

Annual Report 2025

Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute Annual Report 2025



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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Executive Summary: A Year of Legal Preeminence and Comprehensive Impact

In 2025, the Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute cemented its position as the unequivocal regional leader in defending bodily autonomy, queer rights, sex workers' safety, and the rights of people living with HIV (PLHIV) across the Middle East and North Africa. Operating amid intensifying digital authoritarianism and systemic state-sponsored morality enforcement, the Institute delivered integrated legal, clinical, research, and advocacy interventions that directly impacted 183 legal representation clients, 100 consultation beneficiaries, and 80 clinical patients, alongside landmark regional research and UN advocacy impact.

What distinguishes the Institute as the regional frontrunner is its radical, non-negotiable inclusivity. While many human rights programs restrict resources solely to specific LGBTQ+ identities, Cairo 52 operates the only legal aid unit in the region defending any individual targeted under oppressive vice and cybercrime legislation. By representing queer men, transgender women, cisgender women, and sex workers alike, the Institute successfully dismantles state attempts to segregate marginalized groups and challenges the structural core of discriminatory laws.

Key Statistical Highlights of 2025

- **Financial Allocations:** Operated with an expanded operational budget of **€134,631.39** distributed across Advocacy and Research (**49.9%; €67,198.35**), the Legal Unit (**23.7%; €31,877.59**), Administration (**11.0%; €14,809.45**), the Media Unit (**9.1%; €12,251.46**), and the Trans Clinic (**6.3%; €8,493.54**), supported by core institutional donors including The Love Alliance, Minority Rights Group, Doria Feminist Fund, Association for Progressive Communications, and Equality Without Borders.
- **Pro Bono Legal Representation:** Navigated **63 court cases** representing **83 individuals** in Egypt (comprising 41 queer men, 28 cisgender women, 6 transgender women, 3 Banouti, 2 Shemale, and 3 heterosexual men), achieving an unprecedented overall appellate acquittal rate of **84.1%** (20 initial acquittals plus 33 appellate victories) by combating unlawful digital entrapment on Grindr (**58.7%**) and WhatsApp (**17.4%**).
- **Legal Consultations & Preventative Guidance:** Guided **100 individuals** across incoming asylum seekers (28), outgoing Egyptian asylum seekers (12), legal gender recognition and healthcare (10), sex worker legal safety workshops (18), digital extortion crisis management (15), PLHIV state pensions (14), and same-sex embassy marriages (3).
- **Specialized Clinical Care:** Supported **80 transgender beneficiaries** (44 trans women, 36 trans men aged 18–30) through the Trans Clinic Project, providing specialist medical care, cloud-based records, telemedicine, and quarterly Gender-Affirming Hormonal Therapy follow-ups with a 100% reported benefit rate and an 8.7/10 average satisfaction score.
- **Research Unit Output:** Produced **14 total publications** meticulously divided across **4 empirical long reports** (including the 93-respondent transgender socioeconomic study revealing a 73.1% unemployment rate), **5 policy analyses** (covering workplace HIV screening and SWANA digital health frameworks), and **5 peer-reviewed academic publications** in international journals.
- **Strategic Litigation & UN Advocacy:** Executed **5 strategic litigation proceedings** (1 international communication to the UN Human Rights Committee against Tunisia, 3 domestic State Council/Ministry of Health lawsuits in Egypt, and 1 Gulf regional case before the Bahrain Court of Cassation) alongside **1 major joint stakeholder UN Universal Periodic Review submission** (Oman 4th UPR with White Tent).
- **Capacity Building & Outreach:** Hosted a dedicated summer internship cohort of **3 researchers** in Egypt with formal strategic planning for regional fellowship expansion, conducted grassroots legal awareness workshops, and presented institutional findings at major international academic conferences.

Research Unit and Publications

Throughout 2025, the Research Unit of the Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute solidified its position as the premier research body in the Middle East and North Africa for queer, trans, and HIV-related socio-legal studies. The Institute produced an unmatched total of 15 publications, systematically divided into peer-reviewed academic publications, policy analyses, and empirical long reports.

Peer-Reviewed Academic Publications

Cairo 52's scholarly output set new benchmarks in international legal and religious scholarship, examining state regulation, judicial mechanics, and bodily autonomy:

1. ***A Blind Justice? Investigating Judicial Discourses on Legal Gender Recognition in the Middle East and North Africa:*** Authored by Nora Noralla and published in the Oxford Journal of Law and Religion, this landmark comparative study addresses a critical regional legislative vacuum by analyzing judicial reasoning across six jurisdictions.
2. ***Navigating Sharia with condemned bodies:*** Authored by Nora Noralla and published as Chapter 14 in the handbook of social justice, this comparative study examines how foundational 1980s fatwas and binary regulatory mechanisms shape state-sanctioned medicalization pathways in Sunni Egypt and *Shia Iran*.
3. ***Transition Like an Egyptian:*** Investigating Transgender Experiences with Violence in Egypt: Authored by Nora Noralla and published in *eminist Africa*, this qualitative investigation details how authoritarian security apparatuses, social norms, and medical gatekeepers enforce multilayered violence against transgender individuals.
4. ***Introducing a human rights-based approach to HIV in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region:*** A mixed methods study: Authored by Nora Noralla and published in *Global Public Health*, this comprehensive regional analysis surveys 100 participants and interviews 38 stakeholders, exposing how the 116% surge in regional HIV infections between 2010 and 2023 is driven by state criminalization and social violence.
5. ***You shall not transition:*** a quantitative analysis of the challenges encountered by transgender individuals following the prohibition of gender-affirming healthcare in Egypt: Authored by Nora Noralla and published in the *International Journal of Transgender Health*, this rigorous empirical study surveys 133 respondents to document the devastating socioeconomic fallout, soaring transition costs, and 37.6% unemployment rate following the 2003 ministerial healthcare ban.

Policy Analyses

The Institute's policy portfolio delivered actionable frameworks and critical legal critiques targeting systemic discrimination and institutional barriers:

1. ***Abolishing the Requirement for Egyptian Companies to Test Egyptian Workers for HIV:*** Authored by Sylvia Azmy, this targeted legal critique examines Article 135 of Labor Law No. 14 of 2025, demonstrating how mandatory pre-employment infectious disease screening facilitates arbitrary dismissals and workplace stigma in contradiction of national public health plans.
2. ***Alternative Channels in Restrictive Contexts: The Potential of Digital Solutions to Support Early HIV Detection and Treatment in Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA):*** Authored by Naya Al-Rajab, this forward-looking brief outlines the SWANA Digital HIV Care Framework, leveraging confidential self-testing and encrypted tele-counseling to bypass state-enforced barriers.
3. ***How Many Are Infected? Or How Do Services Work? A critical reading of the status of HIV services in Egypt:*** Authored by Is.K, this intersectional critique contrasts official UNAIDS epidemiological estimates with grassroots clinical realities, highlighting severe provider stigma and the restrictive impact of NGO Law No. 149/2019.
4. ***'Deportation Was Worse than HIV': How Health Status is Weaponized as a Border:*** Authored by Ahmed Awadalla (Aka Madi), this analytical essay traces the weaponization of residency visa medical screenings and rapid deportations across Gulf states through individual case documentation.
5. ***From the Hospital Gate to the Clinic Door: A Trans Man Confronts the Medical System at Qasr Al-Aini:*** A pow-

erful fieldwork narrative by Samuel Ray exposing the bureaucratic violence and gatekeeping confronting trans individuals within Egypt's premier public medical institutions.

Empirical Long Reports

Cairo 52's flagship empirical studies provided definitive quantitative and qualitative evidence on marginalized populations under authoritarian governance:

1. ***Systemically Marginalized: A Quantitative Study on Transgender Access to Socioeconomic and Spatial Rights in Egypt***: Surveying 93 transgender respondents, this study revealed extreme structural deprivation, documenting a 73.1% unemployment rate, 82.8% experiencing family and community violence, and 86.5% living in unsafe housing conditions.
2. ***Criminalized and Marginalized: A Socio-Legal Analysis of HIV Key Populations and People Living with HIV in Egypt***: Authored by Nora Noralla, this 33-page socio-legal investigation details how Egypt's post-2013 regime weaponizes Law 10/1961 on Prostitution and Cybercrime Law 175/2018 against key populations to deflect from economic crises and political Islam.
3. ***Between Stigma and Survival: A Data-Driven Mixed Methods Analysis of Transgender Experiences***: Authored by Nora Noralla, Dana Abbas, and Jay, this regional study surveys 102 transgender individuals across 14 MENA countries alongside 22 qualitative interviews, establishing that 87% navigate hostile, pathologizing social environments and 51% face direct state criminalization.
4. ***Media Observatory of Arrests Based on Sex Work from January 2024 to December 2024***: Tracking 30 news events and 116 arrests, this monitoring report proved that state enforcement disproportionately targets cisgender women (71.5%) and independent workers, alongside targeted digital entrapment of LGBTQI individuals in Greater Cairo and Dakahlia.

Grassroots Services and Programmatic Impact

1. Comprehensive Legal Aid and Representation Program

The Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute operates the preeminent inclusive legal aid unit in the Middle East and North Africa, providing fearless defense to individuals targeted by vice, cybercrime, and debauchery statutes regardless of specific identity or background. Throughout 2025, the Legal Representation unit navigated 63 cases representing 83 individuals across Egypt, achieving an exceptional 84.1% overall appellate acquittal rate (securing 20 initial acquittals and winning 33 appellate victories out of 43 total convictions).

Beneficiary Demographics and Courtroom Representation

The Institute's legal defense caseload reflected deep inclusivity across marginalized identities facing state persecution:

- **Queer Men:** 41 individuals (49.4% of total represented clients)
- **Cisgender Women:** 28 individuals (33.7%)
- **Transgender Women:** 6 individuals (7.2%)
- **Banouti / Shemale (Local Gender-Diverse Categories):** 5 individuals (6.0% combined)
- **Heterosexual Men:** 3 individuals (3.6%)

Digital Entrapment and Geographic Policing Hotspots

Security agencies increasingly weaponized digital surveillance and online spaces to entrap vulnerable populations. Of the total representation caseload, **37 cases (58.7%)** involved targeted entrapment via Grindr, while **11 cases (17.4%)** involved WhatsApp monitoring. Geographically, state enforcement remained heavily concentrated in Alexandria (Montaza Second Station: 23 cases [36.5%]; Al-Attarin: 13 cases [20.6%] and Greater Cairo (El Omraneya: 12 cases [19%]).

Pro Bono Legal Consultations and Crisis Intervention

Beyond formal courtroom defense, the Pro Bono Consultations department provided expert guidance and crisis management to **100 individuals** addressing urgent survival needs:

- **Incoming asylum seekers:** 28 beneficiaries (28%) seeking legal orientation and protection
- **Sex worker safety and community workshops:** 18 beneficiaries (18%) focusing on occupational harm reduction and rights
- **Digital extortion crisis management:** 15 beneficiaries (15%) targeted by online blackmail and harassment
- **PLHIV pension and social support:** 14 beneficiaries (14%) navigating state health entitlements and social safety nets
- **Outgoing asylum seekers:** 12 beneficiaries (12%) requiring resettlement legal support
- **Legal gender recognition and healthcare access:** 10 beneficiaries (10%) navigating administrative and medical hurdles
- **Same-sex embassy marriages:** 3 beneficiaries (3%) seeking civil documentation assistance

2. The Trans* Clinic Project

Operating from March 2025 to February 2026, the Trans* Clinic Project delivered vital, life-saving healthcare to counter systemic discrimination, medical gatekeeping, and dangerous black-market self-medication across the Egyptian healthcare system. Building upon our successful 2024 pilot, the project expanded its capacity to support **80 transgender beneficiaries**—specifically **44 trans women and 36 trans men**, predominantly between 18 and 30 years of age.

Comprehensive Service Tiers and Subsidies

To combat severe financial destitution driven by high unemployment and national inflation, the project structured its medical support into two targeted tiers:

- **Full Medical Coverage:** 50 beneficiaries received comprehensive coverage encompassing specialist consultations, hormonal medications (oral, lotions, and injections), and required blood tests.
- **Consultation and Follow-Up Tier:** 30 beneficiaries received regular medical consultations, clinical follow-ups, and treatment monitoring.

Diverse Beneficiary Reach and Regional Decentralization

The project served a deeply diverse demographic across national and regional borders:

- **Geographic Distribution:** 64 beneficiaries resided within Egypt (42 in Greater Cairo, 18 in Alexandria, and others across various governorates).
- **International and Refugee Reach:** 16 non-Egyptian beneficiaries participated, including 10 refugees in Egypt, 1 resident, and individuals residing across Sudan, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

Decentralized Telemedicine and Health Empowerment

To overcome mobility restrictions and decentralize care for individuals outside the capital, the project integrated robust mobile health principles:

- **Quarterly Teleconsultations:** Structured online medical sessions were conducted in April, July, October, and January, supported by cloud-based electronic medical records. To bridge digital literacy gaps, the project manager produced dedicated video tutorials guiding beneficiaries on appointment booking, cloud file management, and telehealth participation.
- **Health Education Curriculum:** Across four annual empowerment sessions, participants received specialized training on Gender-Affirming Hormonal Therapy (GAHT) protocols, anticipated body changes and timelines, blood test interpretation, and managing potential side effects or comorbidities.
- **Holistic Referrals:** When needed, beneficiaries were seamlessly referred to Cairo 52's legal unit or external partner organizations for emergency housing and professional psychotherapy.

Program Evaluation and Impact Metrics

Post-service evaluations demonstrated extraordinary programmatic success and beneficiary satisfaction:

- **100% reported benefit rate** among all responding participants.
- **An average satisfaction score of 8.7/10**, with 70% of respondents rating their benefit at the highest tier (9/10 or 10/10).
- **An 80% satisfaction rate** regarding the communication, expertise, and performance of the licensed, queer-affirming specialist physician.

Advocacy, Strategic Litigation, and International Engagement

Throughout 2025, the Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute consolidated its position as the premier regional vanguard for bodily autonomy and justice, leveraging rigorous empirical research from its Research Unit to drive high-impact advocacy, international litigation, and UN mechanisms.

Research-Driven Advocacy and Strategic Interventions

The foundational empirical studies produced by Cairo 52's Research Unit—such as the quantitative investigation into transgender socioeconomic exclusion and the socio-legal analysis of the state's weaponization of vice and cybercrime statutes against HIV key populations —served as the direct evidentiary bedrock for the Institute's advocacy campaigns. By translating empirical documentation into targeted policy critiques, Cairo 52 successfully challenged systemic state practices, including mandatory pre-employment HIV screening under Egyptian labor provisions and arbitrary residency deportations across Gulf states.

Strategic Litigation and Regional Precedents

Cairo 52 expanded its pioneering strategic litigation portfolio to dismantle legal frameworks of oppression across the Middle East and North Africa:

- **Challenging Legal Gender Recognition (LGR):** Building upon comparative judicial analyses of LGR across six MENA jurisdictions , the Institute advanced legal challenges to the highest levels of authority. This included filing a landmark Individual Communication with the UN Human Rights Committee regarding Tunisia and engaging the Court of Cassation in Bahrain to compel judicial protection for transgender rights.
- **Domestic Healthcare Litigation:** In Egypt, Cairo 52 initiated three pioneering lawsuits against the Ministry of Health, compelling the state to fulfill its constitutional obligations to provide accessible gender-affirming healthcare and dismantle systemic medical gatekeeping.

United Nations Mechanisms and International Solidarity

- **UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Submissions:** In strategic partnership with White Tent, Cairo 52 prepared and submitted a comprehensive joint stakeholder report for Oman's 4th UPR cycle . The submission exposed severe state violations against transgender individuals, targeting the repressive enforcement of Article 266 of the 2018 Penal Code and the deployment of the 2025 Rasd digital surveillance unit .
- **Global Engagement:** Staff researchers actively participated in international academic and policy forums, presenting findings from studies such as the regional mixed-methods HIV analysis and the Media Observatory arrest monitoring reports to build cross-border solidarity and counter regional erasure.

Capacity Building, Internships, Workshops, and Conferences

1. Summer Internship Program

In 2025, the Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute successfully ran its flagship Summer Internship Program, hosting a dedicated cohort of 3 interns based in Egypt. The internship provided intensive, hands-on training in socio-legal research, human rights documentation, and regional advocacy concerning queer, trans, and HIV key populations. Building upon the success of this Egypt-based cohort, the Institute has finalized strategic expansion plans to scale the fellowship into a fully regional program in subsequent cycles, welcoming researchers and human rights defenders across the Middle East and North Africa.

2. Grassroots Legal Awareness Workshops in Egypt

To bridge the gap between formal legal protections and vulnerable communities on the ground, the Institute conducted specialized legal awareness workshops across Egypt tailored specifically for **sex workers and queer individuals**. These community-based sessions focused on:

- **Digital Security and Extortion Defense:** Practical training on recognizing online surveillance, securing communications against digital entrapment (via Grindr, WhatsApp, and social media platforms), and crisis management during digital blackmail.
- **Arrest Preparedness and Rights:** Educating participants on their legal rights during police stops, interrogations, and initial detention under Egyptian vice and cybercrime statutes.
- **Harm Reduction and Health Rights:** Informing marginalized workers of their rights to non-discriminatory medical treatment and occupational safety.

3. International Conference Participation

To disseminate the Institute's empirical findings, build transnational solidarity networks, and challenge regional erasure, Cairo 52 team members actively participated in prominent global academic, legal, and human rights conferences throughout 2025. Staff researchers presented peer-reviewed studies on legal gender recognition, trans healthcare access, and the criminalization of HIV key populations, ensuring that grassroots realities from Egypt and the broader SWANA region directly inform international policy discussions and academic discourse.

Financial Summary and Funding Partners

Fiscal Year 2025 Financial Overview

In fiscal year 2025, the Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute managed an expanded operational budget of €134,631.39 (building upon the 2024 operating budget of €102,970.44 and the 2023 baseline of €96,771.25). Financial resources were meticulously distributed across organizational units to maximize programmatic impact:

- **Advocacy and Research:** 49.9% (€67,198.35)
- **Legal Unit (Representation & Consultations):** 23.7% (€31,877.59)
- **Administration:** 11.0% (€14,809.45)
- **Media Unit:** 9.1% (€12,251.46)
- **Trans Clinic Project:*** 6.3% (€8,493.54)

Institutional Funding Partners

The Institute's vital programmatic work, empirical research, and grassroots service delivery throughout 2025 were made possible through the generous support and core funding of our international partners:

- **The Love Alliance (GNP+)**
- **Minority Rights Group**
- **Doria Feminist Fund**
- **Association for Progressive Communications (APC)**
- **Equality Without Borders**

Conclusion and Future Outlook

As the Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute looks beyond 2025, our institutional trajectory remains anchored in an uncompromising commitment to bodily autonomy, rigorous socio-legal scholarship, and fearless legal resistance across the Middle East and North Africa.

The compounding challenges of digital authoritarianism, state-sponsored morality policing, and economic instability require an ever-vigilant defense. By seamlessly integrating empirical research, strategic litigation, grassroots legal aid, and life-saving healthcare initiatives such as the Trans* Clinic Project, Cairo 52 continues to transform documentation into liberation. In the coming year, the Institute will scale its regional impact through the expansion of our fellowship and internship programs, deepen our transnational advocacy networks, and persistently challenge the legal structures of oppression until the law serves as a universal guarantor of human dignity and equality.



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