



Egypt - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Friday 5 April 2019

Information on the current security situation

In 2019 *Freedom House* issued a report commenting on events of 2018 including stating that:

“Fighting continued between security forces and IS-affiliated militants in the North Sinai region in 2018. In February, the government launched a major antiterrorism campaign called Operation Sinai 2018, which has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of militants and dozens of military personnel. According to the Egyptian Institute for Studies, the army has killed dozens of civilians while carrying out the campaign. A military lockdown has left the region’s 400,000 residents without basic services. According to the government, the number of terrorist attacks in Egypt decreased from 50 in 2017 to 8 in 2018” (*Freedom House (2019) Freedom in the World 2019, Egypt*, p.9).

In February 2019 *Amnesty International* released a report commenting on events of 2018 including stating that:

“On 9 February, the military launched operation “Sinai 2018” against militants in North Sinai. Linked to the operation, the authorities introduced restrictions on movement and closed fuel stations, suspended schools and banned some commercial activities, including fishing” (*Amnesty International (26 February 2019) Human Rights In The Middle East And North Africa: Review Of 2018, Egypt*, p.1).

This document also states that:

“The authorities enforced a strict media blackout on the military campaign in Sinai. The military stated on several occasions that it had used air strikes to kill individuals identified as militants, instead of attempting to apprehend them and bring them to justice” (*ibid*, p.5).

In March 2019 the *United States Department of State* issued a report commenting on events of 2018 which included noting that:

“The conflict involving security forces, militant groups, and terrorist organizations in North Sinai continued. Although the government severely restricted access for media to the North Sinai, starting in July it began organizing supervised visits to the region for domestic and international media organizations. Rights groups and international media reported that the armed forces used indiscriminate violence during military operations resulting in killings of civilians and destruction of property. After launching Operation Sinai 2018, the government imposed severe restrictions on North Sinai residents’ travel to mainland Egypt and movement within North Sinai Governorate. The armed forces stated officially that it provided sufficient humanitarian assistance for local residents throughout the operations” (*United States Department of State (13 March 2019) 2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Egypt*, p.14).

A report issued in February 2019 by the *Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research* points out that:

“The limited war in the Sinai Peninsula over ideology and subnational predominance between militant groups and the government escalated to a war. As in the previous year, most clashes between Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF) and militant groups took place in North Sinai Governorate” (Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (February 2019) *Conflict Barometer 2018*, p.166).

In February 2019 *Middle East Report Online* states that:

“...the escalation and widening pattern of arrests over the past year indicate that the authoritarian mindset of the Egyptian regime has significantly changed since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the former head of military intelligence, took power in a military coup in 2013. Since then, Egypt has arrested or charged at least sixty thousand people, forcibly disappeared hundreds and tried thousands of civilians in military courts. Supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood have been killed, detained and targeted under the banner of fighting terrorism. Many dissidents have been accused of belonging to the outlawed group to justify their arrest” (Middle East Report Online (7 February 2019) *Egypt's Arrested Battlegrounds*, p.1).

In February 2019 *Human Rights Watch* notes that:

“The Egyptian authorities' approach to counter-terrorism relies on systematic and widespread use of prolonged arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and torture and ill-treatment including by rape, in addition to scores of possible cases of extrajudicial executions of detainees, and hundreds of unlawful killings of peaceful protesters. Many of these violations may amount to crimes against humanity. In North Sinai, the army has razed thousands of homes and farmlands leading to the forced evictions of tens of thousands of residents, many of whom were offered no compensation or temporary housing. The army may have also been involved in unlawful ground and airstrikes including by using cluster munitions. Further, the government has recently granted impunity to officers through special laws that make it even harder to question security officers involved in abuses” (Human Rights Watch (22 February 2019) *Renewal of the mandate of Special Rapporteur on promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism*).

The *Economist Intelligence Unit* states in March 2019 that:

“The security climate has improved recently. In the early years of the presidency of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, terrorist attacks by Sinai-based jihadi groups undermined internal security. Following an attack in late 2017 that killed over 300 in Northern Sinai, the government launched an intensified security drive and attacks have reduced sharply since. With the exception of the tourism sector, the attacks have had a limited impact on business operations in Egypt. Heightened security in urban areas (mainly Cairo, the capital, and Alexandria-the primary business centre), have also helped reduce criminal activity precipitated by the 2011 political uprising. The military, which is deeply entrenched in a number of economic sectors, can often play a powerful role in guaranteeing the security of vital business interests” (Economist Intelligence Unit (12 March 2019) *Egypt risk: Security risk*).

Business Monitor Online in March 2019 states that:

“...the state security forces are large in number, their heavy-handed approach towards dissent and their limited success in preventing terrorist attacks highlight the long-term nature of the security challenges that the country faces” (Business Monitor Online (29 March 2019) *Egypt Crime And Security Risk Key View*, p.1).

In March 2019 *Reuters* notes that:

“Egyptian security forces have killed 46 “very dangerous” Islamist militants in shootouts in northern Sinai, the military said on Monday. The armed forces say several hundred militants have been killed since it launched a major campaign in February 2018 aimed at vanquishing Islamic State or related jihadist groups in Sinai” (Reuters (11 March 2019) *Dozens of militants killed in shootouts in Egypt's Sinai: military*).

A report issued in April 2019 by *Reuters* points out that:

“Egyptian security forces have shot dead more than 460 men since the middle of 2015. The Interior Ministry said they were Islamist militants or criminals, and the shootings were in self-defence. Bereaved families, forensic experts and some officials disagree” (Reuters (5 April 2019) *Egypt kills hundreds of suspected militants in disputed gun battles*, p.1).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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