



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF APRIL 8-14, 2018

Summary

- The Communications Committee completed its discussions of all articles of the Cybercrime Law, and subsequently approved all but two articles of the bill. The law criminalizes a variety of technology-based activities with an emphasis on internet use and has raised serious concerns about its implications for surveillance.
- Part of Article 9 of the government draft law regulating Uber and Careem was deemed unconstitutional; a joint committee in parliament amended the article in question to remove a direct link between the security sector and databases, though this change has yet to be formally introduced.
- Members of the House of Representatives expressed outrage over mounting tension between the United States and Russia in Syria, decrying the recent violence in the country and blaming the U.S. for seeking to promote its agenda in the region through further conflict.
- The House of Representatives approved President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi's request to extend the state of emergency for an additional three months. This decree marks the fourth instance of extension since the original decision in April 2017, which highlights the constitutional issue of the state continuing to implement the Emergency Law despite the constitution stipulating a maximum of one continuation.

Notable Developments

Communication Committee Completes its Review of the Cybercrime Law:

Following a series of [meetings](#) with representatives from the Communications, Defense, and Interior Ministries, the Communications Committee [completed](#) its discussions of the Cybercrime Law. The committee had [agreed in principle](#) to the law on March 6, but held multiple meetings

afterward to deliberate various articles of the legislation and approve each component individually. The body then [approved](#) all components of the bill except Articles 30 and 37, which the committee will vote on at a later date. Article 30 [outlines](#) fines and prison time for individuals who commit a crime using technological services, while Article 37 [defines](#) an individual who may be punished for a crime if he or she willingly committed an offense. The law has raised concerns for its broad language allowing censorship and surveillance of online activity (for more, see Mai El-Sadany, “[In an Era of ‘Fake News,’ Egypt Monitors and Silences.](#)”) The committee has declared its intention to host community outreach initiatives to discuss the legislation before submitting it to the general body of parliament, though few details about these efforts or who may be involved in them have been publicized.

Law Regulating Uber and Careem Required to be Amended Based on Data Storage Issues:

After a joint parliamentary committee’s approval of the Public Transportation Using Information Technology Services Law, the same combined body [decided](#) to amend Article 9 of the bill. The original text of the legislation [created](#) a direct link between databases storing user information and the state security apparatus, which was [deemed](#) unconstitutional by the State Council. The amended article is purported to [remove](#) this direct link, yet still allow the state security apparatus to access this information at any time without judicial approval. Despite the reported changes to the bill, this new article has yet to be formally [introduced](#) as part of the law.

International Conflict in Syria Sparks Condemnation from Representatives:

Following the Syrian regime’s use of chemical weapons against its own population in Douma, tensions rose between the United States and Russia, and the U.S. carried out limited strikes on Syrian chemical weapons facilities. Multiple representatives in parliament commented on what they deemed to be an [escalation](#) toward inevitable military conflict. Members of the House [voiced these comments](#) as concern over the violence in Syria, and were [critical](#) of the U.S. without mentioning Russian or Syrian culpability. Following the tripartite bombing of Syria conducted by the U.S., the United Kingdom, and France, several representatives condemned the attack as a violation of international law. Both the [Defense Committee](#) and [Foreign Affairs Committee](#) issued statements decrying the strikes for disregarding human rights concerns in Syria and failing to adhere to the United Nations charter.

Wafd Party Internal Reshuffling Continues:

Wafd Party internal elections continued following Bahaa Abu Shoqa’s assumption to the chairmanship position, as Hani Sari al-Din was [chosen](#) as the new secretary-general of the organization. After the election, Abu Shoqa [authorized](#) Sari al-Din to form a subcommittee of the party to [investigate](#) the membership status of disgruntled individuals within the party as well as to [study](#) initiatives to increase the organization’s total membership. In related news, Abu Shoqa [bestowed](#) outgoing chairman al-Sayyid al-Badawi with the title of honorary president based on his service to the party in recent years.

Representatives Laud the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince’s Visit to Egypt:

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Zayed al-Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates traveled to Egypt to meet with President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi. Representatives in parliament hailed the visit as [symbolic](#) of the strong relations between the two countries. [Members](#) of the House, notably Foreign Affairs Chairman [Tariq Radwan](#), spoke of the visit’s significance in terms of counter-terrorism policy, economic opportunities, and regional developments.

Party Consolidation Discussions Advance in Parliament:

Discussion of political party consolidation continued this week, as Representative Ahmed Rifaat **reasserted** his intention to introduce legislation mandating the merger of political parties. Similarly, Coalition in Support of Egypt Secretary-General Magdi Murshid conducted an interview in which he spoke of the parliamentary bloc's desire to **reclassify** as a political party in order to more effectively **mobilize** political change and reach citizens on a wider scale.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

The Local Administration Committee **approved** Representative Mamdouh Muqaled's draft Motor Cars Law, which would **implement** new regulating procedures and **require** certain motor vehicle operators to possess specific government-issued licensing.

The Constitutional Affairs Committee **completed** its deliberation of Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa's draft amendment to the Criminal Procedure Law. The amendment **provides** additional legal protections for defendants in criminal cases and **offers** them further client-attorney privileges. The committee **approved** the legislation and submitted it to the general body of parliament for discussion, which is expected to take place by the end of April.

Local Administration Committee Chairman Ahmed al-Sageeni **confirmed** that the committee finalized its discussions of the South Egypt Development Law with minor revisions to the name of the governing commission (to be known as the Development Authority of Southern Egypt). Sageeni **added** that the committee affirmed all recommendations made by the State Council, and it will be **preparing** a report of its deliberations to send to the general body of parliament.

The Health Committee **approved** the Medical Research Organization Law. The bill **specifies** new punishments including fines and imprisonment for individuals who conduct unlicensed procedures, and the punishments are greater if these procedures result in permanent disability. Additionally, the legislation **establishes** a supreme council under the Health Ministry's authority to dictate regulations for medical research and ethics.

Parliament **agreed** to the government's draft National Council for Women Law. The proposed bill **creates** a national council to advance the interests of women and to represent the state's policy in any developments regarding women.

The House of Representatives **agreed in principle** to the government's Custody of Terrorist Funds Law. The law was **approved** by the Constitutional Affairs Committee and subsequently sent to the general floor of parliament the following day to be voted upon. The bill **creates** a council comprising judges to manage terrorists' funds seized by the government.

In Session:

Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al **welcomed** Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. During their meeting, they discussed parliamentary relations between both nations and Portuguese development projects in Egypt.

In News and Statements:

Representative Muhammad al-Koumi of the Housing Committee **called** for 2019 to be designated as the year to combat addiction based on the prevalence of drug use among youth. Representative Abdel Aziz Fahim echoed similar sentiments, **suggesting** the implementation of drug screening procedures in schools to prevent the spread of illegal drugs among students.

Representative Hatem Abdel Hamid **requested** that the Health Ministry intensify its media campaigns to raise awareness of the dangers of female genital mutilation procedures, and called for the maximum

punishment to be issued against perpetrators of the crime.

Tourism Committee Chairwoman Sahar Talaat **welcomed** the return of flights between Cairo and Moscow, while also praising various institutions for their extensive work to resume air travel between the two cities.

Arab Affairs Committee Chairman **Saad al-Gamal** and **Abdel 'Al** issued separate statements expressing their condolences to Algeria and to the families of victims of a plane crash that killed 257 individuals.

Representative Hatem Bashat of the African Affairs Committee **blamed** Ethiopia for the delays in resolving the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam dispute, stating that the mutual agreement between Egypt and Sudan will pressure Ethiopia to reach a solution to the issue. Bashat claimed that the primary roadblocks to the crisis involve water level, management of the facility, and safety procedures.

Representative Muhammad Badawi Dessouki of the Transportation Committee **dismissed** the idea of banning Facebook, saying it would create negative perception worldwide about Egypt. Dessouki **suggested** revisiting the idea of creating a similar website specifically for Egypt, because youth members of the population rely on such sites.

On the other hand, Representative Zaynab Ali Salam **warned** that social-networking sites such as Facebook represent a national security concern, and she called for Egyptians to be educated on the dangers of these websites.

Representative Sharif al-Wardani of the Human Rights Committee **praised** the Youth and Sports Ministry for reopening youth centers nationwide in an effort to curb extremist ideologies.

Looking Ahead

- The Communications Committee is expected to send the Cybercrime Law to the general floor of parliament for discussion in the coming week.



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.