



# EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



## WEEK IN BRIEF NOVEMBER 19–25, 2017

### Summary

- The House of Representatives is in recess until December 3. The body, however, is set to reconvene next week for a special session to vote on three draft laws related to the proposed Dabaa nuclear power plant and to discuss the horrific attack on the Rawda mosque in North Sinai.
- Despite continuing issues with quorum that have stymied legislative efforts for weeks, the House of Representatives proved it can still effectively rubber-stamp government legislation. The government's proposed amendments to the Value-Added Tax Law, which increase tax rates on cigarettes and tobacco products, were introduced, discussed, and passed within four hours.

### Notable Developments

#### Representatives Condemn Rawda Mosque Attack:

Following the [terrorist attack](#) on a mosque in Rawda, North Sinai, carried out by a group of militants linked to the Islamic State and targeting the Sufi community, scores of [representatives](#) publicly [condemned](#) the attack and [expressed](#) their [condolences](#) for the 305 people killed and 128 injured. A minority of representatives immediately laid the blame for the attack on foreign elements perceived to be materially and logistically aiding the militants, including [Turkey](#), [Qatar](#), and [foreign security services](#). Though parliament is in [recess](#) until December 3, Deputy Speaker Soleiman Wahdan [advocated](#) for a special session to discuss the attack.

## Emergency Session called to Vote on Nuclear Power Plant Laws:

Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al **announced** that parliament will **hold** an emergency session on Monday to discuss the Rawda attack and vote on **three** government draft laws related to the Dabaa nuclear power plant. The **amendments reportedly** set up the Nuclear Power Plant Authority and **outline** its mandate and powers. No official reason was given for voting on the laws during an emergency session instead of waiting on the parliament to reconvene after the recess.

## Representatives Still Shirking Session:

Before going into recess until December 3, parliament **postponed** the final votes for six draft laws because the body lacked the mandatory two-thirds quorum to vote on them. The final votes for several of these laws have now been postponed for three consecutive general sessions because of a lack of quorum. The issue has brought regular **criticism** and **exasperation** from Abdel 'Al and his deputies.

## Other Developments

### In Legislation:

While at least six pieces of legislation classified as “complementary to the constitution” were postponed for lack of two-thirds quorum (as required by article 272 of the **bylaws**), legislation that only required a simple majority was voted on this week. Parliament passed the government’s amendments to the Value-Added Tax Law, which **increases** the taxes on cigarettes and tobacco. The amendments were **introduced** into committee, **passed** by the committee, and **passed** by a general session of parliament in one day.

Parliament **passed** Representative Fawzi Fatta’s draft amendments to the Sports Law, which prevent judges from running for leadership positions in sports clubs. This comes after a judge was openly **critical** of parliament during an election for such a leadership position. Several representatives are running for similar **positions** across the country (see below).

During its weekly meeting, the cabinet approved amendments to the **Civil Aviation Law**, amendments to the **Economic Courts Law**, and a draft **Public Transportation Using IT Law**, which regulates companies such as Uber and Careem.

### In Session:

The Energy Committee **approved** amendments to three draft laws related to the proposed Dabaa nuclear power plant. One of these laws would reportedly exempt the plant from taxes and customs tariffs.

The Constitutional Affairs Committee **agreed** to the **government’s** draft Surveillance Cameras Law.

The Constitutional Affairs Committee **agreed** to the draft amendments to the Agriculture Law, which **punish** unlicensed ginning of cotton.

The Constitutional Affairs Committee **agreed** to the government’s draft Bankruptcy Law.

The Health Committee **agreed** in **principle** to the government’s draft Comprehensive Social Insurance Law. The government is **reportedly** preparing an actuarial study on the law.

The Tourism Committee **approved** the government’s draft amendments to the Civil Aviation Law. The amendments **stipulate** a fine and jail time for shining laser pointers of a specific caliber at airplanes.

The Agriculture Committee **postponed** the vote on the draft amendments to the Agriculture Law from Representative Omar Abdel Aziz Maseelhi.

The Housing Committee **postponed** its discussion of the amendments to the Unified Building Law.

## In News and Statements:

Representative Muhammad Salim **passed out** while **speaking** during session, but **recovered** after being taken by ambulance to Qasr al-Aini hospital for care. Session had to be put into recess for five minutes to carry him out.

Tariq Radwan, head of the Foreign Relations Committee, **said** that a parliamentary delegation will **visit** the European Union in December and Abdel 'Al will visit the E.U. in February.

Tariq Radwan, head of the Foreign Affairs Committee, **met** with the ambassador of the E.U. in Egypt, where they **discussed** the NGO Law, human rights in Egypt, and the World Youth Forum, among other subjects.

Parliament's secretary-general, Ahmed Saad al-Din, **met** with the U.S. Embassy's political bureau chief, Mustafa Boubal, to **discuss** the long-term strategic relationship of the countries.

A number of representatives **called** for the Ultras White Knights members arrested in the Borg al-Arab Stadium after Zamalek played Ahly Tripoli to be released and given amnesty. Abdel 'Al **replied** by telling them to not interfere in legal matters.

At least four representatives were reported to have **won** elections for chairmanship of sporting clubs. Muhammad Farag Omar is the new chairman of Smouha, Tariq al-Sayyid is the new chairman of Olympic, Ismail Nasser al-Din is the new chairman of Helwan, and Mortada Mansour **won** re-election as the chairman of Zamalek.

## Looking Ahead

- The House of Representatives calling an emergency session over the draft Dabaa nuclear plant laws recently passed by the Energy Committee is an unusual move, and may indicate that final contracts for the plant will be signed soon. An important thing to note about this emergency session will be the number of representatives who show up to vote despite weeks of inability to reach quorum in the legislature.
- The emergency session will undoubtedly include some discussion of the Rawda attack as well. Based on parliament's reactions to past attacks, it is likely that there will be several **calls** for increased government powers to combat terrorism, which could lead to legislative action. (Though little material change followed the December 2016 bombing of the Coptic church in Abbasiya, the House responded to the April 2017 attacks on churches in Tanta and Alexandria with **amendments** to the Appeals Law and Criminal Procedures Law, intended to hasten the prosecution of terrorists. These amendments were brought up in committee, **discussed**, and **passed** in one day.)



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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.