

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

## UN Committee's findings a damning indictment of Egypt's record on economic, social and cultural rights

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The findings of a UN review into how Egypt has delivered on economic, social and cultural rights should be a wake-up call for the authorities, Amnesty International said today.

On 14 November 2013, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reviewed how Egypt was upholding its obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

In a set of [concluding observations](#) made public today, the Committee found that Egypt had failed to address workers' rights and had not adequately invested in affordable housing, resulting in a "high percentage" of the population living in informal settlements which lack adequate infrastructure or facilities. The Committee also stated that Egypt had not protected women and girls from discrimination.

"Bread, freedom and social justice" was a key slogan of the 2011 uprising. The Committee's findings are a damning indictment of how Egypt's authorities have failed to deliver, almost three years after these issues led to the "25 January Revolution" that toppled Hosni Mubarak, Amnesty International said.

The Committee concluded that Egypt's new minimum wage "does not guarantee a decent standard of living" and that the authorities are limiting independent trade unions and imposing "disproportionate" restrictions on striking workers.

The Committee also expressed concern over what it said were "widespread" forced evictions, prohibited under international law, and the lack of effective remedies for those affected. It called on Egypt's government to ensure that laws guaranteed the rights to adequate housing and security of tenure.

The Committee also found that Egypt had failed to end "serious and widespread" discrimination against women and girls, and that the government had not addressed continuing violence against women and girls – including repeated sexual attacks on women protesters.

It also urged the government to take action to help rebuild Coptic Christian communities devastated by a wave of sectarian attacks in August 2013.

More broadly, the Committee expressed concern at cuts in spending on health, education and housing which disproportionately impacted disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups; the failure to adopt comprehensive legislation on non-discrimination and to adequately tackle practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child labour and the high proportion of the population, particularly those in rural areas, who do not have adequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

In its [submission](#) to the Committee ahead of Egypt's review in mid-November, Amnesty International highlighted Egypt's failures to guarantee economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to work, the right to an adequate standard of living, and pervasive discrimination against women and Coptic Christians.

The Egyptian authorities should now take prompt action to implement the Committee's recommendations, in consultation with civil society, Amnesty International said.

As immediate measures, Amnesty International is urging Egypt's authorities to ban forced evictions, set up a system to guarantee a fair minimum wage, prioritise a draft law on violence against women and girls and sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR, allowing victims to bring complaints to the Committee.

Egypt's new draft Constitution does makes reference to economic, social and cultural rights, but in some cases may fall short of fully guaranteeing them. Amnesty International is particularly concerned that, while the draft Constitution recognizes the right to adequate and safe housing, it does not explicitly prohibit forced evictions.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' review of Egypt was attended by both Amnesty International delegates and Egyptian human rights organizations.

#### **Read more**

■ See Amnesty International, *Egypt: Submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 51st Session, November 2013* (Index: MDE 12/049/2013), October 2013: [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fNGO%2fEGY%2f15542&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fNGO%2fEGY%2f15542&Lang=en)

■ Amnesty International, *Egypt: Checklist to combat sexual and gender-based violence* (Index: MDE 12/013/2013), 15 March 2013: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/women-stand-wave-injustice-and-violence-egypt-2013-03-15>

■ See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Concluding observations on the combined second, third and fourth periodic report of Egypt\** (UN Doc: E/C.12/EGY/CO/2-4), 29 November 2013: [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2fEGY%2fCO%2f2-4&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2fEGY%2fCO%2f2-4&Lang=en)

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