

**A Descriptive Statistical Report on the Status of
the Death Penalty in 2024**

**The Road to
the Gallows
(3)**



Prepared by

Stop the Death Penalty in Egypt Campaign

The Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms



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Introduction

At the beginning of 2023, the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms released its monitoring report, *The Road to the Gallows 1*, aiming to shed light on death penalty sentences in Egypt—from their issuance in the Criminal Court and referral of defendants to the Grand Mufti, through the various stages of litigation, to the final execution of the sentence. This report covered the period from January to December 2023, providing a statistical and documentary analysis of developments related to this punishment

In the context of the World Day Against the Death Penalty on October 10, 2024, the second edition of this series was published, focusing on monitoring and analyzing executions during the first half of 2024. Today, the third edition of *The Road to the Gallows* continues this series, offering a comprehensive statistical comparison between 2023 and 2024 while highlighting the ongoing challenges facing the criminal justice system, particularly the acceleration of trial procedures and the implementation of sentences in some cases

One of the fundamental challenges this report faces is the lack of official transparency. Egyptian executive and judicial authorities do not release comprehensive official data on the number of death sentences or executions, making monitoring efforts significantly more complex

Despite these challenges, this report covers all stages of the death penalty process, from the referral of cases to the Grand Mufti to the execution or annulment of sentences. It also considers the inclusion of appellate courts as an additional level of litigation since January 2024, granting defendants a new opportunity to appeal before resorting to the Court of Cassation

The report documented 509 death sentences issued by various criminal courts across their legal jurisdictions, including 180 referrals to the Grand Mufti, 281 death sentences at the first and second levels of litigation, 35 final rulings upheld by the Court of Cassation, and 13 executions carried out. These figures indicate a rising trend in death sentences, necessitating a reassessment of justice mechanisms and the correlation between capital punishment and social and legal indicators reflecting crime trends in Egypt

The report also notes that premeditated murder driven by revenge—whether due to disputes or acts of retribution—was the most common reason for death sentences, followed by financial motives, marking a notable shift compared to the previous report

Believing that justice is the cornerstone of social stability and the protection of rights and freedoms, the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms expresses growing concerns over the increasing execution rates. It underscores the need for a review of this punishment in alignment with a broader and more comprehensive concept of criminal justice

In the following pages, we present a detailed account of the monitoring and analysis conducted by our research team, aiming to provide a clear picture of the status of the death penalty in Egypt in 2024

Report Methodology and

The methodology of this report is based on monitoring and analyzing data related to the death penalty in Egypt throughout 2024, from January to December, as part of the Commission's efforts to oppose capital punishment—one of its main areas of work.

The report relied on three primary sources for information collection:

1. Media and journalistic coverage of news related to death penalty rulings, including the referral of defendants to the Grand Mufti—an indicator of a likely death sentence—as well as the issuance and execution of such rulings.
2. Direct monitoring of criminal court sessions in more than ten governorates, with a focus on premeditated murder cases, given their strong association with capital punishment.
3. Interviews with lawyers, defendants' families, and journalists specializing in criminal case coverage, providing a broader context for understanding the legal proceedings.

These sources covered various aspects of the death penalty, including:

- Death sentences issued by criminal courts across their different formations and legal jurisdictions.
- Appeals courts, which began hearing felony cases in 2024, aligning with the Egyptian Constitution's provision—established a decade ago—that criminal cases should have two levels of litigation.
- Final death sentences upheld by the Court of Cassation.
- Executed death sentences throughout 2024.

To ensure accuracy and reliability, multiple verification mechanisms were employed. News reports were cross-checked with various sources rather than relying on a single one. Archival research was conducted using digital records from over ten Egyptian newspapers to track media coverage, and electronic copies of judicial rulings were obtained from available legal platforms. Additionally, direct communication with lawyers, families of defendants, and journalists helped update information on specific cases.

The research team encountered several obstacles, primarily the lack of official statistics. Judicial and executive authorities in Egypt do not release comprehensive data on the number of death sentences issued or executed, necessitating the use of alternative investigative methods.

Another significant challenge was the lack of details in journalistic coverage. Many news reports omitted case numbers or full names of defendants, making it difficult to verify specific cases. Additionally, media confusion regarding legal procedures was observed, with some reports inaccurately conflating the referral of a defendant to the Mufti with the issuance of a final death sentence, requiring extra verification efforts. In some governorates, limited media coverage of criminal cases further complicated access to accurate data.

The research team also encountered fabricated or outdated news articles that had been republished without updates, adding another layer of difficulty in ensuring accuracy.

Overcoming These Challenges

To address these issues, the research team adopted the following strategies:

- Cross-checking news reports across multiple credible media sources.
- Excluding Mufti referrals unless a subsequent confirmation was found that they resulted in a death sentence.
- Prioritizing verified information from lawyers and defendants' families when official sources were unavailable.

The Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms acknowledges that the figures in this report represent only a portion of the reality and may be lower than the actual number of death sentences issued and executed, due to the absence of official statistics. However, despite these challenges, the research team has adhered to the highest possible standards of accuracy and verification to ensure the reliability of the data presented in this report.

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Documentation and Analysis of Death Sentences from January to December 2024

Legal Status of Monitored Cases

During the reporting period, the research team recorded 509 death sentences at various legal stages, from referral to the Grand Mufti to the issuance of initial rulings, their confirmation, or sentence reductions

The following table presents the number of defendants categorized by their current legal status at the time of monitoring. It also includes separate classifications for cases referred to the Grand Mufti and those sentenced ".to death at the appellate level under the category of "Second-Degree Death Sentence

Current Legal Status	Total Count
First-Degree Death Sentence	273
Referral to Mufti (First Degree)	177
Death Sentence Confirmed by Cassation Court	35
Second-Degree Death Sentence	8
Referral to Mufti (Second Degree)	3
Executed Death Sentences	13
Total	509

The table illustrates the latest legal status of monitored cases. One of the primary challenges faced by the research team was the inability to track the final outcomes of many referrals to the Grand Mufti—177 cases at the first-degree level and 3 cases at the second-degree level. Although a Mufti referral is an intermediate step before either confirming or reducing the sentence, the lack of transparency and insufficient access to official information made it impossible to determine the final rulings in many cases. As a result, the team documented Mufti referrals while noting that sentence reductions after referral remain a rare occurrence.

Accordingly:

- The "Referral to Mufti" category refers to cases where monitoring was halted at this stage, with no available information on whether the sentence was confirmed or reduced in subsequent hearings.
- The "First-Degree Death Sentence" category includes sentences issued by criminal courts after receiving the Mufti's opinion.
- The "Second-Degree Death Sentence" and "Referral to Mufti (Second Degree)" categories apply to cases heard by appellate courts, which became an additional level of litigation starting in 2024.

- The "Death Sentence Confirmed by Cassation Court" category includes cases where defendants have exhausted all appeal rights, and the Court of Cassation has upheld their sentences.
- Lastly, the "Executed Death Sentences" category accounts for cases where the prison administration publicly confirmed the execution of the convicted individuals.

Death Sentences by Gender

Regarding the gender of the defendants, males constituted the majority at all stages of death sentence rulings. As shown in the table below, 460 out of 509 defendants were men, while 49 were women

Notably, the percentage of female defendants sentenced to death increased from 8% in 2023 to 10% in 2024, as illustrated in the following table

Current Legal Status	Male	Female	Total
First-Degree Death Sentence	247	26	273
Referral to Mufti (First Degree)	160	17	177
Death Sentence Confirmed by Cassation Court	33	2	35
Second-Degree Death Sentence	7	1	8
Referral to Mufti (Second Degree)	2	1	3
Executed Death Sentences	11	2	13
Total	460	49	509

Types of Crimes Leading to Death Sentences

The research team identified four primary categories of crimes that led to death sentences:

- 1. Premeditated Murder:** A crime in which the offender has a direct intention to end the victim's life with prior planning. In some cases, aggravating factors such as robbery, kidnapping, or rape were involved. In others, the crime occurred without additional aggravating circumstances.
- 2 Sexual Assault:** This category includes various forms of sexual violence, regardless of the victim's gender. In some cases, sexual assault served as the primary motive for premeditated murder.
- 3. Drug Trafficking:** This refers to crimes involving drug smuggling, importation, distribution, or unauthorized cultivation.
- 4. Terrorism-Related Crimes:** Cases prosecuted before terrorism courts within Egypt's criminal judiciary system.

Current Legal Status	Murder	Sexual Assault on a Minor	Terrorism	Drug Trafficking	Total
First-Degree Death Sentence	229	11	31	2	273
Referral to Mufti (First Degree)	171	6	0	0	177
Death Sentence Confirmed by Cassation Court	21	1	13	0	35
Second-Degree Death Sentence	7	1	0	0	8
Referral to Mufti (Second Degree)	3	0	0	0	3
Executed Death Sentences	13	0	0	0	13
Total	444	19	44	2	509

Based on the data above:

- Premeditated murder accounted for 90% of all death sentences.
- Sexual assault cases led to 4% of death sentences.
- Terrorism-related crimes accounted for 6% of the cases.

Given these findings, the research team conducted a more in-depth analysis of the motives behind these crimes, particularly premeditated murder. The team emphasized the socioeconomic factors contributing to violent crime, arguing that a deeper social understanding of crime motives could help address the root causes, reduce murder rates, and ultimately lower death sentences. The team also underscored the necessity of abolishing capital punishment as a tool for social control and retribution rather than deterrence.

Objective Causes Behind the Crimes, Particularly Premeditated Murder

The research team analyzed media reports covering cases where courts referred defendants to the Grand Mufti or issued death sentences, aiming to identify underlying causes behind these crimes, especially premeditated murder.

While the presence of a motive behind a crime does not justify it, understanding these factors helps protect victims' families and society by preventing future crimes. It also fosters the pursuit of more effective alternatives to the death penalty, aligning with the Egyptian Commission's stance that capital punishment neither ensures justice nor enhances public safety.

The table below outlines the primary motives identified:

Current Legal Status	Murder	Sexual Assault on a Minor	Terrorism	Drug Trafficking	Total
Use of Force & Intimidation	6	0	0	0	6
Revenge Motives	136	0	0	0	136
Family Disputes	44	0	0	0	44
Financial Motives	109	0	0	0	109
Organized Crime	4	0	0	2	6
Political Motives	2	0	44	0	46
Emotional Motives	16	0	0	0	16
Fear of Scandal	5	0	0	0	5
Other	122	19	0	0	141
Total	444	19	44	2	509

These causes were categorized as follows:

- **Use of Force & Intimidation:** When a news report describes the perpetrator using violence against the victim without a clear motive, as a way of asserting dominance or authority. This also includes cases where the perpetrator explicitly claims to be showcasing power and meets the aforementioned conditions.
- **Fear of Scandal:** When the report indicates that the crime occurred after the victim discovered a previous offense committed by the perpetrator—whether it was a socially or legally unacceptable act. This suggests that the crime was committed as a direct response to exposure or the fear of being exposed.
- **Revenge Motives:** If neither fear of scandal nor hiding a past crime is mentioned, this category applies when the crime is described as a retaliatory act by the perpetrator against the victim, indicating a pre-existing relationship between them.
- **Political Motives:** These crimes involve defendants prosecuted for politically motivated offenses, whether violent or non-violent. The difference between revenge-motivated crimes and political crimes lies in the nature of the victim's identity—often linked to their profession or public role. Cases categorized as terrorism-related crimes were grouped under this category.
- **Emotional Motives:** Crimes committed between romantically involved individuals, such as cases where a perpetrator kills a lover or a spouse due to an extramarital affair.

- **Family Disputes:** Crimes where the perpetrator and victim share a family relationship, but the motive is not linked to romantic involvement or direct financial disputes.
- **Financial Motives:** Crimes resulting from money-related disputes, including cases where the perpetrator sought to steal or seize the victim's property.
- **Organized Crime:** This category includes drug trafficking-related offenses, which typically involve larger criminal networks beyond just the direct individuals involved in a single case.
- **Other:** This includes cases where no clear motive was stated or could be inferred. It also includes sexual assault crimes, which require further specialized research beyond the scope of this report.

The previous chart highlights that revenge was the leading cause of murder cases, accounting for 136 incidents, followed by financial motives at 109 cases. This excludes cases where the motive was unclear, including those related to sexual assault on minors, as these cases require a more detailed psychological and sociological analysis beyond the scope of this research.

Unlike the 2023 report, which identified financial disputes as the primary trigger for homicides, the 2024 findings indicate that revenge motives took the lead.

This shift does not imply that the broader socioeconomic crisis—previously highlighted in past reports—has been resolved. Instead, it reinforces the idea that severe crimes are heavily influenced by social factors. The absence of effective judicial authority or a strong legal culture among citizens, combined with a growing tendency for personal revenge, continues to fuel cycles of violence. In such an environment, murder and death sentences become alarming social phenomena requiring in-depth research, political will, and a focused effort to develop better justice alternatives.

While we firmly acknowledge that crime can never be justified, we also stress the importance of linking social factors to criminal cases to create a more comprehensive and just legal framework.

Geographical Distribution of Death Sentences in 2024

The following table presents the geographical distribution of death sentences by governorate:

Assiut	60
Sohag	38
Suez	1
Sharqia	32
Qalyubia	83
Alexandria	28
Cairo	71
Port Said	8
Minya	29
Gharbia	12
Giza	39
Kafr El-Sheikh	11
Fayoum	12
Dakahlia	20
Beheira	12
Menoufia	9
Ismailia	3
Red Sea	2
Qena	33
Aswan	1
Luxor	5
Total	509

The data shows that Qalyubia recorded the highest number of death sentences, followed by Cairo and Assiut. However, this does not necessarily reflect the exact reality of capital punishment across governorates. Instead, it might indicate that these areas receive greater media coverage regarding crime and court rulings.

This aligns with a key challenge our research team previously identified—the lack of official data from Egyptian authorities and the inconsistent media coverage of death penalty cases.

Addressing these challenges could contribute to a more just and transparent legal system—one that ensures fairness for both the victim and their family, as well as the defendant and their loved ones. A well-informed system would focus on understanding and addressing the root causes of crime, rather than merely imposing capital punishment as a reactive measure.

Death Sentences: A Comparison Between 2023 and 2024

During 2023 and 2024, a total of 972 death sentences at various judicial stages were documented. The table below compares both years based on the final status of cases recorded.

A notable development in 2024 was the introduction of the appeal stage following the implementation of the Felony Appeal Law. However, the year also witnessed an overall increase of 55 death sentences across different stages.

Additionally, there was:

- A rise in executions, with 5 more cases compared to 2023.
- An increase in confirmed death sentences by the Court of Cassation, with 10 more cases than the previous year.



Legal Status	2023	2024
First-Degree Death Sentence	297	273
Referral to Mufti (First Degree)	124	177
Death Sentence Confirmed by Cassation Court	25	35
Second-Degree Death Sentence	0	8
Referral to Mufti (Second Degree)	0	3
Executed Death Sentences	8	13
Total	454	509

Death Sentences: A Comparison Between 2023 and 2024

While the overall number of documented cases increased in 2024, the motivations behind these crimes showed varying trends.

Decreases were observed in:

- Use of force to assert power
- Family-related motives
- Financial disputes
- Organized crime
- Crimes driven by emotional motives

However, some categories saw an increase:

- A slight rise in cases motivated by fear of scandal
- A moderate increase in politically motivated crimes
- A significant rise in revenge-driven murders

Additionally, 2024 saw an increase in cases where the motive remained unclear, categorized under "other reasons".

Conclusion and Recommendations

This statistical and descriptive report aims to conclude the "Path to the Gallows" series by monitoring and analyzing death sentences and the surrounding legal processes, including referrals to the Grand Mufti at both the first and second levels of criminal courts, the confirmation of sentences by the Court of Cassation, and the execution of the penalty. The report also focuses on linking social factors to death sentences while documenting the rulings at various stages.

As the number of death sentences continues to rise, it is crucial to handle the increasing use of this penalty with caution, especially given the severe social and economic challenges facing large segments of the population. While the current report highlights revenge motives as the primary driver behind death sentences—compared to financial motives in the previous report—these shifts indicate serious trends that warrant deeper sociological examination. In this context, the death penalty, besides violating the right to life, fails to serve as an effective deterrent, necessitating a reassessment of its effectiveness as a tool for criminal justice.

General Recommendations of the "Stop the Death Penalty in Egypt" Campaign
For years, the "Stop the Death Penalty in Egypt" campaign, led by the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, has urged the Egyptian authorities to fulfill their international commitments and reduce the number of offenses punishable by death, which currently exceed 50 crimes under Egyptian law.

The campaign seeks to raise awareness among Egyptian legal professionals, including lawyers, judges, and legislators, about the dangers of expanding the use of this irreversible punishment, which fuels a culture of vengeance in society. Accordingly, the campaign presents the following recommendations:



- Replacing the death penalty in all penal laws with life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for specific crimes determined by law.
- Reducing the number of crimes punishable by death, limiting its application to only the most severe offenses.
- Introducing legislative provisions allowing for the commutation of the death sentence to life imprisonment without parole, in cases where the offender and the victim's family reach financial compensation agreements, except for crimes classified as war crimes or genocide. This recommendation was previously explored in the "Islamic Law and the Death Penalty" report, released on World Day Against the Death Penalty (2023), available on the Egyptian Commission's website.
- Ensuring that the Egyptian government complies with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Egypt has ratified, and working towards limiting executions with the goal of abolishing the death penalty.
- Signing the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, which aims for the gradual abolition of the death penalty.