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International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

A day born of the murder of women who refused to stay silent in the face of political crime — and a story history is still telling.

A report by the Research and Reports Unit
El Shehab for Human Rights (SHR)

About this report

El Shehab for Human Rights (SHR)

El Shehab for Human Rights (SHR) is a voluntary civil society human rights organisation founded in Egypt in 2006. It works to spread a culture of human rights and to promote justice and equality through monitoring, documentation, awareness-raising and training, and to empower the groups most vulnerable to abuse — particularly women and children.

SHR works to uphold the rule of law, champion social justice and build public awareness grounded in respect for human dignity, without discrimination. It is authorised by the UK authorities to operate as a human rights organisation.

Sources and method

This report is published by SHR's Research and Reports Unit. It documents violence against women in Egypt, drawing on complaints submitted by victims and their families, on field monitoring, and on data published by official bodies and by civil society organisations working on human rights in Egypt.

Contents

Introduction

Part One From binding law to absent accountability

Part Two Political and institutional violence against women

Part Three Documented cases

Part Four Recommendations

Conclusion

References

Introduction

As the world marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2026, it is worth remembering how this day began. It was not born of a call to celebrate women's rights, nor of a campaign against violence. It began with a political crime.

On 25 November 1960, in the Dominican Republic, three sisters of the Mirabal family — Patria, Minerva and María Teresa — were murdered on the orders of the dictator Rafael Trujillo. They had found the courage to object, refused to submit and chose to break the silence surrounding political crime in their country. They were killed because they insisted on having a voice, and on taking a stand against those in power.

Yet we must ask: what is the purpose of publishing reports year after year, of reciting the names of women who have suffered violence and honouring their memory at international observances that come round like clockwork, while the causes of that violence remain in place, the violations keep recurring and so many victims are still denied real justice?

What is gained by turning women's suffering into material for reports, statements and seasonal events, if that memory never becomes accountability, those testimonies never become action, and those violations never become the starting point for real change in policy and practice?

Remembering women who have endured violence — whatever its form or motive — must not become an annual ritual in which we revisit the tragedy, only to return to a reality that has not changed. The true value of this day lies in our ability to expose what has been hidden, to hold to account those who have escaped it, and to confront the causes that allow violence to continue and to reproduce itself.

Perhaps the most urgent question, then, is not how many reports have been written on violence against women, or how many commemorations have been held in honour of its victims. It is this:

> *What has actually changed in women's lives after all these reports? Are women today better able to seek protection, speak their minds, exercise their rights and challenge abuse — without fear of stigma, reprisal or exclusion?*

It is in this spirit that SHR approaches the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women: not as an occasion to repeat familiar human rights rhetoric, but as an opportunity to reopen files that were never closed, to take stock of what has not been achieved, and to expose the gap between rights recognised on paper and rights realised in practice.

Part One

FROM BINDING LAW TO ABSENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Violence against women: international obligations, national legislation and state practice

1. The international framework: from recognising rights to establishing state responsibility

The international legal framework protecting women from violence rests on several cornerstone instruments: the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women; and the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendations No. 19 (1992) and No. 35 (2017), which established that gender-based violence is a form of discrimination and a violation of human rights.

These instruments do more than condemn violence committed by individuals. They establish that the state is responsible both for acts committed by its own agencies and officials and for any failure to prevent, investigate and punish violations. That responsibility covers torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, sexual assault and threats against women, as well as the targeting of women for their opinions, their activism or their participation in public life.

Questions remain, however, about how binding these conventions are in practice, what follows when they are breached, and how the international obligations of states differ from the criminal liability of individuals under the applicable law. Above all, there is a fundamental question: can international mechanisms actually ensure that states honour these obligations, and turn human rights recommendations into concrete measures that protect women and hold perpetrators to account?

2. Egyptian law: constitutional guarantees and criminal provisions

At the national level, this report examines the constitutional and legislative framework for protecting women in Egypt, beginning with the 2014 Constitution. Article 11 commits the state to protecting women against all forms of violence. Article 52 declares torture in all its forms a crime with no statute of limitations. Article 53 enshrines equality and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex or on any other ground, and Article 54 safeguards personal liberty. Article 93 binds the state to the international human rights conventions Egypt has ratified, giving them the force of law once published in accordance with the prescribed procedures.

In terms of legislation, the Egyptian Penal Code and its amendments criminalise a number of forms of violence against women, including rape, indecent assault, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation and torture. Alongside these sit laws against human trafficking and other offences that violate women's physical integrity, dignity and freedom.

The existence of these provisions does not mean that Egyptian law protects women from every form of violence. Significant gaps remain — most notably the absence of a single, comprehensive law criminalising all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence. It is equally important to ask whether existing provisions are adequate to address abuses committed by state bodies or public officials, particularly where those abuses are linked to women exercising their civil and political rights or expressing their views.

3. The gap between law and practice: the limits of accountability for abuses of power

Moving from a review of legal guarantees to a test of their effectiveness means examining the gap between what the Constitution, national legislation and international conventions promise, and the violations women actually face — whether at the hands of individuals, institutions or state bodies.

This gap is starkest in the case of political and institutional violence against women. Such violence takes many forms: threats, intimidation, deprivation of liberty outside any legal framework, ill-treatment, and the use of institutional power to punish women for their political or human rights activism. Each incident must be documented and given its proper legal characterisation according to its nature and the available evidence.

It also raises questions about whether independent and transparent investigations are available, whether victims can obtain justice and reparation, and what obstacles stand in the way of holding officials accountable — especially when the body accused of the violation is the very body responsible for investigating it or enforcing the law.

At the international level, this report considers the limits of the CEDAW Committee, the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteurs, the Committee against Torture and other treaty bodies and UN mechanisms, and asks whether they can exert real pressure on states that fail to meet their obligations.

The existence of these mechanisms does not mean that they have the power to impose sanctions or to compel governments to implement their recommendations. This exposes a gap between condemning violations in international reports and statements, and bringing about tangible change in women's lives.

> *What is the worth of legal texts and international commitments if they never translate into real protection for women — and if holding perpetrators to account, especially those with power and influence, remains at the mercy of the very institutions concerned?*

Part Two

POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

From persecution outside prison to abuse in detention

1. Persecuted for their views: targeting women outside detention

This report highlights the forms of violence and abuse that women may face because of their political views, their human rights work or their participation in public life. These include threats, intimidation, defamation, organised smear campaigns, physical and verbal assault, harassment by the security services, arbitrary arrest and deprivation of liberty, and the use of legal proceedings and politically motivated charges to punish them for exercising their fundamental rights.

It also draws attention to the pressure placed on women human rights defenders, journalists, politicians, activists and dissidents — pressure that targets their families and private lives, and threatens their safety and their rights to work, to move freely and to speak out. This can include sexualised threats, defamation designed to damage their reputation and dignity, and the exploitation of social stereotypes about women to drive them out of public life.

2. Abuse in prisons and places of detention: when detention becomes a space for violence and humiliation

The abuses suffered by women detained in politically motivated cases, or because of their human rights work, are stark. They include enforced disappearance; denial of contact with family and lawyers; torture and ill-treatment; threats and physical and psychological abuse; degrading body searches that violate privacy and dignity; and prolonged or punitive solitary confinement. Added to these are inhumane conditions of detention: denial of adequate medical care, medication and basic health and personal necessities; poor food, ventilation and hygiene; restrictions on visits and family contact; and sexual harassment, sexual assault and threats directed at the women themselves or at their relatives.

These abuses are all the more serious when they involve pregnant women, mothers or women with particular health needs, or when the effects of detention extend to their children and families. Such practices cannot be dismissed as administrative irregularities within the prison system. Their nature and impact must be examined to determine whether they amount to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, on the basis of the facts, the evidence and the relevant legal standards.

3. “Recycling”, prolonged detention and impunity: violations beyond the reach of the law

No account of these violations would be complete without the practice known in Egypt as “recycling” (tadweer), which the United Nations calls “rotation”. A detainee who is approaching the end of the maximum period of pre-trial detention, who has been ordered released, or who has completed their sentence is added to a new case — often on identical or similar charges. In practice, this keeps them behind bars instead of freeing them.

The practice is particularly harmful for women detained because of their political or human rights activities. Its effect goes well beyond lengthening detention: it traps women in continuing legal and psychological uncertainty, prevents them from returning to their families and communities, and leaves them exposed for longer to the risk of abuse in detention.

This report also highlights procedural violations, including detention beyond the legal limits of pre-trial detention, denial of fair-trial guarantees, obstruction of effective communication with lawyers, failure to investigate complaints of torture, ill-treatment and medical neglect seriously, and the absence of effective accountability and reparation.

SHR stresses the responsibility of state institutions, judicial authorities and oversight bodies to ensure accountability and to prevent and investigate these violations. It also questions how effectively national and international mechanisms protect women in detention, and whether they can prevent legal procedures from being used to prolong deprivation of liberty or to punish women for their opinions and positions.

Part Three

DOCUMENTED CASES

Evidence from international and national human rights monitors

1. The international picture: UN and international reporting on women in Egypt

- In their 2024 reporting, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International indicated that more than 200 women had suffered violations linked to their political opinions or human rights activism.
- Recent years have seen a rise in prosecutions of women's rights defenders, whether in cases involving sexual violence or freedom of expression — a sign that the state approaches women's issues through a security lens rather than a rights-based one.
- Selective political will is itself one of the clearest expressions of political violence. Symbolic success stories of women in leadership positions are showcased, while the cases of women who have suffered violence, women in detention and victims of neglect or torture are shut away — a systematic disregard for the suffering of poor and marginalised women.

2. The role of international organisations and bodies

- UN agencies and international human rights organisations have pressed Egypt to engage with international monitoring mechanisms, but the state frequently treats such engagement as an infringement of its sovereignty.
- UN reports indicate that around 70% of complaints of violence against women in Egypt never reach the courts, and that funding for protection programmes in 2024 did not exceed 1.5% of the budgets of official women's programmes.
- The freedom of independent feminist organisations to operate has declined since the adoption of NGO Law No. 149 of 2019, which imposed restrictions on funding and fieldwork.
- Compared with other countries in the region, Egypt performs poorly: the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2024 places it in the bottom 30% of countries worldwide.

3. The political context and its impact on women facing violence

Egyptian women are facing an unprecedented rise in violence. Official and independent data show the following:

- **Edraak Foundation for Development and Equality.** According to 2023 figures, nearly 8 million women and girls in Egypt are subjected to violence every year. In 2024, the foundation documented 1,195 crimes of violence against women and girls. Killings were the most common, at 363 cases — 261 of them the result of domestic violence.
- **Domestic and community killings in 2025.** Field monitoring shows that these crimes continued throughout 2025. Cases include:
  - Judo athlete Dina Alaa, shot three times by her husband in her flat in Alexandria.

  - A housewife who died in hospital after her husband beat her during an argument, causing her head to strike the floor.
  - A girl, a minor, who died after being forced by members of her own family to swallow poisonous tablets. Her mother, grandmother, paternal uncle, cousin and three maternal uncles were arrested.

- **Methods and geography.** Rights monitors found that the most common methods were stabbing (23.1%), strangulation (19%) and severe beating (15.4%). They also documented 153 rapes, 100 attempted murders, 90 assaults causing permanent disability, 182 cases of sexual harassment, 60 cases of online blackmail, 14 attempted rapes, 5 cases of bullying and 3 cases of sexual mutilation. Cairo recorded the highest share of cases (32.7%), followed by Giza (23.3%), Qalyubia (6%), and Minya and Sohag (3.9% each), with Ismailia lowest (0.7%).
- **An overall upward trend.** Recorded cases rose from 815 in 2021 to 1,006 in 2022, fell slightly to 950 in 2023, then jumped to 1,195 in 2024. The 2021 Egypt Family Health Survey also found that 31% of women had experienced domestic violence at the hands of their husbands.

4. UN action on "recycling"

- On 26 August 2025, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, called on the Egyptian Government to end the practice of "rotation" — known in Egypt as "recycling" — which allows government critics to be held arbitrarily and for prolonged periods, even after they have served their sentences or reached the maximum period of pre-trial detention.
- Under this practice, the authorities bring new charges against human rights defenders and critics just as they are about to complete their prison sentences or reach the legal limit for pre-trial detention, so preventing their release. Many women — including women who have suffered violence and women active in political life — have been subjected to it.

5. Families' appeals: documented cases of political abuse

In recent years, families of women subjected to political violence have issued a growing number of appeals through human rights platforms and social media. The most prominent documented cases include:

1. **Marwa Arafa** *(translator)* — Arrested by National Security in 2020 and forcibly disappeared, she later appeared before the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) in Case No. 570 of 2020. On 2 January 2025, after four years in pre-trial detention, the prosecution referred her to the criminal court. She suffered persistent bleeding for months in detention amid medical neglect. Her only daughter, Wafaa, aged five, developed autism as a result of being deprived of her mother's care and affection. In a message dated 19 August 2025, Marwa's mother, Dr Wafaa Hefny, confirmed that her health had seriously deteriorated.
2. **Mahienour El-Masry** *(human rights lawyer)* — On 18 August 2025, the SSSP ordered her release on bail of EGP 50,000, after she had been charged with spreading false news.
3. **Tenth of Ramadan Prison** *(women's section)* — An appeal received on 9 September 2025 revealed serious abuses: denial of exercise and of exposure to sunlight; the deliberate placing of political detainees alongside criminal prisoners, endangering their safety; arbitrary restrictions on the frequency and length of visits; and refusal to allow basic necessities to be brought in.

4. **Nourhan El-Sayed Ahmed Darraz** — Her detention was renewed for 45 days on 15 September 2025 in Case No. 3528 of 2024. Arrested on 5 August 2024, she was forcibly disappeared for 12 days before appearing before the prosecution. She is being denied medication despite an urgent need for medical care.

5. **Safaa El-Korbegy** *(journalist with state media)* — Re-arrested by National Security on 6 October 2025, she was brought before the SSSP in Cairo on charges of joining and financing a terrorist group and spreading false news.

6. **Hoda Abdel-Moneim** *(lawyer, 65)* — Arrested on 1 November 2018 and sentenced in Case No. 1552 of 2018 (Emergency State Security), she completed her five-year sentence on 30 October 2023 — only to be "recycled" into two new cases (No. 800 of 2019 and No. 730 of 2020) and referred to the criminal court in December 2024, despite her steadily deteriorating health. Her husband, the lawyer Khaled Badawy, issued an urgent appeal on her behalf on 10 September 2025.

7. **Aisha Khairat El-Shater** *(human rights activist, 44)* — Arrested on 1 November 2018, she received a final ten-year sentence in Case No. 1552 of 2018 (Emergency State Security). She has been subjected to abuse, prolonged solitary confinement and political reprisals, causing a severe decline in her health, including bone marrow failure and a critically low blood cell count.

8. **Aya Kamal Hussein** *(31)* — Arrested three times since 2013 — most recently on 3 July 2022, in Case No. 93 of 2022 — she was referred to the Cairo Criminal Court on 13 November 2024.

9. **Somaya Maher Hezima** *(30)* — Arrested on 17 October 2017 and forcibly disappeared for 70 days, she was held in Case No. 955 of 2017 (the so-called "espionage for Turkey" case). The case was reserved for judgment at the hearing of 7 April 2025.

10. **Hasiba Mahsoub** *(56)* — An engineer and businesswoman, and the sister of former minister Mohamed Mahsoub. Arrested on 19 November 2019 and forcibly disappeared for 68 days, she was then recycled into Case No. 955 of 2020. She has endured solitary confinement and deliberate medical neglect, despite having no political involvement.

11. **Rabab Abdel-Mohsen Abdel-Azim Mahmoud** *(38)* — A mother of four, arrested on 15 October 2016 in Case No. 785 of 2016. Her health deteriorated after she developed a cancerous lesion on her liver as a result of torture and neglect at a National Security facility.

12. **Salsabil El-Gharbawy** *(28)* — A student at Al-Azhar University, she was first arrested in 2013 and re-arrested at Cairo Airport in December 2023 to serve a four-year sentence handed down in absentia in 2014, without a fair trial.

13. **Naglaa Mokhtar Younis** — A mother of eight, arrested at Cairo Airport on 18 August 2018 as she was travelling to perform the Hajj. She has been held in solitary confinement and denied visits and medical treatment. She renounced her Egyptian nationality and requested deportation to the United States, of which she is a citizen, yet she remains in detention more than six years later.

14. **Asmaa El-Sayed Abdel-Raouf** — Arrested at her home in Sharqia in 2020, following her husband's arrest, leaving behind a daughter not yet five years old.

15. **Nermin Hussein** — First arrested in April 2016 and again in August 2018, she was recycled in January 2021 into Case No. 65 of 2021, and again in January 2022 into Case No. 525 of 2020.
16. **Samia Shanan** *(67)* — Arrested in 2013 and severely tortured, she was sentenced to death in the "Kerdasa massacre" case; the Court of Cassation later commuted her sentence to life imprisonment. She suffers from chronic illnesses, and there have been repeated appeals for her release out of fear for her life.
17. **Basma Refaat** *(doctor and member of the Egyptian Medical Syndicate)* — Arrested in 2015, she was sentenced to 15 years in prison in the case known in the media as the "assassination of the Prosecutor General". She is the wife of retired Colonel Yasser Ibrahim Arafat, who has been forcibly disappeared since 2015 and was sentenced in the same case.
18. **Asmaa Nagy** — Arrested on 12 May 2022 and forcibly disappeared for 18 days, she then appeared in Case No. 2976 of 2021 and is held at the Tenth of Ramadan police station. She is being denied healthcare despite urgently needing tendon surgery, and suffers from an H. pylori infection.

Women currently detained: a partial list

All of the women listed below are held at Tenth of Ramadan Rehabilitation Centre 4 (women's prison).

No.	Name	Case No.	Year
1	Fatma Mohamed Mohamed Ibrahim Heikal	2479	2025
2	Sondos Mohamed Mohamed Ibrahim Heikal	2479	2025
3	Zeinab Karam Mohamed Ibrahim Heikal	2479	2025
4	Hoda Medhat Hassan Salem	2687	2025
5	Nada Medhat Hassan Salem	2687	2025
6	Maha Mohamed Mohamed Sobhi Farhat	2479	2025
7	Hana Mohamed Mohamed Sobhi Farhat	2479	2025
8	Shams Abdel-Hamid Youssef Mohamed Hafez	5000	2025
9	Shaimaa Abdel-Hamid Youssef Mohamed Hafez	5000	2025
10	Gihad Abdel-Hadi Nageh Abdel-Hadi	1773	2025
11	Maha Hamdy Ahmed Mahmoud	1603	2025
12	Sabreen Maghawry Hassan Ismail	1603	2025
13	Nourhan Mohamed Hassan Mahmoud Ahmed	3722	2025
14	Mona Mohamed Nazim Salem	4025	2025
15	Shaaer-Allah Hossam Mohamed Hashem	4037	2025
16	Soha Omar Soliman Mofaddal	1386	2025
17	Hanaa Mohamed Abdel-Reziq	208	2025
18	Rawda Salah El-Din Abdel-Hamid Youssef	3865	2025
19	Safa Abdel-Hamid Youssef Mohamed	5000	2025
20	Fatma Abdou Abou El-Maaty El-Adham	4880	2025
21	Dai Adly Abdel-Hamid Meftah Hassan	5000	2025
22	Hagar El-Sayed Ahmed Abou Hamed	5000	2025
23	Alaa El-Sayed Emam Hassan	1602	2025
24	Shaimaa Khaled Ahmed Madbouly	6181	2025
25	Mushira Ramadan Farghaly Ali	1602	2025
26	Eman Ismail Embarak Abou Bakr	1602	2025
27	Eman Fathy Abdel-Maksoud Youssef	1773	2025
28	Eman Abdel-Azim Mohamed Abou El-Ela	1773	2025
29	Hoda Mohamed El-Sayed Emara	4881	2025
30	Suzan Mohamed Soliman Mahmoud	4880	2025
31	Samira Saeed Abdel-Maksoud El-Abshihi	4285	2025
32	Rasha Ismail Mohamed Ismail	5633	2025
33	Ibtihal Wagih Mohamed Shaker	816	2025
34	Waad Ali El-Sayed Mahmoud	6044	2025
35	Hind Mohamed Mohamed Sobhi	2479	2025
36	Fatma Mohamed Nawar Ali Ahmed Nawar	1773	2025
37	Heba Khaled Abdel-Aty Ahmed	3722	2025
38	Rabab Mohamed Fouad Abou El-Fotouh	4037	2025
39	Nourhan Mohamed Ramadan Hassan	4037	2025
40	Amira Ayesh Salam Ayyash	2079	2025
41	Dina Mohamed Ahmed Mahmoud El-Derini	5197	2025

> *Violence against women in Egypt cannot be tackled in isolation from genuine political reform — reform that guarantees transparency, accountability, freedom of association and women's right to take part in public life without fear of punishment. Without these foundations, any legal or development effort is mere window-dressing that conceals the roots of the problem.*

Part Four

RECOMMENDATIONS

From recognising rights to guaranteeing them

1. Reforming legislation and public policy: what use are laws without protection and accountability?

This report has exposed a clear gap between, on the one hand, the international obligations Egypt has undertaken and the constitutional and legal guarantees it has adopted, and, on the other, the practices and violations women actually face. SHR therefore stresses that tackling violence against women cannot depend on passing laws or announcing national strategies alone. It requires genuine political will to implement them, and to hold to account anyone who violates them or fails to enforce them. SHR calls for:

1. A comprehensive law on violence against women, with a clear and complete definition covering every form of violence — physical, sexual, psychological, economic, digital and institutional — and effective mechanisms for prevention, protection, reporting, investigation, accountability and reparation. Criminalising some forms of abuse while leaving others without adequate legal protection is not enough.
2. Reform of criminal legislation to ensure that all forms of violence against women are criminalised, with penalties and procedures reviewed to secure deterrence and accountability. The law must be applied genuinely and equally, with no leniency towards perpetrators of domestic violence, harassment, sexual assault, coercion or threats.
3. Alignment of national legislation with Egypt's obligations under the human rights, anti-discrimination and violence-against-women conventions it has joined, and implementation of the recommendations of the treaty bodies — above all the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women — rather than treating them as mere observations or appeals that bring no real change.
4. Reform of the Code of Criminal Procedure and related legislation to guarantee women's access to justice; to provide real safeguards for victims, witnesses and women who report abuse, protecting them from intimidation and reprisal; to ensure that investigations are prompt, effective and independent; and to prevent legal proceedings from becoming a further burden on women seeking protection and redress.
5. A clear legal and institutional framework for accountability for abuses committed against women by state officials or agencies — including torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance (where its legal elements are met), sexual assault, and targeting for political or human rights opinions or activities — ensuring that those responsible do not escape accountability and punishment, whatever their position.
6. An end to practices that circumvent release orders and prolong deprivation of liberty, foremost among them "recycling"; legal and judicial safeguards to prevent women detainees from being repeatedly prosecuted on the same or similar charges without genuine legal grounds; and investigation of any abuse of legal procedure, with those responsible held to account.
7. An independent and impartial mechanism, with real powers, to receive women's complaints of abuse — particularly in places of detention — and to investigate them independently of the body accused; to

protect complainants and witnesses from threats and reprisals; and to publish the outcomes of investigations and accountability measures transparently.

8. Reform of personal status laws to guarantee equality, non-discrimination and the protection of women's rights within the family, with fair legal safeguards in matters of marriage, divorce, maintenance and custody, so as to reduce the violence and the economic and social exploitation women may face.

2. Urgent measures to protect victims and survivors: how can we ask women to break their silence without protecting them?

Recognising rights means little unless their protection is guaranteed in practice. SHR believes that confronting violence against women requires a shift: away from placing the burden of reporting and confrontation on victims, and towards creating a safe environment in which they can access justice without fear of reprisal, stigma or further victimisation. SHR calls for:

1. Immediate and safe protection for women at risk of violence, through properly equipped reception centres and shelters staffed by trained specialists and offering psychological, social, legal and medical support, while guaranteeing the confidentiality of victims' data and respecting their choices and privacy.
2. Free legal aid for women victims of violence — particularly political and institutional violence — through access to specialised lawyers and a mechanism or fund to cover litigation and defence costs, so that financial burdens and procedural complexity are never used to deny victims justice.
3. A safe and independent mechanism for receiving reports and testimonies of violence against women, including political and institutional abuses, which guarantees confidentiality, protects women who report and testify, and sets clear procedures for verifying reports and referring them to independent and effective investigative bodies.
4. Regular, independent monitoring of places of detention, police stations and prisons, to verify the conditions of women detainees and whether they enjoy their legal and human rights. Competent oversight bodies must be given effective access in accordance with the law, and neither their work nor those who document and monitor abuses should be obstructed or threatened.
5. Adequate physical and mental healthcare for women in detention, including access to medication, medical examinations and essential health and personal items; attention to the particular needs of pregnant women, mothers and women with disabilities; and serious investigation of every complaint of medical neglect, ill-treatment or assault.
6. Effective legal safeguards to protect whistleblowers, witnesses, activists and women human rights defenders from threats, defamation, prosecution and reprisals for exposing or reporting abuses, ensuring that criminal and administrative procedures are never used to punish them for exercising their legitimate rights.
7. Binding professional and human rights standards for the media that respect the dignity of women who have suffered violence — prohibiting defamation, the disclosure of their personal details and the reproduction of stereotypes that blame them for what they endured — alongside efforts to raise public awareness of women's rights and the rejection of all forms of violence and discrimination.

3. International accountability and oversight: how long will international condemnation leave victims' lives unchanged?

The state's responsibility to meet its national obligations is inseparable from its international responsibilities. Nor should UN reports and the recommendations of international mechanisms remain documents that merely record violations, without serious action to ensure they are implemented. SHR calls for:

1. Stronger international follow-up on Egypt's implementation of its obligations under women's rights conventions, above all CEDAW, and a requirement that the state provide clear and verifiable information on the measures it has taken to implement the recommendations of UN committees.
2. Follow-up by the relevant UN human rights mechanisms — including the CEDAW Committee, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, and the Special Rapporteur on torture — on complaints and documented cases concerning women detainees and women human rights defenders, within the limits of their mandates.
3. A move beyond general statements and recommendations towards stronger mechanisms for follow-up, evaluation and measuring states' responsiveness, with international reviews tied to documented information on investigations, accountability, compensation and guarantees of non-repetition.
4. Continued monitoring by international human rights institutions and organisations of abuses against women, with particular attention to political and institutional violence in places of detention, and technical and legal support for victims and their families, while safeguarding the security of witnesses and sources.
5. Regular, transparent publication by the Egyptian state of data on complaints of violence against women, the investigations conducted, the decisions taken and the measures adopted to hold those responsible to account and provide reparation to victims — allowing a genuine assessment of whether its stated commitments are being met.

Conclusion

SHR affirms that the persistence of violence against women — despite the many constitutional provisions, laws and international conventions that guarantee their protection — shows that the crisis is no longer simply a matter of the legal recognition of rights. It lies in the absence of real guarantees that turn that recognition into lived reality.

What is the use of laws criminalising torture if women's complaints of ill-treatment in detention are never independently investigated and no one is held to account? What is the value of release orders if they can be circumvented through fresh prosecutions, recycling and new charges? And what is the worth of international pledges if the same violations persist and the same recommendations are repeated year after year, while nothing changes for the victims?

Ending violence against women will not be achieved by issuing statements, announcing strategies or adding new laws alone. It begins with respecting the laws that already exist, honouring international obligations, guaranteeing independent investigations, holding those responsible to account and ending impunity.

> *The true test of the state's commitment to protecting women is not how many laws it passes or how many pledges it makes, but whether it can prevent violations, deliver justice and reparation to victims, and ensure that these abuses never happen again.*

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