

Documentation Forbidden and Justice Paralyzed!
A Systematic Collusion Entrenching Impunity for Torture Crimes
*An Analytical Monitoring Report on the Obstacles to
Documentation and Accountability*

(January 2024 – June 2025)





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1. Executive Summary

This study addresses the reality of torture in Egypt during the period from January 2024 to June 2025 through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the cases that were monitored and documented, in an extremely restrictive political and security environment. The study relies on quantitative data documented by lawyers and monitors, in addition to testimonies from victims and their families, and an analysis of the patterns and locations of violations and their resulting impacts.

The study concludes that the available figures do not reflect the actual scale of the torture phenomenon in Egypt but rather represent the cases that could be monitored under difficult and constrained circumstances. It affirms that confronting the phenomenon of torture requires urgent legal and structural reforms, raising awareness around issues of torture and ill-treatment, and genuine support for documentation and monitoring efforts.

The second chapter of the report sheds light on the obstacles to monitoring and documentation in cases of torture and ill-treatment. It identifies the key barriers that hinder efforts to document and verify incidents of torture in Egypt, starting from the moment of arrest, when victims are held in complete isolation beyond the oversight of the Public Prosecution—creating a wide-open space for practices of torture and enforced disappearance. Victims are subjected to physical and psychological abuse, often without any ability to document what occurred, due to the lack of early medical examinations or obstruction of their actual appearance before a natural judge, especially with the expanded use of "video conferencing."

The report also explains how the absence of a lawyer—or the presence of an appointed lawyer who is uninterested in ensuring legal protection—weakens the chances of reporting violations. In addition, the Public Prosecution's failure to carry out its role in examining victims and referring them to forensic medicine in a timely manner often results in the disappearance of signs of torture.



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Meanwhile, a culture of fear prevails among victims and their families, and legal awareness is often lacking—especially among criminal defendants—making the documentation of torture an extremely complex task.

The report also highlights the barriers to reporting and litigation in cases of torture and ill-treatment. This section reveals serious complications that obstruct the paths of litigation in torture cases in Egypt, beginning with a legislative flaw in the definition of the crime itself. Article 126 of the Penal Code imposes narrow conditions that do not apply to most cases, which results in classifying crimes merely as “use of cruelty.”

Testimonies also point to the Public Prosecution’s negligence in fulfilling its investigative role, and its tendency to shift the burden of proof onto the victim in cases that should be proactively investigated by the prosecution.

Additional obstacles—such as delays in referral to forensic examination, the use of beatings through intermediaries (often other detainees), conflicts of interest involving some lawyers (especially non-rights-based practitioners), and police officers—further undermine the chances of accountability.

The justice system proves especially fragile in cases involving criminal defendants, who often lack legal awareness and face restricted communication channels with support institutions such as human rights organizations that assist victims of torture and ill-treatment. As a result, many remain without effective legal representation.

Testimonies also affirm that the high economic cost of litigation excludes the most impoverished and vulnerable groups from accessing justice. This entrenches a legal and procedural framework that strips justice of its substance and reinforces the persistence of impunity.



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2. Purpose of the Report

This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the general situation regarding crimes of torture and ill-treatment through several key points, including:

- Presenting the statistics documented by the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms related to cases of torture during the period from January 2024 to May 2025, to illustrate the extent of the violations. The report highlights that many of these cases resulted in the death of detainees or caused serious physical injuries and permanent disabilities, in addition to long-term psychological and mental harm to the victims.
- Shedding light on the obstacles hindering legal and human rights documentation of torture cases—whether related to collecting testimonies, securing evidence, delays in forensic examination, or threats made against victims and witnesses.
- Analyzing the barriers that prevent access to justice in torture cases, including challenges in litigation before investigative bodies and courts, and examining the effectiveness of the legal system in prosecuting and holding perpetrators accountable.
- Providing information on reporting and litigation mechanisms and raising awareness of the importance of legal reporting, through the presentation of a practical guide that can assist lawyers, victims, and human rights defenders in reporting torture cases and following up on litigation processes.

3. Significance of the Report

The importance of this report stems from the increasing frequency of grave violations inside detention facilities in Egypt, amid the continued absence of accountability and the persistence of impunity policies—particularly in light of the documentation of numerous deaths under torture, the recurring pattern of



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evidence concealment, witness intimidation, and the dissemination of misleading official narratives.

In addition, the report provides a statistical and analytical database that helps track recurring violations and trends. This database can be used in advocacy campaigns concerning torture and ill-treatment cases, policy formulation, and in submitting reports to relevant international human rights mechanisms.

This report represents a critical step toward understanding the reality of documentation and litigation in torture cases in Egypt by highlighting the multiple legal, procedural, social, and economic barriers faced by victims and their lawyers.

Finally, the attached practical guide serves as a tool to empower victims and their families with mechanisms for reporting incidents of torture and following up on litigation and accountability processes.

4. Main Research Question and Sub-questions

Main Research Question:

What are the documented rates of torture crimes in Egypt between January 2024 and June 2025?

How does the current legal and institutional framework affect the ability to document torture crimes and pursue litigation in such cases, and what are the possible pathways to strengthen accountability and protect victims?

Sub-questions:

1. What is the scale of torture crimes documented by the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms in Egypt during the period from January 2024 to June 2025? What are the general trends related to patterns of violations and the entities involved?



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2. What are the main obstacles to reaching victims or their families for the purposes of documentation or providing legal support? How do factors such as fear, lack of legal awareness, loss of trust in institutions, or restricted communication with human rights organizations supporting victims affect this process?
3. What are the most significant legal and procedural obstacles hindering litigation and accountability in torture cases? How do these obstacles impact victims' access to justice?

5. Methodology

This report adopts a dual-method approach that combines quantitative and qualitative analysis.

First, the quantitative method was employed by collecting and analyzing documented data on torture and death cases in detention facilities during the period from January 2024 to June 2025. This data was compiled from the organization's monitoring archive, credible data from other human rights organizations, and published media reports. The data included elements such as: the date of the incident, type of violation, place of detention, outcome of the violation, and—where applicable—the legal status of the case.

Second, the report draws on qualitative methodology through interviews with several lawyers working on torture cases, documentation with victims or families of victims who were subjected to severe violations in detention, as well as analysis of relevant domestic legislation. The report also includes an in-depth examination of the legal, procedural, social, and economic barriers to documentation and litigation in torture cases.



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6. Introduction

Torture and ill-treatment in detention facilities in Egypt constitute a flagrant violation of the Egyptian Constitution and of the international obligations the state has committed to—most notably the Convention against Torture, to which Egypt is a party. Despite the continued flow of both local and international human rights reports on the persistence of these violations, the actual process of monitoring and documentation still faces obstacles that result in limited availability of information and restricted access to victims and the provision of legal support.

This study seeks to provide an analytical reading of the state of torture in Egypt during the period from January 2024 to mid-2025, based on what was actually documented by the monitoring team and lawyers. It also aims to analyze the patterns and locations of torture and its impact on victims, and to assess the real capacity to utilize litigation and accountability mechanisms in these cases.

Although the study reveals systematic patterns of violations, the obstacles facing monitoring and documentation weaken the reliability of these statistics as an accurate indicator of the true scale of violations. Therefore, a dedicated chapter later in the study will present the most prominent of these obstacles and propose a set of recommendations and reforms needed to strengthen pathways for monitoring and accountability.

7. Documentation of Torture Cases (January 2024 – June 2025)

This section of the report presents a statistical analysis of the torture and ill-treatment cases that were monitored and documented between January 2024 and June 2025. The data is drawn from multiple sources, including direct interviews and testimonies from victims or their families, lawyers who worked on these cases, the review of relevant legal documents and reports, as well as documentation by



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independent human rights organizations and accounts published in press statements and testimonies circulated on social media platforms.

It is important to note that these statistics do not reflect the full extent of violations in Egypt, due to the numerous obstacles that hinder documentation. These include victims' and families' fear of reprisals by security agencies, the difficulty of accessing places of detention, and the lack of transparency in how official authorities handle such incidents. A significant portion of violations—particularly those involving psychological torture or those committed in facilities not subject to judicial oversight—remains beyond the reach of documentation. Accordingly, the figures and analyses presented in this section represent only the documented cases and do not necessarily reflect the full scale of the torture and ill-treatment phenomenon in Egypt.

It is also important to note that only direct torture violations were documented; indirect forms of torture such as denial of medical care and medical neglect inside detention facilities in Egypt were not included.

● Distribution of Torture Cases by Year of Incident (2024–2025)

Documented Torture Cases

Year of Incident	Number of Cases
2024	38
2025	37
Total	75

The total number of documented torture cases during the period from January 2024 to June 2025 reached 75 cases, including:

- 38 cases in the year 2024 (representing approximately 50.6% of the total).



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- 37 cases in the first half of 2025 (around 49.3%).

This distribution indicates the continued occurrence of violations at a nearly consistent rate across the two years, reflecting the absence of any noticeable decline or concrete measures taken to curb such practices.

- Distribution of Torture Cases by Year of Incident and Type of Detention Facility

Documented Torture Cases

Distribution by Year and Detention Facility Type

Detention Facility Type	2024	2025	Total
Official	37	31	68
Unofficial	1	2	3
Not Specified	0	4	4
Total	38	37	75

Out of the 75 cases:

- 68 cases occurred in official detention facilities (91%):
 - 37 in 2024
 - 31 in 2025
- 3 cases occurred in unofficial detention facilities (4%):
 - 1 in 2024
 - 2 in 2025
- 4 cases did not specify the nature of the detention facility (5%), all documented in 2025.



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This distribution indicates that the majority of documented torture cases occurred inside official detention facilities, such as prisons and police stations—placing direct legal responsibility on state-affiliated security and oversight bodies. However, the continued appearance of cases in unofficial or unspecified locations highlights the presence of "dark zones" within the detention system and documentation efforts, along with the complete absence of judicial oversight in unofficial facilities, which undermines both documentation and accountability efforts.

One of the cases documented involved physical violence in an official detention facility. The victim stated:

“I spent 100 days in the intake unit. It’s a place beyond description. I was with a lot of criminal inmates, constantly being insulted. I wore the niqab and they forced it off me. He hit me and ruptured my eardrum. Threw me to the ground. Beat me. Constant beatings and humiliation. I try to avoid anything that reminds me of prison, but it’s no use.”



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- Distribution of Torture Cases by Half-Year of Incident

Documented Torture Cases

Distribution by Half-Year of Incident

Half-Year of Incident	Number of Cases
First Half of 2024	16
Second Half of 2024	22
First Half of 2025	37
Total	75

This breakdown shows:

- The first half of 2025 had the highest number of cases (about 49%).
- Followed by the second half of 2024 (approximately 29%).
- Then the first half of 2024 (around 21%).



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● Distribution by Year and Specific Detention Facility Type

Documented Torture Cases

Distribution by Year and Type of Detention Facility

Facility Type	2024	2025	Total
Correction and Rehabilitation Centers	18	23	41
General Correction Centers	6	0	6
Ministry of Interior Administrative Sites	0	1	1
Police Stations (Geographical Prisons)	13	8	21
Unknown	1	5	6
Total	38	37	75

These figures represent the total of 75 documented torture cases across 2024 and 2025, categorized by type of detention facility. The data shows:

- Most cases occurred in Correction and Rehabilitation Centers (41 cases).
- Followed by Police Stations (21 cases), then Unknown Facilities (6 cases).
- The lowest numbers were in General Correction Centers (6 cases) and Ministry of Interior administrative sites (1 case).



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● In-Depth Analysis

1. Correction and Rehabilitation Centers (41 cases)

- 2024: 18 cases
- 2025: 23 cases

This indicates a noticeable increase in the following year (+5 cases), which may reflect either intensified documentation efforts or an actual rise in violations within these facilities.

A notable example is the case of Mohamed Helal in Badr 3 Prison:

On April 8, 2025, detainee Mohamed Hassan Helal died inside Badr 3 Prison due to severe injuries suspected to have resulted from brutal torture. The injuries included fractures in the skull and hands, and extensive internal bleeding in the head. He was transferred in a coma to Qasr Al-Ainy Hospital, where efforts to save his life failed.

The Egyptian Network for Human Rights condemned the state of secrecy and total official silence surrounding what occurred in the prison. The organization noted that Helal was transferred to the hospital shackled at both hands and feet, despite his critical condition.¹

¹ Egypt's Prisons: Death of Detainee Mohamed Helal Following Torture Amid Official Secrecy
Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, April 8, 2025.

For more information, see:

<https://www.aaieg.com/society/سجون-مصر-وفاة-المعتقل-محمد-حسن-هلال-بعد-تعرضه-لتعذيب>

Tragic Deaths, *Rassd Network*, April 20, 2025.

For more information, see:

<https://x.com/RassdNewsN/status/1914041678639353866>



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His death falls within a broader context of systematic violations inside Badr Prison, where in recent months, suicide attempts by detainees have increased—including that of Alaa Gamal, in protest of the harsh detention conditions. This includes an absolute ban on family visits, with many prisoners deprived of visits for ten years or more.

Prisoners also suffer from severe medical neglect, and passive torture through denial of healthcare—both of which are rights guaranteed under Prisons Organization Law No. 396 of 1956, which mandates at least one visit every 15 days and access to medical care at the state’s expense when necessary.²

Even during pretrial detention renewal sessions held via video conferencing, defendants have resorted to turning their backs to the camera in protest of what they described as sham proceedings, where detention is automatically extended without meaningful judicial review.

It is worth noting that the detainees’ demand was not for release—but simply for access to visitation and medical care as guaranteed by law.

2. General Correction and Rehabilitation Centers (6 cases)

- All documented cases occurred in 2024 only, because of the closure of many general prisons following the inauguration of new Correction and Rehabilitation Centers.

3. Administrative Sites of the Ministry of Interior (1 case)

- Only one case was documented in 2025.



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4. Police Stations (21 cases), representing the second highest number after the new Correction and Rehabilitation Centers

- 2024: 13 cases
- 2025: 8 cases

There was a decrease in the number of documented cases in 2025, despite police stations being among the most dangerous locations in terms of torture and ill-treatment. However, this decrease may not reflect an actual decline in violations, but rather an intensified security grip on victims—particularly criminal detainees—which hinders documentation.

5. Unknown (6 cases)

- 2024: 1 case
- 2025: 5 cases

Based on the above statistics, it is evident that the majority of violations occurred inside Correction and Rehabilitation Centers, raising serious questions about the official narrative that these facilities are designed to "respect human rights." Furthermore, the continued occurrence of violations in police stations indicates that the pattern of institutional violence in traditional detention facilities has not undergone any fundamental change. The rise in cases where the place of detention is unknown may reflect a growing tendency by security agencies to obscure the locations of torture—through practices such as blindfolding victims and detaining them in unofficial or undisclosed detention sites—thus further obstructing documentation and accountability efforts.



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Distribution of Torture Cases by Year and Type of Abuse

(January 2024 – June 2025)

1. Prevalence of Physical Torture
Physical abuse accounted for 72% of all documented cases, remaining the most frequently recorded pattern of torture due to its relative clarity and ease of proof.
2. Notable Increase in Threats (Targeting Victims or Their Families) in the First Half of 2025
From just one case in 2024 to six cases in 2025. This may indicate a shift by some perpetrators of torture toward more indirect and evasive methods.
3. Relative Consistency in Documented Psychological Abuse (7 Cases Annually)
Despite its severity, the number of reported incidents remains low. It is likely that the actual figure is significantly higher, but many victims do not recognize that the psychological harm they endured—such as humiliation, threats, and intimidation—constitutes torture and can be documented. A lack of awareness is one of the main reasons why psychological torture is under-documented compared to physical abuse.

Key Insights

- The continuation of physical violence inside detention centers, whether police stations or correctional facilities.
- The increased reliance on indirect forms of abuse—such as threats—particularly noticeable in 2025 compared to 2024, which may signal a shift in patterns of abuse.



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- An urgent need to raise awareness among victims and survivors that psychological violence, intimidation, and threats are serious human rights violations that warrant documentation and accountability.

Distribution of Cases by Type of Detention Facility

Documented Torture Cases

Distribution by Detention Facility Classification

Detention Facility Classification	Number of Cases
Official	68
Unofficial	3
Not Specified	4
Total	75

The statistics indicate that most violations occurred in official detention facilities. Data shows that over 90% of documented torture cases took place in official detention sites such as police stations and correctional centers, reflecting:

- The continued use of systematic torture practices by law enforcement within official facilities.
- Weak or nonexistent oversight of these facilities, even though they are, in principle, subject to supervision by the Public Prosecution under Egyptian law.

Only three cases were documented in unofficial detention sites, yet these carry serious implications, as:

- Detention in unofficial facilities (such as National Security premises or undisclosed locations) is unlawful.



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- This pattern is often associated with enforced disappearance and the most egregious forms of abuse.

We documented one such case involving detention by National Security, where the victim stated:

“I disappeared for four months in National Security custody. The first four days were torture—beatings, threats to kill me, threats against my family. What terrified me most was for my mother and sister. They stripped me, electrocuted me. Five hours of interrogation. Blindfolded. Handcuffed to the wall. I didn’t see daylight until I went to the prosecution. Only my left hand was unshackled. Bathroom once a day—three minutes in the morning, in front of a police officer. The rest of the day, you urinate in a water bottle.”

Additional observations:

- The "official" nature of torture reveals that these crimes are being committed within the institutional framework of the state, which heightens the urgency of activating accountability mechanisms such as judicial inspections and launching serious investigations.
- The ongoing lack of transparency regarding unofficial places of detention continues to obstruct documentation efforts and legal action.

Key Analytical Observations

1. Beating Remains the Most Widely Used Method
 - Beating accounted for over half of the documented torture incidents (50.7%), confirming it as the primary method used to assault detainees.
 - A notable decrease was observed from 24 cases in 2024 to 14 in 2025, accompanied by a rise in other abusive practices.
2. Sharp Increase in the "Other" Category in 2025



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- Cases categorized as "Other" rose from just one in 2024 to 12 in 2025, indicating either a diversification or shift in the methods of abuse.
 - This category may include threats of rape, threats against family members, and similar acts. Many victims do not report such threats, especially those with a sexual or gender-based nature, due to social stigma or fear.
3. Ongoing Use of Solitary Confinement as a Tool of Torture or Ill-Treatment
- Documented in 16 cases (21.3%), this is a relatively high figure, reflecting the use of prolonged isolation as psychological punishment.
 - A slight increase was recorded in 2025 (9 cases) compared to 2024 (7 cases).
4. Sharp Decline in the Use of Severe Physical Torture Methods such as Electric Shocks and Sexual Violence
- Electric shocks were recorded in 4 cases in 2024, with none documented in 2025.
 - Sexual violence appeared only once in the 2024 dataset. While the number is low, this likely does not reflect the true scale of such violations but rather challenges in documentation and the stigma around disclosure.

Example:

An additional case reached the organization after the statistics were finalized, bringing the total number of sexual violence cases to two, and the total torture cases to 76.

The case involved a criminally convicted inmate imprisoned since 2011 under a 25-year sentence. For the victim's safety, their name and place of detention remain undisclosed.



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During a visit in January 2024, the victim's brother noticed severe physical and psychological deterioration. The detainee had completely broken front teeth, one of which he handed over as evidence. The victim reported sexual assault (anal rape) and repeated physical beatings by other inmates acting under orders from prison officers.

In a handwritten letter, the detainee described being woken by guards throwing contaminated water (sewage) on him, enduring daily systematic beatings and mistreatment, and being left without any medical care. He expressed a complete loss of hope in receiving protection or justice and threatened suicide if the situation continued.

Documented violations in this case include:

1. Anal rape and direct sexual assault.
2. Broken front teeth due to violent assault.
3. Medical neglect—no treatment or care provided.
4. Systematic ill-treatment including daily insults and the use of sewage water.
5. Documented back injuries.

The family confirmed that these abuses had been ongoing for about two years, allegedly with direct involvement of security officers, and suspected religious discrimination, as the victim belongs to a religious minority.

5. Weak Documentation of Psychological Harm
 - Only 2 cases of documented psychological threats, possibly due to:
 1. Lack of awareness among victims that psychological harm constitutes torture, legally recognized as "moral coercion" under the Egyptian Constitution.



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2. Difficulty in proving psychological abuse due to the absence of tangible evidence.

Torture Cases by Year and Governorate

Documented Torture Cases

Distribution by Year and Governorate

Governorate	2024	2025	Total
Cairo	1	9	10
Giza	1	1	2
Alexandria	10	3	13
Qalyubia	3	1	4
Dakahlia	2	2	4
Sharqia	7	3	10
Beheira	11	13	24
Minya	2	0	2
Assiut	0	5	5
New Valley	1	0	1
Total	38	37	75

Key Analytical Observations:

1. Beheira Records the Highest Number of Torture Cases
 - Beheira alone accounts for one-third of the total documented cases (32%), ranking highest in both 2024 and 2025.



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- The sustained high figures in Beheira suggest either a systemic pattern of abuse or a lack of effective oversight in detention facilities within the governorate.
- 2. A Sharp Increase in Cairo in 2025
 - Torture cases in Cairo rose from 1 in 2024 to 9 in the first half of 2025.
 - This may reflect either improved documentation mechanisms or an actual increase in violations in the capital during that period.
- 3. Alexandria Witnessed a Decline After Leading in 2024
 - Dropped from 10 cases in 2024 to only 3 in 2025.
Possible explanations include:
 - A shift in patterns of violations.
 - Increased obstacles to documentation.
 - The relocation of high-risk detention centers to other governorates.
- 4. Relatively Low Reporting in Some Governorates
 - Giza, Minya, New Valley, Qalyubia, and Dakahlia reported fewer cases, which may not indicate fewer violations but rather limited documentation capacity or barriers to accessing victims in those areas.
- 5. Assiut Emerges in 2025
 - From zero cases in 2024 to five in 2025, suggesting an expansion of geographical coverage or improved documentation capacity in Upper Egypt.



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Distribution of Torture Cases by Year and Outcome (Jan 2024 – Jun 2025)

Documented Torture Cases

Distribution by Year and Torture Outcome

Outcome Category	2024	2025	Total
Death	4	3	7
Permanent Disability	1	0	1
Moderate or Minor Injuries	14	1	15
Severe Injury	4	7	11
Chronic Illness / Long-Term Health Decline	0	2	2
Unknown	15	24	39
Total	38	37	75

Key Findings:

1. More Than Half of Cases (52%) Have Unknown Outcomes
 - 39 out of 75 cases lacked clear documentation of the physical or psychological outcome of torture.
 - Possible reasons: incomplete follow-up, loss of contact with families, victims still in custody, or fear of retaliation.
 - The proportion of unknown outcomes rose from 39% in 2024 to 65% in 2025.
2. Notable Increase in Severe Injuries in 2025
 - From 4 cases in 2024 to 7 in 2025, constituting 63% of all severe injury cases.
 - This may indicate an escalation in the brutality of torture methods or better documentation of serious physical consequences.



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3. Death Cases Remain Consistent and Alarming

- With 4 cases in 2024 and 3 in 2025, deaths account for 9.3% of the total.
- This consistent fatality rate confirms that torture continues to result in deaths in custody, constituting the gravest form of abuse, potentially amounting to intentional homicide under international law.

Example: The Case of Mahmoud Mika
On March 6, 2025, Mahmoud Mohamed Mahmoud Asaad, known as "Mahmoud Mika" (26 years old), was arrested without a judicial warrant in the Khalifa district of Cairo, by three uniformed officers, one of whom had previously assaulted him. He was held at Khalifa Police Station and accused of drug trafficking, despite no physical evidence. On April 10, 2025, he died in custody after severe torture, as testified by fellow detainees.

They reported that officers took turns beating him, subjected him to "tube suspension" (a form of hanging), placed a towel over his head, and doused him with water, resulting in his death the same day.

The body showed severe signs of torture:

- Deep bruising on the back
- Broken bones
- Ligature marks on limbs
- Signs of strangulation

Authorities allegedly attempted to cover up the incident, delaying his appearance before the prosecution.



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The family filed a formal complaint with the Public Prosecution, and an investigation is ongoing, amid reports of witness intimidation, withholding of the autopsy report, and efforts to fabricate an alternative narrative to exonerate the perpetrators.

Another related case:

In a grave violation of the law, Egyptian security forces arrested 23 Bedouin women from the village of El-Nagila in Matrouh Governorate, as hostages to pressure relatives of a man wanted in a drug-related case into surrendering. The arrest of this large number of women in a tribal setting triggered outrage, as it was seen as a direct assault on tribal honor, a severe breach of societal norms, and a violation of fundamental human rights.

Attempt to De-escalate Ends in Tragedy

To contain the crisis and demonstrate goodwill, the village elders and tribal leaders agreed to surrender two relatives of the wanted man—Youssef Al-Sarhani and Farag Al-Farazi—to the National Security Agency, emphasizing that neither had any knowledge of the suspect's whereabouts. The gesture, intended to restore trust and ease tensions, ended in disaster: within hours of their detention, both families were summoned to the police station to collect the bodies of their sons, who had died in custody, without investigation or trial.

This chilling development strongly suggests that both men were subjected to severe physical torture that led to their deaths shortly after detention.

Fourteen Egyptian and international human rights organizations condemned the incident in a joint statement, describing it as an extrajudicial execution and a grave violation of the right to life, indicative of the escalating brutality of Egypt's security apparatus. The statement emphasized that lack of accountability perpetuates impunity, particularly dangerous in socially and tribally sensitive regions like Matrouh.



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In response, the Council of Tribal Elders and Sheikhs in Matrouh announced the suspension of all cooperation with the police until investigations are concluded into the torture and death of the two men—who had surrendered voluntarily.

Despite an official statement by the Ministry of Interior claiming the men had been killed in an "armed exchange," testimonies from residents and tribal elders, as well as widely circulated photos, contradict this narrative: the men were unarmed and had not resisted arrest.

This case is a stark example of security-led repression: women taken hostage, men tortured to death, and official statements issued that contradict the facts and eyewitness accounts. It illustrates how the absence of accountability has allowed law enforcement agencies to terrorize communities rather than protect them.

In his comment on the incident, Mohamed Lotfy, Executive Director of the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, stated: *"Is there anyone within the Egyptian government who still believes that people should be treated according to the law—even with all its flaws—just so we know the rules we are operating under?"*

4. Sharp Decline in Documentation of Moderate or Minor Injuries

- From 14 cases in 2024 to just 1 in 2025.
This may reflect:
- A shift towards more violent or less visible forms of abuse
- Increased difficulty in documentation
- Silencing tactics, such as threats against victims or their families

Note: Long-term psychological and social consequences (such as PTSD, depression, social withdrawal, paranoia, or cognitive and emotional impairment) are often



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excluded from torture outcome classifications, despite their severity. This gap in data stems from the need for long-term follow-up, which many victims or their families decline due to the trauma and desire to move on.

Conclusion: What the Statistics Reveal (Jan 2024 – Jun 2025)

The statistical analysis of torture cases from January 2024 to June 2025 paints an alarming picture of the continued use of torture and ill-treatment in both official and unofficial detention facilities across Egypt, including police stations and correctional centers.

Geographically, the data indicates concentration of violations in specific governorates, particularly Beheira, Cairo, and Alexandria—highlighting the need for intensified monitoring and legal support in these areas.

The findings further reveal a dominance of physical torture methods, while psychological and sexual torture remain under-documented. This reflects not a lower incidence, but rather a lack of awareness among victims regarding what constitutes torture, especially when it is not physical. There is thus a pressing need for legal and social education to raise awareness around non-physical forms of abuse.

Collectively, the data supports the call for a comprehensive approach that includes:

- Legislative reforms
- Enhanced documentation and accountability mechanisms
- Improved legal and medical support services
- Increased pressure to open public space for civil society actors



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Enforced Disappearance of Five Egyptian Youths Linked to Gaza Solidarity Convoy

In a further concerning incident, five Egyptian youths in contact with the “International Convoy for Gaza” disappeared under suspicious circumstances on June 12, 2025.

They later resurfaced before the Supreme State Security Prosecution, facing vague charges of “joining a terrorist group” and “planning an unauthorized protest”—now-standard accusations against activists and solidarity figures.

The crackdown was not limited to Egyptians. Foreign convoy members, including citizens of Morocco, Tunisia, the United States, and others, were reportedly subjected to physical assault, dragging, phone confiscation, and humiliating deportation.

One notable case is that of Mohamed Gamal, a young Egyptian activist deeply committed to the Palestinian cause, who had forcibly disappeared for ten days before appearing before State Security Prosecution on charges of terrorism.

The Egyptian government's handling of humanitarian solidarity has moved beyond suppression to outright punishment, aiming to intimidate anyone daring to express a dissenting humanitarian or political stance.

Despite evolving tools of repression and state deception, we affirm our commitment to continuing documentation and rights-based advocacy, regardless of whether Egyptian authorities acknowledge it. These efforts are part of a long struggle against impunity and the normalization of repression



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Chapter Two

8. Obstacles to Monitoring, Documentation, and Litigation in Torture and Ill-Treatment Cases

Despite the significance of the statistical data analyzed in the previous chapter, it does not reflect the full scope of torture crimes in Egypt. These figures are based solely on cases we were able to access and document, which represent only a small fraction compared to what is indicated by oral testimonies, informal reports, and the reality of systematic abuse in places of detention. Therefore, this data cannot be considered a comprehensive or representative sample, but rather indicators of what could be documented within a highly restrictive environment, marked by public fear, limited access to justice, and ongoing crackdowns on civil society organizations.

In the following chapters, we examine the various factors that impede access to victims, hinder the documentation of their experiences, and prevent legal recourse for those seeking justice.

I. Obstacles to Monitoring and Documenting Torture and Ill-Treatment

Research interviews with lawyers specializing in criminal justice reveal multiple gaps in Egypt's justice system that impede the documentation of torture cases. To illustrate this, we begin by tracing the victim's journey starting from the moment of arrest.



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1. When Does Torture Occur?

Torture typically begins immediately following arrest, particularly during initial detention in police stations or National Security facilities, where victims are held in hidden rooms—either within the police station or in security compounds—for undefined periods.

According to Article 36 of the Egyptian Code of Criminal Procedure, *"The arresting officer must question the accused, and if they do not present evidence of their innocence, the officer must refer them to the competent Public Prosecution within a maximum of 24 hours. The prosecution must then interrogate them within another 24 hours and either order their release or detention."*

This means that under no circumstance should a detainee be held by arresting authorities for more than 24 hours without being presented to the Public Prosecution, and the maximum time between arrest and formal interrogation is 48 hours.

However, this legal timeframe is systematically violated. In both criminal and political cases, detainees are often held for periods far exceeding 48 hours, ranging from additional hours to days or even months, particularly in enforced disappearance cases.

During this period, the victim is completely cut off from the outside world—unable to contact family or a lawyer. Lawyers, even when officially seeking the whereabouts of their clients, are routinely denied access.

This creates a legal and physical vacuum in which the state has full control to commit torture, intimidation, and psychological abuse without oversight. The isolation facilitates not only the implementation of torture, but also the denial of early legal intervention—for example, blocking defense lawyers from reaching



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detainees who could otherwise help prevent or at least document abuse in its early stages.

Moreover, the length of this enforced disappearance often results in the dissipation of physical evidence. Injuries that do not leave permanent marks—such as bruising, slapping, kicking, or waterboarding—may fade before any official forensic examination occurs, weakening the chances of legal documentation, particularly when a prompt medical check by the Public Prosecution is denied or delayed.

2. Why Is It So Difficult to Prove and Document Torture?

State Security Prosecution

“In nearly all cases brought before the Supreme State Security Prosecution, the accused appear without a personal lawyer—or at best with a court-appointed lawyer chosen by the prosecution itself. These lawyers rarely inquire whether the detainee was tortured. The absence of a trusted lawyer also prevents the accused from feeling safe. So even if they were tortured, they hesitate to inform the prosecution because, at that moment, they’re still technically ‘disappeared’ and fear being returned to National Security custody.”

— *Criminal justice lawyer interviewed for this report*

As documented in multiple research interviews, defendants are typically presented before the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) without private legal representation. Instead, they are accompanied by court-appointed lawyers selected by the prosecution itself. In such situations, detainees remain isolated, confused, and fearful, especially in the absence of any real communication with the outside world or clarity about their fate. They do not know whether they will be sent to an official prison or returned to a National Security compound.



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When victims do report torture—particularly in cases involving visible injuries—the Prosecution is legally required to document the allegations and conduct a full physical inspection, including injuries to the face, body, and clothing, and then refer the detainee to forensic examination to establish the cause and nature of the injuries.

Failure by the prosecution to act despite the presence of injuries or a complaint from the defendant constitutes a dereliction of duty and can be seen as obstructing justice.

Yet, according to multiple criminal justice lawyers, prosecutors rarely initiate such inspections. Even when a detainee explicitly states they have been tortured, prosecutors often delay forensic referrals until the injuries fade, resulting in official medical reports that claim no injuries were found.

“When the prosecution fails to ask the detainee whether they were tortured, fails to inspect their body, and delays referring them to forensic medicine—even when they report abuse—it reflects a serious failure in fulfilling its legal duties.”
— *Criminal justice lawyer interviewed for this report*

3. *Invisible Torture: A Systematic Method Difficult to Prove*

“In Egypt, there is no acknowledgment of the concept of psychological torture. There may be physical injuries like wounds, bruises, permanent disabilities, or other visible signs of abuse. But if a detainee is forced to stand for ten hours while being threatened by police, or hears electric devices being activated near his ear, or hears another person being tortured—this is all a form of severe psychological torture, yet it leaves no visible marks that can be documented. This is a legislative and judicial gap, as it becomes nearly impossible to prove.”



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— A lawyer specialized in criminal justice cases

Judicial bodies in Egypt tend to focus solely on physical torture, while security agencies systematically employ a wide range of non-physical torture techniques. In fact, these agencies often demonstrate a calculated mastery in psychological torture—subjecting victims to extreme mental distress intended to break them down both psychologically and physically.

Research interviews identified several forms of psychological torture, such as blindfolding and handcuffing detainees, threatening them with torture, placing them near other detainees being tortured, and making threats against family members. These practices place the victim in a state of extreme fear and emotional trauma.

Egyptian law explicitly prohibits any form of physical or psychological coercion during detention or interrogation. This is outlined in:

- Article 302 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which states that "no statement made by a defendant shall be considered valid if proven to have been made under coercion or threat."
- Article 55 of the Constitution, which mandates humane treatment of anyone arrested or detained, prohibiting torture, intimidation, coercion, or physical and mental abuse.
- Article 40 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which states that "no person may be arrested or detained except by order of the competent authorities, and they must be treated with dignity, without physical or mental harm."
- And Article 126 of the Penal Code, which provides for punishment of acts of torture.



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Psychological coercion includes a broad range of practices: threats of physical torture or death, threats against the victim’s family, forced exposure to the torture or screams of others, sleep deprivation, extended isolation, denial of medical care or food, and subjecting detainees to harsh environmental conditions (e.g., confinement in extreme heat or cold while restrained or in inadequate clothing).

These methods are all designed to break the victim psychologically without leaving visible marks—making documentation and accountability significantly more difficult. In the absence of independent judicial oversight, psychological coercion becomes a tool for impunity.

One practicing criminal justice lawyer explained:

"The laws speak of both physical and psychological coercion. But there's no method to prove psychological torture. The prosecution rarely refers detainees for psychological assessment. They only consider physical injuries. This creates another gap in the system of documenting torture. The use of psychological torture is widespread, yet even activists often mistakenly believe that if a person wasn't physically beaten, then they weren't tortured—which is simply not true. These assumptions make the crime much harder to prove."

4. *Interrogations Without Oversight: Barriers to Identifying Location and Perpetrators*

"All political detainees are interrogated while blindfolded, in unidentified rooms. These conditions ensure that the torturer cannot be identified by the victim. So, when a detainee reports violent torture, they are unable to name the location, or the individuals involved due to enforced disappearance and blindfolding. How can I document a case where the place and perpetrator are unknown? The state can easily dismiss it as vague or unsubstantiated testimony."
— From a research interview with a lawyer specializing in criminal justice



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Practices such as enforced disappearance and interrogating suspects in undisclosed locations while blindfolded represent one of the most prominent methods that weaken the ability to document and prove acts of torture and thus undermine the possibility of holding perpetrators accountable. Victims are detained in unknown rooms, unable to determine their geographic location, and are interrogated while blindfolded, all in the absence of any judicial oversight. This deliberate concealment — the blindfolding — erases the identity of those responsible for torture, rendering the victim unable to identify names, physical descriptions, or even the locations where the abuse took place. This allows the authorities to easily deny the occurrence of abuse or question the credibility of testimonies, dismissing them as “unsubstantiated” or “unsupported.”

The situation becomes even more complex when interrogations are carried out in facilities that fall outside the supervision of the Public Prosecution, such as certain National Security premises or isolated rooms within police stations. In such contexts, any form of legal or oversight mechanisms vanish, eliminating even the minimal threshold of legal protection.

Within this context, the only remaining tools for substantiating torture allegations — witness testimonies or medical reports — are often unattainable. Witnesses may still be in custody and fear testifying while under the control of security agencies. Medical reports may also be unavailable due to the absence of timely documentation or the fading of visible injuries over time.

5. Video Conferencing: A Regime of Absolute Security Control

"The use of video conferencing in trials is a disaster. It was imposed as a de facto measure, and there's an ongoing attempt to pass it into law under the new Criminal Procedure Code approved by Parliament, though not yet ratified by the President. Video conferencing goes against the Constitution and the Criminal Procedure Code — it severely undermines the guarantees of a fair trial, the right to effective



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defense, and the ability to report coercion or torture."
— From an interview with a lawyer specializing in criminal justice

In recent years, Egyptian authorities have begun using video conferencing technology as an alternative to presenting defendants in person before investigative or judicial bodies. This effectively isolates the defendant — who may also be a victim — from both their lawyer and from appearing in front of a natural judge.

Personal appearance before a judge is a cornerstone of fair trial guarantees. It allows for direct communication with the court, in the presence of the defendant's own lawyer. It also provides an opportunity for defendants to report any violations they have suffered during detention.

Under the video conferencing system, however, defendants are stripped of these essential rights. Their presence is reduced to an image on a screen — often from within the very detention facility where violations may have occurred — under the watchful eye of the same security forces allegedly involved in torture or abuse.

Interviews with defense lawyers and legal experts indicate that the increasing use of video conferencing in investigations and trials, and its imposition as a de facto measure without societal or legal consensus, represents a new legal disaster. This is especially true given the attempts to legitimize its use through the draft amendments to the new Criminal Procedure Code, despite its clear contradiction with the fundamental principles of fair trial guarantees outlined in Article 96 of the Egyptian Constitution and Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The use of video conferencing is not merely a procedural shift; it represents a transformation in the structure of litigation in Egypt. It institutionalizes exceptional measures and makes them the norm, thereby eroding the right to appear before a natural judge — in flagrant violation of both the Egyptian Constitution and international fair trial standards.



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6. Why Is the Use of Video Conferencing a Legal and Humanitarian Disaster?

“When the Constitution says the defendant must appear before a natural judge, it doesn’t mean their face just appears on a screen. A natural judge means the investigation should happen in a courtroom, physically separate from the police. When the accused is brought to court, sees their lawyer, and realizes they are no longer inside a police station, they feel a sense of safety and reassurance — their lawyer encourages them to speak up about any abuse. That’s not what happens with video conferencing, where the accused appears on a screen, while the officer who tortured them might be standing beside or behind the camera.”
— From a research interview with a lawyer specializing in criminal justice

6.1 Legal Issues Associated with the Use of Video Conferencing

A) Violation of the Principle of Appearance Before a Natural Judge

The Egyptian Constitution guarantees the right of a defendant to appear before their “natural judge,” which requires physical, in-person presence before the investigative or judicial authority — not merely appearing on a screen from a detention facility. Replacing physical presence with video conferencing constitutes a clear violation of fair trial guarantees, especially in cases involving serious allegations like torture or coercion.

This breach extends beyond the absence of human interaction with the court or defense; it also undermines a core function of the prosecution — physically examining the defendant. This step is crucial for documenting the defendant’s physical condition in the interrogation report, including the presence of any visible injuries, and determining whether they should be referred for forensic examination.



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In a research interview, one criminal justice lawyer described a key limitation of video conferencing:

“Even if the prosecutor notices visible injuries and agrees to record the defendant’s statements about being tortured, the absence of a physical examination remains a fundamental flaw. The prosecution cannot examine the defendant’s body from head to toe through a screen. Superficial injuries like bruises or abrasions can disappear within hours. So, without a prompt physical examination and direct documentation in the investigation report, the only physical evidence of torture could be lost — especially if the defendant is not referred to forensic medicine in time.”

B) The Right to Communicate with One’s Lawyer: How Video Conferencing Undermines a Core Guarantee of Fair Trial

The gradual institutionalization of video conferencing in investigations and trial sessions has significantly eroded one of the most fundamental rights guaranteed to defendants: the right to meet with their lawyer directly and in private. Under traditional procedures, lawyers could meet their clients in person inside the prosecution or court building, without any physical barriers or direct security monitoring — ensuring safe, confidential communication.

Article 124 of the Egyptian Criminal Procedure Code explicitly guarantees a defendant’s right to the presence of a lawyer during interrogation and the ability to communicate with them. Until a few years ago, it was common practice for lawyers to meet with their clients alone, even briefly — a practice that extended the defense’s ability to uncover violations such as torture or coercion. Lawyers cannot form a complete picture or assess the defendant’s treatment without a private meeting before confronting official narratives from the police or prosecution.



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With the imposition of video conferencing, however, communication between defendant and lawyer has become restricted or outright impossible. The accused appears from a police station or detention facility, and the lawyer may be unable to see or hear them clearly, let alone meet privately to discuss what happened during detention.

As a result, the lawyer loses one of the most critical tools in the defense process — the ability to hear the client’s story away from direct security influence. This severely undermines the right to defense and limits the legal documentation of torture or ill-treatment in detention facilities.

C) The Impact of Losing a Safe and Neutral Space — The Courtroom — on Reporting and Documenting Torture

A core guarantee in torture cases is that victims must be able to report abuse freely and, in an environment, free from intimidation — whether physical or psychological. The video conferencing system, by replacing in-person appearances before the prosecution or judiciary, effectively nullifies this right. It creates a setting in which the necessary conditions for safety and protection are absent.

Numerous testimonies collected through interviews with lawyers handling torture cases revealed that video hearings are typically conducted inside police stations, not in neutral settings. In some instances, the very officer who tortured the defendant is the same person escorting them into the video room — or even standing behind the camera during the session. This presence — whether visible or implied — constitutes a direct violation of the principle of neutral space, where the courtroom should serve as a safe zone.



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In such conditions, defendants are unable to speak freely about any form of coercion or abuse, fearing retaliation or further torture once the session ends. Thus, it becomes essential to underscore that the absence of a safe and neutral environment during interrogation or court proceedings is a major obstacle to documenting acts of torture and ensuring accountability — a clear breach of both constitutional and international obligations regarding the right to a fair trial.

D. The Impact of the Proposed Legislative Amendment

The attempt to codify video conferencing within the new Criminal Procedure Code threatens to entrench this violation as a systematic practice, effectively legitimizing the infringement of core fair trial guarantees. It turns video conferencing into a tool of direct control over defendants/victims.

Using video conferencing as a substitute for physical appearance before the court has severe consequences for the rights of victims in torture cases. It begins with undermining the right to a proper defense, extends to weakening the chances of documentation and evidence collection—particularly in torture cases, where prosecutors are unable to examine or physically observe the defendant—and ends by deepening the problem of impunity, especially in the absence of effective judicial oversight over detention sites.

An Example: The Severe Impact of Video Conferencing on Torture Victims

In a post published by the Bar Association, one lawyer shared the following account on the association's official page:

"In short, I had a pretrial detention renewal hearing today before the Maadi Circuit, held at the South Cairo Court (Zinhom). It was a drug case involving two defendants, and both were supposed to appear online via video screen.



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The second defendant appeared alone via the police station's screen. When I asked about the first defendant, I was told he would appear once the prison screen was activated because he had been transferred to the 15 May prison.

We waited — an hour, two, three — but the defendant couldn't be located. We called the prison; they said he wasn't there. We called the station; they said he had just left on a transfer mission and would be shown on screen as soon as he arrived.

Then, after about three hours, we were shocked to see the defendant appear via the police station screen — the same station they had claimed had already transferred him to prison!

I was stunned to see the defendant's face swollen, his eyes puffy, and his body visibly bruised.

I submitted my motions and requested that the visible injuries be officially documented. When the court asked him, 'Who assaulted you?' he only managed to say three words: *'They're beating me, sir.'*

The court then ruled to continue his detention. I left the courtroom burdened and saddened by what I had just witnessed. I barely made it home and changed my clothes when I received a call from the defendant's mother — crying. His wife was screaming, and his young daughters were in hysterics. In a broken, quiet voice, his mother said: *'Mahmoud is dead.'*

To God we belong and to Him we return."

This incident starkly illustrates how security agencies have used video conferencing as a tool to obscure abuses and ensure impunity.



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7. Barriers Stemming from Fear and Social Pressure

7.1 Barriers Related to the Victim's Family

Families often face a difficult dilemma: fear and hope. Fear of retaliation against their relative if a formal complaint is filed or if the violation is documented and publicized. There is widespread concern that such steps may lead to further torture or fabricated charges. At the same time, they cling to the hope that “staying silent” might help end the crisis without escalation. These fears are sometimes reinforced by lawyers with no background in human rights, who prefer to maintain good relations with security agencies at the expense of the victim’s rights. Some of them openly advise the family: “Don’t get into trouble with the officer,” which discourages documentation and instills fear of engaging with human rights organizations or rights-based lawyers.

7.2 Barriers Related to the Victim

Victims themselves may refrain from documenting violations for various reasons, including:

1. **Fear of repeated abuse:** In some cases, the victim is questioned in front of the same officer who tortured them, with no guarantees of protection.
2. **Social pressure inside prison:** Many detainees tend to downplay torture and see it as “normal,” which may lead victims to disregard what they’ve endured.
3. **Lack of legal awareness:** Many do not realize that what they experienced constitutes torture — especially in criminal cases — particularly when the abuse was in the form of psychological coercion or mild physical force. Some victims don’t consider insults or beatings to be violations unless the abuse involves electric shocks or sexual assault.



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All these factors form a complex web of pressure that hinders documentation of violations and significantly weakens the chances of holding perpetrators accountable.

8.2. Barriers to Litigation in Cases of Torture and Ill-Treatment

1. Legal Barriers: Flaws in the Legal Provisions Related to the Crime of Torture

Although Article 52 of the Egyptian Constitution clearly states that "all forms and types of torture are crimes that are not subject to a statute of limitations," legal practice reveals a significant legislative flaw that undermines the prospects of accountability and justice in torture cases. This flaw lies in the contradiction between constitutional provisions and those of the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, which opens the door for perpetrators to escape punishment through inaccurate legal classifications of the crimes committed.

The Egyptian Penal Code defines two offenses related to the violation of detainees' physical integrity:

- Article 126 criminalizes "torturing a suspect to extract a confession," stipulating punishment for any public official who commits torture for the purpose of obtaining a confession.
- Article 129 criminalizes "use of cruelty" by a public servant against individuals during the performance of their duties, classifying it as a misdemeanor punishable by no more than one year in prison.

The problem lies in the restrictive conditions required to classify an act as torture under Article 126, which demands three criteria be met simultaneously:

1. The perpetrator must be a public official.
2. The victim must be officially classified as a "suspect."
3. The purpose of the torture must be to extract a confession.



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These narrow conditions make it difficult to apply the definition of torture to most cases, often resulting in a lesser classification of "use of cruelty" instead. This significantly downplays the severity of the act and, if punished at all, leads to lighter sentences that do not reflect the gravity of the violation.

For instance, if a person is tortured without being officially charged — such as in the case of someone detained and later released without indictment — the incident is not legally classified as "torture" but rather as "use of cruelty," with a reduced penalty. Similarly, if the torture was intended as retaliation or humiliation rather than to extract a confession, Article 126 does not apply, even if the abuse was severe and well-documented.

A torture victim testified as follows:

"I disappeared for two days. For two days, I was beaten non-stop, electrocuted on my arms, constantly insulted. Everywhere I was moved to, the abuse continued. Despite the beatings, the electrocution, and the pain, the thing I can't forget is when he made me kiss his foot while it was pressed on my head as he insulted me and my family. He didn't want information. Just humiliation."

These legislative loopholes reveal a fundamental deficiency in the Egyptian legal framework for addressing torture. They create a legal environment that allows manipulation of definitions, undermines accountability, and weakens access to justice and redress for victims.

2. Procedural Barriers: The Prosecution's Shortcomings in Investigations

"The problem is that the prosecution completely removes itself from the investigation, acting as if torture isn't a crime that warrants urgent action. They ask the lawyer to prove everything — as if we have the powers of law enforcement."
— A lawyer specializing in criminal justice cases



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Even when some evidence is available — such as the victim's testimony or forensic reports — many torture cases are dismissed due to "insufficient evidence," particularly when the victim cannot precisely identify the perpetrator due to being blindfolded during the assault or being unaware of the officer's name or the location of the abuse. However, this does not absolve the prosecution of its legal responsibility to take steps to identify the perpetrator, whether by matching descriptions provided by the victim, checking duty rosters to identify officers present at the time and place of the alleged incident, or showing the victim photos to aid recognition.

In practice, however, the prosecution often fails to perform this role and instead shifts the entire burden of proof onto the victim and their lawyer, which contradicts the prosecution's function and mandate.

Article 1 of the Egyptian Code of Criminal Procedure states:

"The Public Prosecution shall have exclusive jurisdiction to initiate and pursue criminal proceedings. No other entity may do so unless the law explicitly provides otherwise."

Article 63 of the same law affirms:

"The Public Prosecution must take the necessary steps to initiate criminal proceedings if it becomes aware of a crime."

Thus, placing the burden of proof on the victim or lawyer — especially in cases where the perpetrator's identity is hard to determine — constitutes a fundamental breach of the prosecution's role as society's representative in seeking justice. This procedural failure has become one of the most significant barriers to justice in torture cases, contributing to impunity and eroding public trust in the judiciary's ability to provide redress.



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In cases of murder or theft, prosecutors typically take immediate steps such as visiting the crime scene, hearing witnesses, collecting evidence, and ordering forensic examinations — actions aligned with the law. But in torture cases — particularly those involving police officers — prosecutors often refrain from such steps and instead expect victims and their lawyers to gather all evidence, as though the prosecution bears no responsibility.

"I go to the prosecution and say: the suspect was beaten at the police station, by an officer who looks like this, on this day, at this time, in this place... That means the victim is giving the prosecution everything it needs to identify the perpetrator. But the prosecution just throws it all back on the victim and lawyer — expecting them to do all the work — instead of fulfilling its own role as an investigative body." — From an interview with a lawyer specializing in torture cases

This abdication of responsibility not only empties the role of the Public Prosecution of its purpose but also represents a grave dereliction of its duty as society's representative in the pursuit of justice. In some instances, it borders on complicity when prosecutors fail to act in cases involving crimes committed by state agents.

● **A Torture Case Involving a Retired Officer Reveals Gaps in Investigation and Sentencing**

In one of the well-known cases that took place at Ismailia's Second Police Station, a retired artillery officer was subjected to severe torture after a neighbor intervened with the police to pressure him to vacate his residence. As a result, police forces stormed his home and forcibly detained him, during which he was violently assaulted by a criminal investigations officer and two police sergeants, causing him a permanent disability in the form of a ruptured eardrum.



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Despite the clear nature of the crime, the victim faced significant legal obstacles. The Public Prosecution initially ignored his complaint and requested an internal police investigation — a procedure that raises serious concerns about conflict of interest, especially when the alleged perpetrators are themselves police officers. Unsurprisingly, the investigation concluded that no crime had occurred. The case was closed multiple times without even conducting a forensic examination or physically inspecting the victim.

What ultimately pushed the case toward serious investigation was not the prosecution's action, but the victim's own initiative to appeal to military entities — due to his background as a retired army officer — such as the Military Prosecution and Military Intelligence. These bodies conducted inquiries that confirmed the assault, forcing the Public Prosecution to reopen the case.

Although a conviction was eventually secured, the ruling was lenient: three years in prison for two police officers (a chief detective and his deputy) and one year each for the two police sergeants. Such convictions are rare in torture cases and, in this instance, came only under special pressure related to the victim's military status.

Another alarming issue, as highlighted by a lawyer who attended the trial, is:

“The convicted officers were not dismissed from their jobs; they returned to work immediately after serving their sentences. There is nothing in the law that obliges the Ministry of Interior to dismiss an officer convicted of torture. Meanwhile, crimes like theft or prostitution led to automatic dismissal, but assaulting citizens isn't considered a breach of official duty!”

This situation exposes a fundamental flaw in the legal system: light sentences do not serve as a real deterrent, and the absence of binding legal provisions requiring administrative dismissal of officers convicted of torture entrenches impunity within the state apparatus.



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3. Absence of Dismissal Mechanisms: Implicit Encouragement of Violations
"Today, if a police officer is imprisoned for theft or prostitution, they are dismissed. But if they cause the death of a citizen under torture, they are not even investigated—and may return to work after serving the sentence. The penalty is not only lenient; it's not even deterrent, because it doesn't prevent the perpetrator from regaining their authority afterward."
— From an interview with a lawyer specializing in criminal justice cases

Despite the conviction of the officers in the case, the Ministry of Interior did not take any action to dismiss them. Instead, they resumed their duties after serving their sentences. This reflects a legislative void, as there is no clear legal provision obligating the administrative body to dismiss officers convicted in torture cases—unlike other cases such as bribery, theft, or moral offenses, where a conviction is considered an affront to the dignity of the profession and grounds for administrative dismissal.

4. Delayed Referral to Forensic Medicine: A Method to Destroy Evidence and Undermine Accountability
"A large part of the delay in presenting suspects and prolonging their enforced disappearance is intentional—so that injuries fade before they are brought before the prosecution. It's as if the goal is to destroy the evidence, and this affects documentation and litigation."
— Lawyer specialized in criminal justice

One of the key procedural issues obstructing the documentation of torture crimes or holding perpetrators accountable is the deliberate delay in referring victims to forensic medicine—the authority technically responsible for identifying injuries and assessing whether they result from torture or ill-treatment. This delay often leads to the loss of physical evidence over time. It is sometimes employed strategically to



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destroy the evidence, especially as many signs of torture—such as abrasions or bruises—can fade within days, making it extremely difficult to prove the crime later.

This pattern of neglect is compounded by the public prosecution's failure to fulfill its investigative duties. In many cases, the prosecution ignores urgent torture complaints or delays issuing orders for forensic examinations, resulting in inconclusive medical reports due to the lapse of time.

One of the lawyers interviewed in the research said: In one notable case, citizen Muhannad El-Sayed Kandil died inside the Ismailia Second Police Station after being severely assaulted by other detainees. The incident started with a traffic dispute between him and a judge, which led to him being charged with attempted murder and defamation and subsequently detained for four days.

According to lawyers, he was incited against inside the holding cell and was beaten continuously by several detainees for eight hours, leading to his death. Despite surveillance cameras documenting the incident, the forensic report was inconclusive and stated: *"The injuries, overall, are superficial, frictional, and result from external forces applied to the head and other parts of the body. However, these injuries alone are insufficient to cause death, and it is technically impossible to determine the cause of death."*

As a result of this assessment, the incident was reclassified from potential murder to a misdemeanor of simple assault, and the accused were referred to trial on that basis, which resulted in prison sentences of only one year. Even though the station was responsible for monitoring the cells via cameras and that the assault lasted for hours, no charges of negligence or complicity were brought against the on-duty officers.



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5. Indirect Use of Violence: Proxy Beatings and Expanding Investigative Powers

Multiple testimonies point to a recurring pattern in Egyptian police stations, where violence is exercised indirectly. Certain detainees are assigned—under instruction from officers or security personnel—to assault specific victims to evade direct responsibility for the abuse. This pattern adds to other forms of torture, including those carried out by police agents, or directly by the officers themselves.

The violence is not limited to beatings. Detention officials often resort to alternative forms of physical and psychological abuse, such as prolonged blindfolding, restraining the accused with hands tied behind their back and throwing them onto a cold floor, or detaining them in extremely hot conditions during the summer or in freezing temperatures during winter.

The gravity of this situation increases in light of proposed amendments to the new Criminal Procedure Code, which would grant law enforcement bodies—primarily the police—investigative powers that should be strictly limited to the Public Prosecution. This expansion undermines the core principle of separation between prosecutorial and investigative authorities, as the role of law enforcement officers is limited, under the current law, to gathering evidence and referring it to the prosecution, without conducting investigations themselves.

Empowering law enforcement to conduct investigations means that the perpetrator of the violation may also be the same party investigating it, opening the door to cover-ups and impunity.

6. Criminal Cases: Between Lack of Protection and Conflicted Interests

Although violations against political detainees sometimes receive greater media and human rights attention, the broader group subjected to direct physical torture are those accused in criminal—not political—cases. While violations in political



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cases often take the form of medical neglect (which can amount to torture by omission), prolonged solitary confinement, and ill-treatment, the practice of systematic physical beatings and torture is far more prevalent in criminal detainee cases.

The situation becomes even more difficult given the complexities of the legal profession, especially among non-human rights lawyers. Overlapping interests with law enforcement—particularly the investigative authorities—create indirect pressure that obstructs documentation and accountability. Some lawyers, whose practice relies on their ties to security officers, prefer to avoid torture cases altogether to preserve those relationships, or out of fear of retaliation, whether through direct threats, professional restrictions, or even financial repercussions, as one lawyer explained:

"The whole thing is that criminal lawyers operate with the police on a quid-pro-quo basis: 'Give us info on so-and-so and I'll help you with this other guy.' These lawyers want to stay in control of the scene, so they tell the families: 'No, don't go against them... So what if he was beaten?' And that plays a big role, because they're undercutting us as human rights lawyers. Now there's this toxic layer of relationships between some lawyers and officers. Or they say: 'If you pursue this, you'll put me in conflict with the officer, and he'll block all my work.'"

— From an interview with a lawyer specialized in criminal justice

Another issue is that some lawyers may outright refuse to take on torture cases—either out of fear of losing their privileges at police stations, or out of concern that they'll be linked to specific political movements, which could subject them to security targeting and jeopardize their future. In some instances, they limit their role to that of a mediator in "deals" with security agencies, which may include promises of release or eased measures in exchange for silence on the abuse.



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This overlap between personal interests and the legitimate fears of victims and their families—amid the absence of any legal protection environment for lawyers, victims, or their relatives—results in a near-complete lack of documentation in both criminal and political torture cases, particularly those involving individuals from Islamic movements.

This contrasts with some political cases—not all—that receive solidarity campaigns or international human rights attention. This perpetuates a state of silence and leaves victims of criminal and political torture outside any real paths toward justice or redress.

7. Limited Legal Awareness and the Isolation of Criminal Defendants from Remedies

Limited awareness of legal rights is one of the main obstacles to documentation and accountability in torture cases, particularly among criminal defendants, who are the most exposed to severe violations compared to political detainees. While the latter often benefit from media and human rights monitoring, the criminal defendant remains isolated and lacks effective contact with civil society organizations or lawyers specialized in human rights cases.

This category of victims faces several barriers that prevent them from reporting or pursuing legal action against perpetrators. The first is fear of reliving the experience, as the victim may be returned to the same detention facility or even interrogated by the same officer who tortured them. The second is social pressure within the place of detention, where the victim encounters a culture of minimizing abuse—cellmates might say: “It’s no big deal,” which normalizes violence. The third barrier is a lack of awareness about their rights: many victims do not realize that what they endured qualifies as torture under the law, instead categorizing it as mere mistreatment, and are unaware they have the right to document or litigate.



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"Many people don't realize that what they went through constitutes torture in the first place. They might see verbal abuse or beatings as normal. But when something traumatic happens—like electric shocks or sexual assault—only then do they start to feel that what happened was serious, and that they need to speak out or file a complaint."

— From an interview with a lawyer specialized in criminal justice.

Documentation becomes nearly impossible in the absence of meaningful communication between the accused and their lawyer. Previously, Article 124 of the old Criminal Procedure Code stipulated that “the accused shall not be separated from their lawyer by any barrier during interrogation,” which guaranteed a minimum level of direct contact. With the widespread use of video conferencing for hearings, however, the meeting between the lawyer and the defendant now requires a “visit permit,” which can be arbitrarily denied—depriving the defendant of the chance to disclose violations, especially if the perpetrator remains nearby.

This multi-dimensional dysfunction—lack of awareness, lack of communication, and prosecutorial inaction—creates a closed loop that prevents victims from accessing justice and contributes to entrenched impunity.

8. Obstacles to Accessing Support Mechanisms: Trust Gap and Narrow Communication Channels

Accessing official and rights-based institutions is a core challenge in the path to documenting and litigating torture cases. Many victims or their families refrain from approaching semi-governmental bodies such as the National Council for Human Rights out of fear of retaliation, amid distrust in the confidentiality of information and the absence of protection guarantees.



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On the other hand, independent human rights organizations maintain strict confidentiality of data, but their effectiveness is hindered by legal and security restrictions—such as registration difficulties, the inability to operate hotlines, internet censorship, and limitations on publicly advertising their services. These restrictions exacerbate the crisis of limited direct and secure communication with the public.

There is also a widening trust gap between the public and rights institutions due to the lack of tangible legal victories. As one lawyer explains:

"People aren't looking for written reports; they want to see cases moving, verdicts issued, someone getting justice. Reports alone won't win public trust—strategic litigation can."

This reality diminishes victims' motivation to document or pursue legal pathways. In the absence of realistic prospects for redress and successful case models, hope fades. As the trust gap grows, hundreds of cases involving serious violations never reach any documentation or litigation platform.

Factors such as digital illiteracy, limited financial resources, or lack of legal awareness lead to a gradual drop-off in cases: for every hundred who begin the process of seeking documentation, only a small fraction reach rights organizations for support or litigation.

Building trust between the public and rights organizations requires more than documentation and reports—it necessitates real legal achievements that are publicized and serve as models to encourage victims to break the silence and seek legal support. Many families or victims are not primarily concerned with documentation; they seek justice and reparations.



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9. Economic Barriers to Justice: The Burden of Legal Fees

The financial cost of legal action is one of the major barriers to accessing justice, especially in torture cases that involve long and complex legal processes. In the absence of free legal support, litigation becomes a financial burden that most victims—especially those from marginalized or low-income backgrounds, who are also most at risk of torture—cannot bear.

According to lawyers, court fees are rising—not based on laws passed by Parliament, but through administrative decisions by Courts of Appeal Presidents, despite the legal principle that fees must be set by legislation. One lawyer explains:

"Today, one memorandum page costs 33 EGP, and official documents like verdicts cost 43 EGP per page. If you're submitting a file with ten pages, you're looking at over 1,000 EGP for a single session—and you still don't know if you'll win the case."
— Lawyer specialized in criminal justice.

These fees are not limited to submissions—they also include “digitization fees” for services like retrieving case files or verdicts via the criminal justice IT system. While the system is supposed to be more efficient than paper documents, staffing shortages mean long waits, prompting lawyers to raise their fees to compensate for the time and effort required.

As for fee exemptions, although the Judicial Fees Law allows for them, the process is complicated. It requires a request to the presiding judge, who decides based on subjective assessment and often only grants partial exemption rather than covering the full costs.

Additionally, the law provides for free legal representation—but this guarantee is not effectively implemented, denying legal support to victims unable to afford a lawyer.



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"If a torture victim has no money and no way to reach a human rights organization, they simply have no path to justice."
— Lawyer specialized in criminal justice.

The broader economic crisis exacerbates this situation, especially in impoverished areas where crime rates rise due to deteriorating living conditions, leading to more criminal cases—yet citizens become less able to afford litigation in the event of torture. In criminal courts, a lawyer is usually appointed if the defendant cannot afford one. But in misdemeanors or non-appealable procedures, even this minimum legal representation may be absent.

The persistence of this economic barrier within the justice system reflects not just the absence of social justice but entrenches a discriminatory legal reality in which access to justice is reserved for the financially able, leaving the poor unprotected and without redress.

Although some rights organizations offer free legal support for torture cases, access to them remains limited due to low awareness, security fears, or the practical difficulty of reaching institutions that provide such services. Even when these hurdles are overcome, economic barriers remain—especially for those without access to legal aid. Litigation in Egypt has become prohibitively expensive, from the high costs of documents and memos to lawyers' fees and bureaucratic procedures—effectively excluding a broad segment of victims and making redress a distant option for all but the financially capable.

This reality indirectly entrenches impunity: victims' reluctance to seek justice becomes a predictable result of the system's economic structure and the marginalization of rights organizations under security pressure.



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Conclusion

This report represents an attempt to monitor and diagnose the shortcomings of the justice system in handling torture cases in Egypt—whether at the legislative or practical level. It exposes how legal, procedural, economic, and social barriers intersect to render the litigation process in torture cases lengthy and complex. Without a thorough and structural resolution to these barriers, impunity will remain the norm, and accountability for perpetrators the rare exception.

The report clearly demonstrates that the system of documentation and litigation in torture cases suffers from profound structural imbalances. From legislative loopholes that strip legal texts of their substance, to the Public Prosecution's failure to fulfill its supervisory role, to the economic and social obstacles encircling victims from every direction—these factors combine to produce an environment that enables the continuation of torture and protects its perpetrators from accountability. Confronting this dysfunctional system requires a clear political and legislative will and a serious institutional response that restores justice from the ground up.

Recommendations

1. Legislative Reform of the Legal Definition of Torture Amend the Penal Code to merge the crimes of “torture” and “use of cruelty” into a single article that criminalizes all acts of torture unconditionally. This includes eliminating restrictive criteria that limit the definition of victims to “accused persons,” the purpose of torture to “extracting a confession,” or requiring the perpetrator to be a “public official.” Psychological coercion must also be explicitly recognized as a form of torture under the Code of Criminal Procedure, as it already is under the Constitution.

2. Binding Instructions to the Public Prosecution



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- The Public Prosecutor should issue general and binding directives on how to handle torture complaints, including immediate visits to places of detention, prompt evidence collection, urgent referral of victims to forensic examination, and the immediate interrogation of suspects.
 - Torture must be treated as a serious criminal offense requiring full investigative procedures.
3. **Enforcement of Judicial Oversight Over Places of Detention**
Ensure the effective and regular judicial oversight of all detention facilities—police stations, prisons, and security headquarters—through unannounced visits by the Public Prosecution, and mandate prompt investigations into any complaints of torture or ill-treatment in both official and unofficial places of detention.
 4. **Subjecting National Security Premises to Prosecutorial Oversight**
Amend the legal framework to place National Security Agency premises (State Security) under full judicial supervision, granting the Public Prosecution the authority to enter, inspect, and investigate them at any time, as is the case with other detention facilities.
 5. **Enabling Victims' Access to Justice**
Adopt procedures that facilitate access to litigation, such as the immediate exemption of torture victims from court fees and activate the free legal aid system in criminal cases to ensure victims have legal representation without financial burdens obstructing their pursuit of justice.
 6. **Compliance with International Conventions**
Implement Egypt's obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Torture, which the country ratified in 1986. This includes amending national legislation to align with the Convention's definition of torture and ensuring serious, effective investigations into all allegations of torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading



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treatment. Egypt should also accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture.

7. Strengthening Civil Society's Role in Monitoring and Supporting Torture Victims

- Promote coordination among human rights organizations working on criminal justice by developing joint emergency response mechanisms, integrated documentation systems, and pathways to redress and reparation for victims through strategic litigation.
- Improve outreach to victims by establishing hotlines, secure reporting mechanisms, and free initial legal consultations, while ensuring strict confidentiality.
- Invest in legal awareness campaigns targeting communities and groups most at risk of violations, using simple and clear language to explain the rights of detainees and prisoners.
- Expand strategic litigation efforts in torture cases as a tool to pressure legislative and executive authorities toward reform.
- Document and publicize legal and administrative victories to rebuild public trust in human rights actors.