



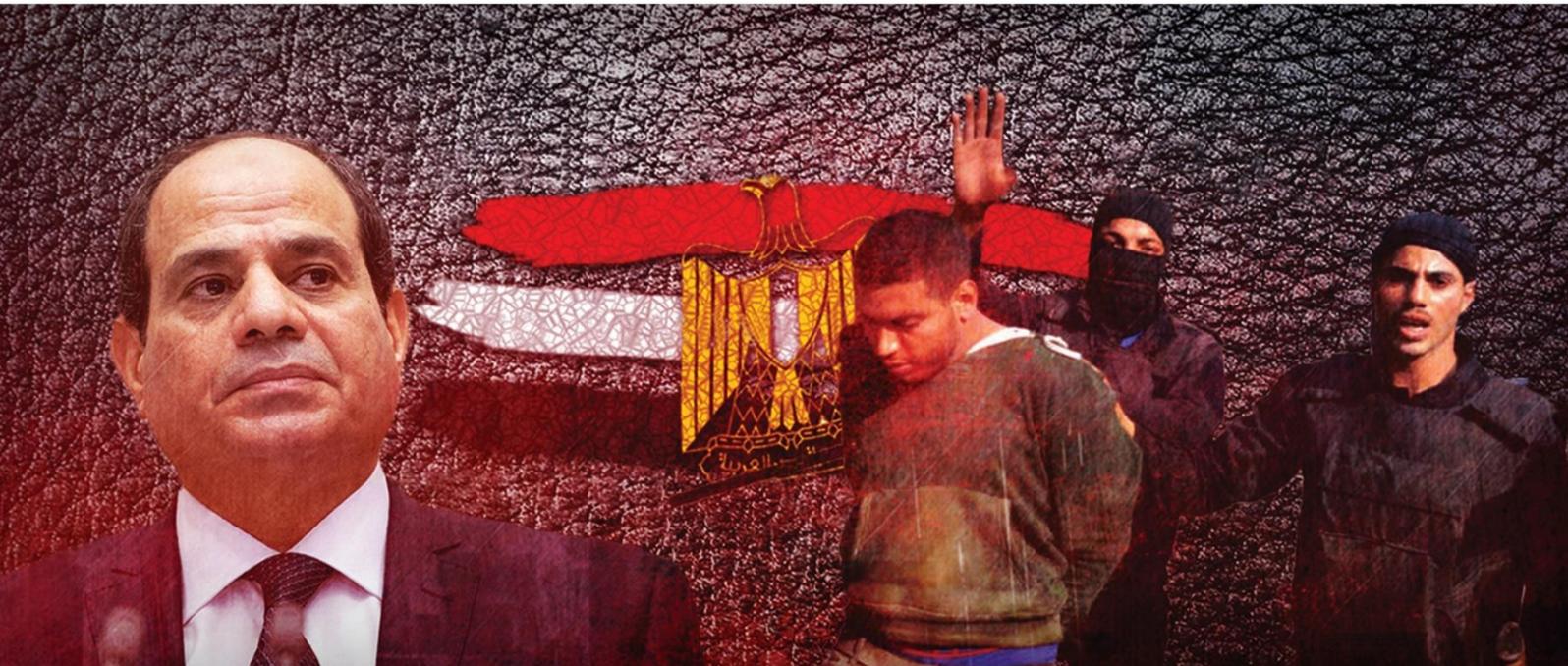
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Egypt bet. enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention

Dr. Nora Al-Hafyan*

Enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention are considered serious violations of basic human rights, in accordance with the provisions of international law as well as national legislation. The phenomena of enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention have witnessed a significant spread in recent years, especially in the Arab countries, particularly Egypt, since the coup d'état of July 3, 2013.

It is noteworthy that all those who have been subjected to enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention in Egypt are opponents of the existing Egyptian regime, including politicians, jurists, journalists, lawyers ... and others, that were not confined to a single political stream, but included various opposition currents between Islamists, socialists, liberals and independents.

The spread of the phenomena of enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention are mainly due to the nature of the military-based Sisi regime which has systematically adopted practice of oppression and tightening its security grip in the country to intimidate opponents from all Egyptian spectrums, in attempt to discourage them from seeking achievement of the rights advocated by the January revolution (2011), most prominently removal of the military rule.

The reality of enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention in Egypt

Since the coup of July 3, 2013, the phenomena of enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention has escalated, as the Egyptian security authorities have

since then pursued a repressive method of systematic practice of violence, intimidation, and terrorization of the regime opponents.

The inhumane practices of authorities against opponents, including the use of brute force, killing hundreds during the Rabaa and Nahda massacres, arbitrarily arresting thousands, and forcibly disappearing opponents and former officials, most notably the late President Mohamed Morsi, who had been forcibly disappeared for approximately six months, before he appeared in court for a series of illegal trials and in complete absence of requirements of a fair trial.

The Egyptian authorities have been implicated in widespread practice of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance against opponents, including politicians, human rights activists, journalists, lawyers, and even former army officers and others; amid deliberate international silence, especially from Western countries supporting Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's regime, most prominently the United States and France.

Sisi's authorities have adopted a revenge approach against critics of the regime's policies, which exacerbated numbers of the forcibly disappeared and detainees, who were subjected to all forms of physical and psychological torture.

In the same context, Egyptian and foreign human rights organizations operating in Egypt have been subjected to major harassment, including arrest of activists to prevent them from documenting human rights violations,

particularly cases of enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention that the Egyptian authorities have systematically practiced since the military coup.

The crime of enforced disappearance in Egypt often turns into arbitrary detention under threat. Most of those who had been forcibly disappeared later appeared on pro-regime TV channels in videos including confessions of committing crimes or involvement in planning or carrying out terrorist operations, of course after being subjected to systematic torture at the hands of security services in detention centers to extract mock confessions of acts that they had never committed, based on police narratives formulated in the corridors of the Interior Ministry's National Security Sector with recommendations and orders from leaders of the General Intelligence Service.

A stark example of fabricated confessions is the case of the assassination of former Egyptian Prosecutor General Hisham Barakat. The assassination charge was attributed to various groups of young people, mostly university students and holders of distinguished professions, and led to the execution of some of them, in violation of the law, amid complete absence of fair trial requirements. This clearly demonstrated collusion between the security and military intelligence services on the one hand, and the judiciary on the other, which has unfortunately become a platform through which the regime implements its conspiracies and use it as a guillotine for Egyptian opponents.

Women in Egypt have not been spared from enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention and subjection to various types of torture and cruel treatment, most notably verbal and physical harassment as well as other types of torture common in Egyptian prisons, in addition to their incommunicado

detention and denial of their right to medical treatment. Egyptian women have been subjected to systematic and deliberate violence by the security authorities, only for reasons related to political convictions, such as Ola Al-Qaradawi, Aisha Khairat Al-Shater, Mahinur Al-Masry, and most recently Israa Abdel-Fattah.

Also, Egyptian children and minors have not been excluded from the regime's brutality and violent practices; as a large number of children were subjected to arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance. The demonstrations of September 20 witnessed the strongest arrest campaign against children, where more than 110 children were detained, including children of politicians and activists, in retaliatory response from the authorities against their parents, in violation of children's rights stated in the Constitution as well as the international law and covenants.

Journalists were also subjected to repressive practices from the regime, especially in 2019, where 11 journalists were arrested after covering the September 20 demonstrations, seven of whom are still under arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance, most prominently the journalist and political activist Israa Abd Al-Fattah.

Detainees in Sisi's prisons are subjected to slow, systematic killing as a result of medical neglect, malnutrition, ill treatment and torture; and accordingly deaths have become a widespread phenomenon in Egyptian prisons, especially in 2019, where deaths in prison have increased dramatically, up to more than 775 detainees. No investigations have been opened by the judiciary despite complaints filed by families of victims about the circumstances of their

death. In fact, the judiciary in Egypt is considered an executive tool in the hands of the regime and one of the main contributors to the spread of human rights violations in Egypt as a result of the impunity enjoyed by security personnel.

In this context, many Egyptian human rights organizations have released statistics related to the enforced disappearances and arbitrary arrests since the July 3 coup (2013), as follows:

- More than 65,000 cases of arbitrary detention between 2013 and 2019.
- Some 2,629 women and girls were subjected to arbitrary detention, 121 of whom are still in detention.
- Between 6000 and 7000 enforced disappearances from 2013 to 2019.
- Some 396 women, including 16 girls, were exposed to enforced disappearance.
- Some 4,000 children were arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared during the period from 2013 to 2019.
- Some 250 journalists have been subjected to arbitrary arrest or enforced disappearance at separate times since 2013, 29 of whom are still in detention.
- Some 958 deaths in detention centers, including 312 women since 2013.

Over the past six years (2013-2019), Egyptian opponents have substantially suffered enforced disappearance and the arbitrary detention, which clearly demonstrated the true face of the regime and its repression of citizens, using

December 23, 2019

various inhuman practices, which has accumulated since the July 3 coup (2013), amid an international silence and indifference over the stark violations of human rights, in addition to the limited role played by human rights organizations that only express criticism and condemnation, amid lack of serious measures against the Egyptian regime's violations, or holding it accountable for these practices that are considered crimes against humanity.

- To read the full study in Arabic, click [here](#)

