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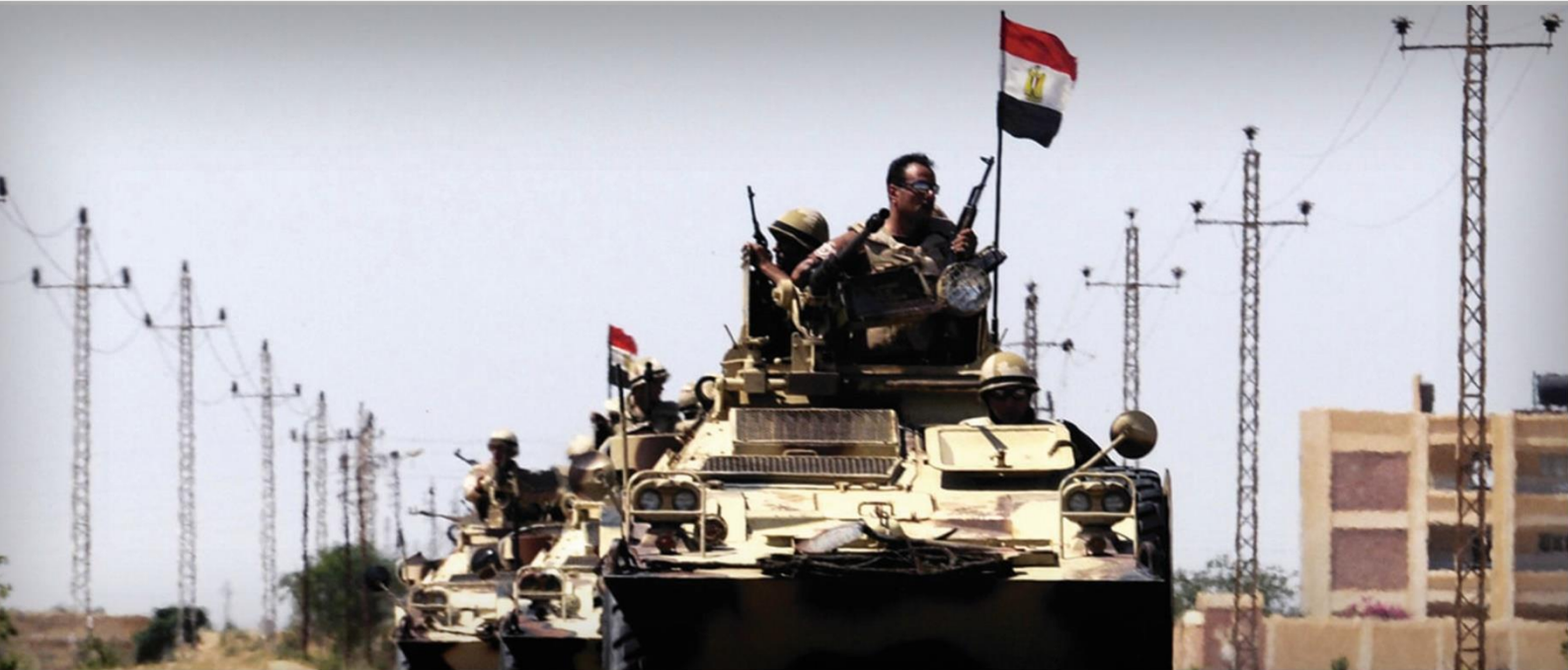
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**Operation Sinai 2018  
Practices and Implications**

**Haitham Ghoneim**



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## Operation Sinai 2018: Practices and Implications

Haitham Ghoneim

“... and use all brute force, all brute force.” – With these words Sisi concluded his [orders](#) to the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian army on November 29, 2017 for restoring security in the Sinai. On commemoration of the birth of Prophet Mohamed, gave his security forces a three-month deadline to restore "security and stability" to the country's northern Sinai governorate after the massacre of the Rawda Mosque which took place during Friday noon prayers on November 24. The massacre was a dangerous turn in the security scene in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula, as it was the first to target this big number of unarmed civilians who have no political orientation, leaving 314 dead, and the first time to attack a [mosque](#) at the time of prayers which is revered by all Muslims.

By that time, the comprehensive military operation in Sinai had entered its third and final deadline of the [mandate](#) issued on 9 February 2018. The declared objectives were to restore security, protect civilians, and eliminate militant activity in the governorate of North Sinai, which will be reviewed in this paper as well as the implications of the military practices on the ground – one year after the orders given by the head of the regime to launch Operation Sinai 2018 on 29 November 2017.

### Not the first operation but the seventh in a row

The military operation announced on 29 November 2017 is not the first operation launched by the Egyptian armed forces since the January 25, 2011 Revolution; in fact, it is the seventh operation in a row. To answer the question: “will this operation succeed?” it is important to review the operations that preceded it, namely:

- Operation Eagle 1 in 2011
- Operation Eagle 2 in 2012
- Operation Martyr's Right 1, 2, 3, and 4 (2015-2017)

### First: Operation Eagle 1

Operation Eagle 1, an Egyptian military campaign in the Sinai Peninsula, was launched on 12 August 2011 to confront the Sinai insurgency, after obtaining approval of Israel to increase the number of army forces and enter areas previously prohibited under the Camp David Agreement. The operation was aimed at securing the gas line between Egypt and Israel against bombings and terminating the activity of perpetrators – the bomber was then referred to as the "masked" man – after several attacks targeted cutting the export of Egyptian gas to Israel, which received widespread popular support at the time.

However, the operation failed to secure the gas line or eliminate the activity of perpetrators, as evidenced by the follow-up [news](#) published on the continuation of the bombing operations in November 2011. [Youm7](#), a pro-regime newspaper, published on 8 January 2016 a report entitled "For the 30<sup>th</sup> time in a row, the masked man explodes the gas line in El Arish". However, it is remarkable that on 18 August 2011, six days after the start of Operation Eagle 1, four militants infiltrated from Sinai to the occupied territories targeting the Israeli forces. Then in September 2011, the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis organization officially declared itself for the first time through adopting an attack that took place near Eilat.

### Second: Operation Eagle 2 in 2012

Operation Eagle 2 was carried out during the era of President Mohamed Morsi on August 5, 2012, in response to an attack on a military checkpoint near the Kerem Abu

Salem crossing in North Sinai, killing 16 soldiers then, and was not adopted by any armed group in Sinai.

Although there were incidents of targeting the army and police forces before this attack (when masked gunmen opened fire on an Egyptian Army checkpoint in the northern Sinai Peninsula on Sunday, killing 15 soldiers), they were very limited and did not receive any media coverage compared to that attack which was carried out in the month of Ramadan at the time when soldiers were preparing for having their iftar - a meal to break their fast after sunset. This led to widespread popular condemnation in general and by the Sinai in particular, as the army forces then enjoyed a privileged position because of non-involvement in any violations against citizens, unlike police forces which were involved in systematic torture and detention against citizens, especially during the last years of Mubarak's rule. The objective of Operation Eagle 2 was to clear Sinai from the terrorist outposts and to promote military forces operations in areas "B" and "C", with fortifying the military and security checkpoints and intensifying their security in the areas of Rafah and Sheikh Zuwaid and Rafah, and control all movement roads.

The operation resulted in achieving calm and preventing the targeting of the military until 2013. However, no results of any investigation were announced about the perpetrators or their objectives. It was also remarkable that the [Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis](#) organization continued to rise at that time. The bombing of the gas line, coupled with discreet media messages, indicated that the organization was then keen to avoiding any confrontation with the army and security forces. However, despite the announcement of the end of the Operation Eagle 2, the gas line bombings continued. In May 2013, a mysterious incident occurred, where seven soldiers were abducted and



then released during the same month without details released about what had happened.

### Operation Martyr's Right 1, 2, 3, and 4 (2015-2017)

The military operations codenamed Operation Martyr's Right (1, 2,3 , and 4) started on 7 September 2015 only days after the Sinai Province militant group launched on 1 July a series of deadly attacks on a series of checkpoints of the Egyptian military in Sheikh Zwaid, North Sinai. (reportedly leaving 17 soldiers dead, including four officers). Operation Martyr's Right 1-4 lasted until 2017 . The militant organization managed to impose its control on the operations field in Sheikh Zwaid for several hours before the intervention of warplanes, reportedly Israeli after the Egyptian army sought help from the Israeli side; while other reporters said the warplanes were Egyptian. According to special [sources](#) including former military personnel who served at that time in the Second Field Army, orders were given to strike all military checkpoints that were seized by militants as well as clash areas to eliminate everything, including militants and army personnel, to prevent the fall of equipment or prisoners in the hands of militants. The objective of the military operation was to control and clear areas of armed activity in the north and central Sinai.

The results of operations: According to the military spokesman, the terrorist strongholds in the Sinai Peninsula were completely destroyed, Jabal al-Hilal in central Sinai was controlled and cleared completely, the cities of Rafah, Sheikh Zuwaid and Arish have become under full control of the Egyptian army. During his speech at the 24th educational seminar of the armed forces in February 2017, head of military intelligence Mohammad Farag el-Shahat said that 500 militants were eliminated and

that the militant Islamic State organization had lost balance because of the military operations.

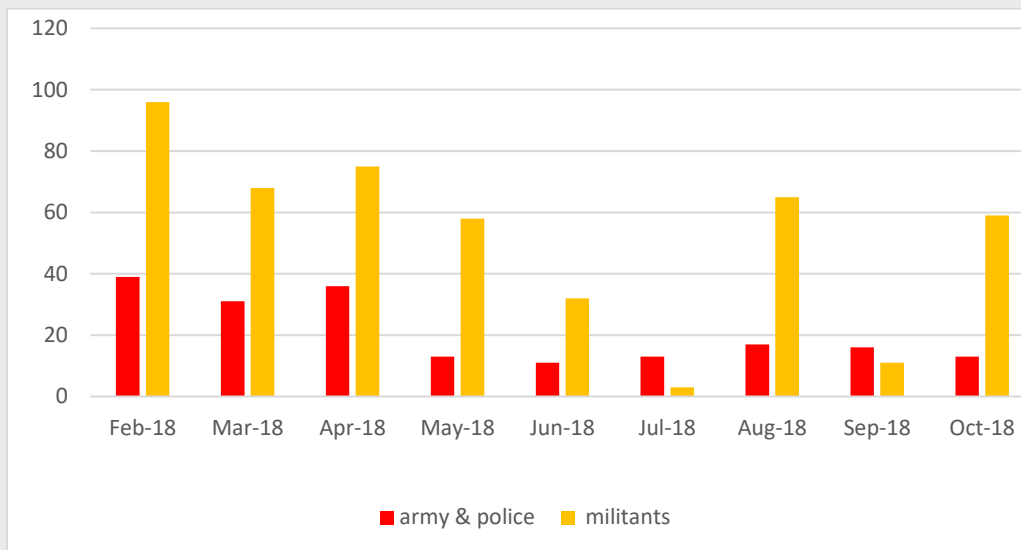
The maximum estimate of the number of militants that confront the Egyptian army and security forces in Sinai was 1,500. However, based on figures released by the military spokesman from 2014 until now, the number of militants officially killed has exceeded those estimates, which means:

- That the victories declared by the military are false and that they do not follow a successful military strategy, or
- That the number of deaths includes civilians who were extrajudicially killed under the pretext of suspicion or for political revenge, or
- That the policy of the regime pushes more individuals to armed action in defense of themselves, or
- As a result of unprecedented oppression and violations practiced by the army and security forces in Sinai.

We believe that all the above reasons are real and reliable interpretation of what is going on in Sinai.

### Operation Sinai 2018: Clearance or eviction and revenge?

The following chart shows a comparison between the military losses of the two conflicting parties during the last nine months, according to sources from both parties as well as the monitoring of the [Egyptian Institute of Studies](http://www.eipss-eg.org):



On February 9, 2018, the military spokesman of the Egyptian army announced launching a military operation codenamed as "Operation Sinai-2018" aimed at clearing all the hotbeds of armed operations not only at the level of the governorate of North Sinai, but across the whole country, that can be assessed through the following aspects:

- 1- Many sources agreed that the operation took the form of a show off aimed at strengthening the status of the Egyptian armed forces and polishing the position of Abdul Fattah al-Sisi as a partner in the fight against terrorism, including the [Washington Post](#) which said: "The offensive comes as Sisi's popularity has declined amid economic austerity measures, rising prices and high unemployment. He has either arrested or sidelined all credible challengers in next month's presidential election, essentially ensuring his reelection. By going after the Islamic State, Sisi is hoping to regain popular support, Western diplomats suggest." – as well as [Financial Times](#), [Reuters](#), and [Bloomberg](#). The start of the operation came at the end of the third and last month of the period

- set by Sisi when he mandated the Chief of Staff of the armed forces in November 2017 to restore security in the Sinai using brute force.
- 2- North Sinai was treated as a hostile military zone, which led to the imposition of a siege around it by the army and police forces. The siege included the closure of fuel stations and the control of foodstuffs allowed to enter.
  - 3- The army and police forces aroused more local hostility and rivalries due to the absence of legal supervision, the immunity enjoyed by the army and security officers against accountability, the policy of imposing a siege on foodstuff in areas of North Sinai, the arrests and humiliation of women in the city of Arish in particular.
  - 4- The military campaign was unable to meet the deadline of 3 months, announced by Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. However, the chief of staff, Mohamed Farid Hegazi, [asked for](#) the extension of the period for more than three months.
  - 5- Operation Sinai-2018 cannot be described as a final success although it has succeeded so far in paralyzing the militant organization's capabilities and reducing its effectiveness. Although the operation has revealed many infrastructures of the IS-affiliate 'Sinai Province', but this is similar to what the previous operations did before (Operation Eagle 1, Operation Eagle 2, and Operation Martyr's Right 1, 2, 3, and 4). The only certain result that this comprehensive confrontation of Operation Sinai-2018 has reached, is that it has succeeded in increasing hatred against the Egyptian army and security forces, which is likely to cause future problems. The army's policy in Sinai may also lead to pushing the IS organization to change its strategy in Sinai and turn to security activity and assassination, but this also requires to changes in leadership, its



discourse, and the way of dealing with the local people most of whom no longer sympathy with the militant organization, especially after the Rawda Mosque massacre.

- 6- The numbers of the dead announced by the military spokesman are inaccurate, as most of those killed are ordinary citizens or suspects arrested in advance for suspicion of belonging to the Sinai Province, or sympathizing with them, or supporting their relatives who are members of the organization. Reviewing the pictures published by the military spokesman's statements (18, 19, 20) for the dead gunmen, in addition to his statement on the Qassima attack, we noticed that 33 of the 39 dead bodies were not killed in an armed clash. In fact, they were physically liquidated, and a weapon was placed next to each of them.
- 7- The emergence of public killings of women and children by the army forces and local militias, according to [tribal sources](#) where the army forces liquidated two women (Um Hudhayfah and Um Ibrahim) from the village of Mutla in Rafah on May 3, a woman in El Arish with signs of torture and gunshots on her body on May 13. According to other sources, three bodies of dead women were found thrown at the graves of Sheikh Zuwaid. Also on May 7, Al-Sharq satellite TV aired a [video](#) on the liquidation of a young man in central Sinai by officers and soldiers of the Egyptian army. However, activists on social networking sites circulated the same video, but without [editing](#), which caused a shock to people with respect to its content.
- 8- In Operation Sinai-2018, the army used a force of 88 battalions, with a total of 42,630 fighters and 800 types of vehicles, while the size of the police forces involved in the operation, but all around the country reached 52,570 thousand

policeman and 2,750 types of equipment, in the face of no less than 1000 militants according to some estimates.

- 9- The Egyptian armed forces used to target areas of engagement starting with the air bombardment and then artillery shells before troops can advance in lines with anti-mines vehicles at the front. Then campaigns break into the target area and begin to comb it with bulldozing all its agricultural land and demolishing most of the houses.
- 10- The military campaigns in Sinai focused on the areas of Bir al-Abed, El Arish, Sheikh Zuwaid, Rafah, and central Sinai. The areas between the border strip up to the east of Arish have witnessed heavy bulldozing of agricultural lands, sweeping operations and demolition of houses. These areas include Al-Lefitat, Al-Tuma, Al-Dahir, the District, Masoura, Al-Safa, al-Ahrash, Al-Mahdiyyah, Shabana, Bala'a, Douar Salim, Douar el Tenk, Kilo 17, Sadout, Qawz Ghanem, Al-Sayahiya, El-Qesm, El-Ghar, Haq el-Hisan, El Matala, El-Zaarba, El-Malalha, El-Gouhaini, Qawz Abu Raad, El-Kharafine, Marbaat el-Foul, and other areas.
- 11- The following areas in north-east Sinai witnessed armed clashes and targeting of campaigns: (Al-Dahir, Haq El-Hisan, Zari'i, Sadut, El Matala, Bala'a) in south and west of Rafah, (Al-Tuma, Al-Arsal area, Al-Kharrouba), in south and east Sheikh Zuwaid, (Kilo 17, Karam Al-Qawadis, the international road) in the district of Arish, while Central Sinai, the areas of Mount Halal, Khraiza and Al-Qusaymah have witnessed clashes but with less frequency.
- 12- It was noted that the same operations and confrontations were repeated in areas that had previously been cleared, indicating that the army had not

succeeded in effectively stabilizing itself in those areas, despite the displacement of the civilian population.

13- Militants tried to launch strong attacks on the army forces, some failed while some succeeded. One of the failed attacks occurred on 21 February when ISIS launched an attack on the main headquarters of operations of army forces in Arish, Battalion 101. The attack was launched through four combatants wearing uniforms of the Egyptian army. Although ISIS succeeded in the implementation of a security breach against the forces of the Egyptian regime, its combatants failed to break into the battalion. Two of them blew themselves up during the clashes while the other two were killed. One lieutenant officer from the army forces and two soldiers were killed during the attack, according to what was documented.

14- The attack on Al-Qusaymah camp on 14 April 2018 was one of ISIS's successful attacks. The Military Spokesman of the Egyptian Ministry of Defence announced the thwarting of an army camp's storming operation in Central Sinai by an armed group of 14 individuals, four of whom were wearing explosive belts. This leads to the killing of all 14 individuals, four of whom detonated explosive belts around the camp, killing eight members of the armed forces and wounding 15 others. The Military Spokesman then published [photos](#) he claimed to belong to the terrorist members that have been killed.

However, only a day later, ISIS published an official statement detailing the operation in and revealing that only two combatants had launched the operation and not 14 as the Military Spokesman claimed. ISIS had even published their images carrying their combat names (Abu Hamza and Abu Bakr Al-Muhajir). One of them was Egyptian and

the other was from the Gaza Strip. They stormed Al-Qusaymah camp wearing uniforms of the Egyptian army they had seized before. They then got involved into clashes with the forces inside the camp before blowing up themselves up. It later turned out that ISIS's attack did not fail, as the Military Spokesman described. The attackers had instead managed to infiltrate and storm the camp despite the security procedures. They then succeeded in getting involved into the clashes and killed many soldiers, including the leader of the camp himself, Major General Ahmad Hamed Zaky Al-Khouli, before blowing up themselves in the center of the military camp, and not in its surroundings as the Military Spokesman claimed. The latter also claimed that the attack was carried out by 14 armed militants, 4 of them were "suicide bombers," in an attempt to show the magnitude of the attack and to justify the extent of losses in the military forces. In contrast, ISIS's statement said that only two militants carried out the attack.

Reviewing the pictures of the dead armed group published by the Military Spokesman [here](#), we found that all of them were wearing nothing in their legs but shoes or sandals worn by ISIS members in their attacks like the one that appears in the remains of dead bodies of the two young men who blew up themselves. We have also noticed the repeated appearance of the same submachine gun next to two different bodies, as we will show in the following analysed picture. This is consistent with what we have obtained from exclusive sources that after the attack, a military campaign came to the camp, led by an officer in the Military Intelligence carrying a group of detainees, who were taken down, forced to wear military uniforms, and then shot to show that they had been killed in the attack.





The Military Spokesman had intentionally minimised the losses of the army. He mentioned that only eight soldiers were killed in the attack and 15 others were injured. However, by tracking the Egyptian media we discovered the lie of the Military Spokesman. The numbers we have managed to monitor only through the research exceeded the declared number to more than the double. We monitored the 22 funerals of the dead officers in the operation, namely: [Lieutenant Colonel / Ahmad Hamed Zaky Al-Khouli](#), [Captain / Khalid Suleiman](#), [Captain Police / Ashraf Gad](#), [Captain / Ahmad Abdel Rahim Sarsi](#), [First lieutenant / Mahmoud Imad Daghash](#), [Doctor Lieutenant / Mahmoud Kamal Eddine](#), [Sergeant / Abdel Hamid Mahmoud](#), [Sergeant / Mostafa Fotouh Jabr](#), and recruits ([Ahmed Ibrahim Abdel Ghani](#), [Tarek Mohamed Ahmed Abdel Hamid](#), [Samir Ahmed Abdel Latif](#), [Ahmed Emad](#), [Abdel Rahman Hassan Abdel Rahman](#), [Abdel Latif Wahid el Naggar](#), [Adham Salah](#), [Mahmoud Bahgat El-Dababi](#), [Mahmoud Abdel Wahab Ali Hassan Sohag](#), [Rahman Mohammed Ahmed Al-Suwaifi](#), [Mohamed Taha Mahmoud Abdel Bari](#), [Ahmed Mohammed Reda](#) and [Mohammed Abul Ala Turki](#)).



In general, the military operations carried out against it, costed ISIS many points of concentration, military and administrative equipment stores as well as the trenches and holes it has been digging. However, ISIS does not believe that the consequences brought by this attack will be reflected on the rate of operations, which is actually low. Although, communication was subject to the Army's electronic monitoring, ISIS was still able to establish communication with its information network, internally and externally, as well as with the main organization. For instance, Al-Naba magazine tackled the outcomes of 10 days of the military campaign on ISIS, in its 121<sup>st</sup> issue published on 1st March. 55 of the army and police forces were killed and 20 vehicles were destroyed, in addition to an attack carried out by suicide attack shock troops (Inghimasi fighters), 3 clashes, 8 sniper attacks and 17 explosive devices.

The Egyptian regime unleashed the National Security apparatus inside the city of Arish which has witnessed high rates of arrest and torture of women. They have been suspected for having relatives, who are wanted or killed during previous demonstrations and armed clashes or suspected of sympathizing with ISIS or the Muslim Brotherhood or appeared in opposition media outlets. The houses of all those who belong to the aforementioned category have been demolished and the people have [circulated](#) terrible stories about the torture, which both women and girls were subjected to during detention.

Return of the old guard to the scene: Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, re-appointed Maj. Gen. [Mohamed Abdul Fadel Shousha](#) as governor of North Sinai. He previously occupied the same position in 2008 and was governor of South Sinai in 2010 and he is known for having a bad reputation dealing with tribesmen. Maj. Gen. Mohammed Tawfiq appointed Maj.Gen. [Mamdouh Abu Zeid](#) as director of the North Sinai Governorate

Investigations Department. He described the re-appointment as part of the Ministry of Interior's strategy to restore the old officers of Sinai who had previous experience with the terrorism file. Mamdouh was one of those who were appointed before the 25 January revolution in several positions, including the position of Criminal Investigation Officer and Inspector General of the Governorate, in order to fight Jama'at Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (Organization of Monotheism and Jihad). At that time, the regime reported its success in the elimination of this organization. However, the truth was totally the opposite, for the security policy at the time contributed to expanding the range of social grievances and some members of the armed organizations had to disappear and integrate themselves within communities. On the other hand, as a result of the grievances, these members gained tribal and popular sympathy. Many citizens were randomly put in prisons and were consequently introduced to the beliefs of armed organizations, which encouraged these citizens to adopt some of these ideas as a result.

The IS-affiliate Sinai Province's media mechanisms deliberately revealed that it was not affected by the military operations carried out against it in Sinai, broadcasting a video entitled "The Failed Confrontation" on 25 March 2018. This video deliberately highlighted the extent to which the Egyptian Army forces were coward and incompetent in several scenes, most notably the one depicting an IS member firing one bullet at a soldier, who was standing next to an armored vehicle and who escaped from this bullet using the same vehicle, which body cannot be harmed by a single machine gun shot.

In general, most of the operations mentioned within the broadcasted video were a collection of sporadic operations carried out since 2016 through 2017 and were

reduced to a lesser extent by 2018. The most important thing about this issue is the announcement of the next issue, which has occurred at the end and will introduce meetings and messages from some former officials and military officers at the Egyptian security and military institutions. This would constitute an embarrassment to the Egyptian regime, which is trying to highlight that the ones joining armed organizations are only members of opponent Islamic groups.

On the other hand, the fact that ISIS has changed its policies in Sinai, since the death of their former Emir Abu Duaa Al-Ansari, has negatively affected its communities after the organization's leadership drastically, deliberately, and increasingly got itself involved into side-by-side conflicts. This state has been reinforced after Al-Rawdah Mosque massacre, which ISIS was afraid to adopt after the angry reactions triggered within the circles, which have previously sympathized with it, and even within its members in Sinai. However, the organization's new leadership did not stop this new trend and published a video that depicted the killing of one of its members, being accused of apostasy for dealing with Al-Qassam Brigades.

This has been accompanied with the frequent emergence of the convulsive rhetoric characterized by poor legitimacy by the media wing of the organization, such as Kadhem Al-Ghazwi speech. In general, some local people attribute these actions to two things: the increasing control of the so-called Hazemites movement over ISIS as well as the security breaches that follow this and work to cause to exhaust itself. This will put an end to ISIS presence in Sinai and dismantle it in favor of other jihadist Salafist organizations, which activities have been interrupted when Ansar Bait al-Maqdis has pledged allegiance to ISIS.

## Israeli support and violation of sovereignty

Not surprisingly, [the New York Times](#) has mentioned in one of its reports that more than 100 secret air raids have been waged by the Israeli Air Force inside Egypt with the consent of the head of the Egyptian regime, Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi. Jonathan Marcus, a diplomatic correspondent at [BBC](#) news website, stated that the Israeli air raids in Sinai indicate to which extent its relationship with the Arab world has developed. The Israeli newspaper [Haaretz](#) highlighted this and confirmed the unprecedented level of alliance between Egypt and Israel during the era of Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. Even, senior Israeli officers call him Sisina (our Sisi).

This unprecedented level of intelligence and military cooperation is one of the reasons behind Israel's participation in the strikes against ISIS in Sinai, even though the military spokesman Col. Tamer Rifai has [denied](#) the validity of these reports or any others. However, the Israeli newspaper [Haaretz](#) attributed the reasons behind some of the support that the Israeli Air Force has offered to the Egyptian regime to several factors: The Israeli F-16 and Apache helicopters are pretty much advanced compared to Egypt's, in terms of expertise of the crew, technologies, updated jets, the group of guided munitions, the superiority of air and ground control devices, and remote control.

The Israeli website [i24](#) highlighted and re-circulated news published by ISIS news agency Amaq. The Agency published a video and photos showing the effects that the Israeli bombing, had on a house and a car in the Egyptian province of North Sinai. One of the pictures showed the remnants of a part of an "Israeli" missile with Hebrew writings on it.



Here at the Egyptian Institute for Studies, we have documented several attacks by Israeli drones during the months of June, July, and August, which took place at various times in the areas of operations in the northeast of Sinai. These attacks were focused on areas in south of Sheikh Zuwaid and southern Rafah. Aerial penetration operation ranged between monitoring and aerial survey and shelling and quick withdrawal. We have noticed that the air force covered the withdrawal of Israeli aircrafts in some cases and re-bombed the same targets. We have also noticed the following:

- 1- On 26 and 27 June, Israeli aerial reconnaissance was observed following the bombing of a car in southern Rafah.
- 2- On 2 July, Israeli drones were observed flying and surveying areas in south and west of Rafah and Sheikh Zuwaid.
- 3- On 5 July, an Israeli drone fired a missile at an unknown target in the area west of Rafah.
- 4- On 10 July, Israeli drones were observed flying and surveying "Israeli" drones for "Al-Rufayaa, Al-Hilweh ash-Shalafah" villages in southern Rafah.



- 5- On 11 July, Israeli drones carried out a flight and aerial survey of the coastal areas of Rafah.
- 6- On 13 July, Israeli drones carried out a flight and aerial survey of areas in southern Rafah.
- 7- On 14 July, an Israeli drone carried out an aerial reconnaissance of the villages of Al Masura, Al-Saha, Al-Tayra, Al-Hilweh, Al-Rufayaa and Rafah, and then fired a missile at an unknown target in that area.
- 8- On 31 July, Israeli drones conducted aerial reconnaissance flight in the area of the village of Abu al-Helu in southern Rafah.
- 9- On 1 August, Israeli drones conducted an aerial survey of the areas south and west of Rafah and Sheikh Zuwaid and shot four aerial missiles at targets in Al-Tuma village, south of Sheikh Zuwaid, Shabana village south of Rafah and Bala'a village west of Rafah.
- 10- On 5 August Israeli drones fired three missiles at targets west of the Egyptian city of Rafah.
- 11- On 12 August, Hermes 450 Israeli drones conducted reconnaissance operations in the villages of Bala'a and Yamit in the Egyptian Rafah area.
- 12- On 21 August, Israeli drones conducted aerial reconnaissance and targeted areas in south of Sheikh Zuwaid and Rafah.
- 13- On 22 August, an Israeli drone aimed at a target missile in the east of the village of Al-Masura in Rafah, in conjunction with the flight of Israeli reconnaissance planes in areas south of Rafah.
- 14- On 25 August, Israeli drones carried out a flight and aerial survey of the villages of Al-Tayra, Al-Masurah, Abu al-Helu, and Rafah.

- 15- On 27 August, two Israeli drones and an aerial reconnaissance aircraft flew over the Egyptian port of Rafah and the village of Yamit while the second over some villages south of Rafah.
- 16- On 6 September, two Israeli drones carried out a flight and aerial survey over al-Zaheer and al-Khraafin villages south of Sheikh Zuwaid.
- 17- On 9 September an Israeli drone flew over the village of Al-Sayala in central Sinai, and another one flew over the Nqizat and Al-Barth villages south of Rafah.
- 18- On 25 September two Israeli drone aircraft bombed several targets south of Rafah and east and south of Sheikh Zuwaid.
- 19- On 28 September an Israeli drone conducted an aerial survey above the area of Goz Abu Raad, south of Rafah, and another one flew over the area west of Rafah.
- 20- On 29 September, two Israeli drones carried out an aerial survey and fired several missiles at targets in the village of Bala'a, west of Rafah, and the village of al-Moqataa in Sheikh Zwaid.
- 21- On 3 October, an Israeli drone overflew the al-Barth village, south of Rafah.
- 22- On 4-5 October, more than one Israeli drone carried out reconnaissance operations and then launched several air raids inside Egyptian territory over two days targeting the villages of Bala'a, Masawrah, Al-Hilweh, Shalalafeh, Tayrah, Shabana, and al-Zaheera, south of Sheikh Zuwaid.
- 23- On 7 October, an Israeli drone carried out reconnaissance operations over the villages of Al Masura, Al-Hilweh, Rafiah, Al-Tayera and Mahdia in Rafah.
- 24- On 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 October, Israeli drones carried out aerial survey over the coast of Rafah city, the Bala'a area west of Rafah, and the Shalalafa area south of the city.

25- On 29 October, two Israeli drones carried out aerial reconnaissance over the areas of southern Rafah and Sheikh Zuwaid.

### Human rights violations during the operation

With the launch of the comprehensive Operation Sinai-2018 With, the year 2018 was the worst in the history of North Sinai governorate for decades due to many practices and violations that took place, including:

- 1- The Egyptian army imposed a siege on the province starting from 9 February without providing the necessary supplies to the population, which led to a rapid shortage of commodities as a result of the rising demand for supplies from the citizens' part for fear of the prolongation of the military operation. Despite the lack of commodities in the area, the Egyptian regime did not allow the flow of food and medical supplies into the cities in order to ease the citizens' concerns. The blockage of food entries led to a significant increase in the prices and the emergence of famine in some villages and areas. As such, the residents of some villages in Rafah and Sheikh Zuwaid resorted to eating herbs and seeds.
- 2- The army expanded use of indiscriminate shelling and cluster bombs in residential zones and agricultural lands which resulted in the devastation of these areas. These violations were documented and condemned in a statement by [Amnesty International](#). The security forces in Arish have illegally expanded the demolition of citizens' houses on the grounds that several members of families living there are wanted by authorities. Hence, the security elements have even targeted women in these families with systematic detention and torture inside the Arish Police Station-1.

- 3- The army deliberately humiliated residents of the north-east Sinai areas by blocking roads and shutting down fuel stations, in addition to controlling the arrival of commodities and restricting it to small quantities, which led the deputies of the People's Assembly for the Sinai Province to submit a [memo](#) to the Minister of Defence and Military Production, including several requests from the people of the province. The requests included: first, opening the way for passengers to and from Sinai, without giving up the totality of security procedures and carefully inspecting citizens during the entry and exit from the province. Second, allowing the entrance of all kinds of goods, and medicines, as well as gas and vital vegetables, and ensuring the full recovery of the educational process in schools and universities as soon as possible for the future of students.
- 4- The policy of extermination of citizens has also continued, including the killing of 48 people by the Egyptian Army and police forces under the pretext of being armed or Takfiri elements. The most prominent of these incidents was published by Al-Watan newspaper on January 4, and it was related to the arrest of four people, two of them on charges of being armed. On the same day, the spokesman for the Egyptian Army announced the detention of two suspects and the killing of two others, in addition to the two cases of killing 14 people on 8 and 23 January committed by the Egyptian Interior Ministry, without announcing their names. The Egyptian Interior Ministry's keenness not to announce the names of those who were exterminated aims to avoid its previous experiences when it announced the names of some of those being killed. The Ministry's move revealed the fact that they were subjected to arrest and enforced disappearance before being killed. This has also been used by

international organizations, such as Amnesty International, to issue their statements based on evidence and documents. A video leak appeared in May showed a unit of the Egyptian Army (from the Thunderbolt and Infantry forces) taking a young man to a mountainous area and trying to close his eyes amid the young man's anguish. An officer promised him that his father will come and take him. But, they eventually shoot him in the head and back ([Video 1](#)) ([Video 2](#)). It is likely that the young man who was executed in this video is the same young man that the military spokesman published the picture of his corpse during the sixteenth military statement of the comprehensive operation Sinai 2018 on March 19, 2018 ([the military statement](#)).

One of the reserve officers, Mohammed Amer, boasted that he participated in the killing. One of the reserve officers, Mohammed Amer, boasted that he participated in the killing. These executions were extended to include women, as the army forces and local militias' killing of women in public reiterated recently. [Tribal sources](#) spoke of the army forces' killing of two women (Um Hudhayfah and Um Ibrahim) from the village of Mutla in Rafah. Also, the corpse of a lady was found in the road of the valley in Arish, and there were signs of torture and shots on her body, near the neighborhood of Aruj in Arish on May 13. According to other sources, three bodies of other women were thrown in cemeteries in the city of Sheikh Zuwaid. The last cases of extermination happened on September 10, when the Egyptian Interior Ministry [announced](#) the killing of 11 citizens in the city of Arish in North Sinai. To everybody's surprise, Mohammed Ibrahim Jabr Shahin, who was arrested with his 10-year-old son,



- Ibrahim, on July 26 by a security force of the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior, was among the killed citizens. They had been forcibly disappeared until the date of the announcement of the father's death and the unknown fate of the son.
- 5- The Egyptian regime has also adopted a deliberate policy of starvation against civilians. [Human Rights Watch](#) has discussed part of this in a report on the humanitarian crisis in Sinai, calling on the government to provide adequate food for the entire population and immediately allowing relief organizations, such as the Egyptian Red Crescent, to provide resources to meet the critical needs of the local population.
- 6- The Egyptian regime's approach of arresting and forcibly disappearing children has continued, and even after their appearance they were imprisoned for long periods. One of the noticeable cases was that of student Anas Hossam Badawi from Arish, who was arrested and forcibly disappeared on January 8, 2015. He has been forcibly disappeared for 400 days, before prosecuting him and continuing his imprisonment until he was released recently. This is not the only case, as there is the case of the child Mahdi Hammad Salmi Alian, 14 years old, who is accused in case No. 357 of Eastern Cairo Military Court for the year 2016. He was subjected to enforced disappearance following his arrest from his home in the village of Zar'aa Al-Khair west of Arish on March 4, 2016. Perhaps, what proves the arbitrary arrest of children is the decision of the Supreme State Security Prosecution to [release](#) 11 children accused in case No. 502 of 2015, known as the "Sinai State," under the guarantee of their place of residence and with precautionary measures. The children are Ahmad Ibrahim Ahmed Abdul Rahim, Ahmad Majdi Ahmed Imam Al Arabi, Anas Hussam Al-Din

Faik Abdul Aziz Badawi, Khalid Mohammed Mohammed Ahmed Khalil, Atef Sayed Ali Saber Singer, Abdul Hamid, Khaled Abdulqader Al-Desouki, Abdul Rahman Abdullah Yousif, Omar Abou El Hassan Ahmed Morsi, Fuad Hossam Ahmed Ibrahim Barhoum, Mohamed Ahmed Lafi Suleiman and Mohamed Mohamed Sayed Selman Abu Daif.

This has occurred after being accused of belonging to a terrorist group established against the law, assault on members of the armed forces and police, targeting vital establishments and possession of weapons and ammunition without a license.

- 7- It was also noticed that the figures of the military data for the comprehensive operation Sinai 2018 were contradictory, specifically the statement No. (12), where the total number of arrested citizens was 3573, including 15 women and girls. We have remarked the disappearance of 252 citizens among those who were arrested from the statements of the military spokesman as he announced in statement No. 12 that the total number of arrested citizens until the date of the statement is 2235 instead of 2487, which can be obtained by adding the number of arrested citizens that the military spokesmen talked about following the military data. According to the military spokesman, 1447 citizens have been released, 547 citizens have been transferred to the investigation authorities on criminal charges and sentences, and 241 citizens have been detained for security checks. However, he did not address the fate of 252 citizens who were deliberately dropped from the statement.

8- There were many examples on the army's continued indiscriminate shooting of civilians; however, we have monitored several cases, including:

- On March 16, the child Saleh Abdul Hamid Saleh Al-Rakeiba was killed by a direct bullet shot in the head by the army forces in Rafah.
- On March 20, the child Abdullah Mohammed Amer, 9, and child Mohammed Ezzedine Saleh Al-Awabdeh, 11, were killed after the Israeli army opened fire on citizens who gathered to receive their share of flour in Al-Masoura area, west of Rafah.
- In April: Mrs. Shehira Mansour Mustafa Hussein was injured in her eyes as a result of shooting by the army. A medical report is enclosed below:



## Impact of the operation on development and population

The situation in North Sinai witnessed an unprecedented level of deterioration regarding the living conditions and services during 2018. This year witnessed too the eviction of the remaining residents of the city of Rafah, where only part of the southern Rafah area citizens has not yet been included in evictions. The forced eviction has gone beyond the boundaries of the buffer zone. According to various reports, including a [report](#) by Human Rights Watch, the army demolished 3,600 buildings from January 15, 2018, to April 14, 2018. Hundreds of hectares of agricultural land were bulldozed over an area of 12 kilometers along the Gaza border, in addition to small pockets of demolition of more than 100 buildings north of Arish airport and the demolition of the homes of dozens of citizens illegally on charges of having relatives wanted by security forces. This comes under a total siege imposed on Sinai, and that had the following effects:

- 1- All agricultural land in the cities of Rafah and Sheikh Zuwaid, in addition to the city of Arish, was dredged, including 25,000 feddans planted with olives, while retaining about 10% of the land in general, according to the [statement](#) of Dr. Atef Ebeid, Chairman of the Directorate of Agriculture and Land Reclamation in North Sinai.
- 2- The farmers' losses in North Sinai exceeded [LE one billion](#), as a result of the bulldozing operations led by the Egyptian army on their farms. The count of such losses is not finalized, but rather limited to the amount of damage which took place until Aug.
- 3- The destruction of power lines supplying the cities of north-east Sinai with energy by the Egyptian Army, which led to the interruption of electricity pushing

civilians to leave their houses. The Union of Sinai Tribes, loyal to the Egyptian Army, [admitted](#) that the reason for cutting power lines, connected to the cities of Sheikh Zuwaid and Rafah, was the bombardment by fighter jets belonging to the Egyptian Air Force and Egyptian artillery. The bombing targeted the power line in the areas of Sabeel and in the south Arish, under the pretext of destroying the dens and activities of armed elements.

4- Running out of food: In March 2018 and due to food shortage, 1,300 citizens of the village of Masoura, located in Rafah, headed on [bare](#) foot towards an army checkpoint located in the area to obtain four kilos of flour. Masoura was evacuated later on. Rafah's whereabouts are subjected to a suffocating siege causing famine and the death of a child due to the lack of substituting medicines. The MP for the province of North Sinai, Rahmi Bakir, [presented](#) a memo to the Assistant Minister of Defense for constitutional and legal affairs, in which he talked about some of the grievances of the people of North Sinai. The memorandum mentioned that the locals of the area including the ones who were stuck outside and inside the province are allowed neither to leave nor to enter. The ban has also affected patients who needed treatment outside the hospitals of Arish. Moreover, citizens originating from the area who have employment contracts abroad were not given travel permits. The MP also demanded an increase in Arish's share of grains, vegetables and fruit supplies due to the demographic density of the governorate, in addition to the severe shortage of alimentary products there which resulted in the death of a citizen. Bakir demanded that the Army distribute free food packages using food ration cards, so that every three individuals per family will have a carton of food



accommodation. Maintaining such system of distribution can insure that everyone can have a share of the supplies. He also called for the distribution of 30 liters of gasoline per day for every citizen in need of oil, in addition to increasing the share of potash pipes in Arish due to a severe shortage.

- 5- High fuel prices due to shutting down gas stations in the area. A litter of gasoline in the city of Arish costs LE 35, while the price of gasoline in some areas of Rafah reached LE 2,000.
- 6- The displacement of about 480 families whose providers work in North Sinai, after removing factories belonging to MP Hossam Rifai, a member of the House of Representatives for Arish district, and engineer Mohamed Hassan Dergham, a businessman in North Sinai. The demolition decision was due to the fact that the production facilities were located in the vicinity of the buffer zone near Arish International Airport.
- 7- Traders are no longer able to pay the rents of shops as a result of economic blockade and the recession of sale and purchase operations due to the siege. Nonetheless, all workshops and factories of all forms and types, even craftsmen, were shut down, in addition to the blockade of fishing and boats and nets workshops as a result of the fishing ban imposed on the region. Such recession led some families to sell their furniture. But, perhaps the most severe manifestation of this crisis is the decision to give bread [for free](#), as an addition on the ration card, for humanitarian cases among workers, craftsmen, and drivers as well as fishermen.
- 8- The destruction of houses in the areas of central and southern Sinai, where more than 200 houses were completely destroyed in the village of Khuraiza, in

addition to more than 100 houses in the village of Ras Bada. In the Province of South Sinai, security forces demolished the houses in the area of Ruwaisat in Sharm el-Sheikh and other locations under the pretext of [violating](#) the law, so the authorities can justify such actions.

9- The continuous water irruption in Arish ([1](#)) and ([2](#)) in general, and the city of Sheikh Zuwaid and Rafah in particular, despite the [expenditure](#) of one billion and 366 million EPG on water projects in the area, according to official figures announced by the Province of North Sinai about projects of drinking water and sanitation.

10- The continued disconnection of mobile communication networks in the cities of Sheikh Zuwaid and Rafah, for more than two years, with [promises](#) from officials every now and then about fixing the problem in the very near future.

11- Unfairness in disbursement of dues and compensations for citizens evicted from buffer zones. Citizens, who are granted financial compensations, among the residents evacuated from the buffer zone in Rafah, [pleaded](#) for help as the government was paying ridiculous compensations compared to the real value of their demolished houses. The amounts paid by the Egyptian State are very low and insufficient to obtain an alternative apartment elsewhere. Hence, the farmers of the villages of Al-Dhahir and Shalaq and Abu Al-Araj [complained](#) about the absence of governmental inspection regarding their farms and houses, which were affected by the armed operations in the area, so that they can claim the officially declared state compensations. This is in spite of the official [statements](#) that the sum of one billion and 813 million and 410,000 EPG were disbursed as subsidies and compensations for those affected by the events

taking place in the province, where the sum of one billion and 244 million EPG was paid to compensate those affected by the removal of buildings and houses in the buffer zone in Rafah.

### Sinai and popular support for the Egyptian regime policy

The Egyptian regime was keen to highlight the turnout of the people of the province of North Sinai to vote in the presidential elections, and that the voting percentages were not affected by the comprehensive military operation Sinai 2018. In this section, we show the fact that citizens are voting according to the official data announced. In accordance with the population capacity of the [Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics](#), the population of North Sinai on Friday March 30, 2018, is about 458,123 people, and those who are entitled to [vote](#) within the province of North Sinai are 250,605 citizens. They vote in 61 subcommittees supervised by 11 public committees and 49 electoral centers, and the votes are divided as follows (111,846 in Arish, 56,844 in Bir Al-Abed, 30,794 in Sheikh Zuwaid, 34,750 in Rafah, 13,004 in Hasna, 3,367 in Nekhel).

On March 25, the army completed its deployment to secure the “electoral” centers and the resting places of the judges inside the province, since the Islamic State had already threatened, in a video version entitled “Protectors of Sharia,” to target the electoral process and its supervisors. It has previously targeted the judges in the 2014 elections, where a number of them were killed. To encourage citizens to participate in the elections, North Sinai Province announced the provision of buses to transport voters from the people of Sheikh Zuwaid and Rafah residents in the city of Arish to transport them throughout the elections days free of charge from Arish to the city of Sheikh Zuwaid, the headquarters of their committees.

## Figures:

- The voting process witnessed a low turnout of citizens, and this was clearly demonstrated by the army and police forces in some areas of the center of Bir Al-Abed when they [arrested](#) a large number of villagers and forced them to go to the polling stations. A [video](#) of the Governor of North Sinai, Major General Abdel Fattah Harhour, and Director of Security Major General Reda Sweilem, showed a small number of voters, during their inspection of the electoral process in the governorate. In the meantime, the [official media](#) continued to portray the matter differently, as it did in covering the “electoral” process in all provinces of Egypt.
- The pro-regime [Al-Watan](#) newspaper reported that the percentage of voting in the governorate of North Sinai is close to 40%, but the same newspaper stated in another report that the [total](#) number of voters in the province of North Sinai was 41,769, out of a total of 250,605 voters, which means that only 16.6% voted.
- As for the images that were circulated about the “electoral” centers’ crowdedness in the Sheikh Zuwaid area, they do not reflect the reality of the turnout of citizens who participated in the voting process, especially if we know that approximately 1,300 voters among Sheikh Zuwaid and Rafah residents who live in Arish were transferred to cast their votes, according to [Youm7](#) newspaper.
- According to [Al-Watan](#) newspaper, the total number of votes counted in the committees of Rafah and Sheikh Zuwaid was 5,372 until March 29, a very small number that does not reflect voting intensity, especially if we know that the total number of eligible voters in the areas of Sheikh Zuwaid and Rafah is 65,544.

- Finally, although some of the voters went to vote out of their own volition, others went out of fear of being considered opponents to the Egyptian regime if they did not go to the polls, which made some citizens keen to vote to prove their support for the Egyptian regime, out of fear of military arrests that take place during the comprehensive military operation Sinai 2018. In general, there is only one fact during the “electoral” process in Sinai, namely that citizens were heavily organized, but not to cast their votes, but in order to get [bread](#), which has become an arduous process under the army’s military operations in Sinai.

