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The State of the World's Human Rights; Egypt 2024

The authorities continued to crack down on criticism, stifle civil society and restrict street protests. Authorities carried out mass arrests to prevent planned anti-government protests and forcibly dispersed the few small peaceful protests that took place. Authorities released 934 prisoners held for political reasons but arrested another 1,594. Those targeted included journalists, lawyers, protesters, dissidents, opposition politicians and those critical of the government's human rights record and handling of the economic crisis. Dozens of individuals were subjected to enforced disappearance. Torture and other ill-treatment remained routine. Death sentences were imposed, including for crimes other than "intentional killing", after grossly unfair trials. Executions were carried out. Impunity prevailed for grave human rights violations committed in 2024 and previous years. Women and girls, religious minorities and LGBTI individuals experienced discrimination, violence and prosecution for exercising their human rights. Authorities failed to protect economic and social rights in the economic crisis, adequately adjust social security measures or ensure private companies complied with the minimum wage requirement. The government introduced new legislation jeopardizing the accessibility and affordability of healthcare. Forced evictions from informal settlements continued. Thousands of refugees and asylum seekers, most from Sudan, were arbitrarily detained and expelled.

Background

In April, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was sworn in as president for a third term after winning elections from which genuine opponents were barred.

The National Dialogue between the government and the opposition resumed in February after being suspended in September 2023, with critics lamenting the lack of tangible results and failure to implement any of the recommended political and human rights reforms.

Amid Egypt's deepening economic and financial crisis, the International Monetary Fund, the EU, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) pledged around USD 57 billion in investment, loans and financial assistance. In March the EU announced a EUR 7.4 billion (USD 8 billion) funding package to Egypt, without human rights benchmarks. In September the USA delivered USD 1.3 billion in aid, waiving human rights requirements. The cost-of-living crisis persisted with annual inflation measuring 24.9% in September.

The Rafah border crossing with Gaza remained closed since May after Israeli forces took control of the Palestinian side of the border and an Egyptian soldier was killed in a cross-border shooting.

Freedom of expression, association and assembly

Authorities continued to criminalize dissenting forms of expression and peaceful assembly, targeting journalists, lawyers, protesters, dissidents, opposition politicians and those critical of the government's human rights record and handling of the economic crisis.

Between January and March, security forces arbitrarily arrested at least four individuals who complained about price increases in comments on social media.¹

On 31 July, authorities arbitrarily arrested opposition politician Yehia Hussein Abdelhady after he published a Facebook post criticizing the president and the army and calling for regime change.² He remained arbitrarily detained at the end of the year over trumped-up charges of terrorism and publishing "false news".

Women's rights defender and journalist Rasha Azab, a vocal critic of the Egyptian government's response to Israel's offensive on Gaza, was subjected to repeated threats and harassment after hostilities erupted on 7 October 2023. This included being followed on several occasions by a group of three unidentified men and receiving warnings via intermediaries that security agencies would arrest her.

At least 14 media workers remained imprisoned in relation to their work, including for publishing content criticizing the government. Among them were Ashraf Omar, arrested in July after he published a cartoon criticizing the government's plan to sell state assets, and Khaled Mamdouh, a journalist at the news website Arabic Post. Both remained arbitrarily detained on trumped-up charges of terrorism and spreading "false news".

At least 562 human rights, news and other websites remained blocked by the authorities, according to the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, an independent rights group.

Authorities carried out arrests prior to planned anti-government protests to prevent them from materializing and forcibly dispersed the few small peaceful protests that took place. In March, security forces forcibly dispersed a small demonstration in Alexandria and arbitrarily arrested protesters who raised signs blaming President al-Sisi for “starving” the poor.

In July the authorities arbitrarily arrested dozens of men, at least seven women and one child in connection with online calls for protests and for the ousting of President al-Sisi’s government due to price increases. Dozens remained in detention for expressing solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza by peacefully protesting, posting comments online, hanging signs or writing slogans on walls.

On 20 March, after 13 years of investigations, authorities announced the closure of Case 173/2011, widely known as the “foreign funding” case, which had involved asset freezes and travel bans for NGO staff. However, a travel ban against human rights lawyer Hoda Abdelwahab remained in place.

Arbitrary detention and unfair trials

Between January and October the authorities released at least 934 people detained for political reasons, mostly after they exceeded the two-year maximum limit for pretrial detention. During the same period, authorities arrested 1,594 people, including five children, on political grounds, according to the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, an independent NGO. Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) prosecutors and judges routinely renewed pretrial detention orders for thousands of detainees without allowing them to meaningfully challenge the legality of their detention.

In February a court sentenced the politician Ahmed Al Tantawy, his campaign director and 21 of his supporters to one year’s imprisonment in relation to his unsuccessful bid to run in the 2023 presidential election. In May the verdict was upheld on appeal and in December it was confirmed by the Court of Cassation.

On 26 June the Emergency State Security Criminal Court sentenced protester Mahmoud Hussein to three years in prison for wearing an anti-torture T-shirt.³ He was released in October having already spent two years and 10 months in pretrial detention.

In August, parliamentary discussions started on a draft Code of Criminal Procedures that would provide no safeguards against the misuse of prolonged pretrial detention and would enable severe violations of the right to a fair trial, including adequate defence.⁴

In September, prominent activist Alaa Abdel Fattah completed his unjust five-year prison sentence but the authorities failed to release him.⁵

In December a military court sentenced 62 residents of North Sinai governorate to prison terms ranging from three to 10 years on charges of damaging military vehicles and using force against public servants. The trial followed a sit-in in October 2023 by residents of Sheikh Zuwayed city, which was dispersed forcibly by the military. The residents were demanding to return to their homes, from which authorities had forcibly evicted them. On 24 December, President El-Sisi issued a presidential pardon for 54 of them.

Enforced disappearances and torture and other ill-treatment

Security forces, including the National Security Agency (NSA), subjected dozens of individuals held for political reasons to enforced disappearance for periods ranging from a few days to several weeks.

Torture and other ill-treatment remained routine in prisons, police stations and NSA-run facilities. In February, NSA officials beat a man and gave him electric shocks while subjecting him to enforced disappearance for eight days after he was arrested for publishing videos criticizing the government.

Prisoners continued to be held in conditions violating the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, including through deliberate denial of healthcare and prolonged solitary confinement. In Badr 1 prison and 10th of Ramadan prison, dozens of prisoners began a hunger strike in early June to protest their cruel and inhuman detention conditions, lack of access to adequate healthcare, reduction in the time allowed for exercising outside their cell, and restrictions on family visits. The prison authorities forced many to end the strike by transferring striking prisoners to other facilities and placed others in solitary confinement.

Death penalty

Criminal courts, including those handling terrorism-related cases, imposed death sentences following unfair trials. Offences punishable by death included crimes that did not amount to “intentional killing”, such as drug trafficking and rape, in violation of international law and standards. Executions were carried out.

Impunity

Impunity prevailed for unlawful killings, torture, enforced disappearance and other grave human rights violations committed in 2024 and previous

years, including the unlawful killings of at least 900 people when sit-ins by supporters of the ousted president, Mohamed Morsi, were violently dispersed on 14 August 2013.

Authorities failed to investigate adequately the causes and circumstances of at least 43 deaths in custody following reports of physical torture and other ill-treatment or denial of healthcare. No investigations were opened into the death of Ibrahim al-Ajeery on 1 January at Badr 3 prison after years of medical negligence, including denying him adequate diabetes medication.

Prosecutors, particularly SSSP prosecutors, dismissed or ignored most complaints of police torture. In a rare case known to Amnesty International, a regular prosecutor opened an investigation into a complaint made by a protester who said that a police officer beat her, but no information was made available on the progress of the investigation by the end of the year.

On 23 May a group of women who were arrested at a pro-Palestine protest reported that they had filed a complaint with the public prosecutor that some of them had been subjected to sexual assault during body searches and harassment during detention. The public prosecutor referred the complaint to the SSSP, which failed to investigate.

Economic and social rights

Economic and social rights, including the rights to an adequate standard of living and to health, were severely undermined by the economic crisis. The government failed to meet the constitutionally mandated allocation of at least 3% of GDP to health and 6% of GDP to education.

Repeated rises in fuel prices affected the price of food and essential services. In June the authorities quadrupled the subsidized price of bread. The government failed to adequately mitigate the effects of inflation on people living in poverty, with spending on social protection representing only 0.2% of GDP.

In September the government announced the end of daily power cuts in place since July 2023.

In June, President al-Sisi ratified a new law privatizing healthcare, jeopardizing the accessibility and availability of health services, particularly for those lacking health insurance and/or living in poverty.⁶

Workers' rights

In February, President al-Sisi raised the minimum monthly wage for public sector workers from EGP 4,000 (around USD 82.50) to EGP 6,000 (around

USD 125). In April, the government also raised the minimum wage for private sector workers to EGP 6,000 but took no measures against companies paying below the minimum wage.

In February, NSA agents arrested two workers from Ghazl al-Mahalla, a public sector company, after questioning dozens of workers for striking to demand the minimum wage. They were provisionally released in May pending investigations by the SSSP into charges of “joining a terrorist group” and publishing “false news”.

On 17 August, workers at another public sector company, Samanoud Weaving and Textile, organized a strike demanding the minimum wage. On 25 August, authorities arrested five men and four women and investigated them over charges including “inciting the intentional obstruction of a means of production”. They were released within two weeks, according to the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), an independent NGO.

In September, to address the ongoing teacher shortage, the Ministry of Education announced it would hire 50,000 teachers on limited hourly contracts under which their monthly earnings would fall significantly below the minimum wage.

In April the State Council, Egypt’s administrative court, began reviewing appeals submitted by the EIPR on behalf of teachers who were excluded from appointments in public schools on discriminatory grounds such as being pregnant or “overweight”.

Right to housing

In February, without prior consultations with residents or offers of compensation, authorities began to carry out forced evictions and house demolitions in El-Gameel neighbourhood, Port Said, which was home to around 2,500 households. The government justified the demolitions by citing plans to develop the region. One man died during the demolitions, but the authorities failed to carry out an impartial and independent investigation into the causes and circumstances of his death.

In July the government announced a partnership between Emirati and local investors to develop a real estate project on Warraq Nile Island. On 26 September, police fired rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse a protest organized by residents in response to reports of police abuse. At least seven residents were injured according to Mada Masr, an independent media outlet. In October, residents of the island publicly demanded adequate compensation. Security forces cordoned off the island, preventing residents from bringing in construction materials to build new homes or extend existing homes. Authorities had kept the

island's only health facility closed since 2021, restricting residents' access to healthcare.

In February the UAE and Egypt signed a USD 35 billion agreement to develop the approximately 16,430 hectares of Ras al-Hekma, a village located on Egypt's Mediterranean coast. Residents ignored government orders to vacate their houses as they considered the compensation offered by the government to be inadequate. Authorities imposed a media blackout on the issue. On 10 March, authorities arrested Mada Masr journalist Rana Mamdouh while she was travelling to report on the situation in Ras al-Hekma. She was released on bail later that day after the SSSP questioned her about complaints that she had incited residents to terrorism. In April, videos circulated on social media showing skirmishes between residents and members of the security forces who had attempted to enter houses to take inventories of residents' belongings. On 16 December, prime minister Moustafa Madbouly announced that the government had paid EGP 5.5 billion (around USD 108,154 million) to residents who were required to vacate their homes. He did not specify whether this amount covered all those affected.

Discrimination

Women

Women continued to face discrimination in law and practice, including in matters of marriage, divorce, child custody and political office. Long-promised amendments to the Personal Status Law stalled amid concerns over lack of meaningful consultation with women human rights defenders.

In October the General Authority for Passports, Immigration and Nationality issued discriminatory directives requiring women from "lower classes" to obtain permission from the authority if they wished to travel to Saudi Arabia. According to the EIPR, communications sent by the Ministry of the Interior to travel agencies specified that women from "lower classes" included housewives, unemployed women and those in low-skilled jobs.

At least four women were arbitrarily arrested and prosecuted on vague morality charges in relation to publishing content on TikTok.

LGBTI people

The authorities continued to harass and prosecute individuals for their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

Right to a healthy environment

In its second NDC, issued in June 2023, Egypt pledged to reduce carbon emissions by ensuring that 42% of its electricity would come from renewable energy sources by 2030. However, the government continued to issue new gas exploration licences, potentially jeopardizing its decarbonization efforts.

Freedom of religion and belief

The right to build or repair churches remained restricted by a 2016 law requiring approval from security agencies and other state bodies. In October a government spokesperson said that the government had approved the legalization of 3,453 churches out of the 5,540 requests that had been submitted since the law was enacted.

In April, security forces failed to protect Coptic Christian residents in two villages in al-Minya governorate from sectarian attacks. The attacks followed reports of the establishment of Christian places of worship in the two villages, and involved Muslim residents marching, chanting anti-Christian slogans and damaging the homes of Coptic Christians.

In July a military court sentenced a Coptic Christian conscript to three years in prison for electronic messages he sent to a Muslim man which were deemed to be “offensive to Islam”, according to the EIPR.

Refugees' and migrants' rights

Egyptian security forces, including EU-funded border guards, carried out mass arrests of thousands of Sudanese refugees for irregularly entering or staying in Egypt. The security forces kept the refugees in squalid detention conditions before forcibly returning them to Sudan without allowing them to access asylum procedures (see Sudan entry). Authorities also continued to arrest asylum seekers and refugees from other countries, including Eritrea, over their migration status.

In September the government extended by one year the deadline requiring all foreign nationals to regularize their status through an Egyptian sponsor and the payment of USD 1,000.

On 16 December, President al-Sisi ratified Egypt's first asylum law, which failed to prohibit refoulement, lacked due process safeguards and allowed for the arbitrary detention of refugees and asylum seekers.

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1. [“Egypt: Halt crackdown on people voicing concerns over economic crisis”, 13 May ↩](#)
 2. [“Egypt: Politician detained over social media posts: Yehia Hussein Abdelhady”, 9 August ↩](#)

3. "Egypt: Three-year prison sentence for anti-torture protester a 'travesty of justice'", 27 June ↩
4. "Egypt: Reject draft Criminal Procedure Code", 2 October ↩
5. "Egypt: Ensure Alaa Abdel Fattah is not detained after completing length of unjust prison term", 26 September ↩
6. "Egypt: New law threatens to reduce access to healthcare for millions", 30 July ↩

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