



Death Penalty Overview

Since President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi came to power in 2013, Egypt has seen a stark increase in the use of the death penalty, fuelled in part by mass trials enabled by the Assembly Law. Domestic and international critics allege that the Sisi government has used the judiciary to stifle opposition through the imposition of death sentences in politically motivated trials. Human Rights Watch has accused the regime of abusing the judiciary to eliminate political dissent and transforming the death penalty from a supposed deterrent into an instrument of revenge. Some executions are actively publicised by the authorities for political purposes, raising further concerns. In 2020 alone, Egypt tripled its annual number of executions, making it the world's third-largest executioner after China and Iran. Conditions in Egypt have steadily deteriorated since Sisi's 2013 coup. Egyptian courts have recommended a staggering number of provisional death sentences between 2016 and 2023, and the government has carried out hundreds of executions.

Under Egyptian law, over 100 offences listed in the Penal Code, the Anti-Drug Law and the Code of Military Justice are currently punishable by death. In addition, Sisi's anti-terrorism law introduced 15 new capital offences, which are now mainly used to prosecute political opponents.

Crimes punishable by death include premeditated murder, rape and drug trafficking. In practice, a significant number of death sentences have been handed down in political trials, particularly for offences related to terrorist attacks and clashes during protest rallies. Preliminary death sentences for alleged terrorist acts are also the most likely to be confirmed as final death sentences. In 2019, the Egyptian cabinet approved a draft law extending the death penalty to drug offences.

The continued use of mass trials, made possible by Law 10/1914 (the Assembly Law), has led to a worrying increase in the number of provisional death sentences in Egypt.

Amnesty International reports that these legal practices lead to grossly unfair trials and violations of the right to life.

Foreign Nationals on Death Row

Amnesty International reports nearly 3,000 preliminary death sentences between 2016 and 2022. Around 400 people were executed during this period. While Egypt's use of drug-related death sentences is relatively low compared to other countries, Harm Reduction International reported at least 8 drug-related executions of foreign nationals in Egypt in 2021 alone – seven Pakistanis and one Iranian, who were sentenced to death for smuggling more than 2 tonnes of heroin into the country by sea. The Egypt Death Penalty Index also reported at least 26 death sentences for drug-related offences between 2011 and 2020, 12 of which were issued to foreign nationals.



Prisoners at Borg al-Arab prison near Alexandria photographed during a prison visit by the State Information Service.

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