



1. Are minors dealt with differently in Egyptian courts to adults? If so, how is a minor described?

The term ‘minor’ in Egypt refers to anyone less than 18 years old.¹ Since March 2008, minors have been treated differently to adults in some aspects of Egyptian legal proceedings. Amendments to Egypt’s Child Law passed in 2008 stipulate that death sentences and life imprisonment can no longer be imposed on minors, and that minors must be segregated from adults in detention centres. However, the amendments do not prohibit minors from being detained.

An article in the *Al-Ahram Weekly* highlights amendments to Egypt’s Child Law 12/1996 that were proposed in mid-2007. As part of the amendments, “Article 115 will be changed to prohibit death sentences and life imprisonment being imposed on defendants less than 18 while Article 116 will stipulate that minors be segregated from adults in detention centres”.² Another amendment restricts the length of time that a person under the age of 15 can be sentenced to a juvenile detention centre to a maximum of one week.³

Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak signed these amendments on 4 March 2008.⁴ The law was subsequently passed by parliament, despite objections from Islamic opposition group the Muslim Brotherhood, who argued “that the law violates Islamic law and imposes foreign values on Egyptians”, particularly those articles which prevent children from being tried as adults.⁵ Human Rights Watch claimed in September 2009 that although the amendments included positive reforms, the government fails to monitor detention conditions for minors, investigate cases where minors have been arbitrarily arrested or abused whilst in custody, or bring to justice those responsible.⁶

In addition, the amendments do not prohibit minors from being detained. For example, a 2010 news article describes the detentions of four Coptic Christian minors between the ages of 13 and 17, who were arrested following an attack by Muslim rioters on a large group of Christians in March. Two of the minors claimed that “the Security forces ‘tricked’ them by saying that they would take them to the police station to identify the

¹ ‘Child Shield’ 2008, *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, Issue No. 888, 13-19 March

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/888/eg4.htm> - Accessed 25 June 2010 – Attachment 1

² Leila, R. 2007, ‘Putting Children First’, *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, Issue No. 847, 31 May – 6 June

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/847/eg11.htm> - Accessed 25 June 2010 – Attachment 2

³ ‘Child Shield’ 2008, *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, Issue No. 888, 13-19 March

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/888/eg4.htm> - Accessed 25 June 2010 – Attachment 1

⁴ ‘Mubarak signs child law amendments’ 2008, *Egypt News*, 5 March

<http://news.egypt.com/en/200803051761/news/-egypt-news/egypt-mubarak-signs-child-law-amendments.html> - Accessed 25 June 2010 – Attachment 3

⁵ Stack, L. 2008, ‘Egypt’s child protection law sparks controversy’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 24 July

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2008/0724/p05s01-wome.html> – Accessed 25 June 2010 – Attachment 4

⁶ Human Rights Watch 2009, ‘Universal Periodic Review Submission: Egypt’, September – Attachment 5

Muslim suspects and would bring them back home within half an hour". The minors were also allegedly harassed and beaten by the police, however were released after Coptic priests intervened on their behalf.⁷

In January 2010, following a shooting attack on Coptic Christians in Nag Hammadi, "nearly 100 Coptic teenagers as young as 15 were arrested randomly without warrants from the streets and their homes in Nag Hammadi and the neighboring [sic] villages... The arrested youngsters were tortured and released without charges after nearly one week, except for 15 who were charged with "rioting and resisting the authorities" on January 24, and sent to detention camps... On February 20, 2010, the courts dismissed the appeals filed against the detention".⁸

Attachments

1. 'Child Shield' 2008, *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, Issue No. 888, 13-19 March <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/888/eg4.htm> - Accessed 25 June 2010.
2. Leila, R. 2007, 'Putting Children First', *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, Issue No. 847, 31 May – 6 June <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/847/eg11.htm> - Accessed 25 June 2010.
3. 'Mubarak signs child law amendments' 2008, *Egypt News*, 5 March <http://news.egypt.com/en/200803051761/news/-egypt-news/egypt-mubarak-signs-child-law-amendments.html> - Accessed 25 June 2010.
4. Stack, L. 2008, 'Egypt's child protection law sparks controversy', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 24 July <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2008/0724/p05s01-wome.html> – Accessed 25 June 2010.
5. Human Rights Watch 2009, 'Universal Periodic Review Submission: Egypt', September. (CISNET Egypt CX239950)
6. 'Egyptian state security arrests Christians assaulted by Muslim mob' 2010, *Assyrian International News Agency (AINA)*, 18 March. (CISNET Egypt CX241200)
7. Abdelmassih, M. 2010, 'Egyptian State Security Accused of Torturing Christian Youth', National American Coptic Assembly website, source: *Assyrian International News Agency (AINA)*, 23 February.

⁷ 'Egyptian state security arrests Christians assaulted by Muslim mob' 2010, *Assyrian International News Agency (AINA)*, 18 March – Attachment 6

⁸ Abdelmassih, M. 2010, 'Egyptian State Security Accused of Torturing Christian Youth', National American Coptic Assembly website, source: *Assyrian International News Agency (AINA)*, 23 February – Attachment 7