



[Egypt Faces Renewed Human Rights Scrutiny](#)

By Jacob Van Veldhuizen

Egypt has faced renewed scrutiny after a report tracking methods of torture used by Egyptian security forces was submitted to the United Nations Committee against Torture. It states the Egyptian authorities' "use of torture is so widespread and systematic as to amount to a crime against humanity under customary international law." Some of the methods used include beatings, electrical shocks, sexual violence, and denial of access to medical care. Torture is being used as a political tool to diminish dissent. The report was submitted by a coalition of NGOs including ECRF, the EIPR, and REDRESS.

This is not the first time Egypt has been criticized for its failure to respect human rights. These criticisms have increased as President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi continues his crackdown on dissent. It is estimated that there are some 60,000 political prisoners currently in Egypt. Previously, Egypt was able to pass off allegations of torture as isolated acts of misconduct, but this report shows that this is simply not true. Emergency and counter-terrorism laws passed by al-Sisi codifies torture into law. Another strategy often employed by Egypt to quell international criticism was to launch national dialogues, which had little real impact on policies. They have also released political prisoners in the past, but they are often quickly rearrested or quickly replaced by other dissidents. 1,000 prisoners have been released in the past year, but rights groups record at least 3 times that amount being detained. Despite the strong evidence. Cairo continues to deny these allegations.

These allegations come at an awkward time for Egypt, whose government was recently indicated in the corruption scandal involving Senator Bob Menedez. Menedez had previously used his power as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to ram through military aid for Egypt despite human rights concerns. Now his replacement, Senator Ben Cardin, has blocked at least \$235 million in military aid to Egypt over human rights conditions. Despite this, it should still be noted that last month, the U.S. State Department approved \$1.215 billion in military aid for the coming year. \$85 million was also withheld. Losing military and political support from the United States would be a massive loss for Egypt, though if past actions are any indication, this is unlikely.

The upcoming election also comes at a poor time. The multiple scandals and allegations is likely to increase the amount of anti-el-Sisi protests. Many are already gaining momentum as the Egyptian economy continues to falter. Because elections in Egypt are neither free nor fair, it is still very likely that el-Sisi will win. Most of the opposition leaders have been arrested as to prevent them from running. He will need to suppress protests in order to do this. In the past, authorities have used brutal tactics to do so. These tactics are more difficult to hide from the international community, which will likely increase diplomatic and potentially economic pressure.

As el-Sisi continues to face a crumbling economy and growing scandals, he will likely have to employ more nefarious tactics to "win" the election. The little support el-Sisi had is slipping. Even pro-government voices have been warning of dire consequences if the economic and human situation does not improve soon. A former member of parliament, Ahmed el-Tantawy, has emerged as a potential challenger. It is unlikely that he will do well

at the ballot box, as many of his supporters have already been arrested. The Egyptian security forces also have a history of preventing supporters of opposition figures to vote.

President Biden has repeatedly said that human rights are at the core of his foreign policy agenda and this is the perfect time to prove it. The United States must cut off all military aid. Egypt is an important strategic ally for the United States, but this behavior should not be tolerated, especially from allies. This is a mistake that the U.S. has made in the past with Iran. This mistake continues to have great impact on foreign policy decisions. History has shown us again and again that abusive authoritarian regimes are not stable. This is the perfect time for the United States to finally do the right thing and cut off support for Egypt.