



[Human Rights Groups Denounce the European Union's \\$8 Billion Aid Package to the El-Sisi Regime in Egypt](#)

The European Union (EU) announced a 7.4 billion Euro (\$8.1 billion) aid package and a movement towards closer ties with Egypt. This new agreement designates Egypt's relationship with the EU as a "strategic partnership" and is aimed at addressing migratory flows. It is meant to boost cooperation in key sectors such as energy and security, while supporting Egypt's faltering economy. Some commentators have stressed that the real motivation behind the aid package is to boost the Egyptian economy and create stability to prevent migration to EU countries. Egypt's population of around 106 million is currently facing economic adversity, and has seen an influx of 9 million migrants and refugees, mostly from Sudan and Syria. Human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International, and others have been critical of the EU's decision to send aid to Egypt, citing the El-Sisi regime's brutal repression and rights abuses. The EU is providing a repressive regime the resources to viciously control migrants, as Egyptian authorities under El-Sisi have been known to commit these types of violations.

According to HRW reports, authorities have wrongfully detained and mistreated migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, regularly deporting them to other countries as well. The approach of cash-for-migration control has been a hallmark of EU policy, and has been exacerbated under European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. It exposes the EU's complicity in abuses and contradicts its founding principles, undermining its credibility on the world stage. Not only does this aid package leave a stain on the EU's reputation, but has also been tried and failed in the past with other repressive regimes in countries such as Tunisia and Mauritania. HRW claims that "the blueprint is the same...stop migrants, ignore abuses." HRW emphasizes that this practice strengthens autocratic rulers, and betrays human rights defenders who have suffered at the hands of the repressive regimes.

Since he overthrew Egypt's democratically-elected president through a military coup in 2013, El-Sisi has run a repressive autocratic regime that frequently commits human rights abuses. The V-Dem Institute categorizes Egypt as an electoral autocracy, meaning that while there are elections, they are neither free nor fair and the government fails to uphold liberal principles such as the rule of law and freedom of expression. The El-Sisi regime has been documented massacring protesters, jailing and torturing thousands of critics and opponents including journalists, and handing down unfair sentences in sham trials. Independent media and civil society, cornerstones of a healthy democracy and avenues for civil change, are heavily stifled by Egyptian authorities. This repression is carried out by the powers of the judiciary and the military, both obedient arms of the El-Sisi government. These are just a few of the abuses committed under the El-Sisi regime that the EU's funds would function as support for. It should be noted that the EU is not the only international actor providing Egypt with an economic crutch. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Arab Emirates have also given billions to Egypt's depleted reserves. These transfers, HRW claims, ran rife with corruption and was in some ways detrimental to Egyptians' economic rights.

EU diplomats claim that Egypt's strategic importance has been underscored by their role in the War on Gaza, where Egypt is mediating between Israel and Hamas. While Egypt may be of strategic importance, it does not dismiss the fact that the EU is directly funding a repressive regime that will continue to engage in these human rights violations as long as it has the resources to do so. A propped-up economy will assist El-Sisi in maintaining a

grip on power and patronage flows to his repressive security apparatus. A bolstered economy could also keep citizens complacent with the El-Sisi regime, possibly gifting conditions that shield from justifiable opposition. Social justice activists have rightly pointed out that aid packages of this size need to be predicated and conditioned on the protection of human rights. The EU should hold the El-Sisi regime accountable for its actions, or else risk tarnishing its desired image as a protector of democracy and human rights.