

Egypt

Publisher and activist arrested for libel

On 21.08.23, the authorities arrested the publisher and political activist Hisahm Kassem for insulting and abusing state officials, according to media reports.

Kassem is a co-founder of the political group al-Tayar al-Hurr, formed in June 2023. The group plans to support an opposition candidate to run against the current president, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, in the upcoming presidential elections next year. Al-Sisi is expected to run again.

Family members of dissidents living abroad arrested

Numerous media report the arrest of the father of the exiled journalist and human rights activist Ahmed Gamal Siada, Gamal Abdelhamid Siada by the security authorities on 22.08.23. Siada is accused of abusing social media, spreading false news and membership in an outlawed association.

According to media reports, also Alaa Eladly was arrested by the security authorities when entering the country at Cairo airport on 18.08.23. He is the father of Fagr Eladly, a German-Egyptian doctor living in Germany, who harshly criticised incumbent President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi at a press conference in Germany in 2015.

International human rights organisations as well as the affected families suspect that the authorities intend to intimidate and exert pressure on Ahmed Gamal Siada and Fagr Eladly by arresting Siada and Eladly. Family members of government critics living abroad have been regularly subjected to harassment, even arrests, by the Egyptian authorities in the past as well.

Ecuador

Early election result; run-off in October 2023; another local politician killed

In the early elections on 20.08.23, left-wing politician Luisa González (Revolución Ciudadana) and centre-right candidate Daniel Noboa (Acción Democrática Nacional, ADN) won the run-off for the presidency on 15.10.23. According to information from the Supreme Electoral Authority (CNE) on 26.08.23, the voting for the 137 seats in the National Assembly will probably be partially repeated due to technical problems on election day. Only Ecuadorian citizens living abroad who are eligible to vote will be affected.

After the fatal attack on the presidential candidate Villavicencio (cf. BN of 14.08.23), security measures for the elections had been considerably stepped up once more and voter turnout was high. In the run-up to the ballot, Pedro Briones (Revolución Ciudadana), another politician, was killed in the municipality of San Mateo, province of Esmeraldas.

El Salvador

Criticism of hotline for anonymous reporting of alleged gang membership

Already in May 2022, the Salvadoran government had set up a telephone hotline for members of civil society to anonymously report alleged collaborators of the MS-13 or Barrio 18 gangs, whose cases would then be investigated by the police. With reference to various national NGOs, this form of reporting is criticized in a report of the Spanish newspaper El País of 26.08.23, as it could easily be abused by people to settle neighbourhood feuds or personal scores. The organisation Socorro Jurídico claims to be aware of many such cases of denunciation; stating that about 14,000 people are still imprisoned innocently and without any relation to a gang. The article mentions examples of presumably unjustified cases of imprisonment after anonymous tip-offs; also a judge has his say and deplores a progressive reversal of the burden of proof in the Salvadoran justice system.