

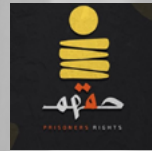


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Violations Documented in Egypt's Prisons and Detention Centers (February 1 – 29, 2024)



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Egyptian Network For Human Rights ENHR



Article 55 of the Egyptian Constitution states: *“Anyone who is apprehended, detained, or whose freedom is restricted must be treated in a way that preserves their dignity. Torture, intimidation, coercion, physical or moral harm shall not be inflicted upon them, and their confinement or detention shall only take place in designated humane and sanitary facilities...”*

With the onset of February 2024, the repercussions of the economic crisis did not subside, and citizens continued to suffer from the increasing prices of almost all essential commodities. This coincided with a significant gap between the official exchange rate of the US dollar in banks and financial institutions and its rate in the parallel market. Following the security approach to crisis resolution, the Ministry of Interior intensified security campaigns not only against currency traders in the parallel market but also against ordinary traders. Media outlets affiliated with the authorities focused on increasing media coverage of these events to directly convey intimidation messages to small-scale traders. Citizens reported sudden inspections by Ministry of Interior personnel at the beginning of the month in an attempt by the authorities to control the exchange rate in that market and reduce the gap.

Meanwhile, leaked information circulated about an anticipated opaque deal between several Emirati companies and the Egyptian government to sell the city of Ras El Hekma, located on the shores of the Mediterranean in the north western coastal area. On February 22, the Cabinet issued a vague statement mentioning a massive investment deal with major companies. The following day, the Prime Minister held a press conference revealing some details and signing the agreement. The Prime Minister discussed the financial installments that the Egyptian government would receive but did not disclose whether these amounts were in exchange for selling an area of up to 170 million cubic meters or the right to use the lands.

In a separate context, residents of the al-Gameel area west of Port Said faced forced eviction from their homes as part of a “development plan.” Authorities employed security measures, led by the Ministry of Interior, to suppress any attempts by residents to cling to their homes. Despite residents expressing their willingness to purchase the lands, the state persisted in rejecting these alternatives, leading to the death of one citizen during the demolition operations. According to journalistic sources in contact with the area’s residents, the suburb, housing over 400 residential buildings and approximately 2500 families, was constructed and maintained with residents’ funds. It had a long-term usufruct right granted by the governorate, renewed annually, and the residents themselves provided all facilities, including water, gas, and electricity, at their own expense without any government support, as stipulated by the governorate at the time. The governorate granted the area the right of use under the condition of construction and development.

War on Gaza:

The editor-in-chief of Mada Masr website, Lina Atallah, was summoned for investigation by the Cairo Appeals Prosecution due to the website publishing an investigation into the Sinai businessman, Ibrahim Al-Organi, revealing the massive profits of his company, Hala from those fleeing the Gaza war. The investigation exposed the bribes or what is known as “coordination fees” that those stranded in Gaza, including Palestinians and holders of Egyptian passports, are forced to pay to leave the Israeli-blockaded territory.

Legal and judicial developments:

On the legal front, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi ratified Law No. 42024/ amending certain provisions of Law No. 1091971/ regarding the police force during the month. Many experts view this amendment as a serious undermining of judicial authorities.

Additionally, on February 6, the Misdemeanor Court of Matariya issued a verdict sentencing the former potential presidential candidate, Ahmed El-Tantawi, and his campaign manager, Mohamed Abu Al-Diyar, to one year in prison with a bail of 20,000 Egyptian pounds, pending appeal. Furthermore, the Economic Misdemeanor Court in Tanta sentenced the assistant professor at the Faculty of Engineering, Kyrillos Rafat Nashad, to six months in prison with a suspended sentence, a fine of 100,000 Egyptian pounds, and a temporary civil compensation of 20,000 Egyptian pounds. This was in connection to charges of violating the privacy of Bishop Benjamin, the Metropolitan of Menoufia, and contempt of the Christian religion, stemming from religious discussions between the parties.

Violations in Detention Centers and Prisons:

The Article 55 Coalition organizations documented three deaths within detention centers during the month of February. The first case involved the death of Abdullah Al-Desawi Saleh, detained in the Tenth of Ramadan Prison, after enduring 7 years of medical neglect and deprivation of proper healthcare. He suffered from liver diseases, diabetes, hypertension, and respiratory allergies, aggravated by the inhumane detention conditions, leading to his death on February 8, 2024. Additionally, we observed the mysterious death of an Ugandan student residing in Egypt named Ahmed Mokasa Nshanga. He was arrested at the end of last December on the pretext of not having a valid residence permit. He was detained at the New Cairo Police Department. On January 5, his family received a message from the Ugandan Embassy in Cairo confirming his death while in Egyptian police custody. His body was handed over to the family, awaiting the autopsy report detailing the circumstances of Nshanga's death. They called for investigations into the circumstances of his death and holding those responsible accountable, preventing them from escaping punishment. Lastly, information emerged regarding the death of a former Yemeni officer, Ali Hassan Al-Sharafi, inside the Shubra police station in Cairo on February 20, just days after his arrest by the Public Funds Investigations for currency trading. The Ministry of Interior issued a statement claiming his death was due to a sudden heart crisis.

Regarding the deplorable detention conditions, we received distress calls from the wife of detainee Abdel Rahman Hassan Dabi, held in solitary confinement in the New Valley Prison for over 10 months. He suffers from a lack of hygiene, with only a water jug available for his needs. He is also prohibited from having books, blankets, and his medical glasses, except during the brief, five-minute visits where he is blindfolded, monitored by four informants who convey messages between him and his wife, forcefully concluding the visits. Throughout the month, similar distress calls emerged from new inmates entering the prison, subjected to degrading "honoring" rituals involving stripping, eye-binding, and beatings with sticks and hoses by prison soldiers. Horrifying accounts were received about forcing prisoners to relieve themselves in front of informants and wardens during inspections.

At the Wadi El Natrun 2 Rehabilitation and Correction Center, partial hunger strikes were observed by several inmates protesting against the violations committed by the prison administration. The arbitrary denial of basic rights, such as preventing the entry of food, heavy clothing to protect against extreme cold, and medications for those with chronic diseases, poses a significant threat to their lives. The arbitrary measures

also extend to their families during visits lasting no more than ten minutes, conducted through a microphone. Additionally, the strike of detainee Ahmed Arabi, held in the Tenth of Ramadan Prison, protesting against his arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance for two weeks inside the National Security headquarters in Shubra. He reported torture and violations within his cell in Badr 1 and Badr 3.

Furthermore, a shocking letter was received from a detainee, and for privacy reasons, we refrain from mentioning her name and detention location. The letter detailed numerous horrifying violations committed by the prison administration against female prisoners detained on political charges. These violations included denying visits, continuous confiscation of personal belongings, and torture during her forced disappearance, involving electric shocks, stripping, and threats of rape by National Security officers. The letter also exposed the theft of her belongings, including money and gold items, during her arrest, which was not recorded in the arrest records. In prison, she is compelled to pay a “fee” to other female inmates under the supervision and encouragement of prison officers. Additionally, she faced attempted murder and sexual assault by another inmate without repercussions, prompting her to attempt suicide in the final moments.

Moreover, we received an appeal from the lawyer of detainee Tahir Jamal, held in pretrial detention for almost four years. In the appeal, the lawyer discussed Tahir's recent suicide attempt after exhausting all available avenues for his release. Another appeal came from the mother of worker Samih Zakaria, a driver at the Ambulance Authority, held in pretrial detention for a year and a half. The appeal sought his release due to her deteriorating health, preventing her from visiting him, and his vulnerability to paralysis, requiring regular medical care.

In light of the aforementioned, the organizations within the Article 55 Coalition view the conditions inside prisons and detention centers not as surprising events but as part of the general framework of how Egyptian authorities handle detainees, especially political ones. The situation is perceived as deliberate rather than isolated individual violations, as promoted by the Egyptian Ministry of Interior.

Moreover, the policy of impunity employed by Egyptian authorities towards human rights violators within detention centers has encouraged and fueled such practices, making them a standard operating procedure within the Egyptian prison system. There has been no evidence of any leadership or official being punished or even reprimanded despite the documented and well-established violations that may have occurred.

Therefore, the organizations in the Article 55 Coalition emphasize that these practices occurring within Egyptian prisons and detention centers raise serious concerns about the fate of detainees, especially with the increasing number of deaths within detention centers in recent times and the deteriorating living conditions within them.

The coalition organizations also call for an investigation into these violations, holding those responsible accountable according to both Egyptian and international law. They advocate for the implementation of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, adherence to Egyptian prison regulations, and an end to their violation. Additionally, they demand the provision of living conditions that are in line with the humanity of the detainees.

The webpage of the coalition: <https://www.facebook.com/Article55egypt>



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