



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF APRIL 29-MAY 5, 2018

Summary

- The House of Representatives approved the Uber and Careem Law in its entirety. The updated law severs database connections between the state security apparatus and the companies, yet it permits the government to request user information from the public ride-sharing companies without the permission of the judiciary. The general body of the House of Representatives postponed its final vote by a day to review the constitutionality of three articles of the bill.
- Wafd Party Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa noted his intention to form a parliamentary coalition rivaling the Coalition in Support of Egypt; he seeks 150–200 members from existing political parties to join the bloc. Abu Shoqa's assertion stirred up internal controversy within the Wafd, as party members disputed the organization's current stature within the House.
- The ad hoc legal committee of the Coalition in Support of Egypt created to study the legal nature of the bloc's political party transformation completed its investigations and presented its findings to the coalition's political leadership, though these findings were kept private.

Notable Developments

Uber and Careem Legislation Amended and Approved by Parliament:

The Transportation Committee [agreed](#) to the amended versions of Articles 9 and 10 of the Public Transportation Using Technology Law, which will regulate companies such as Uber and Careem, prior to the full House vote approving the bill on Monday, May 7. The State Council previously [ruled](#) that the articles were unconstitutional since the bill originally [created](#) a direct link between user information databases and the state security apparatus, and [established](#) servers within

government offices to store user data. The updated version of Article 9 no longer **creates** a direct link between company databases and security authorities, but security personnel will be able to **access** this information upon request without judicial permission. Meanwhile, the new version of Article 10 does not call for information servers to be **established** by the government to store user information from the companies, but these companies will be required to **store** data for 180 days and submit any pertinent information to the government upon request. Following the approval of the legislation's new articles, the Transportation Committee **completed** its final report of the bill and submitted it to the general body of parliament to discuss.

The House convened in general session and approved the legislation in principle. Members of parliament expressed their dismay over Articles 9 and 10, as well as Article 5, which establishes a cap on licensing fees for ride-hailing companies. Following the postponement of these three articles for one day, the general body of the House reconvened and approved the bill in its entirety, including the three articles previously in question. The House will send the law to the State Council for pro forma review before sending it to President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi to ratify.

Wafd Party Intends to Form Coalition to Rival Coalition in Support of Egypt:

Wafd Party Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa stirred up debate in the House this week when he **announced** his intention to merge the Wafd Party with other political organizations to **create** a coalition to rival the Coalition in Support of Egypt. Abu Shoqa seeks to attract representatives from existing organizations such as the Free Egyptians Party to **form** a parliamentary coalition ranging from 150 to 200 members. Following Abu Shoqa's announcement, several members and ranking officials within the party, including spokesman **Yasser al-Hudaibi** and former party chairman candidate **Hossam al-Khouli**, expressed their dismay at the decision, viewing it as too forward an initiative given the party's recent struggles losing members, while also criticizing Abu Shoqa for not mentioning this intention during the party's internal election campaign period. Hudaibi addressed Abu Shoqa's comments by **stating** that the Wafd Party had yet to discuss this initiative with representatives from other parties and **asserted** the organization's commitment to pluralism in the spirit of the constitution.

Coalition in Support of Egypt Completes Legal Investigation into Consolidation:

The political bureau of the Coalition in Support of Egypt held multiple **meetings** this week to discuss the bloc's transformation into an official political party. These meetings were prompted by the ad hoc legal committee, which was established to investigate the legality of party transformation, **completing** its assessment, though the committee's findings were not made readily available to the public. The committee was **tasked** specifically with reviewing Article 6 of parliament's bylaws, which **prohibits** a representative from changing party affiliation after being elected to office.

Nation's Future Party Rejects Merger Initiative:

In light of the recent party consolidation developments, the Nation's Future Party expressed interest in merging with another group to change its organizational structure. The party was in advanced **discussions** with the Association for Egypt, a bloc **comprising** independent representatives with no party affiliation, yet these negotiations to merge **faltered** at the last minute. Following the failed merger, the party **issued** an official statement expressing its rejection of consolidating with the Association for Egypt.

House Officials Condemn Islamic State Attack On Libya:

Members of the Islamic State [attacked](#) Libya's High National Elections Commission headquarters in Tripoli, killing 12 and wounding seven people. Representatives in the House and other parliamentary institutions decried the attack, as Libya seeks to hold [elections](#) later this year. Human Rights Committee Chairman [Alaa Abed](#) condemned the attack, describing it as an assault on freedom and democracy. The [Conservative Party](#) and [Arab Affairs Committee](#) issued statements expressing similar sentiments, as the two entities called upon Arab countries to remain united in their defense against terrorism.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

Abdel Moneim al-Aleemi of the Constitutional Affairs Committee [submitted](#) a draft law to increase pensions for public workers by 20 percent and make this income non-deductible.

Shireen Farag of the Health Committee [submitted](#) an amendment to the Penal Code that would punish all public officials who relay false information when under judicial detainment. The punishment will [include](#) three years' imprisonment or a fine of 100,000 Egyptian pounds (LE).

In Session:

The Communications Committee [began](#) discussing a request submitted by Representative Sharif al-Wardani of the Human Rights Committee to assess the danger of an internet-based challenge called "Blue Whale" passed through social networks that involves self-harm and has been blamed for a number of deaths and severe injuries in Egypt and other countries. Wardani's briefing [includes](#) a joint proposal for Egypt, Tunisia, Kuwait, and Algeria to ask the Russian government to crack down on the game. The committee [requested](#) a briefing on the issue from the Ministry of Communications within two weeks.

Defense Committee Chairman Kamal Amer [submitted](#) a request to the government to increase the Ministry of the Interior's budget by LE13.9 billion so that it can more effectively combat terrorism and crime nationwide. The current [budget](#) calls for LE48.5 billion to be disbursed to the ministry.

The Local Administration Committee [discussed](#) a briefing request submitted by Representative Muhammad Said al-Daweek of the Defense Committee that calls for the construction of a new civil service center in the city of Qena.

Housing Committee Chairman Moataz Muhammad [criticized](#) Finance Minister Amr al-Garhy, Housing Minister Mustafa Madbouli, and Planning Minister Hala al-Said for failing to attend a committee session during which the increase in water utilities for the 2018–19 state budget was discussed.

The Agriculture Committee [submitted](#) a request to the Ministry of Agriculture to raise the price range for wheat to LE 625–650 per ardeb to generate a larger profit for farmers. (One ardeb is roughly equal to 5.6 bushels or 198 liters.)

Local Administration Committee Chairman Ahmed al-Sageeni [requested](#) local officials assist the government in their preparations ahead of the inclement weather expected in Egypt. Sageeni [warned](#) of the flooding that occurred last week, and he called upon local officials to assist in preventing similar events.

In News and Statements:

Ahmed Rifaat of the Communications Committee **stated** that the Cybercrime Law includes stipulations allowing the government to block websites or applications that pose a threat to national security, such as the Blue Whale application. The law also **allows** the government to approach companies such as Google and Apple and request that they block an application's operations in the country if the government does not possess the technical ability to block a website or application.

Wafd Party Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa **expressed** his belief that President Sisi ought to replace Prime Minister Sherif Ismail if his health prevents him from executing his obligations to the fullest extent, though Ismail has not had any medical complications since returning from treatment in Europe earlier this year.

In related news, Representative Muhammad Fuad of the Budget Committee **called** for some ministers in the cabinet to be replaced for what he described as their failure to uphold their ministerial obligations, though he refused to specify which ministers.

A delegation from the African Affairs Committee including Chairman al-Sayyid Felayfil and Representatives Hatem Bashat, Mai Mahmoud, and Salah Afifi will **travel** Saturday to South Africa with fellow committee member Mustafa al-Gindi to promote his candidacy for president of the Pan-African Parliament.

Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tariq Radwan **traveled** to Ghana and met with members of Ghana's parliament and its speaker, Aaron Mike Oquaye, to discuss their countries' bilateral relations.

Speaker of the House of Representatives Ali Abdel 'Al **participated** in a meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Advisory Commission on Combating Terrorism that took place in Abu Dhabi.

Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed **praised** the Egyptian judicial system during a European Union conference in Brussels on rule of law, during which he spoke highly about the judiciary and parliament's respect for rule of law, especially when combating terrorism.

The speaker of Cyprus' House of Representatives, Demetris Syllouris, **invited** Abdel 'Al to visit the country in September to discuss bilateral relations, especially in the energy sector.

Media Committee Chairman Osama Heikal **met** with the South Korean ambassador to Egypt to discuss cultural developments in Egypt and what Heikal deemed as the diverse forum for civil society discussions throughout Egypt's neighborhoods.

A delegation from the Youth Committee **visited** an Egyptian anti-doping laboratory sponsored by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

Abdel 'Al **met** with Prime Minister Sherif Ismail to discuss the current legislative agenda in parliament. Following the meeting, Ismail **stated** that future legislation to government pensions were a focal point of the conversation between Ismail and Abdel 'Al.

The Conservative Party **accused** U.S. President Donald Trump of stirring unrest in the Middle East following his comments that he is considering traveling to Jerusalem for the opening of the new American embassy.

Abdel 'Al **met** with Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin to discuss regional terrorism, illegal immigration, and Ukrainian investments in Egypt.

Arab Affairs Committee Chairman Saad al-Gamal **accused** Iran of continuous interference in Arab countries' affairs, most evident by their support of Houthi rebels in Yemen. Gamal went on to state that Iran is enforcing a radical religious doctrine on Gulf countries.

The Egyptian Revolutionary Party **called** for the creation of a committee comprising public figures to develop a strategy for cooperation among African countries in fields including political affairs, economic endeavors, and social issues.

Looking Ahead

- The Defense Committee will **discuss** the government's proposed amendments to the Traffic Law beginning in mid-May. The amendments **establish** the National Traffic and Transport Council to manage roadway concerns throughout the country. The legislation will also **include** new fees for automobile drivers based on the size of their vehicle and license acquisition procedures.
- The Budget Committee will begin **reviewing** the state budget for the 2018–19 fiscal year next week in its entirety. The committee is expected to hold several **meetings** with representatives from the Ministry of Finance to discuss the budget. Similarly, the general body of the House will **discuss** during plenary session Sunday the Budget Committee's final report on the state budget for the fiscal year 2016–17.
- The Transportation Committee will **send** a delegation in the coming weeks to assess the status of road development projects in the Red Sea governorate.
- The Arab Affairs Committee will **convene** Sunday in two separate meetings to discuss the ongoing security situations in Libya and Syria.
- The political bureau of the Coalition in Support of Egypt will **meet** Wednesday to discuss political developments as well as the group's food distribution preparations leading up to Ramadan.



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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.