

## HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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February 8, 2016

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi  
President  
The Arab Republic of Egypt

Your Excellency,

We write to bring your attention to extremely troubling remarks recently made by a minister in your government that appeared to advocate mass killings. We believe these remarks deserve your strong response.

On January 28, Justice Minister Ahmed al-Zind participated in a live interview on the satellite channel Sada al-Balad, during which he and host Ahmed Moussa discussed the sacrifices made by the armed forces during their counterterrorism operations. During the discussion, Mr. al-Zind praised the soldiers who have been killed and stated:

These soldiers are protecting you, and you need to appreciate them. But I doubt that. He whose heart and sight are blinded shall know nothing until he dies. May God have mercy on our virtuous martyrs. If the armed forces took revenge in a swift response, killing or finishing off 40 wrongful terrorist extremists, the armed forces will do everything they can to take revenge – to quench our thirst for revenge. I believe that these virtuous martyrs – I swear that we will only be satisfied to have 400,000 for their sake ... I swear by God almighty that, personally, the fire in my heart will not be extinguished unless for each one there's at least 10,000.

Mr. Moussa responded that such a figure would mean “the entire Brotherhood,” to which Mr. al-Zind responded affirmatively:

I'm saying the Brotherhood and whoever aids them and whoever loves them and whoever pleases them and whoever takes bribes from them and whoever lives off their ill-gotten funds from Turkey and Qatar and Iran.

Such remarks appear to run counter to Egypt's constitution, international law and your own stated position regarding the Muslim Brotherhood. They represent a dangerous threat to many thousands of peaceful Egyptian citizens, and you should condemn them.

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We ask you to take three concrete steps to ensure the safety those who have been put at risk:

- Publicly condemn Mr. al-Zind's remarks and state that they do not represent the policy of your government.
- Publicly pledge to ensure the prosecution of anyone who commits, orders or assists in murder or other crimes against Brotherhood members or relatives, or any other group because of their political or ideological affiliation.
- Communicate directly to the justice and interior ministries that the government will punish violence outside the law against Brotherhood members or other political opponents, especially killings, torture and enforced disappearances.

As you know, Mr. al-Zind oversees Egypt's judiciary and public prosecution in his role as justice minister, and his words carry special weight and authority, particularly when they concern the authorities' use of force.

The fact that security forces have in the recent past carried out mass killings of Brotherhood supporters, and continue to act outside the law by committing torture and enforced disappearances, takes Mr. al-Zind's remarks beyond hyperbole or heated rhetoric and renders them a real threat to anyone suspected of supporting the Brotherhood.

You have in the past stated your willingness to reconcile with the Brotherhood, and in November 2015, you told the BBC in an interview that the Brotherhood was part of Egypt.

"The problem doesn't lie with the government and it doesn't lie with me. It lies with public opinion, with Egyptians. Egyptians are peaceful people and they don't like violence. They reacted against the Muslim Brotherhood and are wary of them," you said. "This country is big enough to accommodate all of us. They are part of Egypt and so the Egyptian people must decide what role they can play."

In addition to contradicting your own position, Mr. al-Zind's remarks appear to violate the Egyptian constitution and international law.

Article 53 of the constitution states that "discrimination and incitement to hate are crimes punishable by law," while the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights similarly states, in article 20, that "any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law."

We urge you to use your authority as president to counter these dangerous remarks by your minister and protect Egyptian citizens who have the right to live safely and peacefully in their own country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Leah Whitson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sarah Leah Whitson  
Executive Director  
Middle East and North Africa  
Human Rights Watch