

**Research Briefing**  
11 September 2024  
Number 10077

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# Egypt: Introductory country profile

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## Summary

Unless stated,  
sources were  
accessed in August  
2024

The UK has strong diplomatic, military, and economic ties with Egypt. Egypt is also one of the UK's human rights priority countries. Issues that the UK has raised concerns for include Egypt's use of the death penalty and freedom of speech, as well as on the detention of British-Egyptian Alaa Abd El-Fattah.

This briefing introduces Egypt's politics, human rights, trade, and international relations. It also signposts further reading. Please visit the Library's [Middle East pages](#) for further analysis on the region's politics.

## Egypt and its near neighbours



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### Headline statistics on Egypt in 2023

- **Population:** 112.7 million (UK: 68.3 million).
- **Religion:** Around 90% of population is Sunni Muslim, 10% Christian (mostly in the Coptic Church) and around 1% Shia Muslim.
- **Gross domestic product (GDP):** US\$396 billion (UK: US\$3.3 trillion).
- **GDP per person:** US\$3,510 (UK: US\$48,900)
- **2023 GDP growth:** 3.8% (UK: 0.1%). **2024 projection:** 2.7% (UK: 0.7%).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Data from [World Bank](#); International Monetary Fund, [World economic outlook update](#), July 2024, p8, and US State Department, [2023 international religious freedom report: Egypt](#), May 2024

## 1

## Economy

Egypt is a lower-middle income economy. The service sector is the largest economic sector, accounting for 53% of GDP in 2023/24, followed by industry (21%), agriculture (11%) and construction (7%).<sup>2</sup>

Around 1.5% to 2% of Egyptian GDP comes from the Suez Canal, one of the world's most important trade routes. Around 10% to 15% of global trade typically uses the canal each year. Attacks by the [Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen on Red Sea civilian shipping](#) from November 2023 have caused significant disruption: from December 2023 to February 2024 the volume of canal container traffic fell 90%. Egyptian government revenues from the canal fell to US\$7.2 billion in 2023/24, down from US\$9.4 billion in 2022/23.<sup>3</sup>

Remittances from Egyptians working abroad are also significant to the Egyptian economy: in 2023, remittances accounted for 6% of GDP.<sup>4</sup>

State owned enterprises (SOEs), which include public sector and military-owned companies, represent around 16% of economic production, 25% of capital investment, and 6% of employment. In 2021 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that some SOEs “appeared to enjoy advantages in taxes, customs, access to finance [...] [and] navigating the bureaucracy relative to the private sector”.

High levels of external debt and challenges in accessing external finance in the context of high interest rates are among the factors that have led to Egypt receiving [IMF loan support since 2016](#). IMF conditions include divestment from state-owned enterprises, containing capital expenditure, encouraging private sector growth, and reducing energy and fuel subsidies that the IMF argues are poorly targeted. The Egyptian government's 2022 state ownership policy has introduced criteria for public sector divestment of SOEs.<sup>5</sup>

Among the large infrastructure projects the Egyptian government is pursuing is a new administrative capital near Cairo and expansion of the Suez Canal.<sup>6</sup>

Arab Gulf states have been among the most significant creditors and backers of the Egyptian government since the removal of Mohammed Morsi as President in 2013, though recent support has reportedly included more restrictions, including seeking interest in Egyptian economic assets.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Unless stated section sourced from IMF, [Egypt: 2021 article IV consultation](#), July 2021, pp 17-18, 40

<sup>3</sup> [Suez Canal revenue drops as some shippers shun Red Sea](#), 18 July 2024; US Defense Intelligence Agency, [Yemen: Houthi attacks placing pressure on international trade](#) (PDF), 2024

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, [Personal remittances, received \(% of GDP\): Egypt](#)

<sup>5</sup> IMF, [Frequently asked questions on Egypt and the IMF](#), August 2024.

<sup>6</sup> [Egypt's Sisi defends mega-projects with economy under strain](#), Reuters, 23 January 2023

<sup>7</sup> [Gulf states have given billion in aid to Egypt](#), CNN, 1 March 2023

## 2

## Leadership and politics

### The Arab Spring and the fall of Hosni Mubarak in 2011

[Hosni Mubarak](#) was Egyptian President from 1981 to February 2011. Under Mubarak, popular political participation was limited, and the role of the armed forces and president was substantial.

Beginning in late 2010, protests developed across the Middle East and North Africa in what became known as the “[Arab Spring](#).” In addition to Tunisia, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen, Egypt experienced extensive popular protests. Reasons included a belief that Mubarak was preparing his son to succeed him, ongoing economic challenges, and political repression, including of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) (an Islamist group, for its role see page 6).

From January 2011 protesters gathered in Tahrir Square in Cairo. Mubarak attempted to re-organise the government, appointing the first vice president in 30 years. However, the United States (a long-standing partner of Mubarak) called for him to stand down, which he did after 18 days of protest. Power was transferred to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).<sup>8</sup>

In April 2011, Mubarak and his sons were arrested on suspicion of corruption. In 2012 he was sentenced to life imprisonment for issuing orders to kill protesters in January and February 2011. In 2015, he was also sentenced to three years in prison on corruption charges, as were his sons. In 2017 Mubarak was released as an Egyptian court cleared him of involvement in the 2011 killing of protesters. He died in 2020.<sup>9</sup>

Egypt’s current constitution was introduced in 2014 after the removal of Mubarak and his successor, President Mohammed Morsi (see box, page 6). Carnegie Endowment Centre analysis describes the 2014 constitution as providing for a “security state with a democratic face,” with the military insulating itself from public accountability through the constitution.<sup>10</sup>

### President

The President is the Head of State and is elected by popular vote. They nominate the Prime Minister (who must be approved by the Egyptian House of Representatives), some members of the legislature, and all judges to the

<sup>8</sup> [Timeline: Egypt’s revolution](#), Al-Jazeera, February 2011; US Institute for Peace, [Egypt timeline](#), 2019

<sup>9</sup> Europa World Plus, [Egypt profile: recent history](#); E. Kienle, [Egypt: a fragile power](#), 2021, pp66-76

<sup>10</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Egypt’s constitutional cul-de-sac](#), 31 March 2014

supreme court. The 2014 constitution initially stated they serve for up to two, six-year, terms (though next paragraph for current President Sisi).<sup>11</sup>

First elected in 2014, [Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi](#) is President. He was re-elected in 2018 and 2023. A 2019 referendum amended the constitution to extend his second term to six years and allow him to serve to 2030.

Sisi previously held the rank of Field Marshal in the Egyptian military and had served as Minister of Defence under President Mohammed Morsi before becoming Commander in Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces.<sup>12</sup>

Al-Sisi won the 2023 election with 90% of the vote on a turnout of 67%. In 2018 he had won 97% of the vote on a lower turnout of 41%.<sup>13</sup>

US NGO [Freedom House](#) judged the 2023 election as “unfair”, reporting strict candidate-eligibility requirements “obstructed [...] meaningful competition”. Opposition candidates were required to collect 25,000 signatures in support of the candidacy to appear on the ballot. Intimidation tactics were reportedly used to prevent supporters from completing this process.<sup>14</sup>

## Egyptian Parliament and recent elections

The Parliament is bicameral (two-chambers) consisting of the 300-member Senate, and the 596-member lower chamber, the House of Representatives.

In the Senate, 200 members are elected and 100 appointed by the President. In the lower house, all but 28 (5%) are elected by popular vote.<sup>15</sup>

The lower chamber holds legislative powers, and the upper chamber acts as an advisory body on constitutional amendments, foreign policy issues referred to it by the president, and other issues specified in the constitution. All members serve five-year terms, and quotas are in place for at least 10% of seats in the Senate and 25% of seats in House of Representatives to be occupied by women. There are currently 40 female Senators (13% of members) and 164 female representatives (28%).<sup>16</sup>

Political parties are allowed so long as they are not formed on the basis of religion or discrimination based on gender or origin (though the president is not allowed to hold a partisan position while in office).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), [Election guide: Egyptian Presidency 2023](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Egypt President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi: Ruler with an iron grip](#), BBC News, 1 December 2020

<sup>13</sup> IFES, [Egyptian presidency 2023 general](#) and [Egyptian presidency 2018 general](#)

<sup>14</sup> US State Department, [2023 country reports on human rights practices: Egypt](#), May 2024

<sup>15</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Parline, [Egypt: House of Representatives](#) and [Egypt: Senate](#)

<sup>16</sup> As above and Constitute Project, [Egypt constitution of 2014, as amended to 2019](#) (PDF), Article 249

<sup>17</sup> US State Department, [2023 country reports on human rights practices: Egypt](#), May 2024; Constitute Project, [Egypt constitution of 2014, as amended to 2019](#) (PDF),140

Senate elections were held in 2020 and 15 parties won seats. The Mostaqbal Watan Party (Future of the Nation, which supports President Al-Sisi) won a majority with 148 seats. Voter turnout was 14% in the second round.

In the 2020 elections to the House of Representatives, the Mostaqbal Watan Party also won a majority, taking 317 seats. A total of 13 parties won seats. Voter turnout was 29%. In 2015 the turnout had been similar, at 28%.<sup>18</sup>

[Freedom House](#) judges that the 2020 elections to both parliamentary bodies were not free and fair and were marred by the widespread detention of individuals who criticized the process, low turnout, claims of fraud, vote buying, and interference by security forces.<sup>19</sup>

## The Muslim Brotherhood and Mohammed Morsi

The Muslim Brotherhood (now outlawed in Egypt) is an Islamist political and social group.<sup>20</sup> Founded in 1928 to oppose British rule, in the 1960s it announced it would renounce violence and focus on providing social services, which it said would protect and promote Islamic law and values.

While political parties based on religion were banned under Mubarak, several members of the Brotherhood gained representation in parliament as independents. In the late 1980s they were the largest opposition group in parliament. In 2005, it again became the largest opposition group.

Following Mubarak's removal in 2011, the Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi won the 2012 presidential election, with 52% of the vote. However, in 2013 he was removed by the army and arrested. He died in 2019 while on trial for espionage. Among reasons cited by analysts for his removal are his conduct in power, which included making insufficient concessions to the armed forces (which remained important and opposed to Islamist influence), lack of engagement with revolutionary and reformist factions involved in the protests, and declining popular support for the Brotherhood.<sup>21</sup>

The group is considered a terrorist organisation by the Egyptian Government, as well as those of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Qatar and Turkey have historically had ties to the group.<sup>22</sup> The UK does not include the Brotherhood as a [proscribed terrorist organisation](#) (which would make membership of the group illegal, among other restrictions).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> IPU Parline, [Egypt: Senate and House of Representatives](#); IFES, [Representatives 2015 round 2](#)

<sup>19</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024: Egypt](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Profile: Egypt's Freedom and Justice Party](#), BBC News, November 2011

<sup>21</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's failures](#), 1 July 2014

<sup>22</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, [Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood](#), 15 August 2019

<sup>23</sup> PQ HL8574 [[Muslim Brotherhood](#)], 3 July 2023

## 3 Political rights

The US State Department's 2023 report on human rights in Egypt cited ongoing restrictions on political participation:<sup>24</sup>

- **Free expression:** Legal controls and media monitoring are used by the government to restrict free expression and public criticism. The US State Department notes that those expressing criticism are “regularly investigated” and prosecuted on charges including inciting violence, insulting religion, “spreading false news”, and “abuse of public morals”.
- **Free media:** the Supreme Council for Media Regulation, whose members are appointed by the president, is responsible for overseeing broadcasters and the press and has the power to block websites and monitor media funding and content. Blocked websites include those raising human rights concerns. Media groups also report censorship. All media groups must be licensed and senior editors of state-owned print outlets must be approved.<sup>25</sup>
- **Freedom of assembly/association:** constitutional rights of freedom of assembly and association are restricted by the law. Government permits must be obtained for demonstrations and the Interior Ministry can ban demonstrations deemed “prohibited” by the law (these include holding protests near government institutions). Local and international NGOs must register and be approved by state authorities.
- **Imprisoned dissidents:** the US State Department has cited the use of anti-terrorism laws against opposition politicians and government critics. Some have received presidential pardons in recent years (see below). The nature of some trials has been criticised as being unfair.

## 4 Human rights

Egypt's National Council for Human Rights was established in 2003 to protect and promote human rights in Egypt.<sup>26</sup> For 2021 to 2026, the government has a National Human Rights Strategy (NHRS) which includes provisions for free media, greater civil and economic rights, and human rights education.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> This section from US State Department, [2023 country reports on human rights: Egypt](#), May 2024.

<sup>25</sup> Amnesty International, [Human rights in Egypt 2023](#), 2024

<sup>26</sup> The National Council for Human Rights, [Mission Statement](#)

<sup>27</sup> Embassy of Egypt in US, [The launch of Egypt's national human rights strategy](#), September 2021

[Amnesty International](#) says the NHRS “lauds” Egypt’s constitutional and legal human rights framework but overlooks the existence of repressive laws that “severely restrict” their exercise.<sup>28</sup> Ongoing concerns include:

- **Death sentences continuing to be imposed:** In 2023, there were 8 executions and 590 death sentences issued by Egyptian authorities. This compared to 24 executions and 538 death sentences in 2022.<sup>29</sup>
- **Women’s rights:** the Egyptian constitution provides for gender equality and women can vote in elections and stand as candidates. However, the US State Department reports widespread discrimination. Laws on personal status ban Muslim women from marrying non-Muslim men, the Christian Coptic church permits divorce in rare circumstances (such as adultery), and while Muslim women may divorce without her husband’s consent, they must surrender their financial rights when doing so. The law also allows a court to deem a woman disobedient if she leaves the home or works without her husband’s consent (with some exceptions).<sup>30</sup>
- **Religious freedoms:** There is a [history of sectarian violence in Egypt](#). Egypt’s state religion is Islam, though Judaism and Christianity are also officially recognised by the state. Other religious groups can worship privately. Religious expression is restricted and blasphemy laws are actively enforced.<sup>31</sup> State approval is required to build and repair churches, and since a church approval law was introduced in 2016 approximately half of the submitted requests have been approved.<sup>32</sup> As president, Al-Sisi has publicly supported an increase in church building and committed to repair those damaged by violence.<sup>33</sup>
- **Worker rights:** the constitution allows for trade unions and collective bargaining. However, in 2023 Amnesty International noted reports of authorities impeding and intimidating striking workers seeking better pay or working conditions.<sup>34</sup>
- **LGBT+ rights:** No law explicitly criminalises consensual same-sex sexual activity in Egypt. However, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT+) people have been arrested on charges of “debauchery” and “indecentry”. Films and websites have also been banned or edited by authorities.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Amnesty International, [Human rights crisis deepens one year after strategy launch](#), 2022.

<sup>29</sup> Amnesty International, [Death penalty report - 2023](#) and [Death penalty report - 2022](#)

<sup>30</sup> US State Department, [2023 country reports on human rights: Egypt](#), May 2024; Human Rights Watch, [Egypt 2024 report](#).

<sup>31</sup> US State Department, [International Religious Freedom Report 2023: Egypt](#), May 2024

<sup>32</sup> Amnesty International, [Human rights in Egypt 2023](#), 2024

<sup>33</sup> [Egypt’s president Sisi vows to rebuild all destroyed churches in 2016](#), Egyptian Streets, 6 January 2016 and [Egyptian president affirms church building \[...\]](#), Persecution.org, 14 March 2022

<sup>34</sup> Amnesty International, [Human rights in Egypt 2023](#), 2024

<sup>35</sup> International Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association, [Laws on us: global overview](#), May 2024, pp34, 69



## What is the UK Government's assessment?

Egypt is one of the UK's 32 human rights priority countries. In its most recent report on global human rights covering 2022, in Egypt the government noted issues including the high number of death sentences, challenges to freedom of expression, restrictions against journalists, and the use of anti-terrorism legislation against human rights defenders.<sup>36</sup>

The government says it also raised concerns with Egyptian authorities on freedom of religion and belief, the use of the death penalty, and supported campaigns against gender-based violence. It said other UK priorities in Egypt would be supporting media freedom and human rights defenders.

The UK welcomed the reactivation of the Presidential Pardon Committee in 2022, which reportedly released 850 to 1,000 individuals and which has [continued to release further detainees](#). The UK also welcomed a new national dialogue for political reform. This was formally launched in May 2023. The dialogue is [making recommendations](#) on political and other reforms, with some participation from NGOs and civil society groups.

The UK Government has also “consistently” raised the case of detained British-Egyptian blogger [Alaa Abd El-Fattah](#). He has been imprisoned for spreading “false news”. He was on hunger strike for part of 2022.

## 5

## UK-Egypt relations

The British had a military presence in Egypt from 1882 to 1956. In 1914 Egypt became a formal British protectorate but was granted nominal independence in 1922. The 1936 Anglo-Egypt treaty led to a withdrawal of UK forces from Egypt, aside from the Suez Canal zone, but British influence remained substantial. Final British troops withdrew in 1956.<sup>37</sup>

In response to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1956, the UK, France and Israel entered Egypt in a joint [military operation to regain control of the canal](#). The [United States](#) and Soviet Union were among those to condemn the action. The three states withdrew.

Current UK-Egypt relations include the below.

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<sup>36</sup> Below from Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), [2022 report on human rights and democracy](#), 2023

<sup>37</sup> For history and chronology see E. Kienle, [Egypt: a fragile power](#), 2021

## Trade agreement

In 2020, the UK and Egyptian governments signed the UK-Egypt association agreement. This largely applies the [EU-Egypt Association Agreement](#) that was in place when the UK was a member of the European Union, and which had been in place since 2004. The agreement provided for the gradual removal of tariffs on industrial products and selected agricultural products.<sup>38</sup>

### UK-Egypt trade 2023

- **Trade with the UK:** The UK's 47<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner.
- **Total UK-Egyptian trade (exports and imports):** £4.7 billion in 2023, down nearly £300 million from 2022.
- **Top five UK goods exported to Egypt:** Metal ores and scrap, railway equipment, medicinal and pharmaceutical products, cars, and fruits and vegetables.
- **Top five UK goods imported from Egypt:** Electrical goods, fruits and vegetables, processed fertilisers, gas, and road vehicles other than cars.
- **Top 5 services exported to Egypt:** Business services, travel, transportation, telecommunications, computer and information services, and financial services.
- **Top 5 services imported from Egypt:** Travel, transportation, business services, insurance and pension services, and government services.<sup>39</sup>

## UK aid

The UK provides aid to Egypt to address climate change and support economic prosperity and security. UK aid includes £4 million per year in technical assistance (via the World Bank) to support economic and private sector development. The UK has also committed US\$240 million (around £192 million) in grants, investment, and technical assistance for the green transition in Egypt. Further funds have been committed via the Conflict Security and Stability Fund ([CSSE](#), from 2024 the UK Integrated Security Fund) for projects targeting gender-based violence and food and water security.<sup>40</sup>

From 2019 to 2022 the UK provided £65 million in bilateral aid to Egypt.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Department for Business and Trade (DBT), [UK-Egypt association agreement](#), 1 January 2022; [Agreement establishing an association between the UK and Egypt](#) (PDF), December 2020

<sup>39</sup> DBT, [Trade and Investment factsheet: Egypt](#), version for May 2024.

<sup>40</sup> FCDO, [UK-Egypt development partnership summary](#), March 2024.

<sup>41</sup> FCDO, [Final UK aid spend 2022: additional tables](#), 14 September 2023

## Other UK-Egypt engagement

- **High-level meetings:** in August 2024, Prime Minister Keir Starmer spoke with President Al-Sisi. They discussed issues including an immediate ceasefire in the 2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict and two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>42</sup> In March 2024 Lord Ahmad, then Minister of State for the Middle East, visited Egypt to discuss humanitarian access to Gaza and a sustainable ceasefire.<sup>43</sup>
- **Military cooperation:** in 2018 Egypt and the UK signed an agreement to conduct joint military training exercises to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation. In 2019 they completed the joint exercise “Ahmose”.<sup>44</sup>
- **Strategic investments:** in February 2024 Egypt and the UK signed an agreement to support the delivery of infrastructure projects in Egypt and to exchange technical knowledge, training, and expertise.<sup>45</sup>
- **Higher education:** In 2018 the two governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding to allow UK Universities to set up branch campuses in Egypt.<sup>46</sup> UK universities allowing Egyptian institutions to issue their degrees include the universities of Hertfordshire and Coventry.<sup>47</sup> In the 2021/22 academic year, there were 3,450 Egyptian students studying in the UK. The universities of Sussex, West of England, Manchester, Leeds, and Huddersfield had the greatest numbers.<sup>48</sup>

# 6 Foreign relations

## United States

The United States has a significant security relationship with Egypt and views the country as playing an important role in ensuring regional stability, mediating Israeli-Palestinian relations, and combatting terrorism.<sup>49</sup>

American support has increased significantly since 1979 and the signing of the [Camp David Accords](#), in which Israel and Egypt signed a peace agreement (for which Egypt was suspended from the [Arab League](#) for ten years). In 2024/25, the US will provide US\$1.4 billion in bilateral assistance to Egypt.

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<sup>42</sup> Prime Minister's Office, [PM call with President El-Sisi of Egypt](#), August 2024

<sup>43</sup> FCDO, [Lord Ahmad visits Egypt](#), March 2024

<sup>44</sup> British Embassy Cairo, [UK and Egypt kick start joint military exercise Ahmose](#), 5 March 2019

<sup>45</sup> DBT, [UK and Egypt sign sustainable cities and infrastructure pact](#), February 2024

<sup>46</sup> Department for Education, [Agreement for UK universities to expand in Egypt](#), January 2018

<sup>47</sup> University of Hertfordshire, [Global academic foundation](#); Coventry University, [Study a Coventry University degree in Egypt](#)

<sup>48</sup> HESA, [Table 28- non-UK domiciled HE students by HE provider and country of domicile](#).

<sup>49</sup> Unless stated, this section source from Congressional Research Service, [Egypt: background and US relations \(PDF\)](#), May 2023.

Under the Biden Administration some funds have been reprogrammed until the US State Department judges sufficient progress in Egypt on democracy and human rights has taken place.

Since the 1980s the US has conducted military training exercises with Egypt. In 2021, Egypt joined the US Naval Forces Central Command's [Combined Maritime Forces](#). This is a 45-state naval partnership to combat terrorism and prevent piracy. Like other Arab states apart from Bahrain, in 2024 Egypt is not participating in the US-led [Operation Prosperity Guardian](#) against the Houthis who have been targeting civilian shipping in the Red Sea and disrupting the route to the Suez Canal.<sup>50</sup>

## Arab Gulf states

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have given extensive financial backing to Al-Sisi since he became President. Both Saudi Arabia and the UAE list the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation.<sup>51</sup> Qatar, in contrast, backed the presidency of Mohammed Morsi and provided Egypt with financial assistance in 2012 and 2013.<sup>52</sup>

The Arab Gulf states are the largest external creditors to the Egypt state, with 24% of its external debt owed to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. China, in contrast, was owed around 6% and the United States 1%.<sup>53</sup>

From 2017 Egypt participated in the blockade of Qatar, alongside the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain, accusing it of supporting terrorism. Qatar rejected the accusation and refused to meet demands to curtail its engagement with Iran and to close down the news-channel Al Jazeera. An agreement ending the dispute was signed in 2021. It detailed no actions for Qatar to take.<sup>54</sup> Since 2021 Qatari financing of Egypt has resumed (though existing investments had continued during the blockade) and the two have both support mediation efforts in the Israel-Hamas conflict in 2023/24.<sup>55</sup>

## Russia

In line with many other Arab states, Egypt has adopted a more neutral position on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, calling for a ceasefire and a "sustainable settlement".<sup>56</sup> At the UN, Egypt voted in favour of UN General

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<sup>50</sup> Commons Library, [UK and international response to Houthis in the Red Sea 2024](#)

<sup>51</sup> Chatham House, [Egypt and the Gulf](#), April 2020

<sup>52</sup> [Egypt crisis: Fall of Morsi challenges Qatar's new emir](#), BBC News, 5 July 2013

<sup>53</sup> Central Bank of Egypt, [External position of the Egyptian economy, vol 85 for 2023/24](#), 2024, pp12-13

<sup>54</sup> Commons Library, [The Gulf in 2021](#), CBP9284, section 5.1

<sup>55</sup> Atlantic Council, [Qatar and Egypt are letting bygones be bygones](#), 5 May 2021

<sup>56</sup> State Information Service, [Egypt's participation in the African peace initiative \[...\]](#), June 2023

Assembly resolutions calling for Russian withdrawal from Ukraine in March 2022, October 2022, and February 2023 (these are non-binding).<sup>57</sup>

In 2018 Egypt and Russia signed a comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation agreement which covered military, security, trade, and economic cooperation. Russia is also co-funding and building Egypt's first nuclear power plant and has an industrial zone in the Suez Canal.<sup>58</sup>

The two states have engaged on security. The first Egypt-Russian naval drills took place in 2015, with the most recent in 2024.<sup>59</sup> From 2019 to 2023, Russia was also the third largest supplier of Egypt's arms, behind Germany and Italy. Russia was the source of 20% of Egyptian arms imports over this period.<sup>60</sup>

In 2006, Brazil, Russia, India, and China [created the BRIC group](#), and were joined by South Africa in 2010 (forming the "BRICS"). Russia views the group as a means to address the sanctions imposed against it in response to its actions in Ukraine and to challenge the global influence of the United States. In 2024 Egypt, Iran, and the UAE (among others), joined. The expanded group represents around 28% of the global economy.<sup>61</sup>

## China

In 1956 Egypt became the first Arab or African country to establish diplomatic relations with China. Egypt received financial assistance during the 1956 Suez Crisis and was largely non-aligned during the Cold War. Both Morsi and Al-Sisi visited China shortly after they took office as president.

China has increasing economic, cultural, and strategic ties with Egypt. In 2014 the two countries signed a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement (the highest level of diplomatic relations with China). China and Egypt have also conducted joint military exercises and training programs.<sup>62</sup>

Chinese companies have contributed finance to Egyptian infrastructure projects including Egypt's New Administrative Capital (NAC, near Cairo). In 2008, the Chinese and Egyptian governments also established the Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone (SETC-Zone), a major hub for Chinese products and for the Belt and Road Initiative, which Egypt joined in 2016.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> State Information Service, [Egypt and the Russian-Ukrainian War](#), March 2023; UN, [General Assembly adopts resolution condemning Russia Federation's annexation \[...\]](#), October 2022, UN, [UN General Assembly calls for immediate end to war in Ukraine](#), February 2023

<sup>58</sup> Middle East Institute, [Sochi summit highlights growing Russia-Egypt ties](#), November 2019

<sup>59</sup> As above and Russian, [Egyptian warships to hold drills \[...\]](#), TASS, 10 June 2024

<sup>60</sup> SIPRI, [Trends in international arms transfers 2023](#), March 2024.

<sup>61</sup> [BRICS: What is the group and which countries have joined?](#), BBC News, 1 February 2024

<sup>62</sup> [How significant is Egypt and China's naval exercise \[...\]](#), Al Monitor, 24 August 2024; Washington Institute, [The growth of Chinese influence in Egypt](#), 27 April 2023

<sup>63</sup> Arab Center Washington DC, [Egypt's strategic partnership with China](#), January 2023.

In 2021, China was the largest export market for Egypt (14%), above Saudi Arabia (8.5%), the United States (7%) and Germany (4.5%).<sup>64</sup>

## Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

In 1979, under the Camp David Accords, Egypt and Israel signed a peace agreement. This agreement followed the Arab-Israeli conflicts of 1948, 1967 and 1973 and the Suez Crisis of 1956. The agreement remains in place.

Egypt plays a significant mediatory role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2021, Egypt helped negotiate a ceasefire-agreement between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. It has continued to support mediatory efforts in 2023/24.<sup>65</sup> Egypt supports a ceasefire in 2024 and has been critical of Israel actions in Gaza. Egypt supports a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with an Israeli state based on 1967 borders and a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Since Hamas gained control of Gaza in 2007, Egypt has supported a blockade with the aim of preventing the smuggling of weapons into Gaza via the Rafah crossing (the only non-Israeli exit point from Gaza). Under Sisi, Egypt has opposed Hamas as part of its campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood (with whom Hamas has historic links), though there has been some cooperation over countering Islamic State/Daesh in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.<sup>66</sup>

Israel-Egypt relations have been described as a “cold peace”, with a lack of substantive engagement. The 2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict has strained Egypt-Israel relations further, with President Al-Sisi opposing the relocation of Palestinians to Egypt, reportedly citing fears that Hamas would move into Sinai and pose a security threat. Egypt has joined South Africa's case against Israel brought under the genocide convention at the International Court of Justice.<sup>67</sup>

The court has issued some preliminary orders, and the full case is likely to last several years. The Commons Library research briefing, [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: UN, US, EU and regional response](#) provides more on the case.

Israel and Egypt have some economic engagement. In 2021, the two countries signed an agreement in which Egypt would purchase US\$19.5 billion of Israeli

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<sup>64</sup> World Bank World Integrated Trade Solution, [Trade summary 2021 data: Egypt](#)

<sup>65</sup> [US, Qatar and Egypt push urgent talks with Israel and Hamas on Aug 15](#), Reuters, August 2024; Arab Center Washington DC, [Explaining Egypt's role during the Gaza War](#), June 2021

<sup>66</sup> [Has Egypt turned the page on discord with Hamas?](#), Al Monitor, 27 May 2021; Arab Center Washington DC, [Explaining Egypt's role during the Gaza War](#), June 2021; Carnegie Endowment, [Egypt's shifting Hamas policies](#), 26 May 2021

<sup>67</sup> Washington Institute, [The Gaza war is eroding Egypt-Israel relations](#), May 2024

gas over 15 years. The supply of gas was suspended at the beginning of the 2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict but has since restarted in smaller quantities.<sup>68</sup>

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## Further resources

### General background/profiles:

- Europa World Plus, [Egypt profile](#). Provides economic and political data and describes key events. Accessible via a Commons Library log-in.
- CIA, [Africa: Egypt](#). Headline statistical information on population, economy, military, and government.
- BBC News, [Egypt country profile](#), January 2024. Events to 2023.
- Congressional Research Service, [Egypt: background and US Relations \(PDF\)](#), May 2023. Briefing on politics, foreign policy, and economic issues from the perspective of US-Egypt relations.

### UK Parliament proceedings from 2019

- HC Deb, [Alaa Abd El-Fattah](#), January 2023, cc191-2
- HL Deb, [Alaa Abd El-Fattah: Hunger Strike](#), November 2022, cc637-41

### Human Rights: general Issues

- Amnesty International, [Human rights in Egypt 2023](#), 2024. Summary of eleven issues.
- Human Rights Watch, [Egypt 2024 report](#), 2024. Overview of political opposition, prison conditions, migrants and refugees, social and economic rights, LGBT+ people and women.
- US State Department, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Egypt](#), 2024. Wide ranging report on human, political and other rights.
- UN Human Rights Council, [Universal Periodic Review - Egypt](#). The council conducts regular reviews of human rights in every country. The most recent review for Egypt was in 2019.
- EU Diplomatic service, [EU annual report on human rights and democracy in world: 2023 country updates](#), May 2024, see 'Arab Republic of Egypt'.

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<sup>68</sup> [Israel starts exporting natural gas to Egypt under landmark deal](#), Reuters, 16 January 2020; [Israeli gas exports to Egypt resume but in small quantities](#), Reuters, 4 September 2024

- [Cairo Institute for Human Rights](#). Offices in Egypt, Tunisia, and Europe.
- [Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights](#). Based in Cairo.
- [Egyptian Front for Human Rights](#). Based in Czechia.

## Human Rights: specific Issues

- Reporters Without Borders, [Ten years of power for Sisi: Egypt has become one of the world's biggest jailers of journalists](#), June 2023. Work on media & journalistic freedom 2013-2023.
- Human Rights Watch, [Middle East, North Africa: digital targeting of LGBT People](#), February 2023. Looks at rights of LGBT people.
- International Labour Organization (ILO), [The ILO in Egypt](#). Summary of the ILO's work in the country and efforts on worker rights.
- US State Department, [2023 report on international religious freedom: Egypt](#), May 2024. Describes legal and social practices on religion.

## Trade and economic profiles

- Department for International Trade, [Trade and Investment Factsheet: Egypt](#), updated monthly. Provides a 19-page overview of the UK's trade with Egypt.
- Department for Business and Trade, [Markets: Egypt](#). Summary of UK-Egypt trade, trade barriers, and opportunities for UK exporters.
- International Monetary Fund, [Arab Republic of Egypt](#).
- Chatham House, [Why Egypt's economic outlook is down to luck, not skill](#), 2024
- International Institute for Strategic Studies, [Egypt's economic crisis and uneasy position in the Middle East](#), 2023
- International Crisis Group, [Egypt in the balance?](#), 2023
- Carnegie Middle East Center, [What the IMF can do about Egypt's military companies](#), 2022

## Foreign Relations

- Italian Institute for International Political Studies (IPSI), [EU and Egypt: setting the limits to the partnership](#), July 2024



- US Institute for Peace, [Five factors shaping the future of Egypt-Israel relations](#), June 2024
- Washington Institute, [The Gaza war is eroding Egypt-Israel relations](#), May 2024
- German Institute for International and Security Affairs, [Ice age for the “cold peace” between Egypt and Israel](#), March 2024
- Atlantic Council, [Turkey and Egypt bury the hatchet](#), March 2024
- IPSI, [Egypt and Türkiye: the crowning of a new friendship?](#), February 2024
- Arab Center Washington DC, [Egypt’s policy towards Sudan and Libya](#), March 2023
- RUSI, [Russia’s foreign policymaking in the Middle East](#), April 2023.
- Washington Institute, [Top agenda items for the US-Egypt strategic dialogue](#), November 2021
- Chatham House, [Egyptian exceptionalism in a Chinese-led world](#), February 2021
- The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, [What’s behind the partnership between Russia and Egypt?](#), 2021.
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