**Women's Rights in Egypt**

The Association of the Egyptian Female Lawyers (AEFL) is honored to submit this paper which presenting the condition of women's rights in Egypt. AEFL has monitored many positive developments in which the Egyptian government responds to the recommendation of CEDAW Committee as it inserted the strategy of empowering the Egyptian women within the strategic plan of Egypt 2030. The strategy seeks to protect the Egyptian women and enable them on political, social and economic levels. Among these developments are:

* Emphasizing Egypt's commitment to women's rights as stated and approved by national and international charters in addition to responding to actual needs of women in putting developmental plans and having equal opportunities as stated by the constitution.
* Combating violence against women through four axes: prevention axis which includes the development of public awareness, protection axis which includes the development and activation of legislations combating violence against women, intervention axis which provides health, psychological and economic support for women survivors of violence and providing hosting centers/shelters for them and finally legal prosecution and putting mechanism of preventive measures to protect women victims of violence and allocating special departments to review and decide in cases of violence against women.
* Reducing the rates of FGM by enforcing the law of criminalizing FGM and the international conventions which combat FGM in addition to creating supportive sociocultural change for women's rights and raising awareness in regard to these harmful practices.

Moreover, the Egyptian State sought to enhance women's role and empower and protect them through legislative umbrella of laws enacted by the Egyptian parliament, the most important of which are:

* Amending harassment law 2014: according to the amendment the punishment was increased to reach not less than 2-year imprisonment and does not exceed 5 years in addition to a fine with not less than 20.000 EGP and does not exceed 50.000 EGP.
* Amending the Egyptian penal code no. 58 to increase the punishment of FGM to reach seven-year imprisonment, and creating a punishment for whoever calls for circumcise a female with three-year imprisonment.
* Amending law no. 58 of 1937 (the law of alimony) which targets alimony evaders as the amendment states a fine with 500 to 5.000 EGP for alimony evaders.
* Amending law no. 77 of 1943 regarding inheritance: by adding article 49 which states imprisoning those who disinherit the inheritors for not less than 6 months and a fine with 100.000 EGP as women in Upper Egypt and rural areas are disinherited according to customs and traditions
* Amending labor law no. 12 of 2003: according to article 35 of labor law, women have more rights in the law of civil service no. 81 of 2016 as the maternity leave was extended to reach four months, decreasing working hours for pregnant and lactating women. In addition, women employees in governmental sector have right to child care leave with 2 years for maximum of three times.
* Amending the law which regulates family insurance fund (law no. 113 of 2015) to increase its resources to fulfill women's needs and amend law no. 72 of 2017 in addition to creating article no. 2 which states that principle of equal opportunities governs investment and taking into consideration equal opportunities regardless of project size and without gender-based discrimination.
* The parliament also discusses the draft law "Law of National Fund for the Care of Egyptian Women" which aims at providing care for women in all fields especially economic fields. Besides, the parliament discusses the law of criminalizing girls' marriage as the National Council for Women submitted a draft law to criminalize girls' marriage.

Also the Egyptian State took group of integrated measures and programs to provide protection against economic, social and environmental risks faced by Egyptian family especially vulnerable women, the most important of which:

* Cash support programs and social security which programs which are supervised by the Ministry of Social Solidarity through monthly cash aids for women and poor families.
* Family insurance fund which provides cash support for a wife provided that she is divorced or a widow.
* Takaful and Karama Program which aims at protecting the poor through providing cash support periodically.
* Mastora program "revolving loan" provided for women to establish micro projects with a total of 250 million EGP.

In 2018, 89% of women benefit from social protection (2.25 million families – 10 million people). Among the programs of social protection are as follows:

* Program of Decent Housing which aims at improving housing and living conditions of poor families by providing the simplest conditions of dignity and humanity. In addition, structures for gender equality and women empowerment were established such as units for equal opportunities in ministries and gender units.

On the level of political empowerment, the Egyptian women have become main component in ministries and parliament as in 2019 the cabinet included 8 female ministries which represent 25% of the total ministries. Egyptian women occupied the position of a governor and reached the position of a judge, and that women proved their capacities till the number of female judges reached 66 in 2018 and assigning 6 women as vice-presidents of State Cases Authority for the first time in Egypt. In 2016, women got 90 seats in the parliament and that parliament commissions include women. Also in 2019 the constitutional amendments come to approve the amendment of article 102 which states the increase of women representation ratio to 25% which increase the remarkable progress of Egypt in the international reports regarding filling gender gap.

So the Association of the Egyptian Female Lawyers sees that this positive development in the field of women empowerment is still facing many challenges as there are still great number of discriminatory laws and provisions including penal code and personal status law which deprive women from their right to equality. Also women still being exposed to violence in social spheres which is faced by silence as reporting violence cases is difficult matter in social context.

In addition, crisis of declining number of females in primary education in many rural areas and faraway villages. Women are still suffering from continuous discrimination against them in labor market.

AEFL agrees with CEDAW Committee in regard to calling the Egyptian government to provide equal opportunities for women in labor market according to article 11 of the convention. So to achieve this purpose, AEFL urges the Egyptian government to take effective measures in labor market to reduce professional parting and fill gender gap in regard to salaries in addition to encouraging the private sector by the state so that women are exploited in this sector and get social security and other benefits in addition to taking concrete measures to address sexual harassment in work places.

Also AEFL calls the Egyptian government to protect female house workers and domestic servants and to enact a law to protect them.

The Association of the Egyptian Female Lawyers calls the Egyptian government to respond to the committee's recommendation to amend the nationality law in a way which guarantees gender equality in regard to delivering the nationality to children of Egyptian mothers.

In addition, AEFL expresses its concern towards the increasing number of girls' marriage especially in rural areas and also towards polygamy according to law. Also legal provisions in the field of personal status especially what is related to marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance especially in villages of Upper Egypt and does not guarantee equal rights for men and women.

AEFL calls the Egyptian government to continuously cooperate with UN bodies on the top of which CEDAW Committee in addition to take more measures to face cultural legacies which affect women empowerment. AEFL also encourages Egyptian government to widen social networks to provide aids for women in Egyptian countryside.