



Periodical Profile

NGOs and protecting social rights in Egypt

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Human rights issues have occupied the minds of intellectuals and researchers in various fields, especially those interested in humanities and social sciences for long periods. Respecting human rights provides the basis for the political, economic, social and judicial construction of human freedoms, in addition to conflict prevention and peace promotion. The human rights issue is one of the most important issues facing countries, since protecting human rights is one of the fundamental goals in all countries of the world. Hence arises the importance of the role played by NGOs in monitoring and protecting human rights as these organizations are essential actors in international relations. The international and Arab scene has witnessed a steady increase in the number and activities of NGOs.

In contemporary history, since the mid-20th century, the authors of international human rights law have not imagined the emergence of such international NGOs that could play a vital role in monitoring human rights and following up the violations of these rights around the world. Hence the NGOs had an impact that exceeds their legal status specially in the absence of effective mechanisms for the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The reality of NGOs in Egypt:

The beginning of the emergence of NGOs in Egypt goes to the nineteenth century, where the first civil society in Egypt was founded in 1821 as the "Greek Society" in Alexandria, followed by the establishment of other organizations. NGOs flourished in Egypt and increased from 159 in the period from 1900 to 1924 to 633 in 1925-1944.



It should be noted that the civil work in Egypt began 110 years ago through 3 associations, reached in 2002 (34 thousands) associations, and after the revolution of January 25, 2011 (3 thousands) associations were registered in 4 months only).

Since the mid-1970s, there has been a flourish in NGOs, which currently are about 16.800 thousand organizations and include about 3 million members working in various fields. Since their inception in Egypt, NGOs have played many roles in the provision of services. The number of fields of operation of NGOs in Egypt has reached 17 fields, they are as follows:

- Motherhood and Child Care .
- Family care.
- Social assistance.
- Care of aging.
- Care for special segments and disabled persons.
- Cultural, scientific and religious services.
- Community development.
- Organization and Management.
- Care for prisoners.
- Family planning.

No doubt that the presence of such NGOs in Egypt is an evidence of democracy and transparency, which is the most important human rights mechanism. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the close link between NGOs and human rights through its recognition of "the right of everyone to enter and join unions in his favor".

Egypt has acceded to the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1982); acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1967) and Cruel, Inhuman Treatment or professional Treatment (1986); in addition to other conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of Women, The Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Egypt has guaranteed this obligation in its Constitution and in national legislation, such as the penal code provided in the Procedure Code. This assures the



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Egyptian interest in preserving and recognizing these rights; and therefore reflects its concern not to expose any citizen to violation of these rights, and its keenness to establish mechanisms to take charge of monitoring the implementation of these texts.

Egypt has endeavored to apply the monitoring role to human rights through supporting and coordinating with national bodies (Public Prosecution, Human Rights Department, Ministry of Justice, Office of the Assistant Minister for Human Rights Affairs, Human Rights Complaints Office of the Attorney General, Human Rights Committee of the Council of Representatives) to guarantee the implementation of human rights on the ground without prejudice or violation, through the reconciliation of national legislation and international covenants ratified by Egypt, and following-up at the international and national levels.

The following is a description of the reality of NGOs in the Egyptian Constitution:

Law No. 84 of 2002 and its executive regulations regulate the relationship between the administrative agencies, institutions and NGOs in Egypt in terms of approval of establishment, supervision and follow up systems.

The Constitution of 2014 gave civil society real advantages as Article 75, that allowed and facilitated the establishment of civil associations and relieved the bureaucratic procedures. The constitutional draft protected them from the interference and corruption of officials from the administrative agencies and left them in the hands of the judiciary in full.

The Constitution also grants the organizations the full freedom to provide their services to citizens. For the first time, the constitutional articles assigned the dissolution of societies to the judiciary only. This is what is guaranteed by Article 75 of the Constitution, which states that "Citizens have the right to form civil associations and institutions on a democratic basis, and they have legal personality as soon as the notice is given, and their activities are exercised freely and the administrative bodies may not intervene in their affairs or dissolve them or dissolve their boards or councils; and "The establishment or continuation of non-governmental associations and foundations, whose statutes or activities are secretive or conducted in secret or which are of military or quasi-military nature is prohibited as regulated by Law".