



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF DECEMBER 9–21, 2018

Summary

- Special elections for the three available House of Representatives seats in Tamiya, Zefta, and Arish were held December 13–14 for expatriates in Egyptian embassies and December 19–20 for domestic residents. National Election Authority Chairman Lashin Ibrahim described the domestic voter turnout as “mixed.” The elections in Zefta and Arish were undecided and resulted in a runoff vote to be held January 16–17, and the results of the Tamiya vote are expected to be announced by December 25.
- The Human Rights Committee conducted a delegation visit to the al-Qanater prison facilities. The group was led by Ministry of Interior officials. Representatives met with inmates in the prison who reportedly said they were being treated well.
- Despite previous remarks that he would not reconcile with expelled members of the Wafd Party, Bahaa Abu Shoqa, the party’s chairman, said he would welcome the former members if they apologize for their actions during the recent internal elections and repay outstanding debts.
- Several representatives, notably Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah, participated in a reconciliation meeting between Representative Mortada Mansour, also chairman of Zamalek Sporting Club, and Abdel Mohsin Salama, chairman of the Syndicate of Egyptian Journalists. The meeting followed journalists being denied entry to Zamalek headquarters and having their materials confiscated by building security guards.

Notable Developments

Special Election for Available House Seats Under Way:

Campaigning measures in international countries for the three open House seats in Zefta, Tamiya,

and Arish **ended** December 13 in accordance with National Election Authority policies. Egyptian embassies worldwide held elections December 14–15 for the available seats, and domestic elections were held December 19–20. The authority’s chairman, Lashin Ibrahim, announced that domestic elections **occurred** without any discrepancies amid a “mixed” turnout; judicial officials were located at each polling location for monitoring purposes. Voting in **Arish** and **Zefta** did not yield a victor, and a runoff election will be held January 16–17 to determine winners for the two seats. Voter turnout in the Zefta special election **was over** 17 percent of eligible constituents. The winner of the Tamiya election is expected to be **announced** by December 25.

Human Rights Committee Visits National Prison:

A delegation from the Human Rights Committee **inspected** al-Qanater Prison and met with inmates, including both Egyptian and foreign prisoners. Officials from the Ministry of Interior’s prison department **guided** the delegation on the tour, and the visiting representatives **praised** the quality of the various facilities and were allegedly assured by inmates that they were treated well.

Wafd Party Chairman Retracts Remarks Following Internal Split:

Wafd Party Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa **stated** that he would reconcile with disgruntled members of the party if they apologized for their actions during the recent internal dispute. These members include former party chairman al-Sayyid al-Badawi, whom Abu Shoqa claims owes the organization 18 million Egyptian pounds. Abu Shoqa **asserted** that these disputes are not personal but stem from organizational decisions implemented by the party’s council. This statement follows multiple remarks by prominent Wafd officials that the party would not reconcile with the expelled members.

Representatives Mediate Zamalek Club and Journalists Syndicate Dispute:

Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah **stated** that Abdel ‘Al was aware of a recent meeting to resolve the dispute between the Zamalek Sporting Club and the Syndicate of Egyptian Journalists. The meeting was attended by Hassiballah, Youth and Sports Minister Ashraf Sobhi, Zamalek Chairman and member of the House Mortada Mansour, Journalists Syndicate President Abdel Mohsin Salama, and Representatives Ehab al-Khouli and Muhammad al-Husseini. Mansour reportedly **agreed** to adopt the recommendations of the prime minister and prosecutor-general to resolve the crisis, and he will soon **visit** the Journalists Syndicate to demonstrate solidarity with the union.

Abdel ‘Al Travels to South Korea on Delegation Visit:

During his visit to South Korea, Abdel ‘Al **met** with Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon, members of the Egyptian-Korean Parliamentary Friendship Association, and parliament majority leader Hong Young-pyo. Abdel ‘Al **noted** that his visit is the first for a parliamentary speaker from Egypt to South Korea since relations between the two countries normalized in the 1940s. Abdel ‘Al **encouraged** the various parliamentary officials to increase South Korean investments in Egypt, especially in areas such as the Suez Canal and Sinai, and noted prominent developments made through mutual cooperation in fields of education, security, and regional stability. Abdel ‘Al’s counterpart in the South Korean legislature, Moon Hee-sang, **hosted** Abdel ‘Al in a meeting during which they discussed the security situation on the Korean Peninsula, South Korean companies operating in Egypt, and a mutual desire to coordinate in a variety of fields.

Parliamentary Delegation Travels to Ukraine:

A parliamentary delegation led by Local Administration Committee Chairman Ahmed al-Sageeni is **traveling** to Ukraine to meet with officials in the Ukrainian parliament. The parliamentary delegation visiting Ukraine **met** with various representatives in the Egyptian-Ukrainian Parliamentary Friendship Association to discuss economic cooperation. The group also met with officials in the Ukrainian Ministry of Education to discuss ongoing documentation problems facing Egyptians studying in Ukraine. The delegation **includes** Education Committee Chairman Sami Hashem and Representatives Abul Abbas al-Turki Representative Sami Ramadan.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

The special House subcommittee formed to study President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi's objections to the Clinical Trials Law **gathered** for the first time. The committee's primary focus will be amending the punitive measures of the law, which Sisi described as overly burdensome for the medical community.

The Religious Affairs Committee **approved** Committee Chairman Osama al-Abd's draft Dar al-If-ta Law as well as Representative Omar Hamroush's draft Organization of the General Fatwa Law. The committee had been debating legislation since the third parliamentary session, and ultimately decided to move forward with two separate draft laws. Hamroush's draft law would prohibit any individual or organization from engaging with fatwas unless they are a scholar from al-Azhar, Dar al-If-ta, the Islamic Research Center, or the Ministry of Religious Endowments.

The Energy Committee **approved** an executive decision signed by Sisi in March 2018 to join the International Solar Energy Alliance; the alliance comprises 71 countries, though only 48 have officially ratified the group's treaty thus far.

In Session:

Representative Muhammad Fuad of the Energy Committee **submitted** a proposal to Abdel 'Al, Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouli, and Finance Minister Muhammad Mait to expand the financial transaction services for litigation purposes to include online payments.

The House **rejected** a cabinet proposal to appoint the housing minister to head the Supreme Council for Public Shop Licensing, which was created through the Public Shops Law.

The Agriculture Committee **agreed** to form a subcommittee comprising officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Supply and representatives from the sugar cane industry to discuss an amenable price of the commodity.

Representative Saad Badeer of the Tourism Committee is **preparing** a memo to submit to Abdel 'Al and the Foreign Affairs Committee requesting that a parliamentary delegation be permitted to travel to the United States Congress to warn of the dangers of the Muslim Brotherhood and advocate for the group to be designated a terrorist organization.

The Manpower Committee delegation inspecting the BiscoMisr factory in Cairo **cut** their trip short after a dispute arose between the representatives and factory officials in regard to the timing and purpose of the visit. The parliamentary delegation reportedly intended to discuss issues surrounding workers' compensation, but they departed the factory without addressing the problem with

company officials.

A delegation from the Economic Affairs Committee **conducted** a visit to the Suez Economic Zone and the East Port of Port Said to meet with local officials working on development projects.

The Arab Affairs Committee **discussed** a briefing request submitted by Representative Ehab al-Khouli regarding the difficulties that Egyptian expatriates in other Arab countries encounter when seeking employment opportunities.

The House **approved** an initiative by Abdel 'Al that will grant the Speaker of the House authority to change the dates of plenary session at any time.

Abdel 'Al **threatened** to end plenary sessions last week when representatives continued prodding Health Minister Hala Zayed for signatures on briefing requests rather than allowing her an opportunity to address the general legislature.

Manufacturing Committee Chairman Farag Omar **submitted** a briefing request to Abdel 'Al, Madbouli, Foreign Affairs Minister Sameh Shoukry, and Minister of Industry and Trade Amr Adel Nissar on Sudan's embargo on agricultural imports from Egypt. Sudan pledged to lift this ban in October 2018, yet there have not been any exports to Sudan since that time.

In News and Statements:

The Defense Committee **hosted** several French parliamentary officials to discuss the security situations in Palestine and Libya as well as continued security cooperation between Egypt and France.

The Foreign Affairs Committee **hosted** Canadian Ambassador to Egypt Jess Dutton; the group discussed the historical relations between the countries, Canadian investment endeavors in Egypt, and ongoing cooperation in education and scientific research.

Representative Omar Hamroush of the Religious Affairs Committee **stated** that he intends to submit a request to Abdel 'Al and the Supreme Council for Media Regulation to censor Salafi websites to avoid the spread of what he deemed extremist ideology.

Representative Ahmed al-Awadi of the Defense Committee **called** upon the Arab League and the Arab Parliamentary Union to exert greater pressure on Turkey to extradite alleged terrorists residing in the country. Awadi suggested diplomatic processes or economic sanctions if necessary to compel Turkey to comply.

The African Affairs Committee is **hosting** Pope Tawadros II of the Coptic Orthodox Church to discuss means of developing the relationship between the church and Egypt's connection to other African countries.

The African Affairs Committee **welcomed** Nigerian Ambassador to Egypt Abdel Qader Dandali.

Abdel 'Al and Parliamentary Secretary-General Ahmed Saad al-Din **visited** Representative Osama Abul Meged, who was hospitalized during plenary session Sunday.

Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah **blamed** representatives' absences in the House on local councils not having been established, which he said forces representatives to adopt more of a role in managing regional interests for their constituents.

As chairman of the Arab Parliament, Abdel 'Al **participated** in the legislature's most recent plenary session where he spoke about the importance of the union in strengthening relations between Arab countries.

Suggestions and Complaints Committee Chairman Hemam al-Adali **asserted** that Egypt, under Sisi's leadership, has made major progress in developing its slums.

Representative Muhammad Fuad of the Energy Committee **expressed** frustration at al-Azhar's un-

responsiveness to the draft Personal Status Law submitted in March, despite assurances that parliament would receive word from al-Azhar within 15 days.

Representative Magdi Malek of the Agriculture Committee **asserted** that another potato crisis will occur soon as a result of a rise in the market price of potato seeds.

Representative Khaled Hanafi of the Constitutional Affairs Committee **called** for fining shisha smokers. Hanafi said shisha smoking was a poor social habit that “emerged” with the January 25 Revolution.

Representative Muhammad al-Ghoul of the Human Rights Committee **asserted** that some countries and organizations have misused the Universal Declaration on Human Rights to promote specific political agendas against other countries.

Looking Ahead

- The House will **reconvene** in general session on December 22.
- The Energy Committee will **discuss** a presidential decree for a loan agreement between Egypt and the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development for 40 million Kuwaiti dinars (\$131.5 million) for Egypt’s electrical industry; the committee’s deliberations for the loan will occur Sunday.
- The Manufacturing Committee will host three ministers next week including Minister of Industry and Trade Amr Adel Nasser to discuss recent developments in Egypt’s industrial sector, as well as Minister of Finance Muhammad Mait and Minister of Planning Hala al-Said to discuss finances regarding the industrial sector.
- The special parliamentary committee studying Sisi’s objections to the Clinical Trials Law will **resume** deliberations next week.
- A subcommittee of the Budget Committee under the leadership of Representative Mustafa Salam will **convene** several times next week to discuss the final account for the fiscal year 2017–18 state budget.



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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.