

Submission to CEDAW for the 79th Pre-Sessional Working Group - Adoption of the list of issues on Egypt

Annex: Stereotypes, discriminatory and harmful practices

Notions of “honour of the family/community/society” are linked to women’s behavior and women’s bodies. This discourse is endorsed and spread by **State officials at the highest level**, in particular the Public Prosecution in several instances.

One emblematic example is the Prosecution’s [statement](#)ⁱ announcing the arrest of women social media influencers for “[violating Egyptian family values](#)”ⁱⁱ. The Prosecution said that its action on this case came “[in response to reports by social media users](#)”ⁱⁱⁱ. Male you-tubers had [launched](#) a campaign against women social media influencers claiming that they “tarnish Egypt’s image with their immoral behaviour”.^{iv}

The Prosecution’s statement talks about the women “[sexually arousing men](#)” by “[singing and dancing in a way that attracts attention](#)” which has threatened “[national and social security](#)”, “[corrupted our society and values](#)”, and it’s the Prosecution’s duty to “[protect Egypt’s 4th border](#) (the Internet)”. It also called on “[male youth](#)” to help the Prosecution protect “this new border”.

In another [emblematic case](#), the Prosecution stated that it “[refuses to blame the victims](#)”. However, in another case where the survivor/victim reported on social media that she was raped, the Prosecution released a statement announcing her detention and blaming “[her young age and difficult socioeconomic circumstances](#)” and “[warning parents of staying silent](#)” on such deviant behavior. The different positions of the Public Prosecution can be attributed to **discrimination based on socioeconomic class** as in the first case the survivor/victims are from upper/elite class while in the former from working-class.

In a [statement](#) announcing the detention of suspects in a gang-rape case, the Prosecution did not reveal their identities, while in statements announcing the arrest of women social media influencers (see above), it revealed their full names. **The Prosecution’s statements have the set the tone for media reporting on the cases of the women social media influencers.** Media published information of their personal lives with sensationalist headlines (including references to their virginity) and sexualized photos of them. In contrast, media reporting on [a case of one man accused of sexual assault and rape](#) did not use his photo and used his initials; while in the reporting over the women, the media even published the content of the (confidential) interrogations of the women with the Prosecution. One media even published the name of the victim/survivor of the gang-rape case under an article titled “drug use and debauchery” and later removed it. Nevertheless, the media continues to report on the [witness of the gang-rape case](#) using her perceived sexual orientation and lifestyle as evidence against her. **The narrative adopted by pro-government media aims to discredit the women** (social media influencers, victims/survivors/witnesses) in order to lose public support for them as well as reinforce misogynistic perceptions of women. In another [statement](#) by the Prosecution announcing the arrest of one woman and three men for “prostitution”, it refers to the woman as “having a bad reputation” and “having condoms” as evidence against her.

In 2011, Abdelfattah Al-Sisi, the then-head of the Military Intelligence and now President, [defended to Amnesty International](#) the use of **virginity tests** “to protect the army against possible allegations of rape”. This implies that any non-married women who are not “virgins” cannot report rape.

ⁱ The statement is 12 pages long. For ease of reference, we added hyperlinks of the relevant page for each quote.

ⁱⁱ Amnesty International [reviewed](#) the detained women’s video and found no credible evidence linking her to any internationally recognizable crime.

ⁱⁱⁱ Worthy to highlight the discrimination in Egyptian legislation ([hisba](#)) which allows anyone to file complaints of “morality” but does not allow neither the Prosecution nor individuals to report cases of rape and sexual assault.

^{iv} These male-youtubers refer in their videos to women as “pieces of meat” who “are responsible for sexually arousing men”. Their discourse promotes rape culture by justifying sexual harassment due to the women’s behaviour and choice of dress.

^v She was later [released](#) and charges were dropped.