

A wide-angle photograph of a large body of water, identified as Lake Manzallah. The water is a deep blue, with small ripples across its surface. In the background, a long, low shoreline is visible, covered with dense, tall reeds or marshland vegetation. The sky above is filled with heavy, grey clouds, creating a somber and reflective atmosphere.

Questions over State Absences and Presences in Lake Manzallah

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الحقوق محفوظة للمنصة للعدالة الاجتماعية

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Introduction: National Lake Development Plans Projects

There have been numerous discussions in the media¹ on efforts made to pass a draft for a proposed law to protect and develop lake wealth as part of a larger strategic state direction perceiving lakes as national wealth, an issue that has been neglected but could be transformed into economic gain². The proposed law, thus, calls on establishing an economic authority fully responsible for protecting fish wealth, under the auspices of the prime minister. Its goals include the protection and development of lakes, including establishment of touristic aspects, protecting shores, and improvement of wealth and aquatic life through developing guidelines to prevent pollution and exploitation, and ensuring scientific research studies are being produced in collaboration with other stakeholders, in an effort to maximize the potential of wealth accumulation³. In October 2019, Dr. Mona Mehrez, previous deputy of Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, has stressed in a meeting with the agriculture, irrigation and food security committee in the parliament, that the proposed draft is not in line with Ministry of Agriculture's vision as fisheries cannot be separated from animal and poultry, which also is linked through international agreements that the Ministry of

1 See Karim Hussein. 2019. مجلس الوزراء يوافق على مشروع قانون بإصدار قانون جهاز حماية وتنمية البحيرات والثروة السمكية. "The Cabinet Approves Bill Relevant to Development and Protection of Lakes and Fish Resources." *alAhram*.

<http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/2218927.aspx>%20[https://www.youm7.com/story/2019/10/19/10-%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%B1%D9%81/4463790.%20](https://www.youm7.com/story/2019/10/19/10-%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%85%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%B1%D9%81/4463790.%20)<https://www.elbalad.news/4026269.%20><https://akheralanbaa.com/ar/news/378997/%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%B1%D9%81-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A9-%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A9,%20><https://www.elfagr.com/3728324>; "الرئيس السيسي يشاهد أمواج الخبر' عن بحيرة المنزلة President El-Sisi Listens to Good News over Manzallah Lake." 2019. *Sada alBalad*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=7yqh53WHzo8>.

2 Egyptian Lakes .. National Resource." sis.gov.eg. <http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/186070/> البحيرات-/>. ثورة قومية المصرية...-ثورة-قومية [?lang=ar](#).

3 Hussein, Samar. 2019. 'تطهيرها من التلوث والإهمال'.. خطة الحكومة لحماية البحيرات المصرية." "Hygienizing It from Pollution and Neglect' .. Government's Plan to Protect Egyptian Lakes." *elfagr.news*. <https://www.elfagr.news/3728324>.

Agriculture has ratified on⁴. Accordingly, the proposed law is still in discussion within the parliament⁵.

According to the website of the State Information Service, the lakes are a great part of Egypt's wealth due to the high economic value ascribed to them⁶. 75% of Egypt's national fish production comes from Egypt's lakes⁷. There are 14 lakes in Egypt and these are: Maryout, Edko, alBorolus, alManzala, alBardawil, Siwa, alMurrah, Nabaa' alHamraa', alTemssah, Port Fou'ad, Qaroun, Nasser, Toshka, and alRayyan⁸. According to Engineer Mahmoud Salem, the head of central Production Unit in Fisheries Authority, political leadership has a comprehensive plan to develop and hygienize all Egyptian lakes that have been suffering from pollution amongst other factors, which have led to their degradation⁹.

According to an interview done by alMal newspaper with Dr. Mehrez, the hygienization and development of Lake Manzala plan, includes removal of plants and weeds, and dredging work which entails removing silt, sediments and debris from grounds of lakes¹⁰. Such dredging works were leased from the Suez Canal Authority, and was conducted by the Engineering Authority of the Armed Forces

4 Mohamed, Farida, Magda Badawi, and Mohamed Fayyid. 2019. "مفاجأة دول مشروع قانون حماية وتنمية البحيرات والثروة السمكية.. تعرّف علىها" Surprise over Bill of Protection and Development of Lakes and Fish Resources from the Government." *Sada elBalad*. <https://www.elbalad.news/4026269>.

5 ElEmmary, Mahmoud. 2020. "معلومات عن مشروع قانون حماية وتنمية البحيرات والثروة السمكية..تعرف عليها." *Youm7*. <https://www.youm7.com/story/2020/2/10/5-%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B9-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%85%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9/4622438>.

6 البحيرات- Egyptian Lakes .. National Resource." *sis.gov.eg*. http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/186070/_البحيرات-_-ثروة_-قومية_-المصرية_-lang=ar.

7 البحيرات- Egyptian Lakes .. National Resource." *sis.gov.eg*. http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/186070/_البحيرات-_-ثروة_-قومية_-المصرية_-lang=ar.

8 البحيرات- Egyptian Lakes .. National Resource." *sis.gov.eg*. http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/186070/_البحيرات-_-ثروة_-قومية_-المصرية_-lang=ar.

9 AlBadawi, Mahmoud. 2019. "خطة طموحة لتطوير وتنمية بحيرات مصر المغلقة والمفتوحة" 'Fisheries Authority': Ambitious Plan for Development Of Egyptian Open and Closed Lakes." *elWatan News*. <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4326910>.

10 See also "What Is Dredging?" *oceanservice.noaa.gov*. <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/dredging.html>.

[led by Ministry of Defense]^{11 12}. Further, the state, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Irrigation, coordinates to treat wastewater before it passes back through the lake¹³. Part and parcel of lake hygienization process revolves around the ‘removal of violations’¹⁴. ‘Violations’, as referred by the state, mean two elements—both deemed illegal by the state¹⁵. The first of which is categorized as land violations and encroachments, whereby parts of lakes are backfilled by people in order to either expand their agricultural land or build a place for residence. Consequently, the state builds a safety belt, which serves both purposes of removing current squatters and preventing any attempt of future squatting. The second type of violation is pertaining to criminal activities, which occur inside the lakes themselves due to the lake’s capacity to provide a space for camouflage. According to Mehrez, previous deputy Minister of Agriculture, part of the state efforts is catered towards activating the law, which prohibits monopolies over fishing, that are widely taking place¹⁶. Thus, a technical committee has been

11 محرز: الزراعة تسابق الزمن لاستكمال خطة تطوير البحيرات الشمالية” Mehrez: Agriculture Races Time to Continue Northern Lakes Development Plan.” 2017. *almal news*. [12 محرز: الزراعة تسابق الزمن لاستكمال خطة تطوير البحيرات الشمالية” Mehrez: Agriculture Races Time to Continue Northern Lakes Development Plan.” 2017. *almal news*. \[13 محرز: الزراعة تسابق الزمن لاستكمال خطة تطوير البحيرات الشمالية” Mehrez: Agriculture Races Time to Continue Northern Lakes Development Plan.” 2017. *almal news*. \\[14 محرز: الزراعة تسابق الزمن لاستكمال خطة تطوير البحيرات الشمالية” Mehrez: Agriculture Races Time to Continue Northern Lakes Development Plan.” 2017. *almal news*. \\\[15 محرز: الزراعة تسابق الزمن لاستكمال خطة تطوير البحيرات الشمالية” Mehrez: Agriculture Races Time to Continue Northern Lakes Development Plan.” 2017. *almal news*. \\\\[16 محرز: الزراعة تسابق الزمن لاستكمال خطة تطوير البحيرات الشمالية” Mehrez: Agriculture Races Time to Continue Northern Lakes Development Plan.” 2017. *almal news*. <a href="https://almalnews.com/%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A9/.\\\\]\\\\(https://almalnews.com/%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A9/.</p>
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formed, under the auspices of Ministry of Agriculture, from veterinary experts who are preoccupied with fishing issues¹⁷. Accordingly, the plan is to coordinate between various state authorities to improve current fish production. This improvement entails both a qualitative and quantitative shift¹⁸. This will be done through increasing coordination with the Agricultural Research Center that holds the Fish Production Institute¹⁹. The aim of such coordination is to assist in decreasing the gap between local fish production and consumption²⁰. The current local production stands at 600 tons; in addition to 250 tons imported to reduce the gap²¹.

This paper aims to give an ethnographic snippet of the hygienization process of Lake Manzala through engaging particular stakeholders affected by hygienization. Accordingly, it is important to read such an account in relation to the aforementioned state discourse that serves as the backdrop of the paper in which certain lines are entangled. Media coverage has been focusing on portraying Lake Manzala as part of the successful state efforts to hygienize lakes; however, there is little information currently on the status of affected populations.

17 محرز: الزراعة تسابق الزمن لاستكمال خطة تطوير البحيرات الشمالية” Mehrez: Agriculture Races Time to Continue Northern Lakes Development Plan.” 2017. *almal news*. <https://almalnews.com/%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A9/.>

18 محرز: الزراعة تسابق الزمن لاستكمال خطة تطوير البحيرات الشمالية” Mehrez: Agriculture Races Time to Continue Northern Lakes Development Plan.” 2017. *almal news*. <https://almalnews.com/%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A9/.>

19 محرز: الزراعة تسابق الزمن لاستكمال خطة تطوير البحيرات الشمالية” Mehrez: Agriculture Races Time to Continue Northern Lakes Development Plan.” 2017. *almal news*. <https://almalnews.com/%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A9/.>

20 محرز: الزراعة تسابق الزمن لاستكمال خطة تطوير البحيرات الشمالية” Mehrez: Agriculture Races Time to Continue Northern Lakes Development Plan.” 2017. *almal news*. <https://almalnews.com/%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A9/.>

21 محرز: الزراعة تسابق الزمن لاستكمال خطة تطوير البحيرات الشمالية” Mehrez: Agriculture Races Time to Continue Northern Lakes Development Plan.” 2017. *almal news*. <https://almalnews.com/%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A9/.>

State Development Plan for Lake Manzala

In light of the echoes of calls for state presence in Manzala, president El-Sisi has referred to the degraded status of the Lake Manzala, which he sees as part and parcel of a waste of the country's resources²². The president has, further, commented that the lake has been left to the present degraded status "not due to state absence but rather due to the state's inability to do. It is not an issue of state negligence. I state this now because we always speak with objectivity. It is not a matter that the ones before us were bad, but rather what was required was huge, and thus not feasible. How will we make it feasible? It is the question you need to think about. Am I going to pay for this?"²³. This is mentioned in relation to the cost of developing Lake Manzala, which was estimated by General Ahmed Kamel to be EGP 40 billion, without social housing costs in June 2017²⁴.

The development of Lake Manzala is integral to the state's larger Lake Development strategic plan that is led by the Fisheries Authority across Egypt and the target governorate where the lake is located. According to the State Information Service (SIS), the developmental plan for Lake Manzala is focused on developing and creating slit openings²⁵. This is done through creating protection for it, slitting channels within thick water plant growths to facilitate water circulation inside the lake and developing and deepening old channels and sections²⁶. Additionally, monitoring and prosecuting any infringements taking place on the lake in their diverse forms including illegal fishing to restore the lake as a 'free fishing' space²⁷. Finally, developing 13 dodgers distributed amongst various parts of the lake that enable both salt water's entry from the Mediterranean Sea in addition to fresh water from Bahr al-Baqar, Hadous, Ramsis

22 Affifi, Youssef. 2019. El-Sisi on Lake Manzallah: 'No One Is Changing Evil or Rejecting It.' *Masrawy.com*. https://www.masrawy.com/news/news_egypt/details/2019/12/3/1681964/.

23 General Kamel AlWazeer Presents to President El-Sisi Manzallah Lake Development and Hygienization Plan." *Channel 1*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzotKu3ercq>.

24 General Kamel AlWazeer Presents to President El-Sisi Manzallah Lake Development and Hygienization Plan." *Channel 1*..

25 Egyptian Lakes .. National Resource." *sis.gov.eg*. <http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/186070> *البحيرات-البحيرات المصرية .. ثروة قومية* *المصرية...ثروة-قومية*?lang=ar.

26 Egyptian Lakes .. National Resource." *sis.gov.eg*. <http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/186070> *البحيرات-البحيرات المصرية .. ثروة قومية* *المصرية...ثروة-قومية*?lang=ar.

27 Egyptian Lakes .. National Resource." *sis.gov.eg*. <http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/186070> *البحيرات-البحيرات المصرية .. ثروة قومية* *المصرية...ثروة-قومية*?lang=ar.

and al-Sirw²⁸. According to a film made through the collaborations between the Engineering Authority of the Armed Forces, the Fisheries Authority and the target governorates, one of the major accomplishments presented in the film is the construction and opening of 30 June Axis²⁹. The film highlights the benefit of the 30 June axis where it services more than one governorate including but not limited to Damietta³⁰. Further, Manzala's uniqueness is also partially embodied in its ability to attract migratory birds that could serve as a future major touristic attraction³¹. In addition to that, according to General Ahmed Kamel's presentation to President El-Sisi in June 2017, in coordination with Ministry of Housing, new social housing projects are being constructed for fishermen that have been displaced from the lake³². This will be the preventive measure taken in order to demotivate fishermen from illegally moving back into the lake³³. However, no further information has been published on these alternative social housing projects progress.

Background Information about Lake Manzala

Lake Manzala is known to be historically one of the largest and most productive fisheries in Egypt. It is located in northeast Egypt between the Damietta's Nile branch and the Suez Canal, whereby its shores are divided into four governorates: Dakahliya, Port Said, Damietta and Sharqia³⁴. The western and southern coasts have many inlets by which great amounts of wastewater drain into the lake. The most important drainages are: Bahr El-Baqar, Bahr Hadous, Ramsis, Al-Sirw, Abu

28 "البحيرات المصرية .. ثورة قومية" Egyptian Lakes .. National Resource." sis.gov.eg. <http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/186070/> [البحيرات-المصرية-ثورة-قومية?lang=ar].

29 "الرئيس السيسي يشاهد أموان الخير عن بحيرة المنزلة" President El-Sisi Listens to Good News over Manzallah Lake." 2019. Sada alBalad. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=7yqh53WHz08>.

30 "الرئيس السيسي يشاهد أموان الخير عن بحيرة المنزلة" President El-Sisi Listens to Good News over Manzallah Lake." 2019. Sada alBalad. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=7yqh53WHz08>.

31 "معرض الزراعة تسابق الزمن لاستكمال خطة تطوير البحيرات الشمالية" Mehrez: Agriculture Races Time to Continue Northern Lakes Development Plan." 2017. almal news. <https://almalnews.com/%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A9/>.

32 "اللواء كامل الوزير يعرض للرئيس السيسي خطة تطوير وتطهير بحيرة المنزلة" General Kamel AlWazeer Presents to President El-Sisi Manzallah Lake Development and Hygienization Plan." Channel 1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzotKu3ercg>.

33 "اللواء كامل الوزير يعرض للرئيس السيسي خطة تطوير وتطهير بحيرة المنزلة" General Kamel AlWazeer Presents to President El-Sisi Manzallah Lake Development and Hygienization Plan." Channel 1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzotKu3ercg>.

34 Sidqy, Claire. 2016. "Urgent Action for Lake Manzala." Wataninet. <http://en.wataninet.com/features/environment/urgent-action-for-lake-manzala/15983/>.

Garida and Faraskur drains. The lake was known for its vast fish species habitation, whereby they come in through the Mediterranean and Suez Canal, which allows a perfect habitat for the fish to live³⁵. According to Wataninet, the fish production of the lake used to reach 48% of the total fish production coming from the Delta region³⁶. However, since the 80s, there has been numerous articles and calls on the environmental degradation of the lake and its surrounding landscape due to lake pollution, and agricultural land reclamations which have been eating up from the lake's space, leading to its reduction from 750,000 feddans initially to 190,0000 feddans in 1990, and 125,000 feddans, being reduced to 6 times its size currently³⁷. Thus, there have been calls from environmental activists and the lake's residents and fishermen to pay attention to the lake's degrading situation and assist in rescuing this resource. On the one hand, the environmental activists focus particularly on the environmental degradation aspect of the lake as wasteful of its potentiality. On the other hand, the fishermen and lake residents concern more with the fact that their livelihoods have been affected, and became more precarious, with the changes that the lake has lived. These changes include the degraded state of the lake, but they also refer to another major impediment to them, which is the boats licenses that have been stopped since Mubarak. Both of which have affected their livelihoods from the lake in comparison to its past condition.

According to Professor Magdy Khalil, professor of Aquatic Ecology at Ain Shams University, a former consultant with the General Authority for Fish Resources Development (GAFRD) and Secretary General of the Environmental Research Committee at the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, there have been over 15 protests up until 2016 whereby fishermen and inhabitants of Lake Manzala have been calling on the state's assistance for the dying lake³⁸. The pollution of the lake is a cumulative result of agricultural and industrial waste,

35 Sidqy, Claire. 2016. "Urgent Action for Lake Manzala." *Wataninet*. <http://en.wataninet.com/features/environment/urgent-action-for-lake-manzala/15983/>.

36 Sidqy, Claire. 2016. "Urgent Action for Lake Manzala." *Wataninet*. <http://en.wataninet.com/features/environment/urgent-action-for-lake-manzala/15983/>.

37 Sidqy, Claire. 2016. "Urgent Action for Lake Manzala." *Wataninet*. <http://en.wataninet.com/features/environment/urgent-action-for-lake-manzala/15983/>.

38 Sidqy, Claire. 2016. "Urgent Action for Lake Manzala." *Wataninet*. <http://en.wataninet.com/features/environment/urgent-action-for-lake-manzala/15983/>.

including “closing and opening of straits, establishment of High Dam, silting of the lake, continuous drying processes for land cultivation purpose, human settlements and pollution due to wastewater discharge into the lake”³⁹.

Livelihoods interrupted

Manzala's degraded state has prevented many small-scale fishermen from fishing; hence cutting out their major income source and livelihoods, leading them to work in either other lakes that are much farther from their residence areas, or shifting careers altogether to work as tuk-tuk drivers or *qahwa* waiters. Depending on where the fishermen live, some were able to navigate the situation and others could not. Damietta for instance is famous for furniture and thus some fishermen were able to shift their job paths; however, in Sharqeia many fishermen could not, and thus they had to take the burden to fish in other areas that are much farther leading to an increase in their daily subsistence costs to be able to survive⁴⁰.

The returning of Lake Manzala to its previous state was a dream to many of the residents of Dakahlia particularly the fishermen who had their source of income dependent on this return. We have been hearing numerous discussions in the media and a good amount of scientific research, some of which is mentioned in this paper, has come out lately highlighting the urgency of addressing Lake Manzala's pollution that posed a great loss of fisheries and an immense degradation for the general ecological environment. The state since 2017 has been discussing the hygienization of Manzala as one of the top priorities in state plans for lake's development across Egypt. According to the general Adel Ghadban's statement, the governor of Port Said, he mentioned that the Lake cannot only be a source for fishing, but rather one that will host international tourism for global touristic projects that will benefit from the ecological system of the migratory birds and fish in Manzala and build tourist resorts on its banks

39 Rashad, Hussein. 2010. "Lake Manzala, Egypt: A Bibliography." *Damietta University*.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322661327_LAKE_MANZALA_EGYPT_A_BIBLIOGRAPHY.

40 Sidqy, Claire. 2016. "Urgent Action for Lake Manzala." *Wataninet*. <http://en.wataninet.com/features/environment/urgent-action-for-lake-manzala/15983/>.

dependent on water games⁴¹. Lake Manzala development plan primarily revolved around hygienization of the lake and constructing a ‘safety belt’ which is intended to prevent more and more agricultural lands from crawling into the lake causing it to be shallower due to more silt backfilling the lake. Currently, there is no way for people to expand their agricultural lands within the lake because the safety belt [located only in Damietta, Port Said and Dakahliya but not Sharqia⁴²] prevents such extension, and is located in the middle between agricultural lands and the lake.

Additionally, according to Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi’s statement in April 2017, the Lake Manzala development is central in state projects’ agenda today. The hygienization process is done as part of “a larger plan for the [...] region at large and that is one of cultural transformation, not only for Northern Dakahliya but for the entirety of Egypt”⁴³. In this context, the Manzala development plan, according to Dr. Shaarawi, included the launching of a wall around the lake, gating entries and exits from it, and reactivating fishing according to approved licenses only; in addition to moving all residential areas that are adjacent to the lake’s banks to other neighborhoods so that the lake can be better utilized⁴⁴. However, no details

41 According to Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi, the Lake Manzala development plan is part of a larger plan for the region at large, aiming for cultural transformation, not only for Northern Dakahliya but for the entirety of Egypt. This plan includes launching a wall around the lake, gating entries and exits, and reactivating fishing according to approved licenses only. It also involves moving residential areas adjacent to the lake's banks to other neighborhoods to better utilize the lake. The statement was made by Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi in April 2017.

42 According to Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi, the safety belt is located in Damietta, Port Said, and Dakahliya, but not in Sharqia. The safety belt is located in the middle between agricultural lands and the lake, preventing further expansion of agricultural lands into the lake. The statement was made by Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi in April 2017.

43 According to Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi, the Lake Manzala development plan is part of a larger plan for the region at large, aiming for cultural transformation, not only for Northern Dakahliya but for the entirety of Egypt. This plan includes launching a wall around the lake, gating entries and exits, and reactivating fishing according to approved licenses only. It also involves moving residential areas adjacent to the lake's banks to other neighborhoods to better utilize the lake. The statement was made by Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi in April 2017.

44 According to Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi, the Lake Manzala development plan is part of a larger plan for the region at large, aiming for cultural transformation, not only for Northern Dakahliya but for the entirety of Egypt. This plan includes launching a wall around the lake, gating entries and exits, and reactivating fishing according to approved licenses only. It also involves moving residential areas adjacent to the lake's banks to other neighborhoods to better utilize the lake. The statement was made by Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi in April 2017.

45 According to Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi, the Lake Manzala development plan is part of a larger plan for the region at large, aiming for cultural transformation, not only for Northern Dakahliya but for the entirety of Egypt. This plan includes launching a wall around the lake, gating entries and exits, and reactivating fishing according to approved licenses only. It also involves moving residential areas adjacent to the lake's banks to other neighborhoods to better utilize the lake. The statement was made by Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi in April 2017.

46 According to Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi, the Lake Manzala development plan is part of a larger plan for the region at large, aiming for cultural transformation, not only for Northern Dakahliya but for the entirety of Egypt. This plan includes launching a wall around the lake, gating entries and exits, and reactivating fishing according to approved licenses only. It also involves moving residential areas adjacent to the lake's banks to other neighborhoods to better utilize the lake. The statement was made by Dr. Ahmed Shaarawi in April 2017.

were provided on what kind of utilization is presented in future plans for the lake, beyond what was aforementioned regarding having it as a central place for international touristic projects.

Initially, as various people moved next to the lake, it was seen as an immense resource that can be used for people to base their livelihoods on. If they were fishermen, they would have been fishing from the lake, and if they were farmers, then their land would be guaranteed a water source for their plantation. As more farmers moved, more silt was used in backfilling the lake to extend their agricultural landscape. As the lake's distance got smaller, more people found opportunities to move and build their houses on its edges since the seventies. With roads and drainage constructions, some of which preceded Sadat's era, more silt was backfilling the lake. This has led to the encouragement of more people to move by the drainages and inhabit that land, which gradually was being built and farmed around them. The two famous drainages that people occupied the spaces next to are Bahr El-Baqar [coming from Cairo] and Hadous [coming from both Senbellawein in Dakahliya and El Qanater El Khayreya] drainages, a thing which have led to islands formation and people migrating to these islands to live on them. Historically, the distance between both drainages was estimated at 6 kilometers. Currently, the distance has gradually decreased due to the large amounts of silt backfilling the lake, according to our interviewees⁴⁵.

Displacements and demolitions: what and how are lands deemed as 'illegal', and who *deserves* housing?

Initially, according to some interviewees, when Manzala's residents moved in, the Fisheries Authority has told the local dwellers that they are on the land as 'usufruct' category; thus, in order for them to grant electricity, the residents paid an initial fee, where in 2007 they got electricity poles, and followed with paying monthly rental fee⁴⁶. According to our interviewees, no authority has previously come and mentioned that they are in violation, but rather that in order for them to continue inhabiting their spaces in a legal manner, they needed to pay two types

⁴⁵ "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

⁴⁶ "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

of fees⁴⁷. The first of which was paid to the Fisheries authorities as mentioned, which would enable them to get access to electricity, and the second was paid to Ministry of Irrigation which is for the Hadous drainage as a land rental fee. However, they were not asked to pay any fees for the agricultural lands. They have been farming for over 70 years in the same place, commenting that no authority has monitored their agricultural activities.

According to the interviewees, their possession of lands is categorized as squatters rather than owners; thus, they do not pay property tax. However, their houses are considered usufruct, whereby the residents need to pay to the Fisheries Authority and Ministry of Irrigation⁴⁸. For each meter, 14 LE is paid; while in 2008, they used to pay 7.5 LE— 2.5 of which used to go towards the Ministry of Irrigation and 5 of which go to the Fisheries authorities. As part of the interviewees discussion of the confusion emerging from the state's past irregular application of rules, they spoke of how alSharqia's residents used to pay only real estate taxation to the fisheries authorities of 2.5 LE, although their lands were also backfilled lands with silt like theirs, and have very similar situations⁴⁹.

The safety belt has led to the removal and displacement of islands' inhabitants. Thousands of people on the islands in Lake Manzala, in over 43 islands in the lake; however, there is no exact number of displaced peoples in media or state coverage. As part of the Lake Manzala development plan, in a newspaper interview in November 2017, one interviewee commented in despair on how these islands were demolished, and the ownership and rental contracts of fish farms were terminated without prior notice or compensation to their owners⁵⁰. In light of the aforementioned statement, it is important to recall General Ahmed Kamel's comment, to President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in June 2017's conference, stating that refusals to evacuate places of residence will lead to forced removals; however,

47 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

48 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

49 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

50 alSaeed, Basmat. 2017. تطهير بحيرة المنزلة.. تطوير وتنمية أم إخلع لمستثمر إماراتي؟ "Hygienization of Lake Manzallah .. Development or Evacuation for an Emirati Investor?" *Masress*. <https://www.masress.com/elbadil/1104194>.

this is stated with emphasis that residents *do* get notified prior to their removal⁵¹, something that a resident claimed it has not taken place in the process. According to Zaki Mahmoud, one of the 'Keneesa' island's inhabitants, stated that many are now homeless after the demolition of islands, and have already deserted the fishing profession with the increasing pollution in the lake and years of accumulated previous negligence⁵². Further, he spoke of how state vision for the development of the lake lacks the protection of the small-scale fishermen, and threatens to increase thugs in the area where the youth will continuously be not only unemployed but also potentially with no homes⁵³.

These homes have been where the people have lived for many years that have preceded their grandparents' generations⁵⁴. Zaki adds that these homes have been transferred from grandparents to parents and they cannot be deemed as illegal residents when they have their addresses listed in their national IDs⁵⁵. Zaki echoes the major question that many residents ask in Manzala, concerning the shift in state attitude, deeming the islands' residents as illegal, when they not only do have contracts, but also have governmental services such as public schools, an agricultural cooperative established since 1986, and a veterinary unit? Further, Zaki asks "what will happen to the 4000 students enrolled in the 9 primary and preparatory schools on these islands?"⁵⁶. Mamdouh Atta, a resident of alKassab island, has discussed the demolition of 300 houses in Kassab and Gameel islands which has forced the islands' residents out into the villages of Matariya, Nassima, and Azazeya whereby they currently live in wooden stalls, tents and around tombs and graves in cemeteries⁵⁷. The islands' inhabitants do not receive many services

51 الالواه كامل الوزير يعرض للرئيس السيسى خطة تطوير وتطهير بحيرة المنزلة" General Kamel AlWazeer Presents to President El-Sisi Manzallah Lake Development and Hygienization Plan." Channel 1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzotKu3ercg>.

52 alSaeed, Basmat. 2017. "تطهير بحيرة المنزلة.. تطوير وتنمية أم إخلاء لمستثمر إماراتي؟". "Hygienization of Lake Manzallah .. Development or Evacuation for an Emirati Investor?" *Masress*. <https://www.masress.com/elbadil/1104194>.

53 alSaeed, Basmat. 2017. "تطهير بحيرة المنزلة.. تطوير وتنمية أم إخلاء لمستثمر إماراتي؟". "Hygienization of Lake Manzallah .. Development or Evacuation for an Emirati Investor?" *Masress*. <https://www.masress.com/elbadil/1104194>.

54 alSaeed, Basmat. 2017. "تطهير بحيرة المنزلة.. تطوير وتنمية أم إخلاء لمستثمر إماراتي؟". "Hygienization of Lake Manzallah .. Development or Evacuation for an Emirati Investor?" *Masress*. <https://www.masress.com/elbadil/1104194>.

55 alSaeed, Basmat. 2017. "تطهير بحيرة المنزلة.. تطوير وتنمية أم إخلاء لمستثمر إماراتي؟". "Hygienization of Lake Manzallah .. Development or Evacuation for an Emirati Investor?" *Masress*. <https://www.masress.com/elbadil/1104194>.

56 alSaeed, Basmat. 2017. "تطهير بحيرة المنزلة.. تطوير وتنمية أم إخلاء لمستثمر إماراتي؟". "Hygienization of Lake Manzallah .. Development or Evacuation for an Emirati Investor?" *Masress*. <https://www.masress.com/elbadil/1104194>.

57 alSaeed, Basmat. 2017. "تطهير بحيرة المنزلة.. تطوير وتنمية أم إخلاء لمستثمر إماراتي؟". "Hygienization of Lake Manzallah .. Development or Evacuation for an Emirati Investor?" *Masress*. <https://www.masress.com/elbadil/1104194>.

from the state; however, they have been able to navigate such absence. According to the interviewees, the islands' inhabitants do not drink water from the lake, although they used to in the past⁵⁸. This is because the current water from the lake is mixed with drainage water so it is not healthy⁵⁹. They get their drinking water through boats and in order to get access to electricity, they use small self-generators⁶⁰.

A number of homeless residents have raised their issue to the Matariya's head of city council, Nader Bekhit, whereby he stated that he has no alternative residence for them and has not been notified of the need to provide alternative housing for anyone⁶¹. Interviewees have stated that one must differentiate between the shores and the islands... The state discourse revolved around hygienization of the lake to reduce criminal activities, as they state that criminals hide and camouflage their criminal activities in between the lake's plants; however, as this could be true to a certain extent, there are also ordinary people living there and living on the shores, as one of our interviewees comments⁶². Displacement and evacuation, thus, is not the solution as poor families have nowhere else to go. The interviewees have highlighted their dismay from how the media is represented the issue as though the lake is filled with criminal activity, while the many of the people are normal small-scale farmers and fishermen. One of them stated, "state media always takes their videos and images of the rogue plants in the lake, and discusses the 'criminal activity' occurring in these spaces⁶³. Why do they not also photograph our ordinary life, with schools, hospitals, mosques, agricultural land and livestock?". There is no doubt that there exist illegal activities within some of Egypt's islands within the lakes, as the lakes act as good camouflage for such

58 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

59 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

60 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

61 alSaeed, Basmat. 2017. "تطهير بحيرة المنزلة.. تطوير وتنمية أم إخلاء لمستثمرين إماراتيين؟" Hygienization of Lake Manzallah .. Development or Evacuation for an Emirati Investor?" *Masress*. <https://www.masress.com/elbadil/1104194>.

62 مصرع 4 من العناصر الجنائية شديدة الخطورة بمحيط بحيرة المنزلة في تبادل لإطلاق النار Piracy and Thuggery Activities in Lake Manzallah." 2011. *CBC Egypt*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ls1AWHmp0OE>; " مصرع 4 من العناصر الجنائية شديدة الخطورة بمحيط بحيرة المنزلة في تبادل لإطلاق النار مع قوات الشرطة 4 High-Risk Criminal Elements Were Killed in the Vicinity of Lake Manzala in a Fire Exchange with the Police Forces." 2020. *Ministry of Interior*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0xeR4G2Lc0>; ElSenni, Ahmed. 2020. "حملة أمنية لمكافحة الجريمة في بحيرة المنزلة Security Campaign Fighting Crime in Lake Manzallah." *ahram.org*.

<http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/2371264.aspx>; "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

63 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

activities. The interviewees have spoken about their past efforts of submitting legal complaints through to the army and the Fisheries authority, calling for these illegal activities to be removed⁶⁴. They called for targeting such activities, so that other people would not fall as collateral damage of this process. The displacements, according to our interviewees, not only included islands' dwellers, but also people living by the shores, which were estimated to be dense residential areas across the entirety of the 12 kilometers⁶⁵.

"We have contracts since 2010, and have been paying out bills and getting receipts. Most people pay because when we do not pay, we get the police forces that tell us to either pay or face jailtime". Payment is calculated as per the meters, so if one's house is 10*10, then it is 100 meters and payment is calculated accordingly, where an average pay could be between 1400-1500 LE, in addition to other sums added to the total fee which interviewees say that they are unaware what these are for, but pay them anyway to guarantee their stay⁶⁶. What happens when state developmental visions and plans shift strategically, affecting particular areas that are inhabited?

The majority of families that have been displaced were reported to be mainly in Port Said and Damietta, while a minority was in Dakahliya. According to one of the residents, he remembers one of President El-Sisi's speeches, where he stated that there should be no displacements that would occur; if any displacements must occur, then alternatives must be provided, and efforts should be pooled into creating a good living for residents⁶⁷. However, for farmers particularly, they believe that their alternatives cannot be represented in alternative forms of housing, but must rather also provide agricultural lands as their livelihoods depend on livestock breeding and farming⁶⁸. Furthermore, part of the problematic around displacements in Lake Manzala is complicated by the fact that the residents are from two major family lines, that have been marrying off one

⁶⁴ "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

⁶⁵ "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

⁶⁶ "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

⁶⁷ "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

⁶⁸ "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

another since the seventies, and thus the families are entangled and cannot fathom their worlds if they do not live in proximity to one another⁶⁹.

In 2018, people from the irrigation and water authorities have come after finishing the evacuations in Damietta, and moved towards Manzala, the interviewees who have not yet been displaced state that they have not been informed of plans of future displacements, and thus, have protested the entry of authorities in fear of future trials of evacuation⁷⁰. They discussed that sums of money have been paid, which have been estimated to be 1000 LE to each engineer was in the day's visit, as part of updating their enclosure lists⁷¹. Further, the interviewees have mentioned that there are no official decisions with evacuating their area⁷². Interviewed in 2019, interviewees refer back to an incident in 2014 with the authorities, whereby a conversation started over their presence, that was excused through efforts to encourage inhabitants to legalize their land ownership situation⁷³. The residents have accordingly gone to the agricultural land committee in the Ministry of Agriculture in Dokki, and thought to have paid the necessary fees⁷⁴. They were then notified that they needed to pay a 2000 LE fee for the engineers' car to commute to Manzala and take measurements in order to record it officially⁷⁵. Although the car fee has been paid, no one has been gone to the residents ever since⁷⁶.

There are two major lines of work by the lake: the first of which is fishing, whereby small-scale fishermen have almost stopped fishing from Lake Manzala due to the pollution and the consequent dead fish, and the second line of work is pertaining to farmers who have their agricultural lands which they and their livestock feed on⁷⁷. Thus, their source of living is dependent on these agricultural lands as that provide their livestock with animal feed, which they then sell their milk and meat

69 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

70 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

71 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

72 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

73 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

74 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

75 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

76 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

77 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

in souq al'Assafrah⁷⁸. These agricultural lands also feed the families where they are planted with wheat, corn, and rice, amongst other crops⁷⁹.

What is the current state of small-scale fishermen now?

For whom is the state developing Manzala?

The lake renovations and development, under the auspices of Fisheries authorities, is propagated as benefiting to fishermen⁸⁰. The fishermen live in various places, not only on the lake's edges; these include: Bahr El-Baqar, Matariya , Gamaleya, and alBorg. The fishermen argue that the lake's islands have been inhabited since the nineties by criminal activities⁸¹. According to fishermen interviewed, these criminals are powerful large-scale fishermen that used to deal drugs and weapons⁸². The interviewers were told that Water Police and Fisheries authorities could not intervene in the past due to their limited resources⁸³. Complaints by small-scale fishermen were sent numerous times since early 2000s because the islands' inhabitants were preventing small-scale fishermen from accessing the lake and fishing; and thus, since no authorities have taken any

78 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

79 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

80 Qoora, Mohamed. 2019. تطوير البحيرات المنزلة.. الحياة بدأت تعود بعد التطهير. "Lakes Development: Manzallah .. Life Started to Return after Hygienization Work." *Akhbar elYom*.

<https://akhbarelyom.com/news/newdetails/2906142/1/%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA--%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B2%D9%84%D8%A9..-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%AF%D8%A3%D8%AA-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%B1;>

بشرة خير.. صيادو بحيرة المنزلة يجنون ثمار .. "Heyza, Mohamed. 2017. "Good' أعمال التطهير ويصطادون 'الشماش' لأول مرة.. مطالب بتكريك باقى البحيرة وتأمينها بالكامل.. ومحافظ الدقهلية: التطهير سينكلف مليارات News' .. Lake Manzala Fishermen Reap the Fruits of the Hygienization of the Lake for the First Time .. Dakahliya's Governor: Hygienization Will Cost Billions." *Youm7*.

<https://www.youm7.com/story/2017/11/3/%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%AE%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%88-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B2%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%8A%D8%AC%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%AB%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A3%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%B1/3493168;>

Hassan, Helmy. 2017. "إقامة بوابات معروفة للصيادين ضمن خطة تطوير بحيرة المنزلة Establishing Well-Known Gates for Fishermen as Part of the Lake Manzala's Development Plan." *ahram.org*. <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/1574056.aspx>

81 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

82 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

83 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

formal action, the fishermen rerouted their fishing activity to fish in Suez and Damietta⁸⁴.

Matariya residents historically have submitted various complaints to the Fisheries authorities initially due to the pollution in the lake, that has prevented them from being able to fish. However, according to our interviewees, these fishermen even after hygienization of the lake are still unable to fish⁸⁵. This is due to the intense deepening work of the lake, where currently, there are much more aggressive waves that impede fishermen from being able to fish using their own small-scale traditional methods⁸⁶. The lake now requires much bigger boats that firstly small-scale fishermen cannot afford⁸⁷. Secondly, noting that fishing boats licenses have been stopped since the nineties, the fishermen would still be unable to legally fish as no new boats are given licenses⁸⁸.

What do state plans hold for the future of Manzala?

Since the start of Manzallah's hygienization, there is very little media attention covering what is happening in the lake, how the state envisions its future prospects or plans, and what alternatives would it provide to both displaced farmers and small-scale fishermen. Both farmers and fishermen expressed anxieties regarding not knowing what the future holds for them, that making them live on the threshold of not knowing what will happen to their lives the second day. A decision was made that the safety belt will spare 30,000 feddans⁸⁹, which none of our interviewees had any information on why they particularly have been

84 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

85 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

86 This is echoed in Borolous Lake. See also Maher, Ahmed. 2019. "الموت في المياه البيضاء": الميادين AlBorolus: Death in White Water." *elWatan News*. <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4025816>; "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

87 This is echoed in Borolous Lake. See also Maher, Ahmed. 2019. "الموت في المياه البيضاء": الميادين AlBorolus: Death in White Water." *elWatan News*. <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4025816>; "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

88 ElAmeed, Ahmed et al. 2019. "«المنزلة».. «البلطجية» يعطّلون محاولات التطوير والصيادون: «فاضل على الحلم خطوة» Manzallah .. Thuggery Obstruct Development Attempts.. Fishermen: One Step towards the Dream." *elWatan News*.

<https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4025798>; "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

89 Mainly located in an area referred to as 'the triangle'—See_Abdelhady, Ayman. 2019. "مناقشة أزمة مثلث «بحر البقر ببور سعيد»." "Discussion of 'Bahr AlBaqar' Triangle Crisis in Port Said in Plenary Session of Deputies next Sunday." eldyar.com.

<https://www.eldyar.net/show.php?id=7665%20https://www.agri2day.com/2018/12/10/%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9>

spared in relation to the other areas⁹⁰. Currently, the safety belt, in order to spare these unknown 30,000 feddans, passes through the lake instead of surrounding its shores. It prevents any further agricultural lands expansion. Primarily, what the fieldwork has shown us is that particularly in Damietta, all transgressions have been removed, but there is no public information on alternatives provided for people. The current state of people, both of the displaced and the others, is filled with anxieties over what their future holds due to the lack of communication from state authorities on the lake development process⁹¹.

The future of the lake is currently unknown, whether for the fishermen or the farmers that reside on the shores of the lake. Neither formal nor official decisions have been taken towards these residents, and they are worried about their agricultural lands that are the source of livelihoods. Moreover, no information has been provided on who else will get displaced. For the displaced, there are no alternatives that have been provided that the researchers are aware of. Currently, the small-scale fishermen are still faced with a deep open lake, with no boat

<https://www.soutalomma.com/Article/847402/%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%82%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%B6%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%84/>: «المثلث» في بورسعيدي.. بين ضرورة التقنين والحفاظ على المواطنين - The 'triangle' Area in Port Said .. between the Need to Legalize and Preserve the Citizens." 2018. *soutalomma.com*.

<https://www.youm7.com/story/2020/1/10/%D9%88%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B2%D9%84%D8%A9/4578335>; elEl-Sisi, Mohamed. 2020. "كل البرلمان يتقدم باقتراح لإنشاء ميناء صيد على بحيرة المنزلة لخدمة الصيادين Undersecretary Submits a Proposal to Create a Fishing Port by Lake Manzallah to Serve Fishermen." *Youm7*.

90part of which is in Gamaliyya in Port Said and very little of which is left spared in Dakahliya; elEl-Sisi, Mohamed. 2020. " وكل البرلمان يتقدم باقتراح لإنشاء ميناء صيد على بحيرة المنزلة لخدمة الصيادين Undersecretary Submits a Proposal to Create a Fishing Port by Lake Manzallah to Serve Fishermen." *Youm7*.

<https://www.youm7.com/story/2020/1/10/%D9%88%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B2%D9%84%D8%A9/4578335>.

91 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

licenses to fish, and are informally told to continue their fishing activities in Damietta and Suez as they used to during the past times when the lake was polluted.

Potentially, according to our interviewees, people fear the repercussions of President El-Sisi's comment in one of his speeches in 2019 that huge amounts of money have been spent on hygienization efforts of Lake Manzala, considering these efforts as a 'future investment'⁹². Small-scale fishermen have expressed their frustration towards the extreme deepening of the lake as part of the hygienization process, which impeded their own activities⁹³. Thus, this, in their opinion, is intended for the benefit of larger-scale fishermen who already own large fish farms around the lake⁹⁴. Historically, the lake was the main income-generating source for fishermen, where they used to fish traditionally through small-scale methods such as net-fishing, diving and regular hooks. With the deepening of the lake, none of the aforementioned traditional methods can be used, and small fishermen perceive the lake transformation and opening will benefit larger businessmen in the area. This is contradictory to some of the state discourse, discussing these efforts as ones, which target all Egyptians and particularly fishermen to enjoy future touristic complexes and free fishing⁹⁵.

92 See "اللواء كامل الوزير يعرض للرئيس السيسي خطة تطوير وتطهير بحيرة المنزلة" General Kamel AlWazeer Presents to President El-Sisi Manzallah Lake Development and Hygienization Plan." Channel 1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzotKu3ercq>; "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

93 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

94 "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

95 "منطقة «المثلث» في بورسعيد.. بين ضرورة التقنيين والحفاظ على المواطنين" The 'triangle' Area in Port Said .. between the Need to Legalize and Preserve the Citizens." 2018. soutalomma.com.

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96 "البرلمان يتقدم باقتراح لإنشاء ميناء صيد على بحيرة المنزلة لخدمة الصيادين" El-Sisi, Mohamed Undersecretary Submits a Proposal to Create a Fishing Port by Lake Manzallah to Serve Fishermen." Youm7.

<https://www.youm7.com/story/2020/1/10/%D9%88%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B2%D9%84%D8%A9/4578335>.

Dismay was further expressed in our interviews over the state's legal classification of fishermen as 'non-regular labor' whereby their pension is too little and does not grant them any chance to live honorably⁹⁶. According to our interviewees, Law 112/1980, which discusses non-regular labor, is problematic as their retirement age is 65, and there is no medical insurance coverage⁹⁷. This does not account for the fact that the job's nature is bodily draining and exhausting⁹⁸. This is further exacerbated by the fact that new fishing boats licenses have been stopped since the nineties and now no small boats can access the open water of the lake.

Rumors amongst fishermen over the potentiality of a large Emirates company taking over the lake which aggravates the small-scale fishermen problems, as they would be faced with a state empowering large businessmen giving them unjust competitive advantage over small fishermen. Assuming there is no large Emirates company, the small-scale fishermen are worried that they would still be positioned at an unfair competitive advantage as currently, the only ones who can access the Lake Manzala would be the large fishermen, who have old boats licensed prior to the 90s and possess private large fish farms. On this note, they call for empowering the small fishermen and increase their access rather than have the fish production closed on privately-owned large fish farms. It is important to note that the state presence is felt in Manzala, where its potential in relation to the economy and food security is heightened. However, some of the questions that linger in mind are: who is Lake Manzala being developed for, if these development benefits are not currently reaped by the space's inhabitants? What defines illegality within a context of perpetual housing crisis and precarious living conditions?

٩٦ ما هي العمالة الغير منتظمة "What Is Non-Regular Labor?" monofeya.gov.eg.

http://www.monofeya.gov.eg/HaykalTanzemy/moderity/Manpower/imp_information/disp_news.aspx?ID=12; "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

٩٧ قانون رقم ١١٢ لسنة ١٩٨٠ بإصدار قانون نظام التأمين الاجتماعي الشامل وكل تعدياته إلى ١٩٩٣ Law No. 112 of Year 1980 Promulgating Universal Social Insurance for All and Its Amendments until 1993. (arabwomenlegal-emap.org); "Interviews with Fishermen and Farmers in Dakahliya." 2019.

٩٨ ElAmeed, Ahmed et al. 2019. «البلطجية.. «المنزلة».. يعطّلون محاولات التطوير والصيادون: «فاضل على الحلم خطوة» Manzallah .. Thuggery Obstruct Development Attempts.. Fishermen: One Step towards the Dream." *elWatan News*. <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4025798>.

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https://www.masrawy.com/News/News_Regions/details/2017/4/24/1066541/%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%82%D9%87%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%B4%D9%81-%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B2%D9%84%D8%A9.
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