

Five years after the revolution : Egypt's Poorest Human Rights Record in its Modern History

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Egypt is currently witnessing an unprecedented deterioration in the status of human rights in its modern history. The government's crackdown has reached beyond political dissidence, both Islamist and secular, to include a clampdown on secular, independent art and cultural venues.

Crackdown on Journalists, Free Thought, and Secular Art and Cultural Venues

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) stated that Egypt had **23 journalists behind bar in 2015 (The Egyptian Journalist Syndicate puts the figure at 32)**. CPJ also put Egypt right behind China as the world's second highest jailer of journalists, making Egypt the highest per capita (China with a population of 1.357 billion imprisoned 49 journalists while Egypt imprisoned 23 from a population of 90 million). [1]

Egypt witnessed an unprecedented wave of crackdown against independent secular art and cultural venues, with security forces raiding and closing down the Contemporary Image Collective in November 2015, in addition to Townhouse Gallery, Rawabet theatre, as well as Merit publishing house in December 2015. [2] During the same month, television preacher Islam al-Beheiry was sentenced to one year in prison for allegedly defaming Islam as a religion, due to his advocacy for a more progressive interpretation of Islam. [3]

The crackdown is not limited to suspected terrorists and Islamist activists but also includes seculars. Among the secular activists is, Ahmed Douma, women's rights defender Hend al-Nafea, and **228 others who were sentenced to life in prison for participating in a December 2011 peaceful protests**. In other cases, thousands of peaceful protestors are punished by prolonged pretrial detention. It's noteworthy that while secular activists like Alaa Abdelfatah and others are serving a five years sentence for taking part in a peaceful protest, two police officers received the same sentence of five years in prison for torturing a lawyer to death while in custody. [4]

Ahead of the 5th anniversary of 25 January, the government launched a hysterical crackdown on secular youth which included the blocking of Facebook's free internet service, internet.org, as well as massive waves of arrests. **According to a source at the Cairo Security Directorate, the police have raided 5,000 apartments in downtown Cairo, as of 18 January 2016.** [5]

The last two years have witnessed the largest crackdown on LGBT individuals in Egypt. [6] In numerous incidents across several cities, the police raid cafes, arrest customers and individuals in public spaces for breaking the Muslim fast of Ramadan, causing alarm over the future of personal freedoms in Egypt. [7]

While the formal rhetoric on women and coptic rights has improved, it still hasn't been translated to tangible actions.

Many independent human rights NGOs are being investigated for their human rights activities. [8] Furthermore, **over the past year, airport security officers confiscated the passport of at least 32**

Democracy

The Egyptian 2015 parliamentary elections were marked by “a lack of genuine competition and robust debate, widespread apathy reflected in low voter turnout, and a flawed electoral system that failed to ensure a broadly representative bod.” The elections “suffered from a lack of transparency, including obstacles for domestic and international observers.” [10]

*Compiled by Egyptian human rights defenders

In December 2015, the minister of higher education decided to repeat the elections of the Egyptian universities board of Student Unions Federation, which brought independent, non-Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated candidates at the expense of government-backed candidates

Imprisonment and Torture

Within four months only (August and November 2015) there were at least **340 unresolved cases of enforced disappearance of citizens**, with an average of three cases a day. [11] The quasi-governmental National Council for Human Rights NCHR has confirmed that it is working on cases of enforced disappearance. [12]

At least 41,000 people were detained, charged, or sentenced between July 2013 and May 2014, however unconfirmed reports suggest that the numberfigure has now reached over 100,000 detainees. [13] The Interior Ministry claims that 11,877 people have been arrested on alleged terrorism-related charges since the beginning of 2015. [14] In February 2015, President Abdelfatah al-Sisi acknowledged in a speech that there are innocent youth in prisons. [15]

At least 470 death sentences were handed down by Egyptian courts for alleged violence and terrorism related charges in 2015 alone and many more were sentenced to life imprisonment for alleged political violence or activism. The sentences came through mass trials that lacked due process in what was described earlier by a group of UN experts as a “mockery of justice”. [16]

During President Sisi’s first year in office, **at least 289 cases of torture and 16 cases of sexual assaults, were reported** [17]. [According to Nasser Amin](#), Chairman of the Complaints Committee of the NCHR, the actual number of torture cases that occur far exceeds those documented or reported in the media, describing torture as a systematic pattern. [18]

Just in the governorates of Cairo and Giza, **at least 90 detainees held in police facilities died in custody** during the first ten and a half months of 2014 due to medical negligence, bad ventilation and poor conditions in detention facilities, and as a result of ill-treatment [19]. The NCHR reported that overcrowding reached 160% capacity in prisons and 300% at police stations [20].

In a visit by a delegation from the NCHR to al-Aqrab prison in January 2016, Kamal Abbas, member of the NCHR, cited that that the delegation was unable to investigate the complaints filed due to the prison’s administration intransigence. Abbas stated that the administration also refused to allow the delegations to inspect cells and refused to allow a member of the NCHR who’s also a medical doctor to examine prisoners. [21]

Corruption and Impunity

Billions of dollars-worth of corruption, involving some of the country’s most ‘untouchable’ institutions, was

uncovered by Egypt's chief auditor, Hesham Geneina. [22] Instead of investigating the cases of corruption, President Sisi established a committee to investigate Geneina, while government-backed media launched a shaming campaign against the latter. [23]

According to NCHR, between June 2013- December 2014, political violence carried out by both, the state and non state actors (jihadi and non-jihadi groups), had resulted in about 2,600 deaths, including 1,250 identified as supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, 550 other civilians, and 700 security personnel [24]. Over 800 of the civilian deaths took place during the violent dispersal of the Rabbaa and Nahda sit-ins on the 14th of August 2013, in what is described as the single worst incident of mass killing of civilians in Egyptian modern history. The dispersal of the sit-ins have not been independently investigated till this day. [25]

Footnotes

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[3] Mada Masr, Preacher Islam al-Beheiry sentenced to one year for insulting Islam, 29 December 2015, <<http://www.madamasr.com/news/preacher-islam-al-beheiry-sentenced-one-year-insulting-islam>>

[4] HRW, "Egypt: Year of Abuses Under al-Sisi", 8 June 2015, <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/08...>>

[5] Al Badaiah, MoI Raids Downtown Cairo Apartments, 19 January 2016, Available in Arabic: <<http://albedaiiah.com/news/2016/01/1...>>

[6] The Independent, How distaste of LGBT people in Egypt has turned into state-sponsored persecution, 17 May 2015, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/w...>>

[7] Al Arabiya, Is public breaking of Ramadan fast illegal in Egypt?, 26 July 2014, <<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/per...>>

[8] CIHRS, "From Restriction to closure of public space in Egypt: Egyptian Government Clamps Down on Rights Groups, Seeking their Eradication", 4 May 2015, <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=14940&l...>>

[9] HRW, " Egypt: Scores Barred From Traveling", 1 November 2015, <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/11/01...>>

[10] Democracy International, Restrictions on Genuine Competition, Free Expression Undermine Egypt's House of Representatives Elections, December 9 2015, <<http://democracyinternational.com/n...>>

[11] ECRF, "Enforced Disappearance Awaiting Justice", 22 December 2015, <<http://www.ec-rf.org/?p=1194>>

[12] HRW, "Dozens Detained Secretly", 20 July 2015, <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/07/20...>>

[13] HRW, "Egypt: Year of Abuses Under al-Sisi", 8 June 2015, <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/08...>>

[14] Mada Masr, Almost 12,000 people arrested for terrorism in 2015: Interior Ministry, 30 October 2015, <<http://www.madamasr.com/news/almost...>>

[15] Television Interview, 22 February 2015,



par [AlarabyTV Network](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Asf...) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Asf...>

[16] United Nations, Egypt: Mass Death sentences - A Mockery of Justice, 31 March 2014, <<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/...>>

[17] Al Nadeem, Balance Statement: One Year of Abdel Fatah al-Sisi's Rule June 2014 - June 2015, <<https://drive.google.com/a/cihrs.or...>>

[18] Nasser Amin, Chairman of the Complaints Committee of «the National Human Rights Council» in an interview for «Al Masry Al Youm»: «United Nations» adopted 13 cases of enforced disappearance in «January 25», 29 December 2015, <<http://today.almasryalyoum.com/arti...>>

[19] HRW, "Egypt: Rash of Deaths in Custody", 21 January 2015, <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/01/21...>>

[20] NHRC, "Tenth annual human rights report" <<http://www.nchregypt.org/index.php/...>>

[21] Al Bedaiah, Kamal Abbas Reveals the Details of NHRC's visit to al-Aqrab, 5 January 2016, available in Arabic: <<http://albedaiiah.com/news/2016/01/0...>>

[22] Dailymail, "In Egypt, a corruption watchdog hit by backlash", 18 April 2014, <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap...>>

[23] EIPR, Statement on the Central Auditing Organization, 19 January 2016 available in Arabic: <<http://eipr.org/pressrelease/2016/0...>>

[24] NHRC, Tenth annual human rights report 2013- 2014, <<http://www.nchregypt.org/index.php/...>>

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