



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF APRIL 1-7, 2018

Summary

- Political parties ramped up their discussions regarding a massive overhaul of the party system that would consolidate all parties into only a few.
- Comments from the local administration minister that dismissed concerns over his having ignored requests to address parliament sparked outrage in the House of Representatives, with some members calling for his immediate dismissal.
- Representatives pondered the constitutional ramifications of President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi's reelection and the impact it would entail on his cabinet; Egypt's constitution states that any ministerial candidates must be approved by the House before assuming their position.

Notable Developments

Representatives Laud Sisi following his Successful Reelection Bid:

Following the final announcement of vote tallies, prominent representatives and political organizations offered their congratulations to Sisi. Parliamentarians such as Arab Affairs Committee Chairman [Saad al-Gamal](#) and Defense Committee Chairman [Kamal Amer](#) applauded Sisi for his “triumphant endeavors” and wished him good fortune during the next four years of his presidency. Similarly, the [Coalition in Support of Egypt](#) and the [Free Egyptians Party](#) congratulated Sisi on his reelection, both of which participated in extensive campaigning initiatives prior to voting (for more, see TIMEP's [Special Briefing](#) on this period). Meanwhile, Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al [expressed](#) his gratitude to members of the armed forces for providing security and assistance at polling locations nationwide.

Political Parties Continue Consolidation Discussions:

Political party consolidation has been an ongoing source of debate in parliament, as representatives, mainly from the Coalition in Support of Egypt, previously **asserted** that the bloc, which currently comprises seven individual political parties and over 400 candidates, is in advanced discussions to consolidate into a single official party. Coalition Chairman Muhammad al-Suweidi **toned** down these claims, stating that the group is considering this transformation in order to fill the political vacuum in the House of Representatives. In related news, recently elected Wafd Party Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa **expressed** similar sentiments as Suweidi regarding consolidation, as Abu Shoqa expects two to four official organizations to form from the current multitude of political parties within the next week.

Arab Parliament Convenes in Egypt:

The House of Representatives **hosted** the 27th session of the Arab Parliament this week, as delegations from nations throughout the Arab world traveled to Egypt to participate in the meetings. Abdel 'Al **received** Arab Parliament President Habib al-Maliki of Morocco in advance of Wednesday's opening session of the Arab Parliament in Egypt. Sisi was also in **attendance** during the meeting, and he **expressed** his appreciation and support for the ongoing relations between the two countries.

During the session, Arab Affairs Committee Chairman Saad al-Gamal spoke on behalf of Abdel 'Al regarding pressing security matters within the region. Gamal **stressed** the importance of political negotiations and diplomacy in achieving a solution to the conflict in Syria, while also **criticizing** Turkey, Iran, and Russia for holding a summit to resolve the situation but simultaneously excluding representatives from Syria in the discussions. He also **requested** that the Arab Parliament open an investigation into the recent killing of Palestinian protesters by Israeli forces during Land Day demonstrations. At the conclusion of the body's sessions, Abdel 'Al **assumed** the presidency of the Arab Parliament for a one-year term following that of the current leader, Habib al-Maliki of Morocco. Abdel 'Al **expressed** his gratitude to the delegates from various Arab nations to serve in this new position for the next year, while also **calling** for increased solidarity among members of the body to combat regional concerns in a united endeavor.

Local Administration Minister's Comments Spark Outrage in House:

Local Administration Minister Abu Bakr al-Gindi **received** harsh criticism from several members of parliament for what they deemed to be inappropriate behavior and rhetoric for a ranking government official. Gindi **dismissed** claims that he ignored requests from representatives to speak during general sessions of parliament or in committee meetings, **adding** that these allegations were meaningless. Members of the House were **outraged** over Gindi's comments, as some even called for his **dismissal** from his post for his behavior. Notable representatives including Human Rights Committee Chairman **Alaa Abed** and fellow committee member Muhammad al-Ghoul decried Gindi for failing to adhere to his responsibilities as a member of the cabinet, while simultaneously disrespecting his colleagues and Egyptians nationwide. Following several meetings with Gindi, Prime Minister Sherif Ismail, and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Omar Marwan, Abdel 'Al **announced** the conclusion of the conflict with Gindi, **who apologized** for his comments.

Representatives Ponder Cabinet Reshuffling:

Following the announcement of vote tallies for Sisi's second term, representatives questioned the constitutional impact of his reelection on his cabinet, which mandates that any ministerial appointment must receive the approval of parliament before an individual assumes their position. In light of this situation, Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah **expressed** the legislature's dissatisfaction with some current members of the cabinet, though he affirmed that the two bodies maintain a strong and amenable working relationship. Anisa Essam Hassouna of the Foreign Affairs Committee **echoed** similar sentiments regarding a cabinet reshuffling, **stating** that Sisi ought to choose a female prime minister to indicate women's growing role in Egyptian politics. Speaking on behalf of the Coalition in Support of Egypt, Hassiballah **noted** the bloc's desire for five current ministers to be removed from their positions, though he **refused** to name specific individuals.

Parliament Creates a New Body to Combat Terrorism:

The House **approved** in principle the government's draft Supreme Council for Countering Terrorism and Extremism Law. The legislation replaces the current national counter-terror body in an effort to **mobilize** state institutions to combat terrorism, **trace** funding for extremist groups, and **reduce** the causes of terrorism and its ramifications. The council will **consist** of the president and an additional 17 members comprising individuals from various government agencies and religious institutions, who will **formulate** a national strategy every five years designed to combat domestic and international terror. The bill will also **establish** coordination programs between neighboring countries and counterparts in the intelligence community in order to exchange pertinent information.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

Parliament **approved in its entirety** the draft law on Incentives for Science, Technology, and Innovation. The bill authorizes research bodies to partner with private companies to perform specialized research with the inclusion of financial incentives and tax breaks. The body previously **approved** it in principle on March 5.

Parliament **approved** an amendment to Article 46 of the Consumer Protection Law, which now permits the president to **appoint** the chairman of the respective authority to address consumer-related issues.

Parliament **approved** in principle the draft Real Estate in Urban Communities Law. The legislation **mandates** a time frame for the completion of development projects in urban areas in order to adhere to conform to local and national building standards.

Abdel 'Al **referred** the State Budget for the 2018–19 fiscal year to the Budget Committee. Budget Committee Chairman Hussein Aissa **confirmed** that Finance Minister Amr al-Garhy will meet with the committee in the third week of April to discuss the official state budget for the 2018–19 fiscal year. Aissa also **criticized** the Health, Education, and Higher Education Ministries for not submitting a completed budget proposal.

The Religious Affairs Committee **completed** its discussions of the House of Fatwa Law and submitted it to the general body of parliament to vote upon it. The Religious Affairs Committee is **near** completion with its deliberations of the House of Ifta Law. Both pieces of legislation reorganize and modify operating procedures for the religious institutions.

The Local Administration Committee **formed** a subcommittee to discuss the Central Planning

and Development Law and the Local Administration Law; the committee is expected to begin its deliberations in the coming days. The Local Administration Law **amends** the current structure of municipal rule by delegating greater authority to governors and local councils, while also providing additional national resources to support local government. Following the issuance of the Local Administration Law, Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah said that Egypt is expected to **hold** elections for local councils in the first half of 2019.

The Central Planning and Development Law **centralizes** many projects concerning scientific research, innovation, and sustainable development through the national government.

In Session:

Following the **decision** not to remove the immunity of Representative Mortada Mansour, the House of Representatives **refused** to lift the immunity of Representative Alaa Abdel Moneim of the Constitutional Affairs Committee, Representative Sayyid Abdel 'Al of the Economic Affairs Committee, Representative Ahmed al-Sharqawi of the Constitutional Affairs Committee, and Representative Ahmed Badran of the Constitutional Affairs Committee. These four aforementioned members **submitted** a request to investigate Mansour for his alleged financial impropriety with the Zamalek Club, which **prompted** Mansour to submit requests to raise the immunity of the four representatives for what he deemed to be behavior attempting to defame Mansour.

Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed **submitted** a memorandum to Abdel 'Al requesting that the government take legal action against the newspaper *al-Masry al-Youm* for publishing a story claiming that vote-buying in favor of Sisi occurred at polling centers.

Wafd Party Assistant Chairman Yasser Hassan **resigned** from his position following Bahaa Abu Shoqa's victory as party chairman. Hassan **stated** that his resignation is customary and he would gladly resume his duties if offered the opportunity by Abu Shoqa.

In News and Statements:

Representative Badawi al-Nuweishi of the Local Administration Committee **called** for an amendment to the constitution to extend the president's term to include two eight-year terms, though he has yet to submit a formal amendment. Nuweishi's suggestion comes three days following the National Elections Authority's announcement that Sisi was reelected.

Representative Saeed Taima **said** that the delay in debating the Uber and Careem laws was justified, as the law requires the input of Egypt's national security representatives, and the representatives did not show up.

Budget Committee Chairman Hussein Aissa **denied** that he is obligated to disclose the salaries of government officials, stating that the payroll is an internal issue that does not need to be discussed publicly.

Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tariq Radwan **affirmed** that the committee has been continuously working with Miriam Mustafa's family following the Egyptian student's death in the United Kingdom and the delegation visit to the U.K. Radwan **noted** that autopsy procedures in the U.K. tend to last seven to 10 weeks before a body can be buried, which makes the possibility of intervening in the process difficult for the committee.

During a luncheon Tuesday, Abdel 'Al **welcomed** a delegation from Iraq that included members of the Iraqi parliament and its speaker, to whom Abdel 'Al **affirmed** the strong bilateral relations between Egypt and Iraq.

The Tagammu Party **organized** a rally on behalf of the Palestinian cause in which the party formally condemned the recent attack on Palestinian protesters by Israeli armed forces.

Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah **congratulated** Pope Tawadros on Sunday's Easter celebration.

Representative Ahmed Khairallah, president of the Nour Party and member of the Communications Committee, [offered](#) his condolences to the families of the individuals killed and wounded in a recent terror attack in Nigeria committed by Boko Haram.

Looking Ahead

- Abdel 'Al [set](#) April 15 as the date for the next general session of the House of Representatives.
- Important legislation is expected to be debated and finalized within the coming weeks, including the Cybercrime Law, which establishes new procedures for social networking websites and technological crimes such as credit fraud; the Public Transportation Using Technology Law, which regulates ride-hailing companies such as Uber and Careem; and the Local Administration Law, which delegates greater governing authority to local councils.



The Tahrir Institute
for Middle East Policy

1140 Connecticut Ave NW Suite 505
Washington, DC 20036
office 202 969 3343
fax 202 480 2178
timep.org

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.