

SCRIPT: “Death Penalty in Egypt: Form of Justice or Permitted Practice of Murder?”  
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This audio documentary revolves around the various aspects of the application of the death penalty in Egypt to figure out whether this verdict is as an effective method to combat serious crimes in Egypt. It focuses on both the religion and political aspects of the death penalty.

*SFX of gavel (:01)*

*SFX of judge (:06)*

*MUSIC-FADE IN: “Mysterious” (0-1:35 from the start of the song)*

Six hundred, that’s the number of people executed in Egypt between 2013 and 2017, according to Death penalty Worldwide Organization, but when someone kills, or commits a crime of any other sort, do they really deserve to die at the hands of the country in order to combat crimes? Or it’s a practice of murder permitted by both the constitution and religion?

*MUSTAFA EL-SAYED (MS): “In general two types of crimes, one, someone is accused of premeditated murder is punishable by death in Egypt, the second crime is people who are accused of high treason, they spied for a foreign country or they tried to overthrow the government by force.” (0:20)*

*NAT SOUND- FADE IN: office door (:04)*

That was Professor Mustafa El-Sayed, a political science professor at The American University in Cairo (AUC).

*NAT SOUND- FADE OUT: office door*

According to El-Sayed, Islam is the main source of legislation in Egypt, despite the existence of appellate courts where people try to change the death penalty verdicts. That's why Egypt applies the death penalty through hanging, because Islam states that it's the least painful way of execution. And about the effectiveness of the implementation of the death penalty, El-Sayed said.

*MS: "It has been proven that the presence of death penalty is not a deterrent against crimes, The U.S among all advanced countries has the highest rate of crime and has the death penalty at the same time, so the presence of death penalty is not really an effective way of combating serious crimes" (0:22)*

*MUSIC-FADE OUT: "Mysterious"*

*MUSIC-FADE IN: "Skies" (0-0:20 from the start of the song)*

Despite the fact that the U.S does apply the death penalty, FBI's annual report on national crime last month stated that there were almost 17,000 murders in the U.S. last year only. Although the Egyptian constitution states clear conditions for execution, some people get executed for other reasons that the constitution doesn't declare, and this seems to be the case with Mohamed Wageeh.

*MUSIC-FADE OUT: "Skies"*

*MUSIC-FADE IN: "Sad Days" (0-0:20 from the start of the song)*

*Abdallah Wageeh (AW): "My brother, Mohamed Wageeh, is 39 years old, he owns an advertising company, and is a very normal man who loves his country, and was never involved in any political party at all, his political activities were like any other person in Egypt, he participated in the 2011 revolution, but he was never a part of the Muslim Brotherhood." (0:25)*

That was Abdallah Wageeh, Mohamed Wageeh's brother, who was convicted with the death penalty in March 2014, and general secretary of an Egyptian party called "Misr Al Kaweya".

*NAT SOUND-FADE IN: Misr Al Kaweya office (:03)*

He told me more about the story of his brother when we met at the headquarters of Misr Al Kaweya.

*NAT SOUND-FADE OUT: Misr Al Kaweya office*

*AW: "When the police came to arrest Mohamed, he was at his company, not doing anything wrong, and the police didn't find anything there, except for his laptop and mobile, I mean do you think these things are dangerous and he will face death for? What rule in Egypt says that you can arrest and execute a person for only having his mobile and laptop?" (0:27)*

Wageeh believes that the absence of justice and the dysfunction in the Egyptian judiciary system to be the main reasons his brother is sentenced to death.

*AW: "I think the court decided to accuse Mohamed only because he was a businessman, maybe if he was a different job they would never invent another crime for him, funny thing is that this case doesn't have even one person dead, so I don't know what my brother and the other 25 persons are facing death for." (0:26)*

The court rule stated that Wageeh was accused of financing some terrorist groups, and he wasn't the only suspect in this case known as "Khaleyt El Giza" or The Giza Cell, there were other 11 suspects who were sentenced to death, including a 16 year-old young man, and other 14 people who were sentenced to life imprisonment.

*AW: "This is always my opinion, if the judiciary system continues to be unfair, and randomly convict hundreds of people with crimes they didn't commit, then we have to stop the death penalty completely from Egypt, my brother will die for a crime that deserves only 7 or 10 years imprisonment, not death." (0:21)*

*MUSIC-FADE OUT: "Sad Days"*

*MUSIC- FADE IN: "Skies" (:30- :52)*

Although Wageeh disagrees with the implementation of the death penalty in Egypt for political concerns, he can't deny the Islamic perspective on this punishment.

*AW: "I'm a Muslim, and I know that Islam agrees with the death penalty in certain cases, I can't say no to what my religion says, but I can say that we need to stop the death penalty until we solve these political problems we have." (0:15)*

*MUSIC- FADE OUT: "Skies"*

*MUSIC- FADE IN: "Guitar Music" (0:40-1:05)*

Speaking of religion, both Islam and Christianity admit the implementation of the death penalty under very specific and clear circumstances.

*NAT SOUND-FADE IN: Islamic prayers (:03)*

In Islam, applying the death penalty is a form of justice.

*NAT SOUND –FADE OUT: Islamic prayers*

Like this verse in the Quran that says, "Take not life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law. Thus does He command you, so that you may learn wisdom" (6:151).

*SFX –FADE IN: Church bells (:03)*

*MUSIC- FADE OUT: "Guitar Music"*

*MUSIC-FADE IN: "Mysterious" (1:40-2:17)*

Christianity also acknowledges the application of the death penalty in various verses.

*SFX –FADE OUT: Church bells*

*PRIEST ADEL MANSOUR (AM): "There is a clear acknowledgment in the bible across the board, like for example Saint Paul in his letter to the romans in chapter 13, he clearly mentioned that the ruler isn't carrying a sword in vain, but carrying a sword to maintain order, and you should fear that sword if you're a crime committed person." (0:25)*

That was Adel Mansour, a priest in the church of Rehab in New Cairo. He stated that although Christianity agrees with the implementation of the death penalty, it should not be overused because human souls are very precious.

*MUSIC-FADE OUT: "Mysterious"*

*MUSIC-FADE IN: "Skies" (1:08-1:28)*

While religions might agree on the implementation of the death penalty, several organizations around the world had taken serious actions to abolish the death penalty, including Cairo-based non-governmental organization "Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights", known as EIPR, which calls for the abolishing of the death penalty in Egypt.

*MUSIC-FADE OUT: "Skies"*

*MUSIC-FADE IN: "Sad Days" (2:30 to the end of the music)*

*REEM SAAD (RS): "I'm part of a group called "Against the Death Penalty", it's an independent group that formed three or four years ago, in order to advocate against the death penalty." (0:14)*

That was Reem Saad, an anthropology professor at AUC and one of the founders of the campaign "EIPR" started a couple of years ago to abolish the death penalty in Egypt, and about the objective of this campaign, Saad added.

*RS: "Well, we started this campaign because we were alarmed by the increased use of the death penalty, and the mass sentences that were targeting both criminal cases and political cases; and we thought that this issue needs to be brought to the attention of the society, and that we need to talk about." (0:29)*

Saad believes that the death penalty makes both killers and governments equal, in the sense that they both end up committing murder.

While both the religion and political aspects seem to be in favor of the implementation of the death penalty, it doesn't seem to be the most decisive way to put an end, once and for all, to serious crimes, whether in Egypt or elsewhere, and this means that the death penalty might be a form of legalized murder after all.

This audio documentary was produced by Rania Khalil as part of my Audio production course at the American University in Cairo taught by Professor Kim Fox. I would like to

thank my interviewees Professor Mostafa El Sayed, Abdallah Wageeh, Professor Mohamed Serage, Priest Adel Mansour and Professor Reem Saad. Music are Sad Days, Skies, Mysterious and Guitar Music downloaded from Bensound Royalty Free Music. Sound effects are downloaded from FreeSFX; and all NAT sounds are recorded by Rania Khalil.

*MUSIC-FADE OUT: "Sad Days"*