



# EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH



## WEEK IN BRIEF MARCH 21–26, 2019

### Summary

- The Constitutional Affairs Committee held its first three of six social dialogue sessions with relevant stakeholders March 20 and 21 to discuss the proposed constitutional amendments. Most of the state-aligned officials in attendance supported the initiatives, though some officials raised concerns over the future independence of the judiciary under the amendments as well as the quota for female representation in future legislatures. In the days following the meetings, Speaker of the House of Representatives Ali Abdel 'Al convened representatives to respond to any concerns about the proposals.
- Following an article from BBC Arabic documenting popular opposition to the Egyptian government and the proposed amendments, officials in the House criticized the media outlet and described it as against the state.
- Following United States President Donald Trump recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, representatives condemned the decision as an affront to Arab sovereignty. Political parties and House officials released separate statements expressing their opposition to the American decision.

## Notable Developments

### Constitutional Amendments Discussions Ongoing in House:

Under Abdel 'Al's leadership, the Constitutional Affairs Committee hosted the first three of six social dialogue sessions March 20 and 21 for the proposed constitutional amendments. The second set of the committee's meetings will occur March 27 and 28 ahead of an anticipated final [vote](#) in the House of Representatives regarding the amendments on April 14. The committee met with religious officials, media members, legal officials, and representatives from national councils over the two-day period; these individuals were [selected](#) to attend the meetings based on their previous support for state initiatives. While most officials at the sessions expressed their support for the proposed amendments, the proposals concerning judicial authority and the legislature were scrutinized by different attendees. Legal experts and judiciary members such as former Constitutional Court President [Farouq Sultan](#) and Egyptian Lawyers Syndicate official [Sameh Ashour](#) questioned future judicial independence under the amendments, prompting Abdel 'Al to [assure](#) attendants of continued judicial independence in their operations and budget. In terms of amendments impacting the House of Representatives, National Women's Council Chairwoman Maya Morsi [called](#) for the female quota in the legislature to be raised to 30 percent from 25 percent as previously written in the proposal. Sultan [criticized](#) the female quota, asserting that the initiative violates constitutionally-protected freedoms against discrimination.

Following the social dialogue sessions in the Constitutional Affairs Committee, Abdel 'Al [hosted](#) representatives from different governorates including Cairo, Port Said, and the Red Sea to respond to their concerns about the amendments. In the meetings, Abdel 'Al [reassured](#) representatives of future judicial independence through the proposal, while also [emphasizing](#) the necessity of these amendments and asserting that Egypt continues to be in a transitional state and the amendments will assist the state in its development.

### BBC Faces Parliamentary Backlash Over Recent Story:

BBC Arabic published a [story](#) March 22 documenting international opposition among citizens to President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi and the proposed constitutional amendments, prompting outrage in the House of Representatives. Members of the House of Representatives, notably Representative [Muhammad Maher Hamed](#) of the Human Rights Committee, asserted that the BBC has become a media platform intent on operating against the Egyptian state and its institutions. Similarly, the Egyptian Parties Alliance, a bloc of pro-government political parties formed by Moussa Mustafa Moussa in December 2018, [announced](#) their intention to file a complaint to the prosecutor-general's office against the BBC to cancel the media outlet's operating license in Egypt in light of "offenses against the Egyptian people." The BBC faced similar backlash last year when the media outlet published a story describing forced disappearances in Egypt, though attempts to revoke the organization's operating status in Egypt were unsuccessful.

### House Officials Condemn Golan Heights Announcement:

United States President Donald Trump signed a proclamation March 26 following a tweet the previous weekend recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. Officials in the House of Representatives criticized Trump and Israel, calling the decision an assault on Arab sovereignty. The House later [released](#) an official statement condemning the decision as a violation of "all international charters and resolutions." The [Wafd](#) and [Conference](#) Parties

separately rejected Trump's announcement, while Free Egyptians Party Chairman Ayman Abul Alaa [stated](#) that he will cancel an event the party had organized to commemorate Egyptian and Israeli peace.

## Other Developments

### In Legislation:

The House [approved](#) the Budget Committee's report for the final account of the 2017-18 fiscal year state budget, and Abdel 'Al subsequently referred the report to the government for an additional review.

The House [approved](#) a draft law linking the budget for the National Military Production Commission to the state budget.

The Constitutional Affairs Committee [approved](#) the government's amendments to the Counter-terrorism Law. The amendments would [require](#) property owners to register rental agreements with their local police station within a specific time frame or face imprisonment and fines.

The Constitutional Affairs Committee [approved](#) a government draft law that would require hotels to provide a list of every individual who stayed at the hotel in the previous month to the Ministry of Tourism or face fines and imprisonment.

### In Session:

Electricity Minister Muhammad Shaker [appeared](#) before the Energy Committee to discuss agreements for electricity production between Egypt and Jordan.

During a meeting of the Youth and Sports Committee, Youth and Sports Minister Ashraf Sobhy [praised](#) the government's strategies for managing different crises that arise.

Representatives from the Manufacturing Committee [participated](#) in a delegation visit to the Suez Canal to inspect recent economic developments in the region.

### In News and Statements:

The African Affairs Committee [hosted](#) the Tanzanian ambassador to Egypt, Aissa Soleiman Nassour, to discuss bilateral issues.

The African Affairs Committee [met with](#) the Ethiopian ambassador to Egypt, Dina al-Mufti, to discuss issues of mutual concern. Mufti [spoke](#) about improved cooperation between the two countries, especially in terms of "thorny issues."

Nation's Future Party Vice President Alaa Abed [praised](#) the third annual trilateral summit between Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan. Abed described it as "historical" and "successful" as part of regional cooperation in light of issues in Palestine, Syria, and Libya among others.

Representative Saad al-Gamal of the Arab Affairs Committee [expressed](#) his desire to invite Syria to rejoin the Arab League.

## Looking Ahead

- The House will **reconvene** in plenary session on April 14. This is the last date in which the Constitutional Affairs Committee is permitted to review the proposed amendments per Article 136 of the parliamentary bylaws, and the House is **expected** to conduct a final vote for the amendments on the same day.
- The Tourism Committee will **conduct** a field visit to Taba and Nuweiba March 27–30 to inspect recent developments in the area.



The Tahrir Institute  
for Middle East Policy

1140 Connecticut Ave NW Suite 505  
Washington, DC 20036  
office 202 969 3343  
fax 202 480 2178  
timep.org

## 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.