



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF NOVEMBER 12–18, 2017

Summary

- The House of Representatives is in recess until November 19; therefore, only the Cabinet and committees will consider legislation until then.
- The actions of representatives this week were mainly reactionary. Issues like old statements about the Nile River, the recommendations from the World Youth Forum, and the ongoing conflict over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam made headlines as committees continued debate over laws to control the flow of information in Egypt.

Notable Developments

Representatives Still Campaigning for Sisi:

Several representatives continued to actively and passively campaign for President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi's reelection, though Sisi has not yet announced he will run. Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives [Soleiman Wahdan](#) and [Muhammad al-Orabi](#) of the Foreign Affairs Committee both publicly called for Sisi to run again based on his performance in his first term. Representative Ghada Agemi will reportedly [host](#) conferences across the country with the To Build it Campaign aimed at drumming up popular support for Sisi's reelection. These conferences are also [set](#) to take place internationally in countries like Italy, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia for the benefit of Egyptians living abroad.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

The Education Committee [approved](#) the government's [draft Egyptian Space Agency Law](#). The committee's report on the law and the law itself will now go before the general assembly.

The Cabinet [approved](#) three draft laws this week. The drafts will go to the State Council for legal review before being sent to parliamentary committees for debate. The draft laws in question were amendments to the Unified Building Law, which govern the issuance of building permits, a [draft National Council for Women Law](#), and [draft](#) amendments to the Prisons Law, which includes articles decreasing the amount of mandatory time served in a prison sentence.

In Session:

The Media Committee [met](#) multiple [times](#) this week to discuss the draft Media Organization Law, which is said to be the sister law to the Media Bodies Law [passed](#) last session. Representatives were divided over multiple components of the law, including licensing fees for newspapers and attempts to prevent violence and discrimination as a result of media influence.

The Religious Affairs Committee [discussed](#) a draft Regulating Religious Discourse in the Media Law that would have Dar al-Ifta, al-Azhar, the Ministry of Religious Endowments, and the Supreme Council for Media Regulation choose spokespeople for religious affairs. Representatives from each of these bodies attended the meeting to provide their input.

A joint committee of the Communications, Defense, and Constitutional Affairs Committees [debated](#) a government draft Electronic Crimes Law that would regulate crimes related to the internet and social media.

In News and Statements:

Rumors that the House of Representatives might amend the Civil Service Law [reached](#) the news this week, though the Cabinet [claimed](#) that any amendments would only include the law's executive regulations and not the text of the law itself. Amendments would be of interest considering that the Civil Service Law was arguably the only piece of government legislation to which representatives successfully forced amendments in the first two sessions.

The Agriculture Committee is [angry](#) about the statements made by Egyptian singer Sherine Abdel Wahab at a past concert where she said that drinking from the Nile River would cause illness. The committee members plan to summon the head of the Musicians Syndicate to see what will be done to punish her for this.

Representative Ilhami Ageina [announced](#) his support for the draft Anti-Homosexuality Laws presented by representatives Riad Abdel Sitar and Mahmoud Khamis, claiming that gay marriage and homosexuality are contrary to Egyptian culture and customs, which must be preserved.

As predicted, several representatives, including Younis al-Gaher of the Defense Committee and Muhammad al-Koumi of the Free Egyptians Party, [called](#) on parliament to [implement](#) the recommendations of the World Youth Forum.

An Egyptian parliamentary delegation reportedly [met](#) with French parliamentarian and chairman of the French Friends of Egypt Caucus Philippe Folliot about human rights in Egypt. Folliot expressed interest in the subject and was told of the Egyptian parliament's efforts to safeguard human rights by Alaa Abed, chairman of the Human Rights Committee.

Al-Sayyid Felayfil, chairman of the African Affairs Committee, **called** for a legal file to be prepared for the United Nations Security Council and the International Court of Justice showing how the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia will strip Egyptian citizens of their rights.

Representatives will now be **able** to send official requests, statements, and questions to Speaker Ali Abdel 'Al via the electronic tablets they were given by the state when parliament was seated.

Tadros Qaldas of the Communications Committee **claimed** that, according to “statistics,” 53,000 malicious rumors had been spread in Egypt via social media over the last two months. Qaldas said these rumors were aimed at hurting Egypt and have caused prices to rise. He used this argument to buttress his support for the Electronic Crimes Law and the treatment of social media sites as a national security matter.

Looking Ahead

- The general assembly will reconvene on November 19 for what could be a very busy week. They are **set** to vote on the Drones Law, the Youth Bodies Law, and the Unions Law. The body may also accept and debate any of four other laws being presented to them from committees. This all comes as at least 10 committees are **set** to discuss further legislation, including the far-reaching Media Organization Law and Comprehensive Social Insurance Law.
- The Unions Law is the only law set to be voted on that could potentially be sidelined by debate. While the draft law has progressed through the legislative process relatively smoothly, it has recently drawn the ire of the **International Labor Organization**, the **Supreme Council for Independent Unions**, the **Union Services Body**, and **several leftist political parties** as an unconstitutional attack on independent unions. Whether this public pressure will force the law to be spontaneously redrafted by the government, like the Church Construction Law, or will be wholly ignored by the government and representatives, like the Judicial Authorities Law, is yet to be seen.



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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.