The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy

EGYPT

LEGAL & POLITICAL

EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH

WEEK IN BRIEF MARCH 27–APRIL 2, 2019

Summary

- The Constitutional Affairs Committee within the House of Representatives completed the last half of its social dialogue sessions with pertinent officials regarding the proposed constitutional amendments. While most of the attendees expressed their support for the proposals, some members from the Civil Democratic Movement who participated in the sessions were opposed to the amendments. After the three dialogue sessions, the Constitutional Affairs Committee formed a subcommittee to review all of the feedback for the proposed amendments, and the entire committee is expected to finalize the amendments next week.
- The House is expected to conduct a final vote as an entire body for the proposed constitutional amendments during its next plenary session on April 14.

Notable Developments

Constitutional Affairs Committee Completes Social Dialogue Sessions:

The Constitutional Affairs Committee held the last three of its six social dialogue sessions with relevant parties to discuss the proposed constitutional amendments March 27 and 28. Representatives welcomed prominent economists, officials from political parties, and civil society members during the three separate meetings. As critics of the amendments faced arrests and defamation campaigns based on their opposition to the proposals, officials chosen to participate in the sessions generally endorsed the proposed amendments similar to the first round of dialogue sessions. Notable officials or groups who announced their support for the amendments included Moatasm Ibrahim Rashid of the Free Investors Group, Manufacturers Union Chairman Muhammad al-Suweidi (also the former chairman of the Coalition in Support of Egypt), and Talaat Abdel Qawi of the General Federation for Non-Governmental Organizations. Though most political parties expressed their support for the amendments, members of the Civil Democratic Movement were allowed to participate in the session, where its members rejected the proposed amendments. Notable figures from the movement including Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat of the Reform and Development Party, Farid Zahran of the Egyptian Democratic Party, and Muhammad Sami of the Karama Party objected to the amendments, specifically changes to presidential term limits and judicial authority.

Following the Constitutional Affairs Committee completing its community dialogue sessions, Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa announced the committee formed a subcommittee under Representative Ahmed Helmi al-Sharif's leadership to compile the various proposals and feedback from the sessions, representatives, and other interested parties. According to Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah, the committee received over 4,000 suggestions from citizens and concerned officials pertaining to the amendments. The subcommittee is expected to finalize its review of the proposals in the coming days, and the Constitutional Affairs Committee is expected to complete the drafting process of the amendments next week.

Other Developments

In Legislation:

As the House did not convene in plenary session during the past week, no legislation was approved by the legislature.

In Session:

Members of the Education Committee visited several schools in Aswan to assess the various problems affecting each school and to meet with students to discuss their experiences.

In News and Statements:

Economic Affairs Committee Chairman Ahmed Samir hosted the Danish ambassador to Egypt, Tomas Anker Christensen, to discuss Danish investments in Egypt in manufacturing and energy.

Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al traveled to Burundi where he met with President Pierre Nkurunziza to discuss bilateral relations between the two countries with an emphasis on security issues.

Nation's Future Party President Ashraf Rashad praised Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi's speech at the Arab League summit in Tunisia, stating that his unifying message came at an important time when Arab countries are under attack from external influences.

Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Karim Darwish hosted Cuba's ambassador to Egypt, Tanya Fernandez, to discuss parliamentary relations and mutual endeavors in the fields of health and education.

The Wafd Party rejected an invitation from the American embassy in Egypt to attend an event commemorating the 40th anniversary of Egyptian-Israeli peace. Yasser al-Hudeibi, the Wafd Party's vice-president, stated that the party rejected the invitation after Trump's Golan Heights announcement.

Looking Ahead

- The House is expected to conduct a final vote for the proposed constitutional amendments when it reconvenes in plenary session on April 14.

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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.