



SINAI

Foundation for Human Rights

All We Want Is To Live

Annual Report
2019-2020

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Foundation for Human Rights

All We Want Is To Live

Monitoring and Documenting report on the human rights abuses that took place in Sinai in the years 2019 - 2020

The report's title is a quote from a statement made by a victim of abuses recorded in the report's testimony.

Introduction and Acknowledgment

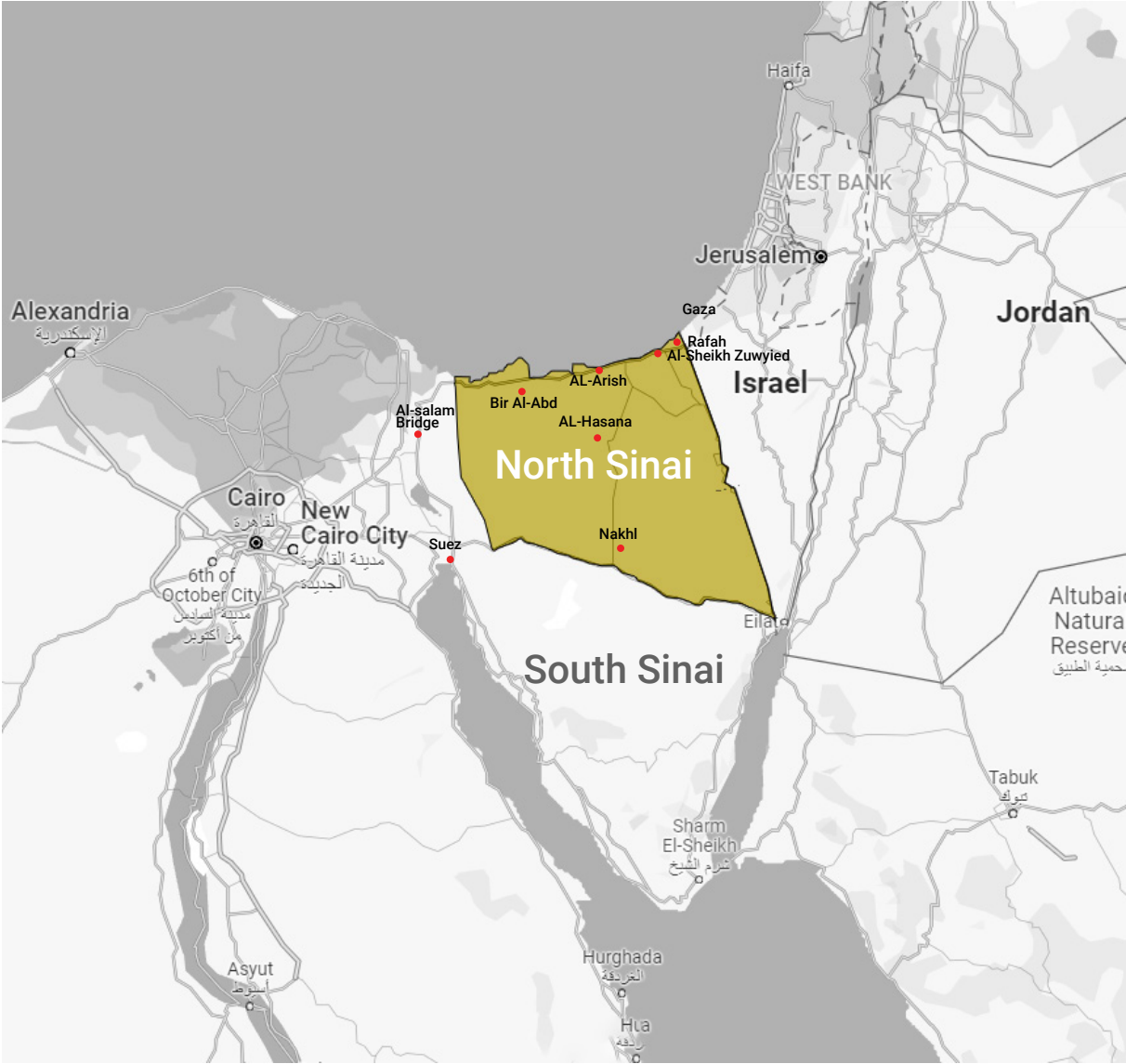
This is the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights' first annual report, inaugurating the birth and launch of the foundation which preceded this report by a few months, during which weekly and monthly reports were published. This report however is the foundation's first extended report -- as a professional independent human rights foundation -- and it covers the years 2019 and 2020, during which many incidents and abuses took place in Sinai, after years of war and destruction. This war transformed the lives of around half a million civilians in that important region of Egypt.

The foundation presents this report, as a way of monitoring and documentation, hoping for the exerted effort in research and writing, as well as the information included, to be an important addition to human rights research in Egypt in general, and Sinai in particular. It's needless to say that there is a scarcity in information allowed by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government to spread about the situation in Sinai, and the dangers and difficulties the foundation team face on the ground to collect information and document violations. Therefore, to them we give our sincerest thanks and gratitude. The eyes and conscience of a researcher, a journalist, and a documenter are what made this report come to light, and they are the hope that some of the blackness surrounding Sinai may subside, like a lantern that pushes away the darkness caused by weapons, pride, and injustice that overshadowed the sun.

The Sinai Foundation strives to be an honest platform that expresses the people of Sinai's fears, worries, and hopes. And it hopes that this report acts as encouragement and motivation for more from within the foundation, as well as all independent human rights, research, and media platforms that have always been separated from Sinai in one way or another.

We hope for a future surrounded by truths for Sinai.

Map of North Sinai, Egypt



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I. Summary

“Our lives here are very hard. No transport, no phone coverage, going outside or into the village needs coordination with the military, and no cars are allowed into the village. Getting food is like searching for drugs. This is not the first time civilians die because of airstrikes and gunshots. This is unfair. All we want is to live a decent life.”

- A local civilian from Abu al-Araj village in southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed, in his testimony on an airstrike that killed 3 women and a child and injured 11 others most of whom were women and children.

Since 2011, life in North Sinai has been extremely hard, with clashes between the Egyptian military and police and Islamist militants. The intensity of clashes increased after president Mohamed Morsi was overthrown and the militants joined ISIS in 2014. The Sinai Peninsula has a population of around half a million who suffer from historical marginalization from the central government. The suffering increased after the armed conflict started, where hundreds of local citizens were killed, thousands were incarcerated, and hundreds disappeared in the past seven years. Tens of thousands of citizens were also forcibly displaced or evacuated their homes due to armed clashes.

This report, which covers the period of 2019 and 2020, reveals the dark reality of human rights in North Sinai where human rights organizations are not allowed and journalism is significantly restricted. The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights recorded during the period covered by the report the death of 112 civilians, 25 of whom were children and 22 were women, and the injury of 134 others, 36 of whom were children, at the hands of the conflicting parties. Those victims represented a portion of the total number of casualties we were able to record. The foundation conducted interviews with 212 eyewitnesses, relatives of victims, and local civilians.

The report documented military airstrikes that led to 5 bloody massacres where 30 civilians were killed and 22 others were injured. While the authorities did not admit to the fall of civilian victims to government gunfire since the beginning of the military operations, the foundation acquired a video documenting an unprecedented confession by government authorities, namely the governor of North Sinai, admitting to the families of the victims that an airstrike mistakenly targeted a house in al-Gora village in southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed on 27 May 2019, however, the foundation acquired official medical documents stating that the victims of that incident were killed by an airstrike of an unknown source, which is the usual behavior by the authorities to evade responsibility when military operations lead to civilian casualties.

The report documented the Egyptian military intentionally bombing and destroying houses, healthcare centers, and schools in many incidents, as well as forced evacuation campaigns of civilians. It also documented the Egyptian military and police killing 26 civilians and injuring 33 others by random gunfire while no threat or military necessity is present.

The Sinai Foundation reviewed all official press releases issued by the Ministries of Defense and Interior about North Siani. The Ministry of Interior published 21 releases stating a total of 158 persons killed, while the Ministry of Defense published 12 releases stating a total of 548 persons killed. All data points to the victims being armed militants who died in clashes with government forces. The foundation found concrete evidence that government forces provided false information in three official statements published by the Ministries of Defence and Interior spokesmen, which poses many questions about the reliability of those statements and the legality of those killings.

The Sinai Foundation team documented how the Egyptian military and police made tens of unlawful arbitrary arrests of civilians, some of which lasted for months with no official criminal charges or judicial procedures. In other cases, detainees, among whom were women with their children, spent long periods of time in prison to force some of their relatives to turn themselves in to the authorities.

On their side, hundreds of ISIS-affiliate Sinai Province group members killed or abducted and tortured hundreds of Sinai residents. Some of those abuses were based on religious identity, as the group systematically targeted Christians and Sufis, in addition to abducting and executing several local citizens who were not part of any armed hostilities, claiming that they supported the government or even worked in financial projects related to the Egyptian military, as well as executing several captive government soldiers, which are war crimes. The report documented the death of 22 civilians and the injury of 23 others, most of whom were women and children, due to explosive devices planted by the group to target government forces.

Graphic representation of the abuses recorded by the foundation during 2019 - 2020

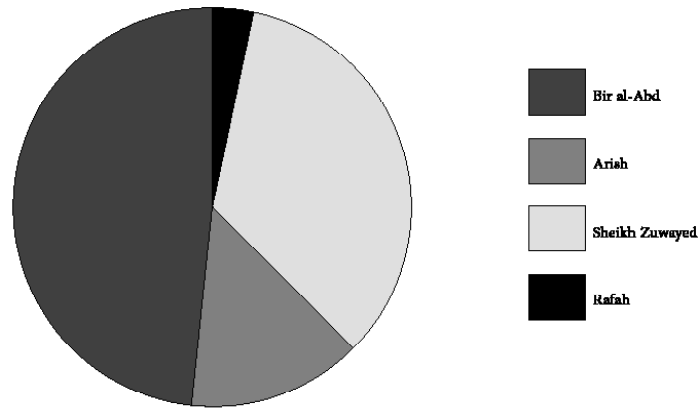


Figure (1): Shows the geographical expansion of abuses in North Sinai cities.

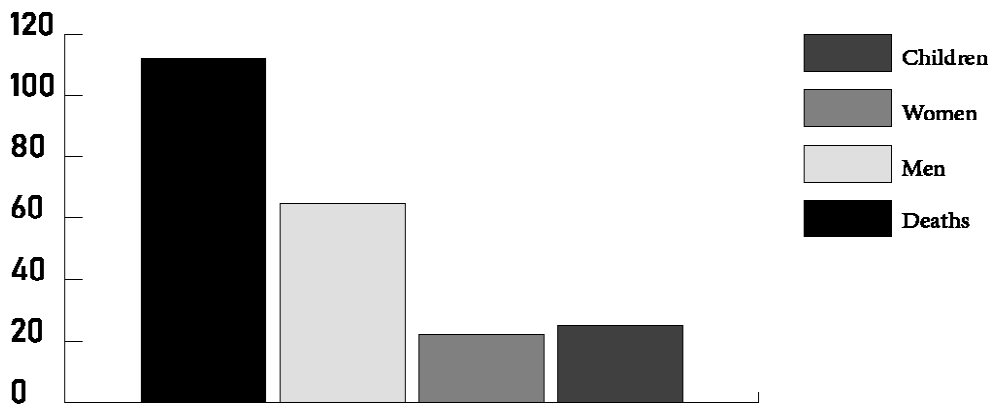


Figure (2): Shows the ratio of children, women, and men among 112 civilians killed during 2019 - 2020.

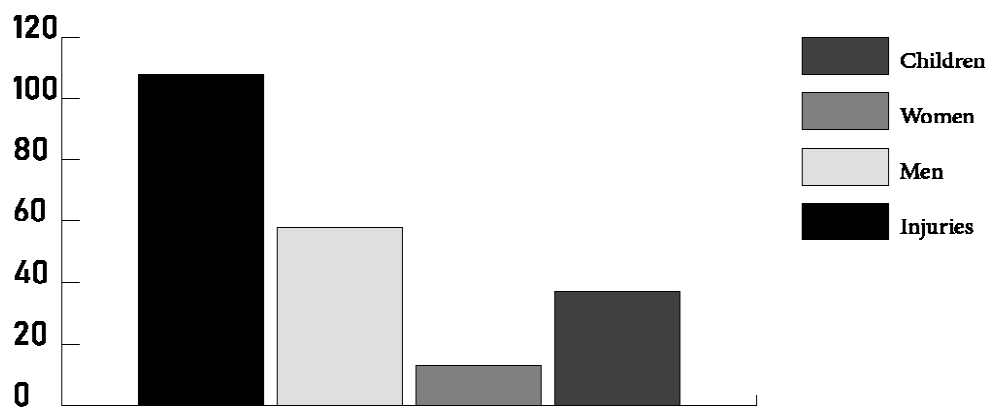
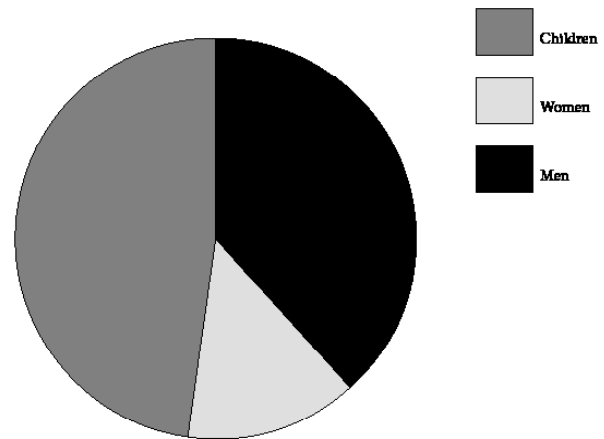
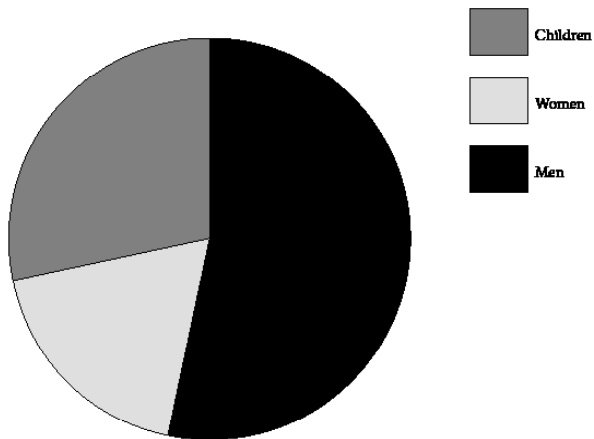


Figure (3): Shows the ratio of children, women, and men among 108 civilians injured during 2019 - 2020.

Armed forces and police

Figure (4): Shows the ratio of children, woman, and men among (60) civilians killed by the military and police during 2019 - 2020.

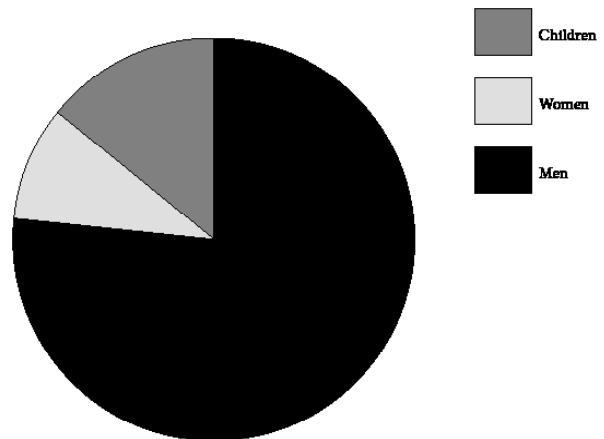
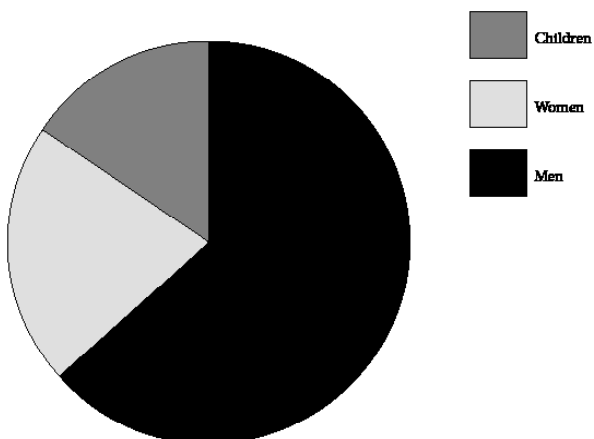
Figure (5): Shows the ratio of children, woman, and men among 65 civilians injured by the military and police during 2019 - 2020.



(Sinai Province) ISIS

Figure (6): Shows the ratio of children, women, and men among 52 civilians killed by ISIS during 2019 - 2020.

Figure (7): Shows the ratio of children, woman, and men among 43 civilians injured by ISIS during 2019 - 2020.



II. Background: What happened in Sinai?

Security conditions in Sinai, which lies in northeastern Egypt, deteriorated after the eruption of the revolution in January 2011. One of the most prominent incidents that took place in the area after the revolution was on the fifth of August 2012, where unknown militants stormed an Egyptian military border checkpoint in Rafah near Kerem Shalom border crossing with Israel and attacked the soldiers posted there while they were breaking their fast one Ramadan evening, killing 16 soldiers and officers and injuring others.

That attack whose execution has not been claimed by any armed groups in Sinai is considered the bloodiest since the Taba and Sharm el-Sheikh attacks between 2004 and 2006, and it has had the most effect on the security conditions in the peninsula till that time. That attack led¹ to many dismissals of people in senior positions including Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Minister of Defense, Director of the General Intelligence Service and Governor of North Sinai, in addition to the launch of a security campaign called "Operation Eagle 2" by the military, which was the beginning of the militarization of the area. At that time, the then Egyptian President, Mohamed Morsi, promised² to enforce total control over Sinai.

The situation escalated after the elected President Mohamed Morsi was overthrown in July 2013 and the subsequent massacres of Islamists in the center of the capital, when "Ansar Bait al-Maqdis" group, situated in Sinai, claimed a speech from 2013 that aimed to depict its operations against the military and police as avenging "Muslims" and excommunicating government forces³. The group also claimed in a statement⁴ the failed attempted assassination of the former Minister of Interior, General Mohamed Ibrahim, on 5 September 2013, after targeting his motorcade in a Cairo neighborhood.

1 - The Egyptian President dismisses the Director of the General Intelligence Service, the Minister of Defense, and the Governor of North Sinai, BBC Arabic, 8 August 2012:

https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2012/08/120808_egypt_newappointment

2 - Sad night in Egypt after the murder of 16 of Earth's best soldiers.. The President promises to enforce total control on Sinai.. Ministry of Interior: A specialized group to uncover the circumstances of the incident.. "Al-Askary (the military official page) admin: We swear we'd get revenge", Youm7, 6 August 2012:

<https://www.youm7.com/story/2012/8/6/750097/ليلة-مصرية-حزينة-بعد-مقتل-16-من-خير-أجناد-الأرض>

3 - Ismail al-Iskandarani, When does the armed conflict in Sinai end? Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 3 February 2015:

<https://studies.aljazeera.net/ar/reports/2015/02/20152311726421951.html>

4 - "Ansar Bait al-Maqdis" claims attempted assassination of the Minister of Interior, Shorouk News, 8 September 2013:

<https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=08092013&id=b5bd8bc6-4d5b-4b52-8848-fff-c263eb44f>

That operation was followed by a number of attacks where “Ansar Bait al-Maqdis” group targeted security and intelligence bases in al-Ismailia, al-Dakahlia and Cairo, as well as a suicide bombing that targeted foreign tourists on their way from Sinai to Israel. Those attacks were followed by a suicide mission⁵ on 24 October 2014 in Karam al-Qawadis area in southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed, which led to the death of more than 26 soldiers and the injury of 29 others. Following those attacks, the Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, issued resolution⁶ number 367 for the year 2014, imposing a curfew and declaring a three-months state of emergency in North Sinai. Those measures have lasted since that time till the time of writing this report. The commencement of building a “buffer zone” 5 kilometers from the borders with Gaza strip was also announced⁷, leading to the evacuation of most of Egyptian Rafah.

On 10 November 2014, “Ansar Bait al-Maqdis” group published an audio statement⁸ on Twitter accounts, pledging allegiance to ISIS and joining its ranks. The group then started calling itself “Sinai Province”, becoming one of ISIS’s branches in Africa.

In the beginning of 2015, and following multiple attacks by the ISIS-affiliate group, “Sinai Province” on military and security forces in al-Arish, official authorities formed⁹ the “Unified Military Command for the East of the Suez Canal and Combating Terrorism”, which observers considered¹⁰ to be a change in Egypt’s strategy in combating terrorism, putting all decision-making authority and supervision of forces under one leadership. Nevertheless, the conflict did not subside, and clashes between the conflicting sides were concentrated mainly in al-Sheikh Zuwayed and al-Arish, and lesser in Rafah. That was accompanied by violations whose casualties were civilians and civilian properties. Life in some areas in North Sinai changed into a warzone, with all kinds of heavy weapons, including missiles, aerial bombs, and artillery shells.

5 - The murder of 29 Egyptian soldiers in two attacks in Sinai, one of which a suicide mission, BBC, 24 October 2014

https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2014/10/141024_egypt_sinai_blast

6 - Imposing curfew and declaring 3-months state of emergency in North Sinai, Al-Masry Al-Youm, 24 October 2014:

<https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/554391>

7 - Since Morsi’s removal from power.. The most prominent “Ansar Bait al-Maqdis” attacks on Egyptian military in Sinai, CNN Arabic, 30 January 2015:

<https://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2015/01/30/egypt-sinai-attack>

8 - Egyptian “Ansar Bait al-Maqdis” group pledges allegiance to “Islamic State” group, France24, 10 November 2014:

<https://www.france24.com/ar/20141110-أنصار-بيت-المقدس-مصر-مبايعة-تنظيم-الدولة-الإسلامية>

9 - Ibrahim Ayad, al-Sisi decides to form a united authority east of the Suez Canal to counter terrorism, Masrawy, 31 January 2015

https://www.masrawy.com/news/news_egypt/details/2015/1/31/441260/السياسي-يقرر-تشكيل-قيادة-موحدة-في-منطقة-شرق-قناة-السويس-لمكافحة-الإرهاب

10 - Sabri Abdul-Hafez, Egypt changes war-against-terrorism strategy in Sinai, Elaph, 1 February 2015:

<https://elaph.com/Web/News/2015/2/979315.html>

In 2017, two incidents took place, affecting the situation in Sinai. The first¹¹ incident was on 24 November 2017, where armed militants, most likely ISIS members, attacked Bilal mosque in al-Rawda village in Bir al-Abd, killing 300 citizens, 27 of them children, and injuring tens of unarmed people during Jumu'a (Friday) prayer, in an attack that is the biggest of its kind in the history of terrorist attacks in Egypt. Bir al-Abd had been relatively safe from such attacks in previous years.

The second incident took place on 19 December 2017, where the Sinai Province group attacked a military helicopter in al-Arish airport, using an anti-tank missile, targeting the Ministers of Defence and Interior who were visiting Sinai¹².

Those attacks led to a number of resolutions, including President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's announcement¹³ of a buffer zone of 5 kilometers around al-Arish Airport, and ordering¹⁴ the securing of Sinai in 3 months in any way, even if it would require the use of "brute force", leading to the launch of a military operation called Comprehensive Operation "Sinai 2018".

In mid 2019, Bir al-Abd was added to the list of areas with increasing numbers of attacks and clashes between Egyptian armed forces and Sinai Province group after Rafah, al-Sheikh Zuwayed, and al-Arish were the base of military operations.

The situation reached its peak in Bir al-Abd when the group attacked a military camp in Rabea¹⁵ village in western Bir al-Abd on 21 July 2020, leading to the group gaining control of several villages to the southwest of Bir al-Abd. Following the attack on Rabea and the group's control over the villages, locals had to evacuate their homes and move toward other areas that were safer, and they only returned after the group retreated from the area around 70 days later. The military allowed¹⁶ civilians to return to their villag-

11 - Mahmoud Khalil, 3 years after al-Rawda massacre: Has the case been closed?, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed (The New Arab), 26 november 2020:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/3-سنوات-على-مجزرة-الروضة-هل-أغلق-ملف-الجريمة-؟>

12 - "Sinai Province" claims an attack on al-Arish Airport in North Sinai during a visit from the ministers of defence and interior, BBC Arabic, 19 December 2017:

<https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-42417772>

13 - Nermin Afifi, Al-Sisi: We will build a 5 kilometer compound around Al-Arish Airport, El-Watan, 19 January 2018:

<https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/2981139>

14 - Viola Fahmy, Al-Sisi: We decided to use "real brute force" to counter terrorism in Sinai, Anadolu Agency, 19 January 2018:

<https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/1035962/الدول-العربية-السياسي-اتخذنا-قراراً-باستخدام-قوة-غاشمة-حقيقية-لمواجهة-الإرهاب-في-سيناء>

15 - Details of the attack on "Rabea" camp in Bir al-Abd, Mada Masr, 22 July 2020:

<https://www.madamasr.com/ar/2020/07/22/news/u/تفاصيل-الهجوم-على-ارتكاز-رابعة-في-بين/>

16 - To read detailed testimonies about the topic, read Sinai Foundation for Human Rights' October report:

<https://sinaifhr.org//show/33>

es under its supervision without completely removing all bombs and explosive devices most likely planted by the group before its retreat, leading to the death of 16 civilians and the injury of 18 others by those explosive devices in the period from 26 July to 18 November 2020¹⁷.

Military operations led to huge civilian casualties. Government authorities admitted to some of those casualties, releasing for the first time a semi-official confession, admitting to the fall of civilian victims. The National Council for Human Rights' commissions of inquiry published a report¹⁸ on 10 February 2021 on the human rights situation in North Sinai after visiting the governorate during the first quarter of 2021. The commission's report revealed that the number of civilian victims since the beginning of the counter-terrorism operations in North Sinai till the date of publishing was 1836 deaths and 2915 injuries. The report stated, according to the Governor of North Sinai, that the governorate is compensating the victims, and offering full healthcare services in al-Arish hospitals or arranging for the injured to be treated at military hospitals. It is worth mentioning that the report did not reveal whether the government forces, ISIS, or both sides caused the fall of that number of victims.

A report¹⁹ issued by the Governor of North Sinai, Major General Mohamed Abdel-Fadhil Shusha, stated that the total of what was spent from 2015 till May 2020 in humanitarian aid, medical or social, and what was given as compensation to the families of the dead and the injured, and to owners of houses and farms, is around 3.5 billion pounds.

On the other hand, the successive military campaigns and the state of emergency and curfew to which there is no foreseeable end, turned²⁰ daily life of civilians into agony. The daily curfew starts at 19:00 and ends at 06:00 the next morning in some areas. This affected the locals' ability to reach hospitals or health centers, as ambulances are not allowed to move during curfew. Extra checks and searches are also being performed by tens of police and military ambushes between and within cities. Citizens are discriminated against at those ambushes based on identity, specifically people of Rafah and al-Sheikh Zuwayed, and people of North Sinai in general. This discrimination also happens at crossings and checkpoints at the entrances and exits of Sinai.

17 - "Bir al-Abd" village: ISIS's devices and Egyptian authorities' negligence cause new civilian deaths:

<https://sinaifhr.org/show/27>

18 - Wael Ali, «Almasry Alyoum» publishes «National Human Rights» report on North Sinai, Almasry Alyoum, 10 February 2021:

<https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2253991>

19 - Madbouly shows report about compensation of the affected by security clashes in North Sinai, State Information Service, 27 June 2020:

<https://sis.gov.eg/Story/205085/مدبولى-يستعرض-تقريراً-بشأن-تعويض-المتضررين-من-المواجهات-الأمنية-في-شمال-سيناء?lang=ar>

20 - North Sinai: More than 2190 days under pointless curfew, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 24 October 2020:

<https://sinaifhr.org/show/26>

The restrictions also included prohibiting a large section of citizens from fishing at the Mediterranean coasts, trade, and agriculture, in addition to preventing them from acquiring what they need in building materials, car parts, agriculture equipment, electricity, fuel, movement of food supplies, and so on, as all those things became part of a specific quota given by the official authorities under the claim of fighting terrorism and tightening their stranglehold on armed groups. All those restrictions were added to years of deprivation and marginalization of the people of Sinai.

Since the escalation of the conflict in Sinai by the end of 2013, the military started utilizing local groups and militias in facing armed militants, as a way to counter the military's decades-long weakness in information and knowledge of operations in the area. They recruited a number of locals as part of irregular forces that are not subject to current laws. Those forces were named by the authorities "al-Manadeeb" (the delegates), and their task is to provide intelligence, in addition to the duties of the police. They can be differentiated from regular forces by their clothes, which are a mix between military and civilian clothes. As a result of not being subject to the law or behavioral codes customary among security forces, their actions led to humanitarian violations and exploitation of the power given to them for personal gain and settling personal scores²¹.

Moreover, news reports have shown that security forces have taken initiatives to get armed militants to turn themselves in with help from tribe elders trying to convince people from their tribes involved with the group to put down their weapons. They then are interrogated after being transported to detention centres²². This was confirmed after the Armed Forces spokesman shared a video²³ on 9 March 2021 depicting armed men turning themselves in at a military barrier in eastern Sinai, but neither the military nor the government revealed any details about trials or future plans to reintegrating those men into society.

21 - For more on the topic, read Human Rights Watch's report: "If You Are Afraid for Your Lives, Leave Sinai!" Egyptian Security Forces and ISIS-Affiliate Abuses in North Sinai:

<https://www.hrw.org/ar/report/2019/05/28/330383>

22 - Province of Sinai heads west toward Suez Canal as militants surrender due to hunger, security initiative on eastern front, Mada Masr, 19 January 2021:

<https://www.madamasr.com/en/2021/01/19/feature/politics/dislodged-from-bir-al-abd-province-of-sinai-heads-west-toward-suez-canal-as-militants-surrender-due-to-hunger-security-initiative-on-eastern-front/>

23 - Video "The Martyr's Story" posted to the Armed Forces Spokesman's official Facebook page, shared on 9 March 2021, date of visit: 10 July 2020:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=179743007063117>

III. Legal Analysis

Sinai Foundation for Human Rights believes that the military operations taking place in Sinai that escalated at the end of 2013 and escalated more at the end of 2014 is a state of non-international armed conflict between the military and the police on one side, and the ISIS-affiliate Sinai Province group on the other. Therefore, the Law of War, or what is called the International Humanitarian Law applies here, as the clash between the two sides has lasted for years in North Sinai, and its intensity has increased to the point that required the use of military forces, including military aircrafts, tanks, artillery, infantry weapons, navy ,and others, which exceeds standard limits of law-enforcement operations. Thousands of civilians, government personnel, and armed militants were killed or injured. Both conflicting parties have a clear level of organization that gives their operations a certain regulatory framework. The Sinai Province group could not take complete control of any land, but there are areas where it has a lot of power which makes the citizens of those areas under the control of both the group and the government at the same time.

The four Geneva Conventions and the two additional protocols are the bases of the International Humanitarian Law, and they were all ratified by Egypt. These charters provide a number of guarantees and precautionary measures related to the protection of civilians. The International Bill of Human Rights, or what is known as the International Human Rights Law, among which are national and African treaties ratified by Egypt, applies at all times, in times of peace and war, and all those charters obligate specifically the government and generally all conflicting parties to respect basic rights of civilians, their safety, and their properties.

IV. Report Methodology

Egyptian authorities prohibit the work of independent media and human rights organizations and their movement inside the Sinai Peninsula almost entirely. In recent years, acquiring reliable information on what happens in Sinai, and even speaking with locals and victims have become harder.

Nevertheless, during the time period covered in the report, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights conducted interviews with 212 local citizens, journalists, some government employees, and local medical institutions workers to record the abuses through the testimonies of affected people. The foundation team also conducted periodical field visits of villages and cities in the area.

The interviews shown in this report cover the abuses that took place mainly between 2019 and 2020. All testimonies in the report were acquired through face-to-face or remote interviews using communication platforms or different kinds of text messages. The names, personal information, and other information of interviewees were unpublished to ensure their safety from revenge by government forces or militants.

The foundation reviewed official statements, including statements made by the President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, the Armed Forces and Ministry of Interior spokesmen, the governor of Sinai, and other officials from different government establishments, but we couldn't get in direct contact with any government establishments due to the continuous attack on human rights organizations, and considering any human rights work in Sinai to be a breach of the state of media blackout imposed on Sinai, which puts the team in danger. The foundation also reviewed written data and videos published by "Sinai Province " group.

The foundation familiarized itself with brief recommendations included in a 12-page report²⁴ published by the government-supported National Council for Human Rights. This report was published after the dispatch of a fact-finding mission that visited North Sinai between the period of 31 January and 4 February 2021. The foundation also reviewed a government report²⁵ released on 27 June 2020, that covers efforts exerted by the authorities to compensate those affected by security clashes between conflicting parties in North Sinai during the period between 1 October 2015 and 31 May 2020. In addition, a revision of a legal study²⁶ titled "Human Rights and the Countering of Terrorist Groups", prepared by the deputy chief justice of the Court of Cassation, Counselor Adel Maged, in which he discusses the importance of human rights in the "Comprehensive Operation Sinai 2018".

In many cases, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights researchers were able to check medical documents presented to us by victims or ones we exclusively acquired from medical sources to compare victim accounts to official data, as well as photographs and video clips published by the Egyptian military or government or supporting newspapers about the situation in Sinai.

24 - Wael Ali, «Almasry Alyoum» publishes «National Human Rights» report on North Sinai, Almasry Alyoum, 10 February 2021:

<https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2253991>

25 - Madbouly shows report about compensation of the affected by security clashes in North Sinai, State Information Service, 27 June 2020:

<https://sis.gov.eg/Story/205085/مذبولي-يستعرض-تقريراً-بشأن-تعويض-المتضررين-من-المواجهات-الأمنية-في-شمال-سيناء?lang=ar>

26 - Counselor Adel Maged, Human Rights and the Countering of Terrorist Groups, "Studies in Human Rights" Magazine, 11 July 2018:

<https://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/169667/هيئة-الاستعلامات-العملية-الشاملة-في-سيناء-نموذج-في-الالتزام-بحقوق-الإنسان?lang=ar>

The foundation also analyzed a number of videos published on different social media platforms that share photos, videos and local commentary from Sinai, in addition to tens of news and analyses articles and social media posts created by activists from Sinai and government officials. The foundation also managed to exclusively acquire various videos documenting a number of abuses committed by the conflicting parties, including a video recording the admission of the Governor of North Sinai to a mistake airstrike that led to the fall of civilian victims, and other clips recording the explosion of houses belonging to displaced civilians, trespassing on and unjustly confiscation of their properties.

V. Egyptian police and military abuses

1 - Possible unlawful air and ground attacks

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights managed to record the fall of civilian victims due to military land or air strikes that were most likely unlawful. These strikes led to -in the time period covered by the report- the death of 34 civilians, 10 of which are children and 7 are women, and the injury of 32 people, 12 of which are children and 4 are women. The foundation team conducted 15 interviews with eyewitnesses and locals who were in a way affected by these abuses.

Neither the Egyptian military nor authorities admitted to the fall of civilian victims in any of those incidents, and no investigation committees were formed to find out what truly happened. In every case, the victims' families were made by security personnel to sign official documents at the hospitals that state that the injury was caused by "a artillery shell from an unknown source", "random projectile". This is achieved by threatening the victim's family with the consequences of accusing the military or with hindering burial procedures of the deceased, which leads the victims' families to agree to signing and recording the incident in official documents as against persons unknown. This repeatedly happened even in the most clear cases where civilians fell due to military airstrikes, and the Public Prosecutor's office never investigated any of the cases recorded by the foundation.

The Sinai Foundation managed to acquire a video documenting a visit by the Governor of North Sinai, Major General Mohamed Abdel-Fadhil Shusha, to civilian victims who fell to an airstrike most likely by an F16 military aircraft, on 27 May 2019, where the injured confronted the Governor with the Egyptian air force bombing their homes in al-Goura village with two consecutive rockets. Despite the Governor's admission and apologies for the wrongful bombing, official medical reports of the incident issued by al-Arish General Hospital say that the source of the bombing was unknown, which exempts those responsible from any judicial accountability, as well as wastes the rights of victims and

their families. The foundation also acquired photos of medical reports of some of the victims of this incident, and those official reports align with eyewitness reports on security authorities insisting on not mentioning the cause of death and recording the incident against persons unknown. While victims' relatives we met with confirmed that security personnel asked them to agree to that in exchange for an acceleration in burial procedures and promises of financial compensation.

Some of the victims' families told us that they headed to the military intelligence office in their cities to present hospital reports and victim information, hoping for financial compensation, then came back months later to know the decision, and some of the families received compensation while others did not. There was no transparency or judicial supervision to investigate the cases of civilian injuries or victim compensation. Despite an official report made by the Governor of North Sinai, Major General Mohamed Abdel-Fadhil Shusha, where he states that compensations of families of the deceased and injured in the period from 1 October 2015 to 31 May 2020 reached 206.7 Million pounds²⁷.

Oftentimes, unlawful indiscriminate attacks turned North Sinai villages into unsafe areas, where locals did not know when they could be hit by shrapnel from artillery shells, or fighter aircraft or drone strikes, killing or injuring them. In some cases recorded by the Sinai Foundation, many eyewitness testimony revealed that many artillery shells fell on inhabited areas with no imminent military threats or ongoing clashes near the area.

Egyptian authorities always deny committing any violations during military operations in Sinai. In October 2013, Major General Ahmed Wasfi, "previous commander of the Second Field Army", said: We never injured an innocent citizen or killed a cat²⁸. He added that the military could complete all military operations in Sinai in 6 hours, if it was allowed to ignore human rights.

Although a legal study²⁹ made by the State Information Service published in July 2018 claimed that the military never used its air force on areas inhabited by civilians, the Sinai Foundation found that military airstrikes led to the fall of tens of civilian victims in a most likely unlawful way. And as a result, many villages were evacuated because their inhabitants no longer felt safe there. Even in cases where the military compensated the affected families, no investigations were carried out to determine legal accountability.

27 - Madbouly shows report about compensation of the affected by security clashes in North Sinai, State Information Service, 27 June 2020:

<https://sis.gov.eg/Story/205085/مذبولي-يستعرض-تقريراً-بشأن-تعويض-المتضررين-من-المواجهات-الأمنية-في-شمال-سيناء?lang=ar>

28 - Ahmed Abdelazim, Major General Ahmed Wasfi to «El Watan»: Military operations in Sinai are over.. We entered the cleansing stage, Al Watan, 2 October 2013:

<https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/333863>

29 - SIS: Comprehensive Operation Sinai 2018 'model' of human rights commitment, State Information Service, 11 July 2018:

<https://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/169667/هيئة-الاستعلامات-العملية-الشاملة-في-سيناء-نموذج-في-الالتزام-بحقوق-الإنسان?lang=ar>

A - Incidents of possible unlawful airstrikes

The period covered in the report witnessed 5 bloody massacres leading to the death of 30 and injury of 22 innocent civilians as a result of Egyptian military airstrikes. These attacks were not limited to a certain area, The cities of al-Sheikh Zuwayed, al-Arish, Bir al-Abd, and al-Hasanah were among those affected. In all cases, civilian victims did not fall as collateral damage while enemy military targets were being targeted, the bombings were rather directly aimed at civilian targets, in the absence of any armed militants in the vicinity. The common denominator in most airstrikes against civilians is that they took place after other unrelated attacks in different areas against military checkpoints, which implies that the murder of civilians happened because of incorrect pursuit and tracking operations of the militants in some cases.

The Egyptian Armed Forces have the ability to carry out air raids in North Sinai, while extremist armed groups in Sinai have no fighter aircrafts or drones in their arsenal.

Name	Date	Number of victims
Al-Gora village massacre	27 May 2019	5 dead and 7 injured
Tofaha massacre	12 October 2019	10 dead and 3 injured
Al-Midan village massacre	26 June 2019	9 dead
Abu Al-Araj massacre	19 October 2019	4 dead and 11 injured
Al-Jifjafah village massacre	28 September 2019	2 dead and 1 injured

Table 1 shows the number of victims and the dates of massacres.

Al-Gora village massacre

Al-Gora village is one of al-Sheikh Zuwayed villages, and it contains important landmarks like the Multinational Force and Observers, Al-Gora Military Airport and a Sufi order’s “al-Zawiyah (the corner)”. The village has 3122 inhabitants according to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics’s count in mid 2016.

The village and all villages of southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed have witnessed a gradual decrease in population, especially after the Sinai Province group attacks on 1 July 2015, and the group’s attempt to seize control of the entirety of al-Sheikh Zuwayed, when it bombed the two biggest ambushes in southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed. The two ambushes were located in the area of al-Gora village, and they were: al-Sidra and Abou-Rifae.

During that time and what followed in attacks during 2015 and 2016, the villages of southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed witnessed a vicious war where all kinds of weapons were used, including unmanned aircrafts and artillery attacks, which led to consecutive waves of evacuation and losses in civilian lives and properties. At the end of 2016, the Egyptian authorities closed off all roads leading into southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed with earth walls, completely separating it from the city, which complicated life a lot after schools stopped and the bringing in of food supplies for civilians and also their movement with cars became more complicated, turning the lives of remaining civilians into hell.

On 27 May 2019, a massacre took place, killing 5 and injuring 7 others, one of whom was a child, as a result of an airstrike from an F16 aircraft, as confirmed by an eyewitness. In the same context, a report on Mada Masr online newspaper³⁰, eyewitnesses confirmed a military aircraft flying above the area minutes after the targeting of Sheikh Khalaf al-Khalfat's house, adding that the targeting style is the same style followed by the military in cases of targeting armed militant groups to do the most damage to their ranks by striking the same place twice, with only a few minutes between each strike.

The names of the victims according to the foundation database:

The deceased: (1) Hussam al-Dien Suliman Mohamed Abu-kassim, 37, (2) Mahmoud Khalaf Hassan Aiesh, 21 (3) Khaled Jabr Hassan Aiesh, 22, (4) Ahmed Muhsin Hussein Silmy, 11, (5) Eid Hassan Aiesh, 43.

The injured: (1) Ahmed Marae Mohamed Aiesh, 12, (2) Mustafa Eid Hassan Aiesh, 18, (3) Mohamed Aiesh Mohamed Aiesh, 28, (4) Khalaf Hassan Aiesh, 50, (5) Zaiid Hassan Aiesh, 24, (6) Majid Mahir Mohamed Aiesh, 25 (7) Bakr Mohsen Sawarka

The day after the massacre, 28 May 2019, the Sinai Foundation recorded in audio and video, for the first time since the beginning of the war on terrorism, an apology and confession by the Governor of North Sinai, Major General Mohamed Abdel-Fadhil Shusha, to the victims during visiting them in the al-Arish general hospital that the strike was due to a mistake. Nevertheless, that apology never left the closed room with the victims' families, as no official military authority claimed responsibility for the airstrike on civilians.

The foundation met with "Khaled"³¹ who was an eyewitness to the incident. He told us: "Members of al-Khalfat³² clan live in east "al-Gora square". They're all known to the military ambushes in the area. The ambushes know of their comings and goings. All those who still live in al-Gora are supporters of the government and have a strong relationship

30 - Two missiles and a military aircraft in the air.. What happened in «al-Gora»? , Mada Masr, 27 June 2019: <https://www.madamasr.com/ar/2019/06/27/news/u/ثاني-ليالي-الرعب-بالعرش-ولاية-سيناء/>

31 - Fake name given to an al-Gora citizen interviewed by the foundation team in Sinai.

32 - Al-Khalfat clan is one of al-Sawarka tribe clans. Most of its members live in al-Gora village in southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed, and they have had a strong relationship with military forces in Sinai for decades.

with the military. As you know, the history of “al-Khalfat” is known and they fought with the military during the occupation, and of course, Sheikh Khalaf al-Khalfat³³, may Allah have mercy on his soul, was a mark in the area. And now Sheikh Arafat³⁴ is one of the people still steadfast in al-Gora, alongside those who didn’t leave. It’s complicated to come to al-Gora, so everyone who lives there is known to the ambushes. It’s even hard to get food into the village. Everything is watched and accounted for.”

Khaled added: “A little after noon in Ramadan while we were fasting, everything turned upside down. There was a huge explosion, then we saw smoke coming from the area where “al-Khalfat” houses are, east of the ambush, then maybe less than a minute later, there was another explosion. We heard the sound of an aircraft, and that sound is probably that of an F16, as far as I and my neighbors know after so many years of war.”

“The house is not just one building, it’s many rooms and shacks next to each other. The rest of the family who lives in the house ran screaming to check on “Mahmoud Khalaf”, a student in al-Arish University, because the first rocket hit his room. They barely gathered and tried to pull his body out when a second rocket hit. Neighbors and people from far-away houses ran to try and save the injured, and some of them went to the ambush which is less than 500 meters away from the bombed house, which means there was no way there were Takfiris there. What we saw was horrible. Dead and bleeding people, children and adults, and those who owned cars went to transport dead bodies and the injured because no ambulances reach that area. The officer who’s in charge of the ambush went to the house to help, and of course he didn’t have an explanation for what happened, he was completely silent, but the soldiers said that it seemed like the aircraft accidentally hit that place. Can you believe they summarized the whole ordeal with the word “accidentally”? But those soldiers can’t do anything. The ambush soldiers and officers have a good relationship with the family but there’s nothing to be done about it. They let a pickup truck in to take the injured to the al-Sheikh Zuwayed General Hospital, then they transported the dead and the injured to al-Arish.”

He added: “The scene was too hard. People made the women leave so they wouldn’t see what had happened, and the men stayed and moved the dead and the injured. One of the victims was a kid who’d just gotten home with his father from al-Sheikh Zuwayed market, buying his and his siblings’ Eid clothes. Thank god the kid was only injured. One of the young men who died lived in al-Sheikh Zuwayed, and was invited to Iftar at the house. He’d been their friend for years, and he died with them.

33 - Sheikh Khalaf al-Khalfat is one of the most prominent tribal leaders of Sinai. He was born in 1930, and participated in raising the Egyptian flag on the soil of Egyptian Rafah after the evacuation of the Israeli occupation.

34 - Sheikh Arafat Khedr Salman, one of al-Sawarka tribe Sheikhs, is currently Sheikh of Shadhili Tariqa, one of the most prominent Sufi orders in Sinai.

Hajj Khalaf ³⁵, one of the civilians injured in the incident, addressing the Governor of North Sinai during the latter's visit to the victims of the airstrike in al-Arish general hospital:

"As far as I know, airstrikes are usually based on coordinates and information and after recon missions. There was no reconnaissance. Even people who were there to help died. We walked 700 meters to save people. The aircraft waited till we were all gathered, and struck again. The houses that were hit and destroyed are very close to military ambushes. Why kill each other? Why kill good people? When your child dies, you're ready to fight the entire world for him. When your child dies before your eyes, you can't think straight. I will say one thing, Mr. Governor, You're the one responsible for bringing them justice. We faced death for the military. Not in this incident, but over the years. Our fathers before us and their fathers before them during all wars, and history proves that."

The Governor replied: "I'm sorry.. You're right.. If God wills it, everyone will be compensated accordingly."

Later, the foundation team got in contact with two sources who believed that the victims and their families were probably financially compensated by the government, but the Sinai Foundation could not find any more information about this.

Al-Miadan village massacre

Al-Maidan village is located in western al-Arish. The village's inhabitants are part of al-Sawarka tribe, and it has a population of 724, according to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics's count in 2016. Al-Maidan village contains three small areas; al-Saliheen, Abu-Huseny, and Kilo 17. Many evicted families displaced from Rafah and al-Sheikh Zuwayed moved to al-Maidan village after the consecutive waves of forced displacement since 2014.

On 26 June 2019, at around 10 PM, some village citizens gathered in a shack attached to a house belonging to displaced members of al-Sawarka tribe who live in al-Saliheen area, and they sat before a TV screen to watch a football match between Egypt and Congo's national teams and support their national team in the African Cup of Nations, held on Egyptian soil, only to be surprised by an two airstrikes taking their lives.

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights acquired exclusive photos of nine official medical reports of the massacre's victims, stating that the perpetrator is unknown. The deceased are: (1) Noor Mohamed Suliman Salama, 15, (2) Hamad Suliman Salama, 46, (3) Mohamed Suliman Salama, 50, (4) Muhsin Mesalam Muhsin Muslim, 63, (5) Mesalam Muhsin Mesalam, 33, (6) Rady Salim Rasheed, 29, (7) Fathy Rasheed Ghanmy Ghunem, 19, (8) Radwan Salim Rasheed, 18, (9) parts of an unknown person.

35 - One of the civilian injuries in the Egyptian military airstrike on al-Gora village.

It is most likely that the massacre happened during an unsuccessful attempt by the Egyptian military to track armed militants who attacked³⁶ several police checkpoints in al-Masaeed neighborhood in western al-Arish, which is located a few kilometers away from the location of the targeted civilians, and the two incidents took place only one hour apart. The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights conducted a field visit to the location of the attack, and met with two eyewitnesses to the massacre, as well as meeting with a medical source to find out the truth about what happened.

“Emad”³⁷, one of the citizens of al-Maidan village, who went to inspect the incident location, told us:

“In the morning I went to see what had happened. I saw a completely burned out shack next to the house near the school. On the ground were remains of a TV screen, the carpet was burned and blood had congealed and was mixed with sand. The neighbors circled the area and found scattered remains of flesh, we gathered them and a man from the village buried them. I’m sure they were not hit with an artillery shot. We could clearly hear the drone circling above that night, and it shot two missiles one after the other directly hitting the shack. The ambush on the international road is about one and a half kilometers away. After the explosion, gunshots were hysterically fired from the ambush. The neighbors said that they called an ambulance after the attack, and also called the ambush to accelerate the ambulance’s arrival, but the ambulance arrived after an hour.”

The foundation met with “Nidal”³⁸, a local citizen of al-Maidan village, who said in his testimony:

“Two men, Muhsin Abu-Hassan and his son Mesalam, from Mazar village were taken by the Takfiris around two weeks before the incident. The Takfiris released them late at night and they had to walk a long distance in the desert till they reached al-Maidan village. And of course because it was late at night, they couldn’t make it to their homes in Mazar village, so they thought they’d stay the night with people living in al-Saliheen area. They stayed and watched the match with people and started telling them their story, saying that the Takfiris released them in an area south of the village and made them walk a long distance and not look behind them till they reached there. People barely sat to watch the match when it all happened. It’s like the rocket wanted to kill those two. Can you imagine? We couldn’t gather their body parts, they were completely scattered. The proof they were there is their ID cards that we found the next day. It seems like the drone

36 - Second night of terror on al-Arish.. «Sinai Province» continue attacking city ambushes, 9 deaths in airstrike on a house, Mada Masr, 27 June 2019

<https://www.madamasr.com/ar/2019/06/27/news/u/ثاني-ليالي-الربع-بالعرش-ولاية-سيناء/>

37 - Fake name given to an eyewitness from al-Maidan village, interviewed by the Sinai Foundation team.

38 - Fake name given to an eyewitness from al-Maidan village, interviewed by the Sinai Foundation team.

followed them, thinking they were Takfiris walking into the village. The drone could be clearly heard that night over the village. If the military can track so accurately with the drone, why don't they track the Takfiris in their areas in the south! And of course, no one comforted the people or even admitted to the incident, like the victims were not human. Allah knows all though. I swear, the women's screams and the children's terror reached the sky when they saw the scene. Their country did that to them when they were cheering on its national team playing football! When all that happened, and when the children gathered, we took them somewhere far away so they wouldn't see. Some of the kids' fathers died, women were widowed and lost all their means of support, except Allah. I swear, my brother, we mind our own business, the village people are good people, poor people, none of them is suspicious or a Takfiri. All of them support the government. What happened is unfair and doesn't please god."

Tofaha village massacre

10 civilians, 9 of whom come from one family³⁹, killed, and 3 others injured in an airstrike thought to have been by an Egyptian military drone on 12 October 2019 in Tofaha, southern Bir al-Abd. According to the foundation database, 3 women and 5 children are among the victims. The victims are:

The dead: (1) Atia Ahmeed Salman, 45, (2) Said Atia Ahmeed Salman, 12, (3) Esraa Atia Ahmeed Salman, 14, (4) Abdullah Atia Ahmeed Salman, 23, (5) Naglaa Atia Ahmeed Salman, 10, (6) Nagwa Atia Ahmeed Salman, 18, (7) Mohamed Atia Ahmeed Salma, 16, (8) Shireen Atia Ahmeed Salman, 20, (9) Salha Salman Mohamed Salim, 40, (10) Mohamed Wagih Salim Mousa, 13.

The injured: (1) Maiada Wahig Salim Mousa, 15, (2) Ahmed Abdelkareem Kabil Rabea, 32, (3) Mustafa Ismail.

Tofaha is located in southern Bir al-Abd, parallel to al-Salam canal, which is an agricultural area known for poultry and olive farms. Several security ambushes are located on the road opposite the area. Tofaha, like other areas in Sinai, has been through a wave of evacuation caused by the movement of military operations to its surroundings. The foundation team met with local eyewitnesses and heard testimonies from medical sources to find the truth behind what happened.

39 - An entire family among the victims.. A massacre in a bombing in Sinai, Al-Jazeera net, 12 October 2019

<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/politics/2019/10/13/مصر-سيناء-بئر-العبد-قتل-طائرة-بدون-طيار>

“Ibrahim”⁴⁰, an eyewitness who said in his testimony to the foundation team:

“It all started when terrorists attacked the military ambush in Tofaha in September⁴¹, almost a month before the massacre. Many locals ran away because of that attack, also farm owners who live in other places, like Bir al-Abd, are too scared to come to their farms because of the clashes and random strikes. A week after the attack, locals started going to their farms for two reasons; first, to water their trees because the olive harvest season is near, and it’s the time farmers work for all year, and it’s their only source of income. And second, to try and take their livestock and furniture so they wouldn’t be stolen or accidentally bombed. People went to Tofaha for short periods and left quickly, and honestly, people were a bit reassured because aircrafts and drones watched the area 24/7, so that encouraged them. The first few days after the attack on the military ambush, militants tried to convince people not to leave their houses and farms, and promised them protection, but people insisted on leaving, and settled for visiting their farms and going back to Bir al-Abd at night. Then the militants prevented people from taking any of their belongings out of the area.”

He added: “The olive harvest season began in Tofaha, and that period was very hard and dangerous on the people because of random military artillery and airstrikes that caused a lot of damage to farmers’ properties. Despite the airstrikes, we never found bodies of militants, and I saw the same militants who seized control of Tofaha in late September. The airstrikes were not accurate, it was obviously random because our palm and olive trees were destroyed, but the militants were not killed. However, most farmers didn’t have any other option except going to their farms to harvest the olive, their only source of income. We had to! How else would we feed our children? We worked our entire lives and spent all the money we made on those farms and trees. At the same time, that is also the season for day laborers who collect olives for a daily pay. Those people also had to work in farms because they had responsibilities and needed the money, especially because farm owners doubled the pay of day laborers due to the danger in the area and to encourage them to work because a lot of laborers refused to work at that time because they were scared.”

The witness continued: “We could hear drones and military aircrafts the days leading up to the incident while collecting olives in farms in Tofaha. On the day of the incident, 12 October 2019, I was somewhere close to where the martyrs were, may Allah have mercy on their souls, and I could clearly hear the drone from morning till the time of the

40 - Fake name given to an eyewitness interviewed by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights.

41 - 8 military personnel and civilians killed and 10 injured in an attack on «Tofaha» ambush, Mada Masr, 27 September 2019:

<https://www.madamasr.com/ar/2019/09/27/news/u/8-قتلى-و-10مصابين-من-الجيش-والمدنيين-حصيل>

strike. We were joking around about the loud noise made by the drone, saying that we're very important, working and gathering olives under supervision from the military, and the drone is filming us live, flying very low. For us, that wasn't weird because we'd been used to the sound of drones constantly flying above the area after the Takfiris' attack on the military ambush⁴² in Tofaha the previous month. Like I told you, the air forces were giving us a sense of safety, we never imagined that they'd kill us. And like every other day, the farm's owner would send a car to take the workers home after they were done. The car arrived to take a group of day laborers from one family living in al-Darawish area in Bir al-Abd, before sunset, and when the laborers were getting into the car heading home, they were hit by a rocket from a drone that tore them apart."

The foundation met with "Said"⁴³, a farmer in Tofaha, who said:

"We could clearly hear drones⁴⁴ and military aircrafts all day that day, and after a long day of work, the laborers put the olives they gathered in the truck behind the driver, and most of them got in the back of the truck, including Atia Ahmeed's family. The father, Atia, and 7 of his children got in the back of the truck, and the mother, Salha, and her baby, Yasmeen, got in the cabin next to the driver. Suddenly, and before the truck could move, a rocket hit a short distance behind it. The people in the back were torn apart, you couldn't tell them apart. One of Atia's sons called Ehmeed hadn't gotten into the car yet, and he saw the whole thing. He was in shock and sat by the side of the road and didn't say a word. The thing I found hardest was the baby, Yasmeen, who for a second I'd wished wouldn't be alive after her parents and most of her siblings died in one moment. After the sound of the explosion, farmers in surrounding farms came quickly to see what had happened and we started gathering the remains in bags."

He added: "The scene was terrible, scattered pieces of flesh and the sun setting. We gathered what we could and left the rest on the ground. No ambulances reached the area except one which transported the injured and refused to take the dead bodies and body parts. We took the body parts to the hospital in 3 pickup trucks. Even in the hospital, they couldn't tell the body parts apart, and knew the number of victims from the injured driver. All this happened with the drone overhead, filming us while we worked, and till now I can't believe how such a mistake could be made. We felt safe because aircrafts were overhead, thinking that as long as the military was there, we were safe. Especially since that wasn't our first day harvesting olives. We'd been doing it for ten days. And that group of laborers was known to the ambushes and the drones filming from above. I know all the people that died, very simple people, they were only forced to work in such hard and dangerous circumstances because they needed money."

43 - False name given to an eyewitness interviewed by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights.

44 - Witness used the word "Zananat/buzzers", which means drones, plural of drone, a word used by locals to describe unmanned aerial vehicles. It's called that because of the sound it makes which sounds like the buzzing of flies.

He added: "I didn't see any militants that day. Also no militants came to that farm in the days leading up to the incident. That's not the first time a mistake like that happens in Tofaha. Days before the incident, a chicken coop was bombed, and two civilian farmers were inside, but thank god they survived, although the coop was destroyed."

The Egyptian authorities did not publish any official information about the incident, but the Governor of North Sinai, Major General Mohamed Abdel-Fadhil Shusha, went to offer his condolences to the victims' families, as well as visiting the injured in Bir al-Abd Hospital, and he stated that they would be financially compensated, according to what was published in "Al-Ahram"⁴⁵ government gazette on 13 October 2019, the day after the incident. On 30 October 2019, Egyptian newspapers⁴⁶ published news of the approval of the Egyptian Cabinet to consider the victims of an unknown airstrike on an olive farm in Tofaha village on 12 October 2019 as martyrs, as financial aid of 100 thousand Egyptian pounds is given to the family of each martyr in accordance with the coroner and the public prosecutor's office reports, as well as financial aid of 100 thousand pounds in every case of injury leading to full disability.

Later, the official North Sinai page published a video⁴⁷ on 8 January 2020 that shows the Governor greeting the families of the victims of the Tofaha incident and handing them investment certificates presented by the Egyptian Armed Forces. The Governor said that the amounts given were 150 thousand pounds in cash divided into 100 thousand pounds for the families of two martyrs, and 50 thousand pounds for 5 injured people according to the degree of injury, in addition to 10 investment certificates, each worth 60 thousand pounds, given to the martyrs' families in their minor children's names. Sadia Mahmoud Hassan, Director General of Social Solidarity, confirmed the continuation of procedures and giving the martyrs' families a document confirming their relationship with the deceased so they could cash in the 100 thousand pounds assigned to each martyr's family, in addition to a monthly pension of 1500 pounds. She added that the government was done with making the payments assigned to the injured, all 5 of them, with a total of 190 thousand pounds, divided according to the severity of the injury.

45 - Hanaa al-Tabrany, the Governor of North Sinai offers condolences to Bir al-Abd martyrs | Photos, Al-Ahram, 13 October 2019:

<http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/2292633.aspx>

46 - Hend Mukhtar, government resolution declares victims of Tofaha ambush and Abu al-Miraj area as martyrs, Youm7, 30 October 2019:

<https://www.youm7.com/story/2019/10/30/4481572/قرار-حكومي-باعتبار-ضحايا-كمين-تفاحة-وتجمع-أبو-المعراج-من>

47 - Video titled "Governor of North Sinai greets families of martyrs and injured of Tofaha, al-Arish" published by the official North Sinai public relations and media page, publishing date 8 January 2020, visit date 11 July 2021:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=548596162665576>

Abu Al-Araj massacre

Abu al-Araj village is located in southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed, and has a population of 2383, according to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics's count in mid 2016. The village has been through many massacres in the past years that caused successive evacuation waves due to random military artillery and airstrikes, in addition to the difficulty in movement and the food blockade imposed by the military on south al-Sheikh Zuwayed villages since the beginning of the Comprehensive Operation Sinai 2018. ISIS attacks on the village and abduction of civilians with the claim of their cooperation with security forces also led to the evacuation of civilians after their region turned into an unsafe environment.

On 19 October 2019, Abu-Araj village in northern al-Sheikh Zuwayed witnessed an airstrike that killed 3 women and a child, and injured 11 others, most of whom were women and children. According to information acquired by the foundation from medical sources, the victims are:

The dead: (1) Farha Ibrahim Farag, 90, (2) Mohamed Masoud Salman, 10, (3) Aya Jumaa Eid, 21, (4) Rania Jumaa Eid, 24.

The injured: (1) Yusef Hemdan Salama, 19, (2) Kawthar Ghalib Eid, 22, (3) Jumana Ahmed Saleem, 2, (4) Maya Eid Jumaa, 2, (5) Mohamed Eid Jumaa, 7, (6) Shahinda Jumaa Eid, 15, (7) Mahir Jumaa Eid, 20, (8) Nancy Ghanim Eid, 20, (9) Tamam Mohamed Ali, 49, (10) Abdul-Rahman Ahmed Naiem, 5, (11) Fatma Eid Salman, 46.

The eyewitnesses we met with confirmed that the number of civilians in the village before the incident was around 30 families, and that security forces and military ambushes surrounding the village knew all civilians in the village because of the continuous military house-searching campaigns. Eyewitnesses also confirmed that no armed clashes took place on that day, and that they didn't witness any movements of militants in the area at the time of the airstrike.

Shortly after the incident, a local journalist posted a number of tweets⁴⁸ on twitter confirming the death of 4 civilians and the injury of 12 others, and talking about hearing a massive explosion followed by terrible screams that traveled a long distance in the silence of the night.

The Sinai Foundation spoke with Ghanim⁴⁹, a local citizen of Abu al-Araj, who said: "We've been living a tragedy for years. What did those children do to deserve this? People still living in Abu al-Araj are good, poor people, we have to stay here, there are no

48 - Tweets posted by the journalost Mostafa Singer on Twitter, posted on 19 October 2019, date of visit 12 July 2021:

<https://twitter.com/MostafasingerMr/status/1185644415928455168?s=20>

49 - Fake name given to a witness interviewed by the Sinai Foundation

other options; we can't afford life in al-Arish and al-Sheikh Zuwayed. Our lives here are very hard. No transport, no phone coverage, going outside or into the village needs coordination with the military, and no cars are allowed into the village. Getting food is like searching for drugs. This is not the first time civilians die because of airstrikes and gunshots. This is unfair. All we want is to live a decent life. Around 9 PM on Saturday, I was at home and the village was very calm, no clashes or Takfiris in the village. I could hear military aircrafts and drones, but we're used to that, even children are used to it. Nothing was out of the ordinary, all the same routine. Then a very powerful explosion shook the house, then I heard the screams of women and children. I started running along with my neighbors to see what happened."

He added: "We found two adjacent houses hit by two rockets. Both houses belonged to one family. What I saw there I swear I will never forget. I felt like it was judgment day. It was a very hard scene. I extracted the body of Hajjah "Farha", a 90 year old woman. I swear I can't even describe the scene. The neighbors gathered and tried to get the injured out, most of them were children and women, and some of their injuries were really bad. We took them to al-Sheikh Zuwayed hospital, and then they were transferred to Al-Arish General Hospital."

Later, Egyptian newspapers published the news⁵⁰ of the approval of the Egyptian Cabinet to consider the victims of an unknown airstrike on Abu al-Araj area in southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed in North Sinai on 19 October 2019 as martyrs, as financial aid of 100 thousand Egyptian pounds is given to the family of each martyr in accordance with the coroner and the public prosecutor's office reports, as well as financial aid of 100 thousand pounds in every case of injury leading to full disability.

Al-Jifjafah village

Two siblings were killed and their father was severely injured while in their civilian vehicle in the early hours of the morning of 28 September 2019 as a result of an Egyptian military airstrike near al-Jifjafah village in al-Hasana city in central Sinai.

Two eyewitnesses and journalists we interviewed confirmed that the vehicle was severely damaged, and that the siblings' bodies were torn apart and the remains were hard to differentiate. The witnesses agreed that the sounds of military aircrafts and drones could be clearly heard that night in the village, and that they heard multiple explosions

50 - Hend Mukhtar, government resolution declares victims of Tofaha ambush and Abu al-Miraj area as martyrs, Youm7, 30 October 2019:

<https://www.youm7.com/story/2019/10/30/4481572/> قرار حكومي - باعتبار ضحايا - كمين - تفاحة - وتجمع أبو المعراج - من

synchronized with the flight of aircraft over different parts of central Sinai that night. Hours before that incident, specifically in the morning of 27 September 2019, Sinai Province group attacked a security checkpoint in southern Bir al-Abd, leading to the death of a civilian and at least 7 soldiers, and the injury of 5 civilians and 5 soldiers. Afterwards, there were heavy air raids on Southern Bir al-Abd and al-Hasana that lasted for hours, in what seems to have been an attempt at tracking the militants who attacked the military ambush, as confirmed by local journalists with whom we met.

During that time a security source revealed⁵¹ the death of three soldiers and a civilian during clashes between a security force and a number of militants at a checkpoint in North Sinai, and that Egyptian air forces carried out an operation where 15 of those who were said to have been “attackers” were killed. According to eyewitnesses, military aircrafts and drones flew over the area till the next morning, and one of those raids accidentally hit the civilian Suliman Kirayem Abu-Dabous and his sons.

Central Sinai’s representative in the Egyptian Parliament, MP Jazy Saad paid his respects to the civilian victims of al-Jifjafah village on his personal facebook account⁵², without mentioning their cause of death, and he did not answer the commenters’ questions about who bombed the civilians.

B- Bombing civilian houses

Many civilian houses in villages subsidiary to al-Sheikh Zuwayed and Bir al-Abd were hit with artillery and airstrikes. In most cases -luckily- no civilians were hurt because they had evacuated their houses and moved, but the bombing destroyed the houses.

A former government official who worked in North Sinai between 2012 and 2015 said that the military bombing civilian houses was routine, especially with artillery. He said in an interview with Human Rights Watch: “They launched the artillery, and it fell sometimes 500 meters away from the target. Residents were always scared”⁵³. On 1 June 2020, two random shells fell on civilian apartment buildings in al-Kawthar neighborhood in al-Sheikh Zuwayed, leading to severe terror among civilians and great material damages. An eyewitness told the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights that the incident happened at noon, and that one of the shells fell on the roof of a civilian apartment building, and the second fell on an empty piece of land near civilian houses belonging to “al-Malalha” clan.

51 - 3 soldiers, a civilian and 15 militants dead in attack in North Sinai, Deutsche Welle, 27 September 2019: <https://www.dw.com/ar/مصر-مقتل-3-جنود-ومدني-و-15-مسلحاً-في-هجوم-بشمال-سيناء/a-50616050>

52 - Post written by MP Jazy Saad on Facebook, date of posting 27 September 2019, date of visit 12 July 2021: https://web.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=941684439530740&id=100010675787598&_rdc=1&_rdr

53 - Human Rights Watch report: “If You Are Afraid for Your Lives, Leave Sinai!” HRW interview with a former Egyptian government official through text messages took place in 2017, the location was shielded. <https://www.hrw.org/ar/report/2019/05/28/330383>

One of the damaged buildings' inhabitants revealed in an interview with the foundation team that the shell badly damaged the ceiling of one of the apartments, creating a large hole, and the damages caused by the explosion extended, causing severe damages to the interior of the house, saying that if the inhabitants had been inside at the time of the explosion, they would have been torn apart. He thought that the artillery shells came from the ambush at the western entrance of al-Sheikh Zuwayed, parallel to the international road leading to al-Arish. He added that the military patrol arrived an hour after the incident to canvas the area and collect the remains of the two shells, without making any remarks.

The locals met with the foundation team, complained about the psychological effects left by the fall of artillery shells on populated areas, the thunderous noises they make, and the shaking of the houses and shattering of windows. A local citizen said: "My children are living in fear. One of them has psychological trauma and cries hard whenever he hears loud noises".

In another incident that took place on 18 June 2020, a random shell fell in the yard of a house belonging to a family of "al-Nasairah" family in al-Hamaida neighborhood in al-Sheikh Zuwayed, but no human casualties were recorded due to the shell not going off.

The Foundation recorded on 2 August 2020 an airstrike hitting a three-story house belonging to the civilian Hussein Hassan Diban Hassan, also known as Hussein al-Qarawi, who left his house in al-Ganayen village southwest Bir al-Abd, for fear for his and his family's lives from ongoing military clashes in the area, and headed to Bir al-Abd. According to an eyewitness who spoke with the foundation team. He revealed that the house was severely damaged and that he witnessed the house being hit while military aircrafts were in the area, while he couldn't confirm whether ISIS members were inside or near the house.

This incident is not limited to what happened with Hussein al-Qarawi, but also evacuated houses in other villages. An eyewitness revealed to the Sinai Foundation team on 5 August 2020 that he saw the remains of a house belonging to the citizen "Emad Salman Dawood", located in al-Marih village, southwest Bir al-Abd, and he confirmed that the house was severely damaged due to a military airstrike. The foundation team also confirmed the shelling of 4 other houses in the village.

The International Humanitarian Law prohibits the use of weapons that can not differentiate between civilians and combatants, as well as prohibiting targeting of civilians in international and non-international armed conflicts. Governments must investigate any violations of this kind with complete transparency. The authorities' failure to conduct serious, transparent investigations, and to fairly compensate victims, means legal lia-

bility on military high commands and political leaders if they are aware of such pattern of violations and do not intervene to stop it and hold the ones responsible accountable. Conflicting parties are obligated to differentiate between those participating in hostilities and civilians at all times. The International Court of Justice decreed in its advisory opinion on 8 July 1996 that the “principle of discrimination” toward targets is an “absolute” principle of the Customary international humanitarian law.

2 - Random gunfire from military ambushes

Random gunfire from military ambushes led to the fall of many civilian casualties since the escalation of armed conflict in Sinai. In the time period covered by the report, the foundation recorded 26 deaths, including 7 children, and 33 injuries, including 19 children, in such incidents. Those abuses usually happen near police and military ambushes. Many eyewitness accounts revealed that soldiers fire heavily and randomly with no clashes or any possible threats in the surrounding area, firing instead in a routine manner aiming to secure the area and to ensure the absence of any threat. The foundation recorded some cases where lethal gunshots were fired from ambushes toward civilian targets that did not look or act in a threatening way.

Raghda

The foundation recorded on 17 August 2019 the death of Raghda Mohamed Jumaa Muhyeldeem, 24, as a result of two gunshots, one of which hit her heart and the other her shoulder. According to the locals we met, the source of the gunshots was most likely an Egyptian military ambush located near al-Obour neighborhood in al-Arish. The incident took place at around 09:30 PM near her family home when Raghda was returning with her mother from a family visit before the beginning of city curfew, for Raghda to take her last breath in her mother’s arms. Days after the incident, specifically on 20 August 2019, the Sinai Tribal Union Facebook page⁵⁴, a page belonging to an armed civilian group supporting government forces, published news from exclusive sources stating that two officers and 4 soldiers were under investigation for Raghda’s murder, and that an investigation and military justice committee was formed to follow up on civilian complaints in North Sinai.

Raghda’s family holds the government forces responsible for their daughter’s death, and appealed to the Egyptian President to hold the perpetrator accountable. Raghda’s mother said in a video shared on social media: “May Allah punish whoever killed my

54 - Facebook post written by political activist Ashraf Ayob about the news article shared by the Sinai Tribal Union page with an attached screen shot of the article, the foundation team visited the Sinai Tribal Union page on 20 August 2019 and reviewed the article they shared, however, the page administrators later deleted the post. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/312436806175778/posts/325415861544539>

daughter Raghda. She was the breadwinner in the family, she brought me food, drink and everything. Her father is disabled and I'm old. Who will take care of us? We were walking home from her uncle's house, and you shoot her while we're under a street light? This is not fair! We're tired. Gunshots everyday, we're dying here. I swear, Raghda's death won't just pass by. I demand justice. Nothing can bring my Raghda back. I raised her and educated her, for her to just die like that? How is that fair!"

Abu-Howeshil family

5 kilometers away is (al- Dhahir) village in southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed, parallel to the road between al-Sheikh Zuwayed and al-Gora village in southern Rafah in North Sinai. al- Dhahir village is one of two villages in the north of the city still inhabited despite the evacuation of most civilians, with around 20 families and a total of less than 200 individuals. The inhabitants are active in the morning and completely inactive after sunset because anything that moves at night is a target to gun shots and shells. According to a testimony acquired by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 3 members of one family successively lost their lives in potential unlawful attacks.

"Samih"⁵⁵, currently living in a rented house in al-Arish after moving from his village last year, told us: "The village is surrounded by ambushes. Security forces know of every single move. Last Eid was a sad Eid on the village. On 22 May 2020, it was Ramadan and we were fasting, "Fathy Said Salim Selmy Abu-Howeshil ", 26, who was living in al-Gora, went to bring his mother cold water because there's no electricity where she lives in al- Dhahir. He walked for 3 kilometers because cars are not allowed in the area, and he arrived in the afternoon. We suddenly heard gunshots from "Hassan ambush"⁵⁶, which is located 400 meters east of the village in a house belonging to displaced civilians. When they heard the gunshots, the children ran to see who'd fallen by "al-Haraba"⁵⁷ near the ambush. We found Fathy dead and bleeding from his head. People are scared of accusing the military, but among us, we know who is to blame. However in official documents, everyone says they don't know what happened or who killed him. It's natural to be scared after everything they've been through and seen. The locals carried Fathy and took him to al-Sheikh Zuwayed hospital, then he was taken to al-Arish hospital, then to Port Said to be examined by the coroner. He was buried after around 5 days because of Eid vacation. To make matters worse, Fathy had a brother named "Talal" who was shot and killed by the same ambush over a year and a half before while in the village."

55 - Fake name given to an eyewitness from the village.

56 - Hassan ambush, military checkpoint located near al- Dhahir village in northern al-Sheikh Zuwayed, has that name because the military built the ambush inside a house belonging to displaced members of Abu-Hassan family.

57 - "al-Haraba" is a local term used to describe: a ditch in the ground dug by locals in a low ground and lined with cement to gather rainwater to be used in summer for drinking and other purposes.

The witness continued: "Fathy's cousin is called "Mohamed Mazid Salim Selmy Abu-Howeshil", 40 years old. He was killed two days before that incident on 20 May 2020. He was tending his sheep like everyone in his family, they make their livelihood from shepherding, he took his sheep to the outskirts of the village for grass, which is not new to soldiers, they know shepherds go outside the village and return everyday. The village was terrorized by an explosion that seemed to come from the north, near al-Azhar school. Mohamed's family knew he took the sheep in that direction, and were of course worried for their son and went to check on him. When they got there, they found him in pieces. I swear, they gathered his flesh and bones in a sack. They couldn't differentiate between his flesh and the sheep's. They were directly hit by a tank shell, not artillery. Hassan ambush has no artillery, just a tank."

Jihad

On 6 September 2020, "Jihad Awad Abdelkareem Ahmed", 21, died as a result of gunshot fired from a security ambush on a car she was riding with a number of family members passing through the military checkpoint situated at "al-Qantara Sharq" city entrance, in the far west of the Sinai Peninsula. Two eyewitnesses told the foundation team the details of the incident, saying that the girl was born in 1999 and studied at the Faculty of Education in al-Arish. She was with her mother in a small pickup truck that passed through "al-Muthalath" ambush which is shared by the military and the police. They said that Jihad had been engaged 10 days before the incident, and was returning with her mother from al-Qantara to al-Arish after buying wedding supplies, and that the driver tried to drive through the barrier, defying the soldiers' order to stop. The driver did not notice the order to stop, which led the soldiers to shoot at the passengers. The vehicle did not pose any threat and the passengers did not show any signs of being a threat that excuses the use of deadly gunshots to deal with the situation.

Medical sources showed that "Jihad" died by gunshot to the neck which led to severe bleeding. Her body was transported to "al-Qantara" general hospital, then was buried in al-Sharqiya.

Hajj Salama

A 68-year-old civilian called "Hajj Salama Aboul-Abd Abu-Howeshil" was killed on 8 December 2020 by gunfire shot by a military force situated in al-Sheikh Zuwayed square near the square police station.

A local citizen told the foundation team: "At around 6 in the morning, we heard gunshots coming from the east, from the direction of the police station. We're used to the sounds of gunshots from all ambushes day and night. We didn't know that those gunshots had killed Hajj Salama until we were told by people after he was moved to the hospital. Most

of us went to the hospital, and we found Hajj Salama dead and covered with a blanket. They wanted to send him to the al-Arish Hospital morgue to start the burial procedures.

The witness added: "Hajj Salama was around 68 years old. He was part of al-Hawashla family living in al-Sheikh Zuwayed. He had been a merchant, then as he got older, he got sick and his hearing became worse. He was even mentally unwell. He sometimes went to the healthcare unit at the edge of al-Sheikh Zuwayed square near the police station. Military forces are heavily present around the town square, inspecting cars. Walking through the square has been prohibited since 2013, but they allow vehicles to come from and go to al-Arish after inspection.. The healthcare unit is located in the square, and they allow people to go there through a side-street. The unit opens at 8 in the morning. Hajj Salama went out early when the curfew that starts from 7 PM till 6 AM was lifted".

He added "When the military officers saw Hajj Salama walking toward the healthcare unit, they kept calling for him to stop. Apparently, he did not hear them and kept on walking, so they fired shots in the air, and when he kept on walking, they shot him. The square is terrifying! The police station is surrounded by tanks and concrete fences, and snipers are spread out on the roof, and military vehicles are everywhere around the square, along with soldiers whose guns are always pointed at passing cars, despite the fact that the cars get inspecting 4 times before being allowed to pass through the square. Also, the destroyed buildings around the square don't look that different from the scenes we see of Syria. Total destruction of buildings and shops."

Ali al-Alawy

On 19 August 2020, a citizen called "Ali Dawood al-Alawy", 62, was killed by a bullet shot by an army patrol in 6 October village in western Bir al-Abd in North Sinai. One of his relatives spoke with the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, saying: "The deceased was killed by gunfire shot by a military patrol during his attempt to move from his home in al-Merih village in southwest Bir al-Abd. He added that the reason he left the village was for fear for his life after the deterioration of security circumstances in the village and its surroundings, and that the military force that shot him was situated near the railway in 6 October village in western Bir al-Abd in North Sinai. The previous testimony aligned with another testimony made by a relative of the victim's who told us that the military shot the victim despite the family coordinating with the military forces through the family elder in close relations with the government, who arranged with the authorities for the victim to move.

Ahmed

A child called Ahmed Badran Atallah, 15, was shot with a bullet that landed in the base of his skull on 16 August 2020, according to a medical source who spoke with the foundation team. He stated that the victim lives in al-Zuhoor neighborhood in al-Sheikh Zuwayed, and that he was first moved to al-Sheikh Zuwayed general hospital, then was transferred to al-Arish hospital due to the severity of the injury, and due to weak resources, was again transferred to Kasr el-Aini hospital in Cairo, especially because he was in critical condition. The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights met with two eyewitnesses in al-Zuhoor neighborhood, who talked about the recurrence of injuries due to random gunshots and shells during previous months, shot by security forces with the aim of combing through and securing the area despite the absence of threats or clashes at those times. The witnesses pointed out that al-Zuhoor camp located in the city is the largest camp used in security operations in al-Sheikh Zuwayed, used to constantly fire random shots from the watchtowers.

Fatima

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights team recorded the injury of a 12-year-old girl called "Fatima Hassan Silmy Sawarka" who received a gunshot to the chest as a result of an indiscriminate shooting from a security ambush in the city of "al-Sheikh Zuwayed" shared by military and police forces, locally known as "al-Mazlakan checkpoint", on 28 November 2020. The child was transported to "al-Arish" general hospital where the bullet was extracted from her body and she was put in the intensive care unit.

An eyewitness from the village of "al-Shallaq" in al-Sheikh Zuwayed said:

"There are four military and security forces ambushes in the village, in addition to mobile checkpoints, and they all use indiscriminate shots in what they call sweep operations- The village is adjacent to the international road, with one part on the south and half on the north of the road. Soldiers shoot in every direction, even the completely safe ones, which puts the lives of civilians in danger. Civilians from the village have been killed and injured before by random shots. There are ambushes among civilian houses, on top of "al-Shallaq" primary school, and inside the village mosque. They shoot all day and we don't know why. Gunshots broke electricity lines many times before, and the village stays with no power, sometimes for months, till they remember to fix them. Gunshots also hit walls and windows of our homes."

High school students bus

In a shocking incident that happened on 10 August 2020, underage students on their way to school in a “microbus” died after the car was shot by a military force on security duty in the area between the villages of Humaisa and Abu-Jolod in southwest Bir al-Abd. A medical source revealed to the Sinai Foundation that an ambulance transported 4 students, one of whom arrived at the hospital dead, followed by another, and two others had different injuries.

The dead: (1) Ahmed al-Said Abdelaziz, 16, (2) Alaa Nasr Selmy, 16.

The injured: (1) Mahmoud Mehny Suliman, 16, (2) Esraa Ibrahim Hassan, 16.

We met with “Karim”,⁵⁸ a surviving student who was on the bus, who said:

“While we were on a side road after al-Humaisa village heading toward Bir al-Abd for a test, we heard bombs and gunshots from afar toward Qatia. People on the bus were saying that the military was bombing the areas where the terrorists who took over Qatia, Iqtiya, al-Ganayin, and al-Merih were. Suddenly we came under heavy fire. At that moment, no one knew what was happening. I tried to hide from the gunshots under the seat. There was a waterfall of blood everywhere and it covered my face. After the bus stopped near a house on the road, we got out quickly. We realized that a military force was near us and they suspected the microbus...”

We met with “Eid”⁵⁹ who was a passenger on the microbus, who said:

“The injured were not quickly offered aid because there was heavy artillery shelling and gunfire. The ambulance was a whole hour late to get the injured. They were bleeding before our very eyes, and we couldn’t do anything to help them. It was very hard and terrifying, moments felt like a year. When the ambulance arrived an hour later, it transported the injured and the deceased to the 6 October emergency unit...”

These incidents amount to the description of unlawful killings. While those actions committed by the Egyptian law enforcement forces require immediate investigation, we have not recorded any such measures by the authorities. Instead, they deliberately waste the victims’ rights by writing the incidents up as against persons unknown, and make sure to prohibit their spread on local media platforms. Killings committed by security and military forces outside combat adhere to basic United Nations principles on the use of force and firearms⁶⁰, which are strict and binding rules that explicitly enforce the obligation to respect the right to life, and that deadly weapons should only be used when absolutely necessary, and to try to minimize damage as much as possible.

58 - Fake name given to an eyewitness interviewed by the Sinai Foundation.

59 - Fake name given to an eyewitness interviewed by the Sinai Foundation.

60 - Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials:
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/UseOfForceAndFirearms.aspx>

3 - Extrajudicial executions

During the time period covered by the report, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights team followed on and analyzed all press releases issued by the Egyptian Ministries of Defence and Interior related to war on terrorism in North Sinai. The Ministry of Interior published 21 releases with a total number of 158 killed. While the Ministry of Defense published 12 releases with the total number of 548 killed. All releases stated that those killed were militants who died in clashes with government forces.

Despite the fact that press releases issued by the Ministries of Defence and Interior spokesmen are in most cases devoid of clear information on the identities of those killed or where they were, the foundation team noticed the presence of fabricated information in some official releases, which led to many questions about the integrity of these releases. It is worth mentioning that international human rights organizations accused the Egyptian Ministry of Interior on 16 March 2017 of extrajudicially executing 6 to 10 men in a house in al-Arish in North Sinai, and fabricating a video of storming the house to cover the murder⁶¹.

Ministry of Interior's press release on eliminating 18 armed militants

In the early hours of morning on 3 May 2020, Egyptian news agencies and papers published the news of the Egyptian Ministry of Interiors success in eliminating 18 terrorists in Bir al-Abd in North Sinai after an armed clash. The news were published at the same time as local activists' publication⁶² of a different story where they accused the Ministry of Interior of eliminating a group of detainees in Bir al-Abd where the incident took place, and demanded the Ministry of Interior show photos of those who were killed.

A few hours later, the Ministry of Interior official Facebook page⁶³ shared an official statement about the incident saying: "The National Security Agency acquired information on a group of terrorists taking a



Ministry of Interior statement issued on 3 May 2020 before editing and removal

61 - Egypt: Possible Extrajudicial Killings in Sinai, Human Rights Watch, 16 March 2017:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/16/egypt-possible-extrajudicial-killings-sinai>

62 - Post written by Ahmed Salem on Facebook, shared on 3 May 2020, date of page visit 10 July 2021:

https://web.facebook.com/100000573786673/posts/3457845840911175/?d=n&_rdc=1&_rdr

63 - Post shared by the Ministry of Interior official Facebook page, shared on 4 May 2020, Date of visit 10 July 2021: https://web.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2990219121021731&id=181662475210757&_rdc=1&_rdr

house in the area of Bir al-Abd in North Sinai as a base to launch their hostile operations. Their hiding spot was targeted, an exchange of fire took place, leading to the death of 18 terrorists". The Ministry of Interior also shared photos of the killed members without censoring their faces as usual.

The foundation team compared the photos from the Ministry of Interior's release to the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights's database and several available resources, and found that the photos from the Ministry of Interior's release are of people who were killed in previous incidents and some of the photos had been published in Egyptian newspapers⁶⁴ on 3 November 2017 of the defecting military officer and leader of Ansar al-Islam group, "Emad Abdel-Hamid, who was killed in al-Wahat operation in Egypt's western desert in 2017.

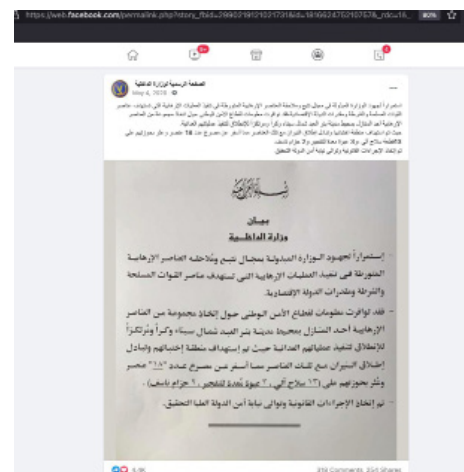


Photo appearing in Ministry of Interior's statement on 3 May 2020 before being removed later



A photo of Al-Watan newspaper issued on 3 November 2017

After the Ministry of Interior's publication of this release, it faced sharp criticism from activists who described the release as fabricated, for the Ministry of Interior to later delete the photos from the release, then completely delete the entire release from its Facebook page, and share a new release about the incident with no photos of those who were killed.



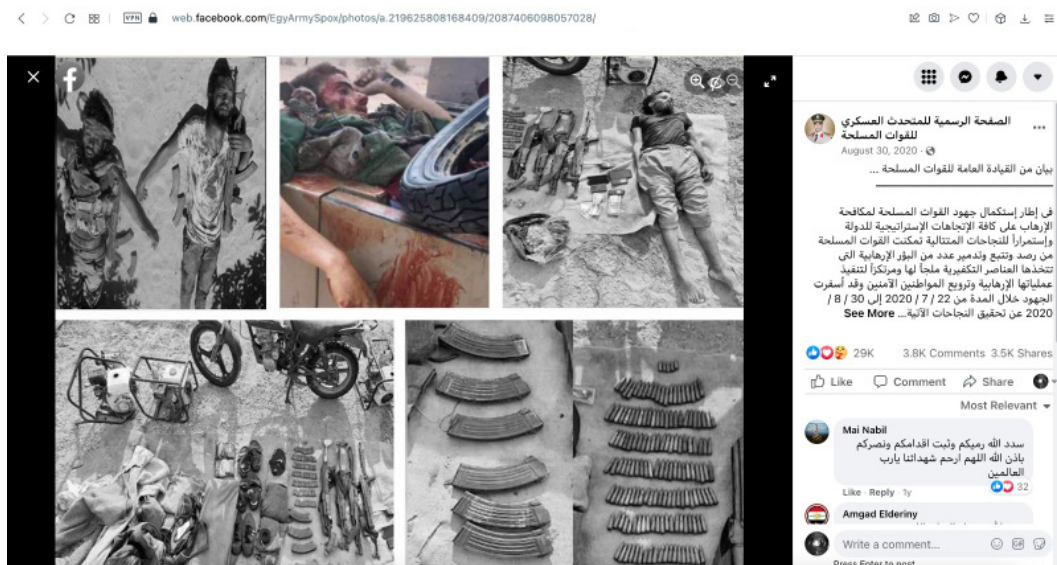
New statement shared on the official Ministry of Interior page after removing the previous statement

64 - Samy Abdelrady, "el-Watan" publishes the real photo of "Ashmawy's" assistant after his elimination in "al-Wahat", El-Watan News, 3 November 2017:

<https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/2676420?t=push>

The dead body of an “extremist”⁶⁵

On 30 August 2020, the Egyptian Military spokesman issued a release⁶⁶ on his official Facebook page on the results of military operations in Sinai from 22 July to 30 August 2020, attaching a number of photos of casualties who he called terrorists.



The Egyptian Armed Forces spokesman's statement issued on 30 August 2020 which included photos of several casualties

Sinai Foundation for Human Rights researchers analyzed the military spokesman's press release and the attached photos, and came to the conclusion that the military fabricated at least some of the information in the release, as a photo of the body of an “extremist” that was put in the trunk of a military vehicle who the military spokesman said had died in a clash with the Egyptian military during the ongoing operations in “Rabea” village in the period referred to in the release. However, after close research in open resources and referring to the foundation database, the photo of the deceased in the military release matched with another photo shared by the military spokesman in a previous release⁶⁷ on 3 February 2020, with a photo shared by a personal account⁶⁸ belonging to an Egyptian military member in Sinai on 3 February 2020, as well as with a photo included in a

65 - The military labeled the photo of the dead person as “extremist”, and the Sinai Foundation team could not determine the identity of the deceased and whether he was a civilian or a militant.

66 - A release from the General Command of the Armed Forces, published on the military spokesman's official Facebook page, shared on 30 August 2020, date of visit 11 July 2021:

<https://www.facebook.com/EgyArmySpox/posts/2087406271390344>

67 - Video shared by the General Command of the Armed Forces on Youtube, shared on 3 May 2020, date of visit 12 July 2021:

<https://youtu.be/u6x-2iAi-vg>

68 - Personal Facebook profile under the name “Mohamed abd el moniem” belonging to a member of the Egyptian military in Sinai, specialized in sharing exclusive news and photos of military operations in Sinai since 2015 until the account was banned on 10 July 2021, according to the Sinai Foundation team.

leaked video⁶⁹ shared by activists on social media on 19 March 2020, a copy of which the foundation later acquired, in which an officer burns the dead body and defiles the corpse. The foundation refrains from sharing the aforementioned content with the public, to spare their feelings, and due to the belief that a person's dignity is to be spared, whoever they may be, dead or alive.



Photo from a video leaked by activists on social media on 19 March 2020, a copy of which was later acquired by the foundation



Photo of the deceased as presented in the military spokesman's statement on 30 August 2020 where he said that this "extremist" was killed between 22 July and 30 August 2020

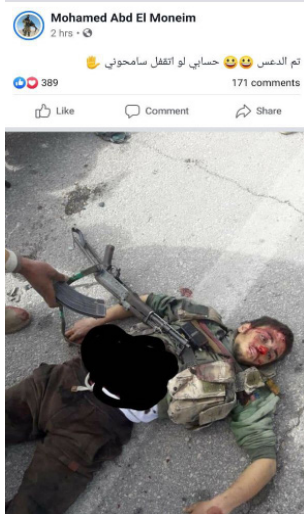


Photo shared on a personal Facebook profile belonging to an Egyptian military personnel in Sinai on 3 February 2020



Photo of the deceased appearing in a video published by the Egyptian Ministry of Defense's official Youtube channel on 3 May 2020

Evidence acquired by the foundation proving fabrication in the military's statement

69 - The leaked video shared by Egyptian activists and broadcasted by Al Jazeera - Egypt on Facebook, shared on 29 March 2020, date of visit 12 July 2021:

<https://www.facebook.com/AJA.Egypt/videos/568997700639297>

Amir Hassan Abu-Draa

On 1 May 2020, the military spokesman published a release⁷⁰ on his official Facebook page talking about the execution of a qualitative operation in a farm in North Sinai. He mentioned targeting two armed and very dangerous Takfiris as a result of an exchange of fire. He attached photos of the two militants after their targeting during the clash. As usual for military releases, the names of the deceased were not mentioned and their faces were censored, as well as their points of injury in the lower parts of their bodies. Worth noticing about the release is the use of different vocabulary than usual for this kind of release, as it was said that “two members were targeted”, while the linguistic fingerprint of military releases over the course of military operations uses the words “kill” or “apprehend” to describe the outcomes of military operations. In addition, the attached photos showed machineguns next to the two militants’ bodies in a way that implies their elimination, which is the same pattern used in military releases when showing dead bodies of alleged terrorists.



Statement published by the military spokesman on his official Facebook page on 1 May 2020 showing two bodies

The sharing of the release by the military spokesman coincided with a number of military-supporting local pages⁷¹ and accounts and military personnel personal Facebook profiles celebrating the fall of a person called Amir Salim Hassan Abu-Draa, and sharing photos of him where he seems to be wearing the same clothes he was wearing in the military spokesman’s release, but he was lying on a hospital bed. It is worth mentioning that Amir is locally known for his affiliation with ISIS and having extreme Islamic beliefs.

70 - Release published by the military spokesman’s official Facebook page, shared on 1 May 2020, date of visit 10 July 2021:

https://web.facebook.com/217455035052153/posts/1952677388196567/?d=n&_rdc=1&_rdr

71 - A post shared by “Sahm al-Hakika/Arrow of Truth” page on Facebook, shared on 1 May 2020, date of visit 12 July 2021:

<https://www.facebook.com/LwaBdwSyna/posts/4335253816500196>

We also acquired a video that shows “Amir” alive in the hospital after receiving medical treatment, where you can see the similarities between the two photos, where Amir is shown after being undressed, being beaten up by someone in a military uniform.



Photo taken from a video shared by Facebook accounts supporting the military showing Amir alive being beaten inside an ambulance

The foundation later acquired information from a medical source stating that “Amir” had been treated at al-Sheikh Zuwayed general hospital. The foundation also acquired exclusive photos of the emergency room where Amir was treated. The following photos show the emergency room at al-Sheikh Zuwayed general hospital and the details show the match between the room in the photos we acquired from the hospital and the photo of the room where Amir was treated in the presence of uniformed military personnel.



Exclusive photo of the emergency room at al-Sheikh Zuwayed general hospital where Amir was treated



Photo of Amir receiving treatment from nurses inside the hospital shared on Facebook accounts

Those photos and evidence show that the military most likely apprehended Amir alive then killed him by summary execution, then created the murder scene to look like he died in an armed clash.

Treaties and laws of armed conflict criminalize the murder of unarmed civilians or combatants who lost or put down their weapons. They also criminalize defiling dead bodies during conflicts. Those are considered imprescriptible war crimes, and a gross violation of the Geneva Conventions, which legally bind the Egyptian authorities to put a stop to such practices and to prosecute those responsible for such violations.

4 - Arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and torture in detention centers

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights recorded the continuation of unlawful arbitrary arrests of civilians by the authorities, which is a behaviour usually demonstrated by law enforcement authorities after attacks as part of the policy of group punishment against Sinai locals. They also make these arrests during unannounced search campaigns of neighborhoods and at ambushes. Also the long absence of a family member, or not finding them at the time could lead to the arbitrary arrest of family members or relatives present at the house at the time. The Sinai Foundation recorded tens of cases of arbitrary arrest where the victims do not know the reason behind their detention or what the charges are, all under inhumane detention circumstances and security practices. In addition, the Egyptian authorities practice arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances in a strategic manner, as many civilians were subject to arbitrary detention under no legal action or judicial supervision, and sometimes even with no apparent reason for suspicion that led official authorities to deal with them as criminals.

Parliament members from North Sinai criticized the behavior of security forces, and intervened on many occasions for the release of detainees and later presented the cases to the military requesting the "review" of the situation of detainees and the release of those detained with no proof of offense. In a few cases, those efforts led to the release of some detainees. For example, the Rafah parliament representative, Salem Abu-Mraheel, said through his official Facebook page⁷³ on 25 March 2021 that he intervened for the release of more than 15 men and women from Sinai detained by security authorities from North Sinai and Ismailia.

...

الصفحة الرسمية للنائب سالم ابو مراهيل

25 مارس · ٢٩٧

من خلال المتابعه والتواصل خلال الشهور الماضيه فى اكثر من اتجاه تم وبحمد الله اولاً التواصل مع السيد الوزير المحافظ ورئيس مجلس مدينة رفح بخصوص صرف تعويضات الأهالى ووعد سيادته بصرف تعويضات المنازل الى الارقام من أول شهر أبريل ثم مباشرة صرف تعويضات العدادات ثانياً ويوعون الله وتوفيقه تم الإفراج عن أكثر من خمسة عشر رجل وسيده من أماكن الاحتجاز فى محافظة الاسماعليه وسيناء من اهالى سيناء خلال الايام الماضيه ثالثاً ومن خلال المتابعه مع رئيس مجلس مدينة بئر العبد تم اعاده توصيل الكهرباء الى أهالى رفح والشيخ زويد النازحين هناك رابعاً تم حل مشكله الكهرباء وتركيب محول جديد الى الاهالى فى الاسماعليه فى تجمع كلبو خامساً تم عقد اجتماع مع الجهات الأمنية المسؤولة عن الانفاق والمعديات للتسهيل على اهالى سيناء بخصوص التحريات وتم الوعد بالتسهيل فى الإجراءات الأمنية سادساً تم تقديم طلب للسيدة وزيره التضامن الاجتماعي بخصوص صرف اعانه تقديه الى أهالى رفح وسيناء واعانه الشباب وعوده من تم فصلهم من التضامن الاجتماعي وأخيراً والشكر والتقدير الى كل المسؤولين السابقين المساهمين فى مساعده وحل مشاكل الاهالى ونطمع معاكم فى المزيد والله الموفق والمستعان

١٦٤ تعليقاً ٣٣ مشاركة

٢٩٧

Post written by the Egyptian PM Salem Abu-Maraheel on 25 March 2021

73 - PM Salim Abu-Mraheel's official Facebook page, date of visit 10 July 2021:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=118711570239160&id=100262955417355

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights met with a number of ex-detainees and relatives of current detainees and interviewed some of their relatives. Some of them confirmed that they did not know where their relatives were being detained till after a long time, and others who had been released revealed that they had been faced with different types of mistreatment, and some of them had been tortured and almost died due to medical negligence.

Detaining women and children as hostages

The Sinai Foundation met with “Hanaa”⁷⁴, housewife and mother, who was detained for four months during the period covered by the report in ... center⁷⁵ in North Sinai. She told the foundation team the details of her experience, saying:

“There was a Military of Interior campaign to collect data on locals of the neighborhood where I live. They went into almost all houses in the neighborhood, searched them, and asked about our information. When they got to my house, they asked me about my family’s information, then asked me where ...was, and I told them he was being detained but I didn’t know where exactly, he was forcefully disappeared. The officer asked me how I didn’t know where he was, in a way that implied that I was lying. I swore to him that that was the case, he’d been arrested and I didn’t know where he was. He said that they’d take me to the police station so I could give my information then answer some questions and go home right after. I started getting really scared, and my daughters started crying hard. The officer told them not to worry, they’d just ask me a few questions and I’d be home in no time.”

Hanaa said: “I was taken by normal security forces from the ... police station, who were wearing civilian clothes. They put me in a police truck and took me to the ... station, and I didn’t go home for 4 months. When I arrived at the station, I entered through the main door on the ground floor, then I was led up the stairs on the right to the first floor. There were seven rooms, four to the right and 3 to the left. The fourth room to the right is the women detention room. There were 26 other detainees in the room, most of them were from al-Sheikh Zuwayed, and all of us were being detained because someone in our family was wanted, be it a husband or son or brother. Some of those women’s wanted family members were already in custody but security forces denied it, like in my case, so they took us as hostages till the wanted family member turn themselves in.

74 - Fake name, specific detention period and location and some personal details were removed to hide the witness’s identity.

75 - Name of the detention center was removed to maintain the witness’s anonymity.

From what I gathered later, some of the wanted people were being detained by the military and others by the police, but there was no coordination between the two authorities, so the women remained hostages in jail till it was proven that the wanted family member really already was in custody.”

She added “The area of the room was around 7*8 meters, and we only had very dirty covers to sleep on. The room only had 7 very small windows. The bathroom was outside the room and we shared it with the detained men, as well as low-ranking officers, who all used it. The head detective and the officers had their own bathroom though. The bathroom’s stink was unbelievable, and the thought of using the bathroom while low-ranking officers were there, and everyone coming or going could see me, was very degrading. Sometimes detainees waiting to be transferred or released would wait in the corridor facing the bathroom, that was all disgusting and extremely degrading for me. We would shower every once in a while, when they felt like it. It was summer and it was very hot, and there were too many of us in the holding cell, we couldn’t help sweating and the smell was so bad. We were allowed to wash our clothes in the bathroom and hang them in the room. Of course we only got cleaning supplies with visits. They allowed us to get some stuff our families brought, but they didn’t allow us to see our visitors. I ate and drank less so I wouldn’t need to use the bathroom. They didn’t allow us to go to the bathroom everytime we asked, they sometimes refused, and the bathroom was old style squat toilets. Every Time I remember that whole bathroom situation, I feel nauseous, it was so disgusting.”

Hanaa said on the interrogation methods and questions:

“I was interrogated 3 times during my detention, and a fourth time one day before I was released. During the interrogation, they made me stand on one leg for maybe an hour, and when they started asking me questions, they’d let me sit in a chair. All questions were ‘where is ...? How do you not know anything about him? He has to have contacted you?’ When I answered swearing that I did not know, that he was in custody and forcefully disappeared, one of them would hit me hard on the back. The officer once slapped me twice when he kept asking the same questions and I gave the same answers. And of course I was called terrible names. But that’s all. I was not beaten again. They once took 3 women to interrogate, and we heard their screams because like I told you, the interrogation room wasn’t far from us. When they came back, we could see marks of hard beating on their faces. These women were from al-Sheikh Zuwayed. But when they came back to the holding cell, they didn’t tell us any details. All detained women had a family member who was wanted. No laws in the world prosecute innocent people in place of others, and it’s even harder when that wanted person is already detained by a security authority but they didn’t know.”

She added: "We told each other about our families and children on the outside. Some of the detainees had babies. Those who received visits would send letters to her family hidden in clothes we sent them for laundry, telling them to bring diapers for the babies, and those who could afford it would not hesitate. Of course the police station did not offer anything for the babies, like diapers or milk, we tried to get that in the things our families sent us during visits. We did not exercise at all. We only moved when they allowed us to go to the bathroom, otherwise, we never left the room."

Hanaa Said: "Four months after my arrest, they called my name and told me that I was getting out, and I started with my release procedures. No one told me anything, nothing about (...), whether he was alive or dead, I wasn't even brought before a prosecutor. I got out and I couldn't believe it. I cried so hard and at the same time, my heart was breaking for the other detainees. I don't know which ones are still being detained and which ones were released, but the detention of women still happens, till this moment, women are being detained because one of their relatives is wanted. The families suffer, especially when the mother is detained. It's a disaster, hurting an entire family. A disaster our kids pay for."

Traveling is a gamble that could lead you to prison

Sinai locals are used to facing arbitrary interrogations, thorough searching, and detention that could take up to 8 hours till they are checked against security forces wanted lists when travelling. This is a repetitive pattern especially at ambushes in Ismailia and Suez. Locals from al-Sawarka and al-Rmailat, or those living in Rafah and al-Sheikh Zuwayed face even worse treatment.

The foundation met with "Saif"⁷⁶, a civilian who was arbitrarily detained in the second half of 2020 in al-Qantara, Ismailia, on his way home to al-Arish. He told the foundation team: "I was going home to al-Arish from Cairo. When I reached al-Qantara to catch the ferry to cross Suez Canal, I had to pass through a checkpoint shared by military, police and National Security forces. When I gave them my ID card, one of the National Security personnel stopped me when he saw my place of residence on the card being al-Sheikh Zuwayed. That always happens to anyone whose place of residence in their ID card is al-Sheikh Zuwayed or Rafah; they're always stopped when trying to cross the Suez canal, whether going to or from Sinai. That was not the first time it happened to me that year. Everytime I travelled, I would get to Qantara to cross the Suez canal, I would be stopped for inquiries that could take at least 8 hours."

76 - Fake name given to a civilian interviewed by the Sinai Foundation.

He added: "That specific time though, after waiting at the checkpoint for a long time, I was transported to the National Security base in Ismailia in the "Educational Complex" building. There's an unofficial National Security base in the educational complex, and no one knows about it except those who work there, and prisoners. I was detained there for five days under investigation. They interrogated me before I was released. There was no arrest warrant or any legal action. Thank god I got out. Sometimes they'd find a similarity of names or a relationship with a wanted extremist, and you could be detained for months, and no one would know where you were. It happened with many of my relatives and friends."

He Said "During my interrogation at the checkpoint in al-Qantara, I was assaulted because my ID card says al-Sheikh Zuwayed, and because I told them that what was happening was illegal. They beat me and insulted me. No one told me where I was being taken, then I was taken from al-Qantara to the National Security base in Ismailia, blindfolded. However before that, I managed to send a quick text to my family before they took my phone, and told them who arrested me. When I reached the National Security center, they put me in a solitary cell with an area of 1.5*2 meters. The cell had 5 iron links attached to the wall. They placed me on the ground next to one of the links and cuffed my left hand to the link, and left me there, blindfolded, till the next morning. They then took me to an office to interrogate me and started by asking me: 'Do you pray? Do you listen to any famous Sheikhs? Do you read books on religion? Do you visit Jihadi websites?', my answer to all those questions was 'no'. Then the officer changed the pattern of questions and started asking me if I'd voted in the elections, who I voted for, why I did not vote for that person, all about voting and elections. Then they asked me if I liked President al-Sisi, and if I'd voted for him. I said that I did not like him and did not vote for him because he's the reason behind the deterioration of the economy. They then asked me if I'd broken the law in any way, and I said no. Then the interrogator got very angry and started calling me names, saying 'Do you only know how to say no? You're lying and you won't get out of here until you die', then he hit me really hard with both hands on my chest. Then they took me back to the solitary cell and I stayed there for 5 days till I was released. After I got out, I was in treatment for two months for a tear in chest muscles from where the officer hit me".

Samir⁷⁷

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights met with Samir, one of Bir al-Abd locals, who was arbitrarily detained twice, one of those times in the beginning of 2020 and lasted for 8 months. He talked to the foundation team, detailing what he went through and the circumstances he lived in that almost led to his death due to medical negligence.

Samir said: "They came into our house dressed as civilians. We did not know who they were. I wasn't at home, and my parents were sleeping, and they woke up with a start. The door wasn't locked, and they came inside without permission. They asked my family about me and were told that I wasn't home. They told my family to tell me to turn myself in at (...) station, and to let me know that if I didn't, they would (...)"⁷⁸

He added: "When I went home and knew what had happened, I decided to turn myself in. I thought they'd ask me a few questions and let me go. I expected there must've been a misunderstanding or mistake. When I got to the station and told them who I was, they directly blindfolded me, took my phone, keys, and money, and put me in holding. The next day, they called on me for interrogation. During the interrogation, the question were generally 'Are you a member of the Muslim Brotherhood? Do you help Takfiris? Did you see Takfiris? Did you see weapons with them?'. I told him that I wasn't a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and had never helped or seen Takfiris. He said '(...) sold you out and said you help takfiris', just to make me slip. Then they took me back to the cell. The next day, the interrogation was all about my family. 'Who are your brothers? Who are your sisters?' and other questions in the same area. There was no pressure or torture so far. The third day, they handcuffed me to another prisoner in the evening and left us outside in the cold till morning, then we were both transported to Battalion 101 base in al-Arish at around noon. I was blindfolded so I didn't know how many others were where they took me, but based on the voices, we were 5 or 7 men. They kept us blindfolded in a room where people were tortured by electrocution. We heard the sounds of electricity since our arrival at noon, till the next morning. We were blindfolded and bound all that time. They would only untie us to eat, then bind us again."

He said: "They took me to a cell. They would give 3 men a bottle of water to drink, one in the morning and one at night, and 4 liters of water every week or 10 days to wash our underwear and shower. We needed a piece of paper to go to the bathroom, and there was no water, and instead of wudu, we performed Tayammum. About a week later, they took me for interrogation with a device they called a lie detector.

77 - Fake name given to a local living in one of Bir al-Abd villages, interviewed by the Sinai Foundation team.

78 - Parts of the testimony were removed to keep his anonymity and safety.

I was blindfolded, and the officer told me that he'd ask me two questions, I should answer one truthfully and the other with a lie, then my answers should be yes or no. The first questions were whether I'd been to Britain, and I said yes, and the other was If I was Muslim, and I said yes. He then started the interrogation and asked me: 'Did you ever kill a police or military officer? Do you help Takfiris? Have you ever been to a protest? Do you belong to any party?', my answer to all questions was no. Then they took me out, took an iris scan, a photo, and fingerprints, then took me back to the holding cell. They let us outside the cell for a while every 10 days. I stayed in that cell for around 5 months. No interrogations, or anything. Food, water, and sleep. A doctor would make a round and ask if anyone had complaints, and those who complained would be given the same kind of medicine. Most complaints were about stomach and chest pain, and he would give them a pill and leave, no examination."

"Around 20 days before my release, they called me for interrogation. The interrogator started by saying: 'Son of a (curse word), when did you join the group?' Two men were interrogating me; one asking questions and the other saying 'Let me! I can make him talk', and the first one would say: 'No, he'll talk on his own'. They were offering each other the opportunity to torture me if I didn't talk. They wanted me to admit to their accusations. He kept telling me that he could eliminate me, make me never see my family again. They put me on a chair and hit the bottoms of my feet with a stick, then they hung me with one hand tied above, and the other tied to one of my legs, and the other leg tied behind me, and through all that, I was stripped of my clothes and only wearing shorts. That was the first day. Then they put me in solitary. When I was in the cell, I cried and felt like I was going to die there. All I could think was that they were going to kill me and I did not know why any of that was happening. They only opened the cell door once a day to let me go to the bathroom and to bring me food, otherwise I was locked in 24 hours a day, so I urinated in a bottle and defecated once every 24 hours when they let me out. They later took me for another interrogation. It was morning, and I was also only wearing shorts. They asked the same questions, then the officer took me outside and hung me. I was hanging with no clothes on till around 2 AM. Then the high-ranking officer came at around 3 AM and ordered for us to be brought back inside, and they brought me back to solitary where I stayed for 16 days, which were some of the hardest days of my life."

Samir added: "Next day after the interrogation, I got very dizzy, couldn't stand straight, and had stomach aches. I thought it was because I didn't eat so I wouldn't need the bathroom because I could only go once every 24 hours. The doctor came and gave me the pill without examining me."

This happened for 6 days. I had consistent dizziness and general weakness, and the doctor gave me a pill that didn't do anything, it happened every day, he gave me the same pill, and there was no improvement. I thought they were leaving me to die slowly, and couldn't stop thinking about what the officer had said during the interrogation. I was taken for interrogation once, normal questions, no torture, and when the officer saw that I was sick, he told me I'd go to a hospital, and when I come back, I'd be released. They took me to (...) hospital in a military armed vehicle, and after I was treated, I was taken back to the battalion base, and released a week later. When I was first detained, I weighed around 100 kilograms, and when I was released and my family saw me, they cried at how I looked, and took me to a doctor, and I weighed 70 kilograms, had anemia, jaundice, and high sugar levels. I also had a herniated disc in my neck, and couldn't even lift up a water bottle to drink, and couldn't pray except while sitting on a chair..."

Ashraf al-Hefny

Leftest political activist Ashraf Ibrahim Salih, known as Ashraf al-Hefny, was arbitrarily detained on 25 December 2019. He was arrested in his home by a National Security force who gave no reason or legal justification for the arrest. Ashraf works as a maths teacher, he is a father of four, and he suffers from diabetes and low blood pressure. Ashraf was involved in public and political work before the 25 January revolution, as he was secretary of the Unionist party in al-Arish, North Sinai. After the 2011 revolution, Ashraf announced the establishment of a movement which some of his colleagues called the Revolutionary Movement January. He alongside others also established the "People's Committee in al-Arish" in 2017, after the eruption of protests and marches after the Ministry of Interior eliminated detainees from al-Arish in its custody, as human rights reports stated then.⁷⁹

The Sinai Foundation met with one of Ashraf's relatives, who told us the details of what happened with Ashraf:

"Ashraf was arrested at his home. He was in his car in front of his house with his young son, to keep the child away from his sick mother. The National Security forces came to the house and took him from the car. Ashraf asked to change his clothes, they let him into the house and waited in the living room. The force that went to his house consisted of National Security personnel and the al-Arish first police station commander in a police pickup belonging to the first station.

79 - Egypt: Possible Extrajudicial Killings in Sinai, Human Rights Watch, 16 March 2017: <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2017/03/16/301149>

They did not give any reason or present any warrant for the arrest. They said they would ask him a few questions about a few things for 5 minutes, then he would come back home. We waited for 24 hours, hoping he'd be released like we were told. When more time passes, we decided to share the details of the arrest on social media. Two days later, specifically Friday evening, 27-12-2019, someone called Ashraf's wife and told her that Ashraf was at the first police station and needed his diabetes medication, food, and clothes because he had no covers or clothes other than the ones he was wearing when arrested."

He added: "His wife went to visit him Friday evening and took his brothers. They went 3 times during the time he was at the station. Ashraf told them that he was not interrogated and did not know why he was being detained. He stayed in al-Arish first police station for ten days without being interrogated and without knowing the reason behind his incarceration. On Thursday 2 January 2020, National Security moved him from the police station and detained him in one of their facilities for a month. At that time, no one knew his location. Days later, we learned from people who'd been released National Security in al-Arish that Ashraf was being detained there and that he'd been interrogated 5 times in one week. No one from the family could visit or contact him. On 7 February 2020, Ashraf was transferred from al-Arish to Cairo, and was placed in Tora prison in Cairo on 9 February 2020."

He said: "Ashraf's wife received a sneaked message which said that Ashraf was being detained at Tora prison, and on 24 February, Ashraf's family visited him for the first time. He told them during the visit that he was being charged in case number 488/2019 and was interrogated about his political and media activity, specifically his communication with the media, especially al Jazeera. He said they accused him of knowingly joining a terrorist group. Ashraf refused to answer his family's questions about whether he'd been tortured, but said that he was blindfolded during the two-day trip from al-Arish to Cairo when he was transferred, and that on 7 February 2020, until his first visit, he had been refused his diabetes medication. On 10 March 2020, they prevented Ashraf's sister from visiting him due to Covid-19, -the Egyptian authorities restricted prisoner visits for months without offering alternative ways to contact lawyers or families like phone calls⁸⁰. But his sister managed to get food and medication through to him on that day, and after a while, his family learned that at that time, Ashraf fell into a diabetic coma. In October 2020, visits were allowed again, and during the first visit, Ashraf's family learned that he was not checked by a doctor when he fell into the coma and that his cell mates were the ones who helped him."

80 - For more on the subject, read Human Rights Watch's report: Egypt: Apparent Covid-19 Outbreaks in Prisons: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/20/egypt-apparent-covid-19-outbreaks-prisons>

He added: "Due to the bad detention circumstances, and the delay in Ashraf's acquisition of his meds, he now suffers from cataract. Later in December 2020, Ashraf was taken to the prison hospital, and the doctor said that he has to get surgery for his eye. Ashraf's lawyer made a request for permission for the surgery at the beginning of Ashraf's detention, and it was approved on 13 January 2021, over a year after his arbitrary arrest, but he hasn't had the surgery till now. His sister tried to make an appointment at private hospitals and eye clinics, as the family is paying for the surgery, but his case was turned down because he's a political prisoner, and they required the prison's approval to accept the case. When his sister went to the prison service for the approval, they denied her request and told her to bring a statement of approval of accepting Ashraf's case for surgery from a private hospital, despite the fact that the sister had an approval from the prosecutor's office for the operation. The family requested the withdrawal of Ashraf's termination from work because he was terminated while incarcerated, and presented a statement to the Education Directorate that Ashraf was being detained, to get half his salary, according to the law, because Ashraf is the breadwinner in his family, responsible for four children and a wife, but a decision has not been made about the request since October."

After Ashraf al-Hefny's detention for a year and 3 months, he was released from prison on 23 March 2021, was transported to the second police station in al-Arish but stayed under arbitrary detention for two months at the station in custody of National Security, before being released on 27 May 2021.

Ashraf Ayoub

On 4 August 2020, a police force arrested the leftwing leader Ashraf Ahmed Suliman Ayob, 58, and his son Sherif, at their house in al-Bahr street in al-Arish. Four days after the unjustified arrest, the son was released, but the father was kept and prevented from contacting his lawyer. Ashraf is one of the most prominent political activists in Sinai. He records on his Facebook profile the abuses against civilians by the conflicting parties. He works as a teacher at the Ministry of Education, and has three sons. He started his political activity in 1984 when he created a branch of the Unionist party in North Sinai, before quitting the party after the January 2011 revolution to form the Socialist Revolutionary Movement January with others. Ashraf shone as a member of the opposition

82 - Political activist Ashraf Ayob's Facebook account, date of visit 30 July 2021:

<https://www.facebook.com/Almahmoum1/posts/10157971878512750>

83 - Egyptian PM Aida al-Sawarka's Facebook profile, date of visit 12 July 2021:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100015286597801>

84 - Egyptian PM Aida al-Sawarka's Facebook profile, date of visit 12 July 2021:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=608764392976442&id=100015286597801

and a human rights activist between the years 2004 and 2006 after the bombing of Taba and Sharm al-Sheikh and the subsequent wide-scale arrests of locals. He started sharing news of the arrests, then opened the base of the Unionist party in al-Arish for families of detainees, and led the marches with families of detainees demanding their release, and met representatives from human rights organisations and independent media.

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights met with a relative of Ashraf's who said: "On 4 August 2020 at 2 AM Ashraf and his son Sherif were arrested by National Security. An armoured police vehicle and a civilian pickup truck with seven people in civilian clothes knocked on the door, went into the house, searched it, and confiscated all phones and computers. They did not give a reason for the arrest, just said that they needed to interrogate him for 5 minutes then he would be released. When he was taken, he had to sit in the passenger seat of the pickup truck because of his disability resulting from a car accident he was in in 2008."

He added: "The family knew he was at National Security, but had no way to contact him or make sure he was alright, which led them to send a telegraph to the District Attorney and the Ministry of Interior demanding to know where he was being held. 22 days later, he appeared on 26 August 2020 at the National Security prosecutor's office in the Fifth Settlement in Cairo for charges in case number 865/2020. There he met the attorney (...) ⁸¹ who got in contact with Ashraf's family and told them where he was. During Ashraf's only session before the public prosecutor, he was accused of being part of a terrorist group, then he was held at Tora prison in Cairo, and was not interrogated or brought before the prosecutor again. His incarceration was routinely renewed without his presence in court or before the prosecutor. Every time, the prison management would inform the prosecutor's office that the suspect could not be present for interrogation without giving reasons. The first time the family visited Ashraf was on 26 September 2020, and because he was the breadwinner in the family, his family presented a statement to the Ministry of Education about his arrest, demanding half his salary, in accordance with the law. The demand was met starting 1 January 2021."

After 10 months of arbitrary detention, Ashraf was granted release on 15 March 2021, transferred to the second police station in al-Arish and remain incarcerated for two months in custody of National Security, before he was finally released on 27 May 2021.

81 - The attorney's name was blocked to keep his identity secret.

The Egyptian Law requires any detainee to be brought before the public prosecutor in 24 hours of their incarceration. All those met by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights who were victims of arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance say that there's no judicial revision of arrests, and that they were victims of forced disappearance for different periods of time that could reach several months inside detention centres before they were prosecuted, and that their prosecution was based on an arrest warrant with a recent date with no reference to their detention and disappearance period. Some of the ones we met were victims of enforced disappearance for three to seven months then were released from detention centers without prosecution.

Article nine of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that: "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile". While the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that: "Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law".

5 - Illegal confiscation and theft of civilian properties

The Sinai Foundation recorded the theft or confiscation of civilian properties, like houses, furniture, cash, gold jewelry, cellphones, and livestock, by law enforcement forces and civilian militias in cooperation with the military. Some of those incidents happened during house raids and searches, and others happened during searches at military and security ambushes.

Some eyewitnesses we met with complained about their properties and personal belongings, like cellphones and money, being confiscated upon their arrival at detention centers to be placed in storage, but when they were released after investigation or interrogation or enforced disappearances, part of or all their belongings were not returned⁸². The foundation field team also recorded on video soldiers in military armored vehicles, accompanied by civilian militias seizing water tanks and other belongings from closed houses evacuated by the owners, who were fleeing military operations in southern and western al-Sheikh Zuwayed.

Some farm owners we interviewed said that government-supporting militia along with soldiers confiscated water pumps and farming equipment from farms whose owners can not reach due to military instructions and closing off roads for civilians.

82 - Political activist Ashraf Ayob's Facebook account, date of visit 30 July 2021:
<https://www.facebook.com/Almahmoum1/posts/10157971878512750>

PM Aida Sallam Salama Salman “Aida al-Sawarka”

On 11 May 2019, Mrs. Aida al-Sawarka, current member of the Egyptian Parliament, shared on her Facebook profile⁸³ a post, accusing members of the Egyptian military situated in al-Mazlakan ambush in al-Shallaq village, southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed, of breaking into her house in broad daylight while no one was at home and stealing household items.

Aida replied to one of her followers asking about details of the incident saying that a military force from the ambush went to her house at noon in an armoured military vehicle, then went back to the ambush after the incident. She confirmed that one of her husband’s relatives went to the ambush after the incident and told them that the house belonged to General Mohamed Selmy al-Sawarka, for them to threaten to kill him and accuse him of trying to storm the ambush. Mrs. Aida said that she was going to take the matter to the President’s office to hold those responsible for breaking into her house accountable.



Post written by Mrs. Aida al-Sawarka on her personal Facebook profile on 11 July 2019 saying that military personnel broke into her house in al-Sheikh Zuwayed and ransacked it, she deleted the post a few hours after posting it.

83 - Egyptian PM Aida al-Sawarka’s Facebook profile, date of visit 12 July 2021:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100015286597801>

Hours later, Mrs. Aida al-Sawarka deleted her post and wrote a new post⁸⁴ saying that she received an apology for the ambush personnel's behavior, and thanking military and police commanders who, according to her, contacted her and promised her strong action. Mrs. Aida was elected in 2020 as PM for North Sinai, and she is wife of the late Police General Mohamed Selmy al-Sawarka who was assassinated by ISIS in 2014.



عايدة السواركة
11 May 2019 · 🌐

اتوجه بالشكر
لكل من اتصل بي من قيادات
جيش وشرطة للوقوف على ما حصل لبيت الشهيد
ووعودني باتخاذ اجراءات حازمة
مع تقديم الاعتذار لعائلة الشهيد، ولذلك قمت بحذف البوست، إيماناً مني أن حق
حرمة بيت الشهيد لن يضيع، طالما أن هناك رجال مخلصين أوفياء مقدرين
تضحيات شهدائنا

👍❤️ 189 57 comments 5 shares

👍 Like 🔄 Share

View previous comments

Wafaa Rosa Alyoussef
لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله العلي العظيم ...
عاشت قيادتنا الحكيمة والعظيمة.
Like · 2 y

Post written by Mrs. Aida al-Sawarka on her personal Facebook profile on 11 July 2019 saying she received apologies and promises from government officials to hold the ones responsible for ransacking her home accountable

84 - Egyptian PM Aida al-Sawarka's Facebook profile, date of visit 12 July 2021:
https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=608764392976442&id=100015286597801

Suliman⁸⁵

Suliman said that the Egyptian military ordered farm owners -farms already besieged for the past 4 years, surrounding al-Zuhoor ambush in al-Sheikh Zuwayed in fall 2020- to uproot their trees in areas reaching 500 meters to the east, south and north of the ambush, claiming that the trees obstruct vision around the ambush. He added that he went to his farm as soon as he heard the military allowed farm owners to go to their farms, to make use of dry olive and citrus trees, whether by selling them as firewood, or using them for cooking and heating during the next winter. Locals were totally prohibited from going to their farms for the past 4 years, leading most trees to dry and wither. Suliman Said: "I could finally go to my farm after leaving my ID card at the ambush leading to al-Zuhoor camp as guarantee they ask of all farmers. I was shocked to see my farm after so long; usually fruitful olive trees were shriveled and dry. It was so hard to see."

Upon arrival at his farm, Suliman and his sons immediately started to uproot trees good for firewood or for sale, until they managed to get a small pickup truck full, planning to come back later and get the remaining trees. However, the next day, he was not able to go back to his farm after civilian militia members, some of whom were in his farm and took the remaining trees, prevented him from going back, threatening him with guns, and ordering him to leave at once.

Suliman mentioned that this same scenario happened with other farm owners, so the militia could take the wood, sell it themselves, and prevent farm owners from any gain from the remains of their farms. They told the farmers "If you have complaints, go to al-Zuhoor", meaning the military camp in al-Sheikh Zuwayed, implying that they did not care about any complaints, and that military officers would not intervene to help the civilians.

6 - The Use of civilian properties for military purposes

An ambush in the apartment building

In Um Akaba village in Bir al-Abd, the military established a security checkpoint in an apartment building belonging to a civilian called Eid Mansour Mohamed on 7 August 2020. Ali⁸⁶, an eyewitness from the village told the foundation team the details of what happened:

"No one asked the inhabitants their opinion on setting up a military checkpoint in their houses. When the family asked how long the force was staying inside their house, the commanding officer smiled and told them: 'Don't you love Egypt? You have to help!'. Hajj Eid and his wife stayed on the first floor and the military established the ambush on the

85 - Fake name.

86 - Eyewitness from Um Akaba village

second floor. The officer ignored their pleas for the military not to use their house, fearing that the house could be targeted by armed groups while they were at home, but the officer replied to them saying: 'We are here to protect you from terrorism, Hajj.'

He added: "The owners thought more than once about leaving the house for the time being and returning when the situation was calmer, but this fear of what happened to the houses of those displaced from "Rafah" and "al-Sheikh Zuwayed" happening to his house was what stopped them every time."

The foundation team later learned from one of the neighbors that the house -after the military presence- was targeted by ISIS militants, and many clashes between the military force and armed militants stationed in northern Um Akaba took place. The force also fired shots all night, aiming to secure the ambush, which put the lives of the inhabitants in danger.

The International Humanitarian Law specifically prohibits the destruction or confiscation of the opponents properties, except in cases of extreme military necessity. The use of civilian houses as military checkpoints or sniper positions is a recurrent pattern of abuse exercised by law enforcement forces in North Sinai. The military used in some cases school or hospital rooftops as sniper positions or soldier dormitories. The use of civilian properties by government forces is hard to excuse as a military necessity.

7 - Government compensations for victims of military operations in Sinai

Compensations for the dead and injured

Since 2015, and according to government resolution number 915 for the year 2015⁸⁷, the government grants some compensation to civilian victims of military operations as a "special pension" of maximum 1500 pounds monthly (around 95 USD). And according to the government resolution, a pension is given to those who suffer partial or total disability as a result of "terrorist action" as described by the law.

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights received a complaint by a civilian in June 2020 through the foundation's Facebook page about the Social Solidarity administration in al-Arish, refusing to give the families of civilian victims of military operations in Sinai their compensation since February of the same year. The foundation contacted government sources who confirmed that the halt is a result of an administrative decision of unknown reasons.

87 - To read government resolution number 3131 for the year 2015 issued on 3 December 2015 on the replacement of article one of the Prime Minister's resolution number 915 for the year 2015 about granting families of civilian victims of terrorism a special pension:

<https://www.almasdar.com/30749>

The journalist specializing in Sinai affairs, Ahmed Abu-Draa, published on 18 February 2021 a post⁸⁸ on his personal Facebook profile confirming the testimony we received from the family of a victim of the military operations, as he wrote that the application of the government resolution number 915 for the year 2015 on compensating the families of civilian casualties of terrorist operations and granting them a special salary was in effect till February 2020 when it stopped for no apparent reason. He added that the Social Solidarity administration says that they don't have jurisdiction and that the problem is from Social Insurance. He said that there are families in great need of these monthly compensations .



Post written by Sinai journalist Ahmed Abu-Draa on 18 February 2021 on his Facebook profile stating that the military operations victims' compensations and pensions had been halted since February 2020

For the first time since the beginning of the military operations, an official government statistic was released, showing the number of civilian victims in North Sinai. The National Council for Human Rights' truth committee released a report⁸⁹ on 10 February 2021 on human rights circumstances in North Sinai, after visiting the governorate in the period between 31 January and 4 February 2021. The commission's report, shared by Egyptian media, revealed that the number of civilian victims since the beginning of military operations in North Sinai till the date of publishing was 1836 dead and 2915 injured. The report stated, according to the Governor of North Sinai, that the governorate is compensating the victims, and offering full healthcare services in al-Arish hospitals or arranging for the injured to be treated at military hospitals. It is worth mentioning that the report did not reveal whether the government forces, ISIS, or both sides caused the fall of that number of victims.

88 - Post written by the journalist Ahmed Abu-Draa from Sinai on Facebook, posted on 18 February 2021, date of visit 12 July 2021:

<https://www.facebook.com/100000903955107/posts/5274303099276436/?d=n>

89 - Wael Ali, «Almasry Alyoum» publishes «National Human Rights» report on North Sinai, Almasry Alyoum, 10 February 2021:

<https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2253991>

Compensation for houses and farms

Egyptian officials always deny the forced nature of evacuations in Sinai. Pro-government media outlets⁹⁰ use the phrases “relocated” and “affected” to refer to displaced civilians. President al-Sisi said⁹¹ in October 2019: “We didn’t displace anyone in North Sinai. We gave people money, and removed farms and buildings because it’s national security”, adding that the government “paid billions” in compensation.

Many testimonies of displaced families with whom the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights spoke support the previous conclusions made by international human rights organizations⁹² that the compensation process was not transparent⁹³ and slow and lacked independent revision or appeal mechanisms. They also confirmed that thousands of people were not added to the list of compensations or did not receive any compensation for their houses or farms in the buffer zone from which they were forcibly displaced, even 5 to 6 years after their displacement. The government also did not offer any substantial aid or compensation to thousands of civilians living outside the buffer zone who left their homes in fear of the armed conflict, or those whose abandoned houses or farms were destroyed by the military with bulldozers or by shelling⁹⁴.

Major General Mohamed Abdel-Fadhil Shusha said⁹⁵ on 9 February 2020 that the government will start accepting compensation requests for destroyed houses outside the buffer zone in Rafah. On 17 February 2020, Rafah city council published a form to be filled by civilians whose houses outside the buffer zone were destroyed, demanding that the form be verified by two tribe Sheikhs (leaders) in the area to qualify for compensation. In the same context.

a report released by the Governor of North Sinai revealed that the compensations assigned for farms and buildings, as well as dealing with consequences of al-Rawda incident, reached 3.6 billion pounds, and a total of 2.7 billion pounds⁹⁶ was already granted.

90 - Khaled Mohamed, the Egyptian Red Cross offers aid to civilians relocated from Rafah and al-Sheikh Zuwayed, Almasry Alyoum, 13 January 2021: <https://www.almasyalyoum.com/news/details/2232987>

91 - Nour Rashwan, al-Sisi refuses the term «displacement» of the people of Sinai: «We paid them.. We’re protecting national security», al-Shorouk News, 13 October 2019: <https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=13102019&id=178ee337-59ea-4df8-a8d9-24405a6ffffa>

92 - Egypt: Massive Sinai Demolitions Likely War Crimes, Human Rights Watch, 17 March 2021: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/17/egypt-massive-sinai-demolitions-likely-war-crimes>

93 - Ahmed Mady, the beginning of examination of compensation files of property owners in the area of al-Arish airport, Elaosboa, 10 November 2020: <https://www.elaosboa.news/192084>

94 - The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights conducted interviews with 212 local civilians between January 2019 and December 2020.

95 - Post shared by the official website for Rafah center and city Facebook page, shared on 9 February 2020, date of visit 12 July 2020: <https://www.facebook.com/-105741197492158/الوقوف-الرسمي-لمركز-ومدينة-رفح-سيناء/photos/a.105743547491923/202049261194684>

96 - Madbouly shows report about compensation of the affected by security clashes in North Sinai, State Information Service, 27 June 2020: <https://sis.gov.eg/Story/205085/-مدبولي-يستعرض-تقريراً-بشأن-تعويض-المتضررين-من-المواجهات-الأمنية-في-شمال-سيناء?lang=ar>

Parliament members from Sinai had different reactions to the government's statements. They confirmed that the compensation mechanism of civilians who lost their houses 7 years ago was slow. They interacted with local civilian complaints, as PM Salim Abu-Marahel wrote on his official Facebook page⁹⁷ on 3 June 2021 that he met with the Governor of North Sinai to discuss compensations for buildings and farmlands in Sinai in general and Rafah and al-Sheikh Zuwayed in particular, and demanded haste in paying civilians. Egyptian Parliament members Rahmy Bakir⁹⁸ and Salama el-Ruqeaie⁹⁹ made urgent statements at the Parliament on 5 November 2019 on the delay in compensating houses and farms due to complicated government procedures.

96 - Madbouly shows report about compensation of the affected by security clashes in North Sinai, State Information Service, 27 June 2020:

<https://sis.gov.eg/Story/205085/مذبولي-يستعرض-تقريراً-بشأن-تعويض-المتضررين-من-المواجهات-الأمنية-في-شمال-سيناء?lang=ar>

97 - PM Salim Abu-Marahel official Facebook page, date of visit 12 July 2021:

<https://www.facebook.com/-100262955417355/الصفحة-الرسمية-للنائب-سام-ابو-مراحيل>

98 - Statement shared by PM Rahmy Bakir on his official Facebook page, shared on 14 November 2019, date of visit 12 July 2021:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=494572281155244>

99 - Statement shared by PM Salama el-Ruqeaie about compensations on his Facebook page, shared on 29 September 2020, date of visit 12 July 2021:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=801105457385945>

8 - Forced displacements and destruction of civilian homes and properties

During the time period covered by the report, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights recorded the Egyptian authorities' continuation to commit hundreds of abuses including destroying civilian houses, healthcare units, schools, and farmland in many areas in North Sinai. Several of those houses' owners had to evacuate them earlier due to the armed conflict in the area, and others were forcibly displaced by the military. The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights interviewed several locals, eyewitnesses, and activists from Sinai, as well as journalists. Most demolitions of civilian properties recorded by the Sinai Foundation took place in Rafah, al-Sheikh Zuwayed, al-Arish, and Bir al-Abd.

The foundation only recorded a few cases of forced displacement of a number of families in Rafah in the outskirts of al-Husainat village in western Rafah, and that is because it had already been almost completely evacuated since the release of an official decree to create the buffer zone at the borders with Gaza Strip in October 2014. However, military demolition campaigns of the vacant houses in Rafah were very accelerated during the research period. The foundation team managed to acquire exclusive videos recording house detonations in many areas in western Rafah including the villages of al-Wifaq, Al-Matala,, al-Husainat, and al-Khrafin. Out of 11 villages in Rafah, only one village is still inhabited, which is al-Barth. According to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics' count in 2017, Rafah had a population of 75.537, but the ongoing military operations since 2014 evacuated all villages and areas, leaving around 5 thousand remaining citizens in al-Barth village.

On 1 September 2020, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights learned that military forces blew up a number of houses located near the Rafah western borders in a campaign that lasted for a few days. The Sinai Foundation spoke with an eyewitness aged 48 years old and living in al-Sheikh Zuwayed, who said that this operation went on for over a week, destroying houses in al-Matala and al-Wifaq villages in Rafah. He said that smoke plumes and white dust resulting from the explosions rose high and could be seen from relatively far distances. He estimates the number of destroyed houses per day to reach 6 houses, based on the strong sounds of explosions that echoed from time to time in one day. The Sinai Foundation also interviewed two al-Sheikh Zuwayed locals on 8 September 2020, who confirmed that the sounds of explosions lasted for a few days, and that white smoke plumes rose high from several areas in al-Wifaq, al-Matala, and al-Maragda villages in Rafah and al-Sheikh Zuwayed. The foundation field monitoring team also managed to get exclusive photos recording the moment members of the military wired and detonated houses belonging to evicted civilians whose houses were located outside the borders of the buffer zone on the border with Gaza.

Many areas in al-Sheikh Zuwayed were subjected to waves of forced displacement and evacuation to escape consequences of the military operations. Al-Sheikh Zuwayed coast north of the city witnessed the forced evacuation of the areas of al-Sakadra, al-Maragda, and al-Diaba. Locals living in villages in southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed were not spared the same fate as a result of random military artillery and airstrikes, in addition to the difficulty in movement and food blockade imposed by the armed forces on the villages of southern al-Sheikh Zuwayed since the beginning of the Comprehensive Operation Sinai 2018¹⁰⁰. ISIS attacks on villages and abduction and execution of civilians with the claim of their cooperation with security forces also contributed to civilian evacuations in search of safety.

In two statements¹⁰¹ acquired on 4 July 2020, two civilians from al-Sakadra village in al-Sheikh Zuwayed revealed a pattern followed by the authorities to push civilians to forcibly evacuate their houses before evicting the ones remaining to follow with demolishing the civilian properties. They said that security authorities issued an order in April 2020 to forcibly evict locals from the village. That was preceded by severe restrictions in means of living, including cutting power off the area for long periods of time, then random shells hitting the village and its surroundings from time to time, leading the locals to leave the village to survive. After the evacuation of the village, demolition of the houses started after a military vehicle was bombed by an exploding device, for the military to launch a removal campaign that started with the area surrounding the explosion site, then expanded to reach several areas, despite the fact that the village of al-Sakadra lies outside any buffer zone in the area the government officially decreed to evacuate. In this context, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights conducted several interviews with local citizens who, alongside their families, were forcibly displaced. Their testimonies show details of the steps they went through till they were forcibly displaced.

100 - Between Death and Siege: A general look at the conditions of the people of Sinai in almost a year since the launch of the comprehensive operation in February 2018, Egyptian Front for Human Rights, 24 January 2019:

<https://egyptianfront.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2/بين-الموت-والحصار.pdf>

101 - Weekly Human Rights Report: The first week of July, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 27 September 2020:

<https://sinaifhr.org//show/4>

Ibrahim¹⁰²

"I've been a handyman my entire life and it's always been my only source of income. I'm married and I have 6 children. I live in Bir al-Abd. I saved up money for 5 years and bought 6 feddans of land in "Tofaha". Then I saved up money for 3 more years and dug a well, then for the next two years I planted trees bit by bit till trees grew in around 90% of the land. I had 600 olive trees and around 120 fig trees. I cared for the farm and spent money on it for 5 years. Then I started a poultry farm, then built a small house for us. With time, the farm started making profit. I started making money without exhausting myself with handiwork, because all I wanted from that farm was rest, and at the same time to secure a future when I got older and became unable to work, the land would bring money."

He added: "Once my farm started bringing in good profit, Tofaha ambush was attacked on 14 September 2019, and the next day when we went to our lands, we were surprised to find terrorists in our farms. At first they didn't talk to anyone, they just moved among the farms and aircrafts fired from above. Shells sometimes hit houses, sometimes farms, burning them. This lasted for 3 months. People were gathering olives because it was the season, and that was the time the farmers massacre happened, when aircrafts hit a vehicle carrying "day laborers" from al-Darawish village, killing nine or ten poor people."

He said: "Afterwards things became so hard. Gunfire, random shellings and clashes. Power started going out and so there was no water to water our trees, then people stopped going there altogether. At first, no one stopped us from going to our farms, people stopped going because no one was fixing the electricity, and because we were scared of the militants who'd started abducting farmers and killing them, like what happened with Hajj "Othman Suliman Mousa"; they killed him and posted his photos on the internet. They also abducted another man called "Samih Mohamed Abu al-Dawa" and till now no one knows what happened to him. After a while, the military prohibited civilians from going to that area, whether farmers or Tofaha citizens. Our farms withered and our trees died and our years of hard work died overnight."

The witness continued: "It's been over a year and we still haven't received any compensation. They asked us for documents and we submitted them at the Administration of Agriculture and at city council in Bir al-Abd and at the engineering administration for the buildings. We did all that because we were told we'd be compensated, but till now nothing. They keep telling us to be patient, but there's nothing so far. 15 years of hard work were gone in a blink."

102 - Fake name given to a farm owner in southern Bir al-Abd interviewed by the foundation team.

Faris¹⁰³

He said: "We lived on the coast, in "al-Diaba" area in northeast al-Sheikh Zuwayed. That area is a gathering of around 50 houses belonging to al-Dib family with about 7 people in each house, so around 350-400 people in the area. Near al-Diaba area is another gathering of another family, Abu Dirb, of about 70 houses. Our house has an area of close to 300 square meters where my family of 8 lives. We had a citrus farm on the coast that belonged to my father and uncles, and it was all destroyed."

Faris added: "It all started with the Comprehensive Operation in February 2018. The area was under a total lockdown, we were surrounded and food and drink were prevented from entering the area for 3 months. They were really hard times. We had to walk a long distance to al-Sheikh Zuwayed for 2 kilograms of tomatoes. After the lockdown was lifted in May 2018, people of the buffer zone in Rafah moved and we stayed in our area. We told ourselves that we're very far from the buffer zone and our houses are safe, so why move? Not too long after, the military surrounded our area again and terrorists started showing up, and the military started randomly firing shots and shells. The power started going out most of the time, it was very hard to get food and drink, it became normal for us that someone died to a random gunshot, or someone was slaughtered by Takfiris, or a strike fell on someone's house. Our situation became worse than that in Syria. What happened to the people living in the buffer zone in Rafah exactly happened to us, so my family decided to leave al-Diaba to save ourselves and decided to temporarily move close by to "al-Sakadra" where we'd sleep and go home in the morning to tend to our homes and farms. We took our furniture to al-Sakadra on a cart. Honestly, we were terrified of the random shooting and terrorists killing people. We were living very hard times, I can not explain. There was no way to stay with no food or drink, We had to dig up holes in low areas near the sea shore to get water for ourselves and our kids. In addition to random airstrikes and clashes. It was a bloody war. We couldn't stay in such terrifying circumstances."

Faris said: "After we moved, our house was hit with artillery shells more than once and it was badly destroyed. Some neighboring houses were hit by airstrikes. After we moved to al-Sakadra, terrorists took over our houses in al-Diaba. They used to stay in the surrounding farms, then they moved to our empty houses to hide, so the military struck the houses, the Takfiris moved to the neighbouring house, so the military struck that one too, and that's how our houses were destroyed. The military later prohibited civilians from moving east from al-Sakadra toward al-Diaba, al-Maragda, and Abu-Shanar because Takfiris moved to those areas after we moved out."

103 - Fake name given to a forcibly displaced citizen from the cost of al-Sheikh Zuwayed.

Faris also said: "The situation in al-Sakadra became too bad as well, random airstrikes and clashes. It's become so scary, people dug up spaces like "basements" to hide their children during airstrikes or clashes to protect them."

He added: "During that time, people kept gradually moving to safe areas in or even outside North Sinai because of how hard life in the area had become. Families moved their furniture at their own expense, and had no help from the government, whether in the move or in finding replacement houses. Everything stayed the same till April 2020, when the military told the locals that the Takfiris were getting food and drink with the help of some locals, so in order to tighten the noose on the Takfiris, they had to evacuate al-Sakadra and close off al-Sheikh Zuwayed coast. And that's what happened. Al-Sakadra was turned into a military zone, the entire coast area was closed off from al-Sheikh Zuwayed till Rafah, and civilians were permanently displaced from the area. We moved to al-Sheikh Zuwayed. Till now, there are no compensations for anything. No government committees went to our houses or farms before they were destroyed to assess their costs, so how would they compensate us? Despite our houses being destroyed by military airstrikes with the claim of terrorist presence, we didn't demand compensation from the government or present any documents because we know they won't give us anything. Most of those who demanded compensation received nothing. Only one of my three uncles requested compensation, and his papers were put to the side and he hasn't received anything till now. Some of the people whose names are on official statements for compensation have not been compensated and were told to come back for their money after a few months because there was no money in the treasury. They scammed us all."

According to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court¹⁰⁴, "deportation or forcible transfer of population, when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, is a crime against humanity".

Blowing up al-Salam preparatory school and al-Shatii primary school

An eyewitness¹⁰⁵ told us that a military patrol blew up two schools on 3 September 2020; al-Salam middle school and al-Shatii elementary school in al-Sakadra village in al-Sheikh Zuwayed, which is the village whose citizens were evicted by Egyptian authorities in April 2020. Eyewitnesses stated that the houses located to the east of the village's water treatment plant were also blown up, as well as the village mosque. Neither the foundation team nor locals living close to the area could count the destroyed houses.

104 - Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court:

<https://www.ohchr.org/AR/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/InternationalCriminalCourt.aspx>

105 - The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights interviewed 212 locals and eyewitnesses during the period covered by the report.

The destruction of healthcare units in al-Sheikh Zuwayed

On 18 August 2020, an Egyptian military force destroyed two healthcare units, one in al-Sakadra village, and the other in al-Akour village, both in al-Sheikh Zuwayed, North Sinai. An eyewitness from Abu-Tawila village, near the incident place, told the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights that work in the healthcare unit in al-Akour had been suspended two years prior under military instructions, and that the locals witnessed the explosion and the smoke plumes rising from the place that turned to dust in seconds. When asked where citizens received medical care in the village, an eyewitness answered that they had assigned a local's house as replacement for the healthcare unit a long time ago.

About the healthcare unit in al-Sakadra, three local testimonies revealed that after the military launched an enforced displacement campaign of the locals, they blew up the healthcare unit, and turned the houses and shops to rubble.

The health situation in al-Sheikh Zuwayed regions and villages in particular, and North Sinai in general is very bad, with the lack of sufficient human and financial resources. To make matters worse, most of the 14 healthcare units in al-Sheikh Zuwayed were blown up or turned into military ambushes, leaving only one operational unit in "Abu-Tawila" village.

The International Law and related treaties protect healthcare units and hospitals from any military or revenge operations. Rules of the Customary international law offer healthcare and medical units protection during both international and non-international armed conflicts. Additional Protocol (II) to the Geneva Conventions, 1977 emphasises the obligation to protect and respect medical units and transports, and that they are not to be attacked.

VI. ISIS-affiliate group, Sinai Province, abuses

1 - Religious persecution

Religious minorities in Sinai faced several patterns of abuse which increased in frequency after former President Mohamed Morsi was overthrown in July 2013, reaching their peak after ISIS appeared in Sinai in 2014. The religious persecution of Christians and Sufis represents a prominent pattern of abuse by ISIS in Sinai, be it murder, abduction, detonation of or closing down places of worship, or forced displacement. Successive targeting led Christians in Rafah and al-Sheikh Zuwayed to move¹⁰⁶ to al-Arish with the outbreak of the armed conflict in 2013, before the increase of intensity of targeting Christians¹⁰⁷ by the end of January 2017, which led Christian families to move¹⁰⁸ from al-Arish to cities of the Delta and Suez Canal regions. Sufis have also suffered since the beginning of the conflict from the bombing of shrines¹⁰⁹, grave desecrations, abduction, murder, and prevention from upholding worship rituals, reaching the peak of targeting when ISIS targeted people praying in al-Rawda mosque in 2017, massacring 305 civilians¹¹⁰.

The period covered by the report witnessed ISIS continuing to target people with opposing ideological and religious views or beliefs¹¹¹, leading Christians living in or returning to Sinai to act in ways unlike their religious beliefs and freedom, according to eyewitnesses interviewed by the foundation team. A local in al-Arish¹¹² told us that he noticed returning Christian civilians who had moved from al-Arish in 2017 trying to keep out of sight, and women and girls often wearing head scarfs as not to be differentiated from

106 - Ismail al-Iskandarani, Christian panic in North Sinai, al-Akhbar Lebanon, 24 July 2013:

<https://www.al-akhbar.com/Arab/54699>

107 - Attacks targeting Christians in Egypt, BBC Arabic, 26 May 2017:

<https://www.bbc.com/arabic/media-40064914>

108 - Tens of Christians families flee al-Arish in Egypt after threats from militants, BBC Arabic, 24 February 2017:

<https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-39078663>

109 - Mohamed Hussein, The details of bombing two shrines in North Sinai.. The locals: Takfiris bombed the two shrines "Shamiaa" and "Sabiha" in "Mazar" cemetery.. Source: 4 similar bombings of different shrines the last of which were "al-Sheikh Zuwayed" and al-"Sheikh Hameed" preceded the bombing, Yom7, 9 November 2016:

<https://www.youm7.com/story/2016/11/9/2959924/تفاصيل-تفجير-ضريحين-في-شمال-سيناء-الأهالي-عناصر-تكفيرية-نسفت>

110 - 'I was waiting for my bullet': Accounts of the Rawda mosque attack, Mada Masr, 2 November 2017: <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2017/11/27/feature/politics/i-was-waiting-for-my-bullet-accounts-from-the-rawda-mosque-attack/>

111 - Bir al-Abd: ISIS increases religious persecution of Christians in Sinai, the government needs to protect minorities during armed conflict, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 18 April 2021:

<https://sinaifhr.org//show/80>

112 - The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights interviewed 212 locals and eyewitnesses during the period covered by the report.

Muslim women by militants, as women in al-Arish usually cover their hair with Hijab or wear Niqab. Christian women did not cover their hair in the past, before Christians were forced to move, but security threats forced them to use that behavior to hide. In an incident that took place on 5 August 2020, the Sinai Foundation recorded the abduction of two Christian citizens in al-Abtal village in western Sinai by ISIS militants. The victims are Bekhit Aziz Lamii and Yusef Samaan Gergis. "Bekhit" was later released after his family paid the militants a large ransom¹¹³.

Murder based on religious identity

Murder and forced disappearance of Christians can not be described, whether by standards of the Egyptian law and constitution, or international standards, as anything other than murder based on religious identity committed by an armed group against a homogeneously religious group, with the aim of despoiling of its members and terrorizing them. These practices can not be underestimated and considered individual actions or normal criminal behavior. On 7 November 2020, ISIS abducted¹¹⁴ a Coptic civilian called "Nabil Habashi Salama", 61 years old, outside his house in al-Ghozlan neighborhood in Bir al-Abd. He disappeared for around 160 days, for the group to announce on 17 April 2021 Nabil's murder through a video¹¹⁵ shared on Twitter. The video also contained threats against all Christians in Egypt, claiming that they cooperated with the Egyptian military.

The Foundation team met with Peter Nabil Habashi, the victim's son, who said: "My father is called Nabil Habashi Salama, 61. He was a merchant, and had a gold jewelry shop. My father was abducted near his house in al-Ghozlan neighborhood in Bir al-Abd on 7 November 2020 at 8 PM. He was on his way home and 3 unmasked people who looked young and had machine guns stopped him in the middle of the street near his house and forced a small pickup truck to stop, forced the driver out, and forced my dad in the car. When pedestrians tried to help my dad, the armed men fired shots in the air to scare the pedestrians and left with my dad."

113 - Bir al-Abd: ISIS increases religious persecution of Christians in Sinai, the government needs to protect minorities during armed conflict, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 18 April 2021:

<https://sinaifhr.org//show/80>

114 - The most notable abuses that took place in Sinai during the month of November, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 14 December 2020:

<https://sinaifhr.org//show/48>

115 - ISIS execute a Christian and two others in Sinai because they "supported the military", Euronews, 19 April 2021:

<https://arabic.euronews.com/2021/04/19/isis-execute-copt-and-2-others-in-sinai-due-to-supporting-egypt-army>

He added: "We reported the incident to the Bir al-Abd police station, but sadly the report was written up as against persons unknown. On 04.01.2021, security forces evicted my family from our home and forbade us from returning to the area. We are 5 households from the same family living on the same street as my father. The abductors later contacted us, and asked for a 3-million-pound ransom, claiming that it is a "Jizya (tribute) to be paid by Christians, if we paid, my dad goes free, if we didn't, they'd kill him. We don't have that kind of money and can't sell our properties in Bir al-Abd, and we're prohibited from reaching our gold shop. We notified the authorities and they promised to handle it, but nothing happened. Three months before my father was abducted, around August, a Christian called Bakhit Aziz Lamii was abducted, and the abductors called his family and asked for a large sum of money as ransom, and when the family paid, Lamii was released. When Amm Lamii was released, he told me that my father was incarcerated with him during the last month."

He added: "My father was abducted because he is a Christian, and he founded "The Church of the Virgin, Anba Karas and St. Abanoub", the only church in Bir al-Abd. I am scared for my father, scared they would kill him. Everything is a haze right now and nothing is clear because the abduction report was closed and written up as against unknown. It's been four months and I don't see real effort by the authorities to find my father. No government authorities contacted me to see what we could do about the ransom the abductors asked for."

This interview was conducted last March, before the murder of Nabil Habashi Salama. ISIS shared a video on 17 April 2021 recording the murder of Nabil, and as a result, the Coptic church mourned him, saying: "Hold on to your faith till death"¹¹⁶.

Egypt's constitution emphasises the Right to Life in articles 59 and 60, stating that "Every person has the right to a secure life. The state shall provide security and reassurance for citizens, and all those residing within its territory", and "The human body is inviolable. Any assault, defilement or mutilation thereof is a crime punishable by law". The International Humanitarian Law offers civilians clear protection from targeting during conflicts, as stated in common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions "violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds" of civilians and persons unable to fight is prohibited. Special protection is also devoted to minorities in several conventions, for example: The United Nations General Assembly declaration prohibits all kinds of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, as freedom of religion and religious belief expression and such are protected and are not to be coerced.

116 - Wael Ali, Coptic church mourns the martyr Nabil Habashi: «Hold on to your faith till death», Almasry Alyoum, 18 April 2021:
<https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2314039>

The Arab Charter on Human Rights approved by the League of Arab States in 2004 also prohibits depriving any person of their rights based on their ethnicity, color, sex, language, religion, political views, or national or social origin.

2 - The abduction and execution of local citizens

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights recorded cases of civilian abduction and murder at the hands of ISIS with the claim of their cooperation with the military by offering services or information about militant activity¹¹⁷. ISIS militants consider services or information offered to security forces as hostilities against them¹¹⁸, including working in construction projects or factories related to the military, as well as transporting supplies and gas for military personnel at ambushes in volatile regions. According to eyewitnesses interviewed by the Sinai Foundation, the military sometimes intentionally forces civilian drivers to transport supplies for ambushes in exchange for privileges, like allowing them to fuel their cars. Some locals agree due to the shortage and strict government restrictions on fuel for over two years, and sometimes locals agree in fear of prosecution in case of refusing military forces requests¹¹⁹. Despite the fact that those civilians are not part of any military or hostile operations, ISIS claims that they are on the military's side in the conflict and uses their services for the military as an excuse to target them and spread fear to stop locals from helping the military.

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights met with several North Sinai locals who witnessed or have close relations with ISIS's murder and execution victims. The Sinai Foundation recorded several abuses, including the murder of a boy no older than 18 years old¹²⁰. The group openly confessed to some of those crimes through written statements or videos under different claims, including refusing to follow the group's orders or ideological or religious differences.

117 - Interviews conducted by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights with a number of local citizens between 2019 and 2020.

118 - Sinai.. Militants kill nine drivers and set fire to their truck, Russia Today, 10 November 2017: https://arabic.rt.com/middle_east/909353-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A1/

119 - Interviews conducted by the Sinai Foundation with a number of local citizens, eyewitnesses and relatives of victims between 2019 and 2020.

120 - Monthly report of February, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 10 March 2021: <https://sinaifhr.org//show/69>

During the time period covered by the report, the Sinai Foundation team recorded the abduction of civilians by the group with the aim of interrogating them¹²¹ that later ended in executing some of them. We also recorded random killings of civilians working in military projects, like the group's attack on 22 June 2019 on civilian laborers working on building a wall around al-Arish airport, killing 5 of them¹²².

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights recorded tens of civilian abductions during the period covered by the report, most of which took place in Bir al-Abd, al-Sheikh Zuwayed, and al-Arish¹²³. All victims are civilians, uninvolved in the conflict, and should have immunity as civilians, as stated in laws of conflict. During the period covered by the report, and through observation and analysis of the group's official media outlets and the testimonies of witnesses, we noticed a pattern of abductions where the group does not mention the abduction through its media outlets, then the abducted are released after days of enforced disappearance and interrogation. In some cases, the group used psychological and physical torture to extract information.

We also noticed another pattern of abductions where the group releases statements through its official media outlets, claiming the abduction of civilians and describing them using certain phrases with definite connotation like "apostate and infidel", implying that the group is going to kill them, in accordance with the group's accustomed behavior, but the group did not release any information about them for long periods of time, sometimes reaching 18 months, and the fate of abducted civilians is still unknown, doubling their families' suffering. During the period covered by the report, the group was a semi-ruling party of some North Sinai regions for certain periods of time¹²⁴, practiced strategized violence against local citizens, and conducted "Sharia courts"¹²⁵ through which they conducted unfair trials and sentenced some people to death.

121 - Monthly report of August, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 8 October 2020: <https://sinaifhr.org//show/19>

122 - Egypt.. 5 laborers killed and others injured in a terrorist attack near al-Arish airport, Russia Today, 22 June 2019:

https://arabic.rt.com/middle_east/1027544-مقتل-اصابة-عمال-هجوم-إرهابي-مطار-العريش-/

123 - Interviews with several locals during 2019 and 2020.

124 - "ISIS controls five villages"... Mass displacement in Egypt's Sinai, Raseef22, 28 July 2020:

<https://raseef22.net/article/1079209-داعش-يسيطر-على-خمس-قرى-نزوح-جماعي-في-سيناء-مصر->

125 - Amr Said, Province of Sinai militants release footage of religious policing in North Sinai, Mada Masr, 28 March 2017:

<https://www.madamasr.com/ar/2017/03/28/news/u/ال-نشاط-ال-فيديو-جديد-ل-ولاية-سيناء-بدء-نشاط-ال->

Victim of making a living

The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights recorded on 24 October 2020 ISIS members abducting “Mahmoud Ismail Iskandar”, 67, citizen of al-Sakadra village in al-Sheikh Zuwayed who worked as a fisherman, only to announce his execution on 26 October 2020 through the group’s magazine, al-Nabaa¹²⁶. The group alleged in the statement that Ismail was killed after he was proven to have provided military checkpoints with fuel, adding that the military hired fishermen to provide checkpoints with supplies and fuel in exchange for allowing them to fish in the coast region. The group alleged that the military assigned some locals roles of transporting food and fuel to military checkpoints in the coast of al-Sheikh Zuwayed, using small boats or animals, adding that the military resorted to hiring civilians as a result of repetitive targeting of military supply lines in al-Sakadra and al-Maragda.

We met with a local citizen of al-Sheikh Zuwayed, which is where the fisherman lived after being displaced from his village, who revealed that Ismail’s family has not yet found his body, and that they learned of his murder after the Takfiris published an article revealing that the fisherman was executed by gunshot because of his cooperation with the military, and that Ismail had never worked as anything other than a fisherman. The local added that the military prohibited fishing on the coasts of North Sinai since the beginning of the Comprehensive Operation in February 2018, and only allowed some fishermen to fish in exchange for delivering supplies to checkpoints, after Takfiris targeted military mechanisms more than once in the coast of al-Sheikh Zuwayed regions.

The witness added that the fisherman was an “al-Sakadara” local, in al-Sheikh Zuwayed, and he had recently settled in the city after being displaced from the village by the military forces alongside a large number of the village inhabitants last April, and only small number of the inhabitants remained in the village.

A local truck driver confirmed in an interview with the Sinai Foundation that military ambushes on the coast of al-Sheikh Zuwayed and Rafah use civilian drivers to transport supplies and fuel, which puts their life in danger on unsafe and dangerous roads. The military forces have resorted to that after ISIS forces started targeting military forces transporting supplies to military checkpoints in the area. He added that ISIS members in the area stalk military forces and those they consider as associates, which is what happened with Ismail Mahmoud Iskandar.

126 - Al-Nabaa magazine, issue number 258, 12 Rabi al-Awwal 1442 Hijri, (29.10.2020).

He went to check on his house he was forced to leave so they killed him and hid his body

The Sinai Foundation recorded ISIS members killing “Ahmed Hassan Suliman Omaira”, 43, on 3 May 2019, who lived in al-Diaba area on the coast in western al-Sheikh Zuwayed in North Sinai, while on his way to check on his house from which he was forcibly displaced, after getting permission from the military to go into the restricted area, leading to ISIS killing him with the claim of his cooperation with the military.

The Sinai Foundation met with “Hassan”¹²⁷, one of the victim’s relatives, who told us the details of Ahmed’s murder by the group.

Hassan said: “We’re members of al-Dib family. We lived in al-Diaba gathering at the coast in western al-Sheikh Zuwayed in North Sinai. We were displaced because of the multiple operations carried out by Takfiris against the military near our area where military soldiers and officers died, and each time, the military would retaliate by striking the area, and more than ones the strikes fell among houses, so people started running away fearing for their lives, and some people stayed. After a while, the military ordered the evacuation of al-Sakadra, al-Maragda, and al-Diaba coastal areas, to purify the area of Takfiris, and they prohibited civilians from entering the region. That was around March 2019, and that’s when we hurriedly left our houses, taking only the furniture we managed to take on carts and left some stuff behind, and we stayed in a rented house in al-Sheikh Zuwayed.”

Hassan added: “In late April 2019, Ahmed decided to go home and bring some things we left behind. He arrived at the ambush on the coast near “Dayan Rock” and took permission to go to al-Diaba to take the rest of the furniture, and he got permission and went home. He had a cart because cars aren’t allowed. Two ISIS members went to him and asked him how he made it there, and why, so he told them he took permission from the coast ambush and went to get his things, the house’s metal gate and some furniture, and leave. They left him for ten minutes then returned, told him they wanted to talk to him for five minutes, he went with them and he was not worried because he had no affiliations with the military. Ahmed disappeared for a week, then on 3 May 2019, people told us that “Sinai Tribal Union” Facebook page uploaded the news that ISIS announced killing Ahmed Omaira. The same day, National Intelligence called Ahmed’s brother and told him that Takfiris killed Ahmed, and to go and get his body from al-Diaba by their house, because it would be hard for the military to go there. It took us a long time to take permission from the surrounding ambushes, and when we reached the place the Intelligence office told us about, we didn’t find a body, only blood traces. It seems like the Takfiris killed him and took the body.”

127 - Fake name given to one of Ahmed Omaira’s relatives.

Hassan said: “What happened afterwards made things even harder on the family. We couldn’t prove that Ahmed is dead. At first, the family filed a report at the police station to prove the incident and obtain a death certificate, but the police refused, saying that there is no death certificate without a burial permit, and no burial permit without a body. Where are we supposed to get the body from if the government couldn’t retrieve it?! Ahmed died and left behind a wife and 6 children. He worked as a laborer in al-Azhar and his family was supposed to get a pension to help with rent and education. We need government officials to help with the death certificate. We talked to many officials but no one helped. Security authorities know of the death but are not helping with the death certificate.”

Fatir gathering

On 27 September 2019, Tofaha ambush¹²⁸ located near Tofaha village in Bir al-Abd was attacked by militants, and after the attack, ISIS increased its activity against civilians through establishing ambushes on the road and storming houses, According to the testimony of the eyewitnesses we met, we documented that ISIS abducting then slaughtering¹²⁹ two civilians, Salama Salam Aslim Salman, 40, and Khaled Ata Salman, 41.

The Foundation team met with Saleem¹³⁰, a local living in Fatir gathering, who revealed the details:

He said: “Fatir gathering is located between southern al-Kharaba village and southern al-Nagah village. The gathering has around 50 houses and more than 300 citizens. It had an elementary school with 70 students in grades one to six. After the attack on the ambush in late 2019, we started seeing a motorbike with 2 militants come to Fatir gathering once in a while and leave without talking to anyone. We notified the military when we saw them the first time, but the military only came on Monday, 3 February 2020, and clashed with the two militants killing one of them. The other militant was chased by the military to the south of Fatir, but he escaped.

128 - Mohamed Ali al-Sohagi, Sinai Province attack on a military checkpoint in Bir al-Abd kills 8 and injures 10, al-Manassa, 27 September 2019:

<https://almanassa.com/ar/story/12979>

129 - Sinai Province shares a video showing the slaughter of two young men the group said to have been “spies” for the Egyptian military, Nawafez news website, 5 March 2020:

<https://nwafez.com/ولاية-سيناء-ينشر-فيديو-لذبح-شابين-قالت/>

130 - Fake name given to a farmer living in Fatir gathering in al-Nagah village in Bir al-Abd.

Saleem said: "The next day, Tuesday 4 February 2020, two militants on a motorbike entered Fatir gathering and went to Salama Salam Aslim Salman's house while he was standing by the house. He had gathered tomatoes and was going to go sell them in the market. One of the militants stood with the bike at a distance, and the other went to Salama and told him they wanted to talk to him for five minutes. They walked for about 400 meters, then another motorbike arrived with two other militants and they took Salama and left Fatir. About two months before they abducted Salama, militants met Salama and his 10-year-old son while Salama was gathering hoses and motors he was paid to collect by people who moved and left them behind around 3 kilometers south of Fatir. He was transporting the stuff on a cart. The militants asked Salama what he was doing there, and he told them he'd been paid by people to bring them their hoses with his cart. The militants told him that he must be a spy for the oppressors, and he swore to them he was only working with his cart (karoo)¹³¹, so they told him if they saw him there again they would consider him a spy and slaughter his son before his eyes as an example to others."

Saleem said: "We reported the abduction to the military, but no one showed up. I left my house for a whole week after Salama was taken because honestly I was scared I too would be taken, and when Salama didn't return, I thought about moving from Fatir. Anyways, 17 days after Salama was abducted, I think on Thursday 20 February 2020 at 1 AM, two militants went to Khaled Ata Salman's house, and asked him for the 6500 pounds he made that day from selling sheep at the Thursday market in Bir al-Abd, he really had sold sheep that day at the market for that price. They talked to him for 3 hours, then took him in his house clothes without changing, took his car, a 2013 white pickup, and the 6500 pounds. The next day, Friday 21 February 2020, aircrafts started shelling south of Fatir and people started getting scared and moving. People left fearing abduction and airstrikes. No military personnel came by and we did not know what was happening, and in 3 days, no one remained in Fatir gathering. I moved with my family to a nearby village in Bir al-Abd and built ourselves sheds and stayed there, me and my children. We left behind a house and a large farm in Fatir. The future was unclear. I'd look at my children and think I did not want them to end up like Salama's kids. Salama had 4 sons and two daughters. They only have God to look out for them now."

131 - Karoo: a local term for a cart drawn by a horse or a donkey.

Saleem said: “The shock was on 5 March 2020, after I received news of Salama’s death. One of my relatives told me the terrorists shared a video slaughtering Salama and Khaled, saying that that’s the fate of those who work with the military. Salama never worked with the military. He’d always been a farmer, growing some vegetables, selling them, and supporting his family with the money, or he transported things for people with his cart. He was a good man and he minded his own business. He didn’t deserve to die like that. May God avenge his death. I still can’t watch the video till now, it would be very hard to watch Salama be slaughtered. We were shocked after the news. We haven’t found his body till now. Those who watched the video said that it took place somewhere with farms, probably in Tofaha.”

Being a lawyer is not a crime

The foundation recorded through eyewitness interviews the abduction of 6 men by Sinai Province members on 12 June 2019 at an ambush set up by the group at around 9 PM on the international coastal road by Sabika area between Mazar and al-Maidan villages western al-Arish¹³². According to eyewitnesses, group militants stopped cars and searched them, then took 6 men after checking their ID cards. The group later released the abducted civilians, keeping the two lawyers; Mahmoud Said Lutfi, 55, and Kamal Mohamed Awad, 54¹³³.

Days later, the group released an article on the incident in issue 187 of ISIS’s al-Nabaa weekly magazine¹³⁴, confirming their claim on the abduction through what they called a “security ambush”, saying that two apostate lawyers were kept to be brought before the group’s Sharia court. The group said they kept the two lawyers because they were “apostate and infidel” because of their work at courts that rule with civil laws instead of laws of Islamic Sharia. Testimonies¹³⁵ confirmed that randomness is the most prominent trait of detention by the group, and that the goal behind the security checkpoints they set up is to show power and ability to set up a temporary checkpoint for up to one hour in some cases on the international road connecting al-Arish and al-Qantara, and that in many cases where civilians were detained, they were later released. Some families said that the jobs and only source of income of some of the detainees are the reason they are taken by the group, denying any relationship between the victims and the military or police. For example, Kamal Mohamed Awad, the lawyer abducted since mid 2019 is a prominent leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in North Sinai, which confirms that the group violates the rights of civilians who are in no way part of the military operations in Sinai.

132 - Postponing North Sinai cases after the abduction of two lawyers along with others, BBC Arabic, 14 June 2019:

<https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-48642711>

133 - The previous source.

134 - Al-Nabaa magazine, issue 187, 17 Shawwal 1440 Hijri (20.06.2019)

135- Eyewitness testimonies acquired by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights between 2019 and 2020.

Al-Gora village

In the early morning of 4 July 2020, a group of armed militants snuck into al-Gora around 7 kilometers to the south of al-Sheikh Zuwayed center, and killed 3 citizens; customary judge Salama Abu-Maiouf al-Baly, 58, Mahmoud Mohamed Khidr Salman, 54, employee at the Real Estate Taxation authority, and his son, Azhar high school student and Fajr Imam at the village main mosque, Mohamed, 16¹³⁶. An eyewitness told the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights that masked men holding machine guns, most likely ISIS members, surrounded Salama's house and fired at it, resulting in women screaming which led neighbors and villagers, including Mahmoud and his son Mohamed, to hurry toward the judge's house to see what was happening, and Mahmoud and his son were immediately killed.

A village youth who was among the people trying to aid the victims told us that the reason behind targeting the judge's house was one of the judge's sons' cooperation with security authorities against the extremist group, and that the accountant and his son were unarmed civilians who tried to help the judge and stop the militants from killing him. Four civilians from the village also confirmed that the civilian victims never had any affiliation with any armed group.

They added that the locals are the ones who moved the dead bodies to al-Sheikh Zuwayed hospital in a small civilian pickup truck, then to al-Arish hospital, because no ambulance made it to the area. The victims were buried in al-Goura village cemetery, 3 days after the incident.

Extrajudicial executions and murders committed by the group and recorded by the Sinai Foundation show that the group's behavior aims at revenge, terrorizing, or undermining civilian rights. The group, being a party of the bloody armed conflict in Sinai, is obligated by the International Humanitarian Law to differentiate between civilians and combatants. This principle which was emphasized by article 48 of the additional protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions, 1977 applies to all parties in an armed conflict and stays in effect no matter the type of conflict or the parties involved. Article 51, act 2 of the same protocol clearly states that citizens and civilians are generally protected, and are not to be attacked or threatened, and that they enjoy this protection as long as they do not take direct part in hostilities, and all conflicting parties must abide by these regulations.

136 - The most notable abuses that took place in Sinai during the month of July, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 8 October 2020:

3 - Indiscriminate attacks affecting civilians and civilian properties

The period covered by the report witnessed an increase in civilian casualties as a result of explosive devices and mines. The Foundation documenting the killing of 22 civilians, including 10 women and 7 children, in addition to the injury of 23 others, including 5 children. The villages of Bir al-Abd¹³⁷, which were controlled by ISIS and from which the local residents were displaced for about 70 days, starting from the date of July 21, 2020, witnessed the most prominent bloody chapter. These regions¹³⁸ suffered from explosions of exploding devices and foreign objects planted by the group or left behind in streets and houses after the group's retreat¹³⁹. The Sinai Foundation for Human Rights recorded 8 such incidents.

Despite ISIS planting the explosives and its responsibility for these attacks, the Egyptian authorities who regained control of the area are obligated to protect civilian lives¹⁴⁰, whether by guiding civilians not to return to the area, or by combing through and completely securing the area before allowing civilians to return. In addition, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights recorded the targeting of several healthcare units and civilian objects by ISIS. Five such abuses took place in Bir al-Abd, including the bombing of a shrine¹⁴¹, the burning of a youth center and the looting of healthcare centers. ISIS also executed a suicide bombing at the public Tuesday market¹⁴² in al-Sheikh Zuwayed city center, where a suicide bomber targeted a security patrol, killing three civilians and injuring others, in addition to killing and injuring several policemen.

137 - Province of Sinai militants occupy North Sinai villages forcing mass displacement, Mada Masr, 28 July 2020:

<https://www.madamasr.com/en/2020/07/28/feature/politics/province-of-sinai-militants-occupy-north-sinai-villages-forcing-mass-displacement/>

138 - Bir al-Abd: 3 women and a baby killed and a man and a child injured in explosion of an exploding device in Iqtiya village, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 13 October 2020:

<https://sinaifhr.org/show/21>

139 - Press release: No safe return if the authorities fail to fulfill their duty, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 11 October 2020:

<https://sinaifhr.org/show/20>

140 - Press release: No safe return if the authorities fail to fulfill their duty, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 11 October 2020:

<https://sinaifhr.org/show/20>

141 - The most notable abuses that took place in Sinai during the month of July, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 8 October 2020:

<https://sinaifhr.org/show/17>

142 - Egypt: Seven killed in a suicide bombing in North Sinai, Deutsche Welle, 9 September 2019:

<https://www.dw.com/ar/مصر-مقتل-سبعة-أشخاص-في-هجوم-الانتحاري-بشمال-سيناء/a-48265404>

A - Victims of exploding devices in Bir al-Abd villages

The family of Eid Harb

On 12 October 2020, the detonation of an exploding device¹⁴³ in a civilian vehicle led to the death of 5 civilians, 2 women and 3 children, and the injury of a man, who were previously displaced and returning to their homes in (Iqtiya) village in Bir al-Abd, according to an eyewitness and medical source interviewed by the Sinai Foundation researchers. According to the data acquired by the foundation, the victims are:

Dead: 1- Wafaa Seleem Mohamed, 28. Her daughters; Dema Nour Eid, 9 months, and Sumaia Nour Eid, 3.

2- Lamiaa Eid Harb, 17.

3-Fatima Nasr Abdullatif, 25, was pregnant at the time of the explosion .

Injured: 1- Anwar Eid Harb, 26, husband to Fatima.

The Foundation team met with Salama¹⁴⁴, a local living in Iqtiya village, who revealed the details, who said: "It was our second day back at the village since our displacement for about 70 days. We'd started fixing up the houses and seeing what furniture we needed to get. We heard an explosion with dhuhr (noon) prayer coming from the village center . We went to see what happened and found military soldiers crying. I asked what happened and was told a land mine exploded in a soldier called Ali. His colleagues were collecting his body parts and the road was destroyed from the blast that was so strong to the point that the next day, part of the dead soldier's leg was found about 400 meters from the place of the explosion. Anyways, they collected the soldier's body parts and left, and we went back to the house. At around 3 PM, we heard an explosion near Eid Harb's family home and saw smoke and stuff being blown away by the explosion. The blast was about 300 meters away from us and we heard screams. I and two others ran toward them. We were scared of other landmines in the ground, but we arrived and found others who'd made it there before us, and we learned that an explosive device exploded in Eid Harb's family when they were getting into their car."

He added: "The neighbors took the injured to Bir al-Abd hospital, and I stayed with others and collected body parts. We found Sumaia, Nour's 3-year-old daughter, blasted 50 meters from the place of the explosion. We put Fatima, Wafaa, and her daughter Dema in another car. Nour tried to give his wife Wafaa CPR, hoping she might breathe, but sadly she'd already been dead since the moment of the explosion, alongside her daughter and Fatima, and in the hospital, Wafaa's other daughter Sumaia, and her aunt Lamiaa died.

143 - The most notable abuses that took place in Sinai during the month of October, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 22 November 2020:

<https://sinaifhr.org/show/35>

144 - Fake name given to an eyewitness interviewed by the Sinai Foundation.

May god help Nour through this; he lost his wife, two daughters, his sister Lamiaa, and his sister-in-law Fatima who was a newlywed and was pregnant in that explosion. When the military arrived at the scene, some people asked them why let them back to Iqtiya to die and why not comb the area first, so an officer answered saying: 'One of my soldiers died too, you're not the only ones dying', some people and the military were arguing loudly."

Sharifa and her family

On 24 October 2020, the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights recorded¹⁴⁵ the death of 5 women and injury of four civilians from the same family by two successive explosions of explosive devices planted near their house in Iqtiya village in Bir al-Abd¹⁴⁶.

An eyewitness from the village told us the details of the incident, where an explosive device meant for military forces killed two women, and after the explosion, the rest of the household hurried to see what had happened, only for another device to explode, killing three women, and injuring 4 others with shrapnel to different parts of the body. The victims are:

Dead:

- 1- Sharifa Abdulmalik Ibrahim Salim, 40.
- 2- Isbiha Abdulmalik Ibrahim Salim, 39.
- 3- Fatima Abdulmalik Ibrahim Salim, 65.
- 4- Fatima Salman Salim, 20.
- 5- Madeha Saleh Mohamed Sulaiman , 45.

Injured:

- 1- Reda Hassan Yousef, 45.
- 2- Shady Salem Abdulmalik, 35.
- 3- Riyad Ibrahim Salim, 15.
- 4- Ibrahim Mohamed Ibrahim, 16.

The Foundation team met with Ali¹⁴⁷, an eyewitness who came to the site a short while after the explosion told the foundation team the details of what happened.

He said: "On 24 October 2020, at 4 PM, I was in the farm trying to fix it up after we left it for 3 months because armed militants took control and there were military operations in the village. While I was working, I heard an explosion somewhere nearby and saw smoke. I live on the outskirts of the village, one kilometer or less from the explosion site.

145 - "Bir al-Abd" villages: "ISIS" explosives and Egyptian authorities negligence cause the fall of new civilian victims, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 24 October 2020:

<https://sinaifhr.org/show/27>

146 - The most notable abuses that took place in Sinai during the month of October, Sinai Foundation for Human Rights, 22 November 2020:

<https://sinaifhr.org/show/35>

147 - Fake name given to an eyewitness interviewed by the foundation team.

When I heard the explosion, I got in my car with two people who worked at the farm and went to the explosion site, we saw a gathering of people and learned that an explosive device had blown up in “Sharifa” while she was cleaning her brother’s house so they could return and live there¹⁴⁸. We found pieces of flesh torn apart, it was a terrible sight, and we started gathering the pieces. While gathering body parts, we found different parts, meaning there was another victim other than Sharifa. We asked who was with her because we found parts of a second body, and the man who drove them to the house replied telling us that he drove Sharifa and her niece Fatima to the house in the morning.”

He added: “People started gathering, coming from al-Maqaad (a place where people gather for occasions) where they were for Eid Mohamed Eid al-Kalgy’s funeral, he’d died a couple of days earlier by a landmine explosion too. Anyways, an ambulance was called and two ambulances arrived about half an hour later. We put the body parts we gathered in plastic bags and put those in the ambulance. The explosion was so bad, we found Fatima’s upper half around 150 meters away. We could only gather the larger body parts, the smaller ones remained and were eaten by crows. We only gathered what we could see because it was almost sunset. After giving what we could find and the information we had to the ambulances, the ambulances left and we went back to try and move the victims’ families away from the house.”

He said: “Sharifa and Fatima’s family members were sitting at the house, crying and screaming. We were starting to console them and tell them to go home and that staying at the house wouldn’t do anything when the women came out of the house. I was looking at Madeha, helping her mother walk and crying, followed by Isabiha and Reda, when Madeha stepped on a mine 3 meters from the house, before my very eyes! 50 or more people were at the place of the explosion. Suddenly, the place was filled with black smoke and there was a thunderous explosion. Most people fell to the ground from the intensity of the blast, and when the smoke started clearing, we started checking to see who’d died or was affected by the explosion.”

148 - Information given by the witness: “During their return, there were remaining Takfiris and one of them met a neighbor and told him that there were mines in the house, so the owners got scared and would not go near the house and notified the military. The military then went to the house and found a mine, took it outside and detonated it, then told the owners that the house was clean. The Takfiris had camped in that house when people left, so the owners did not go to the house till the military told them it was afe. A military delegate blamed one of the victims’ relatives and said that he had warned them not to go to the house yet because it had not been properly inspected, so I’m not sure if he really warned them or not.”

He added: "There were people on the ground and people covered in dust, and there was a woman's head on the ground around 20 meters from the crater created by the explosion, and we couldn't tell who she was, there were pieces of flesh and bone. Isabeha's body was the only one intact, she'd died due to a piece of shrapnel that hit her in the head. Another piece of shrapnel blasted Reda's arm off where she was holding Isbeha consoling her after her daughter's death. People carried the injured and started transporting them to the hospital in their cars and called an ambulance that arrived about half an hour later."

Ali said: "It took us a while to start gathering the parts because people were scared, but some youths volunteered and carried the intact body, and some of them gathered the body parts they could see. By dark, the place became very scary and people were scared of stepping on a mine. We put the parts and pieces we gathered in the ambulance, and people started leaving and going back to al-Maqaad to continue mourning Eid Mahmoud and wait for the new funeral."

He added: "The Next day, a military delegate said that the military is telling us to go pick up a body part of one of the victims. Young men found it east of the house, meaning that it was blown 10 meters over and fell about 30 meters from the house. It was Madeha's upper half and her face was recognizable. They buried it in a new grave other than the one where the rest of her body was buried. Eid's family gave al-Maqaad over to Abdulmalik's family for a new funeral and mourning. Families started giving al-Maqaad over for funerals, and no one knows who will be next. Some locals took their children and left the village, fearing an uncertain fate. We don't know who's next, after Eid Harbs family, and the young man Eid Mohamed, and Abdulmalik's family. Till this day people still find explosive devices and notify the military to come and detonate them. People are living in fear. It's normal now if you hear an explosion to see most people on their roofs looking to see where the explosion was coming from."

B - Suicide bombing in "Tuesday market" in al-Sheikh Zuwayed

On 9 April 2019, there was a suicide bombing at the Tuesday market in al-Sheikh Zuwayed city center in North Sinai. An ISIS militant wearing an explosive vest targeted a security patrol, killing 3 civilians and injuring 27 others, in addition to killing 5 policemen and injuring 3 others¹⁴⁹. Tuesday market is the largest gathering of civilians in the city center, and the largest weekly folk market to which locals go to shop for vegetables, chicken, meat, clothes, and livestock.

149 - Province of Sinai claims responsibility for Sheikh Zuwayed suicide bombing that Interior Ministry says killed 7, injured 26, Mada Masr, 9 April 2019:

<https://www.madamasr.com/en/2019/04/09/news/u/province-of-sinai-claims-responsibility-for-sheikh-zuwayed-suicide-bombing-that-interior-ministry-says-killed-7-injured-26/>

The Foundation team met with an owner of a shop in the market vicinity, who said: "Every Tuesday, the police place two armored cars and a Nissan car outside the market, and the policemen take chairs from shops and sit in the shade of a tree and call on walking people to check their ID cards, and take some people into the armored car. They also watched foreign women who bought a lot of goods, saying the women take the goods for the Takfiris. We're used to that, but it makes people nervous, and some people are too scared to come to the market. On the day of the explosion, the policemen were standing in the middle of the road, they'd barely gotten there and parked the armored cars and were just beginning to start searching people and checking IDs, when we heard a huge explosion and saw smoke and people running. Women, children, and men, everyone was running and no one knew what was happening."

He added: "We quickly closed our shops, especially because policemen far from the explosion started hysterically firing. I saw a woman on the ground covered in blood, but she was moving, so we ran toward her, and took her to the hospital in a pickup truck. The scene at the hospital was terrifying; so many bleeding people, including children. One of the kids had a bleeding eye and had injuries all over. The scene made my hair stand on end. Women were screaming and covered in blood. Locals kept bringing more injured people into the hospital, the ambulance wasn't the one transporting people. Many people donated blood. Then the victims, both dead and injured, were transported to al-Arish hospital, some in an ambulance and some in a pickup truck."

The Foundation team met with "Aisha"¹⁵⁰, an eyewitness of the Suicide bombing in the market, who said: "I swear I haven't been to the market since that day. I was buying things for the house and I wouldn't wish what happened on anyone. I was just going into the market from between shops and I found myself thrown to the ground from the intensity of the explosion. Thank god my face was only cut but I didn't need the hospital. Those are not the actions of Muslims and god would not like that! The market is full of people and women!"

The Foundation team got in contact with "Kareem"¹⁵¹ a street vendor who witnessed and was injured in the incident, he said:

"I left my house after 6 AM, spread the crates of goods at the edge of the market and started calling on customers. I saw a man I didn't know walk toward the policeman in the middle of the road, then the explosion happened and smoke covered the place and women started screaming very loudly. I later learned that the man I saw blew himself up in front of the policeman who was sitting under the tree that policemen always use before the market. You know, on the day of the market no one asks who people are, people

150 - Fake name given to an eyewitness interviewed by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights.

151 - Fake name given to an eyewitness interviewed by the Foundation team.

come from all over to shop. We are always scared, and we honestly expected something like that to happen at the market because Takfiris hate the people of al-Sheikh Zuwayed and believe they support the military. Those Takfiris are only killers. All they do is kill. They are the reason behind the suffering of the people of Rafah and al-Sheikh Zuwayed and all the destruction. We've seen it all over the past years; gunshots, explosions, shells, we have kids that were born and raised during war and know nothing other than death and the sounds of gunshots."

Eyewitness reports negate what the Sinai Province group announced in its video claiming the attack. The video stated that a suicide bomber called "Abu Hagar al-Masry" attacked police officers near al-Sheikh Zuwayed police station, and did not say that the attack took place at the city center in the crowded Tuesday market, and that most victims were civilians.

C - Sheikh Abu-Kitan shrine

Members of the Sinai Province group blew up the shrine of Sheikh Zbu-Kitan on 22 July 2020. The shrine is located in Iqtiya village, according to eyewitnesses who spoke with the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights. Armed groups in Sinai have executed similar attacks before, like blowing up the shrine of al-Sheikh Zuwayed in 2012¹⁵², and the shrines of Shamia and Sabiha in Mazar village¹⁵³ in southern al-Arish in 2016.

D - Martyr Ahmed al-Mansy youth center

On 21 July 2020, ISIS members burned down the Iqtiya youth center¹⁵⁴, called "Martyr Ahmed al-Mansy" youth center, after attacking Rabaa village camp and the following clashes in several villages. Eyewitnesses from the village said that the attackers raised their group flag in front of the center.

150 - Fake name given to an eyewitness interviewed by the Sinai Foundation for Human Rights.

