



EGYPTIAN FRONT
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The "Everyone should Listen!" Ward

A glossary of prison slang and a guide to the
most prominent terms used in Egyptian prisons

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A glossary by
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November, 2020

To... AlBaker, the companion of all times
Ayman, the companion of playing poker and dark thoughts
My "criminal colleagues": Alshaikh and Ramadan
Cell 3/5 Wadi Natroun Prison
Cell 2/4 Abu Zaabal prison

Introduction

“Go to Prison Immediately”... these words change your position upside down in the ‘Bank of Luck’ board game (The Egyptian version of Monopoly), bringing you from motion to standstill. Nearly 10 years passed since the January 25 revolution, it is now quite plausible that just about anyone will have to “Go to Prison Immediately”, the reasons are not important, there may not be an actual or valid reason to begin with, it is just that prison became more conceivable for everyone.

There is a parallel universe behind prison bars, people who undergo this experience are different ones from who they were when they first went inside and from who they will be when they are out.

Hundreds of books, poems and songs were written there to tell of that world, but still experience is the most telling means, for one to actually become truly acquainted with it. It is an experience that we do not wish upon anyone to go through, especially in Egypt.

This guide was written by a former prisoner, who was on the street when suddenly and without an actual reason, the police surprised him with the “Go to Prison Immediately” sentence. Since then, his time stopped for years. The Author of these pages tries to give a glimpse of what it is to experience prison, he narrates it through the terms he learned and the expressions he acquired during the four stages he went through; starting with moving between different police departments, prosecutions, and courts. In addition to going to several prisons. He recounts how he learned a new dialect, one that will never be of value to the prisoner after his release from prison, but learning it would let us know what it would be like if we were ever to become future prisoners.

The Egyptian Front for Human Rights publishes this guide as part of an Observatory for Places of Detention Project, in order to define the conditions of prisoners and detainees in various Egyptian prisons.

This guide will help to understand the testimonies of former detainees that the Egyptian Front documents, in case any of the terms used by prisoners in Egypt are mentioned in them.

"Outside & inside... in between"

Once one of the inmates - imprisoned for criminal charges - saw that I was occupied with thinking of my mother, he told me that I should... *"keep the outside outside, and the inside inside"*, he simplified the matter, which is how most prisoners divide life into two separate worlds, the world of **"outside"** and the world of **"inside"**. It's true that I couldn't come to terms with this philosophy at the beginning of my imprisonment, but I cannot deny that it helped me accept my fate when I stayed on the inside for too long, so I learned to divide the world into two and started living in the world of prison with its rules and terminology, its terminology being the subject of the coming lines.

"Excuse me, Hajj" I remember this sentence from the world of **"outside"**, I used a lot while addressing elders with white hair, but once one of my peers said it to an aged man in the Wadi Natroun Prison while handing him the lighter, and the world turned upside down, the older man took out a weapon and almost killed us, then one of the other inmates pointed to him that we were **"royal kids"** from the **"outside world"**, only then he started to calm down and he gave us an excuse. Later on, we learned that the word **"Hajj"** is used inside to describe pedofiles - those who lust for children - Thus, the terminology of the two worlds mixed up in my head until I forgot, with time, the terminology of **"outside"** completely.

This simple guide did not rely on any sources other than the author's experience, which extended for nearly nine hundred days in Egypt's different prisons and police stations. If you were

among those who went through the prison experience in Egypt, then this dictionary of the **"inside world"** terms will take you down memory lane, which are mostly unhappy memories. It is interspersed with some laughter and sweet companionship. If you have not gone through this experience yet, you may consider it a kind of general knowledge that will benefit you in the future because imprisonment is apparently destined to all of us in the era of Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi.

The first stage: the idiocy of beginnings

You will not learn the terms all at once, it is a process similar to children learning to speak, each stage has its own words that you hear for the first time with infinite naivete, the prisoners who had been **"inside"** for a good while will laugh at you, and you will also laugh at the new inmates later.

When you are arrested, whether from your place or at random... if you are unfortunate like me, you will not be released until a report is issued, you will go through the first stage, which takes place at the police station. After being insulted and humiliated, you will be placed in the **"Fridge"** until the procedures are completed, then you will be moved to detention, if you are wealthy you will be in the **"Al-Bakitah"** detention facility, but if you are poor or your family has not yet known about your arrest, you will be placed in the **"depth of the mountain"** detention, and the moment you set foot in there, you will be received by **"Nabatshi"** in the dungeon and will be asked to hand in the **"Nabatshia"**, you will learn to sleep in the **"Sayef we Elhem"** method on an

area of an "An inch and a fist". You will also be awakened by knocking for the "Tamam" and you will get acquainted with the "Al-Blukameen".

Al-Hagz (Detention)

Rooms designated for the detention of prisoners inside police stations before their transfer to prisons. They are usually smaller in size than prison cells albeit they have a larger number of prisoners. It is notorious for being overcrowded and that criminal prisoners are not separated from the political ones.

Talaga (The fridge)

The temporary detention room inside the police station, they are used until the procedures of registration are completed. Sometimes these detention rooms are used for the purpose of enforced disappearance as there is no count of people detained inside them.

Al-Bakayta

Detention rooms that are reserved for people of certain social standing and the wealthy, where prisoners pay large quantities of cigarettes or money to the shawish to ensure that no other prisoners enter them, keep a small number in custody, and allow the entry of hygienic and sterilization tools.

Al-Blukameen

He is the most senior police secretary in any station or prison, who knows all the secrets of the place and can provide any service, whatever it is, to whoever pays him the most.

Batn Elgabal (The Depth of the Mountain)

The worst detention place in any police station, it is slightly larger in space than other detention rooms, but it also contains a large number of prisoners who cannot afford to pay cigarettes to the shawish. It is notorious for the presence of dangerous and poor inmates, known for its lack of hygiene and severe overcrowding, to the extent that the inmates coordinate their sleeping in different periods of the day, as they divide themselves into a group that sleeps and one that stands by the door then they switch.

Shebr and Kabda (Inch and Grip)

The unit of measurement of the space available to a prisoner to sleep varies from one prison to another. In some prisons, it reaches only an inch, and in some other prisons it may reach Shibin.

Al-Nabtashi

The head of the cell, usually chosen amongst the criminal prisoners by seniority or severity, and in the case of political prisoners he is chosen through election and sometimes simply by choosing the eldest among them.

Al-Nabtashia

A fixed number of packs of cigarettes or money that the prisoner pays each visit in exchange for some services and also in exchange for protection from some prisoners.

Al-Tamam

The head of the cell, usually chosen amongst the criminal prisoners by seniority or severity, and in the case of political prisoners he is chosen through election and sometimes simply by choosing the eldest among them.

Sayef and Elhem (Sword up and Stick together)

The way of sleeping inside detention, in the meaning of sleep on your sword (your side) Elhem, in the meaning of sticking to the prisoner before you.



The Second Stage: *The world from the windowpane of the deportation car*

If your imprisonment continues, God forbid, you will go to the prosecution to be investigated and released, or have an order issued to detain you for 15 days pending investigations. The police secretary will wake you from a sleep that is not at all comfortable, so you can go to the prosecution and learn about the prosecution's decision about you and also get acquainted with some new terms in the world of "inside", you will ride for the first time the "Deportation Car" that you only saw in the movies, and you will see the world through its window, and all the many times this car passed by next to you without any raising your interest will gain significance as you never thought that one day you will be inside it.

If nature obliges you to relieve yourself and you actually imagine that the officer could stop the car for that, then you are completely wrong. At that time, one of the more experienced prisoners will tell you that there is no present solution but to "Kazkaz" (squirt). When the car stops, you will know that you have reached the court or the prosecution, as there are no stops before that, and the guards will take you to the basement and you will be locked up in the "HabsKhana" until your turn in the prosecution comes.

Arbayet Tarheelat (Deportation Car)

A transportation car with a blue tin box intended for the transport of prisoners. From the inside, it has two long seats on both sides of the box. Its temperature rises gravely to high heat in summer, its ventilation is weak and it smells bad. It has small windows covered with a layer of thick wire.

Kazkaz (Squirt)

The process of urinating inside a plastic bag or an empty water bottle inside the deportation car.

HabsKhana

Is the place where prisoners wait for their trial to begin and for being presented to the prosecution, it is in the basement of the court, which is a medium-sized room with one or two windows at most. Some habskhanas do not contain a bathroom, and are notorious for the abundance of graphics, letters, slogans and dates that prisoners draw on their walls.



The Third Stage: *The road to Miri (Being officially prisoned)*

After spending a few days in police detention, one of the more experienced inmates told me *"if you undergo the criminal records check, it means that you will go to jail,"* which is exactly what happened; two days after doing the fiche and running the criminal records, I was transferred to one of Egypt's many prisons. As the deportation car heads towards prison, your mind will depict films, poems and novels that narrate the prison life, you will imagine that you are living inside one of them. Meanwhile, I thought I had learned enough terminology for me to handle prison... I was totally wrong.

From now on, the days of the **"Malaki"** (royal) have passed, and those of the Miri "official" have come. At first, informants and prison soldiers receive you with the **Tashreefa** "Welcome Party", then they take all your personal belongings and your royal clothes and put them in the form of **Amanat** (trusts). As for the money in your possession, if it will not be stolen, you will take it in the form of **"Bonnat"**. The investigation officer will come and order you to **"Qarfsa" squat**, you may survive from this heinous act if you are a **"political"**, as some prisons do not use this with the political prisoners. You will be searched carefully and then receive **"AlKahoul"** if you are a male, and **"Al Sholl"** if you are a female. If you are lucky, you will be deposited in the **"Erad"** dungeon, but if not, you will be placed in the **"Anbouka"** for 11 days.

The Tashreefa, (the welcome party)

The name of the torture party and beating new prisoners are subjected to the moment they walk inside prison, this happens through informants, soldiers and police secretaries in the presence of intelligence officers and sometimes in the presence of the prison warden.

The Amanat (Safety deposit box)

All personal belongings are taken from the prisoner during the prison gate and placed in the safety deposit box, mostly these belongings are never recovered.

Bonnat

It is not allowed to circulate money inside the prison, but it is allowed to transfer it into paper bonnat bearing the same denominations of currencies, and the prisoner can buy them from the prison cafeteria.

Political Prisoner

A prisoner who is detained or charged in crimes relating to protests or expressing opinion or terrorism.

Criminal Prisoner

A prisoner who is convicted in charges related to murder, robbery or drugs or indecency.

The Qarfa (Squatting)

A procedure followed with the new prisoners, especially the criminals, where they are forced to drink water mixed with soap and squat to relieve themselves, to make sure their stomach is free of any contrabands. As for women, the infamous vaginal inspection takes place, whereby prisoners are forced to take off their clothes in front of the prison guard, who places her hand inside the prisoner's vagina and anus to ensure that they don't have any contrabands.

Miri (Governmental)

A term that used to refer to everything inside prison (Prison food, prison clothes, prison words and dialect)

Malaki (royal)

A term that is used to refer to everything outside prison, including food, drinks, clothes and language.

AlKahool

Prison Clothes, which are two pieces of shoddy polyester fabric. It comes in white during the investigation whereas the convicted inmates are dressed in blue.

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.

Irada (income) New arrivals

A term that is used for new inmates, and it means the special cells allocated for receiving them for 11 before being relocated to their own wards.

AlAnbouka

It's another new arrival prison cell but it doesn't have a bathroom and the prisoners urinate either in buckets or plastic bags.

The Fourth stage: *Rotten Evidence/The cop magnet*

After you spend 11 days in the Irada or the Anbouka you will breathe a sigh of relief, because right after "Taskeen" you will be finally be allowed a "Tablia" and you may even see your "Ahlia" for the first time since going into prison, and you will move from the ugly "Irada" prisons to less ugly prisons where you settle for the remainder of your sentence or until you are released. You will get to learn your new address, the "Anbar, Rob', storey, and your cell's number", you will form friendships with the "Anbar's informat", "Shaweesh Eldoor", the "Moyaser", you will take care of the cleanliness of your "Nemra". Or if you are lucky, you will be granted a "Molla" rather than the Nemra. You will learn how to make the "Asfoura" and the "Khabour" and talk to your fellow inmates in the neighboring cells through the "Naddara". You also know what the "Tayeen, Garaya, Tahwia, Tarayod,

Ta'deeb, Tagreed, Taghreeb" are. You will learn what it means to "dakan" and how to avoid being in the company of any "Herz Mekamken". You will learn of things that never occurred to you such as "Rafa" or "Bala". It is possible that you will get a "Tarqiya" or move to the "Maslab" or the "Meraya" before the end of your imprisonment term, you might as well be released before the Tarqiya.

Al-Ahlia

The family of the prisoner.

Taskeen

The process of distributing prisoners to their cells, in which they will serve the remainder of their sentences or until they are released or transferred to another prison.

Shaweesh Eldor (The floor's Sergeant)

The Shaweesh is the one in charge of a full floor/storey inside the ward, and he works for two full days. He is replaced at noon of the third day. During the two days of his shift he lives in a room at the ward's entrance, his job is to open cells for exercise and to organize the food admission, visits, and transferring inmates to the prison hospital.

The Anbar (Ward)

Often a prison consists of a group of buildings that contain cells, called wards, and are numbered A - B - C or 1 - 2 - 3.

The Anbar's Mokhber (The ward's informant)

The informant in charge of the ward and is affiliated with the administration of the prison investigation and is responsible for visiting statements and searching for contraband inside the ward.

The Morshid

He is a prisoner who is recruited by the security forces to snitch on his fellow prisoners in exchange for privileges and services, such as being allowed to leave the cell during times other than exercise and being allowed to own some belongings that are officially forbidden to other prisoners.

The Rob' (Quarter)

The floor is divided into quarters. Each quarter has a certain number of cells that have one door with a private key.

AlNemra (The Number)

is your sleeping space on the ground, which can be an inch and a fist or two inches depending on the number and area.

The Mollah (Cot)

A bed that consists of several storeys, it is often made of concrete which is fixed to the wall. This term is used in prisons that have few beds.

Al-Bakya

The empty space between each mollah and the one the next to it.

Al-Maslab

In each cell there are three main corners called Maslabs (Crosses). They are characterized by being near the wall, which is a comfortable place to sleep for prisoners.

Al-Meraya (The mirror)

It is the Nemra that is right at the front of the cell's door.

Al-Tayara, (The aeroplane)

It resembles a hammock, which is a blanket tied to the windows of the cell by ropes, and is used for sleeping.

Al-Asfora (The bird)

It is a rope, the first end of which is tied to the cell's window, and the other end is tied to a stick or an empty lighter, it is used to hang bags in order to save space inside the cell.

Al- Dawra (The Water Cycle)

The Bathroom

Alnaddarah (The Spectacles)

a term that is used by the prisoners and also by police officers which refers to a rectangular opening at the top of the cell door. It is the only way for prisoners in different cells to communicate with each other at night, through it the prisoners recite poetry and sing.



Al-Tayeen (The assigned)

The food assigned by the prison administration to prisoners without a financial fee, it is served twice daily.

Maesha (The living)

Food prepared by prisoners and it is sold for a financial fee, which is relatively better than the Tayeen.

Al-Garaya

Bread made from brown flour that is offered to prisoners once in the morning, each prisoner gets three loaves, this number may vary from one prison to another. It is baked in most prisons in a poor manner, most prisoners resort to requesting their own bread during the visits they get.

Tahawai (Ventilation)

The process of opening cell doors for a certain time and allowing prisoners to go out for a walk inside the quarter or only inside the floor.

Taryod (Exercise)

The period during which prisoners are allowed out of the ward, they are then exposed to the sun, and allowed to run and play, often prisoners are deprived of this right and it is replaced by ventilation only.

Al-Khabour

A heating device, which is made of strips of cloth covered in oil that are wrapped and ignited. A bottle of water is placed inside a roll of cloth to heat the water and make tea. The khabour is used by prisoners in their first days due to the lack of an electric heater.



Al-Mosayer (the facilitator)

A prisoner who is hired inside the prison to conduct some clerical and administrative work, such as going out for visits and housing, and in return he gets large quantities of cigarettes in exchange for services he provides to prisoners as long as he can.

Al-Motasana' (The harnessed)

A prisoner who is hired inside the prison to do cooking or maintenance work, according to what he is good at. He is often sentenced to long prison terms, and he gets cigarettes from prisoners in exchange for maintenance work, or in return for increased food rations for appointment.

Al-Ta'deeb (The discipline)

small prison cells, which are about a meter of width and a half meter long, that have one window and do not contain a bathroom. These cells are used to discipline those who violate the prison rules, the prisoner remains inside them without jogging for the period specified by the chief of investigations or the official in charge.

Al-Makhsous (The special place)

The place allocated for prisoners on death row.

Al-Shoukhshekia (The sistrum)

An iron cage where the prisoners wait before going into the visiting room.

Al-Taweel (The long one)

A long rope made of the fabric of prison clothing, with a shoe or a plastic bag tied at one end, prisoners use it in Ta'deeb cells to pass cigarettes between them as one of them passes the shoe through the Nadarra to the adjacent cell where the other prisoner fixes the cigarettes inside the shoe or the bag, then the first prisoner pulls the rope again.



Al-Taghreeb (Alienation)

Transferring the prisoner and placing him in a prison in another governorate far from his relatives' residence.

Al-Tagreed

A search carried out by the prison administration or the prison authority which aims at stripping prisoners of smuggled items, in addition to confiscating personal items and sometimes cooking utensils and blankets. The stripping differs from regular prison inspection in that it is considered a form of annoyance and punishment for some act.

Al-Tashreed

It is a punitive act carried out by the prison administration, whereby the prisoner is transferred from his cell to another cell or to another ward.

Al-Bala' (The Swallowing)

The contraband is swallowed orally to avoid inspection, and then extracted through vomiting.

Al-Rafa' (The lifting)

The contraband is crammed into the anus to hide it, and it is later extracted by defecation.

Al-Anbala

Wrapping contrabands like rivets, hashish, and phones very tightly in plastic bags in order to conceal them through swallowing or (lifting).

Al-Safeena (The ship)

The name given to a prisoner who smuggles a large amount of contraband for the purpose of trafficking

Abalong

White beans, one of the recurring meals in the prison's tayeen.

Faddi al-Torqa (Empty the hallway)

A phrase used by prisoners indicating an imminent fight that requires clearing the cell's hall.

Al-Dawa'i

A group of very small cells isolated from the ward, in which the prisoners held in there are believed to be a danger to the rest of the inmates, it also refers to inmates who frequently smuggle contrabands.

Tarqia (Promotion)

The prisoner gets a better number than his current one, such as moving from sleeping next to the bathroom to inside the cell.

Al-Tabliah (The mini-table)

This term is used in prisons where the death penalty is carried out, it refers to the platform on which the convict stands for the execution of the sentence before pulling the rope.

Daken

A word that refers to the atmosphere of tension, fighting and a general feel of strain between prisoners.

Daken

The title of a stupid or troublesome prisoner that implicates other prisoners.

Herz Mekmekm (The cop magnet)

The title of a stupid or troublesome prisoner that implicates other prisoners.

Almesa

All greetings such as "Good Morning, Good Night" "Salmo Aliko (peace be upon you) disappear inside prison and they are replaced singularly by "Mesa", Mesa to you my mate.

Zemeely (My Mate)

This is the prisoner's official nickname, as words such as my friend, brother, or companion also disappear.

Al-hadeed Gada' (The unabashed Bars) The bars are brave

A sentence that is used when a prisoner is attacked by a prisoner in another cell through the Nadarra, it indicates that we have Iron Bars isolating the prisoner and thus preventing them from fist fights

Don't involve a ruler between us (authority)

It is one of the rules set by prisoners, which is not to include the prison administration "the ruler" in any internal problems between them.

Al-Tazkara (The ticket)

A paper where all the details of the prisoner are documented, such as the name, age, charge and verdict, in addition to the dates of the visits he gets.



The night you leave prison whether after you have done your time or were released, you will stand on the **Naddara** and Divorce the **Anbara**.

Ifrag Bawaba (Gate's Release)

which is being released from prison after finishing the term of punishment or through being absolved from it. The prisoner goes directly from the prison gate to his home without going to the police station.

Al-Anbara

It is singing or reciting poetry from the door's nadara, mostly talking during the night of prisoners' release as some sort of celebration. It has the same intro and nobody knows who wrote it.



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This guide was written by a former prisoner, who was on the street when suddenly and without an actual reason, the police surprised him with the "Go to Prison Immediately" sentence. Since then, his time stopped for years. The Author of these pages tries to give a glimpse of what it is to experience prison, he narrates it through the terms he learned and the expressions he acquired during the four stages he went through; starting with moving between different police departments, prosecutions, and courts. In addition to going to several prisons. He recounts how he learned a new dialect, one that will never be of value to the prisoner after his release from prison, but learning it would let us know what it would be like if we were ever to become future prisoners.



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.