

Workers in 2023: "Either Dismissal or Imprisonment"

Report on Workers' Conditions and Labor Movement in 2023

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Introduction

The unprecedented decline in the value of the national currency, as well as historic waves of inflation, only increased poverty and misery for Egyptian workers in 2023.

The already meager wages, for which they had long struggled to increase over the years, suddenly dropped in real value to a third, making any announced increase impractical or entirely unrealistic.

However, to be fair, the authorities, who are still insistent on adhering to the harsh measures of the International Monetary Fund, including reducing subsidies and raising prices, succeeded in containing worker anger, as the report notes, through repression, forcibly dispersing protests, and arresting labor leaders.

In contrast, company managements resorted to a policy of closure in the face of striking workers, along with filing reports against strike leaders at police stations, dismissing labor leaders, as well as resorting to salary deductions.

According to the report, in cases where we were able to monitor the results, there was clear intransigence from companies in responding to workers' demands. In addition to police repression and administrative abuse, workers suffered from the following:

- The absence of genuine trade union organizations to defend them, along with attempts to undermine existing independent unions and obstruct any attempts to establish new unions.
- The closure of the "Better Work" program and its institutions in Egypt, a program proposed by the International Labor Organization for cooperation between labor unions on one side and businessmen and the Ministry of Labor on the other, aimed at creating balanced labor relations based on launching trade union freedoms and promoting comprehensive societal dialogue.
- The closure of the public sphere through the monopolization of most media outlets, either through direct ownership or intensified censorship, as well as besieging political parties, labor and professional unions, and even human rights centers.

This led to the weakening of labor movements, as all sectors of society play important roles in supporting labor struggle.

- Company managements resorted to burdening workers with the crisis, either to maintain high profit rates or due to economic uncertainty and some investors' inability to provide production requirements amidst the dollar crisis. Consequently:

Some of them laid off large numbers of workers, accompanied by partial closures, and the sword of dismissal hung over the heads of those who continued to work, generally negatively affecting workers' movements in the foreseeable future.

Despite this, 128 actual labor, professional, and social protests were monitored on the ground, beyond merely threatening sit-ins or strikes. However, the low number prompted us to monitor the number of complaints to understand the reality of the suppressed anger brewing in the chests of wage earners, waiting for a moment of explosion.

Usually, resorting to complaints is considered a safe means of protest before escalating to actual protest through strikes, sit-ins, or protest stands.

The statistics of the Ministry of Labor itself reveal this truth, as the number of labor complaints alone for the year 2023 reached 32,602 complaints, both individual and collective, while the number of collective complaints reached 1,453, bringing the total of labor protests and collective complaints to 1,498.

The beginning of the past year also witnessed important strikes in the private sector, especially in companies that rely on exporting their products in hard currency and also benefiting from the deterioration of the local currency's exchange rate, thus significantly increasing the volume of their exports.

However, workers wishing to improve their salaries to face the high cost of living faced an unwritten agreement between major businessmen and the state to suppress the workers' movement and not respond to their demands.

After the state effectively prohibited the right to strike through Labor Law No. 12 of 2003, which regulates the strike process and places it in the hands of official unions loyal to managements and the government, in some cases, these managements resorted to police stations to report them with the aim of intimidating striking workers.

In many cases, labor leaders were arrested and charged with political accusations such as belonging to a terrorist group, etc., along with the authority giving business owners a free hand in dismissing and displacing labor leaders.

Thus, wage earners found no alternative but to resort to other means to face the exorbitant inflation that the state's efforts to contain it failed to achieve, by raising the minimum wage to reach 4,000 pounds for government workers and 3,500 pounds for private sector workers during 2023.

The most prominent of these means - primarily individual - was working to reduce living expenses by various means, while others resorted to ending their lives and committed suicide.

In this context, the Arab Foundation for Civil Society and Human Rights Support issued a report in December 2022 titled "Suicide Cases in Egypt: Social Frustration and State Absence," confirming that suicide cases in Egypt during the six months from (April to September 2022) witnessed an alarming increase.

A study by the "Egyptian Institute" confirmed that suicide cases over 3 years (2019-2021) escalated alarmingly, with the study documenting about 1,511 suicide cases during this period, as well as addressing suicide attempts monitored during the same period, which reached 168 attempts.

However, the anger simmering beneath the surface due to the living crisis and political and union suffocation expressed itself during the past year through two important developments:

First: The ability of professional unions to create a breach in the wall of repression, through notable movements of wage earners including journalists, lawyers, and engineers. These movements stemmed from union, economic, and political reasons.

In this regard, as the report monitors, lawyers, journalists, and engineers succeeded in their protest movements in reclaiming the right to demonstrate and choose their union representatives, despite all the mobilization attempts by the state, which went as far as using thugs in the Engineers Syndicate, for example.

In the three unions, angry youth were the fuel of the movements, as they fought battles that expanded in scope for lawyers to include branch unions in most Egyptian governorates.

Journalists also reclaimed their union from the clutches of security agencies, after they succeeded in ousting the government's candidate and electing a candidate belonging to the independent and opposition press, gradually returning the opinion union to open up to societal issues.

This was also evident in the professional unions regaining their national role by organizing a series of protests in support of the Palestinian people. Journalists succeeded through solidarity activities with Gaza in reclaiming the stairs of the Journalists Syndicate as a place for protest after it had been forbidden for a full six years.

This was not the only important development during the past year. The labor arena witnessed two attempts to form independent union organizations for the working

class, although it is too early to judge whether they can transform into strong and popular unions under the current authoritarian regime and the decline in the level of social struggle.

In August 2023, Sherif El-Masry, head of the Alexandria Library Workers' Union, announced the establishment of the Egyptian Confederation of Trade Unions (ECTU), a union that includes 20 independent unions from various sectors and professions. In December, a second independent workers' union was announced, independent from the authority in Egypt and the pro-government Workers' Union. The new union, announced under the auspices of the Trade Union Services House, one of the civil society organizations concerned with labor and union rights, includes in its ranks 21 unions and a general union comprising 25 union committees, diverse between service and production fields and distributed among workers in the public and private sectors.

The positive aspect of both experiences is that despite the fierce attack on independent unions during the past years, and the obstacles placed by the administrative body in front of the announcement of the establishment of new independent unions, and even its refusal to conduct elections for other unions, labor leaders are still clinging to the idea of union freedom.

Report Methodology

This research is a desk study based on monitoring some of the protests published by Egyptian newspapers and websites during 2023, in addition to social movement pages on social media after verification, along with special union sources of the report's editor, who refused to disclose their identity for fear of persecution.

As for the methodology of collecting information and sources, information was collected and verified through:

- A comprehensive survey of newspapers, news websites, and journalistic platforms, including blocked sites.
- Following platforms of human rights organizations and initiatives that enjoy high credibility and following union platforms and workers' groups.
- Following platforms of unionists, labor activists, and lawyers.

Some criteria were also adopted to verify the monitored data, such as:

- Using a verification methodology that relies on more than one source of information, studying them all to ensure their accuracy, and excluding weak sources.
- Observing the extent of matching the framing details of the source's information about the violation case, such as the place and time of the case, as well as accurate personal data about the worker, in addition to observing the accurate details available to the source of information.
- Observing the conflict and contradiction between the details of the source's information.

Problems Faced During the Monitoring Process

- Some workers were subjected to threats that push them to concede and not disclose violations or their details.
- Scarcity of news sites and media platforms in general, as well as civil society organizations interested in labor affairs and work issues.

In the end, it can be said that the labor and social protests included in this report (128 protests) represent some, but not all, of the protests that took place on the ground, as

labor and social movements suffer from deliberate obscurity and absence for more than one reason.

These reasons, the most important of which is the fear of the spread of these protests, along with the illusion of a state of stability and acceptance of conditions, which is essentially illusory.

We also faced difficulties in completing the information due to non-publication, as well as due to its spatial distance from the capital, which resulted in the absence of an important element of monitoring, which is the results, i.e., what happened after the protest? And what demands were achieved or promised to be achieved?

We resorted to monitoring the number of labor complaints, considering them a safe means of protest in light of the security grip that the authority faces protesters with through forceful dispersal, arresting protest leaders, as well as workers in many locations being subjected to persecution and arbitrary dismissal from work as punishment for practicing protest. In fact, many workers were punished in various ways for submitting collective complaints.

Despite all these difficulties, we decided to publish the report, which gives a glimpse and an indicator of the conditions of workers and social movements in Egypt in 2023, to help those interested in the conditions of workers and social movements to identify an aspect of the unspoken situations.. the situations of labor and social mobility in Egypt.

First: The Political Context

The authority in Egypt made a clear effort to absorb and control the political situation before the presidential elections, especially with the increase in suppressed popular anger due to the escalating economic crisis, and indeed achieved notable success in absorbing the largest sector of the political opposition around the "National Dialogue," which was launched last year in exchange for the release of a limited number of prisoners of conscience from various political forces.

The National Dialogue path, which President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi called for in April 2022, succeeded in absorbing the majority of opposition forces, and also contributed

to the nomination of one of the opposition party leaders for the presidential elections, in addition to the heads of two other parties considered supporters of the authority.

However, the authoritarian regime made it clear that its intention for reform was "formal" through the wide violations that the campaign of presidential candidate Ahmed Tantawy was subjected to, starting from preventing his supporters from documenting powers of attorney in the real estate registry, through the suffocating media siege, ending with the arrest of dozens of his campaign and referring them to trial, led by the candidate Tantawy himself, which spread an atmosphere of frustration and despair that pushed the majority of political forces to boycott the elections.

But the violent dealing was not only with the political opposition but extended to labor protests, as security forces forcibly dispersed the teachers' sit-in in the New Administrative Capital last October, which contradicts the declared calls in the National Dialogue for the need to respect the right to peaceful protest.

Despite the response of those responsible for the National Dialogue recently to the invitation of independent unions to participate in presenting the demands of wage earners, which were summarized in their rejection of burdening workers with the

economic crisis in a way that practically delivers them and their families to hunger, opening the public sphere, allowing the establishment of unions, and implementing laws.

The surprise was that the outputs of the first phase of the dialogue came completely devoid of any demands of the independent unions, and only responded to the single demand adopted by the "governmental" Workers' Union, which called for the approval of the labor law.

The authoritarian regime also did not pay attention to the main demands of the opposition, and tens of thousands are still in prisons of political opponents and social leaders, and the media is under the domination and censorship of security agencies, independent labor unions are besieged, and the right to demonstrate is limited to supporters of the regime only, while more than a hundred young men/women were arrested on charges of demonstrating to support Gaza.

Second: The Economic Situation

Workers and wage earners in both public and private sectors are considered the biggest losers from the significant collapse in the exchange rate and the resulting hyperinflation, which eliminated their purchasing power and placed the vast majority of them below the poverty line, especially with the complete collapse of basic public services that the state used to provide in a subsidized form.

The working class bore the greatest loss of the collapse and hyperinflation, as a result of the collapse of the real value of their wages despite the "illusory increases" that occurred to them, and remained very lagging behind inflation rates.

The year 2023 began with the signing of an agreement with the International Monetary Fund and ended with the government announcing new negotiations to obtain a new loan.

The agreement with the Fund guaranteed a small loan of \$3 billion in installments, to be repaid in conjunction with conditions imposed by the Fund, and pressures it exerts

to take faster steps towards liberalizing the exchange rate and privatizing state projects.

The actual effect of the agreement with the Fund only appeared in the decline of the pound against the dollar from less than 20 pounds to the dollar to more than 30 pounds to the dollar, which pushed inflation in the election year to record levels not recorded in Egypt's history, and the inflation rate broke the 40% barrier in some months, contrary to what the regime aspired to in trying to mitigate the effects of the crisis during the presidential election year.

Record inflation levels were not the only manifestation of the economic crisis. Debts also formed a headline for the state of the Egyptian economy, as external debt reached a record level of \$165 billion, in addition to domestic debt that swelled due to excessive use of monetary policy tools and raising the interest rate multiple times in one year. The result was burdening the general budget with debt burdens, so that debt installments and interests consume more than half of the general budget expenditures.

According to the general budget for the current fiscal year (2023/2024), the deficit in the first quarter of the year amounted to about 3.9%, compared to 2.1% in the first

quarter of the previous fiscal year, which means an increase of almost double, and it is expected that the deficit will reach 7% by the end of the current fiscal year compared to 6% in the previous fiscal year.

The clearest reason for the growing deficit is the debt burdens, which rose from 216.9 billion pounds in the first quarter of last year to 477.5 billion pounds in the first quarter of the current fiscal year, an increase of more than double.

These indicators, of course, led the government to reduce its expectations for the growth of the Egyptian economy in the current fiscal year to 3.5% instead of 4.2%.

The government did not succeed in repairing the economic conditions before the presidential election round, despite its attempts to mitigate the effects of the crisis several times, whether through social protection packages, the last of which was in September, when President Sisi launched a social protection package that included raising the minimum wage, increasing pensions, raising the tax exemption limit, and increasing cash support.

Also, the government avoided making additional reductions in the exchange rate throughout the current year, which led to the postponement of the International Monetary Fund's review of the agreement twice in March and September, and Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly launched an initiative to reduce the prices of a number of basic commodities before the start of the presidential elections, and the government tried to refrain from raising fuel prices by not holding the fuel pricing committee meeting on its scheduled date in July, but it was forced to hold it at the next date after three months and raised fuel prices.

The government's attempts to mitigate or even hide the manifestations of the economic crisis and its impact on the daily lives of citizens did not succeed, as record inflation rates quickly absorbed social protection packages, and living standards did not stop declining, while avoiding liberalizing the exchange rate and postponing IMF reviews did not prevent the dollar price from rising in the parallel market where it exceeded 60 pounds compared to 30.8 pounds in the official market, at the time of writing this report. Even the Prime Minister's initiative to reduce the prices of a number of commodities was not responded to by the market and the prices of basic commodities rose.

The announcement of increasing the value of the minimum wage to become 4000 pounds per month for government workers, and 3500 pounds per month for private sector workers, starting from January 2024, involved several problems:

- First.. The value of the increase in the minimum wage is much less than the increase in the inflation rate.

- Second: Raising the value of the minimum wage is accompanied by reducing the periodic allowance to (3%) of the insurance wage, contrary to what is stipulated in the current labor law, which was followed by the government submitting an amendment to the draft labor law submitted by it to reduce the periodic allowance, which private sector workers reject.

- Third: The decision of the National Council for Wages on the minimum wage included the right of employers to apply for an exemption of their establishments from applying the minimum wage if their economic conditions do not allow its application, which resulted in the exemption of thousands of establishments from applying the minimum wage.

According to estimates by the Central Bank of Egypt, Egypt will have to pay more than \$42 billion on its debt service during 2024, which follows the presidential elections.

Egypt's huge debt dues in 2024 are met with a modest reserve of foreign currency not exceeding \$35 billion, knowing that a large part of this reserve is in the form of deposits for Gulf countries.

This is accompanied by a deficit in the trade balance that exceeded \$31 billion in the fiscal year 2022/2023, and the figure is likely to rise in the current fiscal year due to the decline in gas exports. In conclusion, what these data mean is that the debt entitlements in 2024 will be no less than a real nightmare.

Despite the exacerbation of the difficulties that the Egyptian economy may face after the presidential elections due to the limited options of the Egyptian government. The latter adheres to the same tried options based on borrowing and selling public assets to provide some foreign currency, all of which have proven to fail in addressing the severe shortage of currency, raising the debt burden to limits that are difficult to bear,

curbing successive price jumps, exacerbating the general budget deficit and lowering growth rates, which portends the possibility of doubling the severity of the crisis.

However, the explosive political situation in the region due to the Zionist aggression on Gaza has activated the Egyptian political role and made the International Monetary Fund more flexible towards the Egyptian government. Its director, Kristalina Georgieva, expressed her support for the economic steps taken by Egypt and the Fund's readiness to raise the value of the agreed loan. She also indicated in her statements at the climate summit held in the UAE that the Fund does not insist on linking its support for Egypt to liberalizing the exchange rate, which means that Egypt will not be forced to liberalize the exchange rate before obtaining the second installment of the loan, worth \$700 million.

Also, in turn, the Gulf countries seemed keener to support the Egyptian economy at this stage, even if this support, so far, was limited to renewing the term of their deposits in the Central Bank of Egypt.

On the other hand, the state seeks to offer a group of projects to investors with the aim of obtaining some foreign currency. The most prominent of these projects are:

Selling a stake in the Holding Company for Hotels, offering the sale of gas power generation stations and wind farms, in addition to selling the National Company for the Sale and Distribution of Petroleum Products owned by the National Service Agency of the Armed Forces, which was one of the main demands of the International Monetary Fund, to face what it called the encroachment of the army's role in the economy at the expense of the private sector.

Nevertheless, doubts surrounding the ability of these steps to curb the economic crisis are legitimate, as what the Egyptian economy received from the Gulf countries and the International Monetary Fund in previous years is multiples of what it expects now, and yet that support did not solve the crisis but contributed to complicating it and burdening the state with debts.

Also, offering state assets for sale, whether on the stock exchange or to a major investor, are policies that have been ongoing for decades and have had dire consequences for the economy. It is noteworthy here that the Egyptian state seeks to offer gas and wind power stations to private sector investments, at a time when it suffers from a shortage in electricity generation that pushes it to rationalize.

It is also notable that the projects offered by the state for privatization, whether productive or service-oriented, are profitable projects, and some generate foreign currency, such as what happened with the "Rabat and Anwar" company affiliated with the "Suez Canal and Hotels" company. This means that the government prefers to obtain a one-time payment of foreign currency, even at the expense of cutting off a permanent source of profit and foreign currency, which means a decline in state revenues in the medium term.

More importantly, the flexibility shown by the International Monetary Fund and Gulf countries towards supporting the Egyptian economy, after a hardline discourse, is clearly linked to the tension in the region against the backdrop of Israeli aggression, and the importance of supporting the stability of the Egyptian regime and its active role in mediation, which means that it is temporary flexibility that can disappear with the decline of this tension.

Last September, the Information and Decision Support Center of the Council of Ministers issued the first report to monitor the implementation of the state's asset ownership policy document, indicating the names of 35 companies for which the government announced a program to sell stakes, with the aim of allowing the private

sector and securing dollar returns, either through the stock exchange or sale to a strategic investor.

Hala El-Said, Minister of Planning and Economic Development, revealed to Al-Sharq Bloomberg website that a "national" deal has been postponed for a few weeks after the previously scheduled date at the end of December, without clarifying the reasons behind this.

Meanwhile, sources familiar with the privatization file suggested that the "national" deal, which owns about 255 service stations and car fuel stations, will most likely take place in mid-January 2024.

The privatization program faced obstacles in implementation due to the difficulty of evaluating the exchange rate with the expansion of parallel market transactions. In August, the Cabinet issued a follow-up document for the program, revealing an increase in the number of companies offered to 35 companies, while extending the program's implementation from the first quarter of next year to mid-year.

Recent years have witnessed liquidation cases for a number of public business sector companies, such as the National Cement Company in 2018, Iron and Steel in Helwan in 2021, and Al-Nasr for Coke Industry in 2022.

The state is making strenuous efforts to collect revenues from the sale of public assets, with the deterioration of foreign exchange reserves since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022.

Third: Reading the protests

A) Workers and the prohibited right to strike

In Egypt... the size of strikes varies according to the time period and economic conditions, and strikes are usually documented through government reports and media outlets, which makes the issue more difficult in terms of accurate documentation, due to many factors affecting the issuance of these reports, including direct instructions to newspapers and channels not to cover any labor strike, and to announce only major

strikes that are impossible to conceal, according to organizations concerned with labor affairs.

Despite this, we were able to monitor 46 labor protests during 2023, the most prominent of which were:

- Strike by workers at the Kiriazi electrical appliances factory in Obour City, over the unequal distribution of profits among workers.
- Strike by workers at the Universal factory on the 6th of October City due to delayed payment of salaries.
- Strike by workers at the "Mac" company affiliated with the parent company "Oriental Weavers" in Al-Sharkia Governorate due to the weak annual wage increase.
- Strike by thousands of workers at "Leoni Wiring Systems" company specialized in producing electrical braids for cars in Nasr City to demand raising their wages.
- Sit-in by hundreds of workers at the Nasr Casting Company factory for several days, in protest against attempts to lay off more than 2,200 workers and sell the factory.
- Strike by workers of Sammanoud Weaving Company in Gharbia Governorate over work, due to the reduction of the monthly grant from 300 pounds to 150 pounds.

- Sit-in by workers of Qena Cement Company; in protest against the non-confirmation of their contracts and the absence of incentives and allowances.

- Sit-in by workers of the Egyptian Styrene Production Company in Alexandria at Al-Dekheila Port; to demand their appointment and obtain their legal rights from insurance and others.

- 1,000 workers in the Eastern Company for Spinning and Weaving entered an open sit-in on November 5 inside the company's headquarters in Zagazig city; in protest against the company's decision to transfer them to units affiliated with the Holding Company for Spinning and Weaving in Shebin El-Kom Spinning and Weaving Company, which raised their fears of liquidating the company.

B) Reasons for protests.. spread and means

We divided this part into three categories: workers, professionals, and other social groups, to clarify the reasons that made each of them practice different protest methods.

1. Workers:

Workers in Egypt face a number of factors that make the work environment difficult and push them to protest, most notably:

- Low wages in light of the deterioration of the currency value and high inflation levels. In January 2023, the annual core inflation rate, according to the Central Bank, jumped to 31.2%, which is much lower than the figure recorded by the "Johns Hopkins" index, which estimates the real inflation in Egypt at about 101%, placing it in sixth place among the worst 21 countries in the world in terms of high real inflation rates. However, the same situation was not reflected in workers' wages, as the increases decided are almost slight and do not match the speed of the pound's fall to the bottom, which was reflected in the living conditions of workers. Therefore, labor protests for wages formed 33 protests, with a rate of approximately 72%.

- It is noted that about 80% of the movements regarding wages are defensive movements, i.e., demanding rights that have been taken away by company administrations, or entitlements due to workers.

- Workers also protested against employers' continuous circumvention of workers' appointments, in addition to the presidential decision to stop government appointments for several years, so that temporary work has become the norm, and

therefore workers' movements for appointment occupied the second place with a rate of approximately 9%.

- Movements in defense of the right to work, housing and treatment constituted a very weak percentage of the few protests, despite the poor conditions, and it seems that the security conditions prevent workers from moving except in cases of extreme necessity and mainly related to salary.

In the confrontations that the workers entered in the face of closing the company and liquidating it, the workers of the Eastern Spinning Company followed in the footsteps of the iron and steel workers, where they focused in their protest movements on obtaining their dues, and did not move to operate the company and stop its liquidation, which is a situation related to the absence of trade union organizations and political organizations besieged in their headquarters and the absence of free media.

Greater Cairo (Cairo, Qalyubia and Giza) had the largest share of labor protests, with 50%, which can be explained by the expansion of industrial cities associated with them, the large population density, in addition to being close to decision-making centers.

In the second place came traditional centers of the working class, namely Alexandria and Sharkia, then Gharbia, although the presence of Port Said and Suez governorates in late positions raises questions as they are par excellence labor governorates.

It is noted that the private sector, whose role in the Egyptian economy is growing at the expense of the business sector and the government, is witnessing the largest percentage of protests, at 63%, which is due to the increasing weight of this sector in the structure of the economy, at the expense of the public sector that is being disposed of, as well as the absence of any regulatory role for the state on companies' application of the law, in addition to the fact that businessmen wanted to burden workers with the economic crisis, which began to affect their investments, and the ambiguity of the economic situation in the country.

The business sector follows the private sector in the number of protests, whose workers are subjected to an organized campaign to reduce their salaries in various forms, by about 22%, while the government continues its declared policy to complete the process of liquidating and selling business sector companies, which led, as the report monitors, to the outbreak of protests in at least two companies, namely Eastern Spinning and Weaving and Nasr Pipes in Giza.

Workers' increasing concern about the announcement of new privatization processes seems legitimate, in light of the absence of the workers' voice, during the sale process and the absence of real trade union organizations that are partners in negotiation during the sale process.

It is also striking that workers resorted to the weapon of strike, which came in first place among the struggle means, at 52%, despite the resort of company administrations to the weapon of criminalizing strikes and dismissing its leaders and filing reports against them with the police.

According to Labor Law No. 12 of 2003, workers are not entitled to strike or enter into collective negotiations, except through their official trade union organizations, which in turn are loyal to the government.

Despite the various restrictions imposed on workers, last year witnessed labor strikes, during which workers were able to impose the strike as a fundamental right despite the fierce attack on everyone who resorts to or even calls for a strike.

It seems that workers' feeling of the ability of the strike weapon to force the company owner to respond to their demands, in addition to the severe deterioration in living standards, pushes a limited sector of them to challenge various pressures, almost without allies.

Despite this, it is noticed that company administrations, in coordination with state agencies, do not respond, except to the slightest of workers' demands, and do not hesitate to refer workers for investigation to dismiss union members, and file reports in police stations against workers' leaders at the same time.

In most cases, state agencies collude with businessmen, while the police apparatus mainly seeks, as the report monitors, to prevent protests from moving from one site to another, by imposing media blackout on them, and besieging them to prevent workers from gathering in the street, in addition to threatening labor leaders through summons to national security headquarters or arrest and referral to the prosecution, and in other cases, national security officers negotiate with company administrations and labor leaders to come out with some partial gains for workers, in exchange for dissolving the protest.

However, there are blatant cases of courtesy to businessmen at the expense of workers, especially when they are from the authorities, as happened with the daily workers of La Catalyse Group who were subjected to various forms of persecution by its owner, businessman Mohamed Halawa, deputy head of the parliamentary body of the Future of the Nation Party, and chairman of the Industry, Trade and Micro-enterprises Committee in the Senate. The Future of the Nation Party is widely considered to be the party of power and its founders say they established it to support President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and support his policies.

The workers were demanding the disbursement of overdue salaries and obtaining allowances and annual increases, in addition to the return of many benefits that they lost, or eroded during the past years since La Catalyse Halawa acquired Green Land Company in 2019.

The battle of "La Catalyse" clearly reveals the negative effects of the marriage of power and wealth in Egypt on workers' rights, as laws are legislated in a parliament dominated by the alliance of political money and businessmen's interests, and therefore workers find little support for themselves within the legislative authority, in

addition to the absence of monitors on the implementation of laws, and pressure on businessmen in case they practice arbitrary measures against workers.

Finally... The government controls the labor scene in the absence of a free trade union organization, or real civil society organizations, as well as the ambiguity of the general economic situation, which implicitly forces workers to stay in the job, even with their attempts to protest, due to the high unemployment rate and not easily obtaining another job opportunity, and then looking at strikes as sources of pressure that can be contained.

But despite that, workers and employees succeeded in achieving some of their demands in many strikes, and the element of "surprise" is always present, as between one moment and another, anger can explode to redraw the map of the scene in the country, as the uprising of 77 confirmed that repression, no matter how severe it is, may delay popular movement, but it does not eliminate it completely."

2. Professionals' protests

The collapse of the value of the Egyptian pound led to a deterioration in the standard of living of the middle classes of wage earners.

These groups are steadily crawling towards the bottom, which pushed them to work in several jobs at the same time after these professions once represented social prestige and provided a respectable income.

Lawyers and journalists topped, respectively, the protests of professionals, which amounted to 51 protests during 2023, where they recorded 44 protests, at a rate of approximately 86%, then teachers and engineers with a balance of two each, while new groups joined the queue of protests such as female referees and football players.

It is striking that the national cause was the first motive for professionals' protests, as the movements in support of Gaza in the face of Israeli aggression reached 35, at a rate of 69%, while the movements related to the work environment were 16, at a rate of 31%, of course wages were at the forefront with 7 protests, then the struggle to defend a job opportunity 4, then facing arbitrary dismissal 3, then releasing detainees number 2.

Unlike workers, protest stands were the first weapon for professional groups, while the strike came in second place where the number of times it was repeated was 6, and finally the sit-in with 3 times.

Professionals succeeded in organizing stands in the street, which represents a challenge to the demonstration law and a step to restore the right of assembly, while security authorities were content with follow-up in most movements.

Lawyers resorted to the weapon of general strike from attending sessions with remarkable success, in response to what they considered abuse by the judicial authority against them, and organized a march in Marsa Matrouh governorate to demand the release of their colleagues.

They organized protest stands in most governorates in support of Gaza, while journalists regained the union's ladder once again, after it was confiscated for six full years under various pretexts, which is the ladder associated with the movement for

democratic change, and received protests from various other social groups in the era of former President Hosni Mubarak.

The Journalists Syndicate, led by the independent captain Khaled El-Balshy, was distinguished by leading journalists' protests to improve their social conditions, a role that the syndicate has long failed to perform under the captains of boards of directors or those close to political authority.

El-Balshy succeeded in leading journalists' strikes at "BBC" and "Reuters" and "Al-Wafd" newspaper, and entering into negotiations with administrations until achieving the demands of editors, which is a remarkable development that restores the union's main role in defending the rights of its members and struggling to improve their conditions.

Cairo and Giza witnessed more than half of the protests, 30 protests, at a rate of 59% and Marsa Matrouh 4, while 17 governorates witnessed one protest each.

Unlike workers, security agencies did not target professionals' movements, except in two cases, the first was its intervention to disperse the stand of angry teachers from being excluded from appointment by force, and arresting their leaders and referring them to the prosecution on charges of belonging to a terrorist organization.

Security agencies also turned a blind eye to a group of thugs storming the headquarters of the emergency general assembly of engineers, after the efforts of the office members affiliated with the authority party, Future of the Nation, failed to withdraw confidence from the independent captain Tarek El-Nabrawy, despite attempts to mobilize and intimidate the government sector of engineers.

The thugs assaulted the engineers, and tore up the voting papers under the eyes and ears of state agencies that did not move a finger, and did not arrest the perpetrators of the attack despite being filmed by the engineers.

Fourth: Examples of labor protests

1. Labor protests

- "Leoni Wiring" administration refers 65 workers for investigation to abort workers' strike

On January 29, Leoni Wiring Systems referred about 65 of its striking workers in its factories in the free zone in Nasr City for investigation, and also brought in workers from its branch in Badr City, and a number of daily workers, to fill the gap in priority work stopped due to the strike that workers started on January 28.

The number of those referred for investigation ranged between 60 to 65 workers, and the administration said that it would not allow work to return except "after workers' written acknowledgment not to return to the strike or else they bear the legal consequences of this strike, which may reach dismissal, which is the same procedure that the company took previously in the face of the company's workers' strike in Badr area."

At that time, the striking workers demanded the implementation of previous promises by the administration to raise wages in the new year, and according to previous

statements by one of the strikers, the workers "considered that adjusting wages in a way that is somewhat consistent with the decline in the price of the pound is self-evident."

The trade union committee takes a position opposing the strike, and for this reason, the decision to strike was taken spontaneously without leadership from the trade union committee, according to statements by a labor source.

Leoni Wiring Systems operates in the manufacture of electrical harnesses, and is listed on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange in Germany. It owns ten factories in Nasr City, as well as three others, two of them in Badr City and another in Assiut Governorate.

- Strike by cleaning workers at Baltim Government Hospital

On January 10, cleaning workers at Baltim Government Hospital in Kafr El-Sheikh Governorate went on strike to protest the reduction of their monthly salaries from two thousand pounds to 1400 by "House Keeping" company, which replaced Care Service company that used to supply labor to the hospital.

The workers did not stop work completely out of concern for the comfort of patients, and demanded the application of the minimum wage announced by President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, which at the time amounted to 2700 pounds.

The cleaning workers at Baltim Hospital are a model of the problems faced by contractor workers or what is called subcontracted labor, as they suffer from inequality between them and the appointed workers in the sites and facilities where they work.

- Qena Cement workers sit-in for two weeks demanding permanent contracts

Workers at Qena Cement Company held a sit-in for two weeks, protesting against not being given permanent contracts, despite the passage of more than five years since signing the contracts, in addition to the existence of serious financial violations.

MP Mohamed El-Geblawi, a member of the House of Representatives, submitted a briefing request in the first week of January to Counselor Dr. Hanafi Gebali, Speaker of the House of Representatives, addressed to the Minister of Public Business Sector regarding the sit-in of Qena Cement Factory workers, which began on December 22, 2022.

MP Mohamed El-Geblawi demanded the permanent employment of workers who have been working for years without permanent contracts, bonuses, or disbursement

allowances, and opening an investigation into the appointments made for those close to the managing director.

- Strike by "Beriat and Samanoud" female workers after reduction of monthly grant

Female workers at the Beriat and Samanoud Company in Gharbia Governorate went on strike on January 20 after the company's management reduced the monthly grant from 300 pounds to 150 pounds.

The workers had organized a strike in 2022 due to the delay in disbursing end-of-service benefits for 198 female workers, deductions from the salary of 30 workers, and changing the nature of work from production to cleaning work.

- Sit-in by day laborers at the Styrene and Polystyrene Production Factory demanding permanent contracts

Day laborers at the Styrene and Polystyrene Production Factory in western Alexandria held a sit-in for two weeks demanding permanent contracts after having spent years in the company working on temporary contracts.

The workers participated in the sit-in, which began on November 29, 2022, and their demands included being given official and legal contracts according to Labor Law No. 12 of 2003 and according to the regulations in force in the company.

The demands of the protesting workers at the company's headquarters in Dekheila Port included social insurance, with the calculation of their previous years of work within the company, in addition to placing them under the umbrella of health insurance.

- "Mac" carpet workers return to work after management agrees to increase their wages

The striking workers at Mac Carpet Company, affiliated with Oriental Weavers Group in 10th of Ramadan City, Sharkia Governorate, decided to resume work starting February 13, after a meeting held then, which included representatives of them with Engineer Amr Farid Khamis, one of the company's owners, ended with promises to approve a near increase in salaries.

The workers' strike, which lasted for two weeks, forced the management to add an additional incentive allowance on top of the cost of living allowance, with a value ranging between 800 pounds to 1000 pounds.

However, the factory witnessed a division among workers about accepting the management's offer presented on February 6, or continuing the strike until all demands are met.

When the decision to continue the strike prevailed, the company's management decided on February 7 to grant the workers a 10-day paid leave deducted from their leave balance starting from February 8. The publication also emphasized the application of the provisions of Labor Law No. 12 of 2003 and its amendments, considering the workers' strike as a violation of the law, demanding all departments and sections to implement this, each in its own capacity.

The management elements succeeded in spreading a state of intimidation among the workers through the threat of permanently closing the company if they continued the strike. The majority of workers decided to accept the scheduled increase and give the management a deadline to meet the rest of the demands with its pledge not to harm any worker.

- Nasr Foundries on the footsteps of Helwan Iron and Steel

More than 800 workers at the Nasr Foundries factory went on a sit-in on February 1 for 5 days until security forces dispersed the workers' sit-in and closed the factory until further notice.

This crisis continued for three years, as the company's board of directors tries to force workers to agree to sell it and restructure it in a clear direction to close the company and lay off more than 2,200 workers.

Poor management and the debt problem, which exceeded ten billion pounds, are among the main problems facing Nasr Foundries Company, which is considered one of the largest industrial companies in Egypt. It is the leading Egyptian company in the field of manufacturing gray iron products for the water and sewage pipe industry.

Nasr Company used to achieve profits of more than 500 million pounds per year, but after irresponsible people took over its management, the company became indebted to banks with amounts reaching 17 billion pounds.

On the other hand, the Egyptian government is extremely silent on this matter, in light of news indicating that the government wants to sell the company to the Saudi sovereign fund as part of the International Monetary Fund's plan for Egypt regarding the sale and liquidation of government companies.

- Striking Al-Farasha workers in Sharkia

Workers of Al-Farasha Packaging Company in 10th of Ramadan City, Sharkia Governorate, went on strike for four days, demanding an increase in salaries.

The management offered the striking workers an increase in their salaries, ranging from 5 to 10%, but the workers refused, and all the company's workers, about 3000, decided not to come to the company.

The security agencies asked the labor leaders not to deal with the media at all, so that no measures would be taken against the strikers, which the workers reluctantly responded to, and thus we were deprived of any media coverage.

- Imprisonment and dismissal is the response of "Kiriazi" company management to the workers' strike

The strike of workers at the home appliance manufacturing company "Kiriazi", on February 16, succeeded in reaching an increase in wages after more than a week of its announcement, and the workers returned to work after promises from the police to release their colleagues who were arrested against the background of the strike in the company's branch in El-Obour City.

Security forces had arrested at least 20 workers, and the arrests that occurred among workers in the El-Obour branch led to their colleagues in the "10th of Ramadan" joining the strike, which had begun on February 8.

A publication was issued by the company announcing a gradual increase in wages starting from January 2023, with a value of 300 pounds, so that the increases for

January and February are added to the February salary, provided that this increase rises to 500 pounds starting from March 2023, in addition to another increase of 500 pounds starting from July 2023.

The vicinity of the company's branch in El-Obour City witnessed a heavy security presence, and the number of police cars there exceeded 20 cars. The company also issued a publication announcing the suspension of transporting workers to the company, so that workers would come to the company's headquarters at their own expense, which did not affect the level of participation in the strike by attending the company's headquarters, according to labor sources.

At the same time, the workers demanded an increase in wages of one thousand pounds, in line with the continuing high prices; especially since the average wages in the group are approximately 2700 pounds, while the wages of workers who have spent more than twenty years do not exceed 4000 pounds, which is a wage level below the poverty line.

- Protest stand by container workers in Alexandria demanding profits

Workers of Alexandria Container Handling Company organized a protest stand on February 25 in objection to the management's procrastination in disbursing the

remaining share of the workers from the company's annual profits for the fiscal year 2021/2022.

The management had determined the annual profits for workers for the mentioned period at 13%, of which 10% was disbursed and 3% remained for the workers that has not been disbursed until now despite repeated promises by the management to disburse it in mid-January, while it achieved profits of 20.2 billion pounds during the past fiscal year.

In the same context, 500 workers gathered, who are workers of the third shift, with workers of the first shift, waiting for the arrival of Yasser Heikal, the Executive Managing Director, and demanded the immediate disbursement of the remaining share of the deferred profits for the workers, to face the burdens of life and the huge rise in prices. He promised them to finish disbursing the remaining share of profits before mid-Sha'ban in addition to a cost of living aid of 4000 pounds for each worker.

The workers decided to end their protest stand waiting for the implementation of the Managing Board Member's promises.

- Strike by workers and drivers of the Shubra El-Kheima-Mansoura train line demanding wage increase

Workers and drivers of the Shubra El-Kheima-Mansoura train line went on strike on February 7, demanding an increase in salaries, and negotiations took place between the workers and the management, as a result of which the workers ended the strike.

- Workers' strike in Green Land factories

The factories of Green Land, owned by businessman and member of the Senate Mohamed Halawa, witnessed a strike by a number of workers after the company dismissed 49 workers in violation of the law; because of their demand for bonuses and an annual increase.

In return, Halawa filed a report against the workers after they organized a protest stand for their dismissal from work after their demand for a financial increase.

As for the Lactalis group, work in it stopped completely and the Al-Nour factory was closed, and Mohamed Halawa wanted to get them out of the factory and close it, and he recorded the names of the workers and made a report for them.

The workers demanded the intervention of any government agency to protect them from abuse by Halawa, who gives the worker a salary of only 2500 pounds.

Finally, the state intervened and opened negotiations between the workers and the management, as the delayed March salaries were disbursed, but the rest of the

demands were not met, which include the return of many benefits that they lost, or eroded during the past years, since Lactalis Halawa's acquisition of Green Land Company in 2019, including annual increases that stopped four years ago, in addition to health insurance contributions, and Ramadan bonuses that were suspended two years ago.

But the story did not end as the workers returned to strike in May, after learning of a similar strike at the "Best Cheese" factory in Qalyubia Governorate, which is also affiliated with the "Halawa" group.

In return, the company's management filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor against 82 workers, accusing them of inciting the strike, and causing large losses through work stoppage, and after it backed down from the dismissal decisions it had previously announced, it returned to investigate 15 workers over three days.

After that, the management suspended 13 workers from work when they tried to record their exit from the factory in the fingerprint device that did not recognize them.

- Contracting workers at Baltim Hospital in Kafr El-Sheikh resume their protest

Workers at Baltim Hospital in Kafr El-Sheikh Governorate, affiliated with one of the contracting companies, organized a new protest stand on June 10, 2023 to demand an increase in salary.

The workers explained in a video on social media that they have been receiving 1500 pounds since they contracted with the company in 2018, and the management threatened the workers with reporting them to the National Security.

The workers tried to communicate with a number of members of the House of Representatives after they organized a protest stand last January, but the representatives did not fulfill their promises to solve the workers' problems.

- Alpha Market Stores Company workers organize a protest stand

Workers of Alpha Market Stores Company organized a protest stand after Mamdouh Al-Amin, the owner of the company, laid them off and stopped paying salaries.

The protest stand against the company's owners came because of the management's intransigence in disbursing the workers' dues, after the company moved to close branches as a result of debts of tens of millions of pounds on the company.

- Kiriazi workers strike again to demand the implementation of management promises

The management of Kiriazi Home Appliances Manufacturing Company sent dismissal letters to an unknown number of workers against the background of their demands for

the management to implement its promises to disburse the rest of their financial dues that it promised them in February 2023.

The workers had gone on strike on June 5 to demand equality in profits, and the disbursement of their financial dues, supposed to be disbursed at the beginning of July, and increase them to become one thousand pounds instead of 500 pounds.

The management had disbursed two and a half months of profits to the administrative employees, while it disbursed only half a month to the production workers, which angered the workers, in addition to the rest of the demands that the management had not implemented since the February 2023 strike.

- Iron and Steel workers gather to demand the disbursement of the rest of their dues

On July 5, 2023, about 300 workers from Helwan Iron and Steel Company gathered in front of the headquarters of the Metallurgical Industries Holding Company, demanding the disbursement of their dues in the fellowship fund.

It is worth noting that hundreds of workers who were referred to retirement from May 1, 2018, until the liquidation of the company in 2021, have not received their financial rights in the fellowship fund since their retirement until now.

- Striking "Polvara" workers gain their demands

The management of the Arab Company, and Polvara for Spinning and Weaving "Unirab" in Alexandria, decided on August 9 to stop work permanently, due to the strike and sit-in of the company's workers to demand the disbursement of overdue financial dues, coinciding with the negotiation of security agencies and the workforce, with the strike leaders.

The next day, the company announced that the negotiations resulted in an agreement with the workers, and the problem was resolved, and work at the factories returned to normal again.

The company's losses had recorded about 3.05 million pounds during the first quarter of this year, compared to about 5.29 million pounds for the same quarter of last year.

- "Engineering Holding" calls security to disperse the stand of Iron and Steel workers

On Tuesday, August 22, 2023, more than 250 workers from the Iron and Steel workers - referred to retirement before the liquidation of the company - gathered for the second time - as the workers had organized a similar stand in front of the Metallurgical Industries Holding Company to demand their financial rights in the fellowship fund without the company providing any possible solutions to the crisis on July 5 last.

After the workers gathered, the Holding management asked the workers to authorize only two people to talk with the management about their demands, which actually happened before the authorized returned quickly to the workers, to tell them that the Holding Company said that it is not a party to the issue, and that they should go to the Ministry of Public Business Sector, and discuss the matter with the minister, or any other official in the ministry, before the Holding Company management called the police, who asked the workers to leave from in front of the company.

- "Linen Group" management refuses to respond to the demands of striking workers

The workers of Nile Linen Group for Textiles in Alexandria ended their strike on September 28, 2023, after promises from the company's management to negotiate.

The management promised to arrange a meeting to negotiate with the workers, without specifying a clear date for it, and linked it to the recovery of the company's president Ahmed Said, who is currently undergoing treatment, to be attended by members of the union committee to discuss the "legitimate demands of the workers", and also pledged to cancel the investigation with 15 of them, in exchange for them working on Thursday and Friday next to compensate for the work stoppage during the seven days of the strike.

The workers began a strike on September 21, protesting the company's management's disregard for their demands to modify the wage schedule, in line with rising inflation rates, and the accompanying increase in prices and high cost of living, and the return of grants that the company had canceled or reduced.

The strike was interspersed with quarrels between the union committee and the management, which prompted security to intervene to force the company's management to allow workers to enter its headquarters, and complete their strike in it, after it closed its doors in their faces, according to a previous statement by one of the striking workers.

This is not the first strike for Nile Linen workers, as they previously organized a strike in April 2022, in protest against reducing the Eid al-Fitr bonus at that time from 1000 to 500 pounds.

Until the writing of the report, none of the workers' demands have been met.

****Partial Victory for "Universal" Workers After Their Strike****

Workers at Universal Appliances in 6th of October City went on strike for 14 days to demand payment of their overdue wages. They eventually reached an agreement to

recover their wages monthly until the full amount owed was settled. During the strike, security forces prevented the workers from gathering near the company's gates and from filing complaints with the Ministry of Manpower. The National Security Agency summoned some workers for questioning about the reasons for their strike, and the union leaders dismissed in 2019 were not reinstated.

The workers ended their strike after reaching an agreement with management, which stipulated that they would receive half a month's salary from August within two days and the rest of the month's salary within a week. The overdue wages, amounting to four months and half a month, were to be scheduled, with management agreeing to pay monthly wages on time, plus a quarter of a month of overdue payments until all outstanding amounts were cleared. Additionally, the strike days would not be counted as absenteeism, and therefore, would not be deducted from the workers' salaries.

****Strikes Reach Peacekeeping Camp in Sharm El-Sheikh****

On November 26, dozens of workers employed by Care Service in the peacekeeping camps in Sharm El-Sheikh and Sheikh Zuweid started a sit-in and strike due to poor living conditions, according to the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights.

The center's statement indicated that work inside the camp stopped after approximately 400 workers, who provide various services such as plumbing, maintenance, cleaning, cooking, laundry, and commercial services, went on strike. Workers in the Arish area received threats of dismissal if they joined the sit-in.

The statement quoted striking workers as saying that monthly salaries for those with up to 25 years of service reach around 4,000 EGP, while cleaning staff earn less than 2,000 EGP. The workers demanded a 100% increase in their salaries.

****Workers' Sit-In at Eastern Textile Company to Prevent Liquidation****

On November 6, 2023, about 1,000 workers from Eastern Textile Company ended their open-ended sit-in at the company's headquarters in Zagazig after the company's board of directors agreed to their demands. According to the administrative announcement from Eastern Textile Company:

1. Workers' financial, job-related, and material entitlements, including allowances, wages, incentives, bonuses, and grants, will be paid by the 28th of each month, similar to other affiliated companies.
2. Workers at Eastern Textile Company in Zagazig will receive paid leave from November 4, 2023, with an administrative office (accounting and administrative unit) provided within Zagazig to facilitate procedures.
3. Workers at the Zagazig unit will remain with Misr Spinning and Weaving Company and will not be transferred to another company or unit outside Zagazig.

Around 1,000 workers had staged an open-ended sit-in on November 5 at the company's headquarters in Zagazig to protest a decision to transfer them to units under the holding company for spinning and weaving at Shibin El-Kom Spinning and Weaving Company. They demanded that their financial and material entitlements be maintained, similar to a situation in Kafr El-Dawwar, where workers expressed their demands and the issue was resolved with official intervention. Workers stated that the company's machinery was in good condition, and the company was not in need of sale.

****"Egyptian Workers Union" Holds Protest to Support Gaza****

On October 19, the Egyptian Workers Union organized a protest in the Al-Hosary Square in 6th of October City, involving all employees, including administrators, staff, workers, leaders, and individuals. The protest was in response to Israeli violations and massacres against the defenseless Palestinian people. Engineer Haitham Hussein, Chairman of the Egyptian Workers Union, stated during the protest that Israel's actions against the Palestinian people violate ethical, religious, international norms, and conventions, amounting to a humanitarian massacre. He called for collective action to confront these repressive measures against innocent children and women.

****Examples of Professional Protests****

****Lawyers' Battle Against Erosion of the Rule of Law****

On January 21, 2023, the General Council of Lawyers announced the continuation of a strike by lawyers indefinitely until the release of six lawyers sentenced to two years in prison and two years of probation following a scuffle with court employees. The

lawyers argued that the case affected the entire profession, not just those prosecuted. Local bar associations also participated by sending delegates to attend the session in Matrouh.

Lawyers accused judges of siding with court employees and issuing harsh sentences. They held a protest outside the courtroom where their colleagues were sentenced and demanded a review of their case. Pressure from the lawyers led to state intervention and a settlement that resulted in the release of the six lawyers on appeal.

The recurring protests by lawyers stem from a collective sense that the rule of law is being undermined, threatening their profession and livelihood, prompting them to hold public demonstrations at their unions across various provinces.

****Al-Wafd Newspaper Journalists Protest Wage Issues****

In March 2023, journalists at Al-Wafd newspaper protested due to the failure to provide the approved cost-of-living increase of 300 EGP and the lack of a unified salary payment schedule. They also protested the low wages, wage distortions,

delayed allowances, and minimum wage issues. They demanded an increase in the tax exemption limit, higher salaries for those with master's and doctoral degrees, and a set timeframe for resolving pension entitlements.

****Teachers Protest for Court Rulings Implementation****

On June 11, 2023, hundreds of adult education teachers contracted with the General Authority for Adult Education held a protest at the authority's Cairo building, demanding the implementation of court rulings that mandated their permanent appointment and contract modification. Teachers from across Egypt had obtained final court rulings to be made permanent employees, but since 2020, the authority had not implemented these rulings despite approvals from the Central Agency for Organization and Administration and the Ministry of Finance. The protest aimed to compel the authority to respect the court rulings and regularize contracts, with many teachers having been contracted for over fifteen years, contrary to the law.

This was not the first time such protests occurred. In August 2023, the head of the executive body at the General Authority for Adult Education threatened to report the union's committee members to national security and fabricate charges against them.

****Journalists' Strike at BBC Cairo Office for Salary Increase****

The Journalists' Union led a strike by BBC Cairo office journalists on June 13, demanding improved living conditions. This significant development followed the election of independent union head Khaled Belshy. The journalists organized a warning strike for one day to protest low salaries and discriminatory treatment of Egyptians, whose salaries are about six times lower than their counterparts in other BBC offices worldwide.

Belshy stated that the BBC Cairo office staff had been communicating with the union for some time regarding salary discrepancies and treatment. Despite contacting the BBC office in Cairo, the British Journalists' Union, and the International Federation of Journalists, the response was unsatisfactory. The situation in the Cairo office was contrasted with the BBC offices in Beirut and Turkey, which handle salaries differently.

The response from the institution was negative, suggesting discrimination against Egyptian journalists. As a result, the staff went on another strike in July and a larger strike lasting ten days in August 2023, leading the channel's management to engage in serious negotiations with the journalists' union. On September 19, the union announced a resolution of the BBC Cairo office issue, with salary increases ranging between 75% and 142% for lower salaries and equal transportation allowances for all staff.

****Football Players Join the Protest Wave****

On June 2, 2023, the referee for the match between Al-I'lamiyin and El-Tersana in 6th of October City's stadium decided to cancel the match after the home team withdrew just 12 minutes into the game following two quick goals by El-Tersana. The Al-I'lamiyin team played with only eight players due to a strike by the players over unpaid dues.

****Female Teachers Protest for Appointments and Against "Military Conditions"****

On October 15, security forces forcibly ended a sit-in by hundreds of teachers in front of the Ministry of Education's headquarters in the New Administrative Capital. The protest, which began that morning, was against the exclusion of about 14,000 teachers from the "30,000 Teachers" recruitment competition. Although 28,000 candidates had passed the tests and received training, over 5,000 teachers, mostly women, were excluded due to increased weight and pregnancy, or security reasons.

On October 5, 2023, Dr. Reda Hegazy, Minister of Education, signed contracts for new teachers from the first batch of the competition, with plans to assign them to work in various educational directorates across the country the following week. Female candidates had previously lodged complaints with the National Council for Women about their exclusion due to increased weight.

In July and August 2023, there was parliamentary action on the issue, with MP Dr. Hanan Hosni Yashar questioning the legality of excluding overweight candidates after a year of tests and training. Despite the violent dispersal of their protest and arrests, many of the excluded candidates protested again on October 22 in front of the Ministry of Education, demanding a review of the criteria that led to their exclusion and the release of their detained colleagues.

****Gaza Sparks Lawyers' Anger Across Egyptian Provinces****

On October 22, 2023, several lawyers held protests in Cairo and many other provinces in front of their union offices, expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people. This was in line with a decision by the Arab Lawyers Union to organize solidarity protests at all unions across the Arab world.

****Journalists Demand Opening of Rafah Crossing****

In solidarity with Gaza, a group of Egyptian female journalists organized a sit-in on the steps of the Journalists Syndicate on October 19 for one hour. Dozens of female and male journalists participated, wearing colors of the Palestinian flag, and some adorned themselves with Palestinian scarves. The attendees called for the opening of the Rafah crossing and rejected the mandate called for by supporters of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, chanting "This is a real protest, not a mandate for anyone."

****Artists Condemn Israeli Occupation Massacres****

On October 18, the Egyptian Actors' Syndicate, led by artist Ashraf Zaki, organized a solidarity stand with the Palestinian people at the Syndicate Club headquarters in Giza Governorate. The event aimed to condemn Israel's practices against civilians and the thousands of martyrs and injured.

****Labor Complaints****

The Ministry of Labor reported that over the past year, it resolved five protest sit-ins involving 2,478 workers amicably and dealt with 37 labor strikes involving 33,963 workers, settling them through the General Administration of Labor Relations in coordination with their workplaces. The ministry also received 26,372 individual labor complaints from provincial labor directorates, of which 5,960 were resolved amicably, with legal measures taken against the remaining complaints. Additionally, 148 collective labor complaints were received, with 21 settled amicably by the General Administration. The ministry also handled 4,577 individual complaints and 1,305 collective complaints through its electronic portal, resolving 3,454 individual and 567 collective complaints amicably, while taking legal action on the remaining complaints.

In response to presidential directives, the ministry activated the Supreme Council for Community Dialogue to discuss a labor law project aimed at encouraging investment and balancing the interests of "the two sides of production." However, the ministry did not mention that the law was shelved again without explaining why it was initially introduced and then withdrawn.

****Trade Union Freedoms****

Trade union and labor leaders have faced various forms of persecution, with attempts to obstruct the establishment of unions in violation of the law. Strikes have been criminalized. Last year saw attempts to establish two new labor federations. Here are some violations and the new federations:

****a) Arrest of Labor Leaders for Defending Workers' Rights****

The use of pretrial detention by security agencies continues to punish labor leaders and intimidate workers from demanding their rights. For example:

- On October 17, the Supreme State Security Prosecution in Egypt detained 14 applicants for a competition to appoint 30,000 teachers under case number 2333 of 2023 on charges of joining a terrorist group, spreading false news, misusing social media, and participating in gatherings. This was due to their protests in front of the Ministry of Education in the New Administrative Capital over their exclusion from the competition for unknown or trivial reasons, despite passing the announced tests. One of the detainees was arrested from her home rather than attending the capital, and another detainee was also arrested from his home. A third detainee, not even a teacher but accompanying his wife, was arrested while his wife was left alone.

The security forces had dispersed the sit-in by force, using water cannons and beating the teachers, and forced them into buses that took them away from the ministry. When the teachers returned two weeks later to demand their rights, they were forced by security to disembark the buses and walk to the Ministry of Education under heavy security.

- The arrest of Sheikh Saber Al-Siyah Al-Ramilat, a prominent tribal leader in North Sinai and the leader of the August 2023 sit-in demanding the return of residents to Rafah and Sheikh Zuweid villages in North Sinai.

- The continued detention of worker Samah Zakaria Ramadan, a member of the Independent General Union of Ambulance Workers.

In October, labor leader Mohamed Hashem from the Public Transport Authority was released. Hashem had been arrested on January 19, 2023, and forcibly disappeared for 10 days before being presented to the Supreme State Security Prosecution on January 29. He was detained for 15 days under case number 184 of 2023 on charges of joining an unlawful group and spreading false news.

- On May 20, the Supreme State Security Prosecution released the accountant Wassam Salah, who had been held for a year and a half, on bail. Salah was arrested from his home on January 20, 2022, and forcibly disappeared for nearly two months before appearing in court on March 14 of the same year. Salah faced charges of joining a terrorist group, spreading false information, and using a social media account to disseminate news and statements. His real crime was his political affiliation with the Popular Socialist Alliance Party and his activism in the Alexandria Permanent Workers' Conference, which had ceased operations.

****b) Attack on Workers' Assemblies****

Thugs attacked the General Assembly of the Egyptian Engineers' Syndicate, which met to vote on a vote of no confidence against the independent engineer Tarek El-

Nabrawi in May 2023. About 24,000 engineers participated in the emergency assembly, and initial results showed that the majority opposed the vote of no confidence. Subsequently, dozens of people stormed the counting hall, destroyed ballot boxes, and assaulted some syndicate members responsible for overseeing the counting process.

A vote of no confidence is a democratic mechanism rarely applied in syndicates. However, opponents of the current syndicate leader, affiliated with the system, resorted to violence as a final solution when the vote did not go their way.

The scene of the attack on the engineers' assembly raises concerns among a wide range of political and democratic forces about rejecting any electoral result that does not align with the authorities' preferences, relying on private militias to suppress popular movements and opposition political forces.

****c) Abuse of Political Influence****

Businessman and Future of the Nation Party leader Mohamed Halawa, head of the Industry Committee in the Senate, filed a complaint with the Public Prosecution against 82 workers, accusing them of inciting strikes and causing significant losses by stopping work. Greenland factories, owned by Halawa, saw a strike by some workers

after the company unlawfully dismissed 49 workers for demanding allowances and annual increases. One worker stated that Halawa filed a report against the workers after they organized a protest demanding a financial increase.

****d) Persecution of Protest Leaders****

Company administrations have used arbitrary dismissal and transfer as weapons against labor leaders. For example:

- Four workers from Mac Carpet Company in October 6 City were transferred to Luxor and Qena governorates, far from Cairo, as punishment for leading a strike at the company. The workers have gone to labor courts hoping to secure their rights.
- Labor leaders dismissed from Universal Company in 6th of October City in 2019 have not been reinstated. The workers were dismissed as punishment for establishing an independent union committee.
- The Alexandria Container Company administration punished trade unionist and worker Yousri Ma'arouf by deducting five days from his salary and depriving him of an allowance for allegedly "insulting the company and violating instructions."
Ma'arouf had posted on social media questioning why the allowance decreed by the

President was deducted and why some other financial benefits were denied to workers.

- Media blackout on social protests, with reports indicating security instructions to media institutions to limit coverage of such news as much as possible.

****e) Obstructing Registration of Independent Unions****

The Ministry of Labor (formerly the Ministry of Manpower) has not registered many independent unions despite complete documentation in accordance with the law and regulations, blatantly defying the law and clearly aiming to deny workers the ability to organize independently of the government union. Among them are:

- The General Union of Workers in the Real Estate Tax Authority.
- The Professional Syndicate Committee of Workers in Tourism in Port Said.
- The Professional Syndicate Committee of Workers in Cement Services in Helwan.
- The Syndicate Committee of Workers in Nile Insulation Materials Company (Betoni).
- The Syndicate Committee of Workers in Real Estate Tax in Assiut.

- The Syndicate Committee of Workers in Real Estate Tax in Dakahlia.

****f) Obstructing Elections****

The administrative authority has prevented many suspended unions from holding union elections in 2022, aiming to paralyze their activity, including:

- The Syndicate Committee for Driver Services in Qalyubia Governorate.
- The Syndicate Committee for Workers in Education in Qena.
- The Syndicate Committee for Workers in Quseir Education Administration.
- The Syndicate Committee for Workers in Real Estate Tax in Fayoum.
- The Syndicate Committee for Workers in Suez Canal Authority Clubs.
- The Syndicate Committee for Workers in Universal Company.

****g) Continued Suspension of Labor Relations Program in Egypt****

The program was launched three years ago to improve labor union conditions, protect union organizing rights, and support community dialogue in labor relations. The

Ministerial Complaints Committee has ceased considering complaints from unions with complete documentation, and the ministry has stalled their registration.

****h) Return of Independent Unions****

Despite all these difficulties, labor sectors remain committed to establishing a genuine trade union capable of defending workers' interests. Last year saw two attempts to establish independent labor federations. It is still too early to evaluate them, though lessons from the first independent unions established in Egypt in 2009 and the circumstances surrounding their creation are important to note.

****1. Egyptian Trade Unions Federation****

In August 2023, Dr. Sherif El-Masri, President of the Alexandria Library Workers' Union, announced the establishment of the Egyptian Trade Unions Federation (ECTU), which includes 20 independent unions from various sectors and professions. El-Masri stated that the federation aims to "support workers and employees, and those seeking work, and those in precarious jobs without stability, and those seeking decent,

stable work, fair labor relations, and wages that meet their needs and those of their families.

The Egyptian founder stated in an inaugural statement posted on his Facebook page that the union aims to "stand with workers, employees, and all wage earners across Egypt, as well as those seeking job opportunities, those in irregular, insecure work, and those aspiring to stable and decent work conditions, fair labor relations, and wages that meet their needs and their families' basic requirements. The union also seeks to support those demanding a dignified life, freedom, human dignity, social justice, the right to healthcare, and job and social security."

He added that the union believes in the trade union freedoms guaranteed by the Egyptian constitution and international agreements ratified by Egypt, the need to combat discrimination, violence, and harassment in the workplace, and the necessity of providing a new union model that addresses the changes in the labor market and emerging employment patterns.

The union's establishment followed a series of coordination meetings among its founders from May 2022 until they finalized the union's charter and key issues it aims to address.

The Egyptian Union issued its founding statement, calling on established unions and those seeking to establish themselves, to align their status with the provisions of the Labor Union Organizations Law No. 213 of 2017, which see the union's program as fulfilling the aspirations and dreams of their workers to join it.

The statement stipulated that the joining union must be active and democratic, genuinely practicing its union role, and must clearly support the workers' right to establish their unions and organizations freely to express their interests and defend their rights. The union must not have been involved in actions or statements contrary to these principles, and its representatives must not have been involved in deals compromising workers' rights.

Labor Union Solidarity Federation

In early December 2023, a new independent labor union federation was announced, separate from the government-aligned federation. The new federation, announced under the auspices of the Labor Services and Trade Union Association, a civil society organization concerned with labor and union rights, includes 21 unions and a general union with 25 trade committees, covering both public and private sector fields.

The association stated in a statement titled "Labor Union Solidarity Federation: Milestones on the Road," that the process of establishing the Labor Union Solidarity

Federation was challenging, not only due to the oppressive political climate lacking freedom but also because it was a renewed experience. Between 2011 and early 2022, workers and independent union leaders engaged in several experiences resulting in two independent federations. However, these did not last long due to internal disputes, leading to their dissolution. This historical context made the new federation's experience challenging, risking the federation's key principles of independence, democracy, and genuine representation.

In another statement, the association mentioned that before announcing the federation, a workshop was held to confirm fundamental rules about the union's role:

- The federation must be independent from the government and political parties and represent the working class accurately by addressing all labor issues and proposing amendments to related social legislation.
- It should participate in shaping state policies (social and economic) and efficiently communicate with international trade unions, promoting solidarity between local and international trade union movements.

The workshop also discussed criteria for unions joining the new federation, including:

- The union must be active and legally established.

- The union must have complete founding documents submitted to the administrative authority, even if a decision has not yet been made.
- Criteria were set for accepting existing unions facing administrative obstacles or rejections.

Participants established general rules and mandatory criteria for members:

- Trade union independence and democracy are essential for the federation's establishment and management, with procedures and regulations reinforcing this stance, avoiding unilateral decision-making or neglecting any voices within the federation.
- The General Assembly is the highest authority in the federation, with representation being qualitative, proportional, and geographical.
- The foundational charter during the establishment phase should be transitional and flexible, allowing for amendments as circumstances change.

Summary

The establishment of two independent labor unions is inherently positive, indicating that the labor movement has not been eradicated and that the state's control over labor and union movements has not succeeded. However, the success potential of any

independent trade union is linked to the current labor and union movement's activity, their ability to secure their independence, and the surrounding objective conditions.

Independent unions experienced a "golden era" before the January 25, 2011 revolution, starting from 2008. This rise was linked to two main factors: first, the democratic movement in Egypt during that period, extending over the first decade of the 2000s, and second, the exceptional rise of the labor movement, marking a new phase in its history.

The struggle for democracy led to increased visibility in media, courts, universities, and professional unions, alongside a significant rise in labor protests. This atmosphere facilitated the emergence of Egypt's first independent union.

The independent tax authority union's establishment took a full year and received extensive support from all political opposition forces. The mobilization within the tax authority and the organizational experience during protests laid the groundwork for the union before it formally began its organizational framework. This was evident when thousands of employees attended the union's founding assembly at the Journalists' Syndicate in December 2008 and when hundreds protested outside the Ministry of Manpower in April 2009, demanding the submission of the union's credentials, ultimately leading to the establishment of Egypt's first independent union after half a century of state suppression of union activity.

The actions of the tax authority employees reflect the historical trajectory of Egypt's labor movement, where labor unions have emerged through labor activism and struggle. The first union was established in 1900 following a strike, followed by a wave of labor protests demanding better wages and more unions. Whenever the labor movement and democratic space receded, so did the labor unions, only to rise again with the labor movement.

The current establishment of an independent union federation is happening in a different context, with a visibly weakened labor movement and unfavorable political conditions for political activity in Egypt. Nevertheless, despite the lack of favorable conditions for the success of an independent union federation, any attempt to uphold the independence of labor unions and the right of workers to organize independently of the state is, in itself, an attempt to protect the principle of union independence, even if it is not fully achieved.

The labor movement's vanguard has advocated for union independence and workers' right to independent organization for decades, even without the conditions to build independent organizations. Continuing to uphold this principle was necessary to counter the government's ideological control over the labor movement, even if the government managed to control it organizationally. This has kept the idea of union independence alive whenever its conditions were met.

Labor Conditions in Egypt and the Right to Work

From the above violations of workers' rights in Egypt, we can categorize several problems faced by workers as follows:

1. **Arbitrary Dismissal:** Many workers face arbitrary dismissal either while demanding their rights or after a strike or issue. Arbitrary dismissal is a clear violation of Article 4 of Convention 158 related to termination of employment at the employer's initiative. Article 4 states that termination of employment is not allowed unless there is a valid reason related to the worker's conduct or the needs of the enterprise. Article 5 of the same convention mentions that filing complaints or participating in lawsuits against the employer does not constitute a reason for terminating the employment relationship. Additionally, Article 7 stipulates that "employment cannot be terminated for reasons related to conduct or performance before the worker is given an opportunity to defend themselves," which was lacking in all forms of arbitrary dismissal previously mentioned in the report.
2. **Salary Deductions, Unpaid Wages, and Lack of Fixed Contracts:** The ILO Convention No. 181 on Private Employment Agencies mandates in Article 11 that measures should be taken to ensure adequate protection and facilitate social

protection, freedom of association, and minimum wage levels for workers in private agencies.

3. **Lack of Bonuses and Unequal Promotion Opportunities:** The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights mentions in Article 7 (a) that workers should receive fair wages and equal pay for equal work. Regarding promotion, the same article (c) states that everyone should have equal opportunities for promotion to higher positions within their work.
4. **Use of Force to End Strikes:** Article 8 (d) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights asserts the right to strike, provided it is conducted according to national laws.
5. **Non-payment or Deductions from Wages:** ILO Convention No. 95 on the Protection of Wages stipulates in Article 8 that arbitrary deductions from wages are prohibited without adherence to the terms and extent specified by national laws or regulations. Article 10 indicates that wages cannot be garnished or surrendered except in the manner prescribed by domestic laws and should be protected to ensure the worker and their family's livelihood. In cases of termination, Article 12 (2) states that all wages due should be settled according to national laws and regulations.

Recommendations

To address the severe and almost daily rise in prices and the collapse of the currency's value impacting workers' living standards, with statistics showing that around 35% of Egyptians live below the poverty line (a figure likely to rise), urgent intervention is needed to protect low-income individuals during the economic crisis affecting the country. In this context, we propose the following:

1. **Annual Minimum Wage Setting:** Establish a law mandating an annual minimum wage that is fair and sufficient to meet basic living requirements, adjusted for price increases and inflation.
2. **Commodity Support:** Provide commodity support to wage earners, including essential food items, for at least six months.
3. **Support for Irregular Workers:** Offer aid to irregular workers for six months.
4. **Government Measures:** The state should adopt measures to fund the above steps, including stopping expenditure on non-priority large projects, increasing progressive tax revenues, and restructuring or canceling debts.
5. Workers' right to freely form their trade unions, and the removal of all legal and administrative restrictions and obstacles that prevent the full and unrestricted exercise of this right.
6. The release of those held in pretrial detention and prisoners of conscience, including labor leaders.

7. The issuance of a labor law that guarantees job security and a fair wage sufficient to meet workers' basic needs, their right to an annual periodic increment of no less than 7% of their total wage, and the prohibition of fixed-term employment contracts except for temporary, incidental, or seasonal work, with the law applying to domestic workers who are excluded from its scope or the enactment of a separate law regulating their employment relations.
8. The cancellation of restrictive and onerous conditions imposed by the current labor law and the government's proposed bill on the exercise of the right to strike, despite acknowledging this right in accordance with the constitution and international agreements ratified by the Egyptian government.
9. Ensuring legal and social protection for informal workers, who number over thirteen million, instead of only focusing on collecting the prescribed fees from employers. Work on establishing a mechanism to calculate and record the actual days of work performed by informal workers employed by multiple employers, to provide them with legal protection and insurance coverage.
10. Empowering informal workers to form effective trade unions that defend their rights and adopt their demands.
11. Amending the Social Insurance and Pensions Law No. 148 of 2019 to exempt categories of informal workers from the requirement of having a minimum of 120 months of actual contribution to qualify for a pension.

12. □ Reforming the judiciary, activating the labor courts mentioned in the government's proposed labor law, within an integrated judicial system that ensures the proper functioning of the justice sector and guarantees the right to defense for all parties. Activating judicial inspection mechanisms and amending the State Council Law to ensure the impartiality of the advisory departments in ministries.
13. □ Adopting the recommendations put forward by independent trade unions in the first round of the national dialogue, which were excluded from the final outcomes.

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