

## Law Council Statement on Peter Greste

***The following statement can be attributed to Mr Michael Colbran QC, President, Law Council of Australia:***

- The Law Council of Australia deplores the verdicts and penalties imposed upon Peter Greste and his fellow Al Jazeera journalists, Mohamed Fahmy and Baher Mohamed.
- Last week Mr Greste and Mr Fahmy were sentenced to seven years imprisonment for charges that appear to relate to spreading false news and supporting the banned Muslim Brotherhood, while Mr Mohamed was sentenced to an additional three years for charges including possession of ammunition.
- The verdicts and the severity of the penalties raise serious questions about the protection and promotion of the rule of law and the right to free speech in Egypt - principles which are vital to any functioning democracy.
- The Law Council of Australia supports the statements made by the Australian Government and welcomes their efforts to ensure that Mr Greste and his colleagues are swiftly released.
- While it is difficult to be clear about the precise legal provisions and procedures that have been applied in this case, many reports suggest Mr Greste's trial was characterised by an absence of attention to the rule of law or other procedural safeguards such as rules of evidence.
- The protection and promotion of the rule of law in Australia and abroad is a key priority for the Law Council and the Australian legal profession.
- Mr Greste's case, and the ongoing detention of his fellow journalists in Egypt, highlights the potential for significant harm to be caused to individuals, and to the community more broadly, when the rule of law appears to be threatened and where respect for the presumption of innocence and other fundamental rights such as the right to free speech are at risk of being undermined and ignored.
- The Law Council will continue to closely monitor Mr Greste's case and his potential legal options which may include an appeal to the Court of Cassation in Cairo as well as the pursuit of a plea for clemency to the Egyptian President.

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