



Egypt: UN experts alarmed by treatment of human rights defenders after visit

- *Special Rapporteur visited Egypt in Sept/Oct*
- *Egypt must ensure no one is subjected to reprisal in relation to Special Procedures missions*
- *Resettlement and compensation of those evicted must comply with international human rights law*

GENEVA (4 December 2018) - The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing condemned the forced evictions, housing demolitions, arbitrary arrest, intimidation and reprisals against persons she met during her official [country visit to Egypt](#) from 24 September to 3 October 2018.

"Egypt has failed to adhere to the assurances provided to me that no person would be harassed, intimidated or subjected to reprisal for meeting or providing information to me or my delegation in the context of my visit," said the Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, Leilani Farha.

"I am shocked that after my mission a number of families from two communities I visited have suffered forced eviction contrary to international human rights law. Several multi-storey houses have been demolished, furniture was thrown into the street, and residents have been made homeless.

"According to information received, adequate notice was not provided to the victims nor was alternative accommodation or compensation. In addition, security officials reportedly resorted to excessive use of force against residents when they refused to leave their homes. Among those targeted were several houses and apartments belonging to family members of community leaders with whom I met while I was on official mission," said Farha.

"Human rights defenders and lawyers working on the right to housing also reported that they have been followed and photographed by persons unknown to them, to have received anonymous and threatening phone calls, or have been summoned to report at police offices for interrogation. One lawyer with whom Ms. Farha met after the visit was subjected to a travel ban," said the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Michel Forst.

The reported reprisals also include the arbitrary arrest and undisclosed detention of a person who was only released from detention after signing a document granting permission to have their house demolished. The alleged incidents show a worrying pattern of reprisals against individuals and communities directly related to the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the right to housing.

The [Terms of Reference](#) for country visits of Special Procedure mandate holders specify that no person or group of persons who cooperate with a mandate holder will for this reason suffer intimidation, threats, harassment or punishment or be subjected to judicial proceedings or to any other kind of reprisals. They further indicate that no measures that could be perceived as reprisals should be undertaken before, during or after the mission¹.

The Human Rights Council has reaffirmed in several [resolutions](#) that everyone has the right to unhindered access and communication with the human rights mechanism of the United Nations and urged States to refrain from all acts of intimidation or reprisal².

The Special Rapporteurs have also raised concerns with the Government of Egypt about restrictions on Ms. Farha's ability to undertake confidential and unsupervised contact with witnesses, individuals and those deprived of their liberty while in Egypt.

In addition, Ms. Farha expressed disappointment at having had no access to Warraq Island, where there is a conflict between residents and authorities over expropriations and home demolitions. She is concerned about reports of new expropriations and home demolitions related to the development of the island.

The Special Rapporteurs furthermore expressed their hope that a rights-compliant solution could be found for a number of residents who remain on 26th July Street in the centre of Cairo. "The Government should offer them an opportunity to stay in their homes, or - if relocation is unavoidable - a choice between compensation, or inclusion in the development scheme for the Maspuro triangle area which would allow them to remain in their neighbourhood," they said.

In early November, the two UN human rights experts had raised officially their concerns and sought clarification regarding the alleged forced evictions and reprisals with the Egyptian Government. They have not yet received an official reply.

"Unless Egypt ensures that human rights defenders and victims of human rights violations can interact with UN human rights envoys without fear of reprisal, it is in our view not ready to host further visits," the two experts concluded.

ENDS

*Ms **Leilani Farha** is the [UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing](#) as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context. **Mr Michel Forst** was appointed by the Human Rights Council as the [UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#) in 2014.*

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UN Human Rights country page: [Egypt](#)

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*This year is the **70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted by the UN on 10 December 1948. The Universal Declaration – translated into a world record 500 languages – is rooted in the principle that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” It remains relevant to everyone, every day. In honour of the 70th anniversary of this extraordinarily influential document, and to prevent its vital principles from being eroded, we are urging people everywhere to **Stand Up for Human Rights**: www.standup4humanrights.org*

Notes:

1. Revised Terms of Reference for country visits by Special Procedures mandate holders of the United Nations Human Rights Council (based on Appendix V, E/CN.4/1998/45), para (c).
2. Human Rights Council resolutions 12/2, 13/3, 24/24 and 36/21

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