



**The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights**

**Advancing women's rights since 1996**

**The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights Report  
On the Status of the Political and Civil Rights of  
Egyptian Women**

**Report presented to the 137<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human  
Rights Committee**

**On the Occasion of the discussion of Egypt's periodic  
review**

**(Geneva: 27 February - 24 March 2023)**



## **Introduction:**

The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) is a non-governmental organization that enjoys special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2007.

Since its establishment, ECWR has been concerned with supporting and aiding women in their struggle to obtain their full rights and to achieve equality between them and men. It works to address all forms of discrimination against women and urges legislative authorities to reconsider all legislation that contradicts international conventions related to women's rights, foremost of which is the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and calls for legal reforms if necessary.

ECWR follows up and monitors the status of Egyptian women through its annual report on the status of Egyptian women. In the following lines, a summary of the status of Egyptian women over the past recent years.

## **Status of Egyptian women:**

### **Freedom of Expression:**

Despite the important steps that Egyptian women are witnessing in the field of political rights, represented by the increase in the number of women in parliament and the Senate, and the entry of women into the judiciary after a long struggle that spanned more than seventy years, at the level of freedom of opinion and expression, women suffer from confusion between what is considered opinion and what constitutes a crime.

The human rights system is considered integrated and it is not permissible to work with it selectively. However, many international and Egyptian organizations also confuse what is considered opinion with what constitutes a racist crime and incites violence against women. Some of those who are treated as prisoners of conscience have committed acts of incitement to violence against women and children. In fact, there is a direct call for the wives and children of dissidents to be targeted for death.

And any publication of classified personal information is not allowed to be published about some people, such as the personal name and address, just because they differ in opinion or politics, and these personalities are used and classified as opinion-holders just because the incitement takes place on social media.

Violent crimes and racist discourse are common as a result of confusion between what is an opinion and the limits of this opinion and what is a crime, and some organizations adopt violent opinions just because they belong to the same political orientation.

This constitutes a major challenge to women's rights and often constitutes violence against women, as many women are exposed to increased rates of violence, as well as the reluctance of justice



authorities to take action in complaints submitted as a result of severe pressure or confusion between opinion and crime.

### **Violence Against Women**

With the increase in the rate of violence against women in the public sphere, as well as the emergence of new practices, where several girls were killed in the street at the hands of young men as a result to the refusal of young ladies to marry these men. A series of incidents began with the killing of the young woman, Naira Ashraf, a student at Mansoura University, at the hands of her colleague, with whom she refused to marry, and a series of incidents continued. Incidents for the same reason, the girl refuses to marry a young man, so he killed her, as if the girl had to submit to the desire of any young man who wanted to marry her, regardless of the extent of her acceptance or rejection.

Domestic violence continued at an alarming rate, and it reached the beating in the street of a bride while she was in her wedding dress after she left the beauty center from her groom in front of passers-by. What was known in the media as the "Ismailia bride." That girl did not take any reaction, but rather continued the marriage, which ended with her exposure to more violence, where she was insulted and beaten, as well as an attempt to kill her. After 8 months had passed, the Ismailia bride submitted a complaint to the Public Prosecutor against her husband, accusing him of trying to kill her after torturing her and imprisoning her for 15 days.

What is alarming is the continued neglect of domestic violence and the establishment of firm mechanisms to reduce it, which has led to more permissiveness of women and girls.

Statistics indicate that violence does not affect the abused woman exclusively, but its impact extends to include her children, her family, her community, and other women's sense of threat and fear that they will also be subjected to violence, and even the abuser himself. This impact goes beyond the limits of physical and psychological harm, but leaves a clear imprint as a financial cost. Awareness of the financial costs resulting from these practices helps determine the true size of the problem and its impact on society and provides a new and powerful dimension for understanding the legal, health and other consequences of violence against women and calling for taking the necessary measures. The results of the survey indicated that the value of the total cost of what the victim and her family spend (whether direct or indirect costs) in the most violent accidents alone amounts to 2.17 billion pounds per year as a minimum, and the economic cost may reach 6.15 billion pounds, by calculating rates injury among all violent incidents that occur to women in one year at the hands of a husband or fiancé.

### **Personal Status Law:**

The Personal Status Law has come to pose another challenge not only for women and children, but also for men, as the law constitutes its separation from reality and the changes that occur in Egyptian families. For mothers to direct the lives of their children, this did not provide any insights that are in line with the changes of the times and the development of the roles of women, who have



become the sole breadwinners for nearly a third of Egyptian families and contribute to spending to a large extent in most families. For this reason, the Egypt's President ordered the formation of a committee to prepare a personal status law, and ECWR contributed by submitting a proposal to the competent committee.

### **Education & Labor force:**

As for the rates of enrollment of girls in education, despite the high rates of girls in the various stages of education, there is a gap between education and work, as the women's work arena witnesses a decrease in their participation rates.

According to the data of the Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics, the percentage of female students enrolled in public universities and Al-Azhar for the academic year 2020/2021 is estimated at 52.6%, and those enrolled in private universities is estimated at 46%.

However, despite this, there is a gap between female education and their work and economic participation, and this is indicated by the data of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics issued in November 2022:

- The male unemployment rate reached 5.2% of the total males in the labor force, while the female unemployment rate reached 19.1% of the total females in the labor force.
- The number of employed business owners reached 876 thousand, including 788 thousand employed males and 48 thousand employed females.
- The number of self-employed workers who do not employ anyone reached 5.205 million workers, including 4.805 million male workers and 400 thousand female workers.
- The number of workers participating in projects (within the family) without wages reached 1.133 million workers, including 523 thousand male workers and 610 thousand female workers.
- The rate of male participation in economic activity reached 69.6%, while the female contribution rate reached 14.3%.

### **Electronic violence against women & Human Rights Defenders**

Electronic violence constitutes a great danger in general, and against women in particular, due to its serious social, psychological and economic effects, in addition to the widening audience base of the virtual space "the Internet" and the daily development of communication tools, which sometimes makes it difficult to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice. In addition to the fact that these crimes are transnational crimes, and are usually accompanied by other forms of crimes such as threats and extortion, and it even gets worse if the offensive content is actually published, as the social and psychological damage multiplies on the victim and her family, which may throw her into the clutches of psychological depression, and may lead her in the end, it leads to suicide, and even exposing her to the risk of assault and threatening her life at the hands of her family, in contrast to the societal stigma that the victim is exposed to, which may push her to leave



her job voluntarily or be expelled from it by force, which entails extremely serious economic and social consequences.

This confirms the seriousness of this phenomenon, especially since some surveys - conducted by international organizations - indicated that about 75% of women who use the Internet worldwide have already been subjected to harassment, bullying and threats of violence.

This is in addition to the exposure of human rights activists and politicians to electronic violence as a result of the published opinion articles or awareness videos.

### **Future steps to improve the status of Egyptian women on several levels:**

#### **At the level of legislative reform and reducing violence against women:**

- Adopting a family law that keeps pace with modern changes, respects the multiple roles of women, and emphasizes partnership in building the family.
- Passing a law to combat domestic violence and early marriage.
- Canceling the book of proof of marriage for those authorized to stop customary marriages, with setting a specific time limit for documenting all marriages prior to the cancellation.
- Activating complaints and legal prosecution mechanisms by supporting the Violence Against Women Unit in the Ministry of Interior and expanding its scope of work.
- Developing battered women support centers affiliated to the Ministry of Solidarity.
- Rehabilitating battered women and providing alternative opportunities for work and life outside the circle of violence for themselves and their children.
- Coordinating with the Ministry of Housing and the Informal Settlements Development Agency to provide and equip alternative places for battered women for a period until rehabilitation is completed.
- The need to issue a law to protect whistleblowers and witnesses, especially in cases of sexual assault and violence against women.

#### **At the level of political empowerment:**

##### ***Increasing women's access to leadership positions through:***

- Adopting a quota for women not less than 35% in all leadership and decision-making positions.
- The need to provide training opportunities to qualify women for all leadership positions.
- Increasing the percentage of women in local councils and parliament, through:



- Amending the local administration law and adopting the mixed system in the electoral system by combining the list and individual systems to achieve higher representation for women, in implementation of Article 180 of the constitution, which allocated 25% of the seats for women, and 25% of the seats for young men and women.
- Amending Law No. 70 of 1977 regarding political parties, with its subsequent amendments, and adding the need for party regulations to include 30% for women in all their structures.

### **At the level of economic empowerment:**

#### ***Increasing women's participation in the market to 30% through:***

- Amending the Labor Law to oblige companies that employ 100 male and female workers to work as nurseries for children.

#### ***Increasing women's access to loans and supporting rural women through several activities, including:***

- Allocating 35% of all loans for small and medium enterprises to women.
- Holding awareness meetings for women, especially rural women, to introduce available services and facilities.
- Providing technical support for obtaining loans and starting projects.
- Partnership with NGOs in each governorate to follow up on women and spread awareness of work and project opportunities.

### **At the educational level:**

- Purifying educational curricula from discrimination against women and amending them to ensure an improvement in their image and respect in society.
- Presence of women in decision-making positions at the level of curriculum development in the Ministry of Education.
- Paying attention to the effective eradication of illiteracy for Egyptian women and imposing fines on those who drop out of education.
- The need to include gender in educational curricula and emphasize good models for women to participate in the public sphere.
- The need to teach human rights curricula and gender sensitivity in higher education.