



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Country: Opposition to the state

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Executive summary

Since Abdel Fattah El-Sisi first took power in 2013, Egypt has seen a crackdown on political and media dissent against the government. Power has increasingly been centralised in the president's office, with the military having an increased role in governing the country. Parliament has little to no influence in forming and debating laws

The constitution allows for the formation of political parties. However, opposition or perceived criticism of the government is often met with harsh treatment by the authorities, including arbitrary arrests and detention, and unjust prosecution. Arrests and prosecution of activists over social media posts is common and dissenting voices are met with intolerance.

The law provides for freedom of expression, but this is restricted in practice. Reporters Without Borders described Egypt as 'one of the world's biggest jailers of journalists'. Journalists, activists, and others regularly faced criminal prosecution, arrest and detention in response to criticism of the government.

A person who is openly critical of the government is likely to be at risk of persecution or serious harm. Whether the person is at risk depends on a range of factors including but not limited to their profile, group they belong to (if any), their role within the group (if any), the nature of their activities, and whether the person came to the adverse attention of the authorities.

In the case of media workers, additional factors relevant to considering risk include the subject matter of their written or broadcast material, the profile of the media company or platform they work for, and the reach and frequency of the media platform they have contributed to.

Persons linked to a group which uses or incites violence may be subject to prosecution not persecution. This will be case specific, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that the treatment they face is persecutory.

There is no protection available, nor is internal relocation likely to be viable.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certified as clearly unfounded.

All claims must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that they face a risk of persecution or serious harm.

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Assessment

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is information in the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**:

- a person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state because of their actual or perceived opposition to the government
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- a grant of asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave is likely, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Some persons may claim to be linked to militant groups that have used or incited violence to achieve their political ends. Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.

- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed political opinion.
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3. Risk

- 3.1.1 In general, a person who is openly critical of the government is likely to be at risk of persecution or serious harm. Whether a person is at real risk of persecution or serious harm depends on
- their profile
 - the group they belong (if any)
 - their role (if any) in this group and the nature of their activities/comments.
 - whether or not the person came to the adverse attention of the authorities previously
 - profile and activities of family members who are perceived to be critical to the government.
- 3.1.2 Each case must be considered on its facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that they face such a risk.
- 3.1.3 Where the person claims to be linked to a group that is believed by the state government to be linked to committing or inciting violence, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, decision makers will need give careful consideration as to whether the state is pursuing prosecution or persecution. This will be case specific, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that the treatment they face is persecutory.
- 3.1.4 However, prosecution may amount to persecution if it involves victimisation

in its application by the authorities. For example, if it is the vehicle or excuse for persecution or if only certain groups are prosecuted for a particular offence and the consequences of that are sufficiently severe. Punishment which is cruel, inhumane or degrading (including that which is out of all proportion to the offence committed) may also amount to persecution.

- 3.1.5 President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi first took power in 2013 while serving as defence minister and head of the armed forces. He won the general election in 2018 in an unfair contest marred by irregularities. Since then he and the military have tightened their control over the state. Parliament is dominated by pro-government parties, the judiciary subservient to the executive and via the introduction of laws that restrict freedoms of assembly, association and expression, including broadly-defined anti-terror laws (see [Political context](#)).
- 3.1.6 Political parties (with the exception of those based on religion, including the Muslim Brotherhood), civil society organisations and media companies, as well as individual bloggers, human rights lawyers and activists, are allowed to form and operate as long as they are not considered to be undertaking oppositional activities to the state – in which case they can face closure, legal harassment or even detention.
- 3.1.7 Sources report that 1,000s - though the US State Department (USSD) noted that there was no confirmed number - of government critics or opponents have been arrested since President Sisi came to power and remain detained. However the BTI estimated there were 60,000 political prisoners, (see [Treatment in detention and custody](#)).
- 3.1.8 Human rights defenders, journalists, activists, and others faced criminal prosecution for what observers considered were expressing political views or criticism, groups listed above often face long periods in pre-trial detention or lengthy sentences. Torture is reported to be 'widespread' and 'systematic' in prisons. The UN Human Rights Committee raised concerns that political detainees may be subject to torture and other forms of ill-treatment. Rights groups claim the anti-terror laws have been used to deter criticism and silence dissent, and where persons have not been detained, have been used to freeze assets and impose travel bans (see [Treatment of actual or perceived government critics](#); [Treatment of media workers and bloggers](#); [Treatment of civil society](#), [Detention condition](#)).
- 3.1.9 Authorities continue to crack down on actual or perceived dissent and individuals can face arbitrary detention, unfair prosecution, and other harassment. While the law allows for the right to protest, this right is limited in practice. The security forces ban many marches, demonstrations and gatherings and have used excessive force to disperse peaceful demonstrations, and sometimes used mass arrest and detention (See [Treatment of protesters](#)).
- 3.1.10 Whilst the law provides for the right to a fair trial it is reported that the judiciary often fails to uphold this right. The UNHRC raised concerns regarding increased recourse to military courts and around use of the death penalty for crimes that don't meet the threshold of the "most serious crimes" (See [Judicial system, due process and fair trial](#)).
- 3.1.11 Additional factors to consider for media workers, including journalists and

bloggers, are:

- subject matter, tone and language of their written or broadcast material
- the profile of print, broadcast or online media which they work for and its position with regard to the state
- reach and frequency of publication or broadcast

- 3.1.12 Many Muslim Brotherhood (MB) members, particularly senior figures, have either been imprisoned, some sentenced to death, or are living in exile. However, while individual members of the MB continue to be arrested, there are no longer the mass arrests that took place following the removal of Mohamed Morsi as president in 2013. Persons who are identified with the group but who are not active may face arrest or other forms of harassment, such as losing their jobs (see [Treatment of political opposition groups](#)).
- 3.1.13 The government and its agents have a legitimate interest in pursuing and arresting persons who are, or are suspected of being, involved with or supporting violence and pose a threat to society. Persons fleeing legitimate prosecution or punishment for such acts are not likely to be refugees. Being of interest to the state or being arrested may not amount to having a well-founded fear of persecution (see [Treatment of actual or perceived government critics – general](#) and [Treatment of political opposition groups](#)).
- 3.1.14 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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4. Protection

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state they will not, in general, be able to obtain protection from the authorities
- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

About the country information

This contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment.

The structure and content of this section follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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section updated: 13 September 2023

7. Political context

- 7.1.1 The US Department of State (USSD) in their annual report on human rights in 2022 published 20 March 2023 (USSD human rights report 2022) noted 'According to its constitution, Egypt is a republic governed by an elected president and bicameral legislature, with the upper house reconstituted in 2020 as the Senate after a six-year absence. Officially the president is the head of state while the prime minister is appointed by the president as the head of government and appoints the cabinet. Presidential elections in 2018 saw challengers to incumbent President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi withdraw ahead of the election, citing personal decisions, political pressure, legal troubles, and unfair competition, and in some cases, they were arrested for alleged abuses of candidacy rules.'¹
- 7.1.2 Freedom House (FH) in their report covering events in 2022 (FH report 2022) noted 'President al-Sisi, who took power in a 2013 coup while serving as Egypt's defense minister and armed forces commander, has been elected only through unfair, noncompetitive contests. In the 2018 elections, Sisi received 97 percent of the votes after pressuring all opposition candidates to withdraw. The vote was marred by low turnout, the use of state resources and media to support Sisi's candidacy, voter intimidation, and vote buying. Constitutional amendments adopted in 2019 added two years to Sisi's current term, extending it through 2024, at which point he will be allowed to seek an additional six-year term. Future presidents will be limited to two six-year terms.'²
- 7.1.3 A US Congressional Research Service paper, Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations, updated 2 May 2023, based on a range of sources, (US CRS paper May 2023) observed 'Egypt's bicameral parliament consists of a 596-member House of Representatives (568 elected and 28 appointed by the president) and a 300-member Senate (200 of whom are elected, and 100 appointed by the president).'³

¹ USSD, '[2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices...](#)', (Executive summary), 20 March 2023

² FH, '[Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt](#)', (Section A-1) published in 2023

³ USCRS, '[Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations](#)' (page 13), 2 May 2023

7.1.4 The FH report 2022 noted

‘... the military and intelligence agencies dominate the political system, with most power and patronage flowing from [President] Sisi and his domestic allies in the armed forces and security agencies. Regional support from the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia helped stabilize the regime domestically and globally. Most of Egypt’s provincial governors are former military or police commanders. Vaguely worded 2019 constitutional amendments further strengthened the legal underpinnings of the military’s political influence, calling on it to “protect the constitution and democracy” for the sake of citizens’ rights that are not respected by Egyptian authorities.’⁴

7.1.5 The same report also noted

‘President Sisi and the security apparatus dominate the policymaking process. The parliament has neither a significant role in forming and debating laws, nor the ability to provide a meaningful check on executive power. Laws originating in Sisi’s cabinet receive parliamentary approval without meaningful contestation or deliberation. The 2019 constitutional amendments further consolidated Sisi’s authority and increased the military’s constitutional role in civilian governance and already considerable independence from civilian oversight. The amendments allow the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to permanently control the appointment of the defense minister, who is also the commander in chief.’⁵

7.1.6 The CRS paper of May 2023 commented:

‘President Abdel Fattah al Sisi’s tenure appears to have been predicated on the idea that a sufficient segment of the public, exhausted after several years of unrest and distrustful of Islamist rule, remains willing to forgo democratic liberties in exchange for the rule of a strongman hailing from the military. The extent to which Egyptians’ political quiescence reflects endorsement of military rule or strategic silence in the face of suppression is impossible to quantify, given the closed political environment enforced by the current government... While successive Egyptian presidents since 1952 were effective at centralizing power, both within the ruling system and outside it, certain institutions (judiciary, military) and individuals enjoyed a considerable degree of independence from the executive. However, under President Sisi, there has been arguably an unprecedented attempt to consolidate control over all branches of government while stymying opposition to his rule. In April 2019, voters approved amendments to the constitution that extend President Sisi’s current term until 2024 and permit him to run for a third term, potentially keeping him in office until 2030. The amendments also granted the president the authority to appoint all chief justices of Egyptian judicial bodies and the public prosecutor.’⁶

7.1.7 BTI, in their 2022 report covering the period 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2021 stated: ‘Constitutional amendments in April 2019 curbed the independence of the judiciary, while further centralizing power in the

⁴ FH, [‘Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt’](#), (Section B-3) published in 2023

⁵ FH, [‘Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt’](#), (Section C-1) published in 2023

⁶ USCRS, [‘Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations’](#) (page 12-13), 2 May 2023

president's office and effectively placing the military above the constitution.⁷

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8. 2020 election

- 8.1.1 US Congressional Research Service paper, Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations, updated 2 May 2023, based on a range of sources, (US CRS paper May 2023) observed

'Parliamentary elections took place in late 2020 amidst a turnout estimated at less than 30%. Mostaqbal Watan (translated as either Future of the Homeland or Nation's Future)... emerged as the leading pro-Sisi party, with 316 seats in the House. When parliament began its work in early 2021, it featured the most women legislators in Egypt's history. Egyptian lawmakers overwhelmingly support the president's legislative agenda, as Mostaqbal Watan has become the successor to the now-defunct National Democratic Party (NDP), the former pro-government party of the late Hosni Mubarak. According to one observer, "Sisi's circle is presenting a democratic, pluralistic picture of this outcome, but in truth the legislature will be dominated by one major party surrounded by small parties that serve as window dressing, thereby mimicking an opposition just enough to occasionally channel the public's frustration at socioeconomic conditions. This is straight from the Mubarak playbook."... The next parliamentary elections are expected to take place in 2025'⁸

- 8.1.2 The USSD' human rights report 2022 noted

'Election observers documented visible judicial supervision, a tight security presence, and COVID-19 precautions in place. Local media noted higher than expected participation by women and youth voters. One political coalition alleged instances of vote rigging and bribery that advantaged an opponent political party during the House of Representatives' elections. Some opposition parties questioned the official figures for youth turnout, especially in poorer areas, and claimed young persons were bussed in to vote. No significant acts of violence or disturbances to the election processes were observed.'⁹

- 8.1.3 The Bertelsmann Stiftung (BTI), a German non-profit think tank, in their 2022 report covering the period 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2021 noted

'In theory, the 2014 constitution reduced the power of the executive and strengthened the legislature. However, the parliament elected in 2020 is as weak as the one elected in 2015. Members are almost exclusively regime supporters, whose fate is highly dependent on the backing of the president, the military and the security apparatus. Accordingly, the parliament only very occasionally expresses criticism of the government. Its main role is to approve and implement the executive's initiatives, not to monitor or provide a balance of power.'¹⁰

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⁷ BTI, '[2022 Country Report — Egypt. Gütersloh: Bertels...](#)', (Executive summary) 23 February 2022

⁸ USCRS, '[Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations](#)' (page 13), 2 May 2023

⁹ USSD, '[Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt](#)', (Section 3) 20 March 2023

¹⁰ BTI, '[2022 Country Report — Egypt. Gütersloh: Bertels...](#)', (Executive summary) 23 February 2022

9. Political and civil rights

9.1 Assembly and association rights

9.1.1 The USSD human rights report 2022 noted:

‘The constitution provides for freedom of assembly “according to notification regulated by law.” The demonstrations law includes an expansive list of prohibited activities, authorizing the Ministry of Interior to prohibit or curtail planned demonstrations. Domestic and international human rights organizations asserted the law did not meet international standards regarding freedom of assembly. A government-imposed exclusion zone prohibits protests within 2,600 feet (790 meters) of vital governmental institutions.

‘The Prison Regulation Law prevents the conditional release of those convicted of crimes relating to freedom of assembly, among other crimes.’¹¹

9.1.2 The FH report 2022 noted: ‘Though the constitution guarantees the right to free assembly, the Interior Ministry can legally ban, postpone, or relocate protests with a court’s approval. Unauthorized gatherings of 10 or more people can be dispersed forcefully. Protest organizers must inform police of their plans at least three days in advance.’¹²

9.1.3 The USSD human rights report 2022 also noted:

‘The constitution provides for freedom of association; however, the law governing associations and government practices significantly restrict this right.

‘A 2019 law governing NGOs eliminated prison sentences as penalties and removed formal oversight roles for security and intelligence authorities. Executive regulations clarifying the law in 2021 stated that NGOs would have exclusive access to and control of NGO funds as well as procedural protections, such as impartial administrative and judicial appeal mechanisms. The 2019 law stipulates that NGOs are established through notification; however, the executive regulations require NGOs to provide extensive data to register with authorities, including information on founders and planned activities. All NGOs must receive the approval of the Ministry of Social Solidarity to register, receive funding, or conduct activities. Further, international NGOs are required to receive approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to register to operate.

‘In April [2022] the president ratified a legislative amendment to the NGO law extending the previous deadline for organizations to register with the government until October. The deadline was extended a second time in October until April 2023. In August a group of leading human rights defenders called for review of the NGO registration law and associated administrative decisions through the National Dialogue...’¹³

9.1.4 The FH report 2022 stated: ‘A 2019 law constrains the activities of NGOs

¹¹ USSD, [‘2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices...’](#), (section 2B), 20 March 2023

¹² FH, [‘Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt’](#), (Section E1) published in 2023

¹³ USSD, [‘2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices- Egypt’](#), (section 2B), 20 March 2023

deemed to threaten national security, public morals, and public order and imposes onerous reporting requirements and intrusive monitoring systems. Punishments for violations of the law are severe.’¹⁴ The report also noted ‘The government only recognizes unions affiliated with the state-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation.’¹⁵

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9.2 Political participation

9.2.1 The USSD human rights report 2022 stated ‘The constitution states that citizens have the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage, but significant constraints on freedom of expression, association, and assembly limited citizens’ ability to do so.’¹⁶

9.2.2 The FH report 2022 noted:

‘While electoral laws provide an ostensible basis for credible elections, electoral authorities fail to ensure an open and competitive campaign environment. The board of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) consists of senior judges drawn from some of Egypt’s highest courts, who serve six-year terms. The NEC’s establishing legislation phases out direct judicial supervision of elections by 2024, which critics argue will further damage the integrity of elections and reduce public trust in the results.’¹⁷

9.2.3 On the subject of the formation of political parties, the USSD human rights report 2022 noted:

‘The constitution grants citizens the ability to form, register, and operate political parties. The law requires new parties to have a minimum of 5,000 members from each of at least 10 governorates. The constitution also states that political activity may not be practiced nor a political party formed on the basis of religion or discrimination based on gender or origin. No activity that is “hostile to democratic principles, secretive, or of military or quasi-military nature may be practiced.” Political parties may not be dissolved except by a court judgment. Rights groups asserted that existing electoral practices contravened these provisions. The Freedom and Justice Party, the political wing of the banned Muslim Brotherhood, and the Islamist Building and Development Party remained banned. Authorities did not ban other Islamist parties, including the Strong Egypt Party.’¹⁸

9.2.4 Freedom House (FH) in their report Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt, published in 2023 noted: ‘Political parties are legally allowed to form and operate... Parties formed based on religion are forbidden. While some Islamist parties still operate in a precarious legal position, the Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed in 2013 as a terrorist organization, and its political party was banned.’¹⁹

¹⁴ FH, ‘[Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt](#)’, (Section E2) published in 2023

¹⁵ FH, ‘[Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt](#)’, (Section E3) published in 2023

¹⁶ USSD, ‘[2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices- Egypt](#)’, (Section 3) 20 March 2023

¹⁷ FH, ‘[Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt](#)’, (Section A-3) published in 2023

¹⁸ USSD, ‘[2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Egypt](#)’, (Section 3) 20 March 2023

¹⁹ FH, ‘[Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt](#)’, (Section B1) published in 2023

- 9.2.5 The US [CIA World Factbook](#) provides a list of political parties and their leaders.

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9.3 Freedom of expression

- 9.3.1 The USSD human rights report 2022 observed:

‘The constitution provides for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, allowing “limited censorship in times of war or public mobilization”; however, the government frequently did not respect this right... According to the law, newspapers are required to print their issues at licensed printing houses registered with the Supreme Council for Media Regulation; news websites must host their servers in the country; newspapers must submit 20 copies of each printed issue to the council; and news websites and television outlets must keep copies of all published or broadcast material online for one year and submit a copy of their published or broadcast material to the council every month. The law also prohibits any recording, filming, or interviews in public places with the intention of broadcasting them on a media outlet without a permit issued by the council.’²⁰

- 9.3.2 The USSD also stated: ‘Under the law, the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR) is an independent body with members selected by the president to regulate the media sector. The SCMR issues licenses for media outlets and websites, has the authority to block websites, and monitors media funding and content... The law considers websites and social media accounts with at least 5,000 subscribers to be media outlets, requires them to pay a licensing fee, and grants the SCMR broad discretion to block their content. In April the SCMR issued 12 decisions to close and block websites, social media accounts, YouTube channels and the application, stating that these platforms violated media codes and standards or were not properly licensed in accordance with a 2018 law regulating the press and media. The justifications for the decisions included allegations of broadcasting “false news,” inciting violence and hatred, and insulting individuals or religious beliefs.’²¹

- 9.3.3 The FH report 2022 noted:

‘Multiple laws allow authorities to censor online content without judicial approval and block any website considered to be a threat to national security—a broad stipulation that is vulnerable to abuse. Since 2017, Egyptian authorities have banned hundreds of websites, and continued to do so in 2022. Penal-code amendments passed in 2021 tightened punishments for journalists who cover criminal trial sessions without prior approval and toughened penalties for disclosing classified information. The amendments also increased potential fines and allow for prison terms between six months and five years for these offenses.’²²

- 9.3.4 With regard to online media, the USSD human rights report 2022 stated:

²⁰ USSD, [‘2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices...’](#), (section 2A), 20 March 2023

²¹ USSD, [‘2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices...’](#), (section 2A), 20 March 2023

²² FH, [‘Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt’](#), (Section D1) published in 2023

‘The constitution prohibits the government from “arbitrarily” interrupting, disconnecting, or depriving citizens seeking to use all forms of internet communications.

‘Telecommunications services and internet service providers are regulated under the telecommunication regulation law by the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, which is not independent of the government. The government centralized control of the internet infrastructure and fiber-optic cables, including restricting and disrupting user access and censoring online content.

‘... The counterterrorism law criminalizes the use of the internet to “promote ideas or beliefs that call for terrorist acts” or to “broadcast what is intended to mislead security authorities or influence the course of justice in relation to any terrorist crime.” The law also authorizes the public prosecutor and investigators to monitor and record online communications among suspects in terrorism cases for a period of 30 days, renewable in 30-day increments. The law does not specify a maximum period for this surveillance.

‘The cybercrime law broadly empowers investigating authorities to order the blocking of any website whose content they determine is criminal or “poses a threat to national security or endangers the security or economy of the country.”’²³

- 9.3.5 PEN International (UK) a charity based in UK, in their report ‘Egypt: hostage-like arrests, retaliatory defamation charges and intimidation of journalists are recent tactics to quash freedom of expression ahead of the 2024 presidential election’ published 31 August 2023 stated

‘Over recent days, Egyptian authorities have embarked on a fierce crackdown on freedom of expression and freedom of the press, using defamation charges against opposition figures, arresting independent journalists because of their work, and taking family members of exiled journalists hostage in a bid to silence them. This comes amid preparations for the 2024 presidential elections, whose fairness Egyptian human rights groups have questioned due to the structural challenges and the climate of fear the president Al-Sisi administration is enforcing’²⁴

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9.4 Laws extended from state of emergency

9.4.1 The USSD human rights report 2022 noted

‘In 2021 President Sisi ended a state of emergency but ratified legislation providing similar powers, including allowing the president to take “appropriate measures” not to exceed six months to maintain public order and security (e.g., curfews or forced evacuations) in the event of a natural disaster or terrorism event, and authorizing the military to assist local authorities in protecting critical infrastructure. In April President Sisi reactivated the Presidential Pardon Commission, leading to the release of 850-1,000 political prisoners through the end of the year, according to estimates by local human rights organizations and members of the

²³ USSD, [‘2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices...’](#), (section 2A), 20 March 2023

²⁴ PEN International (UK), [‘Egypt: hostage-like arrests, retaliatory defamation char...’](#) 31 August 2023

9.5 Counter terrorism law

- 9.5.1 The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), a human rights NGO based in Tunisia that publishes information related to human rights in the Arab world²⁶, in their report titled ‘A Crisis by Design The Systemic Nature of Human Rights Violations in Egypt’ published January 2023 (CIHRS report 2023) noted

‘Several laws were enacted and amended following 30 June 2013, aiming to preserve “national security” and combat “terrorism” without including precise definitions of these terms. These laws continue to be used to license human rights violations. The Counter-Terrorism Law (94/2015) was among several laws amended in February 2020 and November 2021, in violation of international laws and treaties. Security forces were further enabled by the amended Counter-Terrorism law to commit with impunity crimes of enforced disappearance, torture, and extrajudicial killing.’²⁷

- 9.5.2 CIHRS report 2023 also noted

‘The Terrorist Entities Law (8/2015) has been used to obstruct the work of activists and independent organizations by adding them to terrorist lists, on the basis of security investigations absent any credible or impartial investigative process. In February 2020, parliament approved the amendment of the Terrorist Entities Law, which allows for the inclusion of companies, unions, associations, organizations and other entities on the terrorist lists and the consequent procedures, such as the freezing of funds or assets owned by the entity or its members or shared in joint ownership.’²⁸

- 9.5.3 The Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) a NGO registered in Egypt noted

‘Terrorist list decisions are mostly based on investigations by national security, which included allegations against some individuals of involvement in funding the Muslim Brotherhood. In other cases, inclusion in terrorist lists was based on final verdicts against some individuals in terrorism-related cases. This reflects the ongoing utilization of counter-terrorism laws by the Supreme State Security Prosecution, which broadly define terrorism, to repeatedly target thousands of peaceful government opponents while depriving them of fair trial guarantees. At the same time, the prosecution has failed to initiate serious investigations into the crimes of enforced disappearance and torture, while the courts rely upon confessions coerced under torture and mistreatment.’²⁹

- 9.5.4 UN Human Rights Committee in their Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Egypt with regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights dated 14 April 2023, (UNHRC report 2023) noted

²⁵ USSD, [‘2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices...’](#), (Executive summary), 20 March 2023

²⁶ CIHRS, [‘About us’](#), undated

²⁷ CIHRS, [‘A Crisis by Design The Systemic Nature of Human Rights...’](#), (Paragraph 41) January 2023

²⁸ CIHRS, [‘A Crisis by Design The Systemic Nature of Human Rights...’](#), (Paragraph 41) January 2023

²⁹ AFTE, [‘Egypt: 1526 citizens on terrorism lists for an additional five years further...’](#) 18 May 2023

‘Recalling its previous recommendations, and noting the State party’s need to take measures to combat terrorism, the Committee remains concerned by the excessively broad and vague definitions of terrorism set out in Act No. 94 of 2015 (Counter-Terrorism Act) and Act No. 8 of 2015 regulating the list of terrorist entities and terrorists (Terrorist Entities Act), including such definitions as “harming national unity” and “disturbing the public order”, and the expanded range of offences subject to the death penalty under counter-terrorism laws. The Committee is concerned by reports that these laws are used, in combination with restrictive legislation on fundamental freedoms, to silence actual or perceived critics of the Government, including peaceful protesters, lawyers, journalists, political opponents and human rights defenders.’³⁰

9.5.5 The USSD human rights report 2022 observed

‘The law provides a broad definition of terrorism, to include “any act harming national unity or social peace.” Human rights observers noted that authorities regularly used the ambiguous definition to stifle nonviolent speech and nonviolent opposition activity’³¹

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9.6 Judicial system, due process and fair trial

9.6.1 The CIHRS report 2023 noted that

‘Egypt received nineteen recommendations [through the 2019 Universal Periodic Review process] related to the right to fair and just trials and accepted only nine of them, including on reducing pretrial detention periods, guaranteeing access to justice and due legal procedures, and taking necessary measures to ensure access to a lawyer and consular assistance for non-nationals. The government rejected ten recommendations on ending military trials of civilians and mass trials, and guaranteeing a fair trial for those sentenced to death. Human rights organizations documented frequent violations through the terrorism circuits of criminal courts and the emergency state security courts. Pretrial detention periods are indefinitely extended on a routine basis, as a retaliatory tactic against political opponents and human rights defenders.’³²

9.6.2 The USSD human rights report 2022 noted that

‘The law provides for the right to a fair and public trial, but the judiciary often failed to uphold this right... According to human rights groups, defendants sometimes faced: difficulties in getting sufficient information concerning the charges and accusations in their case, long delays before commencing a trial, pro forma hearings limiting their ability to mount an effective defense, and limited communication with their attorneys while in detention. Legal observers and rights groups indicated lawyers were sometimes denied sufficient access to detained clients and did not always have the required access to evidence and files against the accused... Military courts are not open to the public. Defendants in military courts nominally enjoyed the same

³⁰ UNHRC, ‘[Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of...](#)’ (paragraph 13) 14 April 2023

³¹ USSD, ‘[2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices...](#)’, (section 2A), 20 March 2023

³² CIHRS, ‘[A Crisis by Design The Systemic Nature of Human Rights...](#)’, (Paragraph 30) January 2023

fair-trial assurances as those in civilian courts, but the military judiciary has wide discretion to curtail these rights on public security grounds and regularly did so. Military courts often tried defendants in a matter of hours, frequently in groups, and sometimes without access to an attorney, leading lawyers and NGOs to assert military courts did not meet basic standards of due process and undermined fair-trial assurances.’³³

- 9.6.3 Amnesty International noted in its annual report covering the human rights situation in 2022 noted “Authorities denied prisoners access to adequate healthcare and imposed undue restrictions or barred contact with the outside world, in some cases deliberately to punish dissent. Authorities imposed on all detainees in Badr 3 prison a blanket ban on family and lawyer visits and written correspondence.’³⁴

- 9.6.4 In its report ‘Egypt’s ‘decade of shame’: Unrelenting assault on human rights since Rabaa massacre’ published 14 August 2023, AI provided further detail regarding due process in detention

“Fair trial guarantees were further eroded in 2022 when the authorities introduced a new videoconference system to conduct pretrial detention hearings in front of courts remotely, with detainees not physically present in the same courtroom as judges and lawyers. In May 2023, this system was extended to interrogations by prosecutors of newly arrested suspects. Such hearings take place under coercive circumstances in the presence of prison guards, and detainees are prevented from communicating privately with their lawyers. Further, they expose detainees to risks of reprisals from guards for complaining about torture or other ill-treatment, and impede the ability of judges to notice visible bruises or other injuries.’³⁵

- 9.6.5 The same report noted in relation to the death penalty ‘Since the ousting of Mohamed Morsi in 2013, Egyptian authorities have used the death penalty as a tool of repression to consolidate their grip on power, punish opponents and spread fear. Over the past decade, courts have imposed more than 4,000 death sentences, and over 400 people have been executed, mostly following grossly unfair mass trials.’³⁶

- 9.6.6 The same AI report further stated that

‘Enforced disappearances have plagued Egypt for the past decade as the NSA and other security forces routinely hold those accused of involvement in terrorism or protests incommunicado and deny any information about their fate and whereabouts to their relatives and lawyers for periods ranging from a few days to 23 months, according to Amnesty International’s documentation. During this time, detainees are tortured and otherwise ill-treated, and coerced into “confessing” or incriminating others. Secret NSA reports, to which suspects and lawyers do not have access, are then used as evidence in prosecutions and trials, amid the abject failure of the SSSP to investigate allegations of enforced disappearance and torture.’³⁷

³³ USSD, [‘2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices...’](#), (Section 1E), 20 March 2023

³⁴ AI, [‘Report on the human rights...’](#), (Arbitrary detention...), 27 March 2023

³⁵ AI, [‘Egypt’s ‘decade of shame’: Unrelenting assault on human rights...’](#) (Section 3), 14 August 2023

³⁶ AI, [‘Egypt’s ‘decade of shame’: Unrelenting assault on human rights...’](#) (Section 4), 14 August 2023

³⁷ AI, [‘Egypt’s ‘decade of shame’: Unrelenting assault on human rights...’](#), (Section 8) 14 August 2023

9.6.7 UN OHCHR in their report ‘Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Egypt’, dated 14 April 2023 noted

‘The Committee remains deeply concerned that domestic law punishes with the death penalty a high number of crimes, including non-violent crimes that do not meet the threshold of the “most serious crimes” within the meaning of article 6 (2) of the Covenant and that the death penalty is mandatory for certain crimes. The Committee is also very concerned about allegations of instances in which death sentences have been imposed on the basis of confessions obtained under duress or torture, or in the context of trials that did not meet the standards of article 14 of the Covenant, including mass trials and trials in military and Emergency State Security Courts, the latter of which can hand down the death penalty without the right of appeal. Notwithstanding the oral assurances provided by the delegation that the death penalty was not imposed upon children, the Committee is concerned by reports that children have been sentenced to death in the context of mass trials as co-defendants with adults in circumstances requiring that they be tried jointly.’³⁸

9.6.8 The same report noted

‘The Committee is concerned by the increased jurisdiction of and prevalent recourse to emergency courts and military courts to prosecute individuals under overly broad provisions of counter-terrorism legislation and other laws. The Committee is concerned that thousands of perceived critics and opponents, including children, have been tried and convicted in such courts in trials, including mass trials, that do not adhere to the procedural safeguards and fair trial guarantees provided for under articles 9 and 14 of the Covenant. The Committee is concerned by the frequent application of the death penalty by such courts; that sentences issued by Emergency State Security Courts cannot be appealed; and that sentences issued by military courts may be appealed only to the Supreme Military Court of Appeals presided over by a military judge appointed directly by the Minister of Defence and subject to the military chain of command and disciplinary procedures...’³⁹

9.6.9 In January 2023, France 24 reported that

‘An Egyptian court on Sunday handed down life prison sentences to 38 people, including a self-exiled businessman whose social media posts helped to spark anti-government protests...

‘Twenty-three of those who got life terms were tried in absentia, including Ali, according to an Egyptian criminal court handling terrorism-related cases.

‘The court also sentenced 44 others including children to terms ranging from five to 15 years in prison over the same charges. Twenty-one were acquitted, according to defense lawyer Ossama Badawi.

‘Those sentenced were convicted of a set of charges that included inciting violence against security forces and state institutions. The case stemmed from the 2019 protests in the port city of Suez that sits at the mouth of the

³⁸ UNHRC, [‘Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of...’](#) (paragraph 21) 14 April 2023

³⁹ UNHRC, [‘Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of...’](#) (paragraph 39) 14 April 2023

Suez Canal.

'Authorities arrested hundreds of people at the time in Cairo and across the country. Many were released but others were referred to trials.

Rights groups have repeatedly criticized such mass sentencings in Egypt and called on authorities to ensure fair trials.'⁴⁰

9.6.10 Human Rights Watch, in its submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in July 2023 noted

'Under the government of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the Egyptian police, the National Security Agency, and military officials have arbitrarily arrested, forcibly disappeared, and tortured children as young as 12 while prosecutors and judges have turned a blind eye and unjustly kept children in custody in abusive conditions, including with adults... These practices were part of the nationwide crackdown on dissent since the military forcibly removed elected President Mohamed Morsy in July 2013....

'Egypt failed to enforce provisions of its Child Law and its amendments that should establish special protections for children, such as alternatives to detention and penalties for officials who detain children alongside adults... These provisions were systematically violated. In addition, authorities have routinely kept children in prolonged pretrial detention, sometimes up to months or years, against established international children's rights and due process guarantees.'⁴¹

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9.7 Accountability

9.7.1 In its report 'Egypt's 'decade of shame': Unrelenting assault on human rights since Rabaa massacre' published 14 August 2023, AI stated that

'...the authorities have consistently failed in the past decade to conduct independent, effective and transparent investigations into crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations, such as extrajudicial executions, torture and other ill-treatment, and enforced disappearances, including in cases where relatives of victims and detainees complained directly to prosecutors or judges. No adequate investigations have been carried out into the causes and circumstances of the dozens of deaths in custody reported since 2013. Even in the rare cases when criminal prosecutions have been opened into suspicious deaths in custody, usually against low-ranking police officials, accountability has remained elusive. For instance, two police officials convicted of torturing to death lawyer Karim Hamdy in Mattareya police station in 2015 were acquitted on retrial and released in March 2017. In other cases documented by Amnesty International, authorities prosecuted those reporting torture instead of opening investigations into their claims.'⁴²

9.7.2 The USSD human rights report noted that 'Local and international rights groups reported instances of persons tortured to death and other allegations

⁴⁰ France 24, '[Egypt sentences 38 people to life in prison over 2019 protests](#)', 15 January 2023

⁴¹ HRW, '[Egypt: Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of th...](#)', 6 July 2023

⁴² AI, '[Egypt's 'decade of shame': Unrelenting assault on human rights...](#)', 14 August 2023

of killings in prisons and detention centers by security forces. The Public Prosecutor's Office charged, prosecuted, and convicted perpetrators in a small number of cases, but lack of accountability remained a serious problem.⁴³

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section updated: 13 September 2023

10. Treatment of actual or perceived government critics - general

10.1.1 The information in this section refers to critics in general, which may include members of the political opposition, civil society, lawyers (defending opponents in court), journalists and other media workers, and bloggers/online influencers. Where sources refer to specific groups, this information has been placed in the relevant sections below.

10.1.2 The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in its annual report on human rights in 2022 (FCDO report 2022) observed

'In Egypt, 2022 saw ongoing challenges for civil society; restrictions on freedom of expression, including media and digital freedom... However, there was some progress with a number of political prisoners released during the year following the reinstatement of the Presidential Pardon Committee in April, and the announcement of a new national dialogue for political reform.

'The announcement of the national dialogue in April marked a potential change by the Egyptian government, promising an opening up of political space. Although an executive committee was formed, the dialogue failed to happen in 2022. However, the reinstated Presidential Pardon Committee did have a tangible impact, and over 1,000 individuals were reported to have been released by December, including the prominent politician Ziad El-Elaimy... Detained since 2019, El-Elaimy was sentenced to 5 years in prison last year on charges of spreading false news, and his pardon was a major concession by the regime.

'However, new – although notably less high profile – arrests overshadowed those released. Figures received from the Egyptian Centre for Rights and Freedoms reported over 2,700 politically motivated arrests over the same period... Many were held in pre-trial detention as the Egyptian authorities continued to use anti-terrorism legislation to keep human rights defenders (HRDs) detained for the 2-year limit, at which point they applied new charges. Often detainees were held in poor conditions. Egypt Watch recorded there had been at least 48 deaths in detention in 2022... For those who were freed, many were subject to asset freezes and travel bans, including Karim Ennarah of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights.'⁴⁴

10.1.3 Amnesty International (AI) in their report 'Egypt: "Disconnected from reality": Egypt's National Human Rights Strategy covers up human rights crisis', published on 21 September 2022 noted

'The Egyptian authorities have... [used] Emergency State Security Courts

⁴³ USSD, '[2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices...](#)' (Section 1A), 20 March 2013

⁴⁴ FCDO, '[Human rights report 2022](#)' (Egypt), 13 July 2023

(ESSC), activated when the state of emergency is in place, where proceedings are inherently unfair, and whose rulings are not subject to appeal, only ratification by the President... Since 2017, thousands including activists, protesters and human rights defenders have been convicted by ESSCs, and sentenced to long prison terms and the death penalty, following grossly unfair trials... In the three months preceding the October 2021 lifting of the state of emergency, the Egyptian authorities referred at least 29 human rights defenders, lawyers, activists and opposition politicians to trial before emergency courts.⁴⁵

10.1.4 The AI report on events in 2022 noted

‘After the president announced the reactivation of the Presidential Pardons Committee (PPC) in April, authorities ordered the release of 895 people held for political reasons and dozens of others for failure to pay debts. Security forces refused to release at least 33 of them, unlawfully summoned others for questioning and threatened to re-arrest them for speaking out. Activist Sherif al-Rouby was released in May and re-arrested in September after he publicly complained about hardships facing former prisoners. Security forces arbitrarily banned from travelling human rights lawyer Mahinour el-Masry, researcher Ahmed Samir Santawy and others released in 2022.’⁴⁶

10.1.5 AI also noted

‘While not directly mentioned in the NHRS (National Human Rights Strategy), President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi called for the reactivation of the Presidential Pardons Committee on 26 April 2022 to re-examine the situation of individuals detained for political reasons and for failure to pay debts, and for a national dialogue with the opposition. The move followed the releases of 85 arbitrarily detained individuals, amid promises to release hundreds of other “political prisoners”. Concerns remain around the role of security forces in decisions over the release of prisoners, as confirmed by a committee member in media interviews... and the exclusion of those accused of “terrorism”. In practice, this could lead to the exclusion of thousands who have been held in pretrial detention on bogus terrorism related accusations as well as prominent members and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood and other high-profile activists who played a key role in the 25 January Revolution and who have been subjected to particularly punitive and discriminatory treatment in detention.’⁴⁷

10.1.6 The UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) noted in its March 2023 concluding observations on Egypt as part of a cyclical review of civil and political rights

‘... The Committee is deeply concerned at the reportedly systematic use of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment at the hands of law enforcement personnel. The Committee is concerned at reports that torture and ill-treatment are prevalent within places of deprivation of liberty, and that such acts are widely practised by police and State Security services during the arrest, interrogation and investigation phases, often as a method of coercion to elicit information or to punish or intimidate opponents and critics,

⁴⁵ AI, [‘Egypt: “Disconnected from reality”: Egypt’s National...’](#) (Paragraph 6.1), 21 September 2022

⁴⁶ AI, [‘Report on the human rights...’](#), (Arbitrary detention and unfair trials), 27 March 2023

⁴⁷ AI, [‘Egypt: “Disconnected from reality”: Egypt’s National Human...’](#) (page 20), 21 September 2022

despite constitutional and legislative guarantees'⁴⁸

10.1.7 The AI report of 2022 also noted 'Thousands of actual or perceived government critics or opponents remained arbitrarily detained and/or unjustly prosecuted. No adequate investigations were carried out into at least 50 suspicious deaths in custody involving reports of denial of adequate healthcare or torture. Death sentences were handed down after grossly unfair trials and executions were carried out.'⁴⁹

10.1.8 The above report also commented 'Authorities added 620 people, including detained journalists and opposition politicians, to their "list of terrorists" without due process, effectively banning them from engaging in civic or political work or travelling abroad for five years.'⁵⁰

10.1.9 The Freedom House report 2022 noted

'Individuals who express personal views contrary to preferred state narratives are subject to reprisals. Security agencies extensively survey and tightly regulate social media companies and users, as well as other mobile phone applications, allowing them to control public discourse. Arrests of activists over social media posts and other activities are common and send a clear message that voicing dissent is intolerable, which contributes to self-censorship among ordinary Egyptians. Dozens of Egyptian activists, rights defenders, and journalists have been targeted by digital phishing attacks as part of an apparent campaign to intimidate and silence critics of the government. Moreover, authorities have targeted content creators on social media platforms, most notably TikTok, charging them with various spurious crimes. Progovernment media figures and state officials regularly call for national unity and suggest that only enemies of the state would criticize authorities.'⁵¹

10.1.10 The USSD human rights report 2022 observed with regard to freedom of expression:

'Human rights defenders, journalists, activists, and others regularly faced criminal prosecution on charges that observers assessed were brought in response to criticism of the government... Citizens expressed their views on a wide range of political and social topics. The government regularly investigated and prosecuted individuals for expressing political views or criticism, using charges such as "spreading false news," supporting a banned group, incitement of violence, insults to religion, insults to public figures and institutions such as the judiciary and the military, or abuse of public morals. The government used social media posts as evidence in many cases, according to multiple human rights lawyers.

'The law provides a broad definition of terrorism, to include "any act harming national unity or social peace." Human rights observers noted that authorities regularly used the ambiguous definition to stifle nonviolent speech and nonviolent opposition activity. In a March report on freedom of expression, a local rights group highlighted the limitations created by restrictions on

⁴⁸ OHCHR HRC, '[Concluding observations on the 5th periodic report...](#)' (para 23, 27), 24 March 2023

⁴⁹ AI, '[Report on the human rights...](#)', (Egypt 2022), 27 March 2023

⁵⁰ AI, '[Report on the human rights...](#)', (Egypt 2022), 27 March 2023

⁵¹ FH, '[Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt](#)', (Section D-4) published in 2023

freedom of expression in various fields, including human rights advocacy, freedom of assembly, media freedom, freedom of expression online, academic freedom, and creative arts such as music.⁵²

10.1.11 The USSD human rights report 2022 also noted: 'Rights groups and lawyers asserted the government used terrorism charges to target government critics and deter criticism of the government officials or policies that would otherwise be considered freedom of expression.'⁵³

10.1.12 The USSD human rights report 2022 also observed:

'There were reports of significant numbers of political prisoners and detainees, although verifiable precise figures were not available.

'In April President Sisi called for a national dialogue to address political, economic, and social challenges facing the country, including human rights. At year's end, the dialogue's launch remained pending following the establishment of a board of trustees and relevant committees. In August a group of local and international human rights organizations demanded the release of political prisoners, including six imprisoned human rights defenders as representatives of the organizations in the dialogue, and called for their release: Ezzat Ghoneim, Mohamed el-Baqer, Alaa Abdel Fattah, Haitham Mohamadeen, Ziyad el-Aleimy, and Ibrahim Metwally. Two of these human rights defenders, Haitham Mohamadeen and Ziyad el-Aleimy, were subsequently released, but the rest remained in prison at year's end...

'The government periodically issued pardons of prisoners on national and religious holidays, sometimes including individuals whose cases human rights organizations considered to be politically motivated. Government statements and local press reported thousands of prisoners were pardoned and released on several occasions throughout the year, but only a small number of those pardoned were individuals detained on politically motivated charges.'⁵⁴

10.1.13 The UNHRC report 2023 concluded:

'The Committee is concerned that amendments to articles 185, 189 and 193 of the Constitution adopted in 2019 compromise the independence of the judiciary, notably by providing for heads of judicial bodies and the prosecutorial authority to be appointed directly by the President of the Republic, and that affairs relating to the conditions of appointing, promoting and disciplining members of judicial bodies are decided by the Supreme Council for Judicial Bodies or Entities, which is headed by the President of the Republic. The Committee is concerned by multiple reports indicating the politicization of judicial and prosecutorial authorities, resulting in politically motivated cases, against actual or perceived critics and political opponents, characterized by prolonged pretrial detention and violations of fair trial guarantees (arts. 2, 9 and 14)...

'The Committee is concerned by the increased jurisdiction of and prevalent recourse to emergency courts and military courts to prosecute individuals

⁵² USSD, '[Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt](#)' (section 2A), 20 March 2023

⁵³ USSD, '[Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt](#)' (section 2A), 20 March 2023

⁵⁴ USSD, '[Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt](#)' (section 1E), 20 March 2023

under overly broad provisions of counter-terrorism legislation and other laws. The Committee is concerned that thousands of perceived critics and opponents, including children, have been tried and convicted in such courts in trials, including mass trials, that do not adhere to the procedural safeguards and fair trial guarantees provided for under articles 9 and 14 of the Covenant. The Committee is concerned by the frequent application of the death penalty by such courts; that sentences issued by Emergency State Security Courts cannot be appealed; and that sentences issued by military courts may be appealed only to the Supreme Military Court of Appeals presided over by a military judge appointed directly by the Minister of Defence and subject to the military chain of command and disciplinary procedures (arts. 2, 6, 9, 14, 19 and 21).⁵⁵

- 10.1.14 The US CRS paper of May 2023, citing various sources, commented ‘The authorities have limited dissent by maintaining a constant crackdown, which initially was aimed at the Muslim Brotherhood, but has evolved to cover a broader range of political speech, encompassing anyone criticizing the government.’⁵⁶

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section updated: 13 September 2023

11. Treatment of political opposition groups

- 11.1.1 See also the section on [Treatment of actual or perceived government critics](#).

- 11.1.2 BTI country index in their Egypt Country Report 2022, published 23 February 2022 noted

‘In the aftermath of the 2011 revolution, a large number of newly founded parties and individuals from across the political spectrum were, broadly speaking, willing to participate in a democratic political process. In the years following the 2013 coup, however, almost all of them were either silenced or brought under state control. In consequence, today’s main political actors – parties and individuals, as well as the military and other politicized state bodies – share the primary objectives of consolidating the authoritarian system and securing regime survival. To that end, they regard democratic reforms as rather counterproductive, and see the partial political openness of the 2000s as a mistake that enabled the 2011 revolution.’⁵⁷

- 11.1.3 The AI report 2022 opined: ‘Authorities continued to crush all forms of peaceful dissent and stifle civic space... political opponents were also targeted through arbitrary detention, unfair prosecution and other harassment.’⁵⁸

- 11.1.4 The FH report 2022 stated:

‘... in practice, [political] activists, opposition parties, and political movements that criticize the regime face arrests, harsh prison terms, death sentences, extrajudicial violence, and other forms of pressure. In the AI-Amal (Hope) Coalition case, at least 15 individuals were detained in 2019 before

⁵⁵ UNOHCHR, ‘[Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of...](#)’, (paragraph 39), 14 April 2023

⁵⁶ US CRS, ‘[Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations](#)’, (page 12), 2 May 2023

⁵⁷ BTI, ‘[Egypt Country Report 2022](#)’, (Consensus-building), 23 February 2022

⁵⁸ AI, ‘[Report on the human rights...](#)’, (Egypt 2022), 27 March 2023

launching a secular coalition to run in the 2020 parliamentary elections. In November 2021, an emergency court gave multiyear prison sentences without appeal to many of its leaders. While some members of this group were released in 2022, thousands of opposition members remained imprisoned and live in unsanitary conditions.⁵⁹

- 11.1.5 UN OHCHR in their report 'Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Egypt', dated 14 April 2023 noted

'The Committee expresses its deep concern that lawyers involved in politically sensitive cases are reportedly often subjected to harassment and intimidation and, in some cases, to arbitrary detention, prolonged pretrial detention, torture and other ill-treatment and enforced disappearance. The Committee is also concerned by reports that lawyers have been unduly denied access to their clients in detention as well as access to documents necessary for their clients' defence, and that lawyer-client confidentiality is not respected (arts. 2, 7, 9 and 14).⁶⁰

- 11.1.6 AI in their report 'Egypt's 'decade of shame': Unrelenting assault on human rights since Rabaa massacre' published 14 August 2023 noted

'In December 2013, Egypt declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist group and in August 2014 dissolved its affiliated Freedom and Justice Party. The authorities criminalized the group's activities and have arrested thousands of people on the basis of their actual or perceived affiliation with the party. They have also arbitrarily arrested scores of other opposition politicians, some of whom remain unjustly jailed, including former presidential candidate and founder of Masr al-Qawya party Abdelmoniem Aboufotouh. On 29 May 2022, an emergency court sentenced him along with the party's deputy head Mohamed Al-Kassas to 15 and 10 years in prison, respectively, over trumped-up terrorism-related charges and for "spreading false news".⁶¹

- 11.1.7 USSD in their 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Egypt, published 20 March 2023 noted

'The law imposes penalties on individuals designated by a court as terrorists, even without criminal convictions, such as imposing travel bans, asset freezes, passport cancellation, and loss of professional credentials and political rights. The government has designated the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist group and prosecutes individuals for alleged membership in or support for the Muslim Brotherhood. An individual may appeal this designation directly to the country's highest appeals court, but authorities failed to inform most individuals of their impending designation before the court ruled.⁶²

- 11.1.8 Al Jazeera in their report, 'What does the future hold for the Muslim Brotherhood?' dated 14 August 2023 stated 'As for the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), the group that Morsi was a member of when he assumed the presidency for a year in 2012, they still appear politically weak, with divisions over what the next steps should be. Even the space outside Egypt for exiled

⁵⁹ FH, '[Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt](#)', (Section B1) published in 2023

⁶⁰ UN OHCHR, '[Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of...](#)', (paragraph 41) 14 April 2023

⁶¹ AI, '[Egypt's 'decade of shame': Unrelenting assault on human rights...](#)' (Section 6), 14 August 2023

⁶² USSD, '[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Egypt](#)', (Section E) 20 March 2023

members of the MB to operate has gotten smaller, with a rapprochement between Turkey and Egypt meaning that Ankara is less welcoming to its territory being used as a base for anti-Sisi campaigns.’⁶³

- 11.1.9 MENA Rights Group in their report, Egypt Evaluation Report of the National Council for Human Rights, dated 1 June 2023 noted:

‘President al-Sisi, who first took power in a 2013 coup while serving as Egypt’s defence minister and armed forces commander, governs Egypt authoritatively and repressively. Since he gained control, there has been virtually no meaningful political opposition, as expressions of dissent can draw criminal prosecution and lengthy imprisonment. Civil liberties, including press freedom, freedom of assembly and association, were increasingly restricted over the years’⁶⁴

- 11.1.10 Amnesty international (AI) in their Report on the human rights situation covering 2022- Egypt published 27th March 2023 noted ‘In May, an emergency court sentenced former presidential candidate and founder of Masr al-Qawia party Abdelmoniem Aboulfotoh, and its deputy head Mohamed al-Kassas, to 15 years and 10 years in prison, respectively, for disseminating “false news”, “membership of a terrorist group” and other bogus charges.’⁶⁵

- 11.1.11 AI in their report ‘Egypt’s ‘decade of shame’: Unrelenting assault on human rights since Rabaa massacre’ published 14 August 2023 noted

‘Despite talk of reform and the launch of the long-awaited National Dialogue with elements of the political opposition in May 2023, arrests of actual or perceived critics and opponents continue. At least 1,482 people were arrested and appeared before the State Supreme Security Prosecution (SSSP) for questioning on terrorism-related charges or for spreading “false news” between 1 January and 31 July 2023, according to information recorded by Amnesty International.’⁶⁶

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section updated: 13 September 2023

12. Treatment of media workers and bloggers

- 12.1.1 Reporters Without Borders, in their article ‘Ten years of power for Sisi: Egypt has become one of the world’s biggest jailers of journalists’, dated 30 June 2023 stated

‘Arrests of journalists had been common when Hosni Mubarak was president but they became systematic under Sisi... Hosni Mubarak restricted press freedom and Mohamed Morsi’s brief presidency followed suit, but Sisi’s years in power have clearly been “the worst years for press freedom in Egypt,” to quote an Egyptian journalist who requested anonymity. It is no surprise that Egypt has fallen eight places in the [World Press Freedom](#)

⁶³ Al Jazeera, [‘What does the future hold for the Muslim Brotherhood?’](#), 14 August 2023

⁶⁴ MENA Rights Group, [‘Egypt Evaluation Report of the National Council...’](#), (section 2), 1 June 2023

⁶⁵ AI, [‘Report on the human rights...’](#), (Freedom of expression...), 27 March 2023

⁶⁶ AI, [‘Egypt’s ‘decade of shame’: Unrelenting assault on human rights...’](#) (Section 2), 14 August 2023

[Index](#) in the past decade and is now ranked 166th out of 180 countries.^{'67}

12.1.2 The report also noted

'Sisi's government has not just jailed and mistreated journalists, it has also steadily imposed draconian media legislation. The "[cybercrime law](#)" that took effect in 2018 legalised website censorship. "Persecution and the law operate side by side in Egypt," an Egyptian lawyer said. "The laws are so terrible for press freedom that, even if they comply with them, journalists risk being arrested or censored." One of Egypt's last independent media outlets, Mada Masr, is the subject of several legal proceedings. Its site is blocked in Egypt and its editor, Lina Atallah, has been detained three times in the past ten years... To secure its grip on the media system, the Egyptian government has also gradually taken control of many media outlets. A survey of media ownership in Egypt in early 2019 revealed that almost all media now toe the government line, either because they are directly controlled by the state or the intelligence agencies, or they are owned by a small number wealthy businessmen allied with the government.'⁶⁸

12.1.3 Amnesty international (AI) in their Report on the human rights situation covering 2022- Egypt published 27th March 2023 noted 'Security forces arbitrarily arrested at least 11 journalists for their work or critical views. At least 26 journalists remained arbitrarily detained following convictions or pending investigations into accusations of "spreading false news", "misusing social media" and/or "terrorism".'⁶⁹

12.1.4 US Department of State (USSD) in their Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt published 20 March 2023 noted 'Human rights defenders, journalists, activists, and others regularly faced criminal prosecution on charges that observers assessed were brought in response to criticism of the government.'⁷⁰

12.1.5 Reporters without Borders (RSF) in their statement 'Egypt still hounding reporters one year after "national human rights strategy" launch' published on 15 September 2022 noted

'The Egyptian government's systematic persecution of journalists has not let up since it launched its "national strategy for human rights" one year ago, says Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Though eight journalists have been freed in the past six months – the latest of whom was let go on 14 September - 22 others remain behind bars. Unless they toe the government line, journalists continue to be subjected to judicial harassment... The arrests, imprisonments and judicial proceedings show that the "strategy" has not addressed the Egyptian media landscape's structural problems. Media pluralism is still non-existent and most media remain under the government control that was imposed in a process dubbed by RSF as the "Sissification of the media."⁷¹

12.1.6 The USSD human rights report 2022 noted:

⁶⁷ Reporters Without Borders, '[Ten years of power for Sisi: Egypt has become one...](#)', 30 June 2023

⁶⁸ Reporters Without Borders, '[Ten years of power for Sisi: Egypt has become one...](#)', 30 June 2023

⁶⁹ AI, '[Report on the human right...](#)', (Freedom of expression, association and assembly), 27 March 2023

⁷⁰ USSD, '[Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt](#)', (Section 2-A) 20 March 2023

⁷¹ RSF, '[Egypt still hounding reporters one year after "national human rights..."](#)', 15 September 2022

'A number of prominent figures previously imprisoned for allegations related to freedom of expression received pardons or were released from detention during the year, including Hisham Fouad, Hossam Moanes, Ramy Shaath, and Ramy Kamel. In April Ibrahim Ezzedine was released after 1,050 days of pretrial detention without ever facing charges. According to rights groups, Ezzedine, like most released detainees, was released without authorities closing the case against him, leaving him open to potential rearrest under the original charges of "spreading false news" and joining a banned group, in response to his criticisms of the government's urban slum policies. In July the SSSP released human rights lawyer Mohamed Ramadan, pending charges of "joining a terrorist group." Ramadan was arrested in 2018 after publishing a picture declaring his solidarity with the yellow vest protests in France. He was then "recycled" into three different cases with accusations of joining a terrorist group, according to rights groups, to prolong his pretrial detention well beyond legal limits.... Independent media expressed a variety of views but with significant restrictions, and official censorship occurred. The constitution, penal code, and the media and publications law prescribe media conduct. The government regulated the licensing of newspapers and controlled the printing and distribution of most newspapers, including private newspapers. The law does not impose restrictions on newspaper ownership.'⁷²

12.1.7 The USSD human rights report 2022 also noted,

'Arrests for media activity and social media posts reportedly had a chilling effect on online speech. Some activists and many journalists reported privately that they self-censored criticism of the government or comments that could be perceived as sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood or other banned groups, in view of the progovernment media environment. Publishers also were wary of publishing books that criticized religious institutions, such as al-Azhar, or challenged Islamic doctrine. Online journalists were also reluctant to discuss sensitive topics due to fear of reprisal, including prosecution and detention.'⁷³

12.1.8 The UNHRC report 2023 noted:

'The Committee is concerned that restrictive criminal laws are improperly used to unduly restrict and suppress legitimate freedom of expression, including by journalists. The Committee is additionally concerned by reports that independent journalists and media outlets are subjected to excessively onerous administrative and licensing requirements under Act No. 180 of 2018 regulating the press, the media and the Supreme Council for Media Regulation, and are frequently prosecuted and detained for their work, including under counter-terrorist legislation. It is also concerned about reports that the Supreme Council for Media Regulation, whose members are appointed by the executive branch of the Government, exercises overly broad powers over the content of media outlets and has reportedly blocked hundreds of independent media websites perceived as critical of the Government, further eroding media pluralism. The Committee is additionally concerned that criminal laws, including Act No. 175 of 2018 on combating

⁷² USSD, '[Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt](#)', (Section 2-A) 20 March 2023

⁷³ USSD, '[Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt](#)', (Section 2-A) 20 March 2023

information technology crimes, have also been used to suppress the activity of social media users perceived as critical of the regime'⁷⁴

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section updated: 13 September 2023

13. Treatment of civil society

- 13.1.1 Freedom House (FH) in their report Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt, published in 2023 noted

'In recent years, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have faced mass closures as well as harassment in the form of office raids, arrests of members, lengthy legal cases, and restrictions on travel. The Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) suspended its Egyptian operations in January 2022, claiming its founder had experienced years of harassment from authorities, including freezing of his assets, a travel ban, and physical assault.'⁷⁵

- 13.1.2 MENA Rights Group in their report, Egypt Evaluation Report of the National Council for Human Rights, dated 1 June 2023 noted

'In November 2016, the Egyptian Parliament adopted a new law on Non-Governmental Organisations ('NGOs'), which President al-Sisi ratified on 29 May 2017. The law was criticised for giving the authorities overbroad powers to oversee the registration, activities, funding and dissolution of NGOs. It restricts the activities of NGOs by limiting their work to "societal development", a vaguely defined concept which could be used to effectively ban human rights work. It further prohibits NGOs from conducting research and publishing their findings without prior authorisation from the authorities.'⁷⁶

- 13.1.3 Amnesty international (AI) in their Report on the human rights situation covering 2022- Egypt published 27th March 2023 noted 'Fifteen human rights defenders and NGO staff were still subjected to investigation, travel bans and asset freezes in relation to the decade-long criminal investigation into the legitimate work of civil society organizations known as Case 173. In April, the government required all NGOs to register under the draconian 2019 NGO law by April 2023 or face closure.'⁷⁷

- 13.1.4 The Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) a NGO registered in Egypt⁷⁸, published a joint statement titled 'Egypt: 1526 citizens on terrorism lists for an additional five years further evidences justice system's deterioration' from a number of human rights organizations on 18 May 2023. This stated:

'The undersigned human rights organizations condemn the decision of the 10th Circuit of the Cairo Criminal Court to include 1526 Egyptians on terrorism lists for an additional five years. We consider this five-year extension, which applies to political activists and human rights defenders, as

⁷⁴ UNOHCHR, '[Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of...](#)', (paragraph 45), 14 April 2023

⁷⁵ FH, '[Freedom in the World 2023 – Egypt](#)', (Section E-2) published in 2023

⁷⁶ MENA Rights Group, '[Egypt Evaluation Report of the National Council...](#)', (section 2), 1 June 2023

⁷⁷ AI, '[Report on the human right...](#)', (Freedom of expression, association and assembly), 27 March 2023

⁷⁸ AFTE, '[About us](#)', undated

indicative of the authorities' persistent deployment of counterterrorism legislation to deprive Egyptians of their basic rights, including the right to free movement or travel, as well as the right to dispose of their property and assets. Inclusion on terrorism lists also entails the deprivation of political rights and social stigmatization.'⁷⁹

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14. Treatment of protesters

- 14.1.1 Amnesty International (AI) in their report 'Egypt: "Disconnected from reality": Egypt's National Human Rights Strategy covers up human rights crisis', published on 21 September 2022 noted

'Since the military ousted late former president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, the Egyptian authorities have severely undermined the right to freedom of peaceful assembly through a series of repressive legislative moves... In practice, since its enactment the authorities have rounded up thousands of peaceful protesters and sentenced them to imprisonment in deeply flawed and unfair trials, including by emergency and military courts and terrorism-circuits of regular criminal courts... The crackdown was largely successful in eradicating protests, and even those rare protests that have taken place in recent years have been met with violence and mass arrests'⁸⁰

- 14.1.2 US Department of State (USSD) in their Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt published 20 March 2023 noted

'In most cases, the government rigorously enforced the law restricting demonstrations, in some instances using force, including in cases of small groups of peaceful protesters. In January security forces arrested nine protesters following a 70-person, peaceful demonstration demanding the rebuilding of a church in Minya Governorate. According to rights reports, the defendants faced charges of participating in an assembly that endangers public peace and committing a terrorist act with the aim of disturbing public security. The defendants were released from pretrial detention in April, but their criminal charges remained pending at year's end.'⁸¹

- 14.1.3 The same report also noted

'According to a local human rights organization, thousands of persons whom authorities arrested in 2013 and 2014 for participating in demonstrations (some peaceful) remained imprisoned; however, authorities released others who had completed their sentences or received a pardon. Authorities reportedly held such individuals under charges of attending an unauthorized protest, incitement to violence, or blocking roads. Human rights groups claimed authorities inflated or used these charges solely to target individuals suspected of being members of groups opposed to the government or those who sought to exercise the rights to freedom of assembly or association.'⁸²

- 14.1.4 AI in their report 'Egypt's 'decade of shame': Unrelenting assault on human

⁷⁹ AFTE, ['Egypt: 1526 citizens on terrorism lists for an additional five years further...'](#) 18 May 2023

⁸⁰ AI, ['Egypt: "Disconnected from reality": Egypt's National...'](#) (Paragraph 7.3), 21 September 2022

⁸¹ USSD, ['Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt'](#), (Section 2-B) 20 March 2023

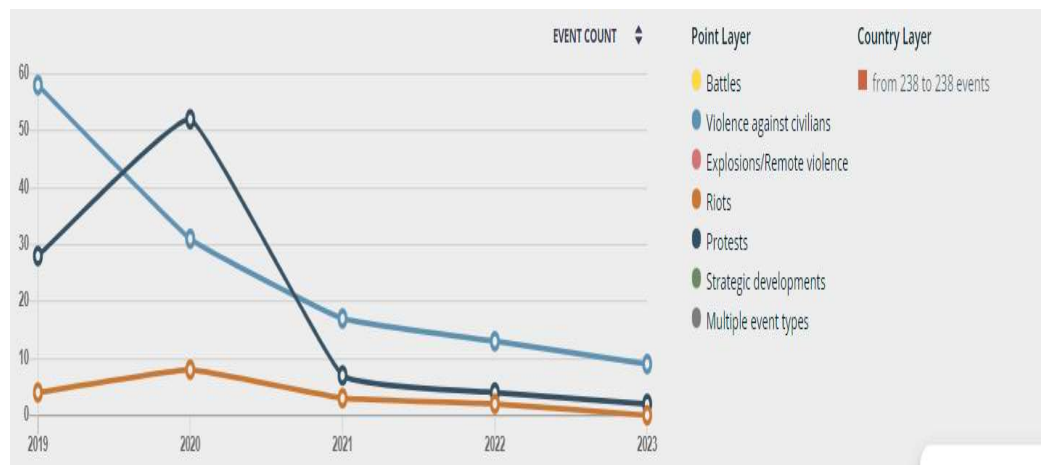
⁸² USSD, ['Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt'](#), (Section 2-B) 20 March 2023

rights since Rabaa massacre' published 14 August 2023 noted

'Members and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood arrested during the protest and sit-in dispersals in 2013 or the subsequent crackdown, as well as human rights defenders, political opponents, journalists, lawyers and others, who were eventually tried after spending years in abusive pretrial detention, have faced grossly unfair proceedings in front of emergency or military courts, or terrorism circuits of criminal courts. For instance, over 440 people were convicted and sentenced in a grossly unfair mass trial in connection to protests by supporters of Mohamed Morsi in August 2013 in the vicinity of the Fath Mosque in Cairo, including unjustly jailed Badr Mohamed who was just 17 years old at the time of the events.'⁸³

- 14.1.5 The above report also noted 'Since 2013, the government has shown zero tolerance of any street protests and introduced draconian laws that effectively criminalize the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. Chief among them is [Law No. 107/2013](#) that grants security forces free rein to ban protests and use excessive and lethal force against peaceful protesters.'⁸⁴

- 14.1.6 The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) data below shows the number of protest, riots, and violence against civilians since 1 January 2019 to 8 September 2023⁸⁵



- 14.1.7 AI in their 'Report on the human rights situation covering 2022', dated 27 March 2023 noted

'In the lead-up to COP27, security forces arrested hundreds of people in connection with protests planned during the conference. Among them was Abdelsalam Abdelghany, arrested in September at his home in the capital, Cairo, after he supported calls for protests during COP27 on social media. He remained detained pending investigations on charges of "spreading false news" and "joining a terrorist group". During COP27, security forces subjected participants to interrogations, surveillance and other forms of harassment, and denied entry to Egypt during COP27 to Italian national Giorgio Caracciolo of the anti-torture group DIGNITY. On 6 November, British-Egyptian activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, who had been on hunger strike in protest at his arbitrary detention and denial of consular visits since April, also

⁸³ AI, ['Egypt's 'decade of shame': Unrelenting assault on human rights...'](#) (Section 3), 14 August 2023

⁸⁴ AI, ['Egypt's 'decade of shame': Unrelenting assault on human rights...'](#) (Section 1), 14 August 2023

⁸⁵ ACLED, [Global Dashboard- Egypt](#), (filtered for Egypt), no date

stopped drinking water. On 11 November, he was fed intravenously after he lost consciousness. He remained arbitrarily detained and in poor health at the end of the year.’⁸⁶

14.1.8 The UNHRC report 2023 stated:

‘The Committee is concerned that Act No. 107 of 2013 regulating the right to hold peaceful public meetings, marches and demonstrations imposes undue restrictions on the right of peaceful assembly, allowing security forces to ban protests on overly broad grounds without having to provide justification; provides for the use of unnecessary and disproportionate force against peaceful protesters; and puts in place heavy criminal sanctions for vaguely defined acts. The Committee is also concerned about information received regarding the use of excessive and disproportionate force to disperse peaceful demonstrations within the State party as well as the mass arrest and detention of protesters. The Committee expresses its concern at the lack of accountability of the police and security personnel for the excessive use of force resulting in the deaths of large numbers of peaceful protesters...’⁸⁷

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15. Treatment in detention and custody

15.1.1 The USSD, ‘Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt’, (Section 1-A) 20 March 2023 noted

‘Human rights groups and family members identified multiple detainees who died while in custody because of abuse or neglect. A report by a local monitoring organization stated 52 prisoners and detainees died as a result of abuse or medical neglect during the year. In August human rights groups reported separate incidents of prisoners dying in custody due to abuse and lack of medical attention, including Mustafa Nafe Ramadan, a 19-year-old car mechanic who reportedly died as the result of injuries to his head and neck sustained while in custody. In each incident, official statements claimed the detainee died of natural causes or from altercations with fellow inmates, and the investigations were closed without accountability or finding of wrongdoing.’⁸⁸

15.1.2 MENA Rights Group in their report, Egypt Evaluation Report of the National Council for Human Rights, dated 1 June 2023 noted

‘Since al-Sisi came to power in 2013, UN bodies and experts, Egyptian and international NGOs “have consistently documented and reported on the Egyptian authorities’ abuse of the criminal justice system and counter-terrorism legislation to keep opponents and critics arbitrarily detained.” Convictions and trials of government opponents remain “inherently unfair” and oftentimes lead to the handing down of death sentences. Officials such as prosecutors and judges “routinely renewed the pretrial detention of thousands of people held on unfounded terrorism or security-related

⁸⁶ AI, ‘[Report on the human rights...](#)’, (Freedom of expression...), 27 March 2023

⁸⁷ UNOHCHR, ‘[Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of...](#)’, (paragraph 47), 14 April 2023

⁸⁸ USSD, ‘[Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt](#)’, (Section 1-A) 20 March 2023

charges.” Because of “security forces preventing private meetings with lawyers”, defendants’ rights to a fair trial are violated.’⁸⁹

- 15.1.3 BTI country index in their Egypt Country Report 2022, published 23 February 2022 noted that ‘Egypt has some 60,000 political prisoners, and the practices of forced disappearance, torture and extrajudicial killings are widespread.’⁹⁰
- 15.1.4 In their report ‘Egypt’s ‘decade of shame’: Unrelenting assault on human rights since Rabaa massacre’ published 14 August 2023, AI noted ‘Torture and other ill-treatment are widespread and systematic in Egypt’s prisons, police stations and NSA-controlled facilities. Methods of torture consistently reported by victims and witnesses include electric shocks, suspension by the limbs, indefinite solitary confinement, sexual abuse, beatings, deliberate denial of healthcare and threats.’⁹¹
- 15.1.5 The USSD human rights report 2022 noted that “There were numerous reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings that occurred while making arrests or holding persons in custody.”⁹²

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16. Detention conditions

- 16.1.1 UN OHCHR, in their ‘Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Egypt’, published 14 April 2023 stated

‘The Committee regrets the lack of information provided by the State party on the official and actual capacities of places of detention, disaggregated by facility. The Committee is concerned by the persistence of severe overcrowding, poor ventilation, the lack of clean water and hygiene products, physical abuse and inadequate health-care provision in places of deprivation of liberty. While welcoming certain measures, including vaccination undertaken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee is concerned that detainees were not given adequate access to testing and, where necessary, isolation rooms, and that a suspension of all in-person visits was enforced without the provision of alternatives, such as video or phone calls. The Committee is also concerned by multiple reports indicating that detainees held for political reasons are frequently subjected to particularly harsh conditions, including the deliberate denial of health care, the denial of visits by family members and legal counsel and extended periods of solitary confinement. The Committee further expresses its concern with regard to reports of deaths in places of deprivation of liberty following the denial of access to health care, as well as the failure to conduct independent, effective and transparent investigations into such deaths’⁹³
- 16.1.2 AI in their report ‘Egypt’s ‘decade of shame’: Unrelenting assault on human rights since Rabaa massacre’ published 14 August 2023 noted

⁸⁹ MENA Rights Group, ‘[Egypt Evaluation Report of the National Council...](#)’, (section 3.7.2), 1 June 2023

⁹⁰ BTI, ‘[Egypt Country Report 2022](#)’, (Executive Summary), 23 February 2022

⁹¹ AI, ‘[Egypt’s ‘decade of shame’: Unrelenting assault on human rights...](#)’ (Section 7), 14 August 2023

⁹² USSD, ‘[2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices...](#)’, (section 1A), 20 March 2023

⁹³ UNOHCHR, ‘[Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of...](#)’, (paragraph 29), 14 April 2023

‘Amnesty International has gathered testimonies from former detainees and other informed sources who describe cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions of detention across Egyptian prisons, including overcrowding and inadequate accommodation, poor ventilation, substandard sanitation and hygiene, shortage of nutritious food, and little or no access to fresh air and exercise. Prison authorities also intentionally place some detainees held for political reasons in prolonged solitary confinement and bar them from family visits for years... Since 2013, dozens of people have died in custody amid reports of denial of healthcare or torture, including over 100 suspicious deaths in custody in 2021 and 2022. From 1 January to 31 July 2023, Amnesty International recorded 18 deaths in custody involving credible reports of torture or prolonged denial of adequate healthcare.’⁹⁴

16.1.3 The above report also noted

‘The authorities have opened new prisons in recent years to great fanfare, only for the same human rights violations documented at the notorious Tora Prison Complex to be reproduced in them. For instance, in Badr 3 Prison, opened in 2022, prisoners are held in horrific and punitive conditions and denied regular contact with the outside world. Fluorescent lights and CCTV cameras are kept on around the clock and access to basic necessities such as sufficient food, clothing and books is denied. While conditions for some prisoners held for political reasons have improved in recent months, including for those transferred to the 10th of Ramadan prison in Sharqia in mid-2023, the authorities continue to reserve the most cruel and inhuman treatment for Muslim Brotherhood members and their families... Ousted President Mohamed Morsi died in custody on 17 June 2019. During his detention he was held in solitary confinement for almost six years and denied family visits and adequate access to healthcare. The then Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions Agnes Callamard and other UN independent experts found that Mohamed Morsi's death could amount to a state-sanctioned arbitrary killing. Vice chairman of the dissolved Freedom and Justice Party Essam El-Erian, arrested in 2013, also died in prison – in August 2020 – following years of unaddressed complaints of poor detention conditions and denial of healthcare.’⁹⁵

16.1.4 In an April 2023 article appearing in the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, based on interviews with former women detainees, the conditions for women prisoners including human rights activists, journalists and political opponents were described as follows

‘Over the past seven years, Egypt’s prisons, especially the notorious Damanhour prison and al-Qanater women’s prison, have witnessed an increase in the number of women prisoners as well as high level of abuse and ill-treatment in dealing with them, including strip searches, beating, insults, and periodic deprivation of personal belongings... Former female prisoners interviewed by TIMEP spoke of what they were subjected to during the search, whether it be during the first investigation session or later on. They indicated that the search for prohibited items in their possession was not in accordance with the law, as their genitals were intentionally touched

⁹⁴ AI, [‘Egypt’s ‘decade of shame’: Unrelenting assault on human rights...’](#) (Section 7), 14 August 2023

⁹⁵ AI, [‘Egypt’s ‘decade of shame’: Unrelenting assault on human rights...’](#) (Section 7), 14 August 2023

and they were stripped of all their clothes in front of other prison guards, or under the supervision of policemen or officers... The women who agreed to be interviewed for this article unanimously agreed that the Egyptian regime and the security authorities adopt a specific approach in dealing with women prisoners, especially human rights activists, journalists, and political opponents. This is shown through the abuse and humiliation that prisoners are put through...⁹⁶

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17. Sur place activity

17.1.1 US Department of State (USSD) in their Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt published 20 March 2023 noted

'In February the UN special rapporteur on human rights defenders released a statement of concern for reprisals by the government against Ahmed Mefreh, executive director of the Geneva-based Committee for Justice, for cooperating with the United Nations. The statement alleged that state security officers questioned members of Mefreh's family, including his brother in October 2021. According to the statement, Mefreh's brother was questioned regarding his communications with him, was asked to grant police access to his messaging applications and social media accounts, and was told "it would be a shame on us if we punish you because of your brother."

'In February foreign-based Egyptian activist Ali Hussein Mahdy released a video addressing state security officials, saying the message was received after his father asked him to stop his activities against the Egyptian state. His father's request allegedly came after the father was summoned and questioned several times by state security officials. In response to the intimidation of his father, Mahdy pledged to refrain from posting leaked information, stop his human rights activities from abroad, cut off communications with foreign officials and journalists, and refrain from criticizing President Sisi or other state institutions. He temporarily refrained from broadcasting on social media but returned to his platforms before year's end.⁹⁷

17.1.2 The report also noted

'In an August post on social media, a human rights lawyer called on authorities to release two brothers, Eid and Hassan el-Shazly, whom the lawyer claimed had been arrested to silence their sister, who lived abroad and allegedly posted videos criticizing the government. The two brothers had reportedly been in pretrial detention for two years, pending investigations on charges of "spreading false news," "misusing social media," and joining a terrorist group.⁹⁸

17.1.3 Middle East Eye in their report, 'Egyptians deported from Bahrain charged

⁹⁶ The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, '[Women in Egypt's Prisons: Tales of...](#)', 19 April 2023

⁹⁷ USSD, '[Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt](#)', (Section 1-E) 20 March 2023

⁹⁸ USSD, '[Annual report on human rights in 2022- Egypt](#)', (Section 1-E) 20 March 2023

with terrorism “for political reasons”, published on 18 August 2023 stated

‘A pair of Egyptians who disappeared for two weeks after they were arrested in Bahrain earlier this month have resurfaced in Egyptian custody on terrorism-related charges, according to a human rights group and an informed source... For two weeks, their families struggled to get answers about where the men were. They have said they believe the warrants, brought by Egypt and used to arrest them in Bahrain, were issued for political reasons.’⁹⁹

17.1.4 In another report by MEE titled, ‘Bahrain urged not to deport Egyptian dissidents arrested in Manama’, published on 6 August 2023, stated ‘Egypt which enjoys close ties with Bahrain, has been using Interpol red notices to target political opponents abroad since President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi seized power in a military coup in 2013’¹⁰⁰

17.1.5 Freedom House (FH) in their report Egypt: Freedom on the Net 2022, published 18 October 2022 noted

‘Prominent journalism professor Ayman Mansour Nada shared a Facebook post criticizing the Egyptian media landscape and specifically a lieutenant in the Egyptian intelligence services who is known as “Egypt’s editor in chief.” The post was deleted a few hours after being posted, but was republished later by another Facebook user. Nada was later arrested after writing a series of articles that were critical of various media personalities with close ties to the government’¹⁰¹

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⁹⁹ MEE, [‘Egyptians deported from Bahrain charged with terrorism ‘for political...’](#), 18 August 2023

¹⁰⁰ MEE, [‘Bahrain urged not to deport Egyptian dissidents arrested in Manama’](#), 6 August 2023

¹⁰¹ FH, ‘Egypt: Freedom on the Net 2022’, (Section B 2), 18 October 2022

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

All the COI included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s). Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared and contrasted to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The Home Office uses some standardised ToR, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Political system
- Laws affecting political and civil rights
- Treatment of political opponent
- Treatment of actual or perceived critics
- Treatment of media workers
- Treatment of protesters
- Arbitrary arrest and detention

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **4.0**
- valid from **12 December 2023**

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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Changes from last version of this note

Updated Country of origin information

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Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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