

Egypt Under al-Sisi: Even Worse than Under Morsi or Mubarak

Protection of Religious Minorities: Security for Egypt's Coptic Christian community has deteriorated under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. An independent organization has [verified more than 400](#) sectarian incidents since 2013, when al-Sisi effectively took power, with most perpetrators escaping punishment. A December 2016 terrorist attack against Botroseya Church in Cairo killed 29 worshippers and wounded 47 others. Recent attacks on Copts by the Islamic State affiliate Wilayat Sinai have led to a mass exodus of the Christian community in Arish, North Sinai.

Women's Rights: Egyptian women continue to face severe discrimination. Sexual harassment and assault is rampant, despite al-Sisi's claims to be tackling the epidemic. Women make up only 23 percent of the labor force and are more likely to be unemployed. Women have fewer rights in the court system, and are still [informally barred](#) from holding certain occupations, like serving in the State Council.

Freedom of Expression: Numerous Egyptians have been put on trial and imprisoned by al-Sisi's regime for "blasphemy" and "insulting morals," including authors, poets, and Coptic Christian teenagers. Egyptians are [routinely arrested](#) for their social media activity. A restrictive cybercrimes bill is in the works, and Egypt has begun [mass data collection and surveillance](#) similar to what occurs in China. Egypt is now [third only to China and Turkey](#) in the number of journalists in detention. At least 23 journalists—including the former head of the Journalists Syndicate—are in jail on politically motivated charges such as spreading false news and illegally protesting.

Freedom of Association: Parliament recently passed a draconian NGO law that conflicts with Egypt's constitution and international norms and would make fund-raising and international cooperation nearly impossible for many organizations. Prominent civil society leaders face interrogation, travel bans, asset freezes, security threats, and other state harassment for peaceful human rights activities. In early 2017, authorities forcibly closed the offices of the renowned Al-Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture. Al-Sisi has refused to exonerate American and other democracy workers convicted on trumped-up charges in 2013.

Freedom of Assembly: The 2013 demonstrations law and other laws effectively ban peaceful protest against the government. Hundreds of people have received lengthy prison terms on protest-related charges.

Political Prisoners: Egypt has arrested [at least 60,000 political detainees](#) since 2013. Egyptian-American former political detainee Mohamed Soltan has described Egyptian prisons as "fertile ground for radicalization." Hundreds are being held in detention on political charges, including Aya Hijazi, a U.S. citizen and humanitarian worker locked up for nearly three years.

Death Sentences: As many as 1,800 people may have been [sentenced to death](#) since 2013 in what many Western governments and international rights organizations [describe as](#) politically-motivated trials lacking due process.

Military Courts: In 2014 President al-Sisi issued a decree vastly expanding the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians. Military courts enable gross human rights violations; military trials of civilians contravene international law. Human Rights Watch [reported](#) that military courts tried more than 7,420 civilians, including university students and labor activists, between October 2014 and April 2016.

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Extrajudicial Killings: Egyptian rights groups [documented](#) 754 extrajudicial killings by security forces in the first half of 2016. There have been numerous accusations of [killings](#) of civilians caught in al-Sisi's ongoing campaign against terrorist groups in the Sinai.

Enforced Disappearances: According to the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, intelligence and security agencies abducted and held incommunicado more than 2,500 people between [January 2015 and May 2016](#).

Impunity: Security forces typically act with impunity. Citizens have little to no judicial recourse against their abuse. No members of the military or police force have been held accountable for the killing of a [reported](#) 1,100 protesters in 2013 in Cairo's Rabaa and Nahda Squares. Under al-Sisi, Egyptian courts have acquitted former President Hosni Mubarak and former Minister of Interior Habib al-Adly of ordering the use of live ammunition against demonstrators during the 2011 Tahrir uprising.

Terrorism Law: The 2015 anti-terrorism law grants state authorities broad powers to "ensure public order and security" equivalent to those granted by the state of emergency in force during the Mubarak regime. The law has been used to [prosecute](#) labor activists, among others.

Deteriorating Security: Attacks by militant groups have risen sharply under al-Sisi, particularly in North Sinai. 2016 saw an average of 70 attacks across Egypt per month, a rate exceeding that during Mubarak's last years in power.

Access to Sinai: North Sinai, parts of which have been under a state of emergency [since October 2014](#), is effectively [closed off](#) to journalists, international observers, and researchers.

Economy: Following the floating of the Egyptian Pound in November 2016, poverty rates have soared to their highest levels since 2000: nearly 28 percent of Egyptians live below the poverty line (less than \$1 dollar/day). Core inflation [reached 29.7 percent in January 2017](#), the highest level in 30 years. Youth unemployment reached [40.7 percent](#), up from 35 percent [in 2012](#).

Migration: Egypt's economic troubles are causing growing [numbers of Egyptians](#) to make the perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe, joining the [tens of thousands of other refugees and migrants](#) who use Egypt as an illicit transit point to Europe.

Corruption: In 2015, Egypt's then-chief corruption auditor, Hisham Geneina, publicly estimated that approximately \$76 billion was siphoned from the public sector through pervasive corruption from 2012-2015. He was soon put on trial and quickly sentenced to a [year in prison](#).