



ماعت للسلام والتنمية وحقوق الإنسان  
Maat For Peace, Development, and Human Rights



# **The National Human Rights Strategy** **a year of efforts and challenges**

September 2021 - September 2022



# The National Strategy for Human Rights:

## One Year of Efforts and Challenges

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## Foreword

On the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the infamous 9/11 terrorist attacks that targeted the New York City World Trade Center, Egypt's first National Strategy for Human Rights was underway. Thanks to this Strategy, which marks a milestone in Egypt's history, Egypt became among the 39 member states of the United Nations that have developed national strategies and action plans for human rights. Many people may fail to observe the strong connection between the two huge events; the 9/11 terrorist attacks and Egypt's milestone Strategy. However, the intertwining correlation stems from the fact that the promotion, protection and advancement of human rights; especially the economic, social, civil and political rights, as well as the rights of vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, women and children, help to prevent the spread of violent extremism that leads to such terrorist attacks. Moreover, it sets a key basic challenge, given that terrorism and the growing threat of non-state armed groups are among the factors that undermine basic human rights and threaten all efforts aiming at advancing them.

**Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights** is deeply honored to have this report, entitled "**The National Strategy for Human Rights: One Year of Efforts and Challenges**", In this report, we tried to track the progress made by the entities entrusted with implementing the targeted objectives of the National Strategy for Human Rights, and the challenges that faced the integration of these efforts in the first year after the launch of the Strategy. Perhaps, the most important challenge is the absence of an executive action plan attached to the strategy. This plan would measure the progress achieved in fulfilling the objectives, within the time frame specified for the first phase thereof which ends by September 2026 and identify the entities entrusted with implementation. Therefore, the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR), in its capacity as the main body entrusted with coordinating efforts to monitor and evaluate progress made in order to achieve the Strategy's targeted objectives, must accelerate the pace of efforts to develop an executive action plan as soon as possible.

One year after the launch of the Strategy, Maat noted some good practices that must be highlighted such as the House of Representatives' near approval of four bills targeted by the strategy, namely; the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act; the Law on the Rights of the Aged; and the amendments included in the Labor Law, which are to be approved in the 3rd session of the House of Representatives. These amendments grant women working in the private sector the same rights as their counterparts in the public sector. In addition to the three bills above, the Law on Settlement of Commercial and Civil Disputes, which, should its provisions are applied in practice, there would be alternatives to litigation and



settling disputes before they reach the corridors of the courts. This covers the measures related to the legislative track.

The vision of the National Human Rights Strategy shall be integrated should the authorities entrusted with implementing the objectives thereof realize the challenges that emerged in the first year of its launch.

The Strategy covers four areas of focus that serve the Egyptian citizen; it replaces the short-sighted view that tainted the human rights file with another comprehensive one. The Strategy's focus areas are Civil and Political Rights; Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; Human Rights of Women, Children, Persons with Disabilities, Youth and the Elderly; and Human Rights Education and Capacity-Building. Each focus area is addressed separately by a program of action, including executive procedures, as well as a proposal of new legislative amendments in order to be compatible with this strategy.

Therefore, the required effect to be brought about over the span of five years is not limited to some aspirations and entitlements, but rather is related to the level of implementation of the objectives. Everyone is anticipating the SSCHR declaration of a timetable for the implementation and the achievement of the objectives, as well as the selection of partners between responsible authorities and stakeholders from civil society in its broad sense, which includes civil institutions, academic research centers, national councils, labor and civil unions, in addition to the political community represented by political parties. Therefore, the development of an executive action plan before the end of the second year to the launch of the strategy may help overcome the most important challenge countering the achievement of the Strategy's targeted objectives.

*Ayman Okeil*  
September 2022

## Introduction

The World Conference of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993) recommended the UN Member States to consider preparing national strategies and action plans laying out the steps to be followed and the measures to be undertaken in order to promote the protection of fundamental human rights and to establish the principles and provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant of economic, social and cultural rights. In this context, Egypt received 4 recommendations in the third session of the universal periodic review, held in November 2019, urging it to develop and implement a national human rights strategy, aiming at advancing the human rights situation, eliminating extremism and spreading the values of tolerance and acceptance of others.

The Egyptian government has accepted all the recommendations and on September 11, 2021, President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi launched Egypt's first national strategy for human rights, guided by the speech of Her Excellency Ms. Nazhat Shameen Khan, President of the Human Rights Council back then, and with the participation of a number of local, regional and international organizations, as well as a number of human rights defenders and human rights experts, topped by the President of Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights, which has urged the Egyptian government, on the sidelines of Egypt's submission to the UPR process, to adopt a national strategy to promote human rights in Egypt, aimed at creating an environment conducive to human rights as a means to achieve peace and security as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

By declaring the launch of this strategy, Egypt became among the 39 member states of the United Nations that developed human rights national strategies and action plans, representing 20% of the member states. Egypt attempts to integrate the development approach, which has received a great deal of attention in the past five years, with the human rights-based approach that corresponds to the discourse adopted by the Egyptian state. The launch of the strategy is also pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. 2396 of 2018, which stipulates in Article 3, that the Committee is mandated to “develop and follow up a national human rights strategy, and action plans for its implementation by relevant bodies”

The strategy aims to achieve 226 targeted objectives across the four areas of concern, namely, Civil and Political Rights; Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights;

Human Rights of Women, Children, Persons with Disabilities, Youth and the Elderly; and Human Rights Education and Capacity-Building..

The implementation of the vision underlying the strategy mainly depends on making progress in three integrated parallel tracks as follows: Legislative Development Track; Institutional Development Track; and Human Rights Education and Capacity Building Track. Each of these tracks is addressed separately; with their strengths and challenges highlighted. There are 226 targeted objectives to be implemented during the implementation timeline (*see, the structure of the national strategy for human rights*).

The first axis; Civil and Political Rights has 71 targeted objectives. Having the largest number of objectives, it may reflect the desire of the strategy developers to address civil and political rights-related challenges in Egypt. This axis has been recently implemented on the ground; mainly in the reactivation of the Presidential Pardon Committee in 2022 and the release of a large number of pretrial detainees who were not involved in violence.

The strategy divided the implementation of the targeted objectives over five years, the implementation timeline of the first phase of the national human rights strategy, but it did not set an operational action plan to achieve these results, and to define the responsibilities of each party entrusted with implementing them.

Since the launch of the National Human Rights Strategy, Maat has been closely following up on the implementation of the strategy within the framework of its role as a civil society organization. Maat has been working to document the efforts aiming at achieving the vision underlying the strategy, by following up on the implementation thereof and evaluating the measures taken to achieve its targeted objectives, even in the absence of an operational action plan, which is the biggest challenge hindering the progress in the achievement of the targeted objectives of the strategy.

Therefore, Maat releases this report one year after the launch of the National Strategy for Human Rights, to focus on the progress made in the three operational tracks underlying the strategy, in order to advance the promotion and protection of human rights in the Arab Republic of Egypt.

## Methodology

The report used an indicator to measure the response of the Egyptian state to activate the targeted objectives of the strategy. This indicator was adopted by distributing the 226 targeted objectives to the implementation timeline of the first phase, which is five years from Sept. 2021 until Sept. 2026. This distribution is made according to the three operational tracks of the strategy: Legislative Development Track; Institutional Development Track; and Human Rights Education and Capacity Building Track. The indicator gives 10 points for each targeted objective achieved through legislative and institutional measures and carried out by the authorities entrusted with implementing the strategy. Therefore, we must score 2260 points by the end of 2026 in order to have all the objectives achieved.

The indicator gives 5 points for each objective that the relevant entities worked on but couldn't fulfill, at least until this date, and no points were given at all for the objectives that no work has been made to achieve.

In order to follow up on the progress made in the implementation of the strategy, the report was based on the surveys of the relevant resolutions and measures announced on the websites of the Permanent Higher Committee for Human Rights and the entities entrusted with the implementation of the strategy, and the resolutions made in wake of the weekly meetings of the Council of Ministers since September 2021, as well as the survey of the issues of the Official Gazette.

## Conceptual Framework

### **1. The Concept of the National Human Rights Action Plan**

The National Human Rights Action Plan implies the existence of specific general principles that may be applicable to a wide range, if not all, of countries, bearing in mind that the approach of any national human rights action plan must start from the specific political, cultural, historical and legal situations of each country. Being in line with the United Nations Charter, there is no single approach that can be applied to all countries. Each country has to develop its specific proposals. This is reflected in the recommendation of the World Conference on the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which has a clear definition of the national human rights action plans.



## **2. The National Human Rights Strategy**

The strategy is defined as the process of setting long-term plans and goals within a specific time frame, while identifying the entities entrusted with implementing this strategy and the various means and tools that shall be used to achieve its objectives, along with the need to allocate sufficient resources for the effective realization of these objectives. In the Egyptian case, the national strategy for human rights was based on a vision that aims to advance all human rights through four axes that make up the structure of the strategy. Each axis includes sub-themes and targeted results.

The National Human Rights Strategy is the first integrated and long-term strategy in the field of human rights in Egypt. It includes the state's policies in dealing with human rights-related files, and aims to promote those rights, within a time frame of five years.

## **3. The Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR)**

The Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR) was established by virtue of Prime Ministerial Decree No. 2396 of 2018, issued on November 14, 2018, as an important addition to the national institutional edifice that aims at enhancing human rights protection in Egypt. It is tasked with responding to and refuting the international allegations and criticism directed at the state's handling of the file of human rights in international forums. These parties use the human rights situation as a pretext for interfering in the state's internal affairs, in order to achieve certain interests or gains. Moreover, the SSCHR was also tasked with developing the National Human Rights Strategy.

The report covers three key parts: i) the strategy implementation tracks; ii) the challenges facing the operationalization of the strategy; iii) the role of civil society in implementing the strategy, and it is concluded with a set of practical recommendations that Maat believes may accelerate the pace of achieving the results due in the national human rights strategy.

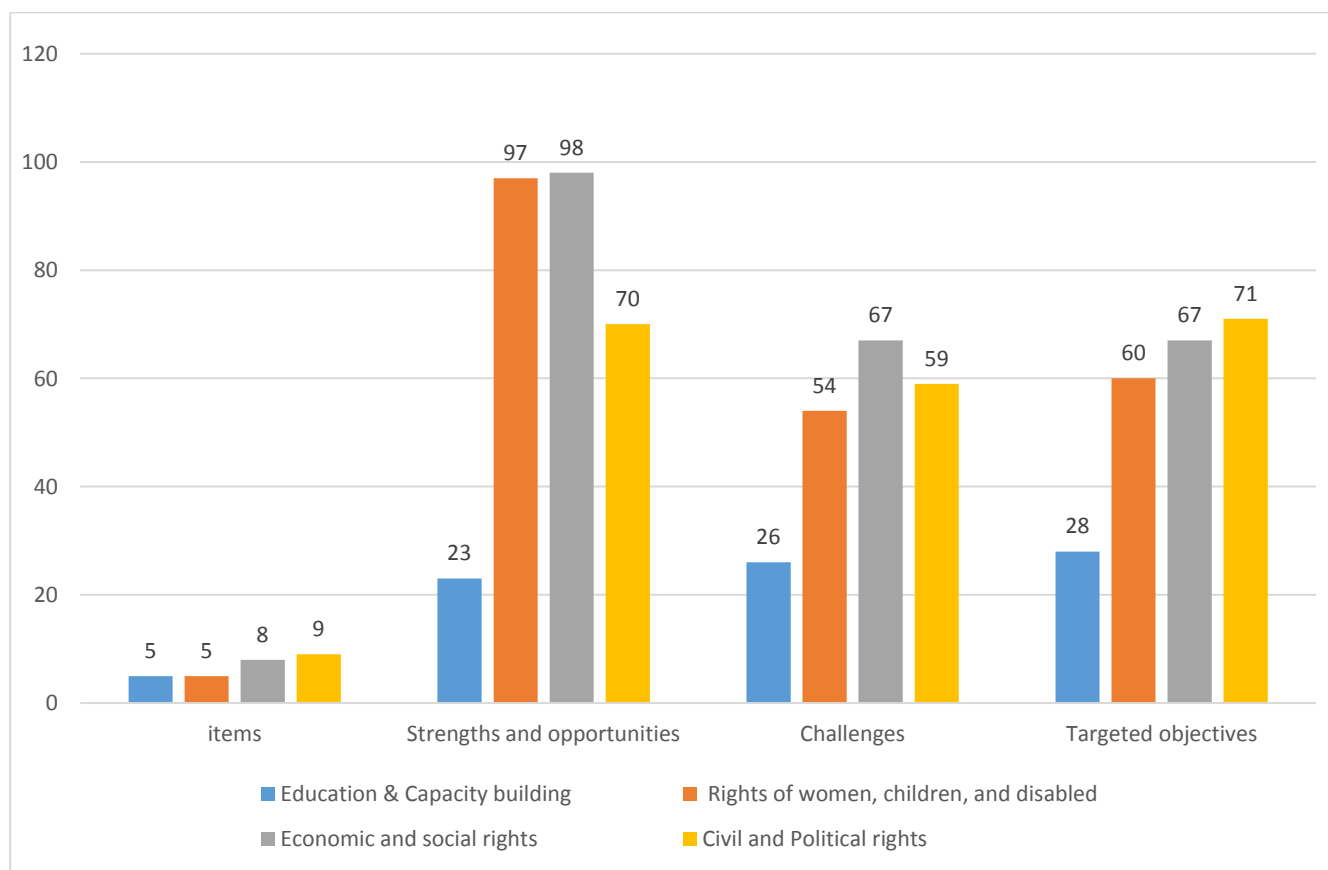
### **Part I: Strategy Implementation Tracks**

The philosophy of the National Strategy for Human Rights is based on a vision that aims at promoting basic human rights, which are primarily included in the principles and provisions of the Constitution, national legislation, and international and regional treaties ratified by Egypt. The Strategy developers seem to believe that the implementation of these provisions and principles in previous documents and treaties may lead to the

activation of the principles of equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination - the underlying principles of the strategy laid out in its 78-page document- as well as the achievement of the 226 targeted objectives - distributed across the four axes making up the structure of the national strategy for human rights - within the specified timeframe, estimated at five years in the first phase. This can be achieved by building on the strengths and opportunities available (see Figure 1 below) and dealing with the various challenges.

In this section, we focus on the positive practices adopted by the entities entrusted with implementing the targeted objectives through the three implementation tracks; Legislative Development Track; Institutional Development Track; and Human Rights Education and Capacity Building Track. The indicator adopted in the report's methodology relied on following up on the unfulfilled efforts to achieve the targeted results during the first year of launching the strategy, in addition to the challenges hindering the achievement of certain targeted objectives.

**Figure 1: The Four Axes of the Strategy in Numbers**



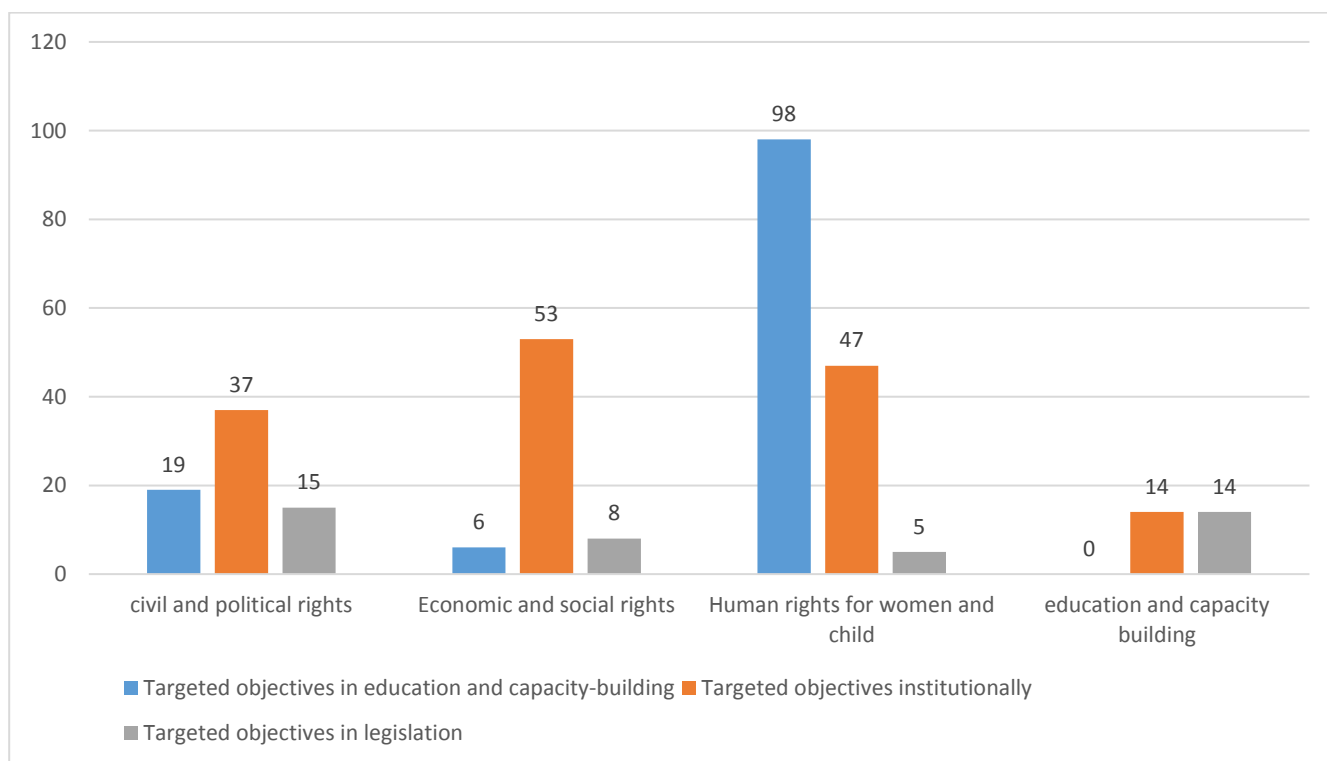
By classifying the targeted objectives on the basis of the axes making up the structure of the national human rights strategy, Maat found that the strategy relies on the executive body and government institutions to achieve 151 of the targeted objectives. These

objectives require executive procedures from the entrusted entity so that they are effectively implemented on the ground. On the other hand, the strategy relies on the executive body and other stakeholders such as the specialized national councils, including the National Council for Human Rights, the National Council for Women and the remaining specialized national councils to implement (42) of the strategy targeted objectives. The legislative authority was tasked with issuing or amending (33) legislative measures, in order to achieve the strategic objectives. (Table, and Figure 1 below) classify the targeted objectives of the strategy according to the four axes making up the structure of the national human rights strategy. The entities entrusted with implementing the targeted objectives scored 380 points (see the three implementation tracks on the following pages) in the indicator adopted in the report's methodology; with 310 points scored by the entities entrusted with implementing the strategy in the institutional development track, 45 points in terms of the efforts made in the education and capacity-building track, and 25 points in the legislative track. The entities entrusted with implementing the strategy shall have 2,260 points by September 2026, which is the end of the first phase of the time frame set by the strategy.

**Table 1: The strategy targeted objectives according to the three implementation tracks**

Axis	Targeted Objectives		
	legislative	Institutional	Education and Capacity-Building
<b>Political and Civil Rights</b>	19	37	15
<b>Economic and Social Rights</b>	6	53	8
<b>Human Rights of Women, Children, Persons with Disabilities, Youth and the Elderly</b>	8	47	5
<b>Human Rights Education and Capacity-Building</b>	-	14	14

**Figure 2: The Targeted Objectives in Statistics**



### 1) Legislative Track

The national strategy for human rights aimed to release and amend approximately (33) legislation that would serve the achievement of the targeted objectives in the strategy's axes, except for the axis of human rights education and capacity-building, which does not aim to release or amend any legislation. The targeted legislations to be released were distributed as follow; 19 legislation for civil and political rights, 6 legislations for economic and social rights, and 8 legislations for the rights of women, children, youth, people with disabilities and the elderly.

By following-up on the progress made in the legislative track since the launch of the strategy, Maat's adopted indicator showed that (4) of the draft laws targeted by the strategy objectives were referred to the House of Representatives. Besides, a ministerial resolution that amounts to legislation and falls within the framework of achieving the targeted objectives of the strategy was approved.

The four draft laws that were referred to the House of Representatives are: **Draft Law Prohibiting Child Marriage**; the **Elderly Rights**; **amendments to the labor law** that guarantee the right of women in the private sector to maternity leave, similar to their counterparts in the public and government sectors, and the **Draft Law on Commercial**

**and Civil Dispute Resolution.** This draft law aimed at reducing civil and commercial disputes in courts, by establishing alternatives to litigation to resolve most disputes before being referred to the courts, which helps reducing the pressure on this sector, and, in turn, achieves some of the strategy's targeted objectives, especially objective No. 2 in the third sub-topic of the right to litigate and enhance the guarantees of a fair trial, in the first axis related to civil and political rights.

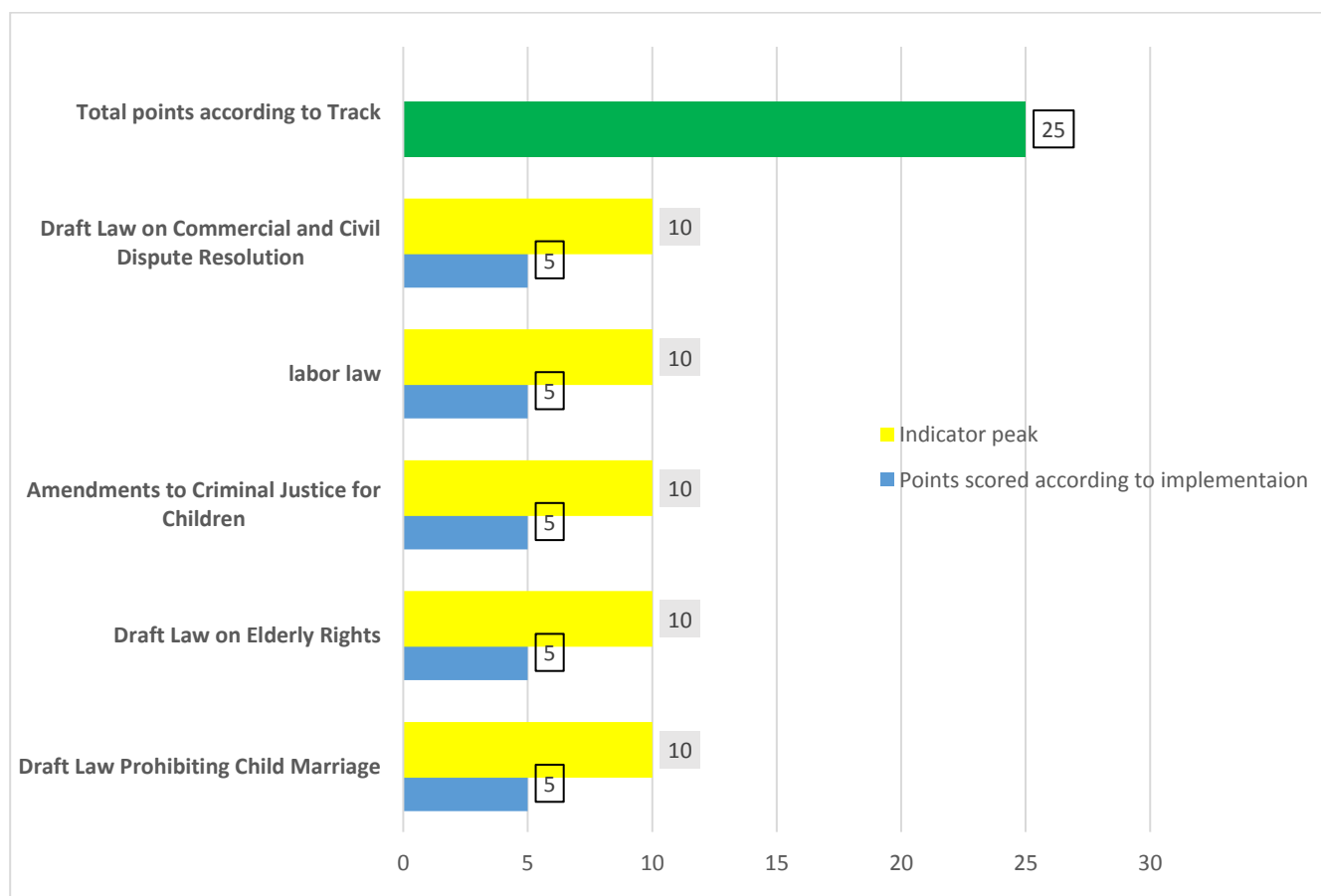
As for the aforementioned ministerial resolution, it refers to the Minister of Social Solidarity resolution to form a National Coordinating Committee for Criminal Justice for Children, in addition to the amendment of the Law No. 149 on Regulating the Exercise of Civil Work. Although no amendments were provided for in the targeted objectives of the strategy, this amendment came to serve other objectives in the national human rights strategy, including strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations to reconcile their situation, which coincides with the Egyptian President declaration of 2022 as the Year of Civil Society.

On January 19, 2022, the Cabinet approved a draft law to amend some provisions of the Law No. 149 of 2019 regulating the Exercise of Civil Work, by extending the deadline for reconciling the status of CSOs for another year. The amendment approved a one-year extension, starting from the date of expiry of the period contained in Art. 2 of the NGO Law on January 11, 2022, to expire on January 11, 2023. This amendment coincides with the ongoing demands of civil society organizations, topped by Maat, for allowing all institutions and NGOs to register and reconcile their situation, especially the ones that were unable to hold their General Assembly meetings due to the Covid-19 precautionary measures, or because of the failure of these organizations to use the electronic portals for registration.

However, one year after the launch of the strategy, none of the legislation targeted by the strategy has been explicitly published in the Official Gazette, and the four draft laws (see: the figure of the legislative track indicator below) may await for the House of Representatives' third legislative session of its second term. However, the aforementioned ministerial decision of the Minister of Social Solidarity to form a National Coordinating Committee for Criminal Justice for Children is an exception. This draft law was introduced to implement two targeted objectives of the strategy; the objective No. 3 of the second sub-topic of personal freedom in the first axis of civil and political rights; and the objective No. 9 in the third sub-topic of the right to litigation and the treatment of prisoners in the first axis of civil and political rights.



## The First Indicator: Legislative Track



It is evident from the indicator of the legislative track above that the bodies responsible for implementing the strategy scored 25 points during the first year of the strategy, thanks to the draft laws that were referred to the House of Representatives. However, these draft laws have not yet been approved whether by the parliament or the President of the Republic, and, accordingly, have not been published in the Official Gazette.

Surely, the anticipated final approval of these draft laws in the House of Representatives third session, which begins in October 2022, will improve the total points scored in the indicator of following up on the legislative path of the strategy. The approval of four laws will help the entity responsible for the implementation of these objectives related to the legislative track to gain 45 points from the total points allocated to the legislative track. This track aims to ensure that entities responsible for the implementation will score (330) point by September 2026. As to the laws that have been discussed, they are divided into three axes in the strategy, with two legislations in the third axis, and one legislation in the first and second axis (as shown in Table No. 2 below). Besides, the

Minister of Social Solidarity's resolution to form a National Coordinating Committee for Criminal Justice for Children has been approved.

**Table 2: Legislations Targeted by the Strategy**

<b>Axis</b>	<b>Legislation</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Status of Implementaion</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>Draft Law Prohibiting Child Marriage</b>	2026 -2021	Discussed
3 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>Elderly Rights Law</b>	2026 -2021	Discussed
3 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>Labor Law, including the articles of women workers in the private sector</b>	2026 -2021	Discussed
1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>Draft Law on Commercial and Civil Dispute Resolution</b>	2026-2021	Discussed
3 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>Ministerial Resolution to form a National Coordinating Committee for Criminal Justice for Children</b>	2026 -2021	Approved

### **1.1 Draft Law Prohibiting Child Marriage**

The body entrusted with the implementation of this objective of the national human rights strategy scored 5 out of 10 points, as the draft law is awaiting for final approval by the House of Representatives. This objective is in line with the objective (6.h) of the first sub-topic of the human rights of women and children, which stipulates "the issuance of a law to prevent child marriage and the strengthening of measures to prevent forced and temporary marriage."

The Cabinet approved, in its April 12, 2022 session, a draft law prohibiting child marriage, and the National Council for Women referred this draft to the Cabinet. After the approval of the Council of Ministers, the draft law was referred to the House of Representatives for discussion by its Constitutional, Legislative Affairs Committee, the two offices of the Social Solidarity as well as the Family and Persons with Disabilities Committees, and the Human Rights Committee. However, the law was not put to a vote in the plenary session of the House of Representatives until the adjournment of the second session.

### **The law stresses the following:**

- Criminalizing the marriage of children under the age of 18 and prohibiting the documentation of marriage contracts except in specific cases and by a decision of the temporary judge in the Family Court, and that is only possible for the crimes of rape and assault, after a final judgment of conviction is issued, in accordance with the principles and provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Egypt acceded under Presidential Decree No. 260 of 1990 issued on May 24, 1990, and published in the Official Gazette, issue No. 7 on February 14, 1991. Notably, Egypt has made express reservations to Art. 21, para. 2. regarding child marriage upon its accession to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, but Egypt quickly lifted its reservation to this article by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 75 of 2015
- The draft law stipulated that a marriage contract may not be authenticated or validated for a child under 18 years old. The draft law also allows those concerned to submit a petition to the Head of the Family Court, in his capacity as a judge of temporary affairs, to authorize the authentication of a marriage contract for the under 18 person, only in the crimes stipulated in Articles No. (267), (268), and (269) of the Penal Code, related to rape and indecent assault, after a final guilty verdict was issued.
- The draft law also obliged the authorized or delegated notary to notify the Public Prosecution Office of the cases of customary marriages in which one of the parties is a child under 18 years of age at the time of marriage. He who marries or allow the marriage of an under-age boy or girl, shall be punished by an imprisonment for a period of no less than one year, and a fine of no less than fifty thousand pounds, and not more than two hundred thousand pounds, and the court shall punish the convict, being authorized, notarized, or guardian of the child.
- The draft law also punishes anyone who incites this crime with the same penalty, even if the incitement has no effect, and the child is not held criminally or civilly liable for this crime, and the criminal case arising from this crime shall not expire with the passage of time. Any authorized or delegated notary who violates the text of Article 2 of this law, regarding notification of the cases of customary marriage where one of the parties is a child, is also punishable by imprisonment for a period of not less than six months, and a fine of not less than twenty thousand pounds, and not more than fifty thousand pounds, in addition to his dismissal. This amendment is in line with the targeted objective No. (7 b, h) in the first sub-topic of women's rights of the third axis, in addition to the objective No. (2, 3) of the second sub-

topic in the third sub-topic of the National Human Rights Strategy - the axis relevant to the most vulnerable groups such as women, children, people with disabilities, youth and the elderly. The approval of this law is also consistent with Egypt's obligations, which it has ratified under international treaties and which it has reaffirmed in the national human rights strategy, including Article 16 (2) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which provides that the betrothal or marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and shall take all necessary measures, including legislation, to establish a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriage in an official registry mandatory. Besides, Article 24, para. 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child urges states to take all effective and appropriate measures to abolish traditional practices that harm children. However, Egypt, by reviewing the United Nations treaty site, is still not party to the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage, and the minimum age Marriage, adopted by the General Assembly on December 10, 1962, which calls for speedy ratification of this Convention so that the constitutional framework is integrated with the international framework prohibiting child marriage in Egypt.

## **1.2 Elderly Rights Law**

The body entrusted with implementing the strategy scored 5 points out of 10 after the Parliament discussed the draft law on the rights of the elderly, which is consistent with the first objective in the fifth sub-topic in the third axis of the strategy of the most vulnerable groups, which requires "issuing integrated legislation that enhances the rights of the elderly." The remaining targeted objectives came under the framework of this fifth item to emphasize the need to "expand the social protection granted to the elderly" in addition to enhancing the elderly's access to appropriate health care.

The law was subject to discussion within the joint committee, which included several committees, including the Senate's Committee on Social Solidarity and Human Rights, which made amendments to the draft law and referred it to the Council of Ministers. In its weekly meeting on March 30, 2022, the Cabinet approved the draft law on the rights of the elderly, and the law was referred to the House of Representatives and was subject to discussion in the Social Solidarity Committee.

This law stresses the following:

- According to Article 3 of the draft law, "the units of the state's administrative apparatus, including ministries, departments, agencies, public bodies and other

public and private legal persons affiliated to it, each in its field of competence, are obligated to protect the rights of the elderly stipulated in the law or in any other law, or contained in international agreements and charters ratified by the Arab Republic of Egypt and taking the necessary measures for that, and remove all obstacles that prevent them from enjoying these rights.

- According to the report of the Parliamentary Joint Committee of the Senate, the law aims at: expanding social protection programs for the elderly, increasing financial allocations for care institutions and intensifying inspection of them, ensuring their access to health care, enhancing their participation in public life, formulating relevant policies, promoting their participation in cultural life and providing legal assistance to them. The draft law on the rights of the elderly comes in response to two recommendations accepted by Egypt during the third session of Egypt's submission to the UPR mechanism in November 2019.

### **1.3 The draft labor law, including amendments in favor of women**

The entity entrusted with implementing this objective also scored 5 out of 10 in the indicator of the legislative track, as objective (5.C) of the first sub-topic of women's rights in the third axis of the strategy targeted the unification of maternity leave in the private and public sectors. In implementation of this objective, the provisions of the draft labor law to be approved by the House of Representatives in the third session included making amendments that provide for granting women working in the private sector a maternity leave similar to that granted to women in the public sector.

However, the draft for the new labor law is still awaiting the approval of the House of Representatives, as the law was referred to the Public Power Committee and is expected to be discussed in the third session, starting in October 2022. The Senate had finally approved the labor law draft submitted by the government and referred it to the House of Representatives. The bill provided for granting women working in the private sector a maternity leave for four months, similar to women in the public sector. The four-month period came in line with Article 52 of the Civil Service Law, which states that “the female employee shall be entitled to maternity leave for a period of four months, with a maximum of three times throughout the duration of her work in the civil service.”

### **1.4 Draft Law on Commercial and Civil Dispute Resolution**

The body responsible for implementing this objective scored 5 out of 10 in the track of legislative indicator. The Legislative Committee of the House of Representatives has prepared a draft law on regulating mediation procedures for resolving civil and



commercial disputes and presented the draft law to the House of Representatives, but it was not discussed in the parliament. This draft law aims to put an end to the accumulation of civil and commercial disputes in the courts by finding alternative mechanism to resolve these disputes before reaching the court. This law regulates mediation procedures in settling all civil and commercial disputes, except for the disputes in which ministries and legal persons are a party and collective labor disputes, disputes subject to the Family Courts Law and the Investment Law, as well as other disputes that the economic courts have jurisdiction over, given the fact that the Economic Courts Law includes mediation procedures. Maat has reviewed the estimates of some experts who believed that the law would contribute to resolving 90% of civil and commercial disputes, which would greatly alleviate the burden on the judiciary. The draft law is consistent with the second objective of the third sub-topic of the right to Litigation and the promotion of a fair trial in the first axis of civil and political rights in strategy.

### **1.5 Formation of the Child Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee**

The body entrusted with implementing this objective scored 5 out of 10 points in the indicator of the legislative track. In objective 3 of the second sub-topic of personal freedom and objective 9 of the third sub-topic of litigation procedures in the civil and political rights axis, the national human rights strategy targeted the establishment of an alternative legal mechanism to pretrial detention if the accused is a child, and strengthening the judicial system for child witnesses. In the context of implementing these two objectives, the Ministry of Social Solidarity issued Executive Resolution No. 189 of 2022 to form the Coordinating Committee for Criminal Justice for Children. The committee included representatives of all relevant stakeholders, including (Ministry of Justice, Public Prosecution, National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Supreme Council of Universities, and the Egyptian Foundation for Advancement of the Childhood Condition (EFACC)).

#### **Under the Resolution, the Functions of the Committee include:**

- Developing the national strategy and plans for the criminal justice system for children, and proposing legislative amendments aiming at developing the criminal justice system, encouraging the application of restorative justice system and limiting the application of detention and freedom-restriction measures.
- Studying the problems and challenges of the criminal justice system for children in Egypt and developing solutions for them, and contributing to activating alternative

measures to children detention. This part requires activating the articles of the Egyptian Child Law No. 12 of 1996, amended by Law No. 126 of 2008, in order to strengthen and establish the criminal justice system that works to better serve and protect children, whether they are victims, witnesses or at risk, in accordance with international treaties, the Constitution and the law.

- Studying the problems and challenges of the criminal justice system for children in Egypt and developing solutions to them, and contributing to activating alternative measures to detention. Therefore, it was necessary to activate the articles of the Egyptian Child Law No. 12 of 1996, amended by Law No. 126 of 2008, and work to amend it in order to strengthen and establish the restorative justice system which works to better serve and protect children, whether they are victims, witnesses or at risk, in accordance with international treaties, principles and provisions of the Constitution and national legislation.

Having analyzed the legislations relevant to the strategy, which were discussed during the first year of the launch of the strategy, the parliament focused on the legislation on economic, social and human rights for women, children and the elderly. However, it did not consider the legislation deemed a priority by civil society organizations, and the legislation targeted in the first axis of civil and political rights.

Maat noted that the law regulating the right to exchange official information and data came last at the list of priorities of the two chambers of Parliament and the National Council for Human Rights, despite the existence of a draft law regulating the right to circulate information proposed by the Supreme Media Council.

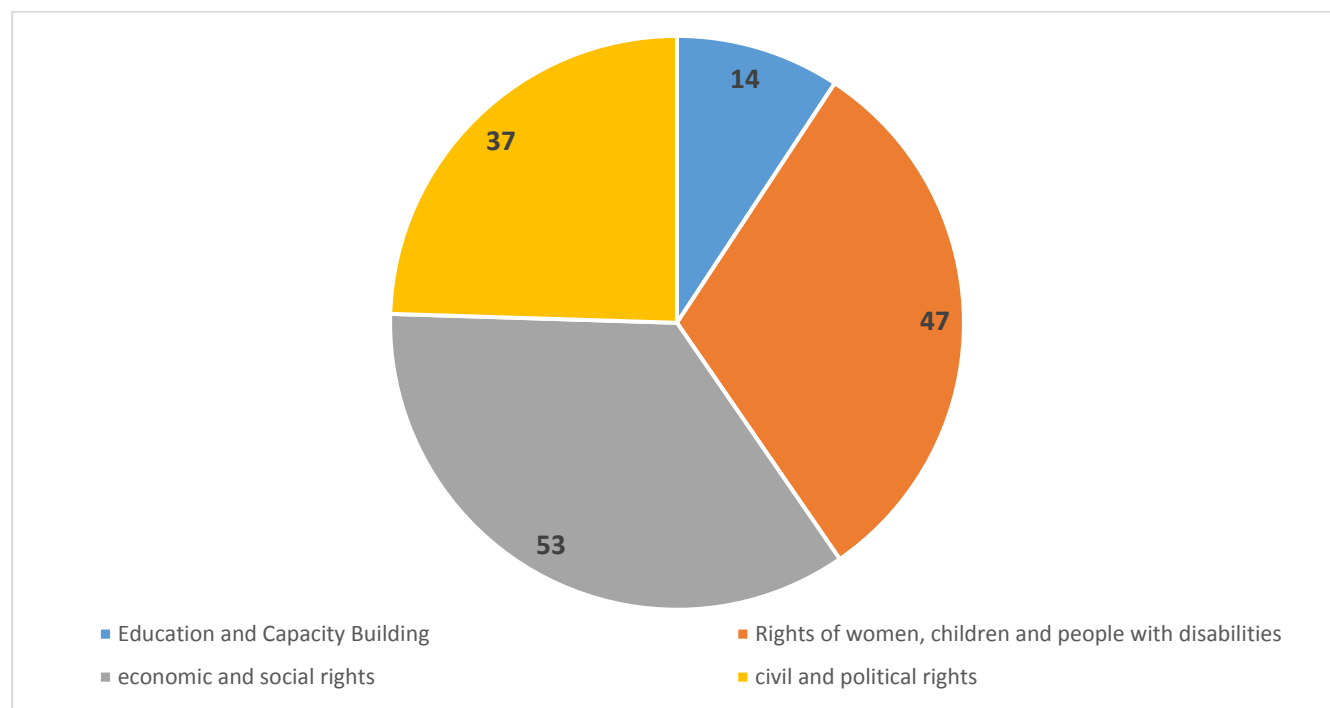
The fact that the legislative environment in Egypt does not have a law regulating the right to information circulation presents a challenge to the realization of this right that regulates the circulation of information and is stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The national strategy for human rights in the fourth sub-topic, the axis of civil and political rights, targeted the issuance of a law for the freedom of information and official documents. Despite the Supreme Media Council's proposal for a draft law for the freedom of information over two years ago, the proposal was not discussed in Parliament and represents a major reason for the publication of incorrect statistics and wrong information.

## 2) Institutional development path

This sub-section of the first part of the report follows-up and analyzes the efforts undertaken by the bodies entrusted with the implementation of the targeted objectives of the national human rights strategy, specifically, the results that require action or implementation measures, and are consistent with the institutional development track. By following up on the targeted objectives, which achievement requires institutional development, Maat found that the National Human Rights Strategy included (151) targeted objective, the implementation of which requires the participation of the executive body and the consolidated efforts of all governmental institutions. These targeted objectives (see Figure 3 below) were distributed according to each axis that make up the structure of the strategy. The entities entrusted with implementing the targeted objectives in the institutional development track scored 310 points in the first year of launching the strategy, while the entities entrusted with implementing the strategy are supposed to score 1510 points by September 2026, which is the deadline of the first phase of the strategy.

Figure 3: Targeted objectives in the institutional development track according to each axis



As shown in the figure above, the growing dependence on government institutions in implementing the national strategy for human rights, as (151) targeted objectives was referred to these institutions, require executive procedures. These objectives are distributed on four axes, topped by the axis of social and economic rights with (53) objectives; the axis of human rights for women, children, people with disabilities, youth

and the elderly with (47) other objectives; and the axis on civil and political rights with (37) objectives. While these institutions were tasked with (14) objectives in terms of education and capacity-building in the field of human rights. After Maat followed up on the efforts made by the entities entrusted with implementing the strategy within the framework of the institutional development path, it found that these entities scored (310) points in the first year of the strategy out of 1510 points to be gained by September 11, 2026, the deadline of the first phase of the national human rights strategy. If the bodies entrusted with implementing the targeted objectives within its institutional framework continue continued accelerated their efforts at this pace, they will gain the total points allocated by the indicator of the report's methodology. The efforts made by the entities entrusted with the implementation of the targeted objectives within its institutional framework were represented in:

2.1 The abolition of the law extending the state of emergency based on the resolution of the President of the Republic, passed on October 25, 2021, which led to restricting the crimes before the Supreme State Security Emergency Court. The report noted the integration of this procedure with the recent measures of activating the Presidential Pardon Committee, which commenced its duties in April 2022. The Committee's efforts led to the release of 138 detainees who were in pretrial detention and prisoners of conscience who were not involved in the violence. This action is to achieve objective No. 10 of the third sub-topic of the right to litigation and a fair trial in the first axis of civil and political rights.

2.2 The Main Committee for Legalizing the Status of Churches and their Buildings continued to regularize the status of churches, reaching 2,401 churches and churches-affiliated buildings until April 2022.<sup>1</sup> The bodies entrusted with the implementation of this objective scored 10 points in the indicator of institutional development track, where these measures come to implement the targeted objective No. 8 of the eighth sub-section on freedom of religion and belief in the first axis on civil and political rights

2.3 The agencies entrusted with the implementation of the strategy also scored 10 points with regard to the development of religious and archaeological areas, which importance was stressed by the President of the Republic, who indicated the need to restore and develop these sites, especially the tombs of the Al al-Bayt and other religious temples. In April 2022, the body entrusted with implementing this objective began restoring the Ben 'Ezra Synagogue, located in the heart of Old Cairo. In September 2021, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities allocated a large budget for the restoration of the Eliyahu Hanavi

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<sup>1</sup> تردد الجهود بشكل مفصل في الملحق الخاص بمؤشر المتابعة نهاية التقرير

Synagogue, known as the “Jewish Temple,” in addition to the initial budget allocated for its development, which amounted to LE68 million. This action comes in light of the states’ endeavors to achieve objective 7 of the eighth sub-topic on freedom of religion and belief in the first axis on civil and political rights.

2.4 The Ministry of Interior also scored 10 points, in terms of the implementation of the targeted objective of developing prisons and establishing new prisons represented in the establishment of the Correctional and Rehabilitation Complex in Wadi El Natroun and the Correctional and Rehabilitation Centre in Badr city. The establishment of these two rehabilitation centers led to the closure of 12 prisons, representing 25% of Egypt's total number of prisons nationwide, according to a government official. The establishment of these centers also in line with the implementation of the first targeted objective, of the fourth sub-topic on “the treatment of prisoners and other detainees in the first axis of civil and political rights.”

2.5 Maat has noted that the construction of correction and rehabilitation centers has led to progress in terms of increasing rehabilitation workshops in prisons and increasing the number of inmates enrolled in technical schools, which is in line with targeted objective No. 7 of the fourth sub-topic on the treatment of prisoners in the first axis of civil and political rights.

2.6 The entity entrusted with implementing the targeted objective of increasing coordination with development partners has scored 5 out of 10 points. Despite the efforts made by the Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation and its ongoing portfolio containing 337 projects worth 25 billion dollars, there is still an urgent need for further steps in this context, especially expanding the base of participation of civil society organizations, including NGOs and foundations, in the implementation of some projects funded by donors.

2.8 As for the targeted objective related to the establishment of an electronic platform for mental health services, the entity entrusted with implementing this objective scored 10 out of 10 points. On March 16, 2022, the Ministry of Health launched the first national electronic platform in Egypt for mental health services and addiction treatment, established in cooperation with the General Secretariat of Mental Health and Addiction Treatment (GSMHAT) and the World Health Organization, within the framework of expanding the provision of mental health services for all.



2.8 The entity responsible for implementing the targeted objective related to identifying and filling the gaps in social protection programs scored 5 points out of 10. While taking into account the efforts made by the Ministry of Social Solidarity represented in trying to provide cash to poor households through its first conditional cash transfer program, Takaful and Karama, a social protection program which helped 4.1 million families until the end of June 2022; however, the Ministry of Social Solidarity aims to target 9.3 million families by the program.

2.9 The executive body, being entrusted with implementing the targeted objective of “increasing the empowerment of young people to participate in public life,” scored 5 out of 10 points according to the indicator. Taking into account the efforts aimed at expanding the general participation of youth, which was represented by the presence of 60 elected representatives, under the age of 35 years old, in both chambers of the Egyptian parliament, that is only about 7.8% of the members of the Egyptian parliament, this in addition to the members appointed by the Egyptian president, who is allowed by law to appoint at least 5% of the members of the House of Representatives and about 30% of the members of the Shura Council. Youth at 25 years old are allowed to run for parliamentary elections and the activation of the constitutional text to hold local council elections, including the allocation of 25% of the seats in these councils to youth, remains not activated, as the local administration law is still in place in the Egyptian parliament. The endeavors to release the law would stress youth participation in public and political life, in accordance with the initial pillar related to ensuring participation of youth in Security Council Resolution 2250. This empowers the state to overcome the challenge set by the National Human Rights Strategy. Besides, the development of a general action plan for youth, peace and security in line with Security Council Resolution 2250 would also be a positive step towards operationalizing this outcome and obtaining a full 10 points before the deadline of the initial phase.

2.10 The entity entrusted with implementing the targeted objective related to the increase in the number of housing units for the different social strata scored only 5 out of 10 points in the institutional development indicator. Despite the construction of about 725,000 housing units within six years in all new governorates and cities, as well as the launch and implementation of the Real Estate Financing initiative that targets low and middle-income people, with an interest rate of 3% and installments of up to 30 years, in addition to building about 250 thousand units of alternative housing for unsafe slums at a cost of EGP 61 billion, these efforts remain not enough as the Mortgage Finance Initiative is still operational on a very limited scale. Despite the initiative, citizens continue face complex

procedures in obtaining a housing unit. In addition, the impact of social housing projects on low-income groups are low, as the gap between supply and demand reaches 2.5 million housing units in favor of groups of the lowest income groups, according to previous government data.

2.11 With regard to achieving the targeted objective 5 of the fifth sub-topic related to “Strengthening training programs for administrative personnel” in the fourth axis related to education and capacity-building in the field of human rights, the entity entrusted with implementing this result scored 5 out of 10 points. During the year of launching the strategy, some ministries issued ministerial resolutions to establish human rights units, while some others remain reluctant to do so. (see Table No. 4 below).

**Table No. 4: The ministries that established human rights units and ministries that have not**

Ministry	Human Rights Unit
Ministry of Social Solidarity	✓
Ministry of Planning and Economic Development	✓
Ministry of Justice	✓
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	✓
Ministry of Awqaf (Endowments)	✓
Ministry of Immigration	✓
Ministry of Education	✓
Ministry of Higher Education	X
Ministry of Health	X
Ministry of Youth and Sports	✓
Ministry of Environment	X
Ministry of housing	X
Ministry of Local Development (MLD)	✓
Ministry of Culture	X
Ministry of Commerce and Industry	X
Ministry of Public Business Sector	X
Ministry of Transportation	X
The Ministry of Manpower	X

It is noted from the previous table that some of the strategy-relevant ministries are still reluctant to establish a human rights unit, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Manpower and the Ministry of Culture, which are

entrusted with the implementation of most of the targeted objectives in the second and third axes of the strategy. On this basis, the authorities entrusted with the implementation of this objective scored 5 out of 10 points in the strategy follow-up indicator. This delay in establishing human rights units within these ministries is reflected in impeding the implementation of some of the targeted results of the national human rights strategy, especially since these units may be given an executive role in implementing the results of the strategy after setting the executive action plan.

2.12 As for the targeted objective No. 3 of the first sub-topic in the fourth axis, which is to intensify the efforts of institutions to uphold human rights values, the agencies entrusted with implementing this objective scored 5 out of 10 points. Some institutions incorporated the document of the strategy into the training plans of the administrative apparatus. The integration of the national human rights strategy into the training plans for employees in the state's administrative apparatus provides an access to the track of strengthening the institutional framework in the national human rights strategy, although it falls within the framework of education and capacity building as well. Without training plans based on an integrated approach to human rights, the implementation of the fourth axis related to capacity building and education will be very difficult. Within the framework of Maat's constant follow-up on the implementation of the national strategy, we could document the following:

- Egypt's administrative apparatus of the Central Agency For Organization & Administration incorporated the Strategy into the training plan of the Agency in a manner that aims to raise awareness among employees of the concepts of human rights, according to "Saleh Al-Sheikh", head of the Central Agency for Organization and Administration. The number of programs that incorporated the strategy as one of its axes are 42 training programs, from which 495 leading employees benefited.
- The training plan of the Local Development Ministry 2022-2023, which included the National Human Rights Strategy also targeted the institutional rehabilitation of 6,000 employees in the localities in the various governorates. However, obtaining 10 points in this objective requires circulating training plans, writing codes of conduct, and publishing the national human rights strategy in all ministries and their affiliated institutions.

2.13 As to the targeted objective "**digitizing litigation procedures**", the national human rights strategy aimed at digitalizing litigation procedures to help guarantee prompt justice,

ease of litigation procedures, and reduce unjustified expenses. The positive steps taken included:

- Launching an electronic litigation platform for economic courts;
- Signing a cooperation protocol to automate the work of Cairo Court of Appeal and its affiliated departments, including archiving documents, files and cases, and providing judicial services provided by the court through various technological platforms, in addition to converting the pleadings and court proceedings into a written text, within the framework of the Egypt Digital Justice Project;
- The Ministry of Justice launched the service of receiving complaints and reports in cases of illegal gains through an electronic mechanism. On this basis, the entity entrusted with implementing the strategy scored 5 out of 10 points in the strategy follow-up indicator with regard to implementing the objective of "digitizing litigation procedures."

2.14 The Ministry of Social Solidarity launched on October 3, 2021, the second phase of the integrated services card system for persons with disabilities, which the aim to reach three million persons with disabilities. This system allows various government agencies to provide various services and benefits for persons with disabilities, such as educational services, transportation and access to housing. This step implements the targeted objective No. 8 of the fourth sub-topic of the human rights of persons with disabilities in the third axis of the national strategy for human rights.

2.15 The entity entrusted with implementing the targeted objective No. 3 in the seventh sub-topic also scored 5 out of 10 points, as the Ministry of Social Solidarity launched the draft of the national strategy for volunteering to be announced and made available on the website of the Permanent Higher Committee for Human Rights covering the time period from 2022 to 2026. However, Maat could not obtain the draft of the strategy, and it seems that it has not been published in written text until the date of writing this report, making it difficult for us to evaluate.

2.16. As for the targeted objective No. 2 of the fifth sub-topic in the first axis, the objective of "Promoting the climate and culture of pluralism and diversity of opinions and visions in terms of different public issues", the body entrusted with implementing this objective scored 5 out of 10 points as well. Maat followed with concern the efforts to achieve this objective through the appearance of a number of opposition figures on the media, including those affiliated with the state. In addition, private and national newspapers have

raised critical opinions and offered alternative visions, which can be considered an initial step to achieve the objectives of the strategy.

2.17 Maat has also monitored the efforts undertaken by the agency entrusted with implementing the strategy to achieve the targeted objective of the study entitled "Encouraging the Expansion of the Alternative Families System", where the Ministry of Social Solidarity, in cooperation with the Belgian "FACE for Children in Need" organization, opened in August 2022 the first classification center model For children of good descent, a step that paves the way for the expansion of child sponsorship in the framework of alternative families. Notably, around 14,300 boys and girls are getting cared of by 14,000 foster families. However, the body responsible for implementing this objective scored 5 out of 10 points. Despite the announcement of opening the center, the aforementioned organization, which is charged with operating the center according to the support of the Ministry of Social Solidarity, still needs to complete the necessary legal procedures.

The full achievement of this objective requires more executive steps to implement Egypt's New Strategy for Alternative Care of Children and Youth (2021-2030), which was launched on April 21, 2021 in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). This strategy included 7 main goals, which include developing the legislative system in line with the guidelines for alternative care for children, developing an knowledge infrastructure for the alternative care system for children and youth, creating a general societal climate for the principle of integrating children and youth, strengthening the principles of participation and governance in the development, implementation and follow-up of the national strategy and its implementation plan, supporting the capacity of families to provide better care for children and youth, to enhance the capacity of the alternative care system for children and youth to provide better care and protection, and to finally prepare sufficient certified human cadres willing to work in the fields of family support and alternative care for children and youth.

2.18 Maat has also documented some efforts in implementing the targeted objective No. 5 of the first sub-topic in the axis on civil and political rights. This objective is related to "strengthening protection for inmates of social care homes, orphanages, nursing homes, inmates of mental health clinics, and addiction treatment clinics," to prevent any violations of their right to a safe life and the sanctity and integrity of their bodies, and to refer violators to the competent authorities for investigation. A key good practice is to issue court rulings against some heads of orphanages who have been implicated in the



trafficking and exploitation of girls. However, obtaining the full 10 points in this objective requires a set of other practices carried out by some of the entities entrusted with the implementation of this result in order to tighten control over those houses sheltering vulnerable groups.

2.19 Maat also noted the finalization of the 100 Million Healthy Lives Initiative in implementation of the targeted objective No. 8 of the first sub-topic of the right to health in the axis of economic and social rights.<sup>2</sup> But the implementation of this objective requires the implementation of these initiatives nationwide in order to reach 10 points according to the indicator adopted by the methodology of the report (*see the figure of the institutional development indicator*).

2.20 The entity entrusted with implementing the strategy related to enabling young people to assume leadership positions scored 5 points, thanks to the Presidential Leadership Program that targets young future leaders and enables them to assume leadership positions as deputy ministers, governors and deputy governors.

2.21. The entity entrusted with implementing the objective related to “Supporting the Takaful and Karama Program for Poor Families” adopted a set of measures to expand the base of beneficiaries of the Takaful and Karama conditional cash transfer program, which reached 4.1 million families at the end of June 2022. The Ministry of Social Solidarity aims that the Program reaches about 9.3 million families, according to what was stated in the Ministry’s report of achievements. Maat also reviewed reports of the implementation of a set of exceptional protection measures directed by the President of the Republic from September 2022. But obtaining 10 points in this objective requires the program to access 9 million families.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> ترد بعض التفاصيل الخاصة بهذه النتيجة في المرفق التنفيذي " النتيجة المستهدفة الخاصة باستكمال مبادرة 100 مليون صحة  
<sup>3</sup> ترد كافة الجهود المبذولة فيما يخص مسار التطوير المؤسسي في المرفق التنفيذي الملحق بالتقرير

## Second Indicator: the Track



### 3) Human Rights Education and Capacity Building Track

The track of human rights education and capacity-building is among the most important operational tracks to achieve the objectives included in the national human rights strategy. Enforcing general legislations, policies and discourse that urges for respecting and advancing human rights on ground requires the existence of employees fully aware of these legislations and policies and the importance of their implementation. Therefore, the strategy singled out a full axis for human rights education and capacity building, especially for police officers, members of law enforcement forces, members of judicial bodies and the administrative apparatus.

During Maat's classification of the targeted objectives across the four axes of the strategy, it found that (42) targeted objectives can be activated by making progress in the education and capacity building track. Over the first year after the launch of the strategy, Maat monitored the efforts of the government agencies entrusted with implementing the targeted objective of the education and capacity building track, in cooperation with the specialized national councils or international organizations. These efforts (*efforts related to spreading a culture of human rights, capacity-building and organizing events are detailed and the implementing agency is shown in Table No. 5 below*) included organizing workshops and lectures to spread a culture of human rights, whether for court presidents, judges and female judges, or university students, in line with the majority of targeted objectives in the first sub-topic in the fourth axis; organizing trainings to build the capacity of employees in the various ministries, in line with the targeted objective No. (5) in the fifth sub-topic of strengthening training programs for workers in the administrative apparatus; educating them, in line with the fourth axis, and finally organizing events and seminars in order to introduce the national strategy for human rights. The entities entrusted with implementing the strategy in the education and capacity-building tracks scored 45 points in the indicator adopted by Maat in the report's methodology. These entities are supposed to obtain 420 points by September 2022.

Activity	Training Subject	Implementing entity	Targeted group
<b>Workshops to promote the culture of human rights</b>	Definition of the strategy for human rights and an overview of the four axes underlying its structure	The Ministry of Higher Education is represented by some public universities such as Assiut, Minya	Students of Egyptian universities

Activity	Training Subject	Implementing entity	Targeted group
		and Cairo Universities.	
	Addressing violence against women and the definition of the national strategy for human rights and the axes underlying it as well as the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women	The Ministry of Justice in partnership with the National Council for Women	Male and female Judges of the Court of Appeal and the Court of First Instance in Alexandria
	Facilitating victims' access to justice within the framework of activating some of the results targeted by the national human rights strategy. This two-day workshop was attended by a group of national and international experts in the field of facilitating victims access to justice, in accordance with some sub-items in the first axis of the National Human Rights Strategy in addition to the provisions of the fourth axis on education and capacity building in the field of human rights, which is also consistent with the sixth axis in the strategy of the Ministry of Justice for strengthening the culture of human rights and protecting the most vulnerable groups. It also aims to facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices among judges in order to enhance their capabilities, and inform them of the best practices in the field of human rights.	The Ministry of Justice represented by the human rights, women and children sector in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	30 of the heads of primary courts and technical members in the judicial inspection

Activity	Training Subject	Implementing entity	Targeted group
	<p>Through an interactive framework, the workshop focused on the concept of human rights in the context of criminal justice in accordance with international treaties as well as the principles and standards of the United Nations on victims' access to justice and finally combating violence against women in accordance with international principles and standards as well as relevant best practices. The workshop also focused on the need to protect and support victims of human trafficking and illegal migration, and highlighted the role of the Ministry of Justice in facilitating access to justice, and drew the attention to child labor in the context of the justice system.</p> <p>Maat believes that it can build on this workshop to come up with practical recommendations in order to enhance the victims' access to justice and to strengthen the judicial system for child witnesses, as stated in the fourth axis of the national strategy for human rights.</p>		
	Giving three lectures on November 21, 2021 for workers in the various sectors and departments of the ministry with the aim of spreading the culture of human rights among the ministry's cadres and	The human rights sector in the Ministry of Interior	Workers in the Ministry's sectors and departments

Activity	Training Subject	Implementing entity	Targeted group
	improving the skills of dealing with citizens		
<b>Capacity-Building Programs</b>	<p>Preparing cadres capable of providing training at the local level, as well as training on the cognitive aspects of human rights, including the United Nations system, regional and national mechanisms and international treaties.</p> <p>The program also provided an overview of the national strategy for human rights, its axes and purpose, as well as the SSCHR, its formation, powers and role, in addition to addressing the relationship of human rights to sustainable development, Egypt's international obligations in the field of fighting corruption, principles of equality, equal opportunities, non-discrimination, and mechanisms of cooperation with the institutions of civil society.</p>	The Ministry of Local Development in partnership with the SSCHR	25 people, including 9 women from human rights units in the governorates
	Building the capabilities of members of the Public Prosecution in investigating cases of violence against women and introducing the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	The Ministry of Justice in partnership with the National Council for Women	N/A
<b>Events and Seminars</b>	The role of the Ministry of Interior in implementing the objectives of the national human rights strategy, including protecting the most vulnerable groups and	The Ministry of Interior, represented by the Police Research	Students of government, military and police colleges

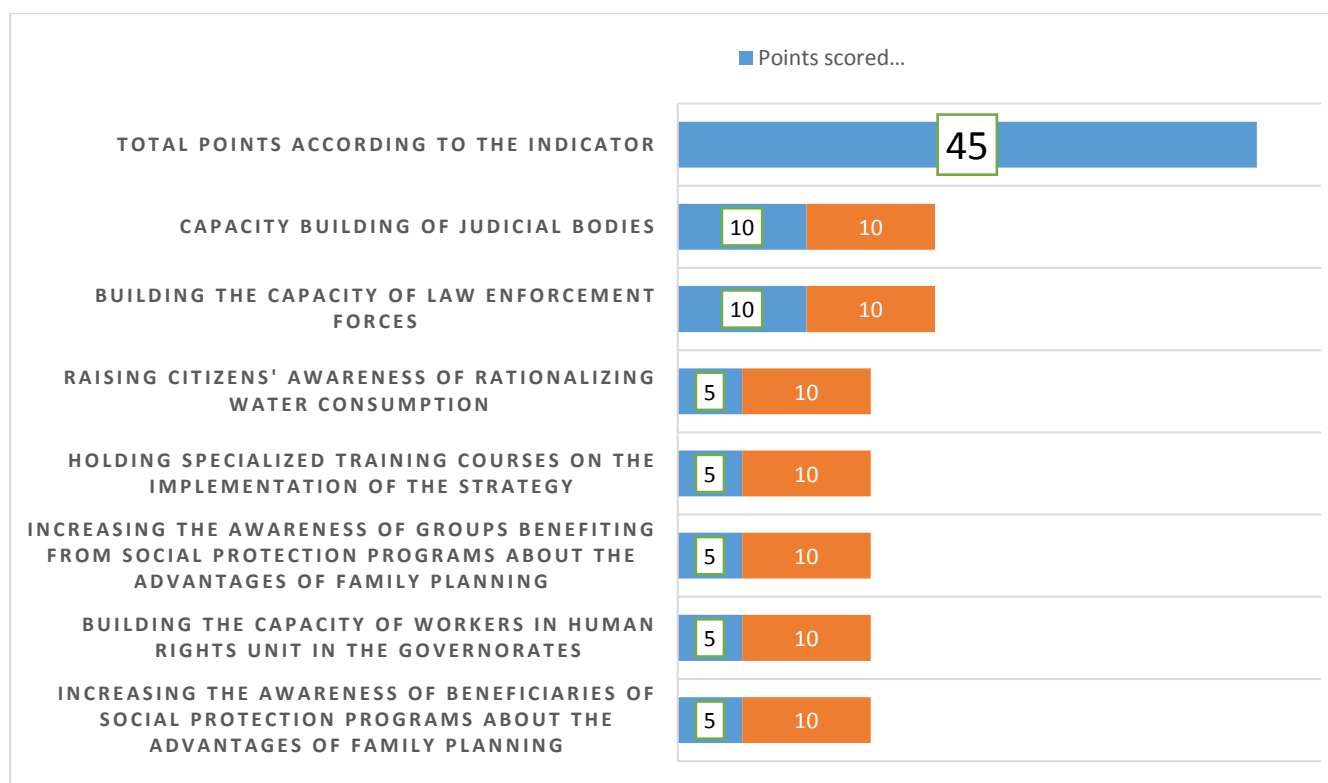
Activity	Training Subject	Implementing entity	Targeted group
	rehabilitating the inmates of the state's reform and rehabilitation centers.	Centre at the Police Academy	

The above table explains the efforts made by the authorities entrusted with implementing the targeted objectives that require work on human rights education and capacity building. Still, despite these efforts, the shortcomings in the education and capacity-building process are clearly reflected in the absence of a national program, guided by the strategy and Egypt's Vision 2030 to promote the culture of human rights nationwide, except for the program declared by the National Council for Human Rights in early 2022, which targeted 11 Egyptian governorates in its first phase. However, this document of this program is not publicly available and was not issued in written form to date.

In addition, the report noted a decline in the achievement of certain objectives of the strategy that called for integrating its provisions into the various educational curricula (*see the figure of the indicator of the education and capacity building track below*). Perhaps the most important example in this context is the approval of the Supreme Council of Universities of the Ministry of Higher Education on a decision that contradicts what was targeted by the third sub-section of the fourth axis. Under this decision, Egyptian universities stopped teaching human rights course, and replaced it with a course on societal issues. This, indeed, undermines a key pillar underlying the strategy. In addition, despite working to raise the awareness of groups benefiting from social protection programs about the National Family Planning Programme, they remain the most fertile groups.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Indicator: Human Rights Education and Capacity Building Track





It can be noted from the indicator that the bodies entrusted with implementing the targeted objectives of the human rights education and capacity building track scored 45 points in the first year of the strategy's launch. The entities entrusted with implementing the targeted objectives are supposed to get 420 points by September 2026. These points have been achieved thanks to the training conducted by the Ministry of Interior represented by the Police Research Centre at the Police Academy for students of police colleges and law enforcement forces, the explanation of the determinants of the strategy, as well as the effective role of the Ministry of Justice in training and building the capacities of more than 200 employees of judicial bodies, including female members of the Public Prosecution.

In addition to the efforts represented in trying to raise awareness, build capacities and introduce the strategy, some of the agencies entrusted with the implementation of the strategy have led initiatives to raise awareness of rationalizing water consumption and reducing water waste, which is consistent with targeted objective No. 3 of the sixth sub-topic of the right to clean drinking water in the second axis of economic and social rights, and in implementation of two recommendations accepted by Egypt during the UPR third cycle.

Despite the commendable efforts made to educate and build the capacities of workers in the various human rights units across the governorates, these efforts need to target more trainees, and lack the indicators to measure the impact of human rights training programs on public officials, and are discouraged by some governorates which are still reluctant to establish human rights units.

## Part II: Challenges Facing the Activation of the Strategy

Nearly one year has passed since the launch of the National Human Rights Strategy, and despite the steps taken to implement the 266 underlying objectives of the strategy, which were distributed over the four axes that make up the strategy's structure, activating these results through its three operational tracks still faces major challenges that may delay reaching the strategy's objectives. Among these challenges.

### 1. Lack of an implementation action plan for the strategy

It is known that any strategy for advancing a particular issue, including human rights strategies, requires that an action plan or a set of interim goals are implemented with the participation of the agencies entrusted with implementing these objectives within a specified timeline. However, nearly one year after launching the strategy, there is no implementation action that has been developed, which represents a key shortcoming of the national human rights strategy and a major challenge in operationalizing its objectives.

Despite the announcement made by Ambassador Moushira Khattab, President of the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR), on June 22, 2022 that the Council has finished formulating a plan to follow up on the implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy and will work to implement it with the Parliament, the details of this plan or its written form has never been published.

In light of the above, as a result of the outcomes of the weekly meeting of the Cabinet that followed the issuance of the National Human Rights Strategy in September 2021, Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly expressed the intention to form a working group to oversee the implementation of the strategy. However, the members of the working group referred to in the outputs of this meeting have not been appointed and, to date, no executive decision has been issued to form this group or to name its members.

### 2. Lack of clear data issued by the SSCHR

On May 29, 2022, a press release was published on the website of the SSCHR about holding a consultative meeting between the technical secretariat of the Committee and civil society organizations. The SSCHR indicated that it had monitored 236 measures to

implement the targeted objectives of the national strategy, without clarifying those measures or referring to examples. Besides, no information are available on the website of the SSCHR about these measures.

This constitutes a challenge for civil society, other stakeholders, and those interested in following up on the efforts and measures that have been taken to implement the objectives of the strategy, and opens the way for circulating information and outcomes widely. It is also an obstacle and a challenge for civil society organizations that wish to follow up and evaluate the strategy and help achieve its results.

### 3. Issuance of some resolutions that contradict the objectives of the strategy

The national human rights strategy aims to fulfill (28) targeted objectives in the fourth axis related to human rights education and capacity-building, to be implemented over the course of five years, the deadline of the first phase of the strategy. Among the objectives of the strategy is the promotion of a culture of human rights in the state's administrative apparatus and the integration of human rights into educational curricula. However, some of the Ministry of Higher Education resolutions contradict the strategy's objectives. On March 22, 2022, Maat reviewed a letter sent by the Central Administration for Technical Affairs and the councils and committees of the university education sectors addressed to university presidents, stipulating the abolition of the human rights course in Egyptian universities and its replacement with a course on societal issues, which is completely in contradiction with the principles of the national strategy for human rights, specifically the second sub-topic in the fourth axis on human rights education and capacity-building relevant to promoting a culture of human rights.

### 4. Limited legislation issued in light of the strategy

In three axes, the strategy aimed to legislate specific laws and amend some already existing laws. For example, the strategy aimed to legislate and amend 33 laws, but none of which had been issued after the end of one year from the launch of the strategy.

The legislative authority has not completely passed any law proposed by the national strategy for human rights. Besides, there was a delay in issuing priority legislation such as the law regulating the right to obtain information and official data, the law on the protection of whistleblowers and witnesses, and the draft law on penalties alternative to prison.

As for the draft law on penalties alternative to prison, it was drafted by Counselor Sameh Abdel Hakam, President of the Court of Appeal, and was formulated in its final

form by a committee of the Ministry of Justice. The law identified crimes to which alternative punishments applies, including: crimes closely related to national security that may harm the Egyptian government at home or abroad. The draft law was referred to the previous House of Representatives in May 2018, but it has never been discussed in any of the parliament's plenary sessions. This draft law would reduce the number of prisoners serving time over misdemeanors and spare debtors jail time. The alternative penalty would be community service.

#### 5. Lack of clarity on the procedures for following up and evaluating the implementation of the strategy

The National Human Rights Strategy stipulates that the SSCHR is entrusted with following up on and evaluating the realization of the vision underlying the strategy, in order to reach the targeted objectives, through coordination and consultation between all institutional components of human rights, including civil society. However, after the elapse of one year since the launch of the National Human Rights Strategy, there is no specific institutional mechanism for following up and evaluating the implementation of the strategy.

#### 6. Ministries reluctance in achieving the objectives of the strategy

Maat noted the reluctance of some ministries entrusted with implementing certain objectives of the strategy to give any importance to the strategy. Perhaps the clearest example in this context is the slowdown of some ministries in establishing human rights units within the offices of these ministries, such as the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Health and Population. These two ministries should have established these units as soon as possible, especially the Ministry of Health so that it would effectively deal with sick and injured people.

### Part III: The Role of Civil Society in the Implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy

In his speech on the sidelines of the launch of the National Human Rights Strategy, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi declared 2022 the Year of Civil Society, and called on civil society organizations to continue their efforts hand in hand with state institutions to achieve sustainable development at all levels, and to spread awareness of a culture of human rights. The same applies to the role of civil society in promoting and protecting human rights in all its dimensions.

Civil society plays a central role in the follow-up and implementation of national action plans for human rights, and it is the third pillar alongside the state and the private

sector in the process of economic and social development. It is supposed to be entrusted with participating in the implementation of a number of targeted objectives in the national human rights strategy.

Civil society, including NGOs, trade unions and political parties, were referred to over forty times in the Document of the National Human Rights Strategy. Civil society can play a constructive role in activating the objectives of the national human rights strategy through three roles:

#### 1. Follow-up and monitoring

The responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the targeted objective in the national human rights strategy is entrusted primarily to the Egyptian state, represented by the SSCHR and its three authorities; operational, legislative, and Judicial. However, civil society is welcomed to participate in the follow-up process of the implementation of the strategy as the first representative of stakeholders, in order to give more objectivity to the process of monitoring the implementation of the objectives. At the same time, civil society should be prepared for monitoring the work and encouraging the actors entrusted with implementing the strategy in order to implement its underlying objectives.

The implementation of the strategy can be done through following up and documenting the procedures, policies and measures taken by the Egyptian government to implement the content of the strategy. Besides, they should issue quarterly or annual reports on the progress made by the government with regard to achieving the targeted objectives, remind the government of the objectives that it did not implement and propose practical recommendations, including Proposals for draft laws to the government regarding the legislation that the strategy aims to issue or amend.

#### 2. Evaluation of Implementation

Having reviewed the United Nations Handbook on National Human Rights Plans of Action, Maat found that the decisive factor in implementing the national human rights action plans is the extent of consultation with civil society organizations. Therefore, civil society has a responsibility to evaluate the implementation of the national strategy, and to clearly determine whether the legislation and policies adopted by the government are applied in practice or not. Hence comes the responsibility of civil society in evaluating the implementation of the strategy by determining the impact of policies, measures and legislation approved by the government to reach the targeted objectives the ground, and to underline the targeted objectives that the government has not addressed by any policies or measures.

### 3. Contributing to the implementation

**The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which Egypt is committed, recognized the role of civil society in participating in the development of national strategies and policies and in the implementation process.**

Civil society can play a key role in implementing the national human rights strategy. It can build on the participatory relationship that began with the issuance of the Law No. 149 of 2019 on Regulating the Exercise of Civil Work and the subsequent executive regulations thereof, as well as the issuance of the National Human Rights Strategy, the declaration of 2022 as the Year of Civil Society and the invitation of the President of the Republic for state institutions to work hand in hand with the civil society organizations in a way that contributes to achieving sustainable development goals at all levels.

**Civil society organizations can contribute and participate in the implementation of the strategy through a set of measures and steps, which are as follows:**

#### **3.1 Proposing draft laws**

Civil society in its broad sense, including political parties, can play an active role in implementing the targeted objectives of the legislative track in the strategy, by proposing draft laws targeted by the strategy. For example, the strategy targeted in objective (7.a) the sub-topic of women's rights in the third axis of the strategy, which is the issuance of a "comprehensive law to protect women from violence."

Civil society organizations interested in advocating "women" rights can propose a draft law that addresses this issue. Community organizations that have consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council can also recommend the amendment of some laws that contradict the essence of the vision and the basic principles underlying the strategy, including the Egyptian Constitution, as well as the international and regional agreements. These organizations can propose a draft law to establish the Anti - Discrimination Commission as stated in Article 53 of the Egyptian Constitution, and in paragraph (14A) of the final observations regarding the comprehensive report of periodic reports from eighth to the tenth of the Egyptian state.<sup>4</sup>

#### **3.2 Participation in institutional development**

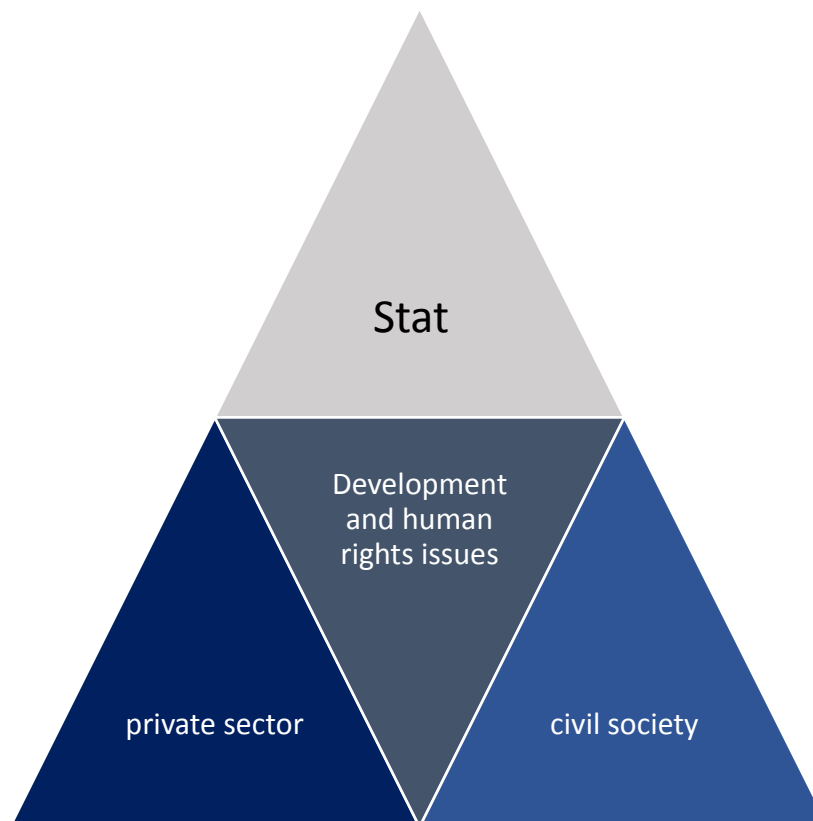
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<sup>4</sup> اعتمدت لجنة القضاء على التمييز ضد المرأة هذه الملاحظات في الدورة 80 التي عُقدت في الفترة من 18 أكتوبر إلى 12 نوفمبر 2021

Civil society is also supposed to have a role in promoting access to the targeted objectives, the achievement of which requires operational procedures and practical measures on the ground. The executive and practical measures intended here does not address the service role played by civil society organizations, but rather the key role in formulating public policies that would improve the living conditions of the population and address their issues. This would never undermine or replace the role of the state, but only helps to establish a diverse and rich system embracing difference and welcoming all opinions.

This role, indeed, is an activation of objective No. 7 of the first sub-topic in the fourth axis of the strategy, which aimed to conclude partnerships with the private sector and civil society in the field of promoting societal culture with the principles and values of human rights. This targeted objective is a key evidence that the strategy drafters have looked beyond the traditional partnership that was limited to this partnership between the state, the private sector and civil society in development-related issues (*see Figure 4 below*), and envisaged another type of partnerships targeting the improvement of human rights conditions, including economic and social rights.

In a related context, civil society can propose national strategies and plans in sub-topics mentioned by the national strategy for human rights, such as preparing the national plan for human rights education across the various educational stages in line with the





targeted objective No. 1 in the second sub-topic of integrating human rights components in the different stages of education in the fourth axis.

#### **Figure 4: Partnerships in Development and Human Rights issues**

### **3.3 Participation in education and capacity building**

Civil society can also play an effective role in contributing to the implementation of the targeted objectives of the strategy, which require human rights education and capacity-building. These objectives are estimated at 42 in the document of the strategy and according to the classification of the Maat.

But education and capacity building should not be limited to holding two or three-day workshops. According to a study issued by the US Agency for International Development, linking capacity building to holding workshops for a few days is a gross mistake; but, long-term training would establish strong institutions and efficient employees fully aware of their rights and the rights of other fellow citizens.

In line with the above, civil society in Egypt can be involved in the process of developing and drafting training programs and plans in human rights education and capacity building for government institutions. Maat believes that providing trainings about international agreements ratified by Egypt, and raising the awareness of the local employees about the principles and provisions of these agreements are key outcomes that must be prioritized.

#### **4. Challenges facing civil society**

- The need to actively participate in the implantation action plan to fulfill the targeted objectives underlying the strategy, and not restricting participation to the hearings held by the Higher Committee on Human Rights;
- Lack of awareness-raising initiatives and campaigns that call on NGOs, especially those working in rural areas, to reconcile their status in accordance with Law 149 of 2019; this may threaten the legal position of these associations;
- The lack of training and capacity-building programs directed at public officials and workers in the Ministry of Social Solidarity, and the consequent lack of knowledge and awareness of the importance of civil society organizations;
- The lack of numbers of NGOs interested in homeless children, children with disabilities, street children and the elderly; the lack of awareness among these



associations of the best interests of the child as stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- Announcing the Ministry of Social Solidarity that it is preparing a national strategy for civil society organizations that includes emphasizing the partnership between these organizations and the state, and includes the axes of partnership with these organizations and what is desired during the years it determines
- Lack of resources, especially for small NGOs, which some of them are forced to close due to the the absence of sustainable funding and resources;
- Poor capacity for coordination, consultation and alliance building, especially in the areas of development and contemporary issues such as environment and climate issues;

## Conclusion & Recommendations:

Finally, upgrading the human rights system is an ongoing process, but what really matters here is the state's general orientation that aim at facing the challenges standing in the way to progress towards the promotion of human rights. Egypt's launch of this Strategy marks a milestone in the State's history and is a positive move towards promoting and protecting human rights.

However, the development of an effective human rights system, whose features were drawn by the National Human Rights Strategy, requires continued follow-up and ongoing self-evaluation in a way that improves and develops the system's efficiency, especially since the strategy came after the launch of a large number of institutional and legislative procedures in order to promote and protect human rights, which enabled its authors to identify the most important challenges facing the achievement of the intended objectives.

Hence comes the importance of the existence of an active national civil society, that works hand in hand with government institutions to help it implement and follow up on the axes of the strategy, as well as responsible media aware of the nation's interest and priorities to follow up the implementation of this strategy, contribute to raising citizens' awareness of their rights and duties, and discuss the impact of implementing this strategy on the ground.

Maat believes that the opportunity is present to improve and enhance the human rights situation in Egypt, especially in light of the initiatives aimed at improving the human rights file in Egypt, as well as the concerted efforts of the executive, legislative and judicial authorities with national human rights bodies and civil society organizations

in order to implement the axes of the national human rights strategy on the ground to advance human rights in Egypt. Accordingly, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights presents a set of recommendations as follows: -

### **1. Entities entrusted with implementing the National Human Rights Strategy**

- Completing the implementation action plan of the strategy to achieve the objectives included therein, clarifying the roles entrusted to each party to implement the targeted objectives of the strategy and the time frame for achieving each objective;
- Initiating consultations with all stakeholders in order to formulate a law on the right to free circulation of information and data in accordance with Article 68 of the Egyptian Constitution and one of the targeted outcomes in the axis of civil and political rights in the National Human Rights Strategy
- Conducting a societal dialogue with the participation of specialized national councils, civil society organizations and legal scholars in order to revise and amend the Penal Code issued in 1937 to conform to the rapid changes in the philosophy of punishment and deterrence and adopt penalties alternative to jail for those serving time over misdemeanors;
- Establishing an official mechanism for consultation, exchange of experiences, and coordination of efforts between the government and all stakeholders, including civil society organizations and specialized national councils in order to work on implementing the targeted results of the strategy and setting an executive action plan to achieve these results;
- Reconsidering the articles of pretrial detention in the Code of Criminal Procedure, and asking the investigation authorities to take alternative guarantees for this procedure, which has turned into a punishment, until Parliament finishes amending the current legislation;
- The need to take into account the targeted objectives of the national human rights strategy when enacting any future laws or taking any executive decisions;
- Highlighting the efforts made in implementing the strategy in the periodic reports that Egypt submits to the United Nations treaty committees

### **2. Civil society organizations**

- Opening channels of dialogue with the state's executive and legislative institutions for discussing important issues, especially those related to the formulation and amendment of laws;

- Implementation of awareness campaigns periodically to enhance interaction and cooperation between state institutions and members of society, especially in the issue that needs urgent handling and is related to human rights;
- Preparing studies and research on societal issues and problems such as poverty, unemployment, child labor and homelessness, and proposing alternative solutions to these problems and phenomena;
- Following up and assisting the Egyptian state to implement its commitments under the treaties it has ratified and the recommendations it accepted in the UPR 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle, and requesting periodic visits to prisons and police stations in coordination with the National Council for Human Rights and the relevant executive bodies.