

Egypt: a repression made in France - A new report

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A new report reveals today how the French State and several French companies have participated in the bloody Egyptian repression of the past five years by supplying Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's regime with military and surveillance equipment. By supplying Egyptian security services and law enforcement agencies with powerful digital tools, they have helped establish an Orwellian surveillance and control architecture that is being used to eradicate all forms of dissent and citizen action. In the face of this new scandal over French exports of arms and dual-use technology, our organisations seek the establishment of a parliamentary inquiry and an immediate end to these exports.

Since the military coup orchestrated by Abdel Fattah Al Sisi in July 2013, Egypt has been in the throes of a relentless crackdown. The record of its security services is devastating: demonstrations dispersed by military means (the dispersal of the Rabaa Al Adawiya sit-in on 14 August 2013 in Cairo alone left over 1,000 dead); the incarceration of at least 60,000 political prisoners since 2013; thousands of extra-judicial executions and enforced disappearances (including 2,811 cases of enforced disappearance at the hands of the security services between July 2013 and June 2016); the systematic use of torture; and a rise in death sentences.

Although the European Union's Foreign Affairs Council declared on 21 August 2013 that "the Member States have decided to suspend export licenses to Egypt for any equipment that could be used for domestic repression", at least eight French companies - encouraged by one government after another - have nevertheless profited from this repression to reap record profits. Between 2010 and 2016 French arms deliveries to Egypt increased from EUR 39.6 million to EUR 1.3 billion.

"While the European Council announced a halt in exports of military and surveillance equipment in order to condemn the drift toward dictatorship in Egypt, France gained market share and achieved record exports!" noted Dimitris Christopoulos, President of FIDH.

Some companies have sold conventional weapons to an army responsible for the death of hundreds of civilians in the name of the war against terrorism, including in the Sinai: Mistral warships (DCNS); Frémont frigates (DCNS); gunboats (Gowind); Rafale fighter planes; armoured vehicles (Arquus); Mica air-to-air missiles and SCALP cruise missiles (MBDA); and two ASM air-to-surface missiles (SAGEM).

Other French companies have sold armoured vehicles (200 from Renault Trucks Defense were sold between 2012 and 2014) and cartridge manufacturing machines (Manurhin) to police services that have no qualms about using machine guns to disperse protests.

Finally, some companies have sold to the security services technologies for individual surveillance (AMESYS/NEXA/AM Systems); mass interception (SUNERIS/ERCOM); personal data collection (IDEMIA); and crowd control (Safran drones, an AIRBUS/THALES satellite, and Arquus (formerly RTD) light armoured vehicles adapted to the urban environment). In so doing, they have all participated in the construction of a widespread surveillance and crowd control architecture aimed

at preventing all dissent and social movement and leading to the arrest of tens of thousands of opponents and activists.

“While the Egyptian revolution of 2011 was driven by an ultra-connected “Facebook generation” that knew how to mobilise crowds, today France is helping to crush this generation through the establishment of an Orwellian surveillance and control system aimed at nipping in the bud any expression of protest”, declared Bahey Eldin Hassan, Director of CIHRS.

Our organisations seek from French companies and authorities an immediate end to these deadly exports. Furthermore, French authorities must not only institute a parliamentary inquiry into deliveries of arms to Egypt since 2013, but also undertake a comprehensive review of the French system of controls of exports of arms and surveillance equipment. Characterised by its opacity and excessive dependence on the executive, this deficient system has been enabling the delivery of equipment contributing to grave human rights violations in Egypt.

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To see the full report, see at the bottom of the page:

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