

# Egyptian Families under Tyrannical Pressure



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## **Belady: an Island for Humanity-- a Human Rights Organization supporting Egyptian Women & Children since 2017**

Belady aims to dismantle institutionalized violence by documenting the Egyptian regime's violations against women and children and educating national and international society and decision makers about them. We also pressure and advocate amendment of legislation that codifies violations while calling upon authorities to implement overlooked laws and treaties that would ensure respect for rights and freedoms. Belady provides legal and psychological support for Egyptian women and children who have been arrested and / or imprisoned in political cases.



## Abstract

This report is extracted from statistical and analytical data and content collected by Belady on the human rights violations faced by Egyptian families through the detention of their family members in political cases. For the International Day of Families on May 15th, 2021, Belady is publishing an analytical report on 497 individuals from 197 Egyptian families and one Syrian family that were detained and/or imprisoned from March 2013 to February 2021. This day is an opportunity to stress the Egyptian families' conditions and their subjugation in the cellars of Egyptian regime prisons and to advocate the exemption of these families from these unjust practices and the respect of the individuality of punishment.

## I- Introduction

The individuality of punishment refers to its applicability to the person who is responsible for the crime, whether culprit or accomplice — on the presumption that he/she committed it. Anyone who is not involved at any stage of the crime should not be included. However, the Egyptian military regime has a different point of view on this matter. Since 2013, a new approach of revenge has been introduced to render dissenting voices subservient and to silence free and critical voices. The regime not only imprisoned oppositionists and critics, but also went through several stages and arrested mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and sometimes even friends. In this framework, Belady presents and publishes statistics on these families dating back to 2013 to promote awareness of their issues and increase knowledge on their stability. To mention that, in 1993, the United Nations General Assembly declared 15 May as the International Day of Families<sup>1</sup>. It also highlighted its role in community building and personal cohesion, advocating support and empowerment of less economically and socially fortunate families.

## II- Methodology

This research is based on analyzing the methods of deliberate retaliation adopted by the authorities to harass opposition and political and civil activists via pressure by arresting their family members. Belady analyzes the available legal, economic, social and health data of 497 detainees who were suspended and/or imprisoned from March 2013 to February 2021 (arrest date).

Belady has been gathering these qualitative and quantitative data over four years through several data collection tools, including: semi-structured interviews with prisoners' families or their lawyers; and data via Belady's legal unit. In addition, indirect secondary sources were used, such as follow-up of newspapers and news websites, social media websites, and follow-ups of civil society and observational data. Collected data was assessed by triangulation of resources and by several evaluation check-in points during data entry. The data was codified and analyzed using SPSS<sup>2</sup>. The prisoners-patients' characteristics were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative and quantitative variables were analyzed, as appropriate, using Student's t-test, ANOVA test, Khi2-test, or Fisher's exact test, with a statistically significant P-value < 0.05<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> [United Nations International Day of Families 15 May](#)

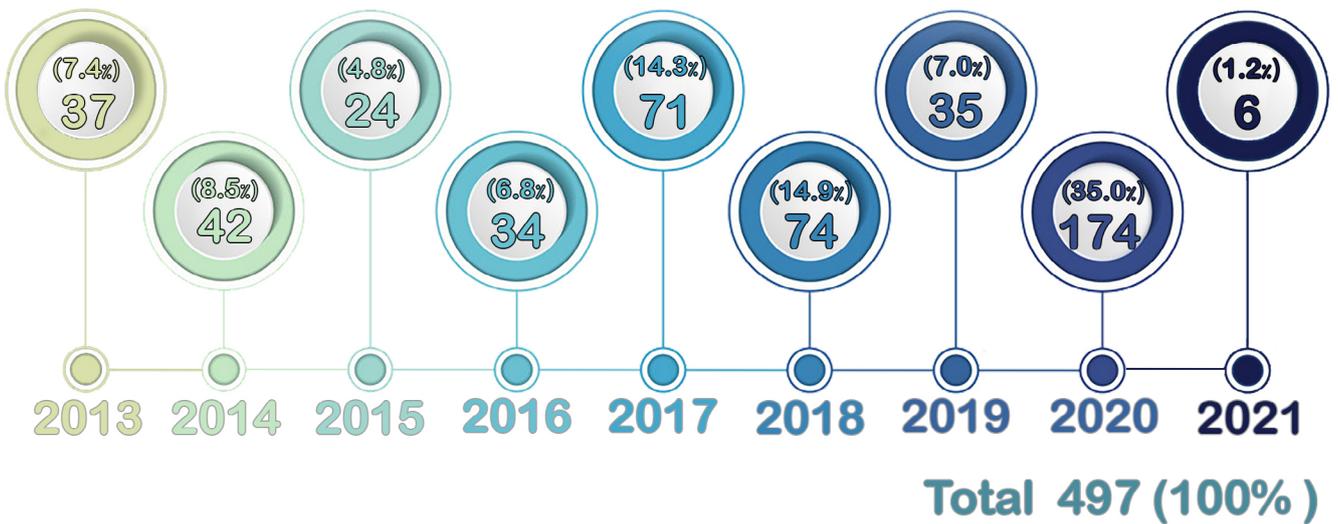
<sup>2</sup> Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (Version 25, SPSS, Inc, USA)

<sup>3</sup> If the P-value is smaller than the significance level (0.05), we conclude that the correlation is statically significant and that there is a linear relationship between two variables.

## III- Findings

### - First: Detention and Prison: a Fate of Entire Families!

Belady has observed the detention of 198 families amidst family arrest campaigns from 2013 to 2020 .2021 is marked as the year of highest arrest rates coinciding with the 20 September events. It is followed by 2017 and 2018 amidst house raid campaigns and interrogations of opposition’s relatives, seemingly to pressure them to surrender, making targeting the family system obvious and evident. The following graph shows the distribution of detentions by year.



## - Second: Geographical Map of Detained Families

Belady has observed that %26 of the detained family members live in Cairo. The rest are distributed over 20 other governorates as shown in the map below (only the residence of 288 arrested persons is known).



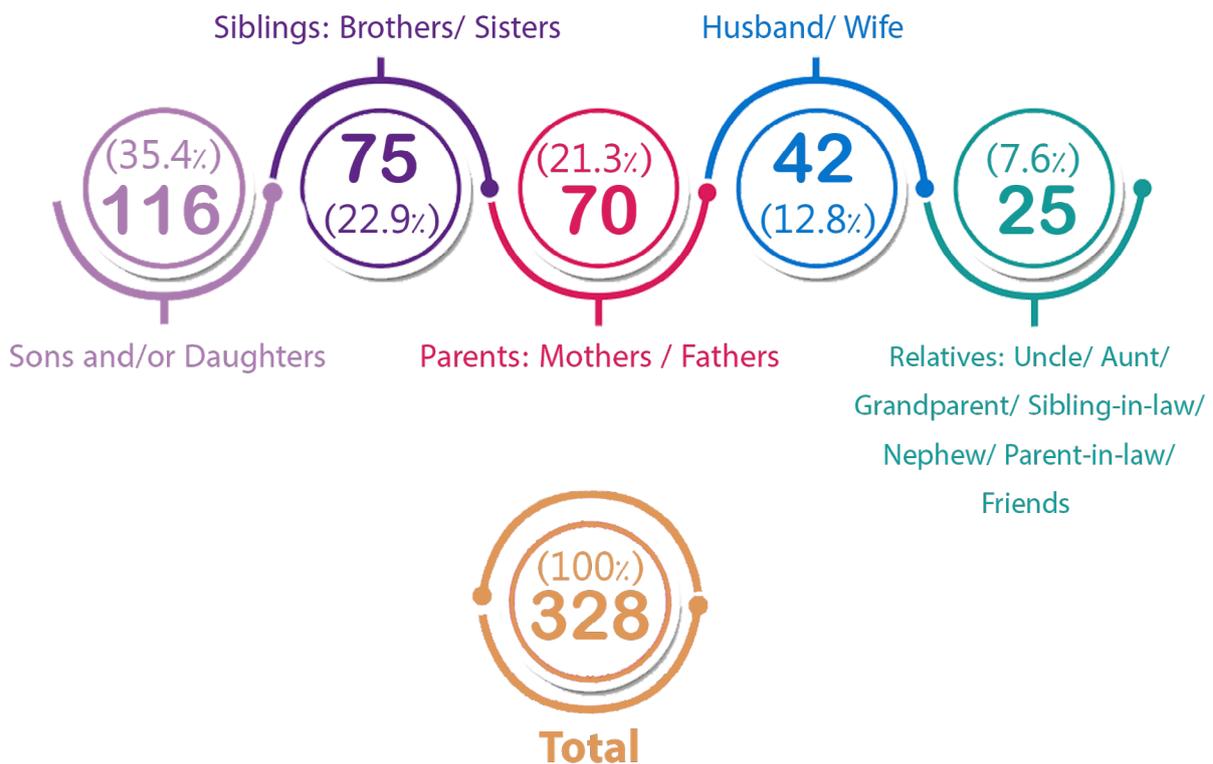
### - Third: Mass Family Detentions including Elders and Infants!

The Egyptian regime creates a political environment for the security to constrain individual and public freedoms. It continues to breach the basic human rights of freedom of speech and peaceful participation in political activities. Consequently, hundreds and thousands of individuals and families were detained without the slightest regard to their ages. Indeed, the age of the detained family members in this study ranges from one to 70 years old, with the average being 28.4 years. Youths (35-18 years old) represent %43.4. The following graph shows the age distribution of detained family members that has been observed in this study.



### - Fourth: The Egyptian Authorities' Retaliation Campaigns including Entire Families and Friends

The Egyptian regime did not exempt anyone from detention campaigns and systematic targeting of families, which is deployed as a pressure tool to silence their relatives in a country that deprives all forms of expression. As shown in the graph below, Belady has observed 324 detainees, whom their gender and degree of kinship are known, among them: %11.4) 37) fathers; %10.1) 33) mothers; %12.9) 42) daughters; %21.9) 71) sons; 55 %16.9)) brothers; %5.8) 19) sisters; %6.1) 20) husbands; %6.7) 22) wives; %4.3) 14) male relatives and friends; %3.3) 11) female relatives and friends.



## - Fifth: Mass Arbitrary Detentions without Exceptions

Belady has observed 181 detainees, whom their education or work is known, among them: %37) 67) students; %24.9) 45) workers (public officer/ engineer/ salesperson/ company technician/ chemist/ merchant/ carpenter/ sculptor/ contractor/ policeman); %8.3) 15) teachers; %6.1) 11) human rights workers (lawyer/ photographer/ journalist / anchor / activist); %7.2) 13) health care workers (doctor / medical personnel).

## - Sixth: Ready-to-use List of Charges

The Egyptian regime does not refrain from arbitrarily stockpiling charges. In most cases, the number of charges can total up to five. The following graph shows the ready-to-use charges and the number of times they were used against families in this study.



## - Seventh: Human Rights in Egypt: a Grim Picture

The Egyptian Authorities follow a systematic pattern that deprives these families of physical and psychological healthcare priorities. Indeed, the detention centers lack basic facilities for a decent life. Belady has observed that 166 detainees among these families were subjected to enforced disappearance. The maximum disappearance duration reached 714 days, excluding the day of appearance. In addition to enforced disappearance, these families were subjected to violations that included many forms of violence, among which:

**Meeting basic biological needs** (deprivation of exercise/ food rations / water/ toilet) in eight cases.

**The right to education/ work** (deprivation of education or work) in three cases.

**The right to health** through deliberate medical negligence (deprivation of medicine entry / refusal of doctors' visits inside and outside the prison) in 14 cases.

**The right to freedom from torture and humiliating practices:** all forms of physical violence (beating / slapping / dragging / pulling, tearing, or shaving of the hair / severe beating / kicking / bruising / bondage / putting out cigarettes against the body / electrocution) in 32 cases, among them %56.2) 18) women. Also, 18 detainees were subjected to psychological terror, including: sexual assault; rape; insults; verbal harassment; humiliation; degrading expressions; and being forced to listen to and /or watch others endure torture (in some cases of a close family member(s)).

**The right to legal representation:** Belady has observed the deprivation of detainees of their legal right to be presented before the prosecution and investigated in the presence of a lawyer in 9 cases.

## - Eighth: The Phenomenon of Rotation Reaching Girls !

Amidst family targeting campaigns, two minors were subjected to what is known as rotation under new cases, including Israa Hassan Sayed Ahmad. She was 14 years old when she was arrested on January 5th, 2014, in front of the dental clinic of the old university of Ismailia with her two relatives just for wearing niqab. Later, they were charged for participation in demonstrations; incitement to violence; disruption of public peace; violation of demonstration law; and disruption of the Constitution. As soon as Israa finished her sentence in prison and hoped to be free, authorities rotated her under two new cases.

## IV- Egyptian Narratives

**The Family of Soulafa Magdy:** Soulafa is an Egyptian journalist who was arrested with her husband in November 2019, under case No. 488 for 2019, Supreme State Security Inventory. She found herself facing a list of charges, most notable of which were joining a terrorist group and disseminating false news and data. She was imprisoned in Al Qanatir Prison where she was beaten and tortured. On April 13th, 2021, she and her husband were released after their son Khalid published a video clip for Ramadan which went viral on social media.



**The Family of Aisha Khayrat Al Shater:** Aisha was 39 years old when she was arrested with her husband on November 1st, 2018. She was presented before the Supreme State Security prosecution on November 21st, 2018. Not only was she detained pretrial for joining a terrorist group, but she was also subjected to severe violations, including: enforced disappearance; severe beating; electrocution; and solitary confinement in inhumane conditions. Aisha suffers from critical medical conditions that endanger her life.



**The Family of Asma Ali Roubi:** In 2014, Asma was arrested with her eight-year-old son, Omar Khalid, to force her husband to turn himself in to security. It is mentioned that they were detained in Nozha Station without charges.

## V- Belady Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned information, Belady calls upon the Egyptian state to consider these urgent and fundamental recommendations:

- **Review laws restricting freedom that contradict the Constitution and International Treaties and Conventions— most importantly, freedom of speech and expression.**
- **Acknowledge and recognize the use of enforced disappearance and torture, and pursue their abolishment through rehabilitation and compensation of survivors and their families and holding accountable those involved in these violations.**
- **Immediately release detained family members who were not involved in any crimes, and emphasize the individuality principle of punishment, either in the legislative or executive branch.**
- **Serious work in order to enhance prison environments in a manner that respects humans' health and dignity.**
- **Amend the legislative and executive framework that allows recrimination, in order to respect the individuality principle of the punishments and its degrees, and prohibit arbitrary imprisonment of citizens.**
- **Allow relatives of detainees to enter necessary personal hygiene products to protect them from disease outbreaks, especially in light of the Covid19- outbreak in Egyptian prisons.**
- **Eliminate gender-based tests (virginity, anal tests..) and criminalize the sexual violence used to oblige prisoners to confess.**
- **Enact the laws protecting public rights and freedoms, including freedom of press and publication and freedom of expression, and protect them in all forms.**
- **Allow Egyptian organizations of civil societies to work with affected families, access prisons to help victims and survivors, rehabilitate tortured persons, and execute their oversight role.**

## VI- Conclusion

The Egyptian Authorities have launched an unprecedented campaign of oppression against oppositionists and critics of the current regime by suppressing individual rights and freedoms, such as the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. This approach was not exclusive to individuals, as the regime used the policy of collective punishment against opposition and their families in order to torture and silence the critics' voices. At the time of this report, authorities are still oppressing the family of detainee Abdel Rahman Shouikh. In a leaked letter, Abdel Rahman has emphasized his hunger strike in protest to his subjugation to torture and sexual assault in Minya Maximum Security Prison. They detained his father, mother and sister as his mother published a video message advocating the rescue of her son's life from torture.