

# Study: 35 new prisons ordered built in Egypt in last 10 years

By  
[Mada Masr](#)  
April 13, 2021



Egyptian authorities have issued orders to build 35 new prisons in the last ten years, according to a [report](#) published by the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) on Sunday, including six ordered built within just the past three months.

Lawyer Nasser Amin, a member of the National Council for Human Rights, described the rapid escalation in Egypt's prison infrastructure as "frightening," telling Mada Masr that it reflects a ramping up in the rate of people being arrested and detained and raises concerns about the conditions in which detainees are kept and the capacity of monitoring bodies to provide the proper oversight.



According to ANHRI, 26 of the new prisons are central prisons, overseen by security directorates, where detainees serving sentences of under three months, or detainees in remand detention, are held. Central prisons can normally hold hundreds of detainees.

Central prisons may be instated as separate entities, or detention facilities at local police stations may be administratively designated as central prisons. Estimates as to the total number of central prisons in Egypt vary: in 2016, ANHRI [recorded](#) 122 central prisons in Egypt, while the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights [recorded](#) 137 in the same year.

ANHRI Executive Director Gamal Eid told Mada Masr that the reason the majority of new detention facilities are central prisons could be due to the fact that this category of prison is less costly than other types of detention facilities and can receive detainees from more than one police station and security directorate.

Seven of the new facilities are general prisons, overseen by the Prison Authority under the Interior Ministry, where male convicts are held if they are serving sentences that exceed three months but

do not fall into the most severe category of sentence. The general prisons also house some categories of detainees with the most severe sentences — termed sentences with hard labor, though in practice the sentence type means they are entitled to fewer visits — including women, those over 60 years old, have health issues, or have completed half of their prison term. General prisons can hold thousands of prisoners at a time.

The final two new detention facilities built since 2011 are *liman* prisons, which also fall under the Interior Ministry, and which hold those sentenced to hard labor.. The *liman* facilities, like the general prisons, can hold thousands of detainees.

Before 2011, there were 47 general and *liman* prisons nationwide.

ANHRI notes that central prisons are not subject to judicial supervision, though, according to Amin, all prisons should be subject to supervision by courts and prosecution offices according to the Constitution. Amin told Mada Masr that the capacity of these bodies to regulate and monitor the increasing number of detainees held in prisons and police stations is cause for concern, especially given that their capacity was already stretched thin before the 2011 revolution.

In 2016, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights lawyer Reda Marei recorded only five visits by the Public Prosecution to prisons over a 38-month period, none of which were to central prisons.

Other types of detention facility include police stations, local security directorates, military prisons and police camps.