



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Country Report: Egypt December 2020

Egypt has been under an Emergency Law since the 1967 Six-Day War. It was reimposed after the 1981 assassination of Anwar Sadat. The law extends police powers, suspends [constitutional rights](#), legalizes censorship and abolishes [habeas corpus](#). It limits political activity including [demonstrations](#). The Arab Spring in 2011 forced the resignation of Hosni Mubarak. Elections were held, and won by the Islamist Mohammed Morsi. Morsi was deposed in 2013 by a military coup led by [General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi](#).

Coptic Christians have faced discrimination by the Egyptian government and violence from Islamist terrorists. With 36 Christians out of 596 Parliament members, Copts have little political representation.

In Imbaba on May 8, 2011, 2,000 Copts and Muslims clashed over false rumors that a Christian woman's community was preventing her from converting to Islam. A mob burned down two churches, killed 12 people, and injured 220 others. Sectarian clashes continue to occur, with sacred holidays as flashpoints.

In 2018 seventeen people were sentenced to death and nineteen others were given life sentences for their involvement in bombings of Coptic churches in Cairo, Alexandria, and Tanta in 2016 and 2017.

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has emphasized Egyptian unity and supported the Copts verbally. He was the first Egyptian president to attend a Coptic Christmas Eve Mass in 2015. Security forces protected Coptic Christians from terrorists by foiling a terrorist plot planned for Easter in April 2020.

In 2014, Egypt adopted a new constitution that includes freedom of religion. However, it also affirms Islam as the state's official religion and bans conversion to any religion other than Islam. The constitution lays out harsh sentences for blasphemy. Several blasphemy cases have been prosecuted under el-Sisi's administration. The Egyptian parliament has passed laws restricting the construction and renovation of churches. Under a [law passed in 2016](#), churches can only be built in proportion to the number of Christians in an area, and governors can deny church-building permits, with no appeals process.

The Muslim Brotherhood has also faced persecution. Under Presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s and 60s, Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011), and Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, the Muslim Brotherhood has been considered a threat to national security, and since 2013, it has been classified as a terrorist organization. Thousands of supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood have been detained, tortured, or disappeared.

Journalists, scholars, and human rights advocates have become targets of Egyptian security police. Three leaders of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, the scholar Patrick Zaki, and Egyptian family members of opposition journalists in exile were arrested and tortured in 2020.

Genocide Watch considers Egypt at Stage 8: Persecution. Coptic Christians are targets of violent attacks by Islamist terrorists. The government denies permission to build or repair churches. Human rights defenders and opposition journalists have been arrested and tortured.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- The Egyptian government should protect Coptic Christians by fully investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of violence against them. Its security forces should protect Christian worship.
- The Egyptian government should immediately release human rights, journalists, and opposition leaders; and stop arresting and torturing them.