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It is no longer a secret that the military dominates civilian life and the society as a whole in Egypt. The present cabinet with all its civil ministries is no longer the only civilian front for the military rule. In fact, the military has tightened its grip on all aspects of civil life through employing military officers, both retired or in office.

On 22 December 2018, Hala Zayed, the current Minister of Health, announced that directors of 48 model hospitals (29 of which belong to the Ministry of Health and 19 to the Ministry of Higher Education) will be chosen from among the military. This decision violates all legal and constitutional values of ensuring that all citizens have equal opportunities when applying for a job based on objective evaluation criteria, not due to belonging to any State body or party, whether civilian or military. This move comes after founding the Faculty of Military Medicine, a critical development in the course of military dominance over the civilian sphere, and within the framework of seeking to tighten control over service sectors that are directly related to citizens, such as the health sector.

Militarization of leading positions in the Ministry of Health

As the Egyptian government that came after the military coup sought to exclude all components of the civil society, the phenomenon of controlling the vital sectors in the Ministry of Health, including the security, finance and administrative sectors, in addition to dozens of jobs in the middle administration at the level of director-general, which is difficult to monitor because of lack of transparency in the announcement of mechanisms of military personnel appointment in those positions.

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The prevalence of the presence of the military in various sectors of the Ministry of Health contributed to increasing anger among employees, in light of the huge salaries that those military commanders receive added to the huge salaries they receive from the army starting from 15 thousand pounds to officers with the rank of Colonel and up to 25 thousand pounds for officers with the rank of Maj. General, which increases the psychological burden on civil servants in those sectors, whose salary may not exceed 1500 pounds per month.

A- The military in the Ministry of Health

Among the most important military figures that were appointed in leading positions at the Ministry of Health after the July 2013 coup:

1- Major General Mohamed Fathallah, an anesthesiologist in the Armed Forces, was appointed to the position of spokesman for the Ministry of Health, from 29 July 2013 to 25 November 2013, and was then promoted to the Head of the Health Minister's Office.

Fathallah only made one statement on the number of deaths during the dispersal of the Rabaa and Nahda sit-ins as well as subsequent events all over the country, during his tenure as an official spokesman of the Ministry of Health. On 15 August 2013, one day after the massacre, the Egyptian Ministry of Health officially announced that the incidents left 578 dead and 4201 injured all over the country, including 288 deaths in Rabaa only.

Meanwhile, the Anti-Coup Alliance, known as the National Alliance Supporting Legitimacy, announced that the number of victims after the dispersal of anti-coup sit-

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ins reached 2,600 in Rabaa Adawiya alone; and some Brotherhood leaders, such as Mohamed El-Beltagy and Essam El-Erian, said 3000 protesters were killed by the army and security forces on 14 August, while the number jumped to 4000 or 5000, including those viewed as “coup victims” in general. However, the Human Rights Watch said the death toll reached one thousand.

Commenting on this:

- The Ministry of Health was supposed to issue several consecutive statements on the situation following the initial statement. However, only three statements were issued between 14 and 17 August.
- The total number of victims announced by Major General Mohammad Fathallah, the official spokesman of the Ministry of Health, (578 people), after only one day of the Rabaa sit-in dispersal cannot be accurate due to the state of liquidity and severe disintegration of the State institutions at the time.
- No subsequent data were issued to indicate the status of the injured and the hospitals to which they were transferred, and whether there were subsequent deaths among the injured.
- The Ministry of Health did not play its role in preserving the rights of the dead and injured through issuance of official death certificates showing the real causes of death or injury, which could support the legal position of the families of those affected in the course of criminal prosecution of army and police forces involved in killing demonstrators.

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- So far, the Ministry of Health has not released any new data or statistics regarding the massacre of dispersal of Rabaa and Nahda sit-ins, especially causes of death.
- The Ministry of Health did not respond to the complaints raised by the Egyptian or international press about discrepancies in statements about the numbers of victims and remained silent.

The appointment of a military doctor in this position as spokesman of the Ministry of Health, at this specific stage, begs a question about the accuracy and transparency of information regarding the incident, where the victims were civilians and the convicts were army and police forces, amid silence of the official spokesman of the ministry.

2- The position of assistant to the Minister of Health for Financial and Administrative Affairs was mostly occupied by the military except for the period from January to October 2015, where the current Minister of Finance, Mohamed Maeit, held the post: Major General Ahmed Farag took over from 2006 until the January Revolution (2011), then Major General Ashraf Khairi, and after that Dr. Maeit as we mentioned earlier, and finally Major General Sayed Al Shahid, who has been in this position until today.

3- The Central Department of Administrative Affairs: Dr. Ahmed Emad Eddin, former Minister of Health in March 2017 appointed Major General Ahmed Baligh Al Hadidi as Head of the Health Ministry's Central Department of Administrative Affairs. The Administrative Affairs Sector is responsible for all types of maintenance within the ministry office including plumbing, carpentry, electricity, as well as sending and receiving the office correspondence.

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4- General Security Department: Dr. Ahmed Emad Eddin, the former Minister of Health, appointed Major General Ahmed Zaghloul as Assistant to the Minister of Health for Political Communication and Security Affairs, replacing Major General Ahmad Said, former Director of the Ministry of Health's Security Department. Also, the former minister of health appointed Major General Hisham Abdel Raouf as assistant to the minister for basic care.

As we have seen, the military control all sectors of the Ministry of Health as well as the overall policy-making within the Ministry and the Ministry's resources, logistics, personnel files, communication systems, facilities and services, in addition to the operating system and internal regulations.

B- Management of model hospitals

The decision of Hala Zayed, the current Minister of Health, to appoint the directors of the model hospitals (48) from among those who have a military background is the most dangerous decision in the context of development of the course of military dominance on the health sector in Egypt, for the following reasons:

- The decision is the first of its kind that restricts applying for a civil position to the military.
- The decision allows the military to systematically invade the Ministry of Health's middle administration, as directors of hospitals, which enables them to control the joints of the health sector as a whole, not only the top administration and policy-making, but also extends to the executive.

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- The decision represents a qualitative leap in the path of imposing military hegemony on society, through the appointment of soldiers in service or retired in civil service sites where there is direct interaction with citizens on a daily basis.
- The appointment of the military as directors of government-owned hospitals, this time not as military doctors, but as professional soldiers assigned to work in administrative not technical positions. Therefore, the decision represents a quantitative and qualitative transformation in this regard.
- The decision will increase the drop-out and emigration of doctors due to deprivation of the possibility of promotion and holding administrative positions in the ministry.
- This military move is an encroachment on the civil rights and social structure of the Egyptian working environment. It is also a negative indicator of the tendency towards a full militarization of society.
- The aim of such decision is to appease the military, who were fired from their positions in the armed forces, especially after the coup of 2013.