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Statement from Hussein Aboubakr Mansour,

My name is Hussein Aboubakr Mansour, I am a dual Egyptian American citizen who received the U.S citizenship through my service in the US Army after being present in the country since 2012 as a political asylee. The reason I had to flee Egypt and seek asylum in the US was due to serious threats to my safety and life for my activism in promoting normalization with Israel and trying to combat the anti-Semitism prevalent in Egyptian society. Growing up at the turn of the century and during the tumultuous time of the post 9/11 years, the war in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq, and the second Intifada, I along with the rest of my generation were regularly exposed to intense anti-American, anti-Zionist, and anti-Semitic messages. Such a strong wave of radicalization intensified religious sentiments and fundamentalist tendencies that came to fruition a decade later in what became to be known as the Arab Spring. Only through God's grace and an educational transformative journey, I was able to find my way out of such dark worldview and came to appreciate liberal and secular values, the positive role of the United States in the world, and the Jewish people. Consequently, I decided to dedicate my efforts to combating anti-Semitism and promote peace and normalization with Israel.

Not to long after I started my activities, I started to attract the attention of the Egyptian security agencies. My activities, which included paying visits to the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo and attempting to organize events to bring Egyptian youths and Israeli diplomats together, were deemed suspicious, un-Egyptian, and potentially dangerous. I was regularly arrested and interrogated through the year 2010. In October of the same year, I was arrested and interrogated by the Egyptian Military Intelligence and was suspected of being a Mossad agent and a Zionist spy. I was held in terrible conditions and went through traumatizing physical abuse and torture. I was released on December 25th, 2010, only a month before the events of the Arab Spring started.

In 2011, I joined millions of Egyptians in the streets demanding more freedom and political rights. Despite of our initial success, the potential for a democratic transition was quickly aborted by a coalition of Islamist forced headed by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood who attempted a massive power grab. As repressive security practices started to return, I found myself again at the hands of Egyptian security which caused me to flee the country in April 2012.

Stories like mine are not unique. Severe human rights abuses are endemic to many Arab countries. Arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances, torture, and unlawful killings are well-known facts of life in that part of the world. However, what is less known are stories like mine of activists who are promoting non-political and unpopular issues. The stories are less known due to the fact the Arab civil society organizations do not wish to deal with a culturally explosive and sensitive issue, but what is truly puzzling is that international human rights organizations do not report or advocate on behalf of this type of activists. This led many truly secular and liberal Arab activists to be convinced that the world of international human rights organizations in the Middle East is deeply partisan and politicized often focusing on human rights abuses against political agents with a disproportionate emphasis on government actions against Islamist actors. Due to this reality, human rights reporting in the Middle East

was co-opted by the profoundly anti-democratic Islamist activists whom they are using it as a politically offensive card against their opponents. This repugnant politicization of human rights, not only does it do a great disservice to activists like me, but also to the very idea of human rights.

At this very instant, Kind Al-Khatib, a 23-year-old Lebanese woman and a social media activist, is waiting for her plea hearing following a 3-year sentence she received by a Lebanese Armed Forces court after she was indicted on the charge of collaborating online with Israelis and being an enthusiast for peace. Before she was recently released due to medical reason, in prison she contracted COVID-19 and lost weight to a life-threatening level. There has been no reporting on this incident from international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International or the Human Rights Watch. I have no doubt that if Ms. Al-Khatib was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood who was arrested in Egypt, her story would have been reported and made its way to major Western media outlets.

As an advocate for peace, I feel I and my fellow activists are being betrayed by Western institution whose very purpose is to champion our rights for the benefit of a certain political agenda. While I believe in the human rights of everyone including Islamists. This behavior plays only into the hands of anti-democratic forces in the regime who openly claim that the human rights agenda is nothing but overt political manipulation.

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Endowment for Middle East Truth