

A Joint Report by a Coalition of Egyptian human rights non-governmental (NGOs) on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Egypt:

I. Introduction

1. This report offers the collective testimony of the Forum for Independent Human Rights NGOs¹ on the human rights situation in Egypt. Although the report focuses on the last four years, it relies on the products of nearly a quarter century of human rights advocacy and activism, both on the ground and in the legal arena. Since this report cannot document all the pertinent developments and abuses witnessed during the period under review, it will focus on those events and cases that are broadly indicative of the major problems and obstacles preventing Egyptians from exercising rights upheld by international human rights treaties that have been ratified by the Egyptian government.

II. A general view on the human rights situation in Egypt

2. It cannot be viewed separately from an entire set of laws, policies, and distinct practices. Indeed, the basic feature of human rights in Egypt today is the prevalence of a policy of exception in which those responsible for violations usually escape punishment amid a climate of impunity intentionally created and fostered over several decades. The State of Emergency, declared in Egypt in 1981 and extended uninterrupted since then, has played a fundamental role in creating this policy and fostering such a climate, such impunity has become the norm. As a result, the rule of law and the state's legal institutions have been eroded, constitutional guarantees for rights and public liberties have been suspended, and citizens' confidence in the state and their own self-worth destroyed. This oppressive environment continues although recent years have seen growing segments of the population resist abuses and the policies that produce them. Indeed, certain sectors of the independent media, civil society, and new social movements have wrested away new spaces for freedom, despite policies, practices, and a legal environment that resist such change.
3. With this policy of impunity gradually becoming the norm, the prerogatives of the security apparatus have been expanded and Egypt has been turned into a police state. In addition to the direct violations of citizens' rights by the security apparatus, which usually go unpunished, this apparatus has come to play a central role in all areas of public life. Not only does it intervene in the affairs of political, civic, educational, religious, and media institutions, it also often obstructs the execution of judicial rulings and court orders.
4. Social justice indicators have continued to deteriorate as poverty rates have increased, urban-rural economic disparities have grown, and the gap between rich and poor has widened, such violation of economic, social and cultural rights is

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now as systematic and prevalent as the violation of civil and political rights in Egypt.

5. The government has used several methods to divert attention from its deteriorating rights record. These include exaggerating the danger represented by political Islam to the future of the state and the region, politically manipulating religion and culture to justify and legitimize human rights abuses, establishing institutional facades that give the impression of concern for human rights, and introducing changes to selected laws that do not change the existing autocratic legislative structure in the country. At best, the state has taken positive, though limited steps to improve women's and children's rights and attempted to highlight them before the international community to deflect further criticisms and distract attention from the broad array of legislative and political measures needed to truly put an end to human rights violations in Egypt.
6. The Egyptian government has played a major role in weakening international and regional mechanisms for the protection of human rights. Particularly from within the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), the Egyptian government has repeatedly sought to protect governments that have perpetrated grave human rights abuses, restrict freedom of expression using the pretext of protecting religions from contempt, weaken the independence of the independent experts appointed by the council, and silence the voices of NGOs during UPR review of human rights records in several Arab countries.
7. The foregoing observations led us to conclude that the persistent erosion of human rights is not a product of a particular social culture, a lack of material resources, or a need for training and capacity building—all of which are excuses used by the government and its institutions. Rather, it is a product of the government's unwillingness to abandon certain policies and respect human rights.

III. Assessing the Egyptian government's observance of its human rights obligations

A. The Right to Life, Liberty, and Personal Security

8. Egyptians enjoy no protection against torture—a systematic, routine practice. Crimes of torture continue to be an everyday practice in police stations, State Security police headquarters, and other detention facilities, including at times in prisons and even on public roads. In many documented cases, torture has resulted in death. No matter how much the Egyptian government insists that these are nothing more than a few isolated incidents committed by a handful of corrupt officers, hundreds of documented testimonies indicate that torture is a systematic policy carried out by police officers on a broad scale all over the country against both political and criminal detainees, suspects and convicts, men and women, adults and minors. Everyone who falls in the grasp of the police, particularly the poor, is in imminent danger of torture and bodily harm inflicted through various means, including beatings, kicks, floggings, burnings with cigarettes, sexual harm or threats thereof, being held blindfolded and naked during torture sessions, electroshocks to the feet, head, sexual organs, and breasts, and hanging from iron bars or the door of the cell. In the case of women, torture and mistreatment includes a sexual dimension that ranges from threats of rape to actual sexual harm, forced stripping, confinement with detained men, head-shaving, and electroshocks to sensitive parts of the body. More recently, the police started using sexual violence against men as well, as indicated by an increasing number of documented cases. The Egyptian government has expanded its torture activities

and is now even torturing on behalf of other countries (extraordinary rendition), such as the US.

9. The government has always resisted all attempts to redefine the extremely limited definition of torture in the Egyptian law; in order to make the law consistent with the UN definition. The government ignores all documented reports and cases indicating that torture is now used for a long list of reasons, including to intimidate or recruit police informers, to discipline or punish at the behest of a third party, to force a citizen to renounce an apartment or plot of land, as part of a hostage-taking policy that usually targets women and children related to a suspect, and to punish those who dare to challenge policemen's absolute authority or demand to see judicial warrants or arrest and search orders. The law also prohibits victims of torture from suing their torturers directly in a court of law and gives this authority solely to the Public Prosecutor, who closes or shelves the cases of the vast majority of complaints without charge. In addition, officers with the State Security police enjoy additional immunity against prosecution. In the rare cases in which the Public Prosecutor refers a police officer to trial, the Ministry of Interior does not suspend the officer or transfer him during the investigation or trial, but leaves him on the job where he can further pressure the victims, abuse them, and sometimes re-arrest and torture them again to compel them to withdraw their complaints.
10. Egyptian legislation allows for the death penalty in a large number of crimes defined by the Penal Code, the Military Code of Justice, the Arms and Ammunition Law, and the Drug and Anti-Drug Trafficking Law. At the same time, criminal courts in Egypt, which issue all death sentences in cases unrelated to terrorism, offer no recourse to appeal before a higher judicial body. The defendant has only the right to contest verdicts before the Court of Cassation, whose role is limited to determining whether the law was adequately interpreted and applied, without a reconsideration of the facts or evidence in the case. More serious are the several death sentences for civilians issued by emergency courts or military tribunals, since these courts do not provide the minimum standards of a fair trial. Since 1992, military tribunals and emergency courts have issued at least 137 death sentences in terrorism cases, at least 67 of which have been carried out.
11. In recent years many people have been killed or injured by the police during police pursuits, home searches and as police break up demonstrations and peaceful assemblies. At least 27 Sudanese refugee migrants were killed in one such incident when the police used violence to break up a peaceful sit-in of Sudanese in front of the UN High Commissioner's Office for Refugees (UNHCR) in December 2005. The Public Prosecutor closed the investigation without referring even one person to trial and the government refused to allow an international investigation. The police forces on the Egyptian-Israeli border also opened fire directly on African migrants in 2007 as they attempted to cross the border to Israel for economic reasons. This policy led to the death of 33 migrants in 2008 alone. The Egyptian government has announced no investigation or trials in any of these cases.
12. Regarding enforced disappearances, the Egyptian security apparatus continues to refuse to divulge the fate of many detainees whose whereabouts after their arrest remains unknown to their relatives and attorneys. In 2007, the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) documented at least 53 cases of enforced disappearance since 1992, most notably journalist Reda Helal.

13. In recent years, the police have expanded the use of collective, arbitrary raids, particularly after bombings and criminal or sectarian assaults. These raids normally involve the illegal detentions without being brought before the proper judicial authority or allowed to contact family or attorneys. The security apparatus also commonly detains entire families as hostages to force wanted fugitives to turn themselves in. The State of Emergency has contributed to the systematization of these violations, particularly since the Emergency Law allows administrative detention for anyone who might be considered “a danger to public security.” Detainees are not permitted to contest the legality of their detention before a judicial body until a full month has passed since their arrest, and even when detainees obtain release orders from the courts, the Ministry of Interior often issues a new arrest order without releasing the detainee – violation of the Emergency Law itself. As a result of this policy, there are now some 12-14 thousand detained persons, some of whom have been under detention for 15 years without charge or trial, although many have received numerous release orders.
14. Finally, Egyptian prisons suffer from severe overcrowding, low standards of cleanliness and hygiene, polluted water, a paucity of food with little nutritional value, while prohibiting prisoners from exercise. Diseases such as tuberculosis and scabies are widespread and health care inside prisons faces a severe lack of human and material resources. For political prisoners, the Ministry of Interior habitually denies visits and contact with the outside world through orders locking down certain prisons and prohibiting all visits for security reasons, or limiting visitation periods and heavily monitoring correspondence. Often the ministry does not inform the family of a prisoner or detainee when the detainee is moved to another prison and does not allow the detainee to inform his family.

B. The Administration of Justice and the Rule of Law

15. The Egyptian legal system contains various provisions that violate due process and undermine the independence of the judiciary. The consistent application of Emergency Law since October 6, 1981, has led to the very real erosion of the principles of sovereignty of the law and equality before the law, in addition to undermining the institutions of justice through the establishment of parallel, exceptional legal systems. The Emergency Law has allowed the security apparatus to suspend constitutional provisions for nearly three decades, permitting security to place restrictions on the freedom of individuals to assembly, movement, and residence, although the constitution upholds these liberties and prohibits security personnel from intervening in their exercise. Warrantless arrests and searches have become so commonplace that this exceptional power has become the general rule of the security apparatus and citizens are no longer able to object or inquire as to the reason for their arrest or detention.
16. Under the Emergency Law, exceptional State Security "Emergency" courts have been established to hear a broad range of crimes that are punishable under common law. These courts do not provide the minimum guarantees of a fair trial and their verdicts cannot be appealed. In addition, the President can intervene in the composition of these courts and introduce military personnel on the judicial panel. The Emergency Law also gives the President the right to intervene in their verdicts after issuance either to ratify the judgment, alter it, suspend it, or order a new trial in another circuit.
17. The State of Emergency also allows the President to refer any cases of civilians to military tribunals instead of regular courts. This not only violates the principle of

equality before the law, the military tribunals themselves violate the principles of due process and a fair trial, including the right of the accused to be tried in public before an impartial, independent court (rather than before military officers subordinate to the executive), Military tribunals are not only used against those accused of terrorism-related crimes, but on several occasions they have also targeted journalists, writers, political dissidents, and parliamentarians.

18. The constitutional amendments of 2007, sponsored by the government, provide constitutional protection for this exceptional state of affairs by circumventing the regular judiciary and establishing a permanent, parallel court system for cases that the state does not wish to refer to the regular courts. The newly added Article 179 allows the president of the republic to refer suspects in terrorism cases to “any judiciary body stipulated in the constitution or law,” thus cementing the role of the exceptional judiciary. The same article also gives the state the right to issue a counterterrorism law that will suspend those sections of the constitution that provide for personal freedoms, protect the sanctity of private life and the home, and prohibit warrantless arrests, searches, and the monitoring of personal communication. Such a law threatens to incorporate all the prerogatives enjoyed by the security apparatus under the state of emergency into the body of regular law if the Emergency Law is lifted. It should be noted that the government issued a counterterrorism law in 1992 and it, along with Emergency Law, is still in effect.
19. At the same time, the Egyptian government has continued to violate the independence of the judiciary in various ways, from the executive branch’s control over the appointment, discipline, deputation, assignment, training and mandating of judges, to the subordination of judicial oversight to the Ministry of Justice, with the executive influence over judges and prosecutors this entails, to laws that give the Minister of Justice the authority to assign the heads of primary courts, oversee court administration, and intervene in their internal systems by forming court circuits and assigning cases to the various circuits.

C. Freedom of Religion, Belief, Opinion, Expression, Organization, Assembly, and Public Participation

20. The freedom of religion and belief has eroded in recent decades as the government persists in maintaining laws and policies that entrench discrimination on the basis of religion or faith, particularly discrimination against Copts, who constitute 8 to 10% of the population. The most prominent forms of discrimination are those related to the freedom to engage in religious rites and establish or renovate churches, restrictions placed on the right to choose or change one’s religion or faith, and certain discriminatory measures against non-Muslims in personal status. In addition, Copts are poorly represented in public office and parliamentary and municipal representative councils. Those adhering to a faith not recognized by the Egyptian state, primarily Egyptian *Bahai's*, face discrimination as well. The security apparatus has continued to harass or arrest individuals because of their religious beliefs, citing the crime of “showing contempt for heavenly religions” found in the Penal Code. This provision allows the security apparatus to harass those who belong to or promote a religious belief that does not meet with the official interpretation of Islam, including *Shiite* Muslims and other individuals who hold or express beliefs at odds with the prevailing interpretation of Islam, such as the so-called Quranists. The gravest danger in the area of religion is the state’s utter failure to deter religious bigotry, expressed particularly

in the growing harassment of Copts and, more recently, *Bahai's*. The state apparatus also shows no interest in tackling the rising tide of sectarian tension and violence between Muslims and Christians, even as sectarian attacks become more frequent and more geographically widespread across the country.

21. Regarding freedom of opinion and expression, violations and restrictions have continued, despite the success of the media in gaining a wider margin for freedom of the press in recent years. The government continues to refuse to amend several legal provisions that allow imprisonment in publication cases. The legal harassment of journalists continues—led by the state or elements linked to it—which has led to prison sentences or heavy fines for journalists in recent years. There have also been more cases in which journalists have been physically assaulted with impunity while doing their job, in addition to pressure on private satellite channels, intervention in their affairs, the closure of their offices, and the legal harassment of some of their employees on charges related to the practice of their profession. The confiscation of printed material and the blocking of websites continued and the security apparatus has arrested several bloggers due to their political opinions and blog content and referred some of them to trials that ended with prison sentences. Although some independent newspapers have been permitted to publish in recent years, the state still refuses to lift legislative restrictions on the freedom to issue and own newspapers or establish private radio and television stations, which are used as a negotiating card with those who wish to obtain licenses to interfere with their media's content. In addition, official religious institutions have exerted increasing pressure against the freedom of literary and artistic expression, filing lawsuits and launching smear campaigns against certain literary figures or intellectuals and branding them as “infidels.”
22. Student and academic freedom has witnessed the same ongoing constraints and violations. The Universities Law makes them completely subordinate to the authority of the Supreme Council for Universities, which is headed by the Minister of Higher Education. Elected until 1994, university presidents are now appointed by a presidential decree. Security approval has also become a prerequisite for appointment, promotion, travel abroad by members of the academic community for academic purposes, and candidacy for academic missions. University professors are required to receive prior approval from security before engaging in joint research projects with a foreign partner or inviting foreign professors to participate in seminars and conferences or give lectures inside the university. Pursuant to a law issued in 1964, the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics is responsible for issuing all permits for poll research. The statutes regulating student activities impose many restrictions on students' right to freedom of opinion, expression, and organization. They also set complex, prohibitive conditions for prospective candidates in student elections that permit the security apparatus or university administration to strike students from the candidates' list because of their political or intellectual beliefs and give the administration the authority to control all student activities. Egyptian students do not have the freedom to elect their representatives in student unions with the exception of students enrolled in some foreign universities in Egypt in which student elections are not subject to security interference.
23. In law and in practice, the state imposes excessive restrictions on the freedom to form NGO's and blatantly violates this right. The NGO Law of 2002 imposes

severe restrictions² and on the ground, the state continues to violate the provisions of even this overly restrictive law. The security apparatus has interfered in the operation of NGOs by illegally canceling conferences and activities and exploiting legal provisions requiring prior government approval for outside funding to barter with NGOs, pressure them for information, or coerce them into altering or canceling some of their activities. In reality, the Ministry of Social Solidarity has simply become the contact point between NGOs and the security apparatus.

24. Egyptians do not have the freedom to form political parties. Political association is subject to severe restrictions imposed by the Political Parties Law of 1977, which grants massive prerogatives to the Political Parties Committee, controlled by the ruling party. The committee is responsible for approving new parties and can suspend a party's activities. This gives the ruling party the ability to choose its political competitors or eliminate them. Indeed, the committee has refused to license at least 75 parties. In addition, it has issued decrees to freeze some parties and has deepened internal conflicts in other parties by supporting one party to a dispute over another, in violation of the law.
25. Egyptians do not enjoy the freedom to form independent trade unions. Law 35/1976 on labor unions puts all such associations under the supervision and oversight of the Ministry of Labor Forces and gives the Ministry the right to oppose the formation of trade unions and to intervene in the organizations and administration of union elections. This administrative interference, not to mention interventions by security, deprives thousands of workers of their right to stand as candidates and leads to wide-scale electoral tampering, which ultimately cements the control of pro-government elements over all levels of the official labor union. With the increasing use of temporary employment contracts, temporary labor now constitutes a substantial portion of the labor force, and this segment of workers is denied the right to compete in elections in the official labor union. As for professional trade syndicates, Law 100/1993 on elections in professional syndicates, which aims to prevent these syndicates from becoming involved in politics, imposes severe, arbitrary restrictions that, in practice, have led to the freezing of elections for 14 years in 12 professional syndicates.
26. Egyptians do not enjoy the right to peaceful assembly. The state uses legislative restrictions and excessive violence to prevent citizens from exercising this right and by refusing to grant permits to peaceful demonstrations and protests, as well as through the use of excessive force in assaulting demonstrators. Of course, the Emergency Law also imposes severe restrictions on peaceful assembly. Although peaceful protests have become more widespread in recent years, most are organized in violation of these reprehensible laws, and in many demonstrators

² Restrictions imposed under the NGO Law of 2002 include: 1) NGOs are required to obtain a license from the Ministry of Social Solidarity the reasons for which the ministry can reject a license application are extensive and vague and are used to deny registration to many NGOs, most of them human rights groups; 2) executive bodies have prerogatives allowing them to intervene in the internal affairs of NGOs, from the drafting of the articles of association to the selection of members of an NGO's leadership bodies, the right to disqualify candidates for membership in these bodies without cause, control over an NGO's affiliation with regional and international networks, intervention in the decisions of the NGO's board, and even the authority to issue administrative orders dissolving an NGO without a court order. In 2007, two advocacy organizations were dissolved on such orders (they later received court orders allowing them to resume their activities); and 3) the law prescribes prison terms of three months to one year for charges of engaging in civic work without a license, joining networks or alliances outside the country, or starting operations before the registration process is complete.

have been assaulted, resulting in several dead (as in al-Mahalla al-Kubra in April 2008) and hundreds injured.

27. Egyptians face severe violations of their right to participate in public life through elections and those who seek to exercise this right must contend with a broad array of restrictions and abuses by both the executive and security. The most recent constitutional amendments put in place impossible restrictions that effectively prohibited independent candidates from competing in the presidential election. The parliamentary elections of 2005, overseen by a committee headed by the Minister of Justice, were the occasion of severe violence that left 13 citizens dead after Central Security troops imposed a tight security cordon at polling stations to prevent access to candidates. The vote counting and announcement of results also witnessed strong administrative and security interference during which many judicial rulings were disregarded. During the Shura Council elections of 2007, security forces prohibited prospective candidates from reaching registration areas, assaulted civil society observers, and arrested opposition candidates and their lawyers as they filed their candidacy papers. The outcome of the election aptly illustrated the result of this intervention: of 88 open seats, the ruling party "NDP" won 84. Of the remaining four seats, three went to other candidates linked with the NDP. The municipal elections of 2008 entailed some of the most flagrant violations seen in elections in the country: the result was that the NDP "won" 99.13% of the seats.

D. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

28. One in every five Egyptians lives in poverty according to the UN and World Bank. The Egypt Human Development Report of 2008, issued by the state, indicates that the poverty rate had risen from 16.7% in 2000 to 19.6%. In Upper Egypt, the rate stands at a sheer 52%. The clear disparities between urban and rural areas are the result of discriminatory policies in the provision of services and economic and social rights. Although only 56% of Egyptians live in rural areas, rural Egyptians constitute 78% of the poor and 80% of the extreme poor. The picture grows darker the further south one goes: although the governorates of Upper Egypt hold no more than one-quarter of the population, their residents constitute 66% of the extreme poor. Some 95% of the 1,000 poorest villages in Egypt are located in Upper Egypt, and the situation in the south has only deteriorated in recent years. Women and children pay the highest price of poverty..
29. Regarding the right to health, at a time when nearly half the population has no insurance coverage for treatment, public health expenditure remains remarkably low, constituting no more than 3.6% of public spending in the 2008-09 state budget. According to the Ministry of Health in 2008, only 3,000 of the 87,000 health clinics across the country are located in rural areas. The lowest-income cohort receives only 16% of public health expenditure, while the highest-income cohort receives 24%..
30. The right to adequate housing has been similarly eroded. Recent years have seen growth in the wide belt of informal housing areas surrounding the capital and a parallel increase of violations of housing rights in Egypt through forced housing evacuations, which have left many residents of informal areas homeless instead of providing alternative, adequate housing.
31. Population groups living in peripheral areas face additional marginalization and abuses. The Bedouins of the Sinai Desert are denied ownership of the land on

which they live. Since the bombings in Sinai in 2004, Bedouins have faced blatant security abuses: their residential areas have been raided and thousands of Bedouin men arrested and tortured.

32. Similarly, Nubians in Egypt's far south continue to pay the price of their gradual collective transfer over the twentieth century as part of several large waterworks projects. State authorities refuse to respond to Nubians' demands for the recognition for their rights, including the reestablishment of their villages on Lake Nubia, the implementation of a program to facilitate migrants' return to these villages, the provision of jobs, infrastructure, and sustainable development in the region and guarantees of their right to participate in decision-making and implementation of projects in their region.

E. Women's Rights

33. Several advances have been made in women's rights in Egypt, including the issuance of a family court law, the partial elimination of discrimination against women in their ability to pass on the Egyptian citizenship to their children, measures implemented that clear the way for the appointment of women in the administrative prosecution and the judiciary, and the issuance of a law that will temporarily allocate seats to women in the People's Assembly (although it is expected that the latter step will be used as a means to increase the NDP's overwhelming parliamentary majority). Nevertheless, Egyptian women still face serious discrimination in legislation, in addition to the discrimination and violence they face in daily life. Regarding discrimination against women enshrined in legislation, divorce remains an exclusively male right, available only to women who have explicitly reserved this right in their marriage contracts. Other than these rare cases, women still spend years in family courts or make use of the *Khula'* system, which requires women to renounce all their material rights in exchange for a relatively rapid divorce. Not only does the Penal Code prescribe imprisonment as a penalty for adultery, the penalty is stiffer for women. Egypt continues to express reservations on three articles of the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The gravest of them is the one on Article 2, which requires ratifying nations to take the necessary measures to bring their national legislation in line with the convention's goals, for without such measures, the convention remains a dead letter. Regarding discrimination on the ground, all local and international statistics indicate that more women than men are illiterate, particularly in the countryside; they receive fewer health services, including reproductive health services, which explain the high maternal death rate in Egypt. Women represent no more than one-quarter of the work force in the formal labor sector and even working women do not receive a fair wage—their income is only one-fifth that of men. Unemployment rates among women are higher than among their male peers.
34. Regarding violence against women, despite the absence of the term “honor crimes” in Egyptian legislation, the murder of women in honor crimes is viewed sympathetically by the courts and light sentences are handed down in crimes that are tantamount to intentional homicide. The Penal Code, allows the judge to reduce a sentence by two degrees if he believes the circumstances of the crime warrant it. Courts use the same article at times to issue lenient sentences for rape and sexual violence as well. In addition, Egyptian law does not have a provision criminalizing domestic violence. Women can seek a divorce because of violence if medical reports and witnesses can prove the harm inflicted, but this rules out all

forms of psychological abuse, and even in cases where evidence is available. Egyptian law does not also recognize marital rape and there is no specific legislation that criminalizes sexual harassment in the workplace. In addition to all this, women who decide to file complaints about abuse or violence face difficulties ranging from the absence of mechanisms to protect victims to a lack of interest by police or even police involvement in violence against women.

35. As for working women, the Unified Labor Law of 2003 contains some sections that entrench inequality between men and women in cases of women working at night or in dangerous or hazardous positions and in issues related to motherhood. Despite women's increasing economic role—33% of Egyptian families are supported by women. As a result of economic liberalization policies, privatization, the state's shrinking role in the provision of basic services, and higher levels of unemployment, this role has normally come as a reaction to the spread of poverty and male unemployment and thus has not been accompanied by advances or increased legal rights within the family. Despite the pressing need for legal protection in this context, the Unified Labor Law withdrew many of the gains that women had made previously: women no longer have the right to labor leave before having served ten months on the job, while the previous law specified six months. They are often treated as temporary labor that is liable to leave the job at any time because of their reproductive role in the family. As a result, they are deprived of promotions and the wage and incentive increases that come with supervisory positions.

F. The Rights of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

36. Although Egypt ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its Additional Protocol, it expressed reservations on certain articles that have a major impact on the economic and social rights of refugees, particularly in primary education, employment, and social welfare services. In reality, refugees are deprived of even more rights. Although Egypt did not officially object to refugees' right to earn a living through work, the Egyptian government does not issue work permits to refugees at all, which pushes them all into the informal labor market, already crowded with Egyptian citizens, and compels them to accept inhumane work conditions for a barely adequate wage. Refugees in Egypt also face the same restrictions on the freedom of assembly noted above, which makes it impossible for them to organize themselves or establish mutual aid societies. Asylum seekers also face harassment, maltreatment, random arrest, and illegal detention by police. In 2008, the government engaged in a severe violation of international law when it illegally deported some 1,400 refugees and asylum seekers from Eritrea and Sudan, despite its knowledge that sending them back will put their lives in grave danger.

IV. Conclusion

37. Despite the bleak picture painted by this report, Egyptian society continues to witness several forms of resistance, collective and individual, to these abuses and policies, and in recent years, additional segments of the population have joined the struggle. Despite some achievements made, in general systematic violations of human rights and a climate of impunity persist, as does the lack of political will to confront the situation