

EGYPT 2018 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to its constitution, Egypt is a republic governed by an elected president and unicameral legislature. Presidential elections were held in March. Prior to the presidential elections, challengers to the incumbent president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi pulled out, citing personal decisions, political pressure, legal troubles, unfair competition, and in some cases they were arrested for alleged violations of candidacy prohibitions for military personnel. Domestic and international organizations expressed concern that government limitations on association, assembly, and expression severely constrained broad participation in the political process. Domestic and international observers concluded that government authorities professionally administered parliamentary elections in 2015 in accordance with the country's laws, while also expressing concern about restrictions on freedom of peaceful assembly, association, and expression and their negative effect on the political climate surrounding the elections.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

Since President Sisi requested parliament to approve a state of emergency (SOE) after the April 2017 terrorist attack on Coptic churches, he has requested and parliament has ratified SOEs with one- or two-day gaps between every two SOE periods to meet the legal requirement that SOEs may only be renewed once.

Human rights issues included unlawful or arbitrary killings by the government or its agents and terrorist groups; forced disappearances; torture; arbitrary detention; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; political prisoners; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; undue restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including censorship, site blocking, and criminal libel; substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including government control over registration and financing of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); restrictions on political participation; use of the law to arbitrarily arrest and prosecute lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons; violence targeting LGBTI persons and members of other minority groups, and use of forced or compulsory child labor.

The government inconsistently punished or prosecuted officials who committed abuses, whether in the security services or elsewhere in government. In most cases

the government did not comprehensively investigate allegations of human rights abuses, including most incidents of violence by security forces, contributing to an environment of impunity.

Attacks by terrorist organizations caused arbitrary and unlawful deprivation of life. Terrorist groups conducted deadly attacks on government, civilian, and security targets throughout the country, including places of worship. Authorities investigated terrorist attacks and prosecuted alleged perpetrators.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were numerous reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings, including incidents that occurred while making arrests or holding persons in custody or during disputes with civilians. There were also reports of civilians killed during military operations in Sinai. Impunity was a problem.

There were instances of persons tortured to death and other allegations of killings in prisons and detention centers. The government charged, prosecuted, and convicted perpetrators in some cases.

Authorities charged two police officers with the death of Mohamed Abdel Hakim Mahmoud (aka Afroto) due to what government investigators described as beatings following his arrest on January 5. Following news of his death, local residents protested outside the police station, resulting in the arrest of 102 protesters. In February the court released at least 79 protesters on bail. On November 28, the Mokattam state security misdemeanor court sentenced 99 defendants to one year in prison. On November 11, a Cairo criminal court sentenced an assistant detective from the Mokattam police station to three years in prison and a police officer to six months in connection with Afroto's death. According to press reports, the police officer convicted will not serve time in prison because he had already spent 10 months in remand detention, while the assistant detective will still serve three years in prison, excluding the time already served in remand. The verdict remained subject to appeal.

As of year's end, an investigative team led by the Prosecutor General's Office had not released conclusions of its investigation into the killing of Italian graduate student Giulio Regeni, who was found dead in 2016 with what forensics officials

said were signs of torture. According to press reports, Italian prosecutors asked in December to investigate a number of Egyptian secret service agents suspected to be involved in Regeni's death. Egyptian authorities denied this request. In November the Italian minister of foreign affairs summoned the Egyptian ambassador to Italy to prompt him to urge Egyptian authorities to act quickly to honor the commitment made at top political levels to hold accountable those responsible for Regeni's killing.

There were reports of suspects killed in unclear circumstances during or after arrest. On March 27, according to press reports, Abdel Halim Mohamed El-Nahas died following a five-hour interrogation in Tora Prison. According to his cellmates' statements to a local rights organization, he returned from the interrogation having lost his ability to speak or move and quickly died.

There were reports of groups of suspected terrorists and other suspected criminals killed during security raids conducted by security forces. The Interior Ministry said police officers fired at suspects only when suspects fired first. Rights groups argued these shootings might have amounted to extrajudicial killings. In some cases human rights organizations and media reported there was evidence that police detained suspects before killing them. In June authorities killed 10 persons and arrested two in raids across the country. Authorities said those killed were members of the Arm of Egypt Movement (HASM), who were involved in a March 24 attack on Alexandria's security chief that killed two soldiers. On March 25, authorities killed six persons in operations related to the same attack, according to an official statement.

There were reports the Egyptian navy shot and killed fishermen from Gaza near the Egypt-Gaza maritime boundary. For example, on November 8, Gazan Mostafa Abu Audeh was allegedly shot and killed by Egyptian naval forces while he was fishing just off the coast of the Palestinian city of Rafah. According to press reports, the Egyptian military denied the reports. On February 8, the Court of Cassation upheld the 2015 appeals court verdict in the case of four police officers charged in the 2013 deaths of 37 Muslim Brotherhood (MB) detainees while transferring them to Abu Zaabal Prison near Cairo. Following a successful 2014 appeal of their convictions, in 2015 the appeals court reduced one officer's sentence from 10 to five years, while maintaining the one-year suspended prison sentences for the three other officers.

At year's end the government had not held accountable any individual or governmental body for state violence after 2013, including the deaths of hundreds

of civilians during the 2013 dispersals of the sit-ins at Rabaa al-Adawiya Square in Cairo and Nahda Square in Giza. On July 25, parliament approved a law giving the president authority to immunize military commanders against prosecution for crimes committed between February 19, 2011 (suspension of the 1971 constitution) and January 23, 2012 (the seating of parliament) and between July 3, 2013 (suspension of the 2012 constitution) and January 1, 2016 (seating of the current parliament). They also have future immunity against prosecution for any crimes that may occur during the suspension of the present constitution and in the absence of a parliament.

Terrorist groups, including “Islamic State”-Sinai (formerly known as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis), HASM, and Ajudat Misr, among others, conducted deadly attacks on government, civilian, and security targets throughout the country, including places of worship. There were no published official data on the number of victims of terrorist violence during the year. According to local media reports, terrorists killed hundreds of civilians throughout the country. As of April in Sinai alone, militant violence killed at least six civilians and 37 security force members, according to publicly available information. During the same period in Sinai, the government killed 225 terrorists, according to official public statements.

On March 24, a bomb placed under a car exploded as the motorcade of Alexandria’s director of security passed. The blast killed two police officers and injured at least four others. No party claimed responsibility, but the Ministry of Interior blamed HASM; authorities arrested and killed several persons they said had ties to the attack (see above).

On November 3, terrorists attacked a bus carrying Coptic Christian pilgrims to a monastery in Minya, killing seven and injuring at least seven others. ISIL-Sinai claimed responsibility for the attack. On November 4, the government reported that police in Minya killed 19 militants responsible for the attack in Assyut.

b. Disappearance

Several international and local human rights groups reported continuing large numbers of enforced disappearances, alleging authorities increasingly relied on this tactic to intimidate critics. According to a 2017 Amnesty International (AI) statement, security agents caused the disappearance of at least 1,700 persons since 2015. The Cairo-based NGO Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF) documented 230 enforced disappearances between August 2017 and August.

Authorities also detained individuals without producing arrest or search warrants. According to ECRF, authorities detained many of these individuals in police stations or Central Security Forces' camps, but they were not included in official registers. Authorities held detainees incommunicado and denied their requests to contact family members and lawyers. The length of disappearances documented by AI ranged from a few days to seven months. According to ECRF the organization received more than 10,000 reports of enforced disappearances since 2013, but it had only been able to document 1,520 due to resource constraints. According to government statements, in 2017 the National Council for Human Rights raised 110 cases of enforced disappearances with the Interior Ministry, which responded with information on 55.

According to local organizations and an AI report, on March 1, authorities arrested Ezzat Ghoneim, a human rights lawyer who worked on enforced disappearance cases for ECRF, while returning to his home from work. On March 4, he appeared before State Security Prosecution at which time authorities issued him a 15-day detention order on charges including joining an illegal group and publishing false news. Before his reappearance authorities filmed Ghoneim for an Interior Ministry video broadcast on March 16. The video labeled those who expressed opinions contrary to the state narrative as "terrorists" and claimed Ghoneim was a terrorist. On April 26, the UN Human Rights Council's Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances transmitted a prompt intervention letter concerning Ghoneim's enforced disappearance. Ghoneim was later added to case 441/2018, which contains at least 13 activists, journalists, and researchers facing similar charges of spreading false news and joining a terrorist group. On September 4, a court ordered Ghoneim's release on probation pending investigation, and security forces moved him from prison to a police station. On September 14, his family went to the police station to visit him, but security forces informed them he had been released, according to an AI report. His whereabouts remained unknown at the end of the year.

According to a 2016 AI report, authorities held many victims of forced disappearance at the National Security Sector Lazoughly Office. There were also reports that military authorities continued to hold civilians in secret at al-Azouly Prison inside al-Galaa Military Camp in Ismailia. Authorities did not charge the detainees with crimes or refer them to prosecutors or courts. They also prevented detainees' access to their lawyers and families.

According to a 2018 annual report of the UN Human Rights Council’s Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, hundreds of disappearance cases were under the working group’s review. The report noted the working group’s “concern” that, despite the government’s engagement, relatively few cases were transmitted under its urgent action procedure during the reporting period of May 2016 through May 2017. As of December 2017, the working group had not received a response to its 2011 request to visit the country, which it renewed in January (see section 5).

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution states that no torture, intimidation, coercion, or physical or moral harm shall be inflicted upon a person whose movements are restricted or whom authorities have detained or arrested. The penal code forbids torture to induce a confession from a detained or arrested suspect but does not account for mental or psychological abuse against persons whom authorities have not formally accused, or for abuse occurring for reasons other than securing a confession. The penal code also forbids all public officials or civil servants from “employing cruelty” or “causing bodily harm” under any circumstances.

Local rights organizations reported hundreds of incidents of torture throughout the year, including deaths that resulted from torture (see section 1.a.). According to domestic and international human rights organizations, police and prison guards resorted to torture to extract information from detainees, including minors. Reported techniques included beatings with fists, whips, rifle butts, and other objects; prolonged suspension by the limbs from a ceiling or door; electric shocks; sexual assault; and attacks by dogs. A June 2017 UN Committee against Torture report concluded that torture was a systematic practice in the country. Government officials denied the use of torture was systematic. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW) and local NGOs, torture was most common in police stations and other Interior Ministry detention sites. The local NGO al-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence documented an average of 35 to 40 instances of torture per month. Authorities stated they did not sanction these abuses and, in some cases, prosecuted individual police officers for violating the law.

On May 7, AI released a report stating prisoners detained on politically motivated charges were held in prolonged and indefinite solitary confinement. The report also stated such prisoners were subjected to physical abuse, including beatings,

lack of food, humiliation, and restricted movement--sometimes for years. In response the government denied widespread use of solitary confinement.

In an October 11 report, HRW alleged security forces detained Khaled Hassan on January 8 in Alexandria and held him incommunicado until bringing him before a military court in May. HRW reported Hassan was repeatedly tortured during his detention, including being raped twice. The government released a public response criticizing the report and stated there was no evidence of any wrongdoing by security officials. Hassan remained in detention pending trial at year's end.

On June 25, prosecutors ordered the detention of the head of the investigations unit and his assistant pending investigations into the death of Ahmed Zalat while in police custody. On June 2, police arrested Zalat on charges of theft. On the evening of his arrest, authorities transferred him to a hospital where he was pronounced dead on arrival. Family members told press that Zalat's body bore clear signs of torture. The case was referred to criminal court; the next session was scheduled for December 9.

Local rights groups and international NGOs reported authorities sometimes subjected individuals arrested on charges related to homosexuality to forced anal examinations (see section 6).

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Conditions in the prisons and detention centers were harsh and potentially life threatening due to overcrowding, physical abuse, inadequate medical care, poor infrastructure, and poor ventilation.

Physical Conditions: According to domestic and international NGO observers, prison cells were overcrowded, and prisoners lacked adequate access to medical care, proper sanitation and ventilation, food, and potable water. Inmates often relied upon external visitors for food and other supplies or were forced to purchase those items from the prison canteen at significantly inflated prices, according to a September 28 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights report. Tuberculosis was widespread. Provisions for temperature control and lighting generally were inadequate. Reports that guards abuse prisoners, including juveniles, in adult facilities were common. Prison conditions for women were marginally better than those for men. Media reported that some prisoners protested conditions by going on hunger strikes.

Authorities did not always separate juveniles from adults and sometimes held pretrial detainees with convicted prisoners. Rights organizations alleged the illegal use of Central Security Forces camps as detention facilities.

The large number of arrests and the use of pretrial detention during the year exacerbated harsh conditions and overcrowding, contributing to the prevalence of deaths in prisons and detention centers. During 2017 the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) reported police detention centers were at 150 percent of maximum capacity and that prisons were at 300 percent of maximum capacity. Health care in prisons was inadequate, leading to a large number of prisoner deaths due to possibly treatable natural causes. Human rights groups and the families of some deceased prisoners claimed that prison authorities denied prisoners access to potentially life-saving medical care and, in some cases, denied requests to transfer the prisoners to the hospital, leading to deaths in prison.

International NGOs continued to allege that journalist Hisham Gaafar's health, including his eyesight, was deteriorating because prison authorities could not provide him necessary health care. Since 2015 authorities detained Gaafar on charges including membership in the MB and illegally receiving foreign funds for his foundation. According to HRW Gaafar suffered from a number of ailments that required continuing specialist care. On November 19, Cairo Criminal Court renewed the detention of Gaafar, pending investigations on charges of receiving funds from foreign agencies for "the purpose of harming national security" and belonging to "a banned group."

On February 14, authorities arrested Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, former presidential candidate and leader of the opposition party Strong Egypt, on charges of belonging to a banned group and spreading false news. According to rights groups and his family's statements to the press, his health was deteriorating due to lack of access to adequate health care. Reportedly, Aboul Fotouh had at least one heart attack while in prison, was unable to walk unassisted due to back pain, and was held solitary confinement. On November 17, Cairo Criminal Court ordered that Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh remain in prison for an additional 45 days pending further investigations.

There were reports authorities sometimes segregated prisoners accused of crimes related to political or security issues separately from common criminals and subjected them to verbal or physical abuse and punitive solitary confinement. The retrial of imprisoned activist Ahmed Douma began in July, and the next hearing was scheduled for January 9, 2019. In 2015 authorities convicted Douma of

several offenses, including assaulting police and military forces during clashes between protesters and police in 2011. In 2017 the Court of Cassation ordered a retrial of the case. Beginning with his arrest in 2015, authorities held Douma in solitary confinement for more than 1,200 days.

The law authorized prison officials to use force against prisoners who resisted orders.

Administration: The penal code provides for reasonable access to prisoners. According to NGO observers and relatives, the government sometimes prevented visitors' access to detainees. Prisoners could request investigation of alleged inhumane conditions. NGO observers claimed, however, that prisoners sometimes were reluctant to do so due to fear of retribution from prison officials. The government investigated some, but not all, of these allegations. As required by law, the public prosecutor inspected prisons and detention centers.

Independent Monitoring: The government did not permit visits by nongovernmental observers but did permit some visits by the National Council for Women and Parliament's Human Rights Committee to prisons and detention centers. The latter visited six prisons and 24 police stations with detention centers during the 2017-18 parliamentary term. The law formally recognizes the NCHR's role in monitoring prisons, specifying that visits require notifying the prosecutor general in advance. The NCHR visited two prisons during the year. Authorities did not permit other human rights organizations to conduct prison visits.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and provides for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court, but reported incidents of arbitrary arrests and detentions remained frequent, according to local and international rights groups. A December 10 report by the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information claimed that police refused to release for as long as months several defendants whom courts ordered released.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over security forces. The government does not have effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse. Official impunity was a problem. Police investigative skills remained poor. Police did not investigate reported police abuses sufficiently, according to local and

international human rights groups. The government investigated and prosecuted some, but not all, reports of abuse, and some prosecutions resulted in acquittals due to insufficient or contradictory evidence. The government frequently called for investigations of abuses by security forces, although these investigations rarely resulted in judicial punishment.

The primary security forces of the Interior Ministry are the Public Police and the Central Security Forces. The Public Police are responsible for law enforcement nationwide. The Central Security Forces provide security for infrastructure and key domestic and foreign officials, and are responsible for crowd control. The National Security Sector, which investigates counterterrorism and internal security threats, also reports to the minister of interior. The armed forces report to the minister of defense and are generally responsible for external defense, but they also have a mandate to “assist” police in protecting “vital public facilities,” including roads, bridges, railroads, power stations, and universities. Military personnel have arrest authority during “periods of significant turmoil.” The Border Guards Department of the Ministry of Defense is responsible for border control and includes members from the army and police. Single-mission law enforcement agencies, such as the Tourist and Antiquities Police and the Antinarcotics General Administration, also worked throughout the country.

The appeal of the retrial of a Central Security Forces officer previously convicted of killing secular activist Shaimaa el-Sabbagh at a peaceful demonstration in 2015 continued. In 2017 a Cairo Criminal Court sentenced him to 10 years in prison.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

For persons other than those apprehended in the process of committing a crime, the law requires that police act on the basis of a court-issued warrant issued either under the penal code or the code of military justice, both of which were in effect simultaneously; however, there were numerous reports of arrests without such a warrant.

Ordinary criminal courts and misdemeanor courts hear cases brought by the prosecutor general. Arrests under the penal code occurred openly and with warrants issued by a public prosecutor or judge. There was a functioning bail system, although some defendants claimed judges imposed unreasonably high bail.

Criminal defendants have the right to counsel promptly after arrest, and usually, but not always, authorities allowed access to family members. The court is obliged

to provide a lawyer to indigent defendants. Nevertheless, defendants often faced administrative and, in some cases, political obstacles and could not secure regular access to lawyers or family visits. A prosecutor may order four days of preventative detention for individuals suspected of committing misdemeanors and 15 days for individuals suspected of committing felonies. The period of preventative detention is subject to renewal by the prosecutor for up to 60 days, in cases of both misdemeanors and felonies. On the 61st day, the prosecutor must submit a case to a relevant judge who may release the accused person or renew the detention in increments of 15 days (but no longer than 45 days at a time). Detention may extend from the stage of initial investigation through all stages of criminal judicial proceedings. Except in cases involving the death penalty or life imprisonment, the combined periods of prosecutor and court-ordered detentions may not exceed six months in cases of misdemeanors and 18 months in cases of felonies. After the detention reaches its legal limit without a conviction, authorities must release the accused person immediately. Legal experts offered conflicting interpretations of the law in cases in which convictions carry the death penalty or life imprisonment, with some arguing there is no time limit to court-ordered renewals of detention in such cases.

Charges involving the death penalty or life imprisonment sometimes could apply to cases related to demonstrations, such as blocking roads or demonstrating outside government buildings; as a result authorities might hold some appellants charged with nonviolent crimes indefinitely.

Arbitrary Arrest: The constitution prohibits arrest, search, or detention without a judicial warrant, except for those caught in the act of a crime. There were frequent reports of arbitrary arrest and detention. Local activists and rights groups stated that hundreds of arrests did not comply with due-process laws. For example, authorities did not charge the detainees with crimes or refer them to prosecutors and prevented access to their lawyers and families (see section 1.b.).

On August 23, security forces arrested political activist Sameh Saudi's wife and two children, five and seven years old, at their home in Cairo when they did not find him, according to an AI report. Authorities arrested Saudi later that day and released his family.

Pretrial Detention: The government did not provide figures on the total number of pretrial detainees. Rights groups and the quasi-governmental NCHR alleged excessive use of pretrial detention and preventative detention during trials for nonviolent crimes. Authorities sometimes held pretrial detainees with convicted

prisoners. Large backlogs in the criminal courts contributed to protracted periods of pretrial detention. Estimates of the number of pretrial and preventive detainees were unreliable. According to a 2016 report by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, almost 1,500 persons in four governorates remained in detention without bail for more than two years without a conviction and at various stages in the legal process. According to a 2015 report by the NCHR, citing Interior Ministry figures, at least 7,000 persons remained in detention without a conviction at various stages in the legal process on charges related to incidents after mid-2013, including approximately 300 “activists.” Most others were affiliated with the MB, according to the NCHR.

Authorities continued to hold Ola al-Qaradawi and her husband Hosam Khalaf, who were arrested in June 2017 while on vacation in Egypt. Al-Qaradawi was being held in solitary confinement in Cairo, had limited access to a lawyer, and had yet to be formally charged. In December, Khalaf received a visit from his father and sister. According to the family’s statements to the media and international NGOs, they were being investigated in connection with belonging to the MB and spreading information aimed at distorting Egypt’s image. On June 12, the UN Human Rights Council’s Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued a report concluding that the arrest, detention, and imprisonment of Ola al-Qaradawi and her husband Hosam Khalaf was arbitrary. The report included information provided by the government responding to the allegation that the arrest was arbitrary.

On September 8, following more than five years of detention, a Cairo Criminal Court sentenced photojournalist Mahmoud Abu Zeid (known as Shawkan) to five years’ imprisonment. Authorities arrested him while he was taking pictures during the security forces’ dispersal of the MB sit-in at Rabaa al-Adawiya Square in Cairo. Authorities charged Shawkan and 739 other defendants with belonging to the MB, possessing firearms, and murder. The court sentenced 75 defendants to death, 47 to life in prison, 215 to 15 years in prison, 23 to 10 years, and 374 to five years’ imprisonment. Five defendants died during the course of the trial. Of the defendants, authorities tried 419 in their absence. As of November, no defendants were released, as in addition to the prison sentence, defendants were ordered to pay financial compensation for damages--estimated to be in the tens of millions of pounds--incurred to private and public properties, as well as a variety of vehicles belonging to security forces during the protest and its violent dispersal. According to press reports, the prosecution sought continued imprisonment of those due for release in lieu of financial compensation as the court has not settled on a final payment amount, and it assumed that, no matter its exact determination, those convicted will be unable collectively to gather the required amount for payment.

Detainee's Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court:

According to the constitution, detainees have the right to challenge the legality of their detention before a court, which must decide if the detention is lawful within one week or otherwise immediately release the detainee. In practice authorities deprived some individuals of this right, according to international and local human rights groups.

Amnesty: The constitution gives the president the power to cancel or reduce a sentence after consulting with the cabinet. According to press reports, as of September the president had used this authority to grant clemency to more than 15,000 prisoners--generally debtors or those who had served more than one-half their sentences, including secular activists, student protesters, MB members, and others.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality. Individual courts sometimes appeared to lack impartiality and to arrive at outcomes that were politically motivated or without individual findings of guilt. The government generally respected court orders. Judicial and executive review is available to individuals sentenced to the death penalty.

Some trials involving hundreds of defendants continued, particularly in cases involving demonstrators sympathetic to former president Morsi and the MB in 2013 and 2014.

On April 28, the Court of Cassation upheld the death sentence against six defendants, sentenced three defendants to life, and 59 to 10 years in prison. It acquitted 47 defendants. The defendants faced charges in connection with the killing of a police officer and attempting to kill two other police officers in 2013. In August 2017 the Minya Criminal Court sentenced 24 persons to death, 12 of them in their absence, and a further 119 to life in prison, eight of them in their absence. It sentenced a further two defendants to 10 years in prison and acquitted the remaining 238 defendants.

On September 23, a court sentenced MB Supreme Guide Mohamed Badie, along with 64 defendants out of 682 others, to life imprisonment in a retrial over charges of inciting violence in a 2013 case charged with attacking a police station and

killing two police officers in Minya. Dozens of others tried in the same case received sentences ranging from two to 15 years, while authorities acquitted 463 others. On July 29, the Minya Criminal Court issued a death sentence to one defendant in the retrial. In 2015 the Court of Cassation ordered a retrial after the Minya Criminal Court issued provisional death sentences in 2014 to 683 defendants.

The law imposes penalties on individuals designated by a court as terrorists, even without criminal convictions. As of May authorities had added more than 2,800 persons to the national terrorists list. The effects of a designation include a travel ban, asset freeze, loss of political rights, and passport cancellation. HRW claimed designated individuals could not contest the designation, and authorities had not informed most individuals of their designation before the court decision; however, the decision may be appealed directly to the country's highest appeals court. On July 4, the Court of Cassation overturned a ruling placing 1,538 people on a government terrorist list, many of whom were jailed members of the banned MB. The Court of Cassation returned the case to a lower court for reconsideration. On September 27, the Court of Cassation removed Badie and 35 other MB members from the official terrorist list.

The constitution states: "Civilians may not stand trial before military courts except for crimes that represent a direct assault against military facilities, military barracks, or whatever falls under their authority; stipulated military or border zones; military equipment, vehicles, weapons, ammunition, documents, military secrets, public funds or military factories; crimes related to conscription; or crimes that represent a direct assault against its officers or personnel because of the performance of their duties."

Authorities used military courts to try civilians accused of threatening national security. Public access to information concerning military trials was limited. Military trials were difficult to monitor because media were usually subjected to restraint orders. Rights groups and lawyers stated defense attorneys in military trials had difficulty gaining access to their clients and to documentation related to the cases.

According to a 2016 HRW report, military courts had tried at least 7,400 civilians since the issuance of a 2014 decree ordering the military to "assist" police in securing "vital public facilities." In an official statement responding to a HRW report, the government noted that, according to the constitution, the military

judiciary adjudicates all crimes related to the armed forces, its officers and personnel, and what falls under the military's jurisdiction.

Domestic and international human rights organizations criticized the executions between December 2017 and January 9 of 22 individuals previously convicted in military courts and raised concerns about lack of respect for fair trial assurances. In one instance authorities executed four individuals convicted in a military trial in 2016 of a deadly attack that killed three military college students and injured two. According to human rights organizations, the defendants were subjected to forced disappearance for more than 70 days. According to the defendants' written testimony, most were tortured in prison.

On July 31, a military court sentenced poet Galal el Behairy to three years in prison on charges of publishing fake news and insulting the military. The charges stemmed from his anthology of poems *The Best Women on Earth*, whose title plays on a phrase used to describe the military.

On October 15, the Court of Cassation upheld three-year sentences for former president Morsi and 18 others for insulting the judiciary. On September 30, the Cairo Criminal Court ordered a retrial of MB Supreme Guide Mohamed Badie and other senior figures in the MB, related to a 2015 case in which Badie and 13 others received life sentences "over violence between MB supporters and opponents near the group's headquarters." The retrial started October 15 and included additional charges of beating protesters, but the law allows modification of charges if new evidence arises. Some local and international rights groups questioned the impartiality of proceedings. According to press statements by Morsi's family, authorities have only allowed them to visit him twice since his incarceration in 2013. They also stated he remained in solitary confinement and denied medical treatment for his diabetes, resulting in impaired vision in one eye, among other complications.

Trial Procedures

The law provides for the right to a fair and public trial, but the judiciary often failed to uphold this right.

The law presumes defendants are innocent, and authorities usually inform them promptly and in detail of charges against them. Defendants have the right to be present at their trials. Attendance is mandatory for individuals charged with felonies and optional for those charged with misdemeanors. Civilian criminal and

misdemeanor trials usually are public. Defendants have the right to consult an attorney, and the government is responsible for providing counsel if the defendant cannot afford a lawyer. Defendants have the right to free interpretation from the moment charged through all appeals. The court assigns an interpreter. The law allows defendants to question witnesses against them and to present witnesses and evidence on their own behalf. Defendants have adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense. The constitution provides for the right of an accused person to remain silent in his own trial. Defendants have the right of appeal up to the Court of Cassation. Judges must seek the nonbinding review of the grand mufti on all death sentences, and the president must confirm all such sentences.

The law permits individual members of the public to file charges with the prosecutor general, who is charged with deciding whether the evidence justifies referring the charges for a trial. Observers reported, however, that, due to unclear evidentiary standards, the Prosecutor General's Office investigates and refers for trial the overwhelming majority of such cases, regardless of the strength of the evidence.

After a prime ministerial decree in October 2017, authorities have referred certain economic and security crimes, including violations of protest laws, to state security courts instead of the public prosecutor. State security courts may have two military judges appointed to sit alongside three civilian judges and verdicts of state security courts can only be appealed on points of law rather than the facts of the case as in a civilian court.

Military courts are not open to the public. Defendants in military courts nominally enjoyed the same fair trial assurances, but the military judiciary has wide discretion to curtail these rights in the name of public security. Military courts often tried defendants in a matter of hours, frequently in groups, and sometimes without access to an attorney, leading lawyers and NGOs to assert they did not meet basic standards of due process. Consequently, the quick rulings by military courts sometimes prevented defendants from exercising their rights. Defendants in military courts have the right to consult an attorney, but sometimes authorities denied them timely access to counsel. According to rights groups, authorities permitted defendants in military trials visits from their attorneys every six months, in contrast with the civilian court system, where authorities allowed defendants in detention attorney visits every 15 days.

The Military Judiciary Law governing the military court system grants defendants in the military court system the right to appeal up to the Supreme Military Court of Appeals. The president must certify sentences by military courts.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were reports of political prisoners and detainees, although verifiable estimates of their total number were not available. The government claimed there were no political prisoners and that all persons in detention had been or were in the process of being charged with a crime. Human rights groups and international observers maintained the government detained or imprisoned as many as several thousand persons solely or chiefly because of their political beliefs. One local rights organization estimated there were more than 2,000 political prisoners in Borg al-Arab Prison alone. A local rights group considered any persons arrested under the 2013 demonstrations law to be political prisoners.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals had access to civil courts for lawsuits relating to human rights violations and filed such lawsuits during the year. Nonetheless, courts often dismissed cases or acquitted defendants for lack of evidence or conflicting witness testimonies. Individuals and organizations can appeal adverse domestic decisions to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Property Restitution

Since the launching of Operation Sinai 2018 in February, the government has intensified its efforts to establish a buffer zone in North Sinai Governorate to interdict weapons smuggling and incursions to and from the Gaza Strip. The government also created a buffer zone around the Arish Airport, south of al-Arish.

Based on interviews and analysis of satellite imagery, human rights organizations reported the government destroyed approximately 3,600 homes and commercial buildings and hundreds of acres of farmland in North Sinai since January. In contrast to such reports, according to statements to media, the government stated it demolished 3,272 residential, commercial, administrative, and community buildings between mid-2013 and 2016. Although the government stated it would appropriately compensate all families whose homes it destroyed, rights groups stated that the security forces continued to evict residents of the buffer zone without adequate compensation for loss of property. Moreover, the government

did not compensate residents for agricultural land. Human rights organizations, including HRW, reported that security forces punitively demolished the homes of suspected terrorists, dissidents and their families.

f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution prohibits such actions and provides for the privacy of the home, correspondence, telephone calls, and other means of communication. Nevertheless, there were reports that security agencies sometimes placed political activists, journalists, foreigners, and writers under surveillance; monitored their private communications; screened their correspondence, including email and social media accounts; examined their bank records; searched their persons and homes without judicial authorization; and confiscated personal property in an extrajudicial manner.

g. Abuses in Internal Conflict

The conflict involving security forces, militant groups, and terrorist organizations in North Sinai continued. Although the government severely restricted access for media to the North Sinai, starting in July it began organizing supervised visits to the region for domestic and international media organizations. Rights groups and international media reported that the armed forces used indiscriminate violence during military operations resulting in killings of civilians and destruction of property. After launching Operation Sinai 2018, the government imposed severe restrictions on North Sinai residents' travel to mainland Egypt and movement within North Sinai Governorate. The armed forces stated officially that it provided sufficient humanitarian assistance for local residents throughout the operations.

Human rights groups reported the restrictions caused shortages of food and potable water in Sheikh Zuwayed and Rafah, and the army began selling and distributing food to the population of the region.

Killings: At the end of the year, the government recognized no civilian deaths due to security force actions. Human rights organizations stated some persons killed by security forces were civilians. On May 8, two separate videos released on social media depicted men apparently wearing army uniforms killing a detained and unarmed individual.

Human rights groups and the media reported civilian casualties following army artillery fire in civilian residential areas. According to media reports in May, army shelling killed two children and injured three others when shells hit a residential area south of Rafah.

Human rights groups and media also reported authorities shot civilians for allegedly not adhering to security personnel instructions at checkpoints or for unknown reasons. For example, according to media reports, soldiers fired weapons near a crowd outside a food distribution center. Shrapnel injured four persons, including one woman who lost vision in one eye and was not allowed to seek medical treatment in mainland Egypt.

Militants and terrorist groups in Sinai continued to target the armed forces and civilians, using tactics including gunfire and beheading, including the November 2017 attack in the Rawda Mosque in North Sinai, which killed more than 300 civilians. In June, ISIS claimed responsibility for beheading two civilians it claimed cooperated with the armed forces. There were many reports of attacks using improvised explosive devices targeting military or civilians. For example, on October 25, an improvised explosive device emplaced by militants on a roadside, detonated in the city of Arish, killing at least two military contractors and injuring 10 others.

Abductions: Militants abducted civilians in North Sinai. According to human rights groups, militants rarely released abductees; they were more often shot or beheaded. According to human rights groups, militants abducted civilians rumored or known to cooperate with security forces.

Other Conflict-related Abuse: According to press reports, militants attacked health-care personnel and ambulances trying to reach security checkpoints or transfer injured soldiers to hospitals. State authorities forcibly displaced civilians from the Rafah border area in an attempt to curb smuggling operations, according to press reports and human rights organizations (see section 2.d.).

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press

The constitution provides for freedom of expression, including for the press, but includes a clause stating, “It may be subject to limited censorship in times of war or public mobilization.” The government frequently did not respect this right.

Freedom of Expression: Citizens expressed their views on a wide range of political and social topics. Nonetheless, the government investigated and prosecuted critics for alleged incitement of violence, insults to religion, insults to public figures and institutions such as the judiciary and the military, or violation of public morals. Individuals also faced societal and official harassment for speech viewed as sympathetic to the MB, such as using a hand gesture showing four fingers, a reference to the 2013 security operation to disperse the sit-in at Rabaa al-Adawiya Square.

The law provides a broad definition of terrorism, to include “any act harming national unity or social peace.” The president stated that lying is a form of terrorism. Human rights observers expressed concern that authorities could use the ambiguous definition to stifle nonviolent speech and nonviolent opposition activity.

On May 11, authorities arrested Amal Fathy on charges of abusing a means of communication and publishing a video containing false news after she uploaded a video to her personal Facebook account in which she described her experiences with sexual harassment in the country. Fathy was convicted and received a suspended two-year prison sentence and fine on September 29. Authorities also referred her to State Security Prosecution on charges including joining a banned group and using a website to promote ideas and beliefs advocating the commission of terrorist acts. On December 30, an appeals court upheld the conviction.

On May 30, a Cairo criminal court ordered the travel ban against author Ahmed Naji lifted; after several months’ delay, authorities allowed him to travel in September. The order followed the conclusion of his retrial on April 24 in which authorities fined him 20,000 Egyptian pounds (LE) (\$1,120). In 2016 authorities sentenced Naji to two years in prison on charges of violating public morals based on the publication of an excerpt of his novel, *The Use of Life*, which contained explicit descriptions of sexual acts and illegal drug use. In May 2017 the Court of Cassation cancelled the sentence against Naji and ordered his retrial.

Press and Media Freedom: Independent media were active and expressed a variety of views but with significant restrictions. Independent media reported that entities wholly or partially owned by the intelligence services assumed control of several independent media companies throughout the year. The constitution, penal code, and media and publications law govern media issues. The government regulated the licensing of newspapers and controlled the printing and distribution of a

majority of newspapers, including private newspapers and those of opposition political parties. The law does not impose restrictions on newspaper ownership.

The more than 20 state-owned media outlets broadly supported official state policy. The National Press Authority holds the power to appoint and dismiss editorial leadership of state-owned print outlets. The governmental Egyptian Radio and Television Union appointed the heads of state-owned radio and television channels. Both state-owned and private media (including television and online journalism) occasionally broadcast and published mild criticism of government policies, but dominant media narratives supported the president and his policy initiatives.

On September 1, the president ratified a new media regulation law. Egyptian and international rights organizations criticized elements of the law, including the size of the registration fees, as well as a requirement to treat social network accounts with more than 5,000 followers as media outlets. Under the law the Supreme Media Regulatory Council could block or shut such social media accounts if it deemed they published or broadcast false news. In October the council announced it would begin accepting applications, although the government had not yet issued executive implementing regulations. In response on November 5, Katib, a site launched by the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information in June documenting rights violations, announced it was freezing operations indefinitely in protest of what it considered an opaque registration process.

As of December the Committee to Protect Journalists reported there were 25 imprisoned journalists in the country.

According to press reports and human rights defenders, between February 4 and May 23, authorities detained at least 18 journalists, bloggers, researchers, and students on charges including spreading false news and joining a banned group. The defendants were charged under two cases, 621/2018 and 441/2018, and included prominent blogger Wael Abbas; documentary filmmaker Momen Hassan; University of Washington, Seattle, doctoral student Walid al-Shobaky; satirist Shady Abu Zeid; chief editor of the Masr al-Arabiya news site Adel Sabri; and former Constitution Party leader Shady al-Ghazaly Harb. According to rights groups, several of the detainees were forcibly disappeared. Several remained in custody at year's end, and detention renewal hearings continued. On December 3, a Cairo appellate court upheld a verdict to release Abbas, Hassan, and al-Shobaky on probation pending investigations.

On September 24, security forces raided the headquarters of privately owned *al-Mesryoon* newspaper and placed it under the managerial and editorial control of the governmental Akhbar El Youm Foundation. The raid followed a September 11 decision by the Inventory, Seizure, and Management Committee of Terrorist Groups Funds to seize the assets of the newspaper's publishing company.

On May 22, a military court sentenced journalist Ismail Alexandrani to 10 years in prison. Authorities had detained the Egyptian investigative researcher in 2015 at Hurgada Airport upon his return from Berlin. In 2016 a court ordered his release, but authorities successfully appealed the release order. In December 2017 State Security Prosecution referred Alexandrani's case to the military prosecutor. According to local rights groups, Alexandrani was under investigation for "reporting false news" and "joining a banned group." Alexandrani's reporting and scholarly work focused on Sinai.

On December 3, a court ordered a 45-day extension to *al-Jazeera* journalist Mahmoud Hussein's pretrial detention. In 2016 authorities arrested Hussein in Cairo, accusing him of disseminating false news and receiving monetary funds from foreign authorities to defame the state's reputation. Subsequently, authorities have held him in pretrial detention, and, according to press reports, he has yet to face formal charges.

Violence and Harassment: According to media reports and local and international human rights groups, state actors arrested and imprisoned, harassed, and intimidated journalists. Foreign correspondents reported cases where the government denied them entry, deported them, and delayed or denied issuance of media credentials; some claimed these actions were part of a government campaign to intimidate foreign media.

On February 20, authorities detained Bel Trew, a British reporter with the *Times of London* who had been living in Cairo since 2013, and deported her to London. According to press reports and the government, authorities arrested her after she conducted an interview with the relative of a man who died on a migrant boat to Europe. According to Trew's public statements, authorities said she could stay for a military trial or leave the country. The government stated that Trew did not have the proper permit to conduct journalistic activities at the time. Trew said that she had applied for a 2018 annual press permit, but the government had not yet issued these, instead requiring journalists to apply for monthly temporary permits in the intervening time.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: Official censorship occurred. The SOE empowered the president to monitor newspapers, publications, editorials, drawings, and all means of expression and to order the seizure, confiscation, and closure of publications and print houses.

On April 12, State Security Prosecution summoned the editor in chief of *al-Masry al-Youm* and seven of the newspaper's correspondents as part of investigations into a headline the paper published during presidential elections. The headline, "The State is Amassing Voters on Final Day of Polling," appeared in the first edition of the March 29 paper. Authorities released the group pending further investigations. On April 1, the Supreme Council for Media Regulation fined the paper LE 150,000 (\$8,380), ordered the paper to publish an apology, and referred the editor in chief to investigation by the Journalists' Syndicate. On April 4, the paper's board of directors ordered his dismissal.

Some activists and many journalists reported privately they self-censored criticism of the government or comments that could be perceived as sympathetic to the MB, due to the overall anti-MB and progovernment media environment. Publishers were also wary of publishing books that criticized religious institutions, such as al-Azhar, or challenged Islamic doctrine.

In January the Censorship of Artistic Works Authority confirmed to media it would confiscate any books at the annual Cairo International Book Fair that included MB or terrorist ideology.

Libel/Slander Laws: Local and international rights groups reported several cases of authorities charging and convicting individuals with denigrating religion under the so-called blasphemy law, primarily targeting Christians but also Muslims.

On May 3, police arrested blogger Sherif Gaber and detained him for four days on denigration of Islam charges. A Salafist lawyer had filed a complaint against him a few weeks prior accusing him of insulting the Islamic religion and sharia, disrupting communal peace, inciting strife in society, denying the definite truth of Islam, and criticizing the Prophet Muhammad in his YouTube videos. Gaber was arrested for similar charges in 2015 and 2013.

National Security: The law allows government censors to block the publication of information related to intelligence and national security.

The law imposes a fine on any person who “intentionally publishes...or spreads false news.” The fine is many times the average annual salary of most local journalists. In March authorities established hotlines for members of the public to call or leave text messages reporting fake news in either traditional or social media that endangers state security.

Judges may issue restraint orders to prevent media from covering court cases considered sensitive on national security grounds. Rights groups stated authorities sometimes misused the orders to shield government, police, or military officials from public scrutiny. Citing safety and security, the government and military restricted media access to many parts of North Sinai.

In August prosecutors ordered satirical blogger Islam al-Refai, known as Khorm, detained for 15 days. Khorm, who ran a satirical Twitter account with 75,000 followers, had been detained since November 2017 in a separate case involving charges of belonging to a banned group and spreading false news. He was due for release on bail when prosecutors added him to Case 441/2018 (see above). According to his lawyer, a State Security investigation report accused Khorm of “communication with AI and HRW from his place of detention” and described the two organizations as having an “antagonistic position [to the Egyptian state].” He remained in detention at year’s end.

On July 15, HRW published a report claiming that authorities used counterterrorism and state-of-emergency laws and courts unjustly to prosecute journalists, activists, and critics for their peaceful criticism. The report documented nine ongoing court cases since 2017 involving 36 defendants, including activists, bloggers, and journalists, who authorities detained and investigating under the country’s counterterrorism law.

Internet Freedom

The constitution protects the right to privacy, including on the internet. The constitution provides for the confidentiality and “inviolability” of postal, telegraphic, and electronic correspondence; telephone calls; and other means of communication. They may not be confiscated, revealed, or monitored except with a judicial order, only for a definite period, and only in cases defined by law. The constitution prohibits the government from “arbitrarily” interrupting, disconnecting, or depriving citizens seeking to use all forms of internet communications.

Despite legal protections, the government restricted and disrupted access to the internet and censored online content. There were credible reports the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority. Law enforcement agencies restricted or disrupted individuals' access to the internet, and the government monitored social media accounts and internet usage, relying on a law that only allows targeted interception of communications under judicial oversight for a limited period and does not permit indiscriminate mass surveillance. The public prosecutor prosecuted individuals accused of posting "insulting" material.

The counterterrorism law criminalizes the use of the internet to "promote ideas or beliefs that call for terrorist acts" or to "broadcast what is intended to mislead security authorities or influence the course of justice in relation to any terrorist crime." The law also authorizes the public prosecutor and investigators to monitor and record online communications among suspects in terrorism cases for a period of 30 days, renewable in 30-day increments. The law does not specify a maximum period.

The cybercrime law, ratified by the president in August, states, "the relevant investigating authority may, when the evidence indicates that a website is broadcasting phrases, numbers, pictures, videos, or any promotional material, that constitutes one of the crimes enshrined in this law, and poses a threat to national security or endangers the security or economy of the country, order the blocking of the website." The government did not issue implementing regulations for the law by year's end.

On May 26, an administrative court issued a final ruling ordering regulators to block YouTube for one month. In 2013 a lower court ordered the site blocked for hosting a short film purportedly denigrating the Prophet Muhammad, but the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority appealed. The ruling has not yet been enforced.

There were reports the government temporarily blocked access to internet messaging applications. On February 2, authorities blocked the Accelerated Mobile Pages Project, a Google-led open source website publishing tool.

On July 7, a Cairo misdemeanor court sentenced Lebanese tourist Mona el-Mazbough to eight years in prison on charges of defaming religion, insulting the president, and insulting the Egyptian people. The sentence was appealed and reduced to a one-year suspended sentence on September 9. The charges stemmed

from a video she posted to her Facebook account in May in which she complained about sexual harassment and used profane language to describe the country. In June authorities arrested El-Mazbouh at the airport as she prepared to depart the country.

The government attempted to disrupt the communications of terrorist groups operating in Sinai by cutting mobile services, internet, and sometimes landlines. Cuts generally occurred daily from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Networks were again fully accessible at approximately 8 p.m. and sometimes later. Cuts also disrupted operations of government facilities and banks.

The law obliges internet service providers and mobile operators to allow government access to customer databases, allowing security forces to obtain information regarding activities of specific customers, which could lead to lack of online anonymity. Individuals widely used social media sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, to spread criticism of the government and security forces.

There were reports authorities monitored social media and internet dating sites to identify and arrest lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals (see section 6, Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity).

As of September the government had blocked more than 490 websites without providing a clear legal basis or authority responsible for the blocks, according to the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression. The blocked sites included international NGOs, local human rights NGOs, and numerous virtual private network services. Some blockages appeared to respond to critical coverage of the government. For example, on June 25, the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information launched a website, Kateb, focusing on human rights violations. It was blocked nine hours later.

In 2017 the news website *Mada Masr* sued the government seeking information on why it was blocked. On September 30, the Court of Administrative Justice referred the case for technical review by the Justice Ministry's Authority of Experts. Defense lawyers claimed it could take years to examine the case.

According to the International Telecommunication Union, 39 percent of the population used the internet in 2017. Media reported 1.7 million active users on Twitter and stated 37 million persons used Facebook.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were reports of government restrictions on academic freedom and cultural events. The removal of references to the country's 2011 and 2013 revolutions from high school history class curricula continued after a 2017 decree from the Ministry of Education. According to media and local rights groups, a degree of self-censorship, similar to that reported by nonacademic commentators, existed when academics publicly commented on sensitive political and socioeconomic issues. Faculty members needed security agency approval to travel abroad for academic purposes. Faculty and officials at public universities and research centers also must obtain Ministry of Foreign Affairs permission to travel abroad.

There was censorship of cultural events. A prime ministerial decree issued in June declares it unlawful to hold a special event or festival without "prior license from the Ministry of Culture and liaising with relevant state entities." This new requirement added to existing regulations, under which organizations must obtain a permit from the Ministry of Culture's Censorship Board, as well as permits from the Ministry of Interior and the relevant artists' union for concerts, performances, and other cultural events. The Ministry of Culture must approve all scripts and final productions of plays and films. The ministry censored foreign films to be shown in theaters but did not censor the same films sold as DVDs.

On February 18, authorities arrested film editor Ahmed Tarek. According to his lawyer, authorities held Tarek incommunicado at National State Security headquarters until February 21. Tarek faced charges of spreading false news and joining a group established contrary to the provisions of the law. The charges stemmed from his work on a documentary, *Minus 1,095 Days*, which sought to rebut claims in a state-produced film highlighting President Sisi's accomplishments called *1,095 Days*. He remained in pretrial detention as of December 19.

On June 14, the Central Administration for the Control of Audiovisual Works reversed a decision to ban the film *Karma* after deciding to withdraw its screening license several days earlier for undisclosed reasons. *Karma* addressed several controversial topics, including interfaith marriage and corruption. In response to the initial ban, members of the Film Committee of the Supreme Council of Culture had threatened to resign.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The government restricted freedoms of peaceful assembly and association.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly “according to notification regulated by law.” Authorities implemented an amended 2013 demonstrations law that includes an expansive list of prohibited activities, giving a judge the authority to prohibit or curtail planned demonstrations after submitting an official memorandum. Domestic and international human rights organizations asserted the law did not meet international standards regarding freedom of assembly. In 2017 the government imposed an exclusion zone of 2,600 feet (790 meters) around vital governmental institutions in which protests are prohibited.

There were protests throughout the year, mostly small, and some occurred without government interference. In most cases the government rigorously enforced the law restricting demonstrations, in some cases using force, including in cases of small groups of protesters demonstrating peacefully.

The number of persons arrested under the protest law was not publicly available, although research center Daftar Ahwal reported at least 37,000 cases of individuals stopped, arrested, or charged under the protest law between November 2013 and September 2016. Authorities charged 15,491 individuals under the protest law, resulting in 6,382 convictions and 5,083 acquittals.

On May 12, police arrested 22 persons protesting increased metro fares but released 12 of them the same day. The remaining 10 faced charges of disrupting public transport. Authorities released them on May 16. On May 14, State Security ordered 20 more persons detained for playing a role in the protests. They faced charges of disturbing the peace and obstructing public facilities. Among those arrested was lawyer and labor activist Haytham Mohamedeen, who was released on October 30, although charges remain pending.

Thousands of persons whom authorities arrested during 2013 and 2014 due to their participation in demonstrations (some of which were peaceful) remained imprisoned; however, authorities released others who had completed their sentences. Authorities held such individuals under charges of attending an unauthorized protest, incitement to violence, or “blocking roads.” This included prominent activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, who was convicted in 2015 of breaking the demonstrations law related to his participation in a protest in front of the Shura Council in 2013. In 2017 the Court of Cassation reduced the prison sentence of

prominent activist Abdel Fattah from five years' "rigorous" imprisonment to five years' imprisonment followed by five years of probation. No further appeals are possible. In 2015 the Cairo Criminal Court sentenced Abdel Fattah to five years in prison on charges of breaking the demonstrations law related to his participation in a protest in front of the Shura Council in 2013.

Human rights groups claimed authorities inflated or used these charges solely to target individuals suspected of being members of groups in opposition to the government or those who sought to exercise the rights to free assembly or association.

Since their release from prison in January 2017 after completing three-year sentences for violating the protest law, activists Ahmed Maher and Mohamed Adel remained on probation with terms requiring them to reside in the local police station from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. each day. On June 19, when Adel reported for his nightly stay, he was detained after a local storeowner filed a legal complaint accusing Adel of inciting antistate sentiments in 14 posts on Facebook. In July he was sentenced to a 15-day detention order.

According to press reports, student groups focused on entertainment while political activities virtually disappeared in light of pressure from authorities and the threat of arrest. Authorities allowed students to protest the move of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, but authorities tightly controlled and managed such protests. Universities held student union elections in December 2017 for the first time in two years.

Freedom of Association

The constitution provides for freedom of association. The law governing associations, however, significantly restricts this right.

In 2017 the government enacted a new NGO law, which remained unimplemented by year's end. Local and international NGOs stated the law if implemented could make it impossible for them to operate independently. In November, President Sisi stated he recognized the law's shortcomings and directed the Ministry of Social Solidarity to chair a committee to draft amendments in consultation with civil society and submit the amendments to parliament. The 2017 law includes the creation of a new administrative body that includes members of security services and can regulate all NGOs that receive foreign funding and reject registration applications by not responding for 60 days; rules targeting all aspects of NGO

work; and prison sentences among the penalties for violations. Throughout the year the Ministry of Social Solidarity continued to apply the previous NGO law on international and domestic organizations receiving international funding, denying government approval of programs that domestic and international organizations sought to implement, or granting governmental approval after lengthy delays (which in some cases amounted to effective denials). Rights groups reported several incidents of security services ordering cancellation of planned training programs or other events. On June 2, the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled an article of the previous NGO law, which gives the Minister of Social Solidarity the right to dissolve NGOs, was unconstitutional.

The penal code criminalizes the request for or acceptance of foreign funds, materiel, weapons, ammunition, or “other things” from states or NGOs “with the intent to harm the national interest.” Those convicted may be sentenced to life in prison (or the death penalty in the case of public officials) for crimes committed during times of war or with “terrorist purpose.”

In a series of raids on November 1, security forces arrested Hoda Abdel Moneim, a former member of the NCHR and at least 30 others, including staff members of the human rights NGO ECRF and unaffiliated lawyers and activists. ECRF subsequently announced it was suspending its operations citing the arrest of Abdel Moneim as well the March arrest of ECRF leader Ezzat Ghoneim (see section 2.b.).

Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy, founder of the Association of the Families of the Disappeared, remained in detention. Authorities arrested him in September 2017, at the Cairo International Airport and initially held him incommunicado. Hegazy was traveling to Geneva to participate in the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances. The charges against him included “communicating with a foreign body to harm the Egyptian national interest.” In September 2017 Hegazy told his lawyers authorities tortured him during the first three days they held him.

On April 5, the Court of Cassation overturned the conviction of 16 mostly foreign NGO workers sentenced in 2013 for operating unlicensed organizations and receiving foreign funding without government permission. They were to be retried along with 27 other NGO workers convicted in their absence in the same case. On December 20, a court acquitted 41 defendants; the status of the remaining two was unclear as of the end of the year.

The MB, the MB-affiliated Freedom and Justice Party, and its NGO remained illegal, and the MB was a legally designated terrorist organization.

Authorities continued investigations of local NGOs that received foreign funding under a case originally brought in 2011. On June 20, authorities released Nazra for Feminist Studies founder Mozn Hassan on bail; her charges included receiving foreign funding to harm national security in connection with her NGO. On May 27, authorities questioned Magda Adly and Suzanne Fayyad, founders of the el-Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, on charges of establishing an entity in violation of the civil society law and publishing information that was harmful to the state.

On May 21, authorities released Hossam Eddin Ali, executive director of the Egyptian Democratic Institute, on bail. He faced charges of harming national security and receiving foreign funds.

In February 2017 authorities closed the offices of el-Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence (also registered under the name el-Nadeem for Psychological Rehabilitation), which documents torture and other forms of abuse and provides counseling for torture and rape victims. In early 2016 the center received administrative closure orders from three governmental bodies, and in late 2016 authorities froze its assets. The organization asserted the closure was politically motivated, targeting el-Nadeem because of its work on torture, deaths in detention, and impunity for these crimes. A court case brought by Nadeem challenging the closure order continued; the most recent hearing was December 5, wherein the court postponed a decision until December 26. The organization continued to operate in a limited capacity.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

d. Freedom of Movement

The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights, albeit with some exceptions, including the handling of potential refugees and asylum seekers. The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection

and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern. Authorities maintained a “no-fly” list that prevented some defendants in court cases from fleeing the country.

Abuse of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons: Media, NGOs, and UNHCR staff reported multiple cases of attacks against refugees, particularly women and children. According to UNHCR, refugees sometimes reported harassment, sexual harassment, and discrimination. Refugee women and girls, particularly sub-Saharan Africans, faced the greatest risk of societal, sexual, and gender-based violence.

According to UNHCR and press reports, police security sweeps increased in neighborhoods known to house Syrian, Sudanese, and other African refugees, as well as migrants, resulting in increased detentions. Detainees reported authorities subjected them to verbal abuse and poor detention conditions.

In-country Movement: Citizens and foreigners may not travel freely in areas of the country designated as military zones. The government sought to prevent private individuals, journalists, civil society figures, and international organizations from entering North Sinai, stating it was to protect their safety, although it began organizing some supervised visits for journalists to North Sinai in July.

Foreign Travel: The constitution states, “No citizen may be prevented from leaving the State territory.”

Nonetheless, men who have not completed compulsory military service and have not obtained an exemption may not travel abroad or emigrate. National identification cards indicated completion of military service.

Authorities required citizens between ages 18 and 40 to obtain permission from the Interior Ministry to travel to 16 countries: Guinea, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Qatar, South Africa, South Korea, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Georgia, and Yemen. Enforcement of these regulations was sporadic. The government stated it intended these regulations to make it more difficult for citizens to join terrorist groups and to stop flight of criminals. These regulations also affected the ability of other individuals to travel outside the country.

The government increasingly imposed travel bans on human rights defenders and political activists charged with offenses or under investigation. In 2016 *Mada*

Masr reported there had been 554 cases of politically motivated banned entry and exit imposed by authorities in airports since 2011. Local human rights groups maintained authorities used travel bans to intimidate and silence human rights defenders, including individuals connected with NGOs facing investigation as part of the reopened NGO foreign-funding case. A September 4 court ruling stated a travel ban “does not require the investigation of certain facts and their certainty,” but there must be “serious evidence that there are reasons for it and that the decision to prevent travel is due to security reasons and the interests of the state.”

Democracy activist Esraa Abdel Fattah remained unable to depart the country. In 2015 authorities prevented Abdel Fattah from departing the country and informed her that authorities had issued a travel ban in her name. She filed a lawsuit to challenge the ban, but the court dismissed the suit. In September 2017 authorities referred a case regarding comments she made on social media for military prosecution. No further information on the case was available.

Exile: There was no government-imposed exile, and the constitution prohibits the government from expelling citizens or banning citizens from returning to the country. Some Mubarak- and Morsi-era politicians lived outside the country by choice and stated they faced government threats of prosecution.

Protection of Refugees

Refoulement: On November 8, authorities in Sudan announced criminal charges against an activist named Mohamed Boshi for espionage and crimes against the state, which carry the death penalty. On November 15, HRW released a report alleging that Egyptian authorities had detained Boshi on October 10, while he was in Egypt as an asylum seeker, held him incommunicado, and subsequently refouled him to Sudan. Human Rights Watch stated that Boshi’s family told them Sudanese security officials contacted them on October 13 to say he was in their custody.

Although the government often contacted UNHCR upon detaining unregistered migrants and asylum seekers, authorities reportedly sometimes encouraged unregistered detainees to choose to return to their countries of origin or a neighboring country to avoid continued detention, even in cases where the individuals expressed a fear of return. The number of these cases was unknown.

Compared with previous years, fewer Palestinian refugees from Syria entered the country illegally, intending to travel to Europe. In a number of cases, in the

absence of valid travel documents or inability to confirm their identities, they faced more difficulties, including higher chances of detention or deportation.

Access to Asylum: The constitution provides for the protection of political refugees, but the laws do not provide for granting asylum or refugee status, and the government has not established a comprehensive legal regime for providing protection to refugees. The government granted UNHCR authority to make refugee status determinations. UNHCR does not register Libyan citizens; neither does it register nor assist Palestinian refugees in the country.

According to UNHCR, as of August 31, there were more than 235,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers in the country, coming mainly from Syria, as well as from Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Yemen. Since 2017 the number of Syrian nationals registered as refugees has increased, although at a slower pace than in 2016. Observers attributed the increase to relaxed family reunification visa requirements, increased economic hardship faced by unregistered Syrians already residing in the country, young men attempting to avoid conscription in the national military or armed groups, and an increased fear of raids targeting unregistered migrants. Most Syrians continued to arrive by way of Sudan, which remained the only neighboring country to which Syrians could travel without visas. The number of African refugees also increased during the year, according to UNHCR, particularly among Ethiopian, Eritrean, and South Sudanese populations.

Starting in mid-2013, the government applied a system of visa and security clearance requirements for Syrian nationals and Palestinian refugees from Syria, thus assuring no direct entries from Syria since Egypt lacked consular services there. Following the UNHCR high commissioner's visit in January 2017, the country relaxed its visa requirements for Syrians seeking family reunification.

Reports of irregular movements of individuals, including asylum seekers, and detention of foreign nationals attempting to depart the country irregularly via the Mediterranean remained low during the year, according to UNHCR, following parliament's passage and enforcement of a law that dramatically increased patrols on the country's Mediterranean coast in 2016.

UNHCR and its partners usually had regular access, by request, to detained registered refugees and asylum seekers along the north coast. Local rights groups faced continued resistance from the government when trying to interview detainees at Qanater men's and women's prisons outside Cairo, which housed the majority of detained refugees and asylum seekers. Authorities generally granted UNHCR

access to asylum seekers at all prison and detention facilities. Authorities generally released asylum seekers registered with UNHCR, although frequently did not do so for detained migrants, many of whom were Ethiopian, Eritrean, Sudanese, and Somali (and may have had a basis for asylum claims). Detained migrants--as unregistered asylum seekers--did not have access to UNHCR. Authorities often held them in in police stations until UNHCR or other aid agencies assisted them, although sometimes authorities sent them to regular prisons alongside convicted criminals or deported them.

The government has never recognized UNHCR's mandate to offer services to Palestinians outside of the fields of operations of the UN Relief and Works Agency, reportedly due to a belief that allowing UNHCR registration would negate Palestinian refugees' alleged right of return. Approximately 2,900 Palestinian refugees from Syria were also present in the country, the majority reportedly in Cairo. The Palestinian Authority mission in the country provided limited assistance to this population, who were not able to access UNHCR assistance provided to Syrians due to governmental restrictions. The Swiss Red Cross also provided some humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees from Syria.

Employment: No law grants or prohibits refugees the right to work. Those seeking unauthorized employment were challenged by lack of jobs and societal discrimination, particularly against sub-Saharan Africans. Refugees who found work took low-paying jobs in the informal market, such as domestic servants, and were vulnerable to financial and sexual exploitation by employers.

Access to Basic Services: Refugees, in particular non-Arabic-speaking refugees from sub-Saharan Africa, received limited access to some services, including health care and public education. According to UNHCR refugees can fully access public-health services, although many do not have the resources to do so. The Interior Ministry restricted some international organizations seeking to assist migrants and refugees in Sinai. UNHCR was unaware of any migrants detained in Sinai since 2016. UNHCR provided some refugees with modest support for education and health care, as well as small monthly financial assistance grants for particularly vulnerable refugees. The International Organization for Migration provided additional assistance to particularly vulnerable migrants and individual asylum cases either rejected or being processed by UNHCR.

Refugee children not enrolled in public schools mainly attended refugee-run schools, private schools, or were home schooled. The law requires government hospitals to provide free emergency medical care to refugees, but many hospitals

did not have adequate resources to do so. In some cases hospitals insisted that refugees provide payment in advance of receiving services or refused to provide services to refugees. In response to the influx of Syrians, the government allowed Syrian refugees and asylum seekers access to public education and health services. The Ministry of Education estimated that 35,000 school age Syrian children (approximately 90 percent) enrolled successfully in the public school system.

Stateless Persons

Most of the eight stateless persons known to UNHCR were Armenians displaced for more than 50 years. According to a local civil society organization, the number of stateless persons in the country was likely higher than the number recorded by UNHCR. The government and UNHCR lacked a mechanism for identifying stateless persons, including those of disputed Sudanese/South Sudanese nationality and those of disputed Ethiopian/Eritrean nationality. A majority of the approximately 70,000 Palestinian refugees were stateless.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The constitution provides citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage. Constraints on freedom of expression, association, and assembly, however, limited citizens' ability to do so.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: The country held a presidential election in March 2018 resulting in the re-election of President Sisi with 92 percent of the vote. Sisi's sole opponent, Moussa Moustapha Moussa, received 3 percent of the vote, less than the number of spoiled ballots. Moussa registered his candidacy on January 29, the last possible day to register, and until the day before he registered his candidacy, he was a member of a campaign supporting President Sisi for a second term. Prior to the elections, authorities arrested some potential candidates for allegedly violating military prohibitions for public office and reportedly pressured others against running in the elections. Domestic and international organizations expressed concern that government limitations on association, assembly, and expression severely constrained broad participation in the political process.

International news media alleged that in some instances voters were paid to vote. The Supreme Media Regulatory Council fined some news outlets publishing

critical coverage of the presidential election and also referred several journalists to investigation by the Journalists Syndicate (see section 2).

Parliamentary elections were held in 2015. Domestic and international observers concluded that government authorities professionally administered these elections, while also expressing concern about restrictions on freedom of peaceful assembly, association, and expression and their negative effect on the political climate surrounding the elections.

Political Parties and Political Participation: The constitution grants citizens the ability to form, register, and operate political parties. The law requires new parties to have a minimum of 5,000 members from each of at least 10 governorates. The constitution also states, “No political activity may be practiced and no political parties may be formed on the basis of religion or discrimination based on gender, origin, or sectarian basis or geographic location. No activity that is hostile to democratic principles, secretive, or of military or quasi-military nature may be practiced. Political parties may not be dissolved except by virtue of a court judgment.”

The Freedom and Justice Party, the political wing of the MB, remained banned. Authorities did not ban other Islamist parties, including the Strong Egypt Party and the Building and Development Party, although those parties boycotted the 2015 parliamentary elections, citing a “negative political environment.” The Islamist al-Noor Party participated, winning 11 seats.

Authorities arrested opposition figures preceding the presidential election, including potential presidential candidates. On January 22, authorities arrested former chief of staff of the Armed Forces Sami Anan and 30 supporters for running for office without permission from the military. Authorities held Anan in a military prison but moved him to a military hospital after he suffered a stroke.

On February 14, police also arrested former 2012 presidential candidate and Strong Egypt founder Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh and, earlier, on February 8, arrested Strong Egypt deputy Mohamed El-Kassas on charges of belonging to a banned group and spreading false news after they publicly urged a boycott of the election.

On January 7, former prime minister Ahmed Shafiq reversed his stated intention to run in the presidential election. According to his family and supporters, he made the statement while under duress. After he announced his intention to run in November 2017 from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where he had been living

in exile, UAE authorities detained and deported him to Egypt, according to his supporters. His family told media they could not contact him and claimed authorities held him against his will at a Cairo hotel until released, following his announcement that he would not run for president.

There were reports of physical assaults on members of political opposition movements. For example, on June 5, unidentified individuals attacked dozens of guests at the iftar for the Civil Democratic Movement (CDM), an opposition political coalition, at the Swiss Club restaurant in the Kit Kat district of Giza, according to statements by CDM leaders.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit participation of women, members of minorities, or both in the political process, and they did participate. Social and cultural barriers, however, limited women's political participation and leadership in most political parties and some government institutions. Voters elected a record number of 75 women, 36 Christians, and nine persons with disabilities to parliament during the 2015 parliamentary elections, a substantial increase compared with the 2012 parliament. The House of Representatives law outlines the criteria for the electoral lists, which provides that the House of Representatives must include at least 56 women, 24 Christians, and nine persons with disabilities. In 2015 the president appointed 28 additional members of parliament, including 14 women and two Christians. The House of Representatives law grants the president the authority to appoint House of Representatives members, not to surpass 5 percent of the total number of elected members. If the president opts to use this authority, one-half of his appointments must be women, according to the law. Parliament included 89 women and 38 Christians.

Eight women led cabinet ministries. There were two Christians among the appointed governors of the 27 governorates. In August authorities appointed Manal Awad Michael, a Coptic woman, governor of Damietta, making her the country's second female governor. No women were on the Supreme Constitutional Court. In August the Supreme Judiciary Council promoted 16 female judges to higher courts, including the Qena Appeals Court. Legal experts stated there were approximately 66 female judges serving in family, criminal, economic, appeals, and misdemeanor courts; that total was less than 1 percent of judges. Several senior judges were Christian.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not consistently implement the law effectively, and officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.

Corruption: The Central Agency for Auditing and Accounting was the government's internal anticorruption body and submitted reports to the president and prime minister that were not available to the public. The auditing and accounting agency stationed monitors at state-owned companies to report corrupt practices. The Administrative Control Authority, another state institution with technical, financial, and administrative independence, had jurisdiction over state administrative bodies, state-owned enterprises, public associations and institutions, private companies undertaking public work, and organizations to which the state contributes in any form.

On January 14, authorities arrested Menoufia governor Hisham Abdel Baset and two business associates on charges of bribery. On November 12, Giza Criminal Court convicted Baset over corruption charges and acquitted the other two defendants in the same case. The court sentenced Baset to 10 years in prison and fined him LE 15 million (\$850 thousand) for ordering a bribe of LE 27.45 million (\$1.54 million).

On August 12, authorities sentenced the general manager of the Cairo International Airport-Quarantine to 10 years in prison on charges of receiving bribes to facilitate the import of goods.

Financial Disclosure: There are no financial disclosure laws for public officials. A 2013 conflict-of-interest law forbids government officials from maintaining any pecuniary interest in matters over which they exercise authority.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

International and local human rights organizations said that the government continued to be uncooperative. On August 8, Minister of Local Development Mahmoud Shaarawy said that rights units were established in 18 governorates to receive complaints and spread the culture of human rights. Government officials publicly asserted they shared the civil society organizations' goals, but they rarely cooperated with or responded to the organizations' inquiries. The cabinet established a committee on human rights chaired by the minister of foreign affairs to prepare UN reports and respond to human rights allegations raised against the

country. Domestic civil society organizations criticized the government's consultations with civil society as insufficient. Provisions in the 2017 NGO law and penal code established penalties of up to life imprisonment for requesting or accepting foreign funding to undermine state security (see section 2.b.).

Extended delays in gaining government approvals and an unclear legal environment continued to limit the ability of domestic and international NGOs to operate. State-owned and independent media frequently depicted NGOs, particularly international NGOs and domestic NGOs that received funding from international sources, as undertaking subversive activities. Some NGOs reported receiving visits or calls to staff, both at work and at home, from security service officers and tax officials monitoring their activities, as well as societal harassment.

Human rights defenders and political activists were also subjected to governmental and societal harassment and intimidation, including through travel bans (see section 2.d.). Print and television media published articles that included the names, photographs, business addresses, and alleged meetings held by activists, including meetings held with foreign diplomatic representatives.

Well established, independent domestic human rights NGOs struggled to operate amid increasing pressure from security forces throughout the country. Online censorship (see section 2.a.) diminished the roles of internet activists and bloggers in publicizing information concerning human rights abuses. Authorities sometimes allowed civil society organizations not registered as NGOs to operate, but such organizations often reported harassment, along with threats of government interference, investigation, asset freezes, or closure.

The government continued investigations into the receipt of foreign funding by several human rights organizations (see section 1.b.).

Major international human rights organizations, such as HRW and AI, did not have offices in the country after closing them in 2014 due to "concerns about the deteriorating security and political environment in the country."

The United Nations or Other International Bodies: In October the UN Special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing visited the country, the first rapporteur to visit since 2010. In a December 4 statement, the rapporteur claimed that individuals she met during her trip faced retaliation in the form of forced evictions, housing demolitions, arbitrary arrest, intimidation, and other reprisals

Nine other UN special rapporteurs had pending visit requests; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated it was committed to facilitating their visits by the end of 2019. Authorities did not allow the International Committee of the Red Cross access to prisoners and detainees. The Interior Ministry provided some international organizations informal access to some detention centers where authorities detained asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants to provide humanitarian assistance (see section 2.d.).

Government Human Rights Bodies: The NCHR monitored government abuses of human rights and submitted citizen complaints to the government. A number of well known human rights activists served on the organization's board, although some observers alleged the board's effectiveness was sometimes limited because it lacked sufficient resources and the government rarely acted on its findings. The council at times challenged and criticized government policies and practices, calling for steps to improve its human rights record. For example, the NCHR called for improved prison conditions and for repeal of the protest law.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, prescribing penalties of 15 to 25 years' imprisonment, or life imprisonment for cases of rape involving armed abduction. Spousal rape is not illegal. The government did not effectively enforce the law. Civil society organizations reported police pressure not to pursue charges.

Domestic violence was a significant problem. The law does not prohibit domestic violence or spousal abuse, but authorities may apply provisions relating to assault with accompanying penalties. The law requires that an assault victim produce multiple eyewitnesses, a difficult condition for domestic abuse victims. Police often treated domestic violence as a social rather than criminal matter.

The Ministry of Social Solidarity supported eight women's shelters. The Interior Ministry includes a unit responsible for combating sexual and gender-based violence. The National Council for Women (NCW), a quasi-governmental body, was responsible for coordinating government and civil society efforts to empower women. In 2015 the NCW launched a five-year *National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women* with four strategic objectives: prevention, protection,

intervention, and prosecution. An NCW study found that approximately 1.5 million women reported domestic violence each year.

On August 31, journalist May al-Shamy filed a complaint accusing the editor in chief of the newspaper *Youm7* of sexually assaulting her physically, on several occasions in the preceding month. The prosecution suspended its investigation into the case on October 31 due to a lack of evidence. Shamy's appeal to reopen the investigation was rejected on November 5.

On November 25, the Investment and International Cooperation Ministry launched a national initiative for combating violence against women. The initiative groups international and local partners to conduct an awareness campaign against sexual harassment in means of transportation, in addition to all other forms of violence against women.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): FGM/C is illegal, but it remained a serious problem. According to the *2015 Egypt Health Issues Survey*, published during 2016 by the Ministry of Health and Population, 70 percent of girls between ages 15 and 19 had undergone FGM/C, a decrease from 81 percent in 2008. In May authorities reportedly arrested a doctor from Sohag University Hospital for allegedly conducting FGM/C on a 12-year-old girl.

On June 1, the Egyptian body, Dar al-Iftaa, responsible for issuing Islamic fatwas, declared FGM forbidden in Islam. On November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the country's grand mufti Shawqi Allam highlighted Dar al-Iftaa's issuance of several fatwas confirming the rights of women and preventing FGM.

A 2016 amendment to the law designates FGM/C a felony, as opposed to a misdemeanor as it was previously, and assigns penalties for conviction of five to seven years' imprisonment for practitioners who perform the procedure or 15 years if the practice led to death or "permanent deformity." The law granted exceptions in cases of "medical necessity," which rights groups and subject matter experts identified as a problematic loophole that allowed the practice to continue. According to international and local observers, the government did not effectively enforce the FGM/C law.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: The law does not specifically address "honor" crimes, which authorities treated as any other crime. There were no reliable statistics regarding the incidence of killings and assaults motivated by

“honor,” but local observers stated such killings occurred, particularly in rural areas.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment remained a serious problem. The government claimed it prioritized efforts to address sexual harassment. The penal code defines sexual harassment as a crime, with penalties including fines and sentences of six months’ to five years’ imprisonment if convicted. Media and NGOs reported sexual harassment by police was also a problem, and the potential for further harassment further discouraged women from filing complaints.

Authorities arrested individuals who complained of their experience with sexual harassment online, including activist Amal Fathy and Lebanese tourist Mona el-Mazbough (see section 2.a.).

On September 9, the Qasr al-Nil misdemeanor court sentenced a man to two years in prison for sexually harassing two women while they were walking in downtown Cairo. The man also was fined and received a three-month sentence for assault. Authorities acquitted a second man of the same charges. When police responded to the incident, the two men alleged the women had assaulted them, and authorities took all four into custody. Authorities held the women in detention for 10 hours until their lawyer assured that they would return them for questioning.

Coercion in Population Control: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization.

Discrimination: The constitution provides for equal rights for male and female citizens. Women did not enjoy the same legal rights and opportunities as men, and discrimination was widespread. Aspects of the law and traditional societal practices disadvantaged women in family, social, and economic life.

Women faced widespread societal discrimination, threats to their physical security, and workplace bias in favor of men that hindered their social and economic advancement.

By the end of the year, the Ministry of Interior had implemented a 2017 decree issued by the prime minister to include at least one female officer at every police station.

Laws affecting marriage and personal status generally corresponded to an individual’s religious group. A female Muslim citizen cannot legally marry a non-

Muslim man. If she were to do so, authorities could charge her with adultery and consider her children illegitimate. Under the government's interpretation of Islamic law, any children from such a marriage could be placed in the custody of a male Muslim guardian. *Khula* divorce allows a Muslim woman to obtain a divorce without her husband's consent, provided she forgoes all her financial rights, including alimony, dowry, and other benefits. The Coptic Orthodox Church permits divorce only in rare circumstances, such as adultery or conversion of one spouse to another religion. Other Christian churches sometimes permitted divorce on a case-by-case basis.

The law follows sharia in matters of inheritance; therefore, a Muslim female heir generally receives one-half the amount of a male heir's inheritance, and Christian widows of Muslims have no inheritance rights. A sole Muslim female heir receives one-half her parents' estate, and the balance goes to the siblings of the parents or the children of the siblings if the siblings are deceased. A sole male heir inherits his parents' entire estate.

In marriage and divorce cases, a woman's testimony must be judged credible to be admissible. Usually the woman accomplishes credibility by conveying her testimony through an adult male relative or representative. The law assumes a man's testimony is credible unless proven otherwise.

Labor laws provide for equal rates of pay for equal work for men and women in the public but not the private sector. Educated women had employment opportunities, but social pressure against women pursuing a career was strong. Large sectors of the economy controlled by the military excluded women from high-level positions.

Children

Birth Registration: Children derive citizenship through the citizenship of their parents. The mother or the father transmits citizenship and nationality. The government attempted to register all births soon after birth, but some citizens in remote and tribal areas, such as the Sinai Peninsula, resisted registration or could not document their citizenship. In some cases failure to register resulted in denial of public services, particularly in urban areas where most services required presentation of a national identification card.

Education: Education is compulsory, free, and universal until the ninth grade. The law provides this benefit to stateless persons and refugees. Public schools enrolled Syrian refugees, but they largely excluded refugees of other nationalities.

Child Abuse: The constitution stipulates the government shall protect children from all forms of violence, abuse, mistreatment, and commercial and sexual exploitation. According to a local rights group, authorities recorded hundreds of cases of alleged child abuse each month. No dedicated government institution addressed child abuse, although several civil society organizations assisted runaway and abandoned children.

On September 11, authorities began to investigate reports social workers at the Beni Suef orphanage sexually assaulted children. Beni Suef's governor also ordered an investigation of the orphanage's board of directors.

Rights organizations reported children faced mistreatment in detention, including torture, sharing cells with adults, denial of their right to counsel, and authorities' failure to notify their families. In a November 20 report, AI alleged it had documented six instances of torture and 12 instances of enforced disappearances involving children since 2015. The State Information Service released a response denying the report. According to a local rights group, police sometimes charged street children with unsolved crimes to increase perceived police effectiveness.

According to human rights organizations, security forces detained 12-year-old Abdullah Boumedine Nasr al-Din, in his home in December 2017 and accused him of joining a terrorist group and planting explosives. He was then allegedly forcibly disappeared for seven months before being brought before the State Security Prosecution and interrogated without an attorney in July. Authorities then transferred him to Azbakeya Police Station in Cairo where he reportedly spent more than three months in solitary confinement as of October 30.

Early and Forced Marriage: The legal age of marriage is 18. According to UNICEF 17 percent of girls married before age 18, and 2 percent of girls were married by age 15. According to NCW statistics, nearly 36 percent of marriages in rural areas in the southern part of the country included a partner who was not yet age 18. Families reportedly sometimes forced adolescent girls to marry wealthy foreign men in what were known locally as "tourism" or "summer" marriages for the purpose of sexual exploitation, prostitution, or forced labor. According to the law, a foreign man who wants to marry an Egyptian woman more than 25 years younger than he is must pay a fine of LE 50,000 (\$2,790). Women's rights

organizations argued that allowing foreign men to pay a fine to marry much younger women represented a form of trafficking and encouraged child marriage. They called on the government to eliminate the system altogether. The Antitrafficking Unit at the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), a governmental body, is responsible for raising awareness of the problem.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law provides for sentences of not less than five years' imprisonment and fines of up to LE 200,000 (\$11,150) for conviction of commercial sexual exploitation of children and child pornography. The government did not adequately enforce the law. The minimum age for consensual sex is age 18.

Displaced Children: The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics and the NCCM estimated the number of street children to be 16,000, while civil society organizations estimated the number to be in the millions. The ministry offered shelters to street children, but many chose not to use them because staff treated the children as if they were criminals, according to local rights groups. According to rights groups, the incidence of violence, prostitution, and drug dealing in these shelters was high. Religious institutions and NGOs provided services for street children, including meals, clothing, and literacy classes. The Ministry of Health and Population offered mobile health clinics staffed by nurses and social workers. The Ministry of Social Solidarity offered 17 mobile units in 10 governorates, which provided emergency services, including food and health care, to street children.

International Child Abductions: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data.html>.

Anti-Semitism

The country's Jewish community reportedly numbered fewer than eight individuals. There were a few reports of imams, who are appointed and paid by the government, using anti-Semitic rhetoric in their sermons.

Journalists and academics made statements on state-owned television endorsing conspiracy theories about Jewish domination of world media and economy. In a

June interview on state-owned Channel Two, a university law professor argued, “Jews control the money and the media,” adding that they have a 50-year plan to reach Mecca and Medina. In May the chair of the Hebrew Language Department at Menoufia University claimed, “Israeli violence...is embedded in the Jewish genes” during a weekly show dedicated to Jews and Israel on state-owned television Channel Two.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

Persons with Disabilities

The constitution states persons with disabilities are equal without discrimination before the law. During the year the government passed a law prohibiting discrimination in education, employment, health, political activity, rehabilitation, training, and legal protection.

The law provides for persons with disabilities to gain access to vocational training and employment. Government policy sets a quota for employing persons with disabilities of 5 percent of workers with disabilities for companies with more than 50 employees. Authorities did not enforce the quota requirement, and companies often had persons with disabilities on their payroll to meet the quota without actually employing them. Government-operated treatment centers for persons with disabilities, especially children, were of poor quality.

The Ministries of Education and Social Solidarity share responsibility for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities rode government-owned mass transit buses without charge, but the buses were not wheelchair accessible. Persons with disabilities received subsidies to purchase household products, wheelchairs, and prosthetic devices. Some children with disabilities attended schools with their nondisabled peers while others attended segregated schools. Some of the segregated institutions are informal schools run by NGOs.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law prohibits discrimination on any grounds. Nevertheless, dark-skinned Egyptians and sub-Saharan Africans faced discrimination and harassment, as did Nubians from Upper Egypt.

According to the constitution, the state should make efforts to return Nubians to their original territories and develop such territories within 10 years of the constitution's 2014 ratification.

In September 2017 security forces in Aswan arrested 25 Nubians who were participating in a protest to commemorate the 2011 detention of Nubians during a sit-in. The charges against them included protesting illegally and receiving funds from foreign sources. The death of one detainee while in custody triggered another protest in November 2017 by members of the Nubian community. Authorities reportedly arrested as many as 13 protesters at the event. A court ordered the original 24 detainees released; the next hearing for their case was scheduled for January 29. A State Security Misdemeanor Court acquitted seven defendants in the second case on October 28.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

While the law does not explicitly criminalize consensual same-sex sexual activity, it allows police to arrest LGBTI persons on charges such as “debauchery,” “prostitution,” and “violating the teachings of religion” and provides for prison sentences if convicted of up to 10 years. According to a local rights group, there were more than 250 reports of such arrests since 2013. Authorities did not use antidiscrimination laws to protect LGBTI individuals. Legal discrimination and social stigma impeded LGBTI persons from organizing or advocating publicly in defense of their rights. Information was not available on official or private discrimination in employment, occupation, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care based on sexual orientation and gender identity. There were no government efforts to address potential discrimination. An October 2017 Supreme Media Council (a semigovernmental body) ban on media supporting LGBTI persons and their rights continued.

There were reports of arrests and harassment of LGBTI individuals. Intimidation and the risk of arrest greatly restricted open reporting and contributed to self-censorship. Rights groups and activists reported harassment by police, including physical assault and forced payment of bribes to provide information concerning

other LGBTI individuals or to avoid arrest. The government has the authority to deport or bar entry to the country of LGBTI foreigners.

There were reports that authorities used social media, dating websites, and cell phone apps to entrap persons they suspected of being gay or transgender, a method LGBTI advocates described as especially effective as LGBTI-friendly public spaces had largely closed during the past two years.

In January police in Alexandria arrested 10 men on charges related to debauchery and narcotics. Police reportedly stated one of the men rented an apartment for men “seeking pleasure from men.”

Rights groups reported that authorities, including the Forensic Medical Authority, conducted forced anal examinations. The law allows for conducting forced anal exams in cases of debauchery.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

HIV-positive individuals faced significant social stigma and discrimination in society and the workplace. The health-care system provided anonymous counseling and testing for HIV, free adult and pediatric antiretroviral therapy, and support groups.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

There were incidents of mob violence and vigilantism, particularly sectarian violence against Coptic Christian Egyptians. On July 9, a mob of Muslims attacked Copts’ homes in the village of Minbal after a Copt allegedly posted content on social media offensive to Islam. Following the violence police arrested more than 90 Muslims and charged them with forming a mob, attacking Copts’ homes, inciting sedition, and attacking the police. Police also arrested the Copt, Abdu Adel Ayad, alleged to have made the offensive social media post. All of those arrested were released by late July following a customary reconciliation session except for a defendant accused of instigating the attack.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the rights of workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and strike, with significant restrictions. The constitution provides for freedom of association. In December 2017 authorities passed a law regulating labor unions. The law does not recognize independent trade unions and proscribes a strict hierarchy for union formation consisting of a company-level trade union committee, a profession- or industry-level general union, and a national-level federation. It also stipulates a minimum of 20,000 members needed to form a general trade union and 200,000 to form a national-level trade federation. In March the government issued executive regulations of the trade unions law that affirmed the right of unions to form, join, or withdraw from higher-level unions. It also affirmed the legal status and financial independence that allowed them to make administrative and financial decisions independent of national-level unions.

In May the government held trade union elections; however, the executive regulations stipulated a period of only three months for trade unions to legalize their status and provided only one month to hold the elections. These deadlines restricted the ability of unions to campaign effectively, according to labor activists.

The elections produced little change in trade union leadership. Independent trade union leaders claimed that the Ministry of Manpower excluded them from the trade union election by rejecting applications to campaign in the elections and failing to respond to appeals as allowed by law. There were reports the Ministry of Manpower refused to allow independent union candidates or their representatives to monitor the voting or tabulation process.

While the law provides for collective bargaining, it imposes significant restrictions. For example, the government sets wages and benefits for all public-sector employees. The law does not provide for enterprise-level collective bargaining in the private sector and requires centralized tripartite negotiations that include workers, represented by a union affiliated with the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF); business owners; and the Ministry of Manpower overseeing and monitoring negotiations and agreements.

The constitution provides for the right to “peaceful” strikes. The Unified Labor Law permits peaceful strikes as well, but it imposes significant restrictions, including prior approval by a general trade union affiliated with ETUF.

The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and provides for the reinstatement of workers fired for union activity. Labor laws do not cover some categories of

workers, including agricultural and domestic workers, and other sectors of the informal economy.

The Ministry of Manpower and affiliated directorates did not accept any bylaws other than those provided in the law. This position, according to local workers' rights organizations, was contrary to the law's provisions, its executive regulations, and ministerial decree 36/2018, which stated that unions can use the bylaws as guidance to develop their own.

In February, President Sisi instructed the Ministry of Social Solidarity to introduce a new life insurance mechanism for seasonal workers. The values of insurance certificates will vary between LE 500 and 2,500 (\$28 to \$140) to be paid by workers, who will receive an amount of LE 50,000 to 250,000 (\$2,790 to \$13,960) in case of death or accident. In the case of retirement, authorities will disburse a monthly pension. Separately, the minister of awqaf (Islamic endowments) announced that his ministry would allocate LE 50 million (\$2.79 million) annually from the ministry's budget for insurance for seasonal workers.

Government enforcement of applicable laws was inconsistent. The government also occasionally arrested striking workers and rarely reversed arbitrary dismissals. The government seldom followed the requirement for tripartite negotiations in collective disputes, leaving workers to negotiate directly with employers, typically after resorting to a strike.

In January employees of ETUF organized a protest to demand the administration pay late financial dues. Employees stated that the heads of ETUF told them that the budget did not allow the payment of late dues. The protest became a sit-in that lasted for multiple days until security forces dispersed participants. Following dispersal of the protesters, ETUF issued a statement promising all dues would be paid. There were no clear reports on whether ETUF honored the promise. On January 16, ETUF suspended four employees it accused of organizing the protest.

Independent unions continued to face pressure to dissolve. In some cases the Ministry of Manpower delayed responding to unions' applications for legal status, leaving many in legal limbo. In other instances the Ministry of Manpower refused to legalize proposed unions if an ETUF-affiliated counterpart existed. According to trade union activists, the Trade Union Committee of Workers in Cairo Pharmacies applied in March for legal status to the Cairo directorate of the Ministry of Manpower, but officials at the directorate told the representatives of the committee that it should be affiliated to the pharmacist syndicate, a

professional trade union. Although committee representatives argued their members were working in pharmacies as assistant pharmacists and, thus, it was not appropriate for them to be part of the pharmacists union, the Directorate of Manpower delayed their application by requesting documents not required by law. The Ministry of Manpower did not publish any status report of the process.

Authorities arrested several labor organizers and subjected others to legal sanctions following the dispersal of a labor strike.

Workers sometimes staged sit-ins on government and private property, often without obtaining the necessary permits. Rights groups claimed authorities sometimes arrested those seeking to obtain protest permits. In April hundreds of baked goods manufacturer Bisco Misr workers in Alexandria and Cairo protested a delay in disbursing bonuses and profit shares. On April 25, security authorities arrested and briefly held six workers from the Cairo branch on charges of organizing a protest without a permit. On May 1, Bisco Misr management filed a complaint against 11 employees that accused them of obstructing work, inciting strikes, and “obstructing foreign investments.” Police and the armed forces to a lesser extent forcefully dispersed labor actions in isolated cases.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The constitution states no work may be compulsory except by virtue of a law. Government did not effectively enforce the prohibition. Employers subjected male and female persons (including citizens) from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa to forced labor in domestic service, construction, cleaning, begging, and other sectors. The government worked with NGOs to provide some assistance to victims of human trafficking, including forced labor.

Also see the Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law sets the minimum age for regular employment at age 15 and at age 13 for seasonal employment. The constitution defines a child as anyone younger than age 18. A Ministry of Manpower decree bars children younger than age 18 from 44 specific hazardous occupations, while the law prohibits employment of children younger than age 18 from work that “puts the health, safety, or morals of the child into danger.” Provincial governors, with the approval of the minister of education,

may authorize seasonal work (often agricultural) for children age 13 and older, provided duties are not hazardous and do not interfere with schooling. The labor code and law limit children's work hours and mandate breaks.

Overall, authorities did not enforce child labor laws effectively. The Ministry of Manpower, in coordination with the NCCM and the Interior Ministry, enforced child labor laws in state-owned enterprises and private sector establishments through inspections and supervision of factory management. Labor inspectors generally operated without adequate training on child labor issues, although the Ministry of Manpower offered some child labor-specific training. The government did not inspect noncommercial farms for child labor, and there were very limited monitoring and enforcement mechanisms for children in domestic service. When authorities prosecuted offenders, the fines imposed were often as low as LE 500 (\$28), insufficient to deter violations. The government did not enforce child labor laws in the informal sector.

Although the government often did not effectively enforce relevant laws, authorities implemented a number of social, educational, and poverty reduction programs to reduce children's vulnerability to exploitive labor. The NCCM, working with the Ministries of Education and Social Solidarity, sought to provide working children with social security safeguards and to reduce school dropout rates by providing families with alternative sources of income.

Child labor occurred, although estimates on the number of child laborers varied. According to the Egypt Demographic and Health Survey, 1.6 million children worked, primarily in the agricultural sector in rural areas but also in domestic work and factories in urban areas, often under hazardous conditions. Children also worked in light industry, the aluminum industry, construction sites, brick production, and service businesses such as auto repair. According to government, NGO, and media reports, the number of street children in Cairo continued to increase in the face of deteriorating economic conditions. Such children were at greater risk of sexual exploitation or forced begging. In some cases employers abused or overworked children.

On July 1, the Ministry of Manpower, in cooperation with the International Labor Organization, the NCCM, and the Federation of Egyptian Industries, launched the National Action Plan on Combating Worst Forms of Child Labor. The minister of manpower stated that his ministry filed lawsuits against 74 institutions that did not comply with the country's child labor law. While 74 institutions did not comply, he stated 12,700 institutions do comply with the country's child labor law and that

the ministry has protected 18,885 children (previously engaged in child labor) from further subjection to child labor.

Also see the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/findings/.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

The constitution states all citizens “are equal in rights, freedoms, and general duties without discrimination based on religion, belief, gender, origin, race, color, language, disability, social class, political or geographic affiliation, or any other reason.” It does not specify age, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases. The law provides for persons with disabilities to gain access to vocational training and employment, but, despite the constitutional protection, the government did not effectively enforce prohibitions against such discrimination. Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to women and persons with disabilities (see section 6). Discrimination against migrant workers occurred (see section 2.d.).

An employee facing discrimination can file a report with the local government labor office. If the employee and the employer are unable to reach an amicable settlement, they take the claim to administrative court, which may order the employer to redress the complaint or to pay damages or legal fees. According to local rights groups, implementation of the law was inadequate. Additionally, the lengthy and expensive litigation process could deter employees from filing claims.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no national minimum wage in the private sector. The government sets a monthly minimum wage of LE 1,200 (\$67) for government employees and public-sector workers. According to labor rights organizations, the government implemented the minimum wage for public-sector workers but applied it only to direct government employees and included benefits and bonuses in calculating total salaries. Most government workers already earned income equal to or more than the announced public-sector minimum wage. For government employees and public business-sector workers, the government also set a maximum wage limit at 35 times the minimum wage of LE 42,000 (\$2,340) per month. The law does not require equal pay for equal work.

The law stipulates a maximum 48-hour workweek for the public and private sectors and provides for premium pay for overtime and work on rest days and national holidays. The law prohibits excessive compulsory overtime. The government sets worker health and safety standards, for example, prohibiting employers from maintaining hazardous working conditions. The law excludes agricultural, fisheries, and domestic workers from regulations concerning wages, hours, and working conditions.

The Ministry of Manpower is responsible for enforcing labor laws and standards for working conditions. Due in part to insufficient resources, labor law enforcement and inspections were inadequate. The ministry did not attempt to apply labor standards to the informal sector. Penalties, especially as they were often unenforced, did not appear sufficient to deter violations.

By law workers can remove themselves from situations that endanger health or safety without jeopardy to employment, although authorities did not reliably enforce this right. In September a heavy object struck a worker at the Evergrow fertilizer factory killing him. Workers at the factory went on strike after the accident to demand proper compensation for the death of their colleague and to demand better safety measures. There was no further information on the outcome of the dispute.

The government provided services, such as free health care, to all citizens, but the quality of services was often poor. Other benefits, such as social insurance, were available only to employees in the formal sector.

Many persons throughout the country faced poor working conditions, especially in the informal economy, which employed up to 40 percent of workers, according to some estimates. Domestic workers, agricultural workers, workers in rock quarries, and other parts of the informal sector were most likely to face hazardous or exploitive conditions. There were reports of employer abuse of citizen and undocumented foreign workers, especially domestic workers. Little information was available on workplace fatalities and accidents.