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Egypt

Sisi government the most repressive in Egyptian history

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Reporters Without Borders' latest ranking places Egypt in 166th place out of 180 countries, down three places from last year. The Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECFR) recorded, from 20 September to 21 October, 2019, 4,321 imprisonments, 2,932 people remanded in custody, 55 disappearances. Journalists are paying a heavy price: between October and December 2019, 25 of them were arrested.

Since then, the repression has not stopped: following others like Lina Atallah, editor-in-chief of *Madamasr*, Nora Younès, editor-in-chief of the online site *Al Manassa*, was arrested on 24 June, then released on bail 26 hours later. The reasons are always the same: spreading false news, endangering state security, membership of a terrorist organization (implicitly the Muslim Brotherhood).

Activists and their families targeted

The day before, for the same reasons, the sister of the famous activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, Sanaa Seif, was arrested the day after performing a sit-in with her mother Layla Soueif and her sister Mona outside the prison where Alaa is incarcerated. They were beaten and robbed by “hooligan” women under the indifferent eye of the guards. It is a usual technique of the regime: not content with attacking activists, it is all their relatives who are under threat. In the most emblematic case, five cousins of Mohamed Soltan, an Egyptian-American human rights activist living in the United States after having spent two years in prison in Egypt, disappeared for two days to be found in preventive imprisonment for the same reasons of spreading false news and belonging to a terrorist group. Soltan's crime was to have sued former Prime Minister El Beblawi, the current Executive Director of the IMF, in the US, as being responsible for ill-treatment and torture between 2013 and 2015.

An arrest in Egypt means guaranteed ill-treatment: crowded cells, no natural light, insufficient or no food, no drinking water in a country where summer temperatures easily reach 40°C, no care (the cause of the death of ex-President Morsi) and systematic torture: beatings, electrocutions and rapes. On the international day of support for victims of torture, 26 June, three Egyptian human rights organizations launched a campaign “Against torture, no torture in Egypt” which provides, among other things, for the publication of names of torture perpetrators.

Doctors also targeted

It might be thought that only activists or their relatives are threatened, but in the midst of the Covid crisis, even doctors who rebel against their disastrous working conditions are victims of arbitrary arrests on the pretext of spreading false news on the health situation or belonging to a terrorist plot. Media close to the government accuse them of treason and demand the death penalty for them. The health system is failing badly, when not absent, in whole swathes of the country and, since the beginning of the pandemic, many doctors have been infected for lack of sufficient protective equipment. The doctors' union accuses the government of transferring overly talkative doctors to hospitals treating Covid patients or to distant governorates as punishment.

Even influencers of the TikTok application are being sued for spreading immoral ideas and undermining Egyptian family values. Despite all these abuses which the regime does not even hide, the international community and particularly the arms-selling countries say nothing, France in the lead since its chief sales representative Le Drian

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has visited eight times to sell Mirage jets, corvettes, frigates and so on. Italy is ignoring the assassination of Giulio Regeni, found dead on the side of a fast lane, victim of a fight between information services because he was working on a thesis on independent unions resulting from the 2011 revolution, to focus on a sales contract that would in its first phase be worth 8 to 9 billion dollars. It's the contract of the century according to Italy but the shame of the century according to Amnesty International since Egypt has never really cooperated with Italian justice.

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