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Written statement* submitted by Nazra for Feminist Studies, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Escalation in Targeting of Women Human Rights Defenders in Egypt and Continuation of Sexual Violence against Women by both State and non-State Actors

Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) and feminists in Egypt are targeted for their activism and defense of various rights. While some continue their imprisonment for charges connected with breach of the infamous Protest and Public Assembly Law (No. 107 of the Year 2013), others face travel bans and summons for the re-opening of the case known in the media as the NGO Foreign Funding Case (Case 173 for 2011).

Tactics to punish WHRDs include the issuance of travel bans, such as that issued against prominent WHRD Esraa Abdel Fattah on 13 January 2015 (Case No. 25465 of 69 Judicial Year), who did not know she had a travel ban issued against her, and found out about it by coincidence when she was in the airport traveling to Germany. Moreover, the Administrative Court issued a verdict on 16 June 2015 confirming her travel ban, and a petition to cancel the travel ban was rejected by court on 7 December 2015. She has been banned from travel now for almost one and half years.

Another example of the increasing verdicts against WHRDs is the one issued on the 9th of February, 2015 for Case No. 6868 for the year 2013, by El-Raml Misdemeanor Court in Alexandria governorate against WHRD and Lawyer Mahienour El-Massry along with other 9 activists from Alexandria for 2 years imprisonment. On 31 May 2015, the El-Raml Misdemeanor Court issued a verdict of imprisonment for Mahienour El-Massry and 2 other activists for one year and 3 months, and she is currently detained in Damanhour Women's Prison, as a second demurer was rejected on 27 December 2015.

An important case is that of "Belady Foundation" (case 4252/2014/felonies) which includes Aya Hegazy and Amira Farag, who have been in detention for 22 months, which dates back to the raid conducted on the premises of the foundation on 1 May 2014. This case is an example of the clampdown on civil society organizations, and the next court session is scheduled for 19 November 2016. They have been in pre-trial detention for more than 2 years, which is against the Egyptian constitution and penal code.

The 4th Anniversary of Mohamed Mahmoud Clashes is another case where on the 27th of January 2016, the Abdeen Misdemeanor Court confirmed the verdict of WHRD Gameela Ahmed Sareyy- EIDin and 4 activists of two years in prison without bail for protesting without a permit, illegal assembly, obstructing traffic and disrupting public peace.

On 14 May 2016, WHRD and activist Sanaa Seif turned herself in to El Sayeda Zeinab police station to serve the verdict of six months imprisonment she received for charges directed at her of insulting the judiciary, and she was deported to Qanater women's prison. Ms. Seif was accused of insulting the judiciary after she refused to be interrogated in the case no. 4241/2016 El Moqattam Misdemeanors.

In addition, a lifetime imprisonment verdict and a fine of 17 Million Egyptian Pounds (USD 2,229,215.84) was issued on February 4, 2015 in the case known as the Ministerial Cabinet Case (Case No. 8629 for the Year 2011) by the Sayeda Zeinab Felonies Court. The case includes 2 WHRDs who are still detained since March 3, 2015, namely Shaimaa Ahmed Saad and Abeer Saeed Mohamed Mostafa. They are currently at Qanater Women's Prison and their next court session is rescheduled for 15 June 2016.

Moreover, several tactics have been taken to orchestrate an escalation in the attack on civil society organizations, including the closure order issued for the renowned ElNadeem Center for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, re-opening the case no. 173 for 2011 known as the NGO Foreign Funding Case, travel bans against HRD Gamal Eid, the Executive Director of the Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) and Investigative Journalist Hossam Bahgat, court case for the freezing of assets for both Eid, Bahgat, and HRD Bahey EIDin Hassan, Founder and Executive Director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), his family and

others, and the summoning of 3 Nazra for Feminist Studies staff members, which was followed by the official summoning of WHRD and Feminist Mozn Hassan, Nazra's Founder and Executive Director, in addition to WHRD Rawda Ahmed, the Deputy Director of ANHRI on Thursday 26 May 2016, which was postponed to the week after. Recently, Mohamed Zaree, the Egypt Office Director of CIHRS was banned from travel.

A wave of arrests took place in April 2016, when demonstrations took place against declaring the sovereignty of Tiran and Sanafir Islands to Saudi Arabia, where more than 1270 protesters, HRDs and WHRDs were arrested, whether from the street, or others arrested from their homes on charges related to overturning the government. Those arrested from demonstrations were charged with protesting without permit among other charges, which include activist Mirette Abdel Mawla, who despite being released, might face a verdict, where the first court session on 26 May 2016 was postponed to 6 June 2016.

Sexual violence against women in the public space continues to remain a grave problem. A national strategy to combat violence against women has been announced and published on May 7, 2015, yet, after more than one year of its publishing, we emphasize the importance of monitoring its implementation. Moreover, the lack of the differentiation between state and non-state actors in the concerned strategy, in addition to the lack of differentiation between violence against women in the private sphere and public one is one of the main issues that need to be addressed in the concerned strategy, in addition to not regarding marital rape as a form of violence against women, no reference to accountability of both state and non-state actors is made, and no provisions are outlined for revising the internal regulations of shelters. With the exception of the Tahrir mob-sexual assaults and gang rapes in June 2014 during the inauguration of President AbdelFattah ElSisi, no one has been held accountable for mob-sexual assaults and gang rapes committed since November 2012, and only a few individual cases of sexual harassment and sexual assault have had perpetrators held accountable in. Teachers are also subject to crimes of sexual violence, where incidents of sexual assault, rape and mob-sexual assaults have been documented by the media, including the rape of a teacher by a microbus driver and a friend of his on a desolate road in El'Amriya city, in addition to a teacher in a school in Giza governorate who was subjected to a mob-sexual assault by students whom she refused that they cheat on an exam. Teachers continue to suffer from sexual violence amid the lack of provision of safety measures for them, whether in places where they teach, or in transportation routes. Finally, in the recent Journalists' Syndicate sit-in, women journalists and WHRDs were physically and sexually assaulted by non-state actors outside the syndicate, with no intervention from security forces present.

Accordingly, Nazra for Feminist Studies would like to make the following recommendations to the Egyptian government and the international community:

1. The Egyptian government must act in accordance with the standards of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and introduce national legislation to protect them from state and non-state actors, to recognize and enable their work.
2. The Protest and Public Assembly Law No. 107 issued in November 2013 needs to be revised, to allow the space for WHRDs to carry out their legitimate work in defending human rights, especially that this law is unconstitutional.
3. The Egyptian authorities need to immediately and unconditionally revoke the travel ban issued against WHRD Esraa Abdel-Fattah, and to publicly announce the names of human rights defenders, WHRDs and activists against whom a travel ban is issued, in addition to publicly announcing the reason behind the concerned bans and the legal basis on which they are issued, and whether there are any charges directed at them or not.
4. Reform the penal code to punish all forms of violence against women and ensure its implementation to ensure women's access to justice.
5. Enact the implementation of the holistic and comprehensive national strategy to combat violence against women that was publicly announced on May 7, 2015, and legislation, which should contain provisions for its effective implementation through gender budgeting, evaluation and monitoring, where a public committee would be formed that includes civil society members.

6. Investigate sexual violence violations committed against women since November 2012 and prosecute those responsible.
 7. Enact legislation to mandate the regular collection of statistical data and research to ensure an adequate knowledge base for effective implementation and monitoring of the national strategy to combat violence against women.
 8. Call on the international community to push the Egyptian authorities to initiate a process that genuinely incorporates a transitional justice mechanism, that holds real perpetrators accountable and both recognizes the important human rights activism conducted by WHRDs, and ensures their protection.
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