

## **Attempted Shutdown of the Nadeem Center Exposes the War on Independent Rights Organizations**

### **Rights groups: we are operating in a repressive climate with the state harassing us at every juncture**

The undersigned organizations condemn the egregious assault on the Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture that is intended to obstruct its operation, based on a decree issued by the Ministry of Health to close the center and revoke its license. The undersigned organizations believe the center is under threat for publishing periodic reports on cases of torture and prison conditions in Egypt, as well as for its exhaustive efforts to document the number of victims of violence, torture, and other forms of cruel and degrading treatment in detention facilities, whether carried out systematically by the Interior Ministry or other arms of the security apparatus.

Yesterday, February 21, the Nadeem Center held a press conference at the Journalists Syndicate, attended by several family members of torture victims, supporters of the center, and public figures, rights advocates, and diplomats. During the conference, the center spoke in detail of events since Thursday, February 18. On that day, several security personnel accompanied by an employee with the Azbakiya municipality went to the center's office on Ramsis Street to execute an order to close the center's clinic, pursuant to a decree from the Free Treatment Directorate of the Ministry of Health. The center's lawyer asked that the order be postponed until Monday, February 22, 2016, in order to clarify the grounds for it.

In January, the Nadeem Center issued a report titled "The Fruit of Repression" on violations by the Interior Ministry and security forces throughout 2015. The report cited 328 killings outside of detention facilities and 137 inside them. The report was widely covered by the media given the data it contained about violations of the Interior Ministry and security forces of the right to life and the right to bodily safety and personal security. We believe this was the prime motive for the issuance of the closure order.

The attack on the Nadeem Center is part of a broader assault by the government and various security agencies on independent rights organizations. It began in November 2014 when the Ministry of Social Solidarity attempted to force rights groups to register under the repressive NGO law (Law 84/2002). While international and local pressure ensured that no hostile government action took place after the ministry's registration deadline of November 10, 2014, less than a month later, the state resumed its attacks on rights groups by reviving the foreign funding case of 2011. In connection with the case, the investigating judge in 2014 banned four staff members with the Egyptian Democracy Institute from travel. This was followed in 2015 by summons for questioning issued to staff members at other rights organizations, among them the

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and the Hisham Mubarak Law Center. The campaign continues: just two weeks ago, the prominent rights activist Gamal Eid with the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information was banned from travel by order of the public prosecutor, without advance notice and without being informed of the reason for the ban.

These threats and the unprecedented war on the Egyptian rights movement have spurred some civic associations to suspend their activities, change course, or move most of their activities outside of Egypt. The situation now is that a simple report issued by one of these organizations may constitute a genuine threat to their existence.

The undersigned organizations renew their full solidarity with the Nadeem Center, which occupies a vital, fundamental place in the rights movement. We declare that we will continue to aid and offer resources if it is closed, to enable it to continue to support those who have faced injustice and survivors of crimes of torture and sexual violence.

The state's policy of slowly strangling human rights organizations is aimed first and foremost at silencing all voices critical of its appalling human rights record. It seeks to gag one of the last remaining outlets that works to bring justice to victims regardless of political orientation or affiliation. The attempt to shut down the Nadeem Center because of its exposure of the Interior Ministry's crimes will not stop the scandal, which the state, and its media and security apparatus, has failed to cover up. Only accountability for these crimes can stop the rapid, ongoing decline in the performance of the security apparatus in Egypt, which is leading the country into the abyss.

### **Signatory organizations**

1. Nazra for Feminist Studies
2. Alhaqanya Foundation of Rights and freedoms
3. Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies
4. Appropriate Communications Techniques for Development (ACT)
5. Arab Penal Reform Organization
6. Arabic Network for Human Rights Information
7. Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression
8. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
9. Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance
10. Egyptian Commission for rights and freedoms
11. Habi Center for Environmental Rights
12. Masryoon Against Religious Discrimination
13. National group for human rights and law
14. The Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement
15. The Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights
16. The Egyptian Center for Public Policy Studies
17. The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights
18. The Human Rights Legal Assistance Group
19. The New Woman Foundation