

Nubians Stage Open-ended Sit-in on the Road to their Original Villages

In response to the Egyptian government's continuous neglect and intransigence toward the legitimate claims of the Egyptian Nubian community to their right of return to their original homes and lands of habitual residence, yesterday morning, more than 400 members of the Nubian community gathered in a peaceful march toward Furqundi and Toshka districts in protest against the government annexation of around 110 thousand feddans (114,200 acres) of those lands into the 1.5 million-feddan (1,038,000-acre) Toshka land-reclamation project.

The march was taken by surprise when an Egyptian police road block prevented the protesters from reaching their original villages, serving "high-level" orders to the marchers to go back and stop their march at Karkar village, 200 kilometers away from Furqundi village in Toshka. However, the protesters decided to stage a sit-in on the road, while the Egyptian security forces surrounded them, denying food and water to the protesters.

Other protest actions by the Nubian community then broke out across Aswan Governorate, and the Egyptian police used force against the protestors, causing injuries to three persons in al-Karur, south Aswan. Police shot one of the young men was shot in the shoulder, and another in the hand, requiring urgent surgical treatment. The third was wounded superficially. All three are currently in stable condition.

The protesters officially had requested a permit to organize a demonstration for Thursday, 17 November 2016 in front of the Ministry of Agriculture, the official body undertaking to sell the contested lands at public auction. The Egyptian security refused to authorize the demonstration on the basis that the security situation in the country does not permit. Based on administrative order 8002 (2016), the local Duqqi Police Station obtained the Nubian's pledge on 16 November not to gather in the area of the Ministry of Agriculture or organize any events calling for such demonstration, or else bear the legal consequences for any breach.

The 1.5 million feddan (1,038,000 acre) "Egyptian Countryside" reclamation project in question is not the first attempt by the present Egyptian government to grab the Nubian community's historical lands. In December 2014, the Egyptian president issued [Decree No. 444](#) to redefine the border regions of the Republic of Egypt, declaring 16 Nubian villages as militarized borders zones. This contravened the Nubians' constitutional right of return and restricted their constitutional right to freedom of movement in border zones [110 kilometers east and 25 kilometers west of Lake Nasser](#).

These practices represent serious violations of the 2014 [Egyptian Constitution](#), which enshrines the Nubians' right of return to their land and villages under Article 236. They

also violate Articles 14, 19, 20, 21 of [The African Charter on Human and People Rights](#), which treaty Egypt ratified in 1984.

Notably, the [most-recent recommendations](#) of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights advised Egypt to take further steps to ensure security of tenure of housing and lands, especially for vulnerable groups, and that persons affected by forced evictions have access to “adequate remedy, restitution of their property, and compensation” (para. 20). These measures are required for Egypt to meet its obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which the state ratified in 1982.

Therefore, the Egyptian Center for Civil and Legislative Reform expresses its solidarity with the demands of the Nubian protesters, which call for:

- Excluding the land in the Nubian areas from the 1.5 million-feddan reclamation project, in order that they be used as areas of resettlement to build Nubian villages with full services;
- Giving the priority for Nubian people in Aswan Governorate to access the Toshka land under the reclamation project;
- Implementing Article 236 of the Egyptian Constitution and creating the Higher Committee on Resettlement and Development of the Nubian Villages; and
- Amending Decree No. 444 in conformity with the Egyptian Constitution and historical rights of Nubians as indigenous people.

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