



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEKLY BRIEFING OCTOBER 22–28, 2017

Summary

- The House of Representatives passed the new national state of emergency decreed by President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi in the wake of the deadly October 20 attack in the Western Desert. Egypt has been under the state of emergency since April 2017; though the Egyptian Constitution limits its term, the declaration of a “new” state of emergency was presented as a way around this.
- The body is in [recess until](#) November 6 and will therefore not cast final votes on any legislation in the coming week.
- The highest-level parliamentary delegation to visit the United States since 2008 arrived in the country over the weekend to begin a spate of meetings with American legislators and business leaders.

Notable Developments

High-level delegation visits U.S.:

A delegation from parliament left Egypt on Friday for a six-day visit to the United States. Speaker Ali Abdel ‘Al is leading the group, which comprises Ahmed Saad, secretary-general of parliament; Muhammad al-Suweidi, chairman of the majority Coalition in Support of Egypt; Tariq Radwan, newly elected chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee; Hussein Aissa, chairman of the Budget Committee; Marion Azer, member of the Ethics Committee; Karim Darwish, member of the Foreign Relations Committee; Muhammad Salab, member of the Small and Medium Enterprises Committee; and Amr Sedki, member of the Economic Affairs Committee. The delegation will [reportedly meet](#) with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and leaders in Congress, including House Speaker Paul Ryan,

to discuss investment opportunities in Egypt, the recent terror attack in the Western Desert, the Palestinian issue, the corruption in the voting for the head of UNESCO (which Egypt lost), and the “lies” being propagated about the human rights situation in Egypt. However, the delegation thus far has only **met** with Egyptians at the consulate in New York City.

State of Emergency Passed:

The House of Representatives passed the new three-month national state of emergency after Ismail **presented** it to them and gave a **speech** on its necessity. Abdel ‘Al sent the decree to the general committee, which comprises the leadership of parliament, for quick approval, before the full general assembly **voted** to **approve** the decree by standing in agreement. Prior to the final vote, Abdel ‘Al **insinuated** that any representative who voted against the decree is not Egyptian. The legality of the whole process is suspect, as the Egyptian Constitution stipulates that “the declaration is for a specified period not exceeding three months, which can only be extended by another similar period upon the approval of two-thirds of House members.” The government claims that the three-day window between the end of the second state of emergency and this third decree fulfills that requirement. The constitution also mandates that the declaration be presented to parliament within seven days of its issuance. Sources are very unsure whether Ismail presented the decree to parliament within seven days of its issuance; he spoke in the House of Representatives 10 days after President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi declared the state of emergency.

Anti-LGBT Law Proposed:

Representative Riad Abdul Sitar **presented** a draft **Anti-Homosexuality Law** that would explicitly criminalize homosexual intercourse in public and private places, sentencing first-time offenders to one to three years in jail and repeat offenders to five years in prison. Supporters, activists, media members, or hosts of gay parties would also be sentenced to three years in prison under the law. Currently, homosexuality is not outlawed in Egypt, though the courts regularly **use** vague debauchery and prostitution laws to punish anyone charged with the act.

No One Resigned:

Parliament had been set last week to discuss the status of representatives Akmal Qartam and Muhammad Fuad, who each formally resigned from parliament during the second session, but they **withdrew** their **resignations** before the House of Representatives could formally vote on them. According to the bylaws, these resignations do not come into force unless they are approved by the parliament. Following the established trend from the first two sessions, both representatives **maintained** their interest in resigning while giving media interviews, before finally deciding to remain in parliament. Abdel ‘Al reportedly **convinced** Qartam to remain, whereas Fuad **claimed** that he remained because two-thirds of his constituents did not want him to resign. Fuad’s aborted resignation was one of the last vestiges of parliament’s anger over the Tiran and Sanafir islands agreement passed in the second session.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

Parliament **approved** the **Youth Bodies Law** in **principle** and will **hold** the final vote when it reconvenes on November 6 with the quorum required to pass it. The law would set aside at least 50 percent of the seats in leadership bodies of youth and sports organizations for youth. It also

criminalizes political and religious campaigning or mobilization through these organizations. The minister of youth and sports was reportedly in [attendance](#) for this week's debate on the law. The ministerial cabinet [approved](#) the [executive](#) regulations for the Investment Law, which went into [effect](#) Thursday morning.

In Session:

The elections for the two deputy chairman positions in the African Affairs Committee, the last two vacant leadership positions in parliament, were [won](#) by Rizk Nasrallah and Maged Aboul Kheir. The minister of education [came](#) to parliament to [hear](#) the urgent statements and questions [presented](#) by 46 representatives regarding education in Egypt. Now that parliament has stopped releasing full official videos of sessions, it is [difficult](#) to [ascertain](#) how many representatives actually attended this session with the minister.

The Ethics Committee was [re-formed](#) for the third session under the leadership of Bahaa Abu Shoqa and his [deputies](#), Salah Hassiballah and Shadi Aboul Alaa. Hassan Bassiouni, Tharwat Bakheit, Osama Radi, Muhammad Abdul Razek, Wahid Qarqar, Khaled Abdul Aziz Shaaban, Muhammad Shaaban Shemko, Abla al-Hawari, Sami Ramadan, Marian Azer, Ahmed Samih Darwish, and Muhammad Abdul Wahed are the other members for this session. Only four of these representative have served on the committee before. Now that the committee is seated, they will [reportedly](#) issue final reports in the cases against representatives Ahmed al-Tantawi, Ilhami Ageina, and Osama Shersher.

The Constitutional Affairs Committee [postponed discussion](#) of the fate of Sahar al-Hawari, the representative who was sentenced to prison over financial misconduct, to their next meeting in early November because of a lack of quorum. Representative Ahmed Helmi al-Sharif will reportedly [lead](#) the discussion since the committee chairman, Bahaa Abu Shoqa, excused himself from the proceedings.

The Budget Committee reportedly [formed](#) three subcommittees to look into specific issues during a closed meeting. The subcommittee under Mustafa Salem will look into the recommendations in the 2015–16 and 2017–18 state budgets. The subcommittee under Yasser Omar Sheeba will research ways to activate the role of oversight bodies in monitoring market prices. The subcommittee under Mervat Matar will study the issues with state revenue agencies, such as taxes and customs bodies.

The Housing Committee is [creating](#) a subcommittee called the Oversight Committee to follow the Ministry of Housing, visit sites, and write reports on findings.

The Human Rights Committee [began](#) discussing the National Council for Human Rights' annual report. Representative Muhammad al-Ghoul [criticized](#) the report for addressing the state's failures on economic reform, saying that reforms will not be felt overnight, but are for future generations. Ghoul also criticized the lack of specificity in the claims of torture, the report ignoring state housing projects for citizens, and the report's "misplaced" criticism of the Protest Law.

A delegation from the Social Solidarity Committee [visited](#) Alexandria for a meeting with nongovernmental organizations there to discuss ways to deal with the population increase.

In News and Statements:

Following the State Information Service's [dispute](#) with BBC and Reuters over the number of police casualties sustained in the attack on police in [Bahariya Oasis](#), representatives defended the official

state casualty count. Abdel 'Al [called](#) foreign outlets reporting high casualty rates “disgraceful” and Alaa Abed, a former police officer and chairman of the Human Rights Committee, [called](#) the reports lies and misinformation. [Abdel 'Al](#) and delegations from the [Human Rights Committee](#), [Defense Committee](#), and [Coalition in Support of Egypt](#) all visited the injured officers in the hospital.

Margaret Azer of the Human Rights Committee [suggested](#) writing a joint report with the Social Solidarity Committee on the positive aspects of the NGO Law since it is being used as a weapon to attack parliament.

Several representatives [criticized](#) the medical and pharmaceutical situation in Egypt while addressing the minister of health.

Representative Rizk Daifallah [complained](#) that the government has not implemented any of the recommendations made by parliament, saying that the government only replies to the suggestions and then ignores them.

Looking Ahead

- With parliament in recess and several members of the body’s leadership traveling as part of the delegation to the U.S., do not expect many developments in Cairo in the coming week. Committees will continue to meet, but the agenda will be comparatively lighter.
- Judging by the timing and the composition of the delegation to the U.S., it would appear that the delegation is very interested in drumming up business for Egypt under the newly ratified executive regulations for the Investment Law. The Budget, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Economic Affairs Committees are all represented, and Muhammad al-Suweidi is not only the chairman of the majority coalition, but also the chairman of the board of the Egyptian Manufacturers Union. Also, several of these representatives were not part of the delegation to the U.S. earlier this year, which focused on human rights, military cooperation, and the widely criticized NGO Law, suggesting they were specially chosen for the priorities of this visit.
- The Anti-Homosexuality Law presented this week cannot be referred to committee for full discussion until parliament reconvenes on November 6. However, this is not the first time in recent weeks that a representative has discussed preparing similar legislation. It appears likely that the topic will continue to provoke media debate between representatives throughout the coming week.



The Tahrir Institute
for Middle East Policy

1140 Connecticut Ave NW Suite 505
Washington, DC 20036
office 202 969 3343
fax 202 480 2178
timep.org

EGYPT **PARLIAMENT WATCH**

Egypt Parliament Watch is the most comprehensive project on Egypt’s elected legislature, providing analysis of the body’s performance in fulfilling its constitutionally mandated tasks, the legislation it produces, and the political dynamics at play.