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المركز المصري للفكر والدراسات الاستراتيجية
EGYPTIAN CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES



Human Rights

The Trajectory to Combat Terrorism



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The Trajectory to Combat Terrorism



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Special edition

November 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Egypt has been exerting dedicated efforts in the past four years to promote human rights on the civil, political, economic and social venues. The Egyptians are determined to be up to the challenge, against all odds and hardships resulting from economic difficulties due to the economic slowdown between 2011 and 2014, in addition to regional turbulence and the threats of cross-border terrorism.

Egypt realizes that operating in the area of human rights is by definition a work in progress that cannot be fully realized in an instantaneous manner. On the contrary, it is an incremental exercise, requiring perseverance and constant work on the legislative and structural levels. Egypt is working on enhancing, developing and reforming the current core and adjunct institutional arrangements as well as creating new ones, issuing laws and policies, capacity building and training, and above all creating a culture of human rights in society as well as mainstreaming human rights principles in education.

As is the case with all countries, Egypt engages in building on achievements and addressing shortcomings in a spirit of openness and a commitment towards realizing the needed improvements.

Not only does empowering human rights represent an important component of Egypt's national development strategy, Vision 2030. It is a goal that the political will and efforts are dedicated to empower and achieve. In the last four years collective cooperative efforts have been exerted by the government, civil society and Egypt's partners in development to promote the right to health and decent housing, remove slums, improve education, eradicate extremist religious discourse, make available clean water, preserve the environment, effect social protection programs, provide religious freedoms, fight corruption, and create a favorable environment for economic growth and sustainable development. That is in addition to the inclusion of youth, women, children, and the underprivileged in public life, and preserving the main right to life, which is harshly threatened by the horrors of cross-border terrorism.

Egyptian Center for Strategic Studies

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Egypt's Vision for Combating Terrorism



— Noha Bakr —
Advisory Board Member

Egypt's vision for combating terrorism is rooted in the state's firm view that terrorist groups, despite their differences, are of equal threat and their ideas are based in the same ideology that incites violence, killing, and terrorizing people. Egypt believes extremism in all its forms is the ideological umbrella which terrorist groups rely on in spreading their subversive message, and recruiting supporters through false religious interpretations. Egypt is working hard with a clear vision and effective policies to eliminate this phenomenon, not only through military means but also from all ideological, organizational and financial angles, since terrorism is a serious threat to the first human right - the right to life.

Egypt strongly believes in the importance of global cooperation to confront this phenomenon since it is a trans-border trend, meaning that if terrorism surfaces anywhere this does not mean it will be contained within that border. Rather, it will grow beyond the border and beyond the continent. Egypt is focused on boosting cooperation and sharing its expertise in regional and international organizations, and anti-terrorism fora. It also monitors international decisions on combating terrorism, coordinates with national agencies to implement these decisions across the country within domestic laws, trains African security and judicial institutions to raise their capabilities to fight terrorism. Also, bolsters opportunities to build and maintain peace in countries suffering from wars and conflicts that are fertile ground for housing terrorist groups. Egypt also works on drying up sources of funds for terrorism on bilateral and international levels in cooperation with international partners in accordance with UN resolutions, and on the regional level through its membership of several regional and international organizations such as the Arab League, African Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, UN, the international coalition for combating terrorism. It closely monitors the efforts and outcomes of partnerships between Egypt and its global partners to share best practices in combating

terrorism, its sources of funding, and recruiting human resources.

As part of the drive to combat extremist ideology and provide a moderate religious discourse, Egyptian religious institutions which are highly reputable around the world and have great credibility with the Muslim masses everywhere, namely Al-Azhar and Dar Al-Iftaa [Religious Edicts Foundation], play a key role in confronting radical ideology on the national, regional and international stage through several initiatives aiming to popularize and promote religion's moderate and noble messages, and dismantle the ideological foundation of terrorist groups. They also refute radicalism promoted by these groups through social media especially, and their work is not limited to the Arabic language, but also in English, French, German, Spanish, Persian, Urdu, Chinese and African languages so these institutions can deliver their message to 193 countries around the world.

Egypt is also working on combating Islamophobia which aggravates the problem because it is another form of extremism that terrorist groups utilize to ingrain a siege mentality in their supporters, and plant the belief that the entire world is against them and their religion, which confirms extremist claims that the world is the enemy of Islam. Egypt always reiterates the need to combat Islamophobia on the international stage, and is working on the domestic scene to create an economic and social environment that rejects extremist ideology. Egypt wants to address the conditions that lead to the spread of terrorism, including discrimination based on ethnic, national or religious affiliations, political exclusion, socio-economic marginalization, and lack of good governance. The government, along with broad participation in society and in partnership with international development partners, launched a sustainable development strategy until 2030 to provide a good life for all citizens equally. The government also approved a comprehensive economic reform plan which raised economic growth from 4.4 per cent to

5.6 per cent between 2014 and 2019.

The government also began building landmark labor-intensive projects which reduced unemployment rates from 13.4 per cent in 2014 to 7.5 per cent in the second quarter of 2019. As part of its commitment to social justice and social solidarity to guarantee a life of dignity for all citizens and reduce poverty, the government implemented several programs and projects, most notably increasing the pensions of civil servant, public and private sector employees from EGP 103.1 billion to EGP 175 billion between 2014 and 2019, or a 41 per cent increase that benefits some 10 million Egyptians. It also launched the Solidarity and Dignity program to provide a social security network to the poor, old, handicapped, those unable to work and orphans which benefits another ten million citizens.

It also launched an unconditional cash support program known as "social security" that benefits 1.4 million families and provides academic scholarships to prevent children in these families from dropping out of school. It has also provided 929\$ million in funds for development projects in the poorest areas, and 550\$ million from the World Bank for public housing and school food programs to cover 11 million children. The government also multiplied its efforts to provide adequate, safe and healthy housing for citizens and is working on providing a variety of units for all income levels, as well as renovating housing for the neediest families. It has provided 333,000 new housing units for low-income families since 2015, with token down payments and rent, that benefits some three million citizens, and provided 74,651 units for middle income families. The government plans to build 395,000 more units for low-income families until 2020.

The social housing program for low- and middle-income families provided 210,806 soft loans between 2014 and 2018 to enable them to own their unit. The state also adopted a comprehensive national plan to eliminate slum areas, whereby slum residents are given a

choice to either move to other neighborhoods or accept financial compensation or accept temporary alternative housing or take a lump sum to find other housing until their neighborhood is developed. They would be given a housing unit in the neighborhood after the work is done. Around 90 slum areas around the country are being developed, with a total of 92,455 housing units.

With regard to healthcare, between 2015 and 2018 some 20 new hospitals, medical centers and clinics were built in 20 governorates, and 38 existing hospitals, medical centers and clinics were refurbished, and the number of families treated at state health insurance hospitals increased, with more poor patients given access to treatments. A comprehensive health insurance law was issued and will gradually be compulsory for all citizens, while gradually raising the standard and efficiency of medical facilities before applying the new system.

In September 2018, the campaign "100 million Health" was launched to eradicate Virus C and detect non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity. In February 2019, another free campaign was launched to detect and treat obesity diseases, stunting and severe anemia among students under the age of 12.

For women, the 2015 parliamentary elections ushered in 90 female MPs bringing the rate of female members to 15.5 per cent of seats, up from 1.2 per cent in 2012. Since 2018, there have been eight female ministers in charge of 25 per cent of cabinet portfolios. And for the first time ever, two women were appointed as governors. Women occupy 27 per cent of deputy governor positions, as well as preside over district, local councils and as mayors in some villages. Women occupy 25 per cent of leadership positions in the Central Bank of Egypt and 12 per cent of seats on the boards of banks. They are also present in the judiciary and the president's national security adviser is a female.

With regards to the economic empowerment of women, equal opportunity units were

created in all ministries to ensure equality in the workplace, and prevent discriminatory practices against women. There are also legal awareness programs on the rights of working women, confronting violence against women, and three national strategies were launched in 2015: the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women; the National Strategy to Combat Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); and the National Strategy to Combat Early Marriage. Tougher penalties on FGM were also adopted.

On the rights of children and the handicapped, the government – in partnership with NGOs – launched the “National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood: 2023-2017”, with an integrated development view to provide better services, raise the quality of life for children, and focus on protecting the health, survival, development, education and participation of children in public life. Special attention is given to basic services for children in poor families, and 2018 was declared the Year of the Handicapped. The law guarantees their effective participation in all aspects of life, and grants special benefits to them at government offices and education services. The Civil Service Law allocated five per cent of government jobs to the handicapped, reduced their working hours by one hour every day, and increased their paid vacation time. A health strategy for the handicapped was adopted in partnership with NGOs to provide medical care at reasonable prices.

With regards to freedom of belief, a law was issued on the construction and renovation of churches to protect freedom of belief and regulate the rules for acquiring a license, removing previous violations, and adjusting the status of houses of worship. Until July 2019, the status of 1,021 churches and service buildings was adjusted.

Egypt is also seeking to develop its military capabilities in combating terrorism. The army is carrying out an intense campaign to fight terrorism, and Egypt believes in the importance of firm military action to prevent regional expansion of terrorism, and protect civilians

from savage violence by terrorists. To showcase the effectiveness of these operations, Egypt is working closely with international partners to bolster anti-terrorism efforts, and continues to do its utmost to combat terrorism despite regional challenges that directly impact Egypt's security and chronic crises in the Middle East that are causing the quantitative and qualitative evolution of terrorism. Also, the proliferation of extremist ideology, civil wars, and waves of mass displacement.

There are also challenges regarding security and the right of Egyptians to life as a basic right, and guarding political human rights. After the revolutions in 2011 and 2013, Egypt faced serious security challenges and many terrorist attacks that caused great destruction of life and property. It exerted great efforts in recent years to restore security and political stability through a clear and cooperative vision for combating terrorism, and developed policies, plans and mechanisms to combat terrorism, protect political and civil rights, and exercise existing constitutional and legal guarantees on the matter, as well as develop these guarantees.

There remains a crucial problem facing the fight against terrorism, namely some countries funding terrorist currents to interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries. There is also the dilemma of agreeing on a unified definition of terrorism, which is highly controversial. Some actions are labeled as terrorist when they are not, such as armed resistance by national liberation movements with the goal of independence and self-determination. Agreeing on one definition of international terrorism is crucial on the international stage, because only then can global bodies adopt a unified legal reference. This would also unify the theoretical criteria defining this phenomenon, support countries on the frontlines of fighting terrorism to protect world citizens' right to life, mobilize genuine efforts to end armed conflicts, and benefit from available regional expertise in building and maintaining peace.



— Belal Manzour —
Researcher at International Relations Program

Addressing terrorism as an internal or trans-border existential phenomenon and condition, and not an accident, which has taken many shapes and forms such as groups, organized crime or ideologies, is the gateway to studying it and its multiple dimensions, and understanding its impact on human rights and the survival of societies. The definition of terrorism is the practice of violence to produce fear with political goals, to inflict damage and harm on individuals and coerce societies and government. This is a clear violation of basic human rights, the many generations of human rights, and the rule of law.

The right to life is a supreme human right and falls on the state to protect and uphold it. The universal concept of the declaration of human rights is based on partnership between state and individual in applying these rights. The Egyptian state relies on this in its fight against terrorism, through a comprehensive approach to human rights. Combating terrorism is a human right, as Egyptian President Abdel-Fatah Al-Sisi said in his opening address to the first World Youth Forum in 2017.

Fighting terrorism requires upholding human rights and making them a priority; the two notions are not contradictory. Combating terrorism is rooted in human rights which is the starting point to move forward on this path. Any terrorist attack is a clear violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the two international covenants on political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights, and all international conventions regarding basic rights, and the right to life, freedom, physical safety and personal security.

According to Article 3 of the universal declaration, terrorism aims to destroy human rights, democracy and rule of law. It is an assault on respect for human rights, rule of law, rules regulating armed conflicts, protection of civilians and tolerance among people and countries, and peacefully resolving conflicts. This is because it is strongly linked to organized crime, the drug trade, money laundering, illegal trade, murder, blackmail, kidnapping, attacks and

hostage taking, and theft. The aim of terrorism attacks is to destabilize governments and countries, and undermine civil society, destabilize security, peace, and socio-economic development.

The UN has often cited the catastrophic impact of terrorism on human rights and security, with reference to Security Council Resolution 2396 on 21 December 2017.

There is an analytical gap in international literature on the impact of terrorism on human rights with regards the political and social impact of terrorism on values. This paper aims to focus on the impact of terrorism on human rights from the perspective of political values upon which societies are built, such as the values of co-existence, tolerance, accepting the Other, family and its components. For example, after church bombings we find that as well as direct victims of the attack, a political consequence emerges which is a division between Muslims and Christians in Egypt, even though the attack touched both Muslims and Christians equally. Accordingly, a terrorist attack results in a sociopolitical impact that destroys the value of co-existence between the two religions, politicizes religion and makes it a thorny political issue in society. Another example, is the murder of worshipers at Al-Rawda Mosque at Deir Al-Abd village in Arish. According to investigations, the cause of this massacre was the fact that the mosque and its patrons were Sufis. This politicizes Sufism in Egypt and removes its spiritual cloak to make it a political issue, and stomps on the concept of accepting the other and tolerance.

Discussing the impact of terrorism on education, one report noted that the deterioration of the education sector in Yemen is a serious threat to youth and family, and thus extends the ongoing conflict. This is apparent in the low rates of college registration in areas under Houthi control, which raises concerns that Yemeni students are now more focused on joining armed groups out of despair and in the absence of alternatives. These groups provide youth with a sense of belonging and a means to earn a living through financial promises to

many students. The collapse of the education sector in areas under Houthi control, which is the majority of the Yemeni population, only serves the interests of the armed groups and extremist organizations in the country.

With regards to family, terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka and Indonesia raised awareness about the fact that terrorism is usually a family affair, according to the website American Enterprise. The family is a contributing or preventive factor in the spread of extremism and recruiting its members. The disintegration of the family unit and weak family ties make youth more vulnerable to recruitment. A report by American Enterprise stated that researchers in South Philippines found that family and social networks are a key factor in the radicalization of youth and their membership of armed groups, without any specific grievances or socio-economic factors.

In Mali, one or both parents of some youth in armed groups were members of violent radical groups, and parents are factors in directly recruiting their children in terrorist operations, such as in Surabaya, Indonesia. The strategy of Islamic State was to target the family and recruit new members, both women or children, estimated at 10,000 children under the age of 15 in camps in Iraq.

This disintegration of the family unit and social values relates to the rights of upcoming generations and their way of life, because their cultural rights are denied in conflict zones because a single ideology is enforced and it does not tolerate the Other.

Recommendations

Terrorism is a threat to human rights because it targets the fabric of society, the values and beliefs it is built on. Thus, the following recommendations:

- 1- More research on societal and moral dimensions when analyzing human rights conditions.
- 2- Implementing policies that protect the family unit and societal cohesion since they are the key components of any society, and the barrier

preventing recruitment, manipulation of family disintegration, and ugly extremist ideology.

3- Partnership between all state agencies and civil society to embed the main values of state and society, and the relationship between the two.

4- Rejuvenating religious discourse based on dialogue between the past and present, and cooperation of all state agencies, NGOs and religious institutions. Also, launching a broad dialogue to devise the values and rituals of religion to achieve its goals, in light of societal factors and climate in order to prevent erroneous religious and social understandings.

5- Confirmation that fighting terrorism is a human right.





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Sinai: Human Rights and Combating Terrorism



— Ahmed Eleiba —
Chief of Armament Unit

Egypt has been in a continuous battle against terrorism since September 2015, when the two phases of Operation Martyr's Right was launched. In February 2018, Egypt embarked on Comprehensive Operation Sinai. Despite the national and regional complications, the Egyptian state adopted a course that was in line with human rights and international law principles and regulations.

First: Combating Terrorism in a Complicated Environment amid Dangerous Shifts

There are Many Factors Concerning Sinai's Security Environment, Including:

- Prior to the outbreak of the current wave of terrorism in Sinai, which began in the wake of the 25 January 2011 Revolution, the security situation in Sinai was fraught with many threats, perhaps the most prominent of which was the presence of hundreds of border tunnels with the Gaza Strip, which constituted a tributary to threaten the Egyptian national security, given the ability of terrorist and criminal elements to infiltrate from the Gaza Strip into Sinai through these tunnels.
- The nature of the "limited" Egyptian security presence in Sinai for decades has allowed an environment of chaos to develop, which has in turn formed other types of security threats, particularly illegal activities such as arms and drug trades and smuggling. Later, these became the pillars of the phenomenon of terrorism, where terrorist organizations allied themselves with smuggling networks, organized crime gangs and illegal trade groups.
- After 2011, Sinai witnessed a change in the traditional structure of society, in which tribalism, with its known traditions, constituted the active social pattern in managing social lifestyles. The changes Sinai witnessed with the overthrow of the previous regime and the deterioration of the security system led to the surfacing of new players that imposed changes of social interests on the expense of the traditional social formula. These new groups focused on their alliances and interests, regardless, and

sometimes in opposition to, the public interests and traditions established in the community.

- The repercussions of the comprehensive developments in Sinai contributed to the emergence of violent extremist organizations which were formed in two phases. The first phase was from 2011 to 2014. These organizations adopted the Islamic State doctrine. Jihadi doctrines adopted from Palestinian organizations also started to have a voice in the peninsula. Other groups, connected to local organizations with a radical and extremist inclination, tended to be violent and to bear arms. Driven by regional shifts, the majority of these organizations, however, adopted a different approach in 2014 and became more violent.

- The regional situation, particularly in neighboring countries, contributed to the thriving of terrorist groups to a great extent. Egypt's borders with its neighboring countries became a source of threat, such as the case with the eastern border with the Gaza Strip, and the repercussions of the difficult security conditions in Libya, which witnessed the growth of terrorist organizations focusing their attacks on Egypt. That is in addition to the borders with other countries the nature of which are extremely complicated from the topographical aspect as well.

- The political and security conditions Egypt experienced until the launch of an organized program to combat terrorism in Sinai constituted an obstacle to confronting the rise of terrorism. This was manifested in the numerous terrorist attacks on Egyptian security forces and Sinai residents, in addition to the attack on Al-Rawda Mosque, which was one of the worst terrorist operations Egypt had to endure in its modern history. The aim of that attack was to oblige society to obey the orders of terrorist groups.

Second: Egypt's Method to Counter Terrorism

Despite the unprecedented violence of terrorist attacks on the Egyptian arena and their ex-

tension to larger and more complicated environments, Egypt appeared to adopt a method that was different than in other countries. The method can be explained as follows:

1- Countering Traditional Threats

The most obvious of these threats is the nature of the combat scene. Sinai's border with the Palestinians is not tightly controlled, which could threaten international navigation in the Suez Canal. The tunnels, however, are the more serious threat. The state adopted more than one path to counter these threats, such as:

- Tightening control over the eastern border: This was done through establishing a buffer zone for national security reasons. Residents of the border strip were evacuated to close the tunnels and to deal with their threats without endangering the lives of residents. This method was adopted by many countries that were facing threats on its borders, such as Saudi Arabia, that transported tens of villagers from its southern borders with Yemen to secure their lives.

- Fixing damages: Here Egypt adopted the principles and regulations of international law and human rights, such as:

* Relocating residents gradually after giving them a prior notice and helping residents relocate to a decent place. It was the municipal authorities that informed the residents they needed to evacuate.

* The state paid a total of EGP 1.5 billion in financial compensation to the relocating residents, after each case was individually studied. The compensations were given out based on whether the residents were house owners or tenants and whether they had a farm, a house, or both.

- Operating with a strategic vision to treat long-standing imbalances: The Egyptian state built residential projects comprising 10,000 residential units, in addition to Bedouin housing units that took into consideration Sinai's architectural culture. The state also established water desalination stations, solar energy and electric power plants, hospitals, healthcare units, schools and universities, etc.

It can be noticed that the state established the buffer zone in Sinai taking into consideration:

- Committing to Article 63 of the Egyptian constitution which prohibits forced evacuation. Legally, what happened in Sinai was a relocation necessitated for national security reasons to tighten security on the border.

- Egypt didn't change the demographic composition of the area, nor did it replace its residents with other inhabitants. The reality on the ground confirms that the buffer zone was created to halt the threats that resulted from the infiltration of Egypt's borders and widening the network of tunnels under its borders that were connected to a number of houses in the area.

- The area was already dangerous to its inhabitants. During the wars witnessed in the Gaza Strip, the lives of many residents were endangered and on many occasions the borders were infiltrated.

- The financial compensation was an unprecedented move with an unprecedented amount of cost. The compensation was in line with the basic regulations of the Egyptian and international law.

- The state provided residents of the buffer zone with alternative means to live safely away from the security operations and the constructions conducted to tighten security over the borders.

2- Egypt's Fight Against Terrorism is a Special Case

It is well known that Sinai was one of the areas that suffered from difficult economic conditions, where development was stalled for decades. This was one of the logistical factors for the growth of terrorist groups, illegal trafficking, smuggling networks and organized crime. There is also the factor of the expansion of regional terrorist networks. However, Egypt was careful during its operations against terrorists, even with the area's inhabitants being one of the problems encountering it.

This was affirmed by the head of state and a number of military leaders. They said they could have evacuated Sinai's residents to target the terrorist organizations, but they didn't do that, and they exercised the highest degree of self-control.

There are multiple indicators that prove that Egypt's fight against terrorism is a special case, such as:

- Fighting terrorism and developing the peninsula simultaneously: The state is moving ahead with its war against terrorism in tandem with effecting the plan of development. Combating terrorism didn't stop Egypt from establishing the largest infrastructure network in Sinai's history at the cost of EGP 250 billion. Maybe some restrictions caused a slowdown in a number of construction operations but they were not cancelled.
- There are continuous efforts to seize illegal activities. This is done by fighting crimes, reducing the recruitment of criminals in terrorist groups, and closing the smuggling outlets that allow terrorists to infiltrate Egypt's borders.
- In some cases, Sinai residents were apprehended during security checks. However, according to numerous official reports, most of them were released. Sinai citizens who sustained damages from the violence that resulted from terrorist activities, or from unintentional errors during the combating terrorists, were compensated.
- During certain periods, when there were restrictions on the transportation of food and supplies, due to transportation difficulties, the state worked to provide food for free or for discounted prices until the restrictions were lifted.
- As much as it could and with the tightest of security arrangements to ensure their safety, the state allowed domestic and international media outlets in Sinai. This writer was among the journalists who attended a part of Comprehensive Operation Sinai during his stay in the peninsula for two weeks to follow up on developments on the ground. Tens of media reports were published on the subject.

Third: Conclusions

There are exceptional circumstances that forced the Egyptian state to operate based on security reasons in Sinai. The state worked to deal with the repercussions, but never did these circumstances lead the country to operate outside the boundaries of international law and human rights.

In fact, Egypt's fight against terrorism is a special case because it combated terrorism in tandem with development operations, which added to the country's economic burdens which the state shouldered, be it in infrastructure operations, economic development or compensations. The state looked at that burden as part of a comprehensive plan to improve the security and social conditions of Sinai.

The fight against terrorism is a long-term operation in light of its evolution as a phenomenon and the difficulty of completely rooting it out. The war against terrorism cannot succeed if there was not a strong state that enforces security networks that can limit terrorist operations and protect the people from being recruited by terrorist groups.

Recommendations

- There is an urgent need to accelerate the development of areas damaged from terrorist operations. Although this adds to the burdens of the state, it is important to quickly build the models specific to the Sinai environment.
- Fixing the damages should not be limited to protection, solidarity and compensation. There is a need to establish programs that can embrace and rehabilitate the cases that suffered direct violence from terrorist organizations.
- Local rights groups in Sinai are playing a role there, but the need still arises for national organizations to be activated there since they have better access to many cases in the peninsula.





— Alaa Barraniea - Hala Fouda —

Researchers at Women & Family Unit

The Egyptian state adopted many of the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Council and has made great progress on several issues, most notably boosting women's rights and empowering women in all aspects. The state implemented recommendations on violence against women by issuing legislation, new laws and embedding the principle of equality. It was also exemplary in strengthening the rights of youth, children and disabled.

The state's efforts focused on three main aspects: Social security program; presidential initiatives; laws and legislation.

First: Social Security

This is a comprehensive set of measures and programs adopted by the state to protect families against economic, social and environmental threats, especially the weaker echelons, including:

1- Cash Support Program

* The Solidarity and Dignity Program aims to protect the poor by giving them regular cash support. The program registered 1.5 million poor families through the World Bank's Energy Sector Development Project. Some 88 per cent of cash support cardholders are women.

* Launching a new comprehensive health insurance system in Port Said and Luxor by providing the best and most sophisticated hospitals and clinics to achieve comprehensive healthcare for all Egyptians.

2- Dignified Housing Program

This program aims to improve living and housing conditions for poor families by providing the basic requirements of dignity, humanity, and allowing the poorest and most needy families to live in good environmental and hygienic conditions. The program carries out needed interventions in terms of roof repairs, sewage systems and potable water.

3- Program for the Protecting Women and Children

* The "Two is Enough" program provides wom-

en with a variety of options regarding reproductive health.

* The "It's Covered" program has a budget of LE250 million and is a revolving loan for women to start up micro projects.

* The "Childhood Early Development" program evaluates nurseries across the country, and so far 200 preschools are being overhauled through grants worth LE40 million.

Second: Presidential Initiatives

Presidential initiatives are the pragmatic implementation of social justice, most notably:

* "100 Million Health" (October 2018)

The campaign aimed to eradicate Virus C and non-communicable diseases. All 27 governorates were divided into three phases beginning in October 2018 and ending in April 2019, and established permanent medical units in all governorates.

* The Initiative to Detect Three Diseases in Schoolchildren (December 2018)

This initiative aimed to detect anemia, stunting and obesity in 12.5 million elementary schoolchildren to measure the diet and health of schoolchildren, and place interventions to improve the health of students.

* The "Dignified Life" Initiative (June 2019)

The initiative aims to provide a dignified life to the more needy classes in 2019, including healthcare, medical services, surgeries, prosthetic limbs, and developing the neediest villages according to the poverty map.

* "Egyptian Women are Egypt's Well-Being" (June 2019)

The goal of the initiative is to detect breast cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, measuring BMI and focus on the reproductive health of women.

Special Needs

The state declared 2018 as the "Year of Special Needs" and issued several decisions for the disabled including facilitating qualification for disability pensions, refurbishing railway sta-

tions for handicap access, receiving 50 per cent discount on public transportation, and EGP 500 million from the Long Live Egypt Fund to support the disabled.

Third: Laws and Legislation

The Egyptian state focused on enhancing the dynamism of social security programs to guarantee they reach target beneficiaries under a legislative umbrella ratified by the Egyptian parliament, most notably:

1- Amending Law 58 of 1937 for harsher penalty for Female Genital Mutilation, by writing a clear definition of FGM based on the World Health Organisation definition, and dispensing harsher punishment for anyone who “circumcises a female up to seven years [in prison]” and the penalty for anyone who solicits FGM is up to three years in jail.

2- Amending Law 58 of 1937 known as the “alimony and allowance” law to track those who are evading the payment of alimony, which is a serious problem for divorced women. The amendment increased the penalty from EGP 500 to EGP 5,000 for anyone who evades paying alimony and suspends some government services for anyone who is found guilty.

3- Amending Law 77 of 1943 on inheritance, penalizing anyone who intentionally withholds the rightful inheritance of someone else, with at least six months in jail and up to EGP 100,000 in fines. This is a commonly usurped right of women, especially in rural areas and Upper Egypt due to customs of not giving women their inheritance.

4- Law 10 of 2018 on the rights of the disabled which provides mechanism to strengthen the capacity of people with special needs, and their political empowerment through appropriate representation in parliament according to the law and constitution. The law highlights many gains of people with special needs by penning the first ever comprehensive definition of people with disabilities to ensure that all forms of disability are recognized, and guarantees access to all services without exclusion.

Also, their right to assume leadership roles in the state.

A law criminalizing early marriages for girls
The National Council for Women submitted a draft law criminalizing the marriage of under-age girls and it was referred to parliament under the name “Banning Child Marriages”. It stipulates the addition of a clause to the Law on Childhood criminalizing child marriages, and imposing one-year jail time for anyone who marries, participates or writes a marriage contract for anyone less than 18 years old. The cleric who performs such a marriage will be jailed for one year and removed from his job.

Draft Law for Alternative Penalty for Debtors
As part of President Abdel-Fatah Al-Sisi’s initiative “Prisons Without Debtors” a draft law was submitted for alternative punishment for debtors to replace short-term prison time with other options according to the judge’s or court’s discretion. The draft suggests creating small or medium size projects that employ those who are convicted in loan cases to increase production; one third of the profit would go to the state to expand such projects of, the second third would go towards settling the debt, and the final third would go to the convict.

Empowering Egyptian Women

The Egyptian state achieved remarkable progress in empowering women and continues its efforts to secure women’s rights and bolster their role, which contributes to the progress and prosperity of the state’s development process.

Political Empowerment

Egyptian women are a key component in government ministries and parliament. The number of women in leadership roles in government has increased to eight female ministers in 2019, which is 25 per cent of cabinet members. Women have been also appointed as governors and five young women were appointed as deputy governors.

In the past, it was difficult for a woman to become a judge, today, there are 66 female judges since 2018. Six women were also appointed as deputies to chairman of the State Lawsuits Authority for the first time.

Women in parliament

The constitutional amendments of 2019 included Article 102 which increased female representation in parliament to 25 per cent of seats, which improved Egypt's standing in global reports on closing the gender gap.

Political empowerment of women

The Egyptian state exerted a lot of effort in small and medium size projects involving women who support their families. According to a report by the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA) published on 21 August 2019, the number of SMEDA loans to women in the past four years increased to 118,806 projects in 2018 at a cost of nearly LE1.9 billion.

The state also implemented several projects and programs to empower women, including:

- * Savings and loans and the "One product, one village" project.

- * The Women's Financial Inclusion Program, raising awareness about the financial inclusion of women and banking services in all governorates.

Despite the quick pace of progress and overlap of issues in this day and age, human rights remain at the forefront of the Egyptian state's priorities through a bundle of decrees and laws supporting economic, social and political aspects. Continuing these efforts requires the participation of NGOs and media, as well as support from global organizations through:

- 1- Effective measures to ensure the media respects and promotes respect of women, to reshape the image of women and ingrain values and principles in families and society.

- 2- Expansion in establishing centers for psychological and social support to provide services to victims of domestic violence, rape, and

sexual assault, including shelter, rehabilitation, counseling, training and employment.

- 3- Passing laws that ban honor killings.

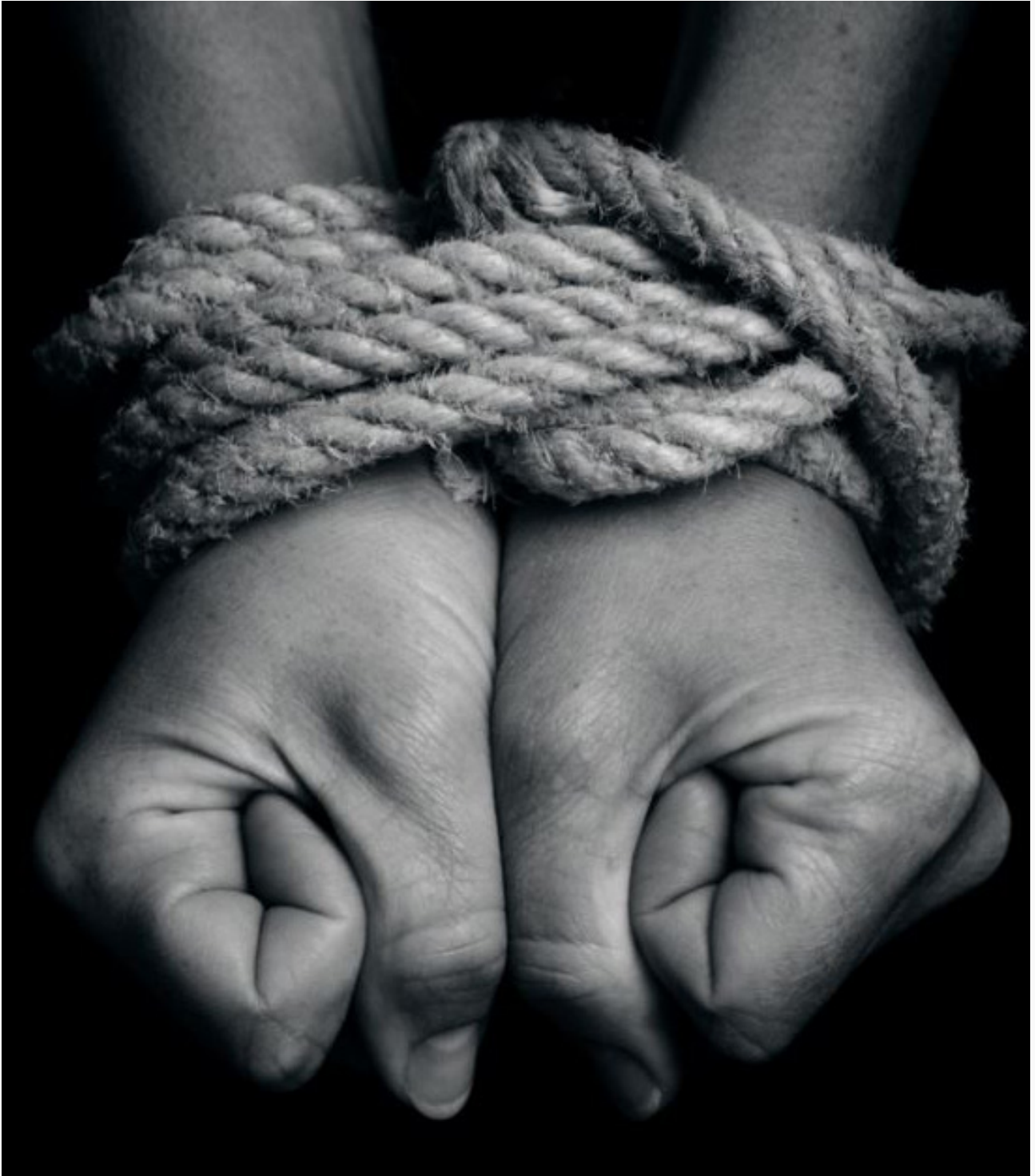
- 4- Revising the age of juvenile criminals or making exceptions for the crimes of murder and rape in international agreements and covenants, while amending child laws to make them more contemporary to the age.

- 5- Global organizations adopting and supporting social initiatives to guarantee continued social protection and expanding the base of beneficiaries.



5

Right to Life, Respect and Protection of Humanity: Guaranteed Rights in Egypt



— Mahmoud Salama —
Researcher at Public Policy Program

Government guarantees protecting the rights of individuals enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human rights is not limited to their own citizens only, but also protecting the rights of refugees and migrants to their countries.

Egypt is a country that is committed to protecting refugee rights since it signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, its protocols in 1967, and the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) agreement on refugees in Africa. We will focus on how Egypt upholds some refugee and migrant human rights through combating illegal migration and prevent human trafficking.

Condition of Refugees in Egypt

“Egypt does not build refugee camps and does not allow any boats to leave its shores to sail to Europe with refugees on board,” declared President Abdel-Fatah Al-Sisi, clearly indicating how the Egyptian government deals with refugees or asylum seekers, and can set an example for other countries that receive refugees from poor countries or war zones.

The number of registered refugees in Egypt in 2019 that UNHCR is in charge of is estimated at 280,000, but according to statements by the president the number of refugees in Egypt is around five million. Regardless of the figure, what is important here is for everyone to recognize that refugees in Egypt enjoy the most basic rights stipulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. UNHCR states that these people are living in local communities side by side with Egyptian citizens, which gives them access to the right to life, freedom, security, work, education, freedom of movement, as well as the right to dignity and equality with others.

Regarding the right to employment, refugees in Egypt do not live on aid or wait for local or international agencies to give them food at isolated camps. They are allowed to work and receive licenses to open restaurants and investment projects in local communities they freely choose.

As for the right to education, the government allows non-Egyptians to either study the Egyptian curriculum or their country’s curriculum at their schools or embassies. Refugees and asylum seekers from Syria, Sudan and Yemen also have access to education, the same as Egyptian citizens. UNHCR is currently in negotiations with the Egyptian government to provide healthcare for refugees and asylum seekers of all nationalities similar to that offered to Egyptian citizens.

All these indicators showcase the extent of support the Egyptian state provides to ensure that non-Egyptians exercise their rights as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

All these indicators showcase the extent of support the Egyptian state provides to ensure that non-Egyptians exercise their rights as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Combating Illegal Migration

Illegal migration is a serious threat that could result in migrants being denied the most basic rights of average citizens. Illegal immigrants are more likely to be denied jobs or subjected to work in sub-humane conditions, sexual exploitation, or illegal activities. This puts their lives in danger and does not guarantee them the stable future they had hoped for when they decided to leave their countries this way.

Egypt was the crossing point for people, mostly Africans, who wanted to reach Israel through the Sinai Peninsula. It was also the crossing point for Syrians who wanted to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. However, all this has changed since 2014 when Egypt became a dead end for illegal emigration due to several measures taken by the government, including:

- * The government formed the National Coordinating Committee for the Combat of Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking in March 2014.
- * Egypt signed the UN’s Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants and Protocol Against Human Trafficking, and parliament ratified them.
- * Egypt issued Law 82 of 2016 banning the smuggling of refugees and illegal migration.
- * Cooperating with the EU in an extensive campaign against illegal migration via Egypt’s north coast.

All these measures ended illegal migration

from Egypt's north coast to Europe since 2016. Fabrice Leggeri, executive director of Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, said: "There are no illegal refugee boats coming directly from Egypt to the EU, and cooperation with Egypt on this issue is advanced and encouraging".

As a result of this cooperation between Egypt and the EU, in 2016 Egypt was able to detain 4,600 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants as they tried to illegally migrate. This is almost a 30 per cent increase compared to numbers of the previous year. However, after originally prosecuting lawbreakers, Egyptian authorities

trafficking in Egypt, its forms and measures to combat it in 2018 as follows:

- * Human traffickers in Egypt take advantage of local and foreign victims, as well as Egyptians overseas.
- * Children are trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labor as domestic help, begging on the streets, dealing in drugs, and farming.
- * Traffickers, including guardians, force children to beg or force girls into sex trafficking.

The report described Egypt's international efforts in combating human trafficking as follows:



no longer prosecute victims and instead detain them on orders from the Department of Passports, Immigration and Nationality. Perpetrators and human trafficking rings, however, are prosecuted.

Combating Human Trafficking

A US report on human trafficking published in March 2019 describes the reality of human

* In December 2018, the National Coordinating Committee for the Combat of Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking drew a map showing the governorates and areas in Egypt where trafficking is most common, based on complaints received on the hotline for combating trafficking.

* Some 42 suspected cases of child trafficking were reported on the hotline, which is a slight

increase from 33 cases in 2017.

* The committee used the map of human trafficking victims to launch training and awareness campaigns, and the government sponsored several awareness activities in 2018.

* The National Coordinating Committee distributed informational booklets about combating human trafficking to migrant workers, Egyptian embassies and diplomats abroad.

* The National Committee partnered with the National Council for Women to launch a media campaign about treatment of domestic help, and groups that are vulnerable to trafficking.

* The National Coordinating Committee partnered with international organizations and donors to launch an awareness campaign about the risks of illegal emigration.

* The government gave Egyptian diplomats instructions on human trafficking and how to protect victims, as well as training on human rights issues in classes prior to them leaving the country.

* The government provided compulsory training on combating human trafficking to all Egyptians working overseas, as part of peace-keeping missions.

* The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood continued to operate a hotline to combat human trafficking to receive calls on possible trafficking cases, and the hotline was updated in May 2018 allowing to operate around the clock, 24/7.

* The council also trained hotline operators to better handle reports of child trafficking.

* The National Council for Women continued operating a hotline to report possible trafficking cases.

As well as domestic efforts, Egypt's campaign extended beyond its borders in partnership with other countries in Africa. President Al-Sisi declared combating human trafficking as a priority, and the need for the Coordinating Committee to increase cooperation with African Union countries on human trafficking issues during and after Egypt's presidency of the AU. The government exempted refugees and asy-

lum seekers from all fees for their presence in the country after their residencies expire.

Egypt's role in guaranteeing the rights of refugees and equating them to its own citizens, including their right to life, work and education, is undeniable. Its efforts have resulted in a halt in illegal journeys via Egypt's coast to Europe, and migration of Africans to Israel via Sinai. This has duly reduced the possibility of trafficking or the death of these migrants, which has increased international appreciation of Egypt's actions on this issue.

In addition to the above-mentioned efforts, there are several recommendations that would increase protection against illegal migration, including:

1- Increasing cooperation with NGOs in raising citizen awareness about the dangers of illegal migration and human trafficking.

2- Assisting AU countries suffering from the same phenomenon in applying the Egyptian model to reduce the impact of illegal migration on African citizens.

3- Urging the global community to invest in African countries to create job opportunities with reasonable income to reduce emigration from poor countries to Europe and Israel.

4- Implementing the Silencing the Guns Initiative in Africa to reduce conflicts on the continent, and the numbers of migrants fleeing war zones.

5- Updating migrant and refugee databases in Egypt, and registering them in the UNHCR's database.



UNIVERSAL
HEALTH
INSURANCE



التأمين
الصحي
الشامل

— Alaa Nassar —
Researcher at Public Policy Program

“Every citizen has the right to health and to comprehensive healthcare which complies with quality standards. The State shall maintain and support public health facilities that provide health services to the people, and shall enhance their efficiency and their equitable geographical distribution,” states Article 18 of the Egyptian constitution.

Egyptians have the right to receive comprehensive healthcare without discrimination according to the Egyptian constitution and according to numerous international treaties and charters. The United Nations General Assembly resolution adopted by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966 recognizes “the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.”

This is proof of the right of people to health, as much as they have the right to food, housing, employment, and education. Human rights is a comprehensive notion and is not limited to a political aspect.

Egypt’s human rights file has witnessed tangible developments across its many sectors, prime among which is the healthcare sector, a topic of crucial importance to Egyptians and the political leadership. As is the case in many countries, Egypt came face to face with difficult choices in its attempt to meet the increasing demands and expectations of its people. In the recent years, however, the country achieved tangible progress in the healthcare services offered across its governorates, be it through boosting the infrastructure of hospitals and healthcare units in villages or providing state-of-the-art equipment and developing the potential of manpower.

In addition, President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi launched numerous healthcare initiatives to upgrade healthcare services presented to people of all ages.

1- The Comprehensive Healthcare System

The new comprehensive healthcare system is the gateway to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those that concern healthcare and Egypt’s Vision 2030. The political leadership and government have strongly supported this system that grants Egyptians comprehensive healthcare services, whether they can afford them or not.

The new comprehensive healthcare system is not only concerned with the health insurance sector. It extends healthcare services to every citizen, which helps achieve social solidarity in the community, in addition to restructuring household spending, 60 percent of which is directed to health.

The new system will be applied in six phases that cover all of Egypt’s governorates.

2- The Presidential Initiative to Terminate Waiting Lists

To alleviate the pressure on low-income Egyptians and conduct urgent surgical operations with the highest rate of success, President Al-Sisi kicked off the initiative to terminate waiting lists.

Through the initiative, 124,304 critical surgical operations were conducted thus far. The initiative was executed in two phases with a total cost of EGP 104 billion. The first phase was launched from 6 July to 31 December 2018, during which time 85,778 critical operations were performed. The second phase began on 1 January 2019 and will continue for three years.

3- The Presidential Initiative to Terminate Hepatitis C and Non-Communicable Diseases

After years of tireless efforts and with a strong political will, Egypt was able to control Hepatitis C and stop it from becoming an epidemic that threatens the world.

In October 2018, President Al-Sisi launched the 100 Million Health initiative to conduct medical check-ups on Egyptians and detect Hepatitis C and non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and obesity, with the aim of declaring Egypt Hepatitis C free in 2023.

Through the initiative, 57 million Egyptians were screened for diseases. Medical check-ups were also made available to refugees and asylum-seekers. About a million citizens have been given free medication since the onset of the initiative.

4- The Egyptian Woman is Egypt’s Health ini-

tiative

This initiative is part of the 100 Million Health initiative, focusing on the detection of breast cancer. The initiative benefits about 28 million Egyptian women and aims, besides treating patients, at raising the awareness of women about the causes of breast cancer and ways to conduct self-examination for women above the age of 18.

The initiative was launched in nine governorates: Alexandria, Port Said, Beheira, Fayoum, Assiut, Qalioubiya, Matrouh, South Sinai, and Damietta.

5- The Presidential Initiative “Light of Life” to Combat the Causes of Visual Impairment and Loss of Vision in School Pupils

The initiative, which began on 7 February 2019 and will continue for three and a half years, is aimed at the early detection of five million primary school pupils, in addition to two million citizens in need of urgent medical attention, providing one million eye-glasses, and performing 250,000 eye surgeries. The initiative works to reintegrate and empower the visually impaired, and raise awareness among citizens to make Egypt free of visual disabilities that can be avoided. The initiative received funding of EGP 1 billion from the Long Live Egypt Fund. The treatment is free of charge and the initiative will be implemented in four phases.

6- The Model Hospitals Initiative

The National Project for Model Hospitals was launched across Egypt’s governorates simultaneously with the implementation of the National Project for Comprehensive Health Insurance, to provide better health services for those who cannot afford it.

The initiative includes the preparation and operation of a model hospital in every governorate to make a breakthrough and tangible improvement in healthcare services, being in line with Egypt’s plan to achieve “health reform.”

In the Model Hospital, patients receive medical services in every specialty, and they do not need to travel long distances to receive them.

This contributes to the elimination of the problems patients traveling from villages and rural areas encounter when seeking treatment in Cairo.

7- The Presidential Initiative for the Early Detection of Obesity, Anemia and Stunting

The initiative was launched in early February 2019 in a collaboration between the ministries of health and education, for the early detection of obesity, anemia and stunting in primary school pupils. Some 12 million students were examined across Egypt’s governorates in public, private and Azharite schools. Patients were treated for free in 225 health insurance clinics.

8- The Presidential Initiative “Dignified Life”

The initiative included launching medical convoys to offer free medical services to the elderly, children, and people with special needs in remote locations and areas deprived of healthcare services in Egypt. Medical check-ups, treatments, tests, x-rays and ultrasound services were offered. Some 22.5 million patients were examined and treated for free.

9- The Presidential Initiative for the Early Detection of Hearing Loss in Newborns

In September 2019 the presidential initiative for the early detection of hearing loss in newborns was launched by conducting a hearing gauge for infants aged one to 28 days, in order to quickly detect the chances of hearing loss, and facilitate the treatment procedures to prevent the loss of hearing.

The initiative targets newborns, who number about 2.6 million children annually. The audiometry (which costs outside the framework of the initiative EGP 200) is free of charge in the 1,300 healthcare units scattered in Egypt’s governorates.

10- Medical Manpower Rehabilitation Programs

The state’s focus on hospitals and health initiatives was not only a step to upgrade the healthcare system. The state is also working on

improving manpower working in the system. The Ministry of Health launched the first training courses of the Unified Training Program to Rehabilitate Manpower, under the auspices of President Al-Sisi, to be an effective tool to implement the new comprehensive health insurance system.

In parallel, other courses for medical and administrative staff in the governorates are taking place in tandem with the application of the new health insurance law, as well as training courses for the unified training program to qualify manpower to apply the law.

Recommendations to speed up the implementation of Egypt Vision 2030

The numerous programs and initiatives Egypt has launched are proof the state is working towards achieving its Egypt Vision 2030, particularly with its focus on the healthcare sector that guarantees Egyptians' access to medical services within a comprehensive healthcare system without discrimination and with the highest quality and that is available across the country. This system is able to improve the health indicators by providing comprehensive protection and health coverage to citizens including those who are not able to afford treatment, thereby improving Egyptians' health within a fair and just framework.

However, there are a number of recommendations that may help achieve this ambitious vision, such as depending to a larger extent on legislation instead of the initiatives launched by President Al-Sisi to be able to sustain the healthcare programs, in addition to widening the media's role in promoting healthcare initiatives to increase their chances of reaching a larger audience, thereby making the initiatives more effective. Finally, it is imperative to locate other sources of funding to guarantee the sustainability of the healthcare initiatives and programs that range between making available and increasing the quality of medical services and improving the infrastructure of hospitals and healthcare units to sustain Egyptians' right to health.



7 Egypt's Comprehensive Vision for Human Rights



— Maha Allam —

Researcher at International Relations Program

The issue of human rights is at the center of the comprehensive national project Egypt has adopted since 2014. The state is concentrating its efforts on the issue of human rights to achieve the aspirations of the Egyptian people that carried out two revolutions within three years. Despite the multiple threats issued by the political regime, and the terrorist organization to which it belongs, and that rose to the helm after the 25 January 2011 Revolution, the nation decided to rise again in June 2013.

Egypt adopted a comprehensive national project aiming at supporting human rights with its three generations, starting with the political and civil rights, in addition to the economic, social and cultural rights, and third generation human rights. Therefore, it is safe to say that Egypt has a comprehensive vision for human rights that doesn't solely depend on the role of the state, but extends to the role of the civil society and religious institutions such as Al-Azhar and the Church, and the individual.

Egypt believes in human rights, not only on the national level, but on the regional and international levels as well. Egypt realizes that protecting human rights will contribute to the containment of the troubled humanitarian conditions due to conflicts spread across the region. The state also believes that respecting human rights shall prevent the threats from spreading from the region to the international arena.

Egypt has made various achievements for the sake of supporting and respecting human rights, the most prominent of which are:

The First Generation: Civil and Political Rights

- Following the 2011 and 2013 revolutions, the Egyptian state did not put in place an exceptional or arbitrary justice system. Rather, corrupt and violent regime figures were dealt with under the ordinary course of law. No one was punished or fired from their work for their intellectual affiliation unless they had committed

violent acts.

- A direct political communication tool was established. Periodical conferences were held between the president and state ministers and youth, media, and different and marginalised groups of society.

- The law establishing the National Council for Human Rights was issued to support its authority and independence in accordance with the constitution and in line with the Paris Principles of National Human Rights Institutions.

- A human rights department at the Prosecutor-General's Office was established to investigate complaints of human rights violations.

- The right to public assembly and peaceful protest law was amended in 2017. The amendment stripped the Interior Ministry of the right to prevent, postpone or change the course of a protest, granting this right instead to the judiciary for the sake of establishing equality.

- The law regulating the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was issued in July 2019, allowing the establishment of NGOs and their acquisition of legal personality by notification, granting them financial merits and tax exemptions, and the right to receive funds and grants after notifying the administrative body. The law also abolishes penalties infringing on rights, prohibits the dissolution of an association or its board of directors except by a judicial ruling, and reduces the fees for granting licenses for foreign organizations to function in Egypt.

In addition to allowing the increase in percentage of foreigners on NGOs' boards and membership to reach 25 percent, the law establishes a fund to provide technical, financial and administrative assistance to NGOs to improve their performance, along with comprehensive organization of volunteer work.

- Believing in the important role NGOs play in developing society, and since civil associations have reached more than 57,000, governors began in 2017 to invite a representative of NGOs' regional unions from every governorate to attend its executive council meetings to establish communication with civil society bodies and

coordinate efforts that serve citizens. The government suggested adding to the municipal administration draft law, currently discussed in parliament, a clause that allows representatives of NGOs' regional unions to be seated on the executive council of each governorate.

- The law of trade union organizations avoided the flaws of the previous law, granting trade union organizations, whether a trade union committee, a general union or a trade union, a legal personality.

The law established the right of workers to form trade unions, and to join more than one trade union organization if they were practicing multiple occupations, and prohibited the dissolution of their boards without a court ruling.

It also allowed the trade union organization to hold strikes, and to make its general assembly the supreme authority to formulate its policies and supervise its affairs in accordance with its statute.

In 2018, trade union elections were held in accordance with this law after a 12-year hiatus, resulting in the change of 80 percent of union members in some 2,500 committees, 145 of which are not affiliated with the General Union. In July 2019, the House of Representatives approved the recommendation of the International Labor Organization to amend the law. The amendments abolished all penalties infringing on freedoms, reduced the quorum for the formation of a trade union committee from 150 to 50 workers; the trade union committees necessary to form a general union from 15 to 10; member workers from 200,000 to 15,000; the general trade syndicates needed to establish a trade union from 10 to seven; and members of general trade unions from 200,000 to 15,000 workers.

- The law of building and renovating churches was approved. Until July 2019, the status of 1,021 churches and service buildings were ratified.

- The Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that some sections in Article 71 of the civil workers law were unconstitutional, since it was limited to granting Muslim workers the right to

perform Hajj. The court approved the right of Christian workers to a one-month mandatory leave with full pay once to visit Jerusalem.

- The Moderate Tolerance Forum was established at the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs.

- Azharite education saw the introduction of a new curriculum to consolidate Islamic values and support human rights and pluralism.

- The Al-Azhar Brings Us Together campaign was launched in youth centers to spread the values of tolerance and acceptance of the other.

- The Egyptian Family House initiative was launched, putting Al-Azhar and the Egyptian Coptic Church together to consolidate the principles of citizenship and combat actions that incite violence and discrimination.

- Al-Azhar established the International Observatory, addressing nations in different languages, to fight extremist doctrines and terrorist claims.

On accountability and transparency, until April 2019, criminal investigations and prosecutions of police officers were carried out in 30 cases of torture, 66 cases of violence, and 215 cases of ill-treatment.

The investigations and trials resulted in 70 criminal convictions, 156 cases were closed, and 85 cases are still in court. There were also 344 disciplinary trials of police officers, resulting in 207 disciplinary convictions.

In addition, a government delegation met with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances in February 2019.

The Second Generation: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

- A comprehensive economic reform program.

- The establishment of labor-intensive projects: The New Administrative Capital, Suez Canal Zone, power plants, a nuclear power plant with four reactors, 7,500 greenhouses, 5,759 fish farming tanks, and the launch of the Golden Triangle project.

- Social programs: Solidarity and Dignity, Dignified Life, development projects in the poorest

areas, subsidized bread and food supply programs.

- Development of slums and medium- and low-income housing: The government built 102,000 alternative housing units for residents of hazardous areas, and 90 slums are being developed in various governorates with a total of 92,355 units.

- Providing clean drinking water: The government has implemented 276 projects since the end of 2014, bringing clean drinking water to more than 98 percent of the population.

It also established 155 waste management projects in cities and 624 projects in villages, to deliver waste networks to about 60 percent of the population.

- The Education Development Plan included the upgrading of 2,038 schools, 506 technical education schools, the establishment of 10 schools for clever pupils and 18 centers for the talented. The Knowledge Bank was also inaugurated.

- Strengthening cooperation with civil society to eradicate illiteracy.

- The Scientific research budget increased from EGP 22 billion in 2014 to EGP 29 billion in 2018. Special attention is being given to innovators.

- The 100 Million Health initiative to eliminate Hepatitis C and detect noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes, stress and obesity was one of the health initiatives launched. In February 2019, a campaign to detect and treat obesity, stunting and acute anemia was kicked off targeting pupils under 12 years of age. Another campaign concentrating on women's health was also launched.

- Regarding women empowerment, the 2015 parliamentary elections resulted in the election of 90 female deputies – 76 elected and 14 appointed. Since 2018, there have been eight female ministers who hold 25 percent of the ministerial portfolios, and two women have been appointed for the first time as governors.

- In 2016, the Knocking Doors campaign was launched in villages to receive women's complaints and raise awareness about government services. The They Can initiative was launched,

providing 2,812 medical services, training 1,010 women and girls in remote areas, and supporting 162 microenterprises. The Office of Receiving Women's Complaints and the Family Advice Hotline 16021 were set up as national mechanisms to combat violence against women.

- To counter violence against women, three national strategies were launched in 2015: the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women; the National Strategy to Combat Female Genital Mutilation; and the National Strategy to Combat Early Marriage.

- The Together to Serve the Nation program was launched with the aim of raising the awareness of female Muslim preachers and Christian nuns on the importance of including the message of eliminating all forms of violence against women.

- The government, in cooperation with NGOs, launched the National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood 2017-2023, with an integrated development perspective to provide better services to improve children's quality of life, focusing on protecting children's health, development, education and participation in society, and paying particular attention to providing the basic services to children of poor families.

- The establishment of the Child Fund to protect street children, combat child labor, and reduce the spread of the phenomenon.

- 2018 was declared the Year of Persons with Disabilities, and law granted them active participation in all aspects of life.

- A health strategy for persons with disabilities was laid out with the participation of NGOs to provide health programs at a reasonable cost. The strategy included the expansion of phonic rehabilitation centers, that reached 123 centers in all governorates, and the development of 108 physiotherapy centers in health insurance clinics and hospitals to follow up on cases of harmonic paralysis, in addition to providing prosthetic devices.

- Several youth centers were developed and provided with the appropriate engineering code for disability. The sports law considered

the Egyptian Paralympic Committee a sports body, and was obliged to establish centers for the discovery and care of talented athletes suffering from dwarfism and persons with disabilities depending on the extent of their disability.

This enabled the Egyptian Paralympic champions, women and men, to win international and regional medals, the latest of which were 12 medals in Rio de Janeiro.

- Regarding youth empowerment, 59 youth are sitting as members of the House of Representatives. Other activities include national youth conferences and the World Youth Forum held

The third generation of rights establishes the link between human rights and sustainable development, the most prominent of which are peace, health, and the environment.

In other words, the third generation of rights establishes the right of people of this time and the coming generations to live in a safe environment.

- The right to peace is right in the core of the Egyptian vision on conflicts, be they directly related to the Egyptian state or in one of the regional countries. Therefore, the Egyptian vision always emphasizes the importance of building and promoting peace through political and



annually in Sharm El-Sheikh, as well as the Presidential Leadership Program to qualify youth for leadership.

That is in addition to the appointment of 41 deputy ministers and six deputy governors from youth cadres, and allocating 50 percent of the membership of specialized councils for community development, education, scientific research, economic development, foreign policy and national security for youth.

The third generation: Solidarity and collective rights

diplomatic solutions that guarantee the representation of all parties, and rejects violence and the use of the military tool.

- The 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy, with broad community participation that encompasses the visions of civil society and the private sector, and with the participation of international development partners, aims at achieving sustainable economic, social and environmental development, by safeguarding the rights of future generations, and ensuring equality and the optimal use of resources.

- On the environment, the Egyptian govern-

ment adopts a two-dimensional strategy. The domestic dimension works in accordance with the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy, which aims at the good management and utilization of water resources, raising the efficiency of the solid waste management system, reducing air pollution, as well as protecting biodiversity. More important is the initiative of new and renewable energy.

On the foreign level, President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi, during the Climate Summit in Paris 2016, pointed to the dangers of global warming, calling for a fair agreement, and encouraging the international community to support Egypt's efforts to face climate change, focus on developing countries, and provide \$100 billion annually to address climate change by 2020, and to double the amount in later years.

- The comprehensive health insurance system is the backbone of the long-term development of the healthcare system until 2030. The first phase of the comprehensive health insurance system was launched in 2018 in five governorates at the cost of EGP 1.8 billion.

Refugees

- Egypt grants refugees and asylum-seekers the freedom of housing and movement. The number of registered refugees with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Egypt is 250,000 from 55 nationalities, in addition to about five million people most of whom have fled armed conflicts in neighboring countries.

- The total number of refugee students in Egypt is 71,851, excluding Syrians attending public schools with the same conditions as Egyptians.

- Egypt stresses the importance of sharing the burdens of hosting refugees, and believes that short-term solutions based on providing them with assistance are insufficient. Long-term solutions are needed to eliminate the causes of asylum. It is vital to look at the issue from a comprehensive perspective that takes into account the aspect of development, not only security.

Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking

In 2017, a national coordinating committee was established to combat and prevent illegal migration and human trafficking, coordinate policies, plans and programs, and to provide care and services to migrants.

Several social and field studies were conducted to identify the most important exporting cities of illegal immigration for unaccompanied youth and children.

The committee launched a national strategy to combat illegal migration until 2026, with the aim of strengthening cooperation between the government and non-governmental, regional and international parties to decrease illegal migration, with development being the basis to fighting the phenomenon as well as supporting the paths of legal migration. Following the state's efforts on this file, not a single ship transporting illegal immigrants departed from Egypt's shores since September 2016.

- Egypt joined the "Blue Heart" campaign to raise awareness of the crime of human trafficking. The National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2016-2021 was adopted. That is in addition to the establishment of criminal departments in courts of appeal for crimes of human trafficking.

A map was drawn out showing the spread of human trafficking crimes in the cities between 2014 and 2017. Safe shelters were provided for victims of human trafficking, and a national mechanism was set up to facilitate communication between the concerned parties and law enforcement bodies.

Recommendations

Making further progress to consolidate human rights requires more cooperation between the national, regional and international bodies. It is important to de-politicize this file and refrain from using it as a tool for political pressure. This is why the recommendations are as follows:

On the national level:

- The Egyptian state should intensify its efforts to promote the culture of human rights in society through the media, education, and specialized awareness programs.
- Despite the ambitious policy adopted by Egypt on the empowerment of young people, there is still an urgent need to expand this policy based on the fact that Egypt is a young country.
- As we move forward on the path of political stability and economic development, the Egyptian state must move towards a more open and dynamic political system.

On the regional level:

- There is an urgent need to launch a mechanism of action to promote and follow up on the human rights file of regional organizations (the Arab League and the African Union).
- Additionally, there is a need to build a network of national centers involved in the human rights file as well as civil society organizations interested in human rights between the countries of the region (the Arab world and Africa).

On the international level:

- It is imperative for international institutions and organizations to treat the human rights file on the basis of cultural privacy and to treat each of its cases individually.
- Stimulating international and regional cooperation in the human rights file is needed, as well as providing support and funding resources to help countries implement and accelerate their policy to promote human rights.
- Providing international programs for technical and technological support related to the multiple human rights files is important.

In conclusion, Egypt has been taking accelerating steps to promote and preserve human rights. The state is giving prominence to the issues of women empowerment, youth, people with disabilities and children's rights. Even if Egypt has not achieved all of its aspirations yet, it is important to note that the state

is exerting its utmost efforts, despite the limited resources, and the security, economic and social challenges, prime among which are terrorism and overpopulation. Making matters more difficult is the issue of refugees and asylum-seekers who flee their war-torn countries. That is not to mention the limited international assistance handed out and the attempts by a number of countries to promote instability in Egypt by harboring and funding terrorist and criminal elements.



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