



Home Office

# Country Policy and Information Note

## Egypt: Military service

Version 2.0

November 2019

# Preface

## Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in [the basis of claim](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) analysis and assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

## Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note – i.e. the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw – by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment on whether, **in general**:

- A person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- A person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- A person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- Claims are likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- If a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

## Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation’s (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013](#). Namely, taking into account the COI’s relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the ‘cut-off’ date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion.

Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information, and
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided of the issues relevant to this note.

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

## Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

## Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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# Assessment

Updated: 28 November 2019

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm by the state because of:
  - a. The treatment and/or conditions likely to be faced by the person during compulsory military service duties; and/or
  - b. The penalties likely to be faced by the person's refusal to undertake, or their desertion from, military service duties.
- 1.1.2 For further information on this, see the Asylum Instruction on [Military Service and Conscientious Objection](#).

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## 2. Consideration of issues

### 2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For guidance on assessing credibility, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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### 2.2 Refugee convention reason

- 2.2.1 Where a person is considered to be at risk of persecution or serious harm, decision makers must consider whether this is for a Refugee Convention (or other) reason.
- 2.2.2 The [Asylum Instruction on Military Service and Conscientious Objection](#) and paragraph 22 of the House of Lords judgement in the case of [Sepet & Another v. SSHD \[2003\] UKHL 15](#) explains that it is necessary to carefully examine the real reason for the persecution, looking at the real reason in the mind of the persecutor rather than the reason which the victim believes to be the reason for the persecution.
- 2.2.3 There is no evidence to suggest that the Egyptian government views a person's refusal to undertake military service as an act of political opposition. If a person is penalised on return, it is for the criminal offence of evading or deserting national service. The nature of the penalty will depend on the person's circumstances.
- 2.2.4 Persons who have evaded or absconded from national service do not form a particular social group (PSG) within the meaning of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. This is because they do not share an innate characteristic, or a

common background that cannot be changed, or share a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it – and they do not have a distinct identity which is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.

- 2.2.5 For further guidance on particular social groups, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.3 Exclusion

- 2.3.1 Decision makers must consider each case on its individual facts and merits to determine whether to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses.

- 2.3.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection.

- 2.3.3 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the [Asylum Instruction on Exclusion: Article 1F of the Refugee Convention](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Restricted Leave](#).

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## 2.4 Assessment of risk

### a. Military service as a state prerogative

- 2.4.1 Compulsory national service is a prerogative of sovereign states and a requirement to undergo compulsory military service does not in itself constitute persecution or serious harm. Similarly, it is reasonable that draft evasion and desertion are criminal offences and punishable by law.

- 2.4.2 For guidance on military service, see the [Asylum Instruction on Military Service and Conscientious Objection](#).

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### b. Circumstances in which persecution or serious harm arise

- 2.4.3 A requirement to undergo compulsory military service – or punishment for failing to complete this duty – will only constitute persecution where:

- military service would involve acts, with which the person may be associated, which are contrary to the basic rules of human conduct;
- the conditions of military service would be so harsh as to amount to persecution; or
- the punishment for draft evasion or desertion is disproportionately harsh or severe.

- 2.4.4 Punishment for refusing to perform military service because of conscientious objection will not in itself give rise to a well founded fear of persecution or serious harm as there is no provision in international law which requires states to recognise the right to conscientious objection or to provide some form of alternative service. Therefore it is legitimate for states to treat conscientious objectors in the same way as any other draft evader. As a result, punishment for refusing to perform military service due to genuine

reasons of conscience is unlikely to amount to persecution except in the limited circumstances.

- 2.4.5 For guidance on military service, see the [Asylum Instruction on Military Service and Conscientious Objection](#).

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c. Requirement to undertake national/military service

- 2.4.6 Decision makers must first assess whether someone is reasonably likely to be eligible for military service. Those who are not eligible will not be able to establish a well-founded fear of persecution on this basis.
- 2.4.7 The law states that men aged 18-30 are required to complete military service in the armed forces, police forces or prison service. Women are not required to perform military service. There is no alternative to military service (see [General requirements for men](#) and [General requirements for women](#)).
- 2.4.8 The period of service ranges from up to 18 months for certain students to 36 months for everyone else (see [Length of service](#)).
- 2.4.9 There are several exemptions, including on/for:
- medical grounds,
  - only sons,
  - some dual nationals,
  - Men in permanent government positions and essential industries
  - some students (see [Exemptions](#)).
- 2.4.10 Exemptions can be both temporary and permanent. For example, students who are exempt from national service must complete it but they can defer it until they have finished their studies (see [Exemptions](#)).
- 2.4.11 There is no exemption for conscientious objection. There have been, however, a couple of reported cases of individuals who were conscientious objectors being exempted although without an official explanation of why they were exempted. Nevertheless there is no indication that the government has changed its general position on conscientious objection as a grounds for exemption (see [Conscientious objection](#)).
- 2.4.12 The available evidence indicates that a significant number of eligible men do not complete military service. One source observed that most, but by no means all, Egyptian males undergo some form of national service. This assessment appears supported by available data. There are reportedly around 200,000 conscripts in the armed forces however there is no information in the sources consulted of how many conscripts are in the prison or police forces. The total male population of 18-30 year olds is likely to be in excess of 5 million, with for example, in 2010, over 700,000 becoming eligible for military service. The eligible military service male population would therefore appear to far exceed the actual numbers serving in the armed forces, suggesting that many do not, in fact, undertake military service in the armed forces or possibly elsewhere (see [Size of the military](#)).



- 2.4.13 Where on the facts of the case it is reasonable to conclude that a person is exempt, the onus is on the person to demonstrate that they are not.

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d. Acts contrary to the basic rules of human conduct

- 2.4.14 'Acts ... which are contrary to the basic rules of human conduct' are taken to mean being required to act in a way that would bring that person within the scope of Article 1F of the Refugee Convention and/or Article 12 of Council Directive 2004/83/EC ('the Qualification Directive').
- 2.4.15 In the information sourced, there is no information to suggest that the Egyptian state would require a person to undergo Military Service to act such a way.
- 2.4.16 For guidance on Article 1F see the [Asylum Instruction on Exclusion: Article 1F of the Refugee Convention](#).

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e. Conditions of military service

- 2.4.17 Roles and conditions for conscripts in the Egyptian military vary. They range from serving in a military post, including in the Sinai – an area that has seen a number of attacks from militant groups – to more quasi-civilian posts, such as guarding embassies or working in Government-run factories, offices, hotels or companies (see [Deployment and roles](#)).
- 2.4.18 Where a person is deployed and therefore the conditions they work under can be influenced, this may be possible if the person has connections with individuals in authority (see [Bribes \('rishwa'\) and connections \('wasta'\)](#)).
- 2.4.19 Sources describe the pay of recruits as low and the work in the quasi-civilian posts as largely mundane (see [undertaking military service](#)). There are reports of recruits being exploited as cheap labour but there is no evidence in the sources consulted that recruits are generally mistreated (see [Treatment of recruits](#)).
- 2.4.20 A person may claim to be at risk based on a potential posting to a place where they may be exposed to military combat or a heightened possibility of security-related incidents e.g. the Sinai region. Simply fearing combat is not sufficient to grant a person protection. Paragraph 168 of the [UNHCR handbook](#) states 'a person is clearly not a refugee if his only reason for desertion or draft-evasion is his dislike of military service or fear of combat.'
- 2.4.21 In general, conditions of military service are not so harsh as to amount to persecution or serious harm. However, each case will need to be considered on its facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that they face a risk.

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f. Punishment for draft evasion or desertion

- 2.4.22 Evasion of military service is punishable in law by up to two years' imprisonment and/or a fine of between 500 and 1,000 Egyptian pounds (see [Desertion and evasion in law](#)).

- 2.4.23 While the punishment for desertion has no limitation period and a man who deserts the battlefield can, in theory, be punished by the death penalty, the crime of desertion not committed on the battlefield is punishable by prison, or a lesser punishment (see [Desertion and evasion](#) and [Completion and proof of completion](#)).
- 2.4.24 While one source considered that persons who avoid or evade military service face a high risk of arrest, information about the nature of any punishment is limited. There are no statistics in the sources consulted on the number of draft evaders / deserters imprisoned or fined, or length of detention for refusing to undertake military service in practice. Some sources suggest a fine is likely for avoiding service, and that there is little risk of penalty in practice once a person turns 30 years of age other than a fine for any failure to complete service (see [Desertion and evasion](#) and [Completion and proof of completion](#)).
- 2.4.25 Persons who have not completed military service and not obtained an exemption may not be able to travel or migrate, and may find it difficult to obtain employment (see [Completion and proof of completion](#)).
- 2.4.26 To qualify for protection the person must show that ‘the punishment for draft evasion or desertion is disproportionately harsh or severe’. Even if imprisonment were to follow a conviction for evasion, such a penalty is neither disproportionately harsh or severe. The available evidence does not establish that, in general, a person who deserts or evades military service is likely to be subject to a punishment that is so severe or harsh as to amount to serious harm or persecution. However, it is for the person, on the specific facts of their particular case, to demonstrate that they face such a risk.
- 2.4.27 For persons who are conscientious objectors, it is not sufficient to show they would be penalised/punished for failing to comply with the law and that they happen to have particular religious, moral or other convictions.
- 2.4.28 Decision makers must determine whether a person would be reasonably likely to face a disproportionate penalty/punishment for draft evasion/desertion as a direct result of their deeply held convictions.
- 2.4.29 It is for the person to demonstrate a real risk of persecution or serious harm on the specific facts of their particular case.
- 2.4.30 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Military Service and Conscientious Objection](#).

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## 2.5 Protection

- 2.5.1 As the person’s fear is of persecution/serious harm at the hands of the state, they will not be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.
- 2.5.2 For further general guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.6 Internal relocation

- 2.6.1 As the person's fear is of persecution/serious harm at the hands of the state, they will not be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 2.6.2 For further information on considering internal relocation and the factors to be taken into account, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.7 Certification

- 2.7.1 A claim made by the following persons is likely to be suitable to be certified as clearly unfounded:
  - a. Women (as they are not required to perform military service).
  - b. Men who are exempt from, or have completed, military service.
  - c. Men over 30 years of age (as they in practice they cease to be eligible to perform military service and if a penalty was to be imposed it is most likely be a fine which is neither disproportionately harsh or severe).
- 2.7.2 Where another claim based on a refusal to undertake military service is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

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# Country information

Section 3 updated: 2 September 2019

## 3. Size of the military

3.1.1 A 2017 report about Egypt's military personnel on GlobalSecurity.org noted that 'Over 780,000 men reached the draft age of twenty each year in 2010, but only a fraction of these men were conscripted to serve in the armed forces.'<sup>1</sup> The Egyptian government estimated in January 2015 that the total male population of 20 – 29 year olds was over 4,9 million<sup>2</sup>.

3.1.2 In an April 2019 update, Janes reported that the armed forces comprise over 200,000 conscript personnel<sup>3</sup>.

3.1.3 The same report, based on various sources, noted that:

'Under a 1981 law, the Minister of Defence has wide-ranging powers over desert land, which constitutes about 94 per cent of Egypt: including to determine whether plots can be allocated to the private sector, and to allocate land specifically for military or strategic use. It is unclear how the military determines whether land is allocated to the private sector, or private individuals, and how it chooses those who are allocated land...

'Granting the military absolute and unchecked discretion over the use of public land increases corruption risks and allows the armed forces to strengthen its vast patronage network. There is no mechanism to reduce the risk of rewarding loyalty or building new alliances by allocating public land to individuals or companies.'<sup>4</sup>

3.1.4 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) report released in May 2019 noted that 'The paramilitary CSF [Central Security Forces], which includes conscripts and whose estimated numbers vary considerably, is responsible for security at key infrastructure sites, diplomatic missions, and public events.'<sup>5</sup>

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Section 4 updated: 2 September 2019

## 4. General requirements

### 4.1 Men

4.1.1 The DFAT report released in May 2019 noted:

'Article 86 of the Constitution states that military service is compulsory according to the law. Military service is regulated by the Law on the Military and National Service (Law 127/1980). All Egyptian males older than 18 are required to serve. Recruits face up to three years of mandatory service and a

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<sup>1</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, 'Egypt – Military Personnel', 3 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>2</sup> Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics, Population by age, 1 January 2015, [url](#)

<sup>3</sup> Janes, Sentinel Security Assessment, 'Egypt -Army', updated 17 April 2019, (subscription only), [url](#)

<sup>4</sup> TI, 'The Officers' Republic – The Egyptian Military and Abuse of Power', (p10 -11), March 2018, [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> DFAT, 'Country information report- Egypt', (para 5.6), 17 June 2019, [url](#)

nominal monthly wage of EGP250 (AUD37). Conscripts may be placed in a branch of the military, in the police force or prison service.<sup>6</sup>

- 4.1.2 The same report added 'DFAT assesses that most (but by no means all) Egyptian males will undergo some form of national service.'<sup>7</sup>
- 4.1.3 In 2017, GlobalSecurity.org also noted that as of 2012, men aged between 18 to 30 were to subject to military service and could voluntarily enlist from the age of 16<sup>8</sup>. The same article also stated that 'The government required all males to register for the draft when they reached age sixteen.'<sup>9</sup>
- 4.1.4 In an April 2019 update, Janes reported that 'national service... is compulsory for men aged between 18 and 30 years old, but is selective on education, nationality, and political acceptability.'<sup>10</sup>
- 4.1.5 The American University in Cairo stated on its website regarding a student's military service status, 'According to the Egyptian Military Service Law No. 127 enacted in 1980, all Egyptian male students must identify their Military Service status within 30 days of their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.'<sup>11</sup>

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## 4.2 Women

- 4.2.1 In 2017, GlobalSecurity.org observed that 'women were not subject to conscription'.<sup>12</sup>
- 4.2.2 On 11 January 2017, Daily News Egypt reported that 'The cabinet's Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) said Wednesday [4 January 2017] that there was no decision to obligate female university graduates to be enlisted in and complete military service. The Ministry of Solidarity had denied circulating rumours on the matter earlier this week.'<sup>13</sup>. This followed a similar article on 7 January 2017<sup>14</sup>.
- 4.2.3 Egyptian Streets, an independent grass roots news media organisation, reported in August 2017 that:

'Campaigns calling for military service to be available for Egyptian females are in constant growth each year. In Egypt's Fourth National Youth Conference, held in Alexandria in July (2017), the calls were renewed on Egypt's (then) minister of defense Sedky Sobhy.

'Gehad Al-Komy, founder of "Female Egyptian Conscript" delivered her demand to Sobhy to allow voluntary military service for females... Sobhy, in return, promised to take the demand with seriousness and stand on the legal and constitutional aspects of it.

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<sup>6</sup> DFAT, 'Country information report- Egypt', (para 3.98), 17 June 2019, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> DFAT, 'Country information report- Egypt', (para 3.103), 17 June 2019, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, 'Egypt – Military Personnel', 3 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, 'Egypt – Military Personnel', 3 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>10</sup> Janes, Sentinel Security Assessment, 'Egypt -Army', updated 17 April 2019, (subscription only), [url](#)

<sup>11</sup> The American University in Cairo, 'Military service policy for Egyptian Male students', undated, [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, 'Egypt – Military Personnel', 3 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> Daily News Egypt, 'Cabinet denies ... military service for female uni graduates', 11 Jan 2017, [url](#)

<sup>14</sup> Daily News Egypt, 'Social Solidarity ministry denies ... military service for women', 7 Jan 2017, [url](#)

'... these demands are constantly met with sarcasm, not from the authorities, but rather from people who depict women as fragile objects who cannot withstand the burdensome of military service and believe that women will be physically challenged in such environment.'<sup>15</sup>

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Section 5 updated: 2 September 2019

## 5. Length of service

### 5.1 Standard length of service

- 5.1.1 The World Factbook stated that the length of service was between 18 to 36 months, 'followed by a 9-year reserve obligation'<sup>16</sup> and it noted that voluntary enlistment is possible from age 15<sup>17</sup>.
- 5.1.2 Janes also noted in an April 2019 report that the length of national service lasts from 18 to 36 months<sup>18</sup>.

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### 5.2 Length of service for graduates

- 5.2.1 A 2017 report about Egypt's military personnel on GlobalSecurity.org noted that 'Conscripts with degrees from institutions of higher education had to serve only eighteen months.'<sup>19</sup>
- 5.2.2 The Middle East Eye news agency reported in 2016 that, 'young men are required to enlist in the military upon graduation.'<sup>20</sup>
- 5.2.3 Defence Post noted in their April 2018 article that the 'length of service, dependent on their level of education, can last up to three years.'<sup>21</sup>

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Section 6 updated: 2 September 2019

## 6. Exemptions

### 6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 GlobalSecurity.org noted that 'although it was no longer possible for a prospective conscript to pay a fee in lieu of service, he could still apply for an exemption.'<sup>22</sup> DFAT observed that exemptions and deferrals are common, and men are permanently exempt once they reach 30 years old<sup>23</sup>. The same source also noted that 'obtaining a deferral or exemption from military service is largely dependent on individual and socio-economic circumstances.'<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Egyptian streets. 'Women in Egypt's army...', 1 August 2017, [url](#)

<sup>16</sup> CIA, The World Factbook – Egypt, Military and security, 2017, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> CIA, The World Factbook – Egypt, Military and security, 2017, [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> Janes, Sentinel Security Assessment, 'Egypt -Army', updated 17 April 2019, (subscription only), [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, 'Egypt – Military Personnel', 3 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>20</sup> Middle East Eye, 'It is hell': Chronicles of military conscripts in Egypt', 21 October 2016, [url](#)

<sup>21</sup> Defence Post, The rule of Khaki: How Egypt's military dominates the economy', 23 April 2019, [url](#)

<sup>22</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, 'Egypt – Military Personnel', 3 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>23</sup> DFAT, 'Country information report- Egypt', (para 3.100), 19 May 2017, [url](#)

<sup>24</sup> DFAT, 'Country information report- Egypt', (para 3.103), 17 June 2019, [url](#)



## 6.2 Medical grounds

- 6.2.1 The 2019 DFAT report noted that exemptions are ‘possible for health reasons’<sup>25</sup>.
- 6.2.2 The Egyptian Ministry of Defence states on its website that military service can be exempted on the grounds of being medically unfit<sup>26</sup>.

## 6.3 Certain family circumstances – only sons and breadwinners

- 6.3.1 The 2019 DFAT report noted:  
‘Exemptions... can occur for family reasons, including: when an individual is an only son, is the only breadwinner, has brothers who have migrated and is supporting the family, has a brother already serving in the military, or has a father or brother who died while serving in the military. Other family reasons may also be considered. This exemption is renewed every three years for reassessment of the situation until the subject is 30 years old, at which time he receives a permanent exemption.’<sup>27</sup>
- 6.3.2 GlobalSecurity.org mentioned that ‘sons whose brothers had died in service...and family breadwinners were all eligible for exemptions.’<sup>28</sup>
- 6.3.3 The Egyptian Ministry of Defence stated on its website that military service can be exempted to an ‘only son to a deceased father or one who is unable to earn’, as well as the ‘eldest eligible sibling or son of a citizen who was martyred or incapacitated permanently and is unable to earn due to combat’<sup>29</sup>.
- 6.3.4 Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence noted that military service can also be exempted for the ‘Eldest eligible sibling or son of an officer or non-commissioned officer or volunteer who died in service or became ill or an invalid in service resulting in his inability to earn.’<sup>30</sup>
- 6.3.5 Regarding temporary exemptions, the Ministry further noted:
- ‘Only son for a living father, whose siblings are unable to earn.
  - ‘Sole supporter of a father who is unable to earn and sole supporter of his siblings who are unable to earn.
  - ‘Sole supporter of a widowed or divorced mother or if her husband is unable to earn.
  - ‘Eldest eligible sibling or son of an officer or enlisted or volunteer or citizen lost due to combat. This exemption is annulled upon return or

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<sup>25</sup> DFAT, ‘Country information report- Egypt’, (para 3.87), 19 May 2017, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Defence, ‘Exemption from national service’, updated 2018, (official translation), [url](#)

<sup>27</sup> DFAT, ‘Country information report- Egypt’, (para 3.100), 17 June 2019, [url](#)

<sup>28</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, ‘Egypt – Military Personnel’, 3 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Defence, ‘Exemption from national service’, updated 2018, (official translation), [url](#)

<sup>30</sup> Ministry of Defence, ‘Exemption from national service’, updated 2018, (official translation), [url](#)

proof of life. Any absentee in combat will be treated as missing until his situation is confirmed.<sup>31</sup>

- 6.3.6 In November 2016, Middle East Eye reported that exemptions can be granted on four grounds, one of which was ‘if the would-be conscript is an only son.’; another was if the person ‘supports his parents.’<sup>32</sup>

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## 6.4 Students

- 6.4.1 The 2019 DFAT report stated that exemptions can be granted to university students until the age of 28<sup>33</sup>.
- 6.4.2 The American University in Cairo made reference on its website to students receiving exemptions for military service<sup>34</sup>.

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## 6.5 Dual nationals

- 6.5.1 In November 2016, Middle East Eye reported that exemptions can be granted on four grounds, one of which was if the person ‘has dual nationality.’<sup>35</sup> The website of the Consulate General of the Arab Republic of Egypt in the UK also has a section outlining the ‘Requirements for obtaining exemption from military service for dual nationality holders.’<sup>36</sup>

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## 6.6 Conscientious objection

- 6.6.1 The 2019 DFAT report observed:
- ‘Conscientious objection to military service is not a common phenomenon in Egypt. However, there is a small conscientious objector movement, launched by prominent conscientious objector, Maikel Nabil, who refused to be enlisted in 2009. Nabil was detained five times for publicly campaigning against compulsory military service, and was imprisoned for two years for insulting the military. In June 2015, two conscientious objectors (including Nabil’s brother) were granted an exemption from service by the office of the Defence Minister. The exemption did not state a reason or recognise the two as conscientious objectors. It is unlikely that these exemptions represent any formal move towards recognition of conscientious objection.’<sup>37</sup>

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## 6.7 Other reasons

- 6.7.1 DFAT further reported that ‘the military may exempt individuals if it has an excess number of conscripts. It has also been reported that the military will

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<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Defence, ‘Exemption from national service’, updated 2018, (official translation), [url](#)

<sup>32</sup> Middle East Eye, ‘Egypt’s army: The conscripts who refuse to serve’, 28 November 2016, [url](#)

<sup>33</sup> DFAT, ‘Country information report- Egypt’, (para 3.87), 19 May 2017, [url](#)

<sup>34</sup> The American University in Cairo, ‘Military service policy for Egyptian Male students’, undated, [url](#)

<sup>35</sup> Middle East Eye, ‘Egypt’s army: The conscripts who refuse to serve’, 28 November 2016, [url](#)

<sup>36</sup> The Consulate General of the Arab Republic of Egypt in the UK, ‘Army Services’, undated, [url](#)

<sup>37</sup> DFAT, ‘Country information report- Egypt’, (para 3.102), 17 June 2019, [url](#)



not recruit as conscripts those arrested as Islamists. Final exemptions from military service are granted when the individual turns 30.<sup>38</sup>

- 6.7.2 GlobalSecurity.org observed that ‘men employed in permanent government positions (and) men employed in essential industries’ are ‘eligible for exemptions’.<sup>39</sup>
- 6.7.3 The Egyptian Ministry of Defence states on its website that those ‘Over thirty years of age with one of the temporary exemption reasons’<sup>40</sup> will also be exempted.
- 6.7.4 The website of the Egyptian Consulate General in Kuwait explained that ‘1. Each Egyptian has to do the military service upon reaching 18 years old, and he is not allowed to do it if he reached 30 years old.’<sup>41</sup>
- 6.7.5 A November 2016 article on Middle East Eye also noted that ‘After 30, men are no longer obligated to enter the military.’<sup>42</sup>

See also [Completion and proof of completion](#).

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Section 7 updated: 2 September 2019

## 7. Undertaking military service

### 7.1 Deployment and roles

- 7.1.1 The 2019 DFAT report noted ‘Service conditions for military conscripts vary considerably. Some conscripts have been sent to the military front lines in North Sinai...while others have been dispatched to police urban areas. Those with significant family or other connections have been able to undertake their military service in administrative departments, military hotels or offices, or in one of the military’s economic projects.’<sup>43</sup>
- 7.1.2 The same DFAT report added that ‘Military service conditions can vary considerably depending on individual placements. Those with significant connections are likely to have an easier experience than those without them.’<sup>44</sup>
- 7.1.3 GlobalSecurity.org noted that ‘The Constitution mandates conscription but provides a variety of options for national service. Conscripts may be required to serve either in the police force, the prison-guard service, or in one of the military economic service units.’<sup>45</sup>
- 7.1.4 The same source further added that:

‘The government delineated several administrative zones for conscription purposes. Each zone had a council of military officers, civil officials, and

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<sup>38</sup> DFAT, ‘Country information report- Egypt’, (para 3.100), 17 June 2019, [url](#)

<sup>39</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, ‘Egypt – Military Personnel’, 3 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Defence, ‘Exemption from national service’, updated 2018, (official translation), [url](#)

<sup>41</sup> The Egyptian Consulate General in Kuwait, ‘Missing the Military Service’, undated, [url](#)

<sup>42</sup> Middle East Eye, ‘It is hell’: Chronicles of military conscripts in Egypt’, 21 October 2016, [url](#)

<sup>43</sup> DFAT, ‘Country information report- Egypt’, (para 3.99), 17 June 2019, [url](#)

<sup>44</sup> DFAT, ‘Country information report- Egypt’, (para 3.103), 17 June 2019, [url](#)

<sup>45</sup> Globalsecurity.org, ‘Egypt -Military personnel’, 3 April 2017, [url](#)

medical officers who selected draftees. Local mayors and village leaders also participated in the selection process. After the council granted exemptions and deferments, it chose conscripts by lot from the roster of remaining names. Individuals eligible to be inducted were on call for three years. After that period, they could no longer be drafted.<sup>46</sup>

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## 7.2 Bribes ('rishwa') and connections ('wasta')

7.2.1 Defence Post noted in April 2018 that 'While in service Egyptian conscripts are often forced to bribe superiors to avoid mistreatment or to pay extra for rations and certain equipment.'<sup>47</sup>

7.2.2 Based on various sources, and not commenting on military service specifically, a Transparency International report from March 2018 observed:

'To this day, while Egyptian law stipulates equal and equitable access to the job market, in reality wasta - the "use of personal connections to get things done" - prevails, and it is those with connections within the private sector companies, factories, and ministries who secure positions. Egyptians' dissatisfaction connected to the inability to succeed without wasta. Those who lacked wasta were disadvantaged and harboured significant grievances.'<sup>48</sup>

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## 7.3 Treatment of conscripts

7.3.1 Freedom in the World 2019 reported that 'Military conscripts are exploited as cheap labor to work on military- or state-affiliated development projects.'<sup>49</sup>

7.3.2 GlobalSecurity.org noted in 2017 that 'Only 150,000 of the more than 600,000 reserves receive any meaningful training. The military authorities did not give strong emphasis to maintaining reserve forces. Foreign military observers believed that the reserves would be of minimal value in the event of an emergency.'<sup>50</sup>

7.3.3 The same source noted that 'Volunteers earned considerably higher salaries and twice as much leave time as conscripts. Those conscripts who chose to reenlist were often among the less qualified.'<sup>51</sup>

7.3.4 Janes further noted that 'morale is assessed to remain high, albeit typically better among the army's professional soldiers, as opposed to the 200,000-plus temporary service conscripts. Soldiers are typically guaranteed a higher standard of living compared with the wider Egyptian society.'<sup>52</sup>

7.3.5 According to Defence Post:

'In addition to scores of companies owned by the military, private companies often hire former senior military officers to ensure favorable treatment from

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<sup>46</sup> Globalsecurity.org, 'Egypt -Military personnel', 3 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>47</sup> Defence Post, 'The rule of Khaki: How Egypt's military dominates the economy', 23 April 2019, [url](#)

<sup>48</sup> TI, 'The Officers' Republic – The Egyptian Military and Abuse of Power', (p6 - 7), March 2018, [url](#)

<sup>49</sup> Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World 2019 – Egypt', (para G4), February 2019, [url](#)

<sup>50</sup> Globalsecurity.org, 'Egypt -Military personnel', 3 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>51</sup> Globalsecurity.org, 'Egypt -Military personnel', 3 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>52</sup> Janes, Sentinel Security Assessment, 'Egypt -Army', updated 17 April 2019, (subscription only), [url](#)

the government. Often the transition from the barracks to the boardroom an easy one.

“The boards are putting and hiring more military men and retired officers,” said a former Egyptian executive who played a significant role in the country’s privatization in the 1990s.

‘... Consultants to Sisi’s government suggest that the military invests heavily in real-estate and factory projects in part because it can rely on under skilled conscript labor to cut costs.

‘... Conscripts are paid roughly 300 Egyptian pounds (\$17) a month...’<sup>53</sup>

7.3.6 Based on various sources, Transparency International noted in March 2018:

“Since the expansion on military business into large industries, draftees who hold higher technical degrees have been similarly used in factories, hotels, gas stations, hospitals, trading companies and more... Their remarkably low monthly salaries were raised to between \$34 and \$35 in 2013”.

‘The practice of using conscript labour to pursue military economic projects has been criticised by businesses who cannot compete with the low costs of the military. Media investigations have also alleged that recruits are being exploited for their labour without even being given proper military training. Those close to the military have defended this practice by pointing to the patriotic service its projects provide, in contrast to the “greedy” private sector, without acknowledging that the practice effectively constitutes forced labour which would be illegal outside the armed forces...’<sup>54</sup>

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Section 8 updated: 2 September 2019

## 8. Desertion and evasion

### 8.1 Military courts

8.1.1 Based on an unofficial translation of the constitution on the website of the Embassy of Egypt, Washington DC, Article 204 provides for military courts:

‘The Military Court is an independent judicial body exclusively competent to adjudicate on all crimes pertaining to the Armed Forces, the officers and personnel thereof, and their equivalents, and on the crimes committed by the personnel of the General Intelligence while and by reason of performing their duties.

‘No civilian shall face trial before the Military Court, except for crimes that constitute a direct assault against military facilities or camps of the Armed Forces, or their equivalents, against military zones or border zones determined as military zones, against the Armed Forces’ equipment, vehicles, weapons, ammunition, documents, military secrets, or its public funds, or against military factories; crimes pertaining to military service; or crimes that constitute a direct assault against the officers or personnel of the Armed Forces by reason of performing their duties.’<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Defence Post, The rule of Khaki: How Egypt’s military dominates the economy’, 23 April 2019, [url](#)

<sup>54</sup> TI, ‘The Officers’ Republic – The Egyptian Military and Abuse of Power’, (p11), March 2018, [url](#)

<sup>55</sup> Embassy of Egypt Washington DC, ‘unofficial translation of the constitution’, undated, [url](#)

- 8.1.2 In 2019, the US Department of State released their human rights report on Egypt covering events in 2018. The report noted that:
- ‘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.’<sup>56</sup>
- 8.1.3 Human Rights Watch noted in its 2018 World Report that ‘In addition to using the exceptional State Security Courts, for which court decisions cannot be appealed, authorities continue to prosecute thousands of civilians before military courts. Both court systems are inherently abusive and do not meet minimum due process standards.’<sup>57</sup>

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## 8.2 Desertion and evasion in law

- 8.2.1 DFAT reported in 2019 that:
- ‘If an individual is not able to renew his military service exemption and does not complete his military service, he is liable to pay a fine of up to EGP1000 (\$AU170) and/or to face a minimum of one year’s imprisonment. It is unclear how many people have been imprisoned in Egypt for evading military service. Anecdotal evidence suggests that those imprisoned for not completing military service are not targeted or treated differently relative to other prisoners.’<sup>58</sup>
- 8.2.2 DFAT further noted that ‘those seeking to avoid military service face a high likelihood of arrest and detention.’<sup>59</sup>

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## 8.3 Desertion and evasion in practice

- 8.3.1 An article from Middle East Eye in November 2016 noted ‘Talking about conscription is a taboo subject in Egypt. Those who have served are reticent to discuss their experiences, fearing a backlash from the army. Even human rights groups in the country are wary of giving statements in case they are punished by the courts (rights groups based in Egypt refused to discuss the

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<sup>56</sup> USSD, ‘Country reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018’, (section 1e), 14 March 2019, [url](#)

<sup>57</sup> HRW, ‘World Report 2019 – Egypt events of 2018’, 17 February 2019, [url](#)

<sup>58</sup> DFAT, ‘Country information report- Egypt’, (para 3.101), 17 June 2019, [url](#)

<sup>59</sup> DFAT, ‘Country information report- Egypt’, (para 3.103), 17 June 2019, [url](#)

matter with MEE). And for the local media, reporting on the issue is a red line they refuse to cross.<sup>60</sup>

- 8.3.2 A December 2016 article on Al-Monitor also reported that ‘Soldiers and stories about conscription in Egypt are an area that no one dares write about, much less make films about.’<sup>61</sup>
- 8.3.3 The website of the Egyptian Consulate General in Kuwait explained:  
[...]  
‘3. Each Egyptian exceeds the age of 30 years old without doing his military service and does not have a reason to be exempted from military service is considered missing it.  
‘4. Those persons can pay the penalty of missing his military service, but he must be over 30 years old.’<sup>62</sup>
- 8.3.4 Both the 2018 USSD report and GlobalSecurity.org in 2017 noted that ‘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.’<sup>63</sup><sup>64</sup>
- 8.3.5 The 2019 DFAT report observed ‘If a male over the age of 18 years seeks employment without having completed military service, he generally has to produce an exemption certificate from the Ministry of Defence to his employer. National identity cards indicate completion of military service, and eligible men who have not completed their service (or gained an exemption) are reportedly not permitted to travel abroad or emigrate.’<sup>65</sup>
- 8.3.6 Regarding exit checks, DFAT observed that when leaving Egypt, ‘Egyptian males are required to show evidence of their military service status (including proof of exemption, if relevant). Such proof could be an exemption certificate; an expired passport noting exemption from military service; or a permission to travel issued by the Conscription Department.’<sup>66</sup>
- 8.3.7 In addition, regarding the requirement for an Egyptian male to obtain a passport, DFAT stated, ‘male adults (except those born prior to March 1941) additionally require proof of completion of military service, a military service exemption certificate, an expired passport with a recorded exemption from military service or a permission to travel obtained from the Conscription Department.’<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Middle East Eye, ‘Egypt’s army: The conscripts who refuse to serve’, 28 November 2016, [url](#)

<sup>61</sup> Al-Monitor, ‘New documentary on Egyptian conscription faces strong criticism’, 8 Dec 2016, [url](#)

<sup>62</sup> The Egyptian Consulate General in Kuwait, ‘Missing the Military Service’, undated, [url](#)

<sup>63</sup> USSD, ‘Country reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018’, (section 2d), 14 March 2019, [url](#)

<sup>64</sup> Globalsecurity.org, ‘Egypt -Military personnel’, 3 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>65</sup> DFAT, ‘Country information report- Egypt’, (para 3.98), 17 June 2019, [url](#)

<sup>66</sup> DFAT, ‘Country information report- Egypt’, (para 5.33), 17 June 2019, [url](#)

<sup>67</sup> DFAT, ‘Country information report- Egypt’, (para 5.50), 17 June 2019, [url](#)

# Annex A: Translation

Arabic	English
حالات الإعفاء من الخدمة العسكرية	<b>Exemption from national service</b>
<p>الإعفاء النهائي</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• عدم اللياقة الطبية لأداء الخدمة العسكرية والوطنية.</li> <li>• الإبن الوحيد لأبيه المتوفى أو الغير قادر على الكسب نهائياً.</li> <li>• أكبر المستحقين للتجنيد من إخوة أو أبناء المواطن الذى إستشهد أو أصيب بإصابة تعجزه نهائياً عن الكسب بسبب العمليات الحربية.</li> <li>• أكبر المستحقين للتجنيد من إخوة أو أبناء الضابط أو المجدد أو المتطوع الذى يتوفى بسبب الخدمة أعجزته نهائياً عن الكسب.</li> <li>• الذى تجاوز سن الثلاثين وهو مستحق الأعتفاء المؤقت.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Final exemption:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not medically fit for Military service.</li> <li>• Only son to a deceased father or one who is unable to earn.</li> <li>• Eldest eligible sibling or son of a citizen who was martyred or incapacitated permanently and is unable to earn due to combat.</li> <li>• Eldest eligible sibling or son of an officer or non-commissioned officer or volunteer who died in service or became ill or an invalid in service resulting in his inability to earn.</li> <li>• Over thirty years of age with one of the temporary exemption reasons.</li> </ul>
<p>الإعفاء المؤقت</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• الإبن الوحيد لأبيه الحى ويعد فى حكمه من كان له إخوه غير قادرين على الكسب طبيياً بصفة دائمة.</li> <li>• العائل الوحيد لأبيه الغير قادر على الكسب وكذا العائل لأخيه أو أخوته الغير قادرين على الكسب.</li> <li>• العائل الوحيد لأمه الأرملة أو المطلقة طلاقاً بائناً أو كان زوجها غير قادر على الكسب.</li> <li>• أكبر المستحقين للتجنيد من أخوة الضابط أو المجدد أو المواطن الذى فقد بسبب العمليات الحربية ويعامل الغائب فى العمليات الحربية معاملة المفقود إلى أن يتضح موقفه.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Temporary exemption:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only son for a living father, whose siblings are unable to earn.</li> <li>• Sole supporter of a father who is unable to earn and sole supporter of his siblings who are unable to earn.</li> <li>• Sole supporter of a widowed or divorced mother or if her husband is unable to earn</li> <li>• Eldest eligible sibling or son of an officer or enlisted or volunteer or citizen lost due to combat. This exemption is annulled upon return or proof of life. Any absentee in combat will be treated as missing until his situation is confirmed.</li> </ul>
المستندات المطلوبة فى الحالات السابقة	<b>Required documents for the previous cases</b>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• بيان قيد عائلي لبطاقة الوالد من السجل المدني المستخرج منه بطاقته العائلية.</li> <li>• المستند الدال على سبب الإغفاء (شهادة ميلاد الأخ القاصر – شهادة من المدرسة أو الكلية).</li> <li>• كشف عائلي يحصل عليه الشاب من منطقة التجنيد التابع لها.</li> <li>• قسمة الزواج للوالدين.</li> <li>• قسمة طلاق الوالدة طلاقاً بائناً أو حكم محكمة بالتطبيق وقيد عائلي لزوج الأم.</li> <li>• إثبات تجنيد للأخ المجند .</li> <li>• شهادة ميلاد الإخوة والأخوات الأشقاء وغير الأشقاء.</li> <li>• شهادة أو قرار عدم القدرة لمن حصل عليه من الأسرة.</li> <li>• شهادات وفاة المتوفيين.</li> <li>• -في حالة غياب الأب ولم يعرف مكانه يطلب حكم غيبية للأب .</li> <li>• البطاقة العائلية للوالد .</li> <li>• في حالة تعذر الحصول على بيان قيد عائلي للأسرة يكتفى بإعلام الوراثة للوالد إذا كان متوفى يتم توثيق هذه المستندات بمكتب التوثيق بمناطق التجنيد والتعينة أو بمجمع خدمة المواطنين بإدارة التجنيد والتعينة بواسطة شاب التجنيد وأحد أقربائه عند التوثيق للتوقيع على صحة بيانات كشف العائلة وما ورد من مستندات إذا كان سنة أقل من 21 سنة : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o لا يعتد بالزوج العرفي .</li> <li>o لا يعتد بالطلاق الرجعي.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family record for the father's card from the civil register, from which the family card is extracted.</li> <li>• Exemption document (minor sibling birth certificate – certificate from school or college).</li> <li>• Family record obtained by the youth from the recruitment centre</li> <li>• Parent's marriage contract</li> <li>• Mother's divorce letter or a court ruling for divorce and a family record of the mother's husband.</li> <li>• Enlistment record for enlisted brother</li> <li>• Sibling &amp; step sibling birth certificates.</li> <li>• Certificate of invalidity for member of family</li> <li>• Certificate of death In the absence of father, where his location is unknown, a ruling of absenteeism shall be required.</li> <li>• Father family card.</li> <li>• In the event a family record cannot be obtained, the heirs would be notified if the father is deceased. These documents shall be documented in the recruitment centre or the citizen service centre in the recruitment &amp; enlistment administration by the draftee or a relative to sign to the accuracy of the family record and other documents is the draftee is under 21 years. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Unregistered marriage is not recognised.</li> <li>o Retro divorce is not recognised</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>حقوق الملكية © ٢٠١٨ وزارة الدفاع - هيئة التنظيم والإدارة - إدارة التجنيد والتعينة</p>	<p>Copyright 2018 Ministry of Defence – Organisation &amp; Administration – Recruitment &amp; Enlistment.</p>

# Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToRs, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Size of Military
- General Requirements
  - Men
  - Women
- Length of service
  - Standard length of service
  - Length of service for graduates
- Exemptions
  - Overview
  - Medical grounds
  - Certain family circumstances – only sons and breadwinners
  - Students
  - Dual nationals
  - Conscientious objection
  - Other reasons
  - Exemptions in practice
- Undertaking military service
  - Deployment and roles
  - Bribes ('rishwa') and connections ('wasta')
  - Treatment of recruits
- Deserion and evasion
  - Jurisdiction
  - Desertion and evasion in law
  - Desertion and evasion in practice
- Completion and proof of completion
  - Consequences for failing to complete military service
  - Proof of completion

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# Version control

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- Version **2.0**
- valid from **28 November 2019**

## Changes from last version of this note

Update of country assessment and country information.

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