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Egypt: Analysis of draft Civil Society RTI Law

A recent analysis by CLD of a draft right to information law for Egypt, prepared at the request of the group of civil society actors who developed the draft law, concludes that it largely reflects international standards, scoring 129 out of a possible total of 150 on our RTI Rating, which would put it in fourth place globally as compared to countries which have adopted such laws.

Following the revolution at the beginning of 2011, the Government of Egypt showed an early interest in preparing an RTI law, including through holding consultations with civil society. By around September 2011, however, interest within Government appeared to have waned and the consultations stopped. Undeterred, a group of civil society actors – members of the National Coalition for Media Freedom (NCMF) and other interested stakeholders – have continued to work to develop a civil society Bill Concerning Freedom of Information.

“It is extremely encouraging that civil society has continued to push forward on this issue and that they are promoting such a strong draft Bill,” said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of the Centre for Law and Democracy. *“The right to information needs to be at the centre of reform efforts in Egypt.”*

The draft is particularly strong in terms of its wide scope, progressive requesting procedures, narrow regime of exceptions and extensive promotional measures. At the same time, the CLD analysis points to a number of ways in which the draft could still be improved, including a number of areas where clarification is needed, imposing overall time limits, say of 20 years, on exceptions and further bolstering the independence of the Information Commissioner.

CLD calls on the Government of Egypt to make the adoption of a strong right to information law, based on the civil society draft, a priority.

The analysis is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/?p=1708>

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