



# EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



## WEEK IN BRIEF MAY 27-JUNE 2, 2018

### Summary

- The Nation's Future Party gained 150 independent-affiliated members from the Association for Egypt, a bloc of unaffiliated representatives. This follows 51 members of the Free Egyptians Party joining the organization, bringing the Nation's Future Party's total membership to over 250 representatives. Nation's Future now comprises a plurality in the House.
- The party consolidation meetings hosted by the Wafd Party led to the creation of two subcommittees tasked specifically with studying the merger process; the committees include a coordinating body to report to the executive and a legal body to study Article 5 of the Egyptian Constitution in regard to political pluralism.
- The Coalition in Support of Egypt decided not to transform into an official political party, citing Article 6 of the House of Representatives' bylaws preventing representatives from changing political affiliation mid-session. Chairman Muhammad al-Suweidi also denied that the Nation's Future Party withdrew from the bloc, as Alaa Abed, the new party deputy chairman, stated last week.

### Notable Developments

#### Nation's Future Gains 150 Additional Members:

Nation's Future Party Chairman Ashraf Rashad [announced](#) that 150 independent-affiliated representatives from the Association for Egypt have joined the party. This follows a similar decision of 51 members of the Free Egyptians Party (FEP) last week to [withdraw](#) from the FEP and join Nation's Future. Following the most recent membership increase, Nation's Future's membership [eclipsed](#) 250 representatives, about 40 percent of the House, making the organization a [plurality](#) in the legislature. Nation's Future Party Secretary-General Hossam al-Khouli, formerly of the

Wafd Party, [welcomed](#) any representatives considering joining the organization on the condition that they be committed to working on behalf of the state's best interests. Khouli later [stated](#) that Nation's Future aspires to establish itself as the majority party in the House to "fill the political vacuum," similar rhetoric to the Coalition in Support of Egypt in its endeavor to reclassify as an official political party. The Association for Egypt, a [bloc](#) of independent members in the House, had previously attempted to merge with Nation's Future earlier in May, though that endeavor was [rejected](#) by members of the party at the time.

### **Consolidation Meetings Yield Two Subcommittees to Continue Merger Process:**

Officials from over 60 political parties [convened](#) at the Wafd Party's headquarters to resume party consolidation discussions. The meeting adjourned until next week following the group's decision to [form](#) two separate subcommittees, a coordination committee and legal committee, to investigate the merger process. The coordination committee will [consist](#) of 21 individuals, 11 from parties holding seats in the House and an additional 10 members of political parties that do not hold seats in the House; the committee is [tasked](#) with reporting any findings related to the consolidation process to the executive branch. The legal committee will [consist](#) of eight representatives in the House and three legal experts [charged](#) with studying Article 5<sup>1</sup> of the constitution in relation to political pluralism and party consolidation.

In related news, officials from the Nation's Future Party and the FEP [attended](#) the most recent gathering of political parties after their noticeable absence at last week's meetings. Nation's Future Vice-President Muhammed Manzour, also [chairman](#) of the Association for Egypt, [stated](#) that the organization did not attend last week's session owing to members' lack of availability.

### **Coalition in Support of Egypt Decides Against Party Transformation:**

Following months of deliberations and internal legal investigations, the Coalition in Support of Egypt [decided](#) not to transform into an official political party. Coalition Chairman Muhammad al-Suweidi [stated](#) that Article 6 of the House's bylaws, preventing representatives from changing party affiliation mid-session, proved too [restrictive](#) in the bloc's attempt to reclassify as an official political party. Suweidi also [denied](#) that Nation's Future withdrew from the coalition, [noting](#) that the bloc maintains its status as the majority organization in the House. This assertion follows a [statement](#) from Alaa Abed, the new deputy chairman of the party, that the party withdrew from the coalition before the FEP members joined the organization.

### **Sisi Inaugurated Before the General Body of the House:**

President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi was [inaugurated](#) for his second term Saturday in front of the general body of the House. Ahead of the ceremony, Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al [penned](#) a letter to representatives requesting their presence Saturday morning for the inauguration. Throughout the week, workers [decorated](#) the assembly hall of the House and adorned flags on the exterior of the building in commemoration for the ceremony. Representatives including Defense Committee Chairman [Kamal Amer](#) and Coalition in Support of Egypt Secretary-General [Magdi Murshid](#) praised Sisi's speech before the legislature for his commitment to the education and health sectors, as well as promoting Egypt as a prominent regional actor in the Middle East.

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<sup>1</sup>Article 5 of the constitution states: The political system is based on political and partisan multiplicity, the peaceful transfer of power, the separation and balance of powers, authority going with responsibility, and respect for human rights and freedoms, as set out in the constitution.

## Other Developments

### In Legislation:

Budget Committee Chairman Hussein Aissa [stated](#) that the committee finalized its report of the 2018–19 state budget and submitted it to the general body of parliament to vote on; Aissa [expects](#) the report to be finalized before the conclusion of Ramadan in mid-June. Aissa also [mentioned](#) that the committee reallocated funds in the education, health, transportation, and media sectors based on requests to increase funding, though he [asserted](#) that not all sectors can receive additional funding, which would lead the government to run a deficit of 21 percent of gross domestic product. The Defense Committee [approved](#) a draft law raising pensions for military and police officers by 15 percent or 125 Egyptian pounds (LE), whichever figure is larger; the increase will take effect beginning July 1.

Soleiman al-Amiri of the Local Administration Committee [submitted](#) a bill amending Article 341 of the Penal Code. The new legislation would [eliminate](#) prison time as a punishment for falsifying written items such as tickets, in an attempt to reduce the number of incarcerated individuals nationwide. The law was [referred](#) to the Constitutional Affairs Committee for review.

### In Session:

Tadrus Qaldus of the Communications Committee [questioned](#) Prime Minister Sherif Ismail on the expected date that government services will be available online. This follows Communications Minister Yasser al-Qady [announcing](#) that all government services, especially those [pertaining](#) to the education and health sectors, will be available online by the conclusion of 2019.

Abdel Hamid Kamal of the 25–30 Bloc and Local Administration Committee [submitted](#) a briefing to Prime Minister Sherif Ismail requesting the government not raise fuel prices. Kamal also [requested](#) that Ismail and Minister of Petroleum Tariq al-Molla address this issue in an upcoming session of parliament.

Khaled Hilali of the Health Committee [submitted](#) a briefing to Abdel 'Al requesting a follow-up investigation to make the legislature aware of the corruption situation in the Ministry of Supply. Earlier this week, several members of the Ministry of Supply were [arrested](#) by the Administrative Control Authority on charges of corruption.

The Education Committee [held](#) a meeting to discuss raising the salaries of teachers ahead of the upcoming academic year. In a previous meeting, the body requested a increase of LE39 billion in funds allocated for education in the fiscal year 2018–19 budget, to more adequately compensate teachers.

The Local Administration Committee [approved](#) an LE10 million proposal to pave several dirt roads in the Bulaq district of Cairo.

The Local Administration Committee [discussed](#) a request to build three new waste management centers in Kafr al-Sheikh within the next six months.

Muhammad Fuad of the Budget Committee [submitted](#) a request to Abdel 'Al, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prime Minister Sherif Ismail, and the Ministry of Antiquities to investigate the Egyptian artifacts confiscated by Italian authorities. This follows Italian authorities' [discovery](#) of over 100 smuggled artifacts held by Egyptian Embassy employees in Italy.

Fayez Barakat of the Education Committee [submitted](#) a briefing request to the Ministry of Health to investigate the shortage of nurses in public hospitals nationwide. Barakat [stated](#) that hospitals have a nursing deficit of 20 percent of their intended capacity, primarily due to low wages in public hospitals.

## In News and Statements:

Osama Abul Meged of the Defense Committee **dismissed** the recent European statement about civil society activists, claiming that the statement was based on false reporting and represents an infringement of Egyptian internal affairs. Abul Meged also asserted that any detained individuals were arrested in accordance with the law.

Samir al-Bateekhi of the Youth Committee **called** on sports clubs to host seminars encouraging youth members of the population to return to stadiums for future matches, while also warning them of the dangers and punishments associated with violent behavior following matches.

Magdi Murshid of the Health Committee **suggested** a system of incentives and punishments to limit the rising population. Murshid's proposal involved reducing state aid to families with three children, while granting additional aid to families who have two or fewer children.

The Conference Party is **hosting** an annual breakfast Saturday in Sharqia for tribal leaders, parliamentarians, members of the armed forces, and local officials.

Ahmed Helmi al-Sharif of the Constitutional Affairs Committee **stated** that the committee will most likely work past parliament's close of session to finalize its deliberations of prominent legislation, including amendments to parliament's bylaws and the Personal Status Law.

Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed **recommended** that the consideration of Administrative Control Authority Chairman Muhammad Erfan for the position of prime minister, based on his work combating corruption.

Members of the Foreign Affairs Committee met with a delegation from South Korea **visiting** Egypt. The delegation included foreign ministry officials and members of the South Korean parliament's foreign affairs committee. During their meeting, representatives from the Foreign Affairs Committee requested that South Korea lift its travel ban to Egypt based on the recent security developments in the country.

Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah **denied** reports that the president's office and parliament had collaborated on new officials for cabinet positions. Hassiballah asserted that representatives maintain certain sentiments on several ministers, and that they would offer their opinions to the president if requested.

Several United States Congress staff members **traveled** to Egypt and met with representatives in the Foreign Affairs Committee. The group spoke of bilateral relations and legislative support between the two countries.

Mustafa Bakri of the Constitutional Affairs Committee **called** for the creation of taxes on websites such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter based on the revenue that they generate from online advertisements.

Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tariq Radwan **led** a delegation meeting with his counterparts from the German parliament. German parliamentarian Alexander Radwan expressed his country's desire to work with Egypt on various economic projects, while also referencing regional security conflicts.

Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah **claimed** that parliament approved 111 laws since the opening of the third session in October 2017. TIMEP estimates that the House has approved 57 laws since the beginning of the third legislative session in October 2017.

## Looking Ahead

- The House **reconvened** for general session on Sunday, June 3. The session will last until Wednesday, June 6.
- The Arab Affairs Committee will **hold** three separate meetings next week to discuss the respective security situations in Syria, Palestine, and Iraq.
- The Budget Committee will **meet** next week to discuss the requests of the Education and Health Committees to increase the budget allocations for their respective sectors by LE26 billion and LE43 billion.
- The Communications Committee will discuss the draft General Body for Circulating Information Law beginning June 7. The law was submitted by Representative Muhammad Khalifa, who **stated** that the bill attempts to regulate the dissemination of false news, especially on social networking platforms.



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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.