



[New Human Rights Watch Report Outlines How Egyptian Authorities Under the El-Sisi Government Have Failed to Protect Vulnerable Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Sexual Violence](#)

A new Human Rights Watch (HRW) report has drawn attention to how Egyptian authorities under the El-Sisi government have failed to protect vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers from sexual violence. The findings delve into the disturbing trend which has become far too commonplace in recent years, as many female asylum seekers and refugees have fallen vulnerable to sexual abuse and assault. The numbers show that sexual and gender-based violence in Egypt's refugee communities is especially pervasive, with accounts of more than 2,300 refugees who have experienced this in 2021 alone. In their latest report, HRW documents 11 particularly alarming incidents of sexual violence, including ones with children. The evidence uncovers how the victims who went to authorities were often told that they could not file incident reports, and some were even assaulted by the officers that were assigned to help them. Insufficient police responses into sexual violence accounts and authorities' failure to properly investigate and offer accountability were shown to be prevalent occurrences.

Egypt has no national asylum system, and thus, they do not relocate refugees to camps but instead send them to live in urban areas. Many refugee communities are located in poorer neighborhoods and areas with high crime rates, and this has been pointed to as a notable factor which exacerbates the risk of refugees being victimized – as attackers view them as easy targets based on their perceived vulnerability linked to poverty and legal status. The government has allowed the UNHCR to take control of the residency process, however, ongoing barriers to obtaining permits have left many asylum seekers and refugees undocumented, further increasing their risk and vulnerability to exploitation, abuse, and violence. Unfortunately, HRW's report is far from the first time that Egyptian authorities have been documented of failing to provide adequate protection for asylum seekers against egregious human rights abuses. El-Sisi authorities themselves have been accused of engaging in physical abuse and forced labor practices.

Observers have pointed out that refugees and asylum seekers should hold the right to report crimes with no fear of reprisal to their immigration status. HRW officials have also highlighted the troubling combination of pervasive sexual violence, a failure to protect against this and deter future abuses, and an absence of justice and accountability to punish offenders. The issue of major human rights abuses, particularly against women, has been a tangible theme under the El-Sisi government. Rights activists have documented an increase in concerning practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages, and child marriages. These have been highly criticized for their severe negative health, psychological, and emotional ramifications on victims.

Unease regarding the overall state of human rights in Egypt under the El-Sisi government has been a consistent trend in preceding years. The current government has instituted a brutal crackdown on any groups or individuals that they deem to be political opponents and dissidents. Rights groups often document how Egyptian security forces act with impunity, routinely conducting arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances, and torture against real or suspected political activists, as well as ordinary citizens. As a result, HRW's new report is merely the latest evidence of the array of human rights abuses that have plagued Egypt under the El-Sisi government.