

## **Statement by the spokesperson on civil society in Egypt**

24 March 2016

"We are witnessing a mounting pressure on independent Egyptian civil society organisations, in particular human rights organisations and defenders. The recent imposition of travel bans, asset freezes and the summoning of human rights defenders are not in line with Egypt's commitments to promote and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms as guaranteed by its Constitution and enshrined in the EU-Egypt Association Agreement, which is the basis for our partnership.

The decision to revive the so-called "2011 foreign funding case", targeting EU partners who are crucial in the democratic development of Egypt, is of serious concern. Civil society plays a key role for open and democratic societies. At a time when Egypt, the EU and their neighbourhood are faced with the challenge of terrorism, open societies are the best antidote to extremism, terrorism and instability. The EU thus expects the Egyptian government to allow the independent functioning of civil society organisations and human rights defenders, free of fear of intimidation."