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Arab NGO Network for Development
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية



Egypt: “Cyber crime” law another massive blow for freedom of expression

The passing of the so called “cybercrime law” is another worrisome development for citizens in Egypt, adding another layer to the already repressive freedom of expression situation in the county. [Signed by President Abdelfattah al-Sisi in August 2018](#), the law provides the State with the authority to block websites it deems pose threats to national security or the economy. Administrators and visitors to these sites may face fines and jail times for doing so. The law was passed by Parliament in June 2018.

The Cybercrime law was ratified in a current wave tightening access to the internet that has seen over [500 websites](#) taken down since last year. According to the [Arab NGO Network for Development](#), social media has been key tool for mobilisation in Egypt since the people’s uprisings in 2011. “The potential and power of social media has expectedly made it a real threat in many countries facing restrictions. However, the new law in Egypt is a real blow on civic space. It will stifle the right to freedom of expression and be a push for self-censorship.”

Civil society has noted this growing trend with concern, with several international and regional human rights organizations issuing statements against the law. The [CIVICUS Monitor](#), a tool used to measure the state of civic space in countries around the world, rates Egypt as CLOSED, documenting several cases of violations on freedoms of assembly, association and expression. The [2018 State of Civil Society Report](#) noted such crackdowns on internet freedom as a “global online emergency.”

The Egyptian law has draconian provisions that aim to completely stifle online freedoms. For example, it criminalises the publication of personal photos of individuals without their consent and provides for heavy penalties for those found guilty of doing so. Those found guilty of publishing photos of others without their consent can be jailed for a minimum of 6 months or handed fines of between LE50,000-LE100,00 (approximately US \$ 2800 – US \$ 5600). Editors, developers, social media officers and hosts of websites could also face a minimum of two years in jail and fines ranging from LE20,000-LE200,000 (approximately US \$ 1116 and US \$ 11200) according to [Mada Masr](#).

Furthermore, Internet Service Providers could face fines of LE5-10 million (US \$ 560,000) and lose their operating licenses for failure to collect and store information about internet usage for 180 days. Furthermore, social media users with more than 5000 followers will be placed under the supervision of Egypt's media regulator, the Supreme Council for the Administration of the Media.

This new law is in clear violation of Egypt’s Constitution, which enshrines the right to freedom of expression, as well as violates Egypt’s human rights obligations as signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in particular of its Article 19. Therefore, ANND and CIVICUS call on the Egyptian government to:



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- Suspend the law Cybercrime law immediately, while amending it to bring it in line with Egypt's international legal obligations to ensure protection of digital rights and freedom of expression
- Ensure that further measures taken in the context of cybercrime remain in full conformity with international human rights standards — including those that apply to the freedoms of expression, information, opinion and association

[Arab NGO Network for Development \(ANND\)](#) is a regional network organisation working in 12 Arab countries that aims to enhance and strengthen civil society advocacy on social and economic policy-making processes. ANND is the regional research partner for CIVICUS Monitor covering the Arab region.

CIVICUS is a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world. Founded in 1993, we proudly promote marginalised voices, especially from the Global South, and have members in more than 160 countries throughout the world.

For more information or media enquiries

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