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HRW.org

Copied: Climate-Observer-Organizations-Liaison; UNFCCC-Press; Alexander Saier; Thomas Bahr

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Dear Executive Secretary Simon Stiell,

On behalf of Human Rights Watch, an independent human rights organization conducting research and advocacy in 90 countries worldwide, we are writing to follow up on the email correspondence between HRW and the communications and observer relations units of the UNFCCC, between July 1 and August 16, 2022, related to the issue of registration of Egyptian observer organizations at COP27.

We would like to request your response and perspectives regarding the initial findings of our research on the challenges environmental activists from Egypt are facing.

Among the issues we have documented are the following:

- The Egyptian government has, in recent years, severely curtailed the ability of environmental groups to carry out independent policy, advocacy and field work essential to protecting the country's environment.
- The restrictions violate the right to freedom of assembly and association and threaten Egypt's ability to uphold its commitments to environmental and climate action, as Egypt hosts the COP27 climate summit in November 2022.
- In the context of COP27, several sources told Human Rights Watch that the Egyptian authorities, through the ministries of environment and foreign affairs, have in recent closed meetings asked several Egyptian NGOs to

participate in COP27. The UNFCCC Secretariat informed Human Rights Watch that one-off admission (outside the usual process to be accredited) was granted for over 30 Egyptian groups, all of whom were “endorsed” through the Egyptian government.

- In an interview with The Associated Press on May 24, Egypt’s Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said that his government is planning to designate “a facility adjacent to the conference center” in Sharm el-Sheikh, in the Sinai Peninsula, where the meeting will be held, where activists can hold protests and voice their opinions. We are concerned about the implications of Shoukry’s comments on the right to peaceful activism at the COP27. Given existing restrictions on protest and assembly in Egypt that amount to their effective criminalization, the Foreign Minister’s comments imply that the Egyptian authorities will not tolerate protest outside this “government-designated” space. Our full statement on this concern about protest can be found here:
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/12/egypt-statements-cop27-imply-restricting-activism>

To ensure that we reflect the perspectives of the UNFCCC Secretariat in any upcoming reporting, we would appreciate your response to specific questions presented below by September 5, 2022.

We would also welcome the opportunity to speak with you or a designated representative to discuss our findings and discuss these questions in more detail. Please let us know if you have any questions or would like to arrange a video conference.

Questions:

1. Has the UNFCCC granted one-off accreditation to observers from the host country at previous COP meetings? If so, when, and how many observers were accredited through such a process?
2. Can you share the rules of procedure which governs the process of one-off accreditations?
3. When and in what form did the COP27 Presidency suggest a list of one-off observers to the UNFCCC Secretariat and/or the COP bureau?
4. How many organisations did the COP27 Presidency suggest?
5. Were there any additional criteria applied by the COP bureau when reviewing the list suggested by the COP27 Presidency? If so, please describe those criteria.

6. Did the UNFCCC Secretariat and/or the COP Bureau take any steps to ensure that all Egyptian environmental groups, whether or not they have close relationships with the government, have access to this process?
7. Was the possibility of a one-off accreditation for Egyptian groups made public or otherwise shared with civil society groups in Egypt? If so, when, and how?
8. What other measures have the UNFCCC Secretariat and the COP Bureau taken to ensure that all observers can participate freely and meaningfully at COP27? Specifically, what steps are taken to ensure that activists can exercise their rights to assembly, association, and protest?

Yours sincerely,



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