

Arab-West Report, Paper 15, May 2009

Title: Human rights organizations in Egypt

Authors: Jonas Rye Nielsen and Sandy Neubert

Edited by: Cornelis Hulsman, Editor-in-chief Arab-West Report, Clare Turner, academic language editor CIDT

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Methodology.....	4
The National Council for Human Rights (NCHR).....	5
Al-Kalimah Center for Human Rights.....	25
The Land Center for Human Rights.....	37
Association for Human Rights Legal Aid.....	45
Egyptian Union for Human Rights Organizations.....	49
The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR).....	52
The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS).....	69
Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-violence Studies (AITAS).....	77
The Arabic Organization against Discrimination (AAD).....	88
The Egyptian Association against Torture (EAAT).....	92
Al-Nadīm Center for the Management and Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence.....	94
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR).....	98
The Center for Human Rights and National Unity (CHRNU).....	104
Appendix.....	110

Introduction

This report provides an overview of different human rights organizations in Egypt and their activities in order to explore building a network with some of these organizations. This network would have to relate to the main focus area of Arab-West Report [AWR], which is fostering an understanding between peoples of different cultures and religions. Many human rights organizations in Egypt today work as singular entities, independent from each other even though many of them are doing similar work and working toward the same goals. The idea of the report is to explore with which organizations AWR could cooperate with to improve their mutual efficiency.

Human rights organizations in Egypt practically all rely on funding from foreign countries. In 2002 the Egyptian government introduced the Associations Law 84 that makes it very difficult for an organization to be registered as an NGO and without NGO status organizations cannot engage in fundraising in Egypt. The consequence is that foreign supporters are able to influence human rights organizations because they are ultimately dependent on them for their funding. This issue is one that often causes controversy and will be discussed in relation to the different organizations that have had claims about foreign funding launched against them.

We have looked at organizations that deal with issues AWR also deals with and as a consequence this report deals with Coptic rights, church building, the religious data on ID cards, the al-Kusheh episode in 1998-2000 and other issues related to interreligious tensions and freedom of religion. Therefore the main focus of this paper will be these issues. At the end of the paper Appendix A lists all of the newspapers which are covered by AWR along with their orientation and their frequency.

In each section certain features of every organization will be assessed. These are:

1. Description of purpose

A description of the organization in order to provide a background to analyze their effectiveness and their goals.

2. Advocacy for legal change.

A description of what issues the organization deals with. These are often issues related to Copts, religious minorities and freedom of speech.

3. Media evaluation.

Based on Arab-West Report's database a description of how the media portrays the organization will be given. This is done in order to compare the media's view with the organization's own perspective.

4. Key persons.

These are the main characters in the organization. The section will serve to highlight if the organization is driven by one individual or if it has many active members. In addition the same figures can feature in multiple organizations.

5. Website.

The website and its functions are an important point in the evaluation of an organization's effectiveness.

Every organization will have a conclusion that sums up the media's evaluation of the organization and the organization's activities. In some cases examples of cases or issues that the organization has centered on or issues that have caused controversy will be discussed in further detail. These topics will be covered if they help to give a better understanding of how the organization works or how it is perceived by the Egyptian media and public.

Methodology

The researchers have used the database of AWR that is in turn based on Egyptian Arab media reporting covering the period 1997-today as well as its own reporting. Each single reference to organizations mentioned in this paper was read and analyzed. The researchers searched for the websites of respective organizations which, however, often were not very elaborate. Last but not least the researchers have also tried to meet with representatives of all listed organizations as much as possible in order to obtain their response to Egyptian media reporting as well as provide further background information. Often organizations provided reports about their work and of course this too has been used for the analysis in this report.

The National Council for Human Rights (NCHR)

Introduction

The National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) is one of the biggest and most important human rights organizations in Egypt, established in 2003. It is not an NGO, but a governmental or semi-governmental organization –because of its link to the government. Often criticized by other human rights organizations and even its own members, the council is ever-present in Arab media.

The following overview is based on press releases from the AWR database from 2003 to 2008.

1. Description of Purpose

The National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) is not a non-governmental organization, but a governmental or semi-governmental one. In accordance with its establishment the council has no executive function but only an advisory role.¹ The following information was found on the council's website.² The first article of Egyptian Law no. 94 of 2003 mentioned on the website, stated the establishment of a council called 'The National Council of Human Rights' subsidiary to the *Shūrā* Council aiming at promoting and developing human rights, consolidating human rights values, spreading awareness of these rights, and ensuring their abidance. The NCHR is a corporate body and independent in practicing its functions, activities and jurisdiction."³ The website also states, “To achieve its goals, the Council shall prepare and propose means of implementation of a national action plan designed to further the protection of human rights in Egypt; provide competent (Editor: government) bodies with recommendations and advice on all means to protect further and promote human rights; provide opinions, recommendations and advice on matters referred to it by the competent authorities and bodies concerning the protection and promotion of human rights; receive and examine complaints concerning protection of human rights, refer, at its discretion, any such complaints to the competent bodies and follow-up same, advise the parties concerned with the matter of the legal

1 AWR, Art. 5, Week 4/2004, Press Release of Egyptian Human Rights NGOs, February 19, 2004

2 www.nchr.org.eg/En/law.html (accessed 09/03/05, 10:58 am)

3 Article 1, www.nchr.org.eg/En/law.html (accessed 09/03/05, 13:05 pm)

procedures to be followed and assist them in such regard, or settle such complaints with the relevant bodies; monitor the application of international human rights agreements and conventions, and provide the concerned authorities with proposals, notes and recommendations necessary for proper application of such agreements and conventions; coordinate with international and local organizations and agencies concerned in human rights in matters that would help achieve the objectives of, and promote the relationships of such organizations and agencies with the Council; participate with Egyptian delegations in forums, and meetings of regional and international organizations, which are concerned with the protection of human rights; assist by way of advice in preparing reports that the State undertakes to present regularly to human rights committees and organs in application of international conventions, and respond to inquiries made by such committees and organizations; coordinate with public agencies concerned with human rights, and cooperate with the National Council for Women, the National Council for Children and Motherhood, and other interested councils and agencies; disseminate and raise public awareness of the culture of human rights through the assistance of institutions and organs relating to education, culture, media and information; hold conferences, symposiums and seminars on subjects relating to human rights issues or related matters; make the recommendations necessary to support institutional and technical capacities in the fields of human rights, including technical education and training of employees of State bodies related to civil liberties, and economic, social and cultural rights, with a view to increase the efficiency of such employees; issue bulletins, magazines and printed material concerning the Council, and its objectives and functions; issue reports on human rights conditions, and developments made by Egypt in such regard at governmental and community levels.”⁴

Furthermore, “State agencies shall assist the Council in discharging its duties, and shall facilitate performance by the Council of its functions. They shall also provide the Council with data or information required by the Council and relating to such functions. The Council may invite any representative of such agencies to participate in its work and meetings. Such representative shall not be entitled to vote.”⁵

Regarding the organization of the council, the website says, “To perform the functions of the Council, permanent committees shall be formed from among the members of the Council as follows: the civil

4 Article 3, www.nchr.org.eg/En/law.html (accessed 09/03/05, 13:04 pm)

5 Article 4, www.nchr.org.eg/En/law.html (accessed 09/03/05, 13:07 pm)

and political rights committee, the Social rights committee, the Economic rights committee, the cultural rights committee, the legislative affairs committee and the international relations committee.”⁶ But there are also three committees established by the council's decree: the complaints committee, the executive committee and the five-member committee.⁷ Concerning reporting, “The Council shall prepare an annual report concerning its efforts and activities and shall incorporate therein recommendations the NCHR deems appropriate within its functions. It shall present such report to the president of the republic, the head of the People's Assembly, and the head of the Shūrā Council.”⁸ Regarding regulations, “The Council shall issue regulations to organize its work, and regulations to organize its technical secretariat, and personnel, financial and administrative affairs. In furtherance thereof, the Council shall not be bound by any governmental systems.”⁹

The annual report 2004/2005 of the National Council for Human Rights mentioned the goals and purpose of the council, which are identical to the goals and purpose stated on its website. In addition to the already named facts, it considered the violation of prisoner's rights concerning medical care, sufficient ventilation in prison cells, regular medical checkups, receiving medicine from relatives, and meals inside prisons. Also mentioned were the violations against freedom of speech and expression as well as against the right to participate in elections and public affairs administration. The violations of freedom of religion were discussed. Grievances were made by both Christians and Muslims. Complaints of Muslims concerned detentions because of exercising Islamic rituals, and traveling prohibitions which kept the victims from going to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage. A few women were prevented from working as program presenters on Channel 5 because they wanted to wear veils. Christians in Rehab City, a satellite city of Cairo, claimed that they were not allowed to establish a church in their borough.

Other violations were mentioned against the right to have Egyptian nationality, the right to travel, economic and social rights, labor rights, health rights, the right to proper housing, education rights, ownership rights, the right to insurance and social care as well as the right to a clean environment. Even Egyptians who were living abroad brought their complaints to the council.¹⁰ Recommendations which were made included the protection of the right to life and personal integrity, development of the

6 Article 8, www.nchr.org.eg/En/law.html (accessed 09/03/05, 13:08 pm)

7 www.nchr.org.eg/En/committees.html (accessed 09/03/05, 10:56 am)

8 Article 13, www.nchr.org.eg/En/law.html (accessed 09/03/05, 13:07 pm)

9 Article 14, www.nchr.org.eg/En/law.html (accessed 09/03/04, 14:52 pm)

10 Annual Report of NCHR, 2004/2005, p. 135 et seq.

Egyptian punitive system, prohibition of torture, regulation of the travel ban, deliverance of maximum justice, addressing of violations of the rights of Egyptians abroad, improvement of the treatment of citizens dealing with state bodies, enabling of individuals to receive their socio-economic rights, promotion of women's and children's' rights and the promotion of human rights education in Egypt.¹¹

In the annual report of 2005/2006 the council referred to its analysis of Christian and Islamic textbooks in schools about the features and terms of human rights rhetoric.¹² Further in the report complaints were made about violations against the right to life, the right to freedom and personal safety, the right to physical soundness and protection from torture and abuse, the protection of Egyptians' rights abroad, involuntary disappearance and the treatment of prisoners and detainees which included the right to health care, visitations rights, rights to resume education, the right to sound nutrition and the right to a fair and just trial. Also mentioned is the freedom of thought and faith which included Copts, *Bahā'īs*, *Shī'ah* and Jehovah's Witnesses. Interestingly, the Council claimed to receive a small number of complaints from Copts during this time period.

A major part of these grievances concerned the lack of response of government bodies to requests concerning the building of new churches or the renovation and repair of existing ones. These took place even after presidential decree no. 291 which was adopted on December 7, 2005 and authorized all governors to license the repair, renovation and rebuilding of churches and the presidential decree to assign a Christian governor for the first time. But Christians still demanded the promulgation of a new unified law for the building of all houses of worship. This was done in order to reinforce the principle of equality among Egyptians which is a necessary element of citizenship. Authorities still stipulate the requirement of the president's approval on the building of new churches but not new mosques and they address the administrations of governors and security authorities that obstruct the execution of presidential decrees.

Another point is the freedom of speech and expression which is mentioned in article 48 of the Constitution. Other rights which belonged to the council's field were the right to form parties and syndicate organizations and associations, the right to peaceful assemblies and strikes, the right to participate in the management of public affairs, economic, social and cultural rights, women's rights

¹¹ Annual Report of NCHR, 2004/2005, p. 289 et seq.

¹² Annual Report of NCHR, 2005/2006, p. 97 et seq.

and rights of children.¹³ The NCHR took part in and also organized several workshops, seminars, conferences, field visits (e.g. visits to prisons), hearing sessions, human rights salons, cooperation with civil society organizations and international meetings.¹⁴

In the third annual NCHR report it listed its most significant activities as spreading the culture of human rights and teaching human rights. It also spoke about organizing seminars, conferences and workshops as well as about its attendance at international conferences and seminars.¹⁵ The council tried to find facts by visiting prisons, sending missions to certain events as well as field visits and field monitoring of elections.¹⁶ It also developed a “national plan to improve and protect human rights” which included goals to improve human rights conditions, expand and promote human rights culture, support protective mechanisms and achieve the millennium goals. The time frame of the plan was five years.¹⁷

The annual report of 2007/2008 listed cases of violations of human rights against civil and political rights (the right to life, the right to liberty and security of a person, the right to a fair trial, treatment of prisoners and other detainees), civil liberties (freedom of opinion and expression, the right to organize parties and unions and to form associations, the right to participation), and economic social rights (the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to housing, the right to education, the right to health care and the right to work under just and favorable conditions).¹⁸ The council received complaints about violations of economic, social and cultural rights, the right of employment, the right of health care, the right to adequate housing, the right to social security, civil and political rights, the right to freedom and personal safety, the rights of prisoners, the right to participation and managing public affairs, the rights of Egyptians working abroad as well as complaints concerning the right to education, the right to own property, the right to a clean environment, the rights of people with special needs, the right to food, voluntary and forced disappearance, the right to be free from torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment and punishment, the right of a just and fair trial, the freedom of association, freedom of movement and general public duties and rights. Also the violation of the freedom of faith

13 Annual Report of NCHR, 2005/2006, p. 131 et seq.

14 Annual Report of NCHR, 2005/2006, p. 236 et seq.

15 Executive Summary of Annual Report of NCHR, 2006/2007, p. 9 et seq.

16 Executive Summary of Annual Report of NCHR, 2006/2007, p. 22 et seq.

17 Executive Summary of Annual Report of NCHR, 2006/2007, p. 32 et seq.

18 Annual Report of NCHR, 2007/2008, p. 17 et seq.

was mentioned. Complaints about this were made by Christians and *Bahā'īs*.¹⁹ The report highlighted the cooperation of the NCHR with international organizations and the government.²⁰

National and international transparency are two of the properties which the council should achieve, Muṣṭafā al-Fiqī, one of its members, said.²¹ Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn, a reporter from *al-Ahrām*, said that the NCHR was formed to provide more protection and respect to all citizens.²² Ahmad Kamāl Abū al-Majd, its vice-president, added that the National Council for Human Rights attempted to reduce sectarian tensions between Muslims and Christians as well as to protect civil and political rights in Egypt. To reach this goal it proposed a number of measures.²³ Ismā'īl Muntaṣir, a reporter from *October* magazine, stated that the NCHR's role is to inform people of their rights, to receive their complaints of any violations of these rights, and to care about allowing every citizen their political and social rights.²⁴ According to Butrus Ghālī, the council's president, the NCHR had six committees in 2004: the civil and political rights committee, the social rights committee, the economic rights committee, the cultural rights committee, the legislative and constitutional affairs committee and the relations committee.²⁵

In 2006 it established a citizenship committee, which called for spreading a culture of pluralism and tolerance, propagating respect for other religions through the media and religious institutions, and which highlighted the importance of solving Coptic grievances locally without giving cause for foreign intervention. It also illuminated the necessity of training security officers to handle disputes arising from sectarian conflicts and emergencies thoroughly, effectively, and without discrimination.²⁶ Beside this the NCHR had an active role during the presidential elections in 2005 through an operating room that was mainly concerned with receiving complaints about any transgressions in the voting process, said Mukhlis Qutb, the secretary-general of the council.²⁷

Religious freedom and freedom of expression were two of the human rights issues which the council

19 Annual Report of NCHR, 2007/2008, p. 75 et seq.

20 Annual Report of NCHR, 2007/2008, p. 136 et seq.

21 AWR, Art. 75, Week 44/2006, *Al-Ahrām*, Muṣṭafā al-Fiqī

22 AWR, Art. 7, Week 3/2005, *Al-Ahrām*, Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn

23 AWR, Art. 55, Week 17/2006, *Al-Ahrām*, Author not mentioned

24 AWR, Art. 91, Week 42/2006, *October*, Ismā'īl Muntaṣir

25 AWR, Art. 6, Week 40/2004, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Mirvat al-Ḥatīm

26 AWR, Art. 89, Week 8/2007, *Watani* International, Hānī Daniel

27 AWR, Art. 64, Week 31/2005, *Ākhir Sācah*, Hādīyah al-Shirbīnī

purposed to protect and promote. Hānī Labīb wrote in *Rose al-Yūsuf* that political, intellectual and religious freedoms fall within the very territory of the National Council for Human Rights.²⁸ Despite that, Nijād al-Buraġī, director of the Cairo-based Group for Democratic Development, claimed that Vice-President Ahmad Kamāl Abū al-Majd is a member of the Islamic Research Academy, and maybe for this reason the council does not play a major role in promoting religious freedom.²⁹ Cornelis Hulsman, Editor-in-chief of AWR, knows Ahmad Kamāl Abū al-Majd in person and believes he is committed to the promotion of religious freedom but he is also cautious in not going against the main sentiments in the country³⁰. Ahmad Kamāl Abū al-Majd said that the Egyptian Constitution guarantees the right to religious freedom and practice.³¹ Other members of the NCHR supported the freedom to choose one's own religion. Hāfīz Abū Siġdah, a member of the council and the secretary-general of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, argued about forced conversions that children should not be affected by the conversion of their father after being born and brought up as Christians.³² Supporting this point of view, Zaynab Radwān, also a member of the NCHR, called for the right of children of Muslim converts to retain the religion they were born into, and not be forced to adopt their Muslim parent's religion.³³

In the eyes of the council there is a link between human rights and dialogue. For example, the president of the International Relations Committee of the NCHR, Salāh Āmir, recommended that it is necessary to follow what is being published abroad about human rights in Egypt and to cooperate with similar associations and committees from other countries.³⁴ In 2006 the NCHR published a study entitled 'The Characteristic and the Vocabulary of the Dialogue of the Human Rights in School Curricula in Secondary Stage'.³⁵ Another aspect was highlighted by Ahmad Kamāl Abū al-Majd who stressed the need for Muslim-non-Muslim dialogue to avoid any possible misunderstanding.³⁶

Muslim-Christian relations are a much discussed subject in almost all human rights organizations in Egypt. The National Council for Human Rights took up this topic in different meetings and conferences

28 AWR, Art. 4, Week 10/2005, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Hānī Labīb

29 AWR, Art. 49, Week 3/2007, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Sacīd Shucayb

30 Interview with Cornelis Hulsman, May 2009

31 AWR, Art. 65, Week 6/2006, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Sacīd Fu'ād, Huwaydā Yahyá

32 AWR, Art. 24, Week 24/2007, *Wātani*, Hanān Fikrī

33 AWR, Art. 13, Week 37/2007, *Watani International*, Hānī Daniel

34 AWR, Art. 65, Week 31/2005, *Ṣawt al-Azhar*, Author not mentioned

35 AWR, Art. 41, Week 48/2006, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, cIṣām Faḍl

36 AWR, Art. 65, Week 6/2006, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Sacīd Fu'ād, Huwaydā Yahyá

– with the debates about religious references on ID cards and houses of worship leading the way. Ahmad Kamāl Abū al-Majd said that on both the Muslim and Christian side sectarian rage, irrationality and intolerance are present. He added that he has heard unreasonable stories full of lies and exaggerations from people who were supposed to be reasonable, but after all of this he still thinks that the trouble is genuine and that Copts do have problems which should be properly addressed.³⁷ He stressed the need for Muslim-non-Muslim dialogue to avoid any possible misunderstanding.³⁸ In addition, Fakhīr ʿAbd al-Nūr, a member of the NCHR, rejected seeking outside help in the case of Muslim-Christian tensions, stating that such issues should be discussed inside the country and that emigrant Copts exploiting this issue were not representing the Copts of Egypt.³⁹

2. Advocacy for legal change

The National Council for Human Rights was established to make proposals to promote and protect human rights in Egypt and to present proposals for legal change to the government.

2.1 Religion on Egyptian ID cards

In different workshops in 2006 the council discussed the removal of the religion field from Egyptian ID cards to prevent religious discrimination and to make all Egyptians equal. The participants of these workshops, such as human rights activists, politicians, and intellectuals, expressed their different opinions about this issue. Some human rights activists called to remove the religious data, others said that it would not solve the problems of discrimination and fanaticism.⁴⁰ In the discussions several people who called for the omission, defended their demand by claiming that Copts and *Bahā'īs* are persecuted when their religion is revealed by the card.⁴¹ The opposition to change, however, considered the proposal to be a step toward secularism and hence toward abolishing Egypt's Islamic identity, as indicated in the Egyptian Constitution. But even between the members of the council itself there were discrepancies about the deletion. Butrus Ghālī thought that it is more necessary to acknowledge all religions and not just the religions of the book than to delete the data from the ID card. If this is not possible, he said, the religious references should be deleted from the ID cards of all Egyptian people.

37 AWR, Art. 83, Week 19/2006, *Al-Muṣawwar*, Salwā Abū Sacdah

38 AWR, Art. 65, Week 6/2006, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Sacīd Fu'ād, Huwaydā Yahyá

39 AWR, Art. 78, Week 20/2006, *Al-Ahrām*, cīmād Ḥijāb

40 AWR, Art. 31, Week 33/2006, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Huwaydā Yahyá

41 AWR, Art. 77, Week 37/2006, *Al-Ahrām al-cArabī*, Ḥamdī Muṣṭafá

Saʿīd al-Daqqāq, a member of the council, supported the removal of religious data because he found these references unnecessary.⁴² Another opinion was expressed by Mustafá al-Fiqī who rejected the deletion of references from the ID card so as to avoid the spread of civil marriage and to preserve religious identity and inheritance.⁴³ Cornelis Hulsman knows Mustafá al-Fiqī and believes this might not be the real reason for his opposition for the deletion of references on the ID card. Mustafá al-Fiqī, who is not very religious himself, is probably more concerned about the sentiments of the masses in Egypt who indeed want to preserve religious identity and inheritance⁴⁴. Disagreeing with the deletion, Zaynab Radwān stated that everyone has the right to know about the identity of others, especially in the case of *Bahā'īs*, whose names often resemble Muslim ones. She believed that omitting religion from identity cards will not ease sectarian tensions.⁴⁵ Even so the Egyptian *Bahā'ī* leaders had contacted the NCHR in a bid to establish what they called a “legal frame” which would solve their citizenship problem concerning the religious data on their identity cards.⁴⁶ Finally in 2007 the NCHR demanded that the Ministry of Interior as well as the rest of the state departments keep the religious item on identity cards. In addition it pushed to open the door for an addition of new religions, even non-heavenly ones, to solve the problems of certain denominations who refuse to be registered as Muslims or Christians.⁴⁷

2.2 Unified Law for Houses of Worship

The NCHR presented a unified law for houses of worship in parliament which envisaged organizing and restoring mosques, churches and even synagoges. This draft law was presented after the council received many complaints about discrimination – mainly from Copts. Despite presidential resolution no. 291 in 2005, which authorized governors to grant licenses for building, restoring and renewing churches, the NCHR said these procedures seemed to be insufficient for many Copts who call for this law so as to boost equality and justice for all Egyptian citizens.⁴⁸ The draft law included eight articles which regulated building houses of worship for all, and it was widely welcomed by both Muslim and Christian intellectuals.⁴⁹ The council says that their proposed bill of building houses of worship

42 AWR, Art. 33, Week 30/2006, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Ibrāhīm Jād, Huwaydā Yaḥyá

43 AWR, Art. 33, Week 33/2006, *Ṣawt al-Ummah*, Ḥanān Badawī

44 Interview with Cornelis Hulsman, May 2009

45 AWR, Art. 12, Week 38/2007, *Al-Akḥbār*, Aḥmad al-Sirsāwī

46 AWR, Art. 54, Week 15/2006, *Sabāḥ al-Khayr*, Walīd Tūghān

47 AWR, Art. 14, Week 37/2007, *Al-Miṣrī al-Yawm*, Wā'il cAlī

48 AWR, Art. 21, Week 30/2006, *Al-Uṣbūc*, Ḥanān Badawī

49 AWR, Art. 55, Week 26/2007, *Al-Muṣawwar*, cAbd Allāh Kamāl, Ḥāzīm Munīr, Huwaydā Yaḥyá

corresponds with the Constitution, promote citizenship rights and reduce inter-faith tensions. Some articles of the bill would call for equal treatment of all houses of worship whether Muslim, Christian or Jewish in matters of construction or restoration in accordance with law no. 106/1976.⁵⁰ The bill also called for the cancellation of all former decisions that were taken concerning these houses of worship. Also in this matter existed disagreements between members of the NCHR concerning the draft law for building and repairing these kinds of houses of worship. Some members believe that the draft law's first article, which stipulates that building, repair, expansion, or renovation of all houses of worship is permitted only after obtaining a license from the competent authority, imposes severe restrictions on the building of houses of worship.⁵¹

2.3 Amendment of Articles 76, 77, 88 and 179 of the Constitution

The NCHR called for an amendment of articles 76 (election of the president), 77 (presidential term), 88 (juridical supervision of elections) and 179 (against terrorism) of the Constitution.⁵² Ahmad Kamāl Abū al-Majd demanded that article 76 on the election of the president should be eased.⁵³ He also criticized article 179 which discusses combating terrorism by asserting that the text requires an objective revision. He said that the constitutional amendments to article 179 are vague and incomprehensible.⁵⁴ Nabīl Hilmī (Member of the NCHR) agreed “to omit article 88, concerning excluding the juridical supervision of elections, clarifying that in the last elections juridical supervision aroused a crisis and created an obstacle to handling critical problems of people.”⁵⁵

2.4 Law to organize the work of NGOs

In 2006 a forum took place held by the NCHR and NGOs to discuss a law to organize the work of non-governmental organizations – NGO law no. 84/2002.⁵⁶ This law is seen as a restriction on the activities of Egyptian human rights organizations which are mostly NGOs. It is important to note is that the NCHR is not a non-governmental, but a governmental or semi-governmental organization. The

50 AWR, Art. 34, Week 26/2006, *Waṭanī*, Hānī Daniel

51 AWR, Art. 26, Week 31/2007, *Al-Miṣrī al-Yawm*, Wā'il cAlī

52 AWR, Art. 82, Week 45/2006, *Al-Uṣbūc*, Hanān Badawī

53 AWR, Art. 74, Week 44/2006, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, cAbd Allāh Kamāl, Ḥāzīm Munīr, Huwaydā Yaḥyá

54 AWR, Art. 70, Week 10/2007, Press Review

55 AWR, Art. 97, Week 41/2006, *Ākhir Sācah*, Muḥammad Mitwallī

56 AWR, Art. 82, Week 20/2006, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Huwaydā Faṭḥī

National Council for Human Rights mentioned in its first report the violation of rights of freedom of organizing and forming NGOs by stating that the NGO law led to a sense of depression among activists attempting to form NGOs. This proved that this law was restricting the role of NGOs in the development process.⁵⁷ In its annual report from 2005/2006 the council claimed that law no. 84 of 2002, which concerned organizing NGOs, provided many benefits to non-governmental organizations.⁵⁸

2.5 Emergency Law

The People's Assembly approved the two-year extension of the emergency law in 2006. The NCHR believed that the government used emergency measures to silence and oppress the opposition because this law gave the authorities extensive powers to suspend basic liberties, to arrest suspects at will, and to detain them without trial for prolonged periods.⁵⁹ Butrus Ghālī said about the Emergency Law and the long-awaited anti-terrorism law that there is no contradiction between securing the stability of the country and guaranteeing the rights of Egyptian citizens. He said that the NCHR had stressed the need to put an end to the “state-of-emergency” measures, which endanger the rights and freedoms of individuals.⁶⁰ Ahmad Kamāl Abū al-Majd said that the legislative organizations in Egypt were following the wording of the anti-terror law, and he stressed that the law must specifically define the crime of terrorism to prevent arbitrariness.⁶¹

2.6 Law to Regulate religious conversions

Ḥāfīz Abū Si^ḥdah highlighted the necessity of legislating a law to regulate religious conversions. He suggested that religious conversions should be handled by the NCHR rather than by security bodies. His demand was that people should be able to go to court if they want to change their religion just like when they change any item in their personal identification cards.⁶² Fu'ād ^ḥAbd al-Mun^ḥim Riyād, a member of the NCHR, and Dr. Hishām Sādiq, head of the Egyptian Association for Culture and

57 Annual Report of NCHR, 2004/2005, p. 151 et seq.

58 Annual Report of NCHR, 2005/2006, p. 322 et seq.

59 AWR, Art. 31, Week 19/2006, *Al-Ahrām*, cAbd al-Muncim Sa^ḥīd

60 AWR, Art. 93, Week 17/2006, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Huwaydā Yaḥyá

61 AWR, Art. 52, Week 16/2007, *Ākhir Sācah*, Mahmūd Mitwallī

62 AWR, Art. 2, Week 10/2007, *Wātanī*, Ḥanān Fikrī

Enlightenment, suggested a law entitled, the law of changing religion by the judge.⁶³ Concerning the issue of conversion, Coptic Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical leaders also called for a draft law which guarantees the freedom to choose one's religion, originally submitted by professors of law to the council.⁶⁴

3. Media evaluation

The National Council for Human Rights has received and continues to receive criticism from several newspapers, human rights activists, and intellectuals. Sometimes even its own members have made negative comments. But even so, from time to time the council has also received positive feedback.

3.1 Overview of mentioned newspapers

The following is a list of newspapers that issued reports about the NCHR. For a complete list of publications that are covered by AWR along with their orientation and their frequency see Appendix A.

Table a:

Publication
Al-Usbū ^c
Al-Miṣrī al-Yawm
October
Sawt al-Azhar
Al-Ahrām
Al-Wafd
Ṣabāḥ al-Khayr
Rose al-Yūsuf
Al-Ahrām al- ^c Arabī
Ākhir Sā ^c ah
Waṭanī

63 AWR, Art. 2, Week 37/2007, *Al-Fajr*, Author not mentioned

64 AWR, Art. 35, Week 36/2007, *Al-Miṣrī al-Yawm*, cAmr Bayyūmī

3.2 Unified Law for Houses of Worship

Yūsuf Sidhum, the editor of *Watanī* said that the NCHR's role has diverted from defending human rights to defending the authorities' rights. Yūsuf Sidhum saw this as a serious step backward, with no other motive but to abduct the unified law for places of worship.⁶⁵

3.3 Religious references on Egyptian ID cards and the *Bahā'ī* case

Dr. Basmah Mūsá highlighted in *Watanī* the ordeal of *Bahā'īs* in obtaining official papers, and thanked the National Council for Human Rights for being the first institution to give *Bahā'īs* the chance to voice their grievances.⁶⁶ In one of his articles Maḥmūd Ḥabīb criticized that the so-called "promoters of religious rights" (human rights organizations working on these issues) that started to call for the removal of religious data from identity cards after they lost their battle with the Azhar. Further, he stated that the NCHR forgot that the second article of the Egyptian Constitution stipulates that the Sharī'ah is the principle source of legislation. According to Maḥmūd Ḥabīb, these "promoters of religious rights" pose more danger to Islam than the enemies of Islam themselves. He criticized the NCHR's claims that the followers of the three heavenly religions account for less than 50 percent of the world population and their argument that it is necessary to acknowledge other non-monotheistic religions.⁶⁷

3.4 Amendment of Articles 76, 77, 88 and 179 of the Constitution

Ḥanān Badawī, a reporter from *al-Usbūc*, considered the work of the council as positive because the public perceived the NCHR as an active organization, not just a puppet, since it called for the amendment of articles 76, 77, 88 and 179 of the Constitution.⁶⁸

3.5 The NCHR as "decoration"

65 AWR, Art. 16, Week 33/2006, *Watanī International*, Yūsuf Sidhum

66 AWR, Art. 36, Week 48/2007, *Watanī*, Author not mentioned

67 AWR, Art. 44, Week 34/2006, *Sawt al-Azhar*; Maḥmūd Ḥabīb,

68 AWR, Art. 82, Week 45/2006, *Al-Usbūc*, Ḥanān Badawī

Yūsuf Sidhum wrote in *Watanī* that the NCHR's administration failed to command due respect with the government or credibility with the public. He accused the administration of treating the council just as a "cosmetic apparatus" to ameliorate Egypt's image.⁶⁹ Naṣr al-Qafaṣ, a reporter from *al-Ahrām*, underlined that the NCHR is not a political forum, so it does not have any legislative responsibilities and cannot develop constitutional amendments. Its judgments are to be considered seriously, but they are not binding, so it can not coerce the government into accepting its decrees.⁷⁰ Majdī (last name not mentioned) described the council in an article as a puppet council for polishing Egypt's image. He complained that its second report on human rights in Egypt did not include statistics and official figures on detainees in Egyptian prisons.⁷¹ Ḥāfīz Abū Si^ʿdah said that the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR), an organization represented in the NCHR, feared that the NCHR is merely a kind of decoration as a reaction to the criticisms directed at Egypt after the events of September 11, 2001. At this time everyone started to speak about the absence of democracy as the cause for the acts of violence and terrorism that reached the United States.⁷²

3.6 Other critique/praise

Bahī al-Dīn Hasan argued about the NCHR: "If its role shrinks to only issuing reports, statements and recommendations that the government rejects, it will only be an NGO established by the government, lacking the moral privilege that other NGOs merit." He said that the council failed because of the lack of cooperation from ministries and other governmental bodies, the lack of response to correspondence, an unbalanced structure of the council comprised of a great number of old-guard officials and angry statements to the media by some NCHR members.⁷³ Najād al-Bura^ʿī, director of the Cairo-based Group for Democratic Development, stated that he was against the idea of turning the council into a governmental organization because then the NCHR could not be independent. He continued by saying that the NCHR failed to improve the human rights situation in Egypt.⁷⁴ Nabīl ^ʿAbd al-Fattāh, an intellectual and researcher at the Al-Ahram Centre for Strategic Studies, suggested in *Watani*

69 AWR, Art. 75, Week 50/2006, *Watani International*, Yūsuf Sidhum

70 AWR, Art. 96, Week 41/2006, *Al-Ahrām*, Naṣr al-Qafaṣ

71 AWR, Art. 66, Week 16/2006, *Al-Wafd*, Majdī

72 AWR, Art. 6, Week 25/2003, *Al-Ahrām al-cArabī*, Ḥanān Ḥajjāj

73 AWR, Art. 43, Week 3/2007, *Al-Miṣrī al-Yawm*, Wā'il cAlī

74 AWR, Art. 49, Week 3/2007, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Sacīd Shucayb

International that the experience of founding the NCHR proved a failure. The council is no more than an artificial body whose main target is to present an alternative to human rights groups.⁷⁵ However, some positive comments were mentioned. For example a comment by ‘Izzat al-Sayyid, the first deputy minister of justice, said that the National Council of Human Rights is the only authority entitled to protect human rights in Egypt. Samīr Tāhah al-Sajā‘ī, the deputy head of the state jurisdiction authorities, added that complaints against the Egyptian judicial authorities should have been filed with the Egyptian NCHR and not with foreign bodies.⁷⁶ Therefore it is obvious that the National Council of Human Rights is not equivalent to other human rights organizations because it is strongly influenced by the government and does not need connections to other countries to receive funding. For that reason the NCHR is highly regarded by newspapers which work closely with the Egyptian government.

In the same newspaper Bahī al-Dīn Hasan wrote a report about the council in which he accused the NCHR of doing nothing about major torture cases, e.g. sexual harassment and about Egypt’s secret prisons.⁷⁷ A further critique by *al-Misrī al-Yawm* was its report on angry reactions against the council. Nabīl ‘Abd al-Malik, the head of the Canadian Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, accused the conference on citizenship organized by the National Council for Human Rights of lacking professionalism in discussing the topics and organizing workshops.⁷⁸ Bahī al-Dīn Hasan, a member of the council, claimed that the NCHR had failed to do its job. The council’s main job is to influence the policies, decisions, and practices of the government in the human rights arena, he stated.⁷⁹ On the other side, Marcel Wahba, the Head of the American Military University delegation, expressed his appreciation for the NCHR, explaining to *Rose al-Yūsuf* that the council forwarded draft laws to protect freedoms and human rights and played an active role in protecting them.⁸⁰ Also Piet de Klerk, Human Rights Ambassador for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, praised the council in *Rose al-Yūsuf* because of its development and activities since his last visit three years earlier. He noted that the growth of the organization confirmed its credibility and its support for the human rights process in Egypt.⁸¹ Yūsuf Sidhum criticized that the NCHR's second report on the status of human rights in Egypt ignored changes to the political parties' law. It is very catastrophic that the Egyptian people are disappointed in

75 AWR, Art. 35, Week 41/2005, *Watani International*, Sāmīh Fawzī

76 AWR, Art. 7, Week 29/2006, *October*, Muhannā Anwar

77 AWR, Art. 44, Week 3/2007, *Al-Misrī al-Yawm*, Bahī al-Dīn Hasan

78 AWR, Art. 47, Week 47/2007, *Al-Misrī al-Yawm*, Author not mentioned

79 AWR, Art. 43, Week 3/2007, *Al-Misrī al-Yawm*, Wā’il cAlī

80 AWR, Art. 79, Week 20/2006, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Huwaydā Faṭḥī

81 AWR, Art. 9, Week 10/2007, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Taḥīyah cAbd al-Wahāb

the council, which has lost its credibility, he added. Especially on the basis of the annual report that there are few complaints by Copts and that the problem of Coptic discrimination had been exaggerated, he disagreed.⁸² Bahī al-Dīn Hasan, a member of the council, noted in *Watanī* that members who appeared on state television did not refer to the cited human rights violations and the involved methods of torture which were mentioned in the first annual report of the NCHR.⁸³ Dr. Mustafā al-Fiqī, however, argued that this report is “unprecedented,” even if it was criticized in the Egyptian press.⁸⁴ In another issue *al-Uṣbūʿ* claimed that the General Citizenship Conference sponsored by the NCHR was dominated by representatives of Coptic expatriates’ organizations and *Bahāʿīs*. *Al-Uṣbūʿ* also considered the NCHR's recommendations as void and pointless.⁸⁵ Muṣṭafā al-Fiqī praised the council in an article when he said that the NCHR achieved many achievements in the field of human rights and national and international transparency, as well as the possibility to receive governmental, non-governmental and parliamentary delegations to discuss human rights in Egypt.⁸⁶ Dr. Muhammad Nuʿmān Jalāl, a member of the council, underlined in an article in *al-Ahrām* the credibility and the impartiality of the NCHR. He added that in the past two years the council had presented a very clear picture of the human rights situation in Egypt.⁸⁷ Salāh Muntaṣir from *al-Ahrām* praised the council because although the council is not legally entitled to investigate accusations which it receives, it had managed to perform its task through a small legal loophole that allowed it to receive citizens’ complaints and to refer them to the institutions concerned.⁸⁸ Ismāʿīl Muntaṣir, a reporter from *October Magazine*, denied that the vice-president of the NCHR spoke on behalf of the council.⁸⁹ Another criticism was made by Muhannā Anwar, *October* reporter, who claimed that human rights organizations try to defame Egypt's image abroad.⁹⁰ The journalist ʿAbd al-Jawwād Abū Kaʿb reported in one of its issues that the National Council for Women managed to establish good relations with other organizations working for women's right but that the NCHR had failed to integrate its work with that of other human rights organizations. The NCHR had spent L.E. 3,000,000 in just the first five months of its establishment. L.E. 740,000 was spent on administrative costs and salaries. The fact that this money

82 AWR, Art. 85, Week 20/2006, *Watani International*, Yūsuf Sidhum

83 AWR, Art. 17, Week 24/2005, *Watanī*, Sāmiḥ Fawzī

84 AWR, Art. 11, Week 20/2005, *Ṣabāḥ al-Khayr*, Ulfat Jacfar

85 AWR, Art. 36, Week 48/2007, *Al-Uṣbūʿ*, Author not mentioned

86 AWR, Art. 75, Week 44/2006, *Al-Ahrām*, Muṣṭafā al-Fiqī

87 AWR, Art. 66, Week 16/2006, *Al-Ahrām*, Author not mentioned

88 AWR, Art. 38, Week 34/2005, *Al-Ahrām*, Ṣalāh Muntaṣir

89 AWR, Art. 91, Week 42/2006, *October*, Ismāʿīl Muntaṣir

90 AWR, Art. 7, Week 29/2006, *October*, Muhannā Anwar

was not used for public service but for senior officials led to international criticism.⁹¹ In *Ākhir Sācāh*, a semi-governmental weekly, the report of the democracy observer of the Egyptian Society for Social Cooperation declared that most of the council's members have no clear vision about human rights conditions in Egypt.⁹²

3.6 Conclusion

The National Council for Human Rights got more negative comments about its work than applause. Pro-governmental newspapers, like *al-Ahrām*, mainly praised the work of the council for its connection to the Egyptian government. Also these kinds of newspapers see it as positive that the NCHR does not need to receive funding from abroad. Therefore, it would not fall into temptation to defame its country for financial gain. The Christian newspaper *Waṭanī* said the National Council for Human Rights does not interfere enough to change the situation of the Copts because it is not independent enough to act freely. Newspapers of the opposition naturally criticized the activities of the NCHR because of its link to the government. The Islamic *Sawt al-Azhar* included negative comments against the council and other human rights organizations. This is most likely because it did not agree with these organizations demanding that all religious references be deleted from the ID cards. The three most blamed aspects in the articles considered here were the claims that the NCHR was not independent, that it was just a kind of decoration and has failed to do its job. It is also very important to know that a large amount of criticism was addressed to the council because of its lack of cooperation with other organizations and governmental bodies. Members were even criticized because they seemed not to care about human rights in Egypt, as above-mentioned authors said. But it is also noteworthy that a lot of press releases stayed neutral; neither praising nor criticizing this organization in their reports.

4. Key persons (see website)

Members mentioned on the NCHR's Web site ⁹³ (March, 2009)	Members mentioned in the articles of the AWR data base [AWR spellingbased onthe	Functions

91 AWR, Art. 50, Week 29/2005, *Ṣabāḥ al-Khayr*, cAbd al-Jawwād Abū Kacb

92 AWR, Art. 73, Week 44/2006, *Ākhir Sācāh*, Maḥmūd Mitwallī

93 www.nchr.org/En/members.html (accessed 09/03/26, 08:37am)

[own spelling] Website of NCHR is offline, I cannot check the misspelled remarks	Library of Congress spelling]	
Dr. Botros Botros Ghali	Buṭrus Buṭrus Ghālī	President
Dr. Ahmed Kamal Abo-ElMagd	Aḥmad Kamāl Abū al-Majd	Vice President
Mokhlis Mohamed Kotb	Mukhlis Qutb	Secretary General
Ahmed Abd El Fatah	Aḥmad °Abd al-Fattāh	Member
Dr. Ahmed Mohamed Refaat	Aḥmad Rif°at	Member
Dr. Osama Mohamed ElGhazaly Harb	Usāmah al-Ghazālī Ḥarb	Member
Dr. Mohamed Hasanein Abd El Aal	Muḥammad °Abd al-°Āl	Member
Galal Aref Mohamed Othman	Jalāl °Ārif	Member
Gamal Ahmed Morsi Shouman	Jamāl Aḥmad Mursī Shūmān (no reference in AWR)	Member
Dr. Georgette Sobhi Abdo Kilini	Georgette Ṣubḥī °Abduh Qalīnī	Member
Hafez ElSaid Ahmed Abo-Saidaa	Ḥāfiẓ Abū Si°dah	Member
Dr. Hossam Hasan Badrawi	Ḥusām Badrāwī	President of the Social Rights Committee
Dr. Zenab Abdel-Mgeed Radwan	Zaynab Radwān	President of the Cultural Rights Committee
Sameh Mohamed Marouf Ashour	Sāmih °Āshūr	Member
Samia Abdel-Ghani ElMotiam	Sāmīyah al-Mutayyam	Member
Dr. Soliman Abdel-Moneam Soliman	Sulaymān °Abd al-Mun°im	Member
Dr. Salah-EIDin Mahmoud	Salāh °Āmir	President of the International

Fawzi Amer		Relations Committee
Adel Mohamed Farid Qura	°Ādil Qūrah	President of the Legislative Committee
Fahmy Nashed Abdel-Masseh	Fahmī Nāshid	Member
Dr. Fouad Abdel-Moneam Riad,	Fu'ād °Abd al-Mun°im Riyād	Member
Dr. Laila Ibrahim Takla	Laylá Taklā	Member
Dr. Mohamed ElSaeed ElDakak	Sa°id al-Daqqāq	Member
Mohamed Mohamed Faiek	Muḥammad Fāyiq	Member
Dr. Mohamed Noaman Galal	Muhammad Nu°mān Jalāl	President of the Economic Rights Committee
Dr. Mostafa Mohamed ElFeki,	Muṣṭafā al-Fiqī	Member
Mona Salah-ElDin Zu-ElFakar	Muná Dhū al-Faqqār	Member
Mounier Fakhri Abdel-Noor	Munīr Fakhrī °Abd al-Nūr	Member
Dr. Nabil Ahmed Helmy	Nabīl Ḥilmī	Member
Bahi-El-Dein Mohamed Hasan	Bahīy al-Dīn Ḥasan	Member
Dr. Ahmed Youssef Ahmed Mohamed	Aḥmad Yūsuf Aḥmad Muḥammad (no AWR reference)	President of the Civil and Political Rights Committee

5. Website

A lot of information expressed by the council itself on its website was also mentioned in the Arab press. The media made hard critiques which the NCHR did not publish on its website. The following information refers to the official website of the council.

The National Council for Human Rights' website is “www.nchr.org.eg”⁹⁴ and is available in English and Arabic. The text of Law no. 94 of 2003 (establishment of the council) is also available in French. Provided materials are monthly reports for each month in 2006 (in Arabic only), an annual report since

⁹⁴ www.nchr.org.eg/En/home.asp (accessed 09/03/02, 09:40 am)

2004/2005 (in English and Arabic), and other publications (in Arabic only). The sub-categories on the website are 'Establishment', 'Council Statute', 'Members', 'Committees', 'Posting Complaint', 'Press Emissions', 'Library', 'Legislative Ref.', 'Publications' and 'Links.' The homepage does not provide a search function so it is not possible to scan through all of the council's available articles and reports to find one specific topic.

6. Yearbooks

The NCHR published four annual reports, from 2004 until 2008, which structure and style changed over time. However, the main topics like its activities, recommendations and complaints, were mentioned in all of these reports.

7. Conclusion

The most information about the NCHR was found in its annual reports and in the council's article of establishment, which are available on the homepage. In addition to this, press releases are also available on the website, but of course not critical ones. In its establishment law which is presented as a link at the top of the homepage, the council claimed that it is independent in practicing its functions, activities and jurisdiction. The majority of newspapers disagreed with this aspect, because of its link with and dependence on the government. The NCHR set a lot of goals about which some reporters in the Arab media said that the council has failed to realize. Another claim was that the council is just a kind of decoration to polish up Egypt's image. However its reports considered the development of human rights in Egypt and showed the reactions of the government concerning recommendations made by the council. Although the NCHR presented press releases on its homepage, it is noteworthy that only positive comments were issued and so just positive results of the council's activities were demonstrated. Its website created the impression that the NCHR placed value on dialogue with organizations and delegations from Egypt and other nations, whereas a lot of aforementioned newspapers criticized these aspects and said that the council does not try to create connections.

Al-Kalimah Center for Human Rights

Introduction:

This section of the paper will provide an overview of the human rights organization al-Kalima Center for Human Rights and its work. The report will describe how the center presents itself on its homepage, including its activities, goals, mission, and structure.

Media coverage and impressions of al-Kalima will be presented based on articles from different Egyptian newspapers on various subjects. Finally, a comparison between the view presented by the Egyptian media and how the center presents itself on line will be drawn.

1. Description of purpose

Like most human rights organizations in Egypt, al-Kalima Center for Human Rights is a nongovernmental organization. Thus their income is based on foreign funding. They receive the majority of their funding through sponsorship from Coptic organizations in the U.S.

Al-Kalima states that their inspiration comes from Nasr Hamid Abū Zayd, an Islamic thinker who was instructed to separate from his wife after a ruling issued by the Supreme Court in Egypt.⁹⁵ This indicates that freedom of religion is one of their main concerns. Cornelis Hulsman knows Nasr Hamid Abū Zayd and adds that Nasr Hamid Abū Zayd has nothing to do with this center. They are using his name because he is so well-known⁹⁶.

Al-Kalima works for journalists' rights, religious beliefs, legal support for prisoners, and the rights of the poor and women as described on the homepage:

Defend writers, journalists, and thinkers.

95 www.al-kalema.com/English.html

96 Interview with Cornelis Hulsman, May 2009

Resist discriminatory practices based on ethnic origin, gender, or religious beliefs.

Legal support for prisoners of conscious facing restrictions and violations by authorities because of their opinions, religious or intellectual beliefs and affiliations.

Offer technical and legal support in conflicts relating to women's rights, children's rights and labor rights to women's rights, children's rights and labor rights.

Offer free legal services for the poor.⁹⁷

2. Advocacy for legal change:

Al-Kalima works in three areas:

Legal assistance, in handling cases of bureaucracy in the governmental sector. This occurs through filing lawsuits and investigating the police. The center additionally handles the rights of prisoners. An example of the legal work they have carried out was when Mamdūh Nakhlah, head of al-Kalima, said that issuing a law that granted the Copts equal rights, as is the case in the U.S. with the African Americans, would solve a lot of the cultural problems in Egypt.⁹⁸ Al-Kalima says *“that due to the fact that some legislations and administrative orders are in gross violation of the Egyptian Constitution and the various human rights treaties, the Center has questioned the constitutionality of these laws and orders.”*⁹⁹

This means that Mamdūh Nakhlah is involved in a lot of lawsuits.

Informing the public about their causes and thereby raising general interest about human rights in Egypt. They do so by driving campaigns and producing monthly publications and brochures. There are no examples on their Web page of the campaigns, publications or brochures.

They conduct research to expose human rights violations, particularly those related to freedom of expression and freedom of belief. One method of doing this is to send representatives to visit locations where the violations are said to have occurred.¹⁰⁰

97 www.al-kalema.com/Activities.html

98 AWR: Art. 51, Week 18/2006, Rose al-Yūsuf ,Huwāydā Yayhá

99 www.al-kalema.com/Activities.html

100 www.al-kalema.com/Activities.html

2.1 The goals:

The goals of al-Kalima are as follows:

1-To accept the registration of journalists working in non-government owned independent newspapers in the journalist syndicate.

2-To reverse the decision by the Department of Culture to collect entrance fees to old churches. Cornelis Hulsman added that this was an issue in the 1990s when the government wanted to collect entrance fees to historical churches in Old Cairo that are frequented by very large numbers of tourists. The opposition to the fees made the government withdraw its proposal. Hulsman finds it strange that this is still listed as a goal for al-Kalima.¹⁰¹

3- To prohibit holding school exams on January 7, the day Egyptian Copts celebrate Christmas. The court ruled in the center's favor. [Note: This is very doubtful since it has not been mentioned in any media]. Cornelis Hulsman added that this too was an issue before President Mubarak made January 7 a national holiday. It has all appearance that the goals of al-Kalima were formulated in the 1990s and have not been updated since.¹⁰²4- To remove data from national identity cards data pertaining to religion, in order to prevent discrimination based on religious affiliations.

5- To include the history of the Coptic period in Egypt in the high school curriculum.

6- To exempt churches from paying water and electricity charges similar to the privileges enjoyed by mosques.

7- To remove inflammatory wall signs denigrating religions. The Department of Interior has substantially augmented penalties for this violation.

8- To pay monetary compensation to victims of terrorism in the villages of Kafr Demian (1996), Abi Qurkas(1997), and Gerza (2003).

9- The center has published over 150 announcements and several brochures and publications criticizing human rights violations and praising accomplishments in this field.

These goals indicate that this is an organization that is working in the interest of the Copts in Egypt and that is also evident in how they appear in the media.

2.2 The structure:

101 Interview with Cornelis Hulsman, May 2009

102 Interview with Cornelis Hulsman, May 2009

The structure of the organization consists of two elements; the board of trustees and the working party:

The board of trustees is tasked with approving and managing the center's projects, and hiring employees. It consists of 13 members who all work on a voluntary basis.

The working party consists of researchers and journalists, who file lawsuits, conduct studies and field research, and visit sites of where human rights are violated.

The organization was founded by lawyer Mamdūh Nakhlah who started his legal career as a young lawyer in the law office of Coptic human rights activist and firebrand Maurice Sadeq who left Egypt for the US around the year 2000.¹⁰³

3. Media evaluation:

The following will provide an overview of al-Kalima based on the articles from the Arab-West Report database. These articles come from various Egyptian newspapers. Any media critique directed at al-Kalima will be presented. Finally, al-Kalima's Web page will be evaluated.

This organization does not appear to be very involved in the media since they are only mentioned in around 50 articles spanning a period of seven years. Even though they are in few articles, they are very active in the cases they are involved in.

It is worth noting that in these articles, only one representative from the center is mentioned, namely Mamdūh Nakhlah, president of the Secretary Council of al-Kalima. Nakhlah is also a lawyer, which is perhaps why he is the only figure mentioned in these articles.

From the 52 articles in AWR's database, 21 were about legal suits, 13 general statements, six about prisoners, and 12 about religion, all from the period of 1998 to 2006. Three legal suits help to describe the organization's function and priorities. These cases are:

3.1 Identification cards:

103 Interview with Cornelis Hulsman, May 2009

This a significant issue, as it touches upon the subject of freedom of religious belief.

On January 23, 2003, Mamdūh Nakhlah filed a lawsuit against the minister of the interior and the director of the Personal Status Agency in order to remove the information about religious status from ID cards on the basis that “*there is no text in the Constitution, nor is there any law that requires writing one’s religion on identification cards. Article 46 of the Constitution says that the state must guarantee the freedom of belief and the freedom to practice all religious rituals.*”¹⁰⁴

In April 2006, the case of the *Bahā’īs* arises.

It encompassed the Egyptian *Bahā’īs* and their rights in Egyptian society.

The discussion centers on the *Bahā’īs* as a minority, and whether the government was willing to accept the *Bahā’īs* as a religious minority. This led to a discussion about ID cards, because the card indicates an individual's religious affiliation. Mamdūh Nakhlah argues that the information about religious status should be removed from the card, again according to Al-Kalima's goals and the fact that it is already enforced in many countries.

Dr. Mufīd Shihāb, from the Ministry of Judicial Affairs, argues that one should not compare Egypt to these countries because, “*Western societies are secular and religion is separate from the state, which is not the case in Egypt,*” and, “*The manifestation of religion on ID cards is not a means of religious or sectarian discrimination, rather it affirms a reality.*”¹⁰⁵

Mamdūh Nakhlah does not agree with this argument.

3.2 Equal rights for Copts in Egyptian society

The subject of Copts is one of the main concerns for al-Kalima. Thus many of the articles are about the Copts and their rights. Mamdūh Nakhlah for instance commented that:

“*[assuming] that issuing a law similar to the one stipulated in the U.S.A. which granted blacks the right to full equality, would also grant the same rights for the Copts in Egypt.*”¹⁰⁶ Bāhī al-Dīn Hasan, the head of the Center for Human Rights Research, later criticized the administrative institutions for not paying enough attention to events of the 1972 sectarian sedition.

104 AWR: Art. 3, Week 4/2003, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, cAbduh Zayn

105 AWR: Art. 45, Week 37/2006, *Al-Ahram al-cArabī*, Muhammad cAbd al-Khāliq

106 AWR: Art. 51, Week 18/2006, *Rose al-Yusuf*, Huwāyda Yahyá

Dr. Saʿd al-Dīn Ibrāhīm, a professor of sociology at the American University in Cairo, describes it as, “*On the morning of Monday, November 6, 1972, the quarters of Gamiyyat Al-Kitaab Al-Muqaddas [the Holy Bible society] in the town of Al-Khanka, Qalyubia were deliberately burnt, as well as a photography studio and six apartments all belonging to Coptic citizens.*”¹⁰⁷

One of the arguments in this debate is that the Copts should not be seen as a minority. Jamāl Asʿad, a former Labor Party representative in parliament, said during a discussion with Mamdūh Nakhlah on the persecution of the Copts that “*the government will not allow any religious persecution in Egypt and problems should be solved between Muslims and Copts, as we enjoy full citizenship.*” Therefore, the Copts should be seen as a part of the Egyptian unity. Mamdūh Nakhlah's response pointed to a level of persecution, citing “*the law of the Azhar University, which prevents Christians from joining it,*”¹⁰⁸ as an example.

This small dialogue shows how al-Kalima, and particularly Mamdūh Nakhlah, perceives the situation of the Copts in Egypt. Mamdūh Nakhlah here uses the Azhar University as an example of how Christian Copts are discriminated against by not being able to enroll in a state-funded Muslim university.

3.3 The jail case

In the article: ‘First Sunni-Shiite-Christian alliance to call for bringing Mubarak regime before international tribunal’¹⁰⁹ Mamdūh Nakhlah joined Abbūd al-Zumur who was involved in the assassination of President Anwar al-Sādāt and Muhammad al-Durini, head of the Council for the Care of the Prophet’s Family in a Sunni-Shiite-Christian alliance, where Abbūd represented *Sunnī* Muslims, al-Durini represented *Shīʿah* Muslims, and Mamdūh Nakhlah as the Christian representative. In this case Mamdūh Nakhlah called on the international community to respond to the rights of political prisoners in Egypt. On January 30, 2006, al-Zumur, according to *Sawt al-Ummah*, disappeared from prison, when his wife came to visit him she was told that according to senior orders; al-Zumur has been taken to an

107 AWR: Art. 21, Week 7/2000, Watani, Saʿd al-Dīn Ibrāhīm

108 AWR: Art. 20, Week 15/2001, Sawt al-Ummah, Islām Hulwah

109 AWR: Art. 48, Week 4/2006, Sawt al-Ummah, Muhammad cAlī Abū Humaylah

unknown location.

Al-Durini commented in this regard,

“[that] the reason behind what the security did to al-Zumur was that the man was deeply involved in a media and legal warfare against the regime.”¹¹⁰

This case demonstrates how al-Kalima uses international society to broadcast its cause, in an attempt to influence Egyptian society. There are several examples of this in the archived articles, and it is one of the major points of criticism from the media.

Cornelis Hulsmann adds that many cases al-Kalima raised in court appeared only to be done for reasons of obtaining media attention and not for reasons of having a good chance of success or not.¹¹¹

3.4 Conclusion:

As previously mentioned, al-Kalima receives no financial support from Egyptian society. Their income, therefore, is based on funds from organizations abroad. Al-Kalima is supported by Coptic organizations in the U.S. This leads to criticism from the media.

Al-Uṣbūʿ summarized the question describing this well. In this article they ask, 'Does it mean human rights in Egypt, which means American interference in our internal affairs?'¹¹² in reference to Mamdūh Nakhlah asking the American ambassador to pay more attention to human rights. *Al-Uṣbūʿ*'s criticism here is based on the belief that al-Kalima is trying to influence the American ambassador in order to get funding or political support, thereby implying that American interest might interfere in Egyptian society and the political system.

Another point of criticism is raised by Mustafā Sulāyman¹¹³ in the story about monastery building and the risk of losing income generated by tourism in al-Tur in Sinai. The conflict arose between the Coptic Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Christians, after the Copts announced their intention to build a church. The Greek Orthodox Christians then accused the

110 AWR: Art. 74, Week 5/2006, Sawt al-Ummah, Muhammad cAlī Abū Humaylah

111 Interview with Cornelis Hulsmann, May 2009

112 AWR: Art. 12, Week 33/2001, *Al-Uṣbūʿ*, Muhammad Rifcat

113 Mustafā Sulayman: Journalist for *Al-Uṣbūʿ*

Copts of building it without a license, and referred the case to the local administration. The two parties later agreed to share the disputed plot of land. According to Sulāyman, problems arose with the local administration, thereby involving Al-Kalima in the case. The center began propagating the idea that the case was one of a lack of freedom to practice religious rituals, constituting a clear violation of the Egyptian Constitution. This gave the Coptic community in the U.S. the misguided belief that there was persecution of Copts practiced by the state.¹¹⁴

This case is an example of a different form of criticism, namely that Al-Kalima uses every opportunity to make the claim that Copts are persecuted in an effort to make the American Coptic community its ally.

Hamdi al-Husayni, a journalist for *Rose al-Yūsuf* criticized NGOs and their sources of income. He uses Maurice Sadīq, founder of the National Unity Center for Human Rights in Shūbra, as an example of a person who was highly critical of the regime and who received financial support from the U.S. and then left the country with the money.

Maurice Sadīq is a relevant example because he supervised Mamdūh Nakhlah until he left Egypt in 2000. Mamdūh Nakhlah said that he is in contact with various human rights organizations that support him with a minimum of finances. The author poses the question, when will Mamdūh Nakhlah leave the country with the money he has collected?¹¹⁵

4. Key Persons

Only one representative from the center is mentioned in AWR's database, namely Mamdūh Nakhlah who is the president of al-Kalima's Secretary Council. Nakhlah is also a lawyer. (Editor: The AWR-database also mentions Hālah al-Miṣrī and Rūmānī Maṣṣūr as members of al-Kalimah Center for Human Rights.)

5. Website:

Al-Kalima's web page is simply build and easy to navigate. It has six headings, namely:

Our Mission

114 AWR: Art. 26, Week 10/2000, *Al-Uṣbūc*, Mustafā Sulayman

115 AWR: Art. 23, Week 21/2001, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Hamdī al-Husaynī

Structural Organization

Activities

Goals

Members of the Board of Trustees

Join Us

All these categories are simply described, enabling users to get a quick and efficient overview of al-Kalima. One problem however, is that the page claims to publish brochures and reports, yet these publications are not on-line, making it is impossible to gain a deeper understanding of the organization or what they have achieved.

6.Goals and reality

This section will compare al-Kalima's goals to what they have achieved based on media articles, in order to demonstrate al-Kalima's focus. Additionally, a discussion will be included at the end on al-Kalima as a human rights organization.

If the goals of al-Kalima, as shown in the beginning, are considered, it becomes evident that there is an agenda behind them. Aside from their first goal, there is no other goal that does not involve the Copts.

Example:

An example is the discussion about Copts killed in car accidents; a big discussion with Mamdūh Nakhlah as the main spokesman.

Background:

Nakhlah's claims are based on these episodes:

- July 23, 1999, a bus accident in which 33 Copts died.- The death of Bishop Makarios, bishop of Sinai, who died in ''2000 in a tragic car accident, a priest from Damanhour and Father Yūsuf As'ad from Alexandria ¹¹⁶''
- March 5, 2001, a car accident in which Father Antonios Zaki Ghobrial and three of his

116 AWR: Art. 29, Week 9/2001, Religious News Service from the Arab World, Cornelis Hulsman

relatives died.¹¹⁷

These accidents, according to Mamdūh Nakhlah, are not accidents, but rather planned attacks against the Copts in Egypt. In an article for *Copts Daily Digest*, Nakhlah was quoted as staying that

*“it must be noted that this "accident" is the third this year of this "mysterious" type.*¹¹⁸” This gave the U.S. Copts Association the impression that there is an ongoing persecution of the Copts in Egypt.

The discussion includes Cornelis Hulsman's comment that “Mamdūh Nakhlah’s press release is not an isolated incident.” Prior to him, human rights activist Maurice Sadīq, “used to publish many press releases with unsubstantiated claims.”

Nakhlah argues that it is strange that in most of these cases that the driver survives and the passengers die.¹¹⁹

Dr. Ralph Berenger, an assistant professor of Journalism and Mass Communication at the American University in Cairo, said that car accidents in Egypt are a common thing, and the chances of a planned attack would seem unlikely because the taxi that Father Antonios Zaki Ghobrial took was most likely a random one.¹²⁰

This dialogue was included as it demonstrates where al-Kalima, and Mamdūh Nakhlah in particular, direct their focus. They are more focused on making a point than actually exerting their efforts in their goals. These articles provide an example of this, where for instance the 13 articles that are just general statements are mostly about Nakhlah making a statement connected to the Copts and their rights.

7. Conclusion

Throughout this section, the human rights organization al-Kalima and its work have been

117 AWR: Art. 29, Week 9/2001, Religious News Service from the Arab World, Cornelis Hulsman

118 AWR: Art. 28, Week 9/2001, Copts Daily Digest, Mamdūh Naklah

119 AWR: Art. 31, Week 9/2001, Religious News Service from the Arab World, Mamdūh Naklah

120 AWR: Art. 29, Week 9/2001, Religious News Service from the Arab World, Cornelis Hulsman

described, highlighting that al-Kalima favors the Copts in Egypt. An organization is entitled to do so, as long as it continues to work for upholding human rights for all religious beliefs. Amnesty International has worked around this problem by proclaiming, “*We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion.*”

The question is whether or not al-Kalima is working for the same principles.

According to their mission statement on their Web site, one thing they hope to accomplish is to “resist discriminatory practices based on ethnic origin, gender, or religious beliefs.” Therefore, they should be actively pursuing this cause. The problem is that al-Kalima have chosen sides in many cases, in favor of the Copts, making it hard to work for equal rights for all. For instance when the Web site states:

“Visit El Kosheh village in the aftermath of the sectarian violence events to pacify the community and bring closure.” The case of al-Kosheh in 1999 is a highly discussed subject, and government officials and Muslims do not agree with the opinion that “sectarian violence” took place there.

A question which has been raised by the media in this respect, is, “Does Al-Kalima serve the best interest of Egyptian people and its rights?”

Some people and newspapers such as *al-Usbūc* would argue that Mamdūh Nakhlah is intentionally driving a wedge in Egyptian national unity by advocating sectarian strife between Muslims and Christians supported by Coptic organizations in the U.S. For example, *al-Usbūc* said, “When will this crazy campaign stop?!¹²¹” referring to Nakhlah's involvement in the church building case previously mentioned.

Discussions could also center on whether or not *al-Usbūc*, in general, has a very negative view of human right organizations since the two articles referenced were very condemning of al-Kalima or whether it is opposed to the ideals espoused by the al-Kalima center in particular.¹²²

121 AWR: Art. 13, Week 1/2006, al-Hayah , Muhammad Salah

122 AWR: Art. 12, Week 33/2001, al-Usbūc, Muhammad Rifcat

AWR: Art. 26, Week 10/2000, al-Usbūc , Mustafā Sulaymān

One thing that is certain is that when reading texts or articles by al-Kalima, it is important to keep in mind that they do have an agenda.

The Land Center for Human Rights

Introduction:

“The Land Center for Human Rights is a nongovernmental, non-profit organization.

It was established according to articles number 505,537 of the Egyptian civil law & article number 96 of the Egyptian constitution”¹²³

This NGO works for the rights of agricultural laborers.

The website does not say any thing about when the organization was founded.

1. Description of purpose

This organization works to help agricultural laborers protect their rights. Their main focus are women, children, permanent or seasonal agrarian laborers. Unlike many other human rights organizations in Egypt, the LCHR does not work in the urban area. Based on studies of the economic and social political sphere, LCHR is producing analyzes of the agronomic economy.

These are the six objectives that LCHR is working for:

1. Agrarian laborers, relating to work conditions like contracts, vacations and regulations of their rights.
2. Providing legal aid, to the farmers’ associations, unions and syndicates.
3. To make the female agrarian laborers aware of the violations that are committed toward female workers, that exist everyday.
4. The health of farmers and their social insurance programs.
5. The fight against pollution in the agrarian sector and alerting farmers to issues.
6. The fight against child labor.¹²⁴

Freedom of expression and religious freedoms:

This human rights organization is not concerned with freedom of expression, religious freedoms or the relationship between Muslims and Christians.

123 www.lchr-eg.org/eindex.htm

124 www.lchr-eg.org/indexe.htm

2. Advocacy for legal change:

LCHR is very active both in terms of issuing publications and engaging in legal issues.

Looking at the legal aspects of the organization they mainly work in four areas.

2.1. Workers and migrant workers:

This involves all workers and emigrant workers in the agricultural sector. This section is divided into two parts, the regular workers who more rights than the emigrant workers and the emigrant workers. That is also the reason why the regular workers are much more frequent in the statistics.¹²⁵ Within all this they have certain areas that they fight for, one of them is the case about “minimum limit for fees” which is about the minimum salary that a worker can get. Here they draw on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights article no.23:3 which states that:

- (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.¹²⁶

This statement is followed up in the Egyptian Labor Law no. 12 for the year 2003 that guarantees fair salaries compared to prices. This however does not set a fixed salary, so LCHR advocate for more organized unions that can press the government to rise salaries.¹²⁷

Another case they advocate is the right to strike.

The Labor Law states that workers have a right to strike, as long as they do it through a union and give their employer at least 10 days notice. The problem is that some workers do not have a union and then need to go through the general syndicate committee with the approval of two thirds of its board members, the process is long, making it almost impossible to strike.

Furthermore the Egyptian prime minister stated that certain sectors can not strike, like education, land, air and sea transportation, metal and military factories.

125 LCHR's Annual Activity Report 2008 p.7

126 www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

127 LCHR's Annual Activity Report 2008 p.47

These sectors can not even call for a strike and according to LCHR that clearly goes against international standards.

The center calls for some more active civil society organizations that work together in order to impose a law that grants workers the right to strike without having their living or work opportunities threatened.

Here a case will be brought up, in order to show what kind of work LCHR do.

This case is about the migrant workers, they are in a legal dilemma, because they are not Egyptian citizens and they have very few international rights. The employer is more or less free to treat them as he wants. Migrant workers usually work in difficult or dangerous jobs.

Female migrant workers are amongst the most exploited because they are in domestic service, entertainment services, and the sex trade.¹²⁸

LCHR tells the story of Awad allāh ʿAbd al-Fattah's family who lost their son, when he tried to escape to Europe, because a lot of the ships these illegal immigrants travel by are old fishing boat that are not build for transportation.

Awad Allāh ʿAbd al-Fattah's oldest son was not able to find a job after he graduated from university so his father, who was a farmer, sold his land in order to pay for his son's voyage to Europe. The ship sank and his son died. Then there were only the youngest sister and another brother left. So since the income from the field was gone the father of the family had to sell his daughter to a rich man from the Gulf. When people warned the father of not shipping off his last son, he replied that his son does not have any other choice to get out poverty¹²⁹.

LCHR use stories like this to describe the countryside of Egypt and criticize the authorities.

2.2. Fishermen

The LCHR is also working for the rights of the fishermen, which according to LCHR suffer from corruption and suppression from big organized fishing boats.

A case of this is the fishing zone around Edko in northern Egypt. The problem was the free fishing zones, were decreased from 37 to only a several acres.

The area was decreased by the owners of the large farms in the area, and because the Ministry of

128 LCHR's Annual Activity Report 2008 p.39

129 www.lchr-eg.org/117/117-08.htm

Agriculture had released the area of the lake.

The fishermen were therefore pushed out of the area and the local police had committed violations against a lot of the fishermen, by for instance, confiscation of their small boats without any legal reasons.

In this case the LCHR demanded that the union committee of fishermen concentrate its efforts on the rights of the small fishers, for the sake of the work opportunities for them and their families¹³⁰.

2.3. Women's rights

Women's rights are another focus of the LCHR. The problem is that female agricultural workers are not included in the Egyptian Labor Law so they do not receive legal protection. Discrimination is a big problem in Egyptian society as well and even in the public sector the problem is evident.

According to the LCHR there has been great international efforts to end discrimination between the two sexes in the workplace.

LCHR says:

*“Despite the fact that most women working in Egypt are working in agriculture, and despite the multiple demands to amend the provisions of the law, to protect the rights of women workers in the agriculture sector, the Egyptian government ignored all the pleadings that were made by a number of studies and civil society organizations.”*¹³¹

LCHR has the following suggestions for improving women's living conditions:

1. Implement different developmental programs and improve services in the village, especially in the fields of health care and education.
2. Provide public facilities in the village, for example, regarding transportation, telecommunications, and computers.
3. Rejuvenate the roles of cooperative and national associations to raise awareness of women's legal, cultural, and social rights and the active roles they can take in development.
4. Allow women to actively participate in decision-making processes in the people's and local councils, as well as the developmental and agricultural associations.
5. Give women affected by the implementation of Law No. 96 alternative lands to improve their living conditions and develop necessities of life.

130 LCHR's Annual Activity Report 2008 p.39

131 LCHR's Annual Activity Report 2008 p.48

6. Accepting educated women when they apply for graduates' lands.
7. Tabulate the debts of women who took out loans and were subsequently threatened with imprisonment, and cancel the interests of these debts.
8. Increase and develop the skills of poor women by training them to independently deal better with harsh living conditions¹³²

The following case highlights the image of women's rights in Egypt.

Aziza Abu al-Gheit Saqr lives in the village of Nakla, her and her husband both suffer from cancer so cannot work. Aziza had the right to inherit some land so she went to her brother but he refused to give her, her share. The money that she could have got from the land would have enabled her to open a small stand and get some income. Aziza went to the authorities and when they did not listen she turned to LCHR.

LCHR went to the Minister of Social Solidarity in order to get the woman her money.¹³³

This case shows how women live with discrimination, and how hard it is for them to get their voice heard. LCHR advocates equal rights. They state in final notes of the report "Women, Land and Violence in Rural Egypt" that:

*"Women are discriminated against at work because of culture and custom despite legislation that stipulates that men and women are equal."*¹³⁴.

2.4. Children's rights

The issue of child labor is one of the concerns that LCHR has been paying more attention to during recent years since the use of child labor has increased.

LCHR says that a lot of international work is done in the area and the most important of these international agreements was the agreement on child rights which stresses the need to protect children rights in a way that ensures the growth and prosperity of children.

According to the Labor Law No. 12 of 2003 in Egypt, that organizes child labor in Egypt, the law forbids that children under the age of 14 work, it does allow employers to employ children between the age of 12 and 13 in seasonal jobs, this is especially intended for the agricultural sector. Children who

132 The Land and Farmer Series issue No. 29: Women, Land and Violence in Rural Egypt p.34

133 www.lchr-eg.org/112/08-52.htm

134 The Land and Farmer Series issue No. 29: Women, Land and Violence in Rural Egypt p.34

are 14 cannot work for more than six hours a day, including at least one hour of rest. Furthermore the law prohibits children under the age of 17 from doing certain jobs such as working in mines or underground. The law actually prevents child labor. Unfortunately the reality is quite different, in many cases children work without contracts, social or health security in dangerous places such as mines. LCHR then states that:

*“Our efforts must go beyond trying to stop child labor to calling for the provision of alternatives that ensure that girls and boys enjoy health, education, play and fun, and giving the opportunity for their families to obtain proper incomes and cultural, economic and social security.”*¹³⁵

One of the cases that LCHR uses to demonstrate their case, is the case of the village of Dest al-Ashraf, where the children of the village, after a very hard day's work in the field, drive home in a pick up truck on a small road. One day the truck tilted because of the conditions of the road, and ended up in the river, ten children died and two survived.

The LCHR criticized the government for not paying enough attention to the infrastructure of the countryside¹³⁶.

3. Media evaluation:

According to the AWR database LCHR only features in two articles.

At a first look this shows that LCHR is not very much reported about in Egyptian media but on their website they have press releases since 1997 with about 40 releases each year.

So the question is why that not reflected in the media? Since the website is full of reports and press statements. It is also clear that the LCHR is active in many cases.

The year report is very statistical, so getting an overview can be difficult at times, in a way the report reflects the website, in its lack of structure.

4. Key persons

The director of LCHR is Karam Sābir.

135 LCHR's Annual Activity Report 2008 p. 51

136 www.lchr-eg.org/112/08-35.htm

5. Website:

The website [www.lchr-eg.org/indexe.htm] contains a lot of information. So much that it actually makes it hard to navigate around the page and find what you are looking for. For instance the difference between the civil society series and the category 'the contents of social and economical series' seems very small because the titles of the articles in the two subjects are quite similar. What makes it much more difficult is the fact that the page does not have a search function, so it is difficult to find a specific article unless you know what category it is under. The website also has Arabic version, which is similar to the English one.

6. Conclusion:

The LCHR is a very active organization, demonstrated by the amount of information on its website. The organization seems in touch with the Egyptian countryside and knows what is happening in different areas.

One problem might be that they lean on international law concerning their issues, which contradicts the fact that the Egyptian government is not willing to back down to international laws.

The lack of media reporting could be due to their description of the problems in the countryside, for instance the case studies that were used above are very emotionally loaded. In one of the two articles on the AWR database about the center Cornelis Hulsman questions “How do you know a statement was not exaggerated?”

Then Karam Sābir director of the LCHR answers that:

“The report depended indeed on the testimonies of peasants, but the events and the violations they faced were much more than what has been mentioned in the report, as we have tried to be neutral and reasonable so that the report could gain credibility¹³⁷”.

On the other hand as some of the issues that the LCHR deals with are not key focuses of the AWR database it is also possible that there has been more articles about them but that they have not been translated by AWR.

From their press statements it is clear that they write with a lot of emotion. The question then is

137 AWR: Art. 7, Week 18/2005, Arab-West Report, Cornelis Hulsman

whether or not their work becomes too emotional. In comparison looking at the year report it appears realistic.

All in all LCHR seems to a very informed and active organization, its problem is that the information part at times seems unstructured and that makes it hard to get an overview of the organization and its work.

Association for Human Rights Legal Aid

Introduction

This section of the paper will discuss the Association for Human Rights Legal Aid (AHRLA). On their English Web site [www.ahrla.org/en/index-e.htm] the 'About us' tab was not functioning, therefore an overview of the organization had to be taken from the Web site [www.openarab.net/en/node/338], which describes several human rights organization in Egypt.

1. Description of purpose

Like many other NGOs in Egypt, AHRLA is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization, founded on December 18, 1999. They work for the legal rights of victims in cases of human rights violations. One method they employ is to advocate against legislation that contradicts the Egyptian Constitution, or support agreements and conventions on human rights. AHRLA carries out studies of civil and democratic society, and legal developments in order to present analysis on certain issues.

Furthermore, as their name suggests they provide legal aid to the victims of human rights violations. Legal analysis and legal aid are the two main concerns of the AHRLA¹³⁸.

2. Advocacy for legal change

The following legal case provides an example of the work carried out by the AHRLA.

2.1 Background

According to AHRLA Law no. 153, restricts the rights of NGOs. An example of this is the interpretation of Article 11 in volume 2 which allows the government to ban any NGO based on their interpretation of the NGO's activities. If the Ministry of Social Affairs considers the activities to pose a

138 www.openarab.net/en/node/338

"threat[en] to national unity, violate public order or morality, or advocate discrimination," they are legally permitted to ban the NGO. There are no existing guidelines for the ministry on which type of activities fall into this bracket. This influences the NGO's ability to provide legal aid, work for judicial reform, participate in election monitoring, and report human rights abuses.

Mirvat al-Tilawi, the Egyptian minister for insurance and social affairs, argued in 1999 that:

Law No. 153 loosens the government's grip on NGOs, providing three examples. First, it removes the requirement that NGOs should seek permission to own real estate and to work outside their local, geographical areas.¹³⁹

Second, it eliminates the government's power to deny registration to an NGO because of security or because of the conditions of NGO's headquarters.

Finally it eliminated the power of the government to select boards and board members and to intervene in board meetings.

Yet despite these regulations, the Egyptian government retains a lot of power in relation to the NGOs. For example, the government has the power to shut down any NGO that "objects to whatever it deems as contradictory to [Egyptian] law in the statute of the association" [Part I, Chapter I, Article 8]. Additionally, it can ban NGO participation in political issues, trade union activities, or any activities that "threaten national unity, violate public order or morality" [Part I, Chapter II, Article 11]. Finally, Law No. 153 also prohibits organizations from receiving foreign funding [Part I, Chapter II, Article 17]¹⁴⁰.

2.2 . Reaction of AHRLA

This case led to three women from the AHRLA going on a hunger strike. Mona Zul-Fiqar, a lawyer in the law committee said that "The fact that the cabinet did not consult with us does not mean that we cannot stretch out our hands. We have to build up a dialogue until the very last moment to achieve the maximum possible."

139 AWR: Art. 20, Week 24/1999, Cairo Times, Author not mentioned

140 www.wcl.american.edu/hrbrief/07/2law153.cfm

Abd al-Razek, head of AHRLA, said that they did not have a chance to criticize the law, "we had to wait until the proposed law was leaked to us by our MPs, because the cabinet refused to provide us with a copy."¹⁴¹

In conclusion, based on the information on the English Web site and the articles on the database, it can be said that AHRLA is a very active in legal work.

3. Media evaluation

In the articles on the AWR database, AHRLA is not criticized by the media. The reason for this may be that AHRLA, as documented in the articles, has always collaborated with other human rights organizations in their protest against certain issues.

4. Key persons

Tāriq Khātir is the head of AHRLA, apart from him no other key persons could be found in the AWR database or on the website.

5. Web site

The English Web site provides very little information about the organization since its description is not available. Looking at the section 'What's new' then the latest news is from 2002, and the most recent press statement is from 2007. The Web site only contains one report on the al-Kosheh incidents, which may indicate that the organization has not put much effort into translating, especially when compared to the Arabic Web site which has seven reports and a lot more information. The underlying problem however, is that many of the pages on the site do not work.

6. Conclusion

The organization seems to be much more active on the Arabic side. However the structure of the website makes it hard to find information. A reason for the lack of information on the English site could be a lack of funding or a lack of technical expertise. In relation to the Web site, the page mentioned

141 AWR: Art. 23, Week 22/1999, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Jamāl cIsām al-Dīn

earlier [www.openarab.net/en/node/338] states that in a workshop Mr. Tāriq Khatir, head of AHRLA declared that the “Web site was established spontaneously without any plans or awareness as to the importance of the Internet,” and that they try to publish the news of the organization, support human rights principles, and provide help and legal support to the victims of human rights violations in Egypt. The case of Law no. 153 is an example of the work that they do. The impression that one gets from the articles is that, HRLA is critical of the government. Again this organization has some big structural problems, the question is weather this is due to a lack of organizational structural or lack of expertise?

Egyptian Union for Human Rights Organizations

This section of the paper will discuss the Egyptian Union for Human Rights Organizations (EUHRO).

Since the organization does not have a Web site, the information in this paper is based on the articles found in the database of Arab-West Report (AWR).

1. Description of purpose

The articles present in the AWR database are categorized as follows: three on the election of the Coptic Orthodox pope, two about Copts filing their cases with the UN, one about the discussion of identity cards, one about the election of a female priest, two about Muslim-Christian relations and three about the conversion of Coptic girls.

These articles demonstrate that the organization is active in cases related to Copts. If this is then compared to the Al-Kalima organization, it appears that they are working in a similar manner. The EUHRO though commented on, in relation to Copts filing their case with the UN its “rejection of any form of foreign interference in Egyptian domestic affairs.” The head of al-Kalima, however, has a different view which is to develop the involvement of foreign countries in order to achieve equal rights for Copts.

2. Advocacy for legal change.

The cases of Wafā’ Constantine and the election of the pope, help to provide an overview of the organization's agenda, and will be described in this section.

2.1. Background:

Wafā’ Constantine was the wife of a Coptic Orthodox priest from Beheira. In 2004, Constantine made the first steps in her conversion to Islam. Copts then responded by forming a committee in order to push Constantine to reconsider her choice. They were publicly announcing they were under the impression that Constantine was forced to become a Muslim. Cornelis Hulsman stated that people close to Wafā’ Constantine knew this was not true but that this was used as a means to rouse the sentiments

of the Christian masses in Egypt which indeed worked.¹⁴² According *al-Hayāh* newspaper, Constantine claimed she never felt forced or pressured to convert. After talking to church officials she decided to stay a Christian¹⁴³.

2.2. EUHRO activities

In 2006, *Shaykh* Yūsuf al- Badrī filed a lawsuit against the minister of interior, saying that Wafā's reconversion from Christianity to Islam was against the Constitution, referring to article two which states that "Islam is the religion of the state and Arabic its official language. Principles of Islamic law (Shari'a) are the principal source of legislation".

Shaykh al- Badrī demanded that Constantine be the given freedom to manifest her religion.

Judge Najīb Jibrā'īl , the head of EUHRO, replied, "I challenge *Shaykh* Yūsuf al-Badrī to present any piece of paper written by Constantine or a tape recording of her voice, proving that she converted to Islam." This statement indicates that EUHRO are also involved in legal cases.

Another case involves the Community Council elections in 2001. Pope Shenouda III was re-elected Chairman on March 17, 2001.

Following his election, Dr. Najīb Jibrā'īl filed a lawsuit against the pope, calling for the cancellation of the election based on legal violations. He claimed that "the most dangerous violation is... 1200 of the voters in Cleopatra church were workers in one company, Amoun Pharmaceuticals. The president of this company (Tharwat Bāsīlī, closely associated to the pope) was a candidate. They arrived in special cars on polling day... A similar thing happened in Mar Girgis church in Shūbra. One of the candidates was a priest in the church, thus having spiritual influence over the voters... The church should have kept itself from entering secular elections¹⁴⁴," These two examples point to EUHRO's involvement in legal cases.

3. Media evaluation

It is hard to compile a description of EUHRO based on the 11 articles in the AWR database, as they do not mention much about their actual work; it is rather more brief comments about different cases. The

142 Interview with Cornelis Hulsman, May 2009

143 AWR: Art. 3, Week 25/2006, *Al-Fajr*, Fādi Habashī

144 AWR: Art. 20, Week 20/2001, *Al-Maydān* , Ahmad al-Mansī, Nabīl cAbd al-Azīz

EUHRO does not have a Web site which further hinders this, as it renders it impossible to see what they produce.

The articles did not include much criticism of the organization. However Yūsuf Sidhum, a member of the Coptic Orthodox Community Council and editor-in-chief of *Watani*, points out one of the problems concerning 'Copts filing their case with the UN,' is that filing the case internationally, will give the U.S. reason to interfere in Egypt's internal affairs. Sidhum continues by providing the example of "the Religious Freedom Committee of the American Congress visit's [Editor: the committee is not part of the U.S. Congress] to Egypt last March. The reason for that visit was to check on the Coptic situation after court statements about the al-Kushh trial."¹⁴⁵ This furthers the debate on how Copts use international society to interfere in the Coptic case.

4. Key persons

Dr. Najīb Jibrā'īl Mīkhā'īl is a lawyer and the head of EUHRO.(Editor: The AWR-database also mentions Ḥasan Ismā'īl, secretary general of the EUHRO).

5. Web site

No official Web site was found.

The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR)

Introduction

The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) is one of the oldest and largest non-governmental human rights organizations in Egypt, and was founded in 1985. As it is not sponsored by the government it depends primarily on foreign funding, and for this it is harshly criticized by many national newspapers.

The following overview is based on press releases from the database of AWR from 1998 to 2008. The results were then compared to the organization's Web site at the end of this report.

1. Description of Purpose

The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) is one of the oldest and premier non-government, non-profit organizations. It works within the framework of the principles established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other international human rights charters, regardless of the identity or the affiliation of the victims or of the violators. On its Web site the EOHR highlights that it is part of the international and Arab human rights movement. EOHR also cooperates with the United Nations and its bodies concerned with human rights, in addition to the international and regional organization for human rights. EOHR has established and maintains contacts within these organizations to exchange and foster support.

The organization's main goals center around the full respect for human rights and the basic freedoms for all Egyptians, the reform of Egyptian legislation, the promotion of the rule of law and of full respect for an independent judiciary, guaranteeing the right to participate in public affairs without discrimination based on opinion, religion, sex, race or color, guaranteeing the freedom of opinion and expression as well as the artistic and literary invention, and guaranteeing the freedoms of belief, thought and religion. The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights also tries to encourage national and

international civil institutions to take steps in putting an end to human rights abuses, and urges the authorities to revise all laws that are not in line with international human rights standards.

The EOHR stresses its agenda to use peaceful methods in promoting and defending human rights. It believes that the promotion of human rights is a common goal for the entire global community, and is determined to spare no peaceful effort in its struggle against human rights violations. In the fight for human rights, the organization sends fact-finding missions, which include visiting prisons and detention centers in order to collect testimonies, thereby ascertaining and documenting any relevant information connected to human rights violations, issuing urgent appeals, press releases, reports, and publications on human rights violations, promoting and spreading human rights awareness among individuals and groups through publications, conferences, seminars and studies, contacting Egyptian government and non-government bodies and institutions as well as international, regional and national organizations to cooperate with them to get information and to take action to respect and enhance human rights.

EOHR has five substantive and inter-linked departments. These are the Field Work Unit, the Women's Legal Aid Project (WLAP), the Research and Publications Desk, the International and Translation Unit and the Refugees' Legal Aid Project. Its current campaigns are against torture and inhumane prison conditions, as well as for the defense of freedom of thought and belief, to restore the rights of Egyptian prisoners of war, and to cancel the Emergency Law in Egypt.¹⁴⁶ EOHR believes that protecting the rights and freedoms of Egyptian citizens is a primary guarantee for a peaceful society without terrorism.¹⁴⁷

The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights actively issues journals and reports, and has more than 3,000 members who work all over Egypt.¹⁴⁸ Its principal aim is to defend Egyptian human rights and Egyptian political rights in general, as Muḥammad al-Dimyātī, a reporter for *al-Aḥrār*, said.¹⁴⁹ In annual reports published on human rights in Egypt, the EOHR included the most significant human rights violations committed in last years, including the situation in prisons, the number of death sentences, instance of torture, and violations of freedom of expression, along with an analysis of

146 http://en.eohr.org/?page_id=2 (accessed 09/03/11 3:13pm)

147 www.eohr.org/report/2003/emergency.HTM (accessed 09/03/11 3:40pm)

148 AWR, Art. 24, Week 46/1998, *Al-Aḥrār*; Author not mentioned

149 AWR, Art. 10, Week 48/1998, *Al-Usbūc*, Muḥammad al-Dumyātī

violations of the Constitution.¹⁵⁰ Not only through these reports, but also in general, the organization highlighted the deteriorating conditions in prisons.¹⁵¹ EOHR advocates that one method for improving the observance of human rights by security bodies is to include human rights courses in police academy curriculums, as EOHR's Secretary General Hāfīz Abū Si^ʿdah stated.¹⁵² Abū Si^ʿdah further commented on the case of homosexuals in Egypt, justifying the EOHR's refusal to adopt the case by claiming it was “ugly.”¹⁵³

The freedom of religion and expression play a big role in the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights' goals. A report published by the EOHR noted that in 2005, the government confiscated 40 books from the 2005 Cairo International Book Fair, which was seen as a violation of the freedom of expression.¹⁵⁴ Another case included the discussions surrounding the movie 'The Da Vinci Code.' EOHR released a statement, in which it expressed its deep anxiety with the People's Assembly's decision to ban this film and to pull the novel from store shelves. The statement said that judging literary and creative works of literature from a religious or political prospective threatens to impose religious or political tutelage over human thought, describing the decision as a setback for the freedom of opinion and expression.¹⁵⁵

The organization also expressed its anxiety by following the severe campaign launched against the Dr. Su^ʿād Sālīh, a professor of *fiqh* at the Azhar University, due to her ideas about crucial issues such as the *niqāb* [specifically the discussion to ban the *niqāb* in universities], freedom of belief and expression and her rejection of ideological fundamentalism.¹⁵⁶ The broadcast of the controversial series 'Knight Without a Horse' was objected to by the EOHR. The organization underlined that it completely supports the freedom of expression and is against banning works, but at the same time, it believes that the freedom of expression should not be misused to promote ideas that may cause hatred on the basis of religion, race, or color.¹⁵⁷ Dr. Muḥammad Salīm al-^ʿAwwā, a member of the Council of Secretaries of the Egyptian Organization of Human Rights, stated, “From an Islamic point of view, we [members of EOHR] do not accept items that allows any person to change his religion and to call for another religion than that which is among his people. Freedom of religion means the freedom to choose one's

150 AWR, Art. 39, Week 29/1999, *Middle East Times*, Lilian Liang

151 AWR, Art. 56, Week 40/2006, *Al-Aḥrār*; Nabīl Zakī

152 AWR, Art. 38, Week 29/1999, *Al-Aḥram Weekly*, Amīrah Huwaydī

153 AWR, Art. 18, Week 33/2001, *Ṣawt al-Ummah*, Mājī Michel

154 AWR, Art. 56, Week 40/2006, *Al-Aḥrār*; Nabīl Zakī

155 AWR, Art. 37, Week 25/2006, Press review

156 AWR, Art. 85, Week 45/2006, *Al-Ḥayāh*, Author not mentioned

157 AWR, Art. 12, Week 47/2002, *Al-Sharq al-Awsāt*, *al-Ḥayāh*, *al-Aḥrār*; Author not mentioned

own religion, not to arouse strife among people of different religions in one nation. [...] From a national point of view, we do not accept using freedom of religion as a reason to interfere in our domestic affairs.”¹⁵⁸ The EOHR was involved in several discussions about the freedom of expression and religion. In its annual report from 2007, the organization dealt with the freedom of expression.¹⁵⁹

Dialogue is an important element for almost any human rights organizations. The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights sees a link between dialogue and human rights, as illustrated in the statement made by Dr. Muḥammad Salīm al-^ʿAwwā. “I do not support dialogue between religions concerning theological subjects because it results in deepening fanaticism among those who participate in such dialogues. The Arab group of the Islamic Christian dialogue chose to make our dialogue over the believers of different religions and their lives, not about religions themselves. Our dialogues concern what can improve life, not what may arouse disputes and hatred. We called it "Life’s dialogue" and made programs applied by both Muslims and Christians based on a practical policy of Islamic-Christian cooperation especially in fields of education and social work.”¹⁶⁰

The relationship of Egyptian Christians to their “Muslim brothers” is an issue that arises for many human rights organizations. The main topic in the Arab press concerning Muslim-Christian relations was the events of al-Kushh.¹⁶¹ The EOHR said that the torture of Muslims and Christians of al-Kusheh was not a case of religious persecution, but that it was a case of police abuse toward Egyptian citizens.¹⁶² Another subject is the claim that Christian girls were kidnapped or coerced to leave their families, and forced to convert to Islam. Hāfiz Abū Si^ʿdah noted that not only young Christian girls, but also young Muslim girls run away which poses an equally big problem for their families. That is not a human rights problem but a societal problem.¹⁶³ Regarding the perception that Christians in Egypt are persecuted, Hāfiz Abū Si^ʿdah said that since the establishment of the EOHR, no complaints of religious persecution have been filed.¹⁶⁴ The EOHR also confirmed that since its establishment, there have been no forms of transgressions by the police against Coptic citizens for religious reasons.¹⁶⁵ The organization's president, Hishām Qāsim, stated that he does not believe that Christians in Egypt are

158 AWR, Art. 7, Week 13/1999, *Al-Ahrām*, Dr. Muḥammad Salīm al-cAwwā

159 <http://en.eohr.org/?p=43#more-43> (accessed 09/03/11 03:23pm)

160 AWR, Art. 7, Week 13/1999, *Al-Ahrām*, Dr. Muḥammad Salīm al-cAwwā

161 AWR, Art. 15, Week 8/2000, Religious News Service from the Arab World, Egyptian Organization of Human Rights

162 AWR, Art. 29, Week 45/1998, *Al-cArabī*, Akram al-Qaṣṣās

163 AWR, Art. 37, Week 26/1999, Religious News Service from the Arab World, Cornelis Hulsman

164 AWR, Art. 19, Week 45/1998, *Al-Aḥrār*; Mājjidah Ibrāhīm

165 AWR, Art. 33, Week 44/1998, *Al-Ahrām*, Author not mentioned

persecuted.¹⁶⁶ Commenting on Coptic Christians outside of Egypt, Hāfiz Abū Si^cdah said that Copts abroad wrongly believe that Copts in Egypt are persecuted.¹⁶⁷ The organization also strongly supports and encourages dialogue between Christians and Muslims.¹⁶⁸

2. Advocacy for legal change

As the EOHR is a long-established organization within Egyptian society, it has greater authority than other, smaller human rights organizations. It has therefore exerted influence to become involved in several legal changes.

2.1 Amendment of Article 76 of the Constitution

The EOHR released its report which discussed the amendment to article 76 concerning the election of the president.¹⁶⁹ Its annual 2007 report also discussed the amendment to article 76¹⁷⁰.

2.2 The second article of the Constitution

The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights held a symposium on the "secularization of the state" which turned into a Coptic-Muslim Brotherhood debate on canceling the second article of the Egyptian Constitution. Article two denotes Islam as the state religion, and Islamic *Sharī'ah* as the main source of legislation.¹⁷¹ Concerning this issue, the EOHR undersigned an appeal, which was sent by the Cairo Center for Human Rights Studies (CHIRS) to the president and the speakers of both houses of Parliament, calling for an amendment to this article.¹⁷²

2.3 No. 153/1999 Law

The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights and other groups used the celebrations for the 50th

166 AWR, Art. 14, Week 16/2001, Religious News Service from the Arab World, Cornelis Hulsman

167 AWR, Art. 13, Week 1/2000, *Al-cArabī*, Khālid Mansī

168 AWR, Art. 24, Week 46/2005, *Al-Maydān*, Author not mentioned

169 AWR, Art. 56, Week 40/2006, *Al-Ahrār*, Nabīl Zakī

170 <http://en.eohr.org/?p=43#more-43> (accessed 09/03/11 04:04pm)

171 AWR, Art. 22, Week 9/2006, *Ṣawt al-Ummah*, Sherin Rabīc

172 AWR, Art. 66, Week 10/2007, *Waṭanī al-Dawlī*, Author not mentioned

anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to garner support in their campaign against the proposed draft law governing the activities of NGOs, which included restrictive articles that would complicate the work of non-governmental organizations.¹⁷³ Mirvat Tallāwī, the minister of social affairs, claimed that the EOHR had applied to register under Law 153/1999.¹⁷⁴ Despite this, the EOHR criticized the recent passage of this new law covering the establishment, management and funding of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Egypt.¹⁷⁵ Commenting on the issue, Hāfiz Abū Siʿdah stated that the organization had indeed applied for registration, but that they will not go ahead until they see the executive regulations.¹⁷⁶

2.4 No. 84/2002 Law

The NGO law, the executive regulations of law 84 of 2002 on non-governmental organizations, was passed on May 6, 2002. The EOHR warned that the regulations represent the last link in the chain restricting non-governmental organization activities in Egypt as they place heavy burdens on civil participation and activity.¹⁷⁷ Hāfiz Abū Siʿdah said about this law, "the organization assured before in its report titled "the new law of institutions: Nationalizing civil work in Egypt 2002" that the new law of civil organizations No. 84/ 2002 is simply a copy of law No. 32/1964 and law No. 153/1999. Although there is difference in the numbers of laws, they all have similar aims. These are: making the government completely in control of civil work, canceling the will of the members of civil organizations and imposing anti-freedom punishment on the activities of civil work, which is a voluntary work in the first place."¹⁷⁸

2.4 Emergency Law

The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights described the ongoing state of emergency established under the emergency law as a "chronic syndrome," whereby "exceptions become the norm."¹⁷⁹ Condemning this law, Hāfiz Abū Siʿdah pointed out that there is no justification for extending the

173 AWR, Art. 14, Week 52/1998, *Cairo Times*, Author not mentioned

174 AWR, Art. 40, Week 27/1999, *Cairo Times*, Hishām Qāsim

175 AWR, Art. 55, Week 26/1999, *Middle East Times*, Thomas Cromwell

176 AWR, Art. 18, Week 24/1999, *Al-Ahrām Weekly*, Mīrz Tadrus

177 www.eohr.org/report/2002/ngos_reg.htm (accessed 09/03/11 04:14pm)

178 AWR, Art. 18, Week 48/2002, *Al-Sharq al-Awsāt*, Author not mentioned

179 AWR, Art. 38, Week 29/1999, *Al-Ahrām Weekly*, Amīrah Huwaydī

Emergency Law, arguing that the government wants to cancel article 41 of the Egyptian Constitution, which reads, “Individual freedom is a natural right and shall not be touched. Except in cases of a flagrant crime no person may be arrested, inspected, detained or restricted in any way except by an order of the competent judge or Public Prosecution necessitated by investigations and the preservation of public security. This order shall be given by the competent judge or the Public Prosecution in accordance with the provisions of the law. The law shall determine the period of custody.” He believes that the long-awaited anti-terrorism law will restrict citizens’ freedoms and curtail their rights, under the pretext of protecting the security of the nation.¹⁸⁰ Further, Hāfīz Abū Siḍdah stated that the state of emergency is more serious than terrorism.¹⁸¹ The EOHR continuously highlighted the danger of the Emergency Law no 162. of 1958, and its corrosive effect on human rights in Egypt. The Emergency Law had been shown to not only threaten basic rights and freedoms, but also to play a significant role in hindering the peaceful democratization process in society. The organization highlighted in its reports the role of the Emergency Law in usurping the role of the legislature and the judiciary and in undermining national constitutional rights and international human rights agreements to which Egypt is a party. The authorities have continuously abused the powers of the Emergency Law, particularly when dealing with political prisoners.¹⁸²

2.5 Amendments to article 179 of the Constitution

The EOHR organized a debate which included the amendments to the article 179 [“The Socialist public prosecutor shall be responsible for taking the measures which secure the people’s rights, the safety of the society and its political regime, the preservation of the socialist achievements and commitment to socialist behavior. The law shall prescribe his other competences. He shall be subject to the control of the People’s Assembly in accordance with what is prescribed by law.”], which referred to the anti-terror-law.¹⁸³ The organization believed that the government will use this amendment to act arbitrarily. In its annual report from 2007, article 179 was mentioned as potentially leading to codifying the state of emergency as a constitutional case, thereby potentially ending in the violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of citizens.¹⁸⁴

180 AWR, Art. 73, Week 19/2006, Press review

181 <http://en.eohr.org/?p=24> (accessed 09/03/11 04:07)

182 www.eohr.org/report/2003/emergency.HTM (accessed 09/03/11 04:12pm)

183 AWR, Art. 70, Week 10/2007, Press review

184 <http://en.eohr.org/?p=43#more-43> (accessed 09/03/11 04:04pm)

2.6 Proposed law about deleting the religion field from ID cards

The EOHR launched a campaign to seek the omission of religious data omitted from identity cards, a suggestion that was rejected by the government due to the importance of this information for civil considerations such as marriage and inheritance, in addition to feedback concerning the *Bahā'īs*.¹⁸⁵

3. Media evaluation

The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights was one of the first human rights organizations in Egypt. Because this organization is well-known in society and in the government, it can not escape the criticism of Arab newspapers. The Egyptian media dislikes the fact that non-governmental organizations receive foreign funding. They believe this ensures that the organization is not independent enough, and accordingly will not bite the hand that feeds them. Some newspapers even alleged that the EOHR would defame Egypt's image in exchange for financial support.

The following passages include critical statements made by the press concerning the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights. The subtitles referred to the newspapers' names.

3.1 Al-Kushh events of 1998 and the issue of receiving foreign funding

In 1998, a murder took place in al-Kushh, a village in the governorate of Sohag. Two Christian men were killed by a Muslim. The following days, security forces detained a large number of men and women and interrogated them. They in turn became victims of mistreatment at the hands of the police. The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights published a report concerning this event. Several newspapers accused the EOHR of falsifying the facts in order to receive foreign funding from the British Embassy. *Al-Usbūc*^c started a campaign against the organization, and printed a copy of the check made out to the EOHR. In this newspaper, priests from Sohag alleged that in its report on al-Kushh, the EOHR included exaggerations.¹⁸⁶ Muḥammad al-Dumyātī, a reporter for *al-Usbūc*, asserted that those who have accepted foreign funding have betrayed the work ethic of patriotic work. Human rights

185 AWR, Art. 77, Week 37/2006, *Al-Ahrām al-cArabī*, Ḥamdī Muṣṭafā

186 AWR, Art. 24, Week 44/1998, *Al-Usbūc*, Muṣṭafā Sulaymān

organizations like the EOHR should shut the file of foreign funding and go back to its principal duty, the fight against violations of human rights.¹⁸⁷ Critically, Ahmad Yūnus, the head of the Egyptian Organization for the Liberation of the Handicapped, said that his organization does not beg for money from foreign embassies in the name of the disabled. He further stated that Hāfiz Abū Si^cdah tried to deceive employees.¹⁸⁸

In another article, Simon Apiku wrote that Khālīd Ṭal^cat, the lawyer for the organization, used the *al-Uṣbū^c* report to show that the EOHR was conspiring with foreign governments to undermine the security of Egypt.¹⁸⁹ Fahmī Huwaydī defended the organization, highlighting that it is a fact that most human rights organizations and centers, as well as other organizations of a similar humanitarian nature, depend on foreign funding, and that this issue is not monopolized by the EOHR. Huwaydī continued that these human rights organizations are not above suspicion and the funding bodies do not have ulterior motives.¹⁹⁰

In another article, Dr. Waḥīd ^cAbd al-Majīd claimed that with regards to the events of al-Kushh, the report issued by the EOHR may have been misinterpreted in their use of 'cruel' language while condemning the violations committed by some officers against the villagers. He demanded that people be careful of throwing around accusations, and if people believe the church does not need defense of human rights, this should be spelled out because human rights organizations should then close their doors.¹⁹¹

A critical statement was made by Ramzī Zaqlamah, who said that the EOHR's report on the violations committed by the police contained some exaggerations which caused it to lose credibility.¹⁹² Another newspaper stated in an article that they condemn foreign funding. Further in this circulation, the newspaper claimed that Egypt is defending human rights while violations of human rights are committed across the world¹⁹³ A journalist writing in *al-Sha^cb* stated that the *Sunday Telegraph's* report contained many allegations and false information claiming Copts are persecuted in Egypt. He said that

187 AWR, Art. 10, Week 48/1998, *Al-Uṣbū^c*, Muḥammad al-Dumyāṭī

188 AWR, Art. 18, Week 36/2000, *Al-cArabī*, Author not mentioned

189 AWR, Art. 16, Week 52/1998, *Middle East Times*, Simon Apiku

190 AWR, Art. 21, Week 49/1998, *Al-Ahrām*, Fahmī Huwaydī

191 AWR, Art. 23, Week 49/1998, *Al-Wafd*, Dr. Waḥīd ^cAbd al-Majīd

192 AWR, Art. 16, Week 44/1998, *Al-Wafd*, Ramzī Zaqlamah

193 AWR, Art. 6, Week 50/1998, *Al-Sha^cb*, Author not mentioned

it did not depend on the Egyptian Human Rights Organization's report, but the writer received false information from Freedom House in Washington, Christian Solidarity International, and an Egyptian citizen, Mustafā Shukrī, who is a political refugee in the U.K., and that it ignored parts of the organization's report on violations committed by police against Muslims. Additionally, the organization's members in Sohag brought false accusations against the organization claiming it carried out suspicious activities. "The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights has an honorable history and will continue circulating its message with no fear working for respect for human rights in Egypt."¹⁹⁴

In *Rose al-Yūsuf*, cĀsim Ḥanafī remarked on the positive feedback concerning the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights by defending the organization. He said that the EOHR was mistaken in explaining the events of al-Kushh, but there was no conspiracy behind what happened. The corrupt parties are not the human rights organizations, but suspicious foreign funders. Human rights organizations are NGOs and most of them receive financial support from foreign funding agencies and international companies as a temporary alternative until they achieve financial independence.¹⁹⁵ A journalist from *al-Ahrār* said that there are 25 human rights organizations in Egypt which all come under the umbrella of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights. These organizations have split after disputes between leaders, not for the sake of human rights, but for the sake of the dollars coming from abroad. The government has also voiced accusations that serving foreign bodies means destroying Egypt's image and reputation, and thus the organizations give way for the West to intervene in internal affairs. In the same article, Nijād al-Buraḥī, the former secretary general of the organization, defended the EOHR. He said that accusing these organizations of accepting foreign funds would be one excuse the government uses whenever there is an incident involving a breach of human rights.¹⁹⁶ In one of *Akhhbār al-Hawādith's* articles, the regional members of the organization mentioned that they were ignored by the organization in Cairo. They revealed the temptations that were offered by foreign bodies to the organization in return for defaming Egypt, bribes including money, cars, fax machines, and luxurious offices. cIsmat Salīm, a lawyer and founder of the EOHR, criticized the organization when saying that the EOHR issued a report which was prepared in a suspicious way, taking into consideration only one point of view, without taking the views of other sides, and without the knowledge or the participation of its members in Sohag. Even one of the organization's members, Nāsir Ahmad al-Sayyid, criticized the organization's cooperation with migrant Coptic groups abroad, saying

194 AWR, Art. 26, Week 46/1998, *Al-Shacb*, Author not mentioned

195 AWR, Art. 15, Week 49/1998, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, cĀsim Ḥanafī

196 AWR, Art. 24, Week 46/1998, *Al-Ahrār*, Author not mentioned

it was tempting Copts to migrate.¹⁹⁷

One of *al-Akhhār's* authors, in cooperation with members of the organization, claimed that EOHR's report on the al-Kushh events, contained false information and allegations that depended on one source - bishop Wīsā of al-Bilyanā, the diocese al-Kushh belongs to. Bishop Wīsā was not an independent source and closely collaborated with Coptic activists in the West to broadcast Coptic problems in al-Kushh in an effort to put pressure on the Egyptian government. Members of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights in Sohag condemned the report for containing false information and allegations.¹⁹⁸ Yūsuf Sidhum, editor-in-chief of *Waṭanī*, asked, "Why did the members of the EOHR in Sohag come two months late? Does it have something to do with the media frenzy we see these days?"¹⁹⁹ He did not believe that the Muslim-Christian relations in Sohag are as peaceful as members of the EOHR claimed. Journalist °Abd Allāh Kamāl stated that there is a lack of credibility and apparent conspiracy behind the EOHR report. He claimed it first talked about thousands, then hundreds, and then it talked of murder vendettas between Muslims and Christians which never happened. It further mentioned bishop Wīsā who was allegedly facing charges that could result in a death sentence if convicted. The charges, however, never even reached court, in addition to pipe dreams about nailing, crucifying, and rapes.²⁰⁰ This quote appeared in the newspaper but did not present the real published EOHR report. °Abd Allāh Kamāl exacerbated the issue by changing the facts. Minister of Interior, General Habīb al-°Adily, claimed that the EOHR was accused of receiving more than \$25,000 as a donation from a foreign embassy. As this organization was not granted permission to carry out its activities, it is not allowed to receive finances from foreign countries.²⁰¹ A defender of the organization was Karam Jabr (see earlier in this report the Land Center for Human Rights) who said that the human rights market needs to be re-organized without turning the EOHR or Hāfīz Abū Si°dah into a scapegoat. Commenting on this, Hāfīz Abū Si°dah said that Mustafā Bakrī, who harshly criticized the organization in *al-Uṣbū°c* and believed that it was wrong to send incorrect reports to foreign bodies just as a means of receiving funding, was a member of board of trustees of the EOHR. He was one of those who had agreed to accept funding from the British parliament for a project concerning the legal aid of women.²⁰² But in *al-Maydān*, Mustafā Bakrī, editor-in-chief of *al-Uṣbū°c* newspaper and a former member of the organization's board of

197 AWR, Art. 19, Week 47/1998, *Akhhār al-Hawādith*, Khālid Ḥasan

198 AWR, Art. 9, Week 45/1998, *Al-Akhhār*, Author not mentioned

199 AWR, Art. 18, Week 45/1998, *Waṭanī*, Yūsuf Sidhum

200 AWR, Art. 23, Week 44/1998, *Al-Liwā' al-Islāmī*, °Abd Allāh Kamāl

201 AWR, Art. 6, Week 3/1999, *Al-Muṣawwar*, Sanā' Al-Sacīd

202 AWR, Art. 13, Week 49/1998, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Karam Jabr

trustees, claimed that when the issue of foreign funding was brought up in the board of trustees, he objected and left the organization at that time.²⁰³ His allegations implied that the EOHR was dishonest, because Hāfīz Abū Siʿdah had previously stated in *Rose al-Yūsuf* that Mustafā Bakrī agreed to receive foreign funding for a project concerning women's legal aid. Thomas Cromwell, editor-in-chief and publisher of the Middle East Times, said that the EOHR was loudly criticized by the 'independent' press for accepting funding from abroad for the preparation of some of its reports, and its director was briefly imprisoned.²⁰⁴ With this statement he came to defend the organization.

3.2 Closing the EOHR

Hāfīz Abū Siʿdah apparently closed the organization for a while for lack of finance, stating that the work of the organization would take place on a voluntary basis from 6.00pm to 9.00pm. He also froze the organization's bank accounts and fired all regular employees, who then filed a case before the administrative department of Old Cairo.²⁰⁵ For this, even employees of the organization sent critical statements to the EOHR including questions such as, “What is behind the closing of the organization? A secret deal, or a financial crisis?” This quote raised skepticism about the real motives behind the organization's closure, and whether it was in fact a deal between the Secretary General, Hāfīz Abū Siʿdah, and the government.²⁰⁶ Additionally, these members complained that Hāfīz Abū Siʿdah made the decision to shut down the organization following a deal with the state department, concerning his personal safety and a reduction in the organization's activities. They also claimed that Hāfīz Abū Siʿdah did this because they refused to form a committee to defend Saʿd al-Dīn Ibrāhīm, a human rights activist.²⁰⁷

Jihān Luṭfī and employees of the EOHR criticized the fact that suddenly, and for no discernible reasons, Hāfīz Abū Siʿdah decided to close the organization, without referring to the Council of Secretaries, the general council of the organization, or the employees.²⁰⁸ On the other hand, two lawyers from EOHR, Saʿīd ʿAbduh and Hasan Yūsuf, defended the other opinion, assuring everyone that it was a financial crisis and that the organization was not closed, and had merely stopped taking on

203 AWR, Art. 16, Week 1/1999, *Al-Maydān*, Mohammad Hasan al-Alfī and cUlā' Shadīd

204 AWR, Art. 55, Week 26/1999, *Middle East Times*, Thomas Cromwell

205 AWR, Art. 6, Week 33/2000, *Al-Uṣbūc*, Author not mentioned

206 AWR, Art. 13, Week 34/2000, *Al-Uṣbūc*, Muhammad Abū al-Nūr

207 AWR, Art. 6, Week 33/2000, *Al-Uṣbūc*, Author not mentioned

208 AWR, Art. 9, Week 33/2000, *cAqīdatī*, Jihān Luṭfī

new cases, and would follow up the current cases in a limited time schedule.²⁰⁹

3.3 Criticism

Safā' cĀshūr, a reporter, criticized the EOHR for being an illegal organization. He claimed that it is not an NGO, and while being an illegitimate entity, it is still active in pretending to sponsor national interests. Further he stated that the organization collected U.S. financial grants.²¹⁰ Additional criticism came from another writer from *al-Uṣbūc* who criticized the fact that Hāfīz Abū Si'cдах did not pay attention to the executive board's decision that the organization would suspend its membership in the International Federation of Human Rights in protest about the change of its policy toward Israel. He used the International Federation Against Persecution's campaign to finance his book. According to the same author, the EOHR also did not pay some employees' salaries and refused to increase the salaries of some others, while Abū Si'cдах ran up a lot of expenses during his residence in Paris, in spite of the 150,000 Euros, which the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights received from the European Union.²¹¹ In *al-Sharq al-Awsāt*, Muhammad Subhū, a famous actor and director of 'Knight Without a Horse,' which was criticized by the EOHR for promoting ideas that may cause hatred on the basis of religion, race or color, sarcastically described the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights as a "Zionist organization working against Egypt." He wondered whether the name of the organization is the "Egyptian" or the "Zionist" organization, and whether it protects the rights of Egyptian or Israeli people.²¹² Dr. Muḥammad Salīm al-cAwwā praised the activities of the EOHR by saying that these are made on a true democratic bases.²¹³

3.5 Conclusion

Opinion on the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights is divided in the Arab media. Some newspapers defend the organization, while others criticize it harshly. The main fact which caused negative comments from reporters, was the organization's alleged false report on the events of al-Kushh to receive foreign funding. *Al-Uṣbūc* in particular blamed the EOHR for trying to defame Egypt's image in the eyes of the world. Its editor-in-chief, Mustafā Bakrī, got the ball rolling by printing a check made

209 AWR, Art. 13, Week 34/2000, *Al-Uṣbūc*, Muhammad Abū al-Nūr

210 AWR, Art. 34, Week 33/2006, *Al-Uṣbūc*, Safā' cĀshūr

211 AWR, Art. 21, Week 14/2000, *Al-Uṣbūc*, Author not mentioned

212 AWR, Art. 12, Week 47/2002, *Al-Sharq al-Awsāt*, Author not mentioned

213 AWR, Art. 7, Week 13/1999, *Al-Ahrām*, Dr. Muḥammad Salīm al-cAwwā

out to the EOHR by the British Embassy in its newspaper. He claimed that the organization published a report with wrong facts on the al-Kushh incident, which the organization itself denied. Because a lot of newspapers thought that a human rights organization could not work independently if it received funding by foreign bodies, the EOHR was criticized for this fact. *Al-Usbūc* published critical statements because its editor-in-chief was the one who started this campaign against the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights. Furthermore, all Islamic newspapers excoriated the EOHR. This might be because of the events in al-Kushh and the organization's report on them, which cast a slur on Muslims in Egypt. Noteworthy is that human rights organizations which supported Christians rights, were not very well-liked by the conservative Islamic media. But one exception was made by Fahmī Huwaydī, an Islamist who defended the EOHR in his articles. A major problem of the organization in the eyes of critical newspapers is that the organization has lost its credibility, but despite this many reporters came to the defense of the EOHR and its report. *The Middle East Times*, *al-Ahrām*, *al-Wafd*, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, and *Wāṭanī* in particular supported the organization, because their opinion was that all non-governmental organizations have to receive funding from abroad in the beginning to finance themselves because they do not get financial support from the government. Finally, a lot of neutral articles were found in the Arab-West Report database concerning this organization.

4. Key persons (see Web site)

Members mentioned on the EOHR Web site ²¹⁴ (March, 2009) [own spelling]	Members mentioned in the articles of the AWR data base [Library of Congress spelling]	Functions
Abd al-Aziz Muhammad	ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Muhammad	Honorary President
Hesham Kasem	Hishām Qāsim	President
Hafez Abu Seada	Hāfīz Abū Saʿdah	Secretary General (also member of the National Council for Human Rights is this correct?)
Abu El Kasem El Nubi	Abū al-Qāsim al-Nūbī (no AWR reference)	Treasurer

214 http://en.eohr.org/?page_id=2 (accessed: 09/03/24, 03:58pm)

Ahmed Abd El Malak	Aḥmad °Abd al-Malāk (no AWR reference)	Member
Dr. Ibrāhīm Dusūqī Abāzah	Ibrāhīm al-Dusūqī Abāzah	Member
Dr. Ayman Anwar	Ayman Anwar (No AWR reference)	Member
Gaser Abd El Razek (according to AWR staff member of CHRLA and Hisham Mubarak law center, nothing mentioned about EOHR)	Jāsir °Abd al-Rāziq	Member
Reda Tolba	Riḍā Ṭulbah (No AWR reference)	Member
Salah Isa	Ṣalāḥ °Īsá	Member
Abdallah Abd El Lateef	°Abd Allāḥ °Abd al-Laṭīf	Member
Fareda El Nakash.	Farīdah al-Naqqāsh	Member
Muhammad Zari	Muḥammad Zāri° (According to AWR database staffmember at the Human Rights Center for the Assistance of Prisoners, nothing about EOHR)	Member
Naser Amin	Nāṣir Amīn	Member
Nejad el-Bura'i	Nijād al-Bura'ī	Member
Yāsir Hasan	Yāsir Ḥasan (No AWR reference)	Member
	Nāsir Ahmad al-Sayyid	Member (1998)
	Dr. Muḥammad Salīm al-°Awwā	Member of the Council of Secretaries of the EOHR (1999)

5. Web site

Different aspects of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights were criticized in the aforementioned press releases. But it is necessary to see how the organization describes itself on its homepage. Of course mainly positive facts will be found. The following paragraphs will compare the web site to the information which were found in the press releases, and draw an image of the EOHR as it sees itself.

The Web site of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights is <http://en.eohr.org/>.²¹⁵ The site is available in English and Arabic. Available material includes a summary of its annual report from 2007, as well as reports, statements, videos (in Arabic), a legislative reform forum (ELRF), and archives. To access old press releases it is necessary to enter the old homepage [www.eohr.org/old/]²¹⁶. The rubrics of the Web site are 'Pages' [which includes 'Home', 'About EOHR', 'EOHR Submits a Number of Bills Before human rights committee in the Parliament'], 'Categories' [which includes 'Annual Report', 'ELRF', 'Reports', 'Statements', 'Videos'] and 'Achieves' [which includes 'February 2004' until 'March 2009']. On the front page recent posts are also mentioned. The homepage provides a search function which searches the entered keywords in all posts and reports which are findable on the web site.

6. Conclusion

The organization's web site clearly paints a positive image of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights. The homepage states that the EOHR is a non-profit organization which is working within the framework of the principles established in Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other international human rights instruments regardless of the identity or the affiliation of the victims or of the violators. But the aforementioned criticism in the Arab newspapers claimed that the organization would try everything to receive money from foreign countries – even lie and defame the image of its own nation. This implies that the organization would not only work for the “honorable goals” of defending and promoting human rights, but for profit by earning money. The Web site did not mention Muslim-Christian relations separately. The main information concerning Copts are posts about tensions around the Abū Fānā monastery. The laws listed on the site were the same as in the releases on Arab-West Report's database. Negative press releases and statements about the EOHR were not found on the

215 <http://en.eohr.org/> (accessed 09/03/11 02:43pm)

216 www.eohr.org/old/ (accessed 09/03/11 02:45pm)

Web site.

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)

Introduction

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights (CIHRS, also called Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies) is a research center, specializing in human rights.

Despite the CHIRS being founded in 1993, just 48 articles mentioning this organization were found on the Arab-West Report database.

1. Description of purpose

The purpose of the center, as is described on its Web site, is as follows. “The Cairo Center for Human Rights is an independent, regional, non-governmental organization founded in 1993. It aims at promoting respect for the principles of human rights and democracy, analyzing the difficulties facing the application of international human rights law and disseminating human rights culture in the Arab region as well as engaging in dialogue between cultures in respect to the various international human rights treaties and declarations. The CIHRS seeks to attain this objective through the developing, proposing and promoting policies, legislations and constitutional amendments. The center works on human rights advocacy in national, regional and international human rights mechanisms, research and human rights education – both for youth and ongoing professional development for human rights defenders. The CIHRS is a major publisher of information, a magazine, an academic quarterly, and scores of books concerning human rights.²¹⁷ Concerning freedom of expression, the center organized a workshop in cooperation with the International Media Support (IMS), and in coordination with the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), the Moroccan Organization of Human Rights (OMDH), and the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (DCHRS), in Cairo from December 7 – 8 , 2006, entitled, 'Freedom of Expression Across Cultures.,' A group of journalists, human rights defenders, artists, novelists and academics from Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, Syria, Morocco, Denmark

²¹⁷ www.cihrs.org/English/Aboutus.aspx (accessed 09/03/15, 02:10pm)

and France participated in the workshop.²¹⁸

Regarding dialogue, CIHRS created an extra heading named “Culture Dialogue” where posts about this topic were mentioned.²¹⁹ Several posts on Christians are mentioned, but no additional points on Christians' rights were included. Finally, CIHRS released its first annual report in 2008, in which violations against freedom of expression by censoring media were mentioned.²²⁰ The mistreatment of prisoners was also discussed.²²¹

Commenting on the freedom of belief, the report stated that Muslims who converted to Christianity, as well as Copts who converted to Islam and wanted to return to their old religion, were discriminated against. It also mentioned that a large problem facing the *Bahā'īs* is that their religion is still not legally mentioned on their official identity documents. Even the increase in sectarian tensions in Egypt and the discrimination against Copts was mentioned.²²² The arrest of the Qur'ānists, a Muslim denomination, under allegations that they would reject the traditions of the prophet, demonstrated that Muslims are also subject to the invidiousness.²²³

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights organizes and holds conferences, seminars and symposiums, for example the conference on the renewal of religious discourse by considering non-Arab Islamic experiences,²²⁴ as well as a conference about racism.²²⁵ A seminar organized by Salon Ibn Rushd at the Cairo Institute about Copts' problems in Egypt further illustrates the center's initiative.²²⁶ Additionally, Bahī al-Dīn Ḥasan, the general director of the CHIRS, presented a paper in which he pointed out the reasons for religious tension in the Arab world.²²⁷ It is evident that the organization's main goal, as stated in the Arab newspapers, is religious issues.

Freedom of religion and freedom of expression are both a part of the center's aims – although religious aspects appear to be the center of focus. CIHRS held a symposium on the second article of the

218 www.cihrs.org/English/NewsSystem/Articles/455 (accessed 09/03/15, 02:19pm)

219 www.cihrs.org/English/NewsSystem/ArticlesListing/13 (accessed 09/03/15, 02:16pm)

220 Annual Report 2008, www.cihrs.org/English/NewsSystem/Articles/548 (accessed 09/03/16, 09:22am), p.35

221 Annual Report 2008, www.cihrs.org/English/NewsSystem/Articles/548 (accessed 09/03/15, 04:50pm), p.37

222 Annual Report 2008, www.cihrs.org/English/NewsSystem/Articles/548 (accessed 09/03/16, 09:30am), p.38 et seq.

223 Annual Report 2008, www.cihrs.org/English/NewsSystem/Articles/548 (accessed 09/03/16, 09:55am), p.106

224 AWR, Art. 11, Week 22/2006, *Al-Qāhira*, Ḥusām Tammām

225 AWR, Art. 3, Week 29/2001, *Al-Maydān*, Wahīd Ra'fat

226 AWR, Art. 42, Week 20/2006, *Waṭanī*, Ishāq Ibrāhīm, Rimon Edward

227 AWR, Art. 52, Week 37/2006, *Al-Qāhira*, Bahī al-Dīn Ḥasan

Egyptian Constitution, which enforces Islamic *Sharīʿah* as the main source of legislation. It was held under the title, 'The Plight of the Freedom of Faith in Egypt,' during which Ahmad Sayf al-Islām, the head of the Hishām Mubārak Law Center, asserted that freedom of belief is a right guaranteed by the Constitution and international charters.²²⁸ CIHRS also held a cultural seminar entitled, 'An Islamic Party and the Freedom of Thought and Expression,' where Dr. Ahmad Subhī Mansūr, an Islamic researcher and a former Azhar University professor, said, "The freedom of opinion and beliefs is unconditional, as the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah* confirmed."²²⁹ Salon Ibn Rushd also held a seminar about the defense of *ijtihād*, the freedom of interpretation, in the Cairo Institute for Human Rights.²³⁰ CIHRS issued a book that handled the problem of freedom of expression from different angles.²³¹

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights incorporated dialogue into its work to prevent a link to human rights. For example, Bāhī al-Dīn Ḥasan expressed his opinion by saying that it is necessary to remove all taboos and sensitive considerations in order to build an active, deep, and serious intercultural dialogue. Such dialogue is necessary to decrease sectarian tensions in Egypt, and eliminate prejudices in European countries.²³²

Muslim-Christians relations play a big role in the Cairo Institute's work. It published a study on the relationship between Muslims and Copts in Egypt, introduced by *Ākhir Sāʿah* newspaper, and prepared by Khālīd ʿUthmān, a master's student in the Faculty of Education, Tanta University. At the end of the study the researcher identified a number of values (citizenship, participation, equality, dignity, justice, freedom of expression and belief, social peace, and tolerance) that could help maintain good relations between Muslims and Christians.²³³

CIHRS organized a seminar on the future of the relationship between Islam and the West. All participants agreed that Arabs and Muslims were responsible for the campaign of hatred directed against them in the West.²³⁴ It additionally organized a debate on updating the religious discourse, during which Sayyid Ismāʿīl, a journalist, said "the aim of presenting this debate is to show that we need to "change" the religious discourse, instead of simply updating it."²³⁵ CIHRS has also been invited

228 AWR, Art. 55, Week 52/2006, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Huwaydā Yahyá

229 AWR, Art. 4, Week 28/2000, *Al-Ahrār*, Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Hādī

230 AWR, Art. 2, Week 19/2000, *Al-Ahālī*, Khālīd al-Fīshāwī

231 AWR, Art. 2, Week 32/2007, *Al-Ahālī*, Rihāb al-Sāmāhī

232 AWR, Art. 52, Week 37/2006, *Al-Qāhirah*, Bāhī al-Dīn Ḥasan

233 AWR, Art. 14, Week 35/2006, *Ākhir Sācah*, ʿAlāʾ ʿAzmī, Maḥmūd Mitwallī, Aḥmad al-Sacdawī

234 AWR, Art. 14, Week 44/2001, *Al-Ahālī*, Author not mentioned

235 AWR, Art. 14, Week 33/2006, *Al-Qāhirah*, Talcat Radwān

to organize and attend a conference on human rights and innovation of religious preaching.²³⁶ The center stated that jokes in Egypt have recently been addressing Muslim-Christian relations, which further kindles sectarian clashes.²³⁷ The Salon Ibn Rushd, linked to the Cairo Institute for Human Rights, organized a seminar at CIHRS, in which a number of famous intellectuals took part, to tackle Copts' problems in Egypt. The authors of this article, Ishaq Ibrāhīm and Rimon Edward, stated that some of the participants believed that Copts do not face any discrimination and they enjoy all their political rights, while others expressed concerns over the deteriorating situation of the Copts in Egypt.²³⁸

2. Advocacy for Legal Change

The Cairo Center for Human Rights Studies tries to maintain an active presence in the legal spectrum.

2.1 Amending the second article of the Constitution

In 2007, the CIHRS sent the president and the speakers of both houses of parliament an appeal calling to amend article two of the Constitution²³⁹ which was suggested in 1980 and does not mention other sources of legislation, which required legislative bodies to employ Islamic *Shari'ah* as the main source of legislation, even when it proves insufficient. The document noted that such an amendment was a huge setback for the process of strengthening the concepts of citizenship and the civil state.²⁴⁰ The signatories stressed their rejection of the idea of a religious state, as it contradicts with the neutrality of the state toward its citizens, and ensuring equality among them.²⁴¹ Also Mu'taz al-Fujayrī, the executive director of the center, asked for amendments to articles five and two because they are contradictory. Article five reads, "The political system of the Arab Republic of Egypt is a multi party one, within the framework of the basic elements and principles of the Egyptian society as stipulated in the Constitution (Political parties are regulated by law)," while article two states, "Islam is the religion of the state and Arabic its official language. Islamic jurisprudence is the principal source of legislation." They also ask to separate religion from the state to assert that Egypt is a civil state, which

236 AWR, Art. 81, Week 50/2006, *Sabāh al-Khayr*, Rushdī Abū al-Ḥasan

237 AWR, Art. 47, Week 37/2006, *Al-Fajr*; Āmāl Mucawwaḍ

238 AWR, Art. 42, Week 20/2006, *Waṭanī*, Ishaq Ibrāhīm, Remon Edward

239 AWR, Art. 66, Week 10/2007, *Waṭanī al-Dawlī*, Not mentioned

240 AWR, Art. 67, Week 11/2007, *Waṭanī al-Dawlī*, cĀdil Jindī

241 AWR, Art. 71, Week 11/2007, *Waṭanī al-Dawlī*, Majdī Khalīl

will ensure the principle of citizenship²⁴²

2.2 Constitution of 1971

In criticism of the Constitution of 1971, the center issued a book by lawyer Ahmad ‘Abd al-Hāfīz entitled, 'Naqd Dustūr 1971 wa al-Da‘wah li-Dustūr Jadīd,' (Criticizing the Constitution of 1971 and the Call for a New Constitution). Furthermore, the CIHRS held a conference in 2005 entitled 'Toward a New Egyptian Constitution.' The book interpreted the articles of the Constitution, showing that it does not allow for society to freely practice their political rights, which gives the state the right to practice hegemony over every social and political activity in society.²⁴³

2.3 Bahā’īs lawsuit

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights has also expressed disagreement with the dual attitudes with which the Egyptian government is handling the case of the *Bahā’īs*, concerning the rejection of the *Bahā’īs*' lawsuit. Its report asserted the trouble which the governmental institutions are facing with the previously mentioned Supreme Administrative Court. For registering a religion other than the three acknowledged religions is considered to be a violation of the law. Rejecting the registration of different religions would be considered a clear violation of article 40 of the Egyptian Constitution of 1971, which prohibits discriminating against citizens because of their sex, race, language, religion, or doctrine.²⁴⁴

2.4 Emergency Law

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights criticized the fact that the government renewed the Emergency Law in 2008 for an additional two years. The government renounced its intention to replace this law with a new anti-terrorism-law – despite both having the same prerogatives.²⁴⁵ This anti-terrorism-law however, was not finalized, thereby validating the government's alleged need to extend the Emergency

242 AWR, Art. 92, Week 9/2007, *Wāṭanī*, Hānī Daniel, Nāṣir Ṣubḥī

243 AWR, Art. 39, Week 46/2006, *Wāṭanī*, Nabīl cAbd al-Malik

244 AWR, Art. 18, Week 3/2007, *Al-Miṣrī al-Yawm*, Wā’il cAlī

245 Annual Report 2008, www.cihrs.org/English/NewsSystem/Articles/548 (accessed 09/03/16, 09:19am), p.36

Law.²⁴⁶

3. Media evaluation

Despite there being 48 articles about the organization in the Arab-West Report database, the center received minimal criticism, and even this was not very harsh.

3.1 Renewing the Islamic discourse

Fahmī Huwaydī, a political Islamist, made a comment in *Al-Ahrār*, which could be interpreted as negative. *Al-Ahrār* is an Egyptian weekly newspaper and belongs to the opposition Ahrār Party. He stated that “Catholic France is hosting a meeting with the aim of renewing Islamic religious speech. Furthermore, it is the European Union that funded the meeting which is organized by an Egyptian organization (CHIRS) depending on foreign funding in cooperation with two other European organizations.”²⁴⁷ As Fahmī Huwaydī is an Islamist, he did not agree that France, which is, mistakenly, seen as a Christian country, spoke about the renewal of the Islamic discourse. He saw it as a negative stance that the EU and European organizations funded this meeting. Yet all in all, this criticism was not directed toward the center alone.

3.2 Media Conclusion

The Cairo Center for Human Rights was rarely criticized in the 48 articles found in AWR's database. However it is unclear whether CHIRS was subject to less criticism because it is doing a good job, or whether it avoided having a media presence. It should be noted that even positive feedback was not found, thus the newspapers remained neutral in their evaluation. It shows that the media does not consider the center's importance as on par with human rights organizations such as the National Council for Human Rights and the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights. For all that, it is strange that the press did not direct more criticism toward CHIRS as it does receive foreign funding, and supports Christians and the *Bahā'īs*.

246 Annual Report 2008, <http://www.cihrs.org/English/NewsSystem/Articles/548> (accessed 09/03/16, 09:40am), p.98

247 AWR, Art. 15, Week 41/2003, *Al-Ahrār*; Fahmī Huwaydī

4. Key persons

<i>Members mentioned on the Web site²⁴⁸ (March, 2009)</i> [own spelling]	<i>Members mentioned in the articles of the AWR data base</i> [spelling by Library of Congress]	<i>Functions</i>
Kamal Jendoubi	Kamāl Jandūbī (no AWR reference)	President
Bahey el-Din Hassan	Bāhīy al-Dīn Ḥasan	General Director
Mohammed EL Sayed Said	Muḥammad al-Sayyid Saʿīd	Academic Adviser
Moataz El Fegiery	Muʿtaz al-Fujayrī	Executive Director

(Also mentioned in the AWR database is Bassām Muḥammad Bahjat.)

5. Web site

CIHRS's homepage [www.cihrs.org/english/default.aspx²⁴⁹] is available in English and Arabic. Its search function makes it easy to find topics and posts. On the Web site the categories 'Home,' 'HR Advocacy,' which includes 'HR in the Arab world' and 'International & Regional Mechanisms,' 'HR Education & Dissemination,' which includes 'Training & Education,' 'Sawasia Magazine,' 'Publications' and 'Ibn Rushd Salon,' 'Cultures, Religions & HR,' which includes 'Rowaq Arabi Periodical,' 'Culture Dialogue' and 'Islam, Islamist & HR,' 'Press Releases & Statements,' and 'Issues & Opinions' exist. The center also provides the possibility of subscribing to receive CIHRS's newsletter. On the site old and new posts are available concerning human rights and the center. The entire homepage is a collection of press releases, which show, that the center rigorously follows newspapers' reactions to the center's activities. Of course, it also gives the impression that the CIHRS cares about the promotion of human rights through the media. But it is strange, that the site contains the statement 'The views expressed in this site do not necessarily reflect those of the CIHRS.' on its homepage because this site should be a reflection of the center's activities and opinions. By using this comment it appears that CIHRS does not want to take responsibility for some of its statements which do not fit certain people's opinions.

²⁴⁸ www.cihrs.org/English/Aboutus.aspx (accessed 09/03/24, 11:44am)

²⁴⁹ www.cihrs.org/english/default.aspx (accessed 09/03/15, 12:20pm)

6. Conclusion

The Web site of the Cairo Center for Human Rights provides a lot of posts and press releases, and is therefore useful in providing an impression of the center's goals. It seems that CHIRS focuses on freedom of religion and expression, as most articles found revolve around these core themes. However, another important issue for them is the mistreatment of prisoners. The center seems to be minimally involved in legal changes because very few articles about laws and bills were found on the homepage – and these which were found belonged to the 2008 annual report. All in all, the CHIRS Web site includes a lot of reports about the center's activities.

Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-violence Studies

(AITAS)

Introduction

The Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-violence Studies (AITAS) was registered in 2005 as a non-profit company, founded by young Muslims and Christians. The institute is not an NGO because of the difficulties it has experienced and foresaw in applying for this status. The institute is not alone in doing so. Many other Egyptian organizations registered as a non-profit company instead of a non-profit organization (NGO). The NGO has tax exemptions that a company does not have but registering as an NGO is an extremely difficult procedure and once accepted as an NGO, permissions for obtaining funding are needed which are very hard to obtain. A non-profit company must channel 'profits,' if made, back into the organization and is, unlike the NGO, not dependent on interferences of the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

The following overview is based on three press releases (all that was available) from the AWR database from 2005 and 2006. These were compared to the organization's website.

1. Description of purpose

The Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-violence Studies is a non-profit human rights organization, not a NGO but a company, which was established by four young Muslim and Christian Egyptians with the mission of spreading peace, tolerance and dialogue in Egypt. The institute is an independent research institution promoting the values of tolerance and equal citizenship, and aspiring to contribute to human resources development in Egyptian and Arab societies. It has high levels of transparency in its activities which gives it good credibility with the Egyptian people. Many members work on a voluntary basis. The AITAS receives funding from abroad, mostly from the U.S. However, mainly Egyptians support the ideas of the organization. The idea has also been mooted to transform the

institute's radio station, “Horytna,”²⁵⁰ into a profitable one. The institute is committed to the declaration of the principles of tolerance, as well as all international documents, conventions and declarations relevant to human rights.²⁵¹ Their slogan is 'Unity in Diversity.' The four men who founded the institute were Ahmad Samīh, director of the institute and a graduate of the Faculty of Political Science at 6th October University, Muhammad Zāri^c, a law graduate, Peter Nabīl, an expert on communication engineering, and Bāsīm Samīr, who has a B.A in business administration.²⁵² The Andalus Institute holds symposiums, for example about Copts and their citizenship rights and participation in politics²⁵³ and organized peaceful demonstrations, for example against terrorism.²⁵⁴ The institute monitors Egyptian newspapers on issues like human rights, tolerance, and violation. Its goals are to create a culture of tolerance and to meet the issues of cultural intolerance, racial intolerance, sexism, political intolerance and the absence of democracy, and religious intolerance. The target group of the organization is young people between 15 and 35 years old.²⁵⁵ The Andalus Institute cooperates with other organizations abroad. The institute organized the project STC (Stop Think Change), which is a youth initiated program consisting of eight sessions that aim to develop the youth to be able to tackle difficulties in Egyptian society. This project is taking place in cooperation with three other countries: Jordan, Poland, and Germany.²⁵⁶ AITAS also offers internships to students from the Arab world.

The Andalus Institute wants to spread tolerance and dialogue in the face of violence.²⁵⁷ The institute published a report, entitled 'Autumn of Hatred,' about sectarian tensions in Egypt. This project concerned Christian-Muslim violence.²⁵⁸ That the institute published a report about this topic shows that it is involved especially in the relationship between Muslims and Christians. Also in its publication, 'The Egyptian Press and the Industry of Bigotry,' it monitors newspapers and speaks about topics which they cover relating to *Bahā'īs*, Christians, Jews and Muslims.²⁵⁹

Muslim-Christian relations seem to be a big part of the organization's work – especially as its founding members were both Christians and Muslims. It has held symposiums to discuss Coptic isolation. One

250 <http://horytna.net/> (accessed 09/03/26, 12:26pm)

251 www.horytna.net/Articles/PrintDetails.aspx?AID=8443&ZID=227 (accessed 09/03/26, 12:05pm)

252 AWR, Art. 20, Week 34/2005, *Al-Akhhbār*, Nelly cIzzat

253 AWR, Art. 44, Week 14/2006, Watani International, Mājid Samīr, Rimon Edward, Angel Ridā

254 AWR, Art. 16, Week 32/2005, *Al-Ahrār*, Safā' cIsām al-Dīn

255 www.andalusitas.net/ar/index.php (accessed 09/03/22, 09:44am)

256 www.andalusitas.net/ar/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=19&Itemid=1 (accessed 09/03/22, 10:14am)

257 AWR, Art. 20, Week 34/2005, *Al-Akhhbār*, Nelly cIzzat

258 www.andalusitas.net/ar/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=28 (accessed 09/03/22, 10:38am)

259 AITAS, Egyptian Press and the Industry of Bigotry: Baha'is... Pope Benedict... Jews... The Brotherhoods...

of these was the symposium 'Copts: their citizenship rights and participation in politics.' At this symposium, Sāmih Fawzī, a researcher who is involved in citizenship and human rights activities, writing for the newspaper *Watani International*, said that an intact Egyptian citizenship is necessary to put an end to the struggle between Muslims and Copts.²⁶⁰

2. Advocacy for Legal Change

2.1 Unified Law for Houses of Worship

In its report 'Autumn of Hatred' the Andalus institute called for the enactment of a universal law on places of worship to bring an end to the problems surrounding church building. Further, the institute demanded the deletion of religious data from ID cards on the basis of article 40 of the Constitution which states that the state and its institutions have to deal with all citizens on equal terms.²⁶¹

3. Media evaluation

No criticisms were found in the newspapers in the AWR database even though the institute is very present in the press. It even published a book entitled 'The Egyptian Press and the Industry of Bigotry,' in which the organization monitored several Egyptian newspapers.²⁶²

4. Key persons

<i>Members mentioned in the articles of the AWR data base</i> [spelling based on the Library of Congress spelling]	<i>Functions</i>
Aḥmad Samīḥ	Founding Member and Director of the Center
Muḥammad Zāri ^c	Founding Member

²⁶⁰ AWR, Art. 44, Week 14/2006, *Watani International*, Mājīd Samīr, Remon Edward, Angel Riḍā

²⁶¹ www.andalusitas.net/ar/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=28 (accessed 09/03/22, 10:38am)

²⁶² AITAS, *Egyptian Press and the Industry of Bigotry: Baha'is... Pope Benedict... Jews... The Brotherhoods...*

Peter Nabīl (no AWR reference)	Founding Member
Bāsim Samīr (no AWR reference)	Founding Member

4.1 An interview with Ahmad Samīh of the Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies

This interview was conducted by Cornelis Hulsmann and Jonas Rye Nielsen and took place at the Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies's offices in Cairo.

Jonas Rye Nielsen: many organizations are working on the issue of violence, so what makes your organization different?

Ahmad Samīh: We focus on young people, because we think that the future of Egypt, is in the hands of the young people.

Cornelis Hulsmann: What do the statistics say about the number of young people in Egypt?

Ahmad Samīh: the official statistics say that 60 % of the entire Egyptian population is under the age of 35.

Jonas Rye Nielsen: We have a question about funding. Do you receive foreign funding as your only income?

Ahmad Samīh: Yes, it is not all my money.

Jonas Rye Nielsen: I was thinking more in the line of, is it companies abroad that sponsor you or are you getting funding from sources within Egypt?

Ahmad Samīh: no companies, we are working in three levels. There are some projects like the book project that we have right, there is a competition on the radio about if you read a book, you have to write about it, if you write a good review about the book you get another book. We do this voluntarily; the people who are supervising the competition are doing it voluntarily. And the people who provide the books are publishing houses. Young publishing houses like al-Malama and Uktub. This is a new project and they are trying to support us.²⁶³ Some embassies are also supporting this, especially the American embassy they are sending us translation units and are publishing books. Some activities like (Marra wa Rakha²⁶⁴) is build on the personal beliefs of a person who is very much in favor of an idea and who wants to continue with this idea, so he does a full time job voluntarily, one once or twice a

263 00.02.30

264 00.02.49

week²⁶⁵. Another one who is doing this is an anchor on a FM radio station, she now has her own show but she is also expressing her own ideas on, a different show on horytna.net for free so this is a level of sources. So this you can say personal relation sources or people believe about what you do sources.²⁶⁶ The last level is things which need financial support. And we are receiving funding from different international organizations and different international entities. We receive financial aid from USAID²⁶⁷, the American embassy in Cairo, Press Now, Freedom House and other international organizations who has been doing good projects in various countries like Egypt and we have been their Egyptian partners so we receive financial support from them.

Cornelis Hulsman: how much financial support is there from Egypt itself?

Ahmad Samih: The financial support from Egypt is zero. You are talking about money, how much people put into our bank account? Zero, nobody is doing this.

Some Egyptian business men and people who believe in what we do sometimes support some specific ideas. They don't give money but for example if you have a training session, they might buy food for the session. So if you have the room you only need the instructor and sometimes the instructor is coming for free... But there is no Egyptian funding, not directly.

Cornelis Hulsman: But how does this become sustainable long term? You will then always remain dependent on foreign funding?

Ahmad Samih: This is one of things we are trying to find the solution for. One of the concept we are trying to do is make a profitable website horytna.net and to publish newspapers or magazines to not receive aid. But now we are still discussing that. Because we have two different interests, the public interest and the business interest. For instance are you going to keep your programs with out advertising. If you do advertising how much percent of the time will you do advertising and what is the requirement of the advertisement? Is your goal and the advertiser's goal the same? One of the main things is, are they going to keep you using open sources? It is not easy.

Jonas Rye Nielsen: If you say that you will keep on foreign funding could that be problematic in your point of view in certain cases? Are you bound by the financial support?

Ahmad Samih: Listen! We do here what we believe in and if this is going to harm our funding sources we don't mind. For instance we have received financial support from the American Embassy but we have been criticizing President Bush a lot. At the end of the day it is a contract between you and the donor and if the contract says that we are not allow to criticize them, then we will not sign it.

265 00.03.07
266 00.03.50
267 00.04.10

Jonas Rye Nielsen: We are talking about violence. Why do you think that violence is such a big problem in Egyptian society and is most common among young people?

Ahmad Samih: No it is in society, increasing actually, and I think if you have a lot of social pressure and economic pressure and society itself is changing a lot and people don't accept it. I think all this creates a very good environment for violence and other things. This makes violence the easy solution and it becomes part of the new Egyptian attitude.

Jonas Rye Nielsen: Do you think that the violence in prison and so on, reflects the surrounding society and in that way makes violence acceptable?

Ahmad Samih: Once the respect for the law is increasing in Egypt, you will diffidently find increasing of violence. Because people want important things to be done by themselves and then they forget what the government and the laws say. And because society is changing so much it is not easy for people to understand or accept the changes that are happening around them. And also it is not easy for the people to develop their own opinions about what is going on around them.

Cornelis Hulsman: Do you have studies about the respect for the Egyptian laws?

Ahmad Samih: No this is something we are going to develop on the website. To develop a study for this kind of thing need an in-depth survey, the Egyptian law does not give you the right to do survey so you have two things to do. You can take a sample from society, a random sample from among students with different backgrounds. Or you need to make a very in-depth interview with victims of violence and people who have never experienced violence, to see the differences. And to find the roots of this violence. This is a very hard thing to do.

Jonas Rye Nielsen: So you believe that one of the main reasons for violence is people's lack of respect for society?

Ahmad Samih: People's lack of respect for differences. And social, political and economic pressure is also creating violence.

Jonas Rye Nielsen: Do you think that religion plays an important role in this?

Ahmad Samih: Of course religion is a main part of it. On the positive and negative side. Because religious people don't fight this and sometimes they increase it. They prefer to talk about how to make a good prayer but they don't discuss the respect we should have for each other's differences. This is the positive side. Some of them do it very negatively which promotes hate among Egyptian people. Hate against certain groups and hate against specific countries like your country (Denmark). You can find some religious people talking about how very bad Danish people are and make the big mistake of

generalizing. So young people become full of hate. The people who understand the words (Religion, Qur'an etc.) are the ones who tells the young people this. So religion in Egypt can play two roles a positive and a negative one.

Jonas Rye Nielsen: Don't you think that religion can be used as an excuse for using violence?

Ahmad Samih: It happens Egypt is one of the mother countries for exporting terrorist around the world. Egypt is the country of Muhammad Atta who participated in September 11, 2001, attacks. Egypt is the mother country of Ayman al-Zawahiri of al-Qa'ida. Egypt is the mother land of new creativity of tolerance. If you look for the leaders who are using the new tricks in the world of terror, you find them here. Unfortunately.

Jonas Rye Nielsen: Do you think that the future looks brighter or worse in relation to violence and tolerance?

Ahmad Samih: It is fifty-fifty and we all need to work to make it sixty-forty in favor of the peaceful side. But the new generation is pretty different and the younger they are, the more open minded they are. And I believe technology and the Internet etc. is creating a new Egyptian mentality. Some bad things and some good things. At least it is gives people some role models. And a picture of the ideal society. And this is one of the very good reasons why people want to migrate to Europe. It is not only to meet beautiful girls.

Cornelis Hulsman: It can be one of the means.

Ahmad Samih: No no, not all the time. It is not always about this but it is about living in a society that respects many norms. I have been discussing a lot with young people about the minimum rights they want to have. I am not telling you that people want to have a villa. But they want to live like normal Europeans; small flat, good job, the government to give you health care and good opportunities for their children, that is all they want. This is the needs that young people want to see here. And this is one of the things that I have been saying before about social pressure created by society. Because who are working with us, we are a human rights organization so we can't give them for instance health care and we don't give a very good salary so we are part of their development as young people. So the question of future of Egypt as a bigger picture, and the future of them is still a question mark. Nobody knows what will happen in the next five years for Egypt.

If it is going to be a religious regime with the Muslim Brotherhood in charge with tanks in the streets or it is going to be a liberal society with an agenda of capitalism. Nobody knows. I you go and make a very big survey, I have been doing this savage with elite of the Egyptian society, then it is very rare that

you find someone who has an answer to this question. So if the elite don't know have an answer, then it is impossible for a 20 year old guy to see what society will look like in ten years. Ten years is a long time, is he going to be married or not, is he going to have a good job or not, if the effort he does every day going to be enough to bring him food, new clothes and will he be like all his role models. Until now the answers for these questions is no. That is why it is fifty-fifty.

If the answer is yes and he will get all these things then his models change and he will realize how fare his effort can get him. The young people today are asking god to have the football talent, to get more money, not to be the greatest researcher or to create something new or to be an artist. I like artist and in the media business they can make a lot of money on this. We had a project here it is not funded by anyone, called Start Thinking Change with 30 students. Start thinking change, the entire program came from (UN) people, I just gave them some advice, but in start thinking change I have been doing one big open minded, free talk discussion for six or seven hours and we have been discussing a lot of things. And I have tried to be the mentor and one of the problems that the Egyptian younger and older generation has is the concept of ambition, the older generation's ambitions for the youth is that you have to have a house, wife and a car soon. The ambition is not to be someone; the biggest ambition is to have a family as soon as possible. This is a part of few young people's ambitions. But for a foreigner this is not all your ambition, your ambition is feel good and besides that you choose whether you want a family or not and the older generation is accepting this. Here they are not, if a girl for example, because we have a lot of very ambitious girls, want to be a famous anchor in a TV show, then the family is trying to put limitations for her and the main question is when will you start a family. This is a very big difference between our society and other societies in developed countries. We need to change this in the new generation and we are doing it. We will tell them that ambition is not about making a (sacrifice²⁶⁸) and we try to make a deep discussion about it and usually people in the general population hate this, but right now jump in to the discussion and everybody is coming with an input and doing this in a very enlightened way. and that is why I am saying it is only fifty-fifty.

Cornelis Hulsman: One of the things we found in preparing for this meeting were remarkable: , al-Andalus does not really appear very much in Egyptian media?

Ahmad Samih: That is not true like for instance to day (*Misri al-yawm*²⁶⁹) Friday we were in al-Samih Thursday we where appearing in a headline in al-Badil because one of the things we have been doing is

268 00.30.25

269 00.31.48

when (Sudanese president) Bashīr came to Cairo and me and four other activist went to the DA office, the general prosecutor. We appealed that the general had to catch him here because he is a war criminal and he is now in Egypt. We send a report to the Interior Ministry and to the director of security in Cairo airport, asking them to stop Bashīr because he is a criminal. And this was has been taken by the Egyptian government very seriously, all kind of security people in Egypt has been calling me to try to stop us. Because in the office they have the legal papers and they don't want to make it official. But I insist that they do this. I don't mind that Bashīr doesn't get caught I mind making it known. And I have been receiving a lot of criticism for this. But I think we appear a lot.

Cornelis Hulsman: So what other activities do al-Andalus do that have drawn media attention in the last few years?

Ahmad Samīh: The media picks up every thing, because you know I used to be a journalist, so it is very easy to deal with media when you know what you are doing. So I don't think that any of our activities are being out of media coverage. And secondly we are receiving a lot of media criticism. For example from the editor of chief of *Rose Al-Yūsuf* has been writing articles about us. The editor of chief of *al-Jumhūrīyah* newspaper Muhammad ʿAlī Ibrāhīm has been writing articles about me personally. The NGP newspaper had two pages totally against me. Let me show you some of the articles, we have an on-line version of our media coverage.

Cornelis Hulsman: And how do you respond to all this negative media criticism?

Ahmad Samīh: In a good way! Hehe, in a very good way.

(returning to the article he want to show us) Here is two pages with my name, and this says that I am a millionaire. For example this is last week, in *al-Watanī* newspaper there was a report called 'habb al-basus' about the conflict between journalists. This was on March 22.

Cornelis Hulsman: How do respond to the media? I know that for instance that Halah Mustafá has great problems with it. She showed me some articles which were far from nice.

Ahmad Samīh: Yeah but she was not very smart. They went through her personal life and it was very bad with her. But this also happens with me, listen this is *al-Jumhūrīyah* for instance. (Translating from an article):”With the money of American aid, we are cursing the Egyptian nationalism” and he (the article) has been mentioning things like this about me. They are crazy. This is part of a bigger game. And it is not in your hands and not in my hands. We have two tools we can use. You can build a alliance with journalists who believe in what you do and be very open and friendly to then and show them what you are doing. Then they can make up their own mind on whether they will support you or not. And this is exactly what I am doing. Or you go to court with this kind of articles and in the end of

the day will rule in your favor, and give you money or put him to jail or something like that. But some times people like Muhammad ʿAlī Ibrāhīm meeting with President Mubārak or his staff, and then writing things like that, how Mubārak was wise for making that decision.

Cornelis Hulsman: So you respond to this?

Ahmad Samīh: Sometimes. (Returning to the article and translating) Ahh this is hard to translate, “please let me clap my hands for Ahmad Samīh because he didn't deny that he has been doing this study with the money of the USA” Okay? “This young man, who is using the money of the USAID, is doing what he has been ordered to do” This is a conflict between the Egyptian and American Government and it has nothing to do with me. My report has been taken very seriously, by *'al-Misrī al-Yawm'* for instance. They mentioned it on the front page. They gave me like 600 or 700 words; I think it is good because like I tell your main supporters that this is a form of indirect support. People go and read this and then they want to know what Ahmad Samīh is doing, what the al-Andalus institute is doing, why the government don't like this and why and why? And when people come here they will see what you are doing and understand the whole picture by maybe joining your organization, so they are recruiting people for free. Other organizations build their network of journalists by buying them, by inviting them for dinner or some thing like that. We don't do this at all. We promote ourselves as a PR company so we call the journalists and tell them, what we are doing and we have press conferences. They can ask me all questions and I will answer. Even if the question is “can you show us your budget?” I will show them the budget or "can you show us the contract between you and your donors?" I will show people the contracts. These are not the secrets in my organization at all.

Cornelis Hulsman: And your legal status?

Ahmad Samīh: Still the same, I am not going to be under the law (CH: referring to the NGO law). Did you know that the (NGO) law says that this meeting could be monitored by an official. And if I want to do this meeting I have file it one month in advance and then they have the right to send someone and write down what we are saying.

Cornelis Hulsman: That was your legal status, last time you told me about you experiences with the authority.

Ahmad Samīh: They are very interested in what we do.

Cornelis Hulsman: They can see everything you do on the Internet?

Ahmad Samīh: I don't mind, I don't have anything to hide. I am fighting with the sword of transparency. The main thing that they can't get is the thing I have in my head; they have to torture me to get that.

5. Website

The Andalus Institute's website is www.andalusitas.net/ar/index.php²⁷⁰ and is only available in Arabic. Several articles and posts are found in English. The site provides a search function which works in Arabic and English. The subcategories are 'Home', 'Contact Us', 'News' and 'Links' in English, but there are also headings in Arabic. There are also a large number of pictures of the institute's projects.

The Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies supports an Internet radio station, <http://horytna.net/>²⁷¹, which was introduced to the web as an independent cultural and news radio and was founded by Ahmad Samīh.²⁷² “Horytna” was an idea to provide information to everyone, especially young people all over the world. It is possible to subscribe to a SMS service (about 12,000 members already do) through this website.

6. Conclusion

The al-Andalus web site is almost completely in Arabic. This makes it difficult for interested parties who do not speak this language to get information from the homepage. Also, available publications were mainly produced in Arabic because of the high costs of translations. The organization concentrates on tolerance between cultures, nationalities and religions. It does not just deal with human rights, but with young people in helping them to find future prospects.

270 www.andalusitas.net/ar/index.php (accessed 09/03/22, 09:44am)

271 <http://horytna.net/> (accessed 09/03/26, 12:26pm)

272 <http://arabist.net/archives/2007/03/29/horytnanet-on-air/> (accessed 09/03/26, 12:36pm)

The Arabic Organization against Discrimination (AAD)

Introduction

The Arabic Organization against Discrimination (AAD, also called Arab Anti-Discrimination Organization) is a human rights organization which concentrates on cases of discrimination against Muslims, Christians, Arabs, labor migrants and women. Because of its specification this organization is unique in Egypt – but it also wants to be present in all Arab countries. It also tries to monitor the Israeli media to detect discrimination. The organization was founded in 2004 and is registered in France, probably because of the difficulties of registering as an NGO in Egypt.

Only five articles were found on the AWR database which were published between 2004 and 2006.

1. Description of Purpose

Ibrāhīm Nāfi^c, the organization's head and the editor-in-chief of *al-Ahrām*, stated that the Arabic Organization against Discrimination presents itself as a non-governmental organization, legally registered in France.²⁷³ Furthermore he said that the organization of Arabs Against Discrimination started on January 1, 2004.²⁷⁴ The AAD was established by a group of concerned Arabs with the aim of exposing and combating all forms of discrimination and racism that contravene human rights covenants and established international law, using all possible media, legal, and cultural channels to achieve this aim. While concerned with combating discrimination and racism the world over, the AAD focused on discrimination and racism as practiced by Israel, whether it is directed at segments within Israeli society itself or against other peoples and religious groups. In choosing this focus, the organization hoped to help remedy the current situation whereby such Israeli practices, which contravene international human rights covenants, tend to be overlooked by most organizations dedicated to combating racism and discrimination around the world. The AAD also seeks to respond to campaigns organized by Israeli and Zionist organizations which, through the translation and distribution of Arabic

273 AWR, Art. 25, Week 44/2004, *Al-Ahrām*, Zakaryyā Abū Ḥarām

274 AWR, Art. 24, Week 44/2004, *Al-Ahrām*, Rifcat al-Sacīd

media materials, try to create an impression of rampant anti-semitism in the Arab world. Overall, the organization acts to promote and foster the values and traditions of tolerance, acceptance, and respect for others, and coexistence between different cultures, religions, civilizations, and peoples. Values which had been an integral part of Arab culture throughout its history. Ibrāhīm Nāfi^c has commented on the accusation that Arabs are anti-Semitic.²⁷⁵ Further he said that the AAD would be the first Arab independent non-governmental organization that would counter the tyrannical campaign against Arabs and Muslims. The organization consists of Arab and Egyptian academics and researchers who document and broadcast any discrimination on the organization's website. Ibrāhīm Nāfi^c has emphasized that the organization does not belong to any governmental body in Egypt, and that the organization works in accordance with strict norms and standards. According to Ibrāhīm Nāfi^c the organization only accepts contributions from patriotic and upright characters. The organization's mission is to record any transgressions in order to apprise decision makers and general opinion. These reports are written in four languages: Arabic, Hebrew, English, and French. Exposing human rights violations that are taking place in Palestine is a priority. The AAD will also try to counter the influence of the Zionist lobby in the West. According to Ibrāhīm Nāfi^c, establishing such an organization is a necessity, especially after the events of September 11, 2001, for Islam was accused of being a religion of terrorism and extremism due to these events.²⁷⁶ Ibrāhīm Nāfi^c has called on many Arab and Egyptian intellectuals as well as many foreign institutions to contribute to this organization, and they quickly accepted his offer. Ibrāhīm Nāfi^c said that the organization shall resort to the courts in order to counter any campaigns against Arabs and Muslims, and it will criticize any attempts at discrimination that might take place in Arab countries.²⁷⁷ Also he said that the organization held an international conference in Cairo to discuss the notion of racism and determine the vocabulary related to it.²⁷⁸ Imād Jād, the secretary-general of the Arab Anti-Discrimination Organization, has emphasized the observation of the media: to track it and to reveal its danger through serious scientific work. For this reason he opened discussions with public figures, which produced a citizenship charter and creating a non-governmental observation project to be concerned with tracking violations of citizenship rights.²⁷⁹ Rif'at al-Sa'īd, a writer for *Al-Ahrām*, said that the organization is responsible for responding to all accusations and claims made by the enemies of Islam. The AAD also seeks to confirm that not all Arabs are anti-Semitic because, for one reason, Arabs are a semitic people, and also most Arabs are

275 AWR, Art. 25, Week 44/2004, *Al-Ahrām*, Zakaryyā Abū Ḥarām

276 AWR, Art. 3, Week 2/2004, *Al-Ahrām*, Ibrāhīm Nāfi^c

277 AWR, Art. 3, Week 1/2004, *Al-Ahrām*, cĀsim al-Qirsh

278 AWR, Art. 24, Week 44/2004, *Al-Ahrām*, Rifcat al-Sa'īd

279 AWR, Art. 57, Week 20/2006, *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Sāmiḥ Fawzī

against all forms of discrimination and racism.²⁸⁰

The Arabic Organization against Discrimination was established in opposition to the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) which monitors the Islamic media (mainly Arabic and Persian newspapers) in the Middle East and provides research in several languages. MEMRI was founded in 1998 and is an independent but partisan (pro-Israeli), non-profit organization with headquarters located in Washington. Its goal is to document “radical nationalist, anti-semitic and Islamist” points of view.²⁸¹

2. Advocacy for Legal Change

In the articles on the AWR's database there was no information about the organization's advocacy for legal change mentioned.

3. Media evaluation

It is interesting to monitor the criticism directed at the AAD, found in the Arab media, especially because the head of this organization is the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Al-Ahrām*.

3.1 Purpose of the AAD

Al-Ahrām is a semi-governmental, daily newspaper. The Editor-in-Chief is Ibrāhīm Nāfi^c, who is also the head of the Arab Anti-Discrimination Organization. Rif^cat al-Sa^cīd, a writer for *Al-Ahrām*, praised the organization and said that it was responsible for responding to accusations and claims made by the enemies of Islam. Further he stated that the AAD was also keen on confirming that Arabs are against anti-Semitism and against all forms of discrimination and racism.²⁸²

3.2 Conclusion

Much less feedback concerning the organization was found in the press releases. The only newspaper

280 AWR, Art. 24, Week 44/2004, *Al-Ahrām*, Rifcat al-Sa^cīd

281 www.memri.org/ (accessed 09/03/25, 12:23pm) MEMRI calls itself non-partisan but this is highly disputed, see for example Brian Whitaker in the Guardian, RNSAW, 2002, week 45, art. 16)

282 AWR, Art. 24, Week 44/2004, *Al-Ahrām*, Rifcat al-Sa^cīd

which reported about the AAD was *Al-Ahrām*, exactly for the reason that for this newspaper, Ibrāhīm Nāfi^c has been its Editor-in-Chief. Of course the authors of *Al-Ahrām* would not criticize because it would concern their own (former) head editor, who would not accept the publishing of negative feedback in his own newspaper. However, this may make one wonder, why there were no articles concerning the AAD in other Egyptian newspapers. It seems like the organization is not very active.

4. Key persons

Because there is no website only individuals who were mentioned in the newspapers reports are listed. The two who were mentioned were Ibrāhīm Nāfi^c, the head of the organization, and ʿImād Jād, the secretary general.

5. Web site

Because there were so few articles mentioning AAD in the Arab-West Report database, it would have been necessary to work with the homepage of the organization. Although there was a link found (www.aad-online.org²⁸³), the web site was not reachable. This may mean that the organization has ceased to be active. The last press release found was from 2006, so it is not clear if the AAD is still active or not.

283 www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1158658389501&pagename=Zone-English-ArtCulture%2FACELayout (accessed 09/03/19, 01:18pm)

The Egyptian Association against Torture (EAAT)

Introduction

The Egyptian Association against Torture (EAAT) is a human rights organization, founded in 2003, which concentrates on violations of basic human rights.

The following overview is based on press releases from the AWR database from 1998 until 2006, which only included one article.

1. Description of Purpose

The Egyptian Association Against Torture is a non-governmental organization, monitoring human rights violations, specifically the violations that victims of torture in Egypt face. EAAT has published reports, for example one report documenting the punishment of Christians in al-^ᶜUdaysāt in February 2006. The report additionally claimed that security forces participated in deepening sectarian sedition in Egypt.²⁸⁴ More information about the association's purpose could not be found.

2. Advocacy for Legal Change

Nothing about the association's advocacy concerning legal changes is mentioned in either of the articles used as a reference.

3. Media evaluation

The press releases did not mention any criticism. The Egyptian Association against Torture appears rather inactive, therefore newspapers did not write about this organization. It is also possible that the organization is not vocal enough about their activities, resulting in the media's minimal interest in what the organization is doing.

284 AWR, Art. 31, Week 47/2006, *Watanī al-Dawlī*, Majdī Khalīl

4. Key persons

<i>Founder Members</i> ²⁸⁵ [own spelling]		<i>Function</i>
Aida Seif El Dawla	°Āydah Sayf al-Dawlah	President
Hossam Bahgat	Ḥusām Bahjat (mentioned in the AWR database of head of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights)	Vice President
Adel Wassily	°Ādil Wāsilī (no AWR reference)	Secretary C
Khaled ali Omar	Khālīd °Alī °Umar (no AWR reference)	Board Men
Magda Adly	Mājdah °Ādilī	Treasurer
Maha Youssef	Mahā Maḥmūd Yūsuf	Member
Mona Hamed	Muná Ḥāmid	Member
Ragia Gersawi	Rājiyah al-Jirjāwī	Member
Laila Soueif	Laylá (no AWR reference)	Member
Alaa Kamal Basma Abdel Aziz	°Alā' Kamāl Basmah °Abd al-°Azīz (no AWR reference)	Member
Emad Mubarak	°Imād Mubārak (no AWR reference)	Member
Gasser Abdel Razek	Jāsir °Abd al-Rāziq	Member
Abdallah Mansour	°Abd Allāh Maṣṣūr	Member
Adel Mashad	°Ādil al-Mashad	Member

No members were mentioned in AWR's database. Not true °Āydah Sayf al-Dawlah is mentioned once linked to the Egyptian Organization against torture. Other members of the organization are also mentioned in the AWR database, but are not linked to the organization.

5. Web site

²⁸⁵ www.jerusalemiloveyou.net/spip.php?article79 (accessed 09/03/25, 12:55pm)

The Egyptian Association against Torture does not have a Web site. As a result, information on this organization is lacking. It is doubtful whether or not the association still exists. If the EAAT is still active, it would be fair to say that the organization's influence is minimal and not important enough for newspapers to issue reports about it.

Al-Nadīm Center for the Management and Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence

Introduction

The al-Nadeem Center for Management and Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence is a human rights organization, established in 1993 as a company (today it is an NGO), which is specialized in the management and rehabilitation of victims of violence.

The AWR database included one article concerning al-Nadeem which was published in 1999.

1. Description of Purpose

The purpose of the organization is clearly described on the organization's homepage. Al-Nadeem Center for the Management and Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence is an independent Egyptian NGO that was established in August 1993 as a civil non-profit company (Editor: see for the status of a civil non-profit company the description under the al-Andalus Institute). In the early stages of the center, it restricted its activity to the provision of psychological rehabilitation to victims of torture and the provision of medico-legal reports. Because the members of al-Nadeem were working in other human rights organizations at this time, they could not issue reports for victims of torture from official medical institutions such as universities or government hospitals. After some time, al-Nadeem decided to publish, campaign and mobilize different social sectors. In addition, the center started being involved in cases concerning torture, violence against women or other issues of democracy and freedom of civil

society.²⁸⁶ The main focus of the center is violation against prisoners. Together with the Center for Human Rights Legal Aid (CHRLA) and The Human Rights Center for the Assistance of Prisoners (HRCAP) it presented a report entitled 'Human Rights Issues in Egypt 1998.' This report included the most significant human rights violations like the situation in prisons, the number of death sentences, instances of tortures and violations of freedom of expression, along with an analysis of violations of the Constitution. Also mentioned is the violation against farmers, as is shown by an example of a man who was killed because he denied being a thief.²⁸⁷

2. Advocacy for legal change

Al-Nadeem Center made comments in its 1998 report concerning legal changes. These comments concerned topics such as the Emergency Law and the NGO law.

2.1 Officers are protected by law

ʿĀ'idah Sayf Al-Dawlah, a member of the center, said in 1999 that the torture situation is made worse because victims cannot take their torturers to court because the officers are protected by law.²⁸⁸ It is not known whether she believes this has worsened or improved in the past ten years.

2.2 Emergency Law

The 1998 report, which was presented by al-Nadeem, criticized the Emergency Law as one of the main justifications for human rights violations by the government. In force for 18 years, it gives the state control over public rights and freedoms "because of terrorism." Even though there has been a clear decline in activity by terrorist groups, there has been no decline in the use of the law.²⁸⁹ A workshop, entitled 'Prevention through Documentation' was organized by al-Nadeem center and IRCT (The international Council for Torture Victims) in November 2007. This workshop was preceded by a three month preparation period which was coordinated by Dr. Rajia al-Jirzāwī, physician at al-Nadeem

286 <http://alnadeem.org/en/node/27> (accessed 09/03/18, 09:30am)

287 AWR, Art. 39, Week 29/1999, Middle East Times, Lilian Liang

288 AWR, Art. 39, Week 29/1999, Middle East Times, Lilian Liang

289 AWR, Art. 39, Week 29/1999, Middle East Times, Lilian Liang

Center, in cooperation with a national training team which included Dr. °Ā'idah Sayf al-Dawlah from al-Nadeem Center. The workshop was joined by an international training team consisting of Hulya Ucpinar, lawyer and activist from Turkey and member of the team who developed the Istanbul protocol. Hulya Ucpinar made a presentation on the international definition of torture and stressed that an emergency state is not pretext to practice torture and that this provision is not respected in many countries. Still, enacting an emergency state involves an international standard and therefore has to be lobbied for within the international community.²⁹⁰

2.3. New NGO Law

Together with two other organizations, CHRLA and HRCAP, the al-Nadeem Center criticized the new NGO law for being directed at restricting the activities of NGOs.²⁹¹

3. Media evaluation

Because there was just one article which discussed the report issued by al-Nadeem, CHRLA and HRCAP, there was no criticism found.

4. Key persons

<i>Members mentioned on the Web site²⁹² (March, 2009)</i> [own spelling]	<i>Members mentioned in the articles of the AWR data base</i> [spelling by Library of Congress]	<i>Functions</i>
Dr. Aida Seif El Dawla	°Ā'idah Sayf al-Dawlah	Staff Member
Dr. Ragia el-Gerzawy	Rājiyah al-Jirjāwī	Physician at Al-Nadeem Center

In both the article and the web site no more key persons were found. (Not true: The AWR web site mentions Mājdah °Ādilī (Staff Member), Sūzān Fayyād (Director 1999), Ashjān °Abd al-Mahdī, Amānī

290 <http://alnadeem.org/en/node/42> (accessed 09/03/25, 01:57pm)

291 AWR, Art. 39, Week 29/1999, Middle East Times, Lilian Liang

292 <http://alnadeem.org/en> (accessed 09/03/25, 02:01pm)

Khalīl, Basmah °Abd al-°Azīz (Physician), Turk Yūsuf, Khulūd Šābir, Rājiyah Shawqī, Mājid °Adlī, Muná Ḥāmid and Mahā Maḥmūd Yūsuf).

5. Website

Al-Nadeem's website is “<http://alnadeem.org/en/>”²⁹³ which is available in English and Arabic. The homepage also provides a search function. Site users can also register and login in order to post comments about reports. It is also possible to email the reports. The material which is available includes several articles and publications. The headings on the website are 'About', 'News', 'Publications', 'Reports' and 'Contact us.' Not all sectors of this site are working, for example by opening 'News' or 'Reports' the message 'Page not found' appears.

6. Conclusion

The center specializes in the management and rehabilitation of victims of violence, this organization does not focus on Muslim-Christian relations and religious freedom. The al-Nadeem Center seems to be active and visits places where acts of violence that are against human rights are carried out.

²⁹³ <http://alnadeem.org/en/> (accessed 09/03/18, 09:07am)

Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)

Introduction

The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) is an independent human rights organization, founded in 2002, advocating personal rights and individual freedom.

This section of the paper will analyze articles written on the organization which were published in the Arab media, and create a critical overview of the newspapers' opinion on activities organized and carried out by the EIPR. The following overview is based on press releases from the AWR database from 2006, which only included two articles.

1. Description of Purpose

Based on the EIPR's Web site, the initiative's purposes were described as follows: “The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights is an independent Egyptian human rights organization that was established in 2002 to promote and defend the personal rights and freedoms of individuals, as well as to complement the work of Egyptian human rights groups by adopting as its mandate, and focus of concern, a group of rights and freedoms that are closest to the human-being: his/her body, privacy, and house. These rights are often either ignored or completely overlooked. EIPR activists share the belief that the individual cannot be reduced to a mere component of the community or the State. Each member of society deserves respect for his personal dignity and integrity. The initiative's aim is to explore the line between the private and public in the lives of individual members of community and society, while realizing the interrelation and interdependence of these two spheres, as well as to promote a debate about the state's legitimate powers and the areas it should not invade while undertaking its legitimate responsibilities to protect people from abuse.”²⁹⁴

EIPR has prepared reports on the freedom of religion and belief in Egypt²⁹⁵. These reports are issued

²⁹⁴ www.eipr.org/en/info/about.htm (accessed 09/03/17, 09:24am)

²⁹⁵ www.eipr.org/en/reports/index.htm (accessed 09/03/17, 09:28am)

quarterly. Additionally, the initiative published press releases about the case of Abū Fānā and violence against Copts in Egypt.²⁹⁶ The three main issues the organization confronts are; laws which discriminate against freedom of belief, the violation of this freedom by security and sectarian tensions in Egyptian society. The initiative monitors and documents events concerning these topics. It also analyzes new laws and court decrees.²⁹⁷ The EIPR rejects funding from the US government, but receives financial support from private funders in the US.

The main aim of the initiative focuses around freedom of religion. Husām Bahjat, the director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, has explained that the current tensions are the result of the sectarian sedition planted by the State Security, who will arrest whomever they believe will convert to Christianity even if he was baptized in an Egyptian church without having violated any preexisting law prohibiting the conversion²⁹⁸ He additionally stated that *Bahā'īs* fall under the civil law of another religion that is not theirs (Islam), which has created many problems for them, especially in affairs related to marriage, birth certificates, inheritance, and other similar matters²⁹⁹. If an event concerning tensions between Muslims and Christians happens, the organization usually sends representatives to the location to conduct research. The EIPR decides at first if this event is an important one and if it is necessary to go to the place directly, or if it is possible to get enough information from other organizations. Even if an event is not sectarian but Christians and Muslims are involved, the initiative recognizes and documents it.

2. Advocacy for legal change

Several laws in which the EIPR are involved in were listed on the Web site.

2.1 Deletion of religious data from ID cards

The EIPR commented on the discussion of deleting religious data from identity cards. It also published a book concerning this issue³⁰⁰ Husām Bahjat said that “omitting religious data from identity cards would no doubt be an advanced step that will have an important and symbolic impact on respect for

296 www.eipr.org/en/press/index.htm (accessed 09/03/17, 09:26am)

297 Interview with Husām Bahjat, Yārā Sallām and Mīnā Zikrī

298 AWR, Art. 31, Week 47/2006, *Waṭanī al-Dawlī*, Majdī Khalīl

299 AWR, Art. 45, Week 37/2006, *Al-Ahrām al-cArabī*, Muḥammad cAbd al-Khāliq

300 EIPR, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, November 2007

privacy and personal belief.”³⁰¹ He further wondered, “What is the benefit that Egyptian *Bahā`īs* will gain from having religious data omitted from identity cards when they are incapable of obtaining a death certificate for their dead? Now, they are even facing difficulties in obtaining passports.”³⁰² He believed that the deletion of the data would be a step forward, but at the same time believes it is more important to accept the *Bahā`īs* as a legal religion. Husām Bahjat also thinks that the problem is not the second article of the Constitution, which states that the *Shari`ah* is the main source of legislation, but the Egyptian Civil Code.

2.2 Proposed anti-terrorism-law

Concerning the anti-terrorism-law, the initiative said that this law will lead to a further deterioration in the human rights situation in Egypt unless it contains sufficient safeguards for the protection of human rights and personal freedoms. Further Husām Bahjat stated, “We still strongly believe that Egypt could effectively address the threat of terrorism without the need for exceptional legal powers in a new anti-terrorism-law. While the new law now seems unstoppable, it should not sustain the state of impunity enjoyed by security agencies for serious and widespread human rights violations.”³⁰³

2.3 New lawsuit before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights about altering children's religious affiliation

The Egyptian Initiative filed a lawsuit before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights challenging the Egyptian government's policy of altering the religious affiliation of Christian children when one of their parents converts to Islam, thereby granting automatic custody to the Muslim parent.³⁰⁴

2.4 Personal status regulations

The initiative called on the state to assume its legal responsibility to protect and fulfill the right of all citizens to marry and establish a family, a right enshrined in the Egyptian Constitution and international

301 AWR, Art. 45, Week 37/2006, *Al-Ahrām al-cArabī*, Muḥammad cAbd al-Khāliq

302 AWR, Art. 45, Week 37/2006, *Al-Ahrām al-cArabī*, Muḥammad cAbd al-Khāliq

303 www.eipr.org/en/press/07/2507.htm (accessed 09/03/17, 10:46am)

304 www.eipr.org/en/press/08/1011.htm (accessed 09/03/17, 09:57am)

human rights law. Commenting on the ongoing debate over proposed amendments to Coptic Orthodox personal status regulations, the EIPR said that state officials must immediately create alternatives that guarantee citizens their right to make decisions concerning their private and family life, regardless of their religion or the stance of religious institutions³⁰⁵

3. Media evaluation

Due to the existence of only two articles in the Arab-West Report database, there was no criticism mentioned. However, in an interview, Husām Bahjat said that the organization gets ignored or attacked by the Arab media. The most attention the EIPR receives is from the independent media.

4. Key persons

<i>Members mentioned on the Web site³⁰⁶ (March, 2009)</i> [own spelling]	<i>Members mentioned in the articles of the AWR data base</i> [spelling by Library of Congress]	<i>Functions</i>
Hossam Bahgat	Husām Bahjat	Director and Right to Privacy Acting Director
Soha Abdelaty	Suhā °Abd al-°Ātī	Deputy Director
Medhat Kamal	Midḥat Kamāl al-Sayyid	Administrative & Financial Officer
Amīnah Khayrī	Amīnah Khayrī	Media Adviser
Mina Zekri	Mīnā Zakrī (no AWR reference)	Media and Outreach Officer
Yara Sallam	Yārā Sallām (no AWR reference)	Researcher, Freedom of Religion and Belief
Kawthar Bushra	Kawthar Bushrá (no AWR	Administrative Associate

305 www.eipr.org/en/index.htm (accessed 09/03/17, 9:55am)

306 www.eipr.org/en/info/about.htm (accessed 09/03/23, 1:56pm)

	reference)	
Nasīm Hāshim	Nasim Hāshim (no AWR reference)	Administrative Associate
Adel Ramadan	°Ādil Ramaḍān Rāfi°	Legal officer - Right to Privacy Program
Alaa Ghanam	°Alā' al-Ghannām (no AWR reference)	Health and Human Rights Program Director
Ragia Elgerzawy	Rājiyah al-Jirjāwī	Health and Discrimination Program Officer
Dina Eskander	Dīnā Iskandar (no AWR reference)	Legal researcher - Health, Trade and Intellectual Property

Also mentioned in the AWR database are Khulūd Imām and Sarah °Ammār.

5. Web site

The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights's website [www.eipr.org/en/index.htm³⁰⁷] is available in Arabic and English. Materials provided include press releases dating back to 2005 (page still under construction), reports since August 2004, and statements by members of the initiative (page still under construction). This shows that this organization is a very young one, thereby explaining the lack of articles printed in the media. The Web site's tabs include, 'Home,' 'About Us,' 'Press Releases,' 'Reports,' 'Commentary,' 'Campaigns,' 'Forum,' 'Newsletter,' 'Links,' and 'Contact Us.' Many of these tabs, however, are still under construction.

6. Conclusion

The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights provides a Web site with a lot of information about the organization itself. It was therefore possible to provide an overview of the EIPR based on the homepage. The main topic of the reports and press releases were Copts and prisoners. So the initiative's depiction of itself, as described on their site, is similar to the image depicted by the newspapers in their

307 www.eipr.org/en/index.htm (accessed 09/03/23, 2:29pm)

articles. The homepage is still under construction, and thus it is likely that additional information will become available after a while. The EIPR seems to be interested in other organizations, because for example it provided a link to the National Council for Human Rights.³⁰⁸ Comparing the Web site to AWR's database, the homepage of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights provided more press releases – although there was not any criticism about it found. The EIPR is not an old human rights organization, which probably explains why there were not many articles found in Arab-West Report.

308 www.eipr.org/en/press/08/0608.htm (accessed 09/03/17, 10:22am)

The Center for Human Rights and National Unity

(CHRNU)

Introduction

The Center for Human Rights and National Unity is headed by lawyer Maurice Sādiq. The organization's main focus is Christians' rights in Egypt. It is not certain when the organization was founded by Maurice Sādiq who was very active in the 1990s. The organization disappeared from the media with Maurice Sādiq's emigration as asylum seeker to the USA in 2000. It is not certain the organization still exists.

2. Description of purpose:

The description of The Center for Human Rights and National Unity (CHRNU) will be based on interviews and dialogue with Maurice Sādiq, the head of CHRNU. All these articles are found on Arab-West Report's database. According to an interview, Maurice Sādiq claimed to be working for the rights of all Egyptians whether they are Muslims or Christians. His main concern is the Copts because as he says: "*this is because their rights have been violated for more than 30 years.*" He thus appears to be referring to the growth of Islamism since the early 1970s. Sādiq's conclusion is that Christians are discriminated in Egypt, one of his examples is based on the facts that the president and the prime minister are Muslims and out of the 32 ministers there are only two Christians. Another example is the 28 governors who were in the days of Sādiq all Muslims and the fact that the deans of the 15 universities in Egypt are all Muslims.

The organization was working against:

1. The government's segregation of Christians in the field of building churches.
2. The kidnapping of Christians and conversion of them to Islam through torture in police stations and the governmental support of racial discrimination. Much of this has been researched by Cornelis Hulsman in the mid 1990s he found no evidence for the use of physical force in conversions to Islam but instead found a wide range of social problems that triggered these conversions.

3. Police violence against Copts

Like many other organizations CHRNU received foreign funding and Sādiq explained this by saying: *"Human rights is no longer a domestic issue after the Egypt's signing of the Human Rights declaration and it is not a domestic affair because it is no longer accepted that you beat up your child while the world sits and watches."*³⁰⁹.

2. Advocacy for legal change

Maurice Sādiq is a lawyer and has filed a lot of lawsuits and is very active in different issues. Hulsman found that most, if not all, of Maurice Sādiq's court cases were primarily aimed at obtaining publicity. All of these issues involved Copts. In order to make an overview of the activities of CHRNU, this section will be divided in to two subjects:

2.1 Al-Kushh

The case of al-Kushh was discussed at the end of the 1990s. In August 1998 in a small village in Upper Egypt called al-Kushh, where over half of the population were Coptic Christians, a murder happened after three drunk Christian boys had been gambling. Apparently they got into a fight and one of the boys killed the other two. The aftermath of the events have been discussed a lot, because when the police carried out investigations they arrested a lot of Christians and interrogated them.³¹⁰

What the CHRNU then argues is that the reason that so many Copts were arrested was because the police used the events to persecute Copts. After what happened Maurice Sādiq published a report claiming that the police had used torture against the interrogated Copts.³¹¹

Later in an interview he criticized the Egyptian press for not paying attention to the events. In an interview about al-Kushh he stated:

"This event happened on August 14th (1998). It was published in al-Watanī newspaper after two-month passed in September and October. Al-Ahaly published a whole page on this issue of torture and it is a neutral newspaper. Not one single official in Egypt or a member of parliament took any action and

309 AWR: Art. 12, Week 2/1999, Āfaq cArabīyah, Rajab al-Bāsil

310 AWR: Art. 51, Week 44/1998 *Ākhir Sācah*, Ibrāhīm Qācūd

311 AWR: Art. 16, Week 39/1998, Religious News Service From the Arab World, Cornelis Hulsman

*none of them were able to go to Suhag. Nobody, including the governor, took any action to find out what happened and meet the bishop. Only when Christina Lamb published the issue, only then we started to 'awaken'. Is Christina Lamb, who writes for the Sunday Telegraph, the one who is spreading sectarian strife? Why? Is it because the Egyptian people read the Sunday Telegraph and because it is distributed in Cairo?"*³¹²

Christina Lamb was a journalist from the *Sunday Telegraph* who first brought up the case, based on testimony of Maurice Sādiq. Lamb's article was strongly criticized by Cornelis Hulsman.³¹³

2.2 Freedom from Religious Persecution law

Another issue that the organization has been advocating for is the American Freedom from Religious Persecution Law.

The law was signed by President Bill Clinton on October 27, 1998 in order to prevent religious persecution in countries worldwide and make an overview of the persecuted religious groups.³¹⁴ This was highly criticized because it was a clear sign of American intervention in the internal affairs of foreign countries.

One critic's point was that even though the law included a lot of countries, it was mostly directed at Egypt. To this Maurice Sādiq said:

"this law protects the Buddhists and Tibetans in Laos, the Evangelicals in Burma and all Arabs in Israel which were mentioned in the law."

In his view the law is universal and not just focused on Egypt.

The debate also revolved around who is qualified to set the rules of humanity in relation to American intervention. To this Maurice Sādiq responded that when human rights were imposed by the French, Egypt and many others accepted it, so why is it different with this law?³¹⁵

This shows that Maurice Sādiq believes that any foreign interference in concern to human rights is allowed.

3. Media evaluation

312 AWR: Art. 6, Week 51/1998, *Al-Usbūc*, cAṭīyah, cAfāf

313 RNSAW, 1998, week 43, art. 7

314 www.trincoll.edu/depts/csrpl/Religious%20Persecution/relperse.pdf page 38

315 AWR: Art. 6, Week 51/1998, *Al-Usbūc*, cAṭīyah, cAfāf

CHRNU has received a lot of criticism from the media, one of the main newspapers behind the criticism is *al-Usbūc*.

In one article the paper accuses Maurice Sādiq of lying. Maurice Sādiq had sent a letter to the paper on behalf of a woman, saying that she wanted to emigrate because she felt persecuted because of her religious belief as a Christian.

The start of the letter said:

*“I want to immigrate because of persecution which we as Christians face in Egypt. I cannot bear any more humiliation aimed at my religion. They teach the new generation of children how to hate Christians. Many of my friends complain that Muslim children do not want to speak to their Christian children because of their religion. Although I have been working as a journalist for the last 10 years, I have not yet been appointed. I have gone to work for one of the magazines and the surprise was I found discrimination that I had never seen before.”*³¹⁶

When the newspaper contacted the woman, she said that she had never said those words. She had met Maurice Sādiq in order to get a job in the US, all she was told she had to do was to give some information about her previous experiences and her personal data and then he would give her a job.

The woman wanted to file a law suit against CHRNU, but the newspaper advised her not to do anything because if she filed a complaint with the police then he would only claim that the police forced her to file a complaint, and if she went to the courts he would accuse the prosecutor. If she went to withdraw her application, he would make her sign and then say that she withdrew her application because she had been threaten. In all cases, he would play with her name and her case³¹⁷.

Another point of criticism is the case of al-Kushh. A lot of the things that Maurice Sādiq claimed in his reports, have later been proven to be false, according to many of the newspapers in the AWR database. For example, in relation to al-Kushh being a religious conflict, Bishop Wīsā of al-Bilyanā in the Governorate of Sohag, 500 km south of Cairo, says that:

“What we have experienced has nothing to do with Muslim-Christian relations. We have always had good relations in this area. We have not suffered from extremists or terrorists. Besides this, people in el-Kushh, both Muslims and Christians, are not very religious. Both communities are poor, and they are

316 AWR: Art. 9, Week 48/1998, *al-Usbūc*, Khālīd al-Dījālī, Muhammad Rifcat, Hanan Bidawī

317 AWR: Art. 26, Week 44/1998, *al-Usbūc*, Muhammad Rif'at

*first of all concerned with making a living.*ⁿ³¹⁸

Another weak point in the reports is the methods of the police that were described as religious motivated. According to Cornelis Hulsman the reason for the police actions were not primarily based on religious motives. It was caused by a lack of education among the police forces in that area. This is because Egypt is not capable of giving large police forces a proper education, therefore the best police forces are in Cairo and the rest are stationed in the countryside. So when an incident like al-Kushh occurs the police arrest a lot of people and questions them. The questioning is often performed as torture in order to discover what happened. Cornelis Hulsman does not deny that fact that torture might have taken place. It just did not start as a sectarian incident. It, however, later developed into one.

4. Key persons

In this organization there seems to be only one person as no other names are mentioned in the articles. That person was Maurice Sādiq. His assistant for years has been Mamdūh Nakhlah who later founded al-Kalima Center for Human Rights after Sādiq left for the US. See the section on al-Kalima Center for Human Rights in this report.

5. Website

No website was found.

6. Conclusion

This organization seems to be only involved with Coptic issues, a fact which has led to a lot of criticism from the media, for example when *al-Uṣbūʿ*^c called Maurice Sādiq a liar who fabricates stories in order to promote the Coptic case³¹⁹.

Maurice Sādiq's use of international media has been criticized as well and the question of foreign intervention in Egyptian domestic issues, has also been discussed in relation to Maurice Sādiq.

The fact that the organization does not have a webpage, and if one does a Google search then it is not possible to find any information about on The Center for Human Rights and National Unity, indicates

318 AWR: Art. 16, Week 39/1998, Religious News Service from the Arab World, Cornelis Hulsman

319 AWR: Art. 10, Week 49/1998, *al-Uṣbūʿ*^c. Not mentioned

that the organization probably no longer exists, or that its productivity is very limited.

Appendix

Appendix A-The newspapers covered by AWR

Name	Link	Release
Al-Usbū ^c	Independent	Weekly
Al- ^c Arabī	Opposition (Nasserist Party)	Weekly
^c Aqīdatī	Semi-Governmental, Islamic	Weekly
Middle East Times	Independent	Daily
Al-Ahrām	Semi-Governmental	Daily
Al-Wafd	Opposition (Wafd Party)	Daily
Al-Sha ^c b	Opposition (Labour Party, Islamic)	Semiweekly
Rose al-Yūsuf	Semi-Governmental	Daily
Al- Ahrār	Opposition (Ahrār Party)	Weekly
Akhbar Al-Hawadeth		Weekly
Al-Akhabār	Semi-Governmental	Daily
Waṭanī	Independent (Christian)	Weekly
Al-Liwā' al-Islāmī	Islamic newspaper of the ruling National Democratic Party	Weekly
Al-Muṣawwar	Semi-Governmental	Weekly
Al-Maydān	Independent	Weekly
Al-Sharq Al-Awsat	International	Daily