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## **Written statement\* submitted by Committee for Justice, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 May 2025]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



# **Persistent Failure to Implement UPR Recommendations in Egypt: A Call for Genuine Reform**

## **Introduction**

Committee for Justice welcomes the recent Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Egypt and wishes to express its deep concern over the State's continued failure to implement core recommendations issued in previous cycles, particularly those concerning civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

Despite receiving 375 recommendations in the third UPR cycle in 2019 and receiving a similar number of recommendations during the fourth cycle from member States, Egypt has demonstrated a consistent pattern of non-compliance and disregard for its international human rights obligations. The gap between the government's declared commitments and its domestic practices has widened, resulting in a worsening human rights situation on the ground.

## **1. Ongoing Violations of Civil and Political Rights: Arbitrarily Detention and Enforced Disappearances**

Numerous recommendations have urged Egypt to end the practice of arbitrary detention, ensure access to fair trials, and cease the use of enforced disappearances. Nevertheless, the practice of detaining individuals without due process remains systemic. Thousands of individuals, including political opponents, journalists, human rights defenders, activists, and ordinary citizens who express their views, continue to be held in pretrial detention for months or years under the pretext of "pending investigations," often in relation to vaguely defined terrorism charges under the infamous anti-terrorism law No.94 of 2015.

We documented the practice of "recycling" cases, in which detainees are released from one case only to be charged in a new case based on similar facts, effectively circumventing legal limits on pretrial detention. Enforced disappearances, although routinely denied by the government, remain a tool employed by security agencies to silence dissent. Victims are often abducted, held incommunicado for extended periods ranging from a few days to several years, and subjected to torture before being presented before prosecutors.

## **2. Torture and Conditions of Detention**

Despite previous recommendations calling for investigations into torture allegations and for improving detention conditions, Egyptian civil society, regional and international human rights bodies confirmed the persistence of torture and ill-treatment in places of detention. Detainees are routinely subjected to beatings, electric shocks, stress positions, sexual harassment and prolonged solitary confinement.

In its May 2025 follow-up report, the UN Committee Against Torture concluded that Egypt had failed to take any meaningful steps to implement urgent recommendations from the 2023 concluding observations. It highlighted the continuing reliance on the Counter-Terrorism Law No. 94 of 2015 and the Anti-Terrorism Entities Law No. 8 of 2015 to justify excessive powers to security forces and the prosecution.

Conditions in detention centers remain inhumane, particularly in politically sensitive cases. The Badr Rehabilitation and Correction Center—touted by the authorities as a model for reform—has been the subject of alarming reports concerning lack of access to medical care, denial of family visits, lack of ventilation, and prolonged lockdowns. Inmates who attempted to protest their conditions have faced violent reprisals, including beatings and punitive transfers.

Right to Health Inside Detention Places remains a concern as Egypt accepted recommendations to improve access to quality healthcare, yet it remains underfunded and overstretched. Political prisoners and prisoners of conscience are regularly denied access to

adequate medical treatment, their lawyers are denied access to their medical records, and are routinely denied urgent medical treatment, often leading to irreversible health deterioration or death in custody. We documented 1297 deaths in custody inside detention places from mid-2013 until May 2025, with 16 deaths in 2025 only.

### **3. Freedom of Expression, Assembly, and Association**

The civic space in Egypt continues to shrink despite repeated calls from member States to protect fundamental freedoms. Journalists, bloggers, and online users face arrest and prosecution under vague laws criminalizing the dissemination of “false news” or undermining “state stability.” Independent media is nearly non-existent, and hundreds of websites remain blocked.

Freedom of peaceful assembly is severely curtailed through legislation that places undue restrictions on protests, including requirements for prior notification and broad discretionary powers to ban or disperse gatherings. Authorities have violently dispersed peaceful demonstrations and arrested participants under anti-terrorism and public order laws.

Freedom of association is equally under threat. Law No. 149 of 2019 on civil society organizations imposes strict restrictions on registration, foreign funding, and permissible activities. Despite some cosmetic amendments, the law continues to facilitate state interference in CSOs work. Many independent organizations are denied registration or subjected to burdensome investigations, while their staff face intimidation, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, travel bans, and asset freezes.

### **4. Human Rights Defenders and Reprisals**

Human rights defenders in Egypt continue to be the primary targets of state repression. Numerous defenders remain in detention or under surveillance, including lawyers, researchers, and the staff of independent human rights organizations. The government's reprisals against those who engage with UN human rights mechanisms remain a grave concern.

Egypt has ignored multiple calls from States and UN Special Rapporteurs to cease targeting HRDs and lift the retaliatory measures imposed against them. In many cases, defenders are prosecuted under national security or terrorism charges, while others are subjected to prolonged probation measures, restricted movement, and defamation campaigns in state media.

### **5. Right to Work and Labor Rights**

Egypt received multiple recommendations to protect labor rights and guarantee the right to strike and collective bargaining. However, workers who attempt to organize or protest for better wages and working conditions continue to face arbitrary dismissal or even arbitrary arrest by national security officers. The state suppresses labor activism by invoking national security justifications, and independent unions are routinely denied legal recognition.

In the past 6 months, we documented 62 cases in which striking workers were arrested or faced criminal prosecution for demanding minimum wage compliance or calling for improved workplace safety. State security bodies have also been involved in forcibly dispersing sit-ins and arresting labor leaders, particularly in state-owned enterprises.

### **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The Universal Periodic Review mechanism remains a vital tool for strengthening accountability and promoting the implementation of international human rights standards. However, its effectiveness is contingent on the genuine political will of States to take its outcomes seriously. Egypt's continued failure to implement past recommendations undermines the credibility of the UPR and the Council's broader mandate.

CFJ urges Egypt to adopt a transparent and inclusive national implementation plan for the recommendations received in the fourth UPR cycle. Such a plan must prioritize:

1. Ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all individuals held in arbitrary detention, including political opponents, prisoners of conscience, human rights defenders, lawyers, and others detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their fundamental rights.
  2. Guaranteeing fair trial rights and judicial independence
  3. Taking steps forward that lead to achieving justice, putting an end to the fabrication of charges and unfair trials, while respecting the minimum human rights standards in the treatment of prisoners within Egyptian detention facilities
  4. Reforming the counter-terrorism and civil society laws in line with international norms
  5. Protecting freedom of expression, assembly, and association
  6. Ensuring accountability for violations in detention centers
  7. Supporting the work of human rights defenders and ending reprisals
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