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The Egyptian Observatory  
for Journalism and Media

A Research Paper

# The Egyptian newspapers' treatment of climate change issues and summits



**The Egyptian newspapers' treatment of climate  
change issues and summits (26-27)**

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## **Introduction:**

Climate change has imposed new challenges on the international community transferred it from being just an environmental to a political, economic and social issue because of its danger stemming as a result of several things: first, these changes are long-term and irreversible, second, the threats resulting from it, such as increasing droughts, floods, tropical storms, loss of biodiversity, sea level rise, population displacement and others are increasing rapidly, and the consequences of climate change are almost emerging. Indeed, in all parts of the world without exception, and third, these consequences affect countries that are less able to deal with them and less responsible for causing them to a more than other countries, in addition to that climate change will also affect future generations that didn't play any role in creating this problem, which adds an ethical dimension to this issue in addition to its political, economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions.

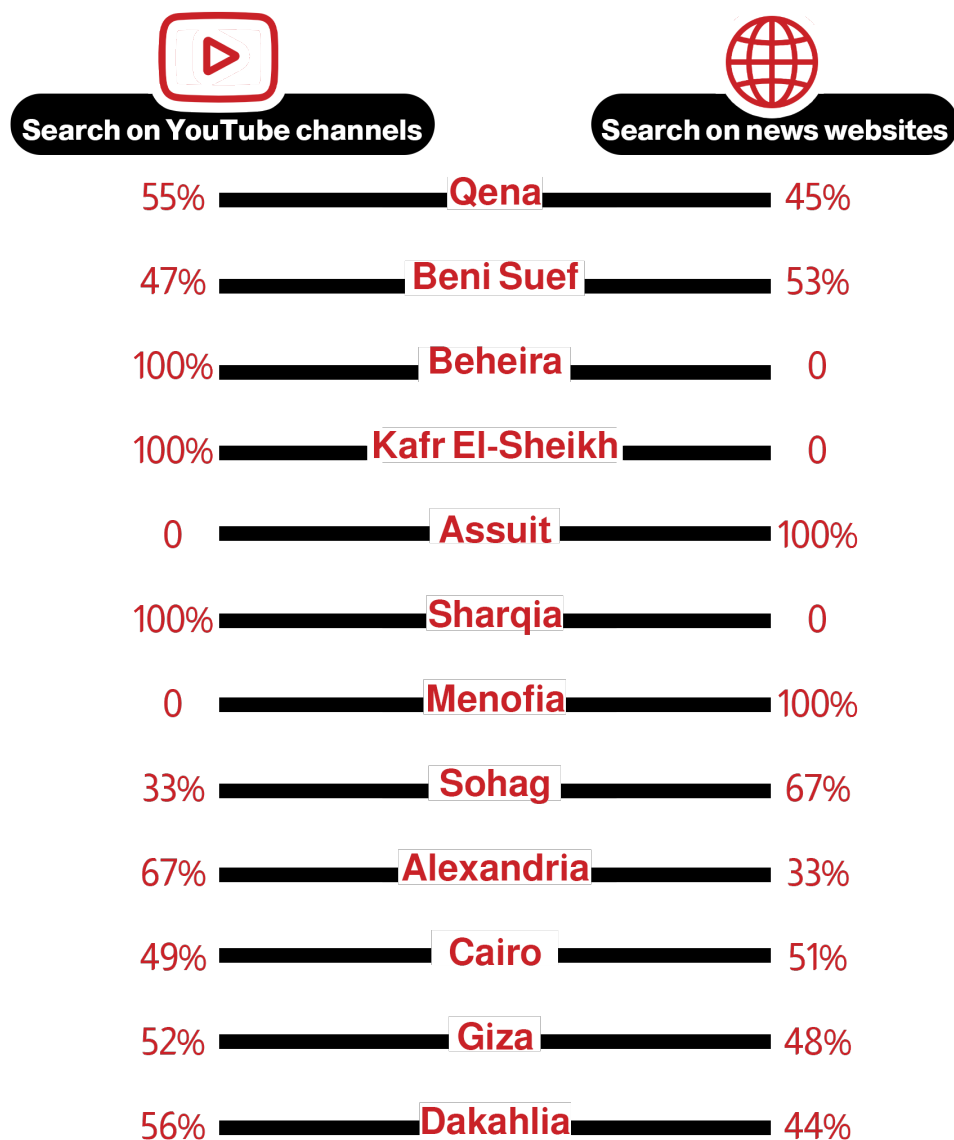
From this, it has become necessary for all international, regional and local governmental and non-governmental actors as well as individuals cooperating to confront these threats. In this context, media has a very important task as it plays a crucial role in societal discussions about the best solutions to solve common problems by communicating ideas, information and facts besides linking civil society, local and international political institutions, as well as individuals together. The annual conferences of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) represent the most important joint discussions to confront climate change as they considered the main forum for that issue at a global level; as it contributes to attracting people and governments' attention to this issue.

Here it can be said that the possibility of reaching a fair climate agreement depends partially on media ability to maintain the continuation of public debate on this issue that includes conflicting ethical and utilitarian viewpoints, and thus contribute to reach solutions that lead to effective, fair and binding actions for all parties, in addition to convince a sufficient majority of people from all countries of climate change seriousness, which is considered a challenge for several reasons: first, the most drastic consequences happen to people in remote areas or to older generations. Second, addressing climate change requires the implementation of drastic and costly measures, which may represent a challenge for peoples who are already suffering Economic crises push it to ignore or underestimate the importance of addressing these changes.

## First: The Study Problem:

The study problem begins with the “Egyptian Observatory for journalism and Media” interest in climate change and the media’s handling of climate summits. It has been noted that citizens in Egypt have weak interest towards climate change issue in general and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conferences in particular, in addition to their limited reliance on news websites as a source of information about Climate change comparing to other sources on YouTube channels; The results indicate that the average searches on climate change in news websites is (45%) lower than the average searches on YouTube channels (55%) during the past five years, search statistics on Google indicate that citizens of only 12 governorates who performed Searches over the past five years on climate change are mostly relied on YouTube more than news sites. See figure No. (1)

Figure No. (1) The rates of climate change search on news websites to YouTube channels



Source: Google trends

It should be noted that only the citizens of 3 governorates (Cairo, Giza, Alexandria) searched on Sharm El-Sheikh Climate Change Conference (COP27), and there were no searched via google either on news sites or YouTube channels on the previous conferences (COP24, 25, 26), which raises several questions, including: Why do Egyptians not pay much attention to climate change, despite the seriousness of the threats it poses? Is it due to the presence of other issues at the top of their priorities or the inability of the media to play its role in attracting public opinion to this issue? Why are YouTube channels more relied upon than news websites to get a better understanding of climate change, is it because the newspapers have poor coverage to climate change, poor quality coverage, or content provided inappropriate to reader preferences?

The study questions represent as follows:

1. What are the journalistic formats used to cover climate change United Nations Framework Conferences on Climate Change UNFCCC in mass media?
2. How have the issue of climate change and United Nations Framework Conferences on Climate Change UNFCCC been covered in mass media?
3. How far have the determinants of media coverage affected the coverage of newspapers on climate change and the United Nations Framework Conferences on Climate Change UNFCCC?
4. How far have the Egyptian newspapers succeeded in addressing climate change issues?

## **Second: The Objectives of the Study:**

1. Know of how Egyptian newspapers address climate change issue.
2. Determine the extent to which newspapers address climate change issue.
3. Explore the effect level of media on the country's climate policies and in attracting the attention of individuals to this issue.

## **Third: Concepts of the study:**

- Climate change: Refers to long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, such as through changes in the solar cycle, or anthropogenic due to human activities such as industrial activities.
- Press treatment: The press material deals with issues and problems related to climate change and United Nations conferences, which were published by the study newspapers, including news, reports, investigations, etc., the manner and method that the journalist followed in presenting the subject.
- Determinants of press coverage: It means the set of political, economic and media factors that affect the newspapers' handling of an issue.

## **Fourth: Methodology of the Study:**

The media survey approach will be used as it is appropriate for the study objective represented in monitoring what the electronic online press provided in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change annual conferences coverage, and the content quantitative analysis published about it to be able to evaluate what those newspapers provided and determine its effectiveness and impact in attract the citizens' attention to climate change issue. The comparative method will also be used to find out the differences, coverage consensus and treatment of the national, partisan and private newspapers on climate change in general and the United Nations conferences (26, 27) on a particular.

### **1- Study community:**

It is represented in the news articles that were published in Egyptian newspapers and websites news on climate change as well as the annual conferences of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 26 and 27 during the following periods:

Figure No. (2): Study Periods

Conference no.	Coverage Period	Notes
26	October 31- November 30, 2021 - Glasgow, United Kingdom	Conducting a survey on a sample of the news published in the study sample before and after the conference period of, i.e. from July 1, 2021 until November 30, 2021
27	November 6 – November 18, 2022 - Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt	Conducting a survey on a sample of the news published in the study sample for this conference starting from July 1, 2022, coinciding with the start of the preparatory work, as Egypt is the host of the conference until October 20, 2022

### **2- Study sample:**

The study sample comes within the category of the non-random intentional sample, as it was deliberately selected for a specific number of sampling units due to the difficulty of dealing with all the study community's vocabulary, which is represented in the Egyptian newspapers and the sample is represented in the websites of the following newspapers to apply the study to them:

1. Private newspapers: (Al-Youm 7, Al-Watan) as they express the special orientation in the Egyptian press.
2. National newspapers: (Al-Ahram) as it represents a national newspaper that expresses the official direction of the state.
3. Party newspapers: (Al-Wafd), which expresses the liberal orientation in the Egyptian press.

The selection was made according to the following criteria:

1. Representation of all political orientations.

## 2. Differing funding sources.

For the numerical choice, 2 newspapers were chosen to represent the private newspapers, as the private newspapers are the largest in terms of nationalism and partisanship.

### **3- Sample collection method:**

A sample of press materials was collected from 4 websites (Al-Youm 7, Al-Watan, Al-Ahram, Al-Wafd) through the artificial intelligence technology to extract information from websites (AI Web Scraping), by specifying time period (July 1, 2021 - November 30, 2021 and July 1, 2022 - October 20, 2022), as well as defining the keywords which represented in: (climate change, global warming, environment, climate summit), then the data cleaning process was carried out by eliminating abnormal values, which are not related to the study subject, by deleting it.

### **4- Criteria for classifying the study sample:**

After implementing the data collecting and organizing from the 4 websites, the researcher categorized the press materials through 4 criteria to facilitate comparison between websites in the climate change coverage, as well as climate summits in addition to describing the nature of that coverage. These criteria were:

1- Number of collected press materials.

2- The press material form: (The alternatives to this criterion were: news, reports, investigations and opinions, multimedia including videos, photos and infographics).

3- The type of press coverage: (The alternatives to this criterion were: coverage of local "Egyptian" achievements and works, coverage of regional and international events and works, mainly represented in the Glasgow and Sharm el-Sheikh summits, coverage of facts and information about an environmental event, coverage of statements by experts and officials on change Climate issue, humanitarian coverage of those affected by climate change).

4- Type of covered topic: (The alternatives to that criterion were: climate in general, disasters and environmental events, lack of natural resources, pollution, global warming, biodiversity loss).

## Fifth: Results of the study:

### 1. Number of collected press materials sample:

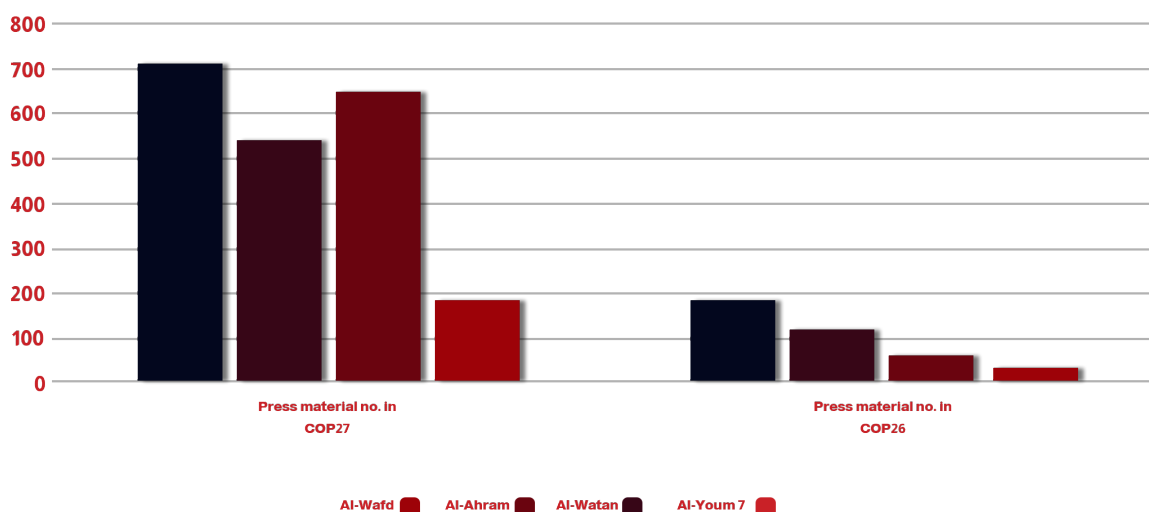
The number of collected press materials sample from 4 newspapers was (2456) press materials, (2069) articles for 2022 between July 1 to October 20 on (COP26), and (387) articles for 2021 between July 1 to November 30 surrounding (COP27).

Analysis of the available data indicates that press materials number that dealt with climate change issue and climate conferences in the period (July 1 - November 30, 2021) is lower than the number of articles published in the period (July 1- October 20, 2022) by (1.6: 8.4) although the first covered period was longer than the second period with about a month. This indicates an increased interest in (COP27) more than (COP26).

The number of press materials related to climate change and climate summits published on private newspapers' websites was the largest among the websites of national and party newspapers; the total number of press materials published on "Al-Youm 7" was (871) articles, and "Al-Watan" was (660) articles, then the national newspapers came in second place; The number of press materials published on "Al-Ahram" newspaper's website reached (704) articles. And in the last place came "Al-Wafd" website, which represents the party press in the study sample, with (221) press articles, during the afore mentioned two periods (COP26 and CoP27).

The number of articles published on "Al-Youm 7" website reached (702) articles in 2022, comparing to (169) articles in 2021, with 533 gap press articles. The same applies to "Al-Watan", "Al-Ahram", and "Al-Wafd" websites, where the press articles number in (COP27) reached (538, 645, 184), respectively, comparing to (122, 59, 37) press articles in (COP26). It is worth noting here the convergence of the number of press materials published on the "Al-Youm 7" and "Al-Ahram" websites in 2022, despite the presence of a large discrepancy between them in 2021, reflecting a tremendous development in "Al-Ahram" development, as a national newspaper interested in climate change issue, as it transcends "Al-Watan" and converges from "Al-Youm 7".

**Shape (3) Number of collected press materials sample from the four newspapers during the two study periods**





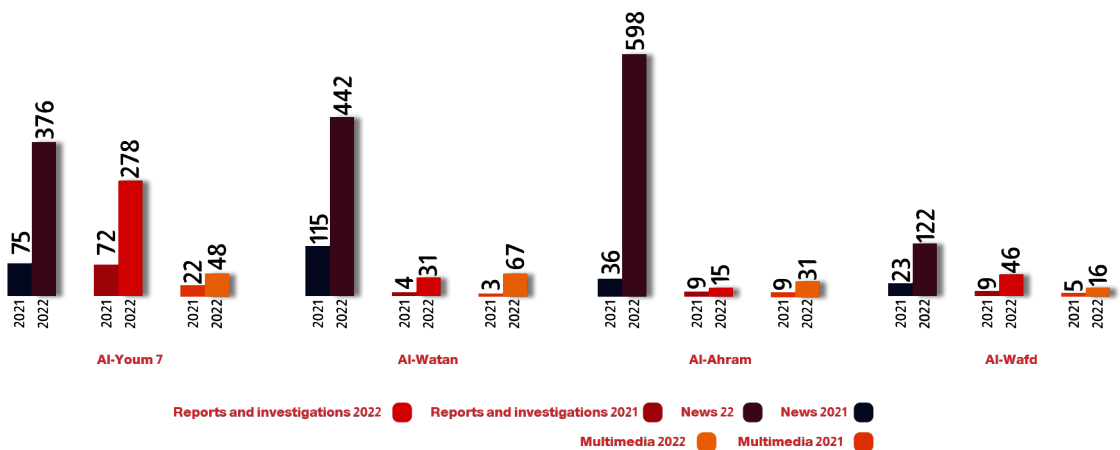
## 2. Press article format:

Related to press material form, it is noted several things:

1- Data analysis indicates that the number of published news on the 4 websites (Al-Youm7, Al-Watan, Al-Ahram, Al-Wafd) in the first period 2022 were respectively as follows: (376, 442, 598, 122) news, and in 2021 period respectively as follows: (75, 115, 36, 23) news. The difference between the news number in the two periods stems from the increased interest in the issue of climate change in the second year due to Egypt hosting the 27th Summit. This applies to reports and investigations whose number was in 2022 as follows (278, 31, 15, 46) reports and investigations opposed to (72, 4, 9, 9) investigations and reports in the period 2021, as well as multimedia, which numbered in 2022 (48, 67, 31, 16), compared to (22, 3, 9, 5) respectively in 2021. This means that the preference of newspapers to cover climate issues and United Nations summits in the news form, with less attention to reports and investigations or to multimedia, which includes photos, videos and infographics, although multimedia is more viewed and more searched by users of those sites, which was previously clarified from the search statistics.

2- Comparing the total number of each form of press material published in the four websites between 2022 and 2021, it is clear that the news number was 1538 in 2022 compared to 249 in 2021, with a huge gap difference of (1289) news. This difference is less than other journalistic forms, with regard to reports and investigations, the difference between the two periods was (276) in favor of 2022, and reached (123) in favor of the same year in the journalistic form "multimedia". This indicates that the order of press forms, in terms of the preference of the four newspapers, remained the same in the two study periods (July 1 to November 30, 2021 - July 1 to October 20, 2022). See figure no. (4)

**Shape (2) The form of press material related to climate change in the four newspapers during the two study periods**



### 3. The type of press coverage:

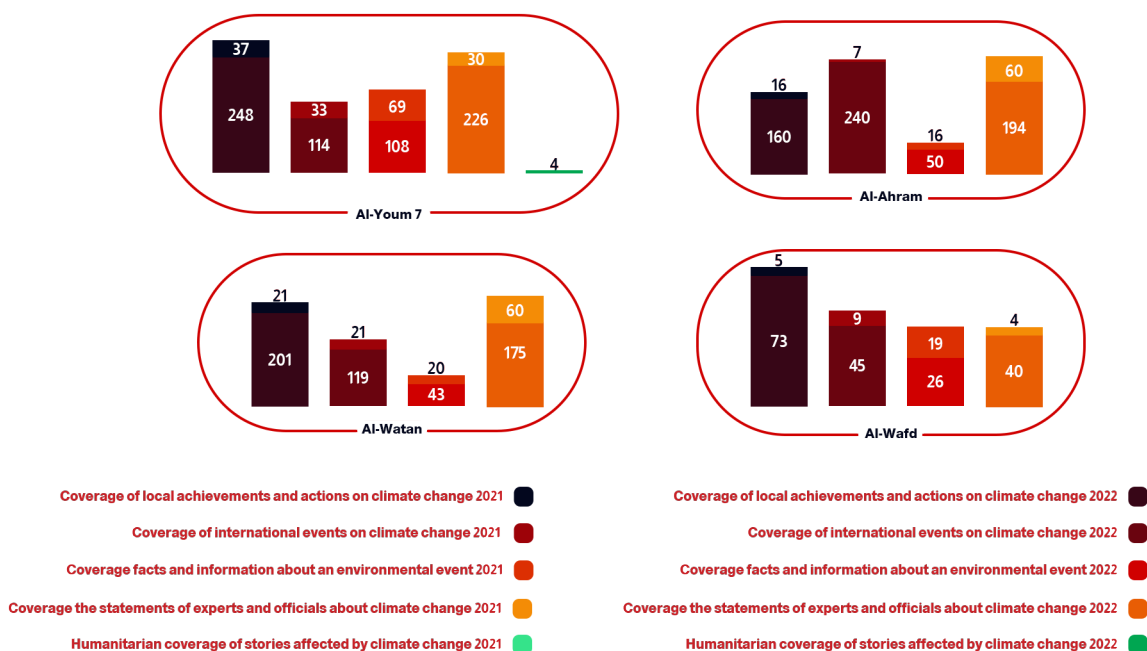
The importance of highlighting the coverage type is to identify the real interest of newspapers in climate change issue by addressing it in a multi-dimensional and in-depth manner, rather covering interesting events, such as environmental disasters or events, or officials' statements without paying attention to the causes and risks awareness, providing solutions to the crisis or drawing attention the decision-makers to those affected by climate change, in order to take policies and decisions in this regard that mitigate or prevent the damages inflicted on them.

It is noted from the study sample the interest of the private newspapers in covering the local achievements and actions taken by the government mainly and in the second grade civil society organizations, companies and individuals, as well as by covering officials' statements on climate change issues greater than humanitarian coverage, for example, or covering international climate-related events. We find that the number of articles on "Al-Youm7" and "Al-Watan" website in 2022 published under the category (covering local achievements and works) amounted to (248, 201), respectively, after it was (37, 21) in the previous year. The number of press materials classified as (experts and officials' statements) in the two newspapers in 2022 amounted to (226, 175), after it was (30, 60) articles in the previous year. This differs with "Al-Ahram" website, where the press materials included in the classification of (international events coverage) ranked first with (240) articles, followed by coverage (statements of experts and officials) by (194 articles), and followed by (covering local achievements and works) by (160) articles in 2022, after their number was (7, 19, 16) last year, in the same order.

Related to party newspaper, it is noted that the order was slightly different, as coverage of local achievements and works ranked first (73 articles in 2022), followed by coverage of international events (45 articles in the same year), then coverage of experts and officials' statements (40 articles).

What the four newspapers agreed on was the coverage of facts and information related to environmental events, humanitarian coverage in the fourth and fifth ranks, with a clear negligence of the newspapers for humanitarian coverage, as it was only covered by "Al-Youm7" with 4 articles only. See Figure No. (5)

**Shape (3) Type of press coverage related to climate change in the four newspapers during the two study periods**



#### 4. The covered Climate-related topics:

The journalist's depth and understanding of the issue is inferred by his ability to deal with all its dimensions and aspects, and his knowledge of those dimensions before that. While talking about climate change, it is either covered superficially without going deep as an overall issue, or covered its dimensions, manifestations and effects which are represented in, for example, and not as a limitation: environmental disasters such as drought, floods, torrents, earthquakes, global warming and the accompanying unprecedentedly high heat waves, pollution whether air, water or environment pollution, lack of natural resources and loss of biodiversity as a result of climate change.

Looking at the study sample, we find that the greatest focus was on dealing with climate change in general without going into its details in the study periods 2022 and 2021, as the number of press materials related to it in "Al-Youm 7", "Al-Watan", "Al-Ahram", and "Al-Wafd" were as follows (614, 502, 597, 166) in 2022, and (111, 90, 43, 20) in the previous year 2021. Then it followed with disasters and environmental events, where the number of press materials related to it in the four sites in 2022 reached (72, 24, 31, 10) respectively, after (35, 30, 11, 14) in 2021.

As for the other four topics; biodiversity loss, global warming, lack of natural resources, and pollution, we find that interest in them was limited in the four newspapers, as shown in the following table:

Website	General climate change		Environmental disasters and events		Lack of natural resources		Pollution		Global Warming		Biodiversity loss	
	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021
Al-Youm 7	614 ) %32 (.7	111 (%42)	72 ) %52.6 (	35 (%38.9)	0 (%0)	5 %83.3 (	0 (%0)	3 (%60)	12 (%70.6)	4 ) %57. (1	4 (%22.2)	11 ) %78. (6
Al-Watan	502 ) %26 (.7	90 ) %34.1 (	24 ) %17.5 (	30 (%33.3)	4 (25%)	0 (%0)	0 (%0)	2 (%40)	1 (%5.9)	0 (%0)	7 (%38.9)	0 (%0)
Al-Ahram	597 ) %31 (.8	43 ) %16.3 (	31 ) %22.6 (	11 (%12.2)	9 (%56.3)	0 (%0)	1 ) %10 (0	0 (%0)	4 (%23.5)	2 ) %28. (6	2 (%11.1)	2 ) %14. (3
Al-Wafd	166 ) %8. (8	20 ) %7.58 (	10 %7.3 (	14 (%15.6)	3 (%18.7)	1 16.7% (	0 (%0)	0 (%0)	0 (%0)	1 ) %14. (3	5 (%27.8)	1 ) %7.1 (4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1879</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>

## **Results discussion:**

It is noted that the coverage of the study's newspapers was affected by a group of political, economic and media determinants that led to a significant increase in interest in climate change this year and in Climate Summit COP27, compared to the previous year, among those determinants:

1. **Political determinants:** where political factors play a major role in media focus on environmental issues or not for several reasons, including the association of media and newspapers with media policies of governments, and the politicization of the climate issue by governments and parties, also the relationship of press institutions with power plays a role in that. That was clear from the significantly increased interest of the national newspaper "Al-Ahram" for example in covering climate issues to a greater degree than the partisan newspaper "Al-Wafd". Among the political determinants that affected the press treatment in the four locations of the issue: the political leadership's interest in the climate change file and the Egyptian organizing of Climate Summit No. 27 in Sharm El-Sheikh.

2. **Economic Determinants:** The impact of economic factors on climate change media coverage emerged as they are linked to the economic interests of the state, whether local, regional or international.

3. **Media determinants:** It refers to the group of factors related to the press institutions themselves, such as the level of experience of the journalists working in them, the degree of their familiarity and level of awareness of the issue, as well as their awareness of their responsibilities and role in combating it. These factors had a clear impact on the study sample, where it was noticed that journalists focused on covering the climate issue in general and superficially, not in an in-depth manner, which reflects their poor knowledge and awareness of the issue's dimensions.

On the other hand, it is also noted that the study newspapers' treatment of climate change issues, as well as the United Nations framework conferences on climate change, were characterized by the following:

1. Addressing the issue primarily as a news treatment, with less attention given to other forms of journalism, especially multimedia, which has become more followed and preferred by newspaper website users.

2. Newspapers rely on the model of journalistic coverage based on sensationalism by linking coverage to urgent environmental crises and events.

3. Journalists relying on the statements of experts and officials as a source of information to a greater degree or quoting news agencies, without resorting to other sources, such as scientific studies or conducting investigations where the journalist obtains information from those affected by disasters, for example.

4. Not paying attention to presenting the causes of climate change and its accompanying effects,

which makes the treatment incomplete.

5. The absence of a section dedicated to the environment and many of the journalists who covered climate issues are not primarily specialized in this file.

6. The absence of media education in the coverage represented in educating citizens about the phenomenon and ways to tackle it, which helps motivate the recipient to participate (public participation), which is an important stage for modifying the environmental citizens' behavior.

7. Focusing on the statements of officials and covering the achievements and events with a greater degree of interest in analyzing the issues dealt with and providing solutions to them or presenting scientific facts about them in order to educate citizens.

## **Recommendations:**

Based on the foregoing of the study, the “Egyptian Observatory for Journalism and Media” provides the following recommendations:

- 1. Organizing training courses for journalists on how to cover environmental issues on a regular and continuous basis, while evaluating the results of those courses and their impact on their performance.**
- 2. Allocating a section for environmental issues in press websites to ensure their continued interest in them without being linked to the aforementioned political, economic and media determinants.**
- 3. Diversifying the journalistic formats used in covering climate change issue, with special attention to multimedia (videos and photos) as they represent elements of attraction for the public.**
- 4. Journalists diversify their sources of information without being relied on the statements by officials and experts.**
- 5. Diversifying the issues dealt with to include all dimensions of climate change, provided that they are dealt with in depth.**
- 6. Focusing journalists on educating citizens about the dangers and causes of climate change, which lead to modify their environmental behavior.**
- 7. Conducting periodic polls for readers about climate change control policies, and other questionnaires to measure the impact of press coverage on their environmental awareness.**
- 8. Expanding coverage of regional and global environmental issues, not just local ones.**