

Egypt: New Wadi al-Natrun prison an attempt to beautify, not reverse violations

and local observers is part of the state's propaganda to present an image that is contrary to the reality of human rights in the country, the undersigned organisations said.

The ministry of interior on 28 October hosted a tour for the new prison, which was built in a period of 10 months. Those who attended the tour included a number of representatives of foreign diplomatic missions, international organisations, members of parliament, and a number of local and international journalists.

While the ministry of interior boasts about this new prison and says that it contains swimming pools, sports grounds, halls for detainees to practice their favorite hobbies, schools, and a fully equipped central hospital, the figures documented by several human rights reports about the living conditions inside detention centers and prisons in Egypt, and the health neglect suffered by detainees there, proves that the tour was part of misleading propaganda to improve the image of the Egyptian regime.

Since the beginning of 2021 until June, the undersigned organisations and campaigns documented more than 400 cases of poor detention conditions, 28 deaths inside detention centers, and more than 120 cases of torture.

Among the services that the Egyptian ministry of interior is proud of providing in the new prison is the renewal of pre-trial detention of inmates and the digital prosecution hearing sessions, which contradict the principles of fair trial and undermine judicial independence.

Under the new system, court sessions and the renewal of imprisonment will be held indirectly inside the prison headquarters, and then the accused will be subject to the executive authority, which opens the door for them to be exposed to more violations, far from any judicial oversight, as the judge will only see what the executive wants to see only through the camera. The inmates will also lose their right to defense.

The opening of this new prison has coincided with the abolition of the emergency state, as Cairo is trying to relieve international pressure on its government regarding its human rights record. Such pressure represents a threatening factor for many strategic and economic partnerships with many global and Western capitals. Egyptian authorities have forgotten, or pretend to have forgotten, that the state of detention centers and prisons in Egypt will not be corrected by the opening of a new prison, even if it is actually equipped with all the above-mentioned facilities. Rather, it will be reformed by putting an end to the phenomena of arbitrary, prolonged, and renewed detention.

They should also put an end to the phenomenon of torture inside detention centers and prisons, stopping attempts to conceal this systematic phenomenon, launching transparent, impartial and effective investigations to hold those responsible to account, ensuring that victims have access to adequate remedies, as well as ensuring that they are compensated appropriately.

The campaigns and the undersigned organizations reiterated that Egypt does not need to build more prisons and detention centers, but it needs to open a new page between the regime and the citizen, based on building and strengthening the capabilities of the citizen, not building a new punitive facility.

We call on the Egyptian ministry of interior to stop the policy of ignoring and polishing, and to adopt a new policy based on transparency and fulfillment of promises regarding the human rights of its detainees, to provide good living and health conditions for all detainees without discrimination based on their political affiliations, and to deal with all of them through the legal and human aspect only.

Signatory organizations:

- Article 55 Campaign – Committee for Justice
- The Arab Foundation for Civil and Political Rights – Nedal
- Their Right (Haqquhum) Campaign
- HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- Zenzana Voice
- The Arab Organization for Penal Reform
- Egyptian Center for Education Right