

Civic Freedom Monitor: Egypt

Last updated: **August 24, 2026**

Recent Developments

On July 24, 2026, the European Commission disbursed €1.5 billion in Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) to Egypt, the second of three installments under the EU's €4 billion MFA program. Human rights organizations subsequently criticized the decision, noting that the financial support is subject to Egypt taking "concrete and credible steps" toward democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. They argued that Egypt had not demonstrated meaningful progress in these areas and called on the EU to publish its assessment of Egypt's compliance with these political preconditions and to ensure that future disbursements are linked to genuine and measurable reforms. Please see the News section below in this report for additional details.

While we aim to maintain information that is as current as possible, we realize that situations can rapidly change. If you are aware of any additional information or inaccuracies on this page, please keep us informed; write to ICNL at ngomonitor@icnl.org.

Introduction

Since the 2013 military intervention and the consolidation of power under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the government of Egypt has implemented a sustained and far-reaching crackdown on civic space. Authorities have systematically targeted organizations and individuals engaged in peaceful activism through a combination of legal, regulatory, and security measures.

A succession of restrictive laws—on association, assembly, counterterrorism, and cybercrime—impose severe constraints on civic freedoms. Law 149 of 2019, which governs civil associations and foundations, imposes significant legal and administrative barriers to CSOs' formation, activities, and access to both domestic and foreign funding, making it extremely difficult for independent organizations to operate freely.

Protesters, activists, journalists, and other civic actors have also been arrested, detained, and prosecuted under vague and expansive legal provisions. Meanwhile, state control over public discourse has deepened through censorship and internet restrictions. Such measures have contributed to a highly restrictive environment for civil society.

Civic Freedoms at a Glance

Organizational Forms	Associations and civil foundations
Registration Body	Ministry of Social Solidarity

Approximate Number	More than 35,000 associations were registered with the Ministry of Social Solidarity by the beginning of 2025.
Barriers to Formation	Law 149 requires that associations have ten founding members and a physical headquarters. Registration is mandatory for all entities that practice “civil work,” defined in the law as non-profit activities that aim to achieve societal development. Informal (unregistered) associations and foundations are prohibited. Registration is by “notification,” but the process requires submission of extensive documentation, and allows the Ministry broad discretion to reject the registration during a 60-day waiting period.
Barriers to Operations	Associations are limited to activities in the fields of development and social welfare. Numerous activities are prohibited, including any activity that “violates the public order, public morals, national unity or national security.” The law also gives authority to government officials to inspect an association’s premises at any time and otherwise interfere in the association’s internal affairs of the association, including the ability to review and reject decisions made by the association’s board. Sanctions for legal violations include steep fines for individuals and dissolution of an association.
Barriers to Resources	The Ministry must issue a special letter to a bank affiliated with the Central Bank of Egypt before an association may open a bank account. Associations must notify the Ministry before they receive foreign funds or funds from Egyptian individuals abroad, and wait sixty days without the Ministry’s objection, during which they may not use the funds. Notification to the Ministry is also required when an association receives or collects donations from domestic sources. A license is required to carry out fundraising.
Barriers to Expression	Law 149 prohibits engagement in “any political” or “partisan” activity that is regulated by other laws; similar provisions have been used to limit organizations’ advocacy activity. Associations may not conduct opinion polls. “Field research” is prohibited unless it has been approved beforehand. Criminal defamation laws have been used to silence critics of the government. Restrictive laws on the press and media, as well as a cybercrimes law, constrains expression offline and online.
Barriers to Assembly	Protest organizers must notify the government three days in advance of a public assembly of ten or more people. Excessive force is often used against protesters, and thousands of protest participants have been arbitrarily detained and imprisoned.

Legal Overview

This section provides a brief overview of Egypt’s legal framework for the promotion and protection of civic freedoms. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Key International Agreements	Ratification*
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	1982

Key International Agreements	Ratification*
Optional Protocol to ICCPR (ICCPR-OP1)	No
International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	1982
Optional Protocol to ICESCR (Op-ICESCR)	No
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	1967
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	1981
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women	No
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1990
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW)	1993
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	2008

Key Regional Agreements	Ratification
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	1984

* Category includes ratification, accession, or succession to the treaty

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Egypt's Constitution was adopted by popular referendum in January 2014, and most recently amended in 2019. The constitution protects numerous rights that are relevant to civil society, although most of these have yet to see meaningful enforcement in practice. Relevant Constitutional provisions include:

Article 65 - Freedom of Thought

Freedom of thought and opinion is guaranteed.

All individuals have the right to express their opinion through speech, writing, imagery, or any other means of expression and publication.

Article 70 - Freedom of the Press

Freedom of press and printing, along with paper, visual, audio and digital distribution is guaranteed. Egyptians — whether natural or legal persons, public or private — have the right to own and issue newspapers and establish visual, audio and digital media outlets.

Newspapers may be issued once notification is given as regulated by law. The law shall regulate ownership and establishment procedures for visual and radio broadcast stations in addition to online newspapers.

Article 71 - Freedom of Publication

It is prohibited to censor, confiscate, suspend or shut down Egyptian newspapers and media outlets in any way. Exception may be made for limited censorship in time of war or general mobilization. No custodial sanction shall be imposed for crimes committed by way of publication or the public nature thereof. Punishments for crimes connected with incitement to violence or discrimination amongst citizens, or impugning the honor of individuals are specified by law.

Article 73 - Freedom of Assembly

Citizens have the right to organize public meetings, marches, demonstrations and all forms of peaceful protest, while not carrying weapons of any type, upon providing notification as regulated by law. The right to peaceful, private meetings is guaranteed, without the need for prior notification. Security forces may not attend, monitor or eavesdrop on such gatherings.

Article 74 - Freedom to Form Political Parties

Citizens have the right to form political parties by notification as regulated by the law. No political activity may be exercised or political parties formed on the basis of religion, or discrimination based on sex, origin, sect or geographic location, nor may any activity be practiced that is hostile to democracy, secretive, or which possesses a military or quasi-military nature.

Parties may only dissolved by a judicial ruling.

Article 75 - Right to Establish Associations

Citizens have the right to form non-governmental organizations and institutions on a democratic basis, which shall acquire legal personality upon notification.

They shall be allowed to engage in activities freely. Administrative agencies shall not interfere in the affairs of such organizations, dissolve them, their board of directors, or their board of trustees except by a judicial ruling.

The establishment or continuation of non-governmental organizations and institutions whose structure and activities are operated and conducted in secret, or which possess a military or quasi-military character are forbidden, as regulated by law.

Article 76 - Right to Form Syndicates

The establishment of federations and syndicates on a democratic basis is a right guaranteed by law. Such federations and syndicates will possess legal personality, be able to practice their activities freely, contribute to improving the skills of its members, defend their rights and protect their interests.

The state guarantees the independence of all federations and syndicates. The boards of directors thereof may only dissolved by a judicial ruling.

Syndicates may not be established within governmental bodies.

Article 77 - Trade Unions

The law shall regulate the establishment and administration of professional syndicates on a democratic basis, guarantee their independence, and specify their resources and the way members are recorded and held accountable for their behavior while performing their professional activities, according to ethical codes of moral and professional conduct.

No profession may establish more than one syndicate. Receivership may not be imposed nor may administrative bodies intervene in the affairs of such syndicates, and their boards of directors may only be dissolved by a judicial ruling. All legislation pertaining to a given profession shall be submitted to the relevant syndicate for consultation.

NATIONAL LAWS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

Relevant national-level laws and regulations affecting civil society include:

- Counter-Terrorism Law No. 94 of 2015 [[عربي](#)]
- Constitution of Arab Republic of Egypt of 2014, as amended in 2019 [[عربي](#)]
- Civil Code (Law 131 of 1948 as amended)[[عربي](#)]
- Law on Regulating the Exercise of Civil Work (Law 149 of 2019) [[English](#)] [[عربي](#)]
- Executive Regulations 104 of 2021 for the Law Regulating the Exercise of Civil Work (Law 149 of 2019) [[عربي](#)] [[English](#)]
- Law on the Right to Public Meetings, Processions and Peaceful Demonstrations (Law 107 of 2013) [[عربي](#)]
- Assembly Law of 1914 (Law 107 above did not replace this law, which is still on the books and may be used to impose additional penal sanctions) [[عربي](#)]
- Law Regulating the Press, Media, and the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (Law No. 180 of 2018) [[عربي](#)]
- Commercial Register Law (Law 34 of 1976 as amended by Law 98 of 1996) [[عربي](#)]
- Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes Law (Law No. 175 of 2018) [[عربي](#)]
- Resolution of the Prime Minister Concerning Executive Regulations for Law No. 149 of 2019 on Regulating the Exercise of Civil Work

PENDING REGULATORY INITIATIVES

Please help keep us informed; if you are aware of pending initiatives, write to ICNL at ngomonitor@icnl.org.

Legal Analysis

This section provides an in-depth assessment of Egypt's legal environment for civic freedoms, including the barriers to the exercise of the freedoms of association (formation, operations, resources), expression, and peaceful assembly. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS

Law 149 of 2019 governs the establishment and operations of civil associations and foundations in Egypt. In addition, not-for-profit companies may be established under the Egyptian Civil Code and Corporate Code. However, if these entities engage in “civil work” as defined by Law 149—or in “any of the activities of associations”—they must comply with the provisions of Law 149.

Under Article 1(1) of Law 149, an association is defined as an “organized group aimed at contributing to the development of individuals and the society; realizing the society's demands; maximizing its capacity for participation in the public sphere and sustainable development; and not aiming at a profit.” The law defines civil work as any not-for-profit activity intended to promote social development.

At least ten founders are required to establish an association; these may be natural or legal persons or both. All founders and board members must have the legal capacity to exercise their civil and political rights. They must not have been convicted of any crime involving “honor or integrity” resulting in a prison sentence or other criminal penalty—unless they have been rehabilitated. Additionally, individuals whose names have appeared on “terrorist lists” are disqualified from serving as founders or board members (Article 4). The law further restricts the participation of non-nationals, stating that no more than 25 percent of an association’s founders or members may be foreigners (Article 5).

A foundation, as defined in Article 1(4), may be established when a natural or legal person allocates at least EGP 20,000 (USD 372.80 as of March 2026) for a not-for-profit, civil work purpose.

This report focuses primarily on associations, which represent the most prevalent organizational form of CSO in Egypt.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATUS

An association engaged in activities that serve the public interest may apply for designation as a “public benefit association” by submitting a request to the Ministry of Social Solidarity. To qualify, the Ministry must determine that the association aims to achieve a public benefit and does not exhibit any “financial, technical, or administrative violations” (Executive Regulations, Articles 91 and 92).

The designation is granted through a resolution issued by the Prime Minister or their delegate (Article 55 of Law 149). The resolution should also define the specific privileges afforded to the association (Article 56). These may include legal protections for the association’s funds and, in some cases, government seizure of private property to support the association’s public benefit objectives.

Historically, many public benefit associations in Egypt have had close political ties to the ruling party or the president.

BARRIERS TO FORMATION

Law 149 of 2019 imposes a number of legal and practical barriers to the establishment of associations in Egypt. First, the law requires all entities engaging in “civil work” (as defined above) to register under Law 149. The law explicitly prohibits any organization from conducting such activities without complying with its provisions (Preamble Articles 3-4). Individuals who establish or work with unregistered or unauthorized organizations face steep fines ranging from EGP 100,000 to 1 million (USD 1,864-18,640 as of March 2026) (Article 94).

While the law provides that associations “merely” need to notify the Ministry of Social Solidarity of their establishment, the notification process is burdensome, time-consuming, and subject to expansive government discretion. Associations must submit an extensive set of documents, including detailed personal information and criminal records of all founders. They must also prove that they occupy a physical property and pay a fee of up to EGP 5,000 (USD 93.20 as of March 2026) (Article 8).

Upon receiving the notification, the Ministry of Social Solidarity is required to issue a receipt confirming that the documentation requirements have been met. However, the association is not legally established until 60 days have passed without Ministry objections. During this period, the Ministry may suspend the registration on broad legal grounds, including if any information is deemed “incomplete or unauthentic,” or if the organization’s purposes are criminalized under the Penal Code or “any other law.” In such cases, the association has 60 days to correct the violation, provide the missing information, or appeal the decision in court (Article 9).

Foreign and international NGOs face additional obstacles. To operate in Egypt, they must obtain a limited-term operating permit from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Article 65). The law provides no clear criteria for the permit’s duration or approval process, leaving these decisions entirely at the Ministry’s discretion. The application for the permit must include extensive “data and documents,” including information on all funding sources and criminal histories of the organization’s founders and managers (Executive

Regulations, Article 108). A fee of up to EGP 50,000 (USD 932 as of March 2026) is required, with fees increasing by 20 percent every time the license is renewed, to a maximum of EGP 200,000 (USD 3,728 as of March 2026) (Article 66-67).

According to Article 110 of Law 149's Executive Regulations, the operating permit must specify the organization's approved activities, their geographic scope and duration, and sources of funding. The Minister of Foreign Affairs retains the authority to cancel or suspend the permit at any time for reasons of "national security, public safety, or public order," or for violations of Law 149 or the "rules for conducting licensed activities" (Article 74). While such decisions must be "reasoned," the law does not allow for appeals.

BARRIERS TO OPERATIONS

CSOs in Egypt also face significant operational restrictions in the form of legal limitations, government interference, vague grounds for dissolution, punitive sanctions and extra-legal harassment, and barriers to international contact.

Limitations on Permissible Activities

Law 149 restricts CSOs—both domestic and foreign—to activities "in the fields of societal development" that consider "the development plans of the state and needs of the community" (Article 14). Additionally, associations are specifically prohibited from engaging in:

- "Any political, partisan, or union activity" regulated by other laws, or anything that "violates the public order, public morals, national unity or national security" (Article 15(b) and (d)).
- Conducting or publishing the results of opinion polls and conducting field research without prior approval from the Central Statistics Organization (Article 15(j)).
- Carrying out activities that are "contradictory" to the purposes listed in their approved notification or license (Article 15(a)).

Violations of these prohibitions may result in the suspension of activities, dismissal of directors and the appointment of a temporary board of directors, dissolution of the organization, and/or steep fines levied on individuals personally involved in the activities (Articles 45, 47, 48, 94, 95).

Government Interference in CSOs' Internal Affairs

Law 149 permits extensive state interference in the internal affairs of CSOs:

- Representatives of the Ministry of Social Solidarity may enter the premises of an association "to monitor its activities, review its records, and inspect the administrative, technical and financial aspects of its work." The Ministry must notify the association about the inspection beforehand unless it has received an "official complaint," in which case it is authorized to enter without prior notice. An association's staff and directors are obligated to facilitate the Ministry's inspection. (Article 30)
- A unit within the Ministry, called the "Central Unit," is tasked with the "supervision and oversight" of Egyptian and foreign organizations. The staff of the Central Unit, as well as any "subunits" identified by the Ministry of Justice, are endowed with the authority of "judicial control officers," or law enforcement, in carrying out their mandate. (Articles 76 and 79)
- Associations must submit minutes of all board meetings and decisions to the Ministry. The Ministry may request the withdrawal of any decision deemed unlawful or in violation of the association's bylaws within 30 days. (Articles 34 and 36)

- The Ministry may review any proposed board members and disqualify those it deems ineligible for candidacy. Disqualified individuals may appeal the decision to a court, but they only have seven days to do so. (Article 38)
- The Ministry or any other individual may seek a court order to dismiss an association's board of directors on broad grounds, including receiving or sending funds without prior approval, entering agreements with foreign entities without permission, committing crimes related to the misuse of public funds, or failing to cooperate with Ministry inspections. (Article 47)

Vague Grounds for Suspension and Dissolution

Law 149 sets out numerous vague or overbroad grounds for suspending or dissolving associations.

Grounds for suspension include:

- Submitting inaccurate data in notification documents.
- Relocating without notifying the Ministry within three months.
- Carrying out activities not listed in the association's notification or otherwise specifically licensed.
- Allocating funds for purposes not aligned with the association's mission.
- Carrying out activities prohibited by Law 149.

The Ministry may issue a suspension order temporarily, but it is only effective if supported by a court decision, which the Ministry must request within seven days of issuing the order (Article 45).

Grounds for dissolution include:

- The receipt of foreign funds without prior permission or raising domestic funds without prior notification to the government. (Article 48(4)-(5))
- Collaborating or affiliating with foreign entities without prior government approval. (Article 48(6))
- Evidence that an association's "real purposes" involve prohibited activities. (Article 48(2))

While an association's court case is pending, it is barred from fundraising or receiving foreign donations (Article 49). If individuals associated with an association commit offenses, a court may order the association's closure, prohibit it from receiving donations, or suspend its activities (Article 97).

Harsh Sanctions and Government Harassment

Law 149 and other Egyptian laws impose harsh sanctions—including steep fines—on CSO members for a range of violations. For example, any individual who "conducts" an activity deemed to violate "public order, public morals, national unity or national security" is subject to a fine between EGP 100,000 and 1 million (USD 1,864-18,640 as of March 2026) (Article 94(3)). The same penalty applies to any member or director of an association who receives foreign funding or transfers funds abroad without prior government approval, or otherwise violates Law 149's fundraising provisions (Article 94(1)).

The law also imposes fines ranging from EGP 50,000 to 500,000 (USD 932-9,320) on individuals for a range of other offenses. These include engaging in "political, partisan, or union" activities regulated by other laws; conducting opinion polls; entering into agreements with foreign entities without prior Ministry approval; or obstructing Ministry inspections (Article 95(3)-(4)).

In addition, Law 149 holds association leaders jointly liable for violations if they knew of the infractions and their failure in performing their responsibilities as leaders facilitated the commitment of such violations (Article 96). Law 149 also incorporates harsher penalties found in the Penal Code or “any other law” (Article 93). This includes provisions such as Articles 86bis and 98 of the Penal Code, which criminalize activities commonly associated with association work.

Beyond formal legal penalties, CSOs and human rights defenders in Egypt continue to face harassment and intimidation by the security apparatus. Prominent rights organizations have been subject to raids, asset freezes, closures, and other restrictions. For example, in October 2016, authorities raided the Cairo office of the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF). In February 2017, they shut down the El-Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, following repeated attempts to close the Center and freeze its assets in 2016. More recently, in 2026, human rights organizations challenged the extension of lawyer and human rights defender Mohamed El-Baqer’s inclusion on Egypt’s “terrorists list” for an additional five years. They noted that the designation continued to subject him to a travel ban and asset freeze despite his 2023 presidential pardon and release, and argued that these restrictions on his freedom of movement, property rights, and participation in public life constituted reprisals for his human rights work.

Barriers to International Contact

Law 149 imposes significant restrictions on the ability of associations to engage with international actors. Under Article 19, associations must obtain advance approval from the Ministry of Social Solidarity before they may “join, affiliate, participate, or cooperate, in any other form” with a foreign entity. Separately, Article 15(k) prohibits associations from entering into “agreements of any kind” with any foreign entity—whether inside or outside of Egypt—without specific Ministry approval.

In addition, Law 149 prohibits associations from employing foreign nationals—whether “as experts, temporary or permanent workers, or volunteers”—unless they obtain a license from the Minister (Article 72). Associations are also barred from opening branch offices abroad without prior permission from the Ministry (Article 20).

In practice, the government has used these restrictions to suppress international engagement. In 2020, staff members of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights were arrested shortly after hosting a human rights briefing for a group of Western diplomats. Authorities have also issued travel bans to prevent civil society representatives and activists from attending conferences and meetings abroad.

BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

Law 149 requires associations to hold their accounts in banks supervised by the Central Bank of Egypt and to use only those accounts for transactions related to the association’s operations (Article 23). Associations may open accounts only after completing the registration process, at which point the Ministry “shall issue a letter” to a bank under the Central Bank of Egypt directing it to open a bank account for the association (Article 10). The law does not specify whether an association may open an account without this letter, or how an association might compel the Ministry to issue it. Associations are also required to notify the Ministry of their bank account numbers (Article 32).

Associations may engage in financial activities outside of regular bank transactions only with prior Ministry notification and approval from the Financial Regulatory Authority (Article 35).

Law 149 requires the Ministry to create and maintain a database with information on all associations’ sources of funding (Article 8, 10). The Ministry may also request the Attorney General to compel banks to disclose information about associations’ accounts (Article 10).

Associations’ resources are classified as “public funds” under Law 149 (Article 23), which has serious legal consequences. Under the Penal Code, any citizen can request an investigation into the use of public funds. If such an investigation is initiated, an association’s access to those funds may be frozen. If a court ultimately finds that public funds have been misused, it may impose severe penalties under the Penal

Code.

Foreign Funding

Law 149 imposes a system of strict state control over associations' access to foreign funding. The law gives the Ministry broad authority to reject most foreign grants and donations, whether from outside of Egypt or from foreign entities inside Egypt (Article 27). Associations must notify the Ministry within 30 days of receiving such funds, and the required "notification" must include extensive documentation, including *"a true copy of the activity license for which the donation is allocated; a clear copy of the policy, bill of lading, the purchase invoice of the donation or the incoming shipment, or a certificate from the forwarder confirming the shipment or any proof of purchase from a duty free zone, as the case may be, in addition to all other customs documents; information of the port of departure and port of arrival of the shipment in case the in-kind donation is received from outside the country; and a description of the shipment, its quality, quantity, purpose and the beneficiary categories"* (Executive Regulations, Article 47). Once notified, the Ministry has 60 days to object, during which time the funds may not be used. No criteria are provided for objections, leaving the Ministry with unbounded discretion to block foreign funding.

If the Ministry raises no objection within 60 days, the law provides that this may be considered approval (Article 27 and Executive Regulations, Article 47). However, there are no mechanisms in the law or regulations to verify or document the absence of an objection.

If the Ministry objects, the association must instruct its bank to return the funds within 5 days and provide the Ministry with proof that it did so (Executive Regulations Article 44).

Failure to comply with Law 149's requirements around foreign funding can result in a fine ranging from EGP 100,000 to 1 million (USD 1,864-18,640 as of March 2026) (Article 94(3)) and may also be grounds for a court-ordered dissolution of the association (Articles 48(4)).

Associations must also obtain advance Ministry approval before transferring funds to a natural or legal person abroad (Article 27), with an exception for scientific and technical books, magazines, publications, and brochures. The required approval must include extensive documentation, including donor details, a breakdown of planned activities, a detailed budget, and a "feasibility study" (Executive Regulations, Article 47).

The Penal Code imposes additional restrictions. Amendments to the Penal Code in September 2014 introduced life imprisonment and steep fines for anyone who receives foreign support with the intent to "harm the national interest," "compromise national unity," or "breach security or public peace" (Article 78). The same penalties apply to those who provide, offer, or facilitate such support. The provision's vague and expansive language has fostered a climate of fear and self-censorship among CSOs and activists.

Between 2020 and 2024, the government dropped charges against 85 CSOs implicated in the long-running "foreign funding case" (Case 173 of 2011). However, some other organizations and activists remain under investigation, with travel bans and asset freezes still in effect. For example, an Egyptian lawyer and Executive Director of the Arab Centre for the Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession (ACIJLP)—a regional organization established in 1997 to promote judicial independence, the rule of law, and respect for human rights across Egypt and the Arab region—remains subject to a travel ban imposed in the mid-2010s, despite calls for its removal.

Domestic Funding

Law 149 imposes similar restrictions on associations' access to domestic funding. Associations must notify the Ministry upon receiving any funding from local entities or from foreign organizations licensed to operate in Egypt (Article 24). As with foreign funding, the notification must include extensive documentation within 30 days of receiving the funds. Associations then must wait for 60 days during which the Ministry may object (Executive Regulations Articles 47-48).

Associations must also obtain a license from the Ministry before conducting any fundraising activity (Article 25-26). The license request must be submitted at least 60 days in advance and specify the fundraising goals, methods, timeframe, and geographic scope (Executive Regulations Article 56). If an association violates the terms of the license, the Ministry may suspend its operations for up to one year or request a court order for its dissolution or dismissal of its directors (Article 29).

BARRIERS TO EXPRESSION

Egyptian law prohibits “any political, partisan, or union activity” by associations and other entities governed by Law 149. The law’s broad language gives authorities significant discretion to determine what constitutes “political” or “partisan” activity. As a result, advocacy and other activities focused on civil or political rights, for instance, could be interpreted as falling within these prohibited categories.

Laws targeting “fake news” have increasingly been used to suppress freedom of expression and criticism of the government. Article 102bis of the Penal Code prohibits the “spreading of fake news” if it “harms the public interest.” Similarly, amendments to the press and publications law in 2018 criminalize the dissemination of “fake news” by journalists or individuals with more than 5,000 followers on social media (Article 19). Neither law defines the term “fake news,” and penalties can include up to 15 years in prison (Articles 16, 18, and 102bis). These provisions have been used against activists, journalists, writers, and other critics for social media posts, reporting, and other forms of peaceful expression.

Since 2025, there has been a marked increase in the summoning of human rights defenders, journalists, and political figures for investigation before the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP). In some cases, summonses fail to specify the charges, such as in the case of Aida Seif al-Dawla, co-founder of the El Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture. In other cases, authorities rely on broadly framed and repetitive accusations, including “spreading false news,” “misuse of social media,” or “joining or financing a terrorist group.” Those subjected to such proceedings have included political activist Ahmed Douma; journalist Lina Attalah, editor-in-chief of Mada Masr; human rights defender Hossam Bahgat; writer and political figure Ammar Ali Hassan; and human rights lawyer and political activist Mahienour El-Massry. In several cases, the SSSP has ordered release only on disproportionately high bail, raising concerns that bail is being used punitively rather than solely to ensure appearance before investigative or judicial authorities.

In 2026, this pattern continued in cases involving both online and political expression. Amnesty International reported that at least 50 people were detained for alleged association with the “Gen Z002” Discord group, which called for political change and published criticism of the government; detainees were investigated on terrorism-related and “false news” charges. Ahmed Douma was also sentenced to one year in prison for spreading “false news” in connection with an article and social media post criticizing detention conditions, while filmmaker and screenwriter Omar Salah Marei was detained in May 2026 and investigated on “spreading false news” charges reportedly based on social media posts. Rights organizations also raised concerns about Marei’s reported enforced disappearance and denial of necessary medical care while in detention.

Authorities have also circumvented limits on pre-trial detention to keep individuals detained for years. For example, Mohamed Adel—an activist and former spokesperson for the April 6 Youth Movement—spent five years in pre-trial detention from 2018 to 2023 on charges of “spreading false news” on social media. He remains in prison after receiving an additional four-year sentence in separate cases related to peaceful activism.

Some activists have also faced ill-treatment and assaults in Egyptian prisons. On January 10, 2026, Mohamed Adel was reportedly assaulted and nearly strangled inside his cell by other detainees with the knowledge—and apparent inaction—of prison authorities. In March 2024, members of the National Security Agency reportedly threatened to place Adel in solitary confinement or transfer him to another prison with notoriously harsh detention conditions in retaliation for his requests for improved prison conditions. In December 2025, Adel went on hunger strike, and his health reportedly continued to deteriorate while he was denied adequate medical care.

Civil society members have also been prosecuted under Egypt's 2015 counterterrorism legislation, which defines terrorist activity broadly to include actions that "disturb public order" or "harm national unity." Penalties include lengthy prison sentences. Human rights lawyer Hoda Abdel Moneim spent more than four years in pre-trial detention on terrorism-related charges after working with a human rights group to document state torture and forced disappearance. She was later sentenced to five years in prison in a ruling that could not be appealed. Despite completing her sentence, she was not released but was instead "recycled" into a new case based on similar charges, and her pre-trial detention was repeatedly renewed for more than a year. While still detained, she was added to another case on similar grounds, raising concerns regarding the principle of *ne bis in idem* (double jeopardy). Abdel Moneim remained in custody as of April 2026 despite having served her sentence and amid reports of deteriorating health.

BARRIERS TO ASSEMBLY

Restrictive laws and repressive government practices have severely limited the right to peaceful assembly in Egypt. Law 107 of 2013 on Organizing the Right to Public Meetings, Processions, and Peaceful Protests prohibits spontaneous protests, and protesting without properly notifying authorities is punishable by imprisonment. The 1914 Illegal Assembly Law also remains in force and, along with various provisions of the Penal Code, is frequently used to bring additional charges against individuals detained during protests.

Protesters may face imprisonment and steep fines for vaguely defined offenses such as "violating public order," "impeding public interests," or "obstructing traffic." Authorities also commonly rely on laws carrying more severe penalties, including counterterrorism and "fake news" provisions, in cases arising from protests and other forms of peaceful collective action.

The legal framework also lacks adequate safeguards on the use of force against assemblies. Police have repeatedly used excessive force to disperse peaceful gatherings. In one of the most violent incidents, security forces killed more than 900 people during the 2013 dispersal of a mass anti-government sit-in in Rabaa al-Adawiya Square.

Since the passage of the 2013 protest law, thousands of individuals have been arrested and imprisoned for participating in unauthorized demonstrations. These include prominent activists such as Alaa Abd El-Fattah, a leader of the "No to Military Trials" campaign, who was arrested for organizing an unauthorized protest and sentenced in 2015 to five years in prison. In 2019, during a wave of anti-government demonstrations across the country, authorities arrested nearly 1,000 protesters, including dozens of minors.

Authorities have continued to restrict peaceful advocacy and gatherings in more recent cases. In May 2026, three members of the Committee to Defend Prisoners of Conscience—Wafaa Al Masri, Hanan Al Tantawy, and Mohamed Abu al-Dayyar—were arrested after organizing an exhibition in Cairo calling for the release of prisoners of conscience. Amnesty International described the arrests as part of the authorities' continuing restrictions on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Authorities have since released Wafaa Al Masri and Hanan Al Tantawy on bail of EGP 50,000 (approx. USD 1000 as of September 2026) each, while repeatedly renewing Mohamed Abu al-Dayyar's pretrial detention. He continues to face charges of spreading false news, as well as additional terrorism-related charges.

Additional Resources

This section contains links to external reports and news reports relevant to civic freedoms. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

GLOBAL INDEX RANKINGS

Ranking Body	Rank	Ranking Scale (best - worst possible)
UN Human Development Index	100 (2023)	1 - 193
World Justice Project Rule of Law Index	135 (2025)	1 - 142
Transparency International	130 (2025)	1 - 182
Fund for Peace Fragile States Index	44 (2024)	179 - 1
Freedom House: Freedom in the World	Status: Not Free Political Rights: 6 Civil Liberties: 12 (2026)	Free/Partly Free/Not Free 40 - 0 60 - 0

REPORTS

UN Universal Periodic Review Reports	Egypt UPR page
UN Human Rights Reports	Egypt
U.S. State Department	2024 Human Rights Report: Egypt
Arab Reform Initiative	New Directions for Civic Engagement in Egypt: Transforming State-Society Relations (2024)
IMF Country Reports	Arab Republic of Egypt and the IMF
International Center for Not-for-Profit Law Online Library	Egypt

NEWS

[EIPR Urges Release of Detainees Amid Deteriorating Mental Health of Religious Freedom Detainees](#) (August 2026)

The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) called for the immediate release of seven detainees whose families reported severe deterioration in their mental health following prolonged pretrial detention. The detainees are among 26 people arrested between September and December 2025 in a case involving alleged membership in an illegal group and “contempt of religion,” with several reportedly subjected to enforced disappearance before being charged. EIPR raised concerns over prolonged detention, video-conferenced detention-renewal hearings, inadequate notification of charges, and the use of detention in response to social media activity and religious views.

[Rights Groups Call for Release of Detained Shi’a Muslims, Including Journalist Haidar Qandil](#) (August 2026)

A coalition of Egyptian and international human rights organizations called for the release of at least 36 Shi’a Muslims detained in Egypt, including journalist Mohammed Haidar Qandil, following arrests carried out in Cairo ahead of and during Ashura commemorations. The organizations reported that the detainees were held incommunicado for more than 20 days before being brought before the Supreme State Security Prosecution, which charged Qandil with leading and financing a terrorist organization and the others with joining one. The groups argued that the detainees were targeted because of their Shi’a identity and peaceful exercise of freedom of religion, expression, and assembly and called for their release and an end

to the use of counterterrorism measures against religious minorities and journalists.

Human Rights Organizations Urge EU to Ensure Human Rights Conditions Are Met in Financial Assistance to Egypt (July 2026)

Human rights organizations called on the European Union to ensure that its financial support to Egypt is conditional on tangible progress in human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. They argued that Egypt had not demonstrated meaningful progress in these areas and cited continued arbitrary detention, restrictions on civil society and the media, suppression of political dissent, and abuses against refugees and asylum seekers. Following the EU's decision to release a second €1.5 billion payment in July 2026, the organizations called on the EU to publish its assessment of Egypt's compliance with the agreed political precondition and ensure that future disbursements are linked to genuine and measurable reforms.

Commission Provides €1.5 Billion in Macro-financial Assistance to Egypt (July 2026)

On 24 July, the European Commission disbursed €1.5 billion in Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) to Egypt. This is the second of the three instalments expected under the ongoing €4 billion MFA programme for the country. This financial support will help Egypt cover part of its ongoing financing needs, preserve macroeconomic stability and support the implementation of its ongoing economic reform programme. In its assessment, the Commission concluded that Egypt met all the conditions for this installment: it fulfilled the economic policy conditions agreed with the EU; took some concrete and credible steps towards effective democratic mechanisms, including a multi-party parliamentary system, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring respect for human rights; and kept the IMF programme on track, as required for the disbursement of MFA funds.

EIPR Report Highlights Expansion of Egypt's Online "Family Values" Prosecutions (July 2026)

The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) published a report examining five years of prosecutions under Egypt's Cybercrime Law for "violating Egyptian family values." EIPR documented at least 327 people arrested in 252 cases between April 2020 and November 2025 across 17 governorates, with men and women targeted in roughly equal numbers. The report argues that the provision has increasingly been used to criminalize non-political online expression and activities through vague notions of morality and gender norms, particularly affecting women and people from lower- and lower-middle-income backgrounds.

Egypt Urged to Release Dozens Detained Over Gen Z Online Group (July 2026)

Amnesty International called on Egyptian authorities to release at least 50 people detained since late May for their alleged association with the "Gen Z002" online group on Discord, which called for political change and published content critical of the government. The detainees, including nine women, are being investigated before the Supreme State Security Prosecution on terrorism-related and "false news" charges, while Amnesty documented several cases of alleged enforced disappearance and ill-treatment. The organization said the arrests reflected the continued use of arbitrary detention and terrorism-related charges to suppress online and offline freedom of expression.

Egyptian Activist Ahmed Douma Sentenced to One Year in Prison Following Unfair Trial (July 2026)

Egyptian activist and writer Ahmed Douma was sentenced to one year in prison with labor after being convicted of spreading "false news" over an article and social media post criticizing detention conditions. Amnesty International stated that the proceedings were marred by serious fair-trial concerns and argued that Douma's renewed imprisonment, following his presidential pardon and release in 2023, reflected the continued use of the criminal justice system to suppress peaceful dissent. Human rights organizations called for his immediate and unconditional release.

EIPR Calls for Investigation into Death of Ayman Ramzy in Police Custody (July 2026)

The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) called on Egypt's Public Prosecutor to ensure a transparent and impartial investigation into the death of Ayman Ramzy at Rod El-Farag Police Station on June 27, 2026. EIPR documented alleged violations preceding his death, including his arrest over social media posts expressing critical religious views, several days of incommunicado detention, interrogation

without legal counsel, and inadequate responses to his deteriorating health and visible injuries. The organization urged authorities to disclose the circumstances of his death, preserve relevant evidence, and hold accountable anyone responsible for abuse, negligence, or failure to provide necessary medical care.

Human Rights Groups Call for Removal of Mohamed El-Baqer from Egypt's "Terrorists List"

(June 2026)

A coalition of Egyptian and international human rights organizations called on Egypt's Court of Cassation to accept lawyer and human rights defender Mohamed El-Baqer's appeal against the extension of his inclusion on the "terrorists list" for an additional five years. The organizations argued that the listing lacked clear legal grounds or publicly disclosed evidence and continued to restrict his freedom of movement, property rights, and participation in public life despite his presidential pardon and release from prison in 2023. They described his continued designation, travel ban, and asset freeze as reprisals for his human rights work and urged the authorities to end the restrictions.

Human Rights Watch Highlights Continued Arbitrary Detention and Re-Arrests in Egypt (June 2026)

Human Rights Watch reported that Egyptian authorities continued to respond to widespread arbitrary detention with further arrests targeting families of prisoners, lawyers, activists, journalists, and former detainees. The organization highlighted the detention of lawyers Wafaa el-Masry and Mohamed Abu el-Diar and activist Hanan Tantawy, as well as the re-arrests of activist Ahmed Douma and former football ultras leader Sayed Moshagheb. Human Rights Watch argued that occasional pardons and release orders remained exceptions to a broader pattern of arrests targeting political dissent and social nonconformity despite government promises of reform.

Egyptian Authorities Urged to Drop Charges Against Activists Detained Over Peaceful Prison Advocacy (June 2026)

Amnesty International called on Egyptian authorities to drop the charges against three human rights activists arrested after organizing a peaceful event highlighting cases of people arbitrarily detained for political reasons. Pharmacist Hanan Altantawy and lawyers Mohamed Abu al-Dayyar and Wafaa al-Masry were arrested on May 25 following an exhibition in Cairo calling for the release of prisoners of conscience, with Abu al-Dayyar remaining in pretrial detention and facing additional terrorism-related charges. Amnesty said the arrests reflected the authorities' continued crackdown on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and called for Abu al-Dayyar's immediate release and the charges against all three activists to be dropped.

Egyptian Filmmaker Omar Salah Marei Detained On Charges Related To Social Media Activity (May 2026)

Egyptian filmmaker and screenwriter Omar Salah Marei was detained by Egyptian authorities in May 2026 after reportedly being subjected to enforced disappearance for several days following his arrest from his home in Cairo without a judicial warrant. Rights organizations stated that he later appeared before the Supreme State Security Prosecution, which ordered his detention for 15 days pending investigation on charges related to "spreading false news" based on social media posts. Advocacy groups also raised serious concerns about his health, noting that he was denied access to necessary medical treatment for a thyroid condition and complications from recent wrist surgery while in detention, and called for his immediate release and access to healthcare.

Rights Groups Say Trial of Journalist Yasser Abu Al-Ela Reflects Continuing Repression of Press Freedom in Egypt (May 2026)

Human rights organizations stated that the trial of journalist Yasser Abu Al-Ela reflects the continuing repression of freedom of expression and independent journalism in Egypt. Abu Al-Ela was arrested by Egyptian security forces on March 10, 2024 and reportedly was forcibly disappeared for nearly 50 days before appearing before the Supreme State Security Prosecution on April 27, 2024, where he said he had been subjected to physical and psychological torture during his disappearance. Rights groups also noted that his wife, Naglaa Fathi, and her sister were arrested later the same day and held incommunicado until appearing before prosecutors on May 11, 2024, describing the case as part of a broader pattern of targeting journalists and their family members through intimidation and collective punishment.

Global Civil Society Demands Immediate Release of Ahmed Douma (April 2026)

A broad coalition of CSOs is calling on Egyptian authorities to immediately release activist and writer Ahmed Douma and end what they describe as an ongoing pattern of judicial harassment against him. Douma has been repeatedly summoned and prosecuted on charges related to his writings and social media activity, including allegations of “spreading false news.” Since his release from prison in 2023, he has faced multiple interrogations, bail conditions, and a recent escalation involving renewed detention linked to new charges.

Calls for the release of lawyer and human rights defender Hoda Abdel Moneim (March 2026)

In March 2026, several human rights organizations called for the release of Hoda Abdel Moneim, who remains in custody on charges for which she has already served her sentence, in violation of Egyptian law and the principle of ne bis in idem (double jeopardy). Her health has significantly deteriorated during her detention. Due to her condition, she requested to be exempted from attending court hearings and to be represented solely by her lawyer, citing the severe physical strain caused by transfers from the Correctional and Rehabilitation Center to the Second Terrorism Circuit trial venue. The court rejected this request.

Calls for lifting the travel ban on Egyptian lawyer and ACIJLP Executive Director, Hoda Abdelwahab (March 2026)

Despite repeated calls for its removal, Hoda Abdelwahab—an Egyptian lawyer and Executive Director of the Arab Centre for the Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession (ACIJLP), a regional organization established in 1997 to promote judicial independence, the rule of law, and respect for human rights across Egypt and the Arab region—remains subject to a travel ban imposed a decade ago. The ban is linked to Case 173/2011 (commonly known as the “foreign funding case”), which was officially closed in March 2024. She is the only human rights defender still subject to the travel ban in connection with Case 173/2011.

Rights Organizations condemn SSSP’s use of summons and excessive bail (February 2026)

Over the past year, there has been a marked increase in the summoning of human rights defenders, journalists, and political figures for investigation before the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP), pointing to a broader pattern of intimidation. In some cases, summonses fail to specify the charges, while in others, they rely on broadly framed and repetitive accusations, including “spreading false news,” “misuse of social media,” or “joining or financing a terrorist group.” In several of cases, the SSSP has ordered release on disproportionately high bail, suggesting that bail is being used as a punitive measure rather than as an exceptional tool to ensure appearance before investigative or judicial authorities.

Activist Mohamed Adel faces assault amid worsening health and prolonged repression (January 2026)

Egyptian activist Mohamed Adel, a co-founder of the April 6 Youth Movement, has reportedly been subjected to assault, ill-treatment, and deteriorating health conditions while in prison, raising serious concerns among human rights organizations. On January 10, 2026, he was allegedly attacked by fellow detainees while officials failed to intervene, heightening fears for his safety. Rights groups have since called for accountability, pointing to broader patterns of due process violations and erosion of the rule of law in Egypt.

Civil society questions Egypt’s National Human Rights Council “A Status” accreditation (January 2026)

Human rights organizations have raised concerns over the decision by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions to maintain “A status” accreditation for Egypt’s National Council for Human Rights, arguing that the body lacks genuine independence and has failed to effectively address serious human rights violations. In a joint statement, civil society groups questioned the credibility of the accreditation process, warning that the decision appears to rely on promised reforms rather than demonstrated performance, despite longstanding concerns over the council’s autonomy and impact. They cautioned that upholding the top rating under these conditions risks undermining the integrity of international human rights standards and weakening confidence in the accreditation system.

Calls for the Immediate release of Dr. Abdelkhalek Farouk (October 2025)

Human rights organizations have called for the immediate release of Egyptian economist Abdelkhalek Farouk, who was sentenced to five years in prison following a trial widely criticized as lacking basic due process guarantees. Farouk was convicted on charges related to “spreading false news” after publishing articles critical of government economic policies, with reports indicating that key accusations were unfounded and that his defense team was denied full access to case materials. His arrest in 2024 and subsequent detention have also raised concerns over prison conditions and access to healthcare. The case is seen as part of a broader pattern of targeting critics and suppressing freedom of expression in Egypt.

Rights groups warn against Egypt’s UN Human Rights Council bid amid ongoing repression (September 2025)

A coalition of international and regional human rights organizations has urged United Nations member states to reject Egypt’s bid for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council, warning that its election would legitimize ongoing repression and undermine the credibility of the global human rights system. The groups argue that Egyptian authorities continue to commit widespread violations—including arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances, and restrictions on freedom of expression and association—while using international platforms to deflect accountability. They also highlight Egypt’s limited engagement with UN mechanisms and its rejection of the vast majority of reform recommendations, warning that granting it Council membership would risk emboldening further abuses and weakening international human rights standards.

Prisoner of conscience Alaa Abdel Fattah granted presidential pardon after six years of unjust imprisonment (September 2025)

Egyptian-British activist Alaa Abdel Fattah has been granted a presidential pardon after spending six years in prison, ending a detention widely criticized by human rights groups as unjust. Abdel Fattah had been serving a sentence linked to his peaceful expression, including a social media post, and his case drew sustained international attention and advocacy. His release is seen as a notable development amid ongoing scrutiny of Egypt’s human rights record, though concerns remain over the continued detention of other individuals jailed for exercising their fundamental freedoms.

Egyptian government’s flagrant refusal to halt widespread rights violations should be a wake-up call (July 2025)

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies has warned that Egypt’s response to a recent United Nations human rights review signals a continued refusal to address widespread abuses, with the government accepting only a small fraction of hundreds of recommendations aimed at improving its record. According to the group, authorities rejected or dismissed numerous calls to release political prisoners, end arbitrary arrests, halt torture, and ensure accountability for violations, while also denying or downplaying the existence of serious abuses. The outcome of the review is seen as reinforcing concerns that the government of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi intends to maintain its current approach, despite mounting international criticism, raising doubts about prospects for meaningful reform.

Rights Groups Urge Egypt to Free Dr. Salah Soltan and Other Wrongfully Detained Prisoners (July 2025)

Human rights organizations have called on Egyptian authorities to immediately release academic and U.S. lawful permanent resident Salah Soltan, who is being held in Badr 1 prison amid a serious medical crisis and alleged inadequate care, raising fears for his life after years of detention without sufficient treatment. The appeal comes in connection with Case No. 1766 of 2022, in which other critics of the government—including U.S. citizen Mohamed Soltan, sentenced in absentia to life in prison—were convicted, a move rights groups say reflects ongoing efforts to intimidate dissenters and their families. Signatories to the call also highlighted harsh conditions and due process deficiencies faced by others imprisoned under the case, and urged Egypt to overturn the convictions and free all individuals they regard as unjustly detained.

Detainees punished for protesting their detention in cruel conditions (March 2025)

In January 2025, a number of detainees at 10th of Ramadan (6) Prison started a hunger strike to demand

the release of individuals held in pretrial detention for more than six months, the right to outdoor exercise, full visitation rights, and the removal of the National Security Agency (NSA) officer in charge of the prison, whom they accuse of being abusive. In the aftermath of the strike, authorities transferred at least three detainees from 10th of Ramadan (6) Prison to prisons notorious for their harsh detention conditions, after punitively confiscating their personal belongings.

Civil society groups call for release of top Egyptian activist (September 2024)

Egyptian and international civil society groups called for the release of the country's most prominent activist, Alaa Abd el-Fattah, after his lawyer indicated that he would remain in detention until 2027. Egyptian-British software developer and blogger Abd el-Fattah had hoped to be freed, when he will have been imprisoned for five years since his latest detention in 2019. In 2021, he was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of spreading false news after sharing a social media post, but Abd el-Fattah's lawyer said this month that authorities were not planning to include his period of pretrial detention as counting towards his release.

Relatives of regime critics face state reprisal (February 2024)

The president of Egypt, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, was voted in for a third term after an election where he faced no serious challengers. The president was able to claim the top job after Egypt's constitution was amended in 2019, extending the presidential term to six years from four, and allowing Sisi to stand for a third term. The election, in which he took 89.6% of the vote, according to the National Election Authority, was held as Egypt struggles with a slow-burning economic crisis and tries to manage the risk of spillover from the Israel-Gaza war.

In Egypt, relatives of regime critics face state reprisal (August 2023)

The arrest of the Egyptian father of a German activist is the latest in an escalating trend of targeting families of outspoken activists to silence dissent, while the international community turns a blind eye. Protestors took to the streets in Frankfurt, Germany in front of the Egyptian General Consulate to protest the arbitrary detainment of German resident, Alaa Eladly. Eladly was arrested earlier this month upon landing in Cairo from Germany, where he currently resides with his family. Over 60 demonstrators held a silent protest with their demand clearly written on signs with the hashtag: #FreeAlaaEladly.

Leading Activists, Lawyers Pull Out of National Dialogue After Rights Advocate's Sentencing (July 2023)

At least three leading activists and lawyers have announced their withdrawal from the country's so-called "National Dialogue" after Egypt's emergency state security court sentenced human rights defender and academic Patrick George Zaki to three years in prison on trumped up charges, said Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN).

Independent civil society organizations at risk of closure after NGO deadline passes (April 2023)

Independent civil society groups may be forced to shut down in Egypt, further limiting the space for civic engagement and human rights activism in the country, Amnesty International said today, as the deadline for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to register under the repressive 2019 NGO law expires.

Harsh Sentences Against Rights Activists (March 2023)

The Egyptian authorities should overturn the harsh prison sentences imposed on March 5, 2023, following an unfair mass trial of 29 men and women solely because of their peaceful activism, Human Rights Watch said today.

Civil society groups report surveillance and intimidation at Cop27 (November 2022)

Members of civil society attending Cop27 have described how surveillance and intimidation by the Egyptian authorities is threatening their participation in the climate conference.

Egypt urged to ensure civil society's full participation in climate summit (October 2022)

Authorities in Egypt must ensure civil society can safely and fully participate in the COP27 UN climate change conference, a group of UN independent human rights experts has said. The main concerns of civil society activists are lack of information and transparent accreditation criteria for Egyptian NGOs, a

coordinated increase in hotel room rates, undue restrictions to freedom of peaceful assembly outside the conference venue, and unjustified delays in the provision of visas to those traveling from abroad.

ARCHIVED NEWS

[Egypt's leader ends state of emergency, says it's no longer needed](#) (October 2021)

[Egypt announces human rights strategy to mixed reviews](#) (September 2021)

[Judge drops charges against 4 NGOs in "foreign funding case"](#) (September 2021)

[At the UN, States criticize the human rights situation in Egypt](#) (March 2021)

[Egypt arrests leading human rights group's employees](#) (November 2020)

[Egypt uses terrorism trials to target human rights activists](#) (October 2020)

[Hundreds arrested on anniversary of 2019 anti-corruption protests](#) (September 2020)

["Targeting the Last Line of Defense: Egypt's Attacks against Lawyers"](#) (September 2020)

[Amnesty: Human rights defender handed outrageous 15-year prison sentence](#) (August 2020)

[Egypt moves toward toughening up draconian anti-terror law](#) (February 2020)

[Human rights organizations call on Egyptian authorities to cease restrictions on internet freedoms](#) (May 2020)

[Covid-19 Cover for New Repressive Powers](#) (May 2020)

[Egypt: Campaign against state's unlawful use of colonial-era Assembly Law continues despite courtroom defeat](#) (January 2020)

[Egypt police raid independent news outlet after journalist arrest](#) (November 2019)

[Egypt's Harsh Crackdown Quashes Protest Movement](#) (October 2019)

[Rights Groups Call for Immediate Release of Protesters](#) (September 2019)

[New NGO Law Renews Draconian Restrictions](#) (July 2019)

[Arrests Target Political Figures Involved in New Coalition to Run in 2020 Parliamentary Elections](#) (June 2019)

[Constitutional Amendments Entrench Repression](#) (April 2019)

[Egypt Tightens Restrictions on Media, Social Networks](#) (March 2019)

[Court acquits 43 defendants of all charges in NGO foreign funding case](#) (December 2018)

[Egypt MPs welcome President Sisi's call to amend controversial NGO law](#) (November 2018)

[Egypt Passes Law to Regulate Media as President Sisi Consolidates Power](#) (July 2018)

[Egyptian Parliament Approves Cybercrime Law](#) (June 2018)

[Egypt's parliament moves forward on anti-cybercrime law](#) (April 2018)

[Sentences annulled for 16 defendants in 2011 NGO foreign funding case, retrial ordered before criminal court](#) (April 2018)

[Censorship tightens in Egypt as el-Sisi prepares for re-election bid](#) (March 2018)

[Egypt's parliament approves three-month nationwide state of emergency](#) (October 2017)

[Protest cases to be tried in regular, not military court](#) (October 2017)

[Egypt extends its assault on freedom of expression by blocking dozens of websites](#) (August 2017)

[Egypt's President enacts law placing severe restrictions on aid groups](#) (May 2017)

[Egypt's President Al-Sisi Issues Controversial NGO Law](#) (May 2017)

[Egypt's state of emergency may act to further silence press](#) (April 2017)

[Rights lawyer jailed for 10 years, issued 5-year social media ban](#) (April 2017)

[Egypt's parliament regulates NGOs in law activists says is repressive](#) (November 2016)

[Egypt parliament finally approves new NGO law](#) (November 2016)

[New regulation mandates NGOs consult ministry security department on activities](#) (August 2016)

[Retaliation still continues against the backdrop of "Foreign Funding" case](#) (May 2016)

[Egypt human rights defender accused of belonging to terrorist group](#) (April 2016)

[UN experts urge Egypt to end ongoing crackdown on human rights defenders](#) (April 2016)

[Judge imposes gag order on NGO foreign funding case](#) (March 2016)

[Nazra for Feminist Studies summoned for investigation in re-opened NGO case](#) (March 2016)

[NGO case reopened against Hossam Bahgat, Gamal Eid and others](#) (March 2016)

[Rights lawyer accused of managing illegal operation](#) (March 2016)

[Egypt dissolves 57 NGOs for "\(Muslim\) Brotherhood ties"](#) (September 2015)

[Renewed Crackdown on Independent Groups](#) (June 2015)

[Detentions, terrorist incidents increased in the first quarter of 2015](#) (April 2015)

[Concerns over human rights and civil society discussed before UNHRC](#) (March 2015)

[Memorandum to the President from the CIHRS on the Constitution, Law, and the Emancipation of Civil Society](#) (September 2014)

[Egypt: Draft Law Threatens Independent Organizations](#) (July 2014)

[The Confiscation of Wasla: A Dangerous Escalation in Harassment of Human Rights](#) (June 2014)

[Egyptian president must reject flawed anti-terrorism laws](#) (April 2014)

[Rights groups outraged by the raid of ECESR](#) (December 2013)

[No Acknowledgment or Justice for Mass Protester Killings: Set Up a Fact-Finding Committee as a First Step](#) (December 2013)

[Egypt Warns Protesters Will Be Treated As Foreign Agents Ahead Of Military Celebrations](#) (October 2013)

[Egypt sentences American NGO workers to jail](#) (June 2013)

[NGO draft law 'strikes fear' into civil society](#) (June 2013)

[Ahmed Fahmi: NGO law fears unfounded](#) (May 2013)

[U.S. State Department Daily Press Briefing: Egypt's NGO Law](#) (April 2013)

[Statement on Repressive NGO Law](#) (February 2013)

[Court ruling to block YouTube is disproportionate and violates right to information](#) (February 2013)

[Final draft of NGO law sent to Cabinet](#) (February 2013)

[NGOs talk human rights violations with EU, US representatives](#) (February 2013)

[Problematic NGO law About to Be Enacted](#) (February 2013)

[Egyptian Lawyer on Trial for Working With 'Illegal Organization'](#) (January 2013)

[NGOs can apply to oversee Egypt parliament polls until 15 February: SEC](#) (January 2013)

[Mostly forgotten, Egyptian trial of US NGO workers drags on](#) (January 2013)

[Egypt's Constituent Assembly to become an NGO](#) (January 2013)

[NGOs reject Morsi's constitutional declaration](#) (December 2012)

[Demonstrations in Tahrir Call for Annulling Constitutional Declaration](#) (November 2012)

[Campaign assembles NGOs against draft constitution](#) (November 2012)

[Rights groups say excluded from EU talks](#) (November 2012)

[The nationalization of Egypt's civil society](#) (November 2012)

[Under new draft law foreign funding still requires permits](#) (October 2012)

[Egypt court to hear testimony in NGO foreign funding case in November](#) (October 2012)

[Fix draft Constitution to protect key rights](#) (October 2012)

[Civil society has its own draft law](#) (October 2012)

[Protection sought for political and non-governmental organizations](#) (October 2012)

[Arab League, OIC proposals out of step with progress on freedom of expression](#) (September 2012)

[Alarm raised over Egypt constitution](#) (September 2012)

[Intellectuals and rights advocates blast draft Egypt Charter on Freedoms](#) (September 2012)

[Government studies new law to regulate foreign capital](#) (September 2012)

[Rumors that judge of NGO case was sent to criminal court are false, say officials](#) (August 2012)

[Status of Muslim Brotherhood legal](#) (August 2012)

[US concerned about freedom of speech in Egypt, Bahrain](#) (August 2012)

[Funding for NGOs in decline following crackdown](#) (July 2012)

[NGOs see funding drying up as international donors grow scared](#) (June 2012)

[NGO case ruling could widen crackdown on civil society, says American defendant](#) (June 2012)

[Draft law will ensure Mubarak re-trial, MP Hamzawy](#) (June 2012)

[Trial of NGO workers set to resume in Egypt](#) (June 2012)

[NGO dispute means fewer monitors for Egypt vote](#) (May 2012)

[Representatives of NGOs reject new draft law](#) (April 2012)

[Joint press release by 25 Egyptian human rights organizations](#) (April 2012)

[U.S. pressing Interpol to deny Egypt's request to arrest NGO workers](#) (April 2012)

[Cairo refused LE21 million in foreign NGO funding since January 25th uprising](#) (March 2012)

[Recent opinions about the restrictions on CSOs in Egypt](#) (March 2012)

[American activists fly out of Egypt, defusing row](#) (March 2012)

[Egypt: Govt-U.S. standoff could hit 40,000 NGOs](#) (February 2012)

[Egypt judges in NGO funding trial resign](#) (February 2012)

[NGO workers could face 5 years in prison, Egyptian judges say](#) (February 2012)

[Egypt names 19 Americans to face trial on NGO funding](#) (February 2012)

[Egypt officials see end to U.S. NGO stand-off](#) (February 2012)

[NGOs reject draft law regulating their activity](#) (January 2012)

[Harassment in Egypt](#) (January 2012)

[HRW Statement: Dismantle Tools of Repression](#) (January 2012)

[Egypt's NGOs must be protected](#) (January 2012)

[U.S.-funded NGOs in Egypt 'shocked' by raid on offices, deny funding parties or groups](#) (January 2012)

[The military council's policy of exclusion and marginalization of institutions of civil society](#) (October 2011)

[Tough post-revolution reality for NGOs in Egypt](#) (October 2011)

[The Egyptian authorities should bring an end to attacks against civil society organizations](#) (October 2011)

[US defends aid as Egypt probes NGO foreign funding](#) (August 2011)

[Is Egypt considering a Freedom of Information law?](#) (June 2011)

[Human rights advocates want new constitution before elections](#) (June 2011)

[Human rights reform an urgent priority](#) (June 2011)

The foregoing information was collected by ICNL LLC Middle East / North Africa Regional office in Amman, Jordan.

Historical notes

From 2002 to 2017, CSOs in Egypt operated under the Law on Associations and Community Foundations (Law 84 of 2002) ([English](#)) ([Arabic](#)) and its Implementing Regulation (Ministry of Social Affairs [now

Ministry of Social Solidarity] Decree 178 of 2002). While highly restrictive, this law gave the Ministry of Social Solidarity and other government agencies enormous discretionary powers. These powers were selectively enforced to suppress organizations or individuals who challenged government “red lines” on social reform and political liberalization. Despite this, civil society expanded during this time and was large and vibrant by the time of the 2011 revolution.

After mass protests across Egypt led to the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, the country entered a period of political turbulence marked by annulled elections, shifting authorities, and legal uncertainty. In mid-2013, the military installed an interim government, which drafted a new constitution that was approved by referendum in January 2014. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was elected president in May 2014, and a new parliament was elected in December 2015.

In the years following the revolution, the government engaged in a more overt and sweeping crackdown on civil society. A criminal case initiated in 2011, targeting international organizations accused of receiving foreign funding without authorization, was revived and expanded in 2016 to include Egyptian CSOs. Since 2016, many of Egypt’s most prominent civil society leaders faced travel bans, asset freezes, detentions, and interrogations in connection with this case.

The crackdown was reinforced through new laws and regulations that imposed sweeping restrictions on the freedoms of association, assembly, and expression. Among the most severe:

- A 2013 law required prior authorization for public gatherings of more than ten people, effectively outlawing protests. Though amended in 2017 to grant the judiciary, rather than the Interior Ministry, final authority, the law remains highly restrictive.
- In 2014, the Penal Code was amended to increase penalties for organizations receiving foreign funding deemed to harm the “national interest,” “national sovereignty,” or “public peace.”
- Counterterrorism legislation passed in 2015 created an overly broad definition of “terrorist entities” that can encompass CSOs engaged in legitimate, peaceful advocacy activities.
- The 2018 cybercrimes law gave authorities the power to block websites deemed to threaten national security, effectively sanctioning the government’s ongoing practice of blocking websites, including those of CSOs and independent news platforms.

In 2017, the government also approved a draconian new law to govern CSOs. The restrictive new law, Law 70 on Associations and Other Foundations Working in the Field of Civil Work, imposed severe restrictions on CSOs’ formation, funding, activities, international engagement, and internal governance, while introducing harsh criminal penalties. The Law drew condemnation from Egyptian and international civil society, foreign governments, and UN bodies. However, the Law was never fully enforced due to the government’s failure to issue implementing regulations.

In November 2018, President el-Sisi publicly expressed support for revising Law 70. Following those remarks, a government committee drafted a new law, but the text was withheld from public scrutiny until it was submitted to Parliament, which passed it within a week. Law 149 of 2019 on the Regulation of the Exercise of Civil Work ([English](#)) ([Arabic](#)) was ratified by el-Sisi and published in August 2019.

While Law 149 eliminated the individual prison sentences included in Law 70, it retained most of its restrictive provisions, thus preserving an overall approach to civil society characterized by excessive government control. The Law imposed significant legal and administrative barriers to CSOs’ formation, activities, and access to both domestic and foreign funding. Despite government claims, Law 149 does not meet international standards for the protection of freedom of association. Instead, it entrenches legal and bureaucratic obstacles that prevent the emergence of a vibrant, independent civil society capable of contributing meaningfully to Egypt’s development and democratization.

Against this backdrop, the government launched a “National Dialogue” in May 2023, purportedly to bring together Egyptians from various sectors, including civil society, to discuss responses to the country’s political, social, and economic challenges. The process did not, however, result in a meaningful opening of civic space. Few human rights activists participated, and an August 2023 report setting out the Dialogue’s outcomes and recommendations did not substantively address key human rights and civic space concerns. CSOs remained required to register under Law 149 or risk dissolution, while organizations that did register continued to face onerous administrative requirements and broad restrictions on their activities. The Dialogue therefore did not lead to any significant reconsideration of the restrictive legal framework governing civil society.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER
FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LAW

<https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/egypt>