



The Right to Life





Center for Human Rights: About Al-Shehab

Al-Shehab Center Human Rights (SHR) is a volunteer-led organization that advocates for freedom, democracy, and the people's will, while fighting injustice and discrimination in all forms. It strives for a world where everyone can live with dignity. Founded in Egypt in 2006, it was officially recognized by the British authorities to operate as a human rights organization.

The Research and Reports Unit of the Al-Shehab Center for Human Rights releases this report. It is a human rights report that documents violations by the Egyptian government related to the death penalty. The information in this report is collected from complaints received by the Center from the families of victims, as well as from the Center's monitoring, documentation, and follow-up unit, and from some websites of human rights organizations that focus on the human rights situation in Egypt.

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Introduction:

The right to life is a fundamental human right protected by law. No person, society, or government is allowed to take another person's life except when there is a conviction for a crime punishable by law, and only after a court has issued a sentence following a fair trial.

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, Article 3 states: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted in 1966, also reinforces this right. Article 6, paragraph 1, declares: " Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life. "

The right to a fair trial is another fundamental human right and is a core principle in all nations that uphold the rule of law. This right is protected under Articles 14 and 16 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and it is legally binding for all signatory states. Article 14/1 guarantees the fundamental right to a fair trial; Article 14/2 establishes the presumption of innocence; and Article 14/3 lists the minimum rights during criminal proceedings. Article 14/5 ensures a convicted person can have their conviction or sentence reviewed by a higher court, and Article 14/7 prohibits double jeopardy (being tried twice for the same crime). The United Nations has established a set of guarantees to ensure a fair trial for every person accused of a

criminal offense, especially those facing the death penalty. These guarantees include the principle that the death penalty should only be imposed for the most serious intentional offenses resulting in death or other extremely grave consequences.

In recent years in Egypt, the right to a fair trial for those facing criminal charges, whether for the death penalty or other punishments, has been systematically violated. Political death sentences in Egypt have become a tool used by the ruling regime for revenge rather than to uphold the rule of law. The most notable violations include:

- The issuance of numerous death sentences without fair trials represents a blatant violation of human rights. A considerable number of summary trials, which lacked fair trial standards and guarantees for those facing the death penalty, resulted in these sentences. Approximately 1,613 death sentences were handed down, and 105 people were executed.

This report explores the death penalty and the legal safeguards that surround its application, and provides examples of multiple death sentences given to innocent people whose trials lacked the guarantees of a fair trial.

Definition of the death penalty:

The death penalty is the legal killing of a person as punishment for a crime or as a deterrent to crime.

Crimes punishable by death are referred to as death offenses or capital offenses. The death penalty has been implemented in nearly all societies, except those with laws based on the state religion that ban it.

Many countries have abolished the death penalty, except those with laws derived from the state religion that mandates it.

On the other hand, Amnesty International believes that most countries support ending the death penalty, which prompted the United Nations to adopt a non-binding resolution in favor of its abolition.

However, to suppress political opposition, the death penalty has been used against dissidents and opponents in nearly all societies. In most countries that still employ this punishment, the crimes warranting the death penalty are murder or espionage.

Countries that have abolished the death penalty:

Amnesty International released a report stating that by the end of 2022, 112 countries had abolished the death penalty in their national laws.

These include: Comoros, Congo, Ethiopia, Cuba, Zambia, Lebanon, Palestine, and Qatar.

Guarantees to safeguard the rights of individuals facing the death penalty:

According to the UN Human Rights Committee, the following conditions must be met to impose the death penalty:

- 1. In countries which have not abolished the death penalty, capital punishment may be imposed only for the most serious crimes, it being understood that their scope should not go beyond intentional crimes with lethal or other extremely grave consequences.**
- 2. Capital punishment may be imposed only for a crime for which the death penalty is prescribed by law at the time of its commission, it being understood that if, subsequent to the commission of the crime, provision is made by law for the imposition of a lighter penalty, the offender shall benefit thereby.**
- 3. Persons below 18 years of age at the time of the commission of the crime shall not be sentenced to death, nor shall the death sentence be carried out on pregnant women, or on new mothers, or on persons who have become insane.**
- 4. Capital punishment may be imposed only when the guilt of the person charged is based upon clear and convincing evidence, leaving no room for an alternative explanation of the facts.**
- 5. Capital punishment may only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement rendered by a competent court after legal process which gives all possible safeguards to ensure a fair trial, at least equal to those contained in article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including the right of anyone suspected of or charged with a crime for which capital punishment may be imposed to adequate legal assistance at all stages of the proceedings.**

- 6. Anyone sentenced to death shall have the right to appeal to a court of higher jurisdiction, and steps should be taken to ensure that such appeals shall become mandatory.**
- 7. Anyone sentenced to death shall have the right to seek pardon, or commutation of sentence; pardon or commutation of sentence may be granted in all cases of capital punishment.**
- 8. Capital punishment shall not be carried out pending any appeal or other recourse procedure or other proceeding relating to pardon or commutation of the sentence.**
- 9. Where capital punishment occurs, it shall be carried out so as to inflict the minimum possible suffering.**

Guarantees for Imposing a Death Sentence in Egyptian Law:

According to Egyptian law concerning the death penalty, the legislator has included several safeguards, such as those specified in Article 381 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

A criminal court cannot impose a death sentence unless:

- 1. All members of the court unanimously agree.**
- 2. Before delivering a death sentence, the court must seek the opinion of the Grand Mufti of Egypt, and the case file must be sent to him.**

3- If the Court of Cassation overturns the verdict and orders a retrial, and the retrial court again sentences the defendant to death, it must also follow the same procedures: seeking the opinion of the Grand Mufti and issuing the verdict with unanimous agreement. These are safeguards established by law due to the severity of the death penalty.

4- Article 46 of Law No. 57 of 1959, which concerns procedures for appeals to the Court of Cassation, states that if a verdict imposing the death penalty is issued in absentia, the Public Prosecutor must submit the case to the Court of Cassation, along with their opinion on the verdict, within the legally prescribed period of sixty days. The purpose of this provision is that the legislator considers it necessary for all death penalty verdicts, even those issued in absentia, to be reviewed by the Court of Cassation, regardless of whether the parties to the case appeal the verdict. This requirement exists due to the severity of the death penalty and the need to ensure that the verdict complies with the law and the facts of the case. The Public Prosecutor must submit the case for review by the Court of Cassation even if, in their view, the verdict is not appealable.

5- The Court of Cassation reviews death penalty judgments both in form and substance during the appeal process: Death penalty judgments have a special nature that demands the court review all aspects of the judgment, both substantive and procedural. The court may, on its own initiative, overturn the judgment in cases of legal error or procedural defect, regardless of the grounds for appeal or the arguments made by the Public Prosecutor. The Court of Cassation has the authority to examine the entire case file from the beginning, including trial transcripts, medical reports, expert opinions, witness statements, and all other evidence and documents. In summary, the role of the Court of

Cassation regarding death penalty judgments is unique, requiring it to conduct a comprehensive review of all aspects of the judgment, both substantive and procedural, and to overturn the judgment on its own initiative in any case of legal error or invalidity.

6. Once the judgment becomes final and unappealable, the case file must be submitted to the President of the Republic by the Minister of Justice. The sentence will be enforced unless an order for pardon or commutation is issued within 14 days. Furthermore, an in-absentia death sentence cannot be appealed by the defendant, as it is considered a provisional ruling that can be overturned, modified, or upheld during any subsequent proceedings if the defendant is apprehended or surrenders.

Statement on death sentences handed down by the Egyptian judiciary against political opponents:

- The Egyptian judiciary issued 2,300 rulings referring the files of defendants in political cases to the Grand Mufti for review between 2013 and October 2025.**
- The Egyptian judiciary handed down 1,613 final death sentences against political opponents from 2013 to October 2025.**

Death sentences carried out from 2013 to 2025:

- Between 2015 and 2024, 105 death sentences were carried out against political opponents.**

2015

- On March 7, 2015, the death sentence was carried out against Mahmoud Ramadan, a defendant in the Sidi Gaber events case from July 5, 2013, in Alexandria.

- On May 17, 2015, the death sentences were carried out against six political opponents in the "Arab Circassian" case, in which the military prosecutor accused the defendants of belonging to Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis.

2016

- On December 15, 2016, the death sentence was carried out on Adel Habara, who had received two final death sentences for crimes including the killing of 25 soldiers in Sinai in 2013.

2017

- On December 26, 2017, the death sentence was carried out against 15 people convicted by military courts of "terrorist acts." This marked the largest number of death sentences carried out in Egypt to date.

2018

- On January 2, 2018, the death sentence was carried out against four individuals in the Kafr al-Sheikh stadium events case, which was heard by a military court. - On January 9, 2018, three people were executed in connection with Military Case No. 93 of 2011, a military court case in Ismailia.

- On January 30, 2018, one individual was executed in connection with Military Case No. 99 of 2014, a military court case.

- On March 22, 2018, two individuals were executed related to the Al-Goura checkpoint incident in North Sinai (Military Case No. 382 of 2013).

- On July 25, 2018, one person was executed in connection with Military Case No. 119 of 2016, a military court case in Suez.

- Three individuals were executed in connection with a military court case in Sinai.

2019

- On February 7, 2019, three individuals were executed for the murder of Judge Mahmoud Abdel-Moula's son.

- On February 13, 2019, three opposition figures were executed for the murder of Major General Nabil Farag during the events in Kerdasa.

- On February 20, 2019, nine opposition figures were executed for their role in the assassination of former Attorney General Hisham Barakat.

- On December 5, 2019, one person was executed in connection with the bombing of Helwan Church (Case No. 2278 of 2018, Cairo State Security Court).

- On December 5, 2019, one person was executed in connection with the events in El-Tall Al-Kabeer (Case No. 5713 of 2013, Ismailia Criminal Court).

- On December 5, 2019, one individual was executed related to the Niger Embassy case.

2020

- Twenty opposition figures were executed for participating in the attack on the Kerdasa police station (Case No. 12749 of 2013, Kerdasa Criminal Court).

- On February 25, 2020, eight people were executed for their involvement in the events known as the "church bombings" (Case No. 65 of 2017, Alexandria Military Court).

- On March 4, 2020, Hisham Ashmawi, a former Egyptian Special Forces officer, was executed for crimes related to targeting

members of the army and police (Case No. 1 of 2014, Military Court).

- On June 27, 2020, Abdul-Rahim al-Mesmari was executed after being convicted of orchestrating the Bahariya Oasis incident, case number 160 of 2018, in the West Cairo Criminal Court.

- On October 3, 2020, ten political opponents were executed in the "Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis" case, number 55 of 2015, before the South Giza Criminal Court.

- Also, on October 3, 2020, two individuals were executed related to the events at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, in case number 20091 of 2013, before the Bab Sharqi Criminal Court in Alexandria.

2021

- On July 4, 2021, the death sentence was carried out against an individual convicted of assassinating the head of security in Alexandria, in case number 106 of 2019, a high-level state security case.

2022

- On March 8, 2022, the death sentence was carried out against four defendants in case number 9115 of 2016, Giza South Court, known in the media as the "Helwan Minibus Cell" case.

- On March 10, 2022, the death sentences were carried out against four individuals in the Helwan minibus case, case number 513 of 2016, Cairo State Security Court.

- The death sentence was carried out for three individuals in the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis case, number 3455 of 2015, Giza South Court.

The total number of death sentences carried out is 105.

Since 2013, there have been 311 final, enforceable death sentences.

Final, legally enforceable death sentences.

- The Egyptian judiciary has issued 113 final, enforceable death sentences against political opponents from 2013 through October 2025.

Some Violations in Cases Leading to Death Sentences:

- According to statements from defendants, their families, and their lawyers, many guarantees for defendants sentenced to death were violated, starting from their arrest, through the public prosecutor's investigations and trial procedures, and ending with the issuance of the death sentence. These included:

- Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance.
- Denial of access to legal counsel during interrogations. - The defendants were not tried before a regular, impartial judge, but rather before special courts—such as terrorism courts, state security courts, or military courts—which are all considered exceptional jurisdictions.
- The court refused to accept the legal arguments made by the defense attorneys and warned of disciplinary action against them, while also declining to consider the defendants' own requests.
- The defendants were forced to attend the hearings behind a soundproof glass partition, which prevented them from following the proceedings and hearing the prosecution witnesses' testimony.
- The court denied the defendants' and their lawyers' requests to call defense witnesses.
- The verdicts against the defendants are invalid, particularly the death and life imprisonment sentences, because they were primarily based on police investigations. However, all prior rulings by the Court of Cassation have established that police investigations are only circumstantial evidence and do not constitute sufficient proof. Therefore, the verdicts of the terrorism courts, which rely on such investigations, are completely null and void according to the law.

Some Cases Resulting in Death Sentences

The Rabaa Sit-in Dispersal Case

On June 14, 2021, the Court of Cassation upheld the death sentences for twelve individuals in case number 34150 of 2015, Nasr City First Criminal Court, also known as the "Rabaa Sit-in Dispersal Case."

The individuals who are sentenced to death are:

1- Abdel Rahman El-Barr, 61 years old, Professor of Hadith at Al-Azhar University.

2- Dr. Mohamed Mohamed Ibrahim El-Beltagy, 61 years old, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Medicine, Al-Azhar University.

3- Dr. Safwat Hamouda Hijazi Ramadan, 61 years old, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Satellite Channels Company, member of the Scientific Academy for Quranic and Sunnah Studies, and holds a PhD in Comparative Religions from the University of Dijon, France.

4- Dr. Osama Yassin Abdel-Wahab Mohamed, 64 years old, physician, Master of Paediatrics and Immunology (1994).

5- Ahmed Mohamed Arif Ali Saeed, 43 years old, dentist.

6- Ehab Wagdy Mohamed, 41 years old, computer engineer.

7- Mohamed Abdel-Haei El-Faramawy.

8- Mostafa Abdel-Haei El-Faramawy.

9- Ahmed Farouk Kamal, 40 years old, lawyer.

10- Haitham El-Sayed El-Arabi, 39 years old, engineer.

11- Mahmoud Mohamed Ali Zanaty, 61 years old, consultant in general and laparoscopic surgery.

12- Abdel-Azim Ibrahim Mohamed, 50 years old, physician.

The Al-Manassa Case:

On March 4, 2024, the Supreme State Security Court of Emergency (a special court) handed down a death sentence to eight individuals—former ministers and members of parliament—in case number 72 of 2021, filed under number 9 of 2021 at the New Cairo Court, known in the media as "the Al-Manassa events."

The defendants sentenced to death are:

1. Dr. Mohamed Badie Abdel-Megid Mohamed Sami, 81, professor emeritus at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Benha University.

2. Dr. Mahmoud Ezzat Ibrahim Ibrahim, 80, professor emeritus at the Faculty of Medicine, Zagazig University.

3. Dr. Mohamed Mohamed Ibrahim El-Beltagy, 61, assistant professor at the Faculty of Medicine, Al-Azhar University.

4. Eng. Amr Mohamed Zaki Mohamed, 58, freelance architect, former member of parliament (2012).

5. Dr. Osama Yassin Abdel-Wahab Mohamed, 64, physician, holds a master's degree in Paediatrics and Immunology (1994).

6. Dr. Safwat Hamouda Hijazi Ramadan, 61, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Satellite Channels Company, member of the Scientific Academy for Quranic and Sunnah Research, holds a PhD in Religious Studies and Comparative Religions from the University of Dijon, France.

7. Eng. Assem Abdel-Magid Mohamed Madi, 66, holds a bachelor's degree in engineering and a master's degree in business administration.

8. Dr. Mohamed Abdel-Maksoud Afify, 77, a retired plant protection research specialist.

The Mansoura Judge's Guard Case

- On June 7, 2017, the Court of Cassation upheld the death sentences for six individuals in case number 16850 of 2012, Mansoura Central Criminal Court, and case number 781 of 2014, Mansoura South Criminal Court, known in the media as the "Mansoura Judge's Guard case." The defendants faced numerous human rights violations during their trial, including a lack of fair trial, enforced disappearance, and torture.

Those sentenced to death:

1- Ibrahim Yahya Abdel Fattah Mohamed Azab, 27 years old, pharmacist

2- Ahmed Al-Walid Sayed Al-Sayed Al-Shal, 28 years old, doctor

3- Khaled Refaat Gad Asker, 27 years old, graduate of the Faculty of Science

4- Mahmoud Mamdouh Wahba Attia Abu Zeid, 23 years old, second-year engineering student at Mansoura University

5- Basem Mohsen Hassan Al-Kharibi, 30 years old, engineer

6- Abdel Rahman Mohamed Abdo Attia, a fourth-year medical student at Al-Azhar University, top of his class for three years, was arrested on March 8, 2014

The Rashid Bus Case

On July 29, 2021, the Damanhur Criminal Court sentenced sixteen people to death in case number 303 of 2018, State Security Emergency Court, Rashid, known in the media as the "Rashid Bus Case," after a grossly unfair trial before the State Security Emergency Court, an "extraordinary court" whose verdicts are not subject to appeal.

Abuses experienced by those convicted in this case:

- They were arrested several days after the incident based on information from unidentified sources.**
- During the investigations, the defendants documented several abuses, including arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and severe physical torture. Some family members of the defendants were also harassed and intimidated to force their relatives to surrender.**
- The most serious violation in this case was referring it to an extraordinary emergency court in 2018, even though the crime happened before the declaration of the state of emergency in 2017. This indicates that the government applied the emergency**

law retroactively to this case, thereby depriving the defendants of their right to a fair trial.

Those sentenced to death:

1- Mohamed Mohsen Sweidan, 75 years old, retired.

2- Maher Abdel Moneim Mohamed Abu Younis, 53 years old, tax office employee.

3- Maher Abdel Hamid Abdel Hamid, 48 years old, farmer.

4- Abdel Hadi Sayed El-Zayat, 55 years old, employee at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.

5- Ayman Ibrahim Malik, 48 years old.

6- Ahmed Adel Abdo El-Zaraa', 31 years old.

7- Al-Moatassem Billah Adel El-Zaraa', 28 years old, student.

8- Saad Fathallah Mohamed El-Haddad, 60 years old, legal investigator.

Behira (Delengat) Case

- On July 29, 2021, the Central Damanhour Criminal Court sentenced eight people to death in case number 681 of 2015 (Delengat Criminal Court), registered under number 2308 of 2015. The court based its verdict on confessions obtained under torture, testimonies from police officers, and its refusal to allow the defense to cross-examine prosecution witnesses or review the evidence.

Those sentenced to death:

1- Sobhi Abdel-Shafi Abdel-Rab, 41 years old, present in court.

2- Ikrami Mohamed Youssef Ghaly, 46 years old, present in court.

3- Badie Sayed Ahmed Bakr, 34 years old, present in court.

4- Ahmed Mohamed Abdel-Rahim Zoura, 34 years old, present in court.

5- Ahmed Abdel-Hakim Fathi El-Sawy, 24 years old, present in court.

The "Al-Montazah Events" Case -

On April 24, 2017, the Court of Cassation upheld the death sentence for an individual in case number 1778 of 2014, a criminal case from the Al-Montazah district of Alexandria,

known in the media as the "Al-Montazah violence events." The court based its ruling on the findings of the National Security Authority, and the case file contained conflicting accounts from witnesses. Furthermore, the only eyewitness in the case gave five different statements in five different locations.

Those sentenced to death:

- 1- Fadel El-Moula Hosny, an employee at the Engineers Syndicate Club.**

The Case of Specialized Committees in Menoufia

On April 27, 2024, the Court of Cassation upheld the death sentence for two individuals in case number 85 of 2017, Shebeen El-Koom Criminal Court, known in the media as "The Specialized Committees Case in Menoufia."

Those sentenced to death:

- 1- Anas Ahmed Khalifi, graduate of the Faculty of Education, Menoufia University.**

- 2- Salah Mohamed Behairi, an agricultural engineer.**

Case number 108 Military Court:

On November 9, 2022, the Military Court of Cassation upheld the death sentence for one individual in case number 108 of 2015, a military court case. The verdict was issued by a military court (extraordinary jurisdiction), despite evidence that the defendants had been subjected to enforced disappearance and torture.

The defense also showed that the arrest and investigation reports were not valid and highlighted the flaws and nullity of the decisions and investigations made by the Military Public Prosecutor's Office.

Those sentenced to death:

1- Azzam Ali Shehata, a student at the Higher Institute of Engineering.

The Al-Naima Church Bombing Cell Case in Al-Marj:

On September 25, 2024, the Third Criminal Court, sitting at the Badr Courts Complex, issued its verdict in case number 510 of 2022, State Security Court, registered under number 31369 of 2023, Al-Marj Criminal Court, known in the media as "The Al-Naima Church Bombing Cell Case in Al-Marj." The court sentenced two defendants to death by hanging.

Those sentenced to death:

1- Mohamed Khaled Ibrahim.

2- Ahmed Karim Kazim.

The Ismailia Cell Case:

- On October 20, the First Terrorism Court of the Supreme State Security Court, which convened at the Badr complex, delivered verdicts against a group of defendants in Case No. 6482 of 2022 (Sharqiya Criminal Court), known in the media as the "Ismailia Cell" case.

The defendant Hamdy Sanaa El-Hamad Badawy (31 years old), a law graduate and nursing assistant, was sentenced to death for "joining a terrorist group."

Recommendations:

1. We support UN General Assembly Resolution 8/2020 of December 16, 2020, which calls for a moratorium on the death penalty as a step towards its global abolition.

2. We urge the Egyptian government to sign and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which aims to abolish the death penalty; Protocol No. 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights, concerning the abolition of the death penalty; Protocol No. 13 to the European Convention on Human Rights, regarding the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances; and the Protocol to the

American Convention on Human Rights to Abolish the Death Penalty.

3. We call for an explicit and unequivocal legal provision in the Egyptian Constitution and laws that abolishes the death penalty in cases related to politics and freedom of expression.

4. We demand the cancellation of all sentences given to political dissidents.

5. We call for allowing the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to visit Egypt to evaluate the situation of those sentenced to death, meet with their families, and engage with NGOs. 6. We urge all human rights advocates, journalists, activists, politicians, and concerned individuals and groups to oppose and condemn the execution of political dissidents, utilizing all available means to try to stop it.

OUR MEDIA OUTLETS:



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