**DRAFT**

**Background Egyptian Delegation for visit to the Netherlands, September 1 – 6, 2015**

**Organizers:**

**Center for Arab-West Understanding (CAWU), Egyptian NGO founded in 2007**.

Purpose is to create understanding between Egypt and the West, Muslims and Christians. CAWU advocates dialogue based on facts and acceptance of peoples of different beliefs and convictions but does not want to advocate any political or religious ideology or beliefs. We want to be on good terms with all actors in society. CAWU is opposed to the use of any violence to achieve political goals. Our NGI is also opposed to foreign interference in Egypt as happened prior to and during the 2011 revolution. CAWU believes that changes only should be advocated through the use of existing legal channels in Egypt.

In 2008 CAWU organized the visit of a delegation of representatives of Dutch Christian and Muslim leaders to Egypt which resulted in the formation of the Dutch Cairo Overleg which then led to an encouraging phone call of Prime Minister J.P. Balkenende. CAWU organized in 2012 with the CDA and VVD and financial support of the Dutch Foreign Ministry (Matra South) an Egyptian multi party delegation to the Tweede Kamer, NIMD and European Parliament. Throughout the years CAWU has become probably the largest internship provider in Egypt. CAWU works with a budget of around 2500 Euro/year and volunteers that are primarily coming from the Center for Intercultural Dialogue and Translation, a company working contracts with Kerk in Actie, Missio and Misereor amounting to around 90K Euro which maintains an office and a small staff of five. CAWU has been able with few staff to document the formation of the Egyptian Constitution of 2014 with tens of interviews with over half of the members of the Constituent Assembly in a 150 page report that is now made ready for publication by Missio. It is not easy for CAWU to find funding in Egypt and for foreign funding CAWU needs a permission of the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity which is hard to obtain.

**Stichting Arab-West Foundation, a Dutch NGO** with ANBI status founded in 2005 with friends of the work of CAWU. AWF board members provide advice to CAWU. AWF maintains with CAWU a newsletter that highlights activities and developments in Egypt.

For this visit we have not found outside funding and delegates are paying for their own tickets and accommodation in the Netherlands. CAWU and AWF want to provide delegates with a platform to present their views about Egypt but CAWU and AWF are not responsible for views expressed.

**Members of the delegation**

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**Khaled Hassan**

Mr. Hassan, Public Relations Officer and researcher of the Center for Arab-West Understanding, is the coordinator and main organizer for the Egyptian delegation visiting The Hague. He is also the political consultant to two Canadian International Defense and Security corporations, Head of Foreign Affairs committee with the Global Forum for Media and Development –Egypt-­­, and Young Ambassador of the Arab Peace Initiative Regional Network that embraces the two-state solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and aims at promoting for the Arab Peace initiative as a comprehensive solution for peace in the Middle East.

**Abd El-Rafea Darwish**

General Darwish is the President of the Fursan Misr political party, which embraces a nationalist ideology. He joined the Air Force in 1965, and participated in all major military operations that took place between 1965 to 1973, including Yemen and the 1973 war. He obtained a Master's degree in military science, with a specialization on Air Force. Mr. Darwish retired in 1990 and founded the Fursan Misr Party in 2012 as an attempt to participate in what he refers to as Egypt's most critical “war." His main goal is contributing to empowering Egyptian youth. During this visit he wants to highlight the importance of demining the Egyptian north coast which is a major obstacle to the economic development of the region.

**Emad Awny**

Mr. Awny is an architectural engineer that owns several construction companies. He is an economist and political expert, the Egyptian Social Democratic Party's candidate running for parliamentary elections on an individual basis, an Engineers Union leader, and the coordinator of the political independence current in Upper-Egypt, and is active in coordinating between the Coptic community of Upper-Egypt and non-Egyptian initiatives and individuals.

Mr. Awny strongly believes in equal rights, citizenship and good governance. He has been quoted by several newspapers and media agencies, and embraces the belief that the Egyptian community is in great need for a strong economy for better living conditions and for the wellbeing of all Egyptians.

**Mr. Imam Ali Soliman Elrefaie**

Businessman in the Egyptian pharmaceutical industry, member of the Cairo Lions Club and Center for Arab-West Understanding.

**Cornelis Hulsman**

Deputy Chairman of the Center for Arab-West Understanding and Editor-in-chief of Arab-West Report. First visited Egypt in 1976 and consequently studied development sociology at Leiden University with a focus on Muslim-Christian relations in the Middle East. He occupied between 1986 and 1994 leading positions in the Dutch emigration service and left in 1994 with his family for Egypt where he discovered a lot of distorted ideologically motivated media reporting on Egypt and Muslim-Christian relations in Egypt. Throughout the years Hulsman has come to the conclusion that many social tensions in society are stemming from a weak civil (local) government and a poor documentation of actual social processes taking place. Structures in Egypt are weak. Bureaucracy is fragmented. Many civil servants are insecure about their position and tend to be focused on personal interests over national interests. Ideologically motivated media reporting clouds a good understanding of Egyptian society. His most recent investigation was into the expulsion and return of a Christian family from the village of Kafr Darwish in July which was linked to local customary law (orfi) which is a consequence of the Egyptian legal system being insufficient accessible to villagers. He did so with PhD student Matthew Anderson (US) who focuses on blasphemy in Islam and Khaled Hassan. His wish is to see better in depth reporting about Egyptian society and translating key reports such as on the Egyptian Constitution into Arabic for which he would like to see CAWU strengthened.



**Eildert Mulder**

Arabist, joined the delegation as translator since Mr. Emad Awny and General Darwish are not fluent English speakers. Mulder was translator in the UNIFIL forces in Lebanon (1980-1981) which he has documented in a book titled “Pratend Voorwaarts” (1910). He served as editor with the Dutch Daily Trouw from 1984-2015 and focused on the Middle East and Islam.

**Purpose of delegation members**

* Creating understanding of the complex situation in Egypt
* Seeking cooperation with the Dutch for strengthening good governance structures in Egypt
* Strengthening the capacity of the Center for Arab-West Understanding to provide non-partisan studies and documentation on issues of relevance in Egypt such as the current report on Egypt’s 2014 Constitution.
* Seeking support for a demining program in Egypt’s north coast
* Understanding Dutch counter-terrorism measures and methods of dealing with demonstrations, violence, extremism.