



EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF JANUARY 30–FEBRUARY 5, 2019

Summary

- Representatives from the Coalition in Support of Egypt officially proposed amendments to the constitution, which include extending presidential term limits to two six-year terms. The amendments would also reduce the size of Egypt's House of Representatives and establish an upper house of parliament, expand military authority, and raise quotas for women in parliament, among other changes. Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al referred the proposals to the General Committee of the House to debate on February 3, and the committee subsequently approved the amendments on February 5.
- The cabinet concluded its community dialogue sessions with civil society organizations concerning proposed changes to the NGO Law. NGO Union Chairman Talaat Abdel Qawi stated that over 1,300 civil society representatives engaged in the discussions (though it is unclear which organizations those individuals represented), and he expects the amendments to be ratified by the end of March.

Notable Developments

Representatives Submit Amendments to Egyptian Constitution:

Five representatives in the Coalition in Support of Egypt acquired the necessary signatures of one-fifth of all representatives to submit amendments to the constitution to Abdel 'Al, beginning the amendment process.¹ The proposed amendments, which were initially published by the newspaper *al-Shorouk* but were subsequently removed from its website, and which Representative Haytham al-Hariri [posted](#) on his Facebook page, extend presidential term limits to two six-year terms, designate the military as responsible for defending the constitution, and grant the president authority to appoint heads of judicial entities. The proposal would permit President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi to seek reelection following his current term, allowing him to potentially remain in office until 2034. The proposal would [reduce](#) the number of representatives in the House from 596 to 450, while establishing an upper house that would not possess the authority to hold the cabinet accountable. The measures also include additional representation for minority groups and establish a 25 percent quota for women in the parliament.

Abdel 'Al [referred](#) the proposal to the General Committee of the House to review on February 3, and the committee [completed](#) its assessment of the amendments and approved an internal report on the changes two days later.² Abdel 'Al subsequently [announced](#) that he postponed sending the amendments to the Constitutional Affairs Committee, one of the steps in the amendment process, to allow all representatives to review the proposal. Parliamentary reaction to the amendments has been limited but positive, as Coalition in Support of Egypt Chairman Abdel Hadi al-Qasbi [asserted](#) that these initiatives would strengthen the 2014 constitution, while the National Movement Party [announced](#) its support for the amendments.

Cabinet Members Complete Outreach Sessions Regarding Changes to the NGO Law:

The Ministry of Social Solidarity [concluded](#) its dialogue sessions with civil society groups discussing amendments to the Law Governing the Work of Associations and Other Foundations Working in the Field of Civil Work (commonly known as the NGO Law) on January 29. Talaat Abdel Qawi, the chairman of the General Union of NGOs, [stated](#) that the public engagement sessions to discuss amendments to the NGO Law included over 1,300 civil society representatives, though no further information was provided to the public about which organizations or individuals participated in the discussions. According to Abdel Qawi some consensus agreements during the forums included eliminating Article 13 (which prevents NGOs from participating in political activities), overhauling penalties for civil society workers who assist unregistered NGOs, and allowing NGOs to receive foreign funding with fewer restrictions. Abdel Qawi also [expects](#) the amendments to the NGO Law to be passed by the House and ratified by Sisi by the end of March.

Parliamentary Officials Host German Bundestag Representatives:

Officials from the German Bundestag, as well as German officials from prominent commercial entities such as the [German Chamber of Commerce](#) and [Siemens Technology](#), met with multiple parliamentary officials during a recent visit to Egypt. Energy Committee Chairman Talaat al-

¹For more information on amending the constitution, please consult TIMEP's [infographic](#) on the process.

²The General Committee is a special committee of the House consisting of the Speaker of the House, the two deputy speakers, all 25 chairmen of the House's standing committees, representatives from political parties with at least 10 seats in the legislature, and five representatives chosen by the Speaker of the House.

Suweidi **hosted** the delegation Monday to discuss recent energy and economic developments in Egypt. Meanwhile, the Egyptian-German Parliamentary Friendship Association **convened** Tuesday to discuss parliamentary cooperation and joint economic development, especially for Egypt's youth.

African Affairs Committee Delegation Visits Ethiopia:

A parliamentary delegation visiting Ethiopia **met** with their counterparts in the Ethiopian House of People's Representatives. African Affairs Committee Chairman Tariq Radwan delivered an invitation from Abdel 'Al for the Speaker of the Ethiopian House, Tadesse Chafo, to visit Egypt in the near future. The group also spoke about political cooperation and trade relationships. The parliamentary delegation later **met** with African Union Secretary-General Kuwasi Kuwarti; the two parties discussed Egypt's future role assuming the presidency of the African Union.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

The House **approved** the amendments to the Anti-Monopoly and Supply Affairs Law on February 5 previously agreed upon in principle on December 10. The amendments **impose** a fine ranging from 100,000 to 1 million Egyptian pounds to companies that distort sales numbers, supply quantities, and prices specifically for petroleum products and food distribution products.

The House **approved** the amendments to the University Law on February 5 which had previously been agreed upon in principle on February 3. Some components of the law had been declared unconstitutional, specifically in reference to limits on faculty members' administrative leave and the ability of professors to hold positions at two separate institutions simultaneously.

The House **approved** amendments to the Education Law on February 5, which it had previously agreed upon in principle on November 12. The amendments **require** educators to possess Egyptian nationality or originate from a country with similar educational standards, to possess a bachelor's degree from either an Egyptian university or an international university with similar accreditation standards, and to abide by professional development standards.

The House **approved** amendments to the Income Tax Law on February 5, which it had previously agreed upon in principle on February 3. The amendments **include** new regulations on bonds, aimed at reducing the budget deficit.

The House **approved** the Internal Land Navigation Law on February 5 after previously agreeing upon the bill in principle 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** the government's amendments to the Agricultural Land Maintenance Law on February 4, which adds field irrigation as a type of land maintenance development promoted under the preexisting law.

The House **agreed** in principle to amendments to the Development Authority of Southern Egypt Law on February 4. The amendment proposes adding an official from the Ministry of Interior as a fixed position to the authority's board of directors.

The House **approved** an executive decree regarding the customs tariff on February 3, which reduces the tariffs imposed on products such as electric vehicles, personal care items, office supplies, and electronic devices.

The House **approved** a presidential decree on January 29 for a \$1 billion loan between Egypt and the World Bank for private sector development initiatives.

The House **approved** the Maritime Transport Agreement between Egypt and Tunisia on February 4.

The Constitutional Affairs Committee **approved** amendments to the Traffic Law on February 5 which require a tracking device be placed on all four-wheel drive vehicles, while also requiring individuals who rent bikes or cars to notify the police of this rental agreement within 12 hours of the exchange.

In Session:

The Agriculture Committee **submitted** a memorandum to Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouli because of the continued absence of Agriculture Minister Ezz al-Din Abu Satit despite multiple requests to attend committee meetings.

Abdel 'Al **called** upon the Constitutional Affairs Committee to complete its report on rescinding membership based on a recent judicial investigation, though he did not disclose the representative in question.

The African Affairs Committee **convened** February 4 to discuss its internal report of the parliamentary delegation's visit to Ethiopia.

A budget subcommittee tasked with overseeing the implementation of the budget for the 2018–19 fiscal year **called** upon government ministries to report on their financial progress in implementing Egypt's 2030 development strategy.

In News and Statements:

African Affairs Committee Chairman Tariq Radwan **stated** that Egypt developed a plan for when it assumes the presidency of the African Union on February 10. The plan seeks to combine issues of mutual concern between African and Arab nations.

The National Elections Authority **announced** that it had received 18 candidacy applications for the available seat in Ashmoun. Appeal hearings regarding each candidate's legal recognition to participate in the election will occur over the next week, and a finalized list of candidates is expected to be announced February 12.

Representative Muhammad al-Ghoul of the Human Rights Committee **intends** to file a formal complaint against Human Rights Watch through the public prosecution on allegations that the organization promotes terrorism. This follows a 2017 report by the organization describing the use of torture against defendants as part of the investigation in a terrorism-related case.

African Affairs Committee Chairman Tariq Radwan **called** for the creation of a Ministry of African Affairs in order to address developments in Africa more appropriately.

The Wafd Party formally **invited** Sisi to attend its centennial celebration in March.

During his meeting with British Ambassador Geoffrey Adams, Wafd Party Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa **spoke** about the history of the party and the role that the organization currently plays in Egyptian politics.

Looking Ahead

- Per the parliamentary bylaws, Abdel 'Al must grant representatives a minimum of seven days to review the proposed amendments to the constitution before holding a discussion before the entire House. According to this schedule, the debate on the amendments cannot begin before February 12. The House is expected to [reconvene](#) February 17 in general session to discuss the amendments.



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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.