

# EGYPT

GCPEA identified at least 13 reports of the military use of schools within the context of the armed conflict in North Sinai governorate during the reporting period, as well as one attack on teachers and one attack on higher education students.

## CONTEXT

Conflict in North Sinai governorate continued in the 2022-2023 reporting period between the non-state armed group Wilayat Sina', an Islamic State affiliate, and the Egyptian military, supported by allied militia groups.<sup>1</sup> President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi declared in 2022 that military operations against Wilayat Sina', which began in 2013, had been successful and were almost concluded.<sup>2</sup> However, Human Rights Watch reported that militias affiliated with the military were still operational in North Sinai in the second half of 2022.<sup>3</sup>

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who has been in power since 2014, secured a third term following elections in December 2023.<sup>4</sup> A national dialogue between the government and opposition members began in May 2023, although the government was criticized for continuing to arbitrarily detain critics, according to International Crisis Group and Human Rights Watch.<sup>5</sup>

Egypt hosted an increasing number of asylum seekers and refugees during the reporting period. According to the UN, around 350,000 people had sought refuge as of September 2023, in particular from Syria and Sudan.<sup>6</sup> The conflict in North Sinai governorate impacted children's access to education; 96 schools in the governorate were not functioning, meaning increased rates of illiteracy, as reported by *The Guardian* in March 2023.<sup>7</sup> In addition, children as young as 16 were reportedly used as child soldiers in military operations carried out by army-aligned militia groups in North Sinai, according to Human Rights Watch.<sup>8</sup> In 2022, 2.1 million children were out of school in Egypt.<sup>9</sup> According to Amnesty International, the government extended emergency measures, including granting the defense minister exceptional powers to close schools, during the reporting period.<sup>10</sup>

Although Egypt has been profiled in previous reports, it was not profiled in *Education Under Attack 2022* so no comparison can be made with the previous reporting period.

## ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

In the 2022-2023 reporting period, GCPEA identified one attack on school teachers. On October 15, 2023, around a dozen teachers were allegedly detained during a protest against the disqualification of teachers from public school positions, in front of the Ministry of Education in Cairo, as reported by Human Rights Watch and local media.<sup>11</sup>

## MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

GCPEA identified at least 13 reports of military use during the 2022-2023 reporting period. According to a human rights organization, at least 37 schools had been used as military bases since 2013,<sup>12</sup> although GCPEA was unable to determine how many of these were ongoing during the 2022-2023 reporting period.

GCPEA identified at least nine reports of military use in 2022, affecting both schools and higher education infrastructure.<sup>13</sup> Schools were often used as bases and as fighting positions. Examples included:

- Al Husseinat Joint Elementary School in North Sinai governorate was reportedly occupied and being used as a base in August 2022, according to a human rights monitor; part of the school was allegedly damaged.<sup>14</sup>
- On November 18 and 19, 2022, a higher education building was reportedly occupied by an armed group in the eastern part of Al-Qantara city, Ismailia governorate. Their presence led to airstrikes from the armed forces, and armed clashes, as reported by International Crisis Group, a violence monitor, and local media outlet.<sup>15</sup>
- Al Okour Joint Preparatory School in North Sinai governorate was allegedly used as a military base from at least May 2017 through 2022, according to a human rights organization. New structures were reportedly added to the school while others nearby, as well as vegetation, were reportedly destroyed, indicating that the school was used for reconnaissance or as a fighting position.<sup>16</sup>
- GCPEA received a report that military and police forces allegedly occupied a primary school for boys in North Sinai governorate between 2016 and December 2022, when the school was vacated; the school was reportedly used as a military base and fortifications were added to the structure for that purpose.<sup>17</sup>

GCPEA identified at least four reports of the military use of schools in 2023.<sup>18</sup> For example, Ahmed Abu Salma Joint School for Elementary Education in North Sinai governorate was reportedly used from at least 2015, when the school was allegedly closed and converted to a military camp, until January 2023; during the same period, the school was reportedly used as a position for snipers.<sup>19</sup>

## ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

GCPEA identified one attack on higher education during the reporting period. On October 3, 2022, police reportedly assaulted some protesting students and arrested at least eight others outside the South Sudanese embassy in Cairo. The students, who were from South Sudan, were protesting living conditions at various Egyptian universities and calling for the payment of their scholarships. Some of the arrested students were deported some weeks later without due process, as reported by local and international media.<sup>20</sup>

GCPEA did not identify any reports of attacks on higher education in 2023.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2023), Egypt chapter.
- 2 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2023), Egypt chapter.
- 3 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2023), Egypt chapter.
- 4 “Egypt election: President Sisi wins third term,” *BBC News*, December 18, 2023.
- 5 International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch, Egypt, May 2023. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2023), Egypt chapter.
- 6 UNHCR, “Refugee Context in Egypt,” September 2023.
- 7 Oliver Holmes, “Egyptian army has turned Sinai schools into military bases, says rights group,” *The Guardian*, March 30, 2023.
- 8 Jo Becker, “US Rebukes Egypt for Using Child Soldiers,” Human Rights Watch Dispatch, September 26, 2023.
- 9 UNICEF, “Country Office Annual Report 2022,” March 7, 2023, pp. 1-2.
- 10 Amnesty International, Report 2022/23 - The state of the world’s human rights, (London: Amnesty International, 2023), Egypt chapter.
- 11 Rana Mamdouh, “Teachers protest after mass rejections from state hiring scheme without clear criteria for acceptance,” *Mada Masr*, October 17, 2023. Human Rights Watch, “Egypt: Dozens of Peaceful Protesters Detained,” Human Rights Watch news release, November 1, 2023. The New Arab, “14 Egyptian teachers imprisoned for “joining a terrorist group 14 (في باءه! دة امجل مامضن ال)» تمهتبا ايرصم امل عم سب ح,” *The New Arab*, October 17, 2023.
- 12 Oliver Holmes, “Egyptian army has turned Sinai schools into military bases, says rights group,” *The Guardian*, March 30, 2023.
- 13 Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, “I Was Afraid...I Was Only 17,” August 8, 2023, pp. 12-15. Information from a confidential source and not otherwise available. Mada Masr, “Armed Forces thwarts militant attack near Ismailia university, 2 military personnel killed, 1 civilian injured,” *Mada Masr*, November 20, 2022. “Incident between Egyptian army forces and ISIS in the Suez Canal region,” The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, November 24, 2022. Twitter; *Rassd; New Arab; Madamas*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID EGY11835 and EGY11836 (data downloaded April 13, 2023). International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch, Egypt, November 2022. Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, “Mines of the Future” April 8, 2024, p. 93.
- 14 Information received via email from Sinai Foundation for Human Rights (SFHR) on June 26, 2023.
- 15 International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch, Egypt, November 2022. Mada Masr, “Armed Forces thwarts militant attack near Ismailia university, 2 military personnel killed, 1 civilian injured,” *Mada Masr*, November 20, 2022. “Incident between Egyptian army forces and ISIS in the Suez Canal region,” The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, November 24, 2022.
- 16 Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, “I Was Afraid...I Was Only 17,” August 8, 2023, pp. 12-15.
- 17 Information received via email from Sinai Foundation for Human Rights (SFHR) on June 26, 2023.
- 18 Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, “Mines of the Future” April 8, 2024, pp. 103-105. Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, “Mines of the Future” April 8, 2024, pp. 115-116. Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, “Mines of the Future” April 8, 2024, p. 86. Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, “Mines of the Future” April 8, 2024, pp. 112-113.
- 19 Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, “Mines of the Future” April 8, 2024, pp. 103-105.
- 20 Deng Ghai Deng, “South Sudanese in Cairo Allege Student Protest Violently Dispersed,” *VOA*, October 4, 2022. Manyang David Mayar, “Egypt to Deport More South Sudanese Students,” *VOA*, October 25, 2022. Wol Mapal, “Two students injured, 16 others reportedly arrested in Egypt,” *Eye Radio*, October 4, 2022.