



## How are People of Determination Politically and Economically Empowered in Egypt?



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**How do we empower people of determination politically and economically in Arab countries?**

**The Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue.**

**A civil institution –**

**registered with No. 6337 of 2005 - non-partisan.**

**Non-profit organization.**

**Governed by Law No. 84 of 2002 on NGOs and Private Foundations.**

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## **Introduction**

Disability is a term that is expressed by a person suffering from a type of disability that prevents him from performing a certain activity or movement with his body, the result of this disability being an accident or a problem that accompanied him since birth, as this disability prevents him from performing any kind of basic functions, the disabled person needs Always help from others to do some of their own things, everyone has their own degree of disability depending on the type of disability they have. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health defines the term disability to include impairments, limitations on activity and barriers to participation. Disability is an interaction between people with health conditions (such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and depression) and personal and environmental factors (such as negative attitudes such as difficulties accessing buildings and public transportation, and lack of social support).

Worldwide, there are more than 1,000 million people with disabilities and they constitute approximately 15% of the world's population (i.e. 1 in 7 people is disabled). The number of people with disabilities will continue to rise due to an aging population and an exacerbation of chronic health conditions in the world. Disability is a human rights issue for some reasons, including: People with disabilities suffer from inequality such as being denied equal access to health care, work, education or political participation; or when they are exposed to violations of their dignity also when they are subjected to violence, abuse, prejudice or disrespect because of their disability; or when some are deprived of autonomy when they are subjected to involuntary sterilization, when they are held in



institutions against their will, or when they are viewed as ineligible due to their disability.

The report discusses international laws and agreements that include articles on the rights of individuals with determination, and sheds light on the local laws in some Arab countries and some of the achievements that those countries have achieved in order to achieve political and economic empowerment for individuals with determination.

### **First: International conventions for people with disabilities**

People with disabilities are considered one of the most important groups that should be paid attention to in society, due to their large number and their enormous capabilities in the field of work if the appropriate environment for work is provided. In order to preserve the rights of persons with disabilities, to obligate different countries to them and to give universal character to those rules, many agreements were issued in this context that would enhance the status of persons with disabilities in various countries.

#### **Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities**

This Convention has contributed to the promotion, protection and guarantee of the full enjoyment of the human rights of persons with disabilities and their enjoyment of full equality under the law. This is in accordance with the purpose defined in Article 1 of the Convention: *“To promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity”*.



“The Convention stipulates the necessity of recognizing persons with disabilities as influential actors in society and the necessity of their recognition before the law, their right to work and equality with others, giving them all their political and economic rights, and working towards their political and economic empowerment, as Article (28) states: *“1. States parties have the right of persons with disabilities to enjoy an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including sufficient food, clothing and housing, and to continue to improve their living conditions, and take appropriate steps to safeguard this right and promote its realization without discrimination on the basis of disability.*

*2. States Parties shall recognize the right of persons with disabilities to social protection, and shall enjoy this right without discrimination on grounds of disability, and shall take appropriate steps to safeguard this right and to promote its realization, including measures aimed at:*

*(a) Ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to clean water and have access to appropriate and affordable services and equipment, and other assistance to meet disability-related needs;*

*(b) Ensure that persons with disabilities, especially women, girls and the elderly, benefit from social protection and poverty reduction programs;*

*(c) Ensure that persons with disabilities living in poverty and their families benefit from State assistance for disability-related expenses, including appropriate training, counselling, financial assistance and temporary care;*

*(d) Ensure that persons with disabilities have access to public housing programs;*



*(e) Ensure that persons with disabilities benefit, on an equal basis with others, from retirement benefits and programs.”*

Article (29) emphasizes the right of people with disabilities to participate in political life, as follows:

***“States shall guarantee to persons with disabilities the political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others, and undertake to:***

***(a) Ensure that persons with disabilities can participate effectively and fully in political and public life on an equal basis with others, either directly or through representatives of their free choice, including by ensuring the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected, including by: ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use; Protect the right of persons with disabilities to vote by secret ballot in elections and public referendums without intimidation, to stand for elections, to effectively hold office and perform all public functions in government at all levels, and to facilitate the use of new and assistive technology where required; Ensure that persons with disabilities are free to express their will as voters and, where appropriate, to this end allow them to choose a person to help them vote;***

***(b) To work effectively towards creating an environment in which persons with disabilities can participate effectively and fully in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and to encourage their participation in public affairs, including: participation in organizations and associations Non-governmental organizations concerned with the public and political life of the country, including the activities and management of political***



***parties; and establishing and joining organizations of persons with disabilities to represent them at the national, regional and local levels.”***

### **1- Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international charter that defines children's civil, political, economic and cultural rights. The Convention recognizes that every child has basic rights, including the right to life, the right to a name and a nationality, and the right to receive care from and maintain a relationship with his or her parents even if they are separated. With regard to the rights of people with disabilities, Article (23) of the Convention is devoted to talking about the rights of children with disabilities, as it stresses that states parties to the Convention must recognize the rights of the mentally or physically disabled child and the need for him to enjoy a safe life in society, and also stresses the need to provide the necessary health care for children. Persons with disabilities, as well as providing them with the necessary special care, which helps them to develop their abilities and talents.

The first paragraph of that article states: *“States recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child must enjoy a full and dignified life, in conditions that guarantee his dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate his effective participation in society; and States Parties recognize the right of the child with disabilities to enjoy special care and encourage and guarantee the child A qualified person and those responsible for his care, subject to the availability of resources, may provide the assistance for which the request is made and which is appropriate to the condition of the child and the circumstances of his parents or others caring for him; The*



*financial resources of the parents or others who care for the child, and should aim to ensure that the disabled child can actually obtain and receive education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for work, and recreational opportunities, and that he receives these in a manner that leads to the social integration of the child and his individual development; including his cultural and spiritual development”.*

And the second paragraph added that: *“States shall encourage, in the spirit of international cooperation, the exchange of appropriate information in the field of preventive health care and medical, psychological and occupational treatment of children with disabilities, including the dissemination and accessibility of information on rehabilitation curricula and professional services, with a view to the Parties’ improve their capabilities and skills and expand their expertise in these areas, taking into particular account, in this regard, the needs of developing countries”.*

## **2-World Program of Action on Persons with Disabilities 1982**

The World Program of Action is a global strategy to promote disability prevention, rehabilitation and equal opportunity, which relates to the full participation of persons with disabilities in social life and national development. The World Program of Action also emphasizes the need to approach disability from a human rights perspective. “Equal Opportunity” is a central theme of the World Program of Action for Persons with Disabilities and its guiding philosophy for achieving the full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of social and economic life. An important principle underlying this topic is that issues relating to persons with





disabilities should not be addressed in isolation, but in the context of normal community services.

Emphasizing the principle of equal opportunities, the World Program of Action for Persons with Disabilities calls upon employers to provide the necessary work environment for persons with disabilities and work to help them remove obstacles that prevent them from obtaining work in the community or face difficulty in performing their work in general, so that persons with disabilities become active people in society. The program emphasizes the need for persons with disabilities to have access to community support services, aid and equipment to enable them to live as normally as possible both at home and in the community to access these services. It stresses the need to provide support to people living with people with disabilities and provide them with assistance in daily life activities.

The program includes the principle of equal rights for persons with and without disabilities, meaning that the needs of each individual are of equal importance, and that these needs must be the basis for the planning of societies, and that all resources must be invested in such a way that ensures that each individual has equal opportunities to participate. Disability policies must ensure that persons with disabilities have access to all community services.

In addition to the above, since persons with disabilities have equal rights, they also have equal obligations, it is their duty to participate in building society, and societies must raise the level of expectation regarding persons with disabilities, thus mobilizing their full resources for social change. This means, among other things, that young people with disabilities should be provided with job and professional opportunities and not early retirement pensions or public assistance.



Persons with disabilities should also be expected to fulfill their role in society and fulfill their obligations as adults. The image of persons with disabilities depends on social attitudes based on various factors that may be the biggest obstacle to participation and equality, as the program emphasizes the need to believe in the capabilities of persons with disabilities and not to underestimate their capabilities because of disability.

### **3-Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities**

In light of the deliberations of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council agreed to focus attention on the elaboration of an international instrument of a different kind, to establish uniform rules on the equalization of opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities, in close cooperation with specialized agencies, other intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations, especially organizations of persons with disabilities. The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities are based on the experiences gained during the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992), and constitute the International Bill of Human Rights, which consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Rights Civil and Political, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the World Program of Action on Persons with Disabilities, provide the political and ethical basis for these norms.



Although these rules are not mandatory, they may become international customary rules when applied by a large number of states out of respect for a rule of international law, but they imply a strong moral and political commitment on the part of states to take measures to achieve equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. They also contain important principles of responsibility, action and cooperation, and point to areas of critical importance to the quality of life and the achievement of full participation and equality. It provides persons with disabilities and their organizations with a tool for policy-making and action, and forms the basis for technical and economic cooperation between nations and through the United Nations and other international organizations.

The purpose of these rules is to ensure that persons with disabilities, girls and boys, women and men, are citizens of their communities, and have the possibility to exercise the rights and obligations of others. In all societies of the world there are still obstacles that prevent persons with disabilities from exercising their rights and freedoms and make it difficult for them to participate fully in the activities of their societies. It is the responsibility of states to take the necessary measures to remove these obstacles. Persons with disabilities and their organizations should play an active role as partners in this process.

The equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities is an essential contribution to global efforts to mobilize human resources, which requires special attention to groups such as women, children, the elderly, the poor, migrant workers, people with double or multiple disabilities, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. In addition, a large number of refugees with disabilities who have special needs require attention.



## **Second: Empowering people with disabilities in the Arab world**

Important developments have taken place in recent years, with regard to institutional and legal frameworks to protect the rights of persons with disabilities in Arab countries. At the regional level, 15 Arab countries have signed and 19 countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Seven of them have signed and eight have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention. All of these developments have led governments to issue new laws, strategies and policies to support persons with disabilities. Thirteen countries have established national coordination mechanisms on disability, most of which are national disability councils. At the level of national legal frameworks, 12 Arab countries have included articles on disability in their constitutions. Comprehensive laws on disability exist in 16 Arab countries and Sudan and Jordan were the most recent countries to adopt new laws on disability for greater compliance with international standards in 2017.

In addition, 17 Arab countries have set an employment quota for persons with disabilities in the public and private sectors. For example, Algerian law requires that at least 1% of the employees of any institution be persons with disabilities. The quota rises to 2% in Bahrain, 5% in Egypt and Iraq, and 7% in Morocco.

### **1-League of Arab States (Arab Organization for Persons with Disabilities)**

Article (40) of the Arab Charter on Human Rights included (97) of the Arab Charter for the Education and Rehabilitation of Persons with Special Needs, and the text of



the first paragraph was as follows: “1997” in society. The fourth paragraph of the article was concerned with economic empowerment, stating: “States provide educational services for persons with disabilities in the educational system and the importance of training and vocational rehabilitation and preparation for the practice of appropriate work in the public or private sector.”

and peoples affairs in epidemics in maternity in June 2021. The results of this formula came to outline the situation in the Arab region.

## **2- The Arab Organization for Persons with Disabilities**

The Arab Organization for Persons with Disabilities stresses the importance of achieving economic security for persons with disabilities, which guarantees them access to productive work that helps them economically empower them and provide a better standard of living. The Arab Organization for Persons with Disabilities organizes many activities and events, and issues many reports that concern the rights of persons with disabilities. For example, it held a conference regarding women with disabilities in the Arab world and made some recommendations regarding their empowerment in light of the implementation of the sustainable development plan 2030.



### **3-The Arab Labor Organization in empowering people with disabilities**

The Arab Labor Organization was established on January 12, 1965. The organization, headquartered in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, includes all Arab countries. It seeks to develop labor legislation in member states, work to unify them, and work to improve working conditions and conditions in member states in order to secure means of occupational safety and health and ensure an adequate work environment.

In light of supporting and empowering people with disabilities within the celebrations of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in the UAE, the organization participated in “Expo 2020” under the slogan “Towards supporting full integration and increasing empowerment”, in cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Community Development in the United Arab Emirates and the Social Affairs Sector The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, the United Nations Population Fund and the Arab Academy.

Fayez Ali Al-Mutairi, Director-General of the Arab Labor Organization, stressed the priority of disability issues in the organization's concerns, which represent an important platform for building partnerships and strengthening cooperation and coordination frameworks between the three production parties in Arab countries and relevant Arab and international organizations. This enhances the integration of roles and the exchange of experiences and best practices related to the inclusion of persons with disabilities at the Arab level.



### **Third: The Egyptian state's efforts to empower people with special needs**

People with disabilities have suffered from marginalization and exclusion for many years, but with the June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution, the situation has changed completely, as the state, under the leadership of President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, has been keen to achieve comprehensive empowerment for them, and is keen to involve all groups in political life, especially groups that need more support, such as youth and women. and those with special needs. In order to achieve the political participation of these groups, the state issues special legislation for these groups to increase their representation in the Egyptian parliament. As for economically, the state works to establish various projects that would help these groups improve the standard of living and achieve economic empowerment.

The 2014 constitution, which was drafted in the wake of the June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution, guaranteed the first and most important steps to empower people with special needs politically, economically and socially. The Parliament included 8 representatives with disabilities who exercised a strong role and a prominent effort to support the issues of people with disabilities.

**The text of Article 81 of the Egyptian Constitution is as follows: *“The state is obligated to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities and dwarfs, in health, economics, social, cultural, recreational, sports and educational terms, and to provide them with job opportunities, allocating a percentage of them to***



***them, creating public facilities and the environment around them, and exercising all political rights for them. and integrating them with other citizens, in implementation of the principles of equality, justice and equal opportunities”.***

In 2018, a presidential decree was issued to allocate this year to be a year for people with special needs, during which the state adopted many initiatives, decisions and laws to support and care for people with disabilities, the most prominent of which was the issuance of Law No. 10 of 2018, known as the People with Special Needs Law, which stipulated many rights And the privileges and gains for this category in various areas of life, whether in the field of education, health, work or pension. It also provided them with many benefits for the first time, including health insurance, raising the amount of personal exemption stipulated in the tax law by 50% for each person with disabilities, and reducing working hours in all governmental and non-governmental agencies by an hour paid per day for workers with disabilities.

In early 2019, Law No. 11 of 2019 was issued regarding the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, which granted the Council technical, financial and administrative independence, and gave it the right to report to public authorities any violation related to its field of work.

In order to interpret the articles of the Egyptian Constitution that emphasize the rights of people with disabilities, the executive regulations of the Persons with Disabilities Law have been issued, stipulating the necessity of providing and facilitating all different services so that persons with disabilities can use and benefit





from them, and also stipulates the need to provide a flexible work system for persons with disabilities. In order to help them achieve a better standard of living.

The executive regulations provide integrated services, facilities, and public and private benefits for people of determination, and enable them to access information and communication technologies and systems with the aim of increasing, improving or maintaining the functional capabilities of people with disabilities. The regulation added a standard measure of the economic level to determine the minimum poverty threshold for the family based on a statistical equation that determines the economic status of the beneficiary, and it includes income, housing specifications, property and holdings acquired by the family, the education level of the individual and his family, the health status of family members, and the practical status of the individual applying for cash support and members of his family.

The regulation obligates governmental and non-governmental agencies to use assistive technology to provide services and information to persons with disabilities and to take the necessary and appropriate measures to use assistive technology in education, training, preparation, vocational rehabilitation and employment programs.

### **Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030**

The Egypt 2030 strategy includes many goals aimed at raising the standard of living of the Egyptian citizen, empowering the neediest groups and providing their rights. The second objective of the strategy is entitled "Justice, Social Integration and Participation", as it aims to achieve equality and justice in rights and opportunities for all segments of society, especially the most needy groups such as youth, women



and people with special needs. An initiative was launched with the aim of promoting digital inclusion under the name of "Social Integration" launched by the Egyptian ICT Fund to promote development in rural and marginalized areas through the application of technology solutions.

### **National Human Rights Strategy (2021-2026)**

And in September 2021, the National Human Rights Strategy was launched, and empowering people of determination was one of the strategy's goals, confirming the Egyptian state's interest in them and their rights in society, empowering them in society and integrating them in all economic, social, cultural and political fields. The strategy includes several axes that emphasize the need to increase societal awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities. The strategy aims to integrate students with disabilities into classrooms, enhance opportunities for equitable access to education, and provide all possible facilities to receive educational services. The National Human Rights Strategy is not limited to providing education and work rights for people of determination, but it also works to strengthen social care for people with disabilities and health care for people with disabilities.

The strategy emphasizes the need to provide suitable job opportunities for persons with disabilities to reduce the spread of unemployment among them, and also stressed the need to fully implement the legal 5% prescribed for their employment in accordance with the Persons with Disabilities Law, reduce their working hours by one hour per day, and increase paid vacations. In addition to providing them with training and vocational opportunities in cooperation with associations and institutions to qualify them for the labor market.



## **The Egyptian Fund for Information and Communication Technology**

Through the partnership with the International Labor Organization and the United Nations Development Program, the Egyptian Fund for Information and Communication Technology implemented the project "Jobs and Skills for Persons with Disabilities Using ICTs", which aims to improve institutional capacities to enable persons with visual and motor disabilities to obtain decent job opportunities, and support them through information and communication technology. This will be done through:

- Identification of needs and capacity building.
- Support and training of NGOs, training and employment service providers.
  - Raising companies' awareness of the benefits of employing persons with disabilities, and promoting entrepreneurship for persons with disabilities who wish to start their own businesses.
- Empowering people with disabilities by strengthening them with information and communication technology skills and learning via the Internet.
  - Stimulating technological innovation to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and facilitate their conditions in daily life, training and work.

The project uses participatory, inclusive and community-based methods; It relies on a strong partnership with the authorities concerned with the issue of employment of persons with disabilities, namely: government agencies, NGOs, and



associations of persons with disabilities, in addition to trade unions and business owners. It aims to empower 600 females and males between the ages of 18 to 35 years who have movement and visual disabilities.

## **Conclusion**

There is no society without a group that has its own conditions under the name of persons with disabilities, and this group needs special attention and care, in order to achieve its positive integration into society, and this integration is a form of empowerment for them. Arab countries are making utmost efforts to achieve economic and political empowerment of persons with disabilities, through the various laws related to the rules of work, education and social protection. . Emphasis also comes on the need to preserve the rights of persons with disabilities by including them in various constitutions through some important constitutional articles and the laws and executive regulations attached to them.

Egypt is making its utmost efforts to achieve economic and political empowerment for people with special needs through various initiatives and projects that improve the standard of living by providing them with suitable job opportunities. Political empowerment is achieved by allocating a certain percentage to represent them in the House of Representatives.