



EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

In June, an Egyptian court handed down jail terms of several years to two employees of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Our office in Egypt was declared permanently closed.

For now, this marks the end of a political process that is having serious consequences for the former head of our Cairo office and for his research officer, whose family has been torn apart by the events. She is now taking on a different role for the KAS in a location far from her family; whether and when she will be able to return to Egypt is an unresolved question.

We note this verdict with dismay. But our concerns go far beyond it. Whereas it used to be military dictatorships in Latin America and just a few countries on the other continents where our work was hampered, it is now becoming more difficult to promote democracy and the rule of law in an ever increasing number of countries.

And by no means does this only affect political think tanks. In Egypt, for instance, 43 employees of a diverse range of NGOs, including some Egyptian ones, found themselves in court. We are receiving similar reports from other countries from NGOs that are active internationally.

However, what is at issue is not first and foremost the foreign organisations, which can be pilloried to make a public point. It is civil society, which is acting ever more effectively in its denunciation of social and political ills.

As a country's civil society becomes more vocal in claiming its right to participation and in demanding transparency and accountability, it increasingly becomes a challenge to the political system. This applies particularly when the

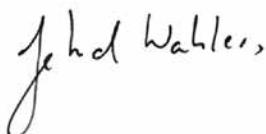
culture of political dialogue and participation has not yet been fully embedded.

A response such as that in Egypt is not consistent with international agreements and declarations, which have also been signed by many of the countries in question, and it is even less consistent with modern times. We live in an era of globally available access to exchange of information and knowledge. To think that it would be possible to turn back this tide is unrealistic.

The fact that numerous countries, in which the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is active, have a difficult relationship to democracy, the rule of law, freedom of speech and civil society justifies our involvement on the ground there. We consider it our mission to foster democratic developments, provide support to political parties and actors of civil society and facilitate dialogue in an atmosphere of trust. Of course, minorities being given an opportunity to be heard and to participate forms a part of this.

Fortunately, setbacks such as that in Egypt and occasionally in other countries remain the exception. The majority of the over 80 offices around the world are not hampered in their work. Interest in topics such as multi-party democracy and the Social Market Economy continues to be high. This is in no small measure due to the fact that Western democracy is considered a successful model.

The recent events in Cairo are thus also an indication of the relevance of our work and of the need for it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerhard Wahlers".

Dr. Gerhard Wahlers
Deputy Secretary General

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