



Underage Marriage in Egypt and the Prospects for Renewing Religious Discourse

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Introduction

Marriage is the foundation of family formation, a social system that no society can discard because it is the secret to the social survival of the human species. Because of the considerations of maintaining the proper family strength, this process should be rationalized with the consent of both parties, but in practice marriage is linked to the customs and traditions of each society. In Egypt, the practice of early and forced marriage of girls under the age of 18 is prevalent on the grounds of puberty to bear marriage on the basis of religion and without informed knowledge of the risks to which their girls are exposed. This puts every year some 50,000 underage children in Egypt under threat.

In fact, early marriage of minors not only affects the reproductive level and population growth rates, but also has clear implications for low social and economic conditions. Early marriage contributes to low school enrolment rates, and is accompanied by low social status and economic participation of women and their limited access to the labor market. Moreover, the young age of marriage causes the health of the mother to deteriorate and may lead to infertility, loss of embryos, death, social problems such as divorce, widowhood, etc. Medical studies therefore refuse that a girl should be exposed to pregnancy and reproduction at an early age of less than 20 years, as this has direct implications for the health of the mother and the child.

Legally, this marriage (underage marriage) is considered to be a form of human trafficking for likening to legalized rape, but the constant denunciation of early marriage to which girls in many countries of the world are subjected is a game in the hands of the strongest, given its persistence in all countries. Thus, the marriage of minors is a phenomenon that deserves to be studied and considered on the grounds and religious references on which Egyptian society is based. Although there were many conventions criminalizing forced child marriage, that phenomenon prevailed in different societies; In developing countries, poverty and social conditions spread to alleviate the burden of the family to bear its responsibilities and costs.

Marriage in Egypt is not governed by civil laws, but is due to the personal status law regulated by Egypt's religions, i.e., religious institutions are responsible for the provisions of marriage.



This highlights the importance of renewed religious discourse in reducing girls' early marriage to religious authorities in Egypt. As health and social conditions have deteriorated recently, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased early marriages in Egypt, and it is estimated that the pandemic has increased the number of girls exposed to forced marriages.

This paper addresses the phenomenon of early marriage through the presentation of international conventions and efforts that criminalize it in Egyptian law, its various standards in Egypt and in accordance with Islamic and Christian law, its repercussions and various consequences in Egypt, and the importance of renewing the religious discourse and raising awareness to eliminate this phenomenon.

Dimensions and Repercussions of Early Marriage in Egypt

Our grandmothers may have married in childhood at the age of 9 to about 12, and over time they have realized the deprivation they have received, which places on them to protect their daughters and granddaughters from this harmful habit. The practice of early marriage of girls is widespread in Egypt, and in villages and countryside it is widespread, as if it has become the custom to engage underage girls in forced marriages, thereby detracting from rights - perhaps without knowledge - to the crime of denying them the enjoyment of their childhood. This crime may have been reduced in the last decade thanks to laws and increased access to education, but it still happens in secret without being reported, which is blamed on the religious authorities in Egypt for adopting or covering up early marriage.

Early marriage has adverse effects on girls' health and psychology, such as complications during pregnancy such as pregnancy poisoning, fetal weakness, and high infant mortality. This may lead to the inability to have children, to have deformed children, or to frequent procreation, which strains women and causes them several diseases, such as breast and cervical cancer, and increases in divorce among early married couples. Girls are also denied access to school and university education, which inevitably leads to limited economic opportunities. However, the most important risk of marriage remains the girl's



unwillingness to do so psychologically and physically, and to deny her the right to self-determination, by marrying at an early age a man she does not know and may sometimes dozens of years older than her.

One of the repercussions of the early marriage of minors in society that divorce rates are high in Egypt, and the husband or wife cannot document the marriage. In case of having children, a birth certificate cannot be obtained for the child, Children do not receive compulsory vaccinations, and if the husband dies, the wife is not entitled to claim inheritance. Upon divorce, the wife is not entitled to claim alimony and delay, and in case of disagreement the wife is not entitled to file a divorce or dislocation action, The child's inability to obtain his or her right to inheritance, and thus, the child will not be able to enjoy the State's educational and health rights.

In a study by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, it was proven that the rate of girls aged 10 to 17 in rural areas who marry early reached 0.8% of the total population in this age group, according to the 2017 census. The study also indicated a high illiteracy rate among those who had previously married in that age group, at about 40%, and a high dropout rate of 36%. The study showed that one of the main causes of dropout was early marriage, especially among 25% of girls.

The current reality of illiteracy in Egypt indicates that there are efforts by the State and other civil society organizations, but these efforts are far from sufficient. This is evidenced by the high illiteracy rate in Egypt, which, according to the most recent official statistics issued by the General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education, stood at 27% for the 15 and over age group up to 1/7/2020. The male illiteracy rate was 22.1% and the female illiteracy rate was 32.3%. This shows the strong correlation between the illiteracy rate of girls and early marriage.

Illiteracy is a national security problem that overshadows many issues with intellectual and economic dimensions. It is estimated that 70% of Egypt's poor (out of the 29.7% poverty rate in the Republic) have only access to primary education. The fact that more than one third of illiterates are poor, and if we add their role among the causes of early marriage to population growth and a number of other social issues, it is not clear to us that illiteracy is both a



symptom and a cause of many societal problems, the most important of which is early marriage.

This ignorance, along with the large dowry presented to the girl's father, constitutes an incentive for him to agree to the marriage and to benefit from this money and to be proud of it, until this became a norm in some villages and rural areas in the governorates, so that whoever wants to marry a minor goes to this well-known village. This phenomenon has become known in some Egyptian societies as **"tourist marriage"**, i.e., the arrival of a wealthy Gulf man, who is mostly over fifty years old, and asks for marriage from some brokers or mediators known to the people of the village. Thus, the meaning becomes clear to human trafficking directed against girls under the age of eighteen.

The unfair economic conditions push families to throw their young daughters into the cage of early marriage to those much older than them, and with the Corona pandemic, the situation has worsened, income rates have decreased, and unemployment rates has risen among heads of families and daily wage workers, so some have had to agree to the marriage of their girls, especially if there are many of them at home. But a "shadow pandemic" of violence and discrimination against girls and women threatens them. Researchers, child advocates and aid workers believe that the effects of the Corona virus will add 13 million child brides worldwide, causing another 10 million girls to drop out of high school.

In a study entitled "The Phenomenon of Early Marriage in Assiut Governorate" in the "Population Studies" periodical - Volume 17, Issue 86 - issued by the National Population Council, the results related to the economic conditions of the families of respondents who married early showed that the vast majority (92.2%) of them were housewives. at their first marriage, 2.2% were students, while the percentage of female employees was only 1.1%, and more than three-quarters of them (76.7%) had no agricultural holdings, 30% of their husbands worked in agriculture, 20% were agricultural workers, while 25.6% were government employees, and 6 7% are either students or conscripts.

What stops us here is that the ratios of husbands express a behavioral imbalance with jobs, especially after it was found that a quarter of them work in government sectors, which shows that it is a trait of complicity or that



customs and traditions have not overcome the career and intellectual advancement of the owners of these jobs, whether they are rural or urban. Assuming that 50% of the wives in the sample are illiterate, this confirms the nature of the value system that sometimes forces young men to marry illiterate female relatives even if they reach the highest levels of education and employment.

One of the observations that draws attention in the same previous study is that the percentage of Christian women who married early is greater than the percentage of their Muslim counterparts, which shows that early marriage in Egypt is a problem related to the thought and public awareness of the people without distinguishing between members of sects, religions or geographical distribution.

Finally, Anna Cristina de Aodio, Senior Policy Analyst for the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, may be cited, *“Ultimately, education is the important link because child marriage is an obstacle to the proper exercise of the right to education. The state is responsible for the right to education. This means that if you have laws that allow a girl or a boy to marry early, you open the way to practices of exclusion and abuse of those girls' rights to education. That's why these two things go hand in hand”*.

Marriage Age in Islamic law

Islam has developed a set of legislation related to marriage, and organized its provisions and made conditions for all the pillars of the marriage contract, as it organized all the related provisions. Islam also stipulated in the spouses several conditions that must be fulfilled at the time of the marriage contract.

According to the opinions of Fuqahaa belonging to the Hanafi school of thought in Egypt, it is important for every Muslim to know what is permissible, what is forbidden, what is permissible, what is prohibited, or what is lawful and illegal in marriage contracts so that he is aware of the position of Islamic Sharia regarding the common names of marriage in our contemporary world. Many of them are contrary to Islamic law, and Fuqahaa say that marriage may be



“obligatory,” or it may be “haram,” and in some cases it is a Sunnah or abhorrent or permissive.

A man’s marriage becomes obligatory if he is certain that he will fall into adultery if he does not marry and he is not able to fast that protects him from falling into adultery and to be able to pay the dowry and spend from lawful earnings. With regard to the woman, the Fuqahaa said that if she fears that she will commit the crime of adultery, she must marry. Also, the able man who fears harm to himself and his religion from not marrying must initiate marriage.

Marriage is forbidden for anyone who is unable to provide for the woman from lawful earnings, or who is unable to perform his marital duties, and does not fear committing the crime of adultery, but if the woman knows his inability and accepts this inability, and also if she aware with his inability to provide alimony, and she agreed to that, it is permissible on condition that the woman be wise, and the Fuqahaa said: If the one who wishes to marry a woman earns from the illicit and she consents to it, then marriage here is not permissible.

As for the age of marriage in Islam; Islamic Sharia did not set a specific age for marriage, and did not restrict marriage to a specific age; Rather, it lays down certain terms and conditions that specify that. Including maturity, and its measure in marriage is the actual sexual maturity of a man and a woman, estimated at fifteen years, and she may be married before that, provided that she is not handed over to the husband until she is able to have intercourse, or the guardian requires the husband not to have intercourse before age and physiological condition. According to Fuqahaa, the ages that are determined today in the Sharia courts, such as determining the age of marriage at eighteen years and referring to the judge in the event of a contract before this age, are nothing but jurisprudence that is not based on a jurisprudential basis .

Thus, we conclude that Islamic Sharia sets the rights and duties for Muslims in establishing marriage and the importance of agreement between the two persons, and that the husband commits himself to the woman in all that she asks and she is - provided that they do not violate the demands of Sharia or are forbidden in Islam. With regard to the age of marriage, Islamic Sharia did not set the exact age for the wife, but rather set the criterion of maturity or actual



sexual maturity, in order for the marriage to take place, and marriage may take place before that age, but the marriage contract will not take place until she reaches maturity.

From the above, Islamic Sharia does not directly criminalize child marriage, or the form known in international laws and agreements, which sets the age of children at 18 years old, but stipulates that the girl or wife be physiologically and sexually prepared for marriage.

Marriage Age in Christianity

Marriage in the Bible is called “the sacrament of marriage” as it is one of the seven sacred sacraments. Christianity has raised the value of marriage and the family. According to the Bible, the family is the central unit of the Christian community, and in the Christian concept it is like a small church. The freedom of choice and consent between the two parties is provided that the Christian family is established without coercion or coercive dictates, and the two partners declare their intention and consent to the sacrament of marriage for the religious leadership.

The bond of marriage between a man and a woman must last in the love and fear of God, as the man should not view his wife as being inferior to him or that she is a slave to bodily pleasure and domestic service. On himself and love him just as he loves himself. Just as a woman should protect her husband as she preserves herself, she loves and respects him and preserves the sanctity of marriage. She must look at him as her other half, who complements her and as a fortress that defends her and protects her, because just as Christ is the head of the church, so the man is the head of the woman, so both the man and the woman must love their partner is like himself, and this conjugal bond is supposed to last, a sacred bond until death “for what God has joined together, let no man separate.” (Matthew 19:6).

Most Christian denominations reject same-sex marriage, polygamy, cohabitation, and the lending of the womb, and in general the marriage of Christians to non-Christians, as being contrary to the true purpose of marriage; It also rejects divorce because the covenant declaring marriage has a feature of



being permanent, but in the event that marital life is impossible, it is permissible to desertion, annul the marriage, or declare its nullity, after the case is presented to an ecclesiastical court. Marriage is also to protect the weak selves who cannot stop thinking about sensuality and approaching adultery.

The Bible did not specify a specific age for marriage, but the consensus was that the marriage court or the religious presidency of the sect determines the age of the husband, but the majority agree on the age of eighteen for the husband and wife.

Conventions Criminalizing the Marriage of Minors

A number of international charters and agreements dealt with the issue of underage marriage, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which gives the right to protection from child marriage in Article 16, which states: "The betrothal and marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all procedures necessary, including legislation, to establish the minimum age for marriage...". The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized the right to "free and full" consent to marriage, since consent cannot be "free and complete" when one of the parties involved is not mature enough to make an informed decision about life with the partner.

Although marriage is not directly mentioned in the CRC, child marriage is linked to other rights - such as the right to freedom of expression, the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, and the right to be protected from harmful traditional practices - and are frequently addressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Other international conventions related to child marriage are the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage Contracts, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

The following table shows the articles concerned with the prevention of child marriage in each agreement:



No.	Name of Instrument Provisions	Name of Instrument Provisions
1	<p>African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990</p>	<p>Article 21: Protection against Harmful Social and Cultural Practices (1): States Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child and in particular: (a) those customs and practices prejudicial to the health or life of the child; and (b) those customs and practices discriminatory to the child on the grounds of sex or other status. (2): Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory.</p>
2	<p>Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989</p>	<p>Article 19(1): States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. Article 19(2): Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.</p>



3	Universal Declaration of Human Rights, General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III), 1948	<p>Article 16(1): Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.</p> <p>Article 16(2): Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.</p>
4	African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1981	<p>Article 18 (3): The State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions.</p>
5	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, 2003	<p>Article 6: Marriage:- States Parties shall ensure that women and men enjoy equal rights and are regarded as equal partners in marriage. They shall enact appropriate national legislative measures to guarantee that: (a) no marriage shall take place without the free and full consent of both parties; (b) the minimum age of marriage for women shall be 18 years</p>
6	SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, 2008	<p>Article 8(1): States parties shall enact and adopt appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to ensure that women and men enjoy equal rights in marriage and are regarded as equal partners in marriage. Article 8(2): Legislation on marriage shall ensure that: a) no person under the age of 18 shall marry, unless otherwise specified by law, which takes into account the best interests and welfare of the child; (b) every marriage takes place with the free and full consent of both parties; (c) every marriage, including civil, religious, traditional or customary, is registered in accordance with national laws; and (d) during the subsistence of their marriage the parties shall have reciprocal rights and duties towards their children with the best interests of the children always being paramount.</p>



7	Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action , 1993	<p>Para. 36: The World Conference on Human Rights reaffirms the important and constructive role played by national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, in particular in their advisory capacity to the competent authorities, their role in remedying human rights violations, in the dissemination of human rights information, and education in human rights. The World Conference on Human Rights encourages the establishment and strengthening of national institutions, having regard to the "Principles relating to the status of national institutions" and recognizing that it is the right of each State to choose the framework which is best suited to its particular needs at the national level.</p>
8	Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (Slavery Convention), 1956	<p>Article 2: With a view to bringing to an end the institutions and practices mentioned in article 1(c) of this Convention, the States Parties undertake to prescribe, where appropriate, suitable minimum ages of marriage, to encourage the use of facilities whereby the consent of both parties to a marriage may be freely expressed in the presence of a competent civil or religious authority, and to encourage the registration of marriages.</p>
9	Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, 1964	<p>Article 2: States Parties to the present Convention shall take legislative action to specify a minimum age for marriage. No marriage shall be legally entered into by any person under this age, except where a competent authority has granted a dispensation as to age, for serious reasons, in the interest of the intending spouses.</p>



<p>10</p>	<p>The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979</p>	<p>Article 16(1): States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women: (a) The same right to enter into marriage; (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse Compiled by the African Child Policy Forum www.africanchildforum.org (May 2013) Page 4 and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent Article 16(2): The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation 21, Equality in marriage and family relations, 1994</p>	<p>(Para. 36): In the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993, States are urged to repeal existing laws and regulations and to remove customs and practices which discriminate against and cause harm to the girl child. Article 16(2) and the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child preclude States parties from permitting or giving validity to a marriage between persons who have not attained their majority. In the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, "a child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier". Notwithstanding this definition, and bearing in mind the provisions of the Vienna Declaration, the Committee considers that the minimum age for marriage should be 18 years for both man and woman. When men and women marry, they assume important responsibilities. Consequently, marriage should not be permitted before they</p>



		<p>have attained full maturity and capacity to act. According to the World Health Organization, when minors, particularly girls, marry and have children, their health can be adversely affected and their education is impeded. As a result their economic autonomy is restricted. (Para. 38): Some countries provide for different ages for marriage for men and women. As such provisions assume incorrectly that women have a different rate of intellectual development from men, or that their stage of physical and intellectual development at marriage is immaterial, these provisions should be abolished. In other countries, the betrothal of girls or undertakings by family members on their behalf is permitted. Such measures contravene not only the Convention, but also a women's right freely to choose her partner. (Para.39): States parties should also require the registration of all marriages whether contracted civilly or according to custom or religious law. The State can thereby ensure compliance with the Convention and establish equality between partners, a minimum age for marriage, prohibition of bigamy and polygamy and the protection of the rights of children.</p>
12	<p>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966</p>	<p>Article 10(1): The widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly for its establishment and while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children. Marriage must be entered into with the free consent of the intending spouses.</p>
13	<p>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966</p>	



From the foregoing, we conclude that international agreements require the age of the marriage process to be no less than 18 (the age of majority), and that this marriage takes place with the informed consent of the two parties without discrimination against women, and that every marriage, including civil, religious, traditional or customary marriages, is registered. In accordance with national laws, the spouses are obligated to provide psychological and health care for children, and child marriage (under 18 years of age) is prohibited in state legislation or laws, otherwise it is considered a form of human trafficking.

The penalty for underage marriage in Egyptian law

A minor is anyone who has not reached the age of maturity, and he enjoys the protection of the state as stipulated in Article (80) of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution, where *“Anyone who has not reached the age of eighteen is considered a child, and every child has the right to a name, identification papers, free compulsory vaccination and health care, family care or alternative care, basic nutrition, safe shelter, religious education, emotional and cognitive development... The State is committed to the care and protection of children from all forms of violence, abuse and sexual and commercial exploitation... every child has the right to early education in a children's center up to the age of six, the employment of a child before the age of completion of basic education is prohibited and the employment of a child in work that endangers him or her is prohibited.”*

By reviewing the legal texts related to marriage, we find that Law No. 143 of 1994 on civil status and amended by Law No. 126 of 2008 stipulates that *“it is not permissible to document a marriage contract for those of both sexes who have not reached the age of 18.”* That is, the prohibition of marriage to anyone under the age of 18. However, the law did not set penalties for those who violated this.

This act in itself is not punishable by Egyptian law, as there is no crime for anyone who has married a minor or married her off, If a person commits this act, he cannot be prosecuted unless this act is associated with the crime of forgery stipulated in the Egyptian Penal Code.



There is only a single independent criminalization for this act stipulated in Article (227) of the Egyptian Penal Code, which punishes only the failure to prove that one of the spouses has reached the legally specified age, in addition to a penalty of imprisonment or a fine. It is for the authorized person who is marrying them. Hence, we found the importance of having legislation to toughen the penalty for underage marriage and also to include penalties for the husband and the curator along with the authorized register and witnesses, as well as the criminalization of those who document an underage marriage contract. Considering early marriage is a form of sexual abuse and considering the minor coveted by others, because she married at a young age, so she is a prey for anyone in the stage of marriage or even while she is married, in addition to her lack of a culture of dealing, whether through breastfeeding or education, also the culture of dealing with herself in the stages of pregnancy.

Article 227, paragraph 1, of the Penal Code stipulates that: "Any person who, in order to prove that one of the spouses has reached the legally prescribed age for the control of a marriage contract, who knows that it is invalid, has written or submitted papers to the marriage contract on the basis of such statements or papers, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine not exceeding 300 pounds".

Article (116) bis of Child Law No. 126 of 2008 stipulates that "the minimum penalty for any crime shall be increased by equal to the minimum penalty if it is committed by an adult on a child, or if it is committed by one of his parents, or whoever has custody over him, or is responsible for observing and raising him, or whoever has authority over him, or was a servant to those mentioned above ,and (A) shall be punished by imprisonment for a period of no less than two years and a fine of no less than 10,000 pounds and not more than 50,000 pounds, whoever imports, exports, produces, prepares, displays, prints, promotes, possesses, or broadcasts any child pornography involving or related to the sexual exploitation of the child, and the confiscation of tools and machines used in committing the crime and the money obtained from it, and the closure of the places where it was committed for a period of no less than 6 months, all without prejudice to the rights of others and good faith.

Article 291 of the Penal Code prohibits any violation of the right of a child to be protected from trafficking, sexual, commercial or economic exploitation or use in scientific research and experiments. Without prejudice to any more severe



penalty provided for in another Act, any person who sells, buys or offers a child for sale, delivers, transports him or her as a slave, sexually or commercially exploits him or uses him or her for forced or other illegal purposes shall be punished with imprisonment for a term not less than five years and a fine not exceeding 50,000 pounds.

The same penalty shall be imposed on the facilitator or instigator of the acts mentioned in the preceding paragraph, even if the offence does not occur accordingly and without prejudice to the provisions of article 116 bis of the Children's Code, the penalty shall be doubled if committed by a transnational organized criminal group.

Prospects for Renewed Religious Discourse towards Underage Marriage

Early marriage in Egypt needs a revolution and renewal in the religious discourse, because the documentation of marriage contracts requires the marriage official in villages and rural areas in particular, or the Pope in the church, where the main problem lies in some misconceptions about the age of marriage with a religious basis. Where Muslim and Christian clerics agree that the age of marriage is linked to the signs of puberty for girls starting from 9 to 13 years old, this does not give the right for some clerics to agree to document marriage.

Marriage is a relationship between body, soul, mind and soul between spouses, and it is the same matter that all the heavenly and non-heavenly religions are concerned with. This also requires awareness of a range of issues related to the ownership of a woman's body, including early marriage. Just as the practice of "female mutilation" has been criminalized and considered a violation of religions, early marriage is also contrary to Islam and Christianity.

Since Islamic Sharia is the main source of legislation, and it is enlightened middle principles that address people in all societies according to their customs and conditions in order to achieve the public interest, the current conditions of Egyptian society require that the issues of early marriage be decided upon at the initiative of the clergy, as a cup filled with a certain liquid needs effort



Larger to be filled with a different liquid. It needs to be poured first, then cleaned second, and thirdly filled.

While terrorism poses a security threat to society, the phenomenon of early marriage poses a more serious threat to the rights of children and girls, as they are exposed to many health and social symptoms that stick with them throughout their lives or lead to their death. Early marriage causes human rights crises and a population crisis that puts a financial burden on the state and is considered a challenge that requires the efforts of the clergy to raise awareness.

The Egyptian people suffer from religious illiteracy, as a result of the accumulation of extremism and misconceptions taken from the blindness of the ancient heritage, as well as as a result of some people's devotion to technological development and their departure from the correct terminology in religion. The danger in religious illiteracy lies in many dangerous aspects. If society reaches it, it must be pointed out, warned against, and the foci of its dissemination and factors for its expansion, and the awakening of awareness, insight and responsibility in society to confront them. Therefore, religious illiteracy embraces the growth of ideas and practices of religious extremism and violence, and thus, a moderate religious culture is considered a safety from it.

Al-Azhar and the Church must promote systematic cultural means that take various forms of presentation to fill the void in the outposts of religious illiteracy and early marriage of minors and take into account simple and uncomplicated methods of raising awareness for the target groups. And the uprising in the face of covert authorized or the Pope in the Church has become a national duty to care and maintenance of our daughters until they realize their needs and identify them themselves.

Conclusion

What Egyptian girls suffer from forced marriage is a problem of national awareness that has caused their health, social and economic conditions to deteriorate in their old age, and also affects their children on the other hand. This problem left the repercussions of population inflation in Egypt and economic obstacles on the way to sustainable development and upgrading the



conditions of the people on the other hand. The early marriage crisis in Egypt shows that there is a shortcoming in the religious discourse towards protecting young girls from what some call “legalized rape.” Therefore, the pace of severing the bonds of the clergy in the mosque and church who cover up these structural crimes against women must be accelerated.

The numbers may refer to 117,000 underage girls who marry early, but these numbers are unreal, perhaps representing one third of them, given the cover-up and privacy of the issue in society. No matter how the state tries to legislate laws, criminalize early marriage, abide by foreign agreements, and intensify domestic penalties, renewing religious discourse is the order to be followed to eradicate this phenomenon.