



SIS: Fabrication & Propagation of Lies

The State Information Service's official response to Human Rights Watch's Report on Sinai

Introduction:

Once again Human Rights Watch circulates lies regarding the human rights situation in Egypt. This comes in a long pattern of false information HRW has attributed to the situation in Egypt, as in September 2017 HRW issued a report alleging 19 cases of torture in Egyptian prisons without providing any real evidence, this despite numerous calls we made on HRW to submit such any actual evidence they have to the Egyptian Public Prosecutors office which in turn investigated those allegations and found that they were not true after a lengthy probe. Then in 2018 Human Rights Watch issued a variety of unfounded statements and report on the situation in Egypt including one on Khaled Hassan (a defendant being prosecuted for his affiliation with Wilayat Sina'a an affiliate of ISIS) whom they claimed was subjected to enforced disappearance and torture only to find out later that their claims carried no veracity whatsoever.

HRW remain faithful to its foul habits regarding its questionable coverage of Egypt and presented us with another report on May 28th, 2019 regarding the situation in Northern Sinai. The latest report carried a multitude of false allegations and it was based on sources lacking any credibility as they were mainly based on entities that are in a state of constant enmity with the Egyptian State.

The content of the report included many alleged cases that are entirely unsupported by any real evidence, as if this report was meant to only be read by amateurs.

Therefor the Human Rights Unit of the State Information Service prepared this detailed comprehensive response to the report which asses and evaluates the allegations made by HRW.

A Flawed & Biased Methodology

1) The Interviews: The report claimed that 54 interview were conducted with local residents from the Sinai without clarifying many essential information to validate their truthfulness

- a. HRW claimed it has conducted the interviews they used in creating this report with local residents of the Sinai in Egypt and abroad however HRW kept the identity of interviewees anonymous. SIS would like to inquire upon the reasons HRW did not reveal the identity of the alleged Sinai locals residing abroad despite the fact that they are probably residing in countries where they enjoy ample protection, and this is rather amazing as it calls the veracity of the main sources HRW has utilised into serious question.
- b. HRW's report kept the identity of those who conducted the 54 interviews unknown except for Amr Magdi and two nameless consultants. The report did not specify who conducted the interview in and out of Egypt either.
- c. HRW's report almost does not point to any interviews that were conducted with any official, quasi-official or even a pro government source in or out of Egypt. HRW does not mention as well any attempts to request meetings, interviews or comments from the Egyptian governments embassies and Media offices abroad.
- d. HRW did not specify either the methods by which it conducted the interviews in and out of Egypt, and this shows the pre-planned nature of the findings they made in their report.
- e. There are citations in HRW's report of text messages used for interviews, and astonishingly enough not one image or screenshot of such texts were included in the report.
- f. Despite the fact that the report included a very few quotes from some individuals that have objective views on the situation in the Sinai it did not point out to any attempts by the lead researcher (Amr Magdi) to verify the allegations made in the report through seeking the

perspective of the aforementioned individuals during international human rights events that both have attended the last of which was the 40th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva Switzerland which took place throughout March 2019.

- g.** HRW did not provide any documentation of the 54 interviews in the report, so does it prefer to gather information orally as in many cases in previous HRW reports on Egypt.

2) Medical and legal documents: HRW's report claims that the researchers who authored it reviewed medical and legal documents however serious questions arise after reviewing the actual report, its cited sources and appendix.

- a.** In a previous 63-page report which was published on September 6th 2017 HRW made allegations regarding the testimonies of 19 alleged victims of torture and the family of a prisoner. HRW claimed it had documents to verify these cases however when SIS requested that they provide such evidence to the Egyptian Public Prosecutor who opened a legal investigation into the matter they did not comply and they failed to provide a single piece of paper despite the prosecution's probe into the cases. HRW repeated the same strange behaviour in the case of Khaled Hassan, a defendant indicted by the authorities for his affiliation with the Wilayat Sina'a terrorist organization which an affiliate of ISIS.
- b.** In HRW's latest report on the Situation in the Sinai there is a huge discrepancy between the sheer amount of allegations it has made and the absent documents that should verify it as HRW failed to provide any such documents in the report.
- c.** In HRW's latest report just like in its previous ones, the entities and individuals who examine and create legal and medical documents remain anonymous. HRW in the past spoke of "independent forensic experts" who supposedly examined Khaled Hassan; the identity of those so called experts remained unannounced, so were their nationalities, entities the work for and their political backgrounds. It's not clear either whether they worked for HRW or not. In HRW's report on the Sinai there are only references to Amr Magdi, an unnamed researcher and a nameless intern. The report did not explain who these people are and whether they had the necessary expertise in forensic medicine and law to be eligible to review medical and legal documents that supposedly verify dangerous accusations HRW markets against Egypt.

- d. How compatible are these hidden documents with universal research standards? As the report as mentioned earlier did not include any documents such as official Egyptian forensic reports on the 14 alleged cases of extrajudicial killings reported by HRW in the report bearing in mind that Egyptian law states that any person killed cannot be buried without a permission provided by the Forensic Medicine authority after examination as well as clearance from the Public prosecution. Families of any such persons possess copies of official forensic reports as stipulated by Egyptian law.

3) Images and Video footage: The report posted a number of pictures and SIS has the following observations regarding them:

- a. HRW posted a picture of individuals with hidden faces and claimed they are detainees, while they should rather be identified as terrorists apprehended according to legal and constitutional standards so that they can be prosecuted. HRW wrote beneath the picture that the army covered their faces as if this is a violation while in fact covering the faces of arrested terror suspects is a common practice worldwide as seen the pictures below from Iraq, France and Russia





- b.** The descriptions of the photos included by HRW’s report do not provide their real context, as most of them were from Egyptian official footage of counter-terrorism operations undertaken by law enforcement authorities in Northern Sinai and not arbitrary roundups of civilians as HRW claims.
- c.** The pictures of arrested suspects and a picture of a child who was monitoring and reporting the movement of Egyptian Law Enforcement troops to the terrorists were taken out of context from videos and images posted on Facebook and there is a time vacuum between the dates of their posting and the dates when they were actually examined which might raise questions regarding how HRW perceived the nature of the events that took place between the two dates. Moreover, the pictures did not reveal in violation of human rights, as the suspects arrested and shown sitting on the ground in one of the pictures were waiting to be transferred to be investigated and interrogated by the prosecution; the men in the picture seemed fine without any signs of torture or inhumane treatment being inflicted on them. Same of the picture of the arrested child the picture doesn’t indicate any mistreatment or violation. In this regard SIS has to stress that as in many parts of the world women and children are used by terrorist elements and this pushes the Egyptian authorities to subject them to legal accountability as is the case in many other countries around the world.

- d. As for the undated picture of corpses HRW received from a mysteriously unknown so called activist from Sinai, the dates and places of these pictures are not specified. So where exactly were the picture taken as Sinai's size exceeds 66,000 square KMs? This negates its validity as it lacks the main basic foundations credibility (Place – Time – Its original source). Its also important to note that with modern technology an picture can be edited or fabricated entirely.
- e. The back image of the cover of HRW' report show how little attention HRW gives to the worst terrorist attack in Egypt's history, Al Rawda Mosque massacre which took place in 2017. The attack left 311 martyrs yet a picture of the aftermath of this horrible mass killing was placed on the back cover of the report and was mentioned only in 8 separate line in a report that exceeds 120 pages while the front cover was a picture of Egyptian Armoured Vehicles and Tanks conducting counterterrorism operations against the blood thirsty elements that perpetrated this horrendous violation of the most basic rights of human beings. This gives an idea about the priorities of HRW when it comes to victims of terrorism.
- f. The alleged satellite images in the report (3 out of an alleged 50) are basically taken from google earth however they have no relation whatsoever to the content of the report. There isn't even any evidence that these are images of places in Egypt, and it leaves one wondering what are the purpose of these images that are nothing but random material from the internet. SIS believes that HRW attempts to legitimise and credence to its report by using such images to fool people into believing that they are using advanced technological methods to seriously verify their claims.

4) Social Media Sources

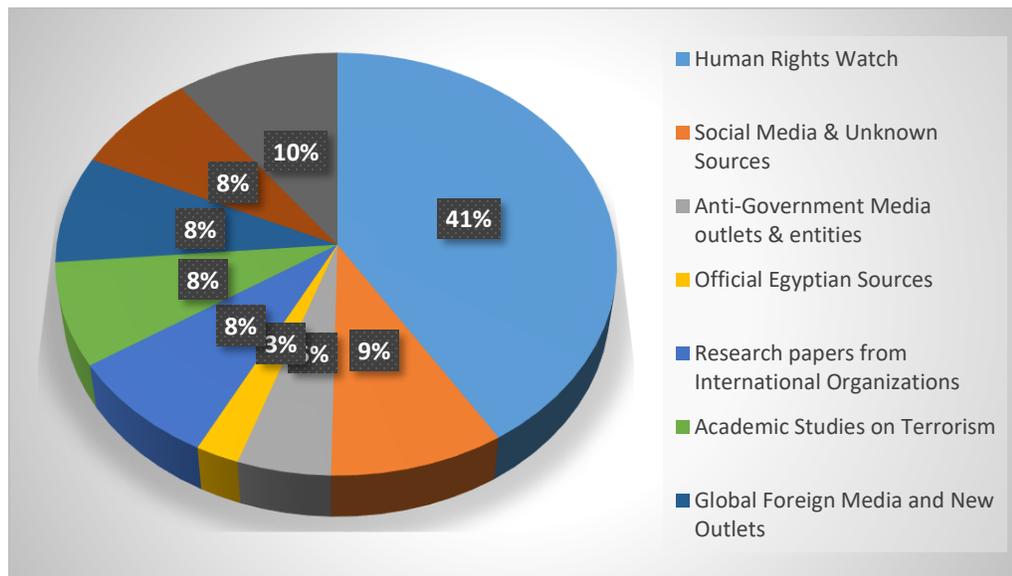
- a. One of the sources HRW based its report's methodology on were social media websites and several citations of such sites were made, and in an unbelievable move one such source was a citation of a Facebook account called "Moo Amer" and HRW attributed this account to an alleged Egyptian Army officer who took part in counterterrorism raids in North Sinai. Here several points and facts have to be raised. Facebook has over 2 billion user accounts, and it seems that the "remarkable skills" of HRW researchers enabled them to find and prove

the authenticity of one of those accounts and used him as a credible source to support their allegations of extrajudicial killings. Furthermore, Global Fire Power estimates that the Egyptian Military is 454,000 strong, so HRW's ability to find the alleged officer among a few hundred thousand troops and claim that the aforementioned account belongs to him is yet again "remarkable" one has to say. SIS view such a methodology with pity.

5) Citations, references, Media reports and Official Resources

- a. HRW used 304 citations in its latest report. Among the 304 citations were 125 footnotes from previous reports, alleged case interviews and press releases which constitutes 41% of all citation. HRW basically used previous allegations as proof of present allegations which is laughable to say the least. HRW cited Facebook pages and accounts 15 times and unknown sources 13 times, this mounts up to 28 citations which constitutes 9% of all citations used in the reports. The report also used 15 citations of media organizations, and other entities that are either supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood terrorist group or in a state of enmity with the Egyptian State. This makes the total supremely biased and weak citations 168 of 304 (55.2%) which demonstrates HRW's propagation of lies as the sources they used have no credibility under any circumstances due to their politicized nature.
- b. HRW only utilised seven official citations (2.3% of all citations) despite its ability to have used much more whether they were official, quasi-official or pro government in nature. However, HRW ignored them which puts the report into question and proves that HRW is bent on distorting facts and smearing the Egyptian government.
- c. HRW only used citations from sources belonging to the UN, regional organizations and ICRC as references to cite treaties, legal documents and research papers on terrorism. This shows that HRW seeks to only sing to its own tunes when it comes to the situation in Egypt, and shows its total isolation in this regard.
- d. HRW used official foreign government sources once, and that was a statement released by the US State Department in which it classified the Sinai based militant group Al Tawhid Wal Jihad as a terrorist organization.

e. HRW used references from 8 international media and press outlets with a total of 25 citations. Among the outlets are only 2 news agencies which were cited 6 times only while one American Newspaper was cited 14 times in comparison to one citation from each of the other 6 media and press outlets. The Newspaper that was cited 14 times is known to share the same opinions of HRW on the Egyptian government. This shows that HRW does not aim to present the truth, it rather attempts to distort



6) Attempts to seek Official comments and replies from the Egyptian Government

a. SIS vehemently denies receiving any correspondence since November 1st 2018 from HRW regarding its latest report on the situation in Northern Sinai, and its claims in this regard do not relate to reality in the most absolute terms. Moreover, HRW has all the official and even personal contact information of SIS. SIS has received correspondences from HRW over the past two years inquiring upon a variety of subjects and SIS did not ignore a single one of them. The last of such correspondence we received was from Mrs. Sarah Leah Whitson the executive director of The Middle East and North Africa Division at HRW on November 1st 2018. This last correspondence entailed that Mr. Ahmed Benchemsi the director of advocacy in the MENA division will take over correspondence with SIS in place of Amr Magdi after

Magdi's unprofessional conduct during the correspondence regarding the case of Khaled Hassan and in a strange coincidence Amr Magdi was the lead researcher among the authors of the latest report; the weak methodology that was utilised to create this report leaves us no choice but to term it as mere "Reflections of Amr Magdi" as it is the most suiting title it should carry.

Content: Deception and Lies

1. HRW's report cited a research paper posted in the first edition of an Academic journal published by SIS in May 2018. The research paper was portrayed by HRW as a legal study authored by SIS and Judge. In fact, the research paper was posted in an academic journal that opens its doors to academic researchers, representatives of civil society and government officials to share their perspectives on human rights related subjects; SIS stresses that any material posted in its academic journals present the views of their authors and not that of SIS or the Egyptian State and this emphasized by a disclaimer on the front-page of the journal that states that "All content posted in the journal represent the opinion of their authors".
 - It seems that the authors of the report did properly review the content of the research paper, they only went to utilise texts out of their logical content to serve their findings. HRW's report ignored the rest of the content of the paper as its subject was Human Rights and the confrontation of Armed Terrorist groups in general and it was not focused only on Wilayat Sina'a which was the impression HRW gave in the report.
2. The report was mainly based on the testimonies of 54 witnesses from the residents of the Sinai, and only 14 of those testimonies were on violations committed by Wilayat Sinai militants vis a vis 40 testimonies on allegation of violations committed by the Egyptian government (. This raises many questions regarding the credibility of these testimonies as the witnesses remain anonymous, that in addition to the disproportionate nature of these testimonies as only a fraction of them focused on the horrible violations of terrorist groups.
3. HRW's report tries to propagate extrajudicial killings as common practice to describe the situation in the Sinai while in reality all of the terrorist elements

who were killed, died in clashes with Law Enforcement forces in counterterrorism raids against their hideouts.

4. HRW claims that it has documented 50 cases of arbitrary detentions that include 39 cases of enforced disappearance in addition to 14 cases of extrajudicial killings between 2015 and 2017; Yet HRW failed to provide the name of a single case of a victim of arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance. HRW failed as well to state the names and dates of these alleged detentions. HRW also provided the names of only 3 of the 14 alleged victims of extrajudicial killings, 2 of them are based on the testimony of an unidentified person while the case of the third is based on conflicting stories about his death provided by 3 unidentified acquaintances of his; HRW claims to have seen his death certificate yet it did not share a copy of it, it did not say either whether it has seen the forensic report and the prosecution's permit of burial or not bearing in mind that only the last document definitely determines the reasons of death.
5. None of those apprehended in counterterrorism operations in Northern Sinai are arbitrarily detained, as all of them are legally indicted in terrorism cases to stand trial. For example, case 137 includes 319 defendants charged with joining the Wilayat Sina'a terrorist group.
6. All of the apprehended terrorists and terror suspects are held in legal places of detention in accordance with Egyptian laws and regulations.
7. The Egyptian government has provided sizable compensation to those who were affected by the establishment of buffer zones on the border with the Gaza strip and around Al Arish airport. According to official records from the Egyptian Ministry of Finance the government between 2014 and September 30th 2018 the government provided compensations that exceeded 3.029 billion EGP (Nearly 800 million USD). In addition to that the Spokesman of the Egyptian Armed Forces announced on May 30th, 2018 that 10,018 housing units were constructed for those affected by the buffer zones. This completely negates all allegation made by HRW in this regard.
8. HRW's report claims to cover the violations committed by "all parties", however it only gave 8 pages out of more than 120 pages to document violations committed by the terrorist group Wilayat Sina'a while in actuality the sheer number of attacks committed by these terrorist group deserves an entire report to give it justice.
9. HRW's report attempted to classify the situation in parts of Northern Sinai as a "none international armed conflict". HRW seems to be aiming to bestow

legitimacy on the Wilayat Sina'a terrorist group which commits acts of violence against civilians and attacks Law Enforcement forces.

- Such an assertion represents another attempt by HRW to legitimise the existence and activities of Wilayat Sina'a, and this was clearly observed when HRW took an ethical and a professional nose dive and gave recommendations to the terrorist group to refrain from targeting civilians and not discriminate against civilians in their alleged areas of control in the same manner it gave recommendations to the Egyptian government, the US Administration, The US Congress, Regional and International Intergovernmental organizations.
 - SIS stresses that not single square meter of territory lies beyond the control of the Egyptian authorities.
 - As noble as the recommendations to the terrorist groups may seem, they are actually meant to portray Wilayat Sina'a as an armed organization that can uphold international humanitarian law and that what going on in Northern Sinai is an None International Armed Conflict while in reality Wilayat Sina'a is an internationally classified terrorist organization even before it pledged allegiance to ISIS which the United Nations and the entire international community declared as a terrorist organization.
- 10.** Despite the flawed nature of the report's methodology and content HRW took its allegations as a pretext to attempt to isolate Egypt internationally by calling upon the US administration, US congress and Egypt's international partners as well as regional and international intergovernmental bodies to suspend all forms of Military cooperation with Egypt. This proves once more that HRW has a politicized stance against the Egyptian government under the pretext of Human Rights.

Human Rights work has a professional, humanitarian, none politicized nature that has no other motive than strengthen human rights. However, this kind of work deviates from its path when it enters the dark alleys of politics and loses its meaning entirely as it turns into inciting acts that are biased to a political actor against another.