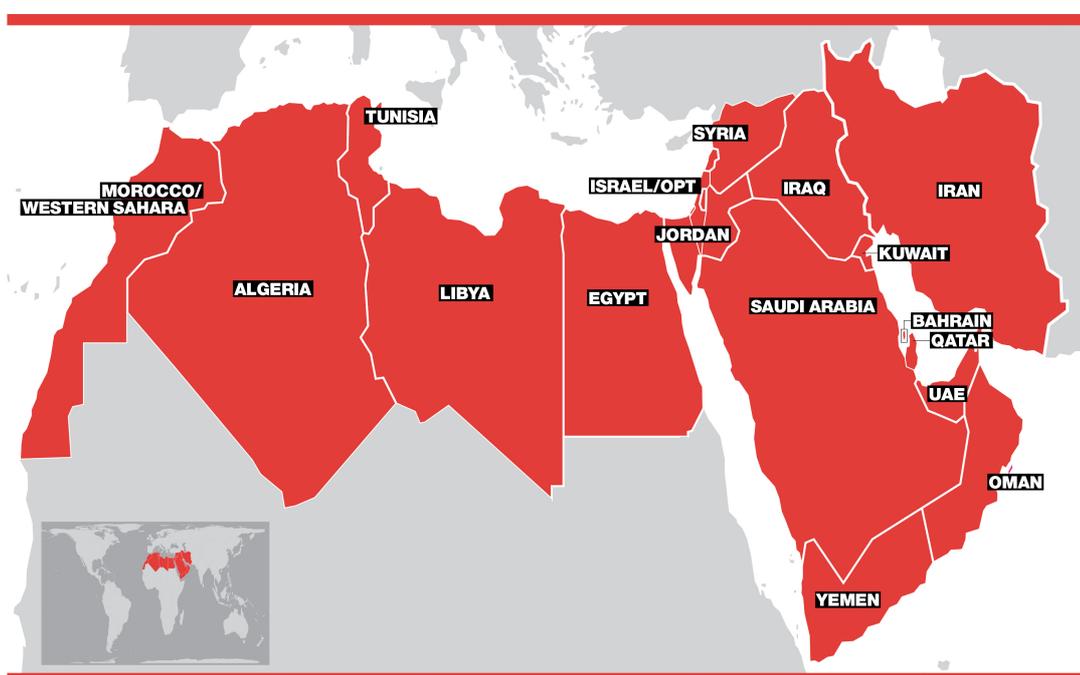


GROUP CAMPAIGN UPDATE



CRISIS AND TRANSITION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA



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Since our last mailing in November, significant events in countries across the Middle East and North Africa have continued. We have seen the National Transition Council assume control in Libya and the death of Colonel al-Gadhafi. In Syria, despite Arab league monitors, the situation remains dire. The violent crackdown continues, with the death toll of protestors now exceeding 4000. And in Egypt, elections began in December amidst renewed protests demanding an end to military rule, which were met with a violent response from the military.

As Amnesty launches a new report 'year of rebellion: state of human rights in the middle east and north Africa', this mailing will look back at what happened in 2011 in our three priority countries; Egypt, Syria and Libya, as well as the work Amnesty have done over the past 12 months. We will also tell you more about an Amnesty rally in London on February 11th and ask you to take action for Egypt.

2011: A HUMAN RIGHTS REVOLUTION: 2011 was a year without precedent for the peoples of the MENA region. It was a year in which millions of peoples summoned the courage to provide a demonstration of 'people's power' such as the region had never seen before. Throughout the year, Amnesty was working hard to document the human rights situation across the region. Here is just some of the work which Amnesty has done over the last 12 months

Between January and March, Amnesty:

- Launched the 1st comprehensive report on the killings of protesters by the security forces in Tunisia.
- Was one of the first organisations to report on the torture of demonstrators by the army in Egypt; and documented the use of forced "virginity tests" against female demonstrators.
- Called for Libya to be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC); and reported a campaign of enforced disappearance by pro-Gaddafi forces.

Between April and June, Amnesty:

- Raised the alarm that violations in Syria appeared to amount to crimes against humanity and called on the UN Security Council to refer the situation in the country to the ICC.
- Released a major report into Egypt's "January 25 revolution" - including the cases of over 300 people who were killed - accusing the security forces of excessive force.
- Called on the international community to help probe the scores of protest killings in Yemen, including the events of "Bloody Friday" protest killings in that left more than 52 dead.

Between July and September, Amnesty:

- Published a leaked secret anti-terror law that would classify dissent in Saudi Arabia as a terrorist crime, leading the government to block the Amnesty website.
- Accused Syria of crimes against humanity in the town of Tell Kalakh after documenting widespread torture, deaths in custody and arbitrary detention.
- Reported on massacres of detainees in Libya by retreating pro-Gaddafi forces; documented attacks on sub-Saharan Africans and "settling of scores" by forces loyal to the NTC;

Between October and December, Amnesty:

- Revealed a campaign of systematic harassment by Syria's intelligence services and embassies to silence opposition to the government in at least eight countries.
- Published statistics on key countries supplying arms to the Middle East and North Africa in the last five years.
- Said it believed that Egypt's Supreme Council of Armed Forces had committed a catalogue of abuses that were in some cases worse than those under former President Mubarak; and campaigned for women in Egypt to play a greater role in public life.

As the New Year begins, Amnesty's work on this region becomes more important than ever. We have a once in a generation opportunity to effect significant human rights impacts in the MENA region.

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LIBYA

www.amnesty.org.uk/libya



In January 2011 it would have been hard to imagine that protests would spread across Libya and evolve by late February into an armed conflict that would transform the oil rich state. Colonel Mu'ammar al-Gaddafi was firmly in control, as he had been for 42 years.

As 2011 progressed and the conflict deepened, Gaddafi became increasingly isolated by the international community. In March; a NATO led international coalition began air strikes.

After around 8 months of conflict rife with war crimes and gross human rights violations, forces opposing Gaddafi had captured and killed him and established territorial control over the whole of the country. On 23 October the National Transitional Council (NTC) announced the liberation of Libya and a month later a new government was formed. In November, Saif al Islam al Gaddafi, the ICC indicted son of Colonel al- Gaddafi, was captured.

It was positive to see that the NTC, in its 'vision for a democratic Libya', promised to respect all international human rights. In August, it issued a Constitutional Declaration enshrining these and other principles. The new government now faces the task of translating these pledges into reality. Enormous challenges are ahead, as the country enters a period of transition, but they have an unprecedented opportunity to address and remedy the many wrongs of the past and to build effective safeguards against their repetition.

SYRIA

www.amnesty.org.uk/syria

In early 2011, as unrest swept across much of the MENA region, it appeared that Syrians might be too fearful to challenge their government. The al-Assad family had ruled with an iron fist for 40 years under a state of emergency that punished any dissent. On 18 March, however, after the authorities suppressed a largely peaceful demonstration calling for the release of detained children in Dera'a, protests began to spread. As they gathered momentum, so too did the brutality meted out by the government.

In the following months, week after week protesters defied the violence of the security forces. By late November, more than 3250 people were reported to have died in connection with the protests, including 200 children. We saw the government banning foreign journalists and independent human rights groups from entering the country, targeting people filming protests and blocking social media sites. Even Syrians living abroad faced harassment and intimidation apparently by embassy officials after showing their solidarity with the pro-reform movement in Syria.

The international response has been slow, but in November, the League of Arab States took action and announced a deal with the Syrian authorities to end the violence. The Syrian government blatantly failed to implement its commitments and as a consequence the League suspended Syria's membership and announced economic sanctions on Syria.

The level and gravity of the human rights violations committed in Syria in 2011 signalled not just a dramatic deterioration in the human rights situation, but also amounted to crimes against humanity. The abuses were part of a widespread and systematic attack against civilians. The situation remains grim and Amnesty continues to call on the United Nations to

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condemn the violations; issue a comprehensive arms embargo and the freeze the assets of the President and his associates. They must take measures to hold those responsible to account, which must include referring the situation to the International Criminal Court.

EGYPT

www.amnesty.org.uk/egypt

At the start of 2011, Egypt was a country whose people had been all but stifled by 30 years of emergency rule, repression of dissent, high levels of official corruption and endemic poverty. The security forces and political leaders enjoyed almost total impunity for human rights violations that were committed routinely and extensively. However, from January 2011, millions of Egyptians took to the streets to demand change. In 18 days, the country wide mass demonstrations had succeeded in ousting Hosni Mubarak, President for 30 years.

Amnesty documented the human rights violations committed by the outgoing regime and have continued to document the violations committed by the now ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). Despite promising to end the state of emergency, the SCAF has retained and extended the Emergency Law. Sadly we continue to see repressive actions, such as arbitrary detention, torture and unfair military trials, live on under the security forces of the SCAF. Despite the new authorities promising freedom of expression, association and assembly, the reality is that criticism of the new authorities is not tolerated, activists are being targeted and NGOs are being threatened with intrusive criminal investigations. Peaceful demonstrators continue to be violently dispersed.

As 2011 drew to a close, mass protests were being held against the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces as parliamentary elections began on 28 November. Elections will continue until March 2012.

EGYPT: WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

As we have highlighted in previous mailings, women were at the forefront of the protests but since then there has been little improvement in their status and situation. They continue to be discriminated against in both law and practice. For example, in July the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces scrapped the quota system for women in the election law in favour of a requirement that each political party have at least one woman on its candidate list, though without requiring that they be included near the top of the list.

At the end of 2011 we saw a worrying rise in violence. In December, women human rights activists took to the streets in Cairo, to denounce violence used by the military against female protestors. As they marched, they carried images of soldiers beating and stripping female demonstrators during previous protests. Yet these activists were cracked down on. On 16 December, an online video clip showed 2 female protestors being dragged along the ground. One of them had her clothes pulled off before a soldier stamped on her torso. The other, Azza Hilal, was beaten severely in the head and face. Armed forces took at least eight female protestors to a parliament building. They reportedly beat them with sticks and some were molested by soldiers or threatened with sexual assault. At least 2 were hospitalized.

Several women activists have spoken out about their experiences during their detention on 16 December:

Dr Farida al Hossy – Farida al Hossy was attacked as she was running from the field hospital in Tahrir Square. First a group of soldiers beat her with batons, then one of the soldiers continued beating and slapping her. She was detained along with other protestors, all injured and bleeding, in a parliament building before being released by an apologetic higher-ranking officer.

Dr Ghada Kamal – says she was targeted for beatings because of an earlier encounter with masked army officers in Tahrir Square who threatened her with sexual assault. When she tried to help a girl who had been severely beaten in the square, she was hit on the head. She was recognized by a soldier who had seen her protesting earlier - as a result she was taken inside the building for further punishment. She was threatened with sexual assault during detention.

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GOOD NEWS:

FORCED VIRGINITY TESTING RULED ILLEGAL:

In December, an Egyptian court ruled that the forced "virginity tests" carried out on women in March last year were illegal and ordered that they be stopped.

The court ruling made references to human rights guaranteed in the Constitutional Declaration of 2011 and Egypt's international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The court ruling also cited Amnesty International's meeting with a member of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).

The decision means that "virginity tests" must be stopped immediately and will be considered illegal if carried out in military detention premises. Now that the tests have been ruled as illegal, this opens the way for victims to be able to submit a claim for compensation. The other importance of the ruling is that a civilian court has ordered the halting of a practice by the military. This will have future implications in relation to the justice system as lawyers are challenging the fact that the military justice system makes the ultimate decisions.

PLANS FOR 2012

Egypt's armed forces and riot police have a track record of violence against women in 2011, including beating demonstrators and sexual assault against female journalists.



Amnesty UK has been working with Egyptian women's organizations to ensure that women's voices are heard. We have lobbied the UK government to better support the work of Egyptian women human rights defenders.

We have also publicly campaigned for the Egyptian authorities to support women's political participation and include women in decision-making bodies.

In 2012 we will be developing this important area of work further. We are working in partnership with Egyptian women's organisations to provide them with training and capacity building and to develop a programme of advocacy and campaigning in this partnership. The space that human rights activists are working in currently is a difficult one and it may take longer than normal to develop our plans. We need to be patient and support these organisations to clarify what work they want Amnesty to do with them. We shall send you information on this area of our plans as soon as we are able to.

We do know that the monthly action in March to tie into International Women's Day (March 8) will be on women's rights in Egypt. Therefore please look out for this action in the March monthly mailing and get involved.

www.amnesty.org.uk/women

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TAKE ACTION (1):

JOIN US AS WE DEMONSTRATE FOR A HUMAN RIGHTS REVOLUTION



Join us in London on Amnesty's Global Day of Action for the people of the Middle East & North Africa, to show support for peaceful protestors across the region and stand in defiance against all those who try to suppress the growing movement of people standing up for their rights, facing down injustice and seeking to bring about a human rights revolution.

Amnesty UK will be holding a rally in Trafalgar Square on Saturday February 11 2012 and would like you to be there to show you solidarity.

Speakers will include Kate Allen, director of Amnesty International UK, plus leading representatives from trade unions and NGOS and activists from the Middle East and North Africa region.

When: 12pm – 2pm, Saturday 11th February;

Where: Trafalgar Square, London. Nearest tube station is Charing Cross

If you will be attending, please wear red, black or white

If you are unable to attend the rally, please keep an eye on our website

www.Amnesty.org.uk/protest as we will be uploading information on a text action that you can take via your mobile phone and information on how to follow events on the day in Trafalgar Square via social media.

It is important we mobilise on a large scale for this event so please pass the message on to your contacts. If you are on Facebook please let your friends know about the event. You can find information via the events tab on Amnesty's facebook page which is

www.facebook.com/amnestyuk

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TAKE ACTION (2):

WRITE TO THE LEADER OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE ARMED FORCES, CALLING FOR AN END TO MILITARY TRIALS OF CIVILIANS IN EGYPT

As elections continue in Egypt, the country's military rulers must immediately cease all attacks on protesters and end unfair trials of civilians before military courts. The past few months have been marred by the brutal suppression of peaceful protests by security forces that succeeded Mubarak's government, as well as unfair trials of thousands of civilians under military tribunal.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has done nothing to protect protesters. Instead, it is suppressing all who are critical of it. Demonstrations are routinely dispersed by soldiers, military police and riot police. Protesters are facing tear gas, batons, rubber bullets, live ammunition and assaults by groups of thugs.

Please write to the leader of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) calling on him to protect, not punish, protesters, and end military trials of civilians.

There is a template letter below which you can use.

The contact address for the target is:

Field Marshal Muhammad Tantawi, Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence, 23 Al Khalifa Al Ma'moun Street, Cairo, Egypt

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Dear Field Marshal,

I call on the SCAF to protect demonstrators and stop excessive use of force, and end military trials of civilians.

I am deeply worried by the increasingly bloody crackdowns on protests in Egypt. While the Egyptian authorities have a duty to maintain law and order, they must not use excessive force to crack down on peaceful protests. Instead, the SCAF must respect Egyptians' rights to freedom of assembly and expression, as guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Egypt is a state party. Incidents where the military and security forces are believed to have used excessive force must be subject to prompt, independent and impartial investigations, as required by international law and standards.

I am further concerned that, since the armed forces were deployed in late January 2011, thousands of civilians have faced unfair trials before military courts. Such trials violate the right to a fair and public hearing before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law – including the right to appeal to a higher tribunal. As such, they breach Egypt's fair-trial obligations under Article 14 of the ICCPR and should never be used to try civilians.

I urge the SCAF to:

Protect protesters -

- Ensure that peaceful protesters are allowed to demonstrate and are not arbitrarily arrested and detained, or tortured or otherwise ill-treated.
- Guarantee that all security forces, including the army, do not use excessive force when policing demonstrations and comply fully with the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.
- Open independent investigations into all cases where the military and security forces are reported to have used excessive force and ensure such investigations are in line with international law and standards.
- Publish and disseminate in a form that is readily accessible to the public the rules and regulations on the use of force by all security forces, including the army.

End military trials of civilians -

- End the practice of trying civilians before military courts.
- Immediately and unconditionally release any one detained solely for criticising the army and the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.
- Release those facing trial before military courts or transfer on-going cases to civilian courts for a new trial, in proceedings that meet international standards for fair trial and without recourse to the death penalty.
- Order fair re-trials for others already convicted by military courts or release them.

Yours faithfully,