

Executive Report on the Activities of the Anti-Irregular Migration Unit From June 2024 to March 2025

First: Key Activities and Events Implemented by the Council in Partnership with the National Coordinating Committee in the Framework of Combating Irregular Migration

The National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) participated in the activities of the National Coordinating Committee of Combating Irregular Migration as a partner in the implementation of the Migration Governance Project, particularly in raising awareness about the dangers of irregular migration and promoting human rights. The Migration Governance Project plans to hold monthly activities for three days in the governorates most affected by irregular migration. The NCHR participates in these visits as part of efforts to raise community awareness about the risks of irregular migration and human trafficking, and to inform the participating groups (university students, executive officials of the governorates, and human rights committee officials) about the relevant international human rights instruments, as well as the national human rights mechanisms. The NCHR also introduces its role, functions, and competencies within the framework of the Egyptian Constitution and its founding law.

The activities were as follows:

First Activity

The NCHR participated in the implementation of a program to strengthen the capacities of staff working at the hotlines in the field of combating irregular migration. This participation involved three researchers from the NCHR, who contributed to enhancing the skills of the employees at the main complaints office. Additionally, a training session was provided by a researcher from the NCHR on the "Role of the National Council for Human Rights in Combating Irregular Migration." The training took place from June 21–22, 2024, in Cairo Governorate.

Second

Activity

Participation of the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking in the implementation of a capacity-building training for researchers and staff working at the hotline for receiving complaints in Ismailia Governorate, held from July 6–8, 2024. The training program aimed to enhance the efficiency of the NCHR staff in the governorates of (Kafr El-Sheikh, Gharbia, Dakahlia, Port Said, Suez, Beni Suef), in addition to 12 researchers from the protection committees in the governorates of (Ismailia, Suez, Damietta). The goal was to establish a communication and coordination network between the NCHR staff and members of the protection committees in the relevant governorates.

Third

Activity

Participation in the implementation of a training program on raising awareness of the dangers of irregular migration in Luxor Governorate, held from August 11–14, 2024. The training session covered several key topics related to irregular migration, including:

- Basic concepts of "migration, migrant smuggling, human trafficking, and asylum"
- The international legal framework for combating transnational crime
- The protocols for combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking
- The national legal framework for combating irregular migration and migrant smuggling
- The differences between human trafficking and migrant smuggling
- The national strategy for combating and preventing irregular migration.

Fourth

Activity

4. As part of the National Human Rights Council's work plan to support national strategies (for Human Rights and Sustainable Development), and in implementation of the Council's action plan for the "Sustainable Development and Climate Justice Committee," coordinated with the "Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration Unit," the Council organized a series of visits to targeted governorates to combat the crime of irregular migration and explore the connection between achieving development goals and eliminating this issue.

Accordingly, the Sustainable Development and Climate Justice Committee, together with the Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration Unit at the National Council for Human Rights, carried out its first visit to Kafr El Sheikh Governorate between July 28 and 31, 2024, as it is one of the most prominent governorates exporting irregular migration. During this visit, several meetings were held with local officials, as well as educational and awareness sessions with civil society organizations and workshops in Kafr El Sheikh. This was part of the Council's programs to raise awareness about the dangers of irregular migration and to introduce the national strategies aimed at achieving sustainable development goals across all development sectors (social, economic, environmental).

Through this program, the Council aims to strengthen its role in addressing human rights-related issues, especially environmental challenges, contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while combating the phenomenon of irregular migration. This initiative also ensures better coordination and collaboration between the Council and relevant institutions, aligning efforts to achieve these development goals.

Fifth Activity

The National Council for Human Rights organized an awareness seminar on the issues of migrant smuggling and human trafficking, in collaboration with the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Irregular Migration and Human Trafficking. The event took place on Thursday, October 3, 2024, at the National Council for Human Rights headquarters in New Cairo, under the leadership of Ambassador Dr. Meshira Khattab, Chairperson of the Council, and Ambassador Naela Gabr, Chairperson of the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Irregular Migration and Human Trafficking. The seminar also had the honorable participation of Ambassador Nabila Makram, Head of the Technical Secretariat of the National Alliance for Civil Action, Ambassador Dr. Karim Mahmoud, Vice Chairman of the Council, Ambassador Fahmy Fayed, Secretary-General of the Council, Dr. Ayman Zahri, Member of the Council and Head of the Anti-Irregular Migration and Human Trafficking Unit.

This seminar was part of a series of activities and meetings aimed at highlighting the role of civil society organizations in protecting youth from the dangers of irregular migration. The discussions focused on identifying the mechanisms used by civil society organizations to protect young people from the dangers of irregular migration, as well as addressing the challenges faced by these organizations in fulfilling their role in safeguarding youth from the risks of irregular migration. The seminar also emphasized the importance of civil society's role in educating migrants and their families about the dangers of irregular migration.

The seminar was attended by around 40 participants, including officials from civil society organizations involved in irregular migration and human trafficking issues, researchers, and academics from the General Authority for Information, the National Center for Strategic Planning, and the National Research Institute.

Main points of discussion:

- Regarding the statute of limitations in human trafficking crimes, according to Article 19 of the Arab League's Model Law on Combating Human Trafficking, criminal prosecution for these crimes does not expire with the passage of time.
- Importance of Coordinating National Efforts to Identify and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking: There is a significant appreciation for the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies and the judiciary in identifying the status of victims. Participants emphasized that one of the key steps in identifying a victim is to build trust with the potential victim, allow them a period of rest, and avoid putting pressure on them. These challenges are considerably reduced for civil society organizations, as they often have social and psychological experts within their organizational structure. Some organizations also have shelters for victims, which encourages trafficking victims to seek help, making it easier for these organizations to determine whether an individual is a trafficking victim. They then refer the case, with the results, to law enforcement to officially recognize the person as a victim and provide the necessary protection while pursuing the perpetrators.
- Enhancing Cooperation and Partnership with Government Agencies and Civil Society Organizations: Participants pointed out the importance of strengthening cooperation and partnerships with ministries, government bodies, and civil society organizations by signing memoranda of understanding between law enforcement, government institutions, and civil society service providers. This collaboration ensures a more effective response to the issues surrounding human trafficking.
- National Human Rights Institutions: National human rights institutions, established in accordance with the Paris Principles, are empowered to play diverse and significant roles in aligning national human rights laws and standards with international human rights norms. These institutions play a vital role in bridging the gap between the government, civil society, and other sectors, fostering the promotion, application, and monitoring of human rights for all individuals—citizens, residents, and refugees—without discrimination.
- Consultative Meetings Between Government Bodies and Civil Society Organizations: The importance of holding consultative meetings between government committees and civil society organizations under the auspices of the National Institution, the National Council for Human Rights, was highlighted. These meetings aim to support human rights issues,

highlight national efforts to assist citizens on economic and social fronts, and shed light on critical issues that affect both citizens and the state.

- Presentation of Awareness Videos: The coordinating committee presented several videos illustrating the difficulties faced by human trafficking victims. These videos depicted the contrasts between the perilous route of illegal migration ("irregular migration") and the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods through vocational work and the alternative opportunities offered by the Egyptian state (e.g., small enterprise development agencies and non-profit supporting organizations). these videos are available for use by civil society organizations and can be employed in workshops and awareness-raising events held in provinces and youth centers during outreach activities for youth and young women.

Sixth Activity

- The National Council for Human Rights dedicated a special session titled "Civil Society Organizations and the Rights of Migrants and Refugees" as part of its agenda during the Annual Civil Society Forum on "The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Human Rights," which took place on Sunday, October 13, 2024. The session was chaired by Dr. Ayman Zahri, a member of the council and the Secretary of the Anti-Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking Unit, with the participation of the Head of the Sustainable Development and Climate Justice Committee, and the journalist specializing in migration issues and Managing Editor of Al-Ahram newspaper, head of the Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Support, and the Director of the Anti-Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking Unit at the council.
- This session's importance is particularly evident in the current global context, where the number of refugees continues to rise worldwide, and the Middle East region remains the largest and most affected area. Many countries are grappling with increasing numbers of refugees and irregular migrants. The Egyptian state, in particular, bears a substantial burden due to regional and economic challenges, in addition to the growing influx of refugees and irregular migrants. In the face of these challenges, the role of civil society organizations becomes crucial in assisting the state to protect migrants and refugees. The session focused on defining the mechanisms for civil society organizations to help protect and assist migrants and refugees, determining the obstacles faced by these organizations in carrying out their responsibilities, and discussing the importance of raising awareness among migrants and their families about the dangers of irregular migration.
- Additionally, the role of civil society in collaboration with the National Council for Human Rights in setting and achieving these objectives was discussed, along with the ways to provide support and assistance.
- The session saw participation from numerous civil society organizations specializing in the rights of migrants and refugees, as well as journalists, lawyers specializing in this field, and researchers and academics interested in the rights of migrants and refugees.

Main Recommendations Based on the Discussions Held During the Session:

- Establish Unified Procedures and Mechanisms to Regulate the Status of Refugees and Migrants.

- Develop an Extensive Plan Between the Egyptian State, International Organizations, and Supporting Entities to provide assistance that helps ease the burdens on the state and its institutions, in order to manage the crisis and increase facilities for refugees and migrants.
- Learn from the Experiences of Other Countries on Refugee and Migration Issues, such as Jordan, and apply relevant strategies that have been effective in those countries.
- Provide Assistance and Training by the National Council for Human Rights to civil society organizations working in this field and reinvest the potential of youth within civil society organizations.
- Create a Comprehensive Plan to Contain the Crisis and assist the state in relieving the heavy burdens it faces.
- Include a Special Focus on Refugees in the National Human Rights Strategy, particularly under the third pillar that deals with awareness-raising.
- Encourage the Establishment of Specialized Institutions to Support Refugees, including systems for registering and regularizing their status.
- Activate the Role of the Federation of Refugee Organizations within the Ministry of Social Solidarity, to enhance coordination and support.
- Legalization of the Links Established by Refugees to disseminate benefits and raise awareness through these organizations.