

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

2 December 2013

### EGY104665.E

Egypt: Exit and entry procedures at airports and land borders; incidence of bribery of Egyptian border officials to facilitate departure by individuals with fraudulent travel documents or outstanding financial, military, or legal obligations or who are sought by the government for political reasons; the punishment for border officers caught taking such bribes (2009-November 2013)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### 1. General Security Situation in Egypt

The UK Foreign Travel Advice states on their website that "the presence and effectiveness of police and security forces is not at the level it was before February 2011" (UK n.d). The US Congressional Research Service notes in its 2013 report on Egypt that the "marked decline in public security ... continues to be a concern for many Egyptians" (27 June 2013, 4).

According to the website of the Canadian Travel Advice and Advisories, Egypt has an "unpredictable security situation ... and the ability to provide consular services may be limited at short notice" (Canada 12 Nov. 2013). Corroboration could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

#### 1.1 Security Situation in Areas near the Egyptian Border

In a report on cooperation between Egypt, Israel, and Hamas for the Brookings Institute, Zack Gold, a senior research assistant for the Saban Center for Middle East Policy states that, since 2011, the Sinai border region has "become more unstable - as has Egypt, generally - and in many ways the threat of cross-border incidents has grown" (The Brookings Institution Oct. 2013, 1). Gold notes that the Sinai border area is characterised by smuggling of people, weapons, and contraband (ibid., 5, 10). Gold states that "another border issue for Egypt is the tunnels between Sinai and Gaza" which are used to smuggle arms and goods (ibid., 20).

Gold indicates that the security in the Sinai border region "deteriorated further with the military's removal of President Morsi on July 3, 2013" and that "Egypt closed the Rafah border crossing and cut access across the Suez Canal from Sinai" (ibid., 8). On 5 July 2013 *the New York Times* reported that "the Sinai Peninsula remains a potential source of friction." The *Los Angeles Times* reports that the Rafah border crossing is closed for an indefinite period (22 Nov. 2013).

The *New York Times* notes the Egyptian military "stepped up its campaign against the tunnels beneath the border that are used for smuggling goods, weapons and fugitives" (5 July 2013). Sources indicate that the Egyptian army has been working to dismantle tunnels within the Rafah border zone (*Middle East Online* 18 Sept. 2013; *Xinhua* 6 Sept. 2013; *Al Akhbar* 4 Sept. 2013). Gold notes that "the Egyptian army also effectively sealed the tunnels underneath the Gaza border..." (Oct. 2013, 8). *Middle East Online*, a Middle East news source located in London, England (n.d.), reports that the head of the Palestinian municipality in Rafah stated that "the Egyptian army has destroyed 95 percent of the tunnels with the aim of setting up a security buffer zone" (18 Sept. 2013).

Further, Gold notes that "as of October 2013, there was no sign that either the Egyptian forces or Sinai's militants were letting up, nor was there indication of a long-term plan to sustain security gains once military operations cease" (The Brookings Institution Oct. 2013, 9). Gold indicates that "regaining control of Sinai, at least to the level that it existed prior to the revolution, is the biggest Egyptian interest regarding the peninsula" (ibid., 10). On 20 November 2013 the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that

ten Egyptian soldiers were killed after a car bomb exploded next to their bus in the northern Sinai Peninsula today, underscoring the precarious security situation since former President Mohamed Morsi's ouster.

The number of attacks in the Sinai has increased since the July 3 military coup ... raising concerns that sporadic attacks will flare into a sustained insurgency.

On 22 November 2013 the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Egyptian "security forces have set up stationary and mobile roadblocks on roads connecting the Suez Canal cities with Sinai to prevent terrorist and outlaws from fleeing the area."

## 2. Entry/Exit Procedures

According to the website of the United Kingdom Travel Advice,

Egyptian military are situated in Sharm el Sheikh international airport, the entrance to the resort of Sharm el-Sheikh and the exit to the rest area of Dahab. Routine security checks are being performed on entry into the airport and the police are carrying out vehicle checks in Sharm el-Sheikh. (UK n.d., 3)

The United Kingdom Travel Advice further notes that the border areas in the "south west corner of Egypt near the border with Sudan or Libya" are porous, and "bandits and armed groups operate" (ibid., 5). Similarly, Lisa Anteby-Yemini writes in an academic article on the Israeli-Egyptian border that the "[translation] border is porous" (Anteby-Yemini 2008, 77).

Anteby-Yemini states that in general, travel within the Israel-Egypt border zone is characterized by tourism from Israel to Egypt, underground transportation of goods and people from Egypt to Israel (ibid., 77-78). She further notes that the Israel-Egypt border zone is sparsely populated with much undocumented travel in both Taba, a southern border crossing, and Nizzana, a northern border crossing (ibid., 77).

### 2.1 Visas

Citizenship and Immigration Canada states on their website that Egyptians must have a visa to visit or transit Canada (Canada 28 Aug. 2013). The Canadian embassy works with a third party service provider, VFS Global, which operates Canada Visa Application Centres (CVAC) on behalf of Canada (VFS Global n.d.a). VFS Global states on their website that Egyptians can deposit their visa application at the CVAC in Cairo (ibid. n.d.b). VFS Global instructs Egyptians to read and complete visa applications on the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website and "as of 22 October 2013, Egyptian citizens between the ages of 14 and 79 must give their biometrics (fingerprints and photograph) when applying for a visitor visa, study permit or work permit" (ibid. n.d.c). Applicants must:

- pay visa fees of C\$ 75 (for a temporary resident visa), C\$ 125 (for a study permit), C\$ 150 (for a work permit) (Canada n.d.);
- pay biometric fees of C\$ 85;
- bring their passport to CVAC;
- bring their photographs to CVAC;
- bring completed forms to CVAC;
- and bring all supporting documents to CVAC (VFS Global n.d.c).

Fees for a temporary resident visa must be paid in Egyptian pounds in person at the Visa Section of the Canadian embassy in Cairo or by direct deposit in Egyptian pounds at a CITIBANK branch (Canada n.d.). Fees for a study permit or a work permit must be paid by direct deposit in Egyptian pounds at a CITIBANK branch or by a certified cheque in Canadian dollars (ibid.).

### 2.2 Entry/Exit Stamps

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a Counsellor at the Canadian embassy to Egypt in Cairo reported that their contact at the Egyptian Ministry of Interior stated that

after exiting Egypt, all passengers proceed to passport control, where their passports are checked against lists of individuals whose travel abroad is not permitted. If cleared, their passports are stamped and they proceed to the departure gate. There is usually another check at the exit from the departure lounge to the aircraft. According to my contact, this second check is carried out by airport security to ensure that individuals' boarding cards, passports and identity match. (Canada 25 Nov. 2013)

## 3. Restrictions on Mobility of Egyptian Nationals

The Counsellor stated their Egyptian contact informed them that

[m]ales who have completed their secondary school and are aged less than 30 years require either a certificate showing that they have completed their military service or a certificate of exemption from military service. Individuals on a control list are not allowed to exit Egypt. This can include persons being sought by the police, persons convicted of certain offences, etc. According to my contact, it can include people with "political problems". A number of Ministries and agencies have the authority to place people on the control list. (Canada 25 Nov. 2013)

The US Department of State *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012* reports that "men who have not completed compulsory military service may not travel abroad or emigrate. Completion of military service is indicated on national identification cards" (US 19 Apr. 2013, 9). Wamda, an online platform "designed to empower entrepreneurs in the MENA region" (n.d.), reports on its website that men "cannot travel abroad without special permission from the Ministry of Defence" (5 Aug. 2013).

The *Country Reports for 2012* indicates that

police officials reportedly forced unmarried young women, sometimes including those in their thirties, to present their father's written permission to obtain a passport and to travel, although this is not required by law. (19 Apr. 2013, 9)

Corroboration could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

#### **4. Egyptian Border Officials**

##### **4.1 Corruption in Egypt**

According to the website of Transparency International, a "non-profit, non-governmental organisation dedicated to fighting corruption" (n.d.), their survey on transparency in Egypt "reveals that 55 percent of [Egyptian] respondents found the government ineffective in fighting corruption" (15 July 2013). Similarly, Freedom House noted in their *Freedom in the World 2012* report that in Egypt, "corruption remains pervasive at all levels of government" (Freedom House Jan. 2013). Freedom House also notes that "Egypt was ranked 118 out of 176 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index" (ibid.).

##### **4.2 Incidents of Bribery of Egyptian Border Guards**

The Counsellor stated that they "are not aware of any incidents of bribery or attempted bribery of Egyptian border officials" (Canada 25 Nov. 2013).

In an online policy analysis article for the Washington Institute on 13 April 2009, Matthew Levitt, a senior fellow and director of the Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at the Washington Institute, and Becca Wasser stated that in April 2009, Egyptian police at the Egyptian border detained several men after multiple attempts to smuggle money across the border to the Gaza Strip (the Washington Institute 13 Apr. 2009). Levitt and Wasser indicated that

Egyptian police officers, historically underpaid, have accepted bribes in exchange for turning a blind eye to weapons smuggling through tunnels into Gaza .... Several media reports suggest that Egyptian police stationed at border crossings are more than willing to do the same in regard to cash. (ibid.)

Levitt and Wasser note that "the high rate of bribery among Egyptian border police has created an environment ripe for bulk cash and other illicit smuggling" (ibid.).

According to the website of the US Department of State International Travel Information, there has been an increase in reports of US citizens being solicited for money at Cairo International Airport from the airport police. (22 Feb. 2013)

The Business Anti-Corruption Portal, a public-private partnership organization (n.d.), indicates that the rate of "transparency of Egypt's border administration [is] quite low and [identifies] the pervasiveness of corruption and bribery in relation to import and export as a problem" (Business Anti-Corruption 2013a). Similarly, "low-level officials in customs zones are known to demand bribes to expedite paperwork for licences, clearances, and other permits required to do business" (ibid.). In contrast, the Counsellor stated that their Egyptian contact reported that "there is no corruption at the border, nor could there be, since a number of Ministries have offices at the airport and are all watching each other" (Canada 25 Nov. 2013). The Counsellor stated that their contact "was not aware of any instances of bribery or other corruption" (ibid.).

Transparency International states in an online article that their survey on transparency in Egypt shows that "over 35 per cent of Egyptians in [their] survey said they had paid a bribe in the past year and 45 per cent of those said that paying a bribe was the only way to obtain a service" (15 July 2013).

In contrast, Wamda reports that "despite rampant corruption in Egypt, you also can't bribe your way out of the military. If you skip it, you are required to pay a hefty fine and [are] barred from things like running for office in the future" (5 Aug. 2013).

##### **4.3 Government Efforts to Combat Corruption**

The Business Anti-Corruption Portal states on its website that "Egypt does not have a specific anti-corruption law, but active and passive bribery ... are criminalised by Egypt's Penal Code" (2013b). Corroboration could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

On 10 November 2013, the Egyptian *Daily News* reported that the General Department for Public Funds Crime Investigation within the Ministry of the Interior announced:

it is designating an operation room to receive complaints from citizens on incidents of bribery. The operation room will also receive complaints from citizens on corruption on a 24-hour basis through phone calls and emails. (*Daily News* 10 Nov. 2013)

Corroboration could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact the following organizations were unsuccessful: Arab Lawyers Union; Egyptian Organization for Human Rights; Embassy of Egypt to Canada; Embassy of Egypt to the United States.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International; The Bertelsmann Foundation; Business Anti Corruption Portal; ecoi.net; Egypt – Ministry of Internal Affairs; Factiva; Human Rights Watch; Interpol; International Air Transport Association; International Organization for Migration; United Nations – Integrated Regional Information Networks, Refworld; United States – Department of State.

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