



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF JUNE 17-23, 2018

Summary

- Speaker of the House of Representatives Ali Abdel 'Al traveled to the European Union's headquarters, where he met with various officials in the European Parliament including President Antonio Tajani. Abdel 'Al also spoke with members of various committees of the parliament. During his visit, Abdel 'Al and his European counterparts discussed Egypt's war on terrorism, economic reforms, and human rights improvements. Members of the European Parliament pressed Abdel 'Al about various human rights concerns and recently passed legislation.
- The House approved President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi's request to renew the state of emergency for an additional three months beginning July 14; the decision was widely praised throughout the legislature as an affirmation of the body's commitment to fighting terrorism along with the armed forces. The constitutionality of the extension is questionable, however, under Article 154, which states that the state of emergency can only be renewed once.
- Egypt's disappointing performance in the World Cup prompted outrage in the House of Representatives. Several representatives called for an investigation into the team's performance and the resignation of prominent officials associated with the team.

Notable Developments

Abdel 'Al Visits European Parliament:

Abdel 'Al visited the European Parliament this week, meeting with representatives and leadership officials and attending various committee sessions. Abdel 'Al and European Parliament President Antonio Tajani [discussed](#) regional concerns in the Mediterranean with an emphasis on illegal

immigration and terrorism. Tajani also **called** on European countries to increase their foreign investments in the Mediterranean region, especially in nations such as Egypt. Abdel 'Al held separate **meetings** with ranking officials of the Counter-terrorism, Human Rights, and Defense Committees, in addition to Tajani. As part of his visit, Abdel 'Al **attended** a session of the Foreign Affairs Committee, during which he **lauded** continued Egyptian-European bilateral relations and **discussed** recent domestic developments pertaining to terrorism, economic reform, and socially minded legislation such as the Church Reconstruction Law. During these meetings, Egyptian press reported that representatives **praised** Egypt for its counter-terrorism endeavors, promotion of stability in the Middle East, and improvement of human rights conditions. In reality, members of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee **pressed** Abdel 'Al about Egypt's human rights conditions, underscoring their concern with the ongoing environment inquiring about current detained individuals and freedom of the press, and calling on Egypt to close the internationally decried "foreign funding" case and overturn the "draconian" NGO Law and Protest Law.¹

House Approves Extension of State of Emergency:

The House **approved** a three-month extension to the state of emergency following Sisi's request for renewal, with the extension set to be renewed beginning July 14. The decision was widely praised throughout the legislature, as notable figures including Parliamentary Spokesman **Salah Hassiballah**, Defense Committee Chairman **Kamal Amer**, and Media Committee Chairman **Osama Heikal** noted that the extension affirms Egyptians' solidarity with the armed forces in combating terrorism. This is the third **extension** of the state of emergency since April 2017, bringing into question the **constitutionality** of the decision under Article 154, which states that the state of emergency can only be extended once.

Representatives Express Dismay over Egypt's World Cup Performance:

Following two consecutive losses in the World Cup, which eliminated the possibility for Egypt to advance in the tournament, representatives blamed team officials for their performance and called for an investigation into the team. Youth and Sports Committee Chairman Farag Omar **intends** to meet with the chairman of the Egyptian Olympic Committee and Youth and Sports Minister Khaled Abdel Aziz to discuss what he deemed the team's troubling **performance** in the World Cup. Local Administration Committee Chairman Ahmed al-Sageeni adopted a more hardline stance, **calling** for an investigation into the team and its governing body to determine why the team played so poorly; Sageeni also **requested** that top officials associated with the team resign following the tournament.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

Representative Abdel Baqi Turkiya of the Suggestions and Complaints Committee **submitted** an amendment to the Press Law of 1996 that would grant shared ownership of press institutions between the state and the various companies' employees. The law **mandates** that state ownership of media outlets shall not dip below 51 percent; the state currently maintains full ownership over these institutions. This follows the passage of the three media bodies laws on June 10, which provided new regulations to the media industry.

Representative Atef Abdel Gawad of the Budget Committee **submitted** a bill establishing the Supreme Council for the Elderly; the law was subsequently **referred** to the Suggestions and

¹ Inquiring members of the European Parliament included Cristian Dan Preda (Romania), Wajid Khan (United Kingdom), Amjad Bashir (United Kingdom), Petras Austrevicius (Lithuania), Jordi Sole (Spain), Mario Borghezio (Italy), Aymeric Chauprade (France), Georgios Epiteideios (Greece), and Barbara Lochbihler (Germany).

Complaints Committee to be discussed Monday during the committee's session. The bill [would establish](#) a supreme council to promote the general welfare of the elderly population.

Representative Bardees Seif al-Din Omran [submitted](#) an amendment to the Law of Tenders and Auctions, which would raise the cap of a contract to 600,000 Egyptian pounds (LE) from LE400,000.

In Session:

Earlier in the week, the House [decided](#) to postpone all meetings to discuss proposals and briefings to the cabinet until Saturday, when Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouli was expected to present the cabinet's agenda to the legislature, but he is now expected to present the agenda by July 4.

Representative Ahmed Idris of the Tourism Committee [stated](#) that the committee is launching an initiative to have smuggled artifacts found in Italy returned to Egypt.

Representative Bassam Felayfil of the Suggestions and Complaints Committee [submitted](#) a request to the cabinet to investigate the clearing of canal banks in heavily populated areas, as it pertains to pollution and environmental concerns.

Representative Ashraf Shouqi of the Economic Affairs Committee [submitted](#) a proposal to Abdel 'Al to coordinate with the Ministries of Agriculture and Irrigation to study the potential success of sugar cane crops in Minya.

Representative Khaled Meshour of the Constitutional Affairs Committee [submitted](#) a request to the Ministry of Agriculture to clarify its plan on how it intends to protect farmers from the upcoming rising costs associated with agriculture products.

Representative Amr Abul Yazid of the Housing Committee [submitted](#) a proposal to the prime minister and minister of housing to reassess the drinking water and sanitation system in Bulaq.

The Budget Committee [recommended](#) that work on the budget for the 2019–20 fiscal year begin immediately following the beginning of the 2018–19 fiscal year.

In News and Statements:

The National Movement Party, former presidential candidate Ahmed Shafiq's organization, [announced](#) that it would be consolidating with the Egyptian Political Alliance. The alliance now consists of 17 political parties, yet only two of these organizations, Guardians of the Revolution and the National Movement Party, hold seats in the legislature: the Guardians of the Revolution have one member in the House and the National Movement Party has four.

Arab Affairs Committee Chairman Saad al-Gamal [asserted](#) that the United States' decision to withdraw from the United Nations Human Rights Council is an affirmation of its bias toward Israel and its attempt to destabilize the international community.

Members of the youth wing of the Free Egyptians Party are [participating](#) in a conference in Beijing aimed at promoting youth political involvement.

Representative Muhammad Maher Hamed of the Human Rights Committee [warned](#) against the spread of false news on social networking sites, such as the rumor that representatives used government funds to travel to Russia for the World Cup. Hamed [called](#) on the Ministry of Interior to shut down any website or social networking page that spreads false news in an attempt to defame the state.

Abdel 'Al [traveled](#) to Brussels and met with Jan Peumans, president of the Flemish parliament. The two leaders [discussed](#) Belgian investments in Egypt and increasing Belgian tourism to Egypt, as well as general bilateral relations.

Representative Yehia Kedwani of the Defense Committee **claimed** that the Muslim Brotherhood started rumors of thugs outside of Alexandria harassing and attacking citizens in order to mislead the public.

Deputy Speaker of the House Soleiman Wahdan **explained** that the comprehensive health-care system will begin in Port Said in December rather than its expected date of July 1, based on insufficient quantities of medical supplies needed for implementation.

Abdel 'Al **participated** in a meeting of the finance body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union as well as a meeting of the executive body of the organization; both meetings were held in Geneva.

Looking Ahead

- Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah will **hold** a press conference at the conclusion of the third session to review prominent laws passed by the legislature as well as outstanding legislation that will be deliberated during the fourth session. The session is set to expire June 30, though there have been rumors about the session being extended until mid-July.
- The political bureau of the Coalition in Support of Egypt will **host** new Health Minister Hala Zayed next week to discuss her plan for the ministry and to promote suggestions for her regarding implementing the comprehensive health insurance policy and providing for the shortage of medical professionals.
- The Arab Affairs Committee will **hold** three separate meetings next week to discuss the situations in Iraq, Yemen, and Palestine.



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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.