Summary

- Multiple parties and party leaders discussed presenting last-minute candidates for the presidential election, though only Moussa Mustafa Moussa, chairman of the Ghad Party (which has no seats in parliament), presented his paperwork to campaign, after 27 representatives reportedly endorsed him.
- Multiple political parties spoke out in support of the military’s decision to arrest former presidential hopeful Sami Anan.
- Several representatives criticized United States Senator John McCain for his recent condemnation of the closure of civil society and undemocratic processes in Egypt.

Presidential Elections Developments

Parties in Parliament Debate Fielding Presidential Candidates:
In light of the recent withdrawal of multiple presidential candidates, state actors reportedly contacted several individuals and groups, including Wafd Party members and Democratic Peace Party Chairman Ahmed al-Fadali, encouraging them to field a challenger to President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi in the upcoming election. While most (including former candidate Hamdeen Sabahi, Representative Mustafa Bakri, the Free Egyptians Party, and Conservative Party Chairman Akmal Qartam) rejected the proposal, Yasser al-Hudaybi of the Wafd Party announced that the party was considering three members—party chairman al-Sayyid al-Badawi, Representative Muhammad Fuad, and Hani Siri al-Din—for potential candidacy. As part of this process, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives Soleiman Wahdan and Constitutional Affairs Committee Chairman Bahaa al-Din Abu Shoqa, both Wafd Party members, held a series of closed-door meetings with
Wafd Party leaders, attempting to convince them to support Badawi for president. The party had recently endorsed Sisi for a second term in office, but held an emergency meeting Saturday to vote on changing its position to endorse Badawi. Badawi appeared to expect to win the party’s nomination and said that he intended to announce his candidacy for president. However, he withdrew from consideration after the party’s supreme council voted 41–4 against approving his candidacy. These events played out on the backdrop of conflict within the Wafd Party over the issue. Tariq al-Tohami, deputy secretary of the party, and Muhammad Khalifa, deputy head of the Wafd parliamentary body, expressed confusion over the potential of fielding a Wafd presidential candidate after previously agreeing to support Sisi, and Khalifa even reiterated his party’s endorsement of Sisi. Party officers at the governorate level also announced their opposition to Badawi’s proposed campaign, and the youth wing of the Wafd Party protested against Badawi’s presumed candidacy.

Democratic Peace Party Chairman Ahmed al-Fadali announced that he was calling for a meeting of the party supreme council to discuss his entrance into the presidential election, and Said Hassassein, chairman of the party’s parliamentary body, said that he would begin collecting endorsements for Fadali’s candidacy. However, Fadali did not submit his final paperwork to the National Election Authority and therefore will not be a candidate.

Sisi, Moussa Mustafa Moussa Only Candidates to Receive Endorsements from the House:
Ghad Party Chairman Moussa Mustafa Moussa applied to run against Sisi in the presidential election. Although neither Moussa nor his party hold any seats in the parliament, the party leader was able to secure endorsement from 26 representatives mere hours after his announcement, allowing him to register as the only other candidate in the race only seven minutes before registration closed. Sisi received as many as 549 representatives’ endorsements, with the 25-30 Bloc and some individual representatives having not endorsed any candidate. No list of official endorsements submitted has yet been made public.

Party Involvement in Presidential Election:
Alaa Abed, chairman of the Human Rights Committee, said that the committee will be receiving copies of any complaints related to the election submitted to the Ministry of Social Solidarity Operations Room. Abed claimed to be aware of organizations attempting to distort the image of Egypt during the election, and said that he believed this new responsibility for the committee will ensure that election coverage will remain transparent and factual. Similarly, Abed commented that the Human Rights Committee will supervise nongovernmental organizations monitoring the presidential election.

Party Campaigning in Presidential Election:
Representatives from the Coalition in Support of Egypt traveled extensively throughout Egypt this week as part of their national campaign to support the reelection of Sisi. Their campaign visits this week included the governorates of Port Said, Monofeya, Fayoum, and Kafr al-Sheikh. The coalition said it intends to hold conferences in every governorate by mid-February. Similarly, the To Build It Campaign intends to organize tours across Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait to allow representatives and campaign officials to advertise Sisi’s achievements to Egyptians abroad.

Representative Haytham al-Hariri of the 25-30 Bloc stated that the bloc plans to endorse a candidate for president following the deadline for individuals to submit their candidacy.
endorsements from the 16 representatives that comprise the 25-30 Bloc would then not be used to provide any potential presidential candidates with the constitutionally mandated 20 endorsements from representatives.

Representatives React to Sami Anan's Arrest:
Following the arrest of former armed forces chief of staff Sami Anan for campaigning for president while still a member of the military, several political parties expressed their support for Anan's detention. The Coalition in Support of Egypt praised the decision, describing it as an initiative indicative of the will of the people. In related comments, the Free Egyptians Party, the Conference Party's parliamentary body, and the Liberal Constitutional Party all announced their support of the military's actions and the rejection of Anan's campaign status. After Anan's arrest, Representative Khaled Youssef of the 25-30 Bloc denied rumors that he previously endorsed Anan's campaign for president.

Notable Developments
Salah Hassiballah's First Comments as Spokesman:
Salah Hassiballah, the newly appointed spokesman for the House of Representatives, held his first official press conference. In this event, Hassiballah covered a variety of political concerns. He ensured the neutrality of parliament in the upcoming election, and stated that representatives are free to endorse any candidate that they support. Hassiballah reported on recent developments in parliament, claiming that the body has passed 323 different laws up to the present day, while adding that the legislature will decide on the status of Amr al-Shobaki, whom a court awarded Ahmed Mortada Mansour's seat in parliament last year, during this legislative session. He also criticized the State Council's ruling that the legislative amendments to the Sports Law preventing judges from campaigning to lead sporting clubs are unconstitutional. Hassiballah concluded his press conference by criticizing the six United States congressmen who proposed legislation pertaining to Copts in Egypt, condemning the representatives for overstepping political bounds.

In related news, Deputy Speaker of the House Soleiman Wahdan opposed the appointment of a spokesperson for parliament, as he believes every representative deserves the opportunity to speak freely on his or her behalf. Wahdan's comments came after Hassiballah's press conference.

Representatives React to Criticism from Senator John McCain:
U.S. Senator John McCain released a statement Tuesday ahead of the seventh anniversary of the January 25 Revolution in which he criticized the backlash against civil society in Egypt and claimed that this trend has led to regression under the leadership of Sisi. McCain's comments received fierce backlash from several representatives in parliament. Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Tariq Radwan and committee member Tariq al-Khouli were particularly outspoken in their condemnation of McCain, both stating that he has no authority to interfere in Egyptian internal affairs and judicial processes. Khouli added that McCain's consistent attempts to degrade Egypt's image stemmed from the closure of the International Republican Institute's headquarters in Egypt. Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed offered further criticism of McCain's comments, echoing similar sentiments on McCain's desire to interfere in Egyptian politics.
Other Developments

In Legislation:
Parliament is on recess until January 28 and did not ratify any legislation this week.
The Cabinet approved a draft Advertising on Public Roads Law, and draft amendments to the Income Tax Law.

In Session:
Several members of the Budget Committee met with a delegation from the South Korean parliament mainly comprising members of its budget committee. The two sides primarily discussed South Korean companies’ investments in Egypt and strengthening economic cooperation between the two countries.

Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tariq Radwan held separate meetings on Sunday with ambassadors from Portugal, Jordan, and Mexico. Radwan primarily focused on economic relations and parliamentary relations with Jordan and Mexico, while his meeting with the Portuguese ambassador revolved around terrorism and security concerns.

Speaker of the House Ali Abdel ‘Al led a parliamentary delegation to Bahrain that included Representative Abdel Hadi al-Qasbi. They met with the Bahraini prime minister and the chairman of the Bahraini Shura Council. During this visit, Abdel ‘Al stressed the importance of Egyptians abroad in representing their homeland and serving as ambassadors.

Australian Ambassador to Egypt Neil Hawkins and an accompanying delegation visited Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed and other committee members, including Deputy Chairwoman Margaret Azer and Representative Soulaf Darwish. The group discussed bilateral relations, particularly concerning human rights issues.

In News and Statements:
Several leaders in parliament commented on the 66th Police Day, yet few made any reference to the January 25 Revolution. Abdel ‘Al along with Coalition in Support of Egypt leader Muhammad al-Suweidi and Representatives Ehab al-Tamawi, Alaa Wali, and Emad Hamouda expressed similar sentiments, congratulating Sisi, Egyptian civilians, the police, and the Minister of the Interior.
In a more pointed statement, Representative Muhammad Abu Hamed defended the Ministry of the Interior in the wake of the January 25 Revolution and the ensuing violence, arguing that any bloodshed occurred as a result of attacks on government buildings primarily conducted by the Muslim Brotherhood. Finally, Representative Tariq al-Khouli offered his congratulations to the Egyptian population on January 25 and Police Day, stating that both occasions serve as a reminder for the country to remain unified in achieving the aspirations of the revolution.

Representative Sami al-Mashed denied rumors that he had been arrested in connection to the corruption case against Monofeya Governor Hisham Abdel Basset, refuting the notion that he was an accomplice to the crime by claiming that he reported the governor’s illegal activity.

The Foreign Relations Committee published its response to the U.S. congressional memo on Coptic issues in Egypt. The committee emphasized what it believes are a variety of falsehoods in the congressional memo, pointing to the 39 Coptic representatives in the legislature, the overwhelming role that the Muslim Brotherhood played in the violence against Copts before the current government took over, and the reconstruction of 83 Coptic churches throughout Egypt under Sisi.
• Parliament was set to take a final vote on the Bankruptcy Law and the Election of Workers Representatives to Boards of Directors Law once the body reconvenes.

• According to Representative Tariq al-Khouli, Abdel ‘Al will lead a meeting of the Detained Youth Committee this week to discuss reintegration policies for formerly detained youths transitioning back into society. Khouli added that the number of released youth eclipsed 600 individuals.

• Tariq Radwan, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, said that the committee is preparing a visit to the U.S. Congress in May to respond in person to the congressional memo on Coptic issues in Egypt.