

## **A Modern Yet Ancient Punitive Philosophy!**

### **The Situation in Prisons/Rehabilitation Centers in 2024**

In the context of the extensive promotional campaigns conducted by the Ministry of Interior and coinciding with **Human Rights Day on December 10, 2024**, the ministry organized visits to the Badr Prison Complex. The delegation included representatives from the human rights committees of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice, along with representatives from the United Nations and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Over the past year, the Public Prosecution has also conducted intensive visits to several rehabilitation centers — particularly the newly established ones — including a **visit by the Public Prosecutor to the Badr Rehabilitation and Correctional Center.**

After **more than three years** since the launch of the **National Human Rights Strategy**, which includes a section on the treatment of prisoners, and over **two years** since the transfer of inmates to the new rehabilitation centers, promoted by the state as a shift in punitive philosophy, we — **“No Statute of Limitations” Campaign** — had hoped for an improvement in prison conditions in

2024.

However, the situation has deteriorated further. Over the past year, we have documented **numerous violations** committed against prisoners and their families, falling into several distinct patterns:

### **First: Solitary Confinement**

In recent years, **solitary confinement has become a common practice** for holding prisoners, even without any violation of prison rules. Upon arrival, many prisoners are immediately placed in **inhumane solitary confinement conditions**.

Some inmates, who were previously held in Tora Prison Complex and **routinely placed in solitary cells**, were transferred to **solitary confinement** in the new Badr Rehabilitation Complex.

For instance, **former presidential candidate Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh** has remained in **solitary confinement since his arrest in 2018** and continues to be held under the same conditions at the time of writing this report.

Additionally, many **Muslim Brotherhood leaders** were moved from **solitary cells in Tora's High-Security Prison 1** to **individual cells in Badr Rehabilitation Center 3**, effectively continuing their isolation.

## **Second: Inappropriate Lighting**

*"The lights were kept intentionally bright day and night for surveillance. We weren't allowed to turn them off at night or block them in any way. It took me months to get used to sleeping under such harsh lighting."*

Despite the importance of **adequate lighting** for both the physical and mental health of prisoners, one of the most frequent complaints from prisoners transferred to **Badr, Wadi El-Natrun, and 10th of Ramadan rehabilitation centers** is that **lights remain on 24 hours a day**, with the prison administration controlling them.

According to interviews conducted by the **Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms** with the families of detainees, the **constant exposure to bright lights** has caused **severe psychological breakdowns** and **chronic insomnia** for many prisoners.

This situation is especially troubling given that many of these prisoners were transferred from **older prisons** where they previously suffered from **insufficient or complete lack of lighting**, whether natural (sunlight) or artificial inside their cells.

## **Third: Lack of Privacy**

*"There are cameras in every cell, microphones for communication with guards, speakers, and even the prison*

door has no peephole. Everything is monitored through cameras and microphones. For example, if a prisoner hangs clothes on a string, guards immediately tell them via the microphone to take them down."

Daughter of a detainee in Badr 3

Privacy and personal security have **never been guaranteed rights for prisoners** in Egypt's prison system. In the older prisons, prisoners frequently suffered from **random inspections and strip searches**, with **constant fear of sudden cell raids by guards**.

In the **new rehabilitation centers**, **continuous surveillance** has been institutionalized through **permanent CCTV cameras inside cells**. Inmates are **constantly monitored** by the prison administration, with **no breaks from this intrusion**. This gives the authorities **total control** over prisoners' daily lives and behaviors.

## **Fourth: Visit Restrictions**

### **A) Visit Frequency and Procedures**

*"We're only allowed to visit once a month, except in rare cases. In Tora, during the first two months, we were visiting weekly. Then, COVID came, and visits were banned. Now, we visit only once a month."*

— *Sister of a detainee in Badr 1*

Since **August/September 2020**, when the **Prison Authority (now the Social Protection Sector)** resumed visits after a **six-month suspension during the COVID-19 pandemic**, the **COVID-related restrictions** have remained **in place** in many prisons.

These restrictions include **barriers between prisoners and visitors**, which are **applied inconsistently**. Some prisons allow **in-person visits without barriers**, while others enforce **strict separation policies**.

Additionally, the **frequency of visits** has been reduced to **once a month**, whether for **convicted prisoners** or **detainees in pretrial detention**. This goes against the **Prisons Organization Law**, which stipulates **two visits per month** for sentenced prisoners and **four visits per month** for those in pretrial detention.

## **B) Visitor Searches**

Visitors frequently report **harsh and humiliating searches** before being allowed to see their loved ones. These **search procedures vary** from **quick checks** to **detailed inspections** of **personal belongings** and **body searches**.

Visitors are usually subjected to **an initial search** at the **main prison gate**, including passing their belongings through **security scanners** and walking through **metal**

**detectors.** However, **these searches are often repeated** before entering the **visitation area.**

The **list of prohibited items** varies **between different prisons** and **even from one visit to the next** within the same facility. Visitors frequently describe the searches as **arbitrary, degrading, and a tactic to assert control** over them.

Over the past year, the campaign documented **numerous complaints** from families visiting **15th of May Rehabilitation Center (1) and (6)** regarding **prison authorities refusing to allow essential items** to be brought in for detainees. Similar complaints were also recorded at **Badr 3, Wadi El-Natrun, and Gamsa Rehabilitation Centers.**

### **C) Visitor Suffering... Even Death!**

- **The mother of detainee Bassem Metwally (Badr 1)** died two days after suffering a **heart attack** following her visit, during which **her son attempted to end his life in front of her** due to the **abuse and restrictions he faced** in Badr 1.
- **Aya Hassan**, sister of a detainee in **Wadi El-Natrun** and daughter of another prisoner in **Minya Prison**, died **while crossing the road** in front of **Wadi El-Natrun Prison** during a visit to her brother.

## **Fifth: Exile (Transfer to Distant Prisons)**

*"He's now held in solitary confinement. Everyone who was with him in the cell has been transferred from Badr Prison. They emptied the prison and moved many detainees to various prisons. Unfortunately, he's now left alone."*  
— *Testimony of the sister of a detainee in Badr 1*

The **policy of exile** — transferring detainees to **prisons far from their hometowns** — remains a **standard retaliatory measure** used by prison administrations against prisoners who attempt to protest their **inhumane living conditions** through **hunger strikes** or other forms of dissent.

The **latest wave of transfers from Badr 1 Prison** followed a **hunger strike by detainees in June 2024**. The prison administration responded by **transferring dozens, possibly hundreds, of prisoners** from **Badr 1** to **remote prisons** such as **New Valley, Minya, Damanhur, Borg El-Arab, Gamasa, and Wadi El-Natrun**.

The scale of these transfers suggests a deliberate effort to **empty Badr 1 of so-called "troublemakers"** from the perspective of the prison authorities. At the same time, **prisoners from Abu Zaabal, Mansoura, and Borg El-Arab** were transferred to **Badr 1** in a **prisoner swap** aimed at **breaking up groups of prisoners who protest**.

## **Sixth: Methods of Resistance**

How can detainees resist while confined within the **walls of their cells?**

The **most accessible form of resistance** for prisoners is a **hunger strike**, which serves as a **symbolic rejection of the abuses** they suffer and the **mistreatment of their families** during visits.

During **2024**, several **hunger strikes** were documented across different prisons:

### **A) February 2024 – Wadi El-Natrun Prison**

A **partial hunger strike** was initiated by **several detainees** due to **poor living conditions** inside the prison. Key complaints included:

- **Shortened visitation time** (limited to **10 minutes**)
- **Restrictions on medication**
- **Inadequate clothing provisions**

### **B) June 2024 – Badr 1 Prison**

Prisoners in **Badr 1** renewed their **hunger strike** in response to **inhumane treatment**, including:

- **Frequent, degrading body searches**



- **Reduced exercise time**, contrary to **prison regulations**
- **Insufficient food portions** provided by the prison

In addition to these grievances, **family members faced harsh conditions during visits**, including:

- **Long wait times** before being allowed to enter
- **Prohibition of bringing essential items** such as **paper, pens, and personal belongings**
- **Strict limits on food items** allowed during visits

Prisoners also endured **electricity outages for nearly two weeks** as part of the **prison's punitive measures**.

The prison administration responded by **transferring around 50 prisoners to Minya and New Valley prisons**. Those who remained in **Badr 1** faced **even harsher conditions**, including **cutting off electricity, water, and food** and **further harassment of their families during visits**.

### **C) July 2024 – Badr 3 Prison**

In **early July**, detainees in **Badr 3** initiated another **hunger strike**, driven by their **total isolation** from the outside world, particularly in **Section 2**, where **visits have been completely banned** since the prisoners' transfer to that section.

## **D) September 2024 – Borg El-Arab Prison**

In **September**, several detainees in **Borg El-Arab Prison** attempted **suicide** as a **last resort** after enduring **severe abuses** by the **National Security officer** in charge of the prison.

Reported abuses included:

- **Power cuts inside cells**
- **Frequent, intrusive searches**
- **Confiscation of prisoners' belongings**, including medications
- **Mass prisoner transfers** as part of the **policy of exile**.

## **E) October 2024 – Badr 3 Prison**

In **October**, prisoners in **Badr 3** launched another **hunger strike**, protesting:

- **Ongoing mistreatment**
- **Continuous, invasive searches and strip searches**

According to the **Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms**, prisoners' families reported **repeated harassment during visits**, including:

- **Strict searches**

- **Refusal to allow basic items** such as **food and personal belongings** to be brought into the prison

These punitive measures reflect **systematic efforts** to **dehumanize prisoners** and **discourage any form of resistance** or protest their treatment.

### **Seventh: Deaths in Detention**

During the past year, we documented **50 deaths** in **police stations, official prisons, and unofficial detention centers**, such as **National Security offices** and **Central Security camps**. These deaths occurred under **various circumstances**, including **medical negligence, torture, and poor living conditions**.

#### **Breakdown of Deaths by Detention Facility:**

- 8 deaths in Badr Correctional Complex
- 5 deaths in Wadi El-Natrun Correctional Complex
- 5 deaths in Minya Correctional Complex
- 3 deaths in 10th of Ramadan Correctional Complex
- 1 death in Abu Zaabal Correctional Complex
- 1 death in Damanhur Correctional Complex
- 2 deaths in New Valley Correctional Complex
- 2 deaths in Borg El-Arab Correctional Complex
- 1 death in Gamasa Correctional Complex

## **Deaths in Police Stations and National Security Facilities:**

- 6 deaths in Zagazig Police Station
- 2 deaths in Belbeis Police Station
- 1 death in Malawi Police Station
- 1 death in Damanhur Police Station
- 1 death in Shubra Police Station
- 1 death in Minya El-Qamh Police Station
- 1 death in Kafr El-Dawar Police Station
- 1 death in Tanta Second Police Station
- 1 death in Assiut First Police Station
- 1 death in Imbaba Police Station
- 1 death in Ataqqa Police Station (Suez)
- 1 death in Gerga Police Station
- 1 death in Helwan Police Station
- 1 death in National Security Office (Sharqia)

## **Deaths in Central Security Forces Camps:**

- 2 deaths in the Central Security Camp in Sohag.

These **50 deaths** represent **documented cases** based on information from **lawyers, families of detainees, and media reports**. The actual number may be **higher**, given the **lack of transparency** from **prison administrations** and **the Ministry of Interior**.

The **geographic spread** of these deaths highlights a **nationwide pattern of mistreatment**, affecting both **police stations** and **prisons**. Many of these deaths can be attributed to:

- **Deliberate medical neglect**
- **Torture during interrogations**
- **Poor detention conditions**
- **Delayed access to medical care**

These practices violate **Egyptian law** and **international human rights standards**, particularly **the right to life** and **the prohibition of torture**.

This alarming number calls for **immediate accountability** and **comprehensive prison reforms** to prevent further **loss of life** in detention.