

NHRIs Questionnaire

Nazra for Feminist Studies

9 October 2012

1. a) The National Human Rights Institution in Egypt is the National Council for Human Rights (hereafter 'the Council'). We are not aware of the existence of any mechanisms in the Institution established for the protection of human rights defenders at risk.

b) No complaint has been submitted to the Council on behalf of Nazra for Feminist Studies.

c) Nazra for Feminist Studies has not been consulted by the Council about protection measures for human rights defenders in Egypt.
2. a) Even though the law establishing the Council maintains that "the Council shall independently perform its duties, activities and functions", it is not perceived to be independent from the Egyptian government.
 - Council members were chosen by the Shura Council's General Committee, currently dominated by the Freedom and Justice party
 - The current formation of the Council seems to only compliment members of Islamist parties or those who support them
 - The Council's mandate, issued by the Shura Council in 2003, kept its role to an advisory level, allowing it issue reports and make recommendationsb) The following recommendations for the Council to operate effectively and promote and protect human rights:
 - Having a diverse membership and a gender balance- from the current 27-member Council, only 5 are women and 10 of which are Islamist figures.
 - The Council currently only has an advisory role, issuing reports and making recommendations. It should, however, have power to monitor the extent to which relevant authorities follow their advice and recommendations. The Council should especially have the power to monitor the police.
 - At least two-thirds of its members, including the president and vice-president, should come from non-governmental organizations recognized for their independence.
 - Relevant ministries must be required to respond to citizen complaints referred to them by the Council.
 - Enable the Council to visit prisons and police stations to inspect detention facilities without the need for prior permission from prison administration.
3. a) No working relationship exists between the Council and Nazra for Feminist Studies.

b) The Council should consult with civil society with regards to the measures it can take to better protect human rights defenders at risk. With the input from civil society organizations that have monitored the violations taking place against human rights defenders, protection programs that are responsive to the situations of human rights defenders can be reached.

4. a) In the current formation of the Council, a few are considered human rights defenders in Egypt, among which is renowned rights lawyer Ahmed Seif al-Islam Hamad .

b) The Council lacks investigatory and enforcement powers and its affiliation to the Shura Council, the appointed, consultative upper house of parliament.

- The Council includes in its membership members of the conservative Al-Nour party (which is ideologically affiliated with the conservative Salafi interpretation of Islam), outspoken about their belief that human rights are a “Western’ imposition.