

UN human rights chief urges repeal of repressive NGO law in Egypt

1 June 2017 – The United Nations human rights chief today urged Egyptian officials to repeal a new law on non-governmental organizations, saying that it “further tightens the noose” around NGOs trying to hold the Government to account for human rights obligations.

Law 70 of 2017, which was enacted on 24 May, requires all NGOs to work in line with the Government’s development and social welfare plans or face jail time.

“The crucial function of these NGOs – to hold the State accountable for its human rights obligations – has been severely hampered already through asset freezes, travel bans, smear campaigns and prosecutions,” [said](#) UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said. “This new law further tightens the noose.”

The law also requires civil society groups to report all information on their funding, activities and programmes to authorities, and to seek permission for conducting surveys and any other activities.

The latest law replaces Law 84 of 2002, which Mr. Zeid said was “already repressive.” In recent years, hundreds of civil society groups were dissolved or had their assets frozen under this legislation.

More than 37 Egyptian NGO workers and leaders have been accused of “illegal receipt of foreign funding” and “working without legal permission,” according to the Office of the High Commissioner ([OHCHR](#)). None of them have been officially charged.

The revised law “places such tight restrictions on civil society that it effectively hands administration of NGOs to the Government,” Mr. Zeid said.

He added that while national security is a consideration in Egypt, “muzzling” civil society is not the solution.

“Civil society and media oversight of the Government are essential elements of a strong and stable society, where grievances can be openly aired. Muzzling dissent can only lead to further instability,” he warned.