



Egypt's 4th Cycle Universal Periodic Review

Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights

2024



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The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) has been working since 2002 to strengthen and protect basic rights and freedoms in Egypt, through research, advocacy and litigation in the fields of civil liberties, economic and social rights, and criminal justice.

For more information see <https://eipr.org/en>

I. CIVIL LIBERTIES

1. Restricting citizens' public participation and limiting political decision-making to a narrow, trusted circle that is not subject to oversight or accountability remained key features of the government's approach. Constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression, information, peaceful assembly, and political participation¹ are systematically violated, using legislation, incarceration and the denial of basic due process rights, resulting over the past decade in the decimation of the civic space.
2. The erosion of civil liberties started early in the rule of President Sisi with the adoption of [the Protest Law](#)², which restricted the right to peaceful assembly and imposed prison sentences for participation in unauthorized gatherings. This was followed by a new [Terrorism Law](#)³ in 2015, which effectively criminalized peaceful activism and freedom of expression. The Media Regulation Law of 2018 authorized the blocking of news websites and introduced new licensing requirements and a slew of penalties to target independent journalism.⁴ A Cybercrimes Law followed the same year, introducing "national security" and "Egyptian family values" as grounds for further censorship and punishment.⁵ Over 600 websites remain blocked arbitrarily without even following this draconian law. Opinion writers and online content creators are routinely imprisoned despite a constitutional ban on custodial penalties for publishing offenses.

1 Articles 71 to 78 of Egypt's current Constitution, adopted in 2014 and amended in 2019, include a number of these rights. Articles 85 and 87 also include guarantees of the right to address public authorities and political participation, whether by election or nomination. Full translation available at https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session20/EG/A.HRC.WG.6.20.EGY_1_Egypt_Annex_4_Constitution_E.pdf

2 Law No. 107 of 2013, available at <https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natleg-bod/2013/en/104525>

3 [Law No. 94 of 2015](#), available at https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Egypt_Anti-Terror_Law_Translation.pdf

4 [ARTICLE19, Egypt: 2018 Law on the Organization of Press, Media and the Supreme Council of Media](#)

5 [Law No. 175 of 2018](#), available at <https://manshurat.org/node/31487>

3. These new laws complemented existing ones, such as the Political Parties Law, which imposes extremely intransigent conditions on the establishment of new parties, and the NGO Law that grants government and security bodies full control of civil society organizations.
4. Vague criminal provisions are systematically used to prosecute and convict citizens for any form of dissent or for attempting to participate in public life. The Public Prosecution and its arm, the Supreme State Security Prosecution, are chief accomplices in these unfair and unfounded prosecutions. Terrorism chambers of criminal courts and even economic courts are other vehicles of oppression. Charges often include “spreading fake news”, joining or supporting terrorism, or violating family values.
5. Thousands of political prisoners are incarcerated as a result, including party leaders, such as [Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh](#) who has been imprisoned since 2018, and former presidential hopeful [Ahmed Tantawi](#) who has been imprisoned along with a number of his supporters since the beginning of this year, as well as peaceful demonstrators with various affiliations, some detained since 2013.
6. A presidential pardon committee was reactivated in 2022 to examine cases of political prisoners, but new detentions ever since far outpace the number of prisoners recommended for release; and the committee has not announced detainees’ numbers, pardon criteria, or a timeline for the completion of its task.
7. Political opponents, lawyers, journalists, labor organizers, student activists, and even ordinary social media users are subjected to illegal summons or arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and torture, often at the hands of the National Security Agency. The authorities also mobilized their supporters to physically attack citizens wishing to exercise their rights if the latter are perceived to be non-supporters. Recent emblematic cases included the attacks on supporters of opposition candidates in the 2023 presidential elections, as well as the violent dispersal of [the general assembly](#) of the Engineers’ Syndicate in the same year to physically disrupt the counting of a vote that was expected to land against regime supporters.

II. JUSTICE

8. Prolonged **pretrial detention** is the most common tool used to punish or deter dissent, especially by the Supreme State Security Investigation Office and the Terrorism Trial Chambers. Thousands of detainees are held for years often exceeding the legal maximum of pretrial detention (two years), such as activist and translator **Marwa Arafa** who has been detained since 2020⁶.
9. Even those ordered released are often immediately charged in a new case to circumvent their release and ‘reset the clock’, in what is now known as the “**recycling**” policy. Defendants may be charged in connection with more than one case without being referred to trial, as is the case with lawyer **Ibrahim Metwally**, who has been detained under four cases since 2017⁷, or the same person is recharged immediately once they complete their sentences, like lawyer **Hoda Abdel Moneim**⁸, or **Abdallah Ramadan**, who has been detained for nine years. Defendants are sometimes acquitted in trial but face the same charges again, like **Ahmed Sabry**, who has been detained since 2017, despite four consecutive acquittals.⁹
10. **Prisons** lack basic health and safety standards, especially in emergencies where prison authorities respond slowly. In 2020, **Shady Habash**, who had been held in pretrial detention for over two years in Tora Prison, died due to lack of medical care in the evening¹⁰. Authorities reduced the number and time allowed for prison visits in 2020, citing Covid-19 precautions, but the measures remain in place to date. In Badr prison complex many prisoners have been denied any visitation for years.

6 EIPR, [Marwa Arafa: Three years in pretrial detention in violation of the law](#), 9 February 2023.

7 EIPR, [Ibrahim Metwally.. Six years in prison for searching for his son who was forcibly disappeared 10 years ago](#), 10 September 2023.

8 EIPR, [Five years are not enough: New case for detaining uman rights lawyer Hoda Abdel Moneim on the last day of her sentence](#), 31 October 2023.

9 EIPR, [Seven years in pretrial detention.. EIPR demands the implementation of the seventh decision to release Ahmed Sabry Nassef](#), 8 February 2024.

10 EIPR, [The Public Prosecution should open a serious investigation into the issue of medical care in places of detention in Egypt](#), 13 May 2020.

11. The Interior Ministry denies allegations of **torture** and ill-treatment in places of detention without investigation. The launch of some new modern prison facilities, including Badr complex, did not result in improved treatment, with many inmates complaining that their cells are monitored by cameras and forcibly lit throughout the day.
12. Egypt continues to resort to the **death penalty** at excessive rates, with one of the world's highest death sentences and executions over the past decade. In 2021, Egypt ranked first globally in issuing death sentences, and third in executions, according to Amnesty International.¹¹ In one month (October 2020), the highest number of executions in Egypt's modern history (at least 53 people¹²) were carried out. Between 2019 and 2023, various criminal courts sentenced at least 1,890 people to death in 1,091 cases, according to EIPR monitoring.

III. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

13. Economic and social rights have been systematically attacked by the state's fiscal and monetary policies, resulting in impoverishment, worsening living standards, and significant increases in income and wealth inequalities. The majority of Egyptians are paying the price for financial distress resulting from economic mismanagement and anti-poor policies. Social subsidies, especially in food, were curtailed; and the government's selective austerity policies reduced social spending on education, health and public services, in favor of public and foreign debt repayment.¹³

11 Amnesty International, Death Penalty 2021: Facts and Figures, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/05/death-penalty-2021-facts-and-figures/>

12 EIPR, [October 2020: 53 people executed in one month; the number of people executed in October exceeds the annual total of executions for each of the past three years](#), 3 November 2020.

13 EIPR, [Austerity devours the Egyptians' bread..](#) The government removes the last rock that protects the poor, 30 May 2024.

- 14. Inequality** is rising, with the richest 1% of the population receiving nearly half of the income and one-third of wealth versus 18% of income and only 4% of wealth for the bottom half of the population.¹⁴ The Gini coefficient¹⁵ measuring inequality reached 0.77 for wealth and 0.57 for income, which are high levels regionally and globally.¹⁶
15. Three out of every 10 Egyptians are poor, and a quarter of Egyptians are on the brink of **poverty**, according to the latest government statistics revealed in 2019. The poor are expected to increase to four out of every 10 in 2024, due to successive inflationary waves ensuing from repeated devaluations of the local currency and the continuous rise in energy, electricity and water prices. Two-thirds of wage earners in the private sector fall below the poverty line. The World Bank estimates that more than 70% of Egyptians spend less than \$6.85 per day based on the purchasing power parity (PPP) conversion factor¹⁷. This sum is equal to EGP 42 per day, which is below the national poverty line adjusted by inflation in 2024 to be at EGP 58 per day.¹⁸
- 16. External debt** increased by 75% over the last five years to \$168 billion, bringing the total state-guaranteed debt to about 158% of GDP. Debt installments and interest consume 62% of public spending, crowding out

14 World Inequality Database: [Egypt](#).

15 The Gini coefficient is the most used statistical measure for inequality in income, wealth and consumption among population groups, and the closer the index is to 1 the more society is equal, and the closer it is to zero the more society is unequal.

16 Oxfam, [The Middle East and North Africa Gap: Prosperity for the rich, austerity for the rest](#), 15 October 2023,

17 The Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) conversion factor is the number of units of a country's currency required to buy the same amount of goods and services in the domestic market as a US dollar would buy in the United States. The ratio of PPP makes it possible to compare the cost of the bundle of goods that make up gross domestic product (GDP) across countries. The World Bank determines this factor for each country through a basket, commodities and average prices in a selected group of countries. Thus, the dollar's rate against the local currency according to it differs from the market exchange rate.

18 World Bank, [Systematic Country Diagnostic: Egypt](#), 1 October 2023.

social spending and generating millions of new poor citizens.¹⁹

17. The state escalated policies to commodify **health and education** through privatization and turn public service providers into for-profit entities. Public spending on health and education fell to record lows, reaching 1.2% for health and 1.7% for education, nearly half the allocations stipulated in the 2014 Constitution. Egyptians spend nearly 70% of all health spending out of their pockets.²⁰
18. The government launched an unprecedented campaign of cutting trees and reducing green public spaces nationwide in favor of real estate projects, roads and bridges, exacerbating a situation in which per capita green space in Egypt was only 17 cm in 2020²¹. While focusing on major debt-financed renewable energy projects aimed at energy export, spending on **environmental protection** does not exceed 0.02% of GDP.²²
19. A number of recent laws further reduced the **transparency** and competitiveness of government contracts, while expanding partnerships with the private sector. The government estimates that only half of public spending falls under the state budget, while parliament is presented with only a single figure. As the government expanded major construction projects, most notably the New Administrative Capital, there is no information about the financing, revenues or volume of investments injected into these projects. The Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) increased its external borrowing, with CBE loans reaching 11.7% of GDP. These loans are not subject to constitutionally mandated oversight or approval.²³

19 The public debt includes all the loans guaranteed by the state: guarantees of loans for private economic bodies, debts of the monetary authority (the central bank) as well as the debt of public budget organs.

20 Individual out-of-pocket spending on hospital and doctor services, treatment and medicines (where people pay for healthcare services), sources such as voluntary health insurance, health programs provided by employers, and NGOs' activities.

21 EIPR, "[So that the green does not disappear - Trees and gardens in Egypt cities from the perspective of environmental justice](#)," November 22.

22 Egyptian Ministry of Finance, [Draft state budget 24-25](#).

23 Sofian Philip Naceur, El-Sisi's «New Republic», Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung North Africa Regional Office Tunis, October 2022, <https://rb.gy/4mbhk6>

IV. WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

20. Despite government claims of championing women's rights since 2014, women continued to face discrimination, violence and impoverishment. Progress was recorded in **women's representation** in public positions. In 2022, women were finally allowed to serve in all judicial bodies, as discrimination ended in the State's Council and the Public Prosecution Office. Numbers of female judges increased but still fall far behind the official target of 25% by 2030. Restrictions on women working in certain vocations or at nightly hours were rescinded. Constitutional amendments in 2019 allocated a quarter of parliamentary seats to women, leading to higher representation, although within a context of an eroded democratic space and decimated political participation.
21. However, **women's participation in the labor market** has decreased. Working women count for 4.2 million in 2022, compared to 5.2 million in 2014. Women accounted for 15.3% of the total employed population, yet they represent 47.6% of the unemployed.²⁴ In some cases, women faced systematic discrimination in public employment policies, such as the exclusion of new female teachers based on weight, pregnancy, recent childbirth, or physical fitness.²⁵ Egypt continued its descent in labor market equality, ranking 175 out of 190 economies.²⁶ In 2023, the average wage for women in the private sector was below the minimum wage at the time. In 2021, only 5.2% of women owned a home alone or in partnership, and 1.9% owned land alone or in partnership.²⁷ For the first time in decades, the past two years witnessed a decline in girls' enrollment in secondary education. The Anti-Discrimination Commission, mandated by the Constitution in 2014, has not yet been established.

²⁴ CAPMAS, Annual Labor Force Research Bulletin, 2014 and 2023.

²⁵ EIPR, [Court examines appeals of the excluded teachers who passed the "30,000 teachers" competition](#), April 2024.

²⁶ World Bank, [Women, Business and the Law 2024](#), April 2024.

²⁷ Ministry of Health and Population/Egypt, El-Zanaty and Associates/Egypt, and ICF International, Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2014.

22. Regarding **reproductive health**, 2022 statistics revealed that 20% of children born in the previous five years were unwanted, and the unmet need for contraceptives was 14% among married women, reaching 18% in rural Upper Egypt. Decline rates in female genital mutilation remained disappointing compared to the efforts made over ten years, and fell behind national targets.²⁸
23. **Violence:** Successive legal amendments increased penalties for sexual harassment, yet reporting difficulties remain a major obstacle to legal redress. Lack of protection for survivors and witnesses in gender-based violence often results in reprisals from the accused and their families or lawyers.²⁹ Killings of women in public places following their rejection of their killers became increasingly common, with no accountability for police prevention or protection failure even where the victims had reported threats before their murders.
24. **Family laws** promulgated nearly a century ago continue to ensure unfair relationships within the family and deprive women of equal rights to divorce or guardianship over their children. National laws do not recognize domestic violence against women and children, with 2022 statistics showing an increase in physical violence by husbands to 26% of married women.³⁰ Marital rape is still not criminalized. Only nine shelters for abused women exist throughout Egypt, without operating at full capacity despite the prevalence of domestic violence.

28 CAPMAS, Egypt Family Health Survey 2021.

29 EIPR, [Imprisonment and a fine for two lawyers accused of defamation and threatening a victim of a mob sexual assault in Meet Ghamr](#), 3 November 2021; [Closing investigations of the Fairmont rape is a natural result of a year of intimidation of witnesses and prosecution of plaintiffs](#), 12 May 2021..

30 CAPMAS, Egypt Family Health Survey 2021.

V. FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

25. Despite official claims of turning a new page in the area of religious freedoms, serious violations persist, as the state adopted a narrow approach limited to Muslim-Christian harmony while ignoring other religious minorities and discriminatory laws and policies.³¹ Positive steps include a quota system in parliamentary elections,³² resulting in increased Christian representation, and facilitating the construction of churches in new cities.
26. Fewer cases of **sectarian violence** were documented compared to the last reporting cycle, especially church bombings and mass targeting of Christian worshippers; but individual violent attacks were reported, such as the killings of **Father Arsanus Wadid, Rani Raafat, Kyrollos Nagah, Nabil Habashi, Mariam Moussa** and her son **Karras Akram**.³³
27. Christians were violently attacked as they attempted to exercise their freedom to worship, especially in rural areas, with EIPR documenting at least 58 incidents since the new Church Construction Law was adopted in 2016. Five incidents occurred in different villages in Minya alone since September 2023.³⁴ Security forces generally fail to prevent or adequately respond to these attacks, often resorting to customary 'reconciliation' sessions to impose calm while impeding accountability and ensuring impunity for perpetrators.³⁵ These sessions led to the closure of at least 27 churches and prayer halls since the new law was adopted, pointing to its failure to remove barriers against the right to build or restore places of

31 EIPR, [Commentary on the Report of the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights on religious freedom](#), 2022.

32 EIPR, [Parliament and Religion: An Analytical Study on Freedom of Religion and Belief in the House of Representatives from 2015 to 2020](#), 2021.

33 EIPR, Map of Religious Freedoms, available at <https://rleg.eipr.org>.

34 EIPR, [EIPR holds the security authorities responsible for the sectarian attacks in the villages of «Al-Fawakhir» and «Al-Kom Al-Ahmar» in Minya](#), 29 April, 2024.

35 EIPR, [Whose Customs? The Role of Customary Reconciliation in Sectarian Disputes and State Responsibility](#), 2015.

worship.³⁶ Legalizing existing churches proceeded slowly, as permits were granted arbitrarily and without transparency.³⁷

28. Discrimination continued against **unrecognized religious minorities**. The Constitution only recognizes the “heavenly” religions of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Religious groups rejected by the state, Al-Azhar or the Orthodox Church include Baha’is, Shi’a Muslims, Quranists, Ahmadis, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Lack of recognition deprives citizens of their rights to worship or organize collectively, obtain mandatory identification documents stating their beliefs, document marriages or family law matters, or even obtain burial sites for the deceased.³⁸ These communities are subjected to security harassment, unlawful detention, or prosecution. Atheism is not allowed and often leads to discrimination and prosecution. At least eight Shi’a and seven declared atheists were sentenced to prison since 2014, in addition to travel bans against Quranist researcher **Reda Abdel Rahman**, Shi’a activist **Haidar Qandil**, and atheist blogger **Sherif Gaber**.
29. **Baha’is** are the largest unrecognized religious community. They remained unable to document their marriages, and the Supreme Administrative Court rejected their petitions to obtain burial sites in Cairo, Alexandria and Port Said in 2022.
30. The **right to change religion** is restricted to conversion to Islam, as the Ministry of Interior denies Egyptians born into Islam the right to obtain mandatory identification documents recognizing their conversion to any other faith. Converts from Islam face security and social persecution, such as **Mohamed Hegazy**, Yemeni refugee **Abdel Baqi Saeed**, **Khaled Gomaa**, and **Mohamed El-Sayed**. Children are automatically converted to Muslims in public records if one parent converts to Islam, even where the other parent refuses.

36 EIPR, [Fourteen functioning churches shut down since the church construction law was issued](#), 30 April 2018.

37 EIPR, [Three years later, the church construction law has failed to resolve sectarian tensions related to worship](#), 6 January 2020.

38 EIPR, [Identity documents, marriage certificates, and burial: The missing rights of adherents of “unrecognized” religions](#), 2022.

31. Muslim men are allowed to marry none-Muslim women who are Christian or Jewish, while a Muslim woman is only allowed by law to marry a Muslim man. Non-Muslim women married to Muslim men face discrimination in inheritance and child custody in the event of divorce.

VI. MORAL AUTHORITARIANISM

32. Egypt has witnessed systematic campaigns seeking to police citizens' religious and moral lives, using a broad spectrum of outdated, vague legal provisions that violate constitutional rights.
33. Dozens of Egyptians fell victim to the vague and unconstitutional charge of **"contempt of religion"**³⁹, used to prosecute religious minorities or Muslims who deviate from official or mainstream beliefs. EIPR documented the conviction of 60 individuals since 2014, often sentenced to up to five years, including 19 since 2019.⁴⁰ Other arbitrary sanctions included dismissal from work and travel bans, as in the case of artist **Shady Makram**, who lost his job at the Ministry of Culture for publishing views deemed offensive to Islam and Christianity.
34. Since 2013, the targeting of individuals by the morality police based on real or perceived **sexual orientation or gender identity** has escalated dramatically. Methods include entrapment via social media or dating apps, house raids, street searches, or following reports from neighbors. Mass arrests of dozens of people from public places and private parties have also been frequent.⁴¹ EIPR documented the arrest of at least 193 people between 2019 and June 2024, mostly charged with "debauchery" under the Anti-prostitution Law and/or violating the Cybercrime Law. Many were sentenced to three years imprisonment or more. Detainees are subjected to forced anal examinations, with at least 45 people since 2019 subjected

39 Article 98 (f) of the Penal Code.

40 EIPR, [Memorandum on the Unconstitutionality of the Contempt of Religion Article](#), 2016.

41 See for more EIPR, The Trap: [Punishing Sexual Difference in Egypt](#), 2016.

to form of torture lacking any medical or evidentiary value.⁴²

35. Public Prosecution also uses charges of “violating public decency,”⁴³ to target artists and content creators. Dozens of women and girls, especially from underprivileged backgrounds, were convicted for social media content deemed to contravene “Egyptian family values” under the Cybercrime or Anti-Trafficking Laws.⁴⁴ The Supreme Media Regulation Council also partakes in similar moral policing and censorship.

42 United Nations Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations of Egypt's Fifth Periodic Review, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/EGY/CO/5, para. 27, February 2023.

43 Article 178 of the Penal Code.

44 Columbia Global Freedom of Expression, [The Case of the Egyptian TikTok Influencers](#), 2021.