

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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October 27, 2022

To President of the National Council for Women, Dr. Maya  
Morsy

Your Excellency,

We write to you to seek your comment on the issue of sexual assault in Egypt in general and specifically assaults against women and girls who are refugees or asylum seekers. Human Rights Watch is an independent nongovernmental organization that monitors and reports on human rights in more than 90 countries worldwide. We appreciate your engagement with our organization on human rights issues in the country.

Human Rights Watch will soon publish research we recently conducted on sexual violence against the refugee community in Egypt and difficulties faced by survivors in accessing justice. Our research with survivors demonstrates that serious challenges exist when they want to file a police report or to communicate to the authorities the violence against them. Reports by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) published in 2022 and 2020 also indicate that sexual and gender-based violence has been a pervasive problem for Egypt’s refugee communities.

We would like to reflect your government’s views and incorporate official government data in our upcoming report, and therefore we request your response to few questions:

1. How many rape or other sexual assault cases were reported to Egyptian authorities in the years 2021-2022? Is there a breakdown by gender of the victim and by location (governorate)? In how many of these cases were the victims refugees or asylum seekers?
2. What are the legal requirements for police in Egypt to register, investigate and refer to public prosecutors a rape or other sexual assault complaint?

3. What are the legal requirements or regulations on police regarding how to treat complaints made by individuals known or presumed to be foreign nationals, including refugees or asylum seekers, who report that they were victims of a crime? Are the police required to check their legal immigration status (e.g., whether they hold a valid residency permit and/or UNHCR refugee or asylum seeker card)? Are there any protection mechanisms or legal firewalls/barriers in place to ensure that undocumented persons who are victims of a crime can file complaints without fear of penalty or repercussions due to their immigration status?
4. What kind of health care or other services are available for survivors of rape or other forms sexual assault? Can survivors access testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy including HIV prophylaxis, emergency contraception and abortion? Are all such services available for Egyptians also accessible to refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented persons?
5. What kind of trainings are police officers and prosecutors required to undergo to work on rape or other sexual assault cases?
6. To what extent are trained female police staff available in police stations to deal with rape or sexual assault reports?
7. What kind activities is the National Council for Women undertaking to ensure the protection of refugees and asylum seekers from sexual violence, if any?

We would appreciate the response of the President of the council to this letter at your earliest opportunity. In order for elements of your responses to be reflected in the report we are preparing, we request that we receive the response by November 10, 2022.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Adam Coogle  
Deputy Director  
Middle East and North Africa  
Human Rights Watch