



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF JANUARY 28–FEBRUARY 3, 2018

Summary

- The National Election Authority announced the final count of representative endorsements for presidential candidates. Only President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi and Moussa Mustafa Moussa, chairman of the Ghad Party (which holds no seats in the current parliament), received endorsements. Despite discrepancies between the tallies and campaign announcements, no list of representatives' votes was published.
- Amid calls from prominent political figures for a boycott of the elections in protest of the restrictive political climate, multiple representatives offered fierce criticism of the Civil Democratic Movement, the initiative leading the calls.
- Representatives in parliament offered their praise for Sisi's passionate speech at the Zohr gas field, citing his skill and prowess as a leader in pursuing energy initiatives.

Presidential Elections Developments

Representatives' Endorsements Finalize Campaign Ticket:

The National Election Authority (NEA) **announced** the final count of representative endorsements for the upcoming presidential election, yet the count does not include a breakdown of who each representative officially supported. President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi **secured** 549 endorsements from representatives, while his opponent, Moussa Mustafa Moussa of the Ghad Party, **received** the bare minimum of 20 signatories from members in the legislature, contrary to previous reports that he **obtained** 26. Moussa himself had stated that he would not disclose the names of the representatives that offered their support; only the opposition 25-30 Bloc, with 16 seats, publicly declared that it would withhold its endorsements (see below).

In related news, Representative [Mortada Mansour](#) of the Constitutional Affairs Committee and Democratic Peace Party Chairman [Ahmed al-Fadali](#) both withdrew from the election after failing to secure the required support.

Representatives Condemn the Election Boycott:

The Civil Democratic Movement [emerged](#) as an organization led by prominent political figures¹ to call for a boycott of the upcoming presidential election. The movement is protesting the failure of democratic process and state interference in elections, which members say cannot be free and fair. Several representatives offered pointed criticism of the boycott, providing a variety of statements and suggestions for how to address it. Some representatives, notably Mustafa Bakri, [compared](#) the group to the Muslim Brotherhood for what they described as attempts to [disrupt](#) the progress and development of the state. Other representatives [suggested](#) that the boycott is a criminal offense punishable by law, and Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al [received](#) requests to expedite the ratification process of amendments to the Penal Code currently in the House to use them against members of the movement. In light of Sisi's fiery speech at the Zohr gas field in which he [condemned](#) "chaos" resulting from the 2011 revolution, some representatives [equated](#) the Civil Democratic Movement with such chaos. These representatives [claimed](#) that the intent of the boycott represents a [betrayal](#) of Sisi and a [rejection](#) of traditional Egyptian political values.

Political Parties Preparing to Campaign for Sisi:

Several political parties described their mobilization efforts on the campaign trail. The Coalition in Support of Egypt will [open](#) community development centers in various governorates to provide civilians with information about local politics and to encourage them to reelect Sisi. Meanwhile, three separate parties announced their endorsement of Sisi in the upcoming election, including the [Nour Party](#), the [Tagammu Party](#), and the [Conservative Party](#), whose chairman, Akram Qartam, refused requests to run for president in favor of reelecting Sisi. (None of the political parties have a major presence in the House, as there are eight representatives from the Conservative Party, 14 from the Nour Party, and one from the Tagammu Party.)

Free Egyptians Party Condemns Critics of the Elections Process:

Essam Khalil, president of the Free Egyptians Party, was critical of negative perspectives of developments surrounding the election. Khalil [referred](#) to the Civil Democratic Movement as an attempt to "embarrass Egypt" and [announced](#) a press conference next week with various foreign media outlets to respond to the "systemic campaign against the next presidential elections." Khalil also [blamed](#) the media for their partial responsibility in creating the negative perceptions of political parties in Egypt, as he [claims](#) that the media distort the directives of parties in relation to citizens while simultaneously portraying parties as cartoonish.

¹ These include former Representative Muhammad Anwar al Sadat; Hazem Hosni, university professor and adviser to former presidential hopeful Sami Anan's campaign; Hisham Geneina, former head of the Central Auditing Organization and adviser to Sami Anan's campaign; Abdel Moneim Abul Fotouh, former presidential candidate and president of the Strong Egypt Party; Essam Heggy, former presidential adviser; Hala Shukrallah, former head of the Dostour Party; Bahey al-Din Hassan, director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies; author Alaa al-Aswany; University of Cambridge professor Khaled Fahmy; American University in Cairo professor Rabab El Mahdi; and others.

25-30 Bloc Responds to Endorsement Criticism:

The 25-30 Bloc **announced** that it will not endorse a candidate in the upcoming election, **citing** a political climate in Egypt that restricts open political expression, and **claiming** that the results and internal operations of the presidential election are being conducted privately and are predetermined. House of Representatives spokesman Salah Hassiballah responded to the bloc's announcement by **refuting** the claims of corruption while **adding** that Egypt is receptive to critical political thought, made evident by the bloc's ability to make its statement without subsequent repercussions. Following the outrage against the group, the 25-30 Bloc is **preparing** to address its statement in an upcoming general session in the House.

Notable Developments

Representatives Praise Sisi's Fiery Speech:

Sisi spoke forcefully at the opening of the Zohr gas field, **stating** that he would give his life in defense of Egypt and **admonishing** any efforts to boycott or criticize the political process as attempts to impose chaos on the nation—a chaos he likened to the 2011 revolution. Following his speech, representatives showered Sisi with praise for his economic endeavors as well as his prowess in leading the nation. Representatives **hailed** the Zohr gas field as a triumphant development in Egypt's continued **economic** and **energy** advancements, including Representative Muhammad Zayn al-Din of the Transportation Committee, who **said** that the initiative will lead to immediate improvements for Egypt's economic production.

Several representatives **praised** Sisi's passionate speech for his continued defense of the nation and relentless commitment to combatting disunity. Representative Mustafa Bakri, who has been outspoken throughout the electoral process, **believed** that Sisi's speech was firm against the Muslim Brotherhood and in upholding the security of the state. Other representatives pointed to Sisi's ability to **guide** the nation amid chaotic environments and for his leadership in **promoting** stability. Representative Nashwi al-Deeb of the Media Committee **expressed** her support for Sisi's **comments** about limiting the media's access to issues of national security. She **stated** that Sisi is working in the best interests of all parties and that the media need to exercise caution when reporting on issues of national concern.

Representatives Meet with European Officials:

Abdel 'Al **presided** over a meeting with European Union Ambassador Ivan Surkos and 26 ambassadors from various European countries. Several prominent representatives attended the meeting, including President of the Coalition in Support of Egypt Muhammad al-Suwedi, Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Tariq Radwan, Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed, Tourism Committee Chairman Sahar Talaat Mustafa, Budget Committee Chairman Hussein Aissa, and Manufacturing Committee Chairman Ahmed Samir. During the group's discussions, Abdel 'Al **stressed** Egypt's priority in combatting terrorism and achieving a stable security environment. Surkos reportedly **thanked** Egypt for its efforts on illegal immigration and called the country an indispensable strategic partner. Later in the meeting, Abed, who has faced skepticism on his commitment to human rights over **allegations** that he was personally involved in torture cases as far back as 2006, **expressed** his opinion to the ambassadors that human rights do not only include civil and political rights, but also extend to education, health, and economic rights.

Parliament Approves the Bankruptcy Law:

Parliament **voted** to **approve** the Bankruptcy Law submitted by the Cabinet. The law **aims** to encouraging investment by minimizing the number of required legal procedures in bankruptcy and post-bankruptcy cases. The absence of a bankruptcy law had long been cited as a major impediment to fostering new enterprise in the country, and its passage is part of a series of efforts to encourage investment. The law will still require Sisi's ratification and publication in the Official Gazette, both considered perfunctory, before it is in force.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

Parliament **postponed** the final vote on the amendments to the **Ending Tax Disputes Law** because of a lack of quorum. The law was agreed on in principle, which means that representatives will then vote on each article in the legislation before a review by the State Council and final vote on its passage. The amendments **update** previously established parameters for citizens to file grievances regarding their taxes.

Parliament officially **passed** the government's Election of Workers Representatives to the Boards of Directors Law, which **establishes** regulations for eligible members to be elected to boards of directors.

Parliament **approved in principle** the government's draft National Council for Women Law, which seeks to empower women through promoting their interests in political, economic, and social concerns.

Parliament **passed the** government's amendments to the Civil Aviation Law, which **provides** additional safety measures for air navigation operations.

Parliament **approved** in principle the government's draft amendments to the Names of the Ministry of the Interior Departments Law. The legislation **modernizes** the bureaucratic structure and names of different departments within the ministry.

Parliament **passed** Representative Amr Ghalab's Importers Registry Law, which **grants** holders of import cards a period of no longer than six months to rectify any issues pertaining to imports.

Representative Soulaf Darwish presented a draft law to parliament that intends to formally protect the Arabic language in Egypt. In commenting on the necessity of the legislation, Darwish **stated** that Arabic is interconnected with Islam, which is the basis of Egyptian society.

The Religious Affairs Committee **agreed** in principle to a draft law concerning the Egyptian House of Ifta. The draft law **aims** to regulate the legal status of the Egyptian House of Fatwa.

The Economic Affairs Committee **approved** the draft Consumer Protection Law, which aims to restrict monopoly-like practices by businesses.

The Energy Committee **passed the** Nature Reserves Law, which **focuses** on grants and fines associated with various energy development projects.

In Session:

Alaa Abed, chairman of the Human Rights Committee, **said** that a delegation of the committee visited al-Qanater Prison recently. He **added** that prisoners receive adequate medical treatment and are performing useful work as part of their imprisonment, which contradicts recent reports from various human rights groups on the abuses occurring in Egyptian prisons.

Representative Ayman Aboul Alaa of the Health Committee **led** a parliamentary delegation to meet with their counterparts in the Francophile Assembly. The group primarily **focused** its discussions on human rights issues, rule of law, and the international presence of the French language.

Abdel 'Al **traveled** to Switzerland Friday morning, where he will spend three days meeting with the Executive Committee for the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Abdel 'Al met with Egypt's permanent representative to the United Nations, Alaa Youssef, and **called** on all Egyptians living abroad to serve as ambassadors of their homeland and represent the interests of their nation.

Al-Sayyid al-Sharif, deputy speaker of the House, **met** with a delegation from the Sudanese parliament led by its deputy chairwoman, Badria Soleiman. The delegations **discussed** continued bilateral relations between the countries as well as parliamentary relations between the two entities.

Representative Magdi Murshid, secretary-general of the Coalition in Support of Egypt and member of the Health Committee, **met** with the Argentinian and Chilean ambassadors at the coalition headquarters. Several other representatives in parliament also **attended** the meeting, which focused on deepening bilateral ties with the two countries and their parliaments.

In News and Statements:

Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah **commented** on a variety of issues Thursday during his second press conference since assuming his new position. He **stated** that security forces are offering their lives in North Sinai on a daily basis and that they will continue to operate in the area until the threat of groups seeking to harm Egypt is eliminated. Similarly, he **said** that some international intelligence agencies aim to undermine the accomplishments of the state. On the elections, Hassiballah **refuted** the notion that the election is already predetermined, encouraging citizens to go to the ballot box and vote for whichever candidate they desire. Hassiballah **affirmed** his belief that Egyptians will recognize the accomplishments of Sisi and reelect him to another term in office.

Transportation Committee Chairman Hisham Abdel Wahed **stated** that all construction companies owed outstanding payments by the government during the first quarter of the fiscal year will receive their payments by the end of March. This delay occurred because of the financial stability that occurred following the decision to float the pound.

Representative Mumtaz Dessouki of the Constitutional Affairs Committee **supported** Sisi's leadership in the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam negotiations, praising his ability to collaborate with his presidential counterparts in securing a resolution to the situation.

Several Wafd Party members reportedly **prepared** a memo to extend al-Sayyid al-Badawi's term as the party chairman and to look into reconciliation with Mahmoud Ali, Fuad Badrawi, and the wing of the party that broke off last year. This comes following Badawi's resounding lack of support from his colleagues in the Wafd Party after his announcement to run for president.

The Arab Affairs Committee **offered** its support for Sisi in addressing security concerns throughout Egypt. They also called on Arab nations to create a collective security force to counter violence in the Red Sea region.

Looking Ahead

- The chairman of the Social Solidarity Committee **denied** rumors that the Law of Disabled Persons was going to be discussed again in parliament. He stated that a number of ministers will attend a meeting of parliament next Saturday to discuss the implementation of the law.
- Deputy Speaker of the House al-Sayyid al-Sharif **said** that the Social Solidarity Committee is discussing a draft law concerning reparations for families of the martyrs. Sharif expects the legislation to reach the general floor of the House in the near future.



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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.