



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF OCTOBER 7-13, 2018

Summary

- Speaker of the House of Representatives Ali Abdel 'Al traveled to France to meet with French Senate President Gerard Larcher; the two discussed recent developments in Egypt's war on terror as well as future investment projects in Egypt funded by French companies. Abdel 'Al also met with Egyptian nationals living in France.
- Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed traveled to Germany, where he met with Bundestag Vice-President Petra Pau, officials from the German Federal Foreign Office, and ambassadors of Arab countries in Germany. During each of his meetings, Abed described recent developments within Egypt related to human rights.

Notable Developments

Abdel 'Al Meets with French Senate President:

Abdel 'Al [traveled](#) to France as part of a delegation visit to meet with French Senate President Gerard Larcher and Egyptian expatriates in France. Larcher [hosted](#) Abdel 'Al for a meeting during which Abdel 'Al discussed increased parliamentary cooperation between the two countries, Egypt's war on terror, and economic reform, and requested that France promote private-sector investments in Egypt. According to Egyptian media, Larcher [affirmed](#) the important relationship between Egypt and France, especially in the context of combating terrorism, while also mentioning that he would promote investments in Egyptian development projects to private-sector companies in France. French and international media did not report on the meeting. Abdel 'Al also [met](#) with a group of Egyptian expatriates residing in France, where he discussed recent domestic initiatives and called upon the Egyptian nationals to serve as international stewards for their country.

Alaa Abed Travels to Berlin:

Human Rights Committee Chairman Alaa Abed traveled to Germany to meet with members of the Bundestag and other German political officials to discuss recent developments domestically and regionally. During a meeting with Bundestag Vice-President Petra Pau, Abed [highlighted](#) developments in Egypt over the past five years including the country's economic reform and the "diversity" of the legislature's members, of whom 15 percent are women. Pau reportedly [called](#) for the two sides to maintain an open dialogue in the future. Abed also [met](#) with an official within the human rights office of the German Federal Foreign Office who [probed](#) Abed on Egypt's utilization of the death penalty based on Germany's formal opposition to the punishment. Abed [responded](#) by affirming the independence of the Egyptian judicial system as an institution that abides by rule of law in reaching legal decisions.¹ Abed also attended an event with the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Germany, where he described parliament's role in promoting human rights.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

The draft Clinical Trials Law was [referred](#) to the Health Committee to be revised after President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi objected to the bill's passage. Sisi previously [objected](#) to several articles in the law that limited researchers' abilities to operate independently without government oversight.

Representative Muhammad al-Hassi, deputy chairman of the Housing Committee, [announced](#) that the committee completed discussing the draft Reconciling Building Violations Law, adding that the committee will begin drafting the final report to present in a future House plenary session. The draft law [permits](#) buildings to be repurposed for something other than their original construction purpose.

In Session:

Representative Ahmed Ali of the Housing Committee [submitted](#) a briefing request to Abdel 'Al and Health Minister Hala Zayed regarding the sale of expired pharmaceuticals in a Cairo market.

Representative Muhammad Fuad of the Energy Committee submitted three separate briefing requests this week to Abdel 'Al and various ministers. Fuad [submitted](#) a briefing request to Abdel 'Al, Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouli, and Finance Minister Muhammad Mait regarding the government's increased rate of borrowing, despite promises to reduce their borrowing. He [proposed](#) a question to Abdel 'Al to be sent to Madbouli asking for clarification of the criteria for assets being placed under the Egyptian Sovereign Fund. Fuad [submitted](#) a briefing request to Abdel 'Al, Madbouli, and Social Solidarity Minister Ghada Wali inquiring about the delay in issuing the executive regulations for the Rights of Persons with Special Needs Law, which Sisi [ratified](#) on February 19; the law [provides](#) economic incentives and tax breaks to special needs citizens seeking to start their own businesses.

Representative Muhammad al-Ghoul of the Human Rights Committee [submitted](#) a briefing request to Abdel 'Al, Madbouli, and Education Minister Tariq Shawqi in regard to the recent transfer of 12 administration officials in schools in Qena, noting that the sudden transfer is detrimental for the schools.

Representative Emad Mahrous of the Tourism Committee [submitted](#) a request to Madbouli to reveal the travel expenditures incurred by cabinet officials since the beginning of the calendar year.

¹For more on due process and parliament's role in human rights, see TIMEP's [issue brief](#) on due process and the Egypt Parliament Watch Session II [report](#).

Suggestions and Complaints Committee Chairman Hemam al-Adali [stated](#) that the committee has received over 300 proposals pertaining to briefings and other information requests since the House reconvened last week. The 300 proposals do not include legislation.

In News and Statements:

Representative Omar Hamroush of the Religious Affairs Committee [called](#) upon the Supreme Council for Media Regulation to censor certain religious channels to avoid the spread of inappropriate religious decrees by unqualified individuals, though he did not refer to any specific channels.

Coalition in Support of Egypt Secretary-General Ahmed al-Sageeni [stated](#) that coalition officials, primarily Chairman Abdel Hadi al-Qasbi, have been collaborating with each other as well as other parliamentary officials to formulate a legislative agenda for the new session.

Representative Ashraf al-Arabi of the Economic Affairs Committee [called](#) for the Tax Authority to be restructured and modernized ahead of its separation from the Ministry of Finance.

Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Karim Darwish [hosted](#) the Armenian ambassador to Cairo, Armen Melkonian. The two officials discussed historical relations and continued parliamentary cooperation.

Representative Hisham al-Hasri of the Agriculture Committee [blamed](#) the government for the current cotton crisis, stating that the government failed to uphold its promise to farmers to purchase cotton at a higher price. Hasri also [asserted](#) that the government's actions will lead to distrust between farmers and the government for future growing seasons.

Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Karim Darwish [described](#) the current situation in Libya as a matter of urgent national security in a meeting with Italian Ambassador to Egypt Giampaolo Cantini. Darwish emphasized that a solution to the instability must come from within Libya in order to ensure Egypt's border security and curb illegal migration across the Mediterranean.

Representative Muhammad al-Koumi of the Education Committee [requested](#) that opponents of the new education system postpone their criticism until the conclusion of the academic year, though he noted that the new system is flawed.

Defense Committee Chairman Kamal Amer and Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Karim Darwish [met](#) with the chairman of the Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee in the Czech Chamber of Deputies to discuss improving bilateral relations between Egypt and the Czech Republic.

Representative Mageda Nasser of the Education Committee [blamed](#) local governorates for early mishaps in the new education system as well as for the school supply deficit nationwide.

Representative Muhammad Abu Hamad of the Social Solidarity Committee [equated](#) the issue of overpopulation to terrorism in terms of its impact on a national scale.

Representative Mustafa al-Gendi of the African Affairs Committee [called on](#) Agriculture Minister Ezz al-Din Abu Satit to expedite the implementation of the Farmer's Card system and ramp up awareness campaigns in rural areas for the importance of accurately reporting data on their holdings.

Representative Abdel Fattah Muhammad of the Manpower Committee [highlighted](#) discontent with state administrative services and stressed the need to implement the executive regulations guidelines for the Civil Service Law to improve civil service worker productivity.

Representative Muhammad Badrawi of the Economic Affairs Committee [encouraged](#) development of public-sector companies for greater efficiency and competition, adding that Egypt must not neglect the potential economic contribution of the public sector.

Representative Mahmoud Badr of the Education Committee [denounced](#) Shariaa Nurseries for promoting hatred and extremism and instilling sectarianism among children.

Representative Megdi Malek of the Agriculture Committee [called](#) on Madbouli to take urgent action in protecting Egyptian farmers and the local spinning and weaving industry from a decline in cotton purchases.

Looking Ahead

- The House will [reconvene](#) in general session on October 21.
- Representative Margaret Azer of the Human Rights Committee [stated](#) that the committee is finalizing its delegation visit agenda for the new session, which will include prisons, orphanages, and police departments. Azer added that the committee will have completed a delegation visit before the next plenary session of the House on October 21.
- Coalition in Support of Egypt Chairman Abdel Hadi al-Qasbi [stated](#) that the House will form an ad hoc committee to follow up on the implementation of the cabinet's agenda.



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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.