



# EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



## WEEK IN BRIEF MARCH 11-MARCH 17, 2018

### Summary

- Ahead of the voting held for Egyptians living abroad from March 16–18, representatives and political parties intensified their efforts to reelect President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi.
- Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed released a list of seven nongovernmental organizations that he claimed defame the Egyptian state in exchange for financial contributions from international governments, which prompted other representatives to criticize multiple international institutions.
- Several representatives expressed interest in reorganizing political parties and consolidating the entities that comprise the Coalition in Support of Egypt into a singular political party.
- Representatives mourned the death of Miriam Mustafa, an Egyptian student killed in a possible race-related assault in the United Kingdom.

### Presidential Election Developments

#### Representatives and Political Parties Progressing on the Campaign Trail:

With elections for Egyptians living abroad taking place over the weekend, representatives and political parties revamped their campaign efforts to support Sisi's reelection bid. Many representatives from various political parties, notably among them Coalition in Support of Egypt Chairman [Muhammad al-Suweidi](#), [Muhammad Fuad](#) of the Budget Committee, spokesperson for the House of Representatives [Salah Hassiballah](#), and Defense Committee Chairman [Kamal Omar](#), encouraged their constituents and Egyptian nationals living abroad to participate in the presidential

election to fulfill their civic obligations and to reject terrorist forces attempting to destroy the state. Other representatives praised Sisi for his leadership in [combating](#) terrorism, [guiding](#) the nation through the tumultuous post-Arab Spring era, and his economic development [endeavors](#). In light of some parliamentarians' extensive campaigning efforts, Representatives Mustafa Bakri of the Constitutional Affairs Committee, Mahmoud Hussein of the Youth Committee, and Maha Shaaban of the Communications Committee were [recognized](#) by the Egyptian community in the United Arab Emirates for their international initiatives to support Sisi's reelection bid.

### **Continuing Condemnation of the Civil Democratic Movement:**

Representatives continued to decry the Civil Democratic Movement and its initiative to boycott the upcoming election. Prominent individuals in the House, such as Conservative Party Chairman [Akmal Qartam](#), Suggestions and Complaints Committee Chairman [Hemam al-Adli](#), and Religious Affairs Committee Chairman [Osama al-Abd](#), highlighted the national duty of electoral participation, while mocking calls to boycott the election as a rejection of Egyptian civil obligations and an affirmation of terrorists' political ambitions. Other representatives [claimed](#) that the boycott represents a mockery of all martyrs of the state who died combating terrorism.

## **Notable Developments**

### **Representatives Criticize International Organizations:**

The parliamentary outcry against various international organizations continued, as representatives increased the scope of their criticism. Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed [accused](#) seven different nongovernmental organizations, prominent among them Human Rights Watch and the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, of receiving payments from foreign governments in exchange for reporting false allegations about human rights and civil society concerns in Egypt. Abed also [stated](#) that a clear distinction ought to be formed regarding freedom of opinion and incitement in regards to the media. Several representatives including [Mustafa Bakri](#) of the Constitutional Affairs Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman [Tariq Radwan](#) expanded on Abed's assertions, claiming that these organizations as well as the *New York Times* and the BBC intentionally publish inaccurate reports in order to defame the state and promote the interests of terrorist entities such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Qatar. As part of the ongoing attack against Western institutions, the Free Egyptians Party [announced](#) that it is finalizing a response to various organizations that have been critical of Egyptian civil affairs. The party will [address](#) and [refute](#) each claim, while also [attempting](#) to illustrate the political agenda of each organization defaming the state.

### **Political Party Reshuffling:**

Several officials in the House expressed interest in a major shake-up regarding political parties and their future structure. Representative Ahmed Rifaat of the Communications Committee [stated](#) that he intends to submit a bill consolidating the number of political parties following the presidential election. The potential legislation would seek to [reduce](#) the number of parties to a maximum of 10 formally recognized institutions. Rifaat [asserted](#) that there is a surplus of political parties in Egypt, as many organizations do not hold seats in parliament and prove ineffective in political dealings. Youth Committee Chairman Muhammad Farag [echoed](#) similar sentiments as Rifaat, while also [questioning](#) the validity of political parties based on religious ideals and warning of the danger that such entities pose for the state. In a major news statement, Coalition in Support of Egypt Secretary-General Magdi Murshid [announced](#) that the coalition is in advanced discussions to reclassify as a formal political party. The coalition

currently [includes](#) several political parties as well as unassociated members of parliament, yet this internal initiative would [consolidate](#) all entities within the coalition into a singular political party. Nearly [400](#) current representatives are members of the coalition.

### **Representatives Decry Assault on Egyptian Citizen in the U.K.:**

Miriam Mustafa, an Egyptian student studying abroad in the U.K., was [assaulted](#) by a group of students on February 20 in a reportedly race-related attack that left her in a coma. Mustafa [died](#) from her injuries Wednesday, prompting an outcry in the House. Several representatives, notably Foreign Affairs Committee member [Tariq al-Khouli](#), [decried](#) the attack as cruel and unwarranted, while also [questioning](#) the medical personnel that treated Mustafa for potential negligence. Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tariq Radwan [announced](#) that a delegation from the House of Representatives including Radwan and Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed among others will travel to the U.K. later this week to investigate Mustafa's attack. In a separate statement, Abed [expressed](#) concern at the lack of international responses to the attack, [adding](#) that international organizations are quick to criticize Egypt for human rights concerns but the same organizations remained silent following Mustafa's assault.

## **Other Developments**

### **In Legislation:**

Representative Samir Rashad Abu Talib of the Suggestions and Complaints Committee [submitted](#) a bill amending the Liability from Transportation Accidents Law. The new legislation [raises](#) the amount of compensation that an individual is eligible to receive from the state following a transportation accident. The new compensation [reflects](#) changes in the value of the Egyptian pound.

The Communications Committee [discussed](#) a majority of the 45 articles of the draft Information Technology Law. The committee [agreed](#) in principle to the law last week, yet it is currently discussing each article for individual approval before sending the bill to the general floor of parliament.

Media Committee Chairman Osama Heikal [stated](#) that the committee reviewed several laws pertaining to the Organization of Media Bodies submitted by the cabinet and representatives in parliament, yet they [chose](#) to continue debating the government's proposal due to its more comprehensive initiatives. Heikal [expects](#) the committee to conclude its deliberations and [submit](#) the bill to the general floor of parliament before the next plenary session in early April.

### **In Session:**

Media Committee Chairman Osama Heikal [met](#) with the South Korean ambassador to Egypt, and the two individuals discussed joint cooperation in cultural endeavors

### **In News and Statements:**

Representative Ahmed al-Tantawi of the Suggestions and Complaints Committee [stated](#) that there is an ongoing attack to limit freedom of thought and expression in Egypt, evident by the extensive [censorship](#) of over 400 websites in recent months.

Representative Muhammad Fuad of the Budget Committee and member of the Wafd Party [endorsed](#) Hassam al-Khouli, a ranking official within the organization, for the party's chairmanship position in the upcoming internal election.

Representative Muhammad Said al-Daweek of the Defense Committee [welcomed](#) U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to remove Secretary of State Rex Tillerson from his position. Daweek [claimed](#) that Tillerson supported Qatar and was opposed to the four Arab nations, including Egypt, which severed diplomatic ties with Qatar.

Representative Maisa Atwa of the Workforce Committee **called** upon NGOs in Egypt to deliver relief aid to Egyptians in Sinai, **claiming** that all citizens and organizations have an obligation to assist in the war against terror.

Representative Yasser Omar Shayba of the Budget Committee **expects** the committee to receive the official budget for the upcoming fiscal year before the conclusion of March.

Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed **praised** Sisi's recent visit to the Ministry of the Interior. Abed **hailed** Sisi's efforts in supporting military and police personnel during their ongoing struggle against forces seeking to destroy the state.

## Looking Ahead

- Parliament is currently in recess to allow representatives to campaign ahead of the upcoming election; therefore, no major legislation or initiatives are expected to be addressed until the body reconvenes in early April.



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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.