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## Freedom House (Author)

### Freedom in the World 2025 - Egypt

Not Free

18

/ 100

Political Rights 6 / 40

Civil Liberties 12 / 60

Last Year's Score & Status

18 / 100 Not Free

A country or territory's Freedom in the World status depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0–40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0–60. [See the methodology.](#)

### Overview

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who first took power in a 2013 coup, has governed Egypt in an authoritarian manner. Meaningful political opposition is virtually nonexistent, as expressions of dissent can draw criminal prosecution and imprisonment. Civil liberties, including press freedom and freedom of assembly, are tightly restricted. Security forces engage in human rights abuses with impunity. Discrimination against women, LGBT+ people, and other groups remains a serious problem, as do high rates of gender-based violence.

### Key Developments in 2024

- In February, Ahmed Tantawi, a prominent challenger to President Sisi in the 2023 election, was sentenced to one year in prison for the unauthorized circulation and production of election documents, highlighting the absence of genuine electoral competition.
- Egypt conducted more rounds of a national dialogue between the regime and key opposition groups to discuss economic issues, pretrial detention, and national security, among other issues.

- The national dialogue's pretrial detention recommendations prompted changes to Egypt's Code of Criminal Procedures, which were preliminarily approved by parliament in December. Rights organizations criticized the changes for weakening the rule of law, failing to address systemic abuses, and protecting security forces from accountability.

## Political Rights

### A Electoral Process

**A1 0-4 pts**

**Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?** 4

President Sisi, who seized power in a 2013 coup while serving as Egypt's defense minister and commander of the Egyptian Armed Forces, has remained in power through unfair and uncompetitive processes. Constitutional amendments adopted in 2019 added two years to Sisi's existing term, extending it through 2024, though he secured a third term in the 2023 elections. Future presidents will be limited to two six-year terms.

In the December 2023 presidential election, the regime effectively barred any significant challengers from participating, and election authorities reported that Sisi won 89.6 percent of the vote. His victory came after a campaign marked by the arrest of opponents, intimidation, and stringent eligibility requirements for candidates, which collectively obstructed any meaningful competition.

Ahmed Tantawi, the key challenger to Sisi in that election, suspended his presidential campaign in October 2023 after failing to secure the required signatures. His efforts had been impeded by the climate of fear created by the arrest of over 100 of his supporters. In February of 2024 he was sentenced to one year in prison for the unauthorized circulation and production of election documents, underscoring the lack of genuine electoral competition in the country.

**A2 0-4 pts**

**Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?** 4

The 2019 amendments to the 2014 constitution reestablished the Egyptian parliament as a bicameral body in which members serve five-year terms. The upper house, the Senate, consists of 300 seats and has no significant legislative competencies. Two-thirds of senators are elected (half through closed party lists and half to individual seats), and one-third are appointed by the president. The House of Representatives is comprised of 568 members, half of which are elected through closed

party lists and half in individual seats. The president has the right to appoint 28 additional members to the House.

The 2020 elections to both parliamentary bodies were marred by the widespread detention and intimidation of individuals who criticized the process, as well as low turnout, claims of fraud, vote buying, and severe interference by security apparatuses. No credible groups were allowed to monitor the elections. The Unified National List, headed by the regime-allied Mostaqbal Watan (Nation's Future) Party, won all 100 party-list seats and 88 individual seats in the Senate; Mostaqbal Watan also won all 284 party-list seats and 31 individual seats in the House of Representatives. A second pro-regime party, independents, and small parties took the remaining seats in both houses. In October 2020, President Sisi appointed 100 mostly pro-regime members to the Senate.

Egypt has not held elections for local councils since 2008, and the last elected local councils were dissolved in 2011.

### **A3 0-4 pts**

**Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?** 1 / 4

While electoral laws provide an ostensible basis for credible elections, electoral authorities fail to ensure an open and competitive campaign environment. The National Electoral Commission (NEC) board consists of senior judges from some of Egypt's highest courts, serving six-year terms.

To qualify for the presidential election, a potential candidate is required to obtain support from either 20 members of parliament or 25,000 voters spanning at least 15 governorates. In the 2023 presidential elections, authorities exploited this requirement to disqualify the only serious competitor.

## **B Political Pluralism and Participation**

### **B1 0-4 pts**

**Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?** 0 / 4

Political parties are legally allowed to form and operate, but in practice activists, opposition parties, and political movements that criticize the regime face arrests, harsh prison terms, death sentences, extrajudicial violence, and other forms of pressure. Former political prisoners have also been threatened with rearrest for their criticism of the regime. The Egypt-based families of exiled activists have faced persecution by state authorities.

In 2023, after five years in pretrial detention, April 6 Youth Movement spokesperson Mohamed Adel was sentenced to four years in prison for spreading false news. In July 2024, he began a hunger strike to protest his unlawful detention and harsh conditions.

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. Since then, authorities have systematically persecuted its members.

In 2023, the regime initiated a national dialogue involving opposition parties, union leaders, and civil society actors. The Muslim Brotherhood was excluded. The dialogue continued into 2024, discussing economic issues, pretrial detention, and national security, among other issues. The national dialogue's pretrial detention recommendations resulted in proposed changes to Egypt's Code of Criminal Procedures, which were approved by the parliament in December.

**B2 0-4 pts**

**Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?** 0 / 4

By extending presidential term lengths and limits in 2019, controlling the electoral process, intimidating presidential and parliamentary candidates, and arresting and prosecuting those seeking to contest elections, the Sisi regime has made it nearly impossible for the opposition to gain power through elections.

**B3 0-4 pts**

**Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?** 1 / 4

Since the 2013 coup, the military and intelligence agencies have dominated the political system, with most power and patronage flowing from Sisi and his domestic allies in the armed forces and security agencies. Financial support from the UAE and Saudi Arabia, amounting to close to \$100 billion in aid, investments, and deposits, has helped stabilize the regime since it came to power. 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."

**B4 0-4 pts**

**Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?** 1 / 4

The constitution and Egyptian laws grant political rights to all citizens regardless of religion, gender, race, ethnicity, or any other such distinction. However, Christians, Shiite Muslims, people of color, and LGBT+ people face discrimination, which affects their ability to participate in political life. Sisi and the security apparatus's increasing control of elections and other aspects of society only permit these groups to represent their interests within the narrow scope of officially sanctioned politics or risk harsh penalties for transgressing stated and unstated red lines. The diminishing power of the legislature further undercuts avenues for meaningful representation.

Gender quotas are meant to help elevate women to national office, and women held 27.5 percent of seats in the House of Representatives as of 2021. In practice, their interests are not prioritized in Egyptian politics.

## C Functioning of Government

### C1 0-4 pts

**Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?** 0 / 4

President Sisi and the security apparatus dominate the policymaking process. Parliament does not have a significant role in forming and debating laws, and also lacks the ability to provide a meaningful check on executive power. Laws originating in Sisi's cabinet receive parliamentary approval without meaningful contestation or deliberation.

### C2 0-4 pts

**Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?** 1 / 4

Corruption is pervasive at all levels of government. Official mechanisms for investigating and punishing corrupt activity remain weak and ineffective. President Sisi controls the Administrative Control Authority, which is responsible for most anticorruption initiatives. It lacks credibility, transparency, and impartiality, and cannot monitor the military's substantial economic activities.

### C3 0-4 pts

**Does the government operate with openness and transparency?** 1 / 4

The Sisi administration provides little transparency regarding government spending and operations and denies civil society groups and independent journalists opportunities to comment on, oversee, or influence state policies, including through intimidation and censorship. Mismanagement of the state's financial resources has contributed to a severe economic crisis, raising serious concerns about financial accountability.

Although the government makes its budget documents, including debt obligations, accessible to the public, data on debt held by state-owned enterprises (SOEs) remains inaccessible. Moreover, state budget

documents do not include allocations to military SOEs, and audits for large SOEs are never public. The military's budget and extensive business interests are notoriously opaque.

## Civil Liberties

### D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

**Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4**

The Egyptian media sector is dominated by progovernment outlets; most critical or opposition-oriented outlets have been shut down since 2013. Private media outlets are generally owned by businesspeople linked to the military and intelligence services. Intelligence apparatuses limit the availability of credible information while shaping citizen attitudes by promoting conspiracy theories, disinformation, and animosity toward the political opposition.

Independent reporting is suppressed through restrictive laws and intimidation, and foreign journalists face obstruction by the state. In 2024, the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate reported that there were more than 20 journalists in pretrial detention. Charges like terrorism affiliation or spreading false news, often unsupported by evidence, are used to silence dissent.

Multiple laws allow authorities to censor and block online content considered threatening to national security without judicial approval. This broad stipulation is vulnerable to abuse, and has resulted in the blocking of hundreds of websites, including news platforms. Penal code amendments passed in 2021 increased punishments for journalists who cover criminal trial sessions without prior approval. They also toughened penalties for disclosing classified information, increasing potential fines and allowing for prison terms of up to five years.

D2 0-4 pts

**Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4**

While Article 2 of the 2014 constitution declares Islam to be the official religion, Article 64 states that "freedom of belief is absolute." Most Egyptians are Sunni Muslims. Religious minority groups are often persecuted for expressing their beliefs publicly and are sometimes charged with blasphemy by the authorities. Coptic Christians, a significant minority in Egypt, along with smaller groups such as Shiite Muslims, other Christian denominations, and atheists, face widespread persecution and violence. Coptic Christians in particular have suffered numerous cases of forced displacement, assaults, bombings, arson attacks, and restrictions on church construction. Structural inequalities have fueled sectarian tensions that can escalate into violence. In April 2024, in Al-Fawakhir,



rumors that a house was being made into a church led to violence, with some Muslim residents reportedly attacking and looting Christian homes. Critics accused authorities of failing to protect minorities or address the shortage of church facilities.

**D3 0-4 pts**

**Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free 1 / from extensive political indoctrination? 4**

The state controls education and curriculums in public schools and to a lesser degree in some private institutions. Faculty members and departments have some autonomy in shaping specific courses, though many scholars self-censor to avoid punitive measures. University professors can be dismissed for on-campus political activity, and several prominent academics are in prison for expressing political views. The government imposes strict requirements for academics to obtain approval from security officials for travel abroad. Authorities have significant control over the appointment of university presidents and can expel students for political reasons.

**D4 0-4 pts**

**Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or 1 / other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4**

Individuals who express personal views that conflict with preferred state narratives are subject to reprisals. Criticism of the president online or in public can result in imprisonment. Security agencies extensively surveil and tightly regulate social media companies and users, as well as mobile phone applications. Arrests of activists over social media posts and other activities are common. Authorities have used incommunicado detention, prolonged pretrial detention, and baseless terrorism charges to silence dissent. Suppression of dissent by Sisi's government has sparked a wave of outward migration.

In 2024, authorities detained and prosecuted multiple government critics. Among them was the prominent dissident Yahya Hussein Abdel Hadi, who was sentenced to one year in prison in January after he published a Facebook post that criticized Sisi and the military and called for regime change.

Authorities have continued targeting content creators on social media platforms, most notably TikTok. Many cases are directed at women, accusing them of spurious crimes, including "inciting debauchery."

## **E Associational and Organizational Rights**

**E1 0-4 pts**

**Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4**

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. Thousands of protesters have been arrested since these strict laws were introduced in 2013, and some jailed protesters have received death sentences. Because of this crackdown, protests are rare.

From early 2023 through mid-September 2023, security forces arrested more than 2,000 people for peaceful expression or assembly, according to the independent human rights campaign Until the Last Prisoner. That October, at least 100 individuals were arrested for participating in pro-Palestinian protests following the Israeli military campaign in Gaza. Since then, over 100 additional individuals, including minors, have been arrested for participating in either protests against government policies or pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

#### **E2 0-4 pts**

**Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work?** 0 / 4

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. A 2019 law constrains the activities of NGOs deemed threatening to national security, public morals, and public order and imposes onerous reporting requirements and intrusive monitoring systems. Punishments for violating the law are severe. These policies have significantly weakened the infrastructure of human rights organizations and civil society groups.

#### **E3 0-4 pts**

**Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?** 1 / 4

The government only recognizes unions affiliated with the state-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation. While Article 15 of the constitution provides for the right to organize peaceful strikes, they are not tolerated in practice, and the law on protests prohibits gatherings that impede labor and production. In the past, striking workers have been arrested and prosecuted. Workers at military-owned businesses are subject to trials by military courts.

## **F Rule of Law**

#### **F1 0-4 pts**

**Is there an independent judiciary?** 1 / 4

The executive branch exerts influence over the courts, which typically protect the interests of the government, military, and security apparatus. Courts have often disregarded due process and other basic safeguards in cases against the government's political opponents and all forms of independent expression.



In 2022, President Sisi appointed a military general as the Supreme Constitutional Court's first deputy justice, further placing the country's institutions under his control.

## **F2 0-4 pts**

**Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4**

Since 2013, Egyptian authorities have increasingly imposed months-long or even years-long pretrial detentions on opposition members, journalists, and activists as retribution for their activities. These due process violations have effectively normalized the use of the justice system for political purposes.

Egyptian courts hold remote pretrial detention renewal sessions via video conference, with detainees participating from prisons under police supervision. This practice increases the risk of abuse for political prisoners, who are hesitant to report mistreatment in front of prison officials. In February 2024, a court extended the detention of over 1,500 defendants through collective video conference decisions, disregarding basic fair trial guarantees.

Although the constitution limits military trials of civilians, a 2014 presidential decree placed all "public and vital facilities" under military jurisdiction, referring thousands of civilian defendants to military courts. That change was made permanent in 2021. Charges brought in military courts are often vague or fabricated, defendants are denied due process, and basic evidentiary standards are routinely disregarded.

In 2024, proposed changes to Egypt's Code of Criminal Procedures, based in part on the pretrial detention recommendations made by the national dialogue, heightened concerns about due process. The draft changes, preliminarily approved by parliament in December, were criticized by rights groups for enshrining practices that weaken fair trial protections, shield security forces from accountability, and allow indefinite abusive pretrial detention.

Although he completed a five-year sentence in late September 2024, activist Alaa Abdel Fattah remains in custody. Authorities refused to release him, disregarding two years of pretrial detention in order to extend his imprisonment.

## **F3 0-4 pts**

**Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4**

Security forces continue to wield illegitimate force with impunity. Counterterrorism laws provide a vague definition of terrorism and grant law enforcement personnel sweeping powers and immunity in enforcement.

Prison conditions are very poor. Inmates are subject to physical abuse, overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and denial of medical care. Under President Sisi's rule, dozens have died in custody amid reports of torture, food and water deprivation, denial of timely and adequate medical care, and physical punishment for those protesting or demanding better treatment. The prison system is rife with extortion, bribery, and corruption, including the lucrative smuggling of drugs and mobile phones by supervisors.

Use of the death penalty has increased dramatically since Sisi took power, despite serious concerns about due process violations and politicized prosecutions. The advocacy group Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) found that 4,202 death sentences had been handed out by Egyptian courts over the course of a decade, of which 448 had been implemented. Of those implemented, the group said many cases involved "trials largely reliant on torture-tainted 'confessions.'" Between January and December 2024, close to 400 defendants were sentenced to death, including Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood Mohamed Badie and seven of the group's other senior leaders.

#### **F4 0-4 pts**

**Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of 1 / various segments of the population? 4**

Though the constitution stipulates equality for women, women face extensive discrimination, particularly in employment and in the justice system. Coptic Christians, other religious minorities such as Baha'i people, people with dark skin from southern Egypt, people with disabilities, LGBT+ people, and migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa also face various forms of discrimination and harassment.

Different personal status laws govern Muslims and Christians, which commonly results in discrimination against Christians.

While same-sex sexual conduct is not explicitly banned, people suspected of such activity can be charged with prostitution or "debauchery." The police regularly arrest people on such charges.

During the Israeli military campaign in Gaza, Egypt provided humanitarian aid across its border with the Gaza Strip but opposed the creation of safe corridors for refugees fleeing the conflict. In December 2024, President Sisi issued the Law Regarding the Asylum of Foreigners, which critics argue violates international standards and undermines the rights of refugees by broadening exclusion criteria, restricting their access to essential services, and failing to secure their personal data, increasing the risk of refoulement and exploitation.

## **G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights**

#### **G1 0-4 pts**

**Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?** 1 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of movement, but internal travel and access are restricted tightly in North Sinai and to a lesser extent in other governorates along Egypt's borders. Sinai residents are subject to curfews, checkpoints, and other obstacles to travel. In recent years, tens of thousands of people have fled abroad, seeking refuge from domestic repression, and consulates have frequently refused to issue or renew the identity documents of perceived dissidents in exile. A growing list of rights activists, journalists, political party members, bloggers, and academics have been subjected to arbitrary international travel bans in recent years. Foreign researchers and activists have been expelled or denied entry to the country.

Individuals seeking to change their place of employment or education can encounter bureaucratic barriers and scrutiny from security officials.

Thousands of people have been displaced since the start of a military campaign against the Islamic State in Sinai in 2013, and authorities have denied their right to return home. Peaceful protests by tribal leaders, activists, and journalists demanding this right have been met with severe penalties, including sentences ranging from 3 to 10 years' imprisonment.

#### **G2 0-4 pts**

**Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?** 2 / 4

Under Sisi, military authority is woven into many aspects of Egypt's economy. The military runs businesses, produces goods, and manages large projects and infrastructure that benefit from tax and customs exemptions, free labor by conscripted soldiers, lack of public budget oversight, and land allocation through presidential decrees. Opportunities for private businesses are limited. Prominent businessmen have faced political harassment, arrest, travel bans, and defamation in state-owned media. Property rights in Sinai and other border areas are affected by the activities of security forces.

In 2023, facing pressure from international lenders and a worsening economic crisis, President Sisi approved a plan to privatize several state-owned companies through sales to strategic investors. However, the plan excluded most military-owned companies, leaving the military's dominant economic role intact. By 2024, the tangible results of the plan remained modest.

Women are at a legal disadvantage in property and inheritance matters, typically receiving half the inheritance due to a man. Societal biases also

discourage women's ownership of land.

**G3 0-4 pts**

**Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?** 2 / 4

Domestic violence, sexual harassment, and female genital mutilation (FGM) are still acute problems in Egyptian society. While the penalties for FGM were increased in 2021, the law's implementation is hindered by societal resistance, poor enforcement, police abuses, and the lack of adequate protection for witnesses, all of which deter victims from contacting authorities. Spousal rape is not a crime.

Personal status rules based on religious affiliation put women at a disadvantage in marriage, divorce, and custody matters. Muslim women cannot marry non-Muslim men, for example, and the Coptic Church rarely permits divorce.

**G4 0-4 pts**

**Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?** 1 / 4

Women and children, migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, and Syrian refugees are vulnerable to forced labor and sex trafficking in Egypt. Authorities routinely punish individuals for offenses that stem directly from their circumstances as trafficking victims. Military conscripts are exploited as cheap labor for military- or state-affiliated development projects.

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