



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF MARCH 18-24, 2018

Summary

- Representatives continued their final efforts to campaign on behalf of President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi. Many parliamentarians intensified their efforts following Sisi's "People and President" speech, which was lauded throughout the House of Representatives.
- The judicial suspension of Careem and Uber's operating status sparked confusion and future debates within the House. A draft law to regulate passenger transportation had been submitted by the government in November of last year and will be high on the agenda after parliament resumes session next week.
- Members of the House hailed Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's visit to Egypt as a triumphant symbol for both nations.

Presidential Election Developments

Representatives Finalize Support Efforts for Sisi following "People and President" Speech:

With the domestic round of voting beginning today, representatives continued their last-ditch efforts to drum up support for Sisi's reelection amid fears of a low turnout. Representatives, notably Local Administration Committee Chairman [Ahmed al-Sageeni](#), [Margaret Azer](#) of the Human Rights Committee, and [Muhammad Fuad](#) of the Budget Committee, campaigned more generally on behalf of Sisi, promoting his leadership role in guiding the nation as well as his economic policy. Among the efforts to generate excitement was the release of Sisi's "[People and President](#)," an

interview in which he documented the progress of the nation during his tenure. During the interview, Sisi described the opposition's underdevelopment as the key reason that no candidates emerged to present a real challenge to his rule, and he presented a picture of a free and democratic Egypt. Members of parliament hailed the speech as a triumph for Sisi, chiefly praising his [sincerity](#) and [transparency](#) when addressing the general public. Prominent representatives, including Human Rights Committee Chairman [Alaa Abed](#) and Constitutional Affairs Committee member [Mustafa Bakri](#), also pointed to Sisi's economic road map for the nation as another major hallmark of the speech.

Conclusion of Expat Election Period:

The election period for Egyptians living abroad concluded Sunday, prompting representatives in parliament to praise expatriates for their electoral participation. Although official turnout numbers have not yet been published, some members of the House of Representatives pointed to the voter turnout as an affirmation of citizens' [faith](#) in Sisi and his [ability](#) to lead the country against hostile forces. Arab Affairs Committee Chairman Saad al-Gamal [hailed](#) the expatriates as affirming the constitutional mandate of 2014 in an effort to continue the developments of Sisi since that time.

Notable Developments

Contestation Within the Wafd Party Heats Up:

Ahead of the internal elections within the Wafd Party, party Secretary-General and Constitutional Affairs Committee Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa continued his campaign efforts for the group's chairman position. Abu Shoqa [denied](#) reports of personal differences between himself and the party's current chairman, al-Sayyid al-Badawi; rather, he [asserted](#) that the two individuals maintain competing beliefs regarding party administration. Abu Shoqa's campaign platform includes a [desire](#) to uphold the values and historical tradition of the group, while also [reorganizing](#) the group in a meaningful manner to field a presidential candidate in 2022.

Following Abu Shoqa's statements, fellow Wafd Party member and Energy Committee Chairman Talaat al-Suweidi [questioned](#) Abu Shoqa's ability to guide the organization in the future. Suweidi officially [endorsed](#) Hossam al-Khouli for the chairman position, [stating](#) that Khouli will provide a fresh vision for the party in addition to garner tremendous support from youth members of the group.

Representatives React to the Suspension of Careem and Uber:

Egypt's Administrative Court [suspended](#) the ride-sharing applications Uber and Careem from operating in the country after a [suit](#) was brought forward by a group of taxicab drivers. In response to this decision, the cabinet [referred](#) a bill concerning the regulation of these two companies to the House of Representatives one day following the court's ruling. Reactions in the House of Representatives to the decision were mixed, as some members [considered](#) it an overreach of the judiciary into legislative processes, while others denied that the House received a draft law from the government, instead referring to previously submitted [legislation](#) known as the Public Transportation Using Information Technology Services Law reportedly sent to parliament in late November. Indeed, members of the Communications Committee [asserted](#) that the body had previously met with representatives from Careem and Uber to discuss their legal status in the country before the Administrative Court's ruling.

Sudanese-Egyptian Summit Hailed as Triumphant for Both Nations:

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir [visited](#) Egypt and Sisi to discuss a variety of topics including regional security concerns and ongoing negotiations pertaining to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Several representatives in parliament [lauded](#) the meetings as a pivotal point for relations and cooperation between the two countries. Members of the House, notably [Muhammad Zayn al-Din](#) of the Transportation Committee, [claimed](#) that the summit eliminated false rumors about growing discord between Egypt and Sudan. Others [praised](#) Sisi following the visit for his commitment to preserving Egypt's historical stake in the Nile River.

Representatives Pursue Justice in the Miriam Mustafa Case:

Following the attack and subsequent death of Egyptian student Miriam Mustafa in the United Kingdom, a delegation led by Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed [departed](#) Thursday for the U.K. to follow up on the incident. Before traveling, Abed [stated](#) that the group would meet with officials from the U.K. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, members of the U.K. Parliament, doctors who treated Miriam after her attack, and her family's lawyer.

Representatives Await the Official State Budget:

The cabinet [approved](#) the state budget for fiscal year 2018–19, which reportedly includes 1.4 trillion Egyptian pounds (about \$80 billion) in government spending and an expected five percent growth rate. Unlike typical legislation where cabinet-approved laws are subsequently sent to the House to deliberate, the president must sign off on the budget before the House is permitted to deliberate the bill. Sisi is [expected](#) to approve the budget and [send](#) it to the House within one week.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

Media Committee Chairman Osama Heikal [stated](#) that the parliamentary recess for the presidential election will delay the passage of the Media Bodies Law. Heikal [expects](#) the committee to finalize the bill in late April or early May.

The cabinet [approved](#) a draft Central Planning and Development Law, and the body subsequently [sent](#) the bill to the House of Representatives to deliberate. The law [encourages](#) a greater degree of citizen participation in the fields of scientific research, innovation, and sustainable development.

The cabinet [agreed](#) to amend the Egyptian Nationality Law. The amendment to the law would [revoke](#) citizenship for any individual who defrauds his or her legal status or is known to have been associated with a terrorist organization.

Abdel Karim Zakaria of the Housing Committee [submitted](#) a draft law that will [reorganize](#) Customary Courts to lift the judicial burden off state-operated courts.

In Session:

Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al [led](#) a delegation of representatives, including Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tariq Radwan, to participate in several meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Geneva. During one of the body's meetings, Abdel 'Al [proposed](#) the creation of a subcommittee to analyze the articles of association of the IPU. In a separate session of the Finance Committee, Abdel 'Al [partook](#) in a discussion regarding the organization's 2017 financial statement and future monetary situation.

Abdel 'Al met Sunday with a delegation from Japan, which included the country's deputy foreign minister. The group discussed bilateral relations in the fields of cultural development and economic policy, while also jointly rejecting regional terrorism and other extremist ideologies.

In News and Statements:

Strong Egypt Party Chairman Abdel Moneim Abul Fotouh's detention was renewed by the State Security Prosecution for an additional 15 days. Fotouh is being held on charges of associating with the Muslim Brotherhood and disseminating false information in an attempt to defame the state.

Tariq al-Khouli of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Presidential Amnesty Committee stated that the committee will reconvene following the presidential election to debate the list of pardoned individuals. Khouli added that the committee has received amnesty requests from citizens, government officials, and representatives in parliament, yet none of these requests have included Muslim Brotherhood members.

Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed expressed his "heartfelt gratitude" to Egyptian women in honor of the "Ideal Mother" celebration, a recognition of the sacrifices that many Egyptian women have made on behalf of the state.

Representative Abdel Fattah Muhammad of the Manpower Committee rejected a government proposal to privatize state industries. Muhammad stated that he supports cooperation between private-sector companies and government businesses rather than complete privatization. His comments follow a government plan to provide initial public offerings on 20 current and future businesses within the next two years.

Looking Ahead

- The Transportation Committee announced that they would be holding two separate meetings with members of the Budget, Communications, Constitutional Affairs, Defense, and Economic Affairs Committees to discuss the recently referred cabinet draft law regarding the legal status of Careem and Uber.
- The Constitutional Affairs Committee will consider a request to lift the immunity of Representative Mortada Mansour in light of recent financial troubles with the Zamalek Club. Mansour, Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah, and Constitutional Affairs Committee Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa denied reports that the body is considering lifting Mansour's immunity.
- Abdel 'Al will lead an emergency session of the IPU over the weekend to discuss the situation in Jerusalem. Several Arab nations submitted requests to the body to formulate a united stance on the issue following President Donald Trump's decision to move the American embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.



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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.