

# EGYPT

## Snapshot

### History

Home to ancient civilizations, a unified kingdom arose about 3200 BCE and various dynasties lasted for almost 3,000 years. Arabs from the Arabian peninsula introduced both Islam and the Arabic language in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The Ottoman Turks captured the region in the early 1500s. The British had a colonial interest in Egypt and occupied Egypt to control the Suez Canal in the mid-1800s. Egypt became fully independent from Britain in 1952 and has been a key ally of the US and its foreign policy initiatives in the last 40 years.

### People

Egypt has a rapidly growing population and has the largest population in the Arab world. Farmland is centered on the Nile River valley, and limited resources and population growth stress society.

**Population:** 82 million (est. 2011)

**Major cities:** CAIRO (pop. est. 11 million) and Alexandria (pop. est. 4.5 million)

**Language:** Arabic

**Religion:** Muslim (most Sunni) 90%, Coptic Christian 9%, other Christian 1%

**Ethnic groups:** 99% Egyptian, 1% other (includes refugees from conflicts in other African countries).

### Government

Since full independence from Britain in 1952, Egypt has had three leaders. **Gamal Abd al Nasser** led a military coup in 1952 and ruled Egypt until his death in 1970. His Vice-President, **Anwar al-Sadat** replaced him and served as President until he was assassinated by Muslim extremists in 1981, shortly after Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel. Sadat's Vice-President, **Hosni Mubarak**, became President in 1981 and won every election since then, although most political observers claim the elections were not free and fair. Political parties must be approved by government, and political parties based on religion are officially banned. The vast majority of seats in Parliament were held by members of the President's political party, the National Democratic Party. Public protests calling for Mubarak's resignation led to him stepping down in February 2011. A military council rules the country and has promised a transition to civilian rule.

Sources: "Egypt." *U.S. Department of State*. 10 Nov. 2011. Web.

"Egypt." *CIA World Factbook*. 5 July 2011. Web.

"BBC News - Egypt Country Profile." *BBC News - Home*. 9 May 2011. Web.