

# Shadow Report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)

Regarding the Arab Republic of Egypt's Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

Submitted by: Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute  
Date: October 24, 2025



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## (CESCR):

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## About Cairo 52

Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute, the inaugural regional legal institute with a distinctive emphasis on the matters concerning sexual and bodily liberties of marginalized communities. At Cairo 52, our institutional ethos is deeply grounded in the principle of intersectionality, acknowledging the intricate and intertwined nature of justice-related concerns.

Our primary objective entails advocating and advancing sexual and bodily freedoms, particularly for the marginalized and stigmatized segments of gender and sexual minorities, encompassing individuals who identify as LGBTQ+, those living with HIV, sex workers, and women.

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1. The Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute (Cairo 52), established in 2020, is a non-governmental policy and research institute dedicated to the fundamental human rights of gender and sexual minorities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.<sup>1</sup>Our institutional ethos is firmly rooted in the principle of intersectionality, advocating for sexual and bodily freedoms for marginalized and stigmatized groups, including LGBTQ+ individuals, sex workers, people living with HIV (PLHIV), and women.<sup>2</sup> We provide legal assistance, conduct research, engage in alternative media initiatives, and pursue strategic litigation to promote human rights as delineated by both domestic and international legislation<sup>3</sup>.
2. This report is submitted to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in anticipation of its 79th session in February 2026, during which it is scheduled to adopt its List of Issues regarding the Arab Republic of Egypt.
3. The information contained in this report must be contextualized within a persistent pattern of recommendations and grave findings from UN mechanisms. During its 3rd Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle (2019), Egypt endorsed recommendations aimed at providing healthcare without discrimination and enhancing its human rights framework<sup>4</sup>. However, in its 4th UPR cycle (2024–2025), Egypt «noted» (rejected) all recommendations related to sexual orientation and gender identity<sup>5</sup>, including those urging the repeal of discriminatory laws<sup>6</sup> and the protection of individuals belonging to sexual and gender minorities from violence<sup>7</sup>.
4. This rejection corresponds with recent alarming findings from UN Treaty Bodies<sup>8</sup>. In its March 2023 Concluding Observations (CCPR/C/EGY/CO/5), the Human Rights Committee expressed profound concern regarding the use of vague anti-terrorism laws to suppress actual or perceived dissent against the Government<sup>9</sup>. The Committee urged Egypt to «take steps to ensure that existing legislation invoking vague notions of morality... is not arbitrarily employed to arrest and detain individuals based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity» and to investigate all incidents of related violence<sup>10</sup>.
5. Similarly, in its December 2023 Concluding Observations (CAT/C/EGY/CO/5), the Committee Against Torture underscored that torture is «systemic,» perpetuated by impunity, and specifically targets LGBTQI+ individuals, including the continued practice of forced anal examinations<sup>11</sup> and virginity testing<sup>12</sup>—a procedure lacking medical justification that constitutes torture<sup>13</sup>. These findings are echoed by UN human rights experts, who have warned that practices such as «conversion therapy» are unscientific, harmful<sup>14</sup>, and «can amount to torture»<sup>15</sup>.
6. This shadow report builds upon these findings, positing that the persecution of sexual and gender minorities is not incidental but is instrumentalized by the state through the intersectional weaponization of «vice» and «morality» laws<sup>16</sup>.
7. This report will illustrate how the ambiguous interpretation of laws such as Law 10/1961 («Combating of Prostitution») and Article 25 of the Cybercrime Law («violating family principles») acts as a legal pretext for infringing upon the private lives, sexual freedoms, and due process rights of transgender individuals, queer individuals, sex workers, and online content creators<sup>17</sup>. This strategy, employed to deflect attention from economic crises and bolster state legitimacy<sup>18</sup>, results in systemic violations of rights to non-discrimination (Art. 2), health (Art. 12), work (Art. 6-7), education (Art. 13), an adequate standard of living (Art. 11), family life (Art. 10), and cultural participation (Art. 15).

# Article 2: Non-Discrimination

8. Article 2(2) of the ICESCR obligates State Parties to ensure that the rights articulated in the Covenant are exercised without discrimination of any kind<sup>19</sup>. The CESCR has clarified that the prohibition of discrimination based on “other status” encompasses sexual orientation and gender identity<sup>20</sup>.
9. There are no laws in Egypt that provide protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, healthcare, or education<sup>21</sup>. Instead, the state actively employs discriminatory legal frameworks, despite Egypt’s constitutional guarantees of equality (Articles 9 and 53<sup>22</sup>) and its recent rejection of all UPR recommendations pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity<sup>23</sup>.
10. Law 10/1961 (“Combating of Prostitution”) employs gendered terminology (“prostitution” for women, “debauchery” for men)<sup>24</sup> and has been judicially interpreted to eliminate the requirement for financial proof,<sup>25</sup> transforming it into a mechanism for policing any non-normative sexuality perceived as “habitual” or “indiscriminate”<sup>26</sup>.
11. This interpretation disproportionately targets women suspected of engaging in sex work (who constituted 83 out of 116 arrests documented by Cairo 52’s media observatory in 2024, including 2 transgender women)<sup>27</sup> and is utilized for the de facto criminalization of queer men and transgender women under the “debauchery” provision<sup>28</sup>, despite the law’s ostensible focus on commercial sex. Notably, cisgender heterosexual male clients are consistently treated as witnesses, underscoring the law’s patriarchal bias<sup>29</sup>.
12. The Cybercrime Law (Law 175/2018), particularly the ambiguous Article 25 (“violating family principles or values”)<sup>30</sup>, has emerged as a primary tool for intersectional persecution in the digital realm<sup>31</sup>. Lacking any clear definition<sup>32</sup>, this article grants excessive discretion to authorities<sup>33</sup>. It is weaponized against several groups.
13. Authorities target Women and TikTok Influencers for online expression, dancing, or attire deemed “immoral” or contrary to “family values,” exemplified by high-profile “TikTok girls” cases<sup>34</sup>. These prosecutions often rely on populist sentiment rather than clear legal standards<sup>35</sup>, disproportionately affecting women from lower socio-economic backgrounds<sup>36</sup>. For LGBTQ+ Individuals, recent judicial interpretations indicate a dangerous shift from de facto to explicit de jure criminalization<sup>37</sup>. Economic Courts now explicitly interpret Article 25 in conjunction with “debauchery” to criminalize homosexual acts themselves as violations of “family values,” invoking religious interpretations<sup>38</sup>. This change removes the previous legal fiction of prosecution solely for alleged sex work<sup>39</sup>. The law is also used against Women Suspected of Engaging in Sex Work; with its introduction, Egyptian authorities initiated campaigns targeting so-called “digital prostitution,” primarily focusing on women deemed immoral by rigid social standards<sup>40</sup>.
14. This selective and ambiguous application results in significant due process violations, as noted by the Human Rights Committee<sup>41</sup>. The lack of legal certainty renders it impossible for individuals to anticipate what conduct may be deemed criminal<sup>42</sup>. Women, both transgender and cisgender, along with queer men, are often adversely affected by this vagueness, facing prosecution without substantive evidence of wrongdoing.
15. Arrests, particularly those stemming from digital entrapment targeting LGBTQ+ individuals (129 out of 232 LGBTQ+ arrests between 2013-2017 occurred via applications<sup>43</sup>; 28 out of 45 vice cases in Cairo 52’s 2024 legal aid involved digital surveillance)<sup>44</sup>, blur the distinction between revealing and inciting criminal activity<sup>45</sup>. Coerced access to digital devices without warrants<sup>46</sup> and the questionable utilization of digital forensic analysis<sup>47</sup> further undermine fair trial rights.
16. The Supreme Administrative Court’s 2023 ruling permitting dismissal from public employment based solely on suspicion of homosexuality exemplifies the erosion of due process<sup>48</sup>, as the digital evidence used in the case was obtained illegally by the accused’s ex-wife from his private phone and was never publicly available<sup>49</sup>. Migration Law No. 89/1961 is similarly wielded to arbitrarily deport foreigners suspected of being queer, circumventing judicial review<sup>50</sup>.
17. This systemic discrimination, facilitated by vague laws applied intersectionally, contravenes the fundamental principles of Article 2 of the Covenant.

# Article 12: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health

18. Article 12 guarantees every individual's right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health<sup>51</sup>. Egypt markedly fails to uphold this right for transgender and intersex individuals and PLHIV, prioritizing discriminatory "morality" narratives, frequently enforced through vice laws, over evidence-based public health approaches<sup>52</sup>.
19. Transgender Individuals: Egypt enforces a medical policy, codified in Article 43 of the Medical Syndicate's 2003 code of ethics, that prohibits medical practitioners from performing "sex change" operations (interpreted as gender-affirming healthcare for transgender individuals) while allowing "sex correction" (for intersex individuals) only with approval from a dysfunctional review committee<sup>53</sup>. This policy, heavily influenced by religious interpretations distinguishing between biological (intersex) and mental (transgender) conditions<sup>54</sup>, effectively bans access to gender-affirming healthcare through official channels<sup>55</sup>.
20. A 2024 Cairo 52 survey indicated that 77% of 104 transgender individuals lack access to gender-affirming healthcare (GAH)<sup>56</sup>. The primary barriers identified include financial constraints (31%), absence of GAH services (24%), living with unsupportive families (23.3%), and societal fears (10.7%)<sup>57</sup>. Notably, 84% of respondents reported prior experience with GAH but subsequently discontinued it<sup>58</sup>. Another study with a sample size of 133 found that only 22.7% had accessed GAH, citing similar barriers, including financial constraints, stigma, familial rejection, and insufficient services or information<sup>59</sup>.
21. 71.5% of participants in the Cairo 52 study reported experiencing stigma or discrimination in medical facilities<sup>60</sup>. A separate study found that 62.5% of respondents experienced similar issues<sup>61</sup>. Participants recounted instances of misgendering, ridicule, denial of service, and voyeurism during examinations<sup>62</sup>. Such discrimination is exacerbated by fears of authorities, as highlighted by the Committee Against Torture, which discourages individuals from seeking redress<sup>63</sup>.
22. With GAH excluded from insurance coverage, 82% of individuals pay out-of-pocket<sup>64</sup>. Estimated transition costs range from 150,000 to over 500,000 EGP<sup>65</sup>, a prohibitive amount given high unemployment rates (37.6% and 73.1% reported in studies)<sup>66</sup> and low wages<sup>67</sup>. This situation compels individuals to rely on perilous underground clinics<sup>68</sup> or do-it-yourself hormone replacement therapy (HRT)<sup>69</sup>, with information primarily sourced from friends (35.8%-37%) and online groups (21.3%-24%), rather than from medical professionals (2.7%-4%)<sup>70</sup>. Only 23% attempted to access public facilities, citing disorganization, discrimination, and unqualified staff as barriers<sup>71</sup>. The Qasr Al-Aini gender clinic accommodates over 50 individuals for merely 35 available slots monthly<sup>72</sup>, with group sessions lasting less than five minutes<sup>73</sup>.
23. The lack of access to GAH directly affects legal gender recognition (LGR), which often necessitates proof of completed surgeries<sup>74</sup>. This situation places individuals in a vulnerable state, adversely impacting their mental health<sup>75</sup>. Recently, Egypt introduced a new invasive DNA testing policy for LGR to ensure that only intersex individuals can access it<sup>76</sup>, effectively weaponizing healthcare against transgender individuals, who are now unable

- to obtain LGR even after completing medical transition<sup>77</sup>.
24. Intersex Individuals: While “sex correction” is permitted<sup>78</sup>, Egypt lacks unified policies or specialized centers for intersex care<sup>79</sup>. Decisions regarding medically unnecessary infant surgeries are often arbitrary<sup>80</sup>, influenced by parental pressure, a lack of resources for proper testing<sup>81</sup>, and societal bias favoring male assignment<sup>82</sup>. There is minimal psychological support available<sup>83</sup>. Adults seeking care encounter bureaucratic obstacles and prohibitive costs<sup>84</sup>. Female genital mutilation (FGM), practiced on 87% of females<sup>85</sup>, complicates subsequent surgeries for intersex individuals misassigned female at birth, as it can diminish the chances of successful genital reconstruction<sup>86</sup>. Overall, policy tends to focus on enforcing binary gender norms rather than ensuring well-being<sup>87</sup>.
  25. Pseudo-Scientific Practices: “Conversion Therapy”: A “profitable pseudo-conversion therapy industry has emerged” in Egypt<sup>88</sup>, posing a severe threat to the physical and mental health of queer individuals, particularly youth. These practices, which encompass any effort to change or suppress a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity<sup>89</sup>, are promoted under misleading terms such as “treating homosexuality” or “recovery”<sup>90</sup>.
  26. This industry is actively endorsed by state-aligned religious authorities. Al-Azhar has issued fatwas encouraging “healing” through prayer and marriage<sup>91</sup> and has called on parents to subject children to these practices “as early as possible”<sup>92</sup>. The Coptic Orthodox Church organized a “diploma” in 2021 to train individuals in conversion therapy, led by US-based practitioner Richard Cohen<sup>93</sup>, while the Evangelical Church opened a similar school in 2020<sup>94</sup>. These practices are carried out by licensed psychiatrists and public figures<sup>95</sup>, including healthcare providers such as Ousim Wasfi<sup>96</sup>, Heba Kotb<sup>97</sup>, Shahab El-Hawary<sup>98</sup>, and Gamal Feroiz, who are considered to be media darlings as they are often invited to talk shows to speak about “healing homosexuals.”<sup>99</sup>
  27. An investigation by local group Atyaf documented survivor testimonials, revealing methods that include: prescribing powerful and inappropriate medications, such as sedatives and antidepressants<sup>100</sup> like Seroxat<sup>101</sup>; employing pseudo-scientific techniques like hypnosis<sup>102</sup> and degrading procedures such as forced anal examinations, which practitioner Heba Kotb has admitted to using;<sup>103</sup> and utilizing “religious and ethical sermons”<sup>104</sup> and telling patients they are “sick,” “against nature,”<sup>105</sup> and “going to hell”<sup>106</sup>.
  28. These practices are universally condemned by global health bodies<sup>107</sup>. The World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>108</sup>, the American Psychiatric Association (APA)<sup>109</sup>, and the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)<sup>110</sup> have all affirmed that homosexuality is not a disease, disorder, or illness and that efforts to “cure” it are unscientific and harmful. The Pan American Health Organization deemed these practices a “serious threat to health and human rights,<sup>111</sup>” and UN experts have stated they “can amount to torture<sup>112</sup>”. The harms are significant, leading to severe depression, anxiety, self-loathing<sup>113</sup>, and suicidal ideation<sup>114</sup>. The investigation documented Egyptian survivors who experienced “self-loathing<sup>115</sup>” and severe depression resulting from the “terror”<sup>116</sup> of the “treatment” they endured as minors<sup>117</sup>.
  29. People Living with HIV (PLHIV): Despite a fivefold increase in infections between 2010 (5,400) and 2021 (30,000)<sup>118</sup>, HIV remains politically neglected<sup>119</sup>. The national strategy emphasizes treatment over prevention, lacks transparency, and excludes key populations from consultation<sup>120</sup>. This stands in stark contrast to the successful Hepatitis C campaign, which reduced prevalence from 10% to 0.38%<sup>121</sup>, indicating capacity but a lack of political will due to HIV’s association with marginalized groups targeted by vice laws<sup>122</sup>. PLHIV experience stigma even within healthcare settings, as evidenced by negative attitudes reported in studies<sup>123</sup>, and housing discrimination, with 1 in 5 individuals forced to leave their homes in 2019<sup>124</sup>. The criminalization of HIV transmission has increased, with recent prosecutions occurring under “public obscenity” laws derived from vice frameworks<sup>125</sup>, further hindering testing and disclosure<sup>126</sup>. Medication shortages were reported during the COVID-19 pandemic and again in March 2024<sup>127</sup>.

# Article 6 & 7: The Right to Work and Just and Favourable Conditions of Work

30. Articles 6 and 7 guarantee the right to work, including the opportunity to earn a living through freely chosen employment, and the right to just and favorable working conditions<sup>128</sup>. Egypt violates these rights through direct discrimination, an intersectional application of morality laws, and the failure to provide legal protection for individuals based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIESC) as well as sex workers.
31. Unemployment rates among transgender individuals are alarmingly high (73.1% in one Cairo 52 survey<sup>129</sup>, 37.6% in another<sup>130</sup>), despite considerable educational attainment (56.3% holding university degrees in one study<sup>131</sup>). The primary barrier for unemployed transgender individuals is inconsistent official documentation (39.7%), which is directly linked to the lack of accessible LGR<sup>132</sup>. Discrimination based on gender identity is cited by 26.92% of employed transgender individuals as a significant barrier they encounter<sup>133</sup>. Sex workers, particularly women and transgender women, face a constant threat of arrest under Law 10/1961<sup>134</sup>, rendering them more vulnerable to exploitation from clients or pimps, as they cannot report abuse to authorities due to fear of arrest<sup>135</sup>.
32. Among the small percentage of employed transgender individuals (28.8% in one study)<sup>136</sup>, employment is often precarious, with only 46.15% working full-time<sup>137</sup>. Incomes are exceedingly low: 45.4% earn between 3,000-5,000 EGP per month, and 18.18% earn less than 3,000 EGP<sup>138</sup>, which is well below the estimated living wage of over 10,000 EGP<sup>139</sup>. The majority are employed in the private sector (84%), indicating exclusion from government jobs (8%) and civil society positions (12%)<sup>140</sup>. Sex workers operate entirely outside labor protections, making them susceptible to exploitation and devoid of social security<sup>141</sup>.
33. Law 10/1961 (“Debauchery”) and Cybercrime Law 175/2018 are frequently employed against LGBTQ+ individuals and sex workers<sup>142</sup>, creating a climate of fear<sup>143</sup>. The Cairo 52 report documented 154 arrests related to sex work in media reports in 2023<sup>144</sup> and 116 in 2024<sup>145</sup>. Majority of those arrests target women who are suspected of engaging in sex work, even if there is no to little evidence to prove such engagement<sup>146</sup> <sup>147</sup>LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly queer men and transgender women, are specifically targeted due to their identities under “debauchery,”<sup>148</sup> often through means of digital entrapment<sup>149</sup>. In 2024, 11 queer individuals were arrested; all were working independently<sup>150</sup>. A conviction for “debauchery” or related charges is classified as a “dishonorable offense,”<sup>151</sup> legally barring individuals from public service<sup>152</sup>. The 2023 Supreme Administrative Court ruling established that suspicion alone is sufficient for dismissal, demonstrating a clear violation of due process and the right to work<sup>153</sup>. The targeting of TikTok influencers under clauses pertaining to “family values” also adversely affects the right to earn a living through online content creation, disproportionately impacting women seeking economic independence<sup>154</sup>.

# Article 13: The Right to Education

34. Article 13 recognizes the right of all individuals to education<sup>155</sup>. Educational institutions in Egypt represent hostile environments for transgender students, violating this right through discrimination, lack of safety, and failure to accommodate gender identity<sup>156</sup>.
35. According to a Cairo 52 survey, Transgender students rated their overall educational experiences with a mean score of only 2 out of 5<sup>157</sup>. 67% rated their experiences negatively (below 3)<sup>158</sup>. Only 12.9% reported positive experiences (above 3), primarily by concealing their identities<sup>159</sup>.
36. Participants reported routine harassment, misgendering, and bullying from peers, and alarmingly, sometimes from faculty, including professors<sup>160</sup>. This aligns with broader studies documenting high rates of bullying in Egyptian schools<sup>161</sup> and the concerns expressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding violence against children<sup>162</sup>. This hostile climate contributes to social isolation, psychological distress, truancy, and dropout rates<sup>163</sup>. 55% stated that their gender identity negatively impacted their education<sup>164</sup>.
37. Schools and universities lack anti-discrimination policies, gender-sensitive protocols, trained counselors, and inclusive curricula<sup>165</sup>. The disparity between legal documentation and gender identity creates administrative barriers<sup>166</sup>. The Ministry of Education actively promotes anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment through school directives<sup>167</sup>. In 2022, the Ministry of Education issued a directive to combat “rising homosexual ideas” by instructing schools to hold religious lessons and awareness programs to “safeguard” youth<sup>168</sup>.

# Article 11: The Right to an Adequate Standard of Living (including Housing)

38. Article 11 recognizes the right to an adequate standard of living, which includes adequate housing<sup>169</sup>. Transgender individuals in Egypt experience significant housing insecurity due to discrimination, economic instability, and a lack of legal protections. This situation aligns with broader concerns expressed by the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing regarding forced evictions in Egypt<sup>170</sup>.
39. According to a Cairo 52 survey, although 39.7% of transgender individuals live independently, their experiences are predominantly negative, with a mean satisfaction rating of ~1.2/5<sup>171</sup>. A substantial 86.5% reported negative or mixed experiences, which include conflicts, threats of eviction, and living in unsafe environments<sup>172</sup>. Key challenges include housing costs (54%/52.5%),<sup>173</sup> discrimination based on gender identity (54%/52.5%),<sup>174</sup> and mismatched documentation that hinders lease agreements (37.8%/35%)<sup>175</sup>.
40. Approximately 60% of transgender individuals reside with family, but for 82%, this arrangement is not voluntary (55.7% “no,” 26.2% “to some extent”)<sup>176</sup>. The primary factor driving this situation is economic hardship, with 75.4% citing financial reasons<sup>177</sup>, which compels reliance on family environments that may be unsupportive or abusive<sup>178</sup>. A significant 82.8% of all respondents reported experiences of violence or stigma from family or community members<sup>179</sup>.
41. The lack of safe and stable housing intersects with barriers in employment and healthcare, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability<sup>180</sup>. The absence of anti-discrimination legislation deprives individuals of legal recourse against landlords or family members who evict them<sup>181</sup>, a reality exacerbated by state indifference or complicity in acts of persecution.<sup>182</sup>

# Article 10: Protection of the Family

42. Article 10 emphasizes the necessity of providing the broadest possible protection and assistance to families<sup>183</sup>. However, state policies, the enforcement of vice laws, and prevailing societal norms in Egypt actively undermine the family lives and formation rights of individuals with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions (SOGIESC).
43. Family rejection is a significant contributor to hardship, cited as a major barrier to accessing healthcare by 23.3% of respondents in one study<sup>184</sup>. This rejection often results in involuntary cohabitation<sup>185</sup>. Over 82.8% of transgender individuals report experiencing violence or stigma from their families or communities<sup>186</sup>. This violence is actively encouraged by state-sanctioned actors<sup>187</sup>. Both the Coptic Orthodox Church and Al-Azhar promote anti-LGBTQ+ ideologies and explicitly endorse “conversion therapy” (as detailed under Art. 12)<sup>188</sup>, encouraging parents to subject their children to these harmful practices<sup>189</sup>. This constitutes a form of parental violence<sup>190</sup> and a violation of the Egyptian Child Law (Art. 96)<sup>191</sup>, which is meant to protect children from “violence,” “abuse,” or conditions that “threaten” their “health”<sup>192</sup>. Survivor testimonials confirm this, with minors being forced into these “treatments” by their families.<sup>193</sup>
44. The state fails to protect individuals from this familial violence<sup>194</sup> and actively engages in disrupting family units. The prosecution of LGBTQ+ individuals under vice laws frequently involves the disclosure of personal information, leading to social ostracization<sup>195</sup>. The state refuses to acknowledge same-sex relationships<sup>196</sup> and obstructs efforts to reflect transgender parents’ identities on their children’s documents, fearing such recognition would imply acknowledgment of same-sex couples<sup>197</sup>. The ambiguous definition of “family values” in Cybercrime Law Article 25 is weaponized by the judiciary to criminalize SOGIESC identities, undermining the right to form families on their own terms<sup>198</sup>. Two documented cases by Cairo 52 illustrate the use of Egyptian embassies abroad to pursue queer women seeking asylum, highlighting state complicity in transnational repression targeting family “honor”<sup>199</sup>.

# Article 15: The Right to Take Part in

## Cultural Life

45. Article 15 affirms the right of all individuals to participate in cultural life<sup>200</sup>. However, Egypt actively suppresses the cultural expression and participation of LGBTQ+ individuals and others deemed “immoral” through censorship, criminalization under vague vice laws, and the promotion of a hostile public sphere.
46. Vague laws that criminalize content considered “against public morals” (Penal Code Art. 178)<sup>201</sup> or that violate “family values” (Cybercrime Law Art. 25)<sup>202</sup> are employed to regulate online expression. This was particularly evident during the intersectional crackdown on TikTok influencers, predominantly women from less privileged backgrounds, targeted for dancing or self-expression deemed “immoral”.<sup>203</sup> Given that Egypt has a substantial TikTok user base (41.3 million users aged 18 and older),<sup>204</sup> it serves as a critical platform for youth culture;<sup>205</sup> however, the state threatens platform bans and arrests creators, invoking moral panic<sup>206</sup>. Between January and March 2025, TikTok reportedly removed 2.9 million videos from Egypt for guideline violations<sup>207</sup>. This policing of online culture adversely affects freedom of expression and the right to participate in contemporary cultural forms.
47. The crackdown in 2017 following the Mashrou’ Leila concert, during which rainbow flags were displayed, resulted in over 75 arrests<sup>208</sup> and underscored the state’s intolerance for any public visibility of LGBTQ+ symbols or identities<sup>209</sup>. State media portrayed participants negatively<sup>210</sup>, and the Supreme Council for Media Regulation prohibited LGBTQ+ individuals from appearing in media unless they “repent”.<sup>211</sup> This event also marked a shift in public discourse; where the narrative surrounding the 2001 Queen Boat arrests was “kill them”<sup>212</sup>, the post-2017 narrative divided the community into “agents of the West” and “victims” who required “treatment”<sup>213</sup>. This “victim” narrative, while appearing compassionate, serves to normalize and legitimize harmful practices like conversion therapy<sup>214</sup>.
48. State surveillance of online platforms and the use of digital entrapment under the guise of vice laws render digital spaces unsafe for LGBTQ+ cultural expression and community building<sup>215</sup>. A substantial 63.4% of transgender individuals reported being targeted by online hate speech<sup>216</sup>. Technology companies, such as Meta, have faced criticism for inadequately moderating anti-LGBTQ+ content in Arabic<sup>217</sup>. This state-sanctioned hostility inhibits LGBTQ+ Egyptians from freely participating in or contributing to the cultural life of their country<sup>218</sup>.

49. The evidence presented illustrates a pattern of systemic and often severe violations of the economic, social, and cultural rights of marginalized populations in Egypt, particularly LGBTQ+ individuals, sex workers, and people living with HIV (PLHIV)<sup>219</sup>. These violations arise from discriminatory laws, arbitrary enforcement practices rooted in ambiguous “morality” and “vice” narratives, limited access to essential services such as healthcare and justice, and a social environment that is either hostile or neglected by the state.<sup>220</sup> This reality starkly contrasts with Egypt’s obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and its own constitutional guarantees.<sup>221</sup>
50. Based on our research and direct engagement with affected communities, the Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute urges the Committee to recommend the following actions to the Government of Egypt:
51. **Legal Reform & Due Process:** Repeal or fundamentally amend ambiguous provisions in Law 10/1961 (Art. 1a, 9c), the Penal Code (Art. 178, 269bis), and Cybercrime Law 175/2018 (Art. 25) that enable the arbitrary arrest and prosecution of individuals based on perceived SOGIESC, sex work, or online expression<sup>222</sup>. Ensure all criminal laws adhere to principles of legal certainty to guarantee due process rights, consistent with the Human Rights Committee’s 2023 concerns<sup>223</sup>. End the discriminatory enforcement of these laws against specific groups.
52. Establish a clear, accessible, and administrative (non-judicial) process for legal gender recognition, eliminating reliance on discriminatory DNA requirements<sup>224</sup> and religious interpretations<sup>225</sup>. Address the recent closure of administrative loopholes (Directive 25/2024)<sup>226</sup>. Enact comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics in all areas covered by the Covenant, including employment, housing, education, and healthcare, as recommended by the Human Rights Committee.<sup>227</sup>
53. **Right to Health:** Repeal Article 43 of the Medical Syndicate’s Code of Ethics<sup>228</sup> and develop national medical guidelines for Gender Affirming Healthcare (GAH) aligned with international standards (e.g., ICD-11)<sup>229</sup>, removing religious authorities from medical decision-making<sup>230</sup>. Ensure GAH is accessible and affordable, including through inclusion in public health insurance.<sup>231</sup>
54. Prohibit and criminalize the practice, promotion, and advertisement of “conversion therapy”<sup>232</sup> in all medical, psychiatric, and religious settings, recognizing it as a pseudo-scientific, harmful practice<sup>233</sup> that constitutes a form of torture, in line with findings from the UN Committee Against Torture and the UN Special Rapporteur on SOGI.<sup>234</sup>
55. Establish specialized, accessible healthcare centers for transgender and intersex individuals<sup>235</sup>, ensuring that staff are adequately trained<sup>236</sup> and that protocols protect bodily autonomy, particularly for intersex infants<sup>237</sup>. Expand mental health support services<sup>238</sup>.
56. Reform the HIV response to prioritize prevention<sup>239</sup>, combat stigma (including within healthcare)<sup>240</sup>, ensure consistent access to medication<sup>241</sup>, and meaningfully consult key populations<sup>242</sup>. Adopt public health-oriented approaches and decriminalize HIV transmission<sup>243</sup>.
57. **Right to Work, Education, & Housing:** Enforce anti-discrimination principles in public sector employment and repeal judicial precedents that permit dismissal based on suspicion of SOGIESC<sup>244</sup>. Implement economic empowerment programs targeting unemployment among transgender individuals.<sup>245</sup>
58. Implement anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies within educational institutions<sup>246</sup> and repeal the 2022 Ministry of Education directive that actively promotes anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment in schools<sup>247</sup>. Provide training for staff and ensure curricula are inclusive and rights-based, addressing concerns raised by the Committee on the Rights of the Child<sup>248</sup>.
59. Address housing discrimination through the establishment of legal protections and support for secure housing options, particularly for individuals facing familial rejection or economic hardship,<sup>249</sup> in accordance with the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing.<sup>250</sup>
60. **Accountability and Civil Society:** Ensure accountability for abuses by law enforcement, including arbitrary arrests, digital entrapment under vice laws, illegal searches, and imme-

diately cease the practice of forced anal examinations, which has been condemned by the Committee Against Torture as a form of torture.<sup>251</sup>

61. Enforce Article 96 of the Child Law<sup>252</sup> to protect minors from being subjected to these practices by guardians.<sup>253</sup>
62. End impunity for both state and non-state actors targeting marginalized groups.
63. Cease harassment and restrictions on civil society organizations engaged in human rights advocacy, particularly those serving key populations impacted by vice laws<sup>254</sup>, and establish safe channels for their meaningful participation in policy-making.<sup>255</sup>
64. Enhance transparency in data collection and reporting related to key populations, vice crime arrests, and public health.<sup>256</sup>
65. Cairo 52 remains committed to monitoring the situation and collaborating with stakeholders to advance the economic, social, and cultural rights of all individuals in Egypt.

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## **Shadow Report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)**

Regarding the Arab Republic of Egypt's Implementation of the  
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights  
(ICESCR)

