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Her Excellency Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission

Ambassador Ivan Surkoš, Head of the European Union Delegation to the Arab Republic of Egypt

Strasbourg, 5 October 2017

Subject: Call on the EU to act against arrests, torture and summary trials of dozens of Egyptian LGBTQI+ youth

We call on you to speak out urgently in defence of at least 33 Egyptian youth arrested in the last week and facing torture, prosecution and potential jail sentences, in an ongoing punitive crackdown because of their alleged sexual orientation, and waving a rainbow flag at a concert in Cairo.

On 22 September, a Cairo concert by Lebanese alternative rock band [Mashrou' Leila](#)—known for outspoken lyrics challenging social and political norms—was attended by thousands, among which a handful waved a rainbow pride flag. Local tabloids began a [frenzied campaign](#) against the “spread of debauchery” and “attempts to corrupt youth” in Egypt as a plot to undermine the country; hate speech and incitement spread to television and social media, [as denounced by 59 rights groups](#).

The Egyptian authorities [have exploited this moral panic](#) to pose as guarantors of a deeply intolerant, homophobic and repressive moral order—using horrific human rights violations as a tool to boost lagging public support. The Public Prosecutor Nabil Sadek [opened an investigation](#). Security forces began rounding up dozens of youth—rights activists and young people simply suspected of being LGBTQI+. On 26 September, a man previously stalked and entrapped online by the vice police, was [sentenced to six years' imprisonment with no lawyer at his trial](#), said Human Rights Watch.

As at least 57 people—and counting—have been detained, misdemeanour courts are conducting summary trials at lightning speed for these youth's alleged sexual orientation and exercise of the freedom of expression. [16 were tried on 1 October; after a single hearing, the court adjourned directly to Oct. 29 for the verdict](#). Though homosexuality is not explicitly criminalised in Egypt, 50-year old laws and Penal Code articles banning “scandalous acts” are used to bring various combinations of prostitution, “debauchery” and “incitement to debauchery” **charges that can bear total sentences of up to 6 or 10 years' imprisonment**.

The authorities have already [subjected at least 5 male detainees to forced anal “forensic examinations”](#); others are likely to experience the same violation in the coming days. Not only is this scientifically useless (and based on discredited 19th-century theories), the UN Special Rapporteur on torture has [confirmed](#) these “intrusive and degrading” tests **amount to “torture or ill-treatment”**; the [International Forensic Expert Group and a host of institutions and rights groups](#) also describe them as a form of **sexual assault** and rape. In addition, all such prisoners are exposed at all times to a high risk of violence in places of detention.

It is unacceptable that dozens of Egyptian youth are exposed to violence, assault and abuse in detention, prosecution and long prison sentences, public defamation and hate speech—for their alleged sexual orientation, for allegedly attending a concert and peacefully raising a flag, or using a dating application. This comes in the context of an ongoing crackdown on Egypt's human rights movement and the freedom of the press, silencing independent voices that could speak out in defence of the oppressed; and shuttering NGOs that provide psychological and legal support to survivors of torture and gender-based violence.

The EU has just concluded Partnership Priorities with Egypt that [enshrine “the full respect of human rights”](#); our own [EU Guidelines](#) commit us to “*actively condemn discriminatory laws, policies and practices, including the criminalisation of consenting same-sex relations between adults or transgender identities, in particular the use of the death penalty, torture or ill-treatment in this respect*”. Consequently, the **EU cannot turn a blind eye to such a vicious campaign of hatred, criminalisation and violence on the basis of sexual orientation**.



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We look forward to your response, and most of all, to swift action from the EU.

Best regards,

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