



25 May, 2016

H.E. Moataz Mounir Moharram Zahran
Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Canada
454 Laurier Ave. E.
Ottawa, ON K1N 6R3

Via e-mail: egyptemb@sympatico.ca

Your Excellency,

We, the undersigned, represent the Steering Committee of a network of over 100 parliamentarians from 60 countries, and of all faith groups, dedicated to the free manifestation of religion or belief for all people everywhere. It is with great concern that we write to you regarding the recent imprisonment of Egyptian human rights advocate, Mr. Mina Thabet of the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF). We believe that Mr. Thabet has been imprisoned for merely exercising his right to freedom of expression and his stalwart defence of religious minority rights.

As you are aware, Mr. Thabet was seized by the Egyptian National Security Agency on the 19th of May and, as of today, has been remanded in custody for an additional 15 days of preventative detention. Mr. Thabet faces unsubstantiated charges including ‘belonging to a terrorist group,’ ‘inciting violence and public assembly,’ ‘spreading fabricated information for terrorist purposes,’ ‘inciting attacks on police stations,’ and ‘the possession of leaflets undermining national security and the ruling regime.’ We believe that these charges are being misapplied under the guise of fighting terrorism and are meant to deflect attention away from Egypt’s longstanding suppression of political dissent.

We also believe that Mr. Thabet faces undue persecution due to his noteworthy human rights advocacy for Egypt’s religious minorities, including Coptic Christians. Coptic Christians account for roughly ten percent of Egypt’s population, yet face increasing persecution amidst political unrest; repressive laws that restrict freedom of thought, conscience and religion; as well as a permissive judicial system that allows acts of religious persecution to occur with little chance of repercussions. Egypt’s engrained persecution of religious minorities, as well as the repression of free thought and expression, demands Mr. Thabet’s continued work at the national and international level. Mr. Thabet’s work is the lifeblood of a free and democratic society.

Keeping in mind Egypt's support of international treaties, including the *UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders*, and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, we request your personal intervention to ensure that Mr. Thabet and other human rights defenders are allowed to carry out their important work without fear of intimidation or persecution.

Yours sincerely,

David Anderson, M.P.
Canadian House of Commons
Member, IPPFoRB Steering Committee

Baroness Elizabeth Berridge of the Vale of Catmose
British House of Lords
Member, IPPFoRB Steering Committee

Leonardo Quintão, M.P.
Brazilian Chamber of Deputies
Member, IPPFoRB Steering Committee

Abid Raja, M.P.
Norwegian Parliament
Member, IPPFoRB Steering Committee