



# Prisons Without Keys

## How Egypt's Detention System Kills Life, Rights, and Hope

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Since 2013, Egypt has undergone a marked decline in the rule of law and fundamental rights, characterized by the unchecked expansion of security powers, encroachment on judicial independence, and the systematic dismantling of press and civil society freedoms. In this context, the criminal justice system has been repurposed into an instrument of repression, in breach of both constitutional guarantees and international legal standards.

At the core of this repressive transformation, Egypt's prisons and detention centers have become central tools of political and social exclusion. No longer exceptional measures in the pursuit of justice, they now function as enduring mechanisms for punishing political opponents, silencing journalists and human rights defenders, and criminalizing peaceful expression. This system has expanded in scale and intent, with more than 60,000 political detainees—including women, children, activists, and rights advocates—many held without trial or charged under vague and unsubstantiated allegations.

This report, issued by Women Journalists Without Chains, offers a comprehensive, evidence-based analysis of one of the most entrenched violations within Egypt's judicial and security apparatus: arbitrary pretrial detention. It traces the transformation of this provisional legal measure into a de facto extrajudicial punishment aimed at suppressing freedoms and silencing dissent beyond the scope of fair trial guarantees.

Covering the period from 2013 to 2025, the report draws on field data, verified testimonies, and legal analysis to expose the conditions endured by detainees. It further documents systemic medical neglect, torture, inhumane detention practices, and the specific vulnerabilities faced by women and children in custody. The report aims to serve as a comprehensive legal and analytical guide, revealing the Egyptian state's use of pretrial detention as a political weapon, and offering clear, actionable recommendations to policymakers and international bodies to end these violations and ensure accountability for those responsible.

This report not only outlines the crisis but also serves as an urgent call for national and international legal and human rights action. It demands the restoration of the rule of law in Egypt and an end to the daily tragedy unfolding behind prison walls—now turned into arenas of humiliation and collective punishment beyond the boundaries of justice.



## Executive Summary

This report exposes one of Egypt's most grave and ongoing human rights violations: the arbitrary use of pretrial detention as a political tool within a broader repressive prison system. Since 2013, the Egyptian government has systematically expanded pretrial detention to suppress dissent amid a harsh security crackdown, judicial interference, and erosion of legal protections. Over 60,000 political detainees are held without trial or trapped in "recycling" procedures—judicial tactics that prolong detention indefinitely and extralegally.

Drawing on legal documents and testimonies from families, lawyers, and former detainees, the report reveals a stark gap between Egypt's laws and on-the-ground realities. Pretrial detention has become a form of punishment marked by arbitrary renewals, denial of legal defense, and obstruction of complaints. Judicial processes are manipulated to sustain repression, with the prosecution complicit in undermining legal integrity.

Prisons have transformed into instruments of silencing dissent, where detainees face medical neglect, solitary confinement, torture, and visitation bans. From 2013 to 2025, there were 1,160 recorded deaths in detention centers, 75% linked to medical negligence. Women detainees—especially activists and journalists—suffer sexual harassment, degrading searches, and inadequate healthcare, violating international standards including the Bangkok Rules. Children held with their mothers endure inhumane conditions without access to education or nutrition, breaching the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The report calls on Egyptian authorities to immediately end enforced disappearances and recycling, enforce legal safeguards, ensure accountability for torture and deaths, improve prisoner healthcare, restore visitation rights, and guarantee legal defense access. It urges international bodies to activate accountability mechanisms and conduct independent inspections of detention facilities.



## Methodology

This report covers the period from **2013** to **2025**—a timeframe marked by the institutionalization of pretrial detention as a mechanism of political repression in Egypt, accompanied by a broad pattern of systemic abuse within official detention facilities.

The research draws on a multi-method approach that integrates field-based documentation with legal and normative analysis. Primary data collection was carried out by the Journalists Without Restrictions team through a series of direct interviews conducted between **2020** and **2024**. Interviewees included defense lawyers specializing in national security and freedom of expression cases, operating in key governorates such as Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, Sharqia, Gharbia, Kafr El Sheikh, and Ismailia.

The legal framework was analyzed in depth, including Egypt's Criminal Procedure Code, Anti-Terrorism Law, and Prisons Regulation Law, juxtaposed with relevant international and regional human rights standards. These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention Against Torture (CAT), the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), and the UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules).

Secondary sources were triangulated to ensure accuracy and breadth. These include reports and documentation produced by both domestic and international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Committee Against Torture, Committee for Justice, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), and the Egyptian Front for Human Rights.

In addition to aggregate data, the report documents emblematic individual cases of abuse, including prolonged pretrial detention beyond legal limits, the recurrent use of the so-called "recycling" tactic, and deaths in custody resulting from torture or medical neglect. These cases are substantiated through direct testimonies from family members and legal representatives, cross-referenced to ensure reliability.



Strict ethical standards were maintained throughout the research. All testimonies were gathered with informed consent and are presented using pseudonyms or anonymized identifiers. Identifying details were withheld to protect the safety and privacy of sources and their families, in adherence to best practices for witness protection and data confidentiality in high-risk contexts.

## Chapter One:

### The Legal Framework and Practical Reality of Pretrial Detention

This human rights report highlights pretrial detention in Egypt as a central mechanism within the country's criminal justice system, with the legislature devoting a separate section to it in the Criminal Procedure Code. However, practical application since 2013 has revealed a serious deviation, as pretrial detention has shifted from a temporary precautionary measure to a means of political repression, used extensively against activists, journalists, and citizens, and serving as a long-term punishment without judicial verdicts.

According to Article 143 of the Criminal Procedure Code, pretrial detention should not exceed six months for misdemeanors, 18 months for felonies, and 24 months for offenses punishable by life imprisonment or death. Nevertheless, human rights organizations have documented widespread violations, with thousands of detainees held beyond these legal limits, and some remaining in custody for five to ten years without trial.

These practices constitute clear violations of Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 6 of the African Commission's Guidelines on Freedom of Expression, both of which stress that pretrial detention must be the exception, not the norm. The continuation of such abuses undermines the foundations of the rule of law and calls for urgent action to ensure Egypt adheres to its obligations under international human rights law.

#### First: The Legal Framework — Between Text and Application

The following table offers a detailed comparison between Egyptian legal provisions, relevant international standards, and the actual practices concerning pretrial detention. These indicators do not represent isolated incidents but rather expose systematic and recurring patterns of abuse, frequently affecting dissidents, journalists, and ordinary citizens. Both local and international human rights organizations have documented numerous cases in which pretrial detention exceeded four years, with at least 941 documented instances of so-called "recycling" between 2018 and 2021, according to the Transparency Center for Research, Documentation, and Data Management. Furthermore, since 2013, more than 60,000 political detainees have been held in Egyptian prisons, many of them without access to fair trials.



## Standards of Pretrial Detention—Between Egyptian Law, International Conventions, and Practical Reality

Standard	Practical Reality	International Conventions	Egyptian Law
<p>Maximum Duration of Pretrial Detention Source: Multiple reports documented by the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy</p>	<p>Typically ranges from 2 to 6 years, and longer in some cases</p>	<p>Must be "reasonable and justified", and strictly exceptional and brief</p>	<p>Up to 24 months for felony pretrial detention, extendable</p>
<p>Right to Defense Source: Multiple reports documented by the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy</p>	<p>Access is severely restricted or denied during early investigations (e.g., no lawyer present, withheld case documents). During trial, access is limited, hindering the ability to examine evidence or call witnesses</p>	<p>A fundamental right, safeguarded by fair trial guarantees</p>	<p>Legally guaranteed, but frequently undermined in practice</p>
<p>Grievance Mechanisms</p>	<p>Effectively disabled, difficult to access, or ineffective</p>	<p>mandatory before an independent and impartial judge, following clear procedures</p>	<p>Legally available, but often formalistic and ineffective</p>
<p>Recycling (Renewed Detention in New Cases) Source: the Transparency Center for Research, Documentation, and Data Management</p>	<p>A systematic and ongoing practice to keep detainees in custody</p>	<p>Explicitly prohibited under international law</p>	<p>Not legally stipulated, yet widely practiced</p>



The above analysis highlights a profound and troubling divergence between Egypt's national legal provisions, its international human rights obligations, and the actual implementation of pretrial detention. While domestic legislation prescribes specific maximum periods for detention, in practice, this safeguard is routinely disregarded. Pretrial detention, intended as a temporary and precautionary measure, has effectively become a punitive tool imposed without judicial verdict—constituting a clear breach of the presumption of innocence enshrined in international law. In addition, fundamental rights of the accused—most notably, the right to legal representation and access to counsel—are frequently curtailed, particularly during the early stages of investigation. These restrictions severely impair the ability of defendants to mount an adequate defense and stand in direct violation of fair trial guarantees under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Egypt is a state party.

The situation is further aggravated by the lack of accessible and effective grievance mechanisms. Legal remedies for contesting pretrial detention are either obstructed, delayed, or rendered ineffectual, depriving detainees of the opportunity to seek redress through independent judicial review. This systemic failure leaves many in prolonged detention without substantive legal justification.

Among the most egregious violations is the practice of so-called "recycling," whereby detainees are rearrested upon their scheduled release and implicated in new, often fabricated cases. This tactic deliberately circumvents legal protections and results in prolonged, arbitrary detention—amounting to a clear abuse of legal process. Such practices convert pretrial detention into an institutionalized instrument of political repression, systematically targeting activists, journalists, and human rights defenders.

These structural imbalances underscore the urgent need for a thorough and transformative review of pretrial detention practices in Egypt. Reform efforts must go beyond superficial amendments to legal provisions and instead focus on ensuring the consistent and genuine application of procedural safeguards in practice—thereby restoring adherence to the principles of justice and the rule of law. It is imperative that Egypt's national legislation be brought into full alignment with clear and binding international standards, ensuring that pretrial detention is not exploited as a mechanism for political retaliation or the suppression of fundamental freedoms. This necessitates the reinforcement of oversight and accountability frameworks, including the establishment or empowerment of independent bodies with the mandate to review detention decisions and hold perpetrators of abuse accountable.



Ultimately, addressing this issue is not solely a matter of individual justice for those unlawfully detained; it is also vital for safeguarding the independence of the judiciary, upholding the rule of law, and fostering a legal and institutional environment in which human rights are genuinely respected and shielded from politicization or arbitrary infringement.

### **Second: Patterns of Deviation from the Law**

Although pretrial detention is intended as an exceptional legal measure, Egypt's practice has deviated sharply from legal and constitutional standards. It has become a tool of repression used systematically to silence opposition, detain journalists, and punish civic activists—often without charge or trial. One of the most prominent violations is the practice of "recycling" cases, where detainees are reaccused in new, fabricated cases to prolong their detention indefinitely. Courts also routinely renew pretrial detention orders without meaningful judicial review, often in mass hearings that disregard due process.

Additionally, many detainees are subjected to enforced disappearance before appearing before prosecutors, during which time they are denied access to lawyers and sometimes face torture. These patterns violate both Egyptian law and international obligations under instruments such as the ICCPR. The Public Prosecution frequently endorses these violations by authorizing detentions without sufficient scrutiny, contributing to a system where legal safeguards are ignored. Together, these practices strip pretrial detention of its lawful purpose and transform it into a mechanism of arbitrary and politically motivated punishment.

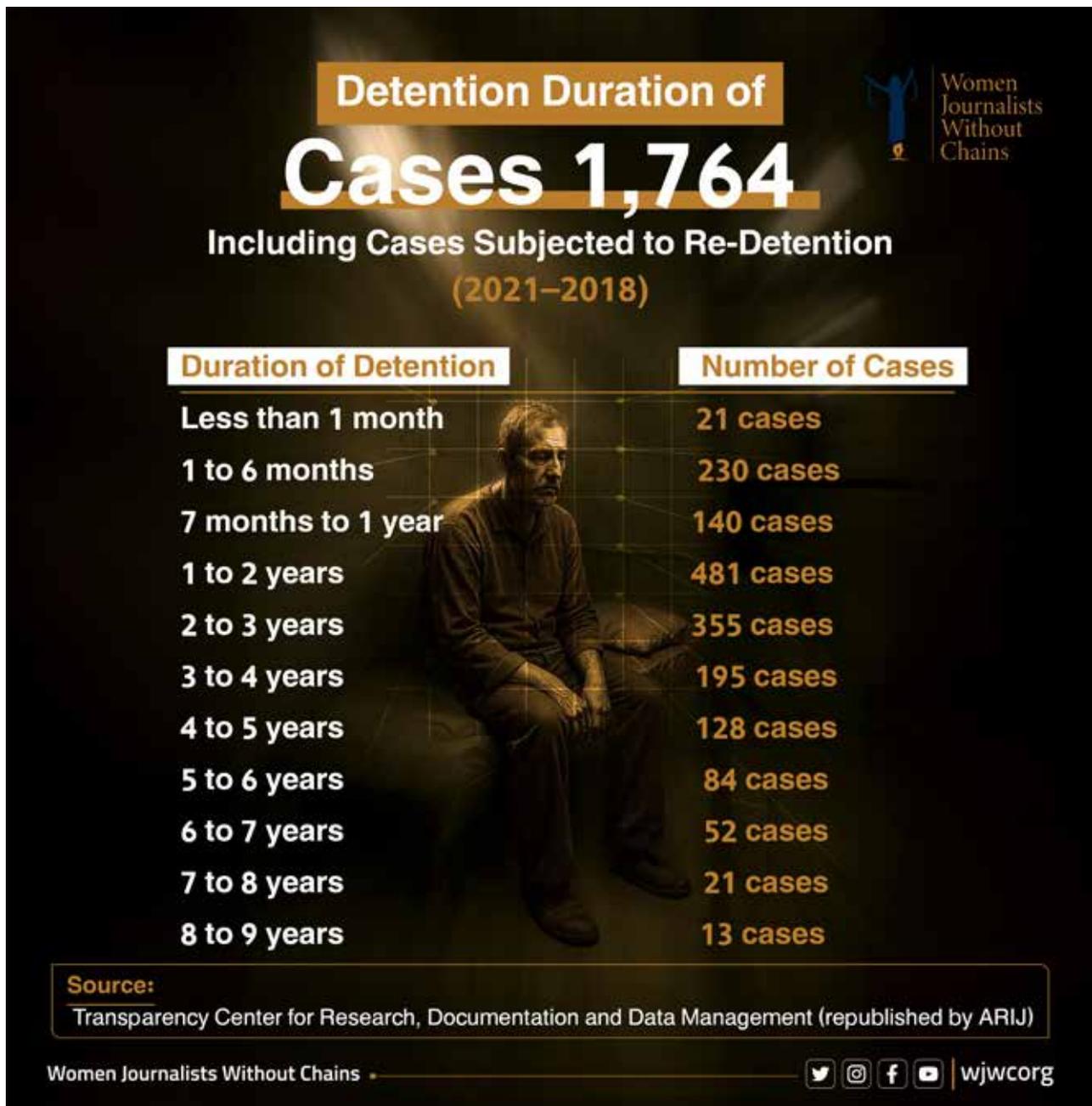
#### **1 | Recycling Cases: A Systematic Violation of Legal Protections**

The practice of "recycling cases" involves re-detaining individuals in new cases—often with identical charges—immediately after courts order their release or legal detention periods expire. This systematic tactic, used especially by the Supreme State Security Prosecution, effectively circumvents legal safeguards and enables indefinite arbitrary detention. It disregards judicial authority and violates both national legal obligations and international human rights standards. Multiple reports confirm that this practice undermines due process and fair trial guarantees, reflecting a broader pattern of judicial abuse. By ignoring court-ordered releases, the Public Prosecution breaches constitutional protections and contributes to the erosion of the rule of law.



### Recycled Prisoners: A Systematic Disruption of Justice in Egypt – ARIJ Network

Between January 1, 2018, and March 15, 2021, the Transparency Center for Research, Archiving, and Documentation recorded 941 incidents of case recycling involving 774 victims. These figures represent only verified cases; the actual number is likely much higher due to restricted access to information and a pervasive climate of fear that deters reporting. Notably, 77 individuals were recycled more than three times, and 9 victims five times or more—highlighting a disturbing, systematic pattern. This practice constitutes a flagrant violation of international human rights law, particularly the rights to liberty, personal security, due process, and protection from arbitrary detention and degrading treatment.





According to data from the Transparency Center for Research, Documentation, and Data Management—republished by ARIJ—out of 1,764 remand detention cases recorded between 2018 and 2021, over 60% involved detentions exceeding one year. This reflects a systematic abuse of pretrial detention, in violation of international human rights law, including the right to liberty, fair trial guarantees, and the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment. Detention periods ranged from under one month to as long as nine years. Such prolonged and arbitrary detentions, often without formal charges or due process, may constitute enforced disappearance and violate both the ICCPR and the Convention against Torture. These practices, if part of a widespread or systematic policy, could amount to international crimes. The report calls for independent investigations, redress for victims, and urgent reforms to bring Egypt's security and judicial practices in line with international standards.

## 2 | Formal Renewal of Pretrial Detention

Documented findings by Human Rights Watch reveal that pretrial detention renewal sessions in opinion-related cases have become perfunctory proceedings, stripped of meaningful judicial oversight. Women Journalists Without Chains reports that 90% of these sessions last less than three minutes, often conducted without presenting new evidence or allowing defense lawyers to speak. Renewals are routinely based on undisclosed security reports, without judicial scrutiny—constituting a flagrant violation of the right to a fair trial and the safeguards enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This routine abuse transforms pretrial detention from an exceptional legal measure into a tool of punitive repression. Applied without due process, it fosters impunity, silences dissent, and deeply undermines the foundations of justice and the rule of law.



### 3 | **Enforced Disappearance Prior to Prosecution**

Enforced disappearance in Egypt constitutes a grave and systematic violation of human rights and breaches core international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention Against Torture. Security agencies, particularly the National Security Agency, routinely subject political detainees, activists, and students to incommunicado detention—denying access to lawyers and families and exposing them to torture and coercion to extract confessions. The case of student Moaz Sharqawi illustrates this practice. Women Journalists Without Chains documented his three-week disappearance and severe physical and psychological torture, during which authorities denied knowledge of his whereabouts. He later appeared before the prosecution, accused of joining a banned group—charges believed to be based on forced confessions. These violations extend beyond disappearance. Pretrial detention is increasingly used not as a precautionary measure, but as a tool of repression, stripping legal safeguards of meaning and using the Public Prosecution to legitimize politically motivated detention. Egypt's continued use of such practices demands urgent, independent, and transparent investigations, accountability for perpetrators, and redress for victims, in line with its international human rights obligations.

## Chapter Two:

### **Egyptian Prisons – Systematic Violations under Dual Security Supervision**

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the grave human rights violations perpetrated within Egyptian prisons and detention centers from 2013 through 2025. The findings are based on a broad range of sources, including firsthand and documented testimonies, field research, and reports issued by both local and international human rights organizations. Furthermore, this examination incorporates a comparative legal analysis referencing key international human rights instruments—most notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). A cross-sectional review of these sources reveals that the violations are not isolated or sporadic incidents. Rather, they form part of a systematic, deliberate policy aimed at breaking the spirit of political detainees and suppressing dissent and civil activism critical of the authorities. This systematic repression unfolds in an environment characterized by near-total impunity.



### Chapter Three: Mapping Egypt's Political Prisons – Locations and Institutional Role

Egypt's network of political prisons has expanded dramatically since 2013, forming a sprawling system of detention facilities that reflects not reform but the entrenchment of state repression in a more institutionalized and systematic form. While these facilities are often outfitted with high-level security infrastructure, they routinely fall short of even the most basic human rights safeguards. Rather than serving rehabilitative or justice-oriented purposes, these prisons function as instruments of political control and coercion.

Women Journalists Without Chains has compiled a detailed list of key detention sites central to Egypt's political imprisonment apparatus. This mapping is based on firsthand testimonies, verified human rights documentation, and on-the-ground analysis. The organization's team conducted a comparative review of these findings against the reports of leading international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). This rigorous process strengthens the credibility of the conclusions drawn and provides a solid foundation for international accountability efforts.

**1. Tora Prison 992 Maximum-Security (Scorpion 1 & 2): Egypt's Most Notorious Detention Facility**  
Located within the Tora Prison Complex south of Cairo, Tora Prison 992—better known as Scorpion 1 and 2—is one of Egypt's most infamous high-security detention centers. Established in the mid-1990s and heavily expanded after 2013, the facility has become emblematic of Egypt's punitive approach to political dissent. Despite its strict security infrastructure, it has consistently failed to meet minimum standards for detainee rights.

Scorpion holds numerous high-profile political prisoners in conditions that violate both domestic prison laws and international human rights obligations. Pretrial detainees are often placed in wings designated for political offenders, blurring legal distinctions and reinforcing patterns of repression. Among those detained are prominent activists including Ahmed Maher, Mohamed Adel, Ahmed Douma, Alaa Abdel Fattah, and Hamada Nubi—many of them imprisoned following protests and the controversial Shura Council case. The prison drew global condemnation following the death of former President Mohammed Morsi during his detention there, a case that highlighted the prison's inhumane conditions and intensified calls for accountability over Egypt's treatment of political prisoners.



This provision imposes a binding obligation on Egypt to actively prevent torture and abuse within its detention system, ensuring detainees' rights are protected in accordance with international human rights standards. Despite these clear legal protections, numerous human rights reports reveal a significant and troubling gap between the law and actual prison practices. Egyptian detention centers have increasingly become instruments of political repression rather than institutions of justice or rehabilitation. Arbitrary pretrial detention, in particular, has effectively morphed into a punitive measure imposed without final judicial verdicts, violating due process rights.

Organizations such as Women Journalists Without Chains, along with various local and international human rights groups, have meticulously documented widespread abuses in Egyptian prisons. These include deliberate medical neglect resulting in preventable deaths, prolonged solitary confinement intended to inflict psychological harm, systematic use of physical and psychological torture, arbitrary denial of family visitation rights, and deprivation of adequate food and medical care.

### **First: Deliberate Medical Negligence – The Silent Killer in Egyptian Prisons**

Deliberate medical negligence has emerged as one of the most lethal and systematic human rights violations within Egyptian prisons and detention centers. It constitutes a grave breach of detainees' right to life and health, as protected under international instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).

Reliable and consistent documentation—most notably by Women Journalists Without Chains—has revealed that at least **1,160** detainees died in Egyptian custody between **2013** and April **2025**. These deaths occurred under inhumane conditions, including severe overcrowding, poor ventilation, unhygienic environments, and a near-total absence of basic medical care.

Reports by credible human rights groups such as El Nadeem Center Against Violence and Torture and the Committee for Justice (CFJ) have confirmed that approximately **75%** of these deaths were the direct result of deliberate medical negligence. This data exposes a systematic policy of ill-treatment that may rise to the level of a crime against humanity under international law, particularly when the denial of care is knowingly employed as a tool of repression or punishment.

These conclusions are not just based on abstract statistics—they are supported by deeply personal and harrowing testimonies from victims' families. Among the most emblematic cases:



- **Dr. Essam El-Erian**, a senior Muslim Brotherhood figure, died in Al-Aqrab Prison in **2020** after being repeatedly denied access to essential medical treatment.
- **Hisham El-Haddad** succumbed in February **2025** following the cruel and deliberate postponement of a surgery deemed medically urgent.
- **Nabil Farfour** died from a severe stroke after receiving no emergency intervention, in violation of basic medical protocols.
- **Mahmoud Asaad** died in Khalifa Police Station under circumstances that strongly indicate a combination of torture and denial of care.

These individual tragedies reflect a much broader and institutionalized pattern of abuse. The Egyptian authorities' persistent denial of appropriate medical treatment to detainees—particularly political prisoners, journalists, and human rights defenders—constitutes a flagrant violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. This crisis demands urgent international action. The scale and consistency of medical negligence in Egyptian prisons warrant the immediate establishment of an independent, transparent international investigation. Those responsible for implementing or condoning this deadly policy must be held to account. Egypt must also be compelled to fulfill its legal obligations to:

- Provide immediate, non-discriminatory, and adequate medical care to all detainees;
- End the use of healthcare denial as a punitive measure;
- Open detention facilities to independent monitoring mechanisms, including international human rights bodies.

Without decisive intervention, these systemic violations will continue to claim innocent lives and erode the very foundations of justice and human dignity. The following table outlines the most common categories of medical and health-related violations documented in several of Egypt's most notorious prisons. It offers a grim snapshot of the conditions endured by thousands of detainees—among them prisoners of conscience, human rights activists, and independent journalists—whose only "crime" was to challenge or criticize the prevailing power structure.



**Table 2: Classification of Violations by Prison**

Prison Name	Main Violation Type	Additional Notes
Badr 3	Medical Negligence, Solitary Confinement, Visit Denial	Notably witnessed Alaa Gamal's suicide attempt.
Al-Aqrab (Scorpion)	Prolonged Solitary Confinement, Visit Denial	Essam El-Erian died after being denied treatment.
Wadi El-Natrun	Overcrowding, Denial of Medical Treatment	Reports indicate a high prevalence of respiratory infections.
Tora Prison	Overcrowding, Torture During Medical Examination	Primarily serves as the intake facility for new detainees.
Qanater Women's Prison	Sexual Harassment, Inadequate Medical Care	Cases of Israa Abdel Fattah and Aya Hegazy are particularly concerning.

The table presents a classification of human rights violations occurring in various prisons across Egypt, highlighting the systematic issues faced by detainees. Each facility exhibits distinct forms of abuse, ranging from medical negligence and solitary confinement to overcrowding and inadequate medical care. For instance, Badr 3 is noted for severe medical negligence and has been the site of alarming incidents, such as Alaa Gamal's suicide attempt. Al-Aqrab prison has similarly faced scrutiny for prolonged solitary confinement, which contributed to the tragic death of Essam El-Erian due to denied medical treatment. Wadi El-Natrun is characterized by overcrowding, leading to a concerning rise in respiratory infections among inmates. Tora Prison, designed for the intake of new detainees, suffers from overcrowding and reports of torture during medical examinations. Lastly, Qanater El Khayereya Women's Prison highlights the grave issues of sexual harassment and inadequate medical care, with cases like those of Israa Abdel Fattah and Aya Hegazy exemplifying the urgent need for reform. This classification underscores the critical need for immediate intervention to address these violations and uphold the rights and dignity of all detainees.



## Second: Systematic and Deadly Violations – A Documented Overview

Women Journalists Without Chains, together with partner organizations such as the Committee for Justice, has documented at least **1,160** deaths among detainees in official detention facilities across Egypt between **2013** and April **2025**. In **2024** alone, more than **50** political prisoners died in custody, as reported by Women Journalists Without Chains. The vast majority of these deaths resulted from severe medical neglect, amid a persistent climate of impunity and inadequate oversight of detention centers.

These figures encompass deaths in public prisons, National Security Agency headquarters, police stations, and Central Security Forces camps—highlighting both the scale of the crisis and the range of agencies implicated in detainee welfare. Human rights analyses reveal a deeply troubling pattern: deliberate medical negligence emerges as the leading cause of death, followed by direct torture and degrading detention conditions. These findings point to grave violations of detainees' fundamental rights, as guaranteed by Egyptian law and international standards—including the rights to life, health, and humane treatment.

Below, you will find detailed data and an illustrative table outlining the percentage breakdown of each cause of death, based on verified human rights reports. These alarming statistics underscore the urgent need for transparent, independent investigations to ensure accountability and bring an end to the prevailing culture of impunity.

**Table 3: Documented Causes of Detainee Deaths (2013–2025)**

Cause of Death	Percentage
Medical Negligence	75%
Torture	15%
Inhumane Detention Conditions	10%



Reports from leading rights groups—including Women Journalists Without Chains and the Committee for Justice—reveal a troubling pattern of deaths within Egypt's detention system. The overwhelming majority of these cases are linked to chronic medical neglect, while torture and abusive conditions such as overcrowding and deprivation also contribute significantly. This evidence points to a systematic disregard for the basic rights of detainees and signals deep failures in official oversight. Egyptian authorities, including the Ministry of Interior and relevant security bodies, are obligated to protect the well-being and dignity of those in their custody. Yet, recurring deaths from preventable causes demonstrate a consistent breach of both national laws and Egypt's obligations under international agreements, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture.

Deaths resulting from medical neglect, torture, or poor detention conditions represent not only administrative failures but also serious violations of the prohibition on torture and ill-treatment. Addressing these abuses requires independent and transparent investigations to identify those responsible and to ensure fair accountability. Justice for victims and their families hinges on such measures. The report calls for urgent action to improve prison conditions, ensure access to adequate medical care, and eradicate all forms of mistreatment. It also urges the international community and rights organizations to intensify monitoring and pressure on Egyptian authorities to fully comply with their obligations under international law. Without meaningful intervention and reform, these grave violations will continue to fuel an ongoing human rights crisis.

### Third: Widespread and Systematic Abuse in Egyptian Detention Facilities

Numerous reports by reputable human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch and the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, have exposed a persistent and systemic pattern of abuse in Egypt's prisons and National Security detention centers. These violations—rooted in institutional practice rather than isolated incidents—reflect the routine use of physical and psychological torture to extract confessions or to humiliate and break the will of detainees. Such conduct flagrantly breaches Egypt's obligations under the International Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.



**Physical Torture:** Victims have reported brutal techniques employed by security forces, including beatings with cables and heavy boots, electric shocks to sensitive areas, and prolonged suspension by wrists or ankles. Detainees face extreme sleep deprivation, painful stress positions, and denial of basic necessities like food and water, all used as tools of coercion. Additionally, survivors recount harrowing instances of sexual violence, including rape and assault, which represent gross violations of international human rights law and are subject to no statute of limitations.

**Psychological Torture:** According to testimonies from relatives of detainees, authorities employ prolonged solitary confinement as a systematic method to isolate individuals from the outside world. This practice results in severe psychological issues, including anxiety disorders, panic attacks, and deep depression, often leading to suicidal thoughts. Such actions clearly violate the minimum standards for prisoner treatment outlined in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules (the Nelson Mandela Rules). The repetitive and widespread nature of these violations across various detention facilities indicates a systematic approach that could lead to international legal accountability.

In Egypt's prison system, solitary confinement has evolved into a strategic tool of repression. Rather than serving its internationally accepted function as a short-term disciplinary measure, it is systematically used to exert psychological domination and erode detainees' mental resilience. Human rights groups—including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International—have documented how authorities employ long-term isolation to break prisoners' spirits, in practices that constitute psychological torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

This tactic is not theoretical. Prisoners are routinely locked in airless, windowless cells for prolonged periods, sometimes lasting months or even years. One of the most emblematic cases is that of activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, who was subjected to forced solitary confinement in a high-security prison from 2019 until early 2022. Denied sunlight, exercise, and family visits, his treatment exemplifies the punitive nature of Egypt's isolation regime. He remains imprisoned today.



First-hand accounts gathered by Women Journalists Without Chains indicate that prisoners are sometimes barred from any verbal or visual contact with others in their ward—a form of deliberate sensory deprivation designed to dehumanize and humiliate. Families report that prison authorities use threats of physical violence, obscene insults, and intimidation against detainees and their relatives, turning communication into a weapon of psychological warfare. Some detainees have been forced to witness the abuse of fellow inmates or to endure the constant sound of others being tortured nearby—tactics clearly intended to sustain a state of fear and helplessness inside prison walls.

In prisons such as Scorpion and Badr 3, extended bans on visitation and contact with family members have become a systematic policy targeting political detainees. The absence of any human connection for years amounts to a calculated form of silent psychological abuse. Journalists Esraa Abdel Fattah and Solafa Magdy have shared accounts of repeated denial of visitation and invasive, humiliating searches at Qanater Women's Prison. Amnesty International has confirmed that most political detainees in Egypt are entirely cut off from their families in blatant defiance of international human rights obligations.

Testimonies gathered from legal professionals and families of detainees at facilities like Wadi El-Natrun and Borg al-Arab reveal extreme overcrowding. Cells designed for 30 prisoners are routinely crammed with more than 70. In some cases, 40 individuals share spaces as small as 20 square meters, with insufficient ventilation and barely enough food to survive. These degrading living conditions fall far below international minimum standards for the treatment of prisoners. Poor nutrition, lack of air circulation, and the absence of adequate healthcare leave prisoners vulnerable to infectious diseases, chronic illness, and even death. These systemic failures—rooted not in resource scarcity but in punitive policy—represent a fundamental breach of Egypt's legal responsibilities to safeguard the health and dignity of those it detains.



## Chapter Three:

### Mapping Egypt's Political Prisons Locations and Institutional Role

Egypt's network of political prisons has expanded dramatically since 2013, forming a sprawling system of detention facilities that reflects not reform but the entrenchment of state repression in a more institutionalized and systematic form. While these facilities are often outfitted with high-level security infrastructure, they routinely fall short of even the most basic human rights safeguards. Rather than serving rehabilitative or justice-oriented purposes, these prisons function as instruments of political control and coercion.

Women Journalists Without Chains has compiled a detailed list of key detention sites central to Egypt's political imprisonment apparatus. This mapping is based on firsthand testimonies, verified human rights documentation, and on-the-ground analysis. The organization's team conducted a comparative review of these findings against the reports of leading international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). This rigorous process strengthens the credibility of the conclusions drawn and provides a solid foundation for international accountability efforts.



## Tora Prison 992 Maximum-Security (Scorpion 1 & 2): Egypt's Most Notorious Detention Facility

Located within the Tora Prison Complex south of Cairo, Tora Prison 992—better known as Scorpion 1 and 2—is one of Egypt's most infamous high-security detention centers. Established in the mid-1990s and heavily expanded after 2013, the facility has become emblematic of Egypt's punitive approach to political dissent. Despite its strict security infrastructure, it has consistently failed to meet minimum standards for detainee rights.

Scorpion holds numerous high-profile political prisoners in conditions that violate both domestic prison laws and international human rights obligations. Pretrial detainees are often placed in wings designated for political offenders, blurring legal distinctions and reinforcing patterns of repression. Among those detained are prominent activists including Ahmed Maher, Mohamed Adel, Ahmed Douma, Alaa Abdel Fattah, and Hamada Nubi—many of them imprisoned following protests and the controversial Shura Council case. The prison drew global condemnation following the death of former President Mohammed Morsi during his detention there, a case that highlighted the prison's inhumane conditions and intensified calls for accountability over Egypt's treatment of political prisoners.





## Badr 3 Prison

Located along the Cairo–Suez Road, Badr 3 Prison is part of the Badr Prison Complex and operates under the oversight of Egypt's National Security Agency. Established in late 2021 as part of a supposed prison "modernization" initiative, it has rapidly become notorious for housing political prisoners in brutal and unlawful conditions. Despite being newly built, Badr 3 fails to adhere to international standards, instead becoming emblematic of widespread abuse.

One of its notable detainees is Dr. Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, a prominent opposition leader. In March 2025, Mohamed Hassan Hilal tragically died in custody due to alleged medical neglect, as reported by Women Journalists Without Chains based on family testimonies. His death represents a serious violation of the right to life as stipulated in Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Additionally, accounts reveal that Alaa Gamal attempted suicide in response to extended isolation and lack of family contact, highlighting clear violations of the Nelson Mandela Rules regarding prisoner treatment.





## Wadi Natrun Prison (Wadi Natrun Rehabilitation and Reform Complex)

Wadi El Natrun Prison, situated on the Cairo–Alexandria Desert Road, operates under the oversight of the Ministry of Interior and the National Security Agency. Reports reveal ongoing gross violations against detainees within this facility, which accommodates both political and criminal prisoners. Notable cases include Mohamed Ehab Moussa, who suffers from chronic kidney disease and is denied essential medical care, and Magdy Abdo El Shabrawy, who died in Badr 3 Prison due to medical negligence.

Testimonies from victims' families, gathered by Women Journalists Without Chains, highlight a climate of unrest within the prison, marked by protests and widespread hunger strikes. Detainees face systematic ill-treatment, including arbitrary placement in disciplinary cells, denial of family visits, and access to contaminated drinking water, all of which pose serious health risks.





## Borg al-Arab Prison

Borg al-Arab Prison is one of Egypt's largest high-security prisons, located in West Alexandria. Established in **2004** to accommodate the increasing number of inmates, especially after Hadra Prison reached capacity, it houses both political and criminal detainees. Notably, it became known for holding members of the Muslim Brotherhood after **2013**.

The prison is situated in a desert area and is recognized for its strict security measures, accommodating inmates accused of serious crimes. Its proximity to the former President Hosni Mubarak's summer retreat has led to heightened security protocols, causing discontent among local residents. Conditions within the prison are inhumane, with over **20** inmates crammed into a four-square-meter cell, exacerbating suffering and neglect. This has led some detainees to hunger strike in protest against the deteriorating conditions.





## 10th of Ramadan Prison Complex (1, 2, and 6)

Located in al-Sharqia Governorate, just 60 kilometers northeast of Cairo, the 10th of Ramadan Prison Complex (Prisons 1, 2, and 6) was inaugurated in 2023 as part of Egypt's so-called "modern prison model." Despite official claims of reform, credible human rights monitoring—such as reports from the Egyptian Front for Human Rights—indicates that this facility replicates, rather than corrects, the entrenched abuses of Egypt's carceral system. The complex operates under the direct authority of the National Security Agency.

Detainees and their families report ongoing violations, including blanket restrictions on family visits, inadequate nutrition limited to two meals per day of minimal content, poor ventilation and lighting, and a complete absence of heating during the winter—conditions that may constitute cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment under international law. The facility has also been linked to unexplained deaths in custody. Engineer Hisham al-Haddad died in February 2025 while imprisoned, and fellow detainee Nabil Farfour died after being forcibly transferred to the National Security headquarters in Damanhour. These incidents raise grave concerns regarding violations of the right to life and physical integrity, and demand urgent, transparent, and independent investigations in line with international human rights standards.





## Police Stations and Central Security Compounds

**Abu Zaabal Prison:** Situated northeast of Cairo in Qalyubia Governorate, Abu Zaabal Prison has become a powerful symbol of widespread human rights violations in Egypt. In **2013**, it was the site of a horrific event now known as the "Abu Zaabal Massacre," where **37** political detainees lost their lives due to gas suffocation inside a prison transport vehicle. This brutal act represented a severe breach of the right to life and protection from torture, directly contravening Egypt's obligations under international human rights treaties.

Reports from rights groups reveal that prisons like Abu Zaabal have evolved into key instruments of authoritarian control, designed to crush political opposition and stifle independent voices. The line separating standard detention facilities from security compounds has essentially vanished, as both are now synonymous with systematic abuse. These violations persist beyond the reach of judicial oversight or credible human rights monitoring, reinforcing a culture of impunity and posing a profound threat to human dignity and the rule of law.





## Major Prisons and Detention Centers in Egypt



(Source: Egyptian Front for Human Rights)



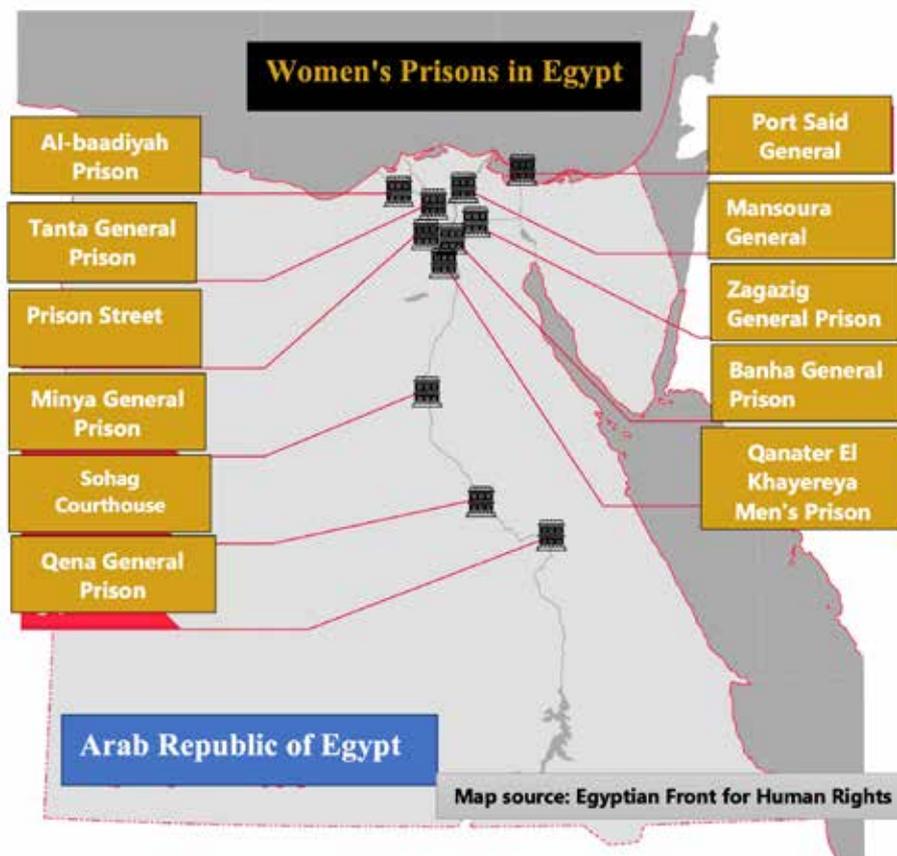
## Chapter Four:

### Women in Egyptian Prisons – The Reality of Compound Violations

Since July 2013, Egypt has witnessed a systematic campaign of repression against women, particularly human rights defenders and public activists. Documented by Women Journalists Without Chains, Human Rights Watch, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, and Committee for Justice, hundreds of women have been arbitrarily detained in facilities including al-Qanater, Badr 3, and Damanhour prisons, as well as in women's wards in Zagazig and Tanta.

Testimonies and verified reports confirm that detained women are subjected to severe physical and psychological abuse, sexual violence, deliberate medical neglect, and degrading treatment—amounting to torture. These violations contravene Egypt's international obligations under CEDAW, the ICCPR, and international humanitarian law.

Evidence indicates that such abuses are not isolated incidents but part of a deliberate state policy aimed at silencing female dissent, particularly following the 2011 Revolution. Despite official claims of reform, conditions remain dire, with institutionalized cruelty and gender-based discrimination prevalent across detention facilities. The systemic targeting of women underscores the urgent need for international accountability and protection of fundamental rights in Egypt.





**Table 4: Some activists and journalists who are still detained and have previously been detained.**

Name	Major Violations	Current Status
<b>Israa Abdel Fattah</b> Journalist and Political Activist	Torture during detention, suffocation, hanging, and beating	Released with travel restrictions on July 18, 2021
<b>Sanaa Seif Abdel Fattah</b> Human Rights Activist	Imprisoned for peaceful protests, denied visits and medical care	Released in December 2021
<b>Radwa Mohammed Farid</b> Political Content Creator Activist	Arrested for videos critical of the president, denied medical treatment	Currently detained
<b>Aya Kamal Eldin</b> Human Rights Activist from Alexandria	Beaten at National Security facilities, denied visits	Currently detained
<b>Marwa Arafa</b> Activist and Translator	Over 3 years in pretrial detention without trial, denied medical care	Currently detained



## Patterns of Torture and Abuse Against Female Detainees in Egypt

Female detainees in Egypt face a broad spectrum of violations that range from psychological intimidation to severe physical abuse. These abuses are neither isolated nor accidental; they reflect a systematic pattern that violates Egypt's international obligations under treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention against Torture (CAT), and the Nelson Mandela Rules.

The violations can be broadly categorized into the following areas:

### First: Sexual Violence, Physical Assault, and Verbal Degradation

The treatment of women in detention—whether in formal prisons or informal security centers—has been consistently characterized by gross misconduct and inhumane treatment. Key documented practices include:

#### ◆ Degrading and Intrusive Body Searches:

Multiple testimonies indicate that female detainees are routinely subjected to full-body strip searches by unqualified personnel, often in the absence of privacy or female medical professionals. These practices flagrantly violate the detainees' dignity and contravene the Nelson Mandela Rules on the treatment of prisoners.

#### ◆ Physical Harassment During Medical Examinations:

In 2020, UN experts submitted a memorandum to the Egyptian government highlighting cases of unjustified physical abuse during routine medical checks—especially in Qanater Women's Prison—exacerbating both physical harm and psychological trauma.

#### ◆ Threats of Sexual Violence as Psychological Torture:

Reports from the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (2019) and Human Rights Watch (2023) confirm the systematic use of sexual threats—particularly during interrogations at National Security headquarters—as a means to intimidate detainees, extract confessions, or force cooperation. This tactic constitutes a form of psychological torture under international law.

These acts not only violate international conventions but also reflect an institutional culture of impunity. Immediate reforms are necessary to ensure criminal accountability, independent investigations, and survivor-centered remedies.



### Second: Denial of Basic Healthcare

Female detainees in Egypt face systematic medical neglect, in violation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the UN Mandela Rules. Key violations include:

#### ◆ Lack of Medical Care:

Women are denied regular health checkups and essential care during pregnancy and childbirth. Cases of unsupervised deliveries in prison cells have been documented, endangering lives.

#### ◆ Restricted Access to Medication

Authorities prohibit detainees from receiving necessary medications, especially for chronic gynecological conditions, leading to serious health deterioration.

#### ◆ Hygiene Supply Deprivation:

Sanitary products are often withheld or sold at up to three times their market price, amounting to exploitation and degrading treatment.

These practices reflect gender-based discrimination and institutional neglect. Immediate measures are needed to ensure access to adequate healthcare, allow personal medication, and provide essential hygiene supplies at no cost.

### Third: Harsh Detention Conditions and Isolation

Women detainees in Egypt are held under severe and degrading conditions that violate international human rights standards. Key patterns include:

#### ◆ Solitary Confinement and Psychological Isolation:

Authorities systematically use prolonged solitary confinement as a punitive measure, causing significant psychological harm. This practice constitutes cruel, inhuman treatment under international law and is prohibited as a routine disciplinary tool.

#### ◆ Restricted Contact with the Outside World:

Female detainees face arbitrary bans on communication, including denial of books, newspapers, and personal hygiene items. Legal and family visits are often restricted without justification, compounding detainees' mental distress and undermining their right to legal counsel and family contact.

#### Fourth: Discrimination in Treatment

Women detainees in Egypt face discriminatory practices in violation of the Nelson Mandela Rules and international human rights law. Key concerns include:

##### ◆ Harsher Treatment of Political Prisoners:

Testimonies indicate that political detainees—especially journalists and activists—are subjected to stricter security measures, limited communication, and restricted visitation, compared to criminal detainees. This differential treatment violates the principle of non-discrimination in detention.

##### ◆ Financial Exploitation of Poor Detainees:

Economically disadvantaged women are often extorted by prison staff or fellow inmates, forced to pay for access to basic needs such as food and sanitary supplies. This practice constitutes degrading treatment and breaches Egypt's obligations to prevent exploitation and uphold human dignity.

### Figures and Statistics on Detained Women (2013-2025)



## 276

**Total Number of Politically Detained Women**  
WJWC, Committee for Justice and Human Rights Egypt's Post



**21 cases (2017-2022), including 19 women and 2 girls**

Human Rights Watch



**44 women appeared before the Supreme State Security Prosecution**

Al-Shihab for Human Rights



## Prominent Testimonies from Former Female Prisoners

### ◆ **Aya Kamal El-Din Hussein:**

In a case documented by Committee for Justice, former political detainee Aya Kamal El-Din Hussein—held in Qanater El Khayereya Women's Prison under Case No. 93 of 2023 (Supreme State Security)—testified to being sexually harassed by a female prison guard. Her statement was delivered during a virtual detention renewal session before the Badr Criminal Court.

Following her disclosure, the prison administration reportedly imposed retaliatory punitive measures, including forced relocation, as a form of reprisal for speaking out. This response reflects a broader pattern in which women who report abuse inside detention facilities face further mistreatment or isolation.

Such actions violate multiple international legal guarantees, including the right to personal integrity, the prohibition of retaliation against complainants, and the right to a fair trial, as protected under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Mandela Rules).

### ◆ **Unnamed Activist:**

In testimony collected by the Without Restrictions team, a female activist reported giving birth inside prison without supervision from a qualified gynecologist, resulting in severe health complications. This incident highlights the systemic denial of adequate maternal healthcare and violates the basic medical rights of female detainees.

### ◆ **Israa Abdel Fattah:**

The prominent activist testified to being beaten, strangled, and suspended for 24 hours for refusing to unlock her personal phone. These acts constitute torture under the UN Convention against Torture, to which Egypt is a state party.

### ◆ **Hoda Abdel Moneim:**

A 63-year-old lawyer and human rights defender, Abdel Moneim was held beyond the legal pretrial detention limit and later sentenced under exceptional procedures. Despite suffering from severe health issues, including the risk of kidney failure, she was denied essential medical care, in violation of international norms governing the treatment of elderly and ill detainees.



#### ◆ **Aya Kamel:**

Arrested three times—most recently in **2022**—on repeated political charges, despite her deteriorating health and history of abuse in custody. She continues to suffer from systematic medical neglect, in violation of international standards for detainee healthcare.

#### ◆ **Sumaya Maher (29 years old):**

Forcibly disappeared for **70** days, subjected to torture, and repeatedly denied release despite court orders. She has now spent over three years in detention without family visits, in gross violation of her right to due process and humane treatment.

#### ◆ **Hassiba Mahsoub (55 years old):**

Endured **68** days of enforced disappearance and continues to face medical neglect—targeted not for her own actions, but due to her familial connection to a political opponent. This reflects a clear case of collective punishment, prohibited under international human rights law.

#### ◆ **Aisha Al-Shater:**

Detained under harsh prison conditions that led to bone marrow failure, Al-Shater was sentenced to **10** years by an exceptional court, raising grave concerns about judicial independence and fair trial standards in politically sensitive cases.

### Violation of International Legal Norms

The treatment of women in Egyptian prisons constitutes a serious violation of international human rights obligations, including those under the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners (Bangkok Rules). Documented abuses—ranging from sexual violence and medical neglect to arbitrary detention and degrading conditions—breach the rights to dignity, physical and mental integrity, and health, all protected under international law.

These violations are particularly severe in cases where children are held with their imprisoned mothers, with inadequate care and poor living conditions undermining the best interests of the child, a core principle of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Such practices contravene Articles **7** and **10** of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which prohibit torture and affirm the humane treatment of detainees.

The persistence of these abuses establishes state responsibility under international law. It is imperative for the international community and UN mechanisms to intensify oversight, demand accountability, and press for compliance with Egypt's legal obligations. Immediate action is needed to end these violations and safeguard the fundamental rights of women detainees and their children.



## Comparison Between International Standards and Practices in Egyptian Prisons

This report exposes a profound and systematic divergence between internationally recognized standards—particularly the United Nations Bangkok Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners—and the conditions prevailing in Egyptian prisons. Comprehensive documentation reveals persistent and egregious violations, including denial of adequate healthcare, systematic breaches of privacy, and neglect of the specific needs of women detainees. These violations represent a clear breach of Egypt's binding international human rights obligations and underscore an urgent and non-negotiable duty for Egyptian authorities to undertake immediate and substantive reforms. The following table presents a detailed juxtaposition of the Bangkok Rules' provisions against the documented realities within Egyptian detention facilities:



**Table 6: Comparison between the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Female Prisoners and the Practical Reality in Egypt**

Criterion	United Nations Rules (Bangkok Rules)	Practice in Egyptian Prisons (According to Documentation)
Respect for women's privacy during searches	Mandatory, carried out under the oversight of a specialized female physician.	Completely lacking; invasive and degrading searches are routinely carried out by unqualified personnel.
Women's healthcare	Full obligation to provide, including reproductive health services.	Routine deprivation of essential medical care, especially concerning gynecological conditions, pregnancy, and childbirth.
Protection of women prisoners from sexual violence	A top priority, with effective preventative measures required.	Threats of sexual violence during interrogations; inadequate protection provided.
Decent and humane detention conditions	Provision of healthy, safe, and appropriate conditions for women's needs.	Overcrowding, lack of hygiene, and inadequate ventilation and lighting.
Right to communicate with the outside world	Allowing regular visits and communication with family and lawyers.	Visits and communication are arbitrarily restricted or completely prevented.
Treatment of female prisoners with dignity and respect	Emphasis on humane treatment and non-discrimination.	Discrimination based on political and social background, with instances of severe mistreatment.
Provision for the special needs of mothers and children	Ensuring a suitable environment for mothers and their children and guaranteeing their care.	Cases of childbirth occurring in cells, with unsuitable conditions for accompanying children.



### A Critical Gap in Standards for Female Inmates

A review of Table (6) in the comparative report highlights a troubling and persistent gap between Egypt's prison practices and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Female Prisoners (Bangkok Rules). Documented evidence reveals systematic violations of women's rights in detention, reflecting a failure to meet basic international obligations.

International standards emphasize respect for privacy and dignity during searches, requiring procedures to be carried out by trained female professionals. However, reports document degrading, often violent searches by unqualified staff—violations that directly undermine prisoners' bodily integrity.

In terms of healthcare, the Bangkok Rules mandate comprehensive medical services, especially in reproductive health, prenatal care, and childbirth. Yet, Egyptian prisons continue to deny women access to basic gynecological care. Cases of childbirth in prison cells under unsanitary, inhumane conditions have been recorded, placing both mother and infant at serious risk.

The Bangkok Rules also call for strong safeguards against sexual violence. Despite this, human rights organizations report threats of sexual abuse used as psychological coercion during interrogations, illustrating the absence of protective mechanisms.

Detention conditions remain dire. Overcrowded cells, poor ventilation, inadequate lighting, and insufficient hygiene create an environment that is not only degrading but harmful to health. These conditions fall far short of the minimum standards for humane treatment.

Furthermore, prisoners' rights to family contact and legal counsel are routinely obstructed through arbitrary restrictions, intensifying isolation and legal disadvantage. Discriminatory treatment based on political affiliation is also reported, with some women subjected to harsher conditions and targeted abuse.

These practices represent a serious breach of Egypt's human rights commitments. The failure to implement the Bangkok Rules—particularly regarding protection from sexual violence, access to healthcare, and humane treatment—demands urgent international attention and corrective action to safeguard the rights and dignity of incarcerated women.



### Children Detained with Their Mothers: A Hidden Dimension of Abuse

The suffering of female political detainees in Egypt extends beyond their own hardship—it reaches their children, who are forced to live with them behind bars. These children are deprived of a safe, nurturing environment and denied access to education, adequate healthcare, and psychological stability. Many have known nothing but prison walls since birth, growing up in conditions unfit for human habitation. This practice constitutes a clear violation of international human rights and child protection standards and amounts to cruel and inhumane treatment, demanding urgent intervention.

#### First: Patterns of Violations Against Mothers and Children

##### ◆ Lack of Healthcare:

Detained children are routinely denied essential medical services, including regular vaccinations and pediatric care. This violates their right to health under both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Egypt's national legal obligations.

##### ◆ Inhumane Living Conditions:

Children are held in overcrowded, poorly ventilated, and unhygienic prison cells. There are no designated areas for play or physical activity, breaching minimum standards for child detention and well-being.

##### ◆ Denial of Education:

Despite reaching school age, many children receive no education or developmental support. This deprives them of a fundamental right enshrined in international conventions and further isolates them from the outside world.

##### ◆ Inadequate Nutrition:

Children are forced to subsist on food designed for adult prisoners, which fails to meet their nutritional needs. This severely compromises their physical and cognitive development, in violation of basic humanitarian standards.

##### ◆ Psychological Harm:

Witnessing violence, enduring prison conditions, and experiencing their mothers' suffering cause deep psychological trauma. Testimonies confirm that these children face sustained emotional harm—amounting to psychological violence under international law.



## Second: Documented Testimonies of Abuse in Detention

### Testimony from a Former Detainee at Qanater Women's Prison (EIPR, 2023):

A report by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) documents the psychological trauma endured by both female detainees and their children inside Qanater Women's Prison. One former political prisoner, identified under the pseudonym "Inas," recounted:

"My young daughter would cry at night, unable to understand why we were behind bars. She would ask me why we couldn't go home, and I had no way to explain it to her."

Additional accounts gathered by Journalists Without Restraints confirm that many detained mothers are arbitrarily denied access to essential supplies for their children—including baby formula and diapers. In some cases, families reported being forced to pay bribes to secure permission to deliver these basic necessities.

These testimonies reflect not isolated incidents but a broader, systematic pattern of neglect and abuse. They point to a climate of cruelty and deprivation that exacerbates the suffering of women and their children, and they call for immediate and impartial investigations, institutional accountability, and urgent remedial action.

### Third: Violations of International Standards: The Bangkok Rules and Beyond

The table below presents a direct comparison between international obligations—particularly the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules)—and the conditions documented in Egyptian detention centers regarding children living with their incarcerated mothers.

This comparative analysis exposes a serious breach of Egypt's international commitments. It highlights the failure to provide a safe, child-appropriate environment that meets even the most basic developmental, psychological, and physical needs of children in detention. These violations stand in clear contradiction to both the Bangkok Rules and the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, underscoring the urgency of meaningful reform and protective oversight.



**Table 8: Comparison Between International Standards and Actual Practices in Egyptian Prisons Regarding Children Living with Their Mothers**

Standard	Bangkok Rules Requirement	Observed Practice in Egypt
Childcare in Prison	A child-friendly environment that supports natural development must be provided.	Overcrowded and unsanitary prison cells.
Child's Stay with Mother	Allowed only up to a reasonable age, with proper health safeguards.	Children remain in prison with their mothers for years without adequate support.
Priority to Child in Ending Mother's Detention	Mothers should be released or transferred to appropriate facilities when they have caregiving responsibilities.	Early release is rare, even when the mother is the sole caregiver.

The Bangkok Rules emphasize the obligation of prison authorities to ensure that children accompanying their detained mothers are provided with an environment conducive to their physical, emotional, and educational development. This includes access to healthcare, proper nutrition, clean living conditions, and opportunities for learning and play.

In Egypt, however, documented practices show a consistent failure to meet these obligations. Children are kept in overcrowded, unsanitary cells, denied access to adequate medical care and education, and exposed to distressing prison conditions that endanger their psychological well-being. These conditions represent a serious breach of both the Bangkok Rules and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which clearly state that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions affecting them.

Prolonged detention of children alongside their mothers—often without access to the most basic rights—constitutes a form of systemic abuse and collective punishment. The failure to offer early release or transfer of caregiving mothers to more suitable alternatives further compounds the harm. This situation demands immediate intervention from both Egyptian authorities and the international community to protect these children from further harm. Measures should include the release or appropriate relocation of affected mothers and children, and the establishment of detention policies that are aligned with international standards and the best interests of the child.



## Chapter Five:

### Recommendations – Toward a Systemic Remedy for Pretrial Detention Abuses and Prison Violations in Egypt

Building on extensive legal analysis and documented violations, including torture, enforced disappearance, and systemic abuse of vulnerable groups such as women and children, the following recommendations are proposed for the Egyptian government, parliament, international organizations, and the global community. These steps aim to align Egypt's practices with its human rights obligations and ensure justice, accountability, and human dignity. Special attention is given to gender-specific abuses, including the targeting of women with threats of sexual violence and the neglect of reproductive healthcare.

#### First: Recommendations to the Egyptian Government

##### ◆ End the Practice of Case Recycling

- Immediately release detainees held beyond legal pretrial limits, particularly women and mothers.
- End the use of video conferencing in detention renewal hearings and ensure all detainees appear physically before a judge. Cease the use of these sessions as substitutes for meaningful judicial review.

##### ◆ Activate Judicial Oversight

- Ensure detention renewal sessions are substantive reviews, not formalities.
- Enforce Article 143 of the Criminal Procedure Code to prevent unlawful extensions. Judges must actively assess the necessity and legality of continued detention.

##### ◆ End Enforced Disappearance and Torture

- Present all arrestees to the Public Prosecution within 24 hours.
- Investigate and prosecute torture and threats of sexual violence, especially against women. Hold perpetrators accountable at all levels, including those responsible for the enforced disappearance and torture of women and minors.



### ◆ Improve Detention Conditions, Especially for Women and Children

- Provide comprehensive healthcare, including reproductive services, chronic illness treatment, and essential hygiene supplies for women.
- Ensure proper nutrition, vaccinations, and hygiene for children in custody with their mothers.
- Investigate deaths in custody through independent inquiries and publish findings transparently.
- Guarantee regular family visits without arbitrary restrictions. End degrading body searches, particularly against women, and ensure all necessary searches are conducted with respect for dignity and privacy.

### ◆ Guarantee the Right to Legal Defense

- Uphold access to legal counsel from the moment of arrest and enable confidential meetings.

## Second: Recommendations to the Egyptian Parliament

### ◆ Legislative Reform

- Amend the Criminal Procedure Law to restrict pretrial detention to exceptional cases.
- Set a six-month cap on all pretrial detention.
- Criminalize case recycling and prison abuses, including degrading treatment, harassment, and threats of sexual violence.
- Enact laws that uphold the Bangkok Rules and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### ◆ Strengthen Oversight

- Establish an independent parliamentary committee empowered to conduct unannounced inspections of all detention facilities, with publicly available reports.
- Ensure accountability through regular review of prosecution and detention reports.

### ◆ Advocacy and Legal Aid

- Provide specialized legal support to detainees and their families, particularly women and children, through lawyers with expertise in gender-based violence and juvenile rights.
- Launch media campaigns highlighting detention abuses and individual stories, emphasizing the plight of vulnerable groups.



### Third: Recommendations to International Organizations and the Global Community

#### ◆ Diplomatic Engagement

- Apply sustained pressure on Egypt to uphold human rights, with priority attention to the rights of women, children, and other vulnerable groups.
- Condition international aid and partnerships on measurable and verifiable improvements in Egypt's human rights record.

#### ◆ International Monitoring and Mechanisms

- Facilitate official and independent visits by UN and international human rights bodies to detention centers.
- Activate UN special procedures, including rapporteurs on torture, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and violence against women and children.

#### ◆ Accountability and Justice

- Encourage states to pursue universal jurisdiction in prosecuting grave abuses such as torture and enforced disappearance.
- Urge the UN Human Rights Council to establish an independent investigative mechanism to examine detainee deaths, torture, and gender-based violations in Egypt's detention system.

#### ◆ Support and Solidarity

- Provide psychosocial and material support to families of detainees, prioritizing those of women and children.
- Build broad-based advocacy networks to amplify calls for justice, accountability, and systemic reform.