



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2007

House of Representatives

MARKING HUMAN RIGHTS DAY: THE PLIGHT OF AYMAN NOUR

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, on Monday, December 10, the United States joins the world in celebration of Human Rights Day, remembering the historic occasion when the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document affirms the elementary rights that belong to all humankind.

Nearly six decades after the adoption of this critical Declaration, and 46 years after I joined the first Freedom Rides to uphold civil and human rights for all citizens of the United States, there are still many people around the globe struggling to gain the rights that we as Americans hold dear.

The plight of one man, Ayman Nour, is emblematic of the myriad injustices that continue to afflict our fellow citizens of the world today. Nour, a parliamentarian and a leading voice for democracy in Egypt, was arrested and jailed in 2005

after his candidacy in the country's first open presidential election. He was charged with forgery, but his imprisonment is widely understood as a political move by the Egyptian government to crack down on the opposition. The illegitimate nature of the charges against him, along with Nour's serious health concerns, including heart problems and diabetes, are grounds for his immediate release. This week, however, Nour enters the third year of his 5-year sentence with little reason for optimism. His latest appeal was rejected earlier this year after the state-sponsored Egyptian media launched a smear campaign against him.

Nour is not the only victim of this crackdown. Judges, journalists, ethnic and religious minorities, civil society and human rights activists, and everyday citizens have all been targeted. Nour and countless others fighting for their

fundamental freedoms continue to look to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an ideal, not as a reality. For the millions who have suffered greatly, Nour's release would symbolize a recommitment to the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as cited in the Declaration's Preamble.

On this Human Rights Day, in the spirit of cooperation between nations, I urge the Egyptian government to release Ayman Nour, and to uphold its stated commitment to civil and human rights.