

EGYPT 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to its constitution, Egypt is a republic governed by an elected president and bicameral legislature, with the upper house reconstituted in 2020 as the Senate after a six-year absence. Presidential elections were held in 2018. Challengers to incumbent President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi withdrew ahead of the election, citing personal decisions, political pressure, legal troubles, and unfair competition; in some cases they were arrested for alleged abuses of candidacy rules. Domestic and international organizations expressed concern that government limitations on association, assembly, and expression severely constrained broad participation in the political process. A progovernment coalition won an overwhelming majority of seats in multistage, multiround elections for parliament's reconstituted Senate and House of Representatives. Domestic and international observers said government authorities professionally administered parliamentary elections in accordance with the country's laws and that their results were credible. Observers noted restrictions on freedom of peaceful assembly, political association, and expression significantly inhibited the political climate surrounding the elections.

The Interior Ministry supervises law enforcement and internal security, including the Public Security Sector Police, the Central Security Force, the National Security Sector, and the Passports, Immigration, and Nationality Administration. The Public Security Sector Police are responsible for law enforcement nationwide. The Central Security Force protects infrastructure and is responsible for crowd control. The National Security Sector is responsible for internal security threats and counterterrorism along with other security services. The armed forces report to the minister of defense and are responsible for external defense, but they also have a mandate to assist police in protecting vital infrastructure during a state of emergency. On October 25, President Sisi announced he would not renew the state of emergency that expired on October 24 and had been in place almost continuously nationwide since 2017 after terrorist attacks on Coptic churches. On November 11, President Sisi ratified legislation allowing the president to take appropriate measures, not to exceed six months, to maintain public order and

died (with two others injured) when a 10-story building housing a garment factory collapsed. On August 14, five persons were killed in an oil refining plant in the Abu Rawash Industrial Zone. Local media reported the arrest of the plant owners by authorities following an investigation, which revealed that the plant had been operating unlicensed and illegally for four years. In North Sinai workers' movements were restricted by local government-established curfews and checkpoints run by both the military and nonstate armed groups in the area due to the military's campaign against militants.

The government provided services, such as free health care, to all citizens, but the quality of services was often poor. Other benefits, such as social insurance, were available only to employees in the formal sector. Many private-sector employers reportedly required workers to sign undated resignation letters as a condition of employment, which the employers could use to terminate employees at will. On June 18, the minister of manpower utilized an emergency fund created to pay workers' wages in the event of economic hardship to assist 257 workers of the Egyptian Company for Modern Food Industries.

Informal Sector: The Ministry of Manpower did not attempt to apply labor standards to the informal sector. Many persons throughout the country faced poor working conditions, especially in the informal economy, which employed up to 40 percent of workers, according to some estimates. According to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, approximately 11.9 million of the 25.7 million workers in the labor force did not have formal contracts with employers and were categorized as “informal” workers. Obstacles to improving working conditions in both the private sector and informal sector included uneven application or lack of regulations and restrictions on engaging in peaceful protests as a means of negotiating resolutions to workplace disparities. Domestic workers, agricultural workers, workers in rock quarries, and other parts of the informal sector were most likely to face hazardous or exploitative conditions. There were reports of employer abuse of citizen and undocumented foreign workers, especially domestic workers, particularly Sudanese and other sub-Saharan Africans.