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EGYPT: ACHPR COUNTRY BRIEFING REPORT: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND VIOLATIONS OF THE AFRICAN CHARTER (OCTOBER 2024 – APRIL 2025)

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1. Introduction

The present report is submitted with the objective of monitoring, documenting, and assessing patterns of human rights violations observed in Egypt over the period extending from October 2024 to April 2025. It aims to provide a comprehensive and evidence-based overview of the legal, institutional, and practical developments affecting civil, political, and socio-economic rights in the country during this timeframe.

This report is prepared by the Committee for Justice as part of its ongoing engagement with regional and international human rights mechanisms, the report focuses on key thematic areas of concern, including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, denial of fair trial guarantees, torture and ill-treatment, reprisals against human rights defenders, and violations of labor and migrant rights. The report draws on CFJ’s primary documentation and monitoring work—including verified testimonies, legal records, and collected data—as well as on official reports, international communications, and relevant legislative developments. The analysis is structured to reflect both Egypt’s obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and its recent interactions with regional and UN human rights mechanisms, including the January 2025 Universal Periodic Review. Particular attention is given to the gap between Egypt’s formal legal commitments and the reality on the ground, highlighting the systemic nature of violations and the institutional practices that sustain them.

This report is prepared and submitted in the spirit of constructive engagement with the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, with the hope of contributing to increased accountability, informed advocacy, and strengthened protection for victims of human rights violations in Egypt.

2. Legal and Institutional Framework

a. Reporting Obligations under the African Charter:

Egypt has been a signatory to the African Charter since 16 November 1981 and ratified the Charter on 20 March 1984. Since Egypt’s date of ratification of the African Charter, it has sent only 4 Periodic Reports to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights; namely: 1992 – 2001, 2005, and 2019. The last report in 2019, Egypt combined reports covering the 9th to 17th reporting periods. The African Commission acknowledged Egypt’s efforts in fulfilling its reporting obligations in the preparation of the report. As of the latest reporting cycle, Egypt has no overdue reports pending submission to the ACHPR.

As a State Party to the African Charter, Egypt is under a legal obligation to “undertake to submit every two years, a report on the legislative or other measures taken with a view to giving effect to the rights and freedoms recognised and guaranteed by the present Charter”.¹ These reports are to be submitted to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (hereinafter referred to as the “African Commission”), based in Banjul, The

¹ African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, Adopted 27 June 1981, OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, 21 I.L.M. 58 (1982), entered into force 21 October 1986, Article 62.

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Gambia. The African Commission, through Articles 45 and 62 of the African Charter is mandated with the powers to promote human rights in African Member States, through amongst others, the receipt and examination of States' reports in fulfillment of their human rights obligations under the African Charter.

State Reports represent a crucial benchmark through which the African Commission can fulfill its mandate to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights. Consequently, this places an unwavering obligation on Egypt "to adopt legislative and other measures to give effect" to the "rights, duties and freedoms enshrined in the African Charter"² and report on such measures in a periodic manner to the African Commission. Contrary to misconceived impressions – often propagated by State officials, State Reports are not a witch-hunt exercise designed to serve as an opportunity for shame or ridicule of any State, rather, they serve as a viable opportunity for States' accountability and strengthened cooperation and partnership with the African Commission. Hence, these reports represent "the urgent desire [...] to create a channel for constructive dialogue"³ on the measures that a State Party, in this case – Egypt – has adopted in compliance with the provisions of the African Charter.

b. National Legal Provisions Related to Detention, Fair Trial, Freedom from Torture, Migrants' Rights, and Workers' Rights

The Egyptian Constitution enacted in 2014, and other key national legislation provide formal recognition of several fundamental rights relevant to detention, fair trial, the prohibition of torture, the protection of migrants, and workers' rights. However, the gaps between these guarantees and actual practice, as well as inconsistencies with Egypt's obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other international treaties, remain stark.

Article 55 of the Egyptian Constitution stipulates that "all those who are arrested or whose freedom is restricted shall be treated in a manner that preserves their dignity, and they may not be tortured, terrorized, or coerced." Article 54 guarantees personal freedom and sets forth protections against arbitrary arrest and detention, requiring that detention be judicially reviewed. However, we documented several cases in the past few months of gross violations of these constitutional rights.

In principle, Egypt's legal framework also recognizes rights for migrants and asylum seekers. Egypt ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. However, the recently adopted Asylum Law introduces serious concerns⁴. The law grants broad discretionary powers to the national Permanent Committee for Refugee Affairs, imposes arbitrary deadlines for asylum applications based on mode of entry, restricts access to appeals, and limits refugee rights in ways that are inconsistent with Egypt's international obligations under the Refugee Convention and the African Charter.

Additionally, national legislation such as the Emergency Law, the Counterterrorism Law (Law No. 94 of 2015), and amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code have systematically weakened the guarantees of liberty, due process, and protection from torture, often in the name of national security. Despite the constitutional prohibition

² Ibid., Article 1.

³ National State Reporting Guidelines 1988, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

⁴ <https://www.cfjustice.org/egypt-cfj-and-the-global-detention-project-gdp-submit-urgent-appeal-to-un-mechanisms-regarding-the-risks-of-the-new-asylum-law/>



of torture and assurances of fair trial rights, domestic criminal procedure laws—particularly the extensive use of pre-trial detention, rotation (“tadweer”) of cases, incommunicado detention, and State Security Emergency Prosecution have undermined the effective protection of these rights. For instance, from January 2025 until April 2025 we monitored 621 cases of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, trials, and administrative detention. Most of them were investigated by the Supreme State Security Prosecution under the pretext of national security using counterterrorism law No.94 of 2015, and similar charges were used in most cases, such as spreading false news or joining a banned group.

Egypt's formal institutional architecture for the protection of human rights includes the judiciary, the Public Prosecution, and the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR), established under Law No. 94 of 2003, and amended by Law No. 197 of 2017. The Judiciary is constitutionally recognized as independent, yet in practice, the judiciary in Egypt has faced significant criticisms for lack of independence, especially in politically sensitive cases. State Security Emergency Prosecution and terrorism courts continue to operate, often depriving defendants of due process guarantees. The Public Prosecution: Instead of acting as an impartial body upholding the rights of detainees, the Public Prosecution has frequently been implicated in facilitating extended pretrial detention, disregarding allegations of torture, and legitimizing enforced disappearances.

National Council for Human Rights (NCHR): While it remains the country’s main human rights body, the NCHR suffers from structural weaknesses, lack of full independence, and limited ability to investigate serious violations. Its periodic reports rarely address the most egregious violations, and it often operates within parameters set by the executive authorities. Thus, as of November 20, 2024, the SCA⁵ formally adopted its recommendations, which included the downgrade of Egypt’s National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) to ‘B’ status⁶. The SCA expressed serious concerns about the NCHR’s failure to meet the Paris Principles, particularly regarding its independence, effectiveness, and transparency. It highlighted that the NCHR lacks independence due to the direct appointment of its members by the executive branch, through a process that is neither transparent nor participatory, which severely undermines the Council’s ability to function without government interference.

The right to work under equitable and satisfactory conditions is enshrined in Article 15 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, to which Egypt is a State Party. Nationally, the Egyptian Constitution of 2014 guarantees several labor rights, including fair wages, safe working conditions, the right to form unions, and protection against arbitrary dismissal (Articles 12, 13, and 14). However, the domestic legislative and institutional frameworks, as well as the actual practices on the ground, continue to fall short of these constitutional and international guarantees.

On 15 April 2025, Egypt’s House of Representatives passed a long-awaited new Labor Law, replacing Law No. 12 of 2003. Although presented as a modernization effort intended to better regulate employer-employee relations, the new law has raised serious concerns. Critiques point to its failure to adequately protect the right to strike, to safeguard workers from arbitrary dismissals, and to ensure the independence of trade unions. Procedural hurdles

⁵ Sub-Committee on Accreditation

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/nhri/report-sca-second-session-2024-en.pdf>

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for workers seeking redress have not been sufficiently eased, and protections against unfair termination remain weak.

In practice, violations of labor rights have persisted across both the public and private sectors. Documentation by CFJ and other organizations shows a pattern of arbitrary dismissals, retaliation against workers engaged in lawful protests, and administrative and security pressures aimed at dismantling collective labor actions. Workers at public institutions such as Al-Qasr Al-Aini Hospital, and private companies like Ceramica Inova and Al-Jamhor News Website, have faced suspension or dismissal in retaliation for exercising their basic rights to freedom of expression and association.

In CFJ only we documented 62 cases from October 2024 until April 2025, which included 17 cases of arbitrary detention, 17 cases of arbitrary dismissal, 21 cases of workers' strikes and protests, 3 case of intimidation by the companies or national security officers, death of 4 workers because of the neglect of safety and security rules. It's essential to note that some of the arbitrary detention cases included tens of workers, and some of the strikes and protest cases, as well as arbitrary dismissal cases included hundreds of workers.

Moreover, widespread intimidation tactics—including administrative investigations, security interrogations, and arbitrary arrests—have been used against labor leaders and striking workers. In multiple documented cases, workers engaged in peaceful demonstrations over wage disputes or unfair working conditions were forcibly disappeared, subjected to mistreatment, pressured into abandoning their demands, or arrested by national security officers.

Despite Egypt's adoption of a new minimum wage in 2024 and subsequent raises in early 2025, the cost of living crisis fueled by inflation, subsidy cuts, and currency devaluation has eroded the real value of wages. Many workers, especially in the private sector, remain outside the effective protection of minimum wage regulations, and enforcement mechanisms are largely absent. Thus, while Egypt's legal texts recognize labor rights in theory, the combination of legislative shortcomings, economic pressures, and systematic repression of labor activism reflects a significant divergence from Egypt's obligations under the African Charter and core international labor standards.

c. Contradictions Between National Laws and Charter Obligations

Despite the presence of constitutional and legislative protections, profound inconsistencies persist between Egypt's domestic legal framework and its obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, particularly Articles 5, 6, and 7. Although torture is explicitly prohibited by the Constitution, legislative instruments such as the Criminal Procedure Code and the Counterterrorism Law permit practices—such as prolonged incommunicado detention and the denial of prompt judicial review—that create conditions conducive to torture and ill-treatment. Similarly, the use of vague legal provisions criminalizing activities like “spreading false news” or “belonging to banned groups” has facilitated the widespread practice of arbitrary arrests and detentions, in violation of the right to liberty and security of person enshrined in Article 6 of the African Charter. The guarantees of fair trial under Article 7 are equally undermined by the extensive recourse to exceptional courts, such as the Terrorism Circuits of the Criminal Court, and by the practice of “case recycling” to prolong pretrial detention beyond legal limits without proper judicial oversight.

Furthermore, the adoption of the 2024 Asylum Law has severely restricted access to asylum procedures, imposed discriminatory timelines based on the mode of entry, and failed to establish effective mechanisms for appeal, thereby

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contravening Egypt’s obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and Article 12 of the African Charter. In conclusion, although Egypt’s legal texts articulate important rights protections, the gap between law and practice remains wide. Systemic shortcomings in implementation, coupled with the enactment of new restrictive laws, continue to undermine the effective enjoyment of fundamental rights by detainees, migrants, asylum seekers, and victims of torture and ill-treatment.

3. Main Violations Identified

A. Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

At CFJ, we have consistently documented a pervasive pattern of arbitrary arrests and detentions in Egypt, highlighting a systemic violation of both national and international legal standards. According to our monitoring and documentation in the past 6 months, these practices are not isolated incidents but part of a broader strategy employed by Egyptian authorities to suppress dissent, silence civil society, intimidate political opposition, and suppress human rights defenders. Individuals are frequently arrested under vague and overly broad charges such as “spreading false news,” “belonging to banned groups,” or “misusing social media.” Arrests are often carried out without judicial warrants, and detainees are held in undisclosed locations for prolonged periods, deprived of access to legal counsel or family contact, and subjected to incommunicado detention.

Moreover, the Egyptian authorities systematically exploit provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code to authorize repeated renewals of pretrial detention orders, often exceeding the maximum periods permitted by law, which officially should not surpass two years. In practice, many detainees remain imprisoned beyond this limit through the manipulation of procedures, including the practice of “case recycling,” whereby detainees nearing the end of their legal detention periods are charged in new cases with similar accusations to extend their imprisonment unlawfully. CFJ has also noted that such detentions are frequently renewed by prosecutors and courts without effective judicial review, depriving individuals of their right to challenge the legality of their detention. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention cited in many legal opinions in the past two years these patterns of violations as amounting to crimes against humanity⁷.

These violations contravene Egypt’s obligations under Article 6 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, which guarantees the right to liberty and security of person, and further infringe upon the rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. CFJ’s Thus, there is an urgent need for comprehensive legal reforms and accountability mechanisms to end the practice of arbitrary detention and to restore the rule of law in Egypt.

B. Enforced Disappearance

The practice of enforced disappearance has become a hallmark of Egypt’s security apparatus, used to instill fear and eliminate opposition. Security forces – particularly the National Security Agency (NSA) of the Ministry of Interior – routinely abduct and hold individuals in secret detention, refusing to acknowledge their custody or

⁷ UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Legal Opinions. Egypt. Opinion No.12/2023, Opinion No.20/2023, Opinion No.36/2023, Opinion No.40/2023, Opinion No.70/2023, Opinion No.17/2024, Opinion No.20/2024,



reveal the person's fate or whereabouts. Such disappearances often last weeks or months, during which detainees are cut off from the outside world and vulnerable to torture or extrajudicial killing. Reports by rights groups and UN experts show that these abuses are carried out in a systematic pattern: arbitrary arrest is followed by prolonged incommunicado detention or outright disappearance, frequently targeting those deemed political opponents or critical voices. Indeed, enforced disappearances remain a “preferred tool” of Egyptian law enforcement to attack political dissidents and human rights defenders. This pattern is not incidental – it reflects deliberate policy. Disappearances have been documented across various agencies (police, NSA, and military intelligence) and throughout the country, indicating an organized campaign rather than isolated misconduct

Egypt's legal framework has effectively facilitated this issue. Under the Counter-Terrorism Law No. 94 of 2015, security authorities may hold suspects in secret detention facilities for up to 28 days with only minimal prosecutorial oversight, by postponing their formal registration or presentation to a judge⁸. In practice, this statute “codifies enforced disappearances” by permitting nearly a month of incommunicado detention, a provision that UN Special Procedure mandate-holders have sharply criticized as overbroad and prone to abuse⁹. Instead of being an exceptional measure, such secret detentions have become routine in state security operations. Detainees are often moved to unofficial or undisclosed locations – for example, NSA-run facilities or military bases – where they are kept off the books, sometimes even after court orders demand their release on other charges. This collusion between police, prosecutors, and state security in hiding detainees ensures that legal safeguards (like access to counsel or medical care) are totally bypassed. It also exemplifies the “overlapping and reinforcing structures of impunity” in Egypt's justice system. Far from being held accountable, the perpetrators of enforced disappearance operate with tacit approval at multiple levels, from low-ranking officers to top officials who deny these practices. In our Justice Watch Archive, we documented more than 648 cases of enforced disappearance in Egypt¹⁰.

The human impact of enforced disappearance in Egypt is devastating. Families are left in anguish, often for years, not knowing whether their loved ones are alive or dead. Far from one-off occurrences, cases number in the hundreds – if not more – each year. Egyptian human rights organizations have documented a steady stream of disappearances; for instance, the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms recorded hundreds of cases annually during the peak of the crackdown (2015–2019), and the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances has transmitted numerous cases to the Egyptian government, many of which remain unresolved.

⁸ See UN Experts Public Communication, reference OL EGY 4/202028, February 2020,

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=25072>.

⁹ Press Release, Egypt's updated terrorism law opens the door to more rights abuses, says UN expert, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 9 April 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2020/04/egypts-updated-terrorism-law-opens-door-more-rights-abuses-says-un-expert>

¹⁰ Committee for Justice, Justice Watch Archive, Filtered for Enforced Disappearance Violations. Retrieved from:

[https://cfjustice.uwazi.io/en/library/?q=\(allAggregations:!f,filters:\(violations:\(values:\(ptwg9wot5x\)\)\),from:0,includeUnpublished:!f,limit:30,order:asc,sort:title,treatAs:number,unpublished:!f\)](https://cfjustice.uwazi.io/en/library/?q=(allAggregations:!f,filters:(violations:(values:(ptwg9wot5x))),from:0,includeUnpublished:!f,limit:30,order:asc,sort:title,treatAs:number,unpublished:!f))

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In their annual report of 2024, the UN WGEID expressed concerns at the reported patterns of use of the Anti-Terrorism Law and national security legislation to perpetrate enforced disappearances¹¹.

C. Denial of Fair Trial

Fair trial guarantees in Egypt have been effectively hollowed out, especially in cases deemed politically sensitive. Individuals who are arrested (often arbitrarily, as detailed above) and eventually brought before a court face judicial proceedings that flagrantly violate basic due process rights. The right to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal – as enshrined in Article 7 of the African Charter – is routinely disregarded. Egyptian courts and prosecutors, particularly in State Security and military tribunals, operate in tandem with executive authorities to engineer convictions or prolong detention rather than deliver justice. As a result, in contemporary Egypt, the right to a fair trial is essentially absent for those whom the regime perceives as opponents or critical of the government. This is especially true for cases involving allegations of “national security” or terrorism, which often simply means the accused is a journalist, activist, human rights defender, member of the political opposition, or even an ordinary citizen who expressed his views on social media. The judicial process in such cases is bent to serve the aims of the authorities, not to ascertain the truth or uphold the law.

We documented several patterns of serious due process violations illustrating the collapse of fair trial norms. The first was “denial of access to counsel”; detainees frequently do not see a lawyer during the crucial early stages of interrogation. Security agencies may hold suspects for weeks before any judicial hearing, and even when brought to prosecution, on paper the day of arrest is the same day of the investigation before the prosecution, and lawyers are most of the time excluded or given no time to consult their clients or review evidence. Courts have allowed proceedings to continue without the presence of defense counsel during interrogations, citing expediency – for instance, in case 9115 of 2016 a court justified the absence of a lawyer by claiming that waiting for counsel could risk “evidence being lost”. Such reasoning blatantly contravenes the right to defense.

The second pattern was “the use of exceptional courts”. During the 2017–2021 State of Emergency, Emergency State Security Courts tried thousands of civilians, producing verdicts that were not subject to appeal. Even after the formal State of Emergency was lifted and until now, “terrorism circuits” within the criminal courts continue to handle political cases with similar disregard for fair trial standards.

The third pattern was “admission of evidence obtained by torture or coercion”; perhaps most egregiously, Egyptian courts often accept confessions and statements extracted under torture, and judges habitually ignore defendants’ torture allegations. It has become “customary for judges and prosecutors to ignore allegations of torture during periods of enforced disappearance, before trial, or during trial sessions”, even when defendants vividly describe their abuse at the hands of National Security officers¹². Courts rarely order investigations into

¹¹ United Nations. Human Rights Council. 26 July 2024. Annual Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5754-enforced-or-involuntary-disappearance-report-working-group>

¹² DIGNITY, Adalah, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Committee for Justice, El Nadeem, Egyptian Commission for Human Rights, Joint Submission for Egypt’s Third Cycle Universal Periodic Review, p. 7 (2019).

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such claims. This contravenes the exclusionary rule (that coerced evidence is inadmissible) which is a cornerstone of fair trials under both Egyptian law and international law.

The fourth pattern is “judicial disregard for procedural irregularities”; Egyptian courts have shown an alarming willingness to overlook blatant violations of procedure and evidentiary rules when the defendants are political. We have noted that courts often shrug off or even justify numerous irregularities, such as: holding defendants in secret detention for weeks before presenting them to a judge; contradictory or weak witness testimony that is never scrutinized; lack of any material evidence linking the accused to the alleged crime; arrest reports that are copy-pasted for multiple defendants or rely on unspecified confidential sources; arrests carried out without a valid warrant or outside any flagrante delicto situation; and blatant forgeries or inaccuracies in police reports. Even instances where defendants were not even present at the scene of alleged crimes, or were arrested before an arrest warrant was officially issued, have been glossed over. Such systematic judicial indulgence of prosecutorial misconduct denies the right to a fair trial.

D. Torture, Ill-Treatment, and Prison Conditions

Conditions of detention in Egypt – including treatment of prisoners – consistently fall below minimum international standards, amounting in many cases to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Also, torture in Egypt is widespread and systematic, perpetrated as a matter of state policy by police, security agents, and prison authorities. This pattern has been documented over many years and persists unabated, especially in cases of enforced disappearance.

Despite Egypt’s legal obligations under Article 5 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, which prohibits torture and guarantees the right to dignity and humane treatment, prisoners—particularly those held in connection with politically motivated charges—continue to face degrading and inhuman detention conditions. We documented patterns of ill-treatment, denial of healthcare, and systematic psychological abuse in several high-security detention facilities.

In particular, Badr Prison, part of a newly constructed generation of so-called “rehabilitation centers,” which emerged as a grave concern¹³. Detainees there are subjected to intense surveillance, continuous artificial lighting 24 hours a day (resulting in sleep deprivation), and extended solitary confinement. Family visits are either denied or heavily restricted, and conversations are monitored through surveillance devices, violating privacy and the right to communication. Prisoners in Badr Prison have staged multiple hunger strikes and attempted suicides in protest of the conditions, which CFJ has described as “a new model of psychological punishment and social isolation”¹⁴.

¹³ <https://www.cfjustice.org/ar/%d9%85%d9%86%d8%b8%d9%85%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d8%ad%d9%82%d9%88%d9%82%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%aa%d8%af%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%aa%d8%b5%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%86%d8%aa%d9%87%d8%a7%d9%83%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d9%81/>

¹⁴ <https://www.cfjustice.org/ar/%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-55-%D9%8A%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%B1->

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Similarly, the newly established buildings within the Wadi el-Natron prison complex—designated for prisoners convicted in politically motivated cases—reflect a deeply punitive environment. Detainees held there have reported being cut off from the outside world, denied medical care, and subjected to collective punishment. Physical conditions are harsh, with overcrowded cells, poor ventilation, and virtually no access to sunlight or outdoor time. These conditions, when combined with prolonged pretrial detention or unjust sentencing, amount to a form of institutionalized ill-treatment, contravening not only the African Charter but also Egypt’s obligations under the UN Convention Against Torture (CAT) and ICCPR Article 10. Despite constitutional guarantees—particularly Article 55 of Egypt’s 2014 Constitution, which mandates humane treatment and access to health services—the lived reality for detainees in Badr, Wadi el-Natron, and similar facilities remains one of coercion, deprivation, and disregard for human dignity. The absence of effective independent oversight and the systemic denial of detainees’ rights underscores the urgent need for accountability and reform. Furthermore, we documented 1295 deaths inside detention facilities from mid-2013 until April 2025, with 13 death since January 2025 until 29 April 2025.¹⁵

E. Reprisals against Human Rights Defenders

Between October 2024 and April 2025, we documented at least 119 violations committed against human rights defenders (HRDs) and lawyers in Egypt. These violations include arbitrary detention, repeated and prolonged pretrial detention, “recycling” into new cases, enforced disappearance, torture, denial of medical care, denial of access to medical records, poor detention conditions, confiscation of personal items, solitary confinement, and deprivation of family visits. Such practices reflect a deliberate and sustained policy of reprisals targeting those engaged in human rights advocacy and legal defense work, in violation of Articles 9, 10, and 7 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, which respectively guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, association, and due process.

Among the most emblematic cases is that of Hoda Abdelmoneim, a prominent 66-year-old lawyer and woman human rights defender (WHRD), who completed a five-year prison sentence in October 2023 following her conviction by an Emergency State Security Court in a case widely condemned as politically motivated. Instead of being released, Hoda was “recycled” into a new case (No. 730/2020), scheduled to begin trial before the Terrorism Circuit of the Cairo Criminal Court on 14 May 2025, based on charges nearly identical to those for which she already served time. She has endured almost seven years in detention and suffers from severe health conditions, including kidney failure, heart disease, and osteoarthritis. Despite multiple health crises, she remains detained in Al-Ashir Min Ramadan Women’s Prison, where she is held in degrading conditions among criminal detainees and denied adequate medical care.

Similarly, Marwa Arafa, a translator and WHRD, has spent over five years in detention since her arrest in April 2020 for her solidarity with families of political detainees. She forcibly disappeared for two weeks following her

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¹⁵ Committee for Justice, Justice Watch Archive, Filtered for Deaths in Custody

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arrest on 20 April 2020 and was later charged with spreading false news, misusing social media, and supporting a terrorist group in case No. 570/2020. Despite exceeding the legal maximum for pretrial detention under Egyptian law, she was referred to trial only recently, in January 2025, after being detained for almost 5 years. Throughout her detention, Marwa has been denied appropriate medical care and contact with her young daughter, who was less than 18 months old at the time of her arrest.

In November 2024, Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy, a 61-year-old lawyer and coordinator of the Association of the Families of the Disappeared in Egypt, was referred to trial in case No. 900/2017 after over six years in detention. Mr. Metwally has long been targeted for his peaceful advocacy on behalf of families of victims of enforced disappearance, and his continued detention represents a stark example of reprisals against those cooperating with international human rights mechanisms.

More recently, CFJ documented the detention of Marwa Samy Abu Zeid, a 42-year-old activist, who was arrested at Cairo International Airport on 7 April 2025 while preparing to travel to Saudi Arabia for the Umrah pilgrimage. She was subjected to enforced disappearance for two days before being brought before the Supreme State Security Prosecution, which ordered her 15 day detention in case No. 7887/2024 on charges of spreading false news and financing a banned group. Her arrest appears to be related to her peaceful activism and to her husband, Abdelrahman Dabi, who has been imprisoned since 2014 for joining a peaceful protest.

These cases illustrate a lived reality for hundreds of HRDs in Egypt, a pattern in which human rights defenders—especially women are punished not for any criminal conduct, but for their lawful and legitimate work in defense of human rights. The persistent use of arbitrary charges, indefinite pretrial detention, and inhumane treatment inside detention facilities, in many cases combined with serious health neglect, reflects a systematic policy of reprisals. These actions are in flagrant violation of Egypt’s obligations under Article 1 of the African Charter, which requires State Parties to adopt measures to give full effect to the rights and freedoms enshrined therein. In the absence of structural reforms and judicial guarantees to protect defenders, the ongoing pattern of reprisals in Egypt serves to suppress civil society and undermine any prospects for accountability and meaningful human rights progress.

F. Workers Rights

Despite constitutional protections and international obligations, the situation of workers' rights in Egypt remains deeply concerning, particularly in relation to the rights to organize, strike, and seek redress. Through our dedicated Labor Justice Project, we have documented and monitored a growing pattern of labor rights violations between October 2024 and April 2025. These findings reflect not only the direct abuses committed against workers but also structural deficiencies in the legal and institutional framework that enable such abuses to persist with impunity. We found that there is a persistent gaps between Egypt’s domestic labor policies and its international obligations, particularly those under the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights Article 15.

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We documented several recent cases that exemplify the challenges faced by workers who attempt to organize or protest unfair labor practices. These include:

1. The arbitrary suspension of eight doctors from Al-Qasr Al-Aini Hospital following posts on social media advocating for their rights and improved conditions.¹⁶
2. The dismissal and intimidation of workers at Ceramica Inova in Fayoum after raising concerns over wages and employment terms.¹⁷
3. The unjustified termination of journalists at *Al-Jamhor* news website following efforts to engage management in dialogue over contractual protections.¹⁸

Such actions contravene not only workers' right to freedom of expression and peaceful protest but also their fundamental right to organize and participate in union activities. Moreover, these incidents reflect a broader trend of criminalizing labor protest and repressing any form of collective action, with employers often operating with the tacit support of state authorities. Legal procedures intended to protect workers from arbitrary dismissal are either inaccessible, ineffective, or disregarded altogether.

The Egyptian Labor Law, recently amended and adopted by the House of Representatives in November 2024, has done little to address these concerns. On the contrary, the new provisions maintain rigid restrictions on the formation of independent unions, impose bureaucratic obstacles to registration, and continue to limit the legal right to strike. The law's vague language concerning activities that may "harm national security" or "disrupt public order" creates a broad mandate for suppressing peaceful labor actions, in direct violation of Articles 10 and 11 of the African Charter, as well as Articles 21 and 22 of the ICCPR. The repression of labor activism and the lack of effective legal remedies have had a chilling effect across the workforce. Workers are increasingly deterred from reporting abuses or pursuing their rights, and independent unionization efforts remain marginal and heavily surveilled. The result is a labor environment where arbitrary dismissal, unsafe working conditions, wage exploitation, and retaliatory actions are commonplace, especially in the private sector. The current trajectory reflects a systematic failure to uphold Article 15 of the African Charter, which guarantees the right to work under just and favorable conditions. Without urgent reforms and international accountability, labor rights in Egypt will continue to deteriorate, and workers will remain vulnerable to repression, exclusion, and abuse.

¹⁶ <https://www.cfjustice.org/egypt-the-cfj-condemns-arbitrary-suspension-of-8-doctors-at-al-qasr-al-aini-due-to-social-media-posts/>

¹⁷ <https://www.cfjustice.org/egypt-the-cfj-documents-arbitrary-measures-against-workers-at-ceramica-inova-in-fayoum-calls-for-their-cessation-and-fair-treatment-of-employees/>

¹⁸ <https://www.cfjustice.org/egypt-the-cfj-documents-arbitrary-dismissal-of-journalists-at-al-jamhor-website-amid-calls-for-their-return-and-opening-channels-for-dialogue/>

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5. Reactions by Regional and International Actors

Egypt's human rights record remains under close scrutiny from regional and international mechanisms. Most recently, the January 2025 Universal Periodic Review of Egypt before the UN Human Rights Council generated strong and targeted recommendations from Member States, with a particular focus on arbitrary detention, fair trial guarantees, protection of human rights defenders, the prohibition of torture, and the rights of migrants and refugees¹⁹. Several States urged Egypt to end the use of prolonged pretrial detention, abolish emergency and military trials for civilians, and ensure accountability for enforced disappearances and torture. Recommendations also emphasized the need to amend restrictive laws governing civil society and to halt reprisals against human rights defenders.

In parallel, UN Special Procedures have intensified their engagement with Egypt through formal communications expressing concern over specific violations. In a series of joint letters issued between late 2024 and early 2025, mandate holders raised alarm over cases involving torture, enforced disappearance, violations of due process, and reprisals against human rights defenders²⁰. A communication dated 24 October 2024 (AL EGY 7/2024) addressed the arbitrary detention and mistreatment of multiple detained activists, calling on Egypt to uphold its obligations under the ICCPR and CAT. On 22 December 2024 (AL EGY 8/2024), UN experts expressed concern regarding violations of the right to health and access to justice in Egypt's prison system, particularly with respect to detainees held in politically motivated cases. Further letters in February and March 2025 (AL EGY 1/2025, 2/2025, and 3/2025) reiterated concerns over reprisals against HRDs, the misuse of counterterrorism laws, and the absence of judicial independence in politically sensitive cases.

These communications, issued jointly by multiple mandate holders—including the Special Rapporteurs on torture, freedom of expression, human rights defenders, judicial independence, and arbitrary detention—underscore the continued pattern of violations that contravene Egypt's international obligations. While the Egyptian government routinely responds to these letters with general denials or justifications such as “national security”, it has not implemented substantive reforms to address the concerns raised. The lack of independent investigations into the alleged violations further undermines its credibility before the international community.

The persistent engagement by the UN mechanisms and UPR Member States reflects a growing international consensus on the need for systemic human rights reforms in Egypt. These reactions reinforce the importance of sustained international monitoring, pressure, and accountability measures to ensure that Egypt's human rights commitments translate into genuine legal and institutional change.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This report has documented widespread, serious, and ongoing human rights violations in Egypt between October 2024 and April 2025. These include arbitrary arrest and detention, enforced disappearance, denial of fair trial guarantees, torture and ill-treatment in detention, reprisals against human rights defenders, and persistent

¹⁹ <https://www.cfjustice.org/egypt-2025-upr-factsheet/>

²⁰ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TmSearch/Results>

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violations of workers' rights. These abuses are not isolated incidents but form part of a systemic pattern of repression sustained by restrictive legislation, weakened judicial independence, and ineffective oversight mechanisms.

While Egypt's Constitution and legal framework formally recognize key rights, their application in practice remains deeply flawed and inconsistent with the State's binding obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Articles 5, 6, and 7—protecting the rights to dignity, liberty, and fair trial—are routinely violated. Similarly, the rights to freedom of expression and association, to seek asylum, and to work under just and favorable conditions, guaranteed under Articles 9, 10, 12, and 15 of the Charter. Despite its obligations, Egypt has failed to implement meaningful reforms, and oversight institutions such as the National Council for Human Rights continue to lack independence and effectiveness.

The findings presented herein reflect an urgent need for structural reforms and renewed pressure from both domestic and international actors. In this regard, the Committee for Justice puts forward the following recommendations.

To the Egyptian Government:

1. End the use of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and torture by amending the Counterterrorism Law, Emergency Law, and Criminal Procedure Code to ensure compliance with due process guarantees under the African Charter and international human rights law.
2. Ensure fair trial guarantees by abolishing exceptional courts, ending the practice of “case recycling,” guaranteeing the right to legal counsel, and excluding evidence obtained under torture.
3. Improve detention conditions and ensure independent oversight of prisons and police stations, particularly Badr and Wadi el-Natrun facilities, and guarantee access to healthcare, family visits, and legal representation for all detainees.
4. Release all individuals detained under vague and overly broad national security or counterterrorism charges, including more than 60,000 political prisoners, prisoners of conscience, human rights defenders, journalists, and activists. The government must also immediately cease reprisals against those engaging in peaceful human rights work or cooperating with regional and international mechanisms.
5. Amend the 2024 Asylum Law and newly adopted Labor Law to guarantee the rights of refugees and workers, ensure union independence, and protect the right to strike and organize in line with the African Charter and ILO standards.
6. Strengthen the independence and capacity of national human rights institutions, including reforming the National Council for Human Rights in accordance with the Paris Principles.
7. Engage constructively with international and regional mechanisms, including by implementing UPR recommendations from January 2025, and cooperating fully with the African Commission.

To African Bodies, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights:

1. Initiate urgent fact-finding missions or thematic investigations focused on arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, detention conditions, and reprisals against human rights defenders in Egypt.
2. Issue public communications, urgent appeals, and thematic reports addressing the most serious patterns of abuse, and call for the release of arbitrarily detained individuals and accountability for torture and deaths in custody.

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3. Apply pressure on Egyptian authorities through periodic review mechanisms, public hearings, and resolutions, and ensure follow-up on Egypt's reporting obligations under Article 62 of the African Charter.
4. Support and protect local civil society actors engaging with the Commission, including by facilitating access to individual complaint mechanisms, amplifying their documentation, and ensuring protection from reprisals.

Sustained Regional engagement—particularly by African and UN mechanisms—is essential to close the gap between Egypt's legal commitments and the lived reality of those subjected to repression. Upholding the African Charter requires not only national reforms but also principled action by regional institutions to demand accountability and restore respect for human rights in Egypt.

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