

***Current Issues and Good Practices in Egyptian Prison Management***

SUBMISSION TO SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON TORTURE

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###

### **Introduction**

Justice House welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the thematic report of the Special Rapporteur on Torture, focusing on “Current Issues and Good Practices in Prison Management.” In line with the Special Rapporteur's call for inputs, we are eager to highlight a range of pressing concerns and practices within the Egyptian prison system, particularly emphasizing how its management and internal conditions impact the human rights of prisoners and detainees.

Our submission is divided into two primary sections, each addressing critical areas within the prison system. The first section, titled "Main Challenges in the Egyptian Prison System," delves into the day-to-day realities faced by inmates. This analysis covers the degrading infrastructure, prevalent malnutrition, and severe mental health challenges, all exacerbated by the conditions of confinement. It further examines the limitations on physical activities, employment, and educational opportunities, alongside the restricted access to family visits and communication, significantly impacting the well-being of inmates and their families.

The second section, "Overcrowding in Egyptian Prisons," provides a detailed examination of the issue of overcrowding, its causes, and its extensive repercussions on inmates' mental health, basic needs, and safety. This part of the submission evaluates the effectiveness of existing measures to address overcrowding, including the construction of new facilities, legal and judicial reforms, improvements in judicial efficiency, conditional release programs, international collaborations, and human rights training for prison staff.

In our comprehensive exploration, Justice House aims to shed light on these significant challenges and suggest strategic recommendations for reform. Our goal is to contribute constructively to the discourse on improving Egyptian prison conditions, aligning with international human rights standards and advocating for a humane and rehabilitative approach to prison management.

###

### **First section: Main Challenges in the Egyptian Prison System**

**Introduction**

In this section, Justice House reviews the significant challenges within the Egyptian prison system, focusing on the daily realities and broader conditions affecting inmates. Central themes include the deteriorating infrastructure of prisons, which are often outdated and overcrowded, leading to detrimental living conditions. A critical concern is the widespread issue of malnutrition among inmates, stemming from poor food quality and inadequate dietary provisions. Compounding these physical hardships are the severe mental health challenges faced by prisoners, including depression, anxiety, and PTSD, often exacerbated by the harsh environment of confinement.

We also explore the limited opportunities for physical activities, employment, and education within the system, factors crucial for rehabilitation and successful societal reintegration. Additionally, the section highlights the restricted access to family visits and communication, a restriction that significantly impacts the emotional and social well-being of both inmates and their families.

Through this examination, Justice House aims to shed light on these pressing challenges in the Egyptian prison system, offering insights and recommendations for reform that align with humanitarian principles and the pursuit of a just and rehabilitative approach to incarceration.

### **The reality of daily life in Egyptian prisons.**

The reality of daily life in Egyptian prisons, particularly concerning the harsh treatment and abuse inmates face at the hands of prison authorities. This troubling aspect of prison life is a critical issue that profoundly affects the well-being and rights of incarcerated individuals. These conditions reflect serious concerns regarding human rights and the treatment of prisoners contribute to an environment of fear and oppression within the prison system. we will highlight the following points:

* **Physical Abuse:** A significant concern in Egyptian prisons is the physical abuse of inmates by prison authorities. This includes beatings, use of excessive force during interrogations, and other forms of physical punishment that are not only inhumane but also illegal under both national and international law. Such treatment often results in serious physical injuries to inmates and, in extreme cases, even leads to death.
* **Neglect of Basic Needs:** Inmates frequently face neglect regarding their basic needs. This neglect manifests in insufficient and poor-quality food, inadequate access to clean water and sanitation facilities, and a lack of proper bedding and personal space. Prisoners, especially those who are politically vulnerable or have been detained without trial, often suffer from a lack of essential health services, exacerbating existing health conditions and leading to new health complications.
* **Overcrowding:** One of the most pressing issues in Egyptian prisons is severe overcrowding. Facilities often house far more inmates than they are designed for, leading to cramped and inadequate living spaces. This overcrowding exacerbates various other problems, such as limited access to resources and increased tension among inmates.
* **Psychological and Emotional Abuse:** Beyond physical abuse, prisoners in Egypt are often subjected to psychological and emotional abuse. This includes prolonged solitary confinement, threats against family members, and other forms of intimidation. Such practices have long-term detrimental effects on the mental health and well-being of the prisoners.
* **Inadequate Healthcare:** Healthcare services within Egyptian prisons are often lacking in both quality and accessibility. There is typically a shortage of medical staff, medication, and facilities to address the health needs of the inmate population, leading to unaddressed health issues and the spread of diseases.
* **Mental Health Challenges:** The oppressive environment, combined with physical and psychological abuse, contributes to significant mental health challenges among prisoners. Issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder are common, often exacerbated by the lack of psychological support or counseling services.
* **Violations of Basic Human Rights:** All these forms of abuse constitute blatant violations of basic human rights. The conditions in the prisons violate the rights to personal integrity, health, and humane treatment as laid out in international human rights treaties to which Egypt is a party, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
* **Systemic Nature of Abuse:** These abusive practices are not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of systemic abuse within the Egyptian prison system. This systemic nature points to a lack of oversight, accountability, and proper training for prison staff in human rights standards.
* **Impact on Prisoners and Society:** The impact of such harsh treatment and abuse extends beyond the immediate suffering of the inmates. It fosters an environment of fear and mistrust within the prison system and has lasting psychological effects on the prisoners. Furthermore, it contributes to a broader climate of repression and undermines public trust in the criminal justice system.

In conclusion, the reality of daily life in Egyptian prisons is marked by a disturbing pattern of harsh treatment and abuse. These practices are not only violations of international and national laws but also indicative of deeper systemic issues within the prison system. Addressing these abuses requires comprehensive reforms, including increased oversight, proper training in human rights for prison staff, and accountability mechanisms to prevent and punish such violations.

### **The condition of facilities inside Egyptian prisons.**

The condition of facilities inside Egyptian prisons highlights several significant issues that severely impact the daily life and well-being of inmates. These facilities, often outdated and lacking in essential resources, present a range of challenges:

* **Outdated Infrastructure:** Many of the prison facilities in Egypt are outdated, meaning they were built several decades ago and have not been adequately updated or maintained. This outdated infrastructure led to a range of problems, including structural issues, inadequate space for the number of inmates, and failing systems for electricity, plumbing, and ventilation. These conditions not only make the environment uncomfortable but also pose serious health risks to inmates.
* **Lack of Essential Resources:** The inadequacy of facilities extends to a lack of essential resources needed for the basic well-being of prisoners. This includes shortages in bedding, insufficient or broken furniture, a lack of necessary equipment for health and hygiene maintenance and to lack of essential utilities like electricity and water. The scarcity of these resources makes it challenging for inmates to maintain a minimum standard of living and leads to feelings of desperation and neglect.
* **Insufficient Sanitary Facilities:** A particularly critical issue is the insufficiency of sanitary facilities. Many prisons do not have enough toilets, showers, or washing areas to accommodate the inmate population. This deficiency is exacerbated by the severe overcrowding in these facilities. The lack of adequate sanitation leads to unhygienic conditions, which not only affect the dignity of inmates but also pose serious health risks. Poor hygiene in such close living quarters facilitates the spread of infectious diseases, a concern that becomes even more pressing in the context of health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.
* **Impact on Health and Hygiene:** The combination of outdated infrastructure and insufficient sanitary facilities has a direct impact on the health and hygiene of the prison population. Poor living conditions, lack of personal space, and inadequate hygiene facilities contribute to the spread of diseases and lead to outbreaks of illness within the prison. These conditions are detrimental to both physical and mental health, as living in a consistently unclean and neglected environment leads to stress, anxiety, and a sense of hopelessness among inmates.

In conclusion, the state of facilities in Egyptian prisons is concerning. The outdated infrastructure, lack of essential resources, and insufficient sanitary facilities create an environment that is not conducive to the health, well-being, or rehabilitation of inmates. These conditions underscore the need for significant improvements and investments in prison infrastructure to ensure humane living conditions and the overall health and safety of the prison population.

### **The state of malnutrition in Egyptian prisons.**

The state of malnutrition among inmates in Egyptian prisons is a serious concern that significantly impacts the health and well-being of the prison population. This malnutrition arises from a combination of factors related:

* **Substandard Quality of Food:** According to documented testimonies with prison inmates, the quality of food provided to inmates in Egyptian prisons often falls below acceptable standards. The meals provided lack the necessary nutritional value, failing to meet the basic dietary requirements of the inmates. This lack of quality be attributed to various factors, including inadequate funding for prison food, poor food preparation and storage practices, and a general lack of attention to the nutritional needs of the prisoners.
* **Inadequate Quantity and Variety:** In addition to the poor quality, the quantity of food provided is also a major concern. Inmates often receive meals that are insufficient in portion size, leading to hunger and undernourishment. Furthermore, the lack of variety in the food exacerbates nutritional deficiencies, as inmates are not receiving a balanced diet that includes all necessary food groups and nutrients.
* **Prevalence of Malnutrition:** As a result of the substandard quality and inadequate quantity of food, malnutrition is a common issue among the prison population in Egypt. Malnutrition leads to a host of health problems, including weakened immunity, increased susceptibility to infections, and a general decline in health. For inmates with pre-existing health conditions, the impact of malnutrition is even more severe.
* **Related Health Issues:** The poor nutrition in Egyptian prisons contributes to a range of related health issues among inmates. These include not only diseases directly related to nutritional deficiencies but also a general deterioration of physical health. The lack of proper nutrition also exacerbates chronic health conditions and has a negative impact on mental health, exacerbating feelings of depression and anxiety.
* **Impact on Rehabilitation and Reintegration:** Proper nutrition is essential not just for physical health but also for the mental and emotional well-being of inmates, which is crucial for their rehabilitation and eventual reintegration into society. The prevailing conditions of poor nutrition in prisons hinder these processes, making it more challenging for inmates to reintegrate successfully upon release.
* **Compounded Health Risks:** The situation is further compounded by the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions prevalent in many Egyptian prisons, which can exacerbate the health risks associated with malnutrition. The combination of poor diet, inadequate healthcare, and unsanitary living conditions creates a hazardous environment for the physical and mental health of inmates.

In conclusion, the reality of poor nutrition in Egyptian prisons is a significant issue that impacts the health and rehabilitation prospects of the inmate population. Addressing this problem requires a concerted effort to improve the quality and quantity of food provided, ensuring that the nutritional needs of all inmates are adequately met.

### **The mental health conditions in Egyptian prisons.**

The mental health conditions in Egyptian prisons are deeply troubling. The testimonies we obtained from prisoners offer insight into the mental health struggles faced by inmates in Egyptian prisons, which are significantly influenced by the harsh conditions within these facilities. The daily reality for prisoners, characterized by a combination of overcrowding, poor living conditions, inadequate healthcare, and often inhumane treatment, creates an environment that is highly detrimental to mental health. we will highlight the following points:

* **Depression and Anxiety:** One of the most prevalent mental health issues among inmates is depression, often resulting from the oppressive environment, lack of freedom, and the uncertainty surrounding their legal situations. Anxiety disorders are also common, fueled by the constant stress of prison life, fears for personal safety, and concerns about family and life outside prison. The lack of privacy, and personal space, and the oppressive atmosphere of constant surveillance and control exacerbate these conditions.
* **Stress-Related Disorders:** The chronic stress of living in overcrowded, unsanitary, and hostile environments leads to stress-related disorders among prisoners. These manifest as insomnia, hypertension, and a host of psychosomatic illnesses. Prolonged exposure to such stressful conditions without adequate support or relief can have a lasting impact on an individual’s mental health.
* **Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** Many inmates in Egyptian prisons have experienced traumatic events both within and outside of the prison system, including during the process of arrest and interrogation. The prevalence of harsh treatment and abuse by prison authorities further compound these experiences, leading to PTSD, which is characterized by flashbacks, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts about the traumatic event.
* **Suicidal Ideation:** The extreme mental distress experienced by many inmates in some cases, leads to suicidal ideation, and in some cases, attempts at suicide, Egyptian prisons have witnessed dozens of suicide cases in recent years. This is often a result of a combination of factors, including the lack of hope for the future, the harshness of the prison environment, the stigma of incarceration, and the absence of adequate mental health support.
* **Lack of Mental Health Support:** A critical factor contributing to the worsening of mental health conditions in prisons is the lack of appropriate mental health care and support. There are often limited resources dedicated to mental health within the prison system, including a shortage of mental health professionals. Inmates rarely have access to regular mental health evaluations, counseling, or appropriate medication. This lack of support leaves many inmates to struggle with their mental health issues without adequate care.
* **Impact of Physical Conditions:** The physical conditions of confinement – such as poor lighting, lack of fresh air, overcrowding, and noise – further contribute to mental health deterioration. These environmental factors heighten feelings of claustrophobia, helplessness, and agitation.
* **Effects of Isolation and Solitary Confinement:** For those subjected to isolation or solitary confinement, the impact on mental health is particularly severe. Extended isolation leads to a range of psychological issues, including hallucinations, paranoia, and severe depression.
* **Social Isolation and Stigmatization:** Inmates often experience social isolation and stigmatization, both within the prison and from society at large. This isolation leads to feelings of loneliness, abandonment, and a loss of social identity, further impacting mental well-being.
* **Reintegration Challenges:** The mental health issues faced by inmates have lasting effects, even after release. The lack of rehabilitative support and mental health care in prisons makes the reintegration process into society challenging, with former inmates often struggling to adjust and cope with life outside prison.

In conclusion, the mental health struggles of inmates in Egyptian prisons are a direct result of the harsh conditions and lack of adequate mental health care within the system. A concerted effort is needed to address these issues, focusing on both improving the prison environment and providing comprehensive mental health support to inmates.

### **Daily Routine and Activities.**

The daily routine and activities within Egyptian prisons, particularly highlight the issue of limited movement and exercise for inmates. This restriction significantly affects both their physical and mental health, several additional details emerge that underline the gravity of the situation, as explained as follows:

* **Limited Physical Activity:** In Egyptian prisons, inmates face significant restrictions on their ability to move freely and engage in physical exercise. The daily routine in these facilities is often highly regimented, with little opportunity for inmates to engage in physical activities. This lack of movement leads to a range of physical health problems, including muscle atrophy, poor cardiovascular health, and a general decline in physical fitness. For inmates with pre-existing health conditions, the lack of physical activity exacerbates their health issues.
* **Effects of Overcrowding:** The severe overcrowding in many Egyptian prisons significantly contributes to the restricted movement and lack of exercise opportunities. In some facilities, the number of inmates far exceeds the capacity, leading to cramped conditions. These conditions not only limit the physical space available for movement but also create logistical challenges for managing and organizing physical activities or exercise programs for the inmates.
* **Daily Routine Constraints:** The daily routine in Egyptian prisons is often highly structured, with strict schedules that allow for minimal free time. Inmates spend most of their day confined to their cells or overcrowded communal areas, with little opportunity to engage in physical activity. This lack of flexibility in the daily schedule contributes to a sedentary lifestyle, further exacerbating health problems.
* **Impact on Mental Health:** The restriction on movement and exercise also has profound implications for the mental health of inmates. Regular physical activity is known to play a crucial role in maintaining mental health, helping to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, and promoting overall psychological well-being. The lack of such activity in the prison environment contributes to the deterioration of mental health, increasing feelings of stress, frustration, and hopelessness among inmates.
* **Healthcare Implications:** Limited movement and exercise exacerbate health issues within the prison population, leading to chronic diseases such as cardiovascular problems, diabetes, and musculoskeletal disorders. These health issues are further compounded by the often-inadequate healthcare available in prisons.
* **Constrained Living Conditions:** The limited movement is often a consequence of the constrained living conditions within Egyptian prisons. Overcrowding and inadequate space mean that prisoners spend a significant amount of time confined to their cells or in small, crowded spaces. These conditions limit their ability to engage in physical activities or exercise, further restricting their movement.
* **Lack of Recreational Facilities:** There is a lack of adequate recreational facilities in many Egyptian prisons. Facilities such as exercise yards, sports equipment, and spaces for physical activities are either insufficient or entirely absent. This lack of infrastructure further hinders the ability of inmates to engage in physical exercise.
* **Structured Activities and Rehabilitation Programs:** The absence of structured activities and rehabilitation programs that include physical exercise is another contributing factor. Such programs are essential not only for the physical health of inmates but also for their mental and emotional rehabilitation. The lack of these programs reflects a broader issue in the approach to prison management in Egypt.

In conclusion, the reality of daily life in Egyptian prisons, with its significant limitations on movement and exercise, poses a severe threat to the physical and mental health of inmates. To effectively address these challenges, a holistic approach is necessary, involving changes in prison routines, improvements in facilities, and a greater emphasis on physical health and rehabilitation in the prison system.

### **Work and Education Opportunities.**

Delving deeper into the limited work and education opportunities in Egyptian prisons reveals several layers of complexity and shortcomings that have far-reaching implications for inmates, both during their incarceration and post-release, as explained as follows:

* **Scarce Availability of Work Programs:** In Egyptian prisons, opportunities for inmates to engage in work activities are scarce. Where work programs do exist, they often lack diversity and sophistication, failing to provide meaningful engagement for inmates. The types of work offered are rudimentary, providing little in terms of skill development or real-world applicability. These programs might involve manual labor or basic craftwork, which, while providing some level of activity, do not necessarily equip inmates with marketable skills or work experience relevant to the outside world. These programs are crucial as they can play a significant role in developing skills and preparing inmates for reintegration into society upon release. However, the limited scope and poor quality of these programs in Egyptian prisons mean that many inmates are deprived of this critical aspect of rehabilitation.
* **Lack of Meaningful Engagement:** The work and education programs that are available often do not provide meaningful engagement or relevant skills development. They may be overly simplistic, lack practical applicability, or not be aligned with the needs and interests of the inmates. This lack of meaningful engagement leads to disinterest and apathy among inmates, diminishing the potential rehabilitative impact of these programs.
* **Limited Access and Participation:** Not all inmates have access to the existing work and education programs. Factors such as prison overcrowding, limited resources, and selective enrollment criteria restrict participation. Consequently, many inmates spend their days in idleness, which can exacerbate feelings of frustration and hopelessness.
* **Impact on Rehabilitation and Reintegration:** The dearth of effective work and education opportunities hampers the rehabilitation process and negatively impacts the prospects for successful reintegration of inmates into society. Without the development of new skills, education, or work experience, inmates may find it challenging to secure employment upon release, increasing the likelihood of recidivism.
* **Impact on Mental Health and Behavior:** The lack of productive and engaging activities adversely affects inmates' mental health. Engaging in work or educational pursuits provides a sense of purpose and can be a positive outlet for stress and anxiety. The absence of such opportunities leads to boredom, increased tension, and potential behavioral issues within the prison population.
* Potential for Improvement: There is a significant potential for improvement in this area within Egyptian prisons. Enhancing the quality and availability of work and education programs could have a profound impact on the lives of inmates. This includes investing in vocational training programs, expanding educational offerings, and ensuring that these opportunities are tailored to the needs and abilities of the prison population.

In conclusion, the state of work and education opportunities in Egyptian prisons requires significant attention and improvement. By expanding and enhancing these programs, there is an opportunity to positively impact the lives of inmates, aiding in their rehabilitation and offering them a better chance at successful reintegration post-release.

### **The restricted access to family visits and communication.**

The restricted access to family visits and communication in Egyptian prisons highlights a significant aspect of prison life that has profound implications for inmates, As explained as follows:

* **Limited Opportunities for Family Visits:** Inmates in Egyptian prisons face considerable restrictions in terms of family visits. These limitations are due to a variety of factors, such as strict regulations governing visitation, limited visiting hours, and logistical challenges for families to reach prison facilities, which may be located far from their homes. The frequency and duration of these visits are often inadequate, providing minimal time for meaningful interaction.
* **Stringent Visitation Policies:** The policies governing family visits in Egyptian prisons are often stringent, with numerous restrictions on who can visit, how often, and under what conditions. Inmates may be allowed only a limited number of visitors, and the visits might be subject to strict security checks and surveillance, which be intimidating and uncomfortable for both inmates and their families.
* **Physical Barriers to Visitation:** The physical location of prisons, often far from urban centers, poses a significant barrier to family visits. The cost and difficulty of transportation be prohibitive for many families, especially those with limited financial resources. This geographical isolation makes regular visits challenging, if not impossible, for many families.
* **Communication Barriers:** Alongside limited visitation, there are significant barriers to other forms of communication between inmates and their families. Access to telephones or other communication channels is often restricted, making it challenging for inmates to maintain regular contact with their loved ones. Such constraints stem from both institutional policies and the lack of necessary infrastructure or resources to facilitate communication.
* **Impact on Mental Health:** The restrictions on family visits and communication have a direct impact on the mental health of inmates. Regular contact with family members is crucial for emotional support and maintaining personal relationships. The lack of such contact leads to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and abandonment. It exacerbates stress, anxiety, and depression among inmates, affecting their overall mental well-being and potentially hindering their rehabilitation.
* **Effect on Family Relationships:** The restrictions also affect the families of inmates, especially children, who may suffer emotional and psychological consequences due to the absence of a parent or loved one. This has long-term emotional and psychological impacts on family members and strains familial bonds.
* **Contrast with International Standards:** These restricted visitation and communication policies contrast with international standards for prisoner treatment, which emphasize the importance of maintaining family relationships as a key component of humane treatment and effective rehabilitation.
* **Impact on Inmate Rehabilitation:** Regular family contact is a key component of effective inmate rehabilitation. It helps maintain a sense of normalcy, provides emotional support, and can be a motivating factor for positive behavior change. The restrictions on family contact, therefore, hinder the rehabilitation process and adversely affect inmates' readiness for reintegration into society upon release.
* **Need for Policy Reform:** Addressing these issues requires a reform of the policies governing family visits and communication in Egyptian prisons. Ensuring more frequent and longer visits, improving the facilities for visitation, and providing greater access to communication channels are essential steps that can help mitigate the negative impact of incarceration on inmates and their families.

In conclusion, the restrictions on family visits and communication in Egyptian prisons significantly impact of inmates. These limitations underscore the need for policy reforms to facilitate better contact between inmates and their families, which is essential for maintaining mental health, preserving family relationships, and supporting rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

### **Justice House recommendations.**

In an effort to address the pressing challenges within the Egyptian prison system, Justice House presents a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at reforming and improving the conditions of incarceration. These recommendations are rooted in a detailed analysis of the current state of Egyptian prisons, which reveals systemic issues.

Justice House's proposals are designed to not only alleviate these immediate concerns but also to lay the groundwork for a more humane, effective, and rehabilitative correctional system. By adopting these measures, the Egyptian authorities can take significant steps toward ensuring that the rights and dignity of all incarcerated individuals are respected while fostering an environment conducive to their rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society.

1. **Alleviating Overcrowding and Enhancing Infrastructure:**
* Expand and modernize existing prison facilities to relieve overcrowding.
* Construct additional detention centers with an emphasis on humane living conditions.
* Streamline judicial processes and promote alternative sentencing for nonviolent offenses to reduce inmate population.
1. **Improving Living Conditions and Nutritional Standards:**
* Upgrade prison infrastructure, ensuring adequate ventilation, lighting, and sanitation.
* Increase investment in prison food services to enhance both the quality and quantity of meals, ensuring they meet nutritional standards and dietary needs.
* Implement regular inspections and quality control measures for food preparation and hygiene.
1. **Ensuring Comprehensive Healthcare and Mental Health Support:**
* Bolster healthcare services within prisons, including the recruitment of additional medical professionals.
* Develop and implement robust mental health programs, offering regular psychological assessments, counseling, and tailored treatments for conditions such as PTSD and trauma.
* Implement regular training for healthcare staff to effectively address both physical and psychological issues, focusing on the needs of those who have experienced torture and trauma.
1. **Upholding Ethical Treatment and Human Rights:**
* Enforce zero-tolerance policies against physical and psychological abuse within prisons.
* Establish and empower independent bodies to monitor prison conditions and address abuse allegations.
* Educate inmates on their rights and provide clear reporting channels for grievances.
1. **Strengthening Staff Training and Support Systems:**
* Enhance training programs for prison staff, emphasizing rehabilitative approaches and effective inmate management.
* Provide necessary support to staff for handling challenging situations and upholding their mental health.
1. **Promoting Rehabilitation through Education and Work Programs:**
* Develop and expand vocational training and educational programs to provide inmates with valuable skills and knowledge.
* Foster partnerships with NGOs and the private sector to create meaningful work opportunities for inmates.
* Establish post-release support systems, including community partnerships, to aid in reintegration.
1. **Facilitating Family Connections and Social Support:**
* Ease restrictions on family visits, improving facilities to make visitations more conducive.
* Enhance access to communication methods, including phone and written correspondence, ensuring privacy.
* Establish inmate support programs like peer counseling and group therapy.
1. **Fostering Physical Well-being and Activity:**
* Provide ample opportunities for physical exercise, including structured sports programs and access to outdoor spaces.
* Regularly scheduled recreational activities to promote physical health and mental well-being.
1. **Advancing Transparency and International Cooperation:**
* Invite and collaborate with international observers and human rights organizations for regular prison inspections and guidance.
* Align prison management practices with international human rights standards and best practices.
1. **Enacting Legal and Judicial Reforms:**
* Reform legal systems to ensure fair, efficient trials and reduce unwarranted pre-trial detentions.
* Amend laws to prioritize rehabilitation over punitive measures, particularly for minor offenses.

Implementing these recommendations demands a steadfast commitment to systemic change, grounded in respect for human rights and the dignity of all individuals within the prison system. By adopting these measures, the Egyptian authorities can significantly enhance the conditions in prisons, contributing positively to the rehabilitation and successful reintegration of inmates into society.

### **Second section: Overcrowding in Egyptian Prisons**

**Introduction**:

In the pivotal section “Overcrowding in Egyptian Prisons,” Justice House critically examines the severe overcrowding issue in Egyptian prison facilities, exploring its underlying causes and wide-ranging consequences. This segment highlights the significant discrepancy between the existing conditions in Egyptian prisons and the standards set by international human rights norms. It brings to the fore the adverse effects of overcrowding on inmates, particularly regarding their mental health, access to basic needs, and overall safety and security within the prison environment.

The analysis extends to a thorough evaluation of the measures reportedly taken to alleviate overcrowding, including the construction of new prison facilities, the implementation of legal reforms, efforts to improve judicial efficiency, the introduction of conditional release programs, international collaboration, and training of prison staff in human rights. Each of these aspects is scrutinized to assess their effectiveness and impact on the current state of overcrowding in Egyptian prisons.

Concluding this comprehensive exploration, Justice House presents a series of strategic recommendations aimed at reducing overcrowding in Egyptian prisons. These recommendations are crafted with a focus on ensuring the humane treatment of inmates, adherence to international human rights guidelines, and the enhancement of rehabilitation and reintegration processes. This approach underscores the necessity of systemic change within the Egyptian prison system to address the critical issue of overcrowding and improve the overall conditions of incarceration.

### **Reasons for overcrowding in Egyptian prisons.**

Severe overcrowding in Egyptian prisons represents a critical and complex issue that deeply impacts the quality of life and human rights of incarcerated individuals. The capacity of many prisons in Egypt is exceeded multiple times over, creating a dire situation where the basic needs and rights of inmates are severely compromised.

The magnitude of this overcrowding is not merely a matter of prisons being slightly over capacity. Rather, it's a scenario where facilities designed for a limited number of inmates are housing many times that number. This extreme overcrowding leads to cells, intended for a few, being crammed with a multitude of inmates. The consequences are dire: inmates lack sufficient space to sleep, sit, or even move around, severely impacting their physical and mental well-being.

The severe overcrowding in Egyptian prisons be attributed to several interrelated factors, primarily stemming from the inefficiencies in the country's judicial and law enforcement systems. A closer examination of these factors offers insight into the underlying causes of this critical issue:

1. **Inefficiency of the Judicial Process:** The judicial system in Egypt is marked by prolonged procedures and delays, resulting in extended pre-trial detentions. The slow pace of legal processes leads to detainees spending long periods in custody before their cases are resolved. This inefficiency contributes significantly to the growing prison population, as more individuals are held in detention for extended periods without resolution.
2. **Crackdowns on Opposition:** The political climate in Egypt, especially post the 2011 Arab Spring and subsequent government changes, has seen increased crackdowns on political opponents, activists, and critics of the authorities. These crackdowns often result in mass arrests and detentions, significantly contributing to overcrowding in prisons and detention centers. The approach of detaining individuals who oppose or are perceived as threats to the government exacerbates the strain on the already burdened prison system.
3. **Expansion of Police Powers:** In recent years, there has been an expansion in the powers of police forces in Egypt, with a broader mandate to arrest and detain citizens under suspicion. This expansion has led to an increase in the number of people being arrested and placed in pre-trial detention, often for extended periods, on varied charges, including those that are politically motivated or related to freedom of expression and assembly.
4. **Aggressive Law Enforcement Practices for Minor Crimes:** Aggressive policing and law enforcement tactics, including the widespread arrest and detention of individuals for minor offenses, contribute significantly to prison overcrowding. This approach, where minor crimes or misdemeanors lead to arrest and detention, adds to the number of people entering the prison system, many of whom might otherwise have been dealt with through alternative measures.

### **The effects of overcrowding in Egyptian prisons.**

### **The effects of overcrowding on the mental health of prisoners.**

Overcrowding also severely affects the mental health of prisoners. The lack of personal space and privacy, combined with the stress of living in such cramped and unsanitary conditions, heightens levels of anxiety, stress, and other mental health issues. This psychological impact is a significant concern, often overlooked in discussions about the physical aspects of overcrowding in Egyptian prisons.

* **Increased Stress and Anxiety:** The sheer density of the prison population, coupled with the lack of personal space, significantly heightens stress and anxiety levels among inmates. In such overcrowded environments, inmates are constantly in close proximity to others, leading to a heightened sense of vulnerability and a lack of privacy. This constant exposure to stressful stimuli,

without the opportunity for solitude or relaxation, exacerbates feelings of anxiety and leads to long-term psychological distress.

* **Development of Mental Health Disorders:** Prolonged exposure to these overcrowded conditions contributes to the development of more serious mental health disorders. Depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mood disorders are common among prisoners in these environments. The lack of adequate mental health care and support within the Egyptian prison system further aggravates these conditions, often leaving inmates without the necessary treatment or coping mechanisms.
* **Impact of Environmental Factors:** Overcrowded conditions often mean inadequate facilities, poor hygiene, and insufficient access to outdoor areas or recreational activities. Such environmental factors negatively impact mental health, reducing inmates' ability to cope with the stress of imprisonment. Lack of physical activity and exposure to natural light, for instance, are known to have detrimental effects on mood and overall mental well-being.
* **Social and Interpersonal Strain:** Overcrowding leads to increased tension and conflict among inmates, especially among prisoners accused of committing serious criminal offenses. The constant close quarters exacerbate interpersonal conflicts and violence, contributing to an environment of fear and mistrust. Such an atmosphere be particularly challenging for individuals already struggling with mental health issues, increasing feelings of paranoia, anxiety, and social withdrawal.
* **Long-Term Consequences:** The mental health impact of overcrowding extends beyond the period of incarceration. Former inmates continue to struggle with the psychological effects long after their release, affecting their ability to reintegrate into society and increasing the risk of recidivism.

### **Effects of overcrowding on Limited Access to Basic Needs.**

The impact of overcrowding on living conditions within these prisons is profound. The issue of limited access to basic needs in Egyptian prisons is a significant concern that directly impacts the dignity and well-being of inmates. This problem is multifaceted, involving several essential aspects of daily life in prison.

* **Insufficient Food Supply:** The food provided to inmates often falls short in both quantity and quality. Nutritional deficiencies are a common problem due to inadequate and poorly balanced meals. This lack of proper nutrition leads to various health issues, including malnutrition and associated diseases, which are further exacerbated by the lack of adequate healthcare in these facilities.
* **Bedding and Sleeping Arrangements:** Overcrowding in prisons has led to a critical shortage of bedding and sleeping space. In many cases, inmates do not have access to individual beds or even sufficient room to sleep comfortably. This situation has forced many inmates to sleep in shifts, which means that they cannot rest simultaneously due to the limited space available. Temporary detention centers and many prisons also lack beds, forcing prisoners to sleep on the floor. Such conditions not only cause physical discomfort but also contribute to sleep deprivation and related health problems.
* **Lack of Personal Space:** The extreme overcrowding results in a severe lack of personal space, which is essential for mental and emotional well-being. Inmates are often confined in cramped conditions, with limited opportunity for privacy or quiet. This constant proximity leads to heightened stress and tension among inmates, exacerbating mental health issues and potentially leading to conflicts.
* **Sanitation and Hygiene:** Access to sanitation and hygiene facilities is also a critical issue. The overcrowding and infrastructure limitations mean that facilities such as toilets and showers are insufficient for a large number of inmates. This insufficiency leads to unhygienic conditions, which pose serious health risks, including the spread of infectious diseases.

### **Overcrowding affected safety and security measures in prisons.**

Safety and security within Egyptian prisons are also compromised due to overcrowding. Managing such a large number of inmates in confined spaces poses significant challenges for prison staff, particularly in emergencies, be it health crises or security breaches. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a stark example of this problem, highlighting the challenges faced by the Egyptian authorities in managing such crises within the prison system.

* **Challenges in Emergency Management:** Overcrowd significantly complicates the management of emergencies in prisons. In the context of a health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, the close quarters and poor ventilation inherent in overcrowded conditions facilitated the rapid spread of infectious diseases. The Egyptian prison system faced difficulties in implementing effective isolation and quarantine procedures due to limited space and failed to implement isolation procedures, which exacerbated the risk of infection spreading among inmates and staff.
* **Inadequate Healthcare Response:** The response to the COVID-19 crisis in these prisons was hampered by inadequate healthcare resources. The medical facilities and staff were overwhelmed, unable to cope with the sheer number of potential cases. This insufficiency led to delays in testing, treatment, and containment of the virus, further contributing to its spread within the prison population.
* **Security Challenges:** Overcrowding also poses substantial security challenges. Managing a large number of inmates in confined spaces leads to increased tension and conflict, making it difficult to maintain order and control. In emergency situations, such as a health crisis, these tensions are further exacerbated, which increases the risk of unrest or violence. This volatile environment demands constant vigilance and additional manpower, putting a substantial strain on the prison staff. The complexity of overseeing such a large inmate population in confined spaces made it challenging to prevent and rapidly respond to incidents. Moreover, the sheer number of inmates makes it difficult for staff to monitor and manage individual behaviors effectively, increasing the risk of security breaches and compromising the overall safety of the prison facility.
* **Impact on Staff and Inmates:** The safety and security challenges in overcrowded prisons affect not only the inmates but also the prison staff. During the COVID-19 crisis, prison staff were placed in difficult positions, having to manage the health risks associated with the pandemic while maintaining security and order. This dual responsibility, coupled with inadequate resources, placed significant strain on the staff, impacting their ability to effectively manage the crisis. The pandemic underscored the vulnerability of overcrowded Egyptian prisons in emergency situations, revealing the need for comprehensive planning and resource allocation to address these challenges. The police forces, therefore, face an ongoing and multifaceted challenge in managing the security and safety of these overcrowded facilities, necessitating systemic reforms and strategic resource deployment to ensure effective prison administration.

### **Legal and Human Rights Concerns.**

The human rights implications of such overcrowding cannot be overstated. The conditions arising from this issue represent a clear violation of the rights of those incarcerated. Prisons are mandated to provide humane conditions for inmates, and the severe overcrowding directly undermines this responsibility. This situation has attracted international criticism, with human rights organizations calling for urgent reforms in the Egyptian prison system.

The conditions in Egyptian prisons raise substantial legal and human rights concerns, both at the national and international levels. Egyptian laws set specific standards for prisoner treatment, aiming to safeguard basic rights such as humane treatment, proper living conditions, and access to justice. However, the prevailing conditions in these prisons, characterized by overcrowding, poor living conditions, and inadequate healthcare, starkly violate these national laws.

Furthermore, these conditions also breach international human rights standards as outlined in treaties like the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). These standards emphasize humane treatment, adequate living space, proper healthcare, fair legal processes, and protection against torture and ill-treatment, which are not adequately upheld in the Egyptian prison system.

In conclusion, the severe overcrowding in Egyptian prisons is a multifaceted problem with deep-rooted causes and far-reaching impacts. It affects not just the health and welfare of the inmates but also the overall functionality and effectiveness of the prison system. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach, involving reforms in judicial processes, law enforcement practices, and overall prison management policies, to ensure the humane treatment and rights of prisoners are upheld.

### **Measures to Reduce Overcrowding in Egyptian prisons.**

### **Construction of New Prisons.**

The Egyptian government is investing in the construction of new prison facilities to increase capacity and alleviate overcrowding. The Egyptian government claims that This initiative is a fundamental part of a broader strategy to increase the capacity of the prison system and, consequently, to alleviate the severe overcrowding that currently plagues existing facilities. Therefore, we will highlight the following points:

* **Increasing Capacity through New Facilities:** The Egyptian government claims that the investment in building new prison facilities is a direct approach to address the lack of space, which is at the heart of the overcrowding problem. By increasing the overall capacity, the government aims to reduce the density of the inmate population in existing prisons.
* **Alleviating Overcrowding and Its Associated Problems:** The overcrowding in Egyptian prisons has led to numerous issues, including health risks, heightened tensions, and compromised security. By constructing new facilities, the Egyptian government claims that it is looking for a solution to these problems significantly. With more space available, prisons can provide better living conditions, reduce the spread of diseases, and lower the risk of conflicts and violence among inmates. Furthermore, the reduced population density can make it easier for prison staff to manage and monitor the inmate population effectively, thereby enhancing the overall security and administration of these institutions. The expansion of prison construction in Egypt, while a strategic step to address the issue of overcrowding, has raised significant concerns us. These concerns revolve around the notion that merely increasing the capacity of the prison system, without concurrent reforms in human rights practices, may exacerbate existing issues rather than resolve them.
* **Concerns of Furthering Repression:** We have apprehension that the construction of new prison facilities might be used to facilitate or expand repressive practices. The fear is that these new facilities could potentially be used for the arbitrary and unjust detention of political dissidents, activists, and other individuals targeted by the government. This concern is rooted in the history of prison conditions in Egypt, where detainees have often faced human rights violations, including torture, lack of due process, and extended pre-trial detention. Thus, the expansion of the prison system might provide the infrastructure to intensify such practices under the guise of addressing overcrowding.
* **The Metaphor of Poison in Honey:** The phrase "putting poison in honey" aptly captures the paradox inherent in the expansion of prison facilities in Egypt. On the surface, building new prisons appears to be a positive step towards alleviating overcrowding – the 'honey'. However, beneath this seemingly beneficial action lies the 'poison' – the potential for these new facilities to be used as tools for further human rights violations. The critical issue is not just the number of prisons but how they are utilized and managed. Without a commitment to uphold human rights standards, the expansion of the prison system could lead to more systemic abuses.
* **Long-Term Impact and Challenges:** While the construction of new facilities is a crucial step, it's important to recognize that this measure alone may not be sufficient in the long term. Overcrowding is a multifaceted issue that also involves judicial and law enforcement practices, including the use of pre-trial detention and incarceration rates for minor offenses. Therefore, alongside building new facilities, there needs to be a focus on broader systemic reforms to ensure a sustainable solution to the overcrowding crisis. This may include revising sentencing laws, promoting alternatives to incarceration, and improving the efficiency of the judicial process.
* **Balancing Capacity Expansion with Rights Protections:** While expanding prison capacity can be a strategic step to reduce overcrowding, it needs to be balanced with measures to protect the rights of detainees. This involves not only improving the physical conditions of detention facilities but also ensuring that the expanded capacity is not used as a means to justify or facilitate broader repressive practices. The focus should be on creating a prison system that is both humane and just, where the rule of law prevails, and human rights are respected.

In conclusion, while the construction of new prisons in Egypt addresses the critical issue of overcrowding, it brings with it concerns about the potential misuse of these facilities in the broader context of human rights. Effective and sustainable solutions to prison overcrowding in Egypt must, therefore, encompass both infrastructural improvements and comprehensive judicial and human rights reforms.

### **Legal Reforms.**

The situation is more complex and raises many concerns, with the Egyptian government, claiming to implement reforms, while in reality, the necessary legal changes have not been effectively realized. Therefore, we will highlight the following points:

* **Discrepancy Between Claims and Actions:** The Egyptian government has purportedly been working on legal reforms to mitigate the issue of prison overcrowding. However, the actual progress on the ground indicates a stark discrepancy. Despite claims of revising sentencing laws and promoting alternatives to incarceration, substantial changes in the legal framework and enforcement practices are lacking. This gap between stated intentions and practical implementation reflects challenges in the legal and judicial systems.
* **Nature of Proposed Reforms:** The proposed reforms, as claimed by human rights bodies, include modifying sentencing laws to reduce harsh penalties for non-violent or minor offenses and introducing measures such as probation, community service, or other non-custodial sentences. However, the effectiveness of these proposals is questionable without concrete legislative changes and actual implementation. There is a clear need for a commitment to genuinely reform the legal system to reduce reliance on incarceration, particularly for offenses that do not warrant such severe penalties.
* **Challenges in Implementation:** The failure to implement these necessary legal reforms be attributed to various factors, including bureaucratic inertia, resistance from certain segments of the legal and political establishment, and a lack of political will to make substantial changes. This resistance to reform perpetuates the status quo, where prisons remain overcrowded and the judicial system continues to favor incarceration over alternative penalties.
* **Human Rights Concerns:** The lack of effective legal reforms raises significant human rights concerns. Overcrowded prisons not only violate the rights of inmates to humane conditions but also reflect broader issues in the criminal justice system, such as prolonged pre-trial detention, lack of fair trial standards, and the use of incarceration as a default punitive measure.
* **Need for Comprehensive Reforms:** For a meaningful resolution to the problem of overcrowding, Egypt needs comprehensive legal reforms that go beyond mere claims. This involves actual changes in the penal code, clear guidelines for alternative sentencing, and a judicial culture shift towards more rehabilitative approaches. Effective reform requires transparent actions, accountability, and a commitment to aligning the criminal justice system with international human rights standards.

while there are claims of efforts to introduce legal reforms in Egypt to address prison overcrowding, the lack of tangible progress points to a significant gap between rhetoric and reality. For meaningful change, a sincere commitment to comprehensive legal reform is essential, focusing on practical implementation and alignment with human rights principles.

### **Improving Judicial Efficiency.**

The Egyptian government claims regarding measures to improve the efficiency of its judicial system, which is presented as an effort to reduce overcrowding in prisons. However, these claims are juxtaposed with serious concerns and evidence suggesting that the judicial system is compromised by interference from executive authorities and is being used as a tool of repression. we will highlight the following points:

* **Government Claims on Judicial Efficiency:** The Egyptian government asserts that it is taking steps to enhance the efficiency of the judiciary, with the aim of expediting trials and reducing the length of pretrial detentions. These measures are purported to speed up the legal process, thereby reducing the number of individuals held in custody for extended periods without a trial. The intention, as claimed, is to alleviate the chronic overcrowding in prisons by addressing one of its root causes – the slow and inefficient judicial process.
* **Contrasting Realities and Allegations of Interference:** Despite these claims, there are indications widespread that the judicial system in Egypt is subject to significant interference from executive authorities and security agencies. Such interference manifests in various forms, including pressure on judges to issue rulings favorable to the Compatible with security and military policies or the use of the judiciary as a means of suppressing dissent and political opposition. This undermines the integrity and independence of the judicial system and raises questions about the fairness and impartiality of trials.
* **Judiciary as a Tool of Repression:** There is the judiciary in Egypt is being utilized as an instrument of political repression. This involves targeting political dissidents, activists, and critics of the government through legal means, including prolonged pretrial detention and trials that lack the standards of fairness and due process. The use of the judiciary in this manner contributes to the overcrowding of prisons, as individuals are detained often without sufficient legal basis or are subjected to protracted legal proceedings.
* **Discrepancy in Claims of Judicial Reforms:** While the government claims to be working on improving judicial efficiency, the reality of thousands languishing in prisons without trial paints a different picture. This discrepancy points to a gap between the government's stated intentions and the actual implementation of reforms. The lack of significant progress in judicial efficiency and the continued reports of executive and security interference in judicial matters suggest that the measures to reform the judiciary might be inadequate or superficial.
* **Need for Genuine Judicial Reforms:** For the judicial system to effectively contribute to reducing prison overcrowding, genuine and comprehensive reforms are necessary. This includes ensuring the independence of the judiciary, protecting judges from external pressures, and implementing fair trial standards. Moreover, reforms should address the issue of prolonged pretrial detentions and ensure that the judiciary is not used as a means of political repression.

In summary, while the Egyptian government claims to be improving the efficiency of its judicial system to address prison overcrowding, the reality suggests significant challenges, including interference from executive authorities and the use of the judiciary as a tool of repression. Addressing these issues is crucial for any meaningful improvement in judicial efficiency and the overall reduction of overcrowding in Egyptian prisons.

### **Conditional Release Programs.**

The Egyptian government claims to be enforcing policies of parole, alternative measures to imprisonment, and other forms of early release for certain prisoner categories to reduce prison overcrowding. However, the reality of these measures appears to diverge significantly from these claims. we will highlight the following points:

* **Government's Claim on Conditional Release Programs:** Egyptian legislation gives the President of the Republic authority to issue pardon decisions for the remainder of the sentence for prisoners who are serving their sentences. Egyptian law also stipulates alternative measures to imprisonment and regulates the conditional release process. The Egyptian Prisons Service, affiliated with the Ministry of Interior, claims the periodic and expanded implementation of policies Parole. These measures are intended to reduce the prison population by allowing certain categories of prisoners, particularly those convicted of lesser offenses, to complete their sentences outside of the traditional prison environment. This approach is aimed at easing the burden of overcrowding in prisons.
* **Discrepancies and Discrimination in Implementation:** Despite these claims, the actual implementation of these conditional release programs and alternatives to imprisonment reveals significant shortcomings. The number of prisoners actually released under these procedures is much lower than expected or necessary to make a meaningful impact on the levels of overcrowding. Furthermore, there is evidence of discrimination in the application of these procedures. Specifically, individuals convicted of crimes of a political nature are often excluded from conditional release opportunities, highlighting a discriminatory practice based on the nature of the offense rather than the behavior or rehabilitation of the inmate.
* **Human Rights Concerns with Alternative Measures:** The alternatives to prison measures that have been implemented carry their own human rights concerns. For instance, certain conditions attached to these alternatives may be overly restrictive or punitive in nature, failing to align with international human rights standards. This situation reflects a broader issue of the government's approach to criminal justice and human rights.
* **Ineffectiveness of the Prisoner Pardon Committee:** The Prisoner Pardon Committee, established by the Egyptian authorities to review the files of political detainees, is not functioning effectively. This committee is crucial for ensuring that political detainees have a fair opportunity for release, but its lack of effective action suggests a shortfall in addressing the needs of this specific prisoner group.
* **Continued Arrests of Political Opponents:** Compounding the issue is the ongoing arrest of political opponents, which contributes to the persistent problem of overcrowding. This practice indicates a continued reliance on detention as a means of dealing with political dissent, further straining the prison system and undermining efforts to reduce overcrowding through conditional releases or alternative measures.

In summary, while the Egyptian government claims to implement conditional release programs and alternatives to imprisonment to reduce overcrowding, the reality appears to be marred by insufficient releases, discriminatory practices, human rights concerns, and the ineffective review of detainee cases. These issues, coupled with the ongoing arrest of political opponents, highlight the complexities and challenges in genuinely addressing prison overcrowding in Egypt.

### **International Collaboration.**

The Egyptian government claims that it is cooperating with human rights organizations to adopt best practices in prison management and secure funding for prison reform. juxtaposed against a contrasting reality of the treatment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights defenders. This presents a complex scenario in the context of Egypt's prison reform efforts. we will highlight the following points:

* **Government Claims of International Collaboration:** The Egyptian government claims that there is an ongoing effort to collaborate with human rights organizations to adopt best practices in prison management and secure funding for necessary reforms. This claim suggests an openness to international input and a commitment to improving the conditions within the prison system, in line with global standards.
* **Repression of NGOs and Human Rights Defenders:** In stark contrast to these claims, the reality on the ground points to a repressive stance towards NGOs and human rights defenders. The Egyptian authorities have been to restrict the operations of these organizations, limiting their capacity to function effectively within the country. Such actions undermine the credibility of the government's claims of collaboration and indicate a reluctance to engage genuinely with independent human rights bodies.
* **Denial of Access to International Observers:** Further compounding the issue is the refusal of the Egyptian government to allow international observers, including special rapporteurs from the United Nations, to visit the country and assess the conditions of prisons and prisoners. This lack of transparency raises serious concerns about the actual state of prison facilities and the treatment of inmates. By denying access to international observers, the government impedes independent verification of its claims regarding prison conditions and reform efforts.
* **Exploitation of Human Rights Organizations for Image Improvement:** The Egyptian government is selectively cooperating with certain human rights organizations to improve its international image. This tactic can be seen as an attempt to gain legitimacy and deflect criticism without making substantive changes to prison management practices or addressing the underlying issues of overcrowding and human rights violations.

In conclusion, while the Egyptian government claims to be engaging in international collaboration to improve its prison system, the reality reflects a more complex and less transparent situation. The repression of NGOs and human rights defenders, the denial of access to international observers, and the strategic use of certain human rights organizations to enhance the government's image all point to significant gaps between the government's stated intentions and its actual practices. These discrepancies highlight the need for genuine and transparent engagement with international human rights bodies and a sincere commitment to reforming the prison system in Egypt.

### **Training Prison Staff on Human Rights.**

The Egyptian government's claims of focusing on human rights training for prison staff, as part of the measures to reduce overcrowding and improve conditions in prisons, stand in stark contrast to the documented realities of human rights violations within these facilities. we will highlight the following points:

* **Government Claims of Human Rights Training:** The government's claims, there is an emphasis on training prison staff in human rights and humane treatment of prisoners. This training is purportedly designed to improve the overall conditions within the prisons, ensuring that inmates are treated in a manner that respects their dignity and rights. The intention of such training would be to sensitize staff to the human rights of inmates and equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage prisons.
* **The reality of Human Rights Violations:** However, the reality within Egyptian prisons, paints a different picture. Inmates continue to face various forms of human rights violations at the hands of prison staff. These violations include physical abuse, psychological torture, inadequate access to medical care, and other forms of mistreatment. The prevalence of such abuses indicates a significant gap between the government's claims of prioritizing human rights training and the actual behavior of prison staff.
* **Ineffectiveness or Inadequacy of Training Programs:** The ongoing human rights abuses within prisons suggest that the training programs, if they exist, are either ineffective or inadequate. There are several potential reasons for this discrepancy. It could be that the training is not comprehensive or rigorous enough to effect real change in staff behavior. Alternatively, the training might be more of a formality, lacking in substance and not taken seriously by the staff.
* **Lack of Oversight and Compliance Evaluation:** Another critical issue could be the lack of adequate oversight of prison employees and the extent of their compliance with prison administration standards. Without proper monitoring and accountability mechanisms, even well-designed training programs can fail to make an impact. Furthermore, the failure to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of these training programs on modifying the behavior of prison employees is a significant oversight. Regular assessment and feedback are crucial to ensure that the training translates into improved treatment of prisoners.

In conclusion, while the Egyptian government claims to focus on human rights training for prison staff as a measure to improve conditions, the persistent human rights violations within prisons point to a disconnect between these claims and the on-the-ground reality. Addressing this issue requires not just the provision of training but also ensuring its effectiveness, adequate oversight of staff behavior, and a genuine commitment to upholding the human rights of all prisoners.

### **Justice House Recommendations.**

Based on the situation of overcrowding in Egyptian prisons, Justice House sees that it's clear that a multifaceted approach is needed to effectively address this issue. The following recommendations encompass a range of measures and practices that the Egyptian authorities should consider alleviating overcrowding:

1. **Judicial and Legal Reforms:**
* Revise Sentencing Laws: Implement reforms to revise sentencing guidelines, particularly for non-violent and minor offenses, to reduce the reliance on incarceration.
* Promote Alternatives to Imprisonment: Expand the use of non-custodial sentences such as probation, community service, or fines.
* Enhance Pre-Trial Procedures: Improve the efficiency of pre-trial procedures to reduce prolonged pre-trial detentions.
1. **Expand and Improve Prison Infrastructure:**
* Construct Additional Facilities: While constructing new facilities can help, ensure that these are designed to provide humane living conditions and are not used to further political repression.
* Upgrade Existing Facilities: Upgrade existing facilities to improve living conditions, focusing on sanitation, ventilation, and healthcare.
1. **Strengthen Oversight and Accountability:**
* Implement Regular Inspections: Establish a system of regular, independent inspections of prison facilities to ensure compliance with national and international standards.
* Increase Transparency: Allow access to prisons for international observers, NGOs, and human rights organizations to assess conditions, and foster transparency and accountability.
1. **Human Rights Training for Prison Staff:**
* Effective Training Programs: Develop and implement comprehensive human rights training for all prison staff, emphasizing the humane treatment of inmates.
* Ongoing Evaluation and Monitoring: Assess the effectiveness of training programs and monitor staff compliance with human rights standards. Establish strict accountability measures to ensure adherence to human rights standards and penalize violations.
1. **Focus on Rehabilitation and Reintegration:**
* Enhance Rehabilitation Programs: Offer vocational training, education, and counseling services to prepare inmates for reintegration into society.
* Support Post-Release Transition: Provide support services for released inmates, including job placement assistance and community-based programs, to reduce recidivism.
1. **The conditions of Political Prisoners:**
* Address Political Detentions: Review and address the issue of political detentions, ensuring that the judiciary is independent and not used as a tool of political repression. Ensure fair trials and release those detained without sufficient legal basis.
* Fair Treatment of Political Prisoners: Ensure that individuals detained for political reasons are treated fairly and justly, with access to due process and protection from arbitrary detention.
1. **International Collaboration and Best Practices:**
* Engage with International Experts: Collaborate with international organizations to adopt best practices in prison management and reform.
* Secure Funding for Reforms: Work with international bodies to secure funding and technical assistance for prison reforms and capacity building.
1. **Monitor and Evaluate Prison Conditions:**
* Monitoring and evaluation: Regularly monitor and evaluate prison conditions and the effectiveness of implemented reforms.
* Establishing an independent body to monitor prison conditions: Establish independent oversight bodies to ensure continuous improvement and adherence to reforms.
1. **Public Awareness and Engagement:**
* Raising public awareness: Increase public awareness of the conditions in prisons and the need for reform.
* Engage civil society: Engage civil society in dialogue and efforts towards reforming the prison system.

In summary, reducing overcrowding in Egyptian prisons requires comprehensive reforms that address the root causes of the issue. By implementing these recommendations, the Egyptian authorities can make significant strides in reducing overcrowding in prisons, improving conditions for inmates, and ensuring that the prison system operates in a fair, efficient, and humane manner.