



**Executive Summary**  
**Of**  
**Fifteenth Annual Report**  
**٢٠١٩/٢٠٢٠**

**Introduction by NCHR President Ambassador Mohammad Fa'eq**

**Supervision by Mohssen Mouawad**

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## **Introduction By NCHR President Ambassador Mohamed Fa'eq**

This report is the fifteenth 15<sup>th</sup> in the series of annual reports issued by the National Council for Human Rights, in accordance with its law. Still, it is unique in addressing an unprecedented scene covered during its reporting period of facing the nation.

Firstly: Corona Pandemic (COVID 19) fallout entailing the suffering that Egypt shared with the rest of the world; Secondly: The consequences of the climate change risks that forced the UN secretary-general to call upon world leaders to declare a "climate emergency to avoid a catastrophic rise in the temperature of the Earth", during the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 Climate Summit; Thirdly: The exacerbation of both the water poverty crisis and the Renaissance Dam crisis. Not only did Ethiopia dispute Egypt's historical rights to the Nile waters, but it, also, attempted to singlehandedly decide when to fill the reservoir. In addition to, other dangerous decisions related to the Nile River, considered the lifeline of Egypt; Fourthly: The escalation of the population explosion, Central Bureau of Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) announced that the census of Egypt exceeded one hundred and one million people, an increase that will lead to a decline in educational, employment and health opportunities - at the very least - unless handled decisively and urgently; Fifthly: Continuation of terrorism for the fourth consecutive decade, which spells the enforcement of emergency laws, extraordinary procedures, military courts for civilians and confining the public domain; Sixthly: Sectarian conflicts and regional ambitions have stoked regional turmoil; Seventhly: Domestic and external public debt are mounting, with domestic public debt recording about \$270 billion, equivalent to 69% of the GDP and external public debt burgeoning to \$112,6 billion, equivalent to 33% of GDP.

On the flip side, apart from such daunting challenges, the reporting period noted extraordinary achievements that have never all been achieved in a single year: First and foremost of which was the implementation of democratic entitlements by electing a Parliament and a Senate, accompanied with an outstanding surge in the representation of women and individuals with disabilities and the election of about two thirds of new Parliament members:

The state anti-terrorist efforts have been so successful that the country is no longer among the ten countries most affected by terrorism.

This was a direct result of the fruitful preventive strikes and improved security conditions in the border areas, particularly in the Northern Sinai region, within the state efforts to protect strategic borders and deploy the growing military might to achieve strategic deterrence to reduce the regional turmoil risk from affecting the stability of the nation.

The state, mostly, managed to contain the repercussions of the Corona epidemic through a series of health measures and social support for the most vulnerable groups. It struck the fine balance by combining the resumption of the economic life without interrupting the livelihood flow, on one hand, with the public behavior reform, the adoption of health prevention behaviour, enforcing social distancing and the reduction of the spread of the epidemic, on the other.

Despite the economic repercussions of the Corona pandemic, the state embarked upon the development of a program to honour its pledges to end the suffering of Upper Egypt caused by its marginalization for many years by connecting it to telecommunications networks, urban communities and the new industrial zones.

Throughout the reporting period, the state, also, honoured its constitutional obligation by addressing the Nuba population file, which was one of the most arduous for about half a century. During the second half of ٢٠١٩, it began to pay the in-kind and financial compensation to the Nubians affected by their migration during the establishment of the Aswan Reservoir in ١٩٠٢ and the High Dam in ١٩٦٠.

On addressing the pandemic, the decisions of the president to pardon and release prisoners from custody resulted in the release of around ٣٧,٠٠٠ prisoners in ٢٠٢٠, concurrent with the improvement of living conditions and enforcement of preventive measures inside prisons through comprehensive maintenance measures, the renovation of existing prisons or the replacement of old and dilapidated prisons by new incarceration facilities.

The significant build-up in the women empowerment goal is one of the most notable areas where major leaps and bounds have been made for the seventh consecutive year, in particular, the strengthening of women's political representation by ٢٥% for the first time in the Parliament, by ١٠% in the Senate and increasing the representation of women in the Cabinet of Ministers to reach approximately one quarter. In addition to, the surge in female appointment to leading public positions in the Central Bank, State banks and local councils.

The Council looks forward to the acceleration of the implementation of commitments to open the public domain and promote political and public liberties in a manner that meets the political needs of fostering the democratic transformation and implementing the development vision of the third decade of the twenty-first century.

When the report was being edited for printing, the National Council for Human Rights carried out its fifth field visit to North Sinai, in the context of actualizing its new business

strategy. (٢٠٢١-٢٠٢٤). The NCHR field team included Council Member Professor Mohsen Awad, Council Member Dr. Salah Salam and Researchers Professor Nabil Shalby and Professor Islam Rehan. The team conducted about fifty interviews with witnesses, victims' families, Civil Society Organizations and political parties' leaders. Besides, the team held formal meetings with the governor of North Sinai, the heads of directorates of the various ministries of the governorate and heads of local councils. (Attached is the report of the visit in Annex ٢١).

The team focused its mission on the received complaints and petitions concerning compensation for damage suffered by the residents of certain areas as a result of terrorist crimes and anti-terrorism efforts, including compensation paid for the families of ١٨٣٦ female and male martyrs and ٢٩١٥ female and male wounded, the compensation for expropriation for public interest, provision of alternative and temporary housing, payment of financial compensation for real-estate and agricultural properties. Furthermore, the team focused on the efforts undertaken by the local councils in providing health and education requirements, after the relocation of the residents.

While, the departments of the local councils outlined their past and current efforts in paying compensations amounting to EGP ٣,٥ billion approximately, till January ٢٠٢١. They emphasized the determination of the authorities to pay all compensations in the course of this year and the upcoming one, which could be amount to more than EGP ٧ billion. Moreover, the local councils representatives reviewed their efforts to provide alternative and temporary housing for the majority of those affected, amounting to about ١,٤٠٠ alternative and temporary housing units and about ١٦٠ plots of land for construction activities, with the opportunity to move to new permanent housing being built to accommodate those affected by terrorism and contain the potential population growth. In addition to, the efforts exerted to comply with the new health and education requirements. Thus, there is extra impetus in the construction of new schools and health centers to cover the basic needs.

The council, also, examined the complaints and appeals of official decrees mechanisms.

Following the visit, the NCHR president wrote to the minister of justice asking him to expedite the reopening of the Arish Cassation Court, after the completion of the renovation works and the operations to secure the premises of the court, as it was targeted by terrorist organizations, in order to ease the burden of the commuting of the natives to other areas to exercise their right to justice.

The Council appreciates the positive cooperation of local administration in the governorate in providing clarifications and information, accepting the request of the

Council team to reconsider the estimated compensation values in accordance with the recent hikes in the cost of construction and increasing the expected compensation values in return for the expropriations done to carry out the slated expansion of Arish Port.

The Council calls for application of the necessary transparency measures to enhance the general confidence of the population in the light of the scarcity of available information and the confusion created by the spread of rumours and lies.

## **State of Human Rights**

### **Foreword**

This chapter examines the human rights developments in Egypt in the period from October ٢٠١٩ till late ٢٠٢٠, which can be divided into two parts: The first period till March ٢٠٢٠ with positive developments in human rights entailed by numerous feats; The second period was, mostly, overtaken by COVID ١٩ pandemic, which still plagues the world. The pandemic undermined many aspects of life in both developing countries, like Egypt, and many developed ones.

Among the most notable accomplishments in the reporting period were the ratification and promulgation in August ٢٠١٩ of the new comprehensive Civil Action Law. Besides, the international conference organized by the National Council for Human Rights in cooperation with its local and international partners. The international event was a milestone in the fight against torture with evident Egyptian and Arab governmental participation and the presence of pertinent national human rights institutions, civil society institutions and international organizations.

Moreover, during this period there was a positive interaction between the state with the United Nations Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights mechanism through an outstanding report in August ٢٠١٩, a rich dialogue during the review session in November ٢٠١٩ and the added value of the recommendations that Egypt accepted before The United Nations Human Rights Council in March ٢٠٢٠.

Such cooperation has, even, been furthered with the state submission of its periodic reports to five United Nations human rights treaty committees, including the three reports which were seventeen years overdue of the Human Rights Committee responsible for overseeing the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Committee against Torture (CAT).

Egypt, also, was ready to extend invitations to six special rapporteurs on development, economic, social and cultural rights of the United Nations Human Rights Council. First invitation was issued to the Special Rapporteur on the right to housing at the end of September ٢٠١٩. Despite the controversy and confusion such an invitation caused, yet it is, still, regarded as a positive progress, which will, hopefully, continue.

Egypt has continued to strengthen the institutional structure of human rights through the launching of the Permanent High Committee for Human Rights, the executive arm of the Cabinet of Ministers in the field of human rights since early ٢٠٢٠. The committee has

begun work on one of its most important mandates to develop the first long-term government strategy to enhance human rights respect, protection and promotion.

The Public Prosecution resumed its efforts to strengthen its role in the protection of human rights by implementing the directives of the attorney-general to use alternative measures to pre-trial detention whenever possible and review the status of pre-trial detainees. Consequently, around three thousand remand prisoners, including hundreds of prisoners of conscience or of violators of the Assemblies Law, who committed no physical violence, were released. Furthermore, the president of the Republic continued to issue pardons and conditional releases of convicted prisoners, bringing the number of released prisoners to approximately forty-seven thousand in ٢٠١٩ and about thirty-seven thousand in ٢٠٢٠.

In October ٢٠١٩, the Council resumed prison visits that had been suspended since late ٢٠١٧ and conducted seven visits in the period from October ٢٠١٩ till February ٢٠٢١, including some prisons where complaints and allegations were frequent.

In addressing the Corona pandemic, the state exerted stintless and outstanding efforts to contain the epidemic: awareness-raising and prevention efforts, increasing the capacity of the health system that is still in transition, providing the necessary quantities of medicines, keeping pace with global measures, coordinating with the World Health Organization (WHO), providing recurrent extraordinary budgets to increase health expenditure, containing the social impact of the pandemic, providing additional support to the most vulnerable groups, controlling market, availing staple goods and maintaining the sustainability of the economic activities. In spite of the evident negative effect of the pandemic, Egypt was, remarkably, able to record a positive growth rate that exceeded the population growth rate.

Despite the difficulties of the Corona pandemic, the country successfully held elections in the two chambers of the House of Representatives (Parliament and Senate), where election propaganda and voting took place amidst strict preventive measures and tested the country's ability to deal with the difficulties of the epidemic. Moreover, the period covered by the report had a number of setbacks, some occurred without any reasonable justification: The enactment of the executive by-laws of the Civil Work Organization Law was delayed; The former Minister of Social Solidarity failed to issue the by-laws after consulting with the Civil Society organizations, as recommended during the drafting phase; No progress, worth mentioning, was achieved in closing the file of the legal persecution of human rights activists, in accordance with the new legal environment



established by the law; No chances were given to the unregistered organizations to adapt to comply with the law.

During the reporting period, torture claimed the life of another victim in pre-trial detention, notwithstanding the significant accountability measures strictly observed by the state for the sixth consecutive year, as well as the disciplinary penalties undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior against its officials convicted of legal offences, including dismissal from office.

The Corona pandemic exacerbated the fears of the congestion of detention places and although the overcrowding of public prisons has, outstandingly, been treated. Still, overcrowding persists as problem in some of the primary detention centers, which include central police stations and prisons of security directorates.

Government actions have escalated the growing Corona social crisis: Reduction of the weight of the subsidized loaf of bread; Enforcement of the Construction Violations Reconciliation Law; Failure to reduce fuel prices in proportion to the decline in global prices and the country's distinct renaissance in achieving a high degree of fuel sufficiency and production of derivatives, thus reducing imports. Such entailed a wave of popular outrage that culminated in some villages in Southern Giza and Northern Upper Egypt, where the population incomes have been affected by the stoppage of the construction adobe bricks factories, with the absence of any alternative sources of livelihood. Although the outrage was limited, yet it was blown out of proportion by the local and international media.

Despite the end of the first legislative term of the House of Representatives (January ۲۰۱۶-January ۲۰۲۱), the coveted amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure have not, yet, been issued to address the problems that limit the country's progress in the field of freedoms respect.

Furthermore, the local councils' elections have not been held for the fifth consecutive year, since the completion of the political system with the election of the House of Representatives by the end of ۲۰۱۵ and its convocation in early ۲۰۱۶. Such is a stumbling block to the country's democratic progress and development, in accordance with constitutional aspirations and entitlements.

## **I- Legislative Development**

Within the reporting period, the attention of both the government and the Parliament continued to focus, mainly, on legislation relevant to development. With the exception of

the enactment of the Civil Labour Organization Law, human rights legislation, still, lurk at bottom of their priorities agenda.

For example, the first legislative term came to an end without the enactment of the proposed amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, which is of paramount in the field of human rights and is usually described as the "Constitution of Liberties". These amendments are supposed to comply with the constitutional entitlement in adding the degree of appeal to felony trials, while establishing the role of the court of cassation in examining cases brought before it as a one stage trial court to reduce the criminal litigation period.

These amendments, also, address the crises of pre-trial detention, a cause for concern for human rights entities, by normalizing pre-trial detention as an exceptional precautionary measure rather than an original measure in procedures and enhancing alternative measures of detention to prevent long-term detention of suspects, who were proven innocent pending the outcome of investigations and trials, sometimes equivalent in duration to judicial sentences.

It is worth mentioning that the NCHR is still calling for a review of the proposed amendments, comprising fifty-four articles of the Law, especially since they fall short of the outcome of the community discourse convened by the Supreme Committee for Legislative Reform in a public conference to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure late ٢٠١٦ and early ٢٠١٧. The Council participated in its proceedings of this public conference together with human rights organizations.

The Ministry of Justice submitted partial amendments to the House of Representatives in May ٢٠١٧, but the State Council made more than ninety comments on them. Many amendments, also, caused a lot of controversy between the Ministry of Justice and the House of Representatives. Consequently, this led to the initiative of the President of the Constitutional and Legislative Parliamentary Affairs Committee to introduce additional draft laws by the end of ٢٠١٩ and the submission of the President of the Human Rights Parliamentary Committee of another draft law by late ٢٠١٧ to bridge some gaps.

Such amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure had been introduced to comply with the constitutional entitlements and address problems consistent with the development of penal philosophy and international obligations. Yet, there is a need to consider a the enactment of a comprehensive new law rather than introduce a large number of amendments. Nonetheless, updating the system of penal legislation, in general, became of

paramount importance to meet the challenges impeding the enhancement of criminal justice, including 1937 Penal Code.

The Council had called for amendments to the Penal Code with the view of reducing the number of articles and offences leading to the death penalty and bridging the loopholes regarding possible leniency in crimes of torture and abuse.

Until the end of the reporting period, the executive by-laws of the Civil Action Organization Law, passed in August 2019, were not issued, although they were supposed to be issued within six months of the enactment of the law. This delay was an additional disruption, in addition to, about four years of sterile debate over the freedom of civil action.

Within the efforts of combating indiscriminate construction in tandem with the efforts of the state to address the most dangerous squatter areas and relocating its residents in decent housing, the state has enacted the relevant legislation over the recent three years.

In 2020, the state enacted amendments known as "Reconciliation in Building Offences Law", representing a predicament because the law forced the owners of such buildings to pay fines for the construction in breach, even if they were not the original builders, while referring the offenders to the Military Prosecution, in violation of the Constitution, as well as granting a very short period of time for the payment of the down-payments of the fines of the offence at hand, which would subsequently result in the actual removal or allow the continuation of the violating building, as soon as, the technical specifications and construction safety of the building were available.

The Law and its applications created a wide controversy, especially, as it was issued in a period where incomes declined significantly as a result of the serious economic and social fallout of the "COVID 19" pandemic, inflation rates and the cost of staple foods and services continued to rise. Such was accompanied by an extensive razing of facilities built on agricultural land.

Due to the mounting controversy, the government decided to reduce the values of reconciliation sums and cutback the required payments, while repeatedly extending the period of reconciliation. Although, it would have been recommended to review the law and adapt it to the Constitution and the legal regulations, on the one hand and establish an appropriate mechanism for its enforcement, on the other, in proportion to the scale of the existing challenges.

## **II: Basic Rights**

For the ninth consecutive year, terrorism remains to be the main determinant of the status of human rights in Egypt and the most prominent cause for violating the right to life. Terrorism continues to be the reason for public tension triggered by excessive pre-emptive security measures and some judicial actions that totally contradict with the prerequisites of respecting human rights.

On the level of the **Right to Life**, notwithstanding the success achieved by country in minimizing the rates of terrorism crimes, yet such type of crimes and the police pursuit of terrorists caused heavy casualties amongst the police and military officers and civilians.

For example, in Northern Sinai area, the hotbed of terrorist operations since ٢٠١١, the terrorist organizations kept on targeting police and army officers and civilians in Bir Al Abd, West of Al Arish, after the security plans succeeded in reigning in terrorist activities in Al Arish -Rafah axis. Such axis was the theatre of dozens of terrorism crimes between ٢٠١١ and ٢٠١٨.

According to official statements, the period of reporting witnessed the killing and injuring of dozens of the police and army officers during manhunt operations mounted to arrest terrorists in Northern Sinai, the Libyan borders and the Sudanese borders. Moreover, many civilians were killed during terrorist attacks or by the hands of terrorists after kidnapping them.

Furthermore, dozens of terrorists were killed and others were arrested. More than ٢٠٠ four-wheel drive vehicles stacked with weapons were, also, destroyed. Myriads of hide outs of terrorists were leveled to the ground.

It is worth mentioning to state that dozens of terrorists who died in the crossfire with the security forces, were not identified and their nationalities remained unknown. Even those who were identified, almost half of them were non-Egyptians.

Meanwhile, the efforts exerted by the security forces led to: the arrest of hundreds of criminals practicing different kinds of criminal activities; seizing thousands of tons of trafficked narcotics and apprehending irregular migration brokers.

The NCHR has followed, with great concern, the abduction and the liquidation of dozens of the inhabitants of Northern Sinai by terrorist organizations claiming that such individuals cooperated with the authorities.

Since February ٢٠١٨, war on terrorism campaign and efforts to secure the Egyptian borders succeeded in decreasing progressively the impact of terrorism rate. By the end of ٢٠١٩, the terrorism impact rate was ٣٧% less than its rate in ٢٠١٨, dipping significantly further in ٢٠٢٠ though the rate remains uncalculated. Terrorism impact rate took a nosedive, despite the attempts to relaunch terrorist activities, especially as of April ٢٠٢٠, as a means of an anti-government propaganda propagating the failure of the State.

In the wake of their failure in targeting security officers, terrorist organizations targeted again civilians as a way of retaliation and in an attempt to announce their presence. The main aim of such acts is to destabilize the area after the country launched mega development projects in the area that would successfully put an end to decades of marginalization which Central and Northern Sinai suffered from.

Among the most prominent feats achieved by the authorities in ٢٠١٣ – ٢٠١٧ was receiving at least four extradited terrorists deemed to be the most dangerous of all. On top of the list of extradited terrorists was terrorist Hisham el Ashmawi who committed dozens of terrorism crimes causing the death and the injury of thousands of civilians and police and army officers.

On the other hand, torture murder phenomenon persisted during the reporting period; despite the efforts exerted by the President and the General Prosecution to eliminate it. On September ٨, ٢٠٢٠, a young man called Islam Al Austurali died in Al Moneeb Police Station in El Giza after fighting with the officers in the police station after being arrested. His death caused a wave of anger and rallies in the neighbourhood of the police station, though the Public Prosecution started an investigation of the incident on the same day. Consequently, the Public Prosecution ordered the detention of four officers of the force working in the station and the release on bail the supervising officer present during the incident.

The NCHR while appreciating the efforts exerted in putting to account the perpetrators of the crimes of torture and other forms of abuse, is reiterating its call to review the Penal Code to allow monitoring the measures and procedures taken and to safeguard implementing aggravated punishments that reach to dismissal from office in case of committing such crimes.

Furthermore, the NCHR followed with great interest the case of the death of a young man called Fady Habash in pre-trial detention in Tourah Prison on April ٢٠٢٠. Habash spent more than two years in pre-trial detention subject to investigations and awaiting trial. The NCHR appreciates the report prepared by the Public Prosecution unraveling the circumstances of the death of Habash. Habash reportedly died due to a health condition

suffered by Habash and due to his administration of medications that led to the deterioration of his health ultimately leading to his death. Meanwhile, the NCHR is emphasizing the importance of observing the maximum limits of pre-trial detention. The NCHR, also, is stressing the importance of amending the Penal Code to eliminate such alarming phenomenon.

Moreover, the NCHR followed the circumstances of the death of Journalist Mohammad Munir, after contracting COVID-19 few days after being released from detention. Munir's brother, Journalist Hazem Munir, a former member of NCHR, asserted that there is no relationship between the detention and the death of his brother. He, also, confirmed that his family and the Journalists' Syndicate were following up his health condition during his detention. Munir's brother stated that on the day of his release, Mohammad was subject to a full check up to ensure that he was free of any disease including COVID-19. Mohammad has reportedly spent the full term of his detention, amounting to two weeks, in the Tourah Prison Hospital due to the deterioration of his health beyond the expectations of himself and his family on the very day of his detention because of cardiac problems.

On the level of the **Right to Liberty and Personal Safety**, the NCHR welcomes the measures taken by the Public Prosecution to limit passing pre-trial detention measures and adopt other measures specified in the current Law of Criminal Procedures. Moreover, the NCHR hails the directives issued by the Prosecutor General on May 2020 to review the status of the individuals remanded in pre-trial detention to release them. Such directives resulted in the release of some three thousand remanded individuals within a period of six months.

The NCHR is gravely concerned due to the continuous resort to pre-trial detention measures. The NCHR hopes that the Public Prosecution would abstain from challenging the court orders of releasing remanded individuals, specifically in cases of individuals affiliated to opposition political movement or civil political wings accused of being involved in activities managed by "Terrorist Organizations".

The NCHR, while appreciating the independence of the Public Prosecution and the judiciary in taking the suitable decisions according to the accusations and the investigations, the NCHR deems the excessive use of pre-trial detention measures in various cases as a cause for alarm. The concern of the NCHR is piqued due to the lack of adequate data offered to the public on the seriousness of charges addressed to the suspects. However, pressing charges never allay suspicions drummed up by the relevant political organizations that claim that the charges are based on investigations rather than evidence.

The concern of the NCHR is doubled due to the phenomenon of pressing new charges against suspects who received court orders releasing them. Such phenomenon dubbed as “Recycling of Cases”, is a term used by terrorist organizations to enhance the accusation leveled against the authorities that they are adamant on punishing the suspects by remanding them in custody for subscribing to opposing opinions. Such an approach allows the members and the supporters of the terrorist organizations to drop the names of their leaders to cause confusion and to justify their adoption of violence and terrorism.

Amongst the political opponents whose remanding causes the alarm of the NCHR and local and international human right organizations are: Hisham Fouad, Hossam Mo’ness, Zeyad el Elemmi, Yehia Hussein Abdul Hady, Abdul Nasser Ismail, Khaled Daoud, Isra’a Abdul Fattah, Mahinour Al Masri, Mohammad Al Baqir and Dr Hazem Hosni.

The NCHR believes that raising the awareness of the local and international public opinion on the positive political will on the matter at hand, which the NCHR perceives, cannot be undertaken in isolation from addressing the relevant contentious issues. The NCHR is requesting: the release of those remanded and the implementation of alternative measures other than pre-trial detention, if necessary, until the investigations and the trials are concluded.

On the level of **the Right to Fair Trial**, the Ministry of Justice and the Public Prosecution are exerting significant efforts to introduce the digital transformation in different domains of the litigation process. Such transformation would facilitate litigation, avail equal access to justice and uplift many unnecessary hitches facing the litigants, as well as the suspects in criminal cases.

Over the past three years, the NCHR, together with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), took part in an open debate with the representatives of the judicial, legislative and executive powers on improving the criminal justice path. Such debates resulted in the formulation of a number of systematic proposals aiming at expediting the finalization of the amendment of the Criminal Procedure Law and the modernization and the reviewing of the Penal Code of ١٩٣٧ with a view of satisfying the Constitutional Entitlements and the international obligations to harmonize the Penal Code with the global penal philosophy. The representatives of the authorities and the government organizations officials participating in such debates were highly responsive.

Among the most prominent concerns that featured in such debates and were, also, the focus of attention of the representatives of the NCHR were boosting the minimization of the death penalty and limiting it to the most heinous crimes. Such trend calls for exerting significant efforts to: repeal a set of articles in the criminal legislation specifying capital

punishment sentences; encourage criminal courts to evade passing capital punishment sentences as much as possible and capitalize on the role of his Eminence the Mufti of Egypt, being the referral authority providing advisory opinion on the relevant cases and the reverence of the criminal court to his advisory opinion, in minimizing upholding capital punishment sentences.

The NCHR is looking to the President of the Republic to strengthen his efforts in refraining from ratifying the majority of the final decisions of capital punishment and minimizing the rate of execution. Furthermore, the NCHR is looking forward for the enhancement of mechanism of the intervention of the President availed to him by Constitution to commute capital punishment sentences to imprisonment sentences in line with the initiatives he started in the past five years.

A major source of concern for the NCHR is the high frequency of capital punishment sentences and executions. The year ٢٠٢٠, particularly October and November, witnessed a spiraling rate of executions, in total contradiction with the commitment that Egypt shouldered by annexing to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of ١٩٨١. Moreover, such trend goes against the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council submitted to the Egyptian government in March ٢٠٢٠. Such recommendations were accepted and officially presented by the Egyptian government before the UN Human Right Council in March ٢٠٢٠. The recommendations comprised Egypt stressing its commitment to keep death penalty at a minimum level and approving to consider the adoption of suspending executions i.e., phasing in limiting executions with a view of staying of execution wherever possible.

The NCHR is alarmed at the endeavours of the terrorist organizations of positioning execution sentences in the wrong context. On the other hand, the international discourse on human rights situation in Egypt is misconceiving the issue of execution sentences. International criticism was directed against Egypt for the executions that took place during the months of October and November, ٢٠٢٠. Such executions were framed to look like a retaliation of political opponents. Something that is not only inaccurate but also cannot be interpreted in isolation of the context of the ongoing political feud that aims at undermining the efforts exerted by the NCHR and other human rights organizations that attempt to deal with the situation from a human rights perspective.

The NCHR could not draw such conclusion in isolation from the deliberate disinformation included in reports and decisions tackling the execution of ١٥ terrorists together with dozens of other criminal offenders. During the month of October, ٢٠٢٠, ١٥ terrorists were executed after receiving a final judgement of death penalty in three law



suits for committing dozens of terrorist crimes. Such crimes caused the death of ٢٠٠ Egyptians and the injury of ١٠٠ civilians and security officers.

Such terrorists stood trials before ordinary courts and were subject to fair legal measures and procedures, monitored by the NCHR. The judgements they received were subject to scrutiny of the Court of Cassation which monitored the trial proceedings. The Court of Cassation repealed or commuted some sentences and sometimes even acquitted the suspects.

The NCHR focuses on tackling the death penalty in general terms, as the executions comprised other criminal offenders who committed serious crimes that are not classified as terrorism crimes. Terrorism crime cannot be described as a political crime; as it does not originate from a political conflict. Moreover, a terrorism crime cannot be justified in any way, so as not to support terrorism which is categorized as a gross violation of human rights.

The NCHR acknowledges that the approach adopted by the President of the Republic in ratifying the execution of the offenders of the most serious crimes is the key to such a problematic issue. The President ratifies the execution of the offenders of the following crimes:

- (١) Murder crimes that take place in geographical and cultural context that might trigger vendetta if the murderer goes unpunished.
- (٢) Robbery-related homicide that undermines public security and causes loss of life.
- (٣) Rape cases specifically child rape cases.

Since assuming power, the president disfavours the ratification of thousands of final judgements issued in cases of drug trafficking and smuggling and other crimes. In other cases, he does not tend to ratify judgements of commuting death penalty to imprisonment.

The NCHR, however, still believes that there is an urgent need to address the legislative and judicial component of such an issue to disburden the executive power, represented in the mandate of the President of the Republic and to decrease the number of the death row inmates overcrowding the penitentiaries.

The NCHR is keen on following up measures to combat torture and abuse in pre-trial detention facilities. The NCHR expresses its appreciation to the competent authority, in particular, the Public Prosecution for conducting criminal prosecution and the Ministry of Interior for undertaking disciplinary measures. The outstanding efforts and the

transparent management of the affairs led to pushing down the rate of torture and abuse crimes as of ٢٠١٦. Such improvement is evident in the low number of serious complaints that were lodged at the NCHR. Furthermore, the Public Prosecution, most of the time, initiates investigations of incidents that were not formally reported, in its capacity as representative of the people.

However, the NCHR believes that there are more steps to be taken to totally eliminate such a practice. The most important step of all is carrying out a comprehensive legislative amendment of the Penal Code; to plug the legislative gaps that might allow for impunity in the future. The NCHR specifically proposes the approval of the amendment of Articles ١٢٦ and ١٢٩ of the Penal Code.

The NCHR expressed grave concern on the lenient sentences delivered to civilians who committed crimes of torture. Such gap is irremediable except through a legislative reform to render the gravity of crime on par with its punishment and to limit the use of clemency with civilians who commit such a serious crime.

Such amendment is needed now more than ever in light of the unprecedented stance taken by the United Nations' Committee Against Torture (CAT) in ٢٠١٧ which deemed torture as a rampant and systematic practice in Egypt. Such categorization, though based on torture cases that took place in past, yet it is a politicized categorization to undermine the present measures and efforts made by the government.

On October, ٢٠١٩, the NCHR discussed with its local and international partners means of combating torture in a conference that was held in Cairo under the title of "Anti-Torture Legislations and Mechanisms". The conference was supposed to have been convoked in partnership with the UN Office of Higher Commission of Human Rights (OHCHR) in Cairo, early September ٢٠١٩. The OHCHR, however, decided to postpone the Cairo conference under pressures practiced by some organizations. The NCHR decided to go head and hold the conference in partnership with the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR), the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) and Kemet Boutros Ghali Foundation for Peace and Knowledge. The conference was attended by a representative of OHCHR.

The conference was attended by ١٣٠ participants from ١٧ Arab countries representing national and local human rights organizations, international experts and around ٨٠ heads of human rights NGOs. The conference witnessed free debates on the drawbacks found in the Arab countries. The Egyptian situation was availed special attention through holding a transparent debate that brought together all human rights actors in Egypt including:

representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Prosecution and the Parliament representatives.

(To watch all the sessions of the conference click on the following link : <https://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=OLJVMLHaRC>.)

The conference devoted a recommendation on the current situation in Egypt calling for working towards plugging the legislative gaps; activation of mechanism of complaining, reporting and accountability and establishing a national mechanism to prevent torture.

In light of the discussions that the NCHR took part in, with some Egyptian NGOs and official institutions in the past three years, in addition to other relevant formal debate, the NCHR is reiterating its call to establish an independent mechanism for torture prevention. The NCHR believes such mechanism should be initiated by law and should have a clear mandate. The mechanism, whether a stand-alone mechanism or a mandate granted to the NCHR, should submit systematic recommendations on combating torture and improving the custody conditions; through joint action with the government and the Parliament. The mechanism should be entitled to receive reports and inspect their seriousness before referring it to the competent authorities; represented in the Public Prosecution. Such mechanism will not impede complainants from directly lodging their complaints at the Public Prosecution.

The mechanism is currently found in five Arab countries. They were established following the annexation of such countries to the Protocol of the Convention Against Torture. Launching similar mechanism in Egypt would be a good preparation for Egypt's annexing to the Protocol in the foreseeable future. The mechanism will serve in bolstering the efforts exerted by the national authorities in the domain of torture prevention.

On the level of **treating prisoners and other detainees**, the NCHR is hailing the intensification of the implementation of the measures of pardon and release on probation that started in ٢٠١٦. The mechanism of implementing such measures was promoted on January ٢٠١٨ by virtue of a Presidential decree. Forty-seven-thousand prisoners were released in ٢٠١٩, while other thirty-six-thousands were released by the end of ٢٠٢٠.

Such measures contributed largely in solving the problem of overcrowding of the public prisons. Such problem was nearly solved by the end of May ٢٠٢٠.

Since late May, ٢٠٢٠, the Prosecutor General issued directives that contributed to reducing the implementation of pre-trial detention measures. The Prosecutor General,

moreover, ordered the review of the status of those remanded in custody that resulted in taking important decisions of releasing, as mentioned above, around one thousand individuals remanded in custody since the September-۲۰۲۰-incidents and the ensuing cases pertinent to public affairs.

During the time of reporting, between October ۲۰۱۹ till February ۲۰۲۰, the NCHR conducted prison visits including: Al Qanatir Prison for Women on ۱۶/۱۰/۲۰۱۹, Al Marg Prison on ۲۳/۱۰/۲۰۱۹, Port Said Public Prison on ۳۰/۱۰/۲۰۱۹, Gamasa High Security Prison on ۱۳/۱۱/۲۰۱۹, Al Menia High Security Prison on ۴/۱۲/۲۰۱۹, Al Qanatir Prison for Women on ۲۷/۱۲/۲۰۲۰ and Tourah Prison on ۱۷/۱/۲۰۲۱. The visits were preceded by a period of discontinuation of such visits which the NCHR objected to in July ۲۰۱۹.

The NCHR published various summary reports on such various prison visits. The reports focused on the endeavours of the NCHR team to address the complaints of some inmates; inspect their conditions and tackle their complaints that proved to be valid.

The Public Prosecution set up high-level delegations to inspect some prisons and pre-trial detention facilities particularly the ones that caused recurrent complaints and claims. Some of such inspection visits that started in October ۲۰۱۹, got high media coverage. As of the beginning of October, ۲۰۱۹, the Human Rights Committee in the House of Representative resumed its visits to the prisons and police stations. The NCHR is looking for further promotion of the role of the House of Representative's Human Rights Committee in the future.

Between November ۲۰۱۹ and February ۲۰۲۰, the Prison and Media Sector in the Ministry of Interior, also, organized a number of symposia and inspection visits where media and NGOs were invited to attend. Such events came after a three-year stoppage of such visits.

The field visit approach took a new positive turn as the Ministry of Interior and the Public Prosecution fulfilled the request of the Arab Organization for Human Rights to organize visits for five prisons, starting by Al Marg Public Prison on December ۱۶, ۲۰۱۹. The visits were attended by two members of the NCHR, representatives of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights and the Italian Organization "Hand off Cain".

On March ۱۹, ۲۰۲۰, the COVID-۱۹ pandemic led to halting different visits undertaken by the human rights organizations and the family of prisoners. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Interior in collaboration with the Public Prosecution resumed allowing the visits of the NGOs of human rights to the prisons, as of December ۲۰۲۰.

However, the families of the prisoners were allowed to visit their imprisoned relatives as of September ۲۰۲۰.

Through the efforts exerted by the NCHR in detecting, following up and inspecting the complaints lodged at it; examining the claims that were raised in public spaces and communicating directly with the families and lawyers of the prisoners and those remanded in custody; the NCHR detected the preventive measures undertaken by the Ministry of Interior to protect the prisoners and those remand in custody from the outspread of the COVID-۱۹ pandemic. The NCHR hailed the measures taken to: safeguard social distancing in prisons and pre-trial detention centres; capitalize on the decisions of pardon and release-on-probation to reduce overcrowding of the prisons; decrease pre-trial detention decisions; upgrade the capacities of the healthcare facilities inside prisons to handle challenges and provide healthcare service to the remanded in custody in central prisons in the directorates and pre-trial detention facilities in the police stations.

The NCHR recommends that pardon and release-on-probation measures for convicts sentenced to terms in prison are practiced more frequently. The NCHR, also, recommends the introduction of the necessary amendments to guarantee that convicts sentenced to life in prison are not excluded, provided that cases are studied.

The NCHR recommends that the Public Prosecution would harness the efforts exerted in limiting to minimum the pre-trial detention decisions and to intensify endeavours to review the status of those remanded in custody on charges that do not include committing violent crimes by physical means including political opposition. The remanding in custody of political opposition members can be evaded by resorting to alternative measures until investigations and trial proceedings are concluded and the charges are proved. Such measures would reign in the ongoing controversies and inculcate confidence in the justice system.

### **III: Public Freedoms**

The methodology deployed by the security and judicial authorities in dealing with cases of public freedoms is still considered part and parcel of anti-terrorism measures and procedures. Such methodology was basically aimed at confronting instigation and calls for violence that became an integral part of the escalation, justification and political marketing of terrorism crimes. Such methodology was not wielded against the enemies of the State and the Constitution, but was unwarrantedly used against political opponents and critics.

The NCHR believes that such methodology exceeded its basic objectives and served as prop up to the discourse of the terrorist groups instead of undermining it through harnessing basic rights and promoting freedom of expression, publication and free flow of information.

On the level of **Freedom of Expression**, the reporting period witnessed a structural reform that demonstrated the validity of the assessment of the NCHR of the crisis from which the national media is suffering. The NCHR rightly perceived that the national media has fallen prey to a tug of war with the foreign media, in general, at one side and the false propaganda launched by the terrorist groups, in particular, on the other side.

On late December, ٢٠١٩, the country reinstated the Ministry of Information in its capacity as a state ministry: spearheading government-based media efforts and working jointly with specialized Constitutional Committees with independent mandate. The Prime Minister granted the Minister of Information ١٢ functions spanning different aspects of media work and exceeding the tasks of the former Ministry of Information of ٢٠١٥.

On June ٢٠٢٠, the set-up of the three media councils, the Supreme Council for Media Regulation, the National Press Authority and the National Media Authority, was subject to amendments. Such amendments proved that the assessment of the NCHR was right and that the State was fully cognizant of the media crisis.

Such amendments revived hope in reforming State-owned and private-owned national media, yet the features of reforming the relevant policies and statutes were not thrashed out until the time of the publication of the present report.

Among the priorities of the NCHR in such concern is reviewing the Penalty Regulations of the Supreme Council of Media Regulation and the relevant measures governing broadcasting and blocking of means of media communications and electronic websites. The NCHR expressed such concerns in its previous annual report.

In mid-٢٠٢٠, the State Minister of Information submitted a plan for the modernization and the development of the media. The plan was submitted to the Council of Ministers and to the President. The features of plan and the ensuing steps to actualize it, however, remain ambiguous.

On the other hand, the first session of the House of Representatives was concluded without the promulgation of the Freedom of Information Law. Such aspired-for-law is supposed to be in congruence with the Constitution and the international standards to safeguard the right to access and impart information freely. The law will create the necessary context to guarantee: freedom of expression and publishing, free flow of

information and the freedom of academic and scientific research. In the absence of such a law, the competent organizations and relevant bodies will be acting in a disparaging or contradictory manner.

On another note, the NCHR is looking forward to the adoption of a clearer policy on dealing with the decisions of the Public Prosecution and the Judiciary pertinent to banning running news on cause célèbre cases. Such decisions decrease transparency and restrict informing the society on contentious issues and arguable allegations.

On the level of the **Right to Assembly**, the NCHR hopes that the governors would determine sites where citizens, upon notifying the competent authorities, would be entitled to assemble in; to express their stances on certain issues. Such step would be in compliance with the Assembly Law and its amendments introduced in ٢٠١٧ upon the decision of the Supreme Constitutional Court.

The NCHR recalls that there is a local and international impression that the right to peaceful assembly in Egypt became banned. Naturally, the ban is unfavourable, yet it is associated with two essential factors. The first factor is that the State, in general, disapproves of protests and rallies. The second factor is that the governors do not exercise their authority to assign sites for the assembly of protesters upon the notification of the authorities.

Serious attention should be given to the fact that the authority's objection to the protest rally held by civil servants against the old Civil Service Law, four years ago in al Fustat Park, assigned by the governor for assembly, left an indelible impression that rallies and protests are banned by law. Although the civil servants' protest rally was illegal and was held in down town Cairo, the State responded to the demands of the protesters and amended the law.

The negative attitude of the authorities, however, gave an impression that legal assembly are frowned upon by the State, allowing the terrorist groups to launch their propaganda alleging that applicants for assembly permits are at risk of being arrested. Such a matter should be addressed without delay.

On the level of the **Right to Association**, though the Law no ١٤٩ of ٢٠١٩ of the NGOs, promulgated in the Formal Gazette on August ١٩<sup>th</sup>, ٢٠١٩, stipulates that the Bylaws of the Law of the NGOs must be promulgated within a maximum of six months, until the end of ٢٠٢٠, such Bylaws were never promulgated.

Delaying the promulgation of the Bylaws hampers the efforts and the activities of the NGOs including the potentials of the NGOs in containing the subversive effects of the

COVID-19 pandemic and the efforts exerted by human rights organizations in confronting the culture of extremism and terrorism.

Furthermore, the postponement of the promulgation of the Bylaws ties down the Ministry of Social Solidarity, being the competent authority enforcing the law, and hampers it from discharging its responsibilities and practicing its functions. The Ministry tries to comply with some Articles of the law that are clear-cut and decisive while being unable to enforce other Articles because of the absence of the Bylaws.

The beginning of the actual enforcement of the law will solve many problems that emerged during the past five years. If a law in congruence with the Constitution and international standards pertinent to the freedoms availed to the NGOs were ratified, such problems would have been avoided. Such freedoms were the subject of the decisions of the Supreme Constitutional Court.

Hopefully, the enforcement of the law would concur with the allowing some human rights organizations to harmonize their situations to satisfy the requirements of the law and stop being subject to the Corporate Law that triggered the prosecutions of some of their activists and organizations in the Spring of ٢٠١٦.

The NCHR is reiterating its call to immediately end the travel ban imposed on such activists and the freezing of their personal bank accounts. Such measures would make the new law an opportunity for the activists to subscribe to it and a chance to allay fears that triggered such a crisis leading to a comprehensive solution. Such measures should be coupled with opening channels of calm and constructive dialogue that brings together different human rights activists and the State authorities with the view of enhancing the future steps.

In November, ٢٠٢٠, three members of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, including Head of the Initiative Jasser Abdul Raziq, were arrested. They were accused of “cooperating with banned organizations and supporting terrorism”. The accusations angered human rights activist community and triggered resounding international criticism. Two weeks later, the activists were released amidst varied legal and political intervention that prompted the Initiative to apply to harmonize its situation to satisfy the requirements of the Law of the NGOs. This proved that the unregistered human rights - based organizations were willing to comply to and act in accordance with the law. Such willingness opens the door for addressing the crisis.

On the level of the **Right to Participate in the Management of Public Affairs**, despite of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government was keen on satisfying the entitlement of



holding the elections of the two Chambers of the Parliament: the House of Representatives and the Senate, that was introduced by virtue of the Constitutional Amendments of April 2019. This is considered a major breakthrough emphasizing the principle of holding elections periodically and bolstering democracy.

Though there were different reservations and observations on the elections, yet elections took place calmly and did not witness any violations that might undermine the results. The elections brought about the change of around two third of the members of the House of Representatives. The elections, moreover, recorded an increase of 0.7% in the number of party-list seats in the two chambers for quotas representation thus promoting the party representation in the two chambers of the Parliament.

The minimum quota allocated to women's representation jumped to reach 20% in the House of Representatives and 10% in the Senate. The actual rate of women's representation in the House of Representatives stood at 27% comprising the winners who were not included in the quota of the list, those who received half of the seats to which the President appoints to in the House of Representatives and 2.7% of the seats he appoints to in the Senate.

The NCHR set up an operation room to follow up the voting in the elections of the two chambers of the Parliament and to receive the relevant complaints. The operation room issued dozens of press releases and referred observations and verified complaints to the National Election Authority (NEA). NEA responded to the observations and addressed many of the complaints.

### **The Senate Election:**

According to the Constitutional Amendments approved on April 2019 and the Law of the Senate Promulgated on June 2020, the Second Chamber of the Parliament, called the Senate, shall be constituted of 300 seats: two third (200 seats) shall be filled by election and one third (100 seats) shall be filled by appointment by the President of the Republic.

The Senate guarantees a minimum representation of women of at least 10% of the total number of the seats of the Senate; including the individual seats distributed amongst 27 constituencies and the party-list seats distributed amongst the four constituencies according to the proportional representation that takes into account the demographic distribution.

The Senate is the competent body authorized to propose the amendment of one article or more of the Constitution; to discuss the General Plan for Socio-Economic Development and examine reconciliation, alliance treaties and all treaties pertinent to the sovereignty

rights. The Senate is, also, responsible for discussing: draft laws, draft laws complementary to the Constitution referred to the Senate by the President or the Speaker of the House of Representatives and issues referred to the Senate by the President related to the State's public policy or its policy on the Arab and foreign affairs. The Senate will inform the President of the Republic and the Speaker of the House of Representatives with its opinion on the matters referred to it in the manner specified in the Rules of Procedures of the Senate after holding its first meeting.

One list contested the election race on constituencies and was in need of at least 5% of the votes to win the seats. The list comprised a coalition of 11 parties of diverse political trends that would not last past the election process; due to the major differences in the ideological backgrounds and the political stances of the allied parties on public policy.

Some national political powers had reservations because the Senate Election Law adopted the closed list system instead of the proportional list system leading to poor competition on the party-list-system seats. Twenty-four political parties vied for 100 individual seats, while 260 party candidates out of 380 candidates took part in the election.

Elections were held under the full supervision and mandate of the National Election Authority (NEA), an independent organization. Such elections were considered the third major Constitutional entitlement supervised by the NEA since its inception in 2017. NEA has previously supervised 2018-Elections and 2019-Constitutional Amendments.

The NEA depends constantly on the judges in managing the election entitlement. NEA engaged around eighteen thousand judges to supervise the polling stations and sub-stations.

The elections ran in twenty-seven main polling stations covering all of the governorates. The number of the polling sub-station reached fifteen thousand (ballot boxes) all supervised by judges assisted by around one hundred and twenty thousand civil servants.

The big number of polling sub-stations safeguarded the prevention of overcrowding in compliance with the framework of the enforcing social distancing amongst voters and assisting them in reaching the ballot centres that are located near to their domiciles.

The number of the registered eligible voters exceeded sixty-three million voters. Citizens are automatically registered in database of the electorates once they reach the age of 18.

Around three hundred thousand police and military officers contributed to secure the headquarters of the polling stations against terrorist threats. In compliance with the

instruction of the NEA, all the staff and security forces operating in the polling stations and sub stations were subject to the supervision of the judges.

On August 11 and 12, 2020, balloting took place where 980 candidates competed over 200 seats accounting for two third of the total number of the seats of the Senate. The President appoints the remaining one third.

The elections ran uneventfully particularly due to the poor turnout of the electorates in the Senate Elections. The situation was typical of the election race of the Second Chamber of the Parliament that took place in the past few decades.

Among the most significant observations recorded by the operation room of the NCHR were:

- \* The poor level of awareness of the role and importance of the Senate, the Second Chamber of the Parliament.
- \* The limited time period that preceded the first round of the elections.
- \* The wide geographic area of the constituencies that prevented the voters from knowing the competing candidates.
- \* The adoption of the closed list system which led to poor turnout due to restricted competition, especially after the parties capable of running for elections set up one electoral alliance.
- \*Barring some licensed observers and media personnel from accessing the polling stations for some times.
- \*Delaying the opening of few polling stations.
- \* The voter rolls, in some polling stations, were excessively long.
- \* Situating few polling sub-stations in the second floor which hampered the access of senior citizens and people with disabilities to the polling station.
- \* The spread out of the supporters of some candidates in the vicinity of the polling stations and their attempts to influence the choice of the voters.

The NEA pointed out that turnout accounted for 14% of the registered electorates, which means that it was lower than the 2011- elections of the Second Chamber of the

Parliament. Such a fact calls for a revisit of the legislative aspect. The Senate convened for the first time on mid-October ٢٠٢٠, to formally commence its work after the President of the Republic appointed members to the ١٠٠ seats in accordance with the law. The appointees were a mix of public figures, experts and party leaders who did not run for the elections. The President, also, doubled the specified quota for the appointment of women in the Senate.

### **The Elections of the House of Representatives:**

The election of the House of Representatives, the First Chamber of the Parliament, ran during October ٢٤<sup>th</sup> and December ٢٠٢٠. The turnout rates recorded an increase of around ٣٠٪ in the two rounds.

The first phase of elections was held on October ٢٤<sup>th</sup> and ٢٥<sup>th</sup>, ٢٠٢٠ in ١٤ governorates including: El Giza, Al-Fayoum, Beni Suweif, Al Menia, Assuit, the New Valley, Sohag, Qena, Luxor, Aswan, the Red Sea, Alexandria, Al Behira and Marsa Matrouh.

The first phase of elections for Egyptians living abroad was held on October ٢١, ٢٢ and ٢٣, ٢٠٢٠.

The second and final phase was held on November ٧<sup>th</sup> and ٨<sup>th</sup>, ٢٠٢٠ in the densely populated governorates including: Cairo, Qalyubia, Dakahlia, Monufia, Sharqia, Gharbiya, Kafr El Sheikh, Damietta, Port Said, Ismailia, Suez, North Sinai and South Sinai.

Despite the outspread of the COVID-١٩ pandemic, it did not represent an obstacle that impeded the voters from participating in the elections; by virtue of the preventive health measures imposed by the NEA.

The NEA depended upon the judges to supervise the election processes inside the polling stations and sub-stations. Around three hundred thousand police and military officers secured the election processes against any potential terrorist attack.

According to the Election Law promulgated on mid-August ٢٠٢٠, the elections combined the list and individual systems, with ٥٠٪ for each system. The hybrid method constituted a key development that led to the increase of the number of the seats on the list from ١٠٠ to ٢٨٤ seats geographically distributed among four constituencies according to the demographic distribution.

Meanwhile, the number of the seats allocated to the individual seats dwindled from ٤٦٨ to ٢٨٤ seats, hence revitalizing the party life through enhancing the list system. Thirty-six political parties competed in the elections.

Despite all the significant developments that guarantee the stimulation of the political and party life and offer better quota representation for the vulnerable brackets of society to inculcate the principle of empowerment, deploying the closed list system instead of proportional list system drew strong criticism for wasting votes and restricting competition.

However, the most significant development featured in enhancing the rate of the participation of women in election by winning, at least, ٢٥% of the seats. The same applied for the vulnerable brackets of society including workers, farmers, people with disabilities, Egyptians living abroad and Christians.

Four lists vied over ٢٨٤ seats allocated to the list system. They were: “Min Adjel Misr” comprising ١٢ parties in four constituencies; Neda’a Misr in the two constituencies of Upper Egypt and Western Delta; Abna’a Misr comprising seven parties in the Eastern Delta constituency; Tahaluf al Mostaqliin comprising three parties in Cairo and the Southern and Central Delta constituencies.

Controversy peaked over campaign financing in the run-up to the elections, prior to the NEA’s decision of calling elections, during and after the elapse of the campaigning period. The NEA deemed it necessary to issue: Decree no ٦١/٢٠٢٠ on Following Up Elections; Decree no ٦٤/٢٠٢٠ on Measures Governing Campaigning; Decree no ٦٥/٢٠٢٠ Establishing Violation Detection Committee and Decree no. ٦٦/٢٠٢٠ Assigning Experts from the Ministry of Justice to Audit Electoral Campaigning Accounts.

Meanwhile, the nominees complained about the violation of the Decree no ٥٨/٢٠٢٠ on the electoral symbols. Some candidates claimed that the candidates of “Mostaqbal Al Watan Party”, and those of the national list of “Min Adjel Misr” were treated with favoritism in terms of assigning them their electoral symbols.

The Elections were marked by varying levels of turnout. Significant turnout was recorded in rural areas, while it came less than average in urban areas. The evident trend was that the majority of voters were set on voting for the candidates of the individual system. There was, also, an awareness deficit and a major confusion on the importance of voting for the list system too which led to the invalidation of some of the list-system ballot cards.

With regards to the positive aspects of the election process, they can be summarized as follows:

- \*Updating and cleansing the electorate database according to specific measures and without any intervention.

- \* Facilitating the registration of the local and international NGOs and media organizations to monitor the election process and allowing the registration of new international organizations to monitor elections like the International Organisation del la Francophonie.

- \* The superiority of the experience of the House of Representatives elections over that of the Senate in terms of: competition, turnout rates, media momentum, constituency zoning and demonstrating the importance of the House of Representatives in the political and institutional processes of the government.

- \* Increasing the number of polling sub-stations and ballot centres to encourage participation in the elections, yet in full compliance with the social distancing measures in place; to combat the outspread of COVID-19.

- \* Emphasizing the implementation of strict preventive health measures during the elections in the statements and directives issued the NEA and by the heads of the polling sub-stations.

- \* The security forces guarding the polling stations and the heads and supervisors of the polling stations observed exemplary behaviour in dealing with the local and international organizations monitoring elections. This proved that the recommendations submitted by the NCHR during the Senate elections were adopted.

- \* For the first time in the history of Egypt since 1926, appropriate security and legal measures were taken against vote buying transactions for individual seats that were conducted around the polling stations.

- \* Undertaking well controlled security intervention to breakup disputes between the supporters of the candidates in some constituency.

- \* Offering assistance to senior citizens and people with disabilities to facilitate their participation.

- \* Offering shaded waiting areas to protect voters from sunlight.

- \* Locating most polling stations on the ground floors in the ballot centres, with the exception of very few stations, to facilitate the participation of the voters particularly senior citizens and people with disabilities.

\* Setting up the NEA hotline to report complaints and to answer queries. The NCHR submitted a recommendation to such effect in the previous elections.

With regards to the negative aspects, they are:

\* Delaying the start of voting in some stations for a period ranging between 10 to 20 minutes.

\* Marked increase in campaign financing.

\* Using campaign finance in the competition over the individual seat away from of the ballot centres.

\* Crowding and mass transportation of the voters supporting the candidates vying on individual seats.

The NCHR submitted the following recommendations to the NEA:

- Enhancing controls over the selection of electoral symbols and the lineup of the candidates.
- Harnessing campaign finance control tools and implementing accountability and auditing measures to eradicate such phenomenon totally.
- Maintaining a high number of polling stations and ballot boxes to facilitate the participation of the voters.

The NCHR lauds the president of the Republic for the appointment of 14 women out of a total of 28 members to complete the seats of the Parliament.

#### **IV: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

Despite the challenges and repercussions created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the government succeeded - to a great extent - in containing the larger part of such repercussions. On the level of the economic performance, the government was able to achieve a positive economic growth rate that exceeded the population growth rate. However, social losses were sustained and their repercussions were aggravated affecting multiple sectors of the society at varying degrees. The gravity of such repercussions lays in the waning aspirations of the weaker brackets of the society in overcoming the social hardships that started to increase since the early nineties of the last century.

It is noteworthy to mention that the country shouldered more burdens specifically with the recession in tourism activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic; the continuous attempts of the terrorist organizations to undermine the stability; the threats caused by the escalation of tension in neighbouring Libya and the intransigence of Ethiopia in negotiating rights that are established by virtue of the International Law, threatening the time-honored quota of Egypt in the water of the Nile river.

On the level of **the Right to Decent Life**, the COVID-19 pandemic was the worst news covered by the present report specifically in the period between March and October 2020. The pandemic paralyzed different sectors and adversely impacted the economy pushing the country back to where it was two years ago or more.

As unemployment rates started to climb up after it showed a gradual decrease. Tourism and aviation sectors declined significantly causing damages to millions of workers benefitting from them. The incomes of large segments of the society shrank and the inflation rate continued to rise again. The country endeavoured to go on with its economic program as much as possible in parallel with the pandemic social mitigating measures. However, this resulted in increasing the suffering of some brackets of the society.

At the outset of the crisis, the country allocated USD 6 billion (EGP 100 billion) to mitigate the social impacts of the pandemic and to expand the capacities of the healthcare system. With the Egyptian standards such measures were important but what was actually spent exceeded double the aforementioned amount, yet it failed to contain the adverse social impacts of the pandemic.

The Council of Ministers though, made minor cuts in fuel prices, such cuts fell short of the cuts in the international prices of the fuel. Amidst social understanding of the economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government went on with the scheduled price hikes of different tiers of household electricity consumption slated for August 2020, causing a wide spread anger amongst the people.

People's anger was exacerbated because of cutting down the bread subsidy and decreasing the weight of the loaf from 110 to 90 gm. Such decrease did not constitute a crisis, per se, however the timing of adopting such a decision, on July 2020, within the context of the pandemic came in an inopportune time.

Moreover, the approval of what is dubbed as the "Construction Violation Reconciliation Law" and enforcing it by the beginning of July 2020, unleashed a lot of anger.



Though such public outrage did not undermine the people's support to the government, yet it had some side effects. Major protests took place in some twelve villages in the South of Giza and the North of Upper Egypt, in the wake of shutting down illegal brick factories which the majority of the inhabitants made their living from. Terrorist groups endeavoured to blow the filmed footages of such protests out of proportion relying on fabricated and incomplete truth.

It would have been better, if the Ministry of Economy were to take into consideration the level of the people's support to the economic reform programs that emanates from the magnitude and quality of the economic and social achievements that promote hopes for a better future. There should have been a better social impact assessment of the reform program on the middle and poorer classes in the past few years; as such impact was exacerbated by the pandemic.

For example, the bulk of the labour force in Egypt is employed by private enterprises. The largest segment depends more on the revenues generated from the profits and the turnover of the enterprises rather than relying on the basic salary. The overall activities of most of the private sectors were adversely impacted by the pandemic resulting in a decline in the domestic consumption of the national products. Hence many private enterprises were prompted to: cease its activities; layoff temporary and additional workers; decrease incomes and sometimes cut down basic salaries.

The success achieved by the Council of Ministers in providing: food commodities, strategic reserves, pharmaceutical needs to face increasing demand and financial support for the destitute while pushing on with the social protection programs and aid system cannot be underestimated. However, maintaining the same pace of the implementation of the economic reform program is not conducive to achieve public satisfaction and jeopardizes social and political stability.

On the level of the overall economic performance, the government resorted to borrowing from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other international financial institutions; to address the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and to maintain the continuity of work in a number of economic and social projects. This led to the burgeoning of the public and external debts thus diminishing the accomplished feats; as the public debt exceeded the GDP.

On the level of the **Right to Health**, the pandemic constituted a major challenge to the health system in the country that was still undergoing a long transitional period. Nonetheless, success was achieved in addressing different serious public health threats. The most prominent of such successes are: eradicating hepatitis C, screening chronic

diseases, adopting a mechanism to eliminate long waiting lists of urgent surgeries, guaranteeing offering State-funded treatment for critical conditions and launching the gradual enforcement of the universal health coverage draft law.

The needs that were magnified by the pandemic are still stretching the governmental health system potentials to its limits. The health care systems of wealthy and poor countries equally failed to contain the backlash of the pandemic. The government, however, through setting up the Coronavirus Management Crisis Committee headed by the President of the Republic, was able to largely contain the fallout of the pandemic. Nevertheless, the pandemic remains a major threat that may get worse.

The government was keen on following up and communicating with major pharmaceutical companies around the world to conclude early purchase deals of the vaccines which the world was racing to produce to curb the outbreak of the pandemic. The government concluded large procurement deals with the aim of satisfying the national needs of different kinds of the vaccines. The government, moreover, earmarked the necessary financial allocations for such purpose, despite the hardships it is facing.

The pandemic was an acid test for the health care system. The conclusions drawn by the NCHR, throughout the past three years, proved right. The NCHR perceived the utmost importance of the steps taken by the government to buttress, though with great difficulty, the national pharmaceutical sector. Such steps were quintessential in furnishing the country with the tools to address the pandemic, whether on the level of the national potentials of producing high demand drugs or on the level of doubling the production capacity to supply the needed quantities of the drugs to combat the pandemic. This happened in tandem with the continuous supply of sufficient quantities of drugs to satisfy the national demand to treat other diseases.

Enhancing medical scientific research potentials had its significant effects; as the national research centres in Egypt were capable of coping up with the continuous developments relevant to finding a vaccine in the world. Moreover, the national research centres were able to swap expertise on the current researches carried out in a number of countries. Such centres were capable of comprehend experiences and comparative case studies that proved useful in drafting the national action plan to combat the pandemic.

The government was able to effectively respond to the challenges of the COVID-19. Among the most prominent responses undertaken by the government was extending moral and financial support to the medical teams who lost their lives combating COVID-19. The government offered healthcare services to the members of such medical teams and compensate their families if they lose their lives in the line of duty.

However, there are still gaps that could not be bridged by the government's efforts; as in the case of the need to enhance the national potentials of appropriate screening and detection of the COVID-19. The government top ranking officials acknowledged to such deficiencies in their statements where they have claimed that the estimated number of cases are 10 to 20 times more than the official recorded cases.

Poor screening and tracking potentials of the country resulted in classifying Egypt among the highest in the world in mortality rates. The accuracy of such ranking cannot be understood in isolation from assessing the screening and tracking potentials.

Unfortunately, citizens and expatriates resorted to private owned healthcare institutions to undergo COVID-19 virus test at exorbitant prices to evade overcrowding in public hospitals or to surpass the long medical measures stipulated by the Ministry of Health before taking the virus test.

Despite all the government endeavours to combat the pandemic through upgrading the potentials of the healthcare system and offering the needed supplies, there is an urgent need to double the numbers of the ventilators. A need that is hard to satisfy in the light of the lack of the domestic potentials for production of such equipment.

The most serious of gaps lay in the failure of the government to regulate the activities of the private-owned and investor-owned hospitals, accounting for 40% of the potentials of the healthcare services in the country, within a framework of an action plan to combat the COVID-19. The government failed to engage such hospitals to implement the governmental action plan or to price their COVID-19 - related services at affordable prices. These private hospitals, whether those which adhered to the price limits set by the government or those who did not, are overpricing their services to exceed world levels.

The pandemic test calls for an overview of the priorities. The NCHR believes that the implementation of the universal health insurance coverage system can no longer be delayed. The pace of the implementation of the project should be accelerated to cut it down to a minimum.

On the level of **the Right to Housing**, the efforts of the country bear fruit. The government succeeded in finishing the biggest phase of establishing one million social-housing unit project. Around 400 thousand housing units have been finished. Meanwhile, around 500 thousand units were delivered, while work is ongoing to finish the construction of around 300 thousand units that should have been finished by the end of 2020.

The social housing project is considered as an important historic project. It eliminated the housing crisis which Egypt has been suffering from since the seventies of the past century. The project contributed, to some extent, in curbing the unjustified hikes in the real estate property prices and rental values. Moreover, the government implemented a middle-income housing project that comprised the construction of around ٥٠٠ thousand residential units. Both projects led to the establishment of ١٢ new residential cities addressing the overpopulation problem in the narrow valley. The new cities complement the new industrial cities through a network of roads that guarantees linking houses to workplaces, production areas and available services. By the end of ٢٠١٩, the government embarked on setting up nine new cities.

Furthermore, there are ongoing projects to establish integrated decent communities to accommodate the inhabitants of the most dangerous squatter areas. The inhabitants are offered furniture and other necessities required by the citizens of the poorest brackets of society.

The government, in the New Administrative Capital and the New Alamein city, preserved the share of the private sector investing in real estate property development. The government offered facilitations to the private sector real estate developers expected to construct around ٦٠٠ thousand luxury housing units. Such projects aim at establishing communities that stimulate and revitalize the economy and utilize the resources in a way that galvanizes foreign investment.

The government, moreover, continues working on a number of pilot projects to utilize the exceptional locations occupied by the squatter areas; in accordance with agreements concluded with legal owners of such areas. The aim of such pilot projects is to establish integrated residential and commercial projects while giving precedence to the owners of such areas in finding housing units and landing jobs opportunities in the projects.

During the reporting period, the government embarked on another historic undertaking in compliance with the Constitution. Such undertaking was disbursing compensations and offering alternative housing units to the inhabitants of Nuba who were evicted from their villages prior to the inception of Aswan dam in ١٩٠٢ and the High dam in ١٩٦٠.

The NCHR, while hailing the-all-and-out efforts exerted in such regards, it calls upon the Specialised Compensation Committee for the Nuba Region to be cognizant of the fact that the beneficiaries are dispersed inside Egypt and abroad in a manner that might hinder delivering their dues and houses to them. In a case that was followed up by the NCHR, the traveling of one member of the family and the inability to communicate with him

deprived the other members of the family from receiving their dues. Hence the NCHR is calling for the establishment of a flexible mechanism to better address such situations.

The government was able to provide a modern infrastructure to the newly developed urban communities in the new cities, districts and industrial and service areas. Such efforts concurred with revamping the main rural and urban infrastructure networks and complementing the missing parts of them. On the other hand, the government's energy production was tripled compared to ٢٠١٠, generating a surplus of ١٨% to be exported over the electricity connectivity projects. During ٢٠٢٠, the energy offered to the Sudan was doubled to assist it in plugging the energy gap. Moreover, the energy offered East to Gaza Strip and West to Barqa region in Libya increased. The government decided to establish a railway road to Wadi Halfa in the Sudan to actualize the dream of land connectivity. Meanwhile, researches on extending a railway road to Benghazi in Eastern Libya were concluded with the view of availing the necessary prerequisites to affect a major economic and urban boom.

On the other hand, within the framework of a comprehensive EGP ٢٠٠-billion-plan, notwithstanding the water scarcity and the threats related to the flagrant violations of Ethiopia to the International Laws of International Rivers, Egypt doubled its water productions from desalination water plants; producing four folds what was produced in ٢٠١٥. The government, also, launched a new plan called "Canal Lining" to reduce the waste caused by the seepage of enormous quantities of water into the sand. The plan includes a component for the overall rehabilitation of the canals to combat environmental violations and encroachments. The government, also, pushed forward with its efforts to utilize the flood water through rerouting the flood streams to enhance subterranean water; securing the protection of natural basins of the subterranean aquifers; using the water that cannot be stored for the reforestation of the desert and mountainous areas, in addition to harnessing the protection of the environmental protectorates.

On the Level of the **Right to Education**, the two-year-achievements of the Education Reform Plan were a good prelude to confront the repercussions of the COVID-١٩ during ٢٠٢٠. Schools were closed down to secure social distancing and to reign in the spread of the virus as of March ٢٠٢٠. Face-to-face teaching was replaced by remote online modes through already existing electronic platforms, establishing new ones or through the television.

The second semester examinations of the basic, secondary and university level education took the shape of theme-based researches. The themes were selected to bridge the gaps in the curricula- presentation. The results of examinations of the first semester were taken into consideration.

The Third Secondary Education Certificate Examinations (equivalent to ICSE), held once every year, put the potentials of the government to the test. The examinations were held under strict measures to prevent the spread out of the virus and safeguard social distancing by keeping the density inside examination committees to less than one third. Students were given chances to be excused, postpone or withdraw from the examination without considering the academic year among the allowable times of failure.

By the beginning of the new academic year २०२०/२०२१, schools and universities started operating in compliance with the Preventive Measures Regulations; reducing the numbers of the students by cutting the school day to half; pushing down the number of lectures and classes to less than २०% and making up for the unexplained parts of the curricula by online and on-television teaching. A Containment Plan is in place in case of enforcing schools' lockdown.

It is worth noting that focusing on online-teaching was among the benefits of the COVID-19 pandemic. It accelerated the implementation of distant learning mode two years prior its scheduled time. However, the positive aspect cannot hide the fact that many students do not necessarily possess the essential requirements of distant learning. Meanwhile on-television teaching does not allow for discussion, inquiring and improving the level of attainment.

Among the priorities topping the agenda of the education during the upcoming period is accelerating the provision of the essential requirements of the online learning together with enhancing the monitoring mechanism of the performance of the teaching staff to make sure that the needs of the students are catered for.

The second positive side of the pandemic fallout is the decline of private lesson phenomenon, a major cause of anxiety for the parents that stretches the potentials of the families to the limits. Such positive aspect was culminated in shutting down the private lesson centres for violating the measures of cutting down on crowding and keeping social distancing. The Third Secondary Education School students attended the private lesson centres due to their sense of isolation, being unable to go to schools, and due to their total reliance on the private lessons.

In २०२०/२०२१, the relationship between the authorities and the private lesson centres ebbed and flowed between closure and supervised licensing, but the continuous overcrowding, disregarding preventive measures and overlooking social distancing led to their shutting down.

Hopefully, the government, within the framework of reforming and modernizing education, would exert more efforts to ban private lessons by law; to alleviate the burdens of the families. While recognizing the importance of increasing the salaries of the teachers to avail them decent lives, many teachers who offer private lessons would not be satisfied with such increase; as they got used to being overpaid. Hence strict enforcement of the law should be in place to alleviate such burdens.

On the level of **the Right to Work**, the rates of unemployment are spiraling up again due to the pandemic. Unemployment rates jumped from an average of ۷% to ۱۲% within seven months after recording a nosedive from ۱۲% to ۷% during the past five years.

Prior to the COVID-۱۹ pandemic, the government gave due attention to the workers of the informal sector of the economy through adopting multiple paths. On one hand, the government offered the informal enterprises incentives and advantages to encourage them to legalize their situations through offering exemption and aid. On the other hand, the government launched the initiative of the President of the Republic to offer insurance coverage to the workers in the informal sector, particularly itinerant and day laborers. The initiative issues increased value banking insurance policy for the benefit of informal sector laborers.

Within the framework of containing the repercussions of the COVID-۱۹ pandemic, the government opened the door for financial aid applications for those impacted by the coronavirus lockdown and the decline in the economic activities. The Ministry of Labour received financial aid applications from some half a million laborers. Each applicant received EGP ۵۰۰ in financial aid/month for three months that was extended for an extra three months. The financial aid is expected to continue for a similar period of time in light of the continued pandemic and its deplorable repercussions.

Despite such positive developments, the government failed to enforce measures to commit the private sector to establish an appropriate minimum wage level and to offer the laborers comprehensive insurance coverage. Such failure is deemed as a serious drawback that should be addressed as a priority. The pandemic demonstrated an urgent need to achieve development in such regards, especially in the wake of closing down of many private sector enterprises, laying off laborers and depriving them from suitable insurance coverage.

The absence of the role of labor associations and syndicates in acting on behalf of affected workers and launching negotiations to address their issues is deplorably noticeable.

As for trade unions, though possessing the potentials to safely manage and run their own affairs and to offer support and insurance coverage to their staff, yet the majority of them do not possess enough clout to take similar measures to serve the best interest of their members. The pandemic caused a significant dip in the income of various tradesmen, proving the necessity of tackling the situation through implementing legislative measures and agreement with the government.

The NCHR recommends holding emergency meetings with the leaders of trade unions to reach to a suitable agreement to provide insurance coverage to the trade union members according to unified standards. Moreover, the meetings should tackle reaching an agreement with the government that would allow the associations to be involved in insurance protection system and to permit them to adopt additional measures through special funds according to the individual potentials of every association.

On the level of the **Cultural Rights**, the NCHR hails the efforts of the government in combatting the culture of extremism and violence. The NCHR is looking forward for the integration of the efforts of the CSOs, in general, and human rights organizations, in particular, with the cultural reform efforts to buttress civic culture and give preponderance to the values of the dialogue and diversity through means of cultural, educational and media communications.

The NCHR, also, welcomes the projects of establishing a number of cultural identity - specific museums that harness and develop the public awareness of the cultural diversity values. Such museums include: Grand Egyptian Museum and other museums specialized in certain historical or various cultural aspects in compliance with the deeply rooted values of the Egyptian society including: tolerance and patriotism.

The NCHR would like to express its appreciation for the measures taken by the government, over the past four years, regarding the legalization of the situation of around ٢٠٠٠ churches and church service centres. Moreover, permits were issued for the establishments of new churches, in addition to the initiative of the government to establish churches and mosques in the new urban communities to promote religious freedom and support the culture of citizenship.

The NCHR would like to hail the positive cooperation between the NCHR and the Governor of Menia in addressing a number of sectarian tensions in some villages affiliated to the governorate. Such cooperation is a model to be emulated in terms of the ability to defuse the crisis and enhance social peace.



## **Recommendations**

Developing a three-year package of intensive positive steps that are easily monitored to plug all the remaining gaps and achieve minimum limits in some important matters; especially in terms of expanding public domains. Such matters will inevitably be revitalized by virtue of the advances already achieved in other aspects specially in the domains of women, youth, religious freedom and social and economic rights.

Acknowledging that all the aspired for efforts, covered during the reporting period, were subject to detailed discussions and consensus within the framework of cordial formal dialogues that brought together the NCHR, government officials, representatives from the legislative and judicial authorities and some pioneering human rights organizations.

Expediting the implementation of such coveted steps on the short term is the only way forward. There is no point in tarrying in adopting and implementing positive steps that were already decided upon. Such delay would undermine such steps and would not help the country in responding to warranted and unwarranted local and international criticism.

Such steps cannot be achieved if human rights did not top the national action agenda.

## **Recommendations**

The NCHR presents a limited number of recommendations that would constitute priorities that should be quickly addressed. They are by order of importance as follows:

- The full positive enforcement of the Law of the NGOs and halting the prosecution of some human rights activists. Such two issues top the priorities of human rights action in the country. They open the door for joint activities and interaction between the CSOs, in general, the human rights organisations, in particular and the different institutions of the government.
- Developing the proposed amendments on the Criminal Procedure Law and approving them as soon as possible.
- Reviewing and modernizing the penal legislations in the light of the outcomes of the rounds of discussions held, in the past two years, with the participation of the NCHR, the CSOs and the competent authorities.
- Reiterating the call to enact a law that mandates the NCHR of an independent National Anti-Torture Mechanism.

- Ratifying the draft law on establishing the National Commission for Combatting Discrimination, in compliance with Article ๑๗ of the Constitution.
- Reviewing the Penalty Regulations of the Supreme Media Committee with a view of mitigating website blocking.
- Engaging human rights organizations in combating cultures of terrorism and extremism.
- Promoting efforts exerted to reform educational curricula by bolstering the culture of diversity, values of peace and human rights.
- Expediting holding local elections to contribute to the revitalization of the political life and harness outcomes of development on local levels
- Assessing the economic policy impact on the middle class.
- Establishing an independent national committee for combating corruption in congruence with the commitment of the Country with the International Convention Against Corruption.

As for (๒๐๒๑-๒๐๒๔), the NCHR expects active participation from different governmental competent institutions and various sectors of the CSOs to contribute to the actualization of the mandate of the NCHR by laying down a Comprehensive National Plan to Promote Human Rights.