

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV)

UPR Submission

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Egypt



www.odvv.org

About ODVV

1. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-partisan organization in Special Consultative Status to ECOSOC. ODVV was established in 1988 in Tehran and has been active in the field of human rights and humanitarian activities.

2. ODVV is also associated to the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), a participatory of the NGOs Coalition for an International Court (based in New York), and national coordinator of the Global March Against Child Labor (based in New Delhi). ODVV has cooperated with international organizations in a variety of issues and has working relations with many NGOs in Iran and around the globe.

3. ODVV is also a member of the International Organization against Small and Light Weapons, the UN Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), the International Movement for a Just World (JUST), AMAN Network of Rehabilitation Centers in the Middle East and North Africa and International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT).

4. During the last 2 decades, we have done so many activities, mainly informative with regard to human rights and support of the victims of violence. Various human rights education courses, workshops, seminars, conferences have been held or co-held by ODVV for various sectors of society: civil society institutions and governmental organizations.

5. Other Activities:

- Participation in UN Commission on Human Rights annual sessions, and the new Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva. Written and oral statements on various items of the agenda are issued by ODVV.
- Internship for foreign students
- Publication of different books and booklets on human rights such as Rights of the Child, Racism, Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia. Publication of Defenders Newsletter (English), human rights news and developments bulletin (Farsi), Rights of the Child bulletin (Farsi)
- Daily electronic human rights newsletter in English and Farsi.

6. As a NGO active in human rights, ODVV has collected documents and data, through published information in news websites, and is providing the following report on the human rights situation of Egypt, with the aim of the improvement of the human rights situation.

1) Freedom of expression

7. Egypt seems to frequently abuse freedom of expression which is a fundamental human right that underpins most other rights and allows them to flourish. Egypt remains one of the worst jailers of journalists in the world with 20 journalists behind bars, 12 of them have not been convicted or sentenced for any crime.¹

8. By passing the “Cybercrime Law” authorities have been granted broader powers to restrict freedom of expression, violate citizens’ privacy, and jail online activists. The authorities blocked at least 496 websites², including those of independent newspapers. Security forces arrested at least 240 political activists and protesters between April and September 2017 for sending online posts that were considered as “insulting” the President or for participating in unauthorized protests.³

2) Torture and other ill-treatments

9. Prohibition of torture and ill treatment is an absolute principle in all legal systems. However, Egypt is in breach of its human rights obligations due to routine and systematic tortures that are being used in its prisons. Authorities, punish prisoners detained for politically motivated reasons by placing them in indefinite and prolonged solitary confinement. New regulations allow solitary confinement to be increased up to six months; a practice that can amount to torture or other ill-treatment. Prosecutors continue to use detainee confessions despite credible allegations they were coerced through torture. The authorities continue to operate with near-absolute impunity. Other forms of ill-treatment and medical negligence in prisons continue; dozens of prisoners died, often due to prison authorities refusing to transfer them to hospital for medical treatment.⁴

3) Situation of human rights defenders

10. As part of efforts to silence all critical voices, Egyptian authorities continue to restrict the work of human rights defenders. They frequently shut down NGOs which are active in supporting victims of torture and violence and criminal investigations are ongoing against human rights defenders. At least 28 leading rights activists have been banned from leaving the country. Furthermore, more than 10 individuals and 7 organizations have had their assets frozen.⁵

4) Minority rights

11. Religious minorities have reported an increase in discriminatory attacks. Egypt’s Christian community, which is the largest Christian minority in the Middle East, has suffered from legal and social discrimination for decades. For instance, in August 2018, security forces prevented dozens of Coptic Christians from praying in a house in Alfora village in Minya governorate, citing reasons

¹ <https://cpj.org/reports/2017/12/journalists-prison-jail-record-number-turkey-china-egypt.php>

² <https://afteegypt.org/en/right-to-know-2/publicationsright-to-know-right-to-know-2/2017/06/04/13069-afteegypt.html>

³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/egypt/report-egypt/>

⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/egypt/report-egypt/>

⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/09/20/egypt-ruling-risks-eradicating-human-rights-work>

of security.⁶ Also, armed groups in North Sinai killed seven Coptic Christians between 30 January and 23 February 2017, prompting an unprecedented internal displacement of at least 150 Coptic families.⁷ The authorities failed to offer them the necessary protection or appropriate compensation.

12. Shia Muslims are also subject to discrimination. On Ashura day in 2016, the doors of the Al-Hussein mosque were closed and access to the Mosque was officially denied. Similar incidents happened prior to 2011. The Ministry of Religious Endowments runs mosques in Egypt in accordance with Sunni doctrine and does not recognize Shia mosques or rituals.⁸

5) Death penalty

13. According to human rights law, the death penalty may be imposed only for the most serious crimes and can only be carried out pursuant to a valid judgment rendered by a competent court. In Egypt, ordinary and military courts continued to hand down death sentences following grossly unfair mass trials.^{9 10} Most of cases stemmed from alleged political violence.

14. As of September 2018, at least 29 Egyptians remain at imminent risk of execution after losing all of their appeal chances.¹¹

6) Women's Rights

15. Women's rights have been particularly affected as a consequence of the political polarization and high number of sexual and gender-based violence has been reported.¹² The effective participation of women and girls in different part of public sphere, such as education, work, health, economics and etc., has diminished due to continued impunity for gender-based violations and discrimination.¹³

7) Recommendations

16. ODVV calls for all individuals detained for participation in legitimate peaceful activities to be released and the media to be allowed to operate freely without fear of intimidation or abuse.

17. ODVV is concerned with the criminal justice system in Egypt, specially the large number of reports of frequent use of cruel, or degrading treatment and even torture. ODVV calls on Egypt to

⁶ <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/311494/Egypt/Politics-/Coptic-villagers-whose-homes-were-attacked-in-Miny.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/egypt-government-must-protect-coptic-christians-targeted-in-string-of-deadly-attacks-in-north-sinai/>

⁸ <http://cairoscene.com/ArtsAndCulture/Being-Shia-in-Cairo-The-Struggles-of-Commemorating-Ashura>

⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/16/egypt-morsy-death-sentence-follows-flawed-trials>

¹⁰ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2017/06/egypt-seven-men-facing-imminent-execution-after-being-tortured-in-custody/>

¹¹ <https://cihrs.org/egypt-announcing-the-campaign-to-end-the-death-penalty/?lang=en>

¹² <http://www.spiegel.de/international/tomorrow/almost-every-egyptian-woman-is-subjected-to-sexual-harassment-a-1198328.html>

¹³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/egypt/report-egypt/>

fulfill its human rights obligations and ensure full and effective protection of human rights defenders and activists.

18. ODVV calls on Egypt to strengthen measures, including the adoption of necessary legislation, to give effect to the rights enshrined in ICCPR, particularly the right to life.

19. ODVV urges the Egyptian government to ensure the human rights of women and adopt appropriate regulations to protect gender equality.

20. ODVV calls on Egypt to consider policies to empower women and pursue measures to eliminate discrimination against women and girls.