



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF DECEMBER 22, 2018–JANUARY 29, 2019

Summary

- The European Union issued a resolution condemning human rights violations in Egypt and requesting that European countries cease security agreements with Egypt until the violations are addressed. The Egyptian House of Representatives rejected the resolution, calling it distorted information and an infringement on Egypt's sovereignty. Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron criticized Egypt's human rights record during his visit to Egypt, which prompted the ire of several representatives.
- Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah convened a press conference on January 10 to discuss the House's achievements during the past three years. Hassiballah covered such topics as Sisi's influence on the legislature, potential constitutional amendments, and party consolidation efforts.
- The National Elections Authority announced the three victors in the special parliamentary elections for the available seats in Zefta, Arish, and Tamiya. Amin Gawda won the seat in Arish, Muhammad Abdel Tawab secured the position in Tamiya, and Yehia al-Gahash was declared victorious in Zefta. Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al swore the three representatives into their new positions on January 27, 2019.
- Abdel 'Al announced that Representative Mahmoud al-Khamees died on January 13, which subsequently led to the NEA organizing another special parliamentary election for the available seat. Prospective candidates began submitting their paperwork to determine candidacy eligibility on January 29, and the submission period concludes February 5.

Notable Developments

House Condemns Critiques by European Officials on Human Rights:

The European Union **adopted** a resolution on December 13, 2018, condemning human rights violations in Egypt and calling on European countries to reconsider any existing security agreements with Egypt until the country achieves progress in its human rights record. The House **lambasted** the resolution issued by the European Union, issuing a statement on December 22 which asserted that the European resolution represented a political attack ignorant of the current political climate and infringed on Egyptian sovereignty.

French President Emmanuel Macron visited Egypt January 27–29, 2019, and **raised** Egypt’s human rights record during a press conference with President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi. Members of the House’s Human Rights Committee, notably Representative Margaret Azer, **rejected** Macron’s condemnation of Egypt’s human rights record. The parliamentarians **described** Egypt’s record as improving, especially as it relates to children and disabled individuals. Representatives also asserted that the fighting terrorism ought to be considered a human right. The representatives also labeled Macron as hypocritical for how his government handled the “yellow vest” protests in France.

Spokesman Hassiballah Reflects on Three-Year Anniversary of House:

Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah held a press conference on January 10 to commemorate the three-year anniversary of the House convening in 2016. During the press conference, Hassiballah **spoke** about the activities of the legislature over the past three years, as well as notable recent developments in the legislature. He **praised** Sisi for guiding the country and offering representatives a model for policymaking. Hassiballah also discussed rumored amendments to the constitution and the House’s bylaws, **suggesting** that the House’s bylaws may be amended before the next parliamentary elections in 2020 to reflect growing sentiments concerning party consolidation. Hassiballah also **denied** that the House has received any official requests to amend the constitution.

House Fails to Approve Constitutionally Mandated Law Organizing Judges:

Per Article 239 of the Egyptian Constitution, the House of Representatives was issued a five-year timeline from the ratification of the constitution on January 18, 2014, to approve a law dictating regulations for judges and other judicial entities regarding their work with non-judicial bodies. The House **failed** to adhere to this mandate, as the last record of any comparable draft law appeared in December 2018 when the cabinet **received** their draft law following judicial review of the bill.

Election Results Finalized for Three Available House Seats:

All three special parliamentary elections for the available House seats in Tamiya, Zefta, and Arish, originally held in December 2018, resulted in a runoff vote held January 16–17 domestically and January 13–14 for Egyptians abroad. Amin Gawda, an independent candidate, was **declared** victorious in the Arish election by a margin of less than 300 votes with fewer than 16 percent of the eligible electorate participating. Meanwhile Yehia al-Gahash, also independent, **secured** victory in the vote in Zefta by over 900 votes against his opponent with 15.3 percent of eligible voters participating. Finally, Muhammad Abdel Tawab of the Nation’s Future Party **won** the special parliamentary vote in Tamiya by a 16,000 vote margin with 25 percent of eligible voters participating in the election. All three newly elected representatives were **inaugurated** as parliamentarians during plenary session by Abdel ‘Al on January 27.

Death of Representative Leads to Another Special Parliamentary Election:

Abdel 'Al **announced** a vacancy in the House for the Ashmoun seat following the death of Representative Mahmoud al-Khamees on January 13, 2019. National Elections Authority (NEA) Spokesman Lashin Ibrahim subsequently **announced** on January 21 that elections for the available seat will occur March 1–2 for Egyptian expatriates and March 10–11 for domestic residents. The NEA later **revealed** the period for candidates interested in campaigning for the position, which opened January 27 and will close February 5.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

The House **voted** to renew the State of Emergency for three months on January 13. Sisi later **rati-fied** the renewal, which appeared in the official gazette on January 10 set to renew on January 15. This is the eighth instance of the State of Emergency being issued since April 2017.

The House **approved** an executive decree to join the International Solar Energy Alliance on January 27. The alliance is an international organization that **seeks** to improve collaboration among countries to promote solar energy usage.

The House **approved** the Egyptian Black Sands Company Agreement Law on January 27; the agreement authorizes the Ministry of Electricity to contract with the Egyptian Black Sands Company to mine for black sand resources.

The House **approved** an agreement between the Egyptian General Petroleum Company and Dia Suez on January 27 to search for oil in the Suez Gulf.

The House **agreed** in principle to the draft Reconciling Building Violations Law on January 27. The law designates new restrictions for construction on land marked for agricultural purposes, while imposing a fine of 10,000 Egyptian pounds and up to five years' imprisonment for violating registration requirements under the law.

The House **agreed** in principle to the government's National Council for Disabled Individuals Law on December 22, 2018, and postponed a final vote due to a lack of quorum. The legislature later **approved** the law in its entirety on January 13. The law establishes a council under the government's authority to promote the interests of disabled individuals. The council may take up any issue pertaining to disabilities either on its own accord or based on the government's request.

The House **approved** an executive decree to sign the 2004 Arab Charter on Human Rights on January 15. The **charter** does not expressly forbid torture nor capital punishment for minors.

The House **agreed** in principle to the Internal Navigation Law on January 14. The law establishes an agency to monitor all commercial shipments and passenger transport within Egypt in order to codify the domestic transportation system.

The House **approved** an executive decree for a loan of 50 million Kuwaiti dinars to Egypt from the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development to establish a water station in Bahr al-Baqar. The House voted on the decree on December 24, 2018.

The House **approved** amendments to the Police Social and Health Fund Law on December 23, 2018. The law raises the maximum fee that the Ministry of Interior or other police officials can obtain from fees to 15 Egyptian pounds per document.

The House **approved** amendments to the Weapons and Ammunition Law on December 23, 2018. The amendments intensify the punishment for possessing a "light weapon" (including small firearms) without proper licensing in places where people gather such as places of worship and transportation settings.

The House [approved](#) the Innovators Fund Law on December 23, 2018. The law establishes a fund under the government's jurisdiction to promote research among individuals and universities. The law also imposes a fee of five percent of a university's budget that schools are required to deposit into the fund. Universities are also required to pay an annual fee of two percent of their tuition to the fund.

In Session:

The House's General Secretariat [issued](#) a report on January 2 noting the importance of Parliament's YouTube channel during 2018, as well as the significance of the House's use of WhatsApp as a new source of communication between representatives and constituents.

In News and Statements:

A parliamentary delegation, led by African Affairs Committee Chairman Tariq Radwan and accompanied by fellow committee members Maged Abul Kheir and Hatem Bashat, [traveled](#) to Ethiopia January 29 to meet with the Speaker of Ethiopia's House of People's Representatives, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Ethiopian House, and local university officials; Radwan did not disclose the agenda of their meetings.

A parliamentary delegation traveled to Kuwait January 19–24, led by Abdel 'Al. The delegation [met](#) with Kuwaiti Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali al-Ghanim, during which time Ghanim and Abdel 'Al spoke about historical relations between the two countries while Abdel 'Al also promoted economic opportunities and investments in Egypt. During a separate meeting with Kuwaiti Prime Minister Gabor al-Mubarak al-Sabah, Abdel 'Al [emphasized](#) Egypt's commitment to Gulf security and combating terrorism.

Secretary-General of the House Ahmed Saad al-Din [hosted](#) Chinese Ambassador to Egypt Song Aiguo on January 9. The two officials discussed bilateral relations between their respective countries as well as organizational matters pertaining to Abdel 'Al's upcoming trip to China at an undisclosed date.

Abdel 'Al [hosted](#) four separate ambassadors on January 2, including British Ambassador to Egypt Geoffrey Adams, Canadian Ambassador to Egypt Jess Dutton, Australian Ambassador to Egypt Neil Hawkins, and Uzbek Ambassador to Egypt Oybek Usmanov. The meetings revolved around a common theme of improving bilateral relations especially in terms of inter-parliamentary dynamics.

Abdel 'Al [hosted](#) Speaker of the Saudi Shura Council Abdullah bin Muhammad Aal al-Sheikh on December 25, 2018 to discuss issues of mutual concern and bilateral relations.

Moussa Mustafa Moussa [formed](#) a political bloc on December 22, the Alliance of Egyptian Parties, which consists of 60 of the 104 recognized political parties. Moussa stated that the party seeks to obtain seats in upcoming national and local elections. Moussa also reaffirmed the bloc's commitment to supporting the Egyptian government through the alliance's initiatives.

Looking Ahead

- During the week of January 27, the 25 standing committees of the House of Representatives are expected to meet individually.



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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.