



Egyptian Front  
For Human Rights

# Forgotten in Al Qanater

Violating rights of  
women detained inside  
Al Qanater prison



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A report by:

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# Introduction

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A delegation from the National Council for Human Rights visited Al Qanater Prison for Women on October 24, 2019, during which it commended the services provided to the female prisoners and praised the level of care rendered to them as well as the good treatment they receive by the prison's administration. The delegation also met with some of the inmates who "praised the different aspects of care that they and their children were provided with, and that the prison administration brought in their children, who are placed in foster care homes, regularly for visitation".<sup>1</sup> This visit coincided with an extensive detention campaign launched by the Egyptian government following the September 20 protests, which affected more than 3,700 persons <sup>2</sup>, which brought in a new group of political prisoners including; Mahinour AlMasri, human rights lawyer, as well as Esraa Abdel Fatah and Solafa Magdi, who are both journalists, in addition to many others. A matter which represented the most massive arrests campaign since Abdel Fatah AlSisi assumed presidency and came to power, during which time the number of defendants accused of protesting and joining unknown terrorist groups significantly increased. The situation is quite unpleasant behind the bars of Al Qanater Prison for women, especially that, with the increase in the number of female detainees, there is another narrative supported by the testimonies of women who were jailed inside it, which contradicts the positive narrative told by the Human Rights Council that is circulated to the public opinion.

There is no official information regarding the date of the foundation of the Qanater Prison for women, but some unofficial sources point to its foundation in 1957. It has had a notorious reputation for decades; As Nawal ElSaadwi, Author and Physician, has recounted in her book "My Diary in the Women's Prison" regarding her arrest in 1981 as per an order issued by former President Anwar AlSadat, which also included more women ranging between activists and writers, under the pretext that they are "conspirators against the nation and the interests of the people".<sup>3</sup> ElSadawi described her struggle to adjust with the inhumane conditions of detention, stretching from insects all around and crawling over her body up to the bad quality of food and the uncomfortable sleeping situation. She also chronicled for the sufferings of other "non-political" prisoners, especially those who were pregnant and had to give birth to their children inside prison, and how they

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1 Amani Awad, The National Center for Human Rights following up on the health care of female inmates in Al-Qanater and al-Marj Prisons. (Al-Mal Newspaper, 2019) [shorturl.at/ptyM8](https://shorturl.at/ptyM8)

2 Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, Arrests during the events of September 20, 2019. [shorturl.at/yKU18](https://shorturl.at/yKU18)

3 Fayez Allam, Prison Literature: My Diary in the Women's Prison. (Raseef22, 2016). <https://raseef22.com/article/24693-nawal-saadawi-prison-memoire>

and their children suffered poor health care, overcrowding, and also the lack of adequate nutrition for them or their children. The situation has not improved for nearly 40 years, but to the contrary, the conditions of female prisoners in the 1980s are quite akin to the conditions of their counterparts in the 2020s if the conditions are not actually worse at the present time.

Women's prisons in general and the Qanater prison in particular never received rightful human rights recognition or consideration, as the focus is on heavily guarded prisons and men's prisons while addressing human rights violations committed against prisoners. The Egyptian human rights literature has not dealt with the conditions of women in Al-Qanater prison thoroughly for at least 10 years since the Human Rights Association for the Assistance of Prisoners issued its last report on the violations suffered by women inside Al-Qanater prison in 2009<sup>4</sup>. Despite the media attention and human rights incidents of arresting women in cases of protesting or on charges of terrorism, but abuses against female detainees are usually reduced to the arrest process itself, without going into the internal conditions of women's prisons.

There is a need to investigate and consider the lives of women in prisons and places of detention in Egypt, away from the traditional pattern of dealing with human rights violations, which focuses on those of detention facilities affecting men, and rarely addresses the special needs of women, or structural violence resulting from the hierarchy and internal structure of the prison system in Egypt. This includes women's needs related to personal hygiene and their health care, as well as the rights of pregnant and nursing women prisoners and their children, and the approach of using sexual harassment as a form of torture.

This report attempts to bring a new onset for research on the rights of women prisoners in Egypt, by dealing with social and economic rights as basic rights no less important than political and civil rights, as with the complete absence of real and impartial supervision of places of detention, discriminatory policies have emerged within Egypt's prisons in general, and women's prisons in particular. A matter which has created a classist and discriminatory prison environment that segregates between prisoners according to their social, economic and political backgrounds, not to mention the financial burden of livelihood services that should have been naturally provided to the inmates in prison, places the burden of attaining them on prisoners and their families, turning the prison from being a house of refinement and reform into a commercial project. This has transformed detentions, from a precautionary measure or a punitive instrument, into a form of kidnapping under which women suffer torture and humiliation endlessly.

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4 Human Rights Association for the Assistance of Prisoners. The conditions of women in Egyptian prisons 2009 [http://www.hrcap.org/artical.php?id=423&cat\\_id=114&fbclid=IwAR0y3x653P2hqViz5ftd7Rv-JVNM8RWZT7YDqlhBAzr3AamnpAECzNEqVT5Y](http://www.hrcap.org/artical.php?id=423&cat_id=114&fbclid=IwAR0y3x653P2hqViz5ftd7Rv-JVNM8RWZT7YDqlhBAzr3AamnpAECzNEqVT5Y)

# Methodology

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This report relied on conducting personal and phone interviews with 12 former female prisoners and documenting their lives while being held in Al-Qanater prison. The testimonies have been attained during the months dating between June to August 2019. Some of the women were held in custody and some of them were already convicted. We also conducted an interview with a mother of a current prisoner, as well as with two lawyers who recounted what their clients went through during their detention. It should be noted that the identities of everyone we have cited in this report is kept anonymous for their protection, whether they were former detainees, relatives of current detainees or lawyers.

The report attempts to determine the role of gender in exacerbating violations against women through reflecting upon how women's prisons. Al-Qanater prison particularly, stand apart from men's prisons, in terms of systematic patterns of violations.

It also attempts to answer this question through reviewing the Egyptian law as well as international agreements and standards. The report also relies on previous literature published in the local press about this prison, the result of combining these sources, the report reaches an outcome that is revealed in five main sections:

**First**, the report analyses the situation of female prisoners through comparing between Egyptian legislation and international law in order to determine the extent to which the prison regulations conforms to international standards.

**Second**, the prisoners are subjected to violations preceding their detention in Al-Qanater prison, starting from their arrest up until being assigned to their wards. This section focuses on their plight in the deportation car and being placed in the "New Arrivals" ward for 11 days before being distributed to their wards, as two main transition points where their rights are gravely breached.

**Thirdly**, this section deals with the housing process in the wards, it begins by an outlook of the Qanater prison from the inside; its quarters and its wards, after that it deals with the violations committed during the distribution process of the prisoners without taking into consideration their legal status.

**Fourth**, the major part of this report highlights the most prominent patterns of violations experienced by the prisoners while they are held in Al-Qanater prison after being placed in their wards. This section is divided into two branches, the first one deals with the violations that female prisoners encounter which are similar to what male prisoners are also exposed to,



while the second branch focuses on violations that are gender-based, which violate or affect the special needs of women.

**Fifth**, the report attempts to delve deeper into the layers of discrimination between female prisoners within Al-Qanater prison, and the tendentious prison policies based on social, economic and political backgrounds.

**Sixth**, lastly, the report addresses the policies of impoverishment used inside the Qanater prison, in terms that free services are sold inside the prison, and the cost of visits upon families, as well as the canteen and cafeteria being rather commercial projects that exploit the prisoners financially and increase the economic burden on them and their families.

In the following page, we will demonstrate a few definitions of some of the terms mentioned in the report that are commonly used in the Qanater prison community:

- Political Prisoner: A prisoner accused or sentenced in cases related to demonstrating, spreading false news, or terrorism related charges.
- Criminal Prisoner: A prisoner accused or sentenced in cases related to murder, theft, money laundering, indecency, or drugs.
- New Arrivals Ward: A ward where prisoners are housed for the duration of 11 days before being relocated to their own wards.
- Al-Sholl: Prison clothes for women, which is a white, light and coarse gown that the prison administration provides to female prisoners upon entering prison.
- Al-Nabatashia: She is a prisoner with seniority, appointed by the prison administration for a fee in order to supervise the internal affairs of the wards.
- Al-Tashreeda (displacement): A punishment method in Al-Qanater prison, which is carried out by transferring the female prisoner from her ward, after taking all her personal belongings, and forcing her to spend the day in the bathroom and sleep there, until the chief of investigations orders her return to her cell.
- Al-Tagreeda: A means of punishment in Al-Qanater prison by robbing the prisoner of all her clothes and personal belongings and then burning them all.
- Molla: A three-story bed.
- Bakia: The space between each Molla and the adjacent one.
- Burning» or «shell»: A cleaning method used by the Qanater prison administration, in which they evacuate the entire ward and burn it.
- Al-Taayeen: Prison food that is served daily, free of charge.
- Al-Maesha (Living): Food that is prepared by female prisoners who are appointed by the prison administration and sold for a fee.



## First: The Legal Framework for Women in Detention

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Article 11 of the Egyptian Constitution, amended in 2019, *stipulates for equality between men and women in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights*. This article ensures the state's commitment to protecting women against all forms of violence, but when considering the status of female prisoners in the Egyptian law, we find that the law has disregarded many of the needs of women, as it only pointed to the status of those who are either pregnant or mothers, a matter which reflects the legislator's outlook towards women only as mothers or supporters of children, without mentioning any of the rights or needs of female prisoners that are essential for the achievement of equality with their male peers. This part of the report tries to clarify what the Egyptian legislator has missed upon in that aspect, which has led to expanding the gap between the Egyptian law and what the International community has reached in the realm of the rights of prisoners.

There are only two brief articles which stipulate the status and rights of women prisoners, specified in the Prison Regulation Law 396/1956.

Article 19 states: *"Starting her sixth month of pregnancy, a pregnant*

*prisoner shall receive an especially good treatment, especially in terms of food, work and sleep until forty days after her delivery. The mother and her child must be provided with the necessary health care and proper nutrition, clothing, and rest. The pregnant/nursing prisoner shall not be deprived from food for whatever reason."*

Article 20 continues: *"The prisoner's child remains with her until he turns two. Once he reaches that age or if she does not wish for him to remain with her before that, he should be handed over to his father or to whom she chooses from among their relatives. If neither exists, he should be handed over by the prison administration to a shelter, and the imprisoned mother should be notified of his location. Seeing him at regular times should be facilitated by the prison administration, as indicated in the internal regulations."*

While considering the executive regulations of Law 48/1991 regarding the organization of prisons, we find that they are almost completely devoid of any reference to the rights of female prisoners. Out of 102 articles, female prisoners were mentioned only once in Article 23 (b), *which states that sentenced female prisoners sentenced should only be employed in work that is appropriate to the nature of women "without indicating the type of work that is appropriate for the nature of women."*

At the international level, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)<sup>5</sup>, obligated state parties to ensure equal rights for men and women so that they enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, without discrimination on the basis of sex.

This is evident when talking about placing male and female prisoners in places of detention, where the Minimum Standard Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), which were adopted by the Economic and Social Council in 1957, stipulated the basic rights that states must follow in the treatment of prisoners. These rules were succeeded by The United Nations for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) in 2011 which stress upon the rights of women prisoners as a category with special rights and needs, and to promote (the Nelson Mandela Rules), which, while applicable to all prisoners without discrimination, are not sufficiently concerned with addressing the needs of women.

The Bangkok Rules are divided into two parts, the first part addresses general rules that apply to all categories of female prisoners, while the second part deals with rules applicable only to special groups of female prisoners. The Bangkok Rules provide detailed and clear rights regarding the needs and requirements of women prisoners, and the measures to be taken to meet those needs. The Bangkok Rules refute matters to be taken into account when women enter prison, such as enabling them to communicate

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<sup>5</sup> Egypt signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on July 16, 1980, and ratified on September 18, 1981.

with their relatives and having access to legal advice, as well as the registry rules that require the prison to record their children's data. It also includes rules for places of detention, so that women are placed in places close to their homes, as well as the personal hygiene requirements necessary to meet their specific needs.

The Bangkok Rules also detail the minimum requirements for health care services that must be provided to women, which include: medical examination upon entry to prison, women's health care, mental health, HIV prevention and providing care for those affected, and programs for treatment of substance abuse that alters the psychological status, suicide prevention and self-harm, and preventive health care services.

Regarding the rules of safety and security specific to women, Bangkok rules address (regulate):

**A) The inspection process**, and how it takes place to ensure the dignity of women prisoners and protect them from sexual abuse.

**B) Discipline and punishment**, so as to protect pregnant women prisoners, women accompanied by infants and mothers.

**C) Freedom restraint tools**, which are not permitted to be used during labor or birth or immediately after delivery.

**D) Providing prisoners with necessary information, right to issue complaints, and inspection visits.**

The second part of the Bangkok Rules deals with rules that apply to special groups of female prisoners, and refers to those who have been sentenced, and it addresses their rights to be classified by categories and treatment on a case-by-case basis, through a prison system that provides them with their special needs so as to ensure the maintenance of social relations and after-care. The Bangkok Rules refer to special categories among female prisoners against whom measures have to be taken, such as pregnant women, nursing mothers and mothers who accompany their children in prison.

The second group deals with regulations for women who are arrested or held in pretrial detention, and with whom which measures must be taken to ensure their safety during this period, given that women are particularly vulnerable during their detention during the trial period.

Although these rules are indicative and non-binding, the Egyptian legislator's failure to use them clarifies where the state stands in the field of human rights. The Prison Regulation Law lacks articles that guarantee the rights of female prisoners, in terms of conditions of places of detention, personal hygiene, health conditions, and conditions necessary for their security and safety. The right to visit and communicate with the outside world, and to create a prison environment with qualified employees to deal with the needs of women. It also contains no rules regulating the rights of special groups of women, such as minors. This defectiveness in the Egyptian law stands as a barrier between female prisoners and the rights guaranteed to them



by international standards, which hinders them from attaining their rights, without providing any hope for reform.





## Second: Pre-housing in the wards

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The defendants arrive at Al-Qanater prison, whether from previous places of detention such as police stations or immediately after their arrest in the «deportation car». All prisoners go directly to the chief of investigations as soon as they enter the prison, who investigates into their cases. After that, one of the informants working in the prison checks their personal belongings, any money that the prisoner possesses is kept in the trusts and a receipt is written for her with the amount so that she can spend it inside the prison. The prison reserves the remaining personal belongings of the prisoner and allows her to receive them immediately upon her release or at the end of her sentence. Then the prisoner is self-searched by a prison guard. Immediately after arriving in prison, the prisoner is stripped of everything, even of her clothes, and is given the «sholl», which is a very light and rough white gown, in preparation for transferring her to the “New Arrivals” ward; it is a private ward, where all new prisoners of all types are transferred to upon arrival at the prison, where they spend 11 days. It is not known why this ward was

created, or the goal of keeping the prisoners there for that long rather than distributing them directly to their wards. After that, the prisoners are distributed to their wards, according to the legal reason behind their detention.

In this section, we look at the violations experienced by prisoners in two main stages before they are housed in the wards designated for each category, starting from what they are exposed to in the deportation car, to determine its suitability as a means of transportation to and from the prison for the prisoners' rights and special needs, and up to the stage of entering the New Arrivals Ward «which is a striking example of countless violations prior to the inmates' housing in their wards.

## 2.1 Deportation Car

**Deportation cars** are the only means of transportation for detainees to and from prison, and they have a special role for women in pretrial detention who have to be independent from and to the agency to investigate them every 15 or 45 days, depending on their legal status. According to the documentation, the deportation car is made of iron or «tin», it has some kind of chairs, also made of iron, the length extends the length of the car, and the width does not exceed several news. Because of the fact that Al-Qanater is imprisoned from Al-Omran, and more specifically from the offices of the prosecution and the courts, women prisoners take a good time inside the car, ranging from 3 to 5 hours at a time. It can be said that the deportation car is never equipped to transport prisoners in general, and it is not prepared in a human form that provides the special needs of female prisoners.

Because the car is made entirely from metal, the seats are very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter, which makes the prisoners unable to touch the seats or the walls of the car. In addition, the ventilation in the car is very poor, because it has one small window covered with a layer of wire openings that is supposed to allow some air, but above that layer another layer of wire with small holes that prevents any kind of ventilation into the car. In addition to poor ventilation, the car is full of unpleasant odors, due to the lack of cleaning and that it is used as "garbage can" by the deportation guards, according to the former prisoner S.A., where they dump their waste and urinate in it often.

S.A. describes her experience in the deportation car:



*It is not supposed to be called a deportation car. It should be called a hell car! A horrible horrible thing... It is big from inside, but very dirty, filled with dust and trash. The road is bad and they deliberately drive in a way that exhausts us on the inside. I got problems in my back during my time in prison because of it. Its ventilation holes are narrow and covered with two types of wire, which are jammed with food wrappers and lots of cigarettes, it smells very nasty, the soldiers use it as a toilet. In the*

*summer it is more like a portable oven, even if we there were only a few of us being deported. It is horrible with the bumps and the bad driving, we are turning upside down inside while we don't even want to let our fingers touch it.*

The Deportation car is also not equipped for dealing with the special needs of the prisoners, whether they had special health conditions, pregnant or nursing mothers in need of special care, as well as dealing with any emergency. One of the prisoners we have documented with was wounded by a bullet in her foot, which prevented her from walking without a crutch, she said that the car broke down once on the ring road and had to wait inside this «oven» for two hours until a car came from Shubra's police station to pick them up.

Former Prisoner S.Kh. recounts:



*They used to tighten the handcuffs too much, and the chair I was sitting in was very thin to the point that when the car when bumped, I would flip off the chair on the floor and I would throw up on the way, the car had no air in it and when I knocked on them for them to stop, they wouldn't allow it. This car also transferred men, and sometimes they urinated in it. So the car had remains of puke and urine to the point where I felt that I would pass out from the smell, along with the lack of air and the material from which the car was made. It was too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter.*

## 2.2 New Arrivals (Irad Ward)

According to the Prison's Regulations Law, prisoners have the right to receive their first visit 11 days after entering the prison. Consequently, visits are prohibited to all prisoners during the new arrivals period. Prisoners do not communicate with any of their relatives for 11 days, and their families are not allowed to bring in their belongings through visits, whether that was food, drink or clothing.

All prisoners spend their first 11 days of imprisonment in the New Arrivals ward; the ward is a small room with the approximate space of three meters\*-four meters, each Molla has three beds stacked on top of each other, i.e. 9 beds in the room. Prisoners in the "Irad Ward" are subjected to countless violations, as they are prevented from visiting, exercising, showering, and hair-dressing, and suffer from poor ventilation, overcrowding, poor food quality, and poor hygiene during their presence there.

Food is compulsory during being placed in the New Arrivals Ward where the prison administration does not leave other alternatives to obtain it. It is forbidden for the prisoners during this period to obtain money from the trusts, and thus they cannot buy food or drink from inside the cafeteria or the prison canteen, which is a breach of Article 16 of The Prison Regulation



Law, which provides that it is permissible for those in pretrial detention to bring in the food they need from outside prison or purchase it from the prison at the price specified for it. A situation that forces the prisoners who are held at the Irad ward to eat the prison food, which all the prisoners whom we have interviewed described as «disgusting» with small insufficient quantities. They also have to drink from the prison's dirty water, which is neither suitable for drinking nor for showering, it is black and full of worms.

According to Sh.A.'s description



*I didn't eat from that ward's food, only once the food looked okay and I took two spoonfuls, then I threw up everything! The heated meals consists of white rice and green beans or beans or lentils or aubergine. Cold meals consisted of three pans of bread a day, sometimes with green peppers, twice a day we were provided with eggs and sometimes zucchini or taro. During the 11 days I spent in the New Arrivals Ward, I only ate Cheese and Halawa.*

Overcrowding is another issue that prisoners suffer in the ward. In a room with only 9 beds, at least 30 female prisoners are held inside and sometimes as many as 95, according to the former prisoner S.A.



*"Three prisoners sleep on each bed, with the exception of two single beds, while the rest of the detainees sleep on the floor in a spaced that "fits a fist." Inmates in that room live in a minimum space that does not allow them to even move, and they are also prohibited from exercising for 11 days, during which they can only sit in their places. They are not allowed to do anything but eat and go to the bathroom. The status of ventilation made matters worse because of the heavy accumulation inside the ward, there is only one window and one fan despite the large numbers."*

CLEANLINESS is hardly attained in consideration of the overcrowding and poor ventilation, the New Arrivals Ward does not enjoy even the lowest standards of hygiene, as it is filled with insects and cockroaches that live side by side with prisoners, usually crawling on their bodies.

R.Q. remembers:



*The New Arrivals Ward is a very dirty place, it's the first time I see a nest of roaches settled in the wall where they are all gathered around it in different colors, that was next to me while sleeping, I was careful not to let my fingers touch the wall so it won't jump on me... sometimes I would be sleeping and I'd find them crawling on me.*

The abuse reaches the extent that prisoners are only allowed to shower once during 11 days. They are prohibited from possessing combs or any toiletries other than soap, and if any of them is caught combing her hair she would be instantly punished by the nabatshia. There is only one toilet in the

new arrivals ward, one meter in a meter... the prisoners stand in a long line waiting for their turn.

Sh.A. talks about the status of personal hygiene inside the New Arrivals Ward,



*The Bathroom was very dirty, you are not allowed to have any sanitizer, no Dettol or anything for personal hygiene, they only allowed us one underwear, when it was no longer clean, I took it off, wore my gawn on the flesh, then I washed it and wore it inside out, the time after I would take it off, wash it and wear it the other way around, and so on... you are only allowed one soap br, one shower in 11 days, which of course allowed for insects and very foul smell*

It is evident from the above-mentioned that prisoners are subjected to countless violations during their presence in the New Arrivals Ward. Starting from denying them visits, the poor quality of food and water, overcrowding, poor ventilation, lack of cleanliness and the prison administration's intransigence in allowing them to shower or maintain their personal hygiene, which may be considered a policy by the prison administration to reduce the expectations of the prisoners while held inside, as if preparing them for losing any hope in humanitarian considerations.



## Third: Distribution to the wards

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The former prisoners we have interviewed for this report have described to us the structure of the Qanater prison on the inside, based on their statements we shall showcase the division of the prison from the inside, its different wards and other buildings behind the prison walls. We will also review the process of distributing the prisoners over the wards as well as the implication of violating the principle of separating prisoners according to their categories and the legal reasons behind their detention.

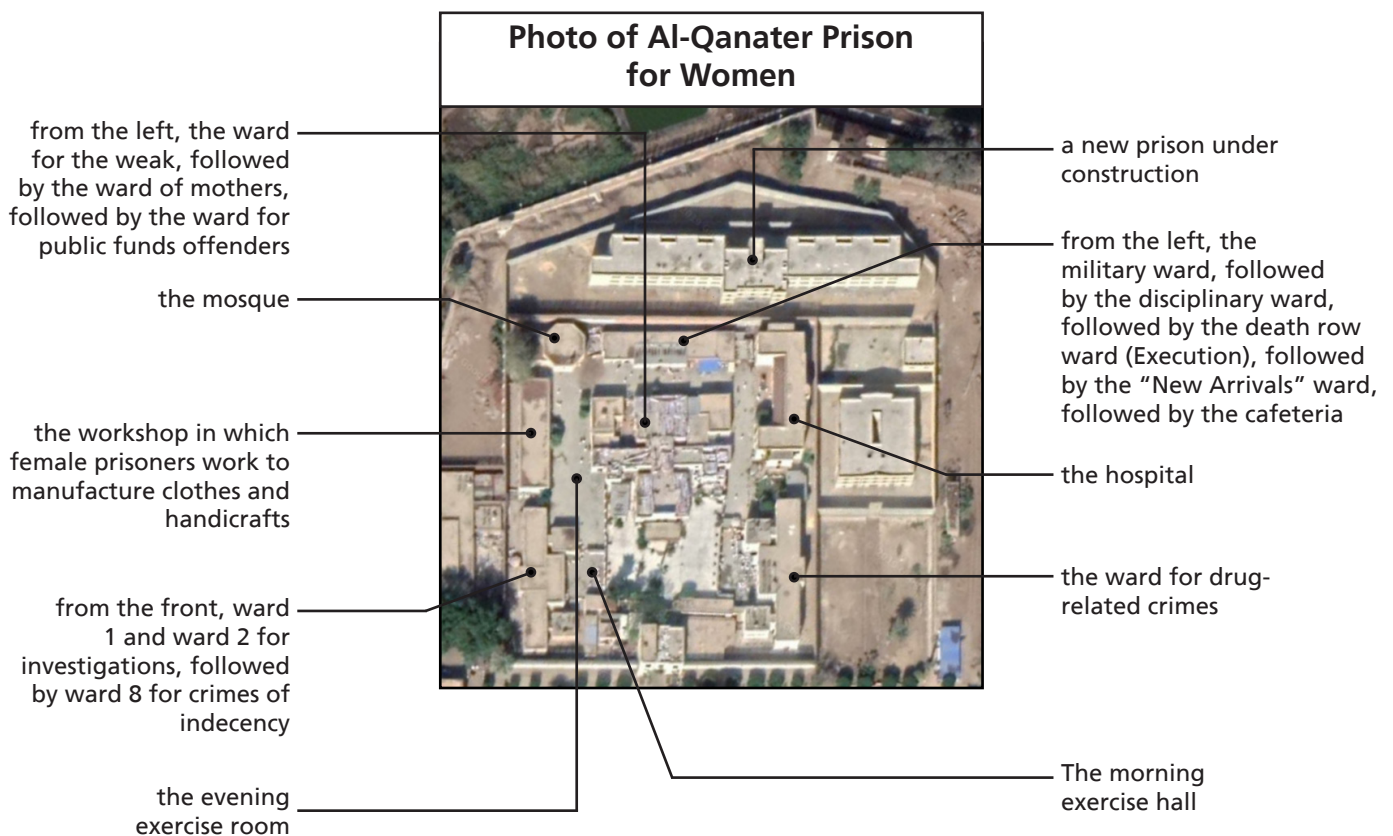
### 3.1 Location of the Prison and its structure

Al-Qanater Charitable Prison for Women is located in Qalyubia Governorate, in an agricultural area near the River Nile, 25 km away from Cairo Governorate. Upon entering the prison's gate, there is a large yard with a two-storey building, which is designated for prisoners and informants, it is surrounded by the office of the prison warden and the office of the chief of investigations. while exiting this yard, you will come across the place for visits, at the left side, there is a small cage for visiting political prisoners, which was previously dedicated to visiting prisoners sentenced to death, and is also

used to keep prisoners who will be presented to the prosecution, and on the right side, there is a larger cage for visiting prisoners held on criminal cases. Then there is a wall, which separates the office, the visiting area, and the wards from each other.

The prison is divided into 12 wards, where prisoners are distributed according to the legal reasons behind detention. In addition to the aforementioned New Arrivals "Irad" ward, there are wards 1 and 2 for prisoners held on grounds of criminal charges, the first ward has an attached room for political prisoners which has recently been assigned to them. There are divided into cells for the pre-trial detainees and one for convicted political prisoners. The other nine wards are for convicted prisoners. These wards are divided as follows: The public funds crimes ward, The drug crimes ward, the theft crimes ward, the crimes of indecency ward, the ward allocated for pregnant, nursing and mother prisoners, The ward for the elderly and sick (weak), The death row ward (execution), the disciplinary ward, and the military ward. The death row and the disciplinary wards are located separately from the rest of the wards.

Right behind the wards, there is the hospital, which is a two-storey building. The ground floor has clinics on the left and right, the pharmacy and reception, and the second floor has the operations room, recovery room and the isolation room. Next to the hospital, there is the canteen and the cafeteria.





### **3.2 Not separating prisoners according to their categories in prison**

The Prison Regulation Law, Article 82, stipulates for the classification of prisoners according to several criteria; namely the type of crime, the duration of the sentence, the case, criminal risk, the prisoner's age, health status, as well as the social and cultural status. Article 86 of the Prison Regulation Law affirms that one of the duties of the Public Prosecutor and his agents is to ensure that each category of prisoners is isolated from the other and that each category is treated in accordance with the treatment prescribed to it. This classification is largely consistent with Article 11 of the Nelson Mandela Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. However, in 2014, the Ministry of Interior issued decree 3320/2014 amending some provisions of the prison's internal regulations, which included adding another condition for the classification and separation of prisoners, which should not violate the provisions of the Prisons Law, regulations, and the prison's capacity. It is evident that the reference to the prison capacity is specifically designed to justify the unprecedented overcrowding in prisons and to justify the failure of separating the different categories of prisoners.

So, it is assumed that prisoners who are detained on different grounds are classified in groups in order to protect them from the negative impact of other prisoners charged on more serious crimes. The classification of prisoners must take into account the quality and severity of guarding required for each of their categories, as it must provide each category separately with an appropriate guarding quality, while implementing the lowest possible guarding procedures to secure their detention. However, due to the lack of prisons and places of detention for women, compared to men, prisons resort to violating this rule, due to the lack of adequate places to accommodate the number and categories of female detainees.

Al-Qanater prison is divided into 12 wards, female prisoners are distributed among any of them according to the legal reasons behind their detention. However, with the increase in the number of female prisoners, plus the absence of other places for their detention, the prison administration tends to place different categories of prisoners in the same ward, and in many cases, in the same cell. Prisoners who are held for civil or political reasons are coupled with those who are held on criminal grounds. There is no longer any separation between political or criminal prisoners, nor between convicted or those still pending investigation.

Ward 1 is divided between prisoners based on criminal or political cases, with two rooms for the political ones, one for convicts and one for those still pending investigation. Although two rooms are allocated for political prisoners, the ward does not enjoy any kind of privacy or separation, where political and criminal offenders live inside the ward, sharing the same bath-

room, with only a corridor separating them, and the doors are open most of the time, according to prisoner Z.M.

Moreover, with the increase in the number of female political prisoners in Qanater, starting from 2013, political prisoners were distributed in other wards to different groups. Out of the former prisoners we interviewed, at least 4 were held in non-political wards. N.H. said:



*When I was detained in Qanater, political prisoners had their own ward; divided between those who were convicted or pending investigation, when the arrests increased and the number of detainees became too much, they placed the political prisoners in other wards*

While A.S. sees this integration between political and criminal prisoners more like a “punishment” as the political ones are turned into a minority under the observation and control of the criminal prisoners. They are abused and discriminated against.

One of the problems mentioned by most of the former prisoners whom we have interviewed is the lack of separation between categories of female prisoners is the «criminal Nabatishia». The Nabatishia is the coordinator of the cell, who is responsible for it and for arranging its internal affairs. Al-Nabatashiyyah is not chosen from among the prisoners held inside a particular cell. Rather, she is a criminal who has a life sentence or long-term sentence, usually in cases of murder, and is appointed by the prison administration to the «administrate the cell’s affairs». The Nabtashia has many privileges and exceptional powers, which allows her to exploit and mistreat other prisoners, which may amount to torture at times.



## Fourth: Violations after housing in the wards

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After moving to the wards, the prisoner's life cycle begins, which ends only with her release or at the end of her sentence, during which her fundamental rights are subjected to countless and systematic violations. These violations are divided into two categories, the first of which is that most detainees in Egypt, whether women or men, are subjected to, and this is manifested in physical and psychological torture, the poor quality of food and water, the lack of bed supplies, overcrowding, poor ventilation, lighting problems, and preventing visits for extended periods.

As for the second category of violations, the Egyptian Front has established that they are systematic violations based on discrimination through gender; as Qanater prison's administration violates the rights of female detainees as women, which affects them differently from men. These violations include sexual abuse of female detainees, the prison administration's negligence of the prison facilities' cleanliness or the prisoners' personal hygiene, adding to that the deterioration of health conditions and the inhuman conditions of detention experienced by the prisoners in the ward allocated for pregnant

women and mothers, which consequently causes the extension of these violations to their children whom are accompanied by their mothers.

## 4.1 General Violations that Women In Qanater Prison are subjected to

### 4.1.1 Physical torture



*Those who do not obey the orders of the Nabatshia or whom she finds annoying are punished by cutting their hair, cutting their clothes, being tied to the bed, severe beating, slapping on the face, beating with slippers... that is the preliminary punishment, before taking them to the chief of prison wards, who also beats, humiliates and steps on their faces with shoes, afterwards they are taken to Abla Sayeda, the disciplinary officer in the prison.*

*-Former political prisoner who was detained in the pregnant women's ward.*

Female prisoners in Al-Qanater prison are subjected to insults and ill-treatment as a method of punishment or for discipline, which may be called the «three-fold torture». If a prisoner commits a mistake, or does not obey the criminal Nabatshia, she goes through three stages of "discipline". Discipline begins with the Nabatshia, who does not have an official capacity to punish the prisoners, but after beating and torturing them, she sends them to the chief of investigations, who completes the torture initiated by the Nabatashia, then the prisoner is sent to "Ablah Sayyeda," the prison disciplinary officer, who strips them from their clothes and continues to beat them.

#### • Criminal Nabatashia

The Nabatashia takes advantage of the impunity granted to her by the chief of investigations, as someone who is responsible for her cell to establish authority in prison. She sets arbitrary rules inside the cell, where she enjoys many privileges and discriminates between prisoners in line with who pays her more money. She compels them to pay in exchange for services that should be provided by the prison administration; like sleeping on a bed, having a pillow, or using the washing machine. Violating the orders of Nabatashia leads to severe punishment that ranges from beating, stripping clothes, to tying and locking them in the bathroom. The Nabatshia treats mentally ill prisoners in a much worse manner. Instead of being provided with treatment by the prison administration, the Nabtashia would tie them from their limbs and beat them up until they calm down. An example of this is narrated by Sh.A.:





*Once, while being held in Irad (the New Arrivals ward), it was restricted to smoke cigarettes after sleeping hours, so an 18-year old girl lit a cigarette and the Nabatshia yelled at her; the girl went into some sort of a seizure, the Nabatshia reacted by slapping her on the face over and over to let her know she crossed the line, I saw this happen a lot with criminal prisoners.*

**In a similar situation N.A. recounted:**



*Once, a criminal prisoner was convulsing at night and kept screaming, the Nabtashia used to tie her from her hands and legs and keep her inside the bathroom until the seizure was over*

#### • **Abla Sayyeda**

Abla Sayyeda is the disciplinary officer in prison, who is responsible for penalizing prisoners who break prison rules or cause trouble. Many prisoners complained from the ill-treatment of Abla Sayeda. She was cruel and humiliated them intensely. Once she punished a group of girls on account of the same case by “beating them and tearing their clothes apart” according to the description of F.M., and after complaints were filed against her, she was prevented from dealing with political prisoners but it didn’t stop her from humiliating and mistreating the criminal prisoners, according to the former prisoner F.M..

Prisoners of the criminal ward receive the largest share of torture and ill-treatment, whether by the Nabatashia or the disciplinary officer, due to their socially and financially sensitive situation, since many of them have been abandoned by their families. Although the prison administration sometimes listens to complaints about ill-treatment by the political prisoners, criminal complaints are met only with total disregard. The disciplinary officer uses humiliation as a punishment for criminal offenders, for example, three prisoners were sent to her, and she has “insulted them with the most heinous words,” according to F. M. who says:



*Once three girls were held down, sworn at by all possible humiliating words, she beat and insulted them, stepped on their faces with her shoes, she cut their shoes or slippers in halves and tore apart their clothes, slapped them on the face, tore the hair and everything*

#### • **Prisoners and the prison’s Chief of Investigations:**

The prison administration and the chief of investigations use several inhumane methods to punish prisoners, the most famous of which is the “Tashreeda” and the “Tagreeda”. The “Tashreeda” is taking the prisoner out of her ward, after stripping her from all her personal belongings, and putting her in another ward, where she is forced to spend the day in the bathroom, and sleep there, until the chief of the investigations orders her to return to

her cells, which may last up to 12 days, a former prisoner says:



*They suffer something called the Tashreeda, the Tashreeda means that she will move from a ward to another and sleep in its bathroom, from morning until it is time for sleep, afterwards she spreads her blanket next to the bathroom and sleeps there, and of course she is known to be "homeless" so everyone passing by throws slurs at her, she eats, drinks and does everything in the bathroom.*

The "**Tagreeda**" is stripping the prisoner of all her clothes, her personal belonging and burning them, in punishment for breaking the prison rules. One of the former prisoners was subjected to both the Tashreeda and the Tagreeda, S.Kh. recounts her experience saying:



*I was punished for starting a food strike, they put me in the criminals ward in during the "Tashreeda" as well as other wards, I was assaulted by beating and the prison administration knew of that. Once I yelled to the prison guard and raised my voice over hers, then I was punished by being stripped of all my clothes and was taken to the criminal ward without having anything to wear.*

Tagreeda and Tashreeda are used to punish political prisoners, but with criminal prisoners, the punishment may include more violent practices such as beating and tearing apart their clothes. The prison administration uses a tool called «Falaka» to beat the prisoners, where the prisoner's feet are tied and hit with a thick stick.

Sh.A. describes other ways in which the criminal prisoners are punished:



*They are punished in several ways, for example by beating, as well as banning them from getting the "garia"(bread), tearing apart their clothes, or going for inspection and taking all their personal belongings.*

prisoner witnessed a situation exemplifying this, where three criminal prisoners fought over a sum of money, "The inspectors and prison wardens captured the girls and kept beating them, they almost disfigured them."

## 4.1.2 Psychological torture

### ***Rules 43 & 44 of the Nelson Mandela Rules***

The following practices, in particular, shall be prohibited:

- Indefinite solitary confinement;
- prolonged solitary confinement;

For the purpose of these rules, solitary confinement shall refer to the confinement of prisoners for 22 hours or more a day without meaningful human contact. Prolonged solitary confinement shall refer to solitary confinement for a time period in excess of 15 consecutive days.

Article 74 of the Prison Regulations stipulates 25 violations, which can be divided between gross violations such as assaulting a prison employee, and less serious violations such as leaking messages through unauthorized methods, all of which are violations that may lead, among several things, to solitary confinement. Article 81 details eight different methods of punishment; which include solitary confinement, provided that it does not exceed 15 days. Punitive articles in the prison regulations are considerably loose, as the regulations do not provide succinct means of punishment for each violation, but rather lists several violations and several punishment methods, and the prison director has the discretion to choose and apply whichever, which paves the way for the use of harsh punishment, such as solitary confinement, for committing tenuous violations.

Article 44 of the Prison Regulation Law 396/1956 stipulates that "convicts are placed in the special disciplinary room appointed by the internal regulations for a period not exceeding six months, which results in being deprived from visits and correspondence during this period," as one of the punishments for committing a violation.

Another method of punishment is the prohibition of visits, which is expressly prohibited by rule 23 of the Bangkok Rules. The Qanater prison administration, through using the disciplinary room, violates the most basic rights of detainees, amounting to intentional psychological torture.

Although there is nothing in the prison regulations that determines the standards or form of the disciplinary room, the prisoners' testimonies reveal to us that there are two places for punishment; the disciplinary ward and the military ward.

The disciplinary ward is divided into 3 solitary cells, each has the length of 180 cm and the width of 160 cm, without any window or openings in the door, and it contains a special mattress and a bucket for urination.

S. A. remembers her experience in the solitary cell saying:



*We were placed in a room with a black blanket, that already looked scary, we used to peek at its entrance while in the exercise area or when coming from the New Arrivals ward, It is a black curtain with a lot of trees from the outside that hides it. It's an entrance to a narrow cell divided into 3 cells. The cell has one fan located in the main cell, of course it does not allow in air, it is for discipline, it is only used for the prison warden sitting there. The rooms are very very small, it can't fit in two persons. No electricity or ventilation. It is opened only twice a day, they let in a bucket for peeing. They do not allow in food, anyone in the military or disciplinary ward is completely prohibited from getting visits, seeing family or allowing food inside.*

Prisoners spend more than 22 hours of their day inside the cell, they are allowed an hour per day to enter the bathroom and half an hour for exercise. Going to the bathroom counts as one of the forms of suffering and

punishment, here is a narration by N. H. who was held incommunicado for 6 months, saying



*The bathroom has a squat toilet, with pipe that has no palm, it has a heater with its own faucet, it has a tub filled with garbage that is clogged most of the time, we place a big bottle filled with water in it to stop the cockroaches from coming out. They have set Monday and Thursday for showering, but we are entitled daily for two hours; one hour for the bathroom and the other for exercising. Later it became an hour for the bathroom and half an hour for walking outside with the imposition of a curfew. The space we were allowed to walk within was seven meters back and forth. The bathroom is allowed twice a day, once in the morning and the second time with sunset, if someone wanted to pee in the middle of the day, they used a bucket inside the cell.*

The prisoners in the solitary ward are only allowed to take one meal inside the cell. They would leave their food and personal belongings on the opposite side of the cell, and take their meals indoors at the time of exercise. Prisoners in the solitary ward are forced to eat base and insufficient food.

In addition to the inhumanity and poor conditions of detention inside the solitary wards, the Qanater prison administration practices prolonged solitary confinement as one of its methods of punishment, which clearly contravenes the prison regulations. A former prisoner recounts her memories about the disciplinary ward regarding a girl accused of collaborating with Israel, she was held in solitary confinement for more than three years. When asked by a lawyer working on the cases of political prisoners held, the lawyer responded that at least 3 political prisoners in this prison are subjected to or have been subjected to prolonged solitary confinement. They include Ola al-Qaradawi, who has been held in solitary confinement for more than two years, and Aisha Khairat Al-Shater who has been held inside it since 9 months ago.

**The military ward** is a 5 meters by 8 meters room, located inside the infamously known «junk room,» according to former prisoners, it is the room where the prison disposes of its waste. Although it is not stated that it shall be used for disciplinary purposes, the military ward is used to punish prisoners, and they are held inside it for prolonged periods in it, in inhumane conditions.

There are 9 beds in the ward, which are so crowded and infested with insects and snakes that prisoners put cotton in their ears and nose at bedtime to prevent insects from crawling into their bodies, there is no ventilation and a foul smell due to it being the «junk dump.» In addition to preventing visitation for prisoners in the military ward, as a form of double punishment, the ban on visitation compels prisoners to eat from prison food that is horrid and in bad quantity, S. Kh. described the military ward saying:





*They took me to the military ward, which is a small room with three beds, each bed has three stories, its width is less than a meter and there is a small space between the bed and the wall, it has a door, but they couldn't open it to the maximum but it hit the bed behind it because of the small space. The room is very small, when I first went inside there were 47 girls all sleeping on these small beds, while the rest slept on the floor against each others so that room fits them in.*

The prisoners are held in the military ward for a prolonged period, exceeding the six months stipulated in Article 44 of the Prison Regulations. That took place with Marwa Ahmed Madbouly, Somaya Ahmed Nassef and Hoda Abdel Moneim, who are in custody pending the State Security case 1552/2018, They have been detained in the military ward since November 2018.

#### **4.1.3 Food Condition**

Article 4 of the Prison Regulations states that «among the duties of the prison director is to supervise the kitchen and oven to ensure proper cooking of food, the safety of its distribution, and the conformity of its ingredients and types to the manuals.» However, Al Qanater prison does not provide fixed and well-known meals in it. The prison administration merely allows in a carton containing a sum of food items for the whole cell in the morning, this food is called «Taayeen». Breakfast is a loaf of bread and a piece of cheese, while raw vegetables are served at lunch; a piece of tomato, onion, zucchini or eggplant. It does not provide any animal protein, neither meat nor chicken.

All female prisoners whom we have interviewed described the Taayeen food as «disgusting» and inedible. The prisoners had their reservations over the quality of food, its cleanliness and how it was stored, in addition to its small quantities. One prisoner said that at one time she was served a breakfast of one loaf of bread and one egg, and that was a meal for two prisoners to share. S. A. said that the “amount of food was always less than the prisoners in the room.» A.A's mother said, “I have seen the army's food, you see and you lose appetite for all food, placed in a disgusting container, and it just looks gross.»

Most prisoners depend on the food they get from their families during visits, in the political prisoners' cell, each prisoner is responsible for providing food on scheduled days, according to the dates of her visits, so that the prisoners inside the cell alternate in providing food for all. This makes the visits a heavy financial burden on the people, especially those with a modest financial level. Moreover, many prisoners, especially the criminal offenders, do not receive visits due to the severing of family ties, which compels them either to eat prison food of bad quality, or to work in prison to purchase expensive cafeteria food.

#### 4.1.4 Bed Supplies

##### *The Nelson Mandela Rules, Rule 21*

Every prisoner shall, in accordance with local or national standards, be provided with a separate bed and with separate and sufficient bedding which shall be clean when issued, kept in good order and changed often enough to ensure its cleanliness.

Qanater prison does not provide prisoners with a single bed for each. Each bed is occupied by two or three female prisoners, adding that the majority of prisoners sleep on the floor or in the bathroom because of the heavy crowding inside the cells. As for some wards, such as one of the reasons, there are no beds at all, so all the prisoners sleep on the floor. Single beds are only available for Criminal nabatashiat Patrols and wealthy female prisoners who pay money for a single bed. Y. N. describes the political cell inside ward 1:



*The Political cell was a narrow long room with 12 beds, each bed for three prisoners, and sometimes there were four, some one of them slept on the floor and they had to rotate the turn each day.*

All of the women we have interviewed complained from the poor quality of beds. The bed is called a «molla», and the molla is a three-storey bed stacked on top of each other, made of iron, and with a width of 80 centimeter. Bed stiffness leads to problems in the bones and blood circulation for the prisoners, especially for those who sleep in the second and third floors of the bed. According to one of the former prisoners, the sleeping situation “marked her body strongly and left blood retention in her hands or legs, giving her blue spot that eventually turned black.”

Moreover, the mattresses are very thin, made of sponge, and its thickness is thin, «It feels like you’re sleeping on nothing», which increases the pain caused by the iron bed. To reduce the pain, the prisoners put blankets under the mattress in order to increase their thickness, since they are not allowed to buy mattresses and place them in their cells.

Prison pillows are no better, and they also cannot be bought from outside the prison. Theoretically, if it was found that a prisoner suffers pain in their bones, the prison doctor may ask for allowing a medical pillow inside, but according to S.M. «That happened after prolonged torture,» A.A’s mother said she bought the pillow after her daughter began to suffer from neck pain, but the prison administration did not allow it inside.

As for the blankets and covers, the prison provides only two rough, coarse blankets, and the families of the prisoners buy the remaining needed supplies. There is no substitute for the covers, and the prisoners are obliged to wash them themselves, because the prison’s washing cycle takes a very long time. Through asking a female prisoner if she had to do it on her own or with the help of others, she said that the criminal prisoners help each other, but as a political prisoner, there is no one to help her.

### 4.1.5 Overcrowding

#### *The Nelson Mandela Rules, Rule 14*

All accommodation provided for the use of prisoners and in particular all sleeping accommodations shall meet all requirements of health, due regard being paid to climatic conditions and particularly to cubic content of air, minimum floor space, lighting, heating and ventilation

The number of prisoners in the Qanater prison has increased dramatically in recent years, especially the number of political prisoners, which is more than double the capacity of the prison. As there are no other prisons for women in Greater Cairo, the prison administration allows for the entry of new prisoners, despite not having enough space for them, which fills the prison with women like an overstacked box, shrinking the space allocated to each prisoner making it a few inches, which is barely enough space to sleep on one side.

Wards 1 and 2 are mixed for both political and criminal prisoners, whether under investigation or already convicted. The two wards are open to each other. All former prisoners interviewed by the Egyptian front confirm that there is a spacious hall containing approximately 120 beds, the number of prisoners in these two wards is around 560, which is four times more than its capacity can fit, leaving each two prisoners one bed to sleep in, while the rest sleep on the floor.

There are two cells inside ward 1 for political prisoners, one is for those who are already convicted and the other is for the ones under investigations. As for the criminal prisoners, they occupy the remaining space of the ward. The cell for political prisoners pending investigation contains 15 beds, which is a 5 meters long and 4 meters wide room, there are more than 40 prisoners in the cell in its most crowded times, and 30 at best. Every two or three women sleep in a bed. The space allocated to each prisoner inside the cell does not exceed half of the bed she sleeps on, S.A. says:



*we do everything in bed, we hang out, eat and everything, and for all of us to sleep we slept on one side and we couldn't turn around*

Following the increase in the number of female political prisoners in recent years, the prison administration did not increase the space allocated to for political prisoners, but rather distributed them on other wards, which aggravated the problem of overcrowding. Sh.A. says:



*The first time I went inside, there were around 60 political prisoners, while leaving the number exceeded 300*

*The remaining part of Ward 1, allocated for criminal prisoners, is way worse, the prisoners sleep on the floor inside the cell, between beds and in the pathway leading to the bathroom and even inside the bathroom. Those*

*who have more money get the advantage of sleeping on beds while the poor ones get the floor. S. A. describes the cell for criminal prisoners saying:*



*The overcrowding was so much that they were sleeping on the floor and between the beds and on the pathway to the bathroom, and they were sleeping on the floor in a row that there wasn't even a space between the beds, they used every inch of the floor.*

As for ward 10, which is allocated for the weak and the sick, the situation is the same as it is in different wards, the cell has around 50 beds, where 175 prisoners live, according to A.S., 3 prisoners sleep on each bed while the rest have to sleep on the floor, without considering their health status.

#### **4.1.6 Ventilation**

##### ***The Nelson Mandela Rules, Rule 13***

In all places where prisoners are required to live or work:

a) the windows shall be large enough to enable the prisoners to read or work by natural light and shall be so constructed that they can allow the entrance of fresh air whether or not there is artificial ventilation.

In addition to the severe overcrowding and the small size of the cells in Al-Qanater prison, the ventilation is very poor. The windows inside the wards are made of iron and covered with wire, which does not allow enough fresh air inside. There are two windows inside the cell for political prisoners, one of which overlooks one of the other wards, which does not allow air or sunlight.

Besides the nearly complete lack of natural ventilation, the criminal prisoners use their own food heaters inside the ward, from eight in the morning until five in the evening, which leaves strong odors inside the ward and heats it. Furthermore, in these cramped rooms, the prisoners smoke. One mother of a prisoner recounts, "Some people escape to the bathroom, so as to avoid the heat and the stinking smell." The high heat and poor ventilation have led to frequent cases of suffocation amongst prisoners and some of them have developed chest diseases. Sh.A. said,



*The heaters were turned on all the time, and with the breathing in the summer, the room itself would be like a grill, in July and August we were dying from the heat, we were all coughing and 10 of us were held inside the hospital.*

The room has one ceiling fan, in a cell with up to 40 prisoners. Prisoners repeatedly asked for another fan, which the prison authorities met with repeated refusal. Some of the prisoners' families also bought fans and de-



manded that they be admitted inside, which was also rejected. A.A's mother told the Egyptian Front:



*She said she wanted a fan as it was very hot there, that was in April, when the weather was actually cold, but my daughter said it was way too hot inside, I got her a fan but they didn't allow it in.*

#### 4.1.7 Lighting

##### ***The Nelson Mandela Rules, Rule 14***

In all places where prisoners are required to live or work:

B) Artificial light shall be provided sufficient for the prisoners to read or work without injury to eyesight

##### ***The Nelson Mandela Rules, Rule 43***

The following practices, in particular, shall be prohibited:

(c) Placement of prisoner in a dark or constantly lit cell

The lighting inside the prison is strong and reasonably appropriate, each room has 4 lamps, but its light does not go out. The light is lit inside the entire prison all the time, it's not even turned down at bedtime. Continuous light causes eye problems for the prisoners, as the effect of uninterrupted light has become harmful, S. A. said;



*The lighting was too strong that it strained our eyes, it was Neon lights placed above the beds, it was very exhausting, especially for those who slept in the upper beds, it was too hot as well, those who slept in the lower beds did not get strong lighting, so the distribution of light was hurtful, we woke up with light in our eyes that was never turned off.*

#### 4.1.8 Visits

##### ***Bangkok Rule 43***

Prison authorities shall encourage and, where possible, also facilitate visits to prisoners as an important prerequisite to ensuring their mental well-being and social reintegration.

Every convicted person has the right to one visit every 15 days, and once every week in the case of pre-trial detainees, according to Article 39 of the Prison Regulation Law and Article 60 of the Prison Internal Regulations. Article 71 of the Prison Regulations sets the minimum period of visit stipulated to be sixty minutes.

Most of the prisoners generally complained from not having an adequate atmosphere for the visit in addition to its short duration, which is an obstacle to communication with their families without providing any space for

privacy. The visits for political prisoners usually take place inside a cage that was originally intended for visiting prisoners sentenced to death, it is a very narrow place. With the increase in the number of female political prisoners, starting in 2013 and 2014, the prison administration assigned it for visiting political prisoners. Sh.A. remembers;



*The visiting place is small cage, which used to be the place for people sentenced to death, but we are visited with them, it's an open cage with a fan inside and everything, but it is very small, it has half a wall and we are locked inside it, the thing is it is very small, it can't take 10 visits. On days that are very crowded, people have to sit on the floor, which always happens in feasts and holidays. Usually there is a prison guard who copies everything we say to the head of investigations, and sometimes she actually intervenes in our conversation, I couldn't put two words together while talking to my family, I can't for instance talk about the case developments, or what the NGO's did outside.*

The prison administration would deduct from the time of the visit because of the inspection process and the process of taking out families, according to S. P.;



*The visit is supposed to be for an hour, but the place allocated for visits is very very small, and by the time families are searched and walk inside, we'd have already lost 15 minutes, and then another 15 minutes are wasted when the jailer starts taking us out of the room and tells us to get ready, so the time of the visit does not even cover half an hour.*

On the other hand, some prisoners only get 10 minutes of their visit. Their families come from all over Cairo and from other governorates in order to spend 10 minutes with their daughters. This is due to the overcrowding inside the prison, the place set for visiting can no longer accommodate this number of prisoners, which led the chief of investigations to reduce the length of the visit to 10 minutes for all new prisoners who were detained in 2019. It should be noted that visits for the prisoners detained on account on the State Security Cases 277/2019 and 488/2019 last for only 10 minutes long. A.A's mother says:



*Our visit is supposed to last for an hour, we get to sit only for 10 minutes while being surrounded by informer, jailers and everything is closed in on us, prisoners held on account of criminal charges or old political prisoners get an hour, but new political prisoners only get 10 minutes.*

In a clear disregard for rule 23 of the Bangkok Rules, the Qanater prison administration prohibits prisoners, especially political ones, from getting visits, as a method of discipline or punishment. Whereas, Article 81 of the Prisons Internal Regulations stipulates the use of banning visits and correspondence as a method of punishment. According to these regulations, it is permissible to be prevented from getting visits twice a month at most, and also to be denied correspondence for a period not exceeding one month,

which, despite violating international standards, the prison administration complies with nonetheless.

One of the prisoners detained in connection with the State Security case 955/2017, has not received any visit since her arrest on October 10, 2017. The prison continues to deprive her of getting visits from her children. Sumaya Maher, who is being held in custody for the same case and was arrested on October 17, 2017, is also prohibited from receiving any visits since she has entered prison. The list of the ban on the visit extends to Marwa Ahmed Madbouly, Somaya Ahmed Nassef, Hoda Abdel-Moneim and Aisha Khairat Al-Shater, who is banned from receiving visits since November 2018. Noha Ahmed Moamen has been banned from receiving visits since around a year ago, and Ola Al-Qaradawi, who has been banned from receiving visits since more than two years.

## 4.2 Violating the special needs of women in Qanater Prison

### 4.2.1 Sexual Violations

The Prison Regulation Law and the Prison Internal Regulations does not have any reference whatsoever regarding the self-inspection process and how to protect female prisoners from potential sexual abuse, not to mention the lack of mechanisms for reporting sexual violations, providing support to the victim, and holding accountable those responsible for the violation. On the other hand, rule 20 of the Bangkok rules explicitly states that alternative methods for naked self-inspection of intimate areas of the body should be developed, in which the removing clothes can be replaced by ultrasound scanning devices, or even by placing the prisoner under close observation, if they represent real danger. This rule is based on the principle of preserving the dignity of the human body and aims to avoid the exposure of female prisoners to painful or traumatic experiences, which may result from being subjected to sexual abuse during the inspection process.

The inspection system in Qanater prison is based on naked inspection, where the female prisoner stands bare naked in front of the prison guard who searches each part of her body, including her genitals. The jailer performs what is called a «vaginal inspection», either through self-examination of the vaginal area or by asking the prisoner to open her feet and move up and down. F.M. describes the inspection process is as follows:



*When I went inside, the woman made me take off my clothes and told me that I will do one of two things, either wear a bag and she will place her hands underneath and search or I will open my legs and move up and down repeatedly.*

One of lawyers quoting her client also reported on insults female prisoners are subjected to during the body-search:

*When we first went inside prison, they stripped us of all our belongings*



*and then we entered a room in which they stripped us of our clothes. The jailer searched our bodies with her hands, she picked up a bag from the floor and wore it in her hands then she used it to rummage inside our private parts in a very humiliating manner.*

Most of the female prisoners said that the experience of the inspection was painful, the insult was deliberate, and that the guards were sexually harassing them; as they deliberately prolonged the inspection of the vaginal area, touching them in unwarranted ways, such as inserting their fingers into the prisoner's vagina. Sh.A. expressed that;



*They inspect us in a very humiliating way. You feel that they are strolling with their hands across your body. They harass you, give you indicative looks so that you know what they mean. [Yes, I am here to humiliate you and provoke you.] You know that it is harassment, not inspection.*

Sh. A. continued to tell the Egyptian Front about one of the situations in which she was sexually harassed by a prison guard:



*There were two wardens, called Hanaa and Hanem. They were really harassing us. They would move their hands across our bodies in a very sexual way. Once, I was once coming back from a session. and the warden would tell me that I have a great body and that I walk in a nice way, after she inspected me she asked to mstand with her for a while.*

The warden, named Hanaa, tried to harass Sh. A., which prompted her to go to the chief of investigations, but the matter did not come to an end, according to her narration. It is worth noting that most of the former prisoners whom we have interviewed have shared similar stories of similar sexual assaults being perpetrated by the same two wardens constantly.

After the self-inspection process, which takes place upon the arrival of the prisoners to the prison for the first time and recur after each visit they get. As personal belongings of the prisoners are inspected, by male prison guards, the process is also meant to be a from insult, since the staff does not consider handling the situation with respect, so as to preserve the prisoners' dignity, but they deliberately humiliate them. Sh A. exemplified this:



*The stuff we acquired through the visits, were rummaged through by the prison guard in a very humiliating way, sanitation pads were opened and checked before us, one by one, thrown on the floor while we picked it up. Same goes for medication. If I had spray or shampoo, he'd empty bits of it and then throw it on the floor, while I pick it up after him.*



### 4.2.2 Health Conditions



*The prison's hospital needs a hospital. Since the minute I went inside prison, nobody actually examined me, if I were to get sick, I would tell the doctor my complaints and he would prescribe medication without examining me. When someone got sick, we'd call on the prison guards for hours until they answered us. Once, a woman fell and broke herself by dawn. We knocked for two hours until the prison guard came, and she calmly commented about how we don't sleep. The woman stayed in the ward with a broken leg and she was only put in cast two days later. There was another girl called Rabab who was sick and kept puking blood all the time, they never tried to treat her, they only gave her something to stop the blood. We always told each other that anyone who gets sick here will die*

- S.H. A.

Article 18 of the Egyptian Constitution guarantees the right to health for all citizens without discrimination or exception, which means that every prisoner has the right to health care. Article 33 of the Prison Regulation Law provides that in every prison there must be a physician in charge of health care, as stipulated for in the prison internal regulations. However, the prison regulations do not stipulate in any of its chapters the duties of the prison doctor, nor does it mention the standards required by the health care department inside the prison. The relevant authorities in Egypt are indifferent to what the Nelson Mandela Rules mandates; that every prison should have its own hospital, with doctors of all specialties, including psychiatrists and dentists, who are available when needed. It should be provided that the Health Care Services Department consists of employees working with complete clinical independence, and that the prison must provide qualified doctors to deal with emergencies and for prisoners who have special health needs. In the event that the prisoner needs surgical intervention or special care, the prisoner shall be transferred to a civilian hospital until they recover, which is not what usually takes place in Egyptian prisons, especially since prison doctors are only employees or officers of the Ministry of Interior and they have no connection with the Egyptian Doctors Syndicate.

According to the description of the former female prisoners we have interviewed, Qanater prison has a hospital of two floors. On the ground floor there are 6 clinics for different specialties, in addition to an analysis lab. The second floor consists of the isolation, operations and recovery rooms. The operating room is equipped, pregnant prisoners are received there for delivery, but no other surgical interventions are provided. According to an interview with a former prisoner, the operating room is not sterilized, its door is constantly open, and it does not have an appropriate protective environment. The recovery room had only two beds covered in tens of sheets, but no pillows. S.A. says:



*The operations room and the hallway leading to it are always open, there is no maintenance or protection whatsoever of the room, the operations take place there but it is not in a safe environment.*

As for the isolation room, it is completely empty except from a leather bed, the floor is made of cement, its open most of the time, and the patients are not completely isolated in it, N.H. describes it:



*There should be an isolation room, it has nothing, it should be an empty room and the floor shouldn't be even made of tiles. A girl has tuberculosis and she was held in the isolation room, but her condition kept deteriorating until she died. Another patient was placed in the isolation room, but she kept going in and out of it without placing a muzzle on her mouth.*

Despite the presence of clinics for all specialties, the hospital had only one resident doctor, who specializes in gynecology and according to the testimony of most of former prisoners, examined all specialties. Other specialty doctors, such as eyes, teeth, and skin, came once a week, which compelled the prisoners who needed to be examined to wait. S. Kh. said:



*There were people who would be dying from toothache and in need of surgical interventions, but nobody did anything for them, the interventions took place for the pregnant women only.*

Some specialties are completely absent from the hospital, as there are no psychiatrists or physiotherapists, nor doctors specializing in dealing with emergencies, specialists in neurology. A.T. says:



*All specialties should be there... I was going inside as a patient, cartilage, and in need of a neurologist, when I went inside, I was presented to an ophthalmologist and a dermatologist. The hospital doesn't have a neurologist.*

Due to the lack of the required medical specialties and the absence of the necessary medical supplies, the prison hospital is unable to provide medical care for prisoners who suffer from special health problems. Former prisoner A.T. was suffering from a leg injury as a result of a bullet injury endured in one of the demonstrations, she remembers;



*My family filed several complaints because of the injury in my leg. At first, they said that the State Security must approve of my transfer to the prison hospital. But the prison hospital did not have any of the fundamental appliances needed for examining me. I sustained a bullet wound around a year and a half earlier before prison. There was no physiotherapy clinic in there, They said they had physical therapy and I was going to get medical treatment inside prison. They brought a doctor called Mohamed Khater, who was supposed to give me physiotherapy sessions, I told him that I will need special equipment, he said they had these equipment, eventually he burned my leg, up until now I have burn scars. I filed a report, but after that they said that I was the one*



*who refused treatment in prison. Following this incident, my family submitted for an authorization that I get treatment in a private hospital but they refused.*

**While S.A., who suffered from cartilage pain, said:**



*I suffered more in the hospital, I went inside as a patient of cartilage, and in need of a neurologist, I was presented to an ophthalmologist and a dermatologist. There is no doctor in the hospital specializing in neurology. The orthopedic doctor said I needed Cat scan, which was not favored in my case, I needed an MRI, the scan should have been placed in a folder to maintain it, and he took it out and gave it to the nurse without preserving it inside anything. I was healthier when I went inside, I had done the operation earlier and took my medication and I walked fine.*

A. S. was being held in the ward for the weak, a ward for women with serious diseases. As she had lupus, and lately had blood coming out of her mouth, kidney failure and chest problems were suspected. She was deposited in this ward, which she likened to a disaster, because her disease is mainly an autoimmune one, and inside this ward, there is no separation between infectious and non-infectious diseases, so she says that this ward placed her in a greater health risk. During prison inspections, the ward is closed and its gate concealed while the prisoners are being threatened so that they should not make any noise or else. As the situation is catastrophic on both legal and humanitarian fronts. A.S said she also suffered from mental illnesses in addition to the lupus, she fought prove her sickness due to the complications that would happen and may lead to her death if she neglected being medicated. Her family managed to get through some papers proving her illness, but they failed to pass what proves her psychological illness.

To make matters worse, the Qanater prison hospital relies exclusively on painkillers to treat the prisoners. The hospital does not take serious measures to treat the patients. In part, this is due to the absence of specialized doctors in the prison hospital on a regular basis, which makes analgesics the easiest solution for the resident doctor, and also because of the shortage inside the prison hospital. Any medications, other than analgesics, must be purchased from outside and be admitted through visits, where the prison nurse obtains them and then gives them to the prisoner in doses. S.A. talks about this;



*The deportation car sickened me a great deal. Once after I returned from it, I couldn't sleep for three days. I was screaming from the pain, the doctor prescribed painkiller injections. I took the amount of a terrible amount of injections, I told the doctor that I needed to take injections for nerve inflammation. My family got them from outside because the medication prescribed in the prison was only painkillers, but they made me sicker that I started throwing up.*

The medical negligence inside prison may lead to death at times, as expressed by S.kh;



*While I was sick, another prisoner had a chronic lung disease, she stayed there until her lungs stopped functioning and she died. The doctor responsible for the night shift used drugs he took her painkillers, That woman had nobody to visit her. When I was there, two prisoners died and around four needed medication that they were not getting.*

### 4.2.3 Sanitation

Article 83 of the Prison Regulations Law 396/1965 establishes that it is the duty of the Prison Authority to verify that conditions of hygiene and health are met within the prison, and to send their reports to the General Director of Prisons. The internal regulations for prisons emphasized in Article 4 that it is the duty of the prison director to inspect the prisoner's places of residence and work daily to ensure their hygiene. On the other hand, there are no more details mentioned regarding the rights of female prisoners in personal hygiene, neither regarding the duty of the prison to provide services and tools that allow female prisoners to maintain their cleanliness as well as that of the place. Prison water is filthy and not suitable for either maintaining hygiene or bathing purposes. Personal hygiene items are not available inside the prison as well. Toilets do not meet the required hygiene standards, and its quantity is much less than the needs of the prisoners. That is in addition to the fact that the prison does not provide sanitary pads for female prisoners, which causes many diseases and health problems.

#### • Cleanliness of the Ward

The wards cleanliness is the responsibility of the prisoners, the prison administration does not provide any kind of services or toiletries. Some of the criminal prisoners clean the wards for a certain amount of cigarette packs, taken from each prisoner. The responsibility for bringing cleaning tools is on the prisoners as well. Their families bring toiletries for them in the visits, or they can be purchased from the canteen inside the prison for double the price outside, in addition to that the prison prohibits the entry of some toiletries. That is in light of the utter disregard by the prison administration for problems of hygiene that the prisoners frequently complain about.

The prisoners complained frequently to the prison administration about the large number of insects inside the wards, but the administration has not taken any serious steps to get rid of them, it refuses to use pesticides under the allegation that it is prohibited inside the prison. All the former prisoners interviewed by the Egyptian Front have confirmed that the prison wards were full of snakes, cats, mice, cockroaches and geckos, all which is at the same place they spend 22 hours of their day and keep their food and personal belongings. As the prison is located in an agricultural area far from



urbanism, these animals and insects are always inside the prison. S.A. talks about the duration she spent in the political ward;



*When I first went inside, I was struck by a flood of cockroaches, all of them are tiny and they bite, we'd be sleeping and the roaches are next to us on the wall, the roaches is a very difficult topic for people sleeping on the floor, of course our belongings such as clothes and food are placed under the bed, you can imagine our things with roaches inside of them.*

The most staggering are the snakes, which the prison tries to deny their presence despite that the prisoners saw them several times and have informed the chief of the investigation of their presence inside the wards. In 2016, a prison security source admitted that «one snake» appeared in prison and was disposed of <sup>6</sup>. Whereas, prisoners from many different wards whom we have interviewed had seen snakes, including women in the military ward, the disciplinary ward, and the political prisoners cell, S.Kh. from the military ward says;



*The first time while we were in the military ward, when a snake bit a girl, they gave her a serum after a struggle, the second time when one of us could kill the snake, and they saw that, they said it's a boy snake that does nothing, and the third time the officer made made fun of us. Imagine 15 months with four snakes without any help. They just want to kill us all*

Y.N. confirms this but regarding the political prisoners cell in ward 1;



*There was a snake in the ward, we screamed and yelled, we asked for wormwood, but they didn't want to give us any, there were mice and many cats as well inside.*

The military ward, known inside as the “garbage Ward”, and that is because it is next to a pile of rubbish, the inmates recount that its smell was intolerable, all sorts of trash was thrown there, in addition to the insects. S.Kh. who was locked up in this ward says:



*The military ward is a dumpster, all sorts of trash is dumped there, to the extent that there were dead fetuses, the women charged on account of crimes and indenceny used to abort themselves and leave the remains there.. we'd smell them in the wards.*

The only cleaning method used by the prison to get rid of this mixture of foul creatures is called «burning» or «Al-shell». It literally means burning the ward, all the prisoners' belongings are taken outside so that nothing but the iron beds are left inside, following that an incendiary material is thrown, the purpose of which is to kill the insects inside the room. However, this «burning» is completely ineffective because, according to the prisoners, insects and snakes soon return after two or three days.

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<sup>6</sup> Alaa Othman, Tales of female prisoners in queens with snakes: horror “behind the walls. (Al-Masry Al-Youm: 2016) <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/979249>

The hygiene situation in al-Qanater prison exceeds the minimum standards for prison hygiene. The prison has become a pile of litter full of insects, snakes and cats, side by side with the prisoners. It does not appear that the prison administration has made or intends to make any serious attempts to solve that problem.

- **Water and Personal Hygiene**

***The Nelson Mandela Rules, Rule 18***

Prisoners shall be required to keep their persons clean, and to this end they shall be provided with water and with such toilet articles as are necessary for health and cleanliness.

The Qanater prison does not have a desalination system, the prisoners we interviewed speculated that the prison water comes directly from the Nile. All the prisoners described the prison water as "dirty" as it was "black, full of worms and small fish." Water is not only not suitable for drinking, but it is not suitable for any kind of use, whether for personal hygiene, cooking or ablution. Y.N. said;



*The water was very bad, sometimes you would open the tap and find black water with a foul smell and tiny fish dropping out it, no filters or desalination system*

Some of the prisoners depends on mineral water for drinking, which their families bring to them in the visits, or they resort to buying them from the canteen inside the prison, at twice the price. A prisoner may bring a filter at her own expense to purify the water, which makes it barely suitable for cooking or bathing. As usual, the poorest inmates are the least fortunate, and they have to drink prison water and bear with the health consequences.

Prison water caused many skin problems for the inmates, such as acne and affecting the skin color, as well as the appearance of black spots in certain areas of the body, adding to that hair damage and loss. so some prisoners resort to washing their hair with mineral water, which is very expensive for their families. S. A. says:



*Prison water was so horrible that our hair fell at great magnitude and the color of our bodies changed in a very fast and notable way, we got black dots out of nowhere.*

The prison administration does not provide any toiletries other than soap, and it is very rigid in allowing items such as shampoo, deodorant and perfumery inside. There are toiletries in the prison canteen, but they are very expensive compared to their actual prices. The prison also does not provide services such as washing and ironing clothes, and the inmates have to pay

cigarettes to other prisoners who work inside the prison so that they do the washing and ironing, who receive their wages from their peers rather than from the prison administration.

### ***The Nelson Mandela Rules, Rule 15***

The sanitary installations shall be adequate to enable every prisoner to comply with the needs of nature when necessary and in a clean and decent manner.

Because of the intense overcrowding, the prisoners can't use the bathroom or shower when needed. Most wards have within them detainees triple of the capacity they can hold. The numbers of bathrooms are fixed. For example, in ward 1, It has approximately 560 prisoners on criminal grounds and 50 political prisoners. In this ward there are eight toilets, six for criminal offenders and two for political offenders. To regulate entering the toilet, the prisoner must take a role and wait in line until her turn comes, in a process that can take up to two hours at times.

Toilets, like other prison facilities, are cleaned by criminal offenders in exchange for a certain number of cigarettes, but they generally remain unclean, and cause illnesses and infections. S.A. said:



*The toilet seat is not there to begin with, which created an inadequate culture that can easily transmit infections, we were all infected and had allergies, whether through using the baladi or european toilets, no medication worked with these infections as the place itself is unclean, bacteria is there all the time*

It is also difficult to shower in times of need due to the heavy crowding inside the wards, and in order to shower; prisoners must take permission from the Nabatshia and wait until all the whole ward is done with using the toilet. The water in the shower, like all prison water is polluted, and causes skin problems for prisoners as well as hair loss, in addition to always being cold, water in the shower is never available at a suitable temperature.

## **• Sanitation Pads**

### ***Bangkok Rules, Rule 5***

The accommodation of women prisoners shall have facilities and materials required to meet women's specific hygiene needs, including sanitary towels provided free of charge and a regular supply of water to be made available for the personal care of children and women, in particular women involved in cooking and those who are pregnant, breastfeeding or menstruating.

Sanitary pads are not available in prison free of charge, and can be purchased from other prisoners or from the canteen if they exist, but the prison

administration does not consider them to be recognised rights. The price of sanitary pads inside prison is 20

Egyptian Pounds more than the price outside prison, and it is considered to be one of the most expensive items sold in the canteen. Some female prisoners rely on their families to obtain sanitary pads. However, some female prisoners, especially those charged on criminal cases, do not receive visits, and do not have enough money to buy sanitary pads. According to the testimony of Sh.A. who was locked up with the criminal prisoners in Ward 1 for investigations;



*I don't know how to describe it to you, but there were criminal prisoners who did not get any visits and had no money to buy sanitary pads from the Canteen, they were walking around without any pads, maybe someone would feel bad for them and give them one, but there were many women without any pads, and the prison administration doesn't not provide that*

All the former prisoners we have interviewed confirmed that the sanitary pads sold at the Canteen are of very bad quality that may cause infections and skin diseases for women prisoners.

A. S. pointed out that there were cases of infection with the HIV virus that occurred inside the prison due to the lack of necessary health care during periods of menstruation and the lack of sanitary pads.

#### 4.2.4. Violating the rights of pregnant and nursing prisoners

The Prison Regulation Law in Egypt stipulates that pregnant prisoners are treated well, and receives special care in terms of food, work and sleep, until forty days after they give birth they give birth. According to Rule 48 of the Bangkok Rules, pregnant women and nursing mothers in prison enjoy all the rights guaranteed, must receive special health care and be provided with an appropriate diet and an opportunity to exercise. It provides mothers and children with an appropriate healthy environment, and the child receives continuous medical care. In this section, we shall review the real situation in dealing with detained pregnant women and mothers in Al-Qanater prison, according to the testimonies by two former prisoners, F. M. And M.M.

Initially, the defendant is transferred to prison from her place of residence, or her previous detention place, in the deportation car, which, as revealed, is a metal method of transportation that is not fit for human use. A former prisoner describes her deportation to Qanater prison with her child following her arrest:



*In that night, our pain was not only during transportation, they took me from Qanater prison to Abu Zaabal Prison and then from Abu Zaabal to the prosecution. One of those times, my daughter peed herself inside the transportation car, it was very dark, I changed her diapers in the*

*deportation car on the floor, without seeing a thing, I was screaming as I was changing her diapers... by the time we left the car, I was soaked in pee. Another time, while going to Abu Zaabal, the guard lost the car keys and we were locked inside, we went on knocking for half an hour, I was going to lose my girl, she was staring and looking upwards and I was trying to laugh and tell her not to be scared, she didn't move out of fear. I was very exhausted with her, carrying her for four floors in the prosecution and after the prosecution they took me down to sit with the guards in their sleeping room, I would sit there for hours, and nurse my daughter in between the men.*

After the prisoner arrived at the prison, she was forced to wait with her daughter outside prison as its administration refused to receive her because the prosecution had not notified them. But an hour later, the prison agreed to allow her inside, and one of the prison guards searched her and gave her prison clothes, called the Sholl. That took place before her personal belongings were searched and put in the safety box. She talks about the time before she and her baby were transferred to the maternal ward: "I stayed there in a severely cold weather, my daughter was ice cold, I tried to cover her but couldn't, while they - the prison guards - were sipping tea."

Pregnant and nursing prisoners are held in ward 9, the ward consists of two rooms, the shape of beds there is different from that in the rest of the wards, they are made of only two stories. It is also overcrowded, while it had the capacity for 50 prisoners, it contains prisoner ranging in number from 130 to 150<sup>7</sup>.

Extra beds are not provided for prisoners when the ward is overcrowded, rather they get beds according to seniority, the new prisoners sleep on the floor until a bed is emptied, with an exception made for prisoners held on political cases, who do not sleep on the floor by an order from the chief of investigations. Former prisoner M.M. , who was initially held in the ward of mothers, said that the administration was adamant with her by placing her in the ward for criminal offenders and allocated an upper bed for her, which she found painful because of her pregnancy. F. M. recounts her first moments in the ward;



*When I first went inside the ward I slept on the floor, even though the political prisoners did not sleep on the floor. My daughter and I slept for 10 days that way next to the door, until my daughter went out on the tenth day, she was very weak. This was an awful time in my life, the ward's fans were turned on all the time, my girl became sick with a fever and puked the whole night, whenever a child sneezed, all the other children in the ward sneezed, whenever one puked, they all puked, there were 50 children inside*

**Prisoners in the maternity ward receive the same quality of food as the**

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<sup>7</sup> Mona Selim, Rights of a prisoner in a sad country..the stories of women's wards. (The Arab Ambassador, 2019). [shorturl.at/dejlB](http://shorturl.at/dejlB)



rest of the wards, without regard to their health conditions or special needs. The maternal dormitory takes its share of taayeen, which is a grain of onions, tomatoes or fruit, along with rice, green beans or fava beans, it is the same black water, no difference, filled with worms and fish. F. M. talks about that;



*There is no such thing as the quality of food, you only get the Taayeen... which is either rubbish food or rotten. As for the water, it had something called "shabah" inside the water tank, which is undrinkable, when we showered with it, our bodies turned black.*

Mothers and pregnant prisoners in Qanater do not receive the required health care for their situation. On one hand, the prison hospital and its doctors are not qualified to deal with the conditions of pregnant women, and on the other hand, the prison administration has been intransigent in providing the necessary health care for the prisoners, and has been tenacious in allowing medicine brought by the families. A situation exemplifying for this was that of M.M. who suffered from bleeding due to her pregnancy, the prison administration did not take any measures regarding that, and the State Security Prosecution refused to accept her lawyer's request to allow the entry of the medication required by her health condition.

F. M. decided ten days after her imprisonment not to keep her baby with her, she handed her over to one of her relatives (as her husband was also detained). In the midst of this overcrowding, poor quality of food and water, poor hygiene, along with sleeping on the floor in a windy weather, adding to the agony of the deportation car. F. M. acknowledged that this place is not suitable for providing a good environment for mothers or their children, she commented on her decision:



*The hell that me and my daughter endured in the ten days that she spent with me inside prison equals the whole sum of the four months and a half months I spent there. I was tormented psychologically and physically with her being with me in these conditions, I couldn't let her live through this, even if she was going to be far from me.*



## **Fifth: Multidisciplinary discrimination: how social classes are reflected within the Qanater prison**

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Discrimination is the distinction in the treatment of prisoners on grounds not related to the purpose of their imprisonment. The principle of non-discrimination is a principle enshrined in all international treaties, and it stems from a deep belief that people, by their nature, are born equal; it is especially of high importance for prisoners not to be discriminated against amongst each other as imprisonment is a harsh penalty in itself, also to avoid subjecting prisoners to further layers of sanctions that may increase the cruelty of their detention. Although the principle of non-discrimination is indispensable for attaining justice and equality between prisoners, we have not found

anything in the Prison Regulation Law in Egypt that stipulates for that or addresses the prevention of discrimination.

Prisoners in Al-Qanater prison are subjected to multiple layers of discrimination. It is not binary discrimination, that is, it cannot be said that there is a category with all privileges and another that is totally disadvantaged, but rather the discrimination is intertwined and overlapping according to several criteria. Women in Al-Qanater prison are subjected to discrimination on the basis of origin, social class, political opinion, and mostly according to their financial status.

## 5.1 Discrimination between prisoners based on their social backgrounds

Regarding the social class, our interviews showed that female prisoners detained on grounds of criminal offenses are subject to clear discrimination as a result of their social background, when compared to prisoners detained in relation to political cases. Criminal offenders generally come from disadvantaged social classes and groups, which naturally affects their educational and financial statuses. In their case, their families are mostly likely to abandon them once they enter prison. Despite this, civil society organizations and organizations working on the file detention place try to contact them, but it is usually difficult to reach them as they refuse, most of the time, to speak to human rights organizations.

- **Torture and ill-treatment** The prison administration uses harsh penal method with prisoners detained on criminal grounds, amounting to torture and inhuman treatment. Criminal prisoners are forbidden from speaking with political prisoners, and if a political prisoner speaks to a criminal one, the criminal is punished with beatings or Tashreeda (displacement), according to most of the former prisoners we interviewed. S.Kh. described how the administration deals with criminal prisoners:



*The criminal offenders are treated in a very cruel manner, they are beaten, humiliated and insulted with the worst insults, they throw things at them, they are not treated in a humane way.*

- **Poor conditions of the Criminal Ward** The prison administration ignores the explosive situation in the criminal ward in terms of its capacity, which makes the criminal wards more stacked than others. One of the prisoners whom we interviewed said that: "There were instructions that political prisoners do not sleep on the floor, so we slept on beds," which is a positive discrimination for political prisoners. But, on the other side, criminal prisoners slept on the floor, between beds, in the pathways, and even in the bathrooms. The prison administration ignores that, and it doesn't take any measures for providing spaces or beds. Z. M. told us about a prisoner from the city of Arish; There was a girl from Arish who was banned from getting visits,

the Nabatshia made her sleep under the beds.

- **The prison administration's reaction to the complaints of criminal prisoners,** the prison administration dealt with complaints from criminal prisoners with great disregard. They do not have a system for documenting the complaints of prisoners, and while the prison administration tries to interact with the complaints of political prisoners out of fear from "their loud noise and the reports issued by human rights organizations," according to Sh. A. The prison administration realizes that criminal prisoners are in a rather more vulnerable situation, and that their complaints will not have the same potential impact. This does not mean that political prisoners are immune from abuse, but it can be said that their complaints against violations by the prison administration are taken into account and interacted with as they try to resolve them at times, while criminal prisoners have no supporters.

F.M. told the Egyptian Front about how the prison administration interacted with the complaints of both criminal and political prisoners, in a situation where the chief of investigations reacted to a complaint about a disciplinary officer who hit a group of political prisoners,



*The last time this officed dealt with political prisoners was during the case of the Azhar girls, she beat them and tore apart their clothes. They filed a complaint about her and after that she was not even allowed to look at political prisoners or complain about them again. Since then, the discipline of political prisoners was only through the chief of investigations.*

On the other side, the prison administration does not allow abt escalations from criminal prisoners in response to beating, insults or mistreatment. Rather, the prison administration participates, represented in the chief of investigations, the wardens and the officers in the abuse.

We believe that the discriminatory practices in the Qanater prison on the basis of social class are countless, which leads to countless violations, including torture and degrading treatment, inhumane conditions of detention as well as ignoring their complaints.

## **5.2 Discrimination between prisoners based on their political affiliations**

On the other hand, political prisoners in Al-Qanater prison are discriminated against because of their political orientations, which generally oppose the regime. The prison administration treats political prisoners as a risk that must be isolated, not only from society, but also from other prisoners. The administration's discrimination against the political prisoners appears in several aspects, all of which seek to tighten the surveillance upon them. In times of necessity, according to the administration, it doesn't them to leave the ward for exercising or to wash their clothes or to buy supplies they



may need. The administration is also obstinate in allowing them to attend funerals of their relatives and in inspecting the things they may obtain visits, in comparison with criminal prisoners.

- **Exercising and Mingling** The Qanater prison administration prevents political prisoners from speaking with criminal prisoners, which escalates the cruelty of the prison sentence for them. Even as their numbers have increased in recent years, they are considered a minority within the Qanater prison, and although they share wards with remanded criminal prisoners, any kind of communication between them remains forbidden. The situation is different for political prisoners who are held in other wards for criminal prisoners, as they are few in number among the criminal prisoners, and sometimes there is one political prisoner in a criminal ward, who is forbidden to communicate with anyone for the entire time she spends in prison. A.B. remembers her detention in the public funds ward, as a political offender in the criminal ward:



*Since the beginning, all what they wanted from me was to shut my mouth and not to communicate with anyone, they told me that I was going into a good ward and getting my own bed, but in return I am not allowed to speak to anyone or speak in politics, if anyone asks me about my case, I shouldn't answer, that was what the prison administration demanded from me. I was allowed to exercise for an hour a day, but I had to be on my own. I spent two years in prison, staying alone on third storey bed speaking to nobody. If the Nabatshia saw me speaking to anyone, she'd report to the chief of investigations, if I were not in the ward, she assigns someone to keep an eye on me.*

Political prisoners locked with each others in a cell allocated for them are allowed to speak and communicate with one another, but not with criminal prisoners who may share the same ward. A.B says;



*Whenever a political prisoner joined the ward, we used to ask for permission in order to exercise together or even speak to each other, it took around a week until it was granted. When the chief of investigations actually approved, he'd say that we are allowed only an hour, when we asked why they treated us that way, their response was that it was for security measures. They thought we'd start a revolution inside the ward and that if we spoke to others we'd open their eyes to things they do not know. On the other hand, the women held in the political cell had the privilege of speaking with each other as they were seperated from the criminal prisoners.*

The prison administration's efforts to isolate the political prisoners extends to restricting their movement inside prison, in terms of exercise times and allowing them to leave the ward to purchase their supplies or wash their clothes. Exercising for Political prisoners is different from that for criminal prisoners, because it is open for latter group from eight in the morning until five in the evening, they have more liberty to walk and buy their supplies,



but the political prisoners have Nabatshias whom they must seek permission from in order to exercise, which should not exceed two hours a day, from nine to ten in the morning, and from three until four in the afternoon. These hours may vary from one ward to the next, but the political prisoners remain prohibited from leaving the cell except in times of exercise.

- **Going out in cases of emergency** The prison administration is intersigent in allowing political prisoners their exceptional leave in case of attending the funeral of one of their parents, while criminal prisoners are always allowed to go out in cases of funerals or weddings. S. Kh. says talked about the cases she witnessed inside prison where the administration was intransigent with a prisoner who was supposed to attend a funeral.



*Once a relative of a political prisoner died, they wouldn't allow her to go out for the burial service, despite that they allowed that for criminal prisoners in cases of death or weddings, they would be able to attend. Once, they detained me in the ward for drug crimes, so one of the drug traffickers went out to attend her daughter's wedding, she begged the prison guard to change her clothes and he allowed her to wear a black abbayya (dress), they let her stay for the whole wedding, and then they brought her back to prison. In another case, a woman's husband passed away at the prison gate and they refused to let her out to see him for the last time, it affected her tragically and she always remembered that situation and cried, wishing that she at least saw him for the last time.*

- **Inspections and visits** The Qanater prison administration also discriminates against political prisoners during the inspection. Families of the prisoner come to visit while bringing; food, clothing, drink, and personal hygiene items are needed. But the prison administration is intransigent in inspecting the visits for political prisoners. They search it "piece by piece," according to Y. N.. They prohibit the admission of many products such as canned food, candy and colored clothes, while allowing criminal prisoners to attain such products. The prison administration also specifies certain quantities of food allowed for admission for the political prisoners, while the administration can be lenient in inspecting things brought to criminal prisoners and allows large quantities of food inside. F.M. says;



*Prison is not only about being locked up and not able to go outside, prison is not being able to wear colored clothes or a white blouse because it has one button, they'd tell you, no this is for going out, either they tear it apart or give it back to your family. The criminal prisoners are allowed to get bags of clothes, all are colored. They explain that the inspection for criminal prisoners is different from that for political prisoners... bags of vegetables, fruits and food, their inspection is very slight despite that they are the ones who bring in drugs out in the open.*

The intransigence in inspecting political prisoners increases not only the

pain of the prisoners, but also that of their families, as the mother of one of the political prisoners recounts:



*I used to cook food and bring it to her, but then they wouldn't allow it inside. I used to go home with it, thinking I better throw it into the river on my way back. I spent the whole night cooking this food and in the end they wouldn't let it in.*

Thus, the Qanater prison administration discriminates against political prisoners because of their opinions and political orientations, by prohibiting their coexistence and communication with other prisoners, and in the case of political prisoners held in the criminal ward, they are prevented from communicating with the other criminal prisoners. The prison administration also discriminates against political prisoners in going out to take condolences in funeral of their first degree relatives. It is also intransigent in inspecting the things brought to them in their visit and prohibits the admission of many products that are available to criminal prisoners. Discrimination against the political prisoners reveals a pattern in line with the prison administration's attempt to limit their movement and communication with others, whether inside prison with other prisoners, or outside it with their families.

### 5.3 Discrimination between prisoners based on their wealth

The internal prison system operates in such a way that wealthy female prisoners enjoy privileges that are not legally provided for and are not available to other prisoners of middle or lower economic class. The wealth of these prisoners allow them to «buy» services that are supposed to be provided free of charge, such as getting a single bed, being provided with good meals, and living in a clean and healthy prison environment. In some cases, the prison allocates special rooms or wards for the famous and wealthy prisoners. Most prisoners who come from a high economic class are concentrated in the public funds ward.

The public funds ward is one of the cleanest wards in prison. It is divided into three large rooms and a spacious lounge. The room has about 7 beds, each bed has three stories. It has four bathrooms with separate showers. Prisoners in the Public Funds ward are accused in cases related to money laundering or they are indebted women. A. B. who was detained in the public funds ward for 20 months explains the difference between the public funds ward and other wards:



*The people inside the public funds ward care about the ward's cleanliness, and they have enough money to live a comfortable life. When I was there, there was a good facilitator kept the cleanliness of the place. This category of people are not like the rest, there are educated people there and public figures as well, they are very smart and they know how*

*to acquire their rights, they come from a social, economic and educational level that is different from the others.*

While it is obligatory for the prison administration to ensure an equal standard of living for all women prisoners, and to take the necessary measures to protect the most vulnerable groups and to prevent strong groups from enjoying illegal privileges. To the contrary, the Qanater prison administration provides wealthy and well-known detainees with exceptional detention conditions that are not provided for other prisoners. Although all prisoners are supposed to spend 11 days in the New Arrivals Ward as soon as they arrive at prison and before being housed in the ward, in addition to being denied visits or the acquisition of any personal belongings during that period. The rules also stipulate that each prisoner is entitled to a visit every week if she is a remand prisoner, while she gets visits once every two weeks if she is convicted. However, these rules were violated when Reham Saeed, famous broadcaster and media person, entered prison, according to R. Q.:



*When I first went inside Qanater, I spent 12 days in the New Arrivals Ward without getting any visits, which is the case for political or criminal prisoners, but for famous or connected people, they get visits everyday, like Reham Saeed or cases of public funds, whether they were convicted or pending investigations. All of us had to go under investigation except for someone like Ola Qaradawi who went into solitary confinement right away while for someone like Reham Saeed, they emptied the immigration ward for her specially and she went in it directly without passing through the New Arrivals ward. Sometimes, when people have connections, they don't go to a ward but they go to the hospital directly as if they were sick.*

Another prisoner, who was a former parliamentarian, was convicted for collaborating with Banque du Caire on grounds of evading debt payment of 238 million Egyptian pounds. A.B. talks about her,



*When a human rights mission visited the prison for inspection, that woman would join and pass through the wardens with them, they'd ask for her as she is a parliamentarian.*

A.T. recounts about another prisoner from the public funds ward:



*One of the convicts in the public funds ward had her own room with a fridge, television and microwave.*

A distinction is also made between rich and poor prisoners during visits, despite the fact that the legal duration for visits is one hour, rich prisoners bribe the prison administration in order to extend the visit. A. B. says in that regard;



*There were visits that lasted for more than the permissible duration, which happens also that the visit lasts an hour, for someone who is a public figure or famous, it can extend up to 3 or 4 hours. They'd also get the exception of a large room during the visit.*



## Sixth: Policies of Impoverishment inside Qanater Prison

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*Al-Qanater prison is Egypt, but on a smaller scale, of course it is classist, supposedly you locked up these people to punish them, so do that. You lock them up every day, but in return, you are responsible to provide them with their needs of food, drink, clothing, and medical treatment, as well as every need, which doesn't happen. People inside are punished, jailed, they pay money, and those who don't have anything to pay suffer inside and they have to work for other people, serve them, and wipe their shoes just because they have no money while the others do. Why? Because the prison is not able to provide for the needs of the prisoners.*

*- A.B.*

The Interior Ministry's Decree 468/2014 stipulates the duties of prisons towards prisoners in terms of providing for their basic life needs, and that includes the duty of the prison to provide three daily meals, taking into ac-



count the special nutritional requirements of some male and female prisoners who suffer from certain diseases, including heart disease, atherosclerosis and hypertension. In addition infants from six months to a year old. The prison must also provide prisoners with clothes, with special specifications for infants, in addition to those detained in custody.

The Nelson Mandela Rules also affirm that prison administrators must provide a good environment for prisoners to live in, and accordingly prison administrations should provide food, clothing, drink, housing, and medicine, as well as health services, maintenance of prison facilities, and providing personal hygiene items. And since prisoners, immediately after their detention, are deprived of their freedom and sever their ties with the outside world, the prison must provide an integrated environment capable of creating living conditions similar to, at least, those of the outside world.

Nevertheless, the Qanater prison administration does not provide prisoners with their basic life needs, which has led to the creation of an internal prison system in which a group of the prisoners work to provide services that should have been provided by the prison administration. Many prisoners depend on their families to provide for their basic needs, which adds a huge financial burden on their families. On top of that, the prison administration inspects the visits and prevents the entry of many supplies, thus the prisoners are forced to purchase them from the canteen or cafeteria. All of the above turns the prisoner's basic rights of food, drink, clothing, housing, a clean environment, and health services into a "commodity" that is bought and sold inside the prison.

This section addresses the impoverishment policy inside Al-Qanater prison; it is divided into three points. First, regarding the services that the prison should provide to prisoners free of charge, however the prison provides them in return for money. Second, Regarding the financial burden of visits on the families of the prisoners, caused by the poor quality food and water served inside prison, and how the prison administration prevents the entry of many basic products. And finally, regarding the exorbitant prices for products sold inside prison whether in the canteen or cafeteria, which the prison administration imposes its purchase on prisoners by preventing certain products from getting through to them in visits.

## **6.1 Free services sold inside prison**

Al-Qanater prison trades in the needs of its detainees. Although the prison administration provides some of their needs, it does not provide them for free, and even when getting some things for free, such as a single bed and its supplies, or providing a refrigerator to store food, its quality is very poor. On the other hand, there are services that the prison does not provide at all, and the administration appoints female prisoners to provide it, such as



cleaning the wards, washing and ironing clothes; these appointed prisoners receive their salaries, not from the prison administration, but from other prisoners.

In the case of services provided by the prison in exchange for a fee, The ward's Nabatashia is responsible for collecting her wages from the prisoners, which represents her monthly salary that she is supposed to receive from the prison administration. The prison places the detainees at the mercy of Nabatshia, who is renting out her efforts to provide free prison services in the first place, at the price it decides. The Nabatshia receives in exchange for its services in the form of cigarettes, which is the currency circulating inside the prison, then goes to the prison administration, which exchanges the cigarettes for paper money. The cigarette cartridge price is 200 pounds, while in the case of selling it, it equals 150 pounds. F. M. talks about the wealth the Nabatshia accumulates from the prisoners' money:



*Nabatshias have different rates and levels, a Nabatashia can make a fortune in prison, they give the cigarettes they collect to the prison administration, which exchanges it for money. A Nabatashia's monthly salary exceeds 20,000 pounds, they build houses and buildings with the money they make in prison. I stayed for two months in the mothers' ward and two months in the political ward, in the political ward, the woman who cleaned took from each prisoner half a cartridge, can you imagine how much money she makes a month?*

During the first 11 days in the New Arrivals ward, each woman has to pay five packs of cigarettes to the Ward's Nabatshia, which is the least amount to be paid according to Sh.A., who says "The more you pay, the better treatment you get. If you only pay 5 packs of cigarettes, you will be tossed on the floor"

• **The cost of food and water ..** After the prisoners are distributed over their wards, commerce is reflected in every aspect of their lives. First, with regard to food, a prison-appointed criminal offender in each ward is responsible for cooking the daily meals, called "Ma'eesha" (living), she sells the food to the prisoners. Ma'eesha is an alternative to the "Tayeen" prison food of poor quality, but it is only available to those who can afford to pay. A prisoner's cost of living is 1,200 pounds per month. A. B. talks about the cost of food in Al-Qanater prison:



*In order to eat one good meal a day, my family can't afford it, because they come every two weeks, so they can't bring me cooked food, so I pay 1200 in food. A woman inside cooks something called the Ma'eesha (food). If you wanted to eat something clean and healthy on official basis - with a certificate - then you buy it from the cafeteria, In the cafeteria, the salad costs 15 pound, the rice costs 15 pounds, a kilo of grilled fish costs 50 pounds, that is the least expensive thing there, otherwise the food quality is really bad, but we always say that the cafeteria is the best of the worst.*

In order to preserve the food bought by the prisoners, or brought to them by their families in visits, the prison administration provides mini fridges in the wards, the prisoners pay at least two packs of cigarettes, which equals 40 pounds a month, so that they can use the fridge. Others may pay multiple prices of that, according to the quantity of food they want to store in the fridge.

And because there is no water desalination system in Al-Qanater prison, the prisoners have to rely on mineral water for drinking. However, due to the high prices of mineral water inside the prison, detainees are forced to shower with the prison water that causes hair loss and leaves spots on the skin. The cost of a mineral water bottle in prison equals 5 and a half pounds, while it is sold abroad for three pounds. A.B. calculated with us what she paid on a daily basis for water while she was in custody:



*The water inside qanater is not drinkable, we all rely on mineral water, even a mouthful of water is for money, the bottle of water which is sold outside for three pounds costs five and a half inside. The small bottle counts as a luxury, which is why it is sold at a higher price. It is difficult for someone to drink from the tap water, it is like drinking from the gutter, it is strange in taste and everything. It makes our hair fall, changes the color of our bodies, seriously, the color of our skin changed from the water and the lack of sun. The water is salty in terrible proportions. It had the color of tea. If you decide to use mineral water in both drinking and showering it will be very costly. The water bottle is for 5 and a half, in order to cook, shower and drink, I will pay at least 60 pounds a day*

- **The price of getting a bed.** Settling in beds is according to seniority in Al Qanater prison, as the prison does not provide each detainee with a bed of her own. To obtain a single or even a double bed, the prisoner pays a fixed monthly fee for it; a cigarette cartridge per month, or 200 pounds, and another cartridge for a mattress, bed linen and curtains, which equals 300 pounds per month. Bed rent and bed supplies are paid to the criminal Nabatashia. In the event that a prisoner chooses not to pay the bed rent to Nabatashia, she would end up sleeping on the floor, between the beds and in the hallway. Z. M. tells us what happened to her when she refused to pay the Nabatashia for renting the bed:



*The Nabatashia made me sleep for two days in the cold on the bed's metal without allowing me a mattress because I refused to give cigarettes after each visit, when I complained about her to the head of investigations, he transferred me to another ward and did nothing else*

- **The cost of medical treatment.** There is no medication in Al-Qanater prison other than painkillers, which is paid for by the prisoners from their own money, through the money her family left for them in the trusts. In the event that the prisoner needs other medicines, they should buy them from

outside prison through the prison outlets, the prisoner pays the cost of the medicine and the cost of its delivery to the prison, in addition to a «tip» for the employee or employee working in the prison sale outlets. A.B. says:



*Treatment provided in the hospital are fixed things, anything that is not available in the hospital, I send for buying it from outside and pay its price. If I will buy a painkiller from outside at the cost of 15 pounds, by the time I get it it will be for 40 pounds, I will receive it through the prison's selling outlets, and I will pay for its price, but the person who will go and get it will also get money*

• **Cost of Cleanliness.** The responsibility of cleaning the wards and toilets is on the prisoners, as the prison administration does not provide staff who regularly clean the prison facilities. Some of the poorest inmates among the prisoners bear the responsibility of cleaning the wards and toilets, in exchange for a monthly payment paid to them by each prisoner. The prison administration also does not provide the necessary cleaning tools, and the prisoners' families sometimes bring cleaning supplies in visits, but the prison administration is intransigent in allowing them inside, which forces the prisoners to purchase them from the prison outlets which sells the products at twice the price. Each prisoner pays at least 190 pounds per month, which is paid to the prisoner who cleans the ward. In other times, the price reaches 200 or 300 pounds per month, depending on whether the prisoner is locked up on criminal or political grounds, in addition to the price of toiletries, which amounts to about 60 pounds per month. Moreover, the prisoners also pay a fee for washing their clothes. The prisoners are prohibited from washing clothes inside the wards, and only the cleaning workers, are permitted to go outside the ward for washing the clothes. As a result of these intransigent measures, the prisoners are compelled to pay 100 pounds per month in exchange for clean clothes. A.B. says:



*We are the ones who pay for the women who clean up, we pay half of cartridge of cigarettes each two weeks for cleaning the room, and because I am a political prisoner, they didn't raise the price. But others paid a cartridge or two. So in order to live in a clean place I had to pay no less than 190 Egyptian Pounds per month. There's also the laundry, we are banned from doing our laundry inside the ward, so it has to be outside, one the prison washers do that, so we have to pay them, we give them a cartridge per month, which is 200 pounds, if were not a political prisoner, I would have had to pay double that.*

In December 2018, news websites circulated a statement by the Assistant Minister of the Interior for the Prison Sector where he said that "a prisoner in some prison factories gets a monthly salary ranging between 3,000 and 6,000 l.e.". He added that the Ministry of Social Solidarity spent 102 million pounds in pensions for the families of prisoners in 2018. However, according to the prisoners and their families, this statement is unfounded, as shown in the following table, the financial burden on the detainees and their families

is clear, considering what they have to spend in order to survive, the table explains the average prices of services that each prisoner has to pay monthly For the criminal Nabatshia and working prisoners inside the wards.

The table shows that a prisoner in Al-Qanater pays about 4000 pounds per month for services that the prison administration is supposed to provide free of charge. And if this money does not go to the prison administration, it is clear that the salary that the assistant interior minister intends is real, but it goes to Nabatshia and prisoners working inside the prison and that they are paid by other prisoners and their families, not from the treasury of the Prisons Authority.

Type of Service	Average Price
Livelihood (Food)	1200 Egyptian Pounds
Water(Drinking/cooking/showering)	1800 Egyptian Pounds (60 Daily)
Bed rent	200 Egyptian Pounds
Renting Bed accessories (mattress, pillow, curtains)	300 Egyptian Pounds
Ward Cleanliness	190 Egyptian Pounds
Cleaning supplies	60 Egyptian Pounds
Washing Clothes	200 Egyptian Pounds
Fridge	40 Egyptian Pounds
Total	4000 Egyptian Pounds

## 6.2 Cost of Prison Visits (to family)

Some female prisoners depend on their families for their needs of food, water, and toiletries, and because the Al-Qanater Prison is 25 km away from Cairo Governorate, it is difficult to reach it by public transport, especially with the quantities of supplies that the families carry on visits. Therefore, people depend on renting a private car, or taking a taxi, which is very expensive.

- **Cost of the visit.** The contents of the visit contains basic food requirements: a day's meal, breakfast and dinner, frozen meat that lasts for several days, rice, oil, bread and fruit. In addition to the personal hygiene supplies such as soap, perfumery and sanitary pads. In addition to these basic requirements at the beginning of detention, some other essentials are not provided by prison, such as blankets, towels, clothes and fans. In addition to the medicines that families bring, other supplies may be required depending on the needs of each prisoner.

According to most of our interviews with the former prisoners, the visit

costs families up to 2000 pounds at the beginning of detention, and around 1500 pounds in regular visits, in addition to what the expenses of transportation. Prisoners receive visits once a week, in case of remands, and every other week, if they were already convicted. A.T. comments on the visit's cost:



*The visit was very costly, first it cost my family around 2000 Egyptian pounds or something, now after arranging for food and I had my own clothes and things, it costs around 1500. That's a lot, in addition to the expenses of transportation.*

S.A. says:



*Each week my family brings me food and money that are enough for the week after, in addition to the medication they must buy for me. They had to rent a car on a weekly basis as my mother is sick and can't walk for long. When they took public transport, they were very exhausted and then they couldn't make it to the next visit. Renting a car cost them 700 Egyptian Pounds, adding that to the visit supplies, and the money they gave me as well as the medication... so it makes a total of 3000 L.E. with transportation and medications.*

• **Visit inspection.** when visiting supplies reach the prison, prison staff inspect its contents. The inspection process represents another burden on the families of the prisoners, one that is actually greater than the original cost of the visit. Families have to wait outside the prison for a while, in which they register their names and wait for their names being called in order to start the process of inspection. Once they enter prison, the inspection process begins. They are searched outside, then the contents of the supplies brought in their visit are searched and they wait until it is time for prisoners to meet them. This process takes from 4 to 6 hours, according to the testimony of most of the prisoners.

The prison administration is usually intransigent in the process of inspecting the supplies brought by visitors, especially with the political prisoners. They do not consider preserving the contents of the supplies during its inspection, which spoils many of them before they are actually attained by the prisoners. S. A. narrates:



*In visits, families bring supplies which are searched before entry, if they actually got through in good shape, that's until they are being searched again inside... then it's in a somewhat acceptable shape, if things are wrapped up; they open it.. even cleaning powder, if there is powdered juice in plastic boxes, they won't allow it inside. If there are sweets, they'd open it, and destroy it with a metal tool that you'd find it disgusting to eat from. As for rice, pasta and cooked meals, they inspect it with a spoon until the food is also ruined. They open everything even if placed in transparent paper. When the supplies from the visit actually reach us, half of it must be thrown away*



Moreover, the prison administration bans many products from going inside to the prisoners during visits, to force them to buy these products from inside the prison, according to most of the prisoners we interviewed, that includes; milk, juice boxes, tea and coffee, instant noodles and many personal hygiene products... prisoner A.A.'s mother said:



*Now all sorts of sweets are banned, the week before our feast they banned everything relevant that resembles celebration, but I learned later is that they are buying products from al-Abd for pastries, it is some sort of investment, rather than letting us buy from outside, we shall buy from inside, same applies for shampoos, conditioners and hair products as well as products for personal hygiene, they were all banned so that we buy them from inside, everything is double the price inside.*

Families of the prisoners are forced to pay a lot of bribes to the prison guard and informants who inspect their visits and search them, so that they avoid intransigence if they choose not to pay bribes. A.B. says:



*They prevent many things from passing through the visit, so that we have to pay it on the inside, if I pay the inspector who searches me money, he will allow anything inside, so you either bribe the inspector or pay your things from inside at double the price.*

A mother of one of the prisoners confirms that burden by saying:



*With the prison guards, it's all about money, if you don't bribe them, they will harass us during inspection, they will scrutinise and inspect everything, so that you pay the next time. From the second I go inside, two women search me, I have to bribe each with 20 L.E., If I want to bring in food, I have to pay 50 L.E., I cross by the resting area, which is a very dirty place with a foul smell, we pay women for the woman outside it so she lets us pass through the resting area, while going inside the prison itself, there are six prison guards standing there, I have to give each of them money; the one who stamps, the one who checks my i.d., the one who searches me inside and the one who searches me outside... all of them.*

So, the families of prisoners bear the transportation costs to reach the prison located at the outskirts of Cairo, plus the burden of providing food and personal needs of their imprisoned family members during visits; some of which are destroyed during the inspection process, while others are not allowed to reach the prisoners in order to force them to purchase the same products from inside the prison at double the price, In addition to bribes that are paid to the prison guards and informants during the inspection, so that they can actually see their daughters.

## 6.3 Canteen and Cafe

The prisoners are forced to obtain products that they are not allowed

to get through visits by purchasing them from the prison's selling outlets, which are either the canteen or the cafeteria. According to the prison executive regulations, the prison director must "inspect the groceries inside the prison to ensure the quality of the items intended for consumption and the appropriateness of their prices and the selling prices of other groceries" if compared to products outside the prison.

Almost all the products that female prisoners may need are available inside prison, but in a clear violation of the prison regulations, there is a sign at the canteen that says prices are 30% higher than prices outside, and this percentage of profit goes to the Ministry of Interior. The women we interviewed have confirmed that the canteen and cafeteria sell products at twice the price outside prison, at least. Which means that the earnings of the Qanater prison are doubled. A.B. talked to us about her experience in purchasing goods that the prison had banned them from acquiring it through visits:



*Most of the products used by people are available in the Canteen, I was always wondering where they got things at poor quality from, they have fruits, meat, salted fish, coffee, tea and sugar, sleeping gowns and underwear. Luxury products like ice cream.. whenever a product is considered a luxury in their eyes its price hiked. Coffee for instance is a luxury so if the packet is sold for 12 l.e. they will see it inside for 30 l.e. The prices inside the canteen is 100% more expensive, am telling you this and ready to say this to anyone, they sell with a profit of 100%. You'd find the profit at 30% for a small number of things, like sugar.. it's for 9 l.e. outside and 12.5 l.e. inside, very simple things.. this talk of 30 percent is what they increase for the ministry of interior, they already added for their own profit..otherwise it's all 100 percent.*

In the following table, we shall showcase the prices of some products inside the prison in comparison to their prices outside it:

Product	Price inside prison	Price outside Prison
Small bottle of Water	4	2
Big bottle of Water	5.5	3
Sugar	12.5	9
Coffee	30	12
Nescafe	49	22
Sanitation Pads	18	9
Dishwash	80	32
Tissue	19	9
Ariel	40	25
Vipa Liquid Soup	70	33
Clorox	35	20

*These prices were assumed from interviews conducted by the Egyptian Front for Human Rights with 12 former female prisoners, and the prices may have increased from the time these women have left the prison until the report came out, but they nonetheless reflect the difference between the prices of goods inside and outside the prison.*

# Conclusion and Recommendations

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In between an incomplete law and uncensored practices, the prisoners in Egypt -especially in Al-Qanater prison - reached a deplorable state, as those in pretrial detention are subjected to a pre-emptive punishment, and the convicted are subject to a punishment above their original punishment, by being in the Al-Qanater prison. To consider being in their place where one is not allowed food, water or to even use the bathroom in a humane manner, one would certainly not come out of this place in good shape (with sanity)

In Al Qanater Prison, a mother had to let go of her newborn child fearing for her presence in a place that is damaging to children. In a small sample compared to the numbers present in Qanater. Women recounted the absence of the fundamentals for normal life, suffering illness without treatment that a prisoner have died without anyone caring to inform her family, adding to that the hardship of actually let the family communicate with her in her last moments.

As a woman with a vagina, the prison administration will violate it, they will force their fingers inside it on grounds of inspection/search. the administration will make it hard for you to get sanitary pads, you will get weaker. Everything is commercialized in this prison, fresh air comes at a price and according to your spot in the prison's ... which is calculated by your social, economic and even political background, this will determine your opportunity for attaining basic rights

At the end of this report and after getting a grasp of the adversities of women in Qanater prison, the Egyptian Front for Human Rights recommends the following:

## **First: Regarding Legislation**

- Amending the Prisons Organization Act and Prison Rules of Procedure to ensure the special needs of women and in accordance with the United Nations Rules for the treatment of Women prisoners and Non-custodial measures for female offenders.
- Amending Article 81 of the Prisons Regulations to ensure that solitary confinement is not used as a punishment for non-grave breaches, and to revoke the ban on visitations as a method of punishment in prisons in accordance with international standards.

## **Second: Regarding the necessity of an investigation**

- The Public Prosecution should open an immediate investigation into claims of torture and inhuman treatment of women in Al-Qanater prison by the prison administration, which includes prison staff, chief of investigations, disciplinary officer, and criminal Nabatashias, especially with regard to criminal female prisoners, given that they are the most vulnerable category.
- The Ministry of Interior should allow the monitoring authorities to visit the prison and allow real inspection. In this regard, the National Council for Human Rights should not be satisfied with praise and play the role drawn out for it to perform, but rather take serious steps in protecting human rights.

## **Third: Regarding the internal condition of the prison**

- The prison administration should stop the practice of strip-searches in which clothes are removed as well as physical searches in which women are violated, and develop alternative methods of inspection in accordance with the United Nations rules for the treatment of women prisoners and the non-custodial measures of female offenders.
- The administration of the Qanater prison shall abolish the practice of housing female prisoners in the "New Arrivals" Ward upon their arrival at the prison prior to placing them in the wards designated for them, due to the violations that these women face in that ward, which are inconsistent with international standards.
- The Qanater prison administration should separate political prisoners from criminal and convicted prisoners and from women in pretrial detention by allocating a ward for each category of prisoners.
- The Qanater prison administration shall transfer prisoners from disciplinary and solitary wards to their own wards immediately and end the practice of prolonged solitary confinement in accordance with international standards.
- The Qanater prison administration shall provide prisoners with free meals of sufficient quality and quantity, containing the necessary nutritional ingredients, in accordance with international standards.
- The Qanater prison administration should install a desalination system and provide clean and free drinking water for its prisoners.

- The prison administration shall work to reduce the accumulation inside the Qanater prison, so as to ensure that each prisoner receives a single bed according to international standards.
- The prison administration should abolish the practice of never turning off the lights and allow them to be turned off inside wards during bedtime, in line with international standards.
- The prison administration must work on cleaning the wards on an ongoing basis and find an immediate solution to the presence of snakes, cockroaches and insects inside the wards.
- The Qanater prison administration shall ensure that the prisoners are healthy, by providing personal hygiene requirements and by keeping the toilets clean.
- The Qanater prison administration shall provide sanitary pads for female prisoners free of charge.
- The prison administration shall provide health services for female prisoners in accordance with international standards.
- The prison administration shall allow prisoners prohibited from receiving visits on disciplinary and unilateral basis to receive them immediately and without delay.





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Egyptian Front for Human rights is a European Organization established in Czech Republic in 2017. The front works to improve the status of human rights in Egypt through research, advocacy and legal work in areas such as criminal justice.

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