

Report for Iceland: Egypt's 2019 UPR Recommendations and Proposed Actions for 2025

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1. Recommendation in 2019 UPR: Ensure, in legislation and in practice, an end to all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, and take concrete steps to investigate and prosecute all cases of sexual violence and harassment.

Egypt's Response Since 2019:

Egypt's National Report mentions various initiatives, including the National Strategy for Women's Empowerment 2030, aimed at advancing women's rights. However, there is still no comprehensive legislation addressing domestic violence, and enforcement of laws against sexual harassment and violence remains inconsistent. Reports indicate that women and girls continue to face high levels of gender-based violence, with limited access to justice. The legal framework lacks clear provisions for addressing domestic violence, and cases of sexual violence are often not fully investigated or prosecuted.

Proposed New Recommendation for 2025:

Recommendation 1: Egypt should enact legislation that criminalizes all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, and ensures effective investigation and prosecution of sexual violence and harassment cases. Law enforcement and judicial authorities should receive specialized training to handle cases involving gender-based violence sensitively and effectively.

Proposed Questions in Advance for 2025 UPR:

- What legislative actions has Egypt taken to criminalize domestic violence and enhance protections against gender-based violence?
- How is Egypt ensuring the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence and harassment cases?

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2. Recommendation in 2019 UPR: Introduce legal provisions to combat rape, including marital rape, and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence, in line with international law and standards.

Egypt's Response Since 2019:

Egypt has not introduced specific legal provisions addressing marital rape or strengthening laws on gender-based violence in accordance with international standards. While the National Report highlights general efforts toward women's empowerment, there is no mention of new legal measures that directly target marital rape or other forms of sexual violence. The lack of clear definitions and protective legislation limits victims' access to justice.

Proposed New Recommendation for 2025:

Recommendation 2: Egypt should amend its Penal Code to explicitly criminalize marital rape and strengthen protections against all forms of sexual and gender-based violence in line with international standards. The government should ensure that victims have access to legal remedies and support services.

Proposed Questions in Advance for 2025 UPR:

- Has Egypt taken any steps to amend the Penal Code to criminalize marital rape and other forms of gender-based violence?
- What support systems and legal remedies are available to survivors of marital rape and sexual violence?

3. Recommendation in 2019 UPR: Allow human rights defenders (HRDs) and all other civil society actors to exercise freedom of expression and their professions without fear of being persecuted, intimidated, or detained.

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Egypt's Response Since 2019:

Egypt's National Report asserts the country's commitment to freedom of expression and association. However, independent reports indicate that HRDs, journalists, and civil society actors continue to face harassment, arbitrary detention, and restrictions, including travel bans and asset freezes. Laws like Law No. 149 of 2019, which regulates NGOs, impose restrictions that inhibit the free operation of civil society. HRDs often face legal and extrajudicial challenges in pursuing their work without fear of persecution.

Proposed New Recommendation for 2025:

Recommendation 3: Egypt should amend restrictive laws impacting HRDs and civil society actors, ensuring their right to operate freely without intimidation or detention. The government should remove arbitrary travel bans, asset freezes, and other restrictive measures imposed on HRDs and journalists.

Proposed Questions in Advance for 2025 UPR:

- What measures has Egypt taken to ensure that HRDs and civil society actors can freely exercise their professions without fear of intimidation or detention?
- How does Egypt address reports of travel bans, asset freezes, and harassment of HRDs?

4. Recommendation in 2019 UPR: Abolish or amend all laws and policies that limit the activities of civil society and human rights defenders, and adopt a national law for the promotion and protection of human rights defenders.**Egypt's Response Since 2019:**

Egypt's National Report claims alignment of NGO Law No. 149 of 2019 with international standards, though independent assessments indicate that the law imposes significant restrictions on civil society. It grants the government extensive control over NGO operations, including funding, activities, and staffing. HRDs continue to face substantial limitations due to this regulatory framework, and there is no national law specifically dedicated to the protection and promotion of HRDs' rights.

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Proposed New Recommendation for 2025:

Recommendation 4: Egypt should revise or repeal restrictive laws that hinder the activities of HRDs and civil society. The government should adopt a national law dedicated to the protection and promotion of HRDs, ensuring they can work without undue interference and with guaranteed legal protections.

Proposed Questions in Advance for 2025 UPR:

- What steps has Egypt taken to amend laws that restrict the activities of HRDs and civil society organizations?
- Is there a plan to introduce a national law specifically aimed at protecting HRDs in Egypt?

Conclusion

Iceland's 2019 recommendations to Egypt emphasized the need for comprehensive protections against gender-based violence, including legal provisions for marital rape, and the safeguarding of civil society actors' rights. While Egypt's National Report describes some progress, there remain significant gaps, particularly in legislating against domestic and gender-based violence, and in allowing HRDs and civil society organizations to operate without fear. The proposed recommendations for 2025 urge Egypt to undertake robust legal reforms and protections for vulnerable groups and civil society.

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