

A Statement on Recent Developments in Egypt and the Region

The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), Beirut on August 27, 2013 – The political stalemate continues in Egypt; the dismissal of the Rabaa and Al-Nahda sit-ins was one of its bloodiest events. Although many players are keen to protect the Egyptian state, safeguard its persistence and support its role, efforts are still required on all fronts, including the international front, to reach effective and permanent solutions that respect human rights and allow for a resumption of the transitional political process. This process includes promulgating a new constitution that meets the aspirations of all Egyptians of all factions and affiliations and making conditions suitable for holding fair, democratic and unchallengeable elections. This will guarantee the right of Egyptian men and women to decide a future for them and for their representative institutions.

In this context, **ANND** continues to make efforts in support of democracy, social justice and stability in close communication with the Egyptian and Arab civil societies and away from political disagreements or conflicting stances about events, players and responsibilities. It recognizes that recent events were neither haphazard nor coincidental but a consequence of accumulated developments that clearly emerged after the presidential election. Things were further complicated by the performance of the unseated president, Mohammed Morsi, and by the practices of the Muslim Brotherhood, which made more enemies and lost allies.

ANND recognizes also that the security-oriented approach that was taken left a heavy death toll and was marred by unacceptable human rights violations. This approach cannot be a substitute to a long-term political one that is still the best solution and the most capable of ensuring a positive and effective resumption of the transitional process towards a democratic system and a just civil state. **ANND** understands that the media play a central role in worsening or defusing violence in such conditions; therefore, the civil society calls among other things for safeguarding the freedoms of opinion and expression while enhancing the positive role local and regional media can play in the curbing of violence and the achievement of justice.

Egypt faces today threats to its security, civil peace and national unity. This requires that all players, whether inside or outside Egypt, provide the country with necessary and imminent support to stop it from slipping into violence and instability. Such an eventuality will have very bad consequences on the future of the Egyptian people and the whole region.

This made **ANND** work harder and mobilize its members and friends around the globe to help provide necessary and imminent support to this vital country that acts as a backbone to the Arab World that is looking for freedom, justice and democracy.

Here, **ANND** would like to underscore the importance of a joint diagnosis for this dangerous crisis by Egyptian and Arab civil society organizations. Such a diagnosis, **ANND** believes, should rely on some basic matters that none can be ignored if credibility and effectiveness were to be preserved. These matters are:

First: Putting an end to violence by all players, disclosing facts and providing justice to all victims. This includes an insistent call for establishing an international fact-finding commission that would collect testimonies, re-document events and deal objectively with facts. Such a commission will help reach the truth about what happened, decide on responsibilities and resort to neutral institutions.

Second: Holding to a rights-oriented approach that does not discriminate among victims on political, religious or other considerations, respects human beings and requires just trials for suspects and detainees. Rights-oriented values are crucial for social coherence, which in turn is necessary for creating a democratic state; they are also the natural prelude to a strong rule of law.

Third: Avoiding the logic of exclusion no matter how reservations and differences are big with Islamists or others. Democracy does not allow for excluding any players irrespective of their weights, except for players who exclude themselves and denounce democracy.

Fourth: Underscoring that Egypt's events are a natural consequence of a weak state and economic and social policies that ignored the revolution's slogans and did not change the applied development model, thus reproducing former choices and discrepancies and deepening protests and divisions. The required transition is not only a nominal political one; it should also be a deep and structural social one. This has not taken place in Egypt, Tunisia or Libya, and its importance was not recognized by international players, who deepened the crisis by defending prerevolutionary choices.

Fifth: Egypt's dangerous conditions and the prospects for further violence require an abstention from stances that worsen the crisis and from siding with one party against another to avoid further tension and violence. International stances that side with one party against another do not serve the Egyptian people's interests. European and US associates should help calm things down by calling on the two main sides of the conflict to put an end to violence and start a national dialogue that include all parties in order to reach a political formula to resolve the crisis and put an end to violence. The European Union, one must reiterate, needs to put into effect decisions that enhance security and peace in the Mediterranean region, treat the region's peoples as associates and revive tracks that were initiated to bolster the ambitions of democracy and social justice held by neighbor countries and their peoples.

Sixth: After popular revolutions managed to unseat the heads of some regimes, economic and social issues should be prioritized in the transition period because they are key issues to achieve justice and equality.. These issues are also preludes to resolving political crises and social di-

lemmas. Also, the national dialogue that is needed in the transition period to lay the foundations of a civil and democratic state must deal with these issues, focus on the nature of the existing state and seek to replace it with a state of rights and law, that relies on transparent and honest civil and public institutions. It's important for regional and international partnerships to be undertaken under such choices and priorities, which should be made part and parcel of constitutions to make sure they will be respected and achieved.

Seventh: Economic and social challenges of national and regional priority should be discussed with EU and US associates and international institutions; such challenges are related to the nature of international relations and the existing world order. They require an in-depth evaluation of economic and trade ties and an amendment of national and regional choices in light of the evaluation's outcomes. All of our partners – in the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic – are urged more than any time before to reassess the nature of the national state and its role and of economic choices and development priorities. Their approaches and relations should be decided according to joint interest. One should note that much of the current world economic crisis is a result of delays in treating economic and social issues. The continuation of the current crisis will only worsen it and will not lead to justice and fairness but to a deeper social and economic crisis and further exclusion, marginalization, unemployment and poverty.

***The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) is a regional network, working in 12 Arab countries with seven national networks (with an extended membership of 200 CSOs from different backgrounds) and 23 NGO members. ANND headquarters is located in Beirut, Lebanon since 2001. For more information please visit our website (www.annd.org) or contact Ziad Abdel Samad (Abdel.samad@annd.org).**