

**Prime Minister
Dr. Essam Sharaf
Magles El Shaab St
Kasr El Aini St
Cairo
Egypt**

Re: Concerns regarding the death threat against Egyptian human rights lawyer Ms Nehad Abu-al-Qumsan

Your Excellency

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it has also observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE writes to express its serious concerns over the death threat received by Egyptian human rights lawyer Ms Nehad Abu-al-Qumsan in connection with her women's rights campaigning.

The CCBE is informed that on 2 May 2011, Ms Nehad Abu-al-Qumsan received an abusive letter; containing offensive threats and threatening her with death should she continue with her campaigns for the reform of family laws in Egypt. It is believed that this threat follows a series of internet-based and physical attacks against women's rights activists and also comes in the context of an on-going anti-women campaign waged across the country. The CCBE has also learned that in recent weeks, attacks on sections of women across Egypt have worsened, with threats being made in case of non-compliance with a strict version of the Islamic code of behaviour, including the wearing of the hijab.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Furthermore, Article 23 states that:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the

administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to take immediate and effective steps to investigate the death threat received by human rights lawyer Ms Nehad Abu-al-Qumsan and provide her with prompt and effective protection. In addition, the CCBE respectfully requests that you preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice and guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in Egypt are able to conduct their professional duties without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Dal', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

GEORGES-ALBERT DAL

President