

Brussels, the 12 February 2016

To: Ms Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission

Dear Ms Mogherini,

On 2 February 2016 the body of Giulio Regeni, the Italian doctoral student at Cambridge University who disappeared in Cairo on Jan. 25, was found on the outskirts of Cairo, in a ditch next to a road, bearing evidences of horrible tortures and a violent death. It was not a simple accident which happens everywhere and without prejudice to the stability in Egypt, as proclaimed by an influential Member of our European Parliament during an official visit in Cairo. Mr Regeni was conducting a research in Cairo on the development of independent trade unions in post-Mubarak and post-Morsi Egypt. It reminds us that Egypt's military government is confronting not only terrorist threats but, in parallel, a vast social opposition, largely neglected by European media and governments.

He was not a journalist neither an activist. He was a cosmopolitan student who loved Egypt and conceived his own work as a bridge between societies and cultures. During his research, he made contacts with different people and civil society's associations, which became the focus of his doctoral thesis but, at the same time, were the target of the cruel repression too often perpetrated by national security bodies. He was trying to understand the claims of the social opposition and make it visible to the outside world.

His field research has been very probably perceived as an intrusion, to be eliminated in the most brutal way.

More than 4,600 academics from across the globe have signed an open letter, after his death, demanding an investigation into his violent death and into the growing number of forced disappearances in Egypt.¹

The case of Giulio Regeni follows a long list of forced disappearances occurred in Egypt since the eviction of Mr Morsi's government and the election of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi as President. Only in 2015 the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedom (ECRF) reported the disappearance of 1700 Egyptian citizens. Between April and November of this year, other 503 disappeared.

We are aware that the inquiry on Mr Regeni's death is not yet concluded, nor its independence really guaranteed, but we believe that what happened to him, and to thousands of Egyptian victims like him, cannot be treated as an accident. It must lead to some rethinking of the support provided by the EU to the Egyptian government, making sure that the question of human rights is fully taken into account, considering their more and more flagrant violation in this country, as reported by a great number of ONGs.

We stress our concern for the role that economic and geo-strategic interests of European countries might have. Such a role must not lead up to a lowering of our vigilance about

¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/08/egypt-must-look-into-all-reports-of-torture-not-just-the-death-of-giulio-regeni>

human rights, democratic pluralism, right of free speech, independent trade unionism. The reverse must be the case.

We are equally concerned by the return policy adopted by the EU, as regards the refugees coming from Egypt. Indeed, according to Frontex, Egypt was in 2014 in the Top 10 of forced returns by nationality – even though according to the 2014 Egypt Progress Report, "exit from detention is often made contingent upon departure from Egypt, and conditions of asylum are believed to be an important push factor for refugees to attempt migration by sea". These systematic returns are therefore in violation of the right of asylum and individual examination of each application, and don't take into account the situation in Egypt.

We ask You, as High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to push strongly for obtaining a completely independent investigation on Mr Regeni's assassination. Those responsible for his brutal murder must respond for their action, and the demand of truth and justice must be satisfied.

The European Parliament, in different occasions, already expressed its apprehension about the situation of human and social rights in this country, i.e. resolution on freedom of expression and assembly in Egypt (17/07/2014), on the situation in Egypt (15/01/2015) and on the case of Ibrahim Halawa, potentially facing the death penalty (12/12/2015). That is why we urge you to consider the non-accidental nature of this death, to finally implement a genuine dialogue on Human Rights and Democracy in the framework of the Association Agreement, and to enhance the Egyptian civil society's capacity to contribute more effectively to the democratic and political process as laid down by the EU/Egypt Action Plan.

Best regards,

Barbara Spinelli and Marie Christine Vergiat – **GUE/NGL**