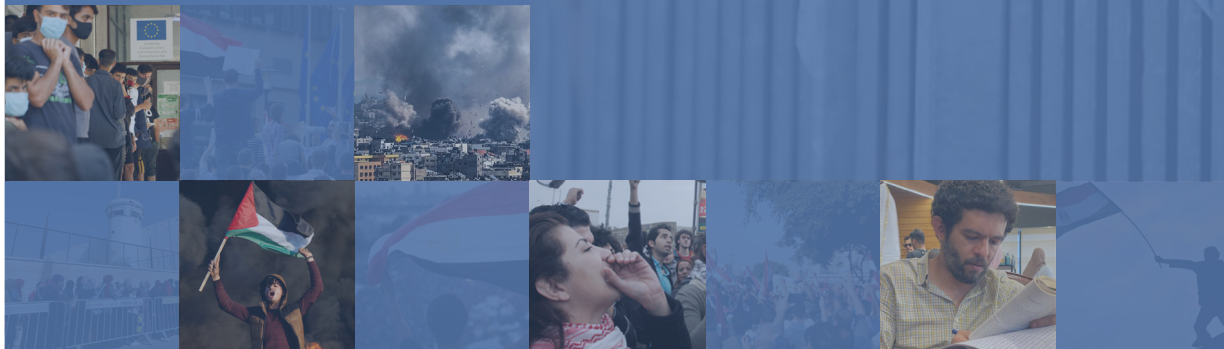


EGYPT'S HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS AND CRACKDOWN ON DEFENDERS



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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's rule, Egypt has faced a systemic and pervasive human rights crisis, entrenched in impunity. The authorities' systematic crackdown on rights and freedoms has been characterised by widespread human rights violations, including mass arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, inhumane prison conditions, and torture. Detainees endure prolonged pretrial detention and/or grossly unfair trials, often leading to harsh sentences, including the death penalty. Women-rights defenders, as well as LGBTI+ and religious minorities' activists, also bear the brunt of the crackdown, facing additional layers of discrimination and targeted harassment.

Over the past decade, the Egyptian authorities have systematically dismantled fundamental freedoms, targeting not only individuals but also institutions essential for collective action. Political parties, trade unions, and human rights organizations have been hollowed out through repressive legislation and other punitive tactics, leaving the country's civic and political landscape in ruins. This relentless assault on civil society has eroded the space for independent civic work and activism, subjecting those who dare to speak out to severe retaliation. Human rights defenders (HRDs), political opponents, trade unionists, journalists, writers, and minority rights activists, among other targeted groups, are all subjected to persistent and systematic persecution through draconian laws, arbitrary detentions, unjust prosecutions, and other forms of harassment.

The Egyptian authorities have made significant efforts to portray themselves as reformers, including through initiatives such as the National Human Rights Strategy and the National Dialogue. However, these measures have proven insufficient in addressing this deep-rooted crisis, and functions primarily as public relations tools designed to deflect international scrutiny while repression continues unabated. This grim reality emphasizes the urgent need for international scrutiny and meaningful reform.

■ Egypt Human Rights Crisis

Since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi assumed power in 2014, Egypt's human rights situation has severely deteriorated as a direct consequence of state policies designed to silence opposition and consolidate power. Efforts to 'legalize' repression have been facilitated through authoritarian constitutional amendments and draconian legislation. The 2019 constitutional amendments further entrenched military oversight, expanding military jurisdiction over civilians and granting the president sweeping powers, which deeply undermined judicial and prosecutorial independence. Laws such as the Protest Law, NGO Law, and media laws have been systematically used to silence independent voices and restrict civil society. Overly broad counterterrorism and national security laws have criminalized fundamental freedoms; including expression, association, and assembly, while eroding fair trial guarantees.

Media freedoms have been systematically curtailed to silence independent voices that challenge the official narrative. Independent journalists and media outlets continue to face arbitrary arrests, raids, and censorship. Hundreds of websites, including press and human rights organizations, remain blocked, undermining the right to access to independent information.

Peaceful protests have been effectively outlawed under the draconian Protest Law, which imposes severe restrictions on public gatherings and demonstrations. Since 2013, security forces have repeatedly dispersed sit-ins and protests using unlawful lethal force, resulting in mass arbitrary arrests, and unlawful killings. The unlawful use of force by security forces, including the deadly dispersal of the sit-ins at the Rabaa and Nahda squares in August 2013—which left over 900 protesters dead—remains uninvestigated, further entrenching impunity.

The authorities have systematically abused the criminal justice system and counterterrorism legislation to punish and silence dissent. Since 2013, security forces have subjected thousands of individuals to enforced disappearances, often for weeks or months at a time, during which victims are frequently tortured and ill-treated to extract coerced confessions. Thousands remain in prolonged pretrial detention, often lasting years. The practice of “rotation,” where detainees are charged in new cases to override release orders and acquittals, ensures that critics are held indefinitely. Trials – including those before military, emergency, and counterterrorism courts – grossly violate basic due process safeguards and frequently result in severe penalties, including death sentences based on torture-tainted “confessions”.

Prison conditions in Egypt remain cruel and inhumane, characterized by severe overcrowding, inadequate medical care, and routine torture. Many detainees have died in custody due to medical neglect or torture.

■ Crackdown on Civic Space

Civic space in Egypt has been systematically dismantled through state-led repression targeting NGOs, political parties, and trade unions. NGO law has effectively stifled the work of independent NGOs, granting authorities extensive powers to dissolve organisations, restrict funding, and prosecute their staff under vague charges. Members of opposition groups, often face arbitrary detentions, politically motivated trials and systematic harassment for their political work. Ahead of the 2024 presidential elections, opposition candidate Ahmed Tantawy and his supporters were systematically targeted through arbitrary detentions and restrictions on political endorsements, undermining the already limited space for political participation. Similarly, trade union members are also often prosecuted and obstructed in their efforts to organize or stage strikes, depriving them of their right to advocate for their labour rights.

Human rights defenders and activists are subjected to relentless persecution, including arbitrary detention, unfair trials, travel bans, asset freezes, and other forms of harassment. Many HRDs face fabricated charges related to terrorism or national security. The use of “terrorist lists” has further criminalized their work. Women’s rights defenders, LGBTI activists, and religious minority advocates endure additional layers of discrimination, violence and harassment. Women’s rights defenders are often prosecuted for exposing gender-based violence, while LGBTI rights defenders endure arbitrary detentions, torture, and degrading treatment for their actual or perceived gender identity or sexual orientation. Those not espousing state-sanctioned religious beliefs face criminalization under vague blasphemy laws. Even defenders living in exile are not immune, as they are subjected to constant surveillance, smear campaigns, reprisals against their family members in Egypt, among other intimidation tactics to restrict their advocacy efforts outside of Egypt.

■ Egypt’s Human Rights Commitments

The government’s publicized reform initiatives, including the National Human Rights Strategy and the National Dialogue, have fallen short in addressing the human rights crisis. These measures are primarily public relations efforts designed to enhance Egypt’s international image rather than genuine attempts for reform. The National Human Rights Strategy portrays the human rights crisis as an inevitable response to national security and economic challenges while deliberately overlooking systemic violations perpetrated by state actors. Similarly, the National Dialogue has failed to deliver tangible political or human rights outcomes, including failing to halt the crackdowns on dissent, even targeting its own participants, further undermining its credibility.

Egypt’s engagement with international human rights mechanisms remains deeply flawed. The government rejected key recommendations from the 2025 Universal Periodic Review, failed to implement those from previous cycles, and has persistently obstructed visits by UN Special Rapporteurs. Reprisals against individuals engaging with UN mechanisms highlight the Egyptian authorities’ blatant disregard for international accountability. This ongoing failure to meaningfully engage highlights the stark disparity between Egypt’s public commitments to human rights and the grim reality of its entrenched and systemic abuses.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Egypt is in the midst of a deeply rooted human rights crisis, marked by widespread and serious violations and a pervasive impunity. The relentless crackdown on civic space is not an isolated policy but part of a broader strategy designed to consolidate power, silence opposition, and stifle independent voices. By criminalizing dissent and dismantling mechanisms of collective action, Egyptian authorities have systematically eroded accountability structures and silenced those advocating for human rights.

The international community has a vital role in breaking this entrenched cycle of abuse and impunity. Meaningful, sustained pressure—both public and private—must compel the Egyptian government to implement genuine reforms and adhere to its international human rights obligations. These urgent steps include:

- Urging Egyptian authorities to repeal or amend repressive laws that criminalize freedoms and erode fair trial rights; release all those arbitrarily detained for exercising their rights; and conduct independent investigations into torture, enforced disappearances, and unlawful killings;
- Advocating for the establishment of a monitoring mechanism at the UN Human Rights Council to oversee Egypt's human rights record and maintain international pressure;
- Supporting victims of human rights abuses and creating platforms that amplify the voices of those striving for justice and accountability in Egypt.

II. METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

This study provides an updated assessment of the situation of human rights defenders (HRDs) in Egypt, examining the escalating human rights crisis under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi since Mohamed Morsi's ousting in 2013. It highlights the unprecedented repression, including restrictions on civic space, media control, and systematic abuses of criminal justice system. These include curbs on freedoms of expression, association, and assembly, alongside the widespread use of arbitrary detentions, unfair trials, enforced disappearances, torture and death penalty, to stifle dissent. The study also examines how these repressive tactics have specifically targeted those who document and expose such abuses, severely curtailing their ability to conduct human rights work and advocacy.

The research relies on a thorough review of secondary sources, including reports from UN bodies, Egyptian and international human rights organizations, joint statements, and press releases documenting patterns of violations. Particular focus is placed on the last two years to reflect the persistence of repression. Data from NGO databases, including ECRF, CFJ, and EIPR, was used according to each organization's expertise, to assess the scale of violations, such as arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, deaths in custody, and violations against LGBTI and religious minority rights defenders. Amnesty International's annual death penalty reports informed the analysis of death sentences and executions.

Government reports and statements, such as Egypt's National Human Rights Strategy (NHRS) and its follow-up reports, were critically examined to compare official narratives against well-documented abuses. Media reports provided further context and updates on certain issues and cases.

Primary data was collected through interviews with victims, their families, lawyers, HRDs, journalists, and activists, ensuring the inclusion of diverse backgrounds and experiences wherever possible to represent different social groups. These interviews were used to verify, update, and contextualize publicly available information and/or ensure informed consent for cases inclusion. Testimonies were selected based on the availability of data, continuity of patterns of violations, and the willingness of individuals, their families, or lawyers to share their experiences.

III. EGYPT HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS

Since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi who came to power in 2014, Egypt's human rights situation has severely deteriorated. The authorities have passed multiple repressive laws which effectively criminalised freedoms, eroded fair trials guarantees and entrenched impunity. Security forces, aided by prosecutors and judges, have arbitrarily arrested thousands, including HRDs, activists, journalists, and lawyers. Many detainees face enforced disappearances, torture, and prolonged detention without trial in cruel and inhumane conditions. Trials often lack due process safeguards, with inherently unfair courts, including military, emergency courts and terrorism-circuits of regular criminal courts, imposing death sentences, some based on torture-induced confessions. Executions following such trials have been carried out.



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a. Legalising Repression: Constitution and Draconian laws

Since the ousting of former President Mohamed Morsi in 2013, the Egyptian authorities have systematically "legalized" repression through a series of draconian laws designed to silence critics, criminalize peaceful protests, curtail independent human rights, political, and trade union work, undermine fair trial safeguards, and entrench impunity for gross human rights violations.

CONSTITUTION

The 2014 Egyptian Constitution introduced some positive provisions, such as explicitly criminalizing torture, but falls short of meeting international human rights standards. It allows military trials of civilians, curtails freedoms of expression, assembly, and association and lacks adequate protection against forced evictions¹.

The constitutional amendments passed in 2019 further expanded the military trials for civilians, eroded fair trial guarantees and enshrined impunity for members of the armed forces. These amendments also granted the president sweeping powers to appoint senior judges and the public prosecutor, further undermining judicial and prosecutorial independence².

DRACONIAN LAWS

The Constitution's failure to safeguard fundamental freedoms and rights has provided the legal basis for a repressive legal framework. Since 2013, authorities have enacted a series of laws with the aim to consolidate their iron grip on power and stifle dissent using vague and overly broad national security grounds. These laws have effectively criminalized the exercise of rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly, as well as further undermined fair trial guarantees and entrenched impunity for human rights abuses.

Criminalisation of Freedoms:

In relation to freedom of expression, authorities introduced four **media and cybercrime laws**³ in 2018 that violate press and digital freedoms, undermining right to freedom of expression. These laws grant authorities sweeping powers to arbitrarily censor and block media and online content, criminalize online dissent based on vague and overly broad provisions, and allow the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR) to control online content without judicial oversight⁴.

¹ Amnesty International, Egypt constitution draft – improved text amid ongoing violations (Index: MDE 12/076/2013), 9 December 2013, [amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/076/2013/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/076/2013/en/)

² Amnesty International, Egypt: Parliament should reject proposed constitutional amendments (Index: MDE 12/ 0147/2019), 8 April 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/0147/2019/en/>, International Commission of Jurists, Egypt Constitutional Amendments: Unaccountable Military, Unchecked President and a Subordinated Judiciary, April 2019: <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Egypt-Constitutional-amendments-advocacy-analysis-brief-2019-ENG.pdf>

³ The Law Regulating the Press and Media (No. 180/2018), the Law of the National Press Authority (No. 179/2018), the Law of the National Media Authority (No. 178/2018), The Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes Law (No. 175/2018).

⁴ Amnesty International, "Egypt: Proposed laws an assault on online freedoms", 2 July 2018, [amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/07/egypt-proposed-laws-an-assault-on-online-freedoms/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/07/egypt-proposed-laws-an-assault-on-online-freedoms/), Article 19, Egypt: 2018 Law on the Organisation of Press, Media and the Supreme Council of Media – Analysis, November 2018: <https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Egypt-Law-analysis-Final-Nov-2018.pdf>

In relation to freedom of association, the NGO Law (No. 149/2019) imposes severe restrictions on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) by granting authorities' broad powers to dissolve organizations, restrict funding, seize assets, and prosecute NGO staff under vague and broadly defined charges, such as "disturbing public order" and "harming national security." It limits NGO activities to "societal development," a loosely defined term that can be weaponized to effectively suppress groups documenting or advocating against human rights abuses by state actors⁵. Independent Egyptian human rights NGOs that failed to register under this repressive law by April 2023 deadline now face the risk of closure⁶.

⁵ EuroMed Rights, Egypt: Authorities Must Repeal the Outrageous NGO Law, January 2022: <https://euromedrights.org/publication/egypt-authorities-must-repeal-the-outrageous-ngo-law/>; Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), Egypt: Legal Commentary on Regulations of NGO Law No. 149 for 2019 on Civic Associations: <https://cihrs.org/egypt-legal-commentary-on-regulations-of-ngo-law-n-149-for-2019-on-civic-associations/?lang=en>; Human Rights Watch, Egypt: New NGO Law Renews Draconian Restrictions, 24 July 2019: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/24/egypt-new-ngo-law-renews-draconian-restrictions>.

⁶ Amnesty International, "Egypt: Independent civil society organizations at risk of closure after NGO deadline passes", 12 April 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/04/egypt-independent-civil-society-organizations-at-risk-of-closure-after-ngo-deadline-passes/>.

While the 2019 NGO law eliminated the explicit threat of prison sentences for NGO staff receiving foreign funding without prior authorization—a hallmark of the draconian 2017 law—it still makes a reference to other legislations that have been used to target and imprison human rights defenders and NGO staff⁷, such as the repressive counter-terrorism law and the Penal Code.

Article 78 of the Penal Code (58/1937) further restricts freedom of association by criminalizing the receipt of foreign funding under vague grounds, with penalties as severe as life imprisonment. Since 2014, authorities have extensively used this article to investigate and prosecute civil society workers on unfounded accusations of harming "national interest", undermining the country "territorial integrity" and disturbing "public peace", effectively silencing independent human rights organizations⁸.

Labour rights to organise and to strike have also been severely curtailed through repressive legislation. The **trade union Law** (No. 142/2019) imposes stringent membership requirements and bureaucratic obstacles, undermining workers' rights to freely form and join independent trade unions⁹, while the **labour Law** (No. 12/2003) imposes unreasonable restrictions on the right to strike¹⁰.

⁷ Amnesty International, Egypt: Draft New NGO Law Retains Repressive Essence of Old One, (Index: MDE 12/0715/2019): 16 July 2019: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/0715/2019/en/>.

⁸ Amnesty International, Egypt: Civil Society Faces Existential Threat (MDE 12/4314/2016), 23 June 2016: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/4314/2016/en/>.

⁹ International Labour Organisation, Individual Case (CAS) - Discussion: 2019, Publication: 108th ILC session (2019), 2019: https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:4000045

¹⁰ Amnesty International, Disconnected from Reality: Egypt's National Human Rights Strategy Covers Up Human Rights Crisis (MDE 12/6014/2022), September 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6014/2022/en/>.

The **Asylum Law** (164/2024), enacted in December 2024, fails to prohibit refoulement, undermines the right to seek asylum, lacks due process safeguards, and transfers responsibility for asylum registration and refugee status determination from the UNHCR to the Egyptian government¹¹. It also criminalizes providing shelter or employment to refugees, asylum seekers, or migrants without notifying the authorities. This limits NGOs' ability to assist them and undermines their operational capacity, while also threatening the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt¹².

In relation to freedom of assembly, the **Protest Law** (No. 107/2013) is another key tool in the ongoing crackdown on dissent, effectively criminalizing the right to peaceful assembly. The law grants security forces broad powers to ban peaceful protests and use excessive and lethal force to disperse them¹³. The Protest Law is frequently used with the Assembly Law (No. 10/1914), which has been used to prosecute peaceful protestors in grossly unfair mass trials¹⁴.

Erosion of Due Process

Since 2015, authorities adopted multiple draconian counter-terrorism laws that further restrict the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association and erode fair trial safeguards. In practice, authorities have used this legislation to keep thousands of people in prolonged arbitrary pre-trial detention pending investigation into bogus terrorism-related charges.

The **Counter-Terrorism Law** (No. 94/2015) broadens the definition of a "terrorist act" to include non-violent activities such as protests, sit-in and strikes, severely restricting peaceful dissent and undermining the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. The law also penalizes the dissemination of information on "terrorism" that contradicts official narratives, which could be used to target journalists, researchers and human rights defenders. It allows for extended periods of detention without judicial oversight and enables the use of excessive and disproportionate force with impunity. Furthermore, the law introduces new offenses punishable by the death penalty¹⁵.

The **Terrorist Entities Law** (No. 8/2015) allows for the designation of individuals and organizations as "terrorists" or "terrorist entities" based on overly broad grounds. This designation leads to severe punitive measures, such as asset freezes, travel bans, and restrictions on freedom of movement, without adequate judicial oversight or due process safeguards¹⁶. In practice, the law has been used to target political opposition, human rights defenders, and civil society groups engaged in peaceful activities like publishing reports, organizing protests, or voicing dissent. In 2017 and 2020, authorities introduced further repressive amendments that further expand the law's scope, allowing persons and entities to be designated as "terrorists" based solely on "police investigations or information," regardless of whether an actual "terrorist act" occurred¹⁷.

¹¹ Amnesty International, Egypt: President al-Sisi Must Reject New Asylum Law Which Violates Refugee Rights, 3 December 2024: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/egypt-president-al-sisi-must-reject-new-asylum-law-which-violates-refugee-rights/>.

¹² Refugees Platform and the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Asylum Law Needs Real Societal Discussion, November 2024: <https://rpegy.org/en/editions/refugees-in-egypt-platform-and-the-egyptian-initiative-for-personal-rights-asylum-law-needs-real-societal-discussion/>.

¹³ Human Rights Watch, Egypt: Draft Law Would Effectively Ban Protests, October 30, 2013: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/10/30/egypt-draft-law-would-effectively-ban-protests>; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, New Law on Demonstrations in Egypt Seriously Flawed and Must Be Amended, November 2013: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2013/11/new-law-demonstrations-egypt-seriously-flawed-and-must-be-amended-pillay>.

¹⁴ Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, UPR Joint Report on Freedom of Assembly, November 2014: https://afteegypt.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/UPR-joint-report-on-freedom-of-assembly-AFTE-EIPR-CIHR-EN_.pdf; Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, A Study on Assembly Law 10/1914, 2017: https://www.cihrs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Towards_the_em_of_Eg_eng.pdf.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, Egypt: Counterterrorism Law Erodes Basic Rights (19 August 2015): <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/08/19/egypt-counterterrorism-law-erodes-basic-rights>; EuroMed Rights, Counter-terrorism and Human Rights: The Impact of Counter-terrorism Measures on Human Rights and Civil Society (March 2018): <https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/EuroMed-Rights-Report-on-Counter-terrorism-and-Human-Rights.pdf>.

¹⁶ Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Law on Terrorist Entities Allows Rights Groups and Political Parties to Be Designated as Terrorists (2015): <https://cihrs.org/law-on-terrorist-entities-allows-rights-groups-and-political-parties-to-be-designated-terrorists/?lang=en>.

¹⁷ Egyptian Front for Human Rights, Terrorism Laws Amendments: Further Legalization of Exceptional Measures in the Name of the War on Terrorism (2020): <https://egyptianfront.org/ar/2020/03/terrorism-laws-amendments/>; Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE), Legislative Analysis: The Terrorist Entities Law and Its Amendments (2021): <https://afteegypt.org/en/legislations-en/legislative-analysis-en/2021/01/10/20657-afteegypt.html>.

In 2017, the authorities passed multiple draconian amendments to the **Code of Criminal Procedure** (No. 150/1950), **Appeal Law** (No. 57/1959), and **Law on counter-terrorism** (No. 94/2015) further eroding fair trial rights. These amendments grant special courts the power to detain individuals indefinitely, allow security forces to arrest or house search suspects without judicial warrants, and enable courts to refuse defence witnesses and abolish the right to a second appeal, including in capital cases. Further, they allow the detention of suspects for up to seven days without judicial oversight¹⁸.

In April 2025, the Egyptian Parliament adopted a **new Code of Criminal Procedure (CPC)**, which now awaits final approval from President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. If enacted, the new CPC would further undermine fair trial rights and facilitate the authorities' ongoing crackdown against critics. The new CPC grants excessive powers to security forces and prosecutors, enabling prolonged detentions without judicial oversight and restricting detainees' rights to defence. This could facilitate further human rights abuses¹⁹, including torture, ill-treatment, and enforced disappearances.

In February 2024, authorities also passed a new law to expand the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians. **The new Law on Guarding and Protecting the State's Public and Vital Facilities and Buildings** (No. 3/2024) grants armed forces sweeping powers in securing key infrastructure, including power stations, roads, and bridges, granting military personnel police-like powers of search, arrest and seizure. The law further expands military jurisdiction over civilians by mandating that all offenses involving broadly defined "vital" facilities, as well as those related to "harming the basic needs of society, including food commodities and essential products," be prosecuted in military courts²⁰.

The **Military Justice Code** (No. 25/1966) authorizes the trial of civilians in military courts and grants these courts authority over alleged human rights violations committed by the military. Recent amendments further expanded the scope of military courts over civilians, also allowing prosecutions for offenses involving "vital" facilities or acts deemed harmful to societal needs²¹. Military trials are inherently unfair as they lack the independence and impartiality required under international human rights law.

Entrenchment of Impunity

Law on Senior Leaders of Armed Forces (Law No. 161/2018), entrenched impunity by granting the president immunity to senior military officials for human rights violations committed between 2013 and 2016, effectively ensuring that those responsible for widespread human rights abuses, including the killing of hundreds of protesters shield from accountability²².

¹⁸ Amnesty International, Egypt: New Draconian Amendments in the Name of Counter-Terrorism: Another Nail in the Coffin of Fair Trial Standards in Egypt (MDE 12/6081/2017), 19 April 2017: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6081/2017/en/>

¹⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Egypt: Concerns over the draft Code of Criminal Procedure, 13 May 2025: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2025/05/egypt-concerns-over-draft-code-criminal-procedure>; International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Egypt: Al-Sisi must reject the new Criminal Procedure Code, 30 April 2025: <https://www.icj.org/egypt-al-sisi-must-reject-the-new-criminal-procedure-code/>; Human Rights Watch, Review of Egypt's Draft Criminal Procedure Code, 2 October 2024: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/10/02/review-egypts-draft-criminal-procedure-code>; Amnesty International, Egypt: Proposed Code of Criminal Procedures Codifies Abuses and Further Erodes Fair Trial Guarantees (MDE 12/8581/2024), 2 October 2024: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/8581/2024/en/>; The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP), Draft Criminal Procedure Code Expands Security and Prosecution Powers in Egypt, 7 November 2024: <https://timep.org/2024/11/07/draft-criminal-procedure-code-expands-security-and-prosecution-powers-in-egypt/>

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, Egypt: New Laws Entrench Military Power Over Civilians, 5 March 2024: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/03/05/egypt-new-laws-entrench-military-power-over-civilians>

²¹ Human Rights Watch, Egypt: New Laws Entrench Military Power over Civilians, 5 March 2024: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/03/05/egypt-new-laws-entrench-military-power-over-civilians>; Committee for Justice, The New Law on Securing Public Facilities in Egypt is a Militarization of the State, 12 February 2024: <https://www.cfjustice.org/cfj-the-new-law-on-securing-public-facilities-in-egypt-is-a-militarization-of-the-state-and-calls-for-stopping-it-because-it-violates-international-and-un-conventions/>; Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Egypt: Alarming New Law Expands Military Power amid Fears of Popular Unrest as Economy Deteriorates, 2 February 2024: <https://cihrs.org/egypt-alarming-new-law-expands-military-power-amid-fears-of-popular-unrest-as-economy-deteriorates/?lang=en>

²² Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Egypt: President Grants Immunity for Military Commanders in Exchange for Lifelong Hold on Power, 6 November 2018: <https://cihrs.org/egypt-president-grants-immunity-for-military-commanders-in-exchange-for-lifelong-hold-on-power/?lang=en>

b. Silencing dissent

Since 2013, Egyptian authorities have escalated their crackdown on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, targeting critical voices, dismantling independent media, and suppressing protests.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION:

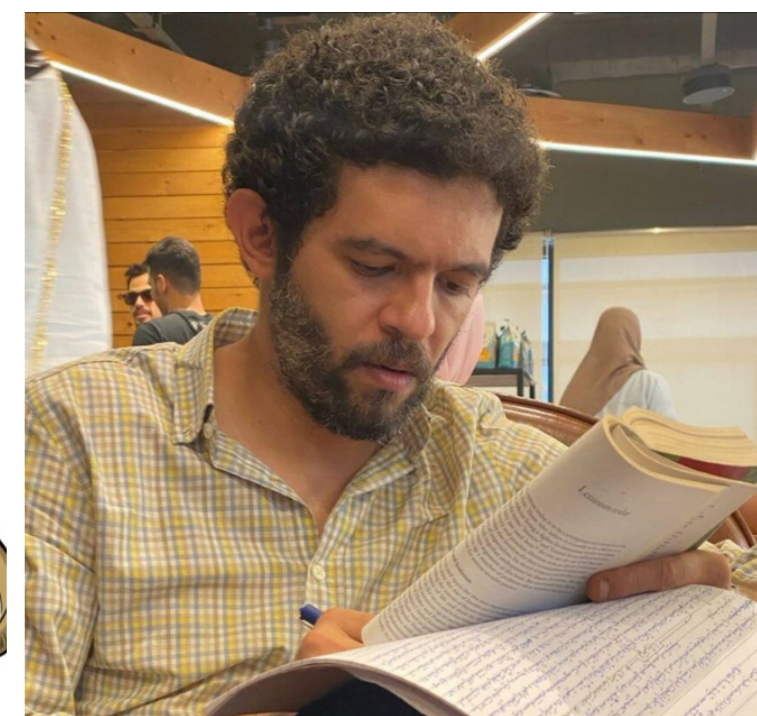
Since President Abdelfattah al-Sisi came to power, the crackdown on freedom of expression has reached unprecedented levels. The authorities have subjected dozens of journalists and other media workers to arbitrary arrest and detention, prosecutions on trumped-up "terrorism"-related charges simply for carrying out their work or for expressing critical opinions. According to Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), at least 14 journalists remain behind bars²³, including five who were detained in 2024, simply for peacefully expressing their opinions²⁴.

Among those detained is cartoonist **Ashraf Omar**, arrested in connection with a satirical cartoon published on 14 July 2024²⁵, in the independent media outlet Al-Manassa. The cartoon criticized the government's plan to sell state assets to Gulf investors. Ten days later, on 24 July 2024, police raided his home in Giza, arbitrarily arrested him and confiscated his electronic devices. Ashraf was subjected to enforced disappearance for three days until his appearance on 25 July 2024 before the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) which ordered his detention for 15 days pending investigations on accusations of "membership in a terrorist group," "publishing false news," and "misusing social media." According to one of his lawyers, during his enforced disappearance, the National Security Agency (NSA) interrogated him about the cartoon and his broader work.

²³ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ): Reports on Egypt: <https://cpj.org/reports/mideast/egypt/>. The journalist, who had been subjected to enforced disappearance, appeared before the prosecution, bringing the total number of detained journalists to 14.

²⁴ Euromed Rights, Egypt: Spate of Free Speech Prosecutions, 29 August 2024: <https://euromedrights.org/publication/egypt-spate-of-free-speech-prosecutions/>; Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms Database.

²⁵ Al-Manassa (Arabic): Post on X (formerly Twitter): https://x.com/Almanassa_AR/status/1812532514038403208.



© Cartoon by Ashraf Omar mocks Egypt's leaders for pouring fuel on the fire of government debt by taking out more international loans



The SSSP also questioned him regarding the same issues²⁶. This case highlights the state’s targeting of journalists and other media workers through enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and unjust prosecutions to silence critical voices.

Since 2016, authorities have tightened their control over both public and private media landscape through online censorship and security instructions on topics to highlight or avoid prior to publication or broadcast. They have raided the offices of at least five media platforms, intimidating and arbitrarily arresting and/or detaining employees and disrupting operations²⁷. These include Mada Masr and Manassa, two of the few remaining independent online media outlets in Egypt, targeted in 2019 and 2020, respectively in an apparent retaliation for publishing critical stories. During the raids, security forces arrested and briefly detained their staff, including their editors in chief, and subjected them to other forms of harassment²⁸.

Since May 2017, the authorities have also blocked hundreds of news, human rights and other websites. At least 638 remain blocked, including 118 media and 16 human rights platforms, violating both rights to freedom of expression and general public’s right of access to information²⁹.

Since 2013, hundreds of political opponents, human rights defenders, activists and other critics were arbitrarily detained following convictions or pending investigations into bogus “terrorism”-related accusations for “spreading false news” simply for expressing their critical views³⁰. Among them is 72-year old prominent politician **Yehia Hussein Abdelhady** who was arbitrarily arrested on 31 July 2024 and detained in the same day pending investigations into bogus terrorism-related charges and for publishing “false news” in relation to a social media post criticizing the military. According to Yehia’s lawyer, the SSSP prosecutor interrogated him about the post and presented screenshots of his social media posts critical of the government as a police evidence against him³¹. He remained arbitrarily detained.

26 Interview with Ashraf Omar’s lawyer, 24 November 2024

27 Amnesty International: Egypt: Prisons Are Now Journalists’ Newsrooms, 2 May 2020 (Index: MDE 12/2240/2020): <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/2240/2020/en/>

28 Amnesty International: Egypt: Prisons Are Now Journalists’ Newsrooms, 2 May 2020 (Index: MDE 12/2240/2020): <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/2240/2020/en/>; CIHRS, Egypt: Investigation of Al-Manassa Editor-in-Chief Must Be Shelved, 12 November 2024: <https://cihrs.org/egypt-investigation-of-al-manassa-editor-in-chief-must-be-shelved/?lang=en>

29 Masaar: Blocked Websites in Egypt, 2021: <https://masaar.net/en/blocked-websites-in-egypt/>

30 Amnesty International, Egypt: Joint NGO Letter: The Need for Follow-up Action on Egypt at the 52nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council, 24 February 2023 (Index Number: MDE 12/6505/2023): <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6505/2023/en/>

31 Interview with Yehia Hussein Abdelhady’s lawyer, 24 November 2024

Between December 2023 and February 2024, authorities arbitrarily arrested and detained at least four individuals from their homes or in public in the governorates of Giza, Sharqia, and Dakhalia for criticizing economic conditions and rising prices on social media. Another individual was arrested in Ramses Square, Cairo, for holding a banner that read, “Go away, Sisi, poor people are tired³²” amid a deepening financial and economic crisis that had devastating effects on people’s livelihoods. The authorities subjected them to enforced disappearance for periods ranging from five to eight days, during which two of them reported being subjected to torture or other ill-treatment, including beatings and electric shocks. Following their enforced disappearances, the SSSSP ordered their detention pending investigations under bogus “terrorism”-related accusations, as well as publishing “false news” and “misusing social media,” while failed to investigate their complaints of enforced disappearance, torture and/or ill-treatment. All five remain in pre-trial detention³³.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY:

Since 2013, Egyptian authorities have systematically suppressed the right to peaceful assembly through repressive legislation, the violent dispersal of sit-ins and protests using excessive and unnecessary force, the abusive pretrial detention and unfair trials of peaceful protesters³⁴.

In response to rare anti-government protests that took place in September 2019 and 2020, authorities have used excessive and unnecessary force to disperse them, arbitrarily arrested and detained at least 7843 people³⁵, and subjected hundreds to enforced disappearance, according to ECRF database³⁶. The majority of those arrested during the 2019 and 2020 protests were subjected to prolonged pretrial detention on bogus charges, without the opportunity to challenge the lawfulness of their detention, sometimes for periods exceeding two years, the absolute maximum allowed under Egyptian law. In January 2023, an emergency court sentenced 82 people from Suez, including 23 who were children at the time the offenses allegedly took place, to prison terms ranging from five years to life for their involvement in September 2019 anti-government protests. The convictions followed a grossly unfair trial marred by allegations of torture, enforced disappearances, and violations of due process rights³⁷.

Ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) held in Sharm El-Sheikh in 2022, security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained at least 1511 individuals across Egypt in connection with calls for peaceful protests during the conference on 11 November 2022. At least 847 individuals remain in pretrial detention or have been “rotated” in new similar cases to date³⁸.

32 Egyptian Front for Human Rights, Based on a Complaint Submitted by the EFHR, UN Experts Condemn Egypt’s Arbitrary Detention and Torture of Citizens for Criticizing Economic Conditions on Social Media, 10 October 2024: <https://egyptianfront.org/2024/10/based-on-a-complaint-submitted-by-the-efhr-un-experts-condemn-egypts-arbitrary-detention-and-torture-of-citizens-for-criticizing-economic-conditions-on-social-media/>

33 Egyptian Front for Human Rights, Based on a Complaint Submitted by the EFHR, UN Experts Condemn Egypt’s Arbitrary Detention and Torture of Citizens for Criticizing Economic Conditions on Social Media, 10 October 2024: <https://egyptianfront.org/2024/10/based-on-a-complaint-submitted-by-the-efhr-un-experts-condemn-egypts-arbitrary-detention-and-torture-of-citizens-for-criticizing-economic-conditions-on-social-media/>

34 Amnesty International: Egypt’s ‘Decade of Shame’: Unrelenting Assault on Human Rights Since Rabaa Massacre (Index: MDE 12/7094/2023), 14 August 2023: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/7094/2023/en/>

35 Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms Database

36 Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, At Least 4,321 Arrested in 24 Governorates in the Wave of Arrests Following 20 September Protests, 2019: <https://www.ec-rf.net/at-least-4321-arrested-in-24-governorates-in-the-wave-of-arrests-following-20-september-protests/>; Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, Protests of margins ... report on arrests during the 20 September 2020 demonstrations, 3 January 2021: <https://aftegypt.org/en/research-en/monitoring-reports-en/2021/01/03/20627-aftegypt.html>

37 Amnesty International, Egypt: Quash Convictions in Torture-Tainted Grossly Unfair Mass Trial of 2019 Protesters (Index: MDE 12/6477/2023), 23 February 2023: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6477/2023/en/?utm_source=annual_report&utm_medium=pdf&utm_campaign=2021

38 Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms Database

Between October 2023 and December 2024, Egyptian authorities detained at least 186 peaceful protesters, across the country, for protesting in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza and/or criticizing Egypt's closure of the Rafah crossing through protests and public displays of support³⁹. According to Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, six of them were subjected to enforced disappearance. At least 114 remain detained over protest and other "terrorism"-related charges⁴⁰.

³⁹ Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, List of Detained Protesters in Egypt (October 2023–October 2024), updated 2024: <https://shorturl.at/OnCy1>

⁴⁰ Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, List of Detained Protesters in Egypt (October 2023–October 2024), updated 2024: <https://shorturl.at/OnCy1>

Judicial authorities in Egypt routinely fail to investigate allegations of human rights violations by security forces, including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and torture⁴¹. The deadly dispersal of the Rabaa and Nahda sit-ins in August 2013, which resulted in over 900 deaths and thousands injured, exemplifies the entrenched climate of impunity and marks a turning point in Egypt's human rights crisis. After more than a decade, the authorities have failed to bring perpetrators accountable for the largest massacre in the Egypt modern history⁴².

⁴¹ Amnesty International, Egypt: Permanent State of Exception: Abuses by the Supreme State Security Prosecution (Index: MDE 12/1399/201927), 27 November 2019: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/1399/2019/en/>

⁴² Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Egypt after the Rabaa Massacre: Ten Years of Repression, Collective Punishment, and Impunity, 14 August 2023: <https://cihrs.org/egypt-after-the-rabaa-massacre-ten-years-of-repression-collective-punishment-and-impunity/?lang=en>; Human Rights Watch, Egypt: Rabaa Massacre Reverberates 10 Years Later, 14 August 2023: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/08/14/egypt-rabaa-massacre-reverberates-10-years-later>; Amnesty International, Egypt: A Decade of Shame Since Hundreds Killed with Impunity in Rabaa Massacre, 14 August 2023: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/08/egypt-decade-of-shame-since-hundreds-killed-with-impunity-in-rabaa-massacre/>.

c. Abusing the criminal justice system

Under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi rule, Egyptian authorities have systematically abused the criminal justice system to crush dissent, arbitrarily detaining thousands of perceived or actual critics, including HRDs, journalists, and political activists. Counter-terrorism laws have been weaponized to justify widespread abuses, including prolonged pre-trial detention, enforced disappearances, and grossly unfair trials.

Detention conditions have been cruel and inhumane, marked by overcrowding, denial of adequate healthcare, and routine torture or other ill-treatment. Authorities have adopted repressive tactics such as "rotation" to circumvent release orders and video-linked hearings that undermine detainees' rights to due process and fair trials. Executions and death sentences have risen sharply, often handed down after grossly unfair trials.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS:

Since 2013, the Egyptian authorities have arbitrarily detained thousands of actual or perceived opponents without charge or trial, sometimes for periods exceeding the maximum limit under Egyptian law of two years. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has constantly concluded that arbitrary detention is a widespread and systemic issue in Egypt⁴³.

Since the reactivation of the Presidential Pardon Committee (PPC) in 2022⁴⁴, which delegates the task of reviewing the release of jailed critics to security forces, including the NSA responsible for their initial arrests⁴⁵, authorities have ordered the release of 3081 individuals held for political reasons, but security forces refused to release 1201⁴⁶ of them by ordering their detentions again pending investigations in new cases on similar charges⁴⁷. Other jailed critics, including high-profile activists who played a prominent role in the 25 January Revolution and members of the Muslim Brotherhood, were excluded. Since 2022, authorities arbitrarily arrested and detained at least 8051 and "rotated" at least 1765 actual or perceived political opponents, including hundreds linked to calls for protests, over cybercrimes, protests, spreading "false news" and terrorism-related accusations⁴⁸. This pattern continued in 2024: between January and October alone, the authorities released at least 934 people detained for political reasons—mostly after they exceeded the two-year maximum limit for pretrial detention—while arresting 1,594 others, including five children, on political grounds⁴⁹. Thousands others remained arbitrarily detained or unjustly prosecuted solely for exercising their human rights or without legal basis or after unfair trials⁵⁰. Among them is political activist **Sherif al-**

⁴³ For instance, Human Rights Council, Opinions adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at its ninety-ninth session, 18–27 March 2024, A/HRC/WGAD/2024/8, 22 May 2024:

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/detention-wg/opinions/session99/a-hrc-wgad-2024-8-egypt-aev.pdf>; Human Rights Council, Opinions adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at its ninety-seventh session, 28 August–1 September 2023, A/HRC/WGAD/2023/36/AEV, 27 September 2023:

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/detention-wg/opinions/session97/A-HRC-WGAD-2023-36-AEV.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Joint Statement, Egypt: Rights Organizations Send New List of Prisoners to Presidential Pardon Committee and Call on Egyptian Government to Resolve the Prisoners' File, 28 July 2022, <https://cihrs.org/egypt-rights-organizations-send-new-list-of-prisoners-to-presidential-pardon-committee-and-call-on-egyptian-government-to-resolve-the-prisoners-file/?lang=en>

⁴⁵ Amnesty International, Egypt: Exclude Security Agencies from Reviewing Releases of Jailed Critics, 25 May 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/05/egypt-exclude-security-agencies-from-reviewing-releases-of-jailed-critics/>.

⁴⁶ Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms Database

⁴⁷ See below more information about the practice commonly known as "rotation".

⁴⁸ Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms Database

⁴⁹ Amnesty International, Human Rights in Egypt – Amnesty International Report 2024/25, 28 April 2025:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/north-africa/egypt/report-egypt/>

⁵⁰ Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Egypt after the Rabaa Massacre: Ten Years of Repression, Collective Punishment, and Impunity, 14 August 2023: <https://cihrs.org/egypt-after-the-rabaa-massacre-ten-years-of-repression-collective-punishment-and-impunity/?lang=en>; Amnesty International: Egypt's 'Decade of Shame': Unrelenting Assault on Human Rights Since Rabaa Massacre (Index: MDE 12/7094/2023), 14 August 2023:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/7094/2023/en/>; Human Rights Watch, Egypt: Rabaa Massacre Reverberates 10 Years Later, 14 August 2023: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/08/14/egypt-rabaa-massacre-reverberates-10-years-later>.

Rouby, who was released following the reactivation of the Presidential Pardon Committee (PCC) in May 2022. However, he was re-arrested and detained pending investigations over bogus “terrorism”-related charges four months later following an interview on Al Jazeera channel in which he discussed the deteriorating living conditions and the restrictions imposed on him and other political prisoners after their release orders, according to his lawyer⁵¹.

Thousands remain in prolonged pre-trial detention based on vague “terrorism”-related accusations on the basis of NSA investigations without charge or trial, and without allowing them to meaningfully challenge the legality of their detention. According to the Egyptian Front for Human Rights, terrorism circuit courts⁵² have nearly stopped releasing defendants in State Security cases during pretrial proceedings since the reactivation of the PPC. Although the release rate has always been significantly low, it dropped from 3.6% in 2020 to less than 0.1% in 2023, as the review of defendants’ detention has apparently become entirely in the hands of the Egyptian security agencies through the PCC⁵³.

Since mid-2017, SSSP prosecutors have increasingly bypassed decisions by judges or prosecutors to release individuals after being released from prolonged pre-trial detention, or after being acquitted by courts by ordering their detention again pending investigations in new cases on similar charges. This tactic, commonly known as “rotation”, aims to circumvent the widely criticised prolonged pre-trial detention and indefinitely detain individuals without trial in politically motivated cases⁵⁴. **Ahmed Sabry Nassef**, 18-year old student at the time of the alleged crimes, has been “rotated” across nine separate cases since 2017 on “terrorism”-related charges in a blatant violation of due process and denial of his right to a fair trial. Despite receiving several release orders and four judicial acquittals in previous trials; his unlawful prolonged pretrial detention persists⁵⁵.

Since 2022, authorities have increasingly relied on a flawed videoconference system to conduct pretrial detention hearings remotely, in an apparent attempt to permanently isolating detainees from their lawyers and courtroom. This online system for detention-renewal hearings system further erodes due process rights, by violating detainees’ rights to communicate directly and privately with both the judges and their lawyers, particularly for those already denied visits or correspondence with their families and legal representatives for months and years. It also prevents detainees from reporting torture, other ill-treatment and inhumane detention conditions effectively as judges cannot easily observe visible bruises or other injuries, while detainees risk reprisals for reporting human rights abuses in the presence of prison guards⁵⁶.

Since 2013, fair trial rights have been routinely flouted particularly in politically motivated cases. Thousands have been convicted in grossly unfair trials, including by inherently unfair emergency courts, military courts, and terrorism-circuits of regular criminal courts, and sentenced to lengthy prison terms or even death⁵⁷. Among them is prominent political activist **Alaa Abdel Fattah**, who has been repeatedly detained and has spent nearly a decade behind bars for his involvement in the 2011 Uprising and for peacefully exercising his human rights. Detained since September 2019, an

emergency court sentenced Alaa on 20 December 2021 to five years’ imprisonment over bogus charges of “spreading false news” for sharing a social media post critical of the authorities’ treatment of prisoners⁵⁸ during which he was subjected to numerous violations, including torture and other ill-treatment, according to his lawyer⁵⁹. Despite completing his unjust five-year prison sentence by 29 September 2024, authorities refused to release him, by counting over two years he had already spent in arbitrary pretrial detention⁶⁰.

Egyptian authorities often resort to a range of repressive tactics simultaneously, including prolonged arbitrary pretrial detention and unfair convictions, to keep critics indefinitely behind bars. **Mohamed Adel**, a prominent political activist, was sentenced in September 2023 to four years in prison over “spreading false news” charges over a Facebook post criticizing death sentences issued after unfair trials⁶¹. Prior to this, he spent five years of arbitrary pretrial detention in cruel and inhuman detention conditions, according to his lawyer. The authorities unlawfully refused to deduct his pretrial detention, prolonging his unjust imprisonment until September 2027 instead of June 2024. Mohamed Adel is also facing other open criminal investigations into similar baseless charges in relation to his peaceful activism, which authorities may use to keep him indefinitely behind bars⁶². Targeted for over a decade, he previously served three years between 2013 and 2017 under the repressive Protest Law and endured abusive probation measures before his re-arrest again in 2018 on different charges, including “spreading false news”, in relation to further social media posts⁶³.

PRISON CONDITIONS, TORTURE AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES:

Egyptian authorities have systematically used torture and other ill-treatment in prisons, police stations, and facilities controlled by the NSA to stifle dissent. Although Egypt ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) in 1986, torture in Egypt is a state policy, facilitated by the country’s abusive counter-terrorism framework, and a pervasive culture of impunity for violations committed by state security and law enforcement officials, as well-documented by the UN Committee Against Torture⁶⁴, as well as international and Egyptian human rights organizations. While security forces, including the NSA, have been directly implicated, the SSSP, Military Intelligence (MI), and General Intelligence (GI) are complicit in facilitating and perpetuating these abuses⁶⁵.

Inhumane and cruel conditions of detention are widespread in Egypt prisons and detention facilities, including overcrowding, inadequate accommodation, poor ventilation, unsanitary conditions, shortage of nutritious food, and little or no access to fresh air and exercise, denial of family visits and prolonged

51 Interview with Sherif al-Rouby’s lawyer, 5 December 2024

52 Egyptian Front for Human Rights, Role of the Terrorism Circuit Courts in Enabling Pre-Trial Detention as a Form of Punishment, 4 June 2020: <https://egyptianfront.org/2020/06/role-of-the-terrorism-circuit-courts-in-enabling-pre-trial-detention-as-a-form-of-punishment/>

53 Egyptian Front for Human Rights, No One Is Being Released Anymore: Monitoring Report on the Performance of Terrorism Circuit Courts in the Pre-Trial Phase During 2023, 16 February 2024: <https://egyptianfront.org/2024/02/no-one-is-being-released-anymore-monitoring-report-on-the-performance-of-terrorism-circuit-courts-in-the-pre-trial-phase-during-2023/>

54 REDRESS and International Commission of Jurists, Joint Submission to the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review Working Group Regarding the Fourth Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of the Arab Republic of Egypt (48th Session of the UPR Working Group, January–February 2025, 16 July 2024: https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/EGY-UPR-2024_ICJJoint-Submission-with-Redress.pdf

55 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), After Seven Years in Pretrial Detention, Ahmed Sabry Nassef Rotated on a 9th Case and Referred to Trial in an Open Case Since 2019, 10 November 2024:

<https://eipr.org/en/press/2024/11/after-seven-years-pretrial-detention-ahmed-sabry-nassef-rotated-9th-case-and-referred>

56 Human Rights Watch, Egypt: Pretrial Detention Renewals by Video, 26 May 2023:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/05/26/egypt-pretrial-detention-renewals-video>

57 Amnesty International, Disconnected from Reality: Egypt’s National Human Rights Strategy Covers Up Human Rights Crisis (MDE 12/6014/2022), September 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6014/2022/en/>

58 OHCHR, Egypt must immediately release Alaa Abdel Fattah, 8 November 2022:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/11/egypt-must-immediately-release-ala-a-abdel-fattah-turk-says>;

59 Interview with one of Alaa Abdel Fattah’s defence lawyers, 6 December 2024.

60 Joint Statement, FIDH, Egypt: Alaa Abd el-Fattah must be released this month at the end of his prison sentence, 26 September 2024:

<https://www.fidh.org/en/region/north-africa-middle-east/egypt/egypt-ala-a-abd-el-fattah-must-be-released-this-month-at-the-end-of>

Joint Statement, Egypt: Alaa Abd El Fattah Must Be Released This Month at the End of His Sentence, 26 September 2024:

<https://www.fidh.org/en/region/north-africa-middle-east/egypt/egypt-ala-a-abd-el-fattah-must-be-released-this-month-at-the-end-of>;

Human Rights Watch, Egypt Should Release Prominent Activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, 3 October 2024:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/10/03/egypt-should-release-prominent-activist-ala-a-abdel-fattah>; Amnesty International: Prominent Activist Risks Indefinite Detention: Alaa Abdel Fattah (MDE12/8567/2024), September 25, 2024: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/8567/2024/en/>

61 Joint Statement, Egypt: Release Mohamed Adel, as Activist’s Health Deteriorates in Detention, 9 September 2024:

<https://euromedrights.org/publication/egypt-release-mohamed-adel-as-activists-health-deteriorates-in-detention/>

62 Interview with one of his defence lawyers, 8 December 2024

63 Amnesty International, Egypt: Arbitrary and Excessive Use of Probation Measures Against Peaceful Activists and Individuals Convicted After Unfair Trials (Index: MDE 12/0665/2019), 22 July 2019: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/0665/2019/en/>

64 Following its 2017 inquiry into Egypt, the UN Committee against Torture concluded that the evidence gathered pointed to torture as a systematic practice in the country. UN Committee against Torture, Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Egypt, CAT/C/EGY/CO/3, 2017: <https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=dY0AaZPhj4NMMy4Lu1T0ebjtOzHl9Ya%2Bxa%2BE%2BvPfmjvoayQx2iV30x2zj4TLGEMjRXVex-9Q%2FNhnR3%2FZHlww27bw4ZF3hxFLucj9b7Nx%3D>

65 REDRESS, Torture in Egypt: A Crime Against Humanity, October 2023:

<https://redress.org/publication/torture-in-egypt-a-crime-against-humanity/>; International Commission of Jurists and REDRESS, Joint Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Egypt, July 2024: https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/EGY-UPR-2024_ICJJoint-Submission-with-Redress.pdf

disappearance and torture by NSA officers through electric shocks and beating⁸⁸. UN experts condemned Egypt's highest court confirming the death sentences of seven individuals in the "Helwan Brigade" case on 24 January 2024, stating that the executions would be arbitrary killings. They cited violations of international law, including enforced disappearances, torture, forced confessions, denial of legal access, prolonged pre-trial detention, solitary confinement, and unfair mass trials⁸⁹.

88 Amnesty International, Egypt: Quash Death Sentences in Torture-Tainted, Grossly Unfair Mass Trial, 28 June 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/06/egypt-quash-death-sentences-in-torture-tainted-grossly-unfair-mass-trial/>.

89 UN Human Rights Office, Egypt Must Halt Executions, Warn UN Experts, 3 April 2024: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/egypt-must-halt-executions-warn-un-experts>.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Egypt must bring its legislation in line with its obligations under international law by repealing or amending laws that undermine the exercise of human rights, including: **Laws criminalising freedoms of expression, assembly and association:** The Law Regulating the Press and Media (No. 180/2018), the Law of the National Press Authority (No. 179/2018), the Law of the National Media Authority (No. 178/2018), The Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes Law (No. 175/2018); NGO Law (No. 149/2019); Penal Code (58/1937); Asylum Law (164/2024); Trade Union Law (No. 142/2019); Labour Law (No. 12/2003); Protest Law (No. 107/2013) and Assembly Law (No. 10/1914); **Laws violating fair trial safeguards:** Counter-Terrorism Law (No. 94/2015); Terrorist Entities Law (No. 8/2015); the new Code of Criminal Procedure; Appeal Law (No. 57/1959); Law on Guarding and Protecting the State's Public and Vital Facilities and Buildings (No. 3/2024); Military Justice Code (No. 25/1966); **Laws entrenching impunity:** Law on Senior Leaders of Armed Forces (Law No. 161/2018);
- Egypt must ratify key international human rights treaties to which it is not a state party and incorporate them into national law. These include the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;
- Egypt must immediately and unconditionally release all those arbitrarily detained solely for exercising their human rights, including the right to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, including HRDs and journalists; and drop all politically motivated charges against them.
- Egypt must end censorship of news and human rights websites, and ensure the constitutionally stipulated right of access to information is enshrined in national legislation.
- Egypt must respect the right to peaceful assembly and ensure that security forces fully comply with international standards governing the use of force by law enforcement officials, in particular by upholding the principles of necessity and proportionality;

IV. CRACKDOWN ON CIVIC SPACE

- Egypt must release all individuals in prolonged pretrial detention, especially those held on unfounded terrorism or national security charges. Authorities should ensure that pretrial detention is used in accordance with international law, and that detainees have the right to challenge the legality of their detention;
- Egypt must quash the convictions of those sentenced in unfair trials, including those by emergency or military courts, or terrorism-circuits of criminal courts. Individuals charged with internationally recognized offenses should be retried in accordance with fair trial standards.
- Egypt must conduct thorough, impartial, and independent investigations into allegations of enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment, and extrajudicial killings. Those found criminally responsible must be brought to justice through fair trials, without resorting to the death penalty. Suspects should be suspended from positions of power pending investigation to prevent further violations or interference in investigations.
- Egypt must also ensure that all detainees and prisoners have access to timely healthcare, maintain regular contact with their families and lawyers, and are held in conditions that meet international human rights standards.
- Egypt must establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi assumed power in 2014, the authorities have employed various tactics to restrict civic space. These measures include repressive legislation, arbitrary detention, unjust prosecutions, unlawful summons, inclusion on the “terrorist list,” travel bans and asset freezes targeting opposition politicians, independent civil society workers, and trade unionists—solely for exercising their right to freedom of association.



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a. Shattering Collective Action: Repression of NGOs, Political Parties and Unions

The authorities have systematically sought to control independent civic institutions to suppress the human rights and labor movements, and to dominate the political sphere through draconian laws and abusive tactics.

The NGO Law which provides overly broad powers to authorities to unduly restrict the registration, activities, and funding of NGOs⁹⁰ has been widely criticised by international, Egyptian organisations and UN experts⁹¹ for its stifling impact on human rights work and for fostering an environment of fear and censorship. In January 2022, the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI), one of Egypt's oldest human rights organizations, suspended operations after 18 years, citing escalated repression and inability to operate under the oppressive NGO Law⁹². Since April 2023, the government-imposed registration deadline, all unregistered NGOs under the repressive law are currently operating under the risk of closure or prosecution⁹³.

In March 2024, authorities dropped the charges against five NGOs and their staff, lifted their travel bans and announced the closure the politically-motivated Case 173/2011, widely known as the "foreign funding case"⁹⁴, for "insufficient evidence" after 13 years of investigations. However, according to ECRF database, at least 17 human rights defenders and NGO workers are still facing arbitrary detentions and unjust prosecutions, and several remain on arbitrary travel bans and/or asset freezes⁹⁵ beyond this case in connection to their human rights work⁹⁶.

In March 2023, an emergency court sentenced **Ezzat Ghoneim**, director of the Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF) and human rights lawyer **Mohamed Abou Horeira** to 15 years in prison and human rights lawyer **Hoda Abdelmoniem** to five years, all on bogus charges in relation their human rights work⁹⁷. The rights defenders have been subjected to a litany of human rights violations, including enforced disappearance, torture or other ill-treatment and inhumane detention conditions⁹⁸. After almost three years in abusive pretrial detention, they were indicted in August 2022 over several bogus charges, including membership in the Muslim Brotherhood and disseminating false news about human rights abuses by security forces via ECRF's social media accounts⁹⁹. The three human rights defenders were convicted in a grossly unfair trial, lacking basic rights such as a fair and public hearing, adequate defence, presumption of innocence, protection from self-incrimination, communication with lawyers and families, and the right to appeal¹⁰⁰.

90 See Section III a. for further information on the NGO law.

91 The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the UN Special Rapporteur on the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Communication, 8 July 2021, [spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=26522](https://www.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=26522)

92 Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI), ANHRI Suspends Its Work in Egypt Due to the Absence of the Rule of Law and Human Rights, 10 January 2022: <https://www.anhri.info/?p=28609>.

93 Amnesty International, "Egypt: Independent civil society organizations at risk of closure after NGO deadline passes", 12 April 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/04/egypt-independent-civil-society-organizations-at-risk-of-closure-after-ngo-deadline-passes/>

94 For further background information on Case 173/2011, see Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), Egypt: Imminent Risk of Prosecution of HRDs Accused of Committing Human Rights Work - Joint Background Information on Case No. 173, 15 September 2016: <https://cihrs.org/further-background-on-case-no-173-the-case-against-human-rights-ngos-imminent-risk-of-prosecution-of-hrds-accused-of-committing-human-rights-work/?lang=en>

95 Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms Database

96 Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), Egypt's Recent Decision on Case 173 Does Not Mean That the Human Rights Crisis Is Over, 21 March 2024: <https://cihrs.org/egypt-recent-decision-on-case-173-does-not-mean-that-the-human-rights-crisis-is-over/?lang=en>

97 Human Rights Watch, Egypt: Harsh Sentences Against Rights Activists, 8 March 2023:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/08/egypt-harsh-sentences-against-rights-activists>.

98 Egyptian Front for Human Rights, Human Rights Defenders Accused of Terrorism, 26 October 2021:

<https://egyptianfront.org/ar/2021/10/1552-2018-fr/>; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Egypt: Human Rights Defenders Held Incommunicado, Face Spurious Charges, Says UN Expert, 15 July 2021:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/07/egypt-human-rights-defenders-held-incommunicado-face-spurious-charges-says-LangID=E&NewsID=27314>

99 Joint Statement, 10 Rights Groups Stand in Solidarity with Members of the Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms, 9 September 2021: <https://eipr.org/en/press/2021/09/10-rights-groups-stand-solidarity-members-egyptian-coordination-rights-and-freedom>

100 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), On the second anniversary of their prison sentences.. EIPR calls for members of the Egyptian

While Ghoneim and Abou Huraira remain in prison, Abdelmoneim was placed back in pretrial detention on similar bogus "terrorism" charges, with her detention repeatedly renewed¹⁰¹. In a statement in November 2018, the ECRF announced the suspension of its human rights work in Egypt, citing the escalating crackdown on human rights defenders and called for UN intervention¹⁰².

Even those released, such as **Gasser Abdelrazik**, **Mohamed Basheer**, and **Karim Ennarah**—three EIPR directors detained in November 2020 and released on 3 December 2020 following global outcry—remain subjected to punitive measures, including travel bans and asset freezes¹⁰³. In January 2025, head of the EIPR Hossam Bahgat was summoned by the Supreme State Security Prosecution and released on bail after his organization published a statement calling for an investigation into a hunger strike and poor conditions at the Tenth of Ramadan prison. He was charged with "terrorism"-related offenses and "publishing false news" in connection with the EIPR's statement¹⁰⁴.

In 2021, over 100 NGOs globally urged UN member states to address Egypt's systematic crackdown on human rights organizations. They warned that the Egyptian government was carrying out widespread and sustained efforts to "annihilate" the human rights movement through relentless attacks on NGOs and activists¹⁰⁵.

Since 2013, Egyptian authorities have also intensified their crackdown on political parties, starting with the dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in 2014, and the arrest of thousands based solely on their affiliation with the party. Many of them have been detained since then, while several senior members have died in prison following prolonged deliberate denial of adequate healthcare and cruel detention conditions. Since 2016, other members of opposition political parties and movements, including from Masr al-Qawia, al-Destour, Bread and Freedom Party, the Egyptian Social Democratic Party, the Socialist Alliance, have been increasingly targeted¹⁰⁶. Some remain arbitrary detained or unjustly prosecuted over bogus "terrorism" solely for their peaceful political work. Among them is **Abdelmoniem Aboufotouh** a former presidential candidate and founder of Misr AlQawia opposition party, has been arbitrarily detained since 2018 in inhuman and cruel conditions. In 2022, an emergency court sentenced him, and **Mohamed al-Kassas**, the deputy head of the party, to 15 years and ten years in prison, respectively, on multiple bogus charges including "spreading false news" and "membership in a terrorist group"¹⁰⁷.

Ahead of the 2023 presidential elections, authorities targeted prominent politician and opposition candidate **Ahmed Tantawy** and his campaign supporters, through restrictions on endorsements, arbitrary arrests and detentions solely for exercising their right to political participation. After being effectively barred from running the election and announcing the Hope Current Party in October 2023¹⁰⁸, Ahmed Tantawy and his campaign members were referred to trial, according to Ahmed's

Coordination for Rights and Freedoms's release, 6 March 2025:

<https://eipr.org/en/press/2025/03/second-anniversary-their-prison-sentences-eipr-calls-members-egyptian-coordination/>

Egyptian Front for Human Rights, Human Rights Defenders Are Not Exempt from Unfair Trials, 5 March 2023:

<https://egyptianfront.org/ar/2023/03/1552-18-trial/>;

Egyptian Front for Human Rights, Human Rights Defenders Accused of Terrorism, 26 October 2021: <https://egyptianfront.org/ar/2021/10/1552-2018-fr/>

101 Interview with one of the defence team of Ezzat Ghoneim, Mohamed Abou Horeira and Hoda Abdelmoniem, 8 December 2024.

102 Facebook, Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms, 5 November 2018: <https://shorturl.at/WfKDK>

103 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Egypt: Bail for EIPR staff is encouraging, as a first step — UN experts, 7 December 2020: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2020/12/egypt-bail-eipr-staff-encouraging-first-step-un-experts>; Joint Statement,

Egypt: Lift punitive measures against EIPR staff, 4 December 2024: <https://eipr.org/en/press/2024/12/egypt-lift-punitive-measures-against-eipr-staff>

104 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, State Security Prosecution releases Hossam Bahgat on bail after charging him with terrorism related offences, 19 January 2025: <https://eipr.org/en/press/2025/01/state-security-prosecution-releases-hossam-bahgat-bail-after-charging-him-terrorism/>;

Amnesty International, Egypt: Prominent human rights defender Hossam Bahgat summoned for interrogations, 16 January 2025:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/01/egypt-prominent-human-rights-defender-hossam-bahgat-summoned-for-interrogations/>

105 Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Egypt: Human Rights Council Countries Should Take Bold Action, 9 February 2021:

<https://cihrs.org/egypt-human-rights-council-countries-should-take-bold-action/?lang=en>

106 Amnesty International, Disconnected from Reality: Egypt's National Human Rights Strategy Covers Up Human Rights Crisis (MDE 12/6014/2022),

September 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6014/2022/en/>

107 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), Convicted Without Evidence: The Unfair Trial of Aboul Fotouh, al-Qassas, and al-Sharqawi, 19 June

2023: <https://eipr.org/en/publications/new-eipr-report-president-must-abolish-unfair-emergency-court-verdict-against-aboul>

108 Facebook, Ahmed Altantawy account, 27 October 2023: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1383041418950411>

wife¹⁰⁹. In May 2024, an appeal court upheld a one-year prison sentence against Ahmed Tantawy, his campaign director Mohamed Abu al-Dayyar, and 21 campaign supporters on charges related to collecting political endorsements for the presidential campaign, while also issuing Ahmed an additional five-year barred from running in elections¹¹⁰. On 28 May 2025, Ahmed Tantawy was released after serving his sentence but continues to face a five-year ban from parliamentary candidacy and other political rights¹¹¹. Since the confirmation of his presidential bid in April 2023, security forces arbitrarily arrested at least 176 supporters in retaliation to their public support for his candidacy and/or the new party on several bogus accusations, including “terrorism”-related charges¹¹². At least 150 remain arbitrarily detained pending investigations¹¹³.

The authorities have also significantly curtailed the right to form and join independent trade unions, with workers and labor rights activists exercising their right to strike and form independent trade unions being subjected to arbitrary detentions, unjust prosecutions, including by military courts, and other forms of harassment¹¹⁴.

The Ministry of Manpower and its directorates continue to obstruct the formation and recognition of independent trade unions, denying workers the ability to freely organize, elect leadership, or carry out legitimate activities. Since 2017, at least 13 trade unions have faced registration delays or refusals, while others, despite recognition, have been prevented from holding elections or staging strikes, reflecting ongoing government interference in workers’ rights and union activities¹¹⁵.

Security forces have interfered in professional syndicate elections, such as the Doctors’ Syndicate elections in 2019 and 2021 and the Dentists’ Syndicate in 2022. Members were summoned and threatened with arrest or reprisals against their families unless they withdrew their candidacies or refrained from supporting independent candidates. This intimidation led the independent coalition of the Doctors’ Syndicate to boycott the October 2021 elections, citing the impact of such interference on the integrity of union work¹¹⁶.

b. Crushing Activism: Arbitrary Detention, Prosecution, and Harassment of HRDs

Since 2013, Egyptian authorities have relentlessly targeted human rights defenders who document and bravely advocate against the ongoing crackdown on dissent, subjecting them to arbitrary detention, unfair prosecution, and other forms of harassment. Scores of human rights defenders have been arbitrarily detained and heavily sentenced on unfounded charges of “terrorism” and

“spreading false news”, including before emergency courts¹¹⁷.

Moaz al-Sharqawy, a former student union leader and a young human rights defender, has been repeatedly targeted over the past six years for peacefully defending students’ rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly on campus. On 11 May 2023, security forces arrested him and subjected him to an enforced disappearance for 23 days, during which he was beaten while blindfolded and interrogated without his lawyer presence. On 3 June 2023, SSSP ordered his detention pending investigations into bogus “terrorism”-related charges¹¹⁸. Prior to this, Moaz was arrested in September 2019 and subjected to enforced disappearance for 24 days by the National Security Agency (NSA), during which he was interrogated about his activism, reportedly tortured and ill-treated. He was held in pre-trial detention pending investigations into bogus terrorism-related charges until his conditional release in March 2020¹¹⁹. Moaz was added to the “terrorists list” in January 2021 and sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment and five years of probation in May 2022 by an Emergency State Security Court in a politically motivated trial¹²⁰. In October 2023, the President ratified the verdict which cannot be appealed in front of a higher tribunal. On 23 January 2024, a terrorism circuit of a criminal court referred him to a new criminal trial on “terrorism”-related charges which can lead to a life imprisonment if convicted¹²¹.

Since the enactment of Terrorist Entities Law in 2015¹²², Egyptian authorities have arbitrarily included thousands, including human rights defenders, activists, and opposition politicians, on the “terrorists list,” often on the basis of secret investigations by the NSA and without any due process. This designation leads to severe restrictions, including travel bans, prohibitions on holding elected or appointed office, asset freezes, and bans on political or civic participation for up to five years. In 2023 alone, 820 individuals were added to the “terrorists list” under these punitive measures. An additional 768 were listed in 2024 and 137 more were added in the first half of 2025¹²³. Dozens of human rights defenders remain arbitrarily listed on Egypt’s punitive “terrorist” lists, including previously imprisoned lawyers and rights activists.

Mohamed Baker, a human rights lawyer and founder of the Adalah Centre for Rights and Freedoms, was arbitrarily detained on 29 September 2019 and sentenced in November 2021 by an emergency court to four years in prison for “spreading false news” related to Adalah Centre reports on detention conditions and death penalty¹²⁴. Despite being released in July 2023 under a presidential pardon, he remains unjustly designated on a “terrorist” list, subjecting him to ongoing punitive restrictions.

Since 2015, particularly escalating in 2019, NSA has employed a systematic pattern of unlawful summons and coercive questioning against human rights defenders and activists to harass and intimidate them into silence. NSA officials routinely interrogate activists and civil society workers about their human rights work and political views, including their social media posts and pressure them to act as informants¹²⁵.

109 Interview with Ahmed Tantawy’s wife Rasha Qandeel, 8 December 2024

110 OHCHR, UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Marta Hurtado, 31 May 2024:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/05/comment-un-human-rights-office-spokesperson-marta-hurtado-egypt>; Joint Statement, Egypt: Tantawi Arrested in Court to Serve a Prison Sentence for Challenging President Sisi in 2023 Elections,” Egyptian Front for Human Rights, 30 May 2024:

<https://egyptianfront.org/2024/05/egypt-tantawi-arrested-in-court-to-serve-a-prison-sentence-for-challenging-president-sisi-in-2023-elections/>; Joint Statement, Egypt: Al-Tantawy Prevented from Running for Presidency and Referred to Trial, Underscoring Illegitimacy of Upcoming Elections,” 12 November 2023:

<https://egyptianfront.org/2023/11/egypt-al-tantawy-prevented-from-running-for-presidency-and-referred-to-trial-underscoring-illegitimacy-of-upcoming-elections/>

111 Al Manassa, Tantawy released from prison, barred from political rights, 29 May 2025: <https://manassa.news/en/news/24577>

112 Mada Masr, Lawyers: 3 People Arrested After Endorsing the Establishment of New Egyptian Hope Current Party, 23 January 2024:

<https://www.madamasr.com/en/2024/01/23/news/u/lawyers-3-people-arrested-after-endorsing-establishment-of-new-egyptian-hope-current-party/>; Joint Statement, Egypt: Tantawi Arrested in Court to Serve a Prison Sentence for Challenging President Sisi in 2023 Elections, Egyptian Front for Human Rights, 30 May 2024: <https://egyptianfront.org/2024/05/egypt-tantawi-arrested-in-court-to-serve-a-prison-sentence-for-challenging-president-sisi-in-2023-elections/>;

Facebook, Tayarelamal, 7 December 2024: <https://shorturl.at/WdzX3>

113 Interview with Ahmed Tantawy’s wife Rasha Qandeel, 8 December 2024 and 3 June 2025

114 Amnesty International, Egypt: On Labour Day – relentless assault on labour rights, 30 April 2017:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6154/2017/en/>

115 Amnesty International, Disconnected from Reality: Egypt’s National Human Rights Strategy Covers Up Human Rights Crisis (MDE 12/6014/2022), September 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6014/2022/en/>

116 Amnesty International, Disconnected from Reality: Egypt’s National Human Rights Strategy Covers Up Human Rights Crisis (MDE 12/6014/2022), September 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6014/2022/en/>

117 EuroMed Rights, Human Rights Behind Bars in Egypt, available at: <https://euromedrights.org/human-rights-behind-bars-in-egypt/>; Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), Egypt’s Recent Decision on Case 173 Does Not Mean That the Human Rights Crisis Is Over, 21 March 2024:

<https://cihrs.org/egypt-recent-decision-on-case-173-does-not-mean-that-the-human-rights-crisis-is-over/?lang=en>

118 Amnesty International, Egypt: Abused Egyptian Activist Unjustly Detained: Moaz Al-Sharqawy (Index: MDE 12/6869/2023), 9 June 2023:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6869/2023/en/>

119 UN Special Procedures, Communication to the Government of Egypt concerning Moaz al-Sharqawy, Reference: EGY 13/2022, 9 August 2022:

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=27435>

120 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, New EIPR Report: The President Must Abolish Unfair Emergency Court Verdict Against Aboul-Fotouh and Al-Qassas, 19 January 2023: <https://eipr.org/en/publications/new-eipr-report-president-must-abolish-unfair-emergency-court-verdict-against-aboul>

121 EIPR, Student Leader Moaz al-Sharqawi and Others Referred to New Trial in Terrorism Court, 23 January 2024:

<https://eipr.org/en/press/2024/01/student-leader-moaz-al-sharqawi-and-others-referred-new-trial-terrorism-court>

122 See Section III a. for further information on Terrorist Entities Law

123 Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms Database

124 Amnesty International, ‘Stop Trials by Emergency Courts’, 31 October 2021:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/10/egypt-stop-trials-by-emergency-courts/>

125 Amnesty International, Egypt: “This Will only End when You Die”: National Security Agency Harassment of Activists in Egypt, (Index: MDE 12/4665/2021), 16 September 2021: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/4665/2021/en/>

The Egyptian authorities have targeted HRDs and dissidents abroad through transnational tactics. Some HRDs and dissidents have been charged while in Egypt or after leaving the country, with their cases left pending and subject to reactivation. These charges can be referred to court based on developments related to the defender's activism, the issues they work on, or evidence of their continued involvement in human rights advocacy. Additionally, Egypt often denies essential consular services to activists and dissidents abroad, including passport renewals and other official documents. This tactic effectively restricts their legal status and mobility, forcing many into a state of legal and social limbo. To further intimidate HRDs overseas, the Egyptian authorities employ extensive surveillance, including both direct physical monitoring and digital surveillance, to gather information and instil fear among those who continue to criticise the government from abroad¹²⁶. Additionally, the family members of Egyptian human rights defenders living abroad are often targeted in retaliation of their advocacy and human rights work outside Egypt, through arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture, and other forms of intimidation. **Among them is Oqba Hashad**, a student with a disability, who has been arbitrarily detained for over seven years, due to the human rights activism of his brother Amr Hashad who left Egypt in 2019. Despite a court order for his release in February 2024, Oqba was subjected to enforced disappearance for nine days and later "rotated"¹²⁷ pending investigations into fabricated charges in a new case¹²⁸. He is denied medical care, including medication and a prosthetic leg essential for his mobility¹²⁹.

The Egyptian authorities also frequently resort to smear campaigns and threats to silence human rights defenders, attempting to discredit and intimidate them into halting human rights work. In February 2024, the authorities targeted the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights and its director, Ahmed Salem, with threats and an aggressive smear campaign on television, in newspapers, and social media after the foundation reported on Egypt's swift construction of a fortified zone along the Gaza-Israel border in North Sinai. Ahmed, who is based in the UK, said that, through intermediaries close to Egyptian authorities, he received threats that he "would be brought back to Egypt" if he did not drop his work. One of these threats, through a government-appointed Sinai local clan leader, warned that Salem "is not far from reach even abroad."¹³⁰

c. Discrimination against women-rights, LGBTI rights and religious minorities' defenders

While human rights defenders in Egypt are often targeted using counterterrorism legislative framework, through arbitrary detentions, unjust prosecutions and other forms of punitive measures, minority rights activists endure further layers of discrimination and repression to silence their voices and hinder their work, including women-rights, LGBTI rights and religious minorities' defenders.

WOMEN-RIGHTS DEFENDERS:

Egypt has violated its international obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which require the protection of women from violence and discrimination and ensure

126 Egyptian Human Rights Forum (EHRF) and Egyptian Front for Human Rights (EFHR), Joint Stakeholder Submission to the UN Human Rights Council's 4th Universal Periodic Review - Egypt: Reprisal against Egyptian HRDs in the Diaspora, 48th Session (Jan - Feb 2025), December 2024: <https://egyptianforum.org/en/transnational-repression-joint-report-exposes-egypts-violations-and-calls-for-accountability-at-the-4th-universal-periodic-review-upr-of-egypt/>

127 See more information about the practice commonly known as "rotation" in III. b. Abusing the criminal justice system section

128 Amnesty International, Egypt: Further Information: Unjustly Jailed Student with Disability 'Rotated': Oqba Hashad, 3 April 2024, Index Number: MDE 12/7901/2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/7901/2024/en/>

129 Interview with his brother Amr Hashad, 5 June 2025.

130 Joint Statement, Egypt: Human Rights Group and its Director Threatened and Smeared, 26 February 2024, <https://euromedrights.org/publication/egypt-human-rights-group-and-its-director-threatened-and-smeared/>

freedom of expression. Instead of ensuring confidentiality and safety of survivors and witnesses who reported sexual violence, whether publicly or anonymously including to state bodies, the authorities have repeatedly threatened, arbitrarily detained, and unfairly prosecuted survivors, witnesses and activists¹³¹ who report or stand up against pervasive sexual violence in Egypt¹³².

Amal Fathy, a women's rights defender, was sentenced to one year in prison solely for her activism after publicly criticizing the Egyptian authorities for their failure to address sexual harassment. Her arrest in May 2018 followed the release of a video on her Facebook page, where she denounced the government's inaction on sexual harassment and its broader crackdown on human rights. Amal was released on probation in December 2018 but left Egypt shortly before the Court of Cassation upheld her conviction in January 2022¹³³.

After a woman reported being gang-raped at Cairo's Fairmont Hotel in 2014, authorities have arbitrarily detained four witnesses in August 2020 on baseless charges of "immorality" and "debauchery" – charges often used to target women and LGBT individuals. The witnesses were also smeared by government-affiliated media, which framed the gang rape as a "group sex party"¹³⁴. Two of the witnesses reported being pressured by security agents to modify their testimonies. By January 2021, the public prosecution released all the witnesses, as well as the men suspected of involvement in the rape, citing "lack of evidence"¹³⁵ in the case commonly known the **Fairmont Case**. According to women rights defenders, the detention of these witnesses has instilled fear, deterring survivors and their supporters from seeking justice.

Rather than investigating allegations of sexual violence, an economic court convicted rights defender **Rasha Azab** of "insult" and "defamation" and fined her 10,000 EGP in August 2022¹³⁶ in relation to tweets in which she expressed solidarity with the survivors¹³⁷. In December 2020, the feminist blog Daftar Hekayat¹³⁸ published six anonymous testimonies accusing film director of sexual violence, including one allegation of rape. Survivors chose to remain anonymous due to their lack of trust in the judicial system, according to women's rights activists. The conviction followed a defamation complaint filed by Islam Azazi against Rasha Azab, and days later, the prosecution moved the case to court. In May 2024, the Court of Cassation rejected Rasha Azab's appeal against her conviction and upheld the fine¹³⁹.

LGBTI RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Since 2013, authorities have escalated their crackdown against hundreds of actual or perceived LGBTI people, through arbitrary detention under vague "debauchery" charges, torture and other forms of ill-treatment including invasive anal tests and sexual violence. According to EIPR, between October 2013 and March 2017, at least 232 people were arbitrarily detained based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity¹⁴⁰.

131 Amnesty International, Disconnected from Reality: Egypt's National Human Rights Strategy Covers Up Human Rights Crisis (MDE 12/6014/2022), September 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6014/2022/en/>

132 The New York Times, Stripped, Groped and Violated: Egyptian Women Describe Abuse, 5 July 2021:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/07/05/world/middleeast/egypt-sexual-assault-police.html>

133 FIDH, Egypt: Sentencing and Ongoing Judicial Harassment Against Amal Fathy, 14 January 2022:

<https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/egypt-sentencing-and-ongoing-judicial-harassment-against-amal-fathy/>

134 Human Rights Watch, Justice Stalled in Egypt's 'Fairmont' Rape Case, 8 February 2021:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/08/justice-stalled-egypts-fairmont-rape-case>

135 Amnesty International, Disconnected from Reality: Egypt's National Human Rights Strategy Covers Up Human Rights Crisis (MDE 12/6014/2022), September 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6014/2022/en/>

136 Mada Masr, The Court of Cassation rejected journalist Rasha Azab's appeal, 9 May 2024: <https://twitter.com/MadaMasr/status/1788586901596696959>

137 Amnesty International, "Egypt: End prosecution of rights defender for speaking out against sexual violence", 12 March 2022:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/03/egypt-end-prosecution-of-rights-defender-for-speaking-out-against-sexual-violence/>

138 Daftar Hekayat: <https://elmodawana.com/>

139 Mada Masr, The Court of Cassation rejected journalist Rasha Azab's appeal, 9 May 2024: <https://twitter.com/MadaMasr/status/1788586901596696959>

140 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, The Trap: Punishing Sexual Difference in Egypt, 22 November 2017:

<https://eipr.org/en/publications/trap-punishing-sexual-difference-egypt>

In September 2017, authorities launched an unprecedented crackdown on LGBTI individuals following the display of a rainbow flag at a Mashrou' Leila concert in Cairo. Following a local media smear campaign, Egypt's public prosecutor announced on 25 September 2017 an investigation into the promotion of "habitual debauchery" and "homosexuality," instructing state security prosecutors to open investigations against those who raised the rainbow flag¹⁴¹. Between September and October, at least 75 were arrested across five governorates¹⁴², primarily on "debauchery" charges often used to criminalize consensual same-sex relations. At least 44 were prosecuted, including nine men were sentenced to prison terms ranging between one and six years' prison. The authorities also subjected at least six detainees to invasive anal examinations, a discriminatory and punitive practice amounting to rape and torture¹⁴³.

Queer rights activist **Sarah Hegazy** was among those detained in 2017 after raising a rainbow flag at the concert. She was arbitrarily detained for three months on charges of "membership in an illegal group" during which she was subjected to sexual abuse, torture, and ill-treatment¹⁴⁴. Sarah later told the prosecutor that she was beaten and sexually harassed by fellow detainees at the Saida Zenab police station in Cairo after security forces informed them she had been detained in relation to debauchery¹⁴⁵. Shortly after her release on bail in January 2018, Sarah was forced into exile in Canada. There, she wrote about the mental health struggles she faced, including PTSD, severe anxiety, and panic attacks, following her cruel prison experience in Egypt¹⁴⁶. In June 2020, Sarah tragically took her own life, leaving behind a note to her family, friends, and the world: "To my siblings – I tried to find redemption and failed, forgive me. To my friends – the experience was harsh, and I am too weak to resist it, forgive me. To the world – you were cruel, to a great extent, but I forgive."¹⁴⁷

Since the "rainbow crackdown" in 2017, Egyptian and international human rights organizations have documented continued targeting of actual or perceived LGBTI individuals, including queer rights defenders, through violent assaults, arbitrary detention, torture (including forced anal exams), lengthy unjust prison sentences, and other forms of intimidation¹⁴⁸. The EIPR has documented the arbitrary detention and prosecution of at least 193 individuals since 2019 on unfounded "debauchery" charges with many sentenced to prison terms of at least three years. Among them, at least 45 individuals were subjected to forced anal test which amounts to torture¹⁴⁹.

Among them is a transgender woman and rights activist **Malak el-Kashif** who was arbitrarily detained for over four months in 2019 in connection with calls for protests following a train accident in Cairo. Malak was held in the all-male Mazra'at Tora prison where she reported being subjected to forced

anal examinations and sexual harassment at a government hospital¹⁵⁰. In May 2020, an administrative court dismissed Malak al-Kashef's lawsuit, which requested the Interior Ministry to establish detention facilities and prisons that align with the gender identities of transgender detainees¹⁵¹. These abuses violate Egypt international obligations under the ICCPR, which prohibits discrimination, violence, and arbitrary detention, and guarantees freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. In *Toonen v. Australia*, the UN Human Rights Committee affirmed states' obligation to protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation¹⁵². Additionally, the Convention against Torture (CAT) explicitly prohibits torture and degrading treatment.

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES' ACTIVISTS:

Under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, members of religious minorities, Muslims who do not adhere to state-recognized religious beliefs and atheists have faced continued prosecution, imprisonment, and other punitive measures, including dismissals from work and travel bans, often for blasphemy and other terrorism-related charges. Courts have convicted and sentenced dozens to lengthy prison terms simply for practicing their faith or expressing dissenting religious-related beliefs. According to EIPR, at least 60 individuals have been convicted over the past decade based on the vaguely defined "defamation of religion" offense under Article 98(f) of the Penal Code. Most were sentenced to prison terms of up to five years, including 19 individuals since 2019¹⁵³.

Ramy Kamel, a Coptic Christian rights defender and head of Maspero Youth for Human Rights, was arbitrarily arrested on 23 November 2019¹⁵⁴, days before his participation in a session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues in Geneva on 28 and 29 November 2019. He was detained for over two years¹⁵⁵ pending investigations on trumped up charges of "spreading false news" and other "terrorism"-related offenses. During his prolonged arbitrary detention, Ramy reported being tortured or otherwise ill-treated during NSA interrogations on 4 November and 23 November 2019. His detention seems to be in retaliation for his peaceful advocacy for Coptic Christian rights in Egypt, including documenting attacks on Coptic churches and raising concerns about the forced displacement of Coptic Christians with the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing during her 2018 visit¹⁵⁶.

Muslims who did not espouse state-sanctioned beliefs were also targeted through enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, and other violations. In August 2020, security forces arrested Quranist writer and blogger **Reda Abdel-Rahman** and forcibly disappeared him for 22 days before presenting him to the prosecution on charges related to spreading Quranist views. Reda was repeatedly targeted, including in 2016, apparently in retaliation for his writings on Quranism as well as the religious and political works of his exiled relative, prominent Quranist thinker Ahmed Sobhi Mansour. Following his 2016 detention, Reda closed his blog, where he had published writings on

141 Amnesty International, 'Egypt Must Stop Homophobic Persecution', (Index: MDE 12/7230/2017), 5 October 2017: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/7230/2017/en/>

142 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, A Year After the Raising of the Rainbow Flag Incident and Five Years After the Longest Security Crackdown Against People with Different Sexual Orientations, 25 September 2018: <https://eipr.org/en/press/2018/09/year-after-raising-rainbow-flag-incident-and-five-years-after-longest-security>

143 Amnesty International, Egypt: Six men facing anal examinations for 'debauchery' amid homophobic crackdown, 30 September 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2017/09/egypt-six-men-facing-anal-examinations-for-debauchery-amid-homophobic-crackdown>

144 Amnesty International, A Rainbow-Coloured Thread, 26 June 2020: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/06/a-rainbow-coloured-thread/>

145 Amnesty International, 'Egypt Must Stop Homophobic Persecution', (Index: MDE 12/7230/2017), 5 October 2017: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/7230/2017/en/>

146 Sarah Hegazy, A Year After the Rainbow Flag Controversy, Mada Masr, 15 June 2020: <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2020/06/15/opinion/u/a-year-after-the-rainbow-flag-controversy/>

147 Al Jazeera, Egyptian LGBT Activist Dies by Suicide in Canada, 15 June 2020: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/15/egyptian-lgbt-activist-dies-by-suicide-in-canada>

148 Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, Stations of Humiliation: Report on Gender-Specific Violations against Women and LBTQI+ Women, 26 June 2021: <https://www.ec-rf.net/stations-of-humiliation-report-on-gender-specific-violations-against-women-and-lbtqi-women/>; Human Rights Watch, Egypt: Security Forces Abuse, Torture LGBT People, 1 October 2020: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/01/egypt-security-forces-abuse-torture-lgbt-people>; Rights Africa, Repression in Egypt: 92 LGBTQI+ Arrests Last Year, 8 March 2020: <https://rightsafrika.com/2020/03/08/repression-in-egypt-92-lgbtiq-arrests-last-year/>

149 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), Universal Periodic Review of Egypt at the Human Rights Council - 4th Session, 2024: https://eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/lmjr_ldwry_lshml_lmsr_bmjls_hqwq_lnsn_-_ldwr_lrb.pdf

150 Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, Egyptian Authorities Must Stop Forced Anal Examinations and Release Malak al-Kashif Immediately and Unconditionally, 13 March 2019: <https://www.ec-rf.net/the-egyptian-commission-for-rights-and-freedoms-ecrf-egyptian-authorities-must-stop-forced-anal-examinations-and-release-malak-al-kashif-immediately-and-unconditionally/>

Amnesty International, "Egypt: Forcibly disappeared transgender woman at risk of sexual violence and torture", 11 March 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/03/egypt-forcibly-disappeared-transgender-woman-at-risk-of-sexual-violence-and-torture/>

151 Facebook, Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, 29 July 2020: <https://shorturl.at/ByHsj>

152 Toonen v. Australia, Communication No. 488/1992, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/50/D/488/1992 (1994): <https://juris.ohchr.org/casedetails/702/en-US>

153 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), Universal Periodic Review of Egypt at the Human Rights Council - 4th Session, 2024: https://eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/lmjr_ldwry_lshml_lmsr_bmjls_hqwq_lnsn_-_ldwr_lrb.pdf

154 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), Two Years After His Remand Detention: The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) Calls for the Release of Coptic Activist Ramy Kamel and the Dropping of Charges Against Him, 25 November 2021: <https://eipr.org/en/press/2021/11/two-years-after-his-remand-detention-egyptian-initiative-personal-rights-eipr-calls>

155 International Christian Concern, Coptic Advocate Ramy Kamel Finally Released from Prison, 10 January 2022: <https://www.persecution.org/2022/01/10/coptic-advocate-ramy-kamel-released-from-prison/>

156 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Egypt Must Free Coptic Christian Rights Defender Reportedly Held on Terror Charges, 11 December 2019: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/12/egypt-must-free-coptic-christian-rights-defender-reportedly-held-terror>

Quranism that challenged state-approved religious narratives¹⁵⁷. He remained in abusive pre-trial detention for over a year and a half¹⁵⁸.

Another example of targeting for expressing non-Sunni beliefs is the case of Shiite rights defender and journalist **Haider Qandil**, who, like many other Shiites in Egypt¹⁵⁹, was arbitrarily arrested in 2019 and detained for seven and a half months on charges including “spreading Shiism.” Following his release on bail in August 2020, Haider has been subjected to a travel ban and weekly police probation measures¹⁶⁰.

Among those targeted for advocating minority rights and right to freedom of belief is blogger Anas Hassan who was detained and prosecuted for declaring atheism and criticizing religions. In June 2020, the Court of Cassation upheld the sentence to three years in prison and a fine of 300,000 EGP for “insulting religion” and “misusing social media”. Anas was arrested in August 2019 from his home in Alexandria, based on a police report accusing him of running the Facebook page “The Egyptian Atheists,” which disseminates atheistic content and criticism of “divinely revealed religions” according to the police report, which led to search and seizure warrant issued by the Public Prosecution.

The arbitrary detention and prosecution of individuals based on their religious or non-religious beliefs in Egypt, violate the country’s international human rights obligations under the ICCPR which guarantees the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and expression.

¹⁵⁷ Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, The Egyptian Initiative Calls for the Release of an Al-Azhar Teacher Accused of Spreading “Quranism” and the End to the Prosecution of People with Different Religious Affiliations, 17 September 2020: <https://eipr.org/en/press/2020/09/egyptian-initiative-calls-release-azhar-teacher-accused-spreading-quranism-and-end>;

Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, Forbidden Belief: Report on the Imprisonment of Quranist Blogger Reda Abdel-Rahman, 3 January 2021: https://afteegypt.org/en/research-en/monitoring-reports-en/2021/01/03/20617-afteegypt.html#_ftnref4.

¹⁵⁸ Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, A Decision to Release Quranist Blogger Reda Abdel Rahman After a Year and a Half of Pretrial Detention. EIPR Welcomes the Decision and Calls for a Halt to All Prosecutions of Various Religious Expressions, 10 March 2022: <https://eipr.org/en/press/2022/03/decision-release-quranist-blogger-reda-abdel-rahman-after-year-and-half-pretrial-0>.

¹⁵⁹ Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Restricted Diversity in State Religion: Analytical Report on the Status of Shia Egyptians Recommends Thorough Reconsideration of Official Religious Policies and Decisive Response to Incitement, 13 July 2016: <https://eipr.org/en/press/2016/07/restricted-diversity-state-religion-analytical-report-status-shia>.

¹⁶⁰ Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, EIPR Demands Closure of Case Against Individuals Accused of Spreading Shiism and Political Activism, 7 December 2021: <https://eipr.org/en/press/2021/12/egyptian-initiative-personal-rights-eipr-demands-closure-case-spreading-shiism-and>.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Egypt must guarantee a safe and enabling environment for human rights organizations including by amending Law No. 149/2019 on NGOs to bring it in line with international human rights law and standards on the right to freedom of association; and cease targeting human rights NGOs and their staff with arbitrary detention, travel bans, or asset freezes.
- Egypt must halt its systematic targeting of political parties and opposition figures, through arbitrary arrests and detentions. The authorities should drop all charges against individuals in relation to their affiliation with political parties and political participation and ensure that opposition parties are able to freely operate, campaign, and participate in elections without fear of repression.
- Egypt must allow workers to form and join independent trade unions and self-employed professionals to join professional syndicates without obstruction or interference in elections; and stop targeting trade unionists and syndicate members through arbitrary detentions, unjust prosecutions and other forms of harassment.
- Egypt must end reprisals against all human rights defenders and activists inside and outside Egypt solely for standing up for human rights and for seeking justice; ; remove all human rights defenders, opposition politicians, and activists from the “terrorist list”; and lift travel bans and asset freezes.
- Egypt must immediately cease all reprisals against women’s rights defenders, activists, and survivors of sexual violence who report or speak out against gender-based and sexual violence, and ensure the protection, safety, and confidentiality of survivors and witnesses of such violence.
- Egypt must stop prosecuting people on the basis of their gender identity and sexual orientation, including queer rights defenders and activists; put an immediate end to forced anal examinations and conduct effective investigations into the rape, torture and other crimes against them.
- Egypt must immediately halt the harassment, unjust prosecution, and other punitive measures, including dismissals from work and travel bans, against members of religious minorities, Muslims who do not adhere to state-recognized religious beliefs, and atheists.

V. EGYPT HUMAN RIGHTS' COMMITMENTS

In the last four years, Egyptian authorities have launched several initiatives to counter growing international criticism of the country's dire human rights record, including launching the National Human Rights Strategy (NHRS) in 2021, reactivating the PPC in 2022, and initiating the National Dialogue in 2023¹⁶¹. These measures coincided with an acute financial and economic crisis and mounting international pressure, notably after 32 states condemned human rights violations in Egypt at the UN Human Rights Council in March 2021¹⁶². Despite these initiatives, the authorities have yet failed to acknowledge or address Egypt's deep human rights crisis. They continue to commit human rights violations with impunity, using repressive legislations and tactics to stifle dissent. Further, they failed to implement the 2019 Universal Periodic Review recommendations and meaningfully cooperate with UN bodies.

¹⁶¹ Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Egypt: CIHRS Position Paper on the National Dialogue, 19 July 2022, <https://cihrs.org/egypt-cihrs-position-paper-on-the-national-dialogue/?lang=en>

¹⁶² Joint Statement, Condemnation of Egypt's Abuses at UN Rights Body, 12 March 2021: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/12/condemnation-egypts-abuses-un-rights-body>



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a. National Human Rights Strategy

The Egyptian authorities have repeatedly cited the National Human Rights Strategy (NHRS) in both public and private meetings with other governments as evidence of their commitment to human rights. The Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR), tasked with managing Egypt's human rights file and countering allegations against the country, is headed by the Foreign Minister and includes representatives from the ministries of defence, interior, general intelligence, public prosecution, the National Council for Human Rights¹⁶³, and other state institutions¹⁶⁴.

Despite claims of an "extensive consultative approach"¹⁶⁵, the development of the five-year strategy lacked transparency, with limited public information on participants, topics discussed, or public involvement, and was drafted without meaningful consultation with independent human rights NGOs or activists¹⁶⁶. According to analyses from credible international and human rights organizations, including Amnesty International¹⁶⁷, Committee for Justice¹⁶⁸, and Cairo Institute for Human Rights¹⁶⁹, the NHRS presents a deeply misleading picture of human rights in Egypt. The strategy portrays repressive laws as legislative "achievements," justifies ongoing violations by citing security threats and economic challenges, and blames Egyptian citizens for "failing to understand" and exercise their rights. The strategy frames Egypt's human rights crisis as "challenges" requiring technical solutions such as "capacity building" and "cultural awareness," while completely ignoring ongoing and past violations. It also fails to acknowledge the responsibility or complicity of state actors, including security forces, prosecutors, and judges, in perpetrating or facilitating these abuses.

The strategy overstates constitutional and legal guarantees but fails to address how they are inconsistent with Egypt's international obligations. In fact, some of these praised laws introduced since 2013 effectively criminalize or severely restrict the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, erode fair trial protections, and entrench impunity for security and military forces¹⁷⁰. For instance, in the National Human Rights Strategy - three Years of Implementation September 2023 – August 2024 report (the 2024 Report), the SSCHR claims that the new draft Code of Criminal Procedures implements key NHRS goals "specifically the right to personal freedom and guarantees for a fair trial"¹⁷¹. However, the draft grants excessive powers to security forces and prosecutors, enabling prolonged detentions without adequate judicial oversight and restricting detainees' defence rights, as analysed by several local and International human rights organisations¹⁷².

¹⁶³ The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions' the Sub-Committee on Accreditation recommended to downgrade Egypt's National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) to Grade B, highlighting its lack of independence, effectiveness, and transparency, particularly regarding executive appointments and failure to address critical human rights violations, including enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions. The decision mandates reforms aligning with the Paris Principles, including transparent appointments, improved responsiveness, and regular public reporting for accountability. Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA), Report of the Second Session 2024: https://ganhri.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/SCA-Report-2nd-Session-2024_EN.pdf

¹⁶⁴ Egypt Prime Minister, Decision Number 2396/2018 on the Establishment of the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights, 14 November 2018: <https://manshurat.org/node/47399/>

¹⁶⁵ The Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR), National Human Rights Strategy- The Republic of Egypt 2021-2026, 11 September 2021, sschr.gov.eg/media/gapb5bq4/national-human-rights-strategy.pdf

¹⁶⁶ Amnesty International, Disconnected from Reality: Egypt's National Human Rights Strategy Covers Up Human Rights Crisis (MDE 12/6014/2022), September 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6014/2022/en/>

¹⁶⁷ Amnesty International, Disconnected from Reality: Egypt's National Human Rights Strategy Covers Up Human Rights Crisis (MDE 12/6014/2022), September 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6014/2022/en/>

¹⁶⁸ Committee for Justice, CFJ's Assessment of the First Year of the Human Rights Strategy, 5 April 2023: <https://www.cfjustice.org/egypt-cfjs-assessment-of-the-first-year-of-the-human-rights-strategy/>

¹⁶⁹ Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), Egypt: National Strategy for Human Rights a Ruse to Show International Community and Donor States that Political Reform is Underway, 15 November 2021: <https://cihrs.org/egypt-national-strategy-for-human-rights-a-ruse-to-show-international-community-and-donor-states-that-political-reform-is-underway/?lang=en#PDF>

¹⁷⁰ See Section III a. on Legalising Repression for further information on the draconian laws that introduced since 2013.

¹⁷¹ Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR), National Human Rights Strategy – Three Years of Implementation September 2023 - August 2024, 2024: https://sschr.gov.eg/media/y25h315a/strategy_2023_2024_en.pdf

¹⁷² See Section III. a. Legalising Repression for further information.

The 2024 Report asserts that the presidential elections in 2024 were held in a “competitive atmosphere”, with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi securing victory “under full judicial supervision and open media coverage”¹⁷³. In practice, authorities targeted genuine opposition candidate Ahmed Tantawy, his campaign members and supporters through arbitrary arrests, detentions, unjust prosecutions and restrictions on endorsements, effectively barring his candidacy. Ahmed Tantawy, 22 campaign members and over 150 supporters remain arbitrary detained¹⁷⁴.

While remaining completely silent on the draconian media laws introduced in 2018¹⁷⁵, the imprisonment of hundreds of actual or perceived critics - including journalists - imprisoned for expressing their views or performing their work, the raids and closures of independent media outlets, and the censorship of hundreds of websites¹⁷⁶, the strategy instead highlights the SCMR’s issuance of licenses for 78 media outlets as an achievement in promoting freedom of expression¹⁷⁷.

The 2024 Report mentions numerous peaceful protests across Egypt, including “large-scale rallies in support of the Palestinian cause amid the Gaza war”¹⁷⁸, but omits that authorities detained at least 186 peaceful protesters across the country between 2023 and 2024 during these demonstrations¹⁷⁹. The report also fails to mention the repressive Protest Law and Assembly Law, which effectively criminalize the right to freedom of assembly¹⁸⁰.

173 Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR), National Human Rights Strategy – Three Years of Implementation September 2023 - August 2024, 2024: https://sschr.gov.eg/media/y25h315a/strategy_2023_2024_en.pdf.

174 See Section IV. a. Curtailing Collective Power: Repression of NGOs, Political Parties and Unions for further information.

175 See Section III. a. Legalising Repression for further information.

176 See Section III. b. Silencing Dissent for further information.

177 Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR), National Human Rights Strategy – Three Years of Implementation September 2023 - August 2024, 2024: https://sschr.gov.eg/media/y25h315a/strategy_2023_2024_en.pdf.

178 Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR), National Human Rights Strategy – Three Years of Implementation September 2023 - August 2024, 2024: https://sschr.gov.eg/media/y25h315a/strategy_2023_2024_en.pdf.

179 See Section III. b. Silencing Dissent for further information.

180 See Section III. a. Legalising Repression for further information.

The 2024 Report highlights the legalization of 34,756 NGOs¹⁸¹, but fails to recognise that they effectively legalised or should legalise their status under the repressive NGO Law, which empowers authorities to dissolve organizations, restrict funding, seize assets, and prosecute NGO staff under vague and broadly defined charges¹⁸², as well as the ongoing arbitrary detention, prosecution and harassment of HRDs and NGO workers.

181 Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR), National Human Rights Strategy – Three Years of Implementation September 2023 - August 2024, 2024: https://sschr.gov.eg/media/y25h315a/strategy_2023_2024_en.pdf.

182 See Section III. a. Legalising Repression for further information.

In a positive but limited step, the 2024 Report notes that the Court of Cassation issued 26 compensation rulings for victims of torture and ill-treatment¹⁸³. However, despite occasional rulings, security forces continue to use torture systematically with impunity, as documented by both local organizations and international organisations. Between 2023 and mid-2025, at least 100 individuals have died in prison due to torture, poor conditions, and denied healthcare. Additionally, both the report and the NHRS remain silent on the thousands of enforced disappearances since 2013¹⁸⁴.

On the “political prisoners” issue, the 2024 Report states that 9,513 inmates were released from presidential pardons between September 2023 and August 2024¹⁸⁵. However, political prisoners and those detained for exercising their rights are often excluded from these releases, while many of those released are banned from travel. Although some detainees have been released, many others have been re-arrested, and thousands remain unjustly imprisoned for exercising their rights to freedoms of expression, assembly, and association, or convicted after grossly unfair trials¹⁸⁶.

While the NHRS includes modest recommendations, such as reviewing crimes punishable by the death penalty and alternatives to pretrial detention, the 2024 Report does not reflect any concrete implementation of these measures.

Human rights organizations, both international and local, consider Egypt’s National Human Rights Strategy (NHRS) a misleading effort to deflect scrutiny of its dire human rights record. The NHRS overlooks systemic and ongoing human rights abuses, fails to propose meaningful structural reforms, and does not align Egypt’s laws, policies, and practices with its international obligations. Genuine reform requires acknowledging the country’s deep-rooted human rights crisis, releasing thousands arbitrarily detained for peaceful activism or dissent, and holding state actors—such as security forces, prosecutors, and judges—accountable for involvement in gross violations, including unlawful killings, torture, and enforced disappearances.

Since the NHRS’s launch in 2021, authorities have taken minimal steps to ease the crackdown on dissent or repeal laws restricting basic rights and criminalising freedoms. Despite President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi declaring 2022 the “year of civil society,” prominent civil society members are still prosecuted, subjected to arbitrary travel bans, asset freezes in retaliation for their human rights activism.

b. National Dialogue

In May 2022, President al-Sisi announced a “national dialogue” with the political opposition—the first such initiative since assuming power in 2014—amid a deepening economic crisis and growing international scrutiny of Egypt’s human rights record ahead of COP27 in November 2022¹⁸⁷. Officially launched in May 2023, the dialogue was promoted as a diverse platform to tackle the country’s economic, social, and political challenges¹⁸⁸. However, it has been widely criticized for its lack of transparency, inclusivity, and restrictive scope, as well as its government-controlled agenda. Ongoing crackdown on dissent, including on members involved in the dialogue, prompted some

183 Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR), National Human Rights Strategy – Three Years of Implementation September 2023 - August 2024, 2024: https://sschr.gov.eg/media/y25h315a/strategy_2023_2024_en.pdf.

184 See Section III. b. Abusing the criminal justice system for further information.

185 Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR), National Human Rights Strategy – Three Years of Implementation September 2023 - August 2024, 2024: https://sschr.gov.eg/media/y25h315a/strategy_2023_2024_en.pdf.

186 See Section III. b. Abusing the criminal justice system for further information.

187 Amnesty International, Egypt: Lift restrictions on civic space to ensure a successful COP27, 23 May 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/05/egypt-lift-restrictions-on-civic-space-to-ensure-a-successful-cop27/>, Human Rights Watch, COP27 Q&A, 28 September 2022: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/09/28/cop27-qa>.

188 State Information Service, Egypt’s National Dialogue Fosters Political Unity, Engagement, 11 September 2024: <https://sis.gov.eg/Story/194765/Egypt's-National-Dialogue-Fosters-Political-Unity-Engagement/?lang=en-us>.



COOPERATION WITH UN MECHANISMS

Despite accepting recommendations to cooperate with international human rights mechanisms in 2019, including the Human Rights Council and its special procedures²²⁰, authorities have consistently failed to respond positively to requests for visits from ten UN Special Procedures, including those related to torture, arbitrary detention, and human rights defenders²²¹. Even the few Special Procedures who have managed to visit Egypt in recent years have witnessed reprisals against those who engaged with them, including arbitrary detention, unjust prosecutions, home demolitions, and other forms of intimidation, raising serious concerns about Egypt's commitment to international human rights mechanisms.

REPRISALS AGAINST THOSE WHO ENGAGED WITH UN MECHANISMS

In September 2017, **Ibrahim Metwaly**, a human rights lawyer and co-founder of the Association of the Families of the Disappeared in Egypt, was arrested at Cairo International Airport while en route to a UN meeting in Geneva on enforced disappearances, including that of his son Amr²²². He was subjected to torture and held incommunicado for two days before being brought before the SSSP. Despite Egyptian law limiting pre-trial detention to two years, he has been arbitrarily held for over seven years over several cases, facing bogus charges including "founding and leading an illegal group", "conspiring with foreign parties to harm Egyptian national security"²²³. In November 2024, he was referred to trial on unfounded charges alongside dozens of others for his activism against enforced disappearances²²⁴.

During the visit of the **UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing** in 2018, the last visit by a UN independent expert to Egypt, the authorities subjected individuals who engaged with her to reprisals, including through detention, interrogation and home demolitions²²⁵. Following these alarming reprisals, the UN Special Rapporteurs on adequate housing and human rights defenders expressed concern over Egypt's actions, concluding that unless the country ensures the safety of individuals engaging with UN mechanisms, it would be inappropriate to host further visits by UN experts in Egypt²²⁶.

Most recently, in 2023, the authorities have carried out reprisals against two human rights lawyers in 2024 who work with the Egyptian Front for Human Rights, independent rights organisation based abroad, who were criminally investigated on bogus "terrorism"-related charges for their human rights work and contribution to UN human rights mechanisms²²⁷.

for peacefully exercising his rights²¹³. Egypt claimed it had already implemented recommendations to release all convicted prisoners who have completed their sentences and those held in pretrial detention beyond the legal limit of two years, and therefore accepted them²¹⁴. However, these claims are contradicted by extensive documentation from both local and international human rights organizations²¹⁵. While claiming that reforms to end the abuse of pretrial detention had "already been implemented," Egypt has rejected or only partially accepted recommendations explicitly calling for an end to the excessive use of pretrial detention and the unlawful practice of "rotation" — used to keep critics behind bars indefinitely²¹⁶. Finally, Egypt has rejected recommendations calling for an end to the harassment and criminalization of human rights defenders, including the use of unlawful asset freezes, travel bans, and arbitrary detention²¹⁷.

Egypt's response to the UPR reflects its broader approach to the country's human rights crisis: a persistent denial of systemic abuses that sustains a parallel reality, obscuring rather than addressing the depth of ongoing violations. Instead of enacting and implementing substantive reforms, the government has relied on image-building efforts—including within the UPR process, the National Human Rights Strategy, and the National Dialogue—to deflect international scrutiny²¹⁸. Meanwhile, grave violations such as prolonged arbitrary detention, unfair trials, torture, and enforced disappearances continue unabated, with the complicity of prosecutors, judges, and other state institutions²¹⁹.

213 Human Rights Council, report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review- Egypt, A/HRC/59/16, 1 April 2025 and Human Rights Council, report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review- Egypt- Addendum, A/HRC/59/16/Add.1, 13 June 2025, recommendations 42.90 and 42.91: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/16>

214 Human Rights Council, report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review- Egypt, A/HRC/59/16, 1 April 2025 and Human Rights Council, report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review- Egypt- Addendum, A/HRC/59/16/Add.1, 13 June 2025, recommendations 42.86 and 42.87: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/16>

215 See Section III. c. Abusing the criminal justice system for further information.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Egypt must fully implement its UPR recommendations, taking concrete actions to address ongoing human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, torture, and enforced disappearances. The authorities must cooperate fully with UN treaty bodies and Special Procedures, granting unrestricted access to UN experts and allowing them to meet with human rights defenders and victims; and ensure the protection of individuals who engage with UN human rights mechanisms, safeguarding them from reprisals.



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VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Egypt remains entrenched in a severe and ongoing human rights crisis, characterized by widespread violations of fundamental freedoms, the systematic targeting of human rights defenders (HRDs), and an aggressive clampdown on civic space. The authorities continue to perpetrate abuses including mass arbitrary detentions, suppression of freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, and systemic discrimination against women, LGBTI individuals, and religious minorities.

Independent NGOs, political parties, and trade unions have faced relentless repression, with authorities seeking to dismantle political, labor, and human rights movements in order to consolidate state control and silence dissent. These measures have drastically undermined the ability of political opponents, unionists, and HRDs to operate freely and effectively. Their capacity to document abuses and advocate for justice has been severely restricted, further isolating victims and deepening impunity for perpetrators.

Repressive laws governing NGOs, protests, and the media have effectively criminalized much of the legitimate work carried out by HRDs. Arbitrary arrests and prolonged pretrial detention on vague terrorism or national security charges are routinely used to punish them for exercising their rights. Many detainees are subjected to torture, ill-treatment, and inhumane conditions, including the denial of adequate medical care. Further, many HRDs face constant surveillance, arbitrary travel bans, and asset freezes.

Despite international criticism and Egypt's highly publicized reform commitments—such as the National Human Rights Strategy, the activation of the Presidential Pardon Committee, and the National Dialogue—authorities have failed to implement meaningful structural reforms. These initiatives largely serve as public relations efforts aimed at deflecting scrutiny, while the entrenched climate of repression and impunity remains unaddressed. This sustained crackdown not only violates Egypt's international legal obligations but also severely weakens the resilience of civil society, a critical pillar of human rights protection.

The international community must take urgent and coordinated action to pressure Egypt to genuinely address this rampant human rights crisis, hold the Egyptian authorities accountable, and ensure adherence to its international obligations.

■ Recommendations to UN member states:

UN state members must advocate for the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on Egypt at the UN Human Rights Council, and privately and publicly call on Egypt to take meaningful steps to improve the human rights situation in the country, including by:

- Immediately and unconditionally releasing all those arbitrarily detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights or for reasons of discrimination on any grounds including religion, gender identity and sexual orientation;
- Ending the crackdown on independent NGOs, political parties, and trade unions by repealing restrictive laws and guaranteeing a safe and enabling environment for political, trade unions and human rights organizations, including by amending repressive legislation to align with international human rights standards;
- Halting reprisals against human rights defenders and civil society workers; dropping all the politically motivated charges against them; and lifting all arbitrary travel bans and asset freezes against them;
- Conducting independent and impartial investigations into allegations of torture and enforced disappearances, ensuring those responsible are held accountable through fair trials.

■ Recommendations to European Union

- Urging Egypt to uphold the freedom and safety of human rights defenders and guarantee the independence of civil society work, both in law and in practice.
- Establishing transparent, public, and measurable benchmarks for the rule of law, human rights, and democracy as conditions for the disbursement of any financial assistance, including macro-financial assistance, and conduct regular, transparent assessments in consultation with independent human rights defenders to ensure compliance.

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