



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
30 October 2024  
English  
Original: Arabic

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**Human Rights Council**  
**Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review**  
**48th session**  
20–31 January 2025

## **National report submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21\***

**Egypt**

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



## Introduction

1. Egypt is making steady progress on promoting and protecting human rights in their full sense. It places human rights at the heart of government policies, programmes and strategies to make sure that everyone enjoys their constitutional rights without discrimination. That helps promote the values of citizenship, democracy and the rule of law, and achieve development. Egypt is stepping up efforts to overcome challenges. It is modernizing the legislative and institutional infrastructure and building capacities in cooperation with all stakeholders. That has made for tangible and sustainable de jure and de facto improvements.
2. It gives Egypt great pleasure to present its report for the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review. We look forward to constructive discussions with the Council to promote mutual understanding of how to fulfil obligations under international agreements and instruments, and bolster national efforts to advance human rights in Egypt and around the world.
3. During the third round, the Government received 372 recommendations, of which 270 were accepted in full, 31 in part, and 30 not supported. Of those, 15 were factually incorrect, 24 were already implemented, and 2 were hostile. The Government presented its position in A/HRC/43/16/Add.1 of March 2020.
4. The present report surveys measures taken to implement the recommendations accepted by the Government in the third round. It reflects the major developments in the country since 2019, especially the momentum generated by the launch of the first National Human Rights Strategy in September 2021. Efforts are ongoing to implement its objectives grouped under four main themes: civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities, youth and older persons; and human rights acculturation and capacity-building.

## Methodology for preparing the report

5. Complementing the previous report, the present report is also the outcome of a participatory and inclusive methodology that involved close consultations with various national stakeholders. That included human rights and civil-society institutions, a number of public figures, and the Board of Trustees of the National Dialogue. The present report was prepared under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights and the relevant ministries. The recommendations accepted by Egypt in 2019 were classified and circulated to all Government agencies and national institutions. A series of meetings were then held with those agencies to follow up on implementation of the recommendations and the challenges they encountered. The draft report was reviewed by all stakeholders and was revised to take into account a number of comments received by the Government. The voluntary midterm report submitted in March 2023 served as an important basis for the preparation of the present report.
6. The present report addresses national efforts under 14 headings; developments in the institutional framework; developments in the legislative framework; cooperation with international and regional human rights mechanisms; civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development; empowerment of women; the rights of the child; the rights of persons with disabilities and older persons; empowerment of youth; anti-corruption; refugees and migration and expatriate affairs; combating illegal migration and human trafficking; respect for human rights in the context of counter-terrorism; and spreading a culture of human rights.
7. **Major developments since the last periodic review**
  - (a) Efforts continue to develop the institutional and legislative human rights framework.
  - (b) The first human rights strategy was launched, for the 2021–2026 period. It will serve as a national roadmap and an important self-development tool.

- (c) The independence of the specialized national councils has been reinforced.
- (d) Cooperation has been stepped up with international and regional human rights mechanisms.
- (e) The state of emergency was ended in October 2021.
- (f) The Presidential Amnesty Committee was reconvened and expanded in April 2022.
- (g) The National Dialogue was launched in April 2022.
- (h) Parliamentary elections were held in October 2020; presidential elections were held in December 2023.
- (i) Prisons and prison conditions have been improved.
- (j) The working environment for civil society has been improved; outstanding cases have been resolved.
- (k) Implementation has continued on numerous initiatives and programmes to promote economic, social and cultural rights, despite the economic challenges.

## Measures taken to implement the recommendations

### A. Developments in the institutional framework

8. In line with the recommendations of the third round, Egypt has continued its efforts to strengthen its institutional human rights framework. The Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights was established by Prime Ministerial decision. It includes all ministries and government bodies involved with human rights, and is chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The committee is responsible for monitoring implementation by Egypt of its international obligations under the relevant international conventions and protocols and proposing the necessary legislative measures and procedures. Its technical secretariat collects and analyses data and information to create a database on recommendations received by Egypt through international and regional mechanisms and to follow up on progress. It also reviews human rights legislation and policies, and follows up implementation of national human rights strategies. The Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights also provides technical support to various national authorities, especially for creating specialized human rights units within ministries and in the governorates. It provides training in disseminating a culture of human rights and incorporating them into relevant policies and programmes.

9. In September 2021, Egypt launched its first National Human Rights Strategy (2021–2026). The launch was attended by the President of the Republic, reflecting the importance the State attaches to its commitment to implement the Strategy's objectives. It was prepared through a consultative approach that included ministries, government agencies and non-governmental organizations. Meetings were held with civil society representatives, and use was made of international experiences and best practices from countries around the world. The strategy sets forth a comprehensive and serious approach to promoting human rights and basic freedoms. It takes into account both opportunities and challenges relating to its targets under the four main themes. It aims to make progress on three parallel and complementary tracks: legislative development, institutional development, and human rights capacity-building. The first and second reports on the implementation of the strategy were issued in December 2022 and August 2024, respectively. The third report is due out before the end of 2024. It will assess progress and identify areas in need of improvement. The following are some of the steps taken to reinforce the institutional structure supporting human rights.

- (a) To reinforce the independence of specialized national councils, Act No. 182 (2023) reorganized the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, elevated its legal status, and expanded its mandate.

(b) During the 2021–2024 period, specialized human rights units were created within a number of ministries, governorates, and universities. In 2020, a department of child protection was established in the Office of the Public Prosecutor. A mandate for protecting persons with disabilities was added in 2024.

(c) There are numerous channels and mechanisms for filing complaints about alleged human rights violations at the national level. The most important are as follows: the complaints mechanism in the Office of the Prime Minister; the National Council for Human Rights; human rights units in police stations; the department of human rights in the Office of the Public Prosecutor and its standardized electronic petition system; the human rights committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate; hotlines at the specialized national councils; and the national referral mechanisms for reporting violence against women and human trafficking cases, which serve both Egyptians and non-Egyptians. That is in addition to public reports and correspondence from international and regional mechanisms.

### **National human rights policies and strategies**

10. Several national strategies have been issued and updated to incorporate human rights principles and concepts in various relevant areas. As of May 2024, the Information and Decision Support Centre of the Office of the Prime Minister had identified some 90 strategies for follow-up and assessment. They include the following:

(a) The Egypt Vision 2030 sustainable development strategy was updated at the end of 2023. It places the human being at the centre of development and emphasizes the interconnectedness between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

(b) In 2022, the Third National Strategy on Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons (2022–2026) was adopted.

(c) The National Alternative Care Strategy (2021–2030) was adopted. It aims to provide family or foster care for the upbringing and protection of children, rather than keeping them in institutions. That is in line with the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children adopted by the General Assembly in 2009.

(d) The National Strategy for Population and Development (2023–2030) was adopted. It aims for a balance between population and development by promoting reproductive health, empowering women, investing in youth, increasing education opportunities, and raising awareness of demographic issues, as well as realizing social and economic well-being for all citizens.

(e) The National Strategy for Early Childhood Development (2024–2029) was adopted along with its implementation plan. The strategic plan of the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (2024–2029) was adopted. It ensures access to education for all without discrimination, and improved quality of education.

(f) The National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2023–2030) was adopted and its third phase has been launched.

## **B. Developments in the legislative framework**

11. The reporting period saw the enactment of several pieces of human rights legislation related to the promotion of human rights, as well as the proposal and introduction of amendments to some laws to address pressing issues and create a climate conducive to human rights. The most important are as follows:

(a) In December 2022, the Government presented a new draft Code of Criminal Procedure. It is currently being considered in the parliament. Among the issues it addresses are pretrial detention (for which it reduces the maximum period and expands the use of alternatives), and reparations and compensation for persons proven innocent.

(b) In September 2024, the Government completed discussion of a draft asylum act to regulate the status of foreigners coming to Egypt. It is in the process of submitting it to the parliament.

(c) In January 2021, implementing regulations were issued for Act No. 149 (2019) regulating civil society work. Act No. 23 (2022) extended the deadline for reconciliation with the conditions provided for by Act No. 149 (2019).

(d) Act No. 14 (2022) amended certain provisions of Act No. 21 (1989) regulating marriage to foreigners.

(e) Some penalties in the Penal Code have been stiffened for bullying, sexual harassment and female genital mutilation. Amendments include the following: Act No. 189 (2020) amending certain provisions of the Penal Code to impose a penalty for crimes of bullying; Act No. 10 (2021) increasing penalties for persons who perform female genital mutilation; Act No. 141 (2021) combating sexual harassment; and Act No. 185 (2023) increasing penalties for crimes of exposure, sexual harassment and bullying, especially in the workplace or on public transportation.

(f) Act No. 1 (2024) amends the Code of Criminal Procedure (No. 150 (1950)) with regard to appeal of verdicts handed down by criminal courts.

(g) Act No. 28 (2023) amends certain provisions of Act No. 26 (1975) on Egyptian nationality on granting nationality to the children of an Egyptian mother to make them more equitable between men and women.

(h) Act No. 151 (2020) provides for protection of personal data.

(i) Amendments were added to Act No. 200 (2020) establishing the Differently Abled fund for persons with disabilities to strengthen its ability to provide care and support services to persons with disabilities in various areas.

(j) Act No. 19 (2024) provided for the rights of older persons.

(k) Act No. 171 (2023) established the National Alliance for Civil Society Development Work.

## C. Cooperation with international and regional human rights mechanisms

12. With regard to the recommendations concerning accession to certain international human rights conventions or additional protocols: Egypt periodically reviews its treaty accessions in the light of national priorities and reconsiders its position on international instruments to which it has not acceded or to which it has expressed reservations in the light of the provisions of the Constitution, in order to ensure consistency and harmony between its international obligations. For example, measures were recently taken to accede to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa.

13. Egypt is committed to increasing cooperation with international and regional mechanisms. It has submitted some 80 per cent its overdue national reports to the various treaty bodies. The last of these national reports are being finalized for submission to the Committee on Economic and Social Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The recent period has seen unprecedented presentation and discussion of submitted reports and steps taken to implement recommendations made to Egypt. These include the following:

(a) The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in October 2021;

(b) The Human Rights Committee, in March 2023;

(c) The Committee against Torture, in November 2023;

(d) The Committee for the Arab Charter on Human Rights, in April 2024;

(e) The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in May 2024;

(f) The Committee on Migrant Workers, before which our national report will be reviewed in December 2024.

14. The Government cooperates with the Human Rights Council's special procedures mechanism and responds to all communications it receives. Egyptian officials also meet regularly with mandate holders on the margins of Human Rights Council sessions to seek their expertise and technical advice. In light of the urgent situation in connection with the ongoing war on Gaza, Egypt hosted official visits from the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in November 2023; the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel including East Jerusalem, in March 2024; and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, in April 2024. Egypt has also invited the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation to make an official visit to the country. It will be extending invitations to a number of mandate holders in the near future, especially now that it has finished preparing and discussing overdue national reports to the treaty bodies.

15. Egypt tries to be proactive on complaints received from United Nations and regional human rights mechanisms. It responds to their correspondence to clarify circumstances related to complaints and allegations received. Notably, it is engaged in ongoing and continuous dialogue with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, as a result of which it was agreed to drop more than 87 enforced disappearance cases. There are now 275 pending cases compared to 363 in 2019. The Working Group was recently supplied a list of 89 other cases whose legal statuses are in the process of being decided. Similarly, cooperation with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights resulted in 44 complaints being dropped during the 2023–2024 period. The expertise of such mechanisms has also been utilized for training and capacity-building. In May 2023, a virtual seminar was held by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to familiarize representatives of ministries and national authorities with the relevant international legal framework, the Working Group's mandate, and its approach to addressing communications and complaints.

16. As part of the technical cooperation programme for human rights capacity-building between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, several law enforcement training courses have been held for officials in the judiciary, the Office of the Public Prosecutor and the Ministry of Interior. Human rights has been incorporated as an essential component in training for new members of the diplomatic corps at the Institute of Diplomatic Studies. A number of capacity-building activities are being held for members of the technical secretariat of the Standing Higher Committee for Human Rights on following up recommendations issued by international human rights mechanisms and drafting national reports. Egypt is also preparing a comprehensive proposal for building national human rights capacities, as well as incorporating human rights principles into education curricula, in cooperation with international partners.

## **D. Civil and political rights**

### **The right to life and physical integrity**

17. With regard to recommendations to abolish or freeze the death penalty, and in implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy's objectives of creating a framework to review the serious crimes for which the death penalty is imposed: From time to time, the technical secretariat of the Higher Committee for Human Rights holds a community dialogue in the form of panel discussions with judges, parliamentarians, lawyers, members of the National Council for Human Rights, and representatives of civil society. Those discussions review the framework of the most serious crimes and conditions for imposing the death penalty in accordance with national legislation, taking into account social conditions, international and regional human rights conventions signed by Egypt, and international experiences. For example, the Weapons and Ammunition Law was recently amended to

allow courts to reduce the punishment for a number of crimes by one degree. That means less recourse to the death penalty for the most serious crimes.

18. The relevant authorities try to provide constitutional and legal guarantees to ensure that defendants get fair trials. They have the right to contact their family and lawyer, and to be presumed innocent. A death sentence must be handed down unanimously by all the judges. The Office of the Public Prosecutor must submit the case to the Court of Cassation, even if the convicted person does not appeal. The case file for a mandatory death sentence must be submitted to the President of the Republic so he can consider using his constitutional authority to pardon or commute the sentence. It is also worth noting that there has been a marked decrease in the number executions actually carried out per year, especially taking into consideration the population and the number of crimes committed that fall in the most serious category.

19. In March 2022, implementing regulations were issued for the Act regulating clinical medical research. The regulations provide for the right of people to withdraw from a medical research study whenever they want without having to give a reason. The regulations also require a protocol be reviewed and approved by the competent committee before any medical research study can commence.

20. With regard to the recommendations concerning torture: The Government, in cooperation with national institutions and stakeholders, has been developing an integrated action plan to prevent torture and cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment. It starts with a strong legislative framework that criminalizes torture in all its forms and includes legislation concerning different forms of violence and cruel treatment. It includes an independent judicial system that refuses to allow confessions or evidence obtained under torture. It maintains due process starting from the first hours of detention. It makes available multiple mechanisms to receive complaints and investigate allegations, including providing legal assistance early on and providing the necessary medical and psychological care, with provision for reparations and compensation. Training and awareness programmes have been expanded. The Nelson Mandela rules are utilized. Social culture is being changed through schools, universities and the family. Practical measures have been taken to enforce accountability and prevent impunity. The Ministry of Interior has taken disciplinary and criminal measures against staff for a number of incidents ranging from abuse to the use of force. There were 1,217 such incidents between November 2019 and July 2024. A number of them were found guilty by the competent investigative authorities. Severe disciplinary and legal measures have also been taken against public employees such as doctors, teachers and government agency staff for verbally or physically abusing citizens or using any form of corporal punishment on children in schools. This was detailed in the national report submitted to the Committee against Torture and during the discussion process in November 2023.

21. With regard to the recommendations to improve state of places of detention and prisoner conditions: The country saw a dramatic modernization of its philosophy on treating persons deprived of liberty in penal institutions and promoting their rights. The designation “prison” is being replaced by “reform and rehabilitation centre”. Several reform and rehabilitation centres have replaced former prisons all over the Republic, starting with Wadi al-Natrun in 2021. New centres have been established and operationalized in the Badr region (on 10 Ramadan, or 15 May) and the Akhmim region. They conform to international standards for ventilation, natural lighting, space in the wards, exercise areas, houses of worship, and cultural, athletic and recreational activities. There are wards set aside for persons with disabilities. There are programmes for rehabilitation and reintegration into society after serving one’s sentence. Regular visits from lawyers and families are facilitated without discrimination.

22. Medical services are provided to reform and rehabilitation centre inmates in hospitals and clinics that cover all medical specialties. Some 13 AIDS prevention units have been established in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in addition to the two already existing centres. There is a psychiatric and addiction treatment department and specialized units for chest and heart surgery, women’s health, burns, endemic diseases, oncology, and dentistry. Prosthetic devices are provided to inmates with disabilities. Special priority is given to women for infectious disease prevention and early detection of breast cancer. Six nurseries and a shelter have been established. They currently house 57 children

with their mothers, who are allowed to nurse their infants and live with them until the age of four. Medical care is provided throughout pregnancy, as is all necessary care for the children, including food, clothing, vaccinations and medical care. Personal hygiene kits are issued monthly for all female inmates, just like food and drink rations.

23. As part of its purview, the Office of the Public Prosecutor conducts inspections of reform and rehabilitation centres to check on conditions and the state of inmates. It investigates any allegations it receives. The Chief Public Prosecutor himself inspected the Badr complex in September 2024. Periodic visits are also conducted with the participation of representatives of national institutions, the specialized national councils, the National Council for Human Rights, civil society, diplomatic missions and the media to inspect the centres and check on the conditions of inmates, including women detainees, especially mothers. From January 2019 to June 2023, there were 52 such visits conducted. There were also 1,238 consular visits by representatives of accredited foreign diplomatic missions to check on their nationals.

24. With a view to reducing overcrowding in the reform and rehabilitation centres (prisons), the Presidential Amnesty Commission was reconvened in April 2022, and its work was expanded on the instructions of the President of the Republic. That reflected the political will to review the files of convicts who meet the conditions for a pardon under article 155 of the Constitution. Some 77,585 persons were released during national holidays and other occasions. In addition, during the 2019–2024 period, 613,384 persons were granted conditional release, and 27 were released for health reasons. In August 2024, 605 elderly convicts with deteriorating health were pardoned by decision of the President of the Republic.

#### **Right to liberty and security of person**

25. In December 2021, the Minister of Justice issued a decree authorizing judges to hold pretrial detention hearings and appeal hearings remotely using modern communication technologies. The reporting period also saw legal reviews by the relevant authorities that led to the release of defendants held in pretrial detention. During the period from January 2020 to June 2023, 1,434 such defendants were released by decision of the Office of the Public Prosecutor or the competent court. In September 2024, the Office of the Public Prosecutor released 151 defendants from pretrial detention.

26. The Office of the Public Prosecutor has expanded the use of alternatives to pretrial detention when the circumstances of the case and of the accused so warrant. They include requiring the accused not to leave their home or domicile; requiring them to present himself at a police station at specific times; and barring them from going to specific places. All this takes into account the circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

27. In December 2022, the Government presented a new draft Code of Criminal Procedure that is currently being considered in the parliament. Among other things, it provides for enhanced safeguards and rules for pretrial detention. It reduces the maximum length of pretrial detention, expands the use of technologically advanced alternatives, and provides for reparations and compensation for persons proven innocent.

#### **The right to litigation and guarantees of a fair trial**

28. On 25 October 2021, the President of the Republic issued a decision not to extend the country's state of emergency. That was a major step to strengthening fair trial guarantees. In January 2024, the Code of Criminal Procedure was amended with regard to appeals of criminal court rulings. The accused now has the right to have their case heard by two levels prior to the Court of Cassation. The Code contains rules for providing public defence attorneys at Government expense to defendants who are unable to hire their own lawyer.

29. Since 2020, the Ministry of Justice has set forth a comprehensive plan aimed at advancing various human, technical and technological aspects of the legal system to promote the right to litigation and effective justice. Work is underway to raise the capacities of members of judicial bodies through training courses and advanced technological systems that provide easy access to academic content. Hundreds of courts have had their capacities improved, and a number of new courts have been opened. Infrastructure has been developed



for electronic litigation at all stages. It has already been used in economic courts across the country and is being generalized to all other courts.

### **Freedom of opinion and expression**

30. The National Dialogue initiative was inaugurated in May 2023. It represents an important window for increased participation in public affairs and political life, and the exercise of freedom of opinion and expression. It has seen wide participation by various segments of society, political parties, representatives of civil society and trade unions. Some 44 sessions have been held during the first three-month phase, with a media presence and representatives of foreign embassies in attendance. National Dialogue sessions resumed in August 2024. The outcomes and recommendations of the discussions have been announced. There were more than 96,000 proposals spanning political, economic, social and cultural themes. They were submitted to the President of the Republic, who forwarded them to the relevant parties for consideration as to which were feasibly implementable under the Constitution and laws. Those requiring legislative amendments were submitted to the House of Representatives. Many had to do with the rules for – and alternative to – pretrial detention.

31. The media map in Egypt is characterized by diversity. It includes public and private institutions, with a total of 580 registered newspapers, 27 registered satellite channels, and 94 registered news and media websites. During 2021 and 2022, the Supreme Council for Media Regulation approved 145 licences for websites, television channels, and newspapers.

32. The Office of the Prime Minister launched the Dialogue platform. It aims to create an interactive environment encompassing all segments of Egyptian society by opening channels of communication and community dialogue on various issues, identify community priorities, and help to arrive at common visions for the best solutions to the obstacles and challenges facing society. The goal is to promote sustainable development and support and improve public-policy decision-making.

33. The Egyptian Children's Forum was launched by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood to support the exercise by children of their right to participate and express opinions. There were 12 local sub-forums held. About 415 children in each governorate took part – a total of 5,000 – in activities and events designed to disseminate a culture of children's rights. There were a total of 220 events, campaigns, competitions, magazines and direct or online meetings, benefiting some 15,000 children.

34. With regard to the recommendations on the right to circulate and make available information and data: The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics launched the Egypt Data statistical observatory. It monitors the social, economic and environmental situation and makes available statistics and data put out by various Government agencies. The website of the Cabinet Information and Decision Support Centre also provides information and research services in all economic, social, administrative and technological fields. The Government is currently drafting a bill to organize, classify, exchange and make available official data and information.

### **Freedom of peaceful assembly**

35. The Constitution and laws in force guarantee the right to hold public meetings, demonstrations and all forms of peaceful protests. Prior notification must be provided, and the route of a demonstration may be prohibited, postponed or changed only via judicial order. The reporting period witnessed many peaceful events and demonstrations by political parties, journalists, lawyers, civil society representatives and citizens in the main squares in various governorates of the Republic to express opinions on issues of a political, social or partisan nature. Some were quite large, notably the demonstrations supporting the Palestinian cause in the light of the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip, and demonstrations during the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change hosted by Egypt in 2022.

### **Freedom to form popular and unions**

36. The 2019 Act regulating civil society activity and its implementing regulations have played a pivotal role in strengthening the relationship between the Government and civil

society. A more conducive environment has been created for non-governmental organizations to go about their work effectively and expeditiously within a transparent framework. The Act was drafted through a participatory approach by a range of stakeholders, thereby avoiding the shortcomings of the previous law. It provides for registration by notification, financial benefits, tax exemptions, and the right to receive grants and funding, including from abroad. It eliminates any penalties involving deprivation of liberty. The grace periods for non-governmental organizations to regularize their statuses have been amended more than once. An integrated electronic system has been launched to regulate and facilitate civil society activity. It provides services for documents, case management, complaints, and more. Over 35,770 national and foreign non-governmental organizations have filed to regularize their status. Paperwork and electronic documents have been completed for 33,000 of them. The rest are under consideration. There were 55 foreign non-governmental organizations regularized. In 2023, non-governmental organizations received EGP 13.305 billion in funding, of which 66 per cent was local and 34 per cent international. The Non-Governmental Organizations Assistance Fund provided some EGP 383 million in grants to non-governmental organizations in 2023.

37. Care has been taken to create a new climate of trust between the State and civil society. The year 2022 was declared the Year of Civil Society in Egypt. Civil society organizations that had previously been in violation were allowed to turn over a new leaf. Pending cases were settled. Most notably investigations were wrapped up in Case No. 173, known in the media as the “foreign funding” case, and the case was fully closed in March 2024. The political leadership has responded quickly to many of the National Dialogue’s demands for the release of a convicts who meet the conditions for a presidential pardon.

38. Act No. 142 (2019) amending certain provisions of the 2017 Act on trade unions and the right to organize helped to create a positive atmosphere within trade unions and the subsequent trade union elections. It removed the penalty of imprisonment from the Act and lowered the minimum number required to form a trade union organization. The Ministry of Manpower was renamed the Ministry of Labour to stress the State’s commitment to dealing with different labour entities without bias. The Ministry of Labour issued a consolidated guide to establishing labour union organizations. Supplementary elections were held to complete the 2022–2026 union cycle for five company boards of directors and two trade union committees. Some 15 new trade union committees have been established under the Act. The 2023 elections for head of the bar association and head of the journalists’ union were conducted in a free and transparent manner.

### **Political participation**

39. Elections for the House of Representatives and the Senate were held in October 2020. These were the first elections since the 2019 constitutional amendment that created a second chamber of parliament, the Senate. The House of Representatives elections produced 165 women members, or 27 per cent of the House. Also elected were 123 young members (under the age of 40), 9 persons with disabilities, 8 Egyptians living abroad and 38 Christians. There were 92 parties, of which 13 gained representation in the current parliament. The Senate elections produced 41 women members, 35 young people (under the age of 40), and 25 Christians. Presidential elections were held in December 2023, with four candidates running. The President of the Republic Abdel Fattah El Sisi won. The voting rate was 66 per cent, with women making up 60 per cent of voters. The election was held under full judicial supervision, with open media coverage and follow-up by various international, regional and local organizations.

### **Freedom of religion and belief**

40. The initiative of the President of the Republic in calling on religious leaders and scholars to revitalize religious discourse was a milestone in promoting the values of citizenship, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. It was followed by historic statements by the President of the Republic on more than one occasion affirming freedom of religion and belief and the values of citizenship. In 2022, in a first-of-its-kind precedent, a Copt was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court. That reflects political will to create change

by providing living examples that raise societal awareness and encourage people to fight discrimination and treat others with respect.

41. Bullying was criminalized by Act No. 189 (2020), which treats it as harmful behaviour rooted in discrimination. The Government is also discussing a draft act to establish an independent non-discrimination commission. That would be in fulfilment of the constitutional obligation for the State to take necessary measures for eliminating all forms of discrimination. Such an act would establish institutional mechanisms to ensure implementation of relevant laws, detect violations, and support the dissemination of a culture of equality and non-discrimination for all through educational, cultural and media institutions.

42. The committee to legalize the status of churches continued its task of regulating the construction and renovation of churches. There was a significant increase in the number of churches and their service buildings legalized, which came to 3,160 churches and buildings as of January 2024. There were also 13 synagogues and Jewish heritage sites restored.

43. There have been numerous initiatives to promote tolerance and respect for cultural and religious diversity. Al-Azhar has launched a campaign to promote the principles of true Islam, especially tolerance and acceptance of others. Videos have been released in various languages to spread a culture of tolerance and respect for religious freedoms and the sanctity of different religions' houses of worship. The "Homeland Unites Us - Love and Peace" initiative trains young people to counter rumours and spread tolerance among all segments of society. The Coptic Evangelical Commission has launched initiatives along the same lines. They include: "Our value is in our humanity," "Our unity is in our diversity," "Our heritage brings us together," and "A message of brotherhood, dialogue and tolerance". The Dar al-Ifta has established a Peace Centre for Extremism Studies. It has issued a scientific guide to countering extremism that highlights sound religious texts and combats extremism in the name of religion. Act No. 190 (2020) established endowments authorities (awqaf) for the Catholic Church and the evangelical community.

## **E. Economic, social and cultural rights**

44. The Government is going ahead with efforts to implement a comprehensive economic and financial reform programme to promote sustainable development. That is in the face of economic challenges in the wake of the of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing tensions in conflict zones around the world, which have exacerbated of the food and energy crises, in turn increasing the debt burdens of developing and low- and middle-income countries. Egypt is committed to meeting the requirements of international financial institutions, especially the International Monetary Fund (IMF), most notably a liberalized foreign exchange system, while working at the same time to ease the impact of difficult economic conditions on citizens, protect groups in the most affected areas, and avert any slowdown of Government policies and programmes to realize sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda.

45. The Government has doubled spending allocations for protection and social security networks, and expanded the beneficiary base. The goal is to ease the impact of these crises on citizens and maintain a decent standard of living. Such spending rose from EGP 327.7 billion in 2020 to EGP 635.9 billion in 2024/2025. The major developments in social protection programmes are as follows:

(a) Subsidies for bread and basic food commodities in the 2024/2025 budget increased by 51 per cent compared to 2020, with 63.6 million beneficiaries.

(b) The number of families benefiting from the Solidarity and Dignity cash transfer programmes increased from 3.8 million in 2020 to 5.2 million in 2024/2025, equivalent to 22 million individuals, an increase of 116 per cent.

(c) Pensions for public and private sector workers increased by 51 per cent for the 2023–2024 fiscal year compared to 2020; the minimum pension threshold was raised.

(d) The Egyptian Government's Decent Life project to develop villages in the Egyptian countryside has been in implementation since 1 July 2021. The project is being

implemented in three phases. It will cover 4,500 villages and 28,000 affiliates of 175 centres in 20 governorates of the Republic, with beneficiaries coming to about 58 per cent of the total population of the Republic. The project aims to improve the quality of life and the level of services. It will provide infrastructure for drinking water, sanitation and housing, and increase the number of schools and health centres, with a focus on rural areas. The first phase will be completed this year, benefiting some 19 million. An electronic monitoring system for tracking the initiative's projects is available on the United Nations SDG Actions platform.

46. To promote the right to food, in addition to existing subsidy programmes, the Government is trying to promote vertical expansion of strategic agricultural crops and provide soft loans to farmers. There are also livestock, poultry and fisheries development programmes.

### **Right to work**

47. The Government drafted a national employment strategy to put in place jobs creation mechanisms. It launched the Professional 2030 project to train 1 million people in professions in demand on the labour market at home and abroad. More than 30,000 persons with disabilities have been hired over the past 10 years, including 14,000 since the beginning of 2023. The unemployment rate fell from 13 per cent in 2014 to 6.9 per cent in 2023. In order to provide a decent standard of living that keeps pace with global price increases, especially for basic commodities, the minimum wage has gone up from EGP 1,200 in 2019 to EGP 6,000 in 2024. In the private sector, it has increased fivefold. Additional funding was injected in the form of loans for some 221,800 small and micro-enterprises. That was in addition to grants for infrastructure, community development and training projects, including technical training for thousands of young men and women.

48. In 2022, to promote conditions conducive to women's enjoyment of the right to work, a national plan to promote employment gender equality was launched. Its goal is to reduce the unemployment rate among women by 2 per cent annually. The Government is currently drafting an act on domestic workers that will provide protection and care for that group, legalize their status, train them, integrate them into the formal labour market, and receive complaints from them.

49. The Government is drafting a new labour act that will provide further protection for workers' rights. In September 2024, the Supreme Council for Social Dialogue was formed to promote cooperation between employers and workers and propose solutions to issues.

### **Right to decent housing**

50. The State has continued its efforts to provide decent housing, especially for low- and middle-income groups, with the Housing for All Egyptians initiative. In less than ten years, 1.5 million housing units have been built, benefiting 7.5 million citizens, with 5 per cent of units designated for persons with disabilities. The Government makes available housing units with cash subsidies and easy long-term financing. It tries to create housing units in integrated urban communities with access to all services, educational, health and recreational facilities, and green spaces. It is also implementing an alternative housing programme and developing informal areas at a cost of EGP 63 billion, benefiting some 1.2 million people. Egypt was declared to be free of unsafe informal areas in 2022. These efforts were commended by the United Nations United Nations Human Settlements Programme in 2020. In 2022, Egypt was ranked among the top countries in reducing the proportion of slum dwellers in the total urban population.

### **Right to safe drinking water and sanitation**

51. Current sanitation coverage in cities is 96 per cent. That is up from 79.2 per cent in 2014. In villages, it is 43 per cent, up from 12 per cent in 2014. The drinking water grid has been extended to underserved areas. Drinking water and sewage pipes have been replaced and renovated in a number of targeted areas. The Government has submitted a draft act to the House of Representatives that would regulate drinking water and sanitation services. It provides for the obligations of service providers and allows for private sector participation.

## Right to health

52. The Government is working to reach 100 per cent health insurance coverage by 2030. The Government's current action programme would reach 85 per cent coverage by 2026/2027. The switchover from the current system to universal health insurance will see a 35 per cent increase in coverage that will include peasants, agricultural workers, irregular workers, and other vulnerable groups. Five new governorates will be covered. Treatment at State expense has been steadily increasing since 2014.

53. Since the launch of the women's health initiative in July 2019 through June 2024, over 50 million women had screening and awareness visits. Some 17 million women have received periodic follow-up services. More than 637,000 women have received free post-examination treatment at 3,663 units across the governorates.

54. There have been 14 initiatives across medical specialties with a focus on women's health, providing 132 million medical services. Indicators show that these initiatives contributed to reducing the prevalence of anaemia by 25 per cent between 2019 and 2022. The early detection rate for breast cancer in women increased by 70 per cent. There were health initiatives for women and newborns; maternal and fetal health; early detection of genetic diseases in newborns; early detection and treatment of hearing loss in newborns; and reproductive health. The National Strategy for Population and Development 2023–2030 contains components on reproductive rights and population control.

55. Some 1,000 free medical caravans were launched in all governorates, especially in the remote areas and villages most in need of health services. They offered blood tests, X-rays and health-awareness seminars. They referred thousands of cases to hospitals for treatment decisions at State expense. They made it easier for older persons, children, and people with disabilities to receive medical services.

56. Leprosy patients are rehabilitated medically, socially and economically to help them integrate into society. Annual meetings are held to disburse periodic and rehabilitative subsidies to deserving patients. Quality treatment is provided for detected cases, and lapsed patients are followed up in 19 main clinics in the governorates where infections have occurred, with some branch clinics in centres with the highest prevalence. The number of clinics is being increased to cover all governorates. Public meetings are held in some governorates to de-stigmatize leprosy patients and integrate them into society.

## Right to education

57. The Strategic Plan for the Development of Pre-University Education 2014–2030 was launched. The 2024–2029 plan for the Ministry of Education is in the process of being updated in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to make education available to all without discrimination and improve the pre-university education system. The new plan will be based on implementing the goals of the Egypt Vision 2030 national sustainable development agenda and the National Human Rights Strategy, in particular the goal of universal and fair access to education for all groups, and quality education that meets international standards. The Government has submitted to the House of Representatives a draft act to establish a national council for education, research and innovation. It will set general policies for all forms and stages of education to bring education up to international levels.

58. The State has made great efforts to develop education, including kindergartens, primary education curricula up to the sixth grade, and the preparatory stage. It plans to instal the technological infrastructure need to switch over the examination systems for the secondary stage. The 2021/2022 academic year saw a significant increase in the percentage of girls enrolled in higher education and postgraduate studies. Females made up 53 per cent of higher education graduates compared to 47 per cent for males. Of those enrolled in higher education, females make up 61.2 per cent of those obtaining diplomas compared to 38.7 per cent for males. Females make up 56.2 of those with master's degrees compared to 43.8 per cent for males. For doctorates the female percentage is 54.25 per cent compared to 45.75 per cent for males.

59. As part of the Decent Life initiative, the Government aims to eradicate illiteracy in 160,000 villages. A map has been drawn to determine the number of people to be targeted for literacy eradication and create classes in those areas. The goal is to be able to declare those villages free of illiteracy. The illiteracy rate for the 10–35 age group declined to 10 per cent in 2022. That compares with 29 per cent in 2019. To provide education to the areas most in need, community schools have been expanded. The total number of such schools is now 4,943.

60. Full access to education is guaranteed for persons with disabilities. Some 139,169 children with disabilities were rehabilitated in kindergartens for children with disabilities and care institutions during the 2019–2023 period. The number of integrated students also saw a significant increase, from 3,697 in 2013 to 114,157 in 2023. The number of integrated autism spectrum students was 4,504.

### **Cultural rights**

61. Numerous cultural development projects have been put in place. Thousands of cultural activities have been held and new cultural sites have appeared in various localities and governorates. A regional museum system is being developed. Some 113,000 cultural projects were implemented to promote positive values in society. The most notable has been the People of Egypt project to spread cultural awareness, confront ideological extremism and reject extremism and violence. Some 133,000 cultural activities have been held to support cultural industries and promote cultural heritage. To highlight cultural diversity, various cultural activities are being held to document and record the customs, traditions and heritage of the Aswan, Nubia and Siwa regions.

### **Right to development**

62. The Government continues to try to distribute the returns on development in a geographically equitable manner. In the United Nations Human Development Report rankings for 2021/2022 compared to 2020, Egypt advanced 19 places to 97th place, keeping its place in the group of countries with high human development.

63. In 2022/2023, for the first time, the National Human Rights Strategy has been integrated into the Economic and Social Development Plan, with development projects and programmes linked to the Strategy's themes and targets. At the same time, human rights have been integrated into the State's annual economic and social development plans. For the first time, the 2023/2024 State budget took into account the principles of the National Human Rights Strategy.

64. The Government releases an annual document for each governorate known as a Citizen's Plan. It includes detailed information on the investments channeled to each governorate by the State, their distribution among different sectors and the most prominent projects implemented in each sector. It also publishes the most important economic and social indicators for each governorate. Such plans have been issued for the past five years. The "Participate 2030" mobile application was launched to raise awareness of development programmes, projects and performance indicators. It provides citizens with an opportunity to take part in proposing projects and initiatives, thereby enhancing communication mechanisms and community participation. Both of these mechanisms have been crucial in raising awareness among citizens about the priorities and policies of annual sustainable development plans. They appear on the SDG Actions Platform of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

## **F. Empowerment of women**

65. The reporting period saw improvements in women's status and position. The ranking of Egypt in the relevant international indicators on women's political empowerment improved. Egypt jumped 47 places in the women's political empowerment indicator in the Global Gender Gap Report to reach its best level in 10 years, occupying 78th place in 2022 compared to 125th place in 2012. It jumped 65 places in the women's representation in parliament indicator, to 63rd in 2022 compared to 128th in 2012. It advanced 29 places in

the women holding ministerial portfolios indicator, to 66th in 2022, compared to 95th in 2012. In 2020, women won 165 seats in the House of Representatives, which is 27.7 per cent. They hold 15 seats on House committees, one of the highest percentages in the history of Egypt. The Senate Act allocated 10 per cent of Senate seats to women. However, President of the Republic appointed 20 women Senators, bringing women's representation to 14 per cent.

66. A woman was appointed to the post of vice-president of the Supreme Constitutional Court. The number of women in judicial bodies reached 3,541 in 2023. There were 166 women judges on the bench and 100 in the State Council, compared to 66 in 2017. In early 2024, the first woman was appointed to a senior position in the Ministry of Interior. She is currently Assistant Minister of Interior for Human Rights. The number of women in the diplomatic corps reached nearly 30 per cent. Women also continued to have a strong presence in the formation of the Government. They held six ministerial positions in the new Cabinet configuration in August 2022 and four portfolios in the latest configuration in August 2024, which involved ministerial portfolios being merged together. They have risen to the posts of minister and governor. Women are heads of all the national human rights councils (the National Council for Human Rights, the National Council for Women, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities).

67. On economic empowerment, indicators of financial inclusion for women, including small businesses and micro-lending to women, have improved. So has the indicator for women in managerial positions. In 2021, the Ministry of International Cooperation, in collaboration with the National Council for Women, the World Economic Forum, and the private sector, launched the Closing the Business Gender Gap Accelerator. Egypt is the first country in Africa and the Middle East to launch this plan. It has created 264 equal opportunity units at the level of ministries, governorates and localities to educate working women about their rights and the importance of taking part in the development process.

68. To create job opportunities for women entrepreneurs, the Enterprise Development Agency has made available EGP 48.3 billion in total funding for 192,716 small projects creating 481,347 job opportunities, and 1,713,513 micro projects for women creating 2,530,452 job opportunities. There is also a project to enhance employment opportunities for women in agricultural manufacturing, which aims to improve the economic status of women in the agricultural manufacturing sector. The Strengthening Women Entrepreneurs in Egypt (SWEET) project builds the capacities of women entrepreneurs and workers in the handmade carpets industry, supporting a work environment conducive to gender equality. The Tahweesha digital savings and loan programme was launched for women-oriented savings groups in the villages and governorates covered by the National Project for Development of the Egyptian Family. The programme targets 1.2 million women to provide 3,000 job opportunities in 20 governorates over the next three years. These programmes have resulted in a dramatic jump in the number of women with bank accounts, which was 20.3 million as of December 2023.

69. In general, indicators for female illiteracy, use of family planning methods, overall reproductive rate, percentage of women who received regular pregnancy care, and the maternal mortality rate have all improved.

70. With regard to efforts to combat violence against women: Amendments to the Penal Code have increased penalties for such crimes. In 2021, the Prime Minister issued a decision to create the first joint unit to protect against violence against women. The goal was to speed up procedures and provide services in an integrated unit. The aforementioned decision contained an explicit definition of violence against women that includes any act, behaviour or omission in violation of the Constitution and the law that results in harm or suffering for women, whether physical, material, moral, psychological, social or economic, or the violation of legally guaranteed rights and freedoms, whether in public or private life.

71. The National Committee for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation launched the National Plan for the Elimination of Genital Mutilation (2022–2026). The Committee was able to carry out 108 million repeated awareness-raising contacts for men and women as part of its Protect Her from Circumcision campaigns. Genital mutilation had already seen a decrease, at 14 per cent in 2021 compared to 21 per cent in 2014 for the 0–19 age group.

72. The security agencies have stepped up measures to address violence against women. During the 2019–2023 period, there were 1,241 arrests of perpetrators of violence against women (sexual harassment and assault). The first national referral form for reporting cases of violence against women has been drafted based on the international model. During the period from January 2020 to August 2022, the Office of the Public Prosecutor investigated 72 cases of female genital mutilation. There were 18 convictions; some cases are still pending.

73. More than 42 anti-harassment and violence units have been set up at universities. There are medical response units at university hospitals. There is a unit to combat violence against women at the Ministry of Justice, and divisions at the Ministry of Interior directorates. There are 10 “safe women” units at university hospitals for women victims of violence, three forensic medicine clinics for women victims of violence and sexual assault, and digital family offices at the Office of the Public Prosecutor. There are nine women’s shelters to take in victims of violence and human trafficking. There have been campaigns to raise awareness of all forms of violence against women, human trafficking and exploitation and cyber violence, and of how to file reports and seek protection. They have included social media, door-knocking campaigns, and awareness campaigns in schools.

74. In order to create a safe environment for women, a code of conduct for the transport sector was adopted to promote safe transportation for women. There is also a code of ethics to promote a safe work environment for women. Training programmes have been put in place for service providers and competent authorities. Several manuals have been issued, including the following: a forensic manual for doctors; a manual on effective police response to crimes of violence against women; a manual for prosecutors manual; a manual on effective judicial response to crimes of violence against women; a medical manual for health service providers; a manual for case management and psychological support; a manual for judges; a manual for anti-violence units at universities; and a manual for safe women units at university hospitals.

75. The Government is studying a draft domestic violence act to confront this phenomenon in its various dimensions prior to submitting it to parliament. The draft would increase penalties for and protection against assault within the family. It would increase penalties in family violence cases related and introduce other punishable crimes. It also covers alternative penalties for some crimes; rehabilitation for offenders and victims; family, psychological, social and health counselling; and the need to raise public awareness of the dangers of family violence, including through training and academic programmes in schools.

## **G. Children’s rights**

76. The State has stepped up child protection efforts with a number of national plans and programmes. They include the following: the National Strategy for Early Childhood Development, the Strategic Framework for Childhood and Motherhood (2018–2030), and the National Alternative Care Strategy (2021–2030). The Act reorganizing the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood was issued in 2023 to strengthen the Council’s independence and separation from the Executive Authority. The Council has become the national mechanism for improving the conditions of children and mothers, and proposing public policies for them.

77. With regard to developing children’s health systems, there are five national programmes under the 100 Million Health Initiative, as follows: early detection and treatment of hearing loss in children; early detection of disabilities; maternal and fetal health; early detection of anaemia, obesity and stunting; and treatment of muscular dystrophy. The Ministry of Health has developed an electronic database of children born with disabilities.

78. The Children’s Code envisages increased protection for children against violence and abuse, as well as more severe penalties for offences committed by an adult against a child, particularly a parent, guardian, custodian, caregiver or a person with authority over a child. The Child Helpline and the child protection committees created in the governorates receive and investigate complaints of violence against children; provide legal assistance and social and psychological services in partnership with civil society organizations; raise awareness and monitor and report incidents and how they have been handled; and refer cases that require



urgent intervention to the Office of the Public Prosecutor for immediate decisions. The National Initiative for the Empowerment of the Egyptian Child was launched to address violence, bullying and misbehaviour.

79. With regard to eradicating certain misguided social practices relating to child marriages: The Civil Status Act prohibits the registration of any marriage contract involving persons under the age of 18 (article 31 bis). The Criminal Code provides for imprisonment or a fine for anyone who provides false information or fraudulent documents for the purpose of legitimizing the marriage of a child under the legal age.

80. The Ministry of Labour, in cooperation with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, issued the National Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labour (2018–2025). It envisions ending child labour by 2025. It provides for social protection for children and their families, economic empowerment of families, and surprise inspection campaigns for establishments where children work, with warnings for those in charge. Some 997 reports were made. Campaigns helped to protect 50,549 children. From 2019–2023, the Child Helpline received 973 reports of child labour, including 278 serious cases and 695 ordinary cases. Appropriate measures were taken. A standard operating procedures guide on combating child labour has been prepared. National Council for Childhood and Motherhood staff and representatives of protection units in a number of governorates have been trained on it. Child labour among children aged 5–17 who performed economic activities or household chores decreased to 4.9 per cent in 2021 from 7 per cent in 2014.

## **H. Rights of persons with disabilities and older persons**

81. Act No. 157 (2022) amending certain regulations of the Support Fund for Persons with Disabilities created by Act No. 200 (2020) reinforces the Fund's ability to provide care and support services to persons with disabilities in all fields. The State provides cash support to 1.1 million persons with disabilities worth EGP 5.2 billion annually. Act No. 161 (2023) allocated EGP 11 billion to support the Differently Abled fund.

82. Care and rehabilitation services have been expanded for persons with disabilities through 805 rehabilitation organizations that provide numerous services, including physiotherapy, speech, comprehensive rehabilitation, housing and more, with a total of 305,900 persons with disabilities benefiting. The number of non-governmental organizations operating in this field is now 4,500. Childcare specialists and facilitators have been trained, and 21 rehabilitation centres have been established in the villages most in need. A factory has been set up for prosthetic devices and artificial limbs for persons with disabilities.

83. With a view to empowering and integrating people with disabilities into the labour market, more than 14,000 job opportunities have been provided to persons with disabilities from January 2023 to date. From October 2023 through the first half of 2024, the Ministry of Labour has been implementing a plan to identify, train, and employ persons with disabilities. The goal is to accelerate implementation of the 5 per cent quota for employees with disabilities required by law for public and private sector organizations with 20 or more employees.

84. With regard to care for older persons: The fourth phase of the Life is Hope initiative was launched, and cash transfers to all beneficiaries of the Dignity programme for older persons were increased, with the number of beneficiaries coming to 524,623. Medical services are also provided. Since October 2021, over 742,000 citizens over the age of 65 have been examined under the programme for continuous healthcare for older persons. The Ministry of Social Solidarity has prepared a strategy for older persons and formed a social protection network of specialized non-governmental organizations. It also provides them with assistive devices. A decision was taken to exempt persons over 70 from public transportation fees. Persons over 65 receive a 50 per cent exemption.

## I. Empowerment of young people

85. As part of the Government's action programme, some 1.3 million Egyptian youth took part in some 72 programmes to promote citizenship values and deepen political participation. Sharm el-Sheikh has hosted several sessions of the World Youth Forum. The most recent was the extraordinary session held in January 2024 under the theme Youth for Humanity. Young people from all over the world took part to promote peace and security and protect civilians in conflict zones. The Egyptian version of the United Nations Generation Unlimited initiative was launched with the name Shabab Balad. It was first partnership between the Government, the private sector and youth in the world. A programme was also launched to support entrepreneurship and innovators in addressing climate change, coinciding with November 2023 climate summit hosted by Egypt.

86. In 2021, the State launched the New Republic Youth Union to mobilize community development work within the framework of Vision 2030. The State also launched a national programme to qualify youth for local political participation in 2021, under the title: Local Leaders and Egypt Vision 2030. The Egyptian Small and Micro-Enterprises Development Agency provides financing and services to expand small and micro-enterprises, especially for young people in rural villages targeted by the Decent Life initiative. It develops plans and policies to promote youth projects and entrepreneurship. The Your Enterprise national community, human and local development project has contributed to the implementation of more than 198,000 projects, with loans amounting to EGP 25.2 billion. These projects have created about 1.9 million job opportunities for young people by implementing medium and small projects that have transformed the Egyptian village from a consumer into a producer.

87. As part of its 2030 Entrepreneurs project, the Ministry of Planning launched the 1 Million Entrepreneurs campaign. Its goal is to qualify 1 million entrepreneurs by 2030. It uses sign language to support and empower youth with visual and hearing impairments to integrate them into society and qualify them for the labour market, within the framework of the Egypt 2030 sustainable development strategy. The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has launched a training scholarship to train 20,000 young men and women nationwide to work on online freelancing platforms. The initiative focuses on building the capacities and skills of Egyptian youth in various fields to help them obtain jobs in such fields as e-marketing, mobile applications, web development, graphic design, and others.

## J. Combating corruption

88. Recognizing the importance of combating corruption to achieving the sustainable development goals, the Government has taken many anti-corruption measures, notably the launch of the third phase of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2023–2030). The second phase had included developing reliance on statistical studies and public indicators, preparing and launching an updated guide to government services posted on the government portal, and launching the Digital Egypt platform to offer public services online. Internal audit and governance divisions have been created in 60 per cent of the State's administrative units. A manual of operation has been drafted and put into practice for internal audit and governance units, starting with training the relevant staff. Around 90 training programmes are offered for national staff on combating numerous crimes, including money-laundering and cybercrime.

89. During the period from January 2020 to August 2022, the Office of the Public Prosecutor investigated 236 bribery offences and referred a number to the courts for criminal proceedings. Convictions were handed down in 23 cases, with 41 still pending. Administrative sanctions and disciplinary proceedings were signed off on in 17 cases. The Public Prosecutor is still pursuing investigations in 54 cases. During that same period, it investigated 4,487 crimes of misappropriation of public funds, with convictions handed down in 277 cases and 408 cases still pending. The Public Prosecutor signed off on administrative sanctions and disciplinary proceedings in 180 cases. Investigations are ongoing in 1,200 cases.

## **K. Refugees and migrant and expatriate affairs**

90. To protect the rights of migrant workers and provide them with means of recourse, the Government has taken the following measures: It has prepared a manual on procedures for employment abroad, the aim of which is to regulate procedures for employing Egyptian workers outside the country, in line with changes and challenges in the foreign labour market. In the context of the programme “Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa”, the Ministry of Labour is cooperating with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other international partners to build capacity at the national level for drafting, negotiating and implementing bilateral labour migration agreements. Several bilateral agreements to employ Egyptian workers abroad have been concluded, including with Jordan, Greece, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Italy. The Ministry of Labour set up a pre-departure guidance unit to educate young persons about their rights and duties before leaving the country to work abroad, and a national labour market platform has been launched to regulate supply and demand for Egyptian workers on the labour market at home and abroad.

91. Egypt currently hosts about 9 million foreigners, including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. That is about 8.7 percent of the total Egyptian population. There are some 760,581 refugees and asylum seekers of 62 nationalities registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The policy of Egypt on dealing with migrants and refugees is rooted in the fundamental principle of respect for the right to freedom of movement. It does not house them in tents or camps, but rather allows them to integrate, cohabitate with Egyptian society, and enjoy basic services, including those subsidized by the Government. Non-discrimination is ensured, in keeping with the right of equality before the law as protected by legislation. The Government tries to combat all forms of discrimination against such persons. It is committed to ensuring that they have equal access to education and health services and psychological and social support. That includes equal access with Egyptians to the COVID-19 vaccine, and to hepatitis C screening under the 100 Million Health presidential initiative.

92. Refugees and asylum-seekers are granted six-months residence with renewable UNHCR-issued identity cards. They are exempt from residence permit issuance and renewal fees. In accordance with article 31 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the State does not impose penalties on refugees for illegal entry or presence. If foreigners are arrested for illegal entry or presence, once they declare their intention to seek asylum, they are released, provided that they commit to registering with UNHCR quickly to legalize their status.

93. The Government is in the process of finalizing a draft act on asylum for foreigners that would regulate the affairs of refugees and asylum seekers and regularize their status within one year from the date of entry into force of the act’s implementing regulations. The draft act would establish a standing committee for refugee affairs that would be responsible for the affairs of all refugees in Egypt and ensure that all aspects of support, care and services are provided to them in cooperation with the relevant ministries and international organizations.

## **L. Combating irregular migration and trafficking in persons**

94. The State is committed to combating irregular migration and trafficking in persons under international conventions and national legislation. The Third National Strategy on Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons (2021–2030) pays particular attention to victim protection by updating national referral mechanisms and stepping up capacity-building for social protection staff, including helpline operators, the Female Rural Pioneers, social workers, labour inspectors and law enforcement officials. The Fourth National Action Plan for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration (2024–2026) was launched to complement efforts to implement the National Strategy for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration (2016–2026). Presidential Decree No. 349 (2024) regulating the Fund for Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking was issued, as well as the Prime Minister’s Decree regulating the Fund for Combating Illegal Migration and Protecting Migrants and Witnesses.

95. A comprehensive protection system for victims of human trafficking has been completed. It consists of the following: a national referral mechanism to ensure expeditious legal assistance; health (physical and psychological) and rehabilitation programmes for victims; a complaints system to receive reports; and support for victims through the hotlines of the national councils for childhood and motherhood, women, and human rights.

96. The Presidential initiative Lifeboats focuses on reducing the phenomenon of illegal migration and introducing constructive and safe alternatives. From 2019–2023, some 41 training courses on combating illegal immigration and human trafficking were held for 788 prosecutors, 368 judges, 140 administrative prosecutors, and 220 law enforcement officers.

97. Some 1,250 suspects were arrested in 1,030 illegal immigration cases; 442 suspects were arrested in 236 human trafficking cases from January 2019 through March 2023. From 2021–2023, verdicts were handed down in 72 human trafficking cases. Some 327 victims of human trafficking were provided with services during that period. In 2023, 151 victims received services including shelter. That included 70 boys under the age of 18, 76 girls under the age of 18, and 5 adult women. Eight judicial chambers have been assigned to hear human trafficking cases. There are designated prosecution offices assigned to human trafficking and illegal migration in every appeal prosecutor's office.

98. The first shelter for victims of human trafficking designated for taking in Egyptian and foreign women and girls has been opened. A second specialized shelter is being renovated for the same purpose as part of a plan to establish a total of seven such shelters across the governorates. A programme is being implemented to support women and children victims of human trafficking, as they are among the most in need of special social, health and psychological care to facilitate reintegration into society.

## **M. Respecting human rights while combating terrorism**

99. The Egyptian State takes a comprehensive approach to combating terrorism through legislation that is consistent with its regional and international counter-terrorism obligations and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The goal is to fight terrorism effectively and comprehensively in all its dimensions. The State also works to confront terrorism through preventive awareness and ideological confrontation.

100. The National Council for the Families of Victims and the Injured provides support and care to the families of victims and the injured. That includes free health and medical services, as well as psychological rehabilitation services to the families of victims, their children, and those who have been fully disabled as a result of terrorist attacks. There have been some 10,000 beneficiaries of the Council's services. In September 2021, the State increased the compensation for the families of civilians killed in terrorist and security operations to EGP 200,000. That consists of EGP 100,000 from the Fund to Honour the Families of Victims and the Injured, plus the amount supplied by the Ministry of Social Solidarity, which has been increased to EGP 100,000 as well. Compensation and alternative housing units are being provided to residents affected by terrorist acts and counter-terrorism operations in North Sinai. That is in addition to ongoing efforts to develop the governorate, improve living conditions and facilitate transportation.

101. In recognition of the major contribution made by Egypt to counter-terrorism in its regional setting and at the international level, Egypt is currently co-chair, along with the European Union, of the Global Counterterrorism Forum. Egypt also contributes to various international forums that exchange counter-terrorism experiences and good practices. It helps draft the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy reviews that are conducted periodically in New York, and, along with Mexico, submits the periodic resolution on terrorism and human rights in both New York and Geneva. In 2022, that resolution incorporated important updates that focused on the human rights dimension and fair trial guarantees, and gave high priority to the rights of victims.

## **N. Disseminating a human rights culture**

102. All ministries and government agencies have added human rights training and acculturation programmes to their action plans. For example, the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the National Council for Women, has held workshops on protection of women for thousands of staff in judicial bodies.

103. During the period from January 2020 to January 2023, 440 human rights training courses were held for 10,808 judges and members of the Office of the Public Prosecutor. Specific topics included the right to a fair trial, crimes against life and physical integrity, and illegal and legal immigration. Courses for judges are also held by the National Centre for Judicial Studies of the Ministry of Justice. There are specialized courses held by the Office of the Public Prosecutor for its staff through its Criminology Research and Training Institute that cover the same topics, as well as due process rights for suspects.

104. During the 2019–2023 period, the Ministry of Interior held 47 staff training courses in coordination with international organizations and OHCHR in the fields of human rights, violence against women, and healthcare in reform and rehabilitation centres. There was also training held in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on the Nelson Mandela Rules for the treatment of inmates.

105. Various human rights training activities have been conducted in cooperation with OHCHR and international partners, most notably a training course for trainers for law enforcement officials (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice and the Office of the Public Prosecutor). Work is ongoing with a number of partners and United Nations agencies to prepare a programme to incorporate human rights into educational curricula.

## **Conclusion**

106. As it submits its fourth national report under the universal periodic review, the Arab Republic of Egypt affirms its commitment to continue working to expand its human rights efforts, with a view to fulfilling its international and regional obligations and in keeping with provisions of its Constitution and national legislation. That includes submitting its periodic reports and increasing proactive engagement with the Human Rights Council and its various mechanisms. It will also seek to contribute constructively to efforts to promote human rights around the world and exchange experiences and good practices. Egypt has been conscientious about implementing the recommendations it accepted from the previous review, despite a multiplicity of challenges during the reporting period that include security and political challenges; the increased threat of terrorism and transnational organized crime in a turbulent region; and increased migration and asylum rates brought about by difficult regional conditions, especially in neighbouring countries. Those challenges also include the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise in global food and energy prices, and continued population increase. Despite all this, Egypt is determined to move forward with rapid and ambitious steps to meet the aspirations of its people.