EGYPT’S “NEW” NGO LAW: AS DRACONIAN AS THE OLD ONE

On August 19, 2019, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi ratified a new NGO law (Law 149/2019), replacing 2017 legislation widely criticized for imposing an extraordinary degree of state control over civil society. Egyptian officials and government supporters claim that the new law meets “100 percent of civil society’s demands” and shows Egypt’s “commitment to international standards on human rights.” In reality, as numerous Egyptian and international organizations have noted, the new law contains only minor changes, while retaining numerous draconian provisions that stifle local and foreign NGOs, inhibit an independent civil society, and violate Egypt’s international human rights obligations.

OTHER LAWS THAT CAN BE USED TO REPRESS CIVIL SOCIETY

Although the new NGO law removes prison sentences as penalties, it includes fines, some exorbitant, as punishments; if individuals are unable to pay such fines, they can be imprisoned under Article 511 of the Criminal Procedures Law.

The government also has at its disposal other laws—such as the Penal Code, the anti-terrorism law, and the cybercrimes law—whose vague and repressive provisions can be used to imprison Egyptians for peaceful NGO work, including sentences up to life in prison.