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Maat For Peace, Development, and Human Rights

**The third report on "Following-up Egypt's 2014 UPR Recommendations"
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Preface

In November 2014, the Arab Republic of Egypt was subordinated to the Universal Periodic Review, receiving 300 recommendations during the interactive dialogue session, in March 2015, and during the report adoption session, the government fully and partially accepted 247 recommendations, where the CSOs Coalition for the UPR submitted two reports to follow-up Egypt's commitment to the implementation of the fully and partially accepted recommendations (voluntary commitments), and the current report is the third report covering the period between February – June 2017 (6 months).

The Egyptian arena witnessed during the reporting period the continuation of the parliament's second convening period concluded in early July 2017, as well as extremely difficult economic pressures upon the Egyptian government's implementation of the financial reform program through a package of economic procedures led by the liberation of the exchange rate and gradual cut of fuel subsidies, resulting in a significant increase in the commodities price in the context of an agreement with the International Monetary Fund, leading to considerable social tension.

Egypt also faced the danger of terrorism, considered as one of the most prominent challenges to human rights respect, amidst an international trend for growing supported terrorism by regional systems and governments led by the Qatari regime receiving official and public accusations from the affected states by the Qatari government support to groups and organizations practicing violence, murder, and intimidation.

Methodology

The CSOs Coalition observed and followed-up the Egyptian government commitment to the UPR recommendations implementation approved in March 2015, in the period between February -July 2017, where the observation process based on highlighting the following information:

1. Relative topics to the recommendations (25 topics), as well as the linked recommendations to every topic;
2. Relative constitutional framework to every topic;
3. Legal developments;
4. The gaps in the legal and institutional system;
5. The key statics and facts linked to the recommendations issues.

The report depended in its information on the legislative process outcomes, decisions, procedures and official governmental statements, as well as sub-reports and statements received by the member organizations of the "Egyptian Civil Society Organizations Coalition for the Universal Periodic Review", where a composed committee of the Coalition members reviewed the information, classified and analyzed them in preparation for the current report writing.

- **Strengthening counter-terrorism efforts**

6 recommendations were presented to the Egyptian government concerning the efforts to counter terrorism, those recommendations were fully accepted.

The Egyptian constitution stipulates in Art. 237 "The State shall fight all types and forms of terrorism, and track its funding sources as a threat to the nation and its citizens, within a specific timeframe while guaranteeing basic rights and freedoms. .

The law shall regulate the provisions and procedures of fighting terrorism, and fair compensation for the damages resulting therefrom and because thereof."

In 14 August 2015, the Anti-Terrorism Law No. 94/2015 was issued, defining the terms terrorist groups and terrorist acts, specified special department in the Criminal and Misdemeanors Courts to review the cases, the Law stipulated on the protection of the law implementers including the use of force during the implementation of the Law. The Law fines those whom transmit or disseminate "false information" on the attacks or military operations inconsistent with the official version stated by the official authorities. The Law, is considered one of the most significant laws adopted by the Egyptian government in light of its fights against terrorism, despite the criticism addressed to the Law as being considered restrictive to rights and freedoms in some of its articles.

During the reporting period, Egypt witnessed a continuation to the terror attacks against the military forces, police and Coptic church institutions, taking the lives of innocent civilians, military and police members, the most prominent incidents between them are the following:

1. 1st of April 2017: a policeman was murdered and 12 others were injured in an explosion in front of a training center for police forces in Tanta, 3 additional civilians were injured, a militant group called "the Revolution Brigade" claimed responsibility for the attack on Twitter;
2. 9th of April 2017, the bombing of St. George Church in Tanta and St. Mark Church in Alexandria, the bombing coincided with the Christians attendance to Sunday prayers and celebration of the Palm Sunday, ISIS claimed responsibility for the bombing of the two churches. St. George Church explosion occurred before 10.00h in the morning, was caused by a highly explosive device, and resulted in 29 deaths and 76 injuries, St. Mark Church explosion took place around 12.00h noon and resulted in 17 deaths and 48 injuries;

Upon the bombings, President Abdel Fattah AlSissi called the National Defense Council to convene in the same day, along with calling Prime Minister Eng. Sherif Ismaeel to move to the site to directly report to the President, the Attorney General Mr. Nabil Ahmed Sadek ordered a team of the Supreme State Security Prosecution to move to the incident site to initiate an investigation into the attack and speed the legal action. On the backdrop of the incident, Minister of Interior, Mr. Magdy Abdel Ghaffar issued a decision to dismiss the governorate security director Gen. Husam Eldin Khalifa, by the end of the day, and during the official speech in the evening of the incident, President Abdel Fattah AlSissi announced a three months of emergency state, demanded the parliament to adopt a law on the formulation of a National Council to Counter Terrorism and Extremism, along with appealing to the religious

institutions to assume their role in the development and improvement of religious discourse with the aim of disseminating the culture of peace and tolerance;

3. A double attack targeted a security barrier in Arish, resulting in 13 policemen and civilians deaths, and unidentified injuries, when a bombed garbage collection vehicle targeted a security barrier in Arish, North Sinai, while heavy gunfire was heard at 07.00h in the morning, followed by a strong explosion, and violent clashes between the security barrier forces and the defendants, that lasted for 45 minutes;
4. 26th of May 2017: Minya governorate witnessed a treacherous terrorist incident, that led to 29 civilian deaths including children, and 24 injuries including many serious injuries, in an armed attack on Christians in Minya governorate, South Egypt, when unidentified armed men opened fire randomly on the victims from three SUVs;
5. 7th of July 2017: the most violent terror attack during the reporting period took place when armed men suddenly attacked the 103rd Thunderbolt Battalion, using bombed vehicles and machine guns, attacking the checkpoint multiple destinations, leading to the death of 26 military members and 40 takfiri elements. Bombed vehicles were used in the attack, followed by gunfire by small and medium weapons along with rocket-propelled grenade, targeting the rest of the security checkpoint at Berth village, 30 km South Rafah, "the State of Sinai" militant group, affiliated to ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.

Despite the adoption of numerous legislative amendments on the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the issuance of counter-terrorism laws regarding terror groups and counter-terrorism, they haven't paid off till now, despite their importance, laws aren't the sole way to eliminate terrorism, other methods should be adopted alongside the legislations to achieve the objective, represented in the elimination of terrorism and its sources of funding led by the elimination of radical religious discourse and controlling foreign funds.

On the 26th of July, the President issued Presidential Decree No. 355/2017, on the establishment of the National Council to Counter Terrorism and Extremism, presided by his Excellency, 3 months after the President's announcement of the establishment of the Supreme Council to Counter Terrorism and Extremism. AlSissi's announcement came during the president's discourse addressed to the Egyptian people after the post meeting to the National Defense Council to the explosion of the two churches in Tanta and Alexandria on the 9th of April 2017, leading to dozens of deaths and injuries during the Balm Sunday celebrations. The Council is competent on the adoption of a comprehensive strategy to counter terrorism and radicalization nationally and internationally, coordination with religious institutions and security forces to empower moderate religious discourse and disseminate true religion concepts in the face of radical discourse, putting plans to avail job opportunities in the radicalization regions, study the linked legislations to fighting corruption domestically and on the international level, proposal of amendments to the current legislations, to face the deficits in the procedures to access prompt justice, and elevate the coordination and cooperation system between security and political agencies and international community, especially the neighboring countries, and seeking the establishment of a regional entity between Egypt and the Arab states to handle coordination with the concerned authorities to fight terrorism and organized crime.

The Council is competent on coordinating the Arab positions from terrorism, along with adoption of adequate plans to inform the international community of the reality of terror organization and the role of states, organizations and movements supporting terrorism against the Egyptian state, and working on taking the adequate legal procedures against the supporting states to terrorism against the Egyptian state, specifying the axes of required development of the curricula to support the principle of citizenship, acceptance of the other, renouncing violence and extremism, following the implementation of reservation of terror entities and terrorists, and citing the financial transactions for terror elements and organizations in order to dry the financing of extremism and terrorism.

It's worth mentioning that the Egyptian security forces were capable to conduct a large number of proactive strikes leading to the arrest of numerous terror cells that were active during the past period, which had a significant role in minimizing the rate of terror operations during the reporting period compared to the same period during the past years, where the security was successful to seize a large number of weapon and explosive warehouses spread across the republic.

The economic siege imposed by the security and oversight apparatus had a key role in minimizing the frequency of these cells operations leading to interior fragmentation, via reservation on the funds of large number of exchange companies in different governorates, in addition to the seizure of other cells collecting foreign funds to be traded in the black market using the benefits in financing terrorism operations.

The Arab boycott to Qatar had a significant role in minimizing the terrorism operations via the declaration of a list composing the names of 59 Qatari persons and 12 organizations on the terrorists lists, which is a serious and effective step on the road of confronting terrorism, leading to undermining the Qatari support to terrorism via those declared entities and persons on the Arab list, forcing the Qatari state to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on confronting terrorism with the United States of America, as a direct result to the pressures and repetitive demands during the past years to the Qatari authorities by the four countries and their partners to stop their support to terrorism.

• **Promoting child and family rights**

The Egyptian government received 7 recommendations linked to the promotion and protection of child and family rights, all of them were accepted.

Article (10) of the Constitution stipulates "The family is the nucleus of society, and is founded on religion, morality, and patriotism. The State shall ensure its cohesion, stability and the establishment of its values."

While Article (80) states "The State shall provide children with care and protection from all forms of violence, abuse, mistreatment and commercial and sexual exploitation."

During the previous period to Egypt's approval to the recommendations, the Prime Minister issued a Decree on amending some of the Executive Regulations provisions to the Child Law, Decree No. 179/2016 included the amendment of some of the provisions of the Executive Regulation issued in 2010, allowing the delivery of children to alternative families willing to adopt them starting from 3 months instead of two years, along with expanding the base of allowed alternative families to adopt

children of unknown decent to 60 years instead of 55 years, as well as amending the required conditions in those families to guarantee the child growing up in a capable family on the social, financial, physiological, and health aspects, when the paid child adoption was canceled.

During the same period, a Decree was issued on the establishment of the Child and Motherhood Fund headed by the General Secretary of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in August 2016, the Ministry of Social Solidarity launched a national project addressing the street children phenomena in July 2016.

The Supreme Administrative Court issued in April 2017 a fair judgment for children, after the stigma of the common marriage children and refusals of the fathers to issue birth certificates for them, the mother now has the right to issue a birth certificate for the child, based on the common marriage contract, the court ruling came after the issues to prove paternity from common marriage exceeded 15.000 cases annually, according to social researches. The SAC ruling is obligating the state to register the child at the Civil Status Authority without taking into consideration the relationship status between the parents or the father's denial to the parenthood, which is a good step on the right road to child protection even temporary till the prove of paternity.

The Arab Council for Childhood and Development organized on the 23rd of May 2017 in its headquarters a conference to establish the Media Observatory for Arab Child Rights, to be a mechanism to observe, follow-up and analysis what is being published on child rights, with the aim of advancing the Arab media performance towards the parenting issues and child rights in cooperation and coordination with media platforms and development institutions.

A report issued by the Egyptian Foundation for Advancement of Children in June 2017 revealed the violations facing the Egyptian children in May counting up to 270 violations as per the report, the violations included murder, kidnapping, rape, drowning etc.

The reporting period witnessed the adoption of the Parliament's Manpower Committee adoption to the relative articles to child labor in the Labor Law draft, including the right to involve children at 13 years old in training and giving them work opportunities at 15 years old.

The Committee banned child labor before 15 years old, and gave children the right to receive training at 13 years old, to allow them to continue their education, where the business owner hiring a child less than 16 years old is obliged to give the children identifications proving their training or work status with the children photos on them, to be authorized and stamped by the concerned administrative authority.

In the same context, the Manpower Committee in the Parliament adopted an article ensuring the Child Law provisions as the adopted system to child labor, the new Labor Law draft also prohibited child labor for more than 6 hours per day, conditioning that the working hours include one or more period/s for resting and eating for one hour, this/these period/s is/are specified to ban the child work for more than four continuous hours, along with prohibiting the child labor for additional hours or during the weekends and holidays, and banning child labor between 07.00 pm and 07.00 am.

Still, there's an urgent need to more legislative and procedural reforms to eliminate the child use and street children, as well as child labor in dangerous professions, this calls for amendments on the Child Laws, prompt issuance of the new Labor Law, Care Houses Law, along with tightening sanctions on the child abusers.

- **Supporting the People with Disabilities**

The Egyptian government received 9 recommendations on supporting the rights of the people with disabilities, out of which 8 recommendations were accepted and one was noted.

The Egyptian Constitution in many articles stipulates the need to support the people with disabilities, work on protecting their rights, and ensures the lack of discrimination against them in relation to public rights and freedoms (articles 53-55), article 81 states "The State shall guarantee the health, economic, social, cultural, entertainment, sporting and educational rights of persons with disabilities and dwarves, strive to provide them with job opportunities, allocate a percentage of job opportunities to them, and adapt public facilities and their surrounding environment to their special needs. The State shall also ensure their exercise of all political rights and integration with other citizens in compliance with the principles of equality, justice and equal opportunities."

During the Third Youth Convention in Ismailia in April 2017, the president announced 2018 the year for the people with disabilities.

Concurrently with the report issuance, and despite the parliament's discussion to a dedicated law for the people with disabilities, it hasn't been issued till now and is scheduled on the beginning of the parliament's third convening period upon reservations by the Ministry of Finances sent to the Committee on Social Solidarity that were refused by the Committee especially when the Ministry has reservations on the business owner exemption from a percentage from taxes in the case of appointment of more than 5% of the people with disabilities in their businesses, the right of the people with disabilities to combine pension and salary, and the exemption of people with disabilities from customs on taxes and taxes exemption in the investment projects.

The reporting period witnessed the decline of some universities in Helwan and Ein Shams universities to admit students with disabilities and high school graduates to some of their divisions in a violation to the Constitution, and in contradiction to the decisions of the Supreme Council for Universities regarding the availing of all colleges to the people with disabilities, and against the state direction to support the people with disabilities.

The reporting period witnessed also a state of anger among the people with mobility impairment due to the decision of the Minister of Social Solidarity to stop the pension for the people with disabilities to those having an equipped vehicle, where this decision contradicts Egypt's commitment to the International Convention to Protect the People with Disabilities and the provision of social protection for them, which contradicts with the constitutional articles as well.

The positive aspects include the fact that the study in the College of Science and rehabilitation for the People with Disability upon the issuance of the Prime Minister Decree number 98 of 2017 on the establishment of the college to work on the preparation and graduation of specialists on behavior modification and specified rehabilitation in certain disabilities categories, as well as the graduation of a specified teacher for each one of the disabilities and integration categories including: Intellectual disability, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disability, autism disorder, language and communication disorders, and learning difficulties.

Despite this, persons with disabilities have no access to the basic rights and freedoms of the ordinary people, including denial of education and employment, health, transportation, information, housing, sports and recreation. The situation is even worse for women with disabilities, who are marginalized

in the social, economic and cultural aspects of society, they are more affected and excluded than women without disability due to their exposure to various forms of violence such as sexual violence, the difficulty of finding equal employment opportunities, and reproductive health.

• **Combating Violence Against Women**

The Egyptian government received 28 recommendations linked to fighting violence against women, 25 out of them were accepted and 3 were partially accepted.

Article (11) of the Constitution stipulates "The State shall protect women against all forms of violence and ensure enabling women to strike a balance between family duties and work requirements.

The State shall provide care to and protection of motherhood and childhood, female heads of families, and elderly and neediest women."

The National Agency for Mobilization and Statistics issued a report explaining the continuity of violence against women, which escalated during the reporting period.

The NAMS conducted a statics study on the violence against women, addressing the number of indicators and numbers on the practice of violence against women especially before marriage, in addition to women's exposure to Female Genital Mutilations. According to the NAMS, the most prominent 10 numbers on violence against women are:

1. 90% of women have been subjected to FGM;
2. 42.5% of women are exposed to domestic violence by their husbands;
3. 37% of total women exposed to domestic violence by husbands are illiterate;
4. 35.1% of women are exposed to physical violence, and 47.5 are exposed to psychological violence;
5. 14.5 women are subjected to sexual violence;
6. 86% of the exposed women to violence suffer from psychological problems;
7. 1.49 billion pounds is the incurred losses by the women and family per year as a result of the violence;
8. 831 million pounds is a direct cost for violence;
9. 662 million pounds is the moral indirect cost for violence incurred by women;
10. 4.1 of women between 18-19 years old are subjected to enforced marriage.

The previous results indicate the continued lack of awareness and knowledge of institutions and organizations, such as the complaints office of the National Council for Women, which can help women solve their problems and fight against violence against them, in addition to the lack of sufficient number of guest houses for battered women established by the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

It is also clear from these results that there is a lack of interest in the positive and effective role of the various media, which must produce programs and dramas in general against violence against women and try to consolidate the principles of negotiation, discussion and persuasion among family members rather than physical or psychological violence against women.

The state should also rehabilitate those who teach religious curricula in various educational institutions, as well as the preachers and clergymen in mosques and churches and raise their scientific and cultural level so that they can integrate the issues of violence in all their lectures to stop the misunderstanding of religion in relation to women's punishment. As well as raising parents' awareness of the correct pedagogy of children and avoid excessive cruelty or excessive pampering that creates children's desire for revenge and violence.

- **Fair Trial Guarantees**

The Egyptian government received 19 recommendations linked to fair trial guarantees, 12 recommendations out of them were accepted, 5 were partially accepted, and two were noted.

The Constitution in articles 96-98 provides good guarantees for fair trial, and the current Code of Criminal Procedure puts forward guarantees for fair trial, still, it doesn't allow speeding up the pace of litigation to promote prompt justice, despite the current calls to amend the law and the concerned ministries initiatives to submit proposals to the required amendments, there's a great fear that these amendments shall come on the account of fair trial guarantees.

Upon the end of its second convening period, the Egyptian parliament announced a few days ago the discussion of a new law submitted by a number of MPs includes the largest amendments to the Criminal Procedure Law, which was established in 1950. The statements of the Chairman of the Legislative Committee of the Parliament indicated the development of a new system of travel ban and listing on waiting lists. The statements also indicated that the new law included an increase in the minimum period of pre-trial detention from 15 days to three months pending investigation before the accused is brought to trial, meaning that defendants will not appear before the court and their whereabouts wouldn't be known prior to the expiration of this period.

According to statements by the Legislative Committee of the Parliament, the law will impose a wall of complete secrecy on terrorism issues, where the names of judges and all persons involved in the cases will be banned from police officers, armed forces and witnesses to ensure their full safety. As well as the prohibition of publishing the proceedings of the trial and preventing the entry of relatives of the accused, the obtaining of judicial orders violating the privacy of citizens and monitor their communications shall be based on strong evidence, which hinders the concept of human rights in Egypt.

The period covered by the report also witnessed a great problem between the judicial bodies in Egypt and the legislative and executive branches because of the issuance of the Judicial Authority Law, which changed the system of appointment of the presidents of the Court of Cassation, the Council of State and the State Affairs Commission, granting the President the power to choose from three candidates for each post, when the President before was appointing the candidates nominated by the judges themselves. Although the custom was stable for the nomination of the most senior judges of each of the three bodies, the latter amendments were neither secondary nor formal, as they made the decision of the President of the Republic a tool of selection after it had been an instrument of appointment, effectively and symbolically detracting from the independence of the judiciary.

It is true that the criterion of seniority does not necessarily mean efficiency, but it is a protection for the executive branch not to take over the judiciary by giving it the right to choose the heads of judicial bodies. Thus, searching for other criteria should be assumed, in addition to seniority, for the selection of heads of judicial bodies has nothing to do with the choices of executive authority.

The reporting period also witnessed the Declaration of Emergency State by Presidential Decision No. 157 of 2017 following the bombings of the Tanta and Alexandria churches starting from 10 April 2017 for a period of three months in accordance with Article 154 of the Constitution, which gave the President the right to declare a state of emergency after taking the Cabinet's opinion, conditioning the necessity to present this declaration to the parliament within the next seven days to decide what it sees, requiring majority of the members of the parliament to approve the declaration of emergency for a specified period not exceeding three months, and may be extended for another similar period after the approval of two thirds of the members of the parliament. The parliament also approved the Presidential Decree No. 289 of 2017, extending a state of emergency throughout the country for a period of 3 months.

Although there have been no complaints of human rights violations so far in accordance with the declared state of emergency, it is feared that any of these rights may be violated under the pretext of applying the state of emergency or using the provisions of the Emergency Law to arbitrariness against innocent citizens.

• **Protecting Peaceful Assembly**

The Egyptian government received 15 recommendations linked to the protection of the right to Peaceful Assembly, out of which 5 recommendations were accepted, 4 were partially accepted, and 6 recommendations were noted.

Article 73 of the Constitution stipulated "Citizens shall have the right to organize public meetings, marches, demonstrations and all forms of peaceful protests, without carrying arms of any kind, by serving a notification as regulated by Law.

The right to peaceful and private assembly is guaranteed without need for prior notification. Security forces may not attend, monitor or eavesdrop on such meetings."

Upon the Constitutional Court's ruling on the unconstitutionality of the tenth article of Law No. 107 of 2013, known as the Demonstration Law, which authorized the Minister of the Interior or the competent security director to issue a reasoned decision prohibiting the public meeting, procession or demonstration or postponing it or transferring it to another place or changing its course. In May 2017, President AlSisi approved the amendment of some of its provisions and the text of the resolution, after its approval by the Egyptian parliament, to replace the tenth article text of Law 107 of 2013 on organizing the right to public meetings, processions and peaceful demonstrations to the new text. Stating that on the basis of serious information or indications of the existence of a threat to security and peace, the Minister of Interior or competent security director before the specified time to the public meeting, procession, or demonstration has the rights to submit a request to the temporary judge of the competent court of first instance to cancel or postpone the public meeting, procession or demonstration or transfer it to another place or change its course. The law provides that the judge has the right to issue a reasoned decision

immediately after the application is submitted to him, provided that he informs the administrative body that submitted the notice immediately after its issuance, and the concerned parties may appeal the decision in accordance with the rules stipulated in the Civil and Commercial Procedures Law. The new amendment eliminated the right of security to prevent the demonstration, giving this right to the judge of temporary matters and after the submission of an official memorandum from the Minister of the Interior or the Director of Security.

During the reporting period, the Egyptian arena witnessed numerous incidents to prevent demonstrations, arrest of those participating in them and putting them forward for trial for demonstrating without a permit, which is punishable by Article 19 of the Demonstration Law No. 107 of 2013, stipulating that it is punishable by imprisonment for two years and not exceeding 5 years and a fine of 50 thousand to 200 thousand, anyone who violates the prohibition provided for in this law.

The law was also used against fans of football teams on charges of establishing a group contrary to the provisions of the law, promoting this group in public, possession of explosives without authorization, incitement to demonstrate on the anniversary of the Port Said massacre, and possession of publications inciting against the Ministry of the Interior and the ruling regime

Despite the amendment, the Demonstration Law still faces objections from political forces and human rights groups, demanding amendment of other articles including articles 12-13 concerning the gradualization used in the event of breaking up participants in the public meeting, procession or demonstration, replacing the use of batons by using warning shots, and the addition of the use of sound or smoke bombs in the first stage stipulated in Article (12), which is in the case of non-response of participants in the public meeting or processions or demonstration of warnings to leave.

The proposal of using truncheons shall be added to article 13 before the use of rubber and non-rubber castor cartridges as the first means in the second phase provided for in article 13, in the case of the futility of the means set out in article 12 to break up the march, demonstration or public meeting, or acts of violence, vandalism, destruction of public or private property, or assault on persons or security forces.

As well as the amendment of the penalties for violation of Law 107 of 2013 known by the Demonstration Law, which is the most controversial point of all among political, human rights and community forces, to be reduced to confinement instead of imprisonment, along with putting a maximum limit for the fine not more than 50 thousand pounds or the value of what is destroyed in the event of a demonstrator destruction to something.

The political and human rights groups in Egypt calls for the establishment of a clear definition of the conditions under which some detained individuals are prosecuted under the cover of the Demonstration Law, especially since the law is filled with broad terms through which the right to peaceful assembly can be regulated, such as calling for disrupting production, disrupting citizens interests, harming or endangering them, or preventing them from exercising their rights and businesses, influencing the conduct of justice or public facilities, or cutting off roads or transportation. These are loose terms that must be defined in the executive regulations of the law.

- **Protecting the Minorities Rights**

Two recommendations were addressed to Egypt concerning the necessity to protect and guarantee the rights of minorities; they were partially accepted by the government.

The third article of the Constitution stipulates "The principles of Christian and Jewish Sharia of Egyptian Christians and Jews are the main source of legislations that regulate their respective personal status, religious affairs, and selection of spiritual leaders."

Article 64 stipulates "Freedom of belief is absolute. The freedom of practicing religious rituals and establishing worship places for the followers of Abrahamic religions is a right regulated by Law."

The reporting period witnessed the targeting of Copts in Sinai by extremist organizations there, where more than 120 Christian families living in Arish city left towards the Evangelical Church in Ismailia and a number of the governorates of the country, fearing for their lives and their families after receiving direct threatening messages on their mobile phones warning them to stay in the city and asking them to leave North Sinai. Especially that the extremists killed 7 Christians in Arish.

The reporting period also witnessed the targeting of Egyptian churches on April 9, 2017, when the bombings of St. Marks Church in Alexandria and St. George church in Tanta took place, in two consecutive bombings. With the coincidence of the Christians gathering to celebrate the Palm Sunday and ISIS claiming responsibility of the bombing of the two churches. The St. George church was targeted before 10.00 am and was caused by a high explosive device explosion, killing 29 people and injuring 76, the St. Marcs church bombing, which occurred at about 12.00 pm resulted in the death of 17 people and wounding of 48.

In May 2017, terrorists also targeted a bus carrying a group of Christians leading to the murder of 29 civilians, including children, and wounding of 24 others. The gunshot on Christians in Minya governorate was carried out by unknown gunmen traveling in three SUVs whom opened fire randomly in the direction of the victims.

Which leads us to recognize the Takfiri ideology inherent in the terrorist groups methods against the Egyptian Christians because of their support for President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the armed forces and Egyptian police in the face of the birds of darkness on the one hand, as well as targeting Christians on the basis of pure religious reasons based on dozens of Salafi sheikhs fatawa, starting from the prohibition of congratulating Christians on their holidays, to the payment of jizyah, and explicit atonement fatawa, which means the continuation of some religious currents in the use of extremist religious discourse inciting hatred and exposes the non-belonging to the same religion to related issues to the right to physical integrity.

Other than Christians, some citizens suffer from restrictions on their freedom to express their religious beliefs, including the arrest of two people in Typa center in Luxor, for the call for Baha'i faith and the dissemination of extremist ideology in July 2017.

In May 2017, the Political Parties Department issued a ruling dismissing the appeal submitted by the Shiite activist Ahmad Rasim al-Nafis to cancel the objection of the Party Affairs Committee to the establishment of a new party called Tahrir Party.

• **Protecting the Freedom of Expression**

11 recommendations were presented to the Egyptian state on the protection of the Freedom of Expression, out of which 7 were accepted, one was partially accepted and 3 were noted.

The Egyptian Constitution in articles 65, 67, 70 and 71 ensured all forms of the freedom of expression, literary and artistic creativity, freedom of media and prohibition of censorship on media portals.

The freedom of opinion and expression in Egypt is subject to the restrictions of Law No. 92 of 2016, on institutionalizing the press and the media, which is filled with serious legal breaches that restrict freedom of expression. The most important of these is Article 98, paragraph (f) of the Penal Code on the punishment of contempt for religions. When the provisions of some other laws are restricting the freedom of opinion and could be interpreted or used in derogating from the rights of newspapers and the media, including article 35 of the anti-terrorism law No. 94 of 2015, which states: "shall be punished by a fine not less than two hundred thousand pounds and not exceeding five hundred thousand pounds each person whom intentionally, by any means, publishes, broadcasts, displays or promotes false news or statements about terrorist acts committed inside the country or the operations associated with its countering thereof, contrary to the official statements issued by the Ministry of Defense, without prejudice to the prescribed disciplinary penalties. At any case, the court may prohibit the sentenced from practicing the profession for a period not exceeding one year, if the crime occurred in violation of the principles of his profession."

At the level of trade union organization for media professionals, the Prime Minister's Decision No. 573 of 2017, on the formation of an interim committee to handle the procedures of establishing the media union, in accordance with the media union law provisions. The President of the Republic issued the Media Syndicate Act No. 93 of 2016, after its adoption by the Parliament, it was published in the Official Gazette on January 3, 2017, guaranteeing the end of controversy over the media workers after decades of claims to join the Syndicate of Journalists (which refused more than once), resulting in calls for the establishment of an independent union of media workers. The formation of the committee without disclosing the criteria for the selection of the committee members and its president, by direct selection by the Prime Minister, and without nominations from the profession workers, the predominance of governmental nature on the committee's formation by eight members against three workers in private channels.

The first quarter of 2017, witnessed the issuance of the judgment of appeal in the case against former head of Egypt's Press Syndicate, former member of the syndicate's board Khaled al-Balashi, and former syndicate member and current board member Gamal Abdel-Rahim, On March 25, 2017, Cairo's Qasr Al-Nil Appeals Court abolished the first instance ruling and issued a one-year suspended prison sentence against the three defendants with the stop of sentence execution for three years, for harbouring fugitives inside the syndicate's headquarters and publishing false news regarding the press Syndicate raid.

On the other hand, on 28 February 2017, the General Assembly witnessed a sharp attack against Al-Ahram Foundation and its Chairman by the Speaker of the Parliament, Mr. Ali Abdel-Al, against the

background of the crisis that broke out between Parliament and Al-Ahram on the dismissal of MP Muhammad Anwar Sadat.

Egypt also witnessed the first incident of its kind when the Speaker of the Parliament reported the editor-in-chief of Almakal newspaper, Mr. Ibrahim Issa. However, on 5 March 2017, the Cairo Prosecution Office released Issa, following an investigation into the complaint accusing the latter of insulting the parliament and its members. Following the debate that took place within the plenary session of the Parliament, commenting on Almakal issue published on February 28, 2017, where the first page included some statements that were taken by the members of the parliament as insulting to the parliament.

During the same period, a large number of websites and news channels were banned by the Egyptian government claiming that they called for and encouraged terrorism and hatred and threatened Egyptian national security.

The ban came on the basis of a report published by Al-Masry Al-Youm on 25 May, issued by one of the sovereign authorities, presenting the experiences of banning sites in Arab and foreign countries, with the aim of justifying the ban in Egypt, believing that the state censorship of social networks is legitimate, with the lack of referring to the provisions of the Constitution and the Egyptian law as a justification for the legality of the decision of ban, the report also presented the reasons for sites ban in the countries of the world due to the following: terrorism, prostitution, illegal immigration, and money laundering.

This move came within the framework of Egypt's war on extremism and its supporters, and considering that these media portals "provide terrorist organizations, states and groups with platforms for propaganda, promotion along with an umbrella for terrorist ideas.", the shutdown of these media outlets has come from a legal ground, as it's a sovereign state authority to shutdown media outlets that destabilize security and stability. In spite of the state's right to ban these sites, it would have been better that the ban decisions came in the form of legal rulings issued against these sites, especially when a number of banned sites were news and media sites opposing some policies of the ruling regime in Egypt and were banned without justification.

• **Promoting Youth Rights**

7 recommendations were addressed to the Egyptian government advancing youth rights, and all of them were accepted, where the Egyptian constitution stipulates in Art. 82 "The State shall guarantee the provision of care to the youth and youngsters shall endeavour to discover their talents; develop their cultural, scientific, psychological, physical and creative abilities, encourage their engagement in group and volunteer activities and enable them to participate in public life.", and articles 180 and 244 dedicated a quota for youth representation in elected parliaments and local councils.

The reporting period witnessed the convention of two national youth conferences under the auspices of the President of the Republic, where the discussions had a high ceiling of freedom and resulted in good decisions regarding pardoning some youth detained on cases related to the Demonstration Law, as well as other decisions relevant to economic and social rights for youth, especially with cutting fuel subsidies.

The local elections ensuring a large representation of young people have not been conducted so far despite the passage of seven years on the dissolution of local councils, and three and a half years on the Egyptian constitution adoption, which is also postponed till after the conduct of presidential elections next year as a result of the lack of adoption of the National Elections Commission Law and the failure to approve the Local Administration Law despite the parliament's local administration committee announcement regarding the finalization of the Law.

Other problems emerged concerning the inability of young people to access projects financing opportunities and sponsorship of their economic initiatives due to poor economic and financial policies in this regard, in light of the inability of the State to appoint young graduates in the state administrative body as it suffers from excessive employment, which necessitates the establishment of micro projects through a complete system with their own mechanisms and funding through the establishment of the Supreme Council for Micro-Industries composed of experts in economics, management, businessmen, and youth, with the participation of chambers of industry, chambers of commerce and representatives of the concerned Ministries, to focus on providing feasibility studies for microenterprises and providing private funding for those businesses allowing youth to work.

In this context, the Central Bank launched a comprehensive program, followed by the issuance of 4 sets of new controls, encouraging banks and obligating them to expand the financing for small and micro enterprises with a declining interest rate of 5%, meaning that the real interest rate does not exceed 2.5%, to encourage banks to pump more funds and loans into the SME sector.

However, a large number of young people didn't benefit from this initiative for various reasons, the most important of which were the unfair banks conditions, including a condition that the project sales reaches 2 million pounds annually, which is very difficult.

• **Advancing Women Rights**

The Egyptian government received 39 recommendations linked to the advancement of women rights, 35 out of them were accepted, 3 were partially accepted and 1 was noted.

The Egyptian Constitution includes several articles promoting women rights and their equality such as article 11 ensuring the achievement of equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, and article 180 ensuring equal representation for women in the local councils.

During the period covered by the report, a 10 million Euros agreement funded by the European Union was signed for the promotion of women's rights in Egypt, for the National Population Council, signed by Dr. Sahar Nasr, Minister of Investment and International Cooperation, and Christian Danielson, Director General of Neighborhood Negotiations and EU Enlargement. As part of the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Women 2030, with the aim of contributing to women's economic, political and legislative empowerment and supporting women to reach justice in all areas through four axes: social, political, economic, protection, cultural and legislative aspects, the first strategy in line with the United Nations goals for sustainable development 2030. The reporting period also witnessed the appointment of first female governor Ms. Nadia Abdo as governor of Beheira in February. She was also the first woman in the Arab world to head the management of Alexandria Water and Sanitation Company.

As well as the appointment of Ms. Neven Gamea as Chief Executive Officer of the Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises Development Agency for two years, renewable.

Along with the appointment of Ms. Lubna Hilal as Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Egypt, also serves as Vice President of the Egyptian Banking Institute, the official training arm of the Central Bank of Egypt

The reporting period also witnessed increase in the number of women judges in Egypt to 66 judges, the appointment of four female governors' deputies, and the appointment of Ms. Rashida Fathallah as head of Administrative Prosecution, the third woman to assume this position in the history of the Authority.

The reporting period witnessed the convening of "Masr Tastateea Beltaa Elmarbouta" conference under the auspices of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, in which 31 Egyptian women scientists abroad participated in to present their experiences to advance the achievement of sustainable development. The conference has already made several recommendations in more than one area which will ensure continuity of communication with Egyptians abroad and work to connect the second and third generation in their country.

Despite the successes achieved during the reporting period in the promotion of women's rights, the representation of women in political, executive and judicial posts is still very limited. There are only 4 female ministers out of a total of 34 ministers, as well as the very low proportion of female employees in the leadership and supervision positions in the government institutions.

• **Combating Torture**

11 recommendations were presented to the Egyptian state linked to combating torture, all of them were accepted by the Egyptian government, Art. 52 of the constitution stipulated that "Torture in all forms and types is a crime that is not subject to prescription".

The number of torture cases in Egypt decreased compared to the period before the 25th of January and the 30 June revolutions, and the incidence of torture has become occasional individual incidents that are being investigated, torture is no longer used as widely as before the revolution. Despite the limited number of cases, the most prominent of which are:

- February 2017, Mohamed Abdelkader Abdel Nabi accused police forces of torturing his son, demanding an autopsy on his son's body to show the real cause of death, stating that he saw traces of head injuries and bruises on the face and neck caused by torture;
- March 2017, a young man called Sayed Hussein from AlHaram died as a result of torture, investigators confirmed that the victim was killed as a result of beatings and torture, and found the presence of traces of bruises and abrasions throughout the body after an illegal detention for 15 days, on charges of murder and theft of his grandmother, as per the preliminary investigations conducted by the prosecution. In the same context, the Public Prosecutor's Office in southern Giza ordered the detention of three officers at the Haram police station for four days pending investigation, on the backdrop of accusations of involvement in torturing the young man to death.

- In May 2017, the Criminal Court's fifth district dismissed a police member accused of involvement in the torture and murder of Magdi Makin, a cart driver, last November, the last of the ten police individuals accused, nine police members and an officer.

In the same context, judges Asem Abdel Jabbar and Hisham Raouf were referred to the Disciplinary Board to investigate their work on a draft law against torture.

Till the issuance of this report, the wide variation continues between the concept of torture in the international conventions and Egyptian legislation, despite the Egyptian government's ratification of the United Nations Convention against Torture and the need to amend the national legislation to be consistent with the Convention. The fact that Article 126 of the Criminal Code criminalizes the use of torture only in the case of the targeting of confessions, as well as the legal protection for the victims of torture, as they face legislative obstacles when they resort to the judiciary led by the limiting the initiation of criminal proceedings against public workers to the Public Prosecution, calling for the issuance of a legislation adopting the defendant's right to direct prosecution before the criminal court in the crimes against personal liberty or crimes of torture, and the repeal of Law 121 of 1956 on the amendment of Article 63 of the Criminal Procedure Code restricting the right of public prosecution to police officers and public officials and their likes to Public Prosecution.

• **Fighting Corruption**

7 recommendations were presented to the Egyptian state relative to the fight against corruption, all of them were accepted, the Egyptian constitution in Art. 218 stated that "The State shall fight corruption, and the competent control agencies and organizations shall be identified by Law.

Competent control agencies and organizations shall coordinate their activities in combating corruption, enhancing the values of integrity and transparency in order to ensure the sound performance of public functions and preserve public funds, and shall develop and follow up execution of a national strategy to combat corruption in collaboration with other competent agencies and organizations, as regulated by Law."

Despite the strong political discourse against corruption, and the great effort exerted by the Egyptian Administrative Control Authority to control the corruption and bring the perpetrators to trial, and the state efforts in combating corruption led by:

- The signature of a letter of cooperation intention in governance and prevention of corruption between the Chairman of the Administrative Control Authority and the United Nations Development Program, with a view to developing a framework for cooperation between the Administrative Control Authority and the United Nations Development Program in combating corruption;
- The Ministry of Social Solidarity organized a conference to discuss and approve the executive plan for civil society organizations to combat corruption, which comes in implementation of the 2014-2018 combating corruption strategy, and the adoption of new methods and ways on how to educate citizens about the dangers of corruption and ways to apply it on the ground. However, some active human rights organizations in combating corruption criticized their exclusion from participation in the conference and accused the

Ministry of not being serious in the discussion of the issue, this unjustified exclusion was against some of the most Egyptian organizations concerned in combating corruption.

- The Administrative Control Authority intensified its campaigns to control corruption cases, led by the administrative control conduct to oversight and inspection campaigns on more than 92 consumer complexes and 83 grocery stores to detect the exploitation of traders for the economic crisis, the floating of the pound and the rise in the price of the dollar to raise prices on citizens. As well as raiding more than 75 fuel stations at the level of the republic, revealing the existence of irregularities in some stations and lack of compliance with some of the safety and storage standards in preparation for sale on the black market, as well as raiding 36 silos, and seizure of 42 cases of bribery and embezzlement worth 105 million pounds; Among the most prominent crimes that the ACA was able to seize is the arrest of 6 involved members in the attempt to smuggle 30 tons of subsidized medicines through the port of Ain Sukhna in Suez, inside a container for the export of household items, including officials of pharmaceutical companies. As well as the arrest of a procurement manager in the Ministry of Planning after taking 1.3 million as a bribe from a company supplying computers, electronic equipment and cables to the Ministry of Planning, in exchange for leaking information about the offers of the competing companies, and facilitating the disbursement of financial extracts, worth more than 100 million pounds.

In the context of international efforts to fight corruption, Egypt signed the African Union Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Corruption, adopted in Maputo on 11 June 2003, in January 2017, and it was ratified by Parliament in July 2017. It is known that Egypt has refused to accede to this Convention since 2003, which indicates that Egypt is moving forward in the fight against corruption seriously.

The Convention contains provisions on legislative procedures for criminalization, combating corruption and related crimes in the public service, access to information, jurisdiction, minimum guarantees of fair trial and extradition, confiscation of revenues and relative methods to corruption, bank secrecy, cooperation and mutual legal assistance and international cooperation, and a follow-up mechanism.

these efforts still require further steps to eliminate the phenomenon of corruption rampant in Egypt, the most important of these steps is to call on civil society to play its role as defined by the strategy to combat corruption, as well as the prompt issuance of the law to protect whistleblowers and witnesses in corruption cases, as well as the information circulation law. The media should exercise its role in combating corruption through awareness programs about the seriousness of the phenomenon, encouraging the whistleblowers to report corruption, or shedding light on efforts to eradicate corruption in Egypt.

• **Joining International Conventions for Human Rights and Withdrawal of Reservations**

10 recommendations were presented to the Egyptian government to join the international conventions and withdraw the reservations, 6 of them were accepted, and 4 were noted, the Egyptian constitution in Art. 93 stated that "The State shall be bound by the international human rights agreements, covenants and conventions ratified by Egypt, and which shall have the force of law after publication in accordance with the prescribed conditions."

The reporting period didn't witness any steps towards the ratification of optional protocols for some international conventions joined by Egypt, Egypt's reservations on some convention articles are the same as before the subordination to the Universal Periodic Review in 2014, addition to the laws violating some international commitments and some constitution articles such as the articles criminalizing torture in the Penal Code, Syndicates Laws, NGOs Law, and Demonstration Law.

• **Enhancing Human Rights Respect Practices Relative to Law Enforcement Authorities**

10 recommendations were presented to the Egyptian state regarding the promotion of human rights respect by law enforcement authorities, all of them were accepted by the government.

Article No. 206 of the Constitution stipulates "The police force is a statutory civil body that is dedicated to the service of the People and its loyalty shall be to the People. It shall ensure safety and security of the citizens, preserve public order and morality. It shall comply with the duties set out in the Constitution and the law, and shall respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. The State shall guarantee that the staff of the Police force perform their duties, and the relevant guarantees shall be regulated by Law.", when article No. 51 stipulates "Dignity is the right of every human being and may not be violated. The State shall respect and protect human dignity."

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Interior signed a cooperation protocol with the National Council for Disability Affairs in order to exchange publications, pamphlets and brochures related to awareness of the persons with disabilities, exchange data and information on the problems facing persons with disabilities and taking advantage of all services and care provided to them by the Ministry. Continuous training and education, holding training courses, meetings and educational lectures to sensitize police officers on the rights of persons with disabilities, and implementation of the provisions of the Constitution, international conventions and laws relating to their rights.

The police also organized special training courses for human rights officers and service police to raise awareness of the basic principles of the sign language and how to communicate with the deaf and the hearing impaired in order to facilitate their dealings with the various police authorities.

During the period covered by the report, judicial proceedings against some officers continued in cases of murder and torture of citizens, the most prominent of which were:

- On February 7, 2017, the Criminal Court of Cairo decided to accept the appeal filed by Karim Magdi, Amiria assistant detective, and the first defendant in the case of Majdi Makin torture, on his 45-day detention order to be released on bail of 5,000 pounds;
- In May 2017, the Criminal Court's fifth district dismissed a police member accused of involvement in the torture and murder of Magdi Makin, a cart driver, last November, the last of the ten police individuals accused, nine police members and an officer;
- On June 19, 2017, Cairo Criminal Court sentenced the officer accused of killing activist Shaima al-Sabbagh, a member of the Popular Socialist Party, to 10 years in prison and referred the civil case to the competent court.
- On July 13, 2017, the hearing of the third retrial session of the two national security officers charged with torturing to death lawyer Karim Hamdi at Matareya Police Department was postponed to 21 September as a defense request for the previous decision, along with ordering the defendants to be present with the continuity of their release. The Court of

Cassation decided to cancel a five years sentence for national security officers in the case of torture and the death of lawyer Karim Hamdi at Matareya police station, and re-trial before another district of the criminal court.

The mentioned practices described in previous axes concerning torture incidents in which police officers were charged, as well as cases of violent dealing with demonstrators, contradict the essence of these legal amendments and require the above-mentioned Committee to adopt a clear vision and procedures to limit these practices and ensure that they are not repeated.

• **Strengthening National Institutions in the Fields of Democracy and Human Rights**

Two recommendations were presented to the Egyptian government in this regard and both were accepted.

The Constitution in article 214 stipulates "The law shall specify the independent national councils, including the National Council for Human Rights, the National Council for Women, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, and the National Council for Disabled Persons. The law shall state the composition, mandates, and guarantees for the independence and neutrality of their respective members. Each council shall have the right to report to the competent authorities any violations pertaining to their fields of work."

The reporting period witnessed the amendment of the National Council for Human Rights Law, which was disappointing, as the law affects the NCHR's independence, neutrality, is considered against international conventions and will reduce its international level. The article on the possibility of dismissing the NCHR's members by a decision of the MPs doesn't include any explanation for the reasons behind this dismissal, allowing the parliament to punish the NCHR member for his opinion.

The new law also requires members of the National Council for Human Rights to submit a financial disclosure report, disrupts grants and imposes restrictions, most notably is the requirement of approval of two thirds of the members of parliament on grants.

Neither the National Elections Commission has been established nor has the law regulating its work been issued despite its discussion and approval in parliament.

• **Ensuring the Right of Access to Sanitation and Drinking Water Services**

The Egyptian government has received a recommendation on the right of access to sanitation and drinking water that has been accepted.

The Egyptian Constitution doesn't include explicit articles concerning the citizens' rights to obtain drinking water and sanitation services, still, this right is ensured in articles 18 on the right to health care, and article 78 on guaranteeing the right to housing and addressing the slums issue.

Efforts have been made to expand the coverage of sanitation during the reporting period, despite the announcement of the first law to regulate the drinking water and sanitation sector in Egypt nearly a year ago, it has not been issued so far or had its articles published to the public for community dialogue, a large number of Egyptian citizens still do not have access to safe sanitation, more rural

areas have no sewage networks, and there are frequent complaints of drinking water quality and pollution in all governorates of Egypt.

• **Cooperation with International Mechanisms for the Protection of Human Rights**

The Egyptian government received 15 recommendations related to cooperation with international mechanisms to protect human rights. The Government accepted 7 recommendations, partially accepted a recommendation and took note of the remaining 7 recommendations.

The reporting period did not witness Egypt's submission to any reports to any human rights treaty bodies, cooperation with the Special Rapporteurs is still not at the required level, and steps have not been taken to establish a headquarters for the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights in Egypt.

On the institutional level, there is no permanent body concerned with the international mechanisms for the protection of human rights, the Egyptian Civil Society Coalition for the Universal Periodic Review has called for the establishment of a permanent national committee to follow up on all recommendations and prepare all reports for human rights protection mechanisms. Yet, the solely existing Committee is a non-permanent Committee on the Universal Periodic Review, and is not keen to inform the public about the results of its work and the periodicity of its meetings, with no clear mechanism for this committee's communication with civil society forces.

• **Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Immigration**

The Egyptian government has accepted all 12 recommendations related to combating human trafficking and illegal immigration.

Article 89 of the Constitution stipulates "All forms of slavery, oppression, forced exploitation of human beings, sex trade, and other forms of human trafficking are prohibited and criminalized by Law.", while article 60 prohibits trafficking in human organs.

Despite the issuance of Illegal Immigration Law no. 82 of 2016, the illegal immigration phenomenon was prominent during the reporting period. Egypt is considered a major smuggling ring for illegal migrants, old fishing boats leave the ports of Damietta or Alexandria with migrants on their way to Italy or Greece.

Egypt has also joined the campaign "Aware Migrant - Spread the Word, Save Lives" launched by Italy and implemented by the Italian Ministry of the Interior in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in order to inform and educate the other about the dangers of illegal immigration.

In spite of the Egyptian attempts to stop illegal immigration, whether at the level of security coordination to arrest immigration brokers, via preventing boats sailing, or through awareness programs carried out by the Coordinating Committee against Illegal Immigration by holding continuous conferences in the governorates witnessing continuous immigration. Youth paid their lives for those illegal travel operations, the discovery of Egyptian bodies in the eastern Libyan desert of Egyptians trying to sneak into the Libyan desert through the Sahara, in order to travel to Italy, in

addition to the arrest of a large number of them before leaving the territorial waters or before Sailing by the Coast Guard were the most prominent incidents.

- **Strengthening Human Rights Education Programs**

Egypt received 11 recommendations in the context of the promotion of human rights education, the Egyptian government accepted 10 and noted one.

Article 24 of the Constitution states "Universities shall teach human rights and professional values and ethics of the various academic disciplines."

Till the issuance of this report, no human rights teaching curriculum has been adopted for the various educational stages, and there are no national plans that are institutionalized and sustainable in terms of education on human rights.

- **Promoting the Right to Social Security**

Egypt received 3 recommendations related to the right to social security that were accepted by the Egyptian government.

Article 8 of the Constitution states "Society is based on social solidarity.

The State shall achieve social justice and provide the means to achieve social interdependence, in order to ensure a decent life for all citizens, as regulated by Law."

Several positive changes to Takaful and Karama Program took place during the reporting period, to provide conditional monetary support to families and individuals, the Program is one of the most outstanding social security achievements despite the continued weakness of the pension. In the Takaful program, the entitled family to the pension was receiving 325 pounds, with an extra of 60-100 pounds to students depending on the educational stage, this amount was recently increased to 425 per family along with increasing the students allocation to be 80-140 pounds. Karama Program on the other hand is an individual entitlement, for the elderly over 65 years, and the disabled, covering an amount of 350 pounds, that has recently been raised to 450 pounds, with an increase of 100 pounds, the two programs may be combined for some individuals in accordance with the provisions of the law, it is worth mentioning that this program targets the poorest families in need to monetary support.

On the other hand, beneficiaries of aid and security pensions continue to be significantly lower than the actual entitled citizens of low income.

As a result of the financial reforms undertaken by the Egyptian state, mainly the floating of the local currency, it is estimated that the number of Egyptian families living below the poverty line have reached half of the total number of Egyptian households, while the estimated value of security pensions is noticeably weak especially in comparison with the severe inflation witnessed in the Egyptian markets in recent months.

- **Respect for Religious Tolerance and Cultural Diversity**

Egypt has received 11 recommendations on respecting and promoting initiatives of dialogue and religious tolerance all have been accepted by the Egyptian government.

The Egyptian Constitution includes various articles consolidating citizenship and equality among citizens irrespective of their religion. However, it does not include specific articles reinforcing the state's role in integrating the values of dialogue and religious tolerance and encouraging relevant initiatives when the political discourse emphasizes on these issues .

Al-Azhar issued a document renewing the religious discourse during the reporting period, indirectly addressing the educational curricula and their need to be reviewed, but did not separate Al-Azhar educational curricula from the rest of the educational curricula in the other public and private schools. The document specifically stressed the need to ease the schism between the divergent teaching methods in religious institutes, civil schools and foreign education, as each of them graduates very different minds, and the distances between them must be gradually rounded up and gradually integrated into an integrated and homogeneous system, not eliminating their diversity but guaranteeing consistency and harmony between their basic components.

The document also stressed the need to rehabilitate imams and preachers in the mosques so that they are trained periodically to understand the moderate religious thought, to distance themselves from extremism and intolerance, to expand their perception via dialogue with sociologists, economics, writers, artists and intellectuals, to digest the cultural development outcomes and purify their discourse from myths and dangerous ideas on the society's security and safety, urging them to continue scientific research in the cultural history of Islam, to maintain coexistence requirements and necessary spirit of citizenship and values, with improving their material situation, and enabling them to resist the temptations of extremist groups.

With every terrorist incident taking place in Egypt, various media discuss the need to renew the religious and enlightenment discourse, in other cases, decision-making circles address this issue as a wall in the face of extremism, but so far we have never seen practical steps to support and activate this ideological trend.

Usually, the concerned official institutions emphasis on the moderation of all faiths and their rejection to the actions of extremists, especially Islam, but the attempts of these institutions to play their effective role on the ground is absent.

In the second half of July, the President of the Republic issued a national decree establishing the National Council to Combat Terrorism and Extremism, with the aim of adopting a comprehensive national strategy to confront terrorism and extremism internally and externally, approving the policies, plans and programs of all concerned state bodies specifying their roles and obligating them to the adequate procedures to complement their coordination according to specific timetables, along with following-up the strategy implementation. The Council will also coordinate with religious institutions and security services to enable moderate religious discourse and disseminate the concepts of true religion in society in the face of extremism discourse in all its forms, the Council is composed of a group of government agencies and a number of public figures in the various areas of art, culture, media and others.

• Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility

Egypt has received 4 recommendations for the promotion of corporate social responsibility that have been accepted.

Article 36 of the Constitution stipulates "The State shall motivate the private sector to undertake its social responsibility in serving the economy and society."

Despite the issuance of Law No. 72 of 2017, Promulgating the Investment Law, promoting the corporate role in social accountability in article 15 stating "Toward achieving the goals of the comprehensive and sustainable development, the Investor may dedicate a percentage of his annual profits to create a social development system, outside of his Investment Project, by participating in the following fields, in whole or in part:

1. Take the necessary action to protect and enhance the environment;
2. Provide services or programs in the areas of healthcare, social care, or cultural care, or other development areas;
3. Support the technical education or the funding of research, studies, and the awareness campaigns aiming at developing and improving the production, in agreement with any of the universities or scientific research institutions; and
4. Training and scientific research.

The amounts spent by an Investor on any of the fields provided for in the previous paragraph shall not exceed 10% of his annual profits after excluding the costs and expenses which are deductible in accordance with Paragraph (8) of Article (23) of the Income Tax Law promulgated by Law No. 91 of 2005.

In coordination with the concerned ministries, the Competent Minister may create a list of the best Investment Projects that conduct social development activities, whether by the geographic area or sector or other criteria, and announce this list to the public.

In all cases, it is prohibited to use the projects, programs, or services delivered under the social responsibility umbrella to pursue political, party-related, or religious purposes or which entail discrimination among the citizens.

The Implementing Regulations of this Law shall indicate the controls and rules necessary to enforce the social responsibility system."

Despite the adoption of the law, one of the obstacles to corporate social responsibility is the failure to adopt laws that allow transparent announcement of the government's various policies, provide information and improve government systems in different bodies and departments, encourage public-private partnership to carry out its social responsibility to various stakeholders through necessary incentives and privileges including government tenders for a specific period and linking them to achieving specific social goals.

In this context, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights held a round table to discuss the improvement of legislation and procedures to promote corporate social responsibility, the meeting hosted a group of parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of civil society organizations, media professionals and experts concerned with the issue, and discussed a group of amendments that could be entered on the bylaws of the new Investment Law and NGOs Law,

as well as the Tax Law, the most significant recommendations included the need to engage CSOs and active authorities in CSR in the development of the Investment Law bylaws, establishment of an institutional unit at the Ministry of Investment to educate investors and community on social responsibility, monitoring and reporting, building the capacity of employees working on corporate social responsibility file and raising investor awareness of his role through the development plans in the governorates, developing a set of procedural and oversight rules on the investor, coordination between civil society forces working on the issue and the establishment of a database containing local needs to be updated annually at the level of the governorates.

• **Guaranteeing the Right to Economic Development**

Egypt received 11 recommendations in this regard, all of which were accepted by the Government.

Article (236) of the Constitution stipulates "The State shall guarantee setting and implementing a plan for the comprehensive economic and urban development of border and underprivileged areas, including Upper Egypt, Sinai, Matrouh, and Nubia.", and article (238) states the tax system goals represented in the achievement of economic development.

During the reporting period, the Egyptian Parliament approved the Economic and Social Development Plan 2016/2017 by adopting the general objectives of the ESDP's context, by increasing the total resources at current market prices to 3875.3 billion pounds, and increasing the gross domestic product at current market prices to reach 3244.8 billion pounds, with a real growth rate (at constant prices) of 5.2%.

The ESDP also approved the allocation of soft loans amounting to 150 million pounds, of which 120 million pounds for public housing, at affordable interest rates not exceeding 6%.

In spite of the above, the Egyptian economy in the period covered by the report suffers from a surge in inflation rates, which negatively affected the citizens living standard, where the Egyptian Central Bank raised the basic interest rates on deposit and lending by 200 points, bringing the total interest rate to 700 points in less than nine months.

The reporting period also saw the Egyptian government increasing to the prices of fuel and natural gas by up to 42%, as well as the announcement of the increase in the prices of domestic electricity consumption segments, in a move aiming at cutting subsidies on fuel and energy by 2022, according to plans agreed with the international financial institutions to restructure the Egyptian economy.

The Egyptian economy is suffering from low growth and investment rates, high rates of poverty and unemployment, and a decline in the purchasing power of the national currency, which led to a high rate of inflation during the first half of this year by 31%, this threatens of a new wave of decline to the middle class towards being poor, meaning a decline in the size of the public purchasing power of individuals and increase in the recession rates in the markets.

- **Improving the Working Environment of NGOs**

Egypt received 20 recommendations on the issue of improving the working environment of non-governmental organizations, out of which 12 recommendations were accepted, 6 were partially accepted and one was noted.

Article (75) of the Constitution stipulates "All citizens shall have the right to form non-governmental associations and foundations on democratic basis, which shall acquire legal personality upon notification.

Such associations and foundations shall have the right to practice their activities freely, and administrative agencies may not interfere in their affairs or dissolve them, or dissolve their boards of directors or boards of trustees save by a court judgment.

The establishment or continuation of non-governmental associations and foundations, whose statutes or activities are secretive or conducted in secret or which are of military or quasi-military nature is prohibited as regulated by Law."

Despite that, the reporting period witnessed the adoption of the Non-Governmental Associations Law no. 70/2017, replacing Law no. 84/2002, although the latter was restrictive and undermining the NGOs rights, as well as being contradictory to the essence of the constitutional text and the UPR recommendations, the parliament adoption to a flawed law for civil work in December 2016, and despite the pressures of NGOs and the effort of the Egyptian Civil Society Organizations for the Universal Periodic Review in pushing the President of the Republic to demand the Parliament to reconsider the law under the constitutional authority granted to his Excellency to veto the laws, the President ratified the law as it is without any amendment.

The law includes restrictions on the establishment of new associations, imprisonment, fines penalties and legal liability on civil work and workers, the law adopts penalties of up to 5 years' imprisonment and fines of up to one million Egyptian pounds for those who violate it, it prohibits any association or institution from conducting any study or survey without a permit from the state, and the results of these studies and surveys cannot be published without the permission of the state. Under the law, foreign NGOs wishing to work in Egypt must pay a fee of 300,000 pounds.

The new law also put a lot of obstacles to the associations' work, including that the association's registration fees has become 10,000 pounds, after costing 100 pounds for the registration form. Despite the issuance of the law for more than two months, the bylaws has not been issued until the publication of this report.

The Parliament also approved a law on amendments to the formation of the National Council for Human Rights from 25 members other than the president and vice president, with a period of four years instead of three years in the existing law, stressing that no one may be appointed to the council for more than two consecutive sessions.

The draft law also stipulates that the parliament shall begin the procedures for the formation of the National Council for Human Rights at least 60 days before the end of its term, in light of the nominations of the National Councils, the Supreme Council of Universities, the Supreme Council of Culture, professional unions and other bodies. The Parliament's General Committee nominates

the candidates taking into account the appropriate representation of the society groups, provided that the Parliament elects the President of the National Council for Human Rights and his deputy and members with the approval of the majority of its members.

The same period also saw a severe restrictions on the right of organizations to receive funding for the implementation of their development interventions, as well as the prosecution of a number of activists on charges of receiving illegal funding in the foreign funding case.

• **Ensuring the Right to Health and Education**

Egypt received 5 recommendations related to the right to health and education, all of which were accepted.

Numerous Constitutional articles ensuring the necessity to guarantee the right in health and education including article 18 stipulating "Every citizen has the right to health and to comprehensive health care which complies with quality standards. The State shall allocate a percentage of government spending to health equivalent to at least 3% of Gross National Product (GNP), which shall gradually increase to comply with international standards.", The State shall establish a comprehensive health insurance system covering all diseases for all Egyptian.", article 19 states " Every citizen has the right to education.

The State shall allocate a percentage of government spending to education equivalent to at least 4% of the Gross National Product (GNP).", article 20 states "The State shall encourage and develop technical and technological education as well as vocational training.", and article 21 states "The State shall allocate a percentage of government spending to university education equivalent to at least 2% of the Gross National Product (GNP)."

The Parliament, during the reporting period, approved stiffening penalty on working employees inside examinations committees or other individuals outside them to reach 7 years imprisonment and 200 thousand pounds fine or one of the two penalties for facilitating cheating. As well as increasing the penalty of e-cheating for students to reach a denial of exams for up to two years.

The Ministry of Education has implemented the Bocklet system, which is based on the integration of the question sheet with the answer sheet, the questions will be distributed on the entire response sheet, with different question patterns among the students, making it difficult to provide any opportunity to leak the examinations.

Education in Egypt continues to suffer from the high number of pupils in the classes, which reduces the ability of education and good understanding, this entails an extraordinary effort by the teacher, not to communicate the information to the students, which became unaffordable luxury, but to control the class, prevent conflictions and resolve dispute.

Which leads to the decline of educational level, due to the weakness of the school possibilities as they accommodate more number of students than the number of classrooms prepared, along with the lack of educational equipments sufficient for all this number.

Although the state has appointed 30 thousand new teachers over the past years, schools are still suffering from a shortage of teachers, which leads them to contract temporarily to fill the shortage of

teachers, this heavy burden makes the teacher in the pressure of increased work and periods, as the educational process in Egypt still suffers from a lack of activities teachers, these activities could be only found on paper and not in practice, leading to the non-teacher classes such as music, sports education and computers.

As for health, the government has not yet issued the comprehensive health insurance law despite the completion of two convening periods, indicating that the health crisis in Egypt is one of the many problems facing the services sector in Egypt, such as the problem of education, housing, population, ration etc. what distinguishes this problem is that it has a great human dimension, raises the sympathy of the healthy to the patients, no matter their level of wealth, and of course sympathy increases for patients in the lower and middle classes.

Therefore, consideration of the system as a whole is the easiest way to solve the health crisis in Egypt, especially as some institutions and entities have established private hospitals, belonging to ministries and different authorities such as police, army, endowments and intelligence, which increased confusion, while everybody is bearing this responsibility to the Ministry of Health, the latter has no authority over the ministries and other authorities hospitals. What made matters worse was the doctors' and nursing limited salaries, making some of them taking shifts in the public, private and ministries hospitals in one day to improve their income.

Amid the complicated issues of low salaries of doctors and the supporting staff including nursing, cleaners and administrators, the health insurance for Egyptian citizens treatment comes as one of the major health crises in Egypt, as it is practiced in most countries of the world that health insurance is a compulsory solidarity system, that is, every individual is supposed to participate as long as he holds the nationality of his country, and the participation rate is based on the income of the subscriber, which makes the rich pays more than the poor.

Because of the absence of the law so far, we find that the major problems facing the improvement of the health insurance system in Egypt is that there are more than 20 million below the poverty line, and these are in dire need of the state to treat them fully, in light of the escape of the rich to private health insurance despite the high price due to the high quality of service provided in private insurance, which affects the contributions of the rich to the poor in the government system and is reflected in the poor quality of services provided in hospitals in the government sector.

Despite the significant achievement of the government in eradicating the hepatitis C virus, the rates of other endemic diseases and cancers are very high, government services provided by the state through its hospitals are very low in quality.

More than 300 types of medicines disappeared from pharmacies, led by heart, diabetes and liver medications, meanwhile, the Chamber of the Federation of the Pharmaceutical Industry issued its decision No. 499 to increase the prices of 1000 types of medicine, which are needed by the simple citizen, this increase goes to the pockets of the largest traders and investors in the sector, the shortage of some medicines is due to of the import of raw material from abroad, which caused a shortage of stock, because of the lack of sufficient liquidity for import after the rise in the dollar price and the request of companies to raise the medicines prices.