



# Propaganda vs. Reality

'Systematic Violations of Inmates  
Rights in Badr "Model" Prison



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## **Systematic Violations of Inmates' Rights in Badr "Model" Prison**

December 2025



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**The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) has been working since 2002 to strengthen and protect basic rights and freedoms in Egypt, through research, advocacy and litigation in the fields of civil liberties, economic and social rights, and criminal justice.**

**For more information see <https://eipr.org/en>**

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## Introduction

In a TV telephone interview in September 2021, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi announced the imminent inauguration of a prison complex in Wadi al-Natrun, to be Egypt's largest and the first of seven or eight similar complexes. He said its inmates would "serve their sentences humanely and decently ... movement, sustenance, healthcare, social and cultural care, and rehabilitation, in a similar system to that of American prisons"<sup>1</sup> and that "no one will be punished twice."

If these remarks sounded generally promising, the reference to US prisons was not. During the 2020 UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review the US had received more than 50 international recommendations, including that it close its illegal prisons, most of all Guantanamo, and improve conditions in prisons within its territory, reducing overcrowding, for example, and police and prison officials' mistreatment of prisoners.<sup>2</sup> The US has a notoriously bad record on prisons and punishment, especially compared to other industrialized countries or so-called established democracies.

Three months after the president's remarks, another prison complex was opened in Badr City with three sub-centers. It was reported that the two new complexes would replace 11 old prisons, containing a quarter of Egypt's prison population, that would be evacuated and demolished.<sup>3</sup> Soon after, the public utility status of some of the empty prisons, some built 140 years ago, was removed.<sup>4</sup> The ownership of their buildings and land was transferred from the Ministry of Interior to the public treasury and registered as the private state property in preparation for their disposal for investment purposes.<sup>5</sup>

A month before Sisi's remarks, the Ministry of Interior had announced several formal changes to the legal texts on prisons.<sup>6</sup> These were later approved under legislative amendments to the Prisons Organization Law; the Prisons Authority became the Community Protection Sector and "prisoners" were now "inmates" in "correctional and rehabilitation centers."<sup>7</sup>

1 «American version.. Sisi: The largest prison complex in Egypt to be inaugurated within weeks», Al-Shorouk newspaper, 16 September 2021, link: <https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=16092021&id=3d65c0ea-0cbf-44db-85b0-d8455910166>

2 Universal Periodic Review - United States of America, Third Cycle, Matrix of recommendations, 9 November 2020, link: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/us-index>

3 Yousry El-Badry, Al-Masry Al-Youm, «Inmates of 12 prisons evacuated and transferred to the new correctional and rehabilitation centers», 2 January 2022, link: <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2495789>

4 Under Presidential Decree No. 311 of 2022, the state became owner of the Appeals Prison in Cairo's Bab al-Khalq, approved as a central prison by Interior Supervisor Mustafa Fahmy on 24 June 1901 under Khedive Abbas Helmy II. Under Presidential Decree No. 461 of 2023, it became owner of Tora Prison, established during the reign of Khedive Tawfik for those sentenced to hard labor by decision of Interior Supervisor Abdel Qader Helmy on 14 April 1885.

5 Muhammad Napoleon, Al-Manassa, «In preparation for disposing it... Ownership of the lands of 9 security directorates and prisons transferred to the Ministry of Finance», 24 July 2024, link: <https://manassa.news/news/18625>

6 Yousri El-Badri, Hamdi Dabsh, Al-Masry Al-Youm, «The Ministry of Interior: Changing the name of the «Prisons Authority» to «Community Protection Authority», 1 August 2021, link: <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2388511>

7 By virtue of Law No. 14 of 2022 issued on 20 March 2022.

At the end of 2021 the Ministry of Interior announced the start of the “trial operation” of the Badr Correctional and Rehabilitation Center as an “integrated security facility.”<sup>8</sup> The prison began operating about six months later, receiving pretrial detainees and convicts from various prisons amid hopes that their detention conditions would improve. The transfer process was not gradual or well considered, as the Prisons Authority did not officially inform any of the detainees or their families about their transfer dates or new locations. Confused families had to ask in multiple places to reestablish contact with their incarcerated relatives.

In the four years during which Badr Prison Complex has been operating, two contrasting narratives have emerged. The government has praised conditions inside the complex in the wake of a handful of official visits. Detainees and their families and lawyers, however, have pointed to dire conditions and the escalation of various forms of violence against them. The new institutional arrangements and new technologies introduced to the prison administration system, now used punitively, have facilitated and systematized violence against detainees. Placement in the new prisons is thus a double punishment, whether detainees are held in pretrial detention without conviction or serving jail terms. At the time of writing, the Badr Complex is depriving many detainees of basic rights such as exercise, reading, and visits, which would require no additional spending, structural modernization, or new buildings, but only a decision.

In September 2022 the families of some Badr Prison Complex detainees complained to the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) about deteriorating conditions, reminiscent of conditions some detainees were held in for periods of up to eight years at the notorious maximum-security at Tora, commonly referred to as “the Scorpion Prison”, completely deprived of visits and medical care.<sup>9</sup> The families’ complaints specified that the detainees were being held in cells that were brightly lit around the clock, under constant surveillance through cameras installed in every cell, in addition to problems with plumbing and exercise areas. Also, some detainees in Badr 3 Prison were denied visits. As complaints proliferated, NCHR member Walaa Gad al-Karim said that the problems were caused by “post-transfer confusion” and that, having sent all the complaints to the Public Prosecution and the Interior Ministry, the council was waiting for their response. Three years have now elapsed since the complaints were sent, and no response from the Public Prosecution or Interior Ministry has been announced.<sup>10</sup>

During the last quarter of 2022, news spread of the death of five prisoners inside Badr 3 Prison,<sup>11</sup> which had received most of the detainees from Scorpion Prison. According to reports, most of the

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8 The official account of the Egyptian Ministry of Interior on YouTube, a film entitled «A New Beginning» on the occasion of the opening of the Badr Correctional and Rehabilitation Center, link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rx-Wc\\_GtiI\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rx-Wc_GtiI_c)

9 «After they were transferred to Badr 3 Prison, families of prisoners complain about continued ill-treatment», Mada Masr, published on 27 September 2022, last visited on 12 March 2023. Link: <https://tinyurl.com/2uzbyrxd>

10 «New Prisons and Updating Violations», Mada Masr, published on 12 November 2022, last visited on 12 March 12, 2023. Link: <https://tinyurl.com/yeymfexv>

11 See the sources associated with each case in chapter IV of this report.

reported deaths were caused by a lack of or inadequate healthcare, including poor or inadequate response during serious health crises. In 2023 and 2024, leaked news and messages attributed to Badr Complex detainees indicated that strikes were being staged and suicide attempts made to protest the poor detention conditions or the very fact of their imprisonment, as some have been in pretrial detention for years without conviction or trial. The Interior Ministry denied the reports without announcing investigations into any of them.

This report is divided into four main parts. The first follows the process of transferring detainees from different prisons to the Badr Complex to understand whether the Ministry of Interior, represented by the Prisons Authority, was administratively prepared for this huge process, whether the new prisons were ready to receive detainees, and how suitable they are for living in by the standards upheld by Egyptian laws and international conventions. The second part examines the prison infrastructure, including the shape and division of cells, based on testimonies received by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) and comparing them to the claims of the Interior Ministry in its promotional films about the “new correctional and rehabilitation centers.” The third part assesses detainees’ living conditions, specifically their ability to exercise their constitutional and legal rights to exercise, food, appropriate healthcare, and communication with the outside world through visits and correspondence, in addition to the impact of the prison’s remote location on their families, especially in the absence of a good transportation network. Finally, the fourth part shines light on the context of the reported strikes and suicide attempts and follows how the competent authorities deal with such reports.

## Methodology and challenges

This report was based on a qualitative research methodology carried out intermittently for three years after the inauguration of the Badr Correctional and Rehabilitation Center in December 2021 and extended until the end of 2024 - the length of the period covered within this report. Information from primary sources about the reality inside Egyptian detention facilities is generally difficult to access.

Ensuring accuracy and scientific integrity in writing this report required additional effort, as there is no official periodic, detailed data on conditions inside the Badr Security Complex. Given the scarcity of official visits, which merely praise the conditions without providing any real detail, and the inability of any independent civil society organization to visit Egyptian prisons - direct communication with current detainees is impossible. EIPR was able to infer the conditions of a number of detainees in Badr 1 from what they tell their families during visits, which are not always detailed due to the short duration of the visits, which in turn are closely monitored by security personnel. The situation is different in Badr 3, where testimonies agree that conditions are similar to those in Al-Aqrab Prison, where visits are prohibited for the vast majority of detainees. Remote detention renewal hearings via video conference are the only way to ascertain their conditions, that is, if they were allowed to speak. We have not yet been able to communicate directly with any of the families of Badr 2 detainees.

This attempt to narrate the experience of being detained in the Badr Center relies on three main sources. First, official news and reports issued by various government agencies regarding the complex. Second, the testimonies of former detainees and the families of current detainees and their lawyers, through personal interviews, their relevant social-media posts, and/or their statements to the press or human rights organizations. Third, a legal analysis of Egyptian laws and international conventions and rules related to detention, enabling comparison between the official narrative and the accounts of detainees, families, and lawyers as well as an understanding of the extent of commitment of relevant authorities to implementing those laws and conventions, and whether those laws require amendment.

EIPR conducted interviews, either face to face or over the phone with families of current detainees in Badr 1 and Badr 3, as well as with former detainees in Badr 1, in addition to interviewing two families of former Badr 1 and Badr 3 detainees. EIPR also interviewed lawyers of detainees in Badr 1 and Badr 3 who regularly attended hearings on the renewal of those detainees' pretrial detention. Whether those hearings were held by the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) or the terrorism circuits convening at the Badr Court, the hearings were sometimes the only opportunity for communication with the detainees.

The interviews and research questions in this report concern "political" prisoners and not ordinary criminal detainees, who are usually held separately. Egyptian prisons tend to publicly and unequivocally put detainees into one of two categories, criminal and political, but this classification is illegal. There is no reference to it in the law or in any regulations. "Political" detainees are those accused of or sentenced on charges related to protest, or terrorism, or publishing "false news" with the purpose of undermining national security; and are usually interrogated by the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) while awaiting trial. Criminal detainees are accused of or sentenced on a swathe of other



charges such as those related to murder, robbery, drug trafficking, debauchery, or any other offense in the Penal Code that is not among the abovementioned political offenses.

After the Badr Prison Complex started operating in mid-2022 and detainees arrived, they found that Badr 1 and Badr 3 were for male political detainees and that Badr 2 was for male criminal detainees, with female detainees held in a special center affiliated to it.

## Prison design and division

In February 2016, the New Urban Communities Authority approved the allocation of 81 acres under the asset transfer system for the construction of new police facilities. (The interior minister had requested 100 acres.) The site was located north of the park in Badr City (55km northeast of Cairo).<sup>12</sup> The decision did not indicate that the area would be used for detention facilities of any kind.<sup>13</sup> On 30 December 2021, in a short film entitled *A New Beginning*, the Ministry of Interior announced the opening of the Badr City "Security Complex" on 85 acres including the 81 allocated to the Interior Ministry.<sup>14</sup> EIPR has not been able to find out how the additional four acres were transferred to the Ministry of Interior or whether they were allocated to the Ministry of Justice by a separate decision since the complex includes courts.

On 15 December 2021, just 15 days before the inauguration of the Badr Correctional and Rehabilitation Center, then Minister of Interior Mahmoud Tawfik issued Decree No. 2400 of 2021 establishing three correctional and rehabilitation centers "as public prisons to implement custodial penalties" in accordance with the Prisons Organization Law.<sup>15</sup> The Ministry repeatedly announced that the Center was intended for short-term sentences.<sup>16</sup> This does not contradict the Prisons Organization Law,<sup>17</sup> which allocates public prisons to convicts sentenced to more than three months up to life and imprisonment with hard labor, and to foreigners for certain reasons specified by the interior minister.<sup>18</sup>

Contrary to Egyptian law and to Rules 11 and 12 of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), Egyptian prisons do not separate convicts from those in pretrial detention. The Badr public prisons have received countless pretrial detainees, some already held far beyond the legal maximum period of pretrial detention. Lawyer Ibrahim Metwally, for example, arrived at Badr 3 after more than four years of detention without trial; he is now serving his eighth year in pretrial detention, in serious violation of the law. Other examples include Mahmoud Shaaban

12 The Authority's Board of Directors Resolution in its meeting No. (91) on 22/2/2016 regarding the letter of the Minister of Interior to approve the allocation of 100 acres in Badr City for the establishment of police facilities under the Asset Transfer System. <http://newcities.gov.eg/about/Decisions/dispdec.aspx?ID=146>

13 The decision specified that police facilities would be established on the land of Badr City allocated to the Ministry of Interior exclusively, as follows: camps for the various ministry bodies in charge of securing the New Administrative Capital, centers for receiving and distributing recruits, a training center for security forces, and training and rehabilitation centers for non-commissioned police officers and police representatives and assistants.

14 Ibid.

15 The Official Gazette, Edition 282, the decision was issued and published on 15 December 2021 and came into effect as of 16 December 2021.

16 Ibid

17 See Articles 3, 4 and 94 of the Prisons Organization Law No. 396 of 1956.

18 The Minister of the Interior may also allocate public prison places for the reception of foreigners to be held temporarily before deportation in accordance with the law regulating the entry, residence, and exit of foreigners, and they shall be treated as the Minister of the Interior determines.

and Ehab Goha, transferred to Badr 1 after exceeding the legal maximum of pretrial detention.<sup>19</sup>

According to the abovementioned Interior Ministry propaganda film, the Badr Complex includes the Badr Correctional and Rehabilitation Center, or "Integrated Security Facility," which consists of three sub-centers – which in fact are independent public prisons – and a special center for female inmates. Each sub-centers includes wards of unspecified number and capacity, a dining hall, a kitchen, a bakery, and Muslims and Christian places of worship. The film also indicates that there are places for inmates with special needs, rehabilitation workshops, a library, technical education classrooms, spaces for arts and crafts, outdoor recreation areas, and a central 175-bed hospital. Indoor spaces for exercise exist but are not featured in the film. The Ministry of Interior film states that a central command building "controls the operation of the system technologically," and that a court complex with four "administratively separate" courtrooms, each with a capacity for 100 people, "spares the inmates the trouble of transfer to distant courts."

In theory, the Badr Complex has three public prisons for receiving detainees with the same legal status, but in practice each has its own classification. Badr 1 is for pretrial detainees and those sentenced in political cases. Badr 3 is treated as an alternative to the maximum security Tora Prison (te Scorpion), receiving pretrial detainees and convicts in more serious political cases; Badr 3 inmates face harsher treatment than those in Badr 1, with the vast majority of inmates denied their most basic rights such as exercise and visitation. Badr 2 is for those detained in criminal cases, with a detention center for female prisoners attached.

**Image 1: The security complex in Badr City.**



<sup>19</sup> EIPR, Five years of pretrial detention... EIPR calls for the immediate release of Ehab Goha in order to preserve his life, 30 October 2024, link: <https://tinyurl.com/mpu3bfbr>

## First: A poorly planned transfer

The sudden transfer of prisoners to the Badr Complex imposed a long and unexpected pause on communication between prisoners and their relatives, who had no way to find out if transfers had occurred. As the administrations of the prisons where their relatives had been held gave them no conclusive information, the families were forced to travel successively in three directions – to the Tora Prison south of Cairo, the Badr Complex east of Cairo, and the Wadi al-Natrun complex north of Cairo – in attempting to find out where they were, often to still have their questions go unanswered. Families were keen to bring personal belongings and money to the new prison because “confiscation” after relocation is a well-established practice in Egyptian prisons, and always happens when a prisoner is moved to a new one or even a new ward in some cases.<sup>20</sup>

This part of the report focuses on how the Prisons Authority dealt with the mass transfer of detainees, as well as tracking the conditions of detainees during their first months in the Badr Complex to understand whether it was ready to receive detainees.

“Everyone is being transferred now. If I go to Tora and find out that he was transferred, am I supposed to go to Badr east of Cairo or Wadi al-Natrun north of Cairo or stand in a queue at the Prisons Authority? By the time I get information – if there is an update – I’ll have missed the Tabliyah deadline in Badr and Wadi al-Natrun prisons.”<sup>21</sup>

## Was the Prisons Authority prepared?

In its 2030 Vision, a national agenda launched in February 2016 and updated in 2023, the Egyptian government announced its adoption of a unified digitized mechanism to integrate databases and facilitate the provision of “automated” services to citizens and agencies.<sup>22</sup> Unlike old prisons, it declared, the new Badr Complex would rely on modern technology.

There does appear to be a difference in basic infrastructure between the Badr Complex and the old prisons, but citizens’ first interactions with Badr prisons did not suggest automation. There was no electronic system to make it easier for families and prison staff to know where detainees were. Rather, revelations about detainees’ place of detention was made in the traditional way: a prison officer checks a list of thousands of names with indistinct pencil marks next to them.

20 EIPR, «For Sale in the Canteen», Deliberate Impoverishment in Egyptian Prisons, September 2018. Link: <https://tinyurl.com/367648k9>

21 Facebook account of Neama Hisham, the wife of lawyer Mohammed al-Baqer who spent about a year in Badr 1, 29 September 2022, link: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19VuQ7arAv/>

22 Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, National Agenda for Sustainable Development, «Egypt Vision 2030», 2023 Edition, link: [https://mped.gov.eg/Files/2030BookletFinalSoftCopy\\_DigitalUse.pdf](https://mped.gov.eg/Files/2030BookletFinalSoftCopy_DigitalUse.pdf)

**"The employee told me, 'He's not registered on the computer, where was he moved to? Since he was transferred yesterday, wait for a week and ask.' I went to the officer in charge and told him I had brought medicine and could not wait a week. He said, 'Wait until tomorrow, maybe by then he'll have been registered.'"**<sup>23</sup>

The families faced chaos and no official information when it was announced that their relatives would be moved to the new Badr prisons. The Prisons Authority did not give transfer dates to any detainee or family. According to testimonies gathered by EIPR, the Ministry of Interior did not implement Rule 6 of the Mandela Rules, which stipulates procedures to ensure a standardized prisoner file management system and a secure audit trail, or Rule 68, which recognizes each prisoner's right to notify their family or other contact person when transferred. The families found no information desk at all in Badr 1, while Badr 3 staff told them that if their relatives' names were not found on the inmate list they must be in Badr 1.

Egyptian prisons are generally each assigned a deposit number at Egypt Post so that financially able families can deposit money to enable their detained relatives to buy basic necessities. Families were surprised to find that no deposit number was allocated to Badr 1. We could not verify how long that problem persisted, but it was solved by the time of writing.

**"I don't know whether the money was transferred or not. After the transfer some people were allowed to buy necessities on credit, but others not. It was only after my release that I found out about the money deposited for me before I was moved to Badr." – former Badr 1 detainee**

Although Rule 7 of the Mandela Rules stipulates that on entry to prison an inventory of the prisoner's personal property must be entered into the prisoner file management system, and Rule 67 stipulates that the administration must safeguard those belongings and return all money and articles sent to the prisoner from outside, most of the families and detainees have not discovered the fate of money that was deposited in the old prisons before the transfers. Some former Badr detainees explained to EIPR that they were allowed, exceptionally, to buy necessities from the canteen on credit, with the cost of purchases to be deducted from their account after their families deposited money under their names in Badr 1.

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<sup>23</sup> Facebook, the personal account of Ikram Youssef, the mother of former MP Ziad El-Elaimi who spent about a month in Badr 1 during 3 years and 3 months of detention, 2 October 2022, link: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15gWnvV9UG/>

## Was the Badr Complex ready?

**“In the old prison he had a medical bed, a respirator, and a table. After the transfer neither the new prison nor his family got these things, although we bought them at our own expense. Now he sleeps just on a mattress despite his age and bad health. If they allow us to bring a medical bed and respirator, we will have to buy new ones.” – relative of current Badr 1 prisoner**

In theory, Egyptian laws guarantee minimum standards of treatment and living conditions for detainees. The Prisons Organization Law and the Internal Regulations of Prisons allow pretrial detainees to reside in furnished rooms, with clothing, blankets, and personal items,<sup>24</sup> for example, and the Interior Minister's Decree No. 691 of 1998 and subsequent amendments specify the quality and number of items and clothing provided to prisoners. These laws and decrees have little effect in practice because they provide no guarantee for their implementation, nor any mechanisms for complaints or for penalties for prison staff if they deliberately deprive prisoners of their rights.

### **The legal minimum amount of clothing for a detainee:**

2 pants/trousers – 2 jackets – 2 undershirts – 2 hats – 2 underpants – 2 handkerchiefs – 1 winter cotton/wool jacket – a pair of shoes – a pair of plastic slippers – 2 white cotton socks – 2 face towels – 2 pieces of soap<sup>25</sup>

### **The legal minimum household items for a detainee:**

A bed – a mattress – a bed sheet – a pillow – 2 pillowcases – a wool blanket in summer and two in winter – a mat – 3 plastic plates – 2 plastic spoons – 2 pieces of soap.<sup>26</sup>

### **The legal minimum household items for a pretrial detainee in a furnished room:**

A hospital-style bed – a mattress – a pillow – 2 pillowcases – 2 bed sheets – a wool blanket in summer and two in winter – a fiber mat – a wooden chair – an iron hanger – an enameled tin bowl – an enameled tin jug (if there is no sink and faucet in the cell) – a small table – a mirror – a pot – a drinking water jug and dish – a hairbrush – a comb – a fork – a spoon – bricks – a plastic basin – and a small metal plate.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Read the text of Article 14 of the Prisons Organization Law No. 396 of 1956, link: <https://manshurat.org/node/63717>

<sup>25</sup> Interior Minister's Decree No. 691 of 1998 on the Treatment and Living of Prisoners, link: <https://tinyurl.com/39t-77p9z>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Interior Minister's Decree No. 79 of 1961 on the Internal Regulations of Correctional and Rehabilitation Centers, link: <https://tinyurl.com/2s3946ht>



Most of the detainees, according to detainee and family testimonies, arrived at Badr 1 with only the clothes they were wearing. They were unable to bring any extra clothes, household items, or furniture their families had bought them. Some detainees' furniture was warehoused; the prison attempted to start distributing it some weeks after detainees arrived at Badr, but no record had been made of who owned each item, so the furniture remained in storage.

Detainees were not allowed to bring any personal belongings. In their early days at Badr 1, they had only a prison uniform, a mattress, and two blankets (one to sleep on and the other as a cover), which is insufficient to protect an adult from nighttime cold. Elderly detainees who had slept on beds, medical beds in some cases, in their former prisons now slept on the floor. Not all detainees were allowed to keep cooking utensils, blood-pressure and glucose monitors, or even breathing devices. As detainees were stripped of their personal hygiene items, such as toothbrushes and shaving kits, in violation of Mandela Rule 18 on prisoners' personal care and ability to maintain respectable appearance, pretrial detainees in Badr 1 and 3 were forced to appear with long beards for the first sessions of video-conference hearings on their detention renewal, according to several lawyers who attended sessions at the time.

**"There was no canteen, and even now it is not open all the time – it was closed for two whole months in Badr 1. There are no cooking stoves, laundry, or laundry items so they can wash their own clothes. And [my father's] age means he can't wash his clothes by himself anyway, and because of the ban on additional clothes I have to go to the prison twice a week to get his clothes washed. But he is lucky, because not all the families of the elderly are allowed to take clothes to be washed outside the prison." – son of current prisoner in Badr 1**

According to several interviewees, at Badr 1 canteen services were not available for more than a month after the first detainees arrived, so nobody was able to purchase basic necessities, and the canteen is still operating irregularly with occasional closures.

In old prisons such as Tora and Wadi al-Natrun detainees could cook or heat food in their cells, and the food families brought during visits could be kept in ward refrigerators. In Badr 1 and 3, where detainees were supposedly transferred to improve their detention conditions, cooking inside cells was forbidden and for about eight months no one could heat food, after which detainees were allowed to use a small electric oven. There was no refrigerator in the first year, and EIPR could not ascertain whether that is still the case.

The Ministry of Interior film on the Badr Complex does not mention a laundry. Former detainees and families of current detainees interviewed by EIPR have confirmed that there are no places or tools dedicated to laundering, unlike in the old prisons. Detainees, especially the elderly and the sick, have found it difficult to wash their clothes. At least between 2021 and the end of 2022, the entry of additional clothes was prohibited so families had to go to the prison to pick up clothes and replace them with clean ones sometimes twice a week.

## Second: Prison Cells

There is no official information available on the capacity of each prison within the complex, or how detainees are distributed among the cells. According to former detainees who spoke to EIPR, each prison inside the Badr Complex consists of six sections and one is for "Al-Dawa'i" ("reasons," a ward with strict rules and stricter detention conditions). Each section has about 16 cells, all equal in size except for two smaller cells. Each standard cell is about five or six meters long and seven wide, has two bathrooms, and can accommodate eight people. The two small cells are each about five meters long and three-and-a-half meters wide, with one bathroom; it accommodates four people.

A cell has two ceiling fans which provide insufficient ventilation due to ceiling height and arbitrary placement. There are four power sockets, but they are 1.5 meters above the ground; a detainee has to stand and hold an electric device while using it. At the time of writing, some detainees have been allowed to receive a water kettle or a small oven for heating. Other devices may have been allowed more recently.

EIPR could not determine how the cells in Badr 3 are furnished. Former Badr 1 detainees say the situation is no different from that in the old prisons: there are no beds, but detainees get mattresses to put on the floor. Some bathrooms have hot water, some not. Some cells have a squatting toilet and others a sitting toilet; some have two sitting toilets, and others have two squat toilets and a shower.

**"Some cells allow them to open the lower opening in the door to talk all the time. I was not among them. The strange thing was that in (former) prisons including maximum security ones, an opening was open 24 hours a day so prisoners could communicate." – former Badr 1 detainee.**

Each cell at Badr has an intercom handset and an automatic door. Unlike the main gates, cell doors cannot be opened manually, which means that when a malfunction occurs detainees are trapped; this has led to missed visits and missed detention renewal sessions, and sometimes prevented clinic visits and exercise. None of the former detainees in Badr 1 interviewed by EIPR saw a technician working inside the prison to address malfunctions.

The technological development that has most affected prisoners' lives is the installation of cameras in every cell for round-the-clock surveillance, unprecedented for Egyptian prisons. In the official narrative, the newly constructed prisons are fitted with modern technological infrastructure in order to improve detention conditions. This omits the fact that detainees are now forcibly monitored inside their cells all the time – even while sleeping and using the bathroom – which violates their most basic human rights. Surveillance cameras are installed to cover the whole area of every cell, complemented by centrally controlled lighting also left on around the clock. This practice, not commensurate with any security considerations that could be invoked, emerged with the new prisons or "correctional and rehabilitation centers" in Wadi al-Natrun and later in the Badr Complex.

In the old prisons a rectangular opening in the cell door was the only way for detainees to commu-



nicate with other cells or request emergency help from prison staff. The opening was usually in the upper part of the door and lower one was for receiving food at specific times. In the Badr Complex, specifically in Badr 1, the intercom handset has replaced the upper door opening, but sometimes detainees have to talk to staff through the lower opening – a “double humiliation,” as one former detainee told the EIPR team.

The conditions in regular cells are different from those in the “Al-Dawa'i” cells, where death-row and dangerous inmates are held separately from each other. Al-Dawa'i cells are also used for discipline, i.e., to hold any detainee, regardless of legal status, if they have done anything deemed punishable by the prison or ward officers.

The Al-Dawa'i sector in Badr Complex consists of two buildings facing each other. Each has about 24 rooms over two floors. The two buildings are connected by a 1.5-meter corridor. Inmates in one building cannot see those in the other. Cell doors are not automatic like the ordinary cells, and they have both lower and upper rectangular openings. A cell is about three meters long and the same wide, divided in two parts separated by a wall 1.5 meters high and 2 meters wide. The first part is for living and includes a mattress and pillow but no fan, interior lighting, or electrical sockets, so detainees cannot use a radio, heater, or oven. Each cell has a 60×40 cm window that does not allow for adequate ventilation or natural light. The only source of light is the reflection of an external floodlight behind the barbed wire visible from the window.

**“The camera covers the bathroom, so I cannot take a shower without wearing my underpants. It's more like a police station cell.” – former Badr 1 detainee**

The second part of Al-Dawa'i cells has a squat toilet and shower. Detainees wear underpants in the shower if they do not want to be seen by camera completely unclothed. Unlike in regular cells showers are cold only, but detainees may get hot water in a plastic bag up to two times a day. When Al-Dawa'i cells are used for disciplinary purposes, prisoners enter either in their underwear or uniform, either barefoot or wearing slippers – this is up to the officer in charge. Disciplinary cells are different from other Al-Dawa'i cells in that there is no mattress to sleep on, a detainee is allowed only two blankets even in the coldest winter, and personal belongings are not allowed.

In discipline cells detainees are prohibited from reading and may not access all the items in the canteen or cafeteria. Water is scarce most of the time. Detainees are denied medicine and visitation and cannot communicate with prison staff if they feel sick or to ask for anything.

**Image 2: A screenshot from the Ministry of Interior film A New Beginning shows a model cell in the Badr Complex.**



**“The cameras are on all the time, not in a mental hospital but a prison... inside a cell not a corridor. It drives prisoners crazy. Normal human behaviors – even when they are not dangerous – differ when people know that they are being monitored, so they behave in a restricted way. Is it constitutional or legal that a prisoner has to change clothes in front of cameras?” – wife of a former Badr 1 prisoner**

All those who spoke to EIPR were unanimous that the most serious violation of Badr detainees was the continuous surveillance. In the Ministry of Interior’s model cell example the camera is installed in a corner, viewing the entire cell and bathroom in flagrant violation of detainees’ basic right to privacy. The cameras never stop. Moreover, prison staff comment on the detainees’ behaviors through a microphone they can use to directly address cells.

On behalf of a group of families of detainees in Badr 1, lawyer Khaled Ali filed a lawsuit (No. 3096/77) against Minister of Interior Mahmoud Tawfiq, his assistant for the Prisons Authority Sector, and the warden of Badr 1 for filming detainees inside cells and exposing them to light 24 hours a day. The Administrative Judiciary Court rejected the case “due to the lack of an administrative decision.” Multiple appeals and complaints have resulted in a reduction of the brightness of the lighting only during sleep time, according to the latest prison testimonies.

### Third: Rights disregarded

The Judiciary Law obliges the Public Prosecution to oversee prisons, and public prosecutors are also obliged to visit and inspect public prisons at least once a month.<sup>28</sup> Yet it was nearly three years after its inauguration, on 3 September 2024, that Public Prosecutor Mohamed Shawky and a Public Prosecution team made a first “inspection visit to the Badr Correctional and Rehabilitation Center,” which one newspaper declared “a historic and unprecedented event.”<sup>29</sup> The prosecution’s statement said the team inspected the entire prison area, meaning three public prisons and the women’s detention center all at once. It said it listened to the complaints of some inmates – not specifying how many or where – and instructed the prisons to avoid the repetition of those problems, without announcing any investigation or resolution processes.<sup>30</sup>

There are several legislative gaps related to detainees’ living conditions. Egyptian laws do not establish mechanisms to guarantee detainees their constitutional rights nor any direct mechanisms to allow them to complain, so no penalties are imposed on prison staff if they deprive detainees of basic rights. Moreover, Egyptian law does not provide for control or inspection of detention facilities by independent bodies; it only assigns the Public Prosecution to do this, in addition to tasks such as investigating cases, bringing accusations, and prosecuting before the courts. Egypt is reluctant to sign the UN’s Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which enables the committee established under it to visit places of detention to make recommendations to member states to protect detainees from torture and other inhuman treatment.<sup>31</sup> This mechanism has been adopted by many countries, including Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, and Mauritania, with comparable geographical and political contexts to Egypt’s. It should be noted that Egypt received a number of recommendations to accede to the protocol during its comprehensive periodic review before the UN Human Rights Council in January 2025. The recommendation was made in interventions by countries including Madagascar, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, Cyprus, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Denmark, North Macedonia, Slovenia, Sweden, and Liechtenstein; however, Egypt

28 EIPR, «Episodes on Egyptian Prisons Legislation (8), Chapter Eleven: Judicial Inspection and Supervision,» 12 September 2017. Link: <https://tinyurl.com/34jsvmt5>

29 Ibrahim Qassem - Omnia Al-Mougy, Youm7, “For the first time, the Public Prosecutor conducts an inspection visit to the ‘Badr’ Correctional and Rehabilitation Center... Counselor Mohamed Shawky reviews the inmates’ living conditions... the Badr complex is one of the state’s tools to consolidate the concepts of human rights in Egypt,” 3 September 2024, link: <https://tinyurl.com/42yee4hk>

30 The Public Prosecution’s official Facebook account, «The Public Prosecutor Conducts an Inspection Visit to the Badr Correctional and Rehabilitation Center», 7 September 2024, link: <https://www.facebook.com/ppo.gov.eg/videos/1189948475597541/>

31 Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted on 18 December 2002.

did not accept any of them.<sup>32</sup>

**“Every talk about rights faces this response: It’s a new prison with a new system, as if the prison does not abide by law or regulations.” – wife of current Badr 3 prisoner**

Badr prisons received a large number of detainees from other prisons. For some this transfer meant a relatively improved situation and fewer abuses than they had experienced before, but for others it meant greater abuses than in their old prisons. Although Egyptian laws guarantee detainees, regardless of legal status, a list of rights that guarantee a minimum of dignity, the situation on the ground is largely subject to the decisions and policies of the management of each prison. No standard rules are applied to the detainees with the same legal status; each detainee – political detainees in particular – is treated according to their file, and their living conditions depend entirely on “security approvals.”

This part of the report assesses the living conditions of Badr 1 and Badr 3 detainees, and the extent to which the rights guaranteed them by the Constitution and law – regarding exercise, food, education, reading, healthcare, and communication with the outside world – are respected.

## Sunlight and movement

**“He has not seen the sunlight or left the cell for three and a half years... everything is forbidden.” – wife of a current Badr 3 prisoner**

In its propaganda film *A New Beginning*, released on the opening of the Badr Complex, the Interior Ministry says the complex was “designed according to the latest architectural systems, with natural lighting throughout the day for inmates, taking into account the appropriate spaces in accordance with international standards and providing renewable ventilation.” The description is undermined by the film’s own imagery, which shows a model cell, a communal dining hall, and a communal visitation hall in which the only visible sources of light are fluorescent lamps. Any windows seen are covered by multiple layers of wire mesh.

The testimonies received by the EIPR team confirm that the Ministry did not adhere to the minimum standards set out in Mandela Rules 13 and 14 regarding lighting, heating, ventilation, and the shape of windows to allow natural light and fresh air to reach prisoners. This is a missed opportunity given

<sup>32</sup> Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, “Report on Recommendations of UN Human Rights Review of Egypt Reveals: The World Sees the Truth Despite Attempts at Whitewashing,” January 31, 2025 <https://eipr.org/press/2025/01/%D8%A%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B6-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%85%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%B4%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85-%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A9-%D8%B1%D8%BA%D9%85-%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84>

that these prisons were built in the 21st century. Former detainees and families of current detainees report that the light fixtures inside cells are very bright and kept on day and night, unlike in the old prisons. Exposing people to constant bright lighting, which impedes sleep and negatively affects mental and physical health, is not only a violation of their basic rights but also constitutes outright torture.

**Image 3: A screenshot from the Ministry of Interior's film *A New Beginning* shows a dining hall inside the Badr Complex.**



If there is no hope for exposure to sunlight or fresh air inside cells, there remains exercise time. Yet in Badr a large proportion of prisoners – political detainees – are allowed only very limited exercise time, often not more than 30 minutes a day, in disregard of Rule 23 of the Mandela Rules and more importantly in violation of Egyptian Prisons Regulations, which stipulate two hours of exercise divided in two, half in the morning and half in the evening, except on Fridays and official holidays (although prisoners are to get 30 minutes a day if a holiday last more than one day).<sup>33</sup>

Sunlight does not reach the exercise yard in Badr 1 because of the iron fence surrounding it, which the Interior Ministry film doesn't show. According to former detainees who spoke to EIPR, the exercise yard has a cafeteria and bathroom attached. The cafeteria has been closed since the prison was inaugurated. The bathroom closed for six months and after it reopened the prisoners found that the prison administration had removed the handwashing basins, leaving only urinals. There is not enough gear such as balls and rackets for the detainees to play sports and the administration refuses to allow any from outside the prison. Inmates of the same cell are not allowed to mix with the rest of prisoners.

It is only fair to mention that several detainees who arrived at Badr 1 from other prisons had been deprived of exercise for years, including lawyer Mohammed al-Baqer, and were allowed exercise for the first time in Badr. Al-Baqer was barred from exercise for three years in Tora Prison 2. Former prisoners and families of current detainees told EIPR that some were now able to leave their ward, beyond interrogation or detention renewal sessions, for the first time in years. These exercise bans were not caused by infrastructure problems in the old prisons.

<sup>33</sup> See the Minister of Interior's Decree No. 3320 of 2014 on amending some provisions of the Internal Regulations of Prisons, Article 85 bis 3. Link: <https://www.manshurat.org/node/5774>

In contrast, Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, 73, detained since February 2018, was denied his right to exercise after his transfer from Al-Mazra'a Prison in the Tora Complex to Badr 1.<sup>34</sup> For most of his detention in Tora he was allowed exercise for one to two hours in the ward corridor; only in the last year of his detention there he was allowed to exercise in an open area. When he was transferred to Badr 1 he was returned to solitary confinement and deprived of any kind of communication. He cannot speak to neighboring inmates because the rectangular opening in his cell door closes from outside, unlike the doors of older prison cells, which allowed a little communication even for those in solitary confinement. After some time in Badr 1, Aboul Fotouh was allowed exercise but only alone (by comparison, detainees in Al-Dawa'i cells may sometimes exercise together despite being classified as dangerous).

On 5 January 2023, during a detention-renewal session at a terrorism circuit in the Badr Complex, lawyers heard several Badr 1 detainees complaining to the judge that they were often denied exercise, while others complained that they continued to be detained in "Al-Irad" (intake) cells after the 11-day "Al-Irad" period, meaning they were denied exercise and access to other prison services. During a 12 March 2023 detention-renewal hearing, the Badr 3 detainees present at the hearing appealed to the judge and Public Prosecution to put an end to numerous violations they had been systematically subjected to since transfer to Badr 3, including the denial of exercise. It was the first time in at least a month that Badr 3 detainees had contact with the outside world. Throughout that time none had appeared before the court considering the renewal of their detention via video conferencing; the prison administration claimed that technical problems prevented them from getting connected.<sup>35</sup>

## Food and drink

**"Don't worry about the tabliyah because he's not allowed it. Every prison has its own system, that's how it is." – prison officer to wife of current Badr 3 prisoner**

This was the reply of an officer to a woman asking why she was not allowed to send food to her husband in Badr 3, whom we will call Waheed. She told the EIPR team that "Waheed," the father of her two daughters, has been in pretrial detention for more than four years, deprived of exercise, tabliyah, and visits throughout, and that he cannot even communicate easily with his lawyer. Article 16 of the Prisons Organization Law matches Mandela Rule 114 in allowing pretrial detainees to receive food parcels from outside prison ("tabliyah" in Egypt) and to buy food from the prison canteen at set prices, while preserving their right to receive the prison food provided to all detainees. The Badr 3 administration ignores these texts when dealing with Waheed. This means he must either buy from the canteen at high prices, which will financially exhaust his wife, especially as she must support her

<sup>34</sup> EIPR, Conviction Without Evidence: The Unfair Trial of Aboul Fotouh, Qassas and Moaz Al-Sharqawi, 17 October 2022, link: <https://tinyurl.com/4593cpft>

<sup>35</sup> EIPR, Weeks after no news about them, Badr 3 detainees appeal to the judge and the prosecution to save them, 14 March 2023, Link: <https://tinyurl.com/uazvrvyu>



two daughters alone because the family's breadwinner has been detained for years without conviction, or rely only on the rations provided by the prison administration. Waheed's wife does not know the quantity or quality of that food because she is not allowed to communicate with him.

Other families also told EIPR that the Badr 3 administration refuses to receive tabliyah from them, with prison staff arguing that the detainees can rely on the "tayeen" (rations), which are a largely unknown entity. The decision to deny tabliyah is essentially punitive, being selectively applied to specific prisoners and having nothing to do with the availability or quality of rations provided by the prison. In Badr 1 the situation is comparatively better, as some detainees are allowed to get tabliyah once a week or once a month, depending on the decision of the national security officer in charge, who also determines the quality and quantity of food, which must be preprepared (detainees cannot keep tabliyah food for long because there is no refrigerator). Thus the prison administration limits the quantity of tabliyah and may disallow it at any time, and detainees cannot know whether the tabliyah they get is in the same shape as when handed over by their families. It probably goes without saying that ingredients that can be refrigerated and used later are more valuable for prisoners than preprepared food.

**"In the old prison, Tora, prisoners whose families could not visit or bring them tabliyah because of the long distance or their inability to afford food depended on other inmates' tabliyah. A family could bring in tabliyah for up to 40 or 50 detainees. Now this is impossible, and detainees who can't get tabliyah rely solely on ta'yeen." – former Badr 1 detainee**

The ta'yeen is supposed to be the three meals the Ministry of Interior must provide daily to every inmate, according to Decree No. 691 of 1998 and its 11 amendments issued over the past 27 years.<sup>36</sup> The Ministry of Interior publishes details about the free meals it provides to inmates, differing for the healthy and the sick, pregnant women, and children accompanying their mothers in prison. The most recent amendment regarding the meals of ordinary detainees (i.e., not sick or pregnant) was issued in October 2024, and included the adjustment of the amount of food received per person from the following categories:

<sup>36</sup> The decree was amended by the following Minister of Interior's decrees: 78 of 1999 - 3909 of 2000 - 8533 of 2000 - 5926 of 2005 - 856 of 2009 - 150 of 2011 - 1164 of 2011 - 545 of 2015 - 468 of 2017 - 184 of 2023 - 2069 of 2024.

Meal	Items and quantities adjusted under the minister of interior's decree
<b>Breakfast</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce halva from 50 g to 30 g and from 7 days to 4 days a week</li> <li>2. Increase beans (50 g) to four times from twice per week</li> <li>3. Increase eggs (two at a time) to three times from twice a week</li> <li>4. Add 100 g of fresh vegetables three times a week</li> </ol>
<b>Lunch</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce rice or pasta from 100 g to 75 g per day</li> <li>2. Reduce edible oil from 30 g to 20 g per day</li> <li>3. Reduce cooking vegetables from 1,050 g spread over 7 meals per week to 600 g over two meals</li> <li>4. Increase green beans or cowpeas (75 g) from once to 4 times a week</li> <li>5. If meat cannot be bought, an equivalent quantity of fish, chicken, duck, or 3 eggs, or 75 gm of pulses shall be provided</li> </ol>
<b>Dinner</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Add 110 g of yogurt once a week</li> <li>2. Add 100 g of fresh vegetables once a week</li> </ol>

According to the Ministry of Interior, these adjustments were made after reviewing a study by the National Institute of Nutrition of the General Authority for Educational Hospitals and Institutes.<sup>37</sup> A quick comparison between the meals described in the decree and the National Institute of Nutrition's study shows that the former do not correspond to the minimum food rations recommended by the government study. Regardless, the administration of Badr 1 prison does not take the decree into account. According to testimonies received by EIPR, Badr 1 detainees receive two meals a day instead of three, and the two meals do not meet per capita daily calorie needs. The quality of the food is inconsistent. The more detainees there are, the smaller the quantities. For example, pretrial detainees in the Badr Complex complained that the ta'ayeen meals did not contain any animal protein for two weeks, according to a lawyer who attended a video-conference detention-renewal hearing on 27 December 2022. According to former detainees, meals for people with chronic illnesses only became available in January 2023, a full year after the prison began operating. Detainees in disciplinary cells – the ones designated by the National Security Sector as “the most dangerous” – are not given anything at all, or at best one meal a day consisting of bread and a spoonful of cheese or small block of halva, delivered through the bottom opening of their door.

<sup>37</sup> See a proposal for the shape of the «Food Group Pyramids», the National Institute of Nutrition, the Ministry of Health and Population, Health Guidelines for Egyptian Families, 2022, link: <https://www.mohp.gov.eg/UserFiles/LibraryFiles/294384.pdf?csrt=10968877340562816047>



**“People were hungry during the first few months due to long intervals between visits, the lack of a canteen, and the small portions of the ta’ayeen meals.” – former detainee in Badr 1 prison**

Canteens, indispensable sources of nutrients and of hygiene and living essentials not provided by prisons, have often been closed at the Badr Complex.<sup>38</sup> The water that reaches cells in Badr 1 is not suitable for drinking or hygiene, for example. “We depended on the water of the canteen,” a former detainee told EIPR, “but it was closed for two months on the grounds that there was a problem with the accounts. So we drank bad tap water.” When the canteen reopened detainees were allowed to buy from it once a week and detainees in disciplinary cells only once a month. Detainees had to write their needs on a piece of paper and give it to a “facilitator,” who presented it to the security officer in charge, who decided whether to grant access.

If detainees are granted access to the canteen, they face prices at least 25% higher than market prices. Former detainees and families of current detainees interviewed by the EIPR team complained that canteen prices are very high but the detainees could not do without it because the administration denies the entry of many tabliyah items. Exercising unprecedented control over the smallest details of detainees’ lives, the prison bars families from bringing clothes and instead sells clothes to detainees, a practice not seen in the old prisons. Only financially capable prisoners can buy clothes from the canteen. A lawyer who functions as the link between a man held in pretrial detention in Badr and his family (who is forbidden to visit) told EIPR: “If you previously needed [LE] 500 you now need 1000 or 2000 more.”

## Education and reading

**“Because of the denial of books, magazines, and radio, we thought of enrolling him in postgraduate studies at a university and that the prison would then agree to allow books in on the grounds that he is a student. But even after he was enrolled, university books were not allowed to enter because they were not in Arabic. So he could not study and he did not know where the library was.” – wife of former Badr 1 detainee**

Egyptian laws guarantee the right of detainees to continue their education, to read, and to follow current events.<sup>39</sup> The Ministry of Interior announced that the Badr Complex includes classes for technical education and a library, but in fact it does not respect Egypt’s Law on the Organization of Prisons or Mandela Rules 63 and 64 on access to reading and information, as the Badr prison administration often arbitrarily rejects newspapers and magazines brought by detainees’ families at their own expense.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> See the Law on the Organization of Prisons (Articles 28-32) and the Internal Regulations of Prisons

Some students held in Badr 1 have struggled to resume their studies, especially postgraduate studies, due to the complexity of procedures, in addition to being denied access to books, notebooks, and even the library.

The radio remains, in most instances, the only source of information available to detainees. However, some Badr 1 detainees are denied radio access for reasons that often appear whims-based or for security reasons unrelated to the Prisons Organization Law or the prison bylaws. Detainees who do manage to get a radio set face poor signal due to the location of the Badr Complex. As for books, the Badr 1 administration informed families that books should be in Arabic and have a standard book number to be allowed in, but the situation varies depending on the prisoner and National Security officers examine each book's content before approving or rejecting it; families are not notified of such decisions or whether there are standards for such censorship. According to all interviewees concerning Badr 1, no one has entered the prison's library since the prison was inaugurated.

**"He was a minor when he was arrested eight years ago, and we were allowed to visit him after he turned 18 – a year after his detention. He was transferred to a 'maximum security' prison and then to Badr 3, where visits and letters were banned. Even books and taking exams were forbidden, so he could not complete his education because he met the maximum limit allowed for failure. He is such a young man who was arrested while he was a minor, but after he finishes his jail term he will be unfit for anything; he has lost the ability to communicate with those around him and he will remain uneducated." – father of a current Badr 3 detainee**

As for Badr 3, testimonies obtained by EIPR from the families and lawyers of detainees confirmed that both visitation and tabliyah are all but prohibited, which means that detainees cannot access a radio or books of any kind. The Badr 3 administration completely denies detainees their right to reading and information. At the time of writing, for example, human rights lawyer Ibrahim Metwally, held in Badr 3 for more than three years, has not been allowed to read any book, newspaper.

**"Because he met the maximum limit for failure in his exams, and despite the submission of complaints and grievances, he cannot enroll in a university and has to study for the ʿġhanawiya [high school certificate] again." – father of former Badr 3 detainee**

Sometimes detained university students, in Badr or brought temporarily from other prisons, take their exams inside the Badr Complex. But taking exams does not mean that those students are learning. They are not given prior warning of exam schedules or allowed all books and references related to their studies, especially foreign-language materials. A lawyer who attended a detention-renewal hearing on 16 February 2023 said that many Badr 1 detainees complained to the Terrorism Court that they were denied textbooks. Students of practical subjects such as medicine and engineering find it almost impossible to complete studies while in detention – often pretrial detention – because univer-

sities do not send committees to prisons to hold exams, especially oral exams. All these problems could be easily avoided and detainees ensured their right to education, as guaranteed by Article 19 of the Egyptian Constitution, either by releasing students held in pretrial detention pending trial, or at least by taking advantage of technological developments to make educational materials, lessons, lectures, and oral exams available online, just as detention-renewal hearings are held via video conferencing. To date there is no documented use of telecommunication technology to help defendants access their rights; video conferencing is only used to expedite the consideration of detention orders in such a way that undermines pretrial detainees' legal rights.

## Healthcare

**"Going to the clinic requires a struggle. We often call them over the phone [the intercom installed inside the cell] when we have a case of sickness. We're told they will convey the request but get no real response." – former Badr 1 detainee**

Back when detention centres were called prisons, and even now that they have been rebranded as correctional and rehabilitation centers; they still lack clear channels for detainees to obtain healthcare. Access to healthcare providers in Egyptian prisons is only allowed through cell guards, meaning that healthcare is contingent on their will to open the cell door, deal with the detainees, and allow them to present to the prison doctor. This endangers the lives of detainees in the Badr Complex.<sup>40</sup> The testimonies received by EIPR indicate that the living conditions inside Badr prisons are health-threatening. Difficulties maintaining personal hygiene, lack of exposure to sunlight or ventilation, and limited nutrition are likely to degrade detainees' health, increase the likelihood of catching diseases, and/or worsen existing conditions. Yet these are modern prisons allocated a huge budget for construction, a budget apparently used to achieve huge population capacity, high security, and permanent surveillance, but based on the same dehumanizing and unhealthy designs as old prisons.

The approach to detainees' healthcare provision in Badr is legally problematic in several ways. For example, the Prisons Organization Law and its regulations do not guarantee a sufficient number of doctors in all specialties,<sup>41</sup> contrary to Mandela Rule 25. Egyptian laws do not stipulate that medical staff in prisons must be assisted by nursing staff, or mandate the presence of a dentist.<sup>42</sup> Prison doctors

40 EIPR, Health in Egypt's Prisons, Field Research on the Determinants of Health in the Closed World of Prisons, 17 June 2014, link: <https://tinyurl.com/ymwpk3x5>

41 See Articles 14, 24, 25, and 26 of the Minister of Interior's Decree No. 79 of 1961 on the Internal Regulations of Prisons, link: <https://tinyurl.com/2s3946ht>

42 EIPR and the El-Nadeem Centre for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, «Treat Them or Release Them, Medical Negligence in Prisons is a Crime», 21 May 2017, link: <https://tinyurl.com/zsbn7sba>

are in fact military officers<sup>43</sup> who report to the prison administration, which can supervise and penalize them. This suggests that their reports, supposed to be decisive in determining the prison's liability when a detainee is subject to a violation or endangered, may not be written without pressure or bias. Upon its inauguration the Interior Ministry announced that the Badr Complex contained an advanced medical center equipped with "state-of-the-art medical tools and equipment," but former and current detainees report that the center is not used properly. Detainees' requests for their constitutional right to access appropriate healthcare meet a slow response, regardless of whether their case is simple or urgent. A lawyer who attended a detention renewal hearing at the Badr Terrorism Circuit on 3 January 2023 said some Badr 3 detainees told the judges that one a fellow detainee "had a heart attack and we banged on the cell door for 12 hours, but no one responded, and the patient was not taken to hospital." During the detention renewal hearing on 31 October of the same year, defendant R.A.A. asked the judges to intervene to take him to a doctor because he had heart pain, but his request was ignored.

**"Doctors are better than maximum-security guards but you rarely get to see a specialist. There are no medicines, only painkillers. If medicines are prescribed your family has to provide them. If you're lucky, the prison allows them in." – former Badr 1 detainee**

According to a lawyer who attended a detention-renewal hearing before the terrorism circuit convened at the Badr Complex on 31 October 2022, numerous Badr 3 detainees asked the judge to order the prison administration to provide medicines and ointments. In the same hearing, Ahmed Abu Baraka, detained for 10 years and not allowed visits for five years, said he had suffered Covid-19 symptoms for eight days before the hearing, but the prison refused to take him to hospital.

To sum up, former detainees reported to EIPR that despite the newness of the Badr prisons, the health-care available is inadequate and in most cases – like in the old prisons – it is limited to providing painkillers regardless of the medical complaint. Even when a doctor prescribes the necessary medication and the families bring it at their own expense, the detained patient may not obtain the medication easily. In the minutes of a detention-renewal hearing on 8 August 2023, defendant M.N. states that after repeated requests he was taken to the hospital director who prescribed the appropriate medication, but for weeks the Badr 3 prison administration refused – and without justification – to receive the medication and the pair of glasses his family brought with the tabliyah. Another example is Ehab Goha, who spent five years and then died in pretrial detention in connection with Case No. 1358 of 2019. He spent two years in Badr 1, during which he had complications related to his diabetes and then developed fluid buildup on his lungs. The prison administration allowed him to undergo thoracentesis twice, but thoracentesis must be repeated regularly (depending on the patient's condition) over time. After that the prison only gave him antibiotics, which caused his health to deteriorate significantly, and he became unable to move independently. Goha was transferred to Borg al-Arab prison in August

43 The official channel of the Egyptian Ministry of Interior on YouTube, «Organizing a ceremony to announce the start of the trial operation of three new correctional and rehabilitation centers», 21 March 2023, link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymX6rKmk5W4>

2024, where he died within two months.<sup>44</sup>

EIPR could not obtain direct testimonies on the conditions of Badr 2 detainees, but in 2024 an Italian citizen named Andrea Passeri, 31, arrested in August 2023 after being found in possession of hashish during a visit to the Giza pyramids, was reported to be experiencing medical neglect in Badr 2.<sup>45</sup> His family said they feared for his life because he was "in bad health, in pain, and his hair is falling out." The family also said that after he underwent appendicular surgery at the prison hospital, he was chained to a bed and returned to a crowded cell within three days. Passeri wrote to his family that his place of detention was "filled with feces, urine, and insects" and that he had "no clothes except underpants."<sup>46</sup>

Article 36 of the Prisons Organization Law stipulates that if the prison doctor determines that a convict has a life-threatening illness or total disability, the convict should be released on medical grounds. Release is granted after the director of the medical department for prisons and medical examiner have jointly examined the detainee, and implemented after approval from the director general of prisons and the Public Prosecutor. Release for health reasons does not mean a convict stops serving their sentence, but that they can stay at their known place of residence to receive appropriate care and recover. The article also stipulates that a Ministry of Health doctor will examine the released convict every six months, and submit a report on their condition to the Prisons Authority to determine whether medical release should continue or cease, provided that the release period be deducted from their total jail term. As for pretrial detainees not convicted of a crime, waiting for their health to deteriorate until it threatens their lives makes no sense because pretrial detention is a precautionary measure in itself. Medical release should be easy in such cases because all that is needed is a release decision from the Public Prosecutor, the prosecutor investigating the case, or from the court considering the renewal of the person's detention. In practice, such a decision is not issued in most cases .

Compassionate release procedures usually take a long time and are entirely dependent doctors affiliated with the Ministry of Interior and the prison administration. Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, 73, imprisoned in Badr 1, has not been released even though his condition is critical and requires continuous care; instead, in December 2024, he was charged in a new case on charges similar to those for which he was already imprisoned.<sup>47</sup> Since his detention in 2018, Aboul Fotouh has suffered repeated heart attacks and an enlarged prostate, which had been scheduled for surgical treatment before his arrest. Aboul Fotouh's pretrial detention exceeded the legal limit even though his lawyers filed complaint No. 8840/2019 demanding urgent intervention to save him from medical negligence. Sentenced to 15 years in prison, he continues to be held despite his condition necessitating medical release. After his

44 EIPR, Ehab Goha dies due to medical negligence after five years in pretrial detention, 6 November 2024, link: <https://tinyurl.com/yjtu4hjw>

45 Il Messaggero, Italian Citizen Luigi Giacomo Passeri Faces Life Sentence in Egypt Amid Allegations of Drug Trafficking, 21 August 2024, link: <https://shorturl.at/rFEUD>

46 Amira Eltahawy, Al-Manassa, Family of an Italian Criminal Detainee in Egypt Complaining of «Ill-Treatment», 15 July 2024, link: <https://manassa.news/news/18479>

47 EIPR, Abuse on top of abuse: Egypt launches political trials for thousands of detainees, 4 May 2025, link: <https://eipr.org/en/press/2025/05/abuse-top-abuse-egypt-launches-political-trials-thousands-detainees>.

transfer to Badr 1 in 2022, four months passed before Aboul Fotouh was presented to the prison doctor. He asked to be seen by cardiac, urology, gastroenterology, and neurology specialists. Two months later, he was only seen by a cardiologist and there was no real medical intervention. It is worth noting that Aboul Fotouh's current condition makes him an elderly person at risk under Article 24 of the Law on the Care of the Rights of the Elderly No. 19/2024, so the Badr 1 administration's refusal to provide his health and nutritional care is punishable by law.

Human rights lawyer Ibrahim Metwally, 61, has been held in pretrial detention since September 2017. The continued deterioration in his health has not been found sufficient reason for his release even though he was examined in Tora 2 prison, after which his family requested (to no heed) his transfer to a hospital for urgent surgery to prevent an enlarged and severely inflamed prostate to avoid further irreversible complications. Metwally has suffered from medical negligence since his transfer to Badr prison which has further damaged his health. During a hearing to consider the renewal of his pretrial detention on 17 December 2024, Metwally did not ask for release despite having exceeded the legal limit for pretrial detention, but only requested that he be transferred away from Badr 3, where treatment is not available for his condition. He has still not undergone the surgery the prison doctor said was necessary years ago, even though his family has submitted many requests for such care, even at his own expense.<sup>48</sup>

Worker Ahmed Abdel Hamid Orabi, who at the time of writing is still detained in connection with Case No. 2094/2022 despite exceeding the legal limit of pretrial detention, has faced medical negligence in both Badr 1 and Badr 3. He had previously lost his left eye when protests in Cairo's Mohamed Mahmoud Street were violently suppressed in 2011. In the 5 January 2023 video-conference hearing on the renewal of his detention, held before the Terrorism Circuit in Badr, Orabi complained that he had a fractured hand and that the doctor repeatedly prescribed painkillers without referring him for specialized care. Orabi remained without treatment, and in his next detention-renewal hearing, on 2 February 2023, he said that he had still not yet been taken to an orthopedist after his fourth request and despite having obtained the prosecution's permission. His lawyer requested an investigation of the Badr prison administration regarding the non-implementation of the prosecution's decisions to take him to the doctor. Then, at his detention-renewal hearing on 5 June 2023, Orabi appeared barefoot with a shaved head. He told the judges that he had been transferred from Badr 1 to Badr 3 a month before as punishment for objecting to the ill-treatment he received from a military conscript in Badr 1 after he asked for his wrist restraints to be made less tight. He complained about continued ill-treatment in Badr 3. EIPR and the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) submitted a request to the Public Prosecutor, No. 33043/2023, to investigate the incidents of assault and harassment against Orabi during his transfer from Badr 1 to Badr 3.<sup>49</sup> At the time of writing, no investigation has been announced.

48 EIPR, After nearly four years in pretrial detention, lawyer Ibrahim Metwally's life is in danger! Published on 12 October 2021, last visited on 12 March 2023, link: <https://tinyurl.com/34bdtwac>

49 EIPR, Complaint jointly filed by EIPR and AFTE regarding the assault on and harassment of Ahmed Orabi in Badr prison, published on 14 June 2023, last visited on 20 June 20, 2023. Link: <https://shorturl.at/RRxyh>



If a sick prisoner's condition becomes critical, the prison administration shall promptly inform the administrative authority in whose jurisdiction his relatives reside, and they shall be allowed to visit him. If the prisoner dies the relatives shall be promptly informed in the same manner, and his body handed over to them if they are present and ask to receive it.

– Prisons Organization Law Article 37

At least five detainees died in Badr 3 prison during the last quarter of 2022 alone, all in critical condition and requiring emergency care. According to available information, all five deaths were caused by their health conditions and healthcare demand amid a refusal to hear their legal requests. One died after a two-month hunger strike. While EIPR was unable to independently verify the circumstances of these death; available information and reports indicate that those deaths and subsequent deaths could have been avoided either through the provision of healthcare and humane detention conditions, or by compassionate medical release and the simple release of detainees that have yet to be convicted or even indicted of any crime.

### **1- Al-Sayed Mohamed Abdel Hamid Al-Saifi (61, mosque worker)**

Al-Saifi died in early October 2022, five days after admission to Badr 3. He had bowel cancer, had not received the necessary medical care, and was transferred to Badr Complex Hospital just before his death. He had been arrested from his home in Sharqiya Governorate on 30 September, having been sentenced to death in absentia in Case No. 81/2016 (Supreme State Security Felonies), known in local media as the "Assassination of the Public Prosecutor" case. That verdict was issued in 2017, and in the intervening years Saifi continued to serve as a mosque worker affiliated to the Hehya Endowments Department of the Sharqiya Endowments Directorate. The Endowments Ministry ended his service years after the verdict and just before his arrest in preparation for retrial in person.<sup>50</sup>

### **2- Alaa Mohammed Abdel Ghani Al-Salmi (47)**

Salmi died on 1 November 2022, several months after transfer to Badr 3. He was arrested in September 2014, held in maximum security Tora 1 prison, and sentenced to life imprisonment in 2019 in Case No. 610 of 2014. Two months before his death Salmi went on an open-ended hunger strike to protest his detention conditions, during which he did not receive any medical care nor were his demands met. Salmi died his family, banned from visiting him since 2017, learned of his death only three days later.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Amnesty International, Egypt: New prison, PR gloss ahead of COP27 cannot hide human rights crisis, October 2022, Link: Egypt: New prison, PR gloss ahead of COP27 cannot hide human rights crisis - Amnesty International. [s://shorturl.at/CvHpu](https://shorturl.at/CvHpu)

<sup>51</sup> «The second in less than a month, a prisoner dies in Badr 3 after his hunger strike», Mada Masr, 2 November 2022, last visited on 13 March 2022. Link: <https://www.facebook.com/mada.masr/photos/a.564476860276121/5889027714487649>

### 3- Magdy Abdo Al-Shabrawi (58, library manager)

Shabrawi suffered kidney failure months before his death in Badr 3 on 15 November 2022, and did not receive proper healthcare. He was arrested in 2020 having received a 15-year prison sentence in absentia in Case No. 2985 of 2015, known in the media as the "Rabaa Sit-in Dispersal" case. He was detained in Tora prison. The sentence was upheld in person in 2022. His family's requests to take him to a specialized doctor at their own expense were rejected on the grounds that there was a hospital and a pharmacy in the prison. From his arrest until his death, Shabrawi was denied visitation, exercise, and access to the necessary medication.<sup>52</sup>

### 4- Hassan Diab Hassan (40)

On 28 November 2022, several pretrial detainees in Badr 3 reported during a detention-renewal hearing that an inmate named Hassan Diab had died in his cell after a six-hour diabetic coma, during which the prison administration refused to respond to the inmates' request to help him or take him to the prison hospital. Hassan was a civilian serving a prison sentence issued by a military court. He was from Qalyubiya Governorate but served his sentence in the maximum security Minya prison before transfer to Badr 3, where he died within weeks due to denial of healthcare according to information available in the public domain.<sup>53</sup>

### 5- Gehad Abdel Ghani Salem (32)

Salem was reported to have died on 21 December 2022 at the Badr Complex medical center, a year and a half after a jaw and throat cancer diagnosis. A father of two, Salem had served seven years of his 15-year sentence. The Badr 3 administration refused to refer him to an oncology hospital for treatment, and he was detained in the prison hospital until his death.<sup>54</sup>

It is not possible to ascertain the exact number of deaths that have occurred in the Badr Complex due to official information being withheld and the isolation of an unknown number of detainees from the outside world by denying them visitation for extended periods, but it is certain that the number will grow because the causes of the known deaths have not been addressed. Lawyer Ali Abbas Barakat, 60, died in 2023 having been detained in 2016. Instead of being released on his acquittal in 2022, he was "recycled" into another case and spent a year and a half in pretrial detention before a hepatic coma

<sup>52</sup> Egyptian Front for Human Rights, Badr 3 prison = Scorpion prison: Three deaths in the «new» prison in less than two months due to medical negligence, 23 November 2022, Link: <https://shorturl.at/kiEyN>

<sup>53</sup> Mada Masr, Lawyer: Fourth prisoner dies in «Badr 3» in two months, 29 November 2022, Link: <https://shorturl.at/Kht35>

<sup>54</sup> Al-Quds Al-Arabi, «Four detainees die in Egypt's prisons in a week... One of them wished to die among his children, 27 December 2022, link: <https://shorturl.at/2KHSg>



killed him.<sup>55</sup> Deaths in the Badr Complex number at least eight at the time of writing.<sup>56</sup>

This number of deaths related to medical conditions indicates systematic medical negligence, not just isolated errors. The problem of poor medical response is chronic in Egyptian prisons, especially in emergencies and when wards are closed. Many had hoped that this problem would end or diminish after detainees were moved to modern, advanced prisons, especially as the Egyptian state boasts of the new prisons' multiple facilities, especially medical. Yet the first documented death in the Badr Complex was reported just a few weeks after prisoners arrived in 2021, confirming that the problem is not a matter of resources or infrastructure, but in security decisions that deny detainees access to their most basic rights. The lives of many of these detainees could have been saved if the laws that allow for medical release and the conditional release of those who have served half their jail terms and those held in pretrial detention were followed.

The other problem is refusal to allow detainees access to the medical services that are available in prison. This can only be resolved if the Ministry of Interior grasps that prisoners have constitutionally protected rights that cannot be waived simply because they are serving sentences that entail the temporary deprivation of their liberty, and that its officers and other workers are public employees in charge of law enforcement rather than imposing additional penalties on detainees.

## Communication with the outside world

On 9 March 2020, with the outbreak of Covid-19, communication between detainees in Egyptian prisons and the outside world was cut off. The Ministry of Interior initially announced that it had decided to "suspend visits to all prisons for ten days in the interest of public health and the safety of inmates."<sup>57</sup> It extended the suspension to five months, during which only very few detainees were allowed to correspond with relatives on limited occasions. At the time the EIPR submitted a request to the State Security Prosecution to allow researcher Patrick George Zaki, detained at Tora, to make a phone call to his relatives in accordance with Article 38 of the Prisons Organization Law, but the prison did not respond.<sup>58</sup>

In August 2020 the Minister of Interior issued a decision to resume prison visits, with new rules in line with the prevailing pandemic-containment measures. Each detainee was allowed one 20-minute

<sup>55</sup> The Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, Detained since 2016.. Lawyer Ali Abbas Barakat dies after his health deteriorated and transferred to Badr Prison Hospital, 26 June 2023, link: <https://shorturl.at/qRmIF>

<sup>56</sup> The Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, «A Modern Old Punitive Philosophy!».. Report of the "Imprescriptible" campaign on the conditions of detention during 2024, <https://shorturl.at/mRbIC>

<sup>57</sup> The official page of the Ministry of Interior on Facebook, Visits to all prisons suspended for ten days in order to ensure public health and the safety of inmates, 9 March 2020, link: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2864702740240037&id=181662475210757&set=a.181676241876047>

<sup>58</sup> EIPR, The Prisons Authority is obligated to provide phone access to detainees and enable communication with their families and their lawyers. The Ministry of Interior must develop a plan to reinstate visits to prisons after a three-month hiatus, 17 June 2020, link: <https://tinyurl.com/bd42uj8n>

visit a month with no direct contact regardless of their legal status. These rules are still in force in prisons throughout the country (the prohibition on direct contact has loosened somewhat at the Badr Complex in recent months<sup>59</sup>), even though by 2021 governmental and other institutions no longer followed Covid-19 measures. Egyptian prisoners - probably alone in the world - are subject to precautionary measures for a health emergency that occurred five years ago and has expired since, and only in the context of restricting their visitation and communication rights. After all, many places of detention (especially in police stations, not run by the Prisons Authority) are still so overcrowded that detainees take turns to sleep.<sup>60</sup>

The legal form of communication between detainees and their families is as follows.<sup>61</sup>

For pretrial detainees:

Four visits per month, one every week lasting for 60 minutes (240 minutes per month)

Sending letters at any time

Two phone calls a month, each lasting for not more than three minutes

For the convicted:

Two visits per month, one every two weeks lasting for 60 minutes (120 minutes per month)

Sending four letters per month

Two phone calls a month, each lasting for no longer than three minutes, alternating weekly with visit dates

A lawyer is allowed to meet their detained client privately, provided that the lawyer obtains written permission from the Public Prosecution and the investigating judge, whether the meeting is at the request of the detainee or the lawyer.

The Public Prosecutor and the assistant minister for the Prisons Authority or his deputy may authorize a prisoner's relatives to visit outside of the normal visiting times if necessary.

The isolation imposed on Egyptian detainees in general, and in the Badr Complex in particular, is unprecedented. For years the Ministry of Interior has systematically violated the Prisons Organization Law, its regulations, and Nelson Mandela Rule 58, which stipulates that prisoners must be allowed, under necessary supervision, to communicate with family and friends at regular intervals. Visitation is

59 Mahmoud Abdel Radi, Youm7, The Ministry of Interior resumes visits to prisoners with precautionary measures against Covid-19, 15 August 2020, link: <https://tinyurl.com/mr4xybnd>

60 The Egyptian Cabinet's Facebook page, The Supreme Committee for Epidemics and Health Pandemics Crisis Eases Covid-19 Restrictions, 27 March 2022, link: <https://tinyurl.com/3ertehe7>

61 See the Prisons Organization Law - Chapter VIII (Visitation and Correspondence) Articles 38-42

See the Minister of the Interior's Decree No. 79 of 1961 on the Internal Regulations of Correctional and Rehabilitation Centers, Chapter Five: Visitation and Correspondence; link: <https://tinyurl.com/2s3946ht>

crucial for both detainees and their loved ones. It is the only way for detainees to communicate with the outside world, it allows detainees to be checked on, and it enables children to interact with their detained parents or grandparents.

"Although the prison is not far away, I need to go out at 6:30 am to get there by 8 am. The problem is that no transport is available, so I have to ask a driver to take me there, which costs a lot. After that I may wait all day to find transport or someone who could take me to the nearest transport to get back." – wife of current Badr 3 prisoner

The Ministry of Interior implemented the "directives of the political leadership" and built the new prisons away from urban areas,<sup>62</sup> but when it chose the location of the Badr Complex, northeast of Cairo, it did not consider the need for a public transport network for family visits. The choice of location and the placement there of detainees from distant governorates can be considered a violation of Mandela Rule 59, which states that prisoners, as much as possible, must be placed in prisons close to their homes or places of social rehabilitation.

The distance between Tahrir Square in central downtown Cairo and the Badr Complex is about 65 km, and due to the lack of direct public or even private transport in that direction it is hard to get there. The road is not safe or inhabited even though many people use it regularly, including prison employees, detainees' families allowed to visit or deliver tabliyah, and the lawyers who work daily at the court headquarters inside the complex.

At the time of publication of this report, renting a car cost about LE800 for one round trip from central Cairo to the Badr Complex (LE800 is about 11% of the current total minimum wage for a private-sector worker).<sup>63</sup> Most non-car-owning families cannot secure this sum on a regular basis, so they have to use public transport. The nearest public station to the complex is Adly Mansour metro station (43 km away) or Al-Marg metro station (around 54 km away); from either station one must take a second means of transport to reach the Regional Ring Road and the entrance to Badr on the Tenth of Ramadan Road, and there one looks for a third means of transport or walks for about 20 minutes to reach the outer gate of the complex.

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62 The official channel of the Egyptian Ministry of Interior on YouTube, Organizing a ceremony to announce the start of the trial operation of 3 new correctional and rehabilitation centers, 21 March 2023. Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxWc\\_GtiI\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxWc_GtiI_c)

63 The State Information Service, the National Wages Council decides to raise the minimum wage for private sector workers to EGP 7,000 as of 1 March 2025, 9 February 2025. Link: <https://tinyurl.com/2w3dhyt2>

**Image 4: The road taken by visitors/lawyers to reach the prison gate after using more than one means of transportation to reach the entrance to Badr**



The time it takes to visit detainees in the Badr Complex varies. In the best traffic conditions it takes more than an hour from Cairo, and it takes three to four hours for those coming from the Delta governorates. It may take double that time to come from Upper Egypt. To save money, families go in groups and share the fare. Other families are forced to give up their right to visits due to the long distance and high cost. Lawyers face a similar difficulty. Although the Ministry of Interior notes in its film that the courts at Badr are under separate administration, their presence within a security complex affiliated with the Ministry of Interior remains contrary to Article 5 of the Constitution, which stipulates the principle of the separation of powers. Lawyers go to the Badr Complex to attend detention-renewal hearings held via video conferencing or trial sessions. The remote location of the complex is a financial burden for lawyers, forcing some to ask colleagues who can go to the complex to attend on their behalf.

**Image 5: A still from the Ministry of Interior's film A New Beginning showing one of the joint visiting rooms inside the Badr Security Complex**



After arriving at the outer gate of the Badr Complex, the families begin another hours-long journey so they can see their relatives. Upon arrival they need to register their names and then wait outside regardless of summer heat or winter cold. After they hear their names called, they take a bus provided

by the Badr Complex for LE10 to the gate of the prison where their relatives are held. These buses are not suitable for the elderly and those who bring tabliyah or any other items due to the tight capacity and overcrowding. On arrival at the prison a series of searches begin. The visitor, whether adult or child, has to stand in line to be searched by an employee. Food packages are also searched. This process is repeated before the last wait that precedes the visit itself, which does not exceed 20 minutes. At the time of writing in 2025, this short visit period, imposed since the implementation of Covid-19 measures in 2020, was still in place despite the expiration of the reasons behind introducing it.

The Ministry of Interior's film shows a visiting hall that looks like visiting halls in movies and TV dramas. Some families who have visited relatives in Badr 1 in such a hall said security personnel were constantly present, leaving no room for privacy. Not everyone who is allowed to visit meets their families in the hall shown in the propaganda film. Depending on the security file of each detainee, visits can take place via phone booth (not shown in the film) or in an office in the presence of an officer. The son of a current Badr 3 prisoner told EIPR that his father is allowed to meet visitors but with clear restrictions, either in the warden's office or via phone booth, making it difficult to speak freely to his family. "I don't know everything," the son added. "He meets his lawyer during hearings but with tight restrictions that make it difficult for him to speak freely."

**"He is denied all visitation and correspondence. His mother died but we don't know how to tell him, or how he will receive the news while he is in a very bad condition, physically and psychologically, especially as he is denied visits, correspondence, and books." – son of current Badr 3 prisoner**

Egyptian law does allow for depriving detainees of human contact for open-ended periods. Article 42 of the Prisons Organization Law stipulates that "visits may be banned totally or restricted [...] at certain times, for health and security reasons." Article 141 of the Criminal Procedures Law also gives the Public Prosecution and investigative judges the right to order that "the detained defendant shall not have contact with other prisoners and that no one shall visit him, without prejudice to the defendant's right to always be in contact his lawyer without the presence of anyone else." The law does not set clear mechanisms to review or challenge such a decision, and detainees denied visits are not informed of the reason or duration.

According to families and lawyers, most Badr 1 detainees are allowed visits, whether in a hall, office, or via phone booth. As for Badr 3, during a video-conference detention-renewal hearing on 3 January 2023 pretrial detainees said they were all denied visitation. A lawyer present explained that they found this situation unbearable and some had not heard anything about their families. The court looking into their detention renewal did not respond to the complaint.

EIPR reviewed a copy of an administrative decision issued in 2022 by the assistant minister of interior for the Community Protection Sector (formerly the Prisons Authority) to the Public Prosecutor's Office to ban visits for defendants and convicts in dozens of cases held in Badr 3, Al-Mazra'a Prison, and a ward in Tora 2. The decision did not specify the duration of the ban or its reasons in detail,



only noting "the prohibition of visits to some of the wards of extreme risk in order to tighten security control and boost stability." This raises doubts about the effectiveness of the touted tools for correcting and rehabilitating inmates, and whether there is any real intention to rehabilitate or just punish prisoners whether convicted or not.

The situation changed slightly for several Badr 3 detainees at the end of March 2023, after news spread that many detainees there were participating in a hunger strike and others had attempted suicide. Between 50 and 60 detainees were transferred to other prisons, including Wadi al-Natrun 5; the families of several detainees in sections 1, 3, and 4 of Wadi al-Natrun 5 received a report stating that they could visit their relatives there. In June 2023, the Badr 3 administration informed the families of some detainees that they were allowed to visit their relatives on specific dates. Among these families was that of lawyer Ibrahim Metwally, who could visit him for the first since he was transferred to Badr 3 almost two years earlier; the visit took place via a phone booth with no direct contact.<sup>64</sup>

However, there are still prisoners who have been denied visits since the opening of the Badr prison complex, some of whom had been denied visits for many years before their transfer to Badr. The family of defendant Mohamed Fathy Refaat Al-Tahtawi, former chief of staff to former President Mohamed Morsi, who is currently detained in Case No. 1097 of 2022, Supreme State Security, in the second section of Badr Prison, reported that he is prohibited from receiving visits. who is currently being held in connection with Case No. 1097 of 2022, Supreme State Security, in the second sector of Badr Prison 3, that he has been denied visits for more than seven years and that the last visit his family was allowed was on March 14, 2018. The defendant's family has filed complaints and petitions with the public prosecutor to appeal the prolonged ban on visits and communication with his family, which is a fundamental right of any prisoner guaranteed by the constitution. The family then appealed the administrative decision to ban visits before the administrative court and asked the court to allow them to obtain an official copy or statement from the Community Protection Authority or from the Reform and Rehabilitation Center in Tora and later in Badr Prison on the date of the last visit allowed to the defendant in April 2018, but to no avail. In the last attempt to appeal the extended visitation ban, which the family filed in January 2025, the administrative court referred the appeal to the State Commissioners Authority, which issued an advisory opinion not to accept the case due to the absence of an administrative decision.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, in the context of this lawsuit, the plaintiff's family obtained for the first time a copy of the administrative decision attached by the State Lawsuits Authority in its argument that the contested administrative decision was invalid.<sup>66</sup> This was Administrative Decision No. 125 of 2025, which prohibited visits for a period of three months to inmates in the second sector of the Badr 3 Correctional and Rehabilitation Center, from April 1, 2025, to July 1, 2025. This came in the context of the Authority's argument that the provisions of the law allow for the discretionary power to prohibit visits to inmates for a period of time. Although the decision

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64 «Badr 3 allows visit to human rights lawyer Ibrahim Metwally, EIPR, published on 26 June 2023, last visited on 3 July 2023, link: <https://shorturl.at/AOTxC>

65 Report of the State Commissioners Authority in Case No. 31206 of 79 Q, April 2025.

66 Defense memorandum of the State Cases Authority representing the Ministry of Interior in Case No. 31206 of 79 Q.

referred to is subsequent to the date of the appeal filed by the defendant's family in January 2025, which stated that the last date of visit was April 2018, this is the first time that the plaintiff's family has received official notification of a decision to ban visits. Since that date, the family has been trying to exhaust all judicial remedies and appeal the Administrative Court's decision to overturn the contested administrative decision. Meanwhile, prisoner Mohamed Fathy Refaat Al-Tahtawi remains banned from receiving visits to this day.

Even if the Ministry of Interior invokes Article 42 of the Prison Regulation Law, which allows the prison administration to prohibit visits to an inmate for reasons related to public security for a period of time not specified by law and without specifying a mechanism for appealing it, the legal text cannot be interpreted in any way that allows this period to be extended beyond seven years or for the entire period of imprisonment of an accused or convicted person, whether in pretrial detention or serving a sentence of conviction. This clearly contradicts the provisions of Articles 55 and 56 of the Egyptian Constitution referred to above. In addition, it is a new and excessively harsh practice in Egyptian prisons.

## Fourth: Strikes and suicide attempts

For years, detainees in various prisons have repeatedly gone on hunger strike as a peaceful act of protest that is part of the right to freedom of expression. Detainees often resort to this extremely grueling option only because they are cut off from traditional ways of making a complaint or grievance. In many cases it is a response to being held in pretrial detention longer than the legal limit, or to being denied visitation or prevented from seeing family or a lawyer for years (sometimes up to ten years) without real legal justification.

Egyptian legislation does not indicate how to deal with hunger-striking detainees, but prison doctors must follow basic procedures in such cases.<sup>67</sup> When a detainee announces a hunger strike, the prison is supposed to draft a report documenting the incident and send it to the Public Prosecutor. In rare cases, the prosecution summons the striker to ask about the reasons for the strike, and in other cases it was the prison itself conducting an interrogation, urging the detainee to end the strike either by promising to improve conditions or by threatening additional punitive measures. In most previous cases documented by EIPR, old prison administrations chose to ignore hunger strikes.<sup>68</sup>

According to the World Health Organization, "experiencing conflict, disaster, violence, abuse or loss and a sense of isolation are strongly associated with suicidal behavior, and suicide rates are also high among vulnerable groups who experience discrimination, such as prisoners."<sup>69</sup> Egyptian prisons witnessed suicides, some documented in court rulings, before the opening of the Badr Complex.<sup>70</sup> After its opening, leaks circulated on social media indicate a number of suicide attempts at Badr. This part of the report reviews some instances of Badr detainees attempting to object to their conditions, whether through strikes or suicide attempts.

On 23 February 2023, less than a year after the Badr Complex began operating, the Facebook page "Association of Families of Badr Detainees" published a photo of a leaked message from detainees in sectors 1, 2, and 3 of Badr 3.<sup>71</sup> The message revealed that several detainees had gone on hunger strike to protest their poor living conditions and the years-long ban on family contact. It also stated that some had attempted suicide, by either hanging or artery-cutting.

67 World Medical Association, "Declaration of Malta on Hunger Strikers," Adopted by the 43rd World Medical Assembly, St. Julians, Malta, November 1991, <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-malta-on-hunger-strikers/>.

68 EIPR, «Hungry for Justice» Campaign to Support the Rights of Hunger Strikers in Egyptian Prisons, 23 September 2014, link: <https://shorturl.at/NhvEp>.

69 World Health Organization, Media Center, «Suicide», 29 August 2024, link: <https://www.who.int/ar/news-room/factsheets/detail/suicide>

70 See the reasons for the court ruling in Case No. 1228 of 2021 (Emergency State Security Misdemeanors). In that case the court adopted the National Security Sector's investigations, which confirmed that prisoner Hossam Hamed Hassan, died by suicide and not as a result of torture after being placed in the disciplinary cell to force him to end his hunger strike. It has never been announced that the Prisons Authority investigated the case. Link: <https://defenselaws.net/?p=1279>

71 See Appendix 1



This was not the only message. Between 23 February and 12 March 2023, nine handwritten letters were leaked and circulated. In the letters, unidentified detainees announced the start of multiple strikes and reported repeated suicide attempts inside Badr 3. The letters said the prison administration responded harshly: it blocked the entry and distribution of medication, reduced food rations, and for around 200 prisoners it confiscated their personal belongings and transferred them to other prisons.<sup>72</sup>

One prisoner's wife told EIPR that she learned from the leaked messages that her husband had attempted suicide. She had been unable to check on him, as he had been denied visitation rights since 2016, both during his time in Tora prison and after his transfer to Badr 3.<sup>73</sup>

It may seem impossible to corroborate the anonymous letters. However, during a pretrial detention renewal session held via video conference on 8 March 2023, the court postponed reviewing the detention orders for all detainees in Badr 1 and Badr 3 for a third consecutive week, citing an inability to connect with the prisons. Thus for three weeks detainees in Badr 3, most of them already denied visitation rights, were completely cut off from the outside world. Several lawyers present explained to the judges that continuing to detain the defendants without presenting them to the court would give families already denied visitation the impression that something may have happened to their relatives. The court still insisted on postponing the session, although there was no legal obstacle to demanding the physical presence of the detainees to consider their detention directly rather than relying on the video conference system, now "inaccessible" for a third consecutive week, especially as the location of the court was inside the same security complex where they were detained..

On the same day, another incident occurred that supports the claims in the leaked letters. According to a lawyer interviewed by EIPR, a pretrial detainee in Badr 3 sought help from the judges during a trial session in connection with Case No. 1360/2019 (Supreme State Security Investigations), which remains ongoing at the time of writing. The detainee claimed before the court that his ward in Badr 3 had witnessed 200 suicide attempts due to unlivable detention conditions. The judge interrupted the defendant after he mentioned suicide attempts and ordered him to stop speaking.

On 13 March 2023, detainees in Badr 3 finally reappeared after nearly a month, attending a pretrial detention renewal session via video conferencing in Badr. According to several lawyers who attended, all the detainees – who were detained in relation to various cases – unanimously stated that conditions in the prison were dangerous. They informed the court that they were denied visitation and outdoor exercise, and that during the past few weeks they had been subjected to torture by both the prison warden and the chief of the investigative police, with an assistant minister of interior implicated in these violations.

Several defendants in the session said they had been stripped and beaten in their cells, which drove dozens of detainees to attempt suicide. Judge Mohamed Hamad, the head of the terrorism circuit responsible for detention renewals at the time, rejected the lawyers' request to record the detainees'

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<sup>72</sup> See the photocopies attached to Appendices 1 to 9

<sup>73</sup> Bisan Kassab, Mada Masr, Message Leaked from Badr 3: Suicide Attempts Among Prisoners.. The Brotherhood Leader Begins a Hunger Strike, 25 February 2023, Link: <https://shorturl.at/f6fFn>

statements regarding torture and suicide attempts in a separate report to initiate an investigation into the claims. The lawyers had to document the detainees' statements in the session minutes of Case No. 238/2020. As of the time of writing, no investigation has been conducted into any of the inmates' statements or allegations.<sup>74</sup>

In parallel with reports of a hunger strike in Badr 3, two revealing incidents took place in Badr 1, exposing a level of brutality not seen in similar wards of older prisons from which the detainees had been transferred. The first occurred in April 2023. Hamed Seddiq, held in pretrial detention since 2019, refused to leave his cell in Badr 1 to attend a detention renewal session for a new case he had recently been recycled into, after exceeding the legal maximum for pretrial detention in his original case.

Seddiq was grieving and in poor psychological condition due to his wife's death during his imprisonment, and the continuation of his detention under repeated charges since 2019. Fellow detainees – political activist Ahmed Douma, human rights lawyer Mohamed El-Baqer (who were still incarcerated at this point), as well as journalist Mohamed Oxygen – tried to negotiate with the prison administration to allow Seddiq to stay in his cell. The response was violence: the prison warden deployed the "striking force" (a special security unit to suppress prison unrest) to deal with all four detainees.

Seddiq was forcibly removed from his cell, beaten with batons, had his face stomped on with boots, and was transferred to a disciplinary cell wrapped in a blanket. The other three were also assaulted and gagged. All four were held in disciplinary cells throughout the following day without food, water, or medication. The next morning they were allowed some medicine, bottled water, and a food ration (one piece of bread and a small portion of cheese). The day after that they were returned to a regular ward, but in separate solitary cells with no belongings or outdoor exercise.

Neama Hisham, the wife of Mohamed El-Baqer, learned the details of the incident on her next visit: his wrist and mouth were injured, while Mohamed Oxygen suffered a rib injury. The pair were transferred to disciplinary detention wearing only underwear. Following her social media post about the incident, El-Baqer's wife was arrested by a security force from her home at around 3:30 am on Monday, 17 April 2023. Her mobile phone was confiscated and she was taken to an undisclosed location before being released 13 hours later.<sup>75</sup> El-Baqer's family filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor regarding the assault, under Case No. 385866. No investigation was conducted and the complaint remained unaddressed until a presidential pardon was issued for El-Baqer on 19 July 2023. As of writing, the complaint is still shelved.

The second incident in Badr 1 concerns poet Galal El-Behairy, who began a full hunger strike on 5 March 2023. His family told his legal team that he had stopped taking his heart medication and antidepressants. El-Behairy had entered his sixth year of detention: first he had spent over a year in pretrial detention before receiving a release order, then a military court had sentenced him to three

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<sup>74</sup> EIPR, Weeks after no news emerged about them: Badr 3 prison inmates seek help from the judge and the prosecution to save them, 14 March 2023, Link: <https://shorturl.at/J43ws>

<sup>75</sup> EIPR, «Neama Hisham, the wife of human rights lawyer Mohamed El-Baqer, arrested from her home,» 17 April 2023, Link: <https://shorturl.at/Z5J3a>

years; after that sentence ended in July 2021, he had not been released but “recycled” into Case No. 2000 of 2021.

El-Behairy went on hunger strike to protest this continued unlawful pretrial detention in a new case involving charges that had previously been brought against him and adjudicated, without any serious investigation. His strike lasted three months, during which Public Prosecutor Hamada El-Sawy continued to ignore repeated requests from El-Behairy’s defense team for medical care and to end his unjustified detention.<sup>76</sup> In September El-Behairy attempted another hunger strike and subsequently attempted suicide but his life was saved, his family told his legal team at the time.<sup>77</sup> By the time of writing, El-Behairy remains in pretrial detention under Case No. 2000/2021. He has served double the legal maximum for detention without trial.

Also in Badr 1, in July 2024 a detainee attempted suicide during a hunger strike. The attempt occurred while his mother was visiting, after the prison rejected his request to transfer her his academic documents. His mother suffered a severe respiratory crisis and died two days later.<sup>78</sup>

Back to the highly restrictive Badr 3. Most families remained unable to ascertain the condition or whereabouts of their detained relatives. Complaints and reports of hunger strikes and suicide attempts resurfaced between May and June 2024, this time extending beyond Badr 3 to other Badr facilities, and coinciding with the Egyptian government’s months-long “load-shedding” plan for power cuts. Several families reported that electricity was cut in Badr 1 for eight consecutive days, with serious health and safety consequences amid soaring temperatures and malfunctioning automatic doors. According to their testimonies, the prison failed to adequately address the health crises the outage caused among elderly and ill inmates.

In June 2024 the Ministry of Interior issued a statement denying the existence of “any letters allegedly written by inmates at a correctional and rehabilitation center concerning the conditions there.” Such reports were “merely attempts to stir confusion and cast doubt on the progress and modernization of the penal system.” The ministry did not name the prison or state whether its denial was based on an investigation or was simply a preliminary dismissal.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>76</sup> «Letter addressed to the Public Prosecutor for the speedy release of poet Galal El-Behairy after he went on a hunger strike and stopped taking heart and antidepressant medications», Joint statement, 13 March 2023, link: <https://shorturl.at/JT59i>

<sup>77</sup> «Life in danger: Galal El-Behairy should be given healthcare, and the Public Prosecutor should release him immediately», AFTE, 21 September 2023, link: <https://afteegypt.org/advocacy/2023/09/21/35491-afteegypt.html>

<sup>78</sup> Joint Statement - Rights Groups Alarmed by Inhumane and Life-Threatening Conditions in Egypt’s Badr Prison, 1 August 2024, link: <https://eipr.org/en/press/2024/08/joint-statement-rights-groups-alarmed-inhumane-and-life-threatening-conditions-egypts>

<sup>79</sup> The official Facebook page of the Ministry of Interior, 27 June 2024, link: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=885411103622275&set=a.144651037698289>

## Conclusion and recommendations

Although the situation in Badr Complex may officially appear to be under control, we can see from the above that it is certainly not in good shape. Denials are plentiful – the Ministry of Interior denies that detainees have been deprived of exercise and medical care,<sup>80</sup> for example, and has dismissed reports of a detainee's suicide<sup>81</sup> as baseless rumors aimed at causing confusion.

No one outside can see the full picture inside the Badr Complex because communication with detainees is tightly restricted. Civil society organizations are unable to conduct regular independent visits to detention facilities in Egypt, and the Public Prosecution does not carry out inspections in a manner that fulfills the purpose of real oversight and accountability.

To avoid "spreading false news," in this report EIPR focused on tracking issues within the Badr Complex that the relevant authorities can easily identify by reviewing the complaints and reports that detainees have repeatedly submitted to judges and prosecutors during detention-renewal sessions, or through requests submitted by families and lawyers to various official bodies. The report is therefore essentially an appeal to both the Public Prosecution and the Ministry of Interior to assess the conditions of detainees in the Badr Complex and to address the complaints, some of which are years-old.

Egypt released its National Strategy for Human Rights at around the same time the Badr Complex was inaugurated in late 2021, and it stated there would always be challenges related to "ensuring that everyone enjoys their fundamental rights and freedoms."<sup>82</sup> Indeed, many inmates in the Complex do not enjoy the basic rights guaranteed to them by law and the Constitution. Serious problems plague Egypt's criminal justice system, including problems specific to the detention system in both legislation and practice. Former Ministry of Interior officials have been known to acknowledge past instances of such issues, noting that older prisons suffered overcrowding and inadequate health and safety standards, and that the results of the ministry's earlier efforts in that regard "did not reach a satisfactory level."<sup>83</sup> But this is also the case for the Badr Complex, despite massive investment in its infrastructure.

On 11 December 2024, the Badr Complex hosted a large delegation of representatives from local and international human rights organizations and councils in celebration of the Human Rights Day. Among them was a representative of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, who stated that what she saw was "evidence of the government's ability to provide advanced care and a

<sup>80</sup> The official Facebook page of the Ministry of Interior, «Statement of denial», 11 February 2025, link: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1044843701012347&set=a.144651037698289>

<sup>81</sup> Al-Shorouk, The Ministry of Interior denies suicide of an inmate in a correctional and rehabilitation center, 18 April 2023, link: <https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=18042023&id=794432c1-6522-4606-a1ca-d44361bd21e9>

<sup>82</sup> National Strategy for Human Rights, October 2021, link: <https://manshurat.org/node/73991>

<sup>83</sup> See the statements of Major General Mostafa El-Baz, the former Assistant Minister of Interior for the Prisons Sector. The official channel of the Egyptian Ministry of Interior on YouTube, «Organizing a Celebration to Announce the Trial Operation of 3 New Correctional and Rehabilitation Centers», 21 March 2023, link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymX6rKmk5W4>

dignified life for inmates.” The promotional video released by the Ministry of Interior about the visit shows that the Egyptian government does have the capacity to offer a dignified life to prisoners, but does not show whether it is acting in accordance with that capacity. The footage does not show any visits to prison cells, and it is clear that no independent meetings were held with any of the detainees.<sup>84</sup> Officials’ praise was based solely on what the Badr security administration allowed them to see.

The Ministry of Interior regularly announces training courses under the title “The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners – The Nelson Mandela Rules,” in cooperation with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. These courses are attended by officers working in correctional institutions<sup>85</sup> and Police Academy students.<sup>86</sup> As complaints continue to pour in to the Public Prosecution and judges from a wide range of Badr inmates, it seems that the courses have not helped officers understand or apply international standards.

The current situation necessitates a review of security policies and management, along with a serious investigation by the relevant authorities. Many executive and legislative measures can be taken by the competent bodies to enforce the law – measures that do not require additional resources or new investments. What’s needed is a genuine will to improve prison conditions, protect inmates’ lives and rights, and recognize that they are citizens who have either not yet been convicted for a crime or are serving time-limited sentences and whose lives and health in detention must be safeguarded by the Ministry of Interior.

Accordingly, this report seeks to assist Egyptian authorities by offering the following practical recommendations:

#### **The Public Prosecution should:**

- Release all pretrial detainees who exceed the legal maximum (two years) of pretrial detention.
- Commit to conducting a periodic inspection of each place of detention at least once a month to implement Articles 85 and 86 of the Prisons Organization Law and Article 27 of the Judicial Authority Law, and to publish detailed results of each visit.
- Inventory and consider the complaints submitted by all detainees in the Badr Complex over the past three years, investigate them, suspend officials accused in the complaints until the investigation is over, and announce the results. The prosecution should also announce a specific timeframe for the examination of any new complaint it receives.

84 The official channel of the Ministry of Interior on YouTube, «The Badr Correctional and Rehabilitation Center receives a delegation of representatives of local and international human rights organizations and councils», 11 December 2024, link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymX6rKmk5W4>

85 Yousri El-Badry, Al-Masry Al-Youm, «The Ministry of Interior: Officers Trained in Nelson Mandela’s Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners», 13 April 2025, <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/3422916>

86 Mahmoud Abdel Radi, Youm7, Organizing a Training Course at the Police Academy to Introduce Students to the Mandela Rules, 1 December 2024, link: <https://shorturl.at/kNqRC>

**The House of Representatives should:**

- Move towards Egypt's signature of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, so that Egypt joins its counterparts in the Arab region that have signed the Protocol (Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania).
- Amend Article 42 of the Prisons Organization Law to explicitly stipulate that any ban on visits must be qualified with case specific reasoning and limited to a specified time period, and involve the provision of alternative ways for detainees to communicate with the outside world, such as phone calls and letters.
- Amend Article 73 bis of the Prisons Organization Law to allow members of the National Council for Human Rights to visit prisons at any time and meet with any prisoner without obtaining approval from anybody.
- Add an article to the Prisons Organization Law to allow detainees to attend classes and lectures and take exams online if they cannot be held inside the prison.
- Amend the Prisons Organization Law to oblige prison administrations to appoint prison doctors affiliated with the Ministry of Health to ensure their independence.

**The Ministry of Interior should:**

- Return to the normal status of adhering to the visiting times that detainees are afforded by law and end the restrictive visitation system enforced exceptionally since Covid-19.
- Stop operating cameras inside prison cells and limit them only to corridors and halls.
- Provide enough doctors from different specialties in each prison commensurate with its number of detainees, allow medical examinations to be carried out by a specialized doctors only, and keep lawyers and families informed of detainees' medical reports. The ministry should also allow detainees to lodge grievances and request medical examinations from an independent body. It should ensure the presence of an emergency doctor in every prison round the clock to reduce injuries and deaths that occur due to the absence of medical care after ward closures and the end of working hours.
- Inventory the number of prisoners eligible for health pardons or compassionate release and work to complete such procedures with more speed.
- Require market prices in prison canteens and/or cafeterias, which prisoners rely on to supplement prison rations, and control those prices.
- Review the Minister of the Interior's Decree No. 79 of 1961 on the internal regulations of correctional and rehabilitation centers and Decree No. 691 of 1998 on the treatment and living conditions of prisoners, in order to ensure their conformity with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), amending the two decrees to ensure the implementation of the rights contained therein, setting mechanisms to enable detainees to complain, and imposing sanctions on prison staff if they deliberately deny or limit prisoners' rights.

- Issue a periodic bulletin containing current numbers of pretrial detainees and convicts in Egypt, as well as statistics on their detention conditions, including the number of those receiving healthcare and any deaths, for the sake of transparency.
- Disclose the number of complaints and requests the ministry receives from detainees and announce a clear timeframe for examining and deciding upon them.