

Take action for Egyptian students and academics

Hosni Mubarak's regime, which ruled Egypt for 30 years before the revolution of 2011, systematically undermined academic freedoms and freedom of association for students and academics. State Security Forces on university campuses monitored classroom discussions, used force against students expressing their opinions through speeches or posters, and suppressed student protests on campus.

Following the 25 January Revolution in 2011, Egyptian universities made gains in academic freedom and independence and there were high levels of student activism. State Security Forces were forced to withdraw from the campuses resulting in less violence. Demonstrations by staff and students led to elections for university deans and presidents creating greater accountability between university administrations, staff and students. Unfortunately, however, there was no progress towards enshrining these freedoms in a new university law.

Since July 2013, with the military overthrow of Mohammed Morsi and under current president Sisi, Egyptian university campuses have faced once again serious threats to their independence. Security forces have turned university campuses into war zones by storming buildings, arresting hundreds and shooting students dead during protests. Both professors and students have been targeted and charged for speaking out against the regime - creating a climate of fear for academics and students.

According to the Association of Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE), an Egyptian human rights group, over the last academic year three students were killed on or near campus, 761 were arrested, while 89 students faced trial in front of military courts, on the grounds that university campuses constitute a "military area", under the jurisdiction of the army. Between July 2013 and July 2014 over 468 students were suspended or expelled from at least ten universities, including Cairo University, Ain Shams, al Azhar, Helwan, Alexandria University, Zaqaziq, Mansoura, Minufiyya, and Kafr Sheikh. In at least 275 cases, the students were permanently expelled.



Students protest at Cairo University, Dec 2014 - picture Belal Wagdy

The British connection

Britain's Tory government plays a key role in supporting Sisi's dictatorship, including the regime's attacks on students, academics and university staff. Britain is a major exporter of arms and military equipment to Egypt, as well as a key trading partner. The UK and Egyptian governments are also keen to promote academic research collaboration between the two countries.

In 2014 they signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the Newton-Mosharafa fund, which provides £20 million in collaborative research funding. Yet the heads of Egyptian universities who visited the UK to sign the agreement establishing the fund are playing a central role in enforcing the crackdown on academic freedoms on their own campuses.

The Ministry of Education is also complicit in the repression. According to the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), "the ministries of education, endowments and interior, the Supreme Council of Universities, as well as the boards of individual universities work hand in hand to exclude both students and faculty who express dissent."

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Egyptian president, Abdelfattah el-Sisi has been invited to the UK by David Cameron. Sign the statement in protest at the visit on our website. Go to www.egyptsolidarityinitiative.org/sisinotwelcome
- Pass a resolution through your student union or trade union condemning the repression in Egypt and inviting a speaker from the campaign
- Organise a film-showing or speaker meeting – get in touch with us for help and advice
- Check our website, Twitter and Facebook for information about protests and events where you can get involved

#Sisinotwelcome



www.egyptsolidarityinitiative.org
for news and updates from Egypt and campaign resources. Twitter: @Egy_Solidarity