



Report of the Technical Secretariat of the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights on the Occasion of the International Human Rights Day (December 10)

On December 10 of every year, the world celebrates the Human Rights Day, which is the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The declaration, which affirms the principles and values of human dignity, freedom, and equality, is a landmark document in the history of human rights, as it played a fundamental role in the drafting and elaboration of international human rights law.

On this occasion, the Technical Secretariat of the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights issued this report that deals with the active role Egypt has played within the framework of the international human rights system, the most important features of the constitutional framework for the protection of human rights, the institutional structure to enhance the respect for and protection of these rights, and the framework for the country's strategic planning in various human rights issues. The report also sheds light on the most prominent national efforts to implement human rights in the context of combating the Coronavirus pandemic during 2020.

First: The Active Role of Egypt within the Framework of the International Human Rights System

- For decades, Egypt has contributed to multilateral efforts to develop international human rights law as it participated in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in addition to the other international covenants for human rights. It has also actively contributed in terms of consultations and preparatory work to the drafting of different international human rights conventions. In addition, Egypt acceded to eight fundamental international human rights conventions and participated in the efforts to develop international human rights mechanisms at the United Nations, including the Human Rights Council, that Egypt won its membership several times. Several Egyptian experts were also elected to the United Nations human rights treaty bodies. On the regional level, Egypt acceded to a number of agreements within the framework of the Arab and African human rights systems.
- Egypt is keen to implement its international and regional human rights obligations against the backdrop of the remarkable development of the international and regional systems for the protection of these rights, the significant expansion of their scope, and the establishment of multiple monitoring and follow-up bodies and mechanisms. Egypt is also keen to develop its cooperation with international and regional human rights bodies by submitting periodic national reports at the specified times; monitoring, following up, and evaluating the implementation of recommendations issued by them on a regular basis; and interacting with the Human

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Rights Council at the United Nations and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and responding to all correspondence received from those bodies.



- Egypt has already submitted several national periodic reports to a number of regional and international human rights treaty bodies, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Commission on Human Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the Committee Against Torture.
- A time plan has also been drawn up to finalize the rest of the national reports for the concerned bodies during the next year. Within the framework of its cooperation and support for the United Nations Human Rights Council, Egypt accepted 87.37% of the recommendations it received as part of the third round of the Universal Periodic Review. Furthermore, in light of Egypt's keenness to implement the recommendations it received from international human rights bodies that are consistent with its international and national commitments, it is particularly exploring the possibility of implementing a national electronic platform to follow up on the implementation of these recommendations.
- In this sense, Egypt plays an active and effective role in joint international action in the field of human rights. It contributes to building bridges and enhancing coordination among the various regional groups within the United Nations by constructively working with all parties on the basis of dialogue and cooperation. It coordinates with Arab, African, and Islamic countries as well as the Non-Aligned Movement countries in addressing issues of concern to developing countries on the international human rights agenda, including racism, xenophobia, and the challenges facing the implementation of economic, social, and cultural rights as well as the right to development.
- Egypt has also led various initiatives connected to multilateral diplomacy for human rights at the United Nations. In the field of women's rights in particular, Egypt led an initiative to present a resolution before the General Assembly with a number of countries on strengthening the rapid national and international response to the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls. It succeeded in mobilizing support within the United Nations General Assembly to adopt the draft resolution unanimously and by consensus at the end of October 2020. The resolution sheds light on the special needs of women and girls during the pandemic and it deals with the economic and social repercussions of the pandemic on their rights. The resolution also aims to strengthen national and international efforts aimed at mitigating these repercussions, which include eliminating violence against women and girls, providing them with the necessary health and social services, empowering them economically, and ensuring their continued inclusion in the preparation of national and international plans to confront the pandemic.
- Moreover, in the field of family protection, Egypt has been leading since 2014 a trans-regional initiative, as part of the Human Rights Council, represented in the resolution entitled

“Protection of the Family,” which aims to affirm the principle that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society that plays an important role in protecting and promoting human rights which thus entails that states must protect and support the family institution. The resolution has witnessed a remarkable development in terms of the topics it addresses, including the rights and responsibilities of all family members and an emphasis on the family’s role in: combating poverty and eliminating hunger, ensuring a healthy life for all its members without exception, and increasing learning opportunities, as well as contributing to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, ensuring children’s enjoyment of their rights in a healthy family environment, and promoting the full enjoyment of persons with disabilities and the elderly of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. This is all within the framework of an integrated and comprehensive approach to development.

- As for the issues of the youth and Egypt’s efforts at placing them on the international human rights agenda, Egypt has contributed to highlighting the role of the youth in societies through its participation in the presentation of a resolution on the youth and human rights every two years at the Human Rights Council since 2016. Egypt’s contribution stems from its belief that the youth are the main driver and beneficiary of the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy, which thus entails providing a favorable environment that enables young people to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms and overcome the challenges they face in this regard whether it is economic, social, or cultural. The last version of the resolution in 2018 witnessed an explicit reference to the contributions made by the World Youth Forum in its first and second editions, which were held in Sharm El-Sheikh during the years 2017 and 2018 respectively, as an international forum to discuss global issues from the perspective of the youth. The last version of the resolution is also considered the first United Nations resolution in which the contributions of the World Youth Forum were mentioned. It is worth noting that the forum began as an Egyptian initiative to support the ideas of the youth and provide a suitable and sufficient space for them to express and exchange their views freely and without any restrictions as well as recommend initiatives for decision-makers.
- On the other hand, since 2018, Egypt pushed, in cooperation with Mexico, for a resolution on terrorism and human rights, which was eventually approved by the Human Rights Council by consensus. This reflects the priority that the Egyptian government attaches to combatting terrorism and mobilizing the international community to take a firm stand against terrorism as well as highlighting terrorism’s effects on the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The resolution condemns terrorist operations in all their forms and their impacts on the enjoyment of human rights and calls for the immediate cessation of all forms of support provided to terrorism, including the provision of safe haven and the sponsorship of media platforms that adopt hate speech that incites violence, killing, and destruction. It affirms its solidarity with the victims of terrorist operations and their families and stresses the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of victims as well as providing them and their families with the necessary support and assistance. In connection with Egypt’s efforts to protect and care for the rights of victims of terrorism at the international level,



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Egypt was among the countries that initiated the establishment of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism at the United Nations in New York in addition to joining the small group concerned with drafting the United Nations General Assembly resolution on strengthening international cooperation to assist victims of terrorism, which was issued in 2019.

- Since 2015, Egypt has also cooperated with several countries from different continents of the world to submit a resolution to the Human Rights Council on the right to work, which deals with the various aspects of this right, including the impact of the international environment, the role of the private sector, the importance of vocational and educational training, protection from discrimination, arbitrary and illegal dismissal from work, and international cooperation and capacity building. The resolution also deals with the right of women to work and the need to empower them and support their rights as well as the need to address the obstacles that prevent them from entering the labor market.

Second: The Constitutional Framework for the Protection of Human Rights

- The Egyptian Constitution achieves a significant qualitative leap at the level of guaranteeing basic rights and freedoms as it includes all the principles of human rights and affirms that the political system is based on the respect for human rights and the consolidation of the values of citizenship, justice, equality of rights and duties without any discrimination, and equal opportunities as foundations for the building of society. It also affirms that discrimination is a crime punishable by law and prohibits any amendments to the constitutional articles that are related to the principle of equality unless the amendments relate to further guarantees of this principle. The Constitution also stipulates that the rights and freedoms of citizens may not be disrupted or diminished and no law may restrict them in a way that affects their essence. It also guarantees the independence of the judiciary to ensure the effective implementation of all human rights principles and fundamental freedoms. The Constitution further provides judicial protection for these principles through the Supreme Constitutional Court, which has jurisdiction over the constitutionality of laws. The Constitution also stipulates that laws regulating the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms contained therein are considered laws that complement it and thus, their issuance require the approval of two-thirds of the members of the House of Representatives.
- In addition, the Constitution takes a more advanced approach in ensuring the fulfillment of Egypt's international obligations in the field of human rights. It confers, for the first time, a special status on international human rights conventions through Article (93) which stipulates that "the state is committed to the agreements, covenants, and international conventions of human rights that were ratified by Egypt, all of which have the force of law after publication." In other words, this article makes the state's commitment to respecting these conventions a constitutional obligation, thus according the basic rights and freedoms contained therein the protection established for the constitution. In accordance with this article as well, the legislature is obliged to not enact any legislation that contradicts the obligations of the state under these conventions.



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EGYPT VISION 2030

works towards the realization of basic human rights as it is a pillar in the development process.

- Furthermore, the legislative structure is replete with many guarantees necessary to promote and respect human rights and Egypt has gone a long way in promoting consistency between national laws on the one hand and the principles and guarantees contained in the Constitution and international and regional human rights agreements to which Egypt is a party on the other hand. Continuous efforts are also being made to build on this legislative momentum, whether through amendments to some existing legislation or the introduction of new ones.

Third: The Institutional Structure to Enhance Respect and Protection of Human Rights

- Egypt has an institutional structure that enhances respect and protection of the different aspects of human rights. The establishment of the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights at the end of 2018 came to be an important addition in this regard, reflecting the existence of a definite political will to activate the constitutional and legislative frameworks to protect public rights and freedoms in Egypt and to enhance the implementation of Egypt's international and regional commitments in the field of human rights. The Supreme Committee began to carry out its work during 2020 and it is mainly concerned with preparing a national strategy for human rights, proposing necessary legislative measures and procedures related to the promotion of human rights, preparing national reports to be submitted to international and regional human rights bodies, following up on the implementation of recommendations received from these bodies, preparing official responses to the correspondence received from these bodies, and developing an action plan for national capacity building in the field of human rights. The Supreme Committee carries out these responsibilities in cooperation and coordination with the units and departments concerned with human rights that have been established in all ministries, governorates, and relevant authorities.
- In particular, and during the exercise of its various competencies, the Supreme Committee seeks to enhance communication and consultation with the National Council for Human Rights as well as civil society in its broader and more comprehensive sense, considering that this is necessary to achieve integration among all national efforts to promote human rights. It should be noted that the Supreme Committee has undertaken, during the current year, the task of carefully examining all the observations and recommendations contained in the last annual report of the National Council for Human Rights and coordinating with all concerned official authorities with the aim of commenting on the observations and recommendations it received.
- In addition to this, and in 2017, the Public Prosecution, which is an independent judicial body, established a general administration for human rights that is tasked with receiving complaints, accusations, and reports related to human rights and following up on the implementation of the rules contained in international and regional human rights conventions, treaties, and covenants that Egypt ratifies with regard to the jurisdiction of the Public Prosecution. It also receives reports of periodic and surprise inspections of prisons and other places of detention received from the prosecution offices along with examining these reports and making observations thereon regarding the extent to which the rules for the treatment of prisoners are applied. The Military Judiciary Authority similarly established a human rights branch under the Military Prosecutor's department in 2018, which deals with all human rights issues as well as other tasks mentioned in the decision that establishes it, all of which fall within the jurisdiction of the military judiciary.
- The institutional structure for the promotion and protection of human rights further includes the National Council for Human Rights, which is the independent national institution concerned

with human rights, the National Council for Women, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities. The Constitution provides for the independence of these councils and their role in informing public authorities of any violation related to their field of work; furthermore, they are to be consulted regarding draft laws and regulations related to their field of work.

- Finally, the House of Representatives also includes a human rights committee that studies and expresses opinion on draft laws in the field of rights and freedoms; international covenants related to human rights; reports of the National Council for Human Rights; aspects related to human rights in the reports of national councils, independent bodies, and state oversight bodies; and complaints submitted by citizens with regard to human rights. This committee also conducts visits to prisons.

Fourth: Strategic Planning in the Field of Human Rights

- The first integrated national strategy for human rights is being prepared in Egypt, reflecting a conviction in the necessity of adopting a comprehensive and serious approach to promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms. This approach is characterized by a clear vision and a strategic orientation in planning. The strategy will be prepared as an ambitious national roadmap in the field of human rights by promoting respect for and protection of all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights contained in the Constitution and the international and regional agreements to which Egypt has acceded and in a framework of equality, non-discrimination, and equal opportunities, pursuant to the rule of law.
- It should be noted that the Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt Vision 2030 works towards the realization of basic human rights as it is a pillar in the development process. It thus seeks to achieve comprehensive development through building a fair society characterized by equality and the fair distribution of the benefits of development as well as achieving the highest levels of social integration for all groups and strengthening the principles of governance. Accordingly, this development vision emphasizes that achieving sustainable development requires respect for the principles of human rights and the rule of law.
- The government has also adopted several other national strategies and plans that address various human rights issues and topics, which include many objectives and implementation measures necessary to achieve them (whether legislative, executive, or institutional) according to specific timeframes and performance indicators, with the aim of giving the necessary impetus to the advancement of human rights. These include the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030, the National Strategy for Combating Female Genital Mutilation 2016–2020, the National Strategy for Reducing Early Marriage 2015–2020, the National Strategy for Combating Violence against Women 2015–2020, the National Population Strategy 2015–2030, the National Reproductive Health Strategy 2015–2020, the National Strategy to Combat Illegal Migration 2016–2026, the Anti-Trafficking Strategy 2016–2021, the Strategy for the Rehabilitation, Care and Protection of Persons with Disabilities 2030, the National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood 2018–2030, the Strategy for Confronting Extremism in Egyptian Universities 2019–2023, the Strategic Plan for the Development of Education Before University 2014–2030, the Higher Education and Scientific Research Strategy 2030, the National Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2030, and the Strategic Plan for the Expansion of

Seawater Desalination Plants to Provide for Drinking Water Needs 2020–2025.

Fifth: Prominent National Efforts to Realize Human Rights in the Context of Combating Coronavirus

The year 2020 imposed exceptional challenges on the whole world due to the global pandemic caused by the spread of the Coronavirus disease, which had direct repercussions on the enjoyment of basic human rights. The state took a wide range of measures to deal with and reduce these repercussions as the government allocated EGP 100 billion to confront the crisis.

1. The Right to Health

- The government's efforts during the first phase (before announcing the appearance of any infections in Egypt) focused on expanding awareness campaigns on the ways to prevent the spread of the virus and the practices to follow as well as conducting tests for travelers returning from affected countries.
- During the second phase, which coincided with the beginning of the emergence of infected cases in Egypt, preventive health measures included suspending education in schools and universities, suspending air traffic, shutting down public gathering places, and imposing a partial curfew.
- During the third phase, which included the rise in the number of infections, the Ministry of Health took several measures to deal with the crisis by allocating around 12 hospitals which were equipped for isolation procedures and distributed across the governorates of the country and by equipping 27 university hospitals for isolation procedures in addition to allocating fever hospitals and chest hospitals to examine and transfer suspected cases. It also prepared university cities to become medical areas for isolating mild cases.
- A set of initiatives have been taken to support digital health in light of the pandemic, including the launch of the Egypt Health Application that includes awareness-raising instructions and an interactive service for reporting suspected cases of the virus in addition to the development of various electronic platforms for reservations, medical examinations, home delivery services of medications, and the provision of remote medical and health advice and guidance.
- Doctors and all workers in the medical sector were supported by raising the bonus for interns (doctors) in hospitals and giving incentive bonuses to the medical staff and workers in quarantine wards, isolation hospitals, central laboratories and their branches, and the Ambulance Authority.
- All health and medical services have been made available to refugees on an equal basis with citizens as part of the national efforts to confront the pandemic.

2. In the Field of Social Protection

- The government has paid attention to directing support to the poorest groups and irregular workers to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on them.



12 HOSPITALS

which were equipped for isolation procedures and distributed across the governorates



The budget for cash transfer programs was raised from **EGP 18.5 BILLION** to **EGP 19.3 BILLION**

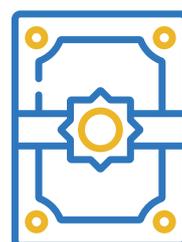
- The budget for cash transfer programs was raised from EGP 18.5 billion to EGP 19.3 billion.
- A number of 100,000 new families have been added to the Takaful and Karama program for those affected by the Coronavirus pandemic.
- Based on the directive of the President, the government provided grants to irregular workers at a value of EGP 500 per month in light of the Coronavirus crisis; around 1.5 million workers benefitted from these grants. It should be noted that a presidential directive was also issued to establish a fund to support irregular workers against various risks and with the aim of disbursing financial aid to them as compensation during periods of economic emergencies or epidemics that lead to disruptions to their income as a way to address the issue of them not being covered by the unemployment insurance. The fund also targets those who do not qualify for the Takaful and Karama program, whose details are available at the Ministry of Social Solidarity. In addition, a ministerial committee was established to protect and care for irregular workers, which undertook the task of counting them in preparation for the approval of pensions and social and health insurance as well as the development of a comprehensive approach to their integration in the formal sector of the economy.
- The Workers Emergency Benefits Fund paid the wages and salaries of workers whose incomes were disrupted by the pandemic, especially within the tourism sector which was the most affected by the events.

3. Care for Prisoners and Detainees

- Visits to all prisons were temporarily suspended on 10 March 2020 in order to preserve the public health of inmates and their families while permitting the exchange of letters with families and allowing phone calls in accordance with regulations and procedures.
- The Ministry of Interior took a number of measures to combat the spread of the Coronavirus disease among inmates and prison personnel, including daily sterilization of all police facilities, wards, and rooms for prisoners as well as places of detention, and the provision of thermal scanners for all prisons and places of detention to inspect all their employees and those visiting them as well as appointing doctors to examine them. These measures were taken to make sure that there were no patients among inmates. In addition, new prisoners underwent medical examinations to avoid negatively affecting the public health of other inmates. Other measures included conducting a random survey of prisoners, allocating rooms to isolate suspected cases, and transferring suspected cases to fever hospitals present in the geographical areas of the prison to conduct the necessary medical examinations and diagnosis.
- Visits were resumed in all public prisons and penitentiaries on 22 August 2020, while still maintaining the following preventive, precautionary, and health measures:



100,000 NEW FAMILIES have been added to the Takaful and Karama program for those affected by the Coronavirus pandemic



the government provided grants to irregular workers at a value of **EGP 500 PER MONTH**

- Setting dates for visits for all prison inmates according to the alphabetical order of their names and taking into consideration the capacity of the visiting halls in a way that maintains safe social distancing between inmates and their families.
 - The visiting halls were suitably equipped to receive the families of the inmates, including disinfecting and sterilizing them before the start of visits and re-disinfecting and re-sterilizing them for each batch of visits. All halls were also equipped with a wire barrier to achieve safe distances between inmates and visitors.
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- Announcing 118 mobile phone numbers for prisons on the website of the ministry of interior and allocating them for the specific task of answering inquiries about visiting dates, provided that the phone call includes the caller's information, the inmate's name, and the degree of kinship.
 - Announcing 2 landlines in the prison sector on a 24-hour basis to receive any complaints or inquiries regarding visits from the family of inmates.
 - Operating an electronic application on the website of the ministry of interior through which it is possible to receive visitor requests from close kinship of inmates and announcing their dates.
 - Installing self-sterilization gates at the entrances to prison areas to ensure the safety of inmates.
 - Providing masks in waiting cafeterias for visitors to wear.
 - Against the backdrop of the Coronavirus pandemic, the measures taken by the Public Prosecution included the activation of alternatives to pretrial detention provided for in the Criminal Procedure Law. A set of precautionary measures were taken within the framework of protecting the parties to the criminal case, which is the establishment of an electronic mechanism to consider the matter of renewing the detention of the accused through facilitating communications between the member of the Prosecution and the defendant via videoconference methods and the issuance of a decision on the matter after hearing the defendant's statements. This limits the transportation of detainees and prisoners and reduces their contact with each other. In parallel, the implementation of the remote review project in the pretrial detention orders was initiated, which allows judges to directly contact defendants who are held in pretrial detention, in the presence of their lawyers, through a closed and secured television circle in order to enable the accused to present all aspects of their defense when considering the matter of their release or continued detention, without going to court.
 - To prevent the spread of the Coronavirus disease in prisons, the number and cases of inmates with chronic diseases and the elderly who were sentenced to short penalties (one year or less)

were allowed an early release either through a presidential pardon for the remainder of the sentence or through their conditional release. This applied to 27,091 cases during the period from March to mid-November 2020.

4. The Right to Education

- The Ministry of Education has taken several measures to deal with the crisis, such as applying remote education systems in schools and higher education institutions, providing electronic access to educational platforms for high school students, providing distanced learning activities for technical education students through educational channels on YouTube, and providing a website for communications among students of schools of applied technology and teachers during the suspension period.

5. In the Field of Women's Rights

- The measures taken by Egypt to confront the Coronavirus disease and respond to the needs of women largely reflect the government's orientation and philosophy towards providing possible means of support to enhance the empowerment of Egyptian women.
- Egypt issued rapid response policies to the status of women, including about 106 policies, decisions, and measures until August 2020, taking into account the needs of women during the outbreak of the pandemic. These measures and policies took into consideration different groups of women such as women with disabilities, elderly women, and pregnant women. Egypt was also the first country in the world to issue a mechanism to monitor policies and measures taken by the state to respond to the needs of women during the outbreak of the pandemic through the National Council for Women.