



The Tahrir Institute  
for Middle East Policy

# EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH

Session **Four** Report



O C T O B E R 2 0 1 8 . J U L Y 2 0 1 9





The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) is dedicated to influencing policy toward the Middle East and North Africa through rigorous research and targeted advocacy efforts that promote local voices.

TIMEP was founded in 2013 and currently has offices in DC and Brussels, with a network of expert fellows located throughout the world. TIMEP is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit in the District of Columbia.

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# Introduction

When Egypt's current legislature gathered under the dome of the parliament building on January 10, 2016, the country completed the final step in its “democratic road map.” But simply convening as a parliament does not necessarily mean that the body is truly engaging in democratic practice; further analysis is necessary to examine the function of the parliament and the ability of members to uphold their sworn oath to respect rule of law and the interests of the Egyptian people. Thus, the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) launched its Egypt Parliament Watch project to assess the performance of Egypt's unicameral parliament, the House of Representatives, and the quality of the legislation it produces.

The project includes years of data collection and review of political developments in the country, and it builds on TIMEP's Parliamentary Elections and Legislation Tracker projects, which provided comprehensive analysis of the 2015 elections and legislation passed by executive decrees under President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi.

This report serves as the fourth full session report in the ongoing project. Along with the others in the Egypt Parliament Watch series, it provides analysis on the parliament with sections on parliamentary performance and legislation, along with appendices detailing a timeline of the fourth session and the report's methodology.

## Performance Indicators

This section reviews the parliament's performance based on four key indicators, describing relevant developments and providing analysis and areas of concern.

The indicators include:

**Checks and Balances:** Was the parliament able to act as an effective check and balance to the executive, the judiciary, and other state institutions?

**Accountability:** Did members of parliament restrict their activity in accordance with existing statutes and bylaws, and did parliament implement equitable mechanisms to sanction members who did not?

**Public Engagement and Transparency:** Did the parliament make its activities known to the public and seek to engage with its constituencies to ensure effective representation?

**Legislative Capacity:** Was the parliament able to craft sound legislation in compliance with international and constitutional law?

## Legislation Tracker

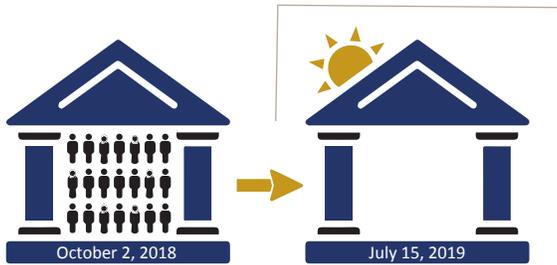
In line with TIMEP's previous legislation tracker project, this section provides an English-language register of laws passed by parliament during the session. Additional detail on prominent laws is available via the TIMEP Law Briefs, a separate output which complements this EPW report.

It is TIMEP's hope that this report and the analysis found herein will be of use to those interested in Egypt's progress toward more democratic representation, which was and has been a key demand since the 2011 revolution. As with all of TIMEP's work, the report is intended to inform policies that will support the role of truly democratic institutions as part of a holistic policy program that holds human rights and rule of law as both inherently valuable and integral to security, stability, and prosperity.

# Executive Summary

Egypt's House of Representatives gathered for the fourth legislative session on October 2, 2018 and adjourned for its summer recess on July 15, 2019. During the nine months that the House convened in session, the legislature reported that it had approved 156 laws and amendments, while TIMEP monitoring accounted for 48 approved laws and amendments during that same period. The fourth

legislative session was notably marked by the introduction and approval of **constitutional amendments** extending presidential term limits, allowing the president to appoint heads of judicial entities, and granting the armed forces the role of constitutional defenders, among other changes; the House dedicated two months to debating the proposed amendments. Aside from the constitutional amendments, the House increased diplomatic efforts particularly on the African continent, supported executive branch policies with little to no opposition, and conducted daily proceedings with little transparency.



Egypt's House of Representatives gathered for the fourth legislative session on October 2, 2018 and adjourned for its summer recess on July 15, 2019

## Performance Indicators

The performance indicators consider developments over the course of the session and analysis in the context of the parliament's stated mandate and international standards for democratic function.

### Checks and Balances

- President Sisi installed a new cabinet in June 2018 following his reelection, and the cabinet pledged to send the House quarterly reports updating the legislature on the progress of its agenda implementation. Despite this pledge, the cabinet sent only one such report in March 2019, thereafter notifying the House that it would subsequently send biannual reports instead. **This change in plans did not generate any significant opposition from the House.**
- Continuing a trend from previous sessions, representatives requested the presence of officials from various ministries but did not make significant efforts to hold these officials accountable in the wake of national incidents. After a train crash at the Ramses Train Station in Cairo in February 2019 killed 25 individuals, for instance, House officials requested the presence of the Minister of Transportation, **though the body did not investigate the minister and dedicated limited time to investigate the incident.**
- According to TIMEP's monitoring, **the House approved 48 laws and amendments during the fourth legislative session, of which only four were introduced by representatives with the remaining 44 originating from the executive branch.** The House issued its own report stating that the legislature had approved 156 laws during the fourth session; due to limited transparency and reporting (see more in later sections), it is unclear what laws,

decrees, and decisions this total entails. Approximately 92 percent of the laws approved in the fourth session were drafted by the executive branch, which is similar to the 89 percent of government-drafted laws that TIMEP tracked in the third legislative session..

- **The House expedited passage of prominent legislation, notably the Law Governing Civil Society Organizations (hereafter referred to as the NGO Law), despite publicly acknowledging not having suitable time to debate the bill.** Similar to previous sessions, representatives prioritized legislation introduced by the executive branch, indicating the House's continued operation as a rubber stamp for executive policies.
- In light of international reports critical of government policies, including a number from local and international civil society groups documenting rights abuses and violations of power, **representatives did not appropriately address these claims, though they did defend the executive branch and supported its policies;** rights groups, members of civil society, and international officials were labeled as terrorists or described as politically-motivated after such reports or statements were issued. Similarly during the constitutional amendment period, **some representatives faced smear campaigns by their colleagues and mainstream domestic media for their criticism of the amendments and opposing viewpoints.**
- The House's role as international emissary increased in the fourth legislative session, especially after President Sisi was named chairman of the African Union. Upon Sisi assuming his new role, **the House made a concerted effort to advance diplomatic relations with other African countries by promoting Sisi's policies abroad rather than strengthening inter-parliamentary relations,** with the African Affairs Committee undertaking the majority of the meetings and delegation visits. Also during this session, the Italian Chamber of Deputies notably severed ties with Egypt's House of Representatives in light of perceived inaction into the investigation of Italian student Giulio Regeni's 2016 murder.

### Accountability

- **Though the Ethics Committee was not utilized during the fourth session, the few cases in which hearings were requested occurred due to political infighting, rather than procedural violations of House regulations.** Outstanding cases before the Ethics Committee from the third session were not addressed either.
- The House discussed 22 requests from the Prosecutor-General to lift parliamentary immunity separate from the Ethics Committee, and some of these investigations resulted in parliamentary immunity being lifted. **Political differences did not appear to impact representatives' decision to lift the immunity of their colleagues.**
- Similar to previous legislative sessions, the House struggled to attain quorum when it convened in plenary sessions.

“ **Though the Ethics Committee was not utilized during the fourth session, the few cases in which hearings were requested occurred due to political infighting.** ”

While Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al threatened to refer representatives to the Ethics Committee for repeated absences, he never acted upon these threats. Parliamentary officials attributed repeated lack of quorum to the absence of local councils, claiming that they had to dedicate additional time and

resources to local concerns. Local councils have been disbanded since 2011, and the House has yet to introduce a law governing electoral procedures for them.

- When drafting legislation, the House adhered to requirements mandated in both the constitution and parliamentary bylaws. Yet the House again failed to issue a law governing transitional justice despite a constitutional provision mandating the passage of such a law in the first session of parliament.

### Public Engagement and Transparency

- Media access to parliamentary activities continued to be limited; *al-Youm al-Sabaa*, a media company owned by the General Intelligence Service through their ownership in the Eagle Capital holding company, continued to receive priority reporting access and preferential treatment for developments in the House, though *al-Youm al-Sabaa* increasingly refrained from publicizing information about legislation approved in the House.
- The House’s daily proceedings remained opaque, as representatives failed to create a public list of legislation approved by the House, nor did they reveal pertinent information

about legislation during the drafting process. The House issued a report asserting that it approved 156 laws during the fourth session, though the report did

““ **Representatives failed to create a public list of legislation approved by the House.** ””

not provide a comprehensive list of them. Similarly, voting procedures continued to be conducted via standing vote rather than roll call.

- Similar to the presidential election period of 2018,<sup>1</sup> representatives and political parties hosted hundreds of community dialogues and promotional events to encourage citizens to vote in favor of the constitutional amendments. None of these numerous of events were open forums in which citizens could freely express concerns or question the proposed amendments.
- Similarly, the House consulted experts during the drafting process for legislation but critical perspectives were excluded and any dialogue sessions mainly included experts and civil society workers sympathetic to the government’s or House’s agenda.
- Despite the House keeping its legislative endeavors private, the legislature started a YouTube channel and released videos on a near-monthly basis documenting the House’s achievements and Abdel ‘Al’s activities over the course of that particular month.

### Legislative Capacity

- During the fourth legislative session, the House demonstrated a similarly weak legislative capacity to previous sessions, as only four of the 48 laws approved by the House during the fourth session were introduced by representatives.
- Legislation approved by the government ignored constitutional and international legal standards, as laws such as the new NGO Law and Public Shops Law infringe on rights guaranteed by both the Egyptian constitution and Egypt’s international legal obligations.
- The constitutional amendments passed during this session are expected to notably alter the future of the House’s legislative capacity, as they create a second house of Parliament with a significant number of appointed members.

<sup>1</sup> For more information on how the presidential election impacted parliamentary activities in 2018, please consult the Public Engagement and Transparency section in TIMEP’s Egypt Parliament Watch Session III report.

# Checks and Balances

## Unsuccessful Attempts to Check Authority of Cabinet Officials

During the third legislative session,<sup>2</sup> the House demonstrated a growing initiative and desire to hold state bodies accountable, a trend that regressed during the fourth legislative session. In June 2018, after President Sisi appointed a new cabinet, representatives **emphasized** their desire to receive frequent updates on the implementation of the new cabinet's agenda over the next four years of his presidency. The cabinet pledged to send the House quarterly updates, but the cabinet **failed** to send any such update until March 2019. Thereafter, the cabinet notified the House that subsequent reports on the agenda would be biannual, rather than quarterly as agreed upon. While some representatives **objected** to the cabinet delaying issuance of the report and changing the requested schedule, parliamentary leadership failed to acknowledge this new development and allowed the government to ignore its commitments without consequences.

In order to hold different state bodies accountable, the House continued to request the presence of government officials to discuss relevant developments to specific committees and in plenary session. Yet officials from state bodies, especially those at the cabinet level, often **ignored** such requests or **sent** lower level officials to attend parliamentary meetings. As in previous sessions, representatives publicly criticized state officials for failing to acknowledge their requests, but they failed to pursue additional actions or inflict consequences against the officials for failing to attend. Continuing a trend from previous sessions, the Ministers of Defense and Interior were never called to appear before the legislature during the fourth legislative session, though less prominent officials from the

“**Representatives did not reprimand government officials for missing plenary sessions.**”

Ministry of Interior **attended** a parliamentary hearing for undisclosed purposes. Notably, a group of representatives **visited** Defense Minister Muhammad Zaki in October 2018 without requesting his presence in the House; the nature of the representatives' meeting was not publicized.

At times when the House demonstrated increased proclivity to hold state bodies accountable, this desire was often short lived. In February 2019, a train **crashed** at the Ramses Train Station in Cairo, killing 25 individuals. The tragedy sparked outrage nationwide, and then-Minister of Transportation Hesham Arafat **resigned** nearly immediately after the incident. Representatives in the House's Transportation Committee subsequently **met** with officials working at the train station and officials from the Ministry of Transportation. While the House demonstrated an immediate interest in investigating the incident and the national railway system as a whole, this fervor wore off in mere weeks after the immediate outrage of the tragic event subsided. Despite the railway system's checkered past pertaining to accidents and national tragedies indicating cause for further action, representatives largely ignored the railway system for the remainder of the legislative session, though the House has already **discussed** legislation in the fifth session to amend construction and operation procedures for the national railway system.

## Fact-Finding Committees Never Utilized During the Fourth Session

In previous legislative sessions, the House employed fact-finding committees to investigate specific incidents or concerns that are often associated with state bodies. Previous examples of fact-finding committees from past sessions include ones **investigating** financial anomalies within ministries or

<sup>2</sup> For more information on previous parliamentary sessions, please consult TIMEP's [Egypt Parliament Watch Session III report](#).

investigating crashes at train stations. Yet the House did not organize a single fact-finding committee during the nine months it convened in the fourth session. TIMEP's monitoring accounted for at least five requests from representatives to form such entities, yet none of the five were acknowledged by parliamentary leadership.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, all of these requests were submitted within the first two weeks of the fourth legislative session.

### House Defends Government Despite Critical Reporting of Abuses

“ Yet the House did not organize a single fact-finding committee during the nine months it convened in the fourth session. ”

As in previous legislative sessions, the House attacked organizations and governments that issued critical reports and statements of Egyptian government policies. For example, Human Rights Watch issued a report in May 2019 detailing security sec-

tor-backed human rights abuses in North Sinai, which had been previously documented in reports by other organizations yet ignored by the House. The report by Human Rights Watch was rejected by parliamentary leadership and its members, who made various statements accusing Human Rights Watch of issuing a politically-motivated report in order to undermine Egypt's war on terror. While the Human Rights Watch report received the most considerable parliamentary backlash during the fourth session, other institutions and individuals were subject to parliamentary attacks for their documentation of rights abuses in the country. The European Parliament, the United States State Department, and United Nations Special Housing Rapporteur Leilani Farha all issued separate statements or reports critical of Egypt's human rights record. In all cases, representatives dismissed the critical comments and defended state policies.

### International Engagement Echoes Executive Branch's Agenda

The House's international diplomatic presence spiked following President Sisi assuming the chairmanship position of the African Union in February 2019. Though this position rotates annually between member states, the chairman provides direction for the body for the calendar year, which Sisi has used to focus on counter-terrorism and improving diplomatic ties with other African countries. The House notably expanded its regional outreach after Sisi assumed the chairmanship position, as the African Affairs Committee and Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al increased the number of delegation visits in Africa, as well as the number of regional officials that they hosted. However, representatives utilized these meetings to promote Sisi's policies rather than strengthening institutional ties. At the conclusion of the fourth legislative session, the African Affairs Committee published a report documenting 12 visits that the committee took to other countries, 27 meetings with ambassadors, and 16 meetings in which they hosted officials from other countries.

In November 2018, Italian authorities announced their intention to indict up to seven members of Egypt's security personnel for their roles in the killing of Giulio Regeni. Regeni, an Italian graduate student researching economic developments in Egypt, was forcibly disappeared in 2016 and his body was subsequently discovered with signs of torture. The Italian authorities accused the seven Egyptian officials of torturing and killing him. In light of perceived delays by Egyptian authorities in the investigation, the Italian Chamber of Deputies announced a temporary cessation of diplomatic ties with Egypt's House of Representatives in November 2018 until a "real turning point" had been achieved by Egyptian authorities in their investigation. The House later released a statement

<sup>3</sup> The five requests TIMEP accounted for focused on agricultural imports, national addiction centers, air pollution, dialysis treatment in public hospitals, and stalled infrastructure projects.

expressing their surprise at the Italian Chamber's decision based on the historical relations between the two legislatures, adding that the cessation was a rushed move by the Italians. As of the time of this report's publication, diplomatic ties between the two legislatures remained severed.

Unique to this parliamentary session was the revolutionary fervor in the region, particularly in neighboring Sudan and to the west in Algeria. After 30 years of authoritarian rule, former President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan was deposed following months of peaceful civilian protests calling for his ouster. Parliamentary comments on the Sudanese revolution notably mirrored statements from prominent officials in the Egyptian government, emphasizing **stability** and **security** for the country rather than prioritizing democratization efforts to encourage civilian rule. Meanwhile, parliamentary officials, like most government officials, failed to acknowledge the violent crackdown Sudan's transitional military rulers were using against civilian protesters.

### House's Legislative Endeavors Demonstrate Proclivity for Government's Policies

According to TIMEP monitoring, 44 of the 48 laws approved by the House during the fourth session were introduced by the cabinet, accounting for 92 percent of all laws approved during this period. The House issued its own report noting that it had approved 156 laws during the fourth session, though the report did not include a comprehensive list of them (please consult the Public Engagement and Transparency section for more background information). When draft laws pertaining to the same subject were separately submitted by both a representative and the cabinet, the House opted to continue debating the government-drafted bill, such as the amendments to the **Education Law** or the amendments to the **Trade Unions Law**, which represents a continuing trend from prior

sessions. Similarly, the House continued to approve the extension of the state of emergency issued by President Sisi. While a state of emergency can last a maximum of three months and be renewed only once, the president worked around this requirement by leaving days in between every other state of emergency so as for it to be considered a technically "new" state of emergency. The House approved the president's request to continue the state of emergency every time it expired, even once **approving** the extension proactively in July 2019 since the decree was not set to expire until after the House had adjourned for summer recess.



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When discussing legislation, representatives rushed prominent bills through the process, especially those introduced by the cabinet. The 2019 NGO Law was arguably the most prominent example during the fourth session of this expediting process. It replaced the 2017 NGO Law after President Sisi requested the cabinet study possible amendments to the law in November 2018. Despite meeting with civil society groups to discuss amending the law, the cabinet ultimately **decided** to draft a new law. Parliament **approved** the 2019 NGO Law barely one week after receiving the bill from the cabinet, although representatives admitted that the amount of time they spent discussing the bill was not suitable given the draft law's significance.

### Amendment Process Leads to Smear Campaign and Legal Cases Against Opposing Representatives and Parties

Egypt's House of Representatives debated the proposed constitutional amendments for nearly two months after they were first introduced by representatives from the Coalition in Support of Egypt bloc in February 2019. During these two months, representatives engaged in public forums both internally and externally with concerned stakeholders (refer to the Public Engagement and Trans-

<sup>2</sup> According to TIMEP research, the House approved 85 bills during the third legislative session. Nine of those bills originated from representatives while the remaining 76 were drafted by the executive branch. For more on methodology, see Appendix B.

parency section for more information on attendees) in order to gather feedback on the proposals. As the House was considering the initiatives, some representatives noted their opposition to the amendments, and they were subject to smear campaigns due to their positions. Representative Haytham al-Hariri, a noted opposition figure in the legislature, **changed** his initial position on the amendments and announced his support for them in mid-February after a phone conversation of him using sexually-explicit language with a woman was leaked, reportedly by members of the House according to an **article** by al-Monitor, and led to public outcry; multiple lawyers filed legal suits requesting his membership in the House be dropped though none of these attempts were successful. Similarly, representative Khaled Youssef was reportedly forced to flee the country after sexually-explicit videos of him leaked, which also coincided with Youssef announcing his rejection of the proposed amendments. Media reports **claim** the videos of Youssef originated in parliamentary WhatsApp groups, though it is unclear how Hariri's phone conversation leaked. Though the reports about Youssef's videos leaking are unsubstantiated, anonymous parliamentary sources **revealed** that the House was attempting to approve the amendments as quickly as possible without any obstacles. The amendments were ultimately approved by the House in April 2019 with 531 representatives **supporting** the proposals, 22 **rejecting**, and 42 abstaining. The amendments were supported by representatives who had demonstrated proclivity to the government's agenda, while those who rejected the amendments hailed from the few political parties more critical of state policies.

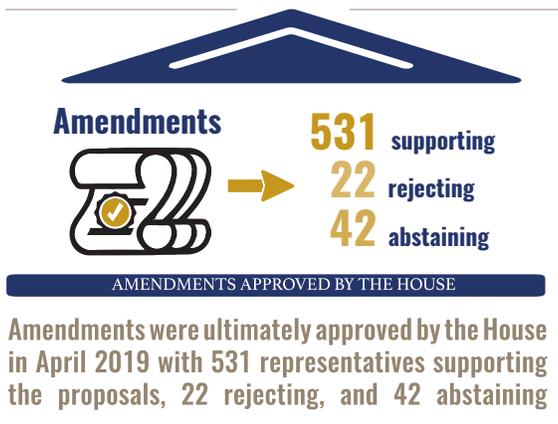
Several political parties, including ones both represented and not represented in parliament, **organized** to create the Union to Defend the Constitution. The collective officially opposed the constitutional amendments and sought to educate Egyptians on their potential implications, encouraging them to vote against the initiatives in the upcoming national referendum. Yet parties associated with the Union, such as the Conservative Party and Dostour Party, faced backlash both within the legislature and outside of it for their advocacy efforts. Several members of the Dostour Party (who hold no seats in the House of Representatives) were **arrested** as the Union was promoting their anti-amendment message. Meanwhile the Conservative Party, holding six seats at the start of the amendment process, faced internal tension as the party officially opposed the amendments but

some of its members publicly supported the proposals. While the Conservative Party ultimately **rejected** the amendments when the House eventually voted on them in April 2019, at least one representative and one party **official** resigned from the organization due to the tension that emerged from the differing opinions.

### Analysis

Similar to previous legislative sessions, the House did not serve as a meaningful check against the executive branch. Despite significant parliamentary interest in the previous session in the new cabinet's agenda and its subsequent implementation, the House was unable to hold the cabinet accountable, losing credibility

when the cabinet ignored its promise to issue quarterly reports and instead submitted one biannual update. After receiving the first update, representatives made no attempt to investigate the cabinet for its ability to uphold its obligations, further undermining the legislature as a check on power. The House further failed to address national tragedies or concerns as they arose periodically: the legislature expressed its initial interest to investigate and seek accountability following events such as the Ramses Train Station crash, yet their investigatory efforts ceased once the national outrage subsided.



<sup>3</sup> For more information on the 2018 presidential election, visit TIMEP's website for its elections project, Pulling Back the Curtain: Dynamics and Implications of Egypt's Elections Period.

The House's international outreach and its legislative endeavors further reflect parliament's inability to appropriately check the executive branch. Rather than investigating credible reports of human rights violations, the House defended the government by supporting the government's policies and rejecting the reports and statements issued critical of the government's policies. Furthermore, the House's increased regional diplomatic presence was utilized as an opportunity to advance the executive branch's agenda rather than the House's own. Though parliamentary bylaws note that the House has an obligation to conduct international delegations to improve diplomatic outreach, these visits were only conducted following Sisi assuming the AU chairmanship position. The parliamentary delegations echoed executive branch policies on these visits, indicating their coalescence with executive policies.

Similarly, the number of government-drafted laws approved during the fourth session in conjunction with the decision to debate government bills as opposed to representative-written bills indicate the House's alignment with executive policies. Despite the questionable measures through which

“ The House did not serve as a meaningful check against the executive branch. ”

Sisi renewed the state of emergency, the House did not meaningfully debate the president's requests for the state of emergency. Additionally, the House expedited discussions of prominent legislation, such as the NGO

Law, despite acknowledging they did not debate the bill for an adequate time period. Representatives' acknowledgement of insufficient debate coupled with their ultimate decision to approve the law in less than two weeks' time further indicates the House's support for executive branch policies.

The constitutional amendment period best exemplified this trend, as representatives were pitted against each other and allegedly directed smear campaigns against their colleagues for expressing opinions that opposed the government and general parliamentary sentiments. These smear campaigns limited the ability of parliament to conduct meaningful debate in session, and state policies were ultimately approved through these tactics. Rather than using the two-month period to engage in meaningful debate about the constitutional amendments, representatives followed the government's direction in advancing the amendments as quickly as possible, resulting in smear campaigns and harassment in order to expedite the amendment process.

## Accountability

### Ethics Committee Not Utilized in Fourth Session

Egypt's House of Representatives created the Ethics Committee in order to settle complaints and other parliamentary infractions, such as failing to attend plenary session. At the beginning of the fourth session, two representatives, [Haytham al-Hariri](#) and [Sahar al-Hawiri](#), faced outstanding cases before the committee from the previous legislative session.<sup>4</sup> Yet the Ethics Committee did not address either representative's investigation during the fourth session. Based on TIMEP's monitoring of news, government, and social media, the Ethics Committee did not convene at all during the session. At times, Abdel 'Al [threatened](#) to refer representatives to the committee for failing to attend multiple plenary sessions, but there is no indication he formally referred parliamentarians for investigation. After the legislature adjourned for its summer recess in July, Representative Karim Salem [submitted](#) a request to Abdel 'Al to refer Wafd Party Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa, also the Chairman of the Constitutional Affairs Committee, to the Ethics Committee. Salem accused Abu Shoqa and the Wafd Party of defamation after the party's media wing [published](#) an article about

Salem accusing him of misrepresenting his constituents and failing to appropriately perform his position as a representative. As of the publication of this report, Abdel 'Al has yet to acknowledge the request and it is unclear if he or the Ethics Committee will address the situation during the fifth parliamentary session.

### House Discusses Requests to Raise Parliamentary Immunity

Compared to previous sessions, the House debated additional requests to raise parliamentary immunity stemming from outstanding legal cases. Per Article 113 of the Egyptian constitution, representatives are granted parliamentary immunity in felony and misdemeanor cases, which can only be waived if the legislature votes to lift immunity. During the fourth session, the House **reported** that it debated 22 different requests to lift parliamentary immunity, and TIMEP internal monitoring tracked one case in which the legislature lifted the immunity of one of its members. The House **approved** the Prosecutor-General's request to lift the immunity of Representative Salah Aissa after he accepted bribes of over 2 million Egyptian pounds for illegal building permits; Aissa is being charged in Case 520 (2019). His immunity was lifted days before the House adjourned for summer recess in July 2019, though Aissa is listed as an active member of the House on parliament's website for the fifth legislative session.

### House Legislative Processes Generally Adhere to Constitution in Practice

While drafting bills, representatives adhered to the minimum signatory requirement of 60 members to officially submit legislation for debate. Once again, the House did not debate a law governing transitional justice, despite Article 241 of the Egyptian constitution which requires that the House issue this law in its first parliamentary session following the drafting of the Constitution. While representatives briefly **discussed** a possible draft law governing transitional justice in light of the constitutional amendments, no such law was submitted after the amendments were ratified and the constitutional amendments did not address transitional justice. While the House again did not approve a law governing transitional justice, the House passed two separate ones governing the organization of judicial entities, required to be passed by the House within five years of the issuing of the constitution per Article 239 (for more background on these two laws, please consult the Legislative Capacity section).

### House Violates Parliamentary Bylaws Barring Repercussions

Representatives frequently violated parliamentary bylaws without repercussion. Failure to achieve quorum continued to be an issue in parliament, as representatives did not attend plenary session,

forcing parliamentary leadership to delay voting procedures on bills until a later date when quorum was achieved. As previously noted, Speaker Abdel 'Al did not seek pen-

“**The constitutional amendments did not address transitional justice.**”

alty against representatives for their continued absences despite his repeated **threats** and ability to utilize the Ethics Committee for such cases. Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah **attributed** the frequent absences to the lack of local councils nationwide, requiring representatives to dedicate additional attention to local concerns. Local councils have been disbanded since 2011, and the House has not debated a bill to reintroduce them despite numerous statements from previous representatives that passage of a Local Administration Law would occur.

<sup>4</sup> Party consolidation, a new trend compared to previous sessions, figures to play an important role in the fourth legislative session with the Nation's Future Party, Coalition in Support of Egypt, and the Wafd Party all attempting to position themselves as the chief political organization in the legislature. For additional insight into the consolidation movement, view TIMEP's commentary piece "Egypt's Party Consolidation and the Stifling of Pluralism."

The House adhered to parliamentary requirements for amending the constitution.<sup>5</sup> The proposals, submitted by the Coalition in Support of Egypt Chairman Abdel Hadi al-Qasbi and other coalition members, possessed the minimum number of signatories (one-fifth) to be admitted onto the floor of the House. The amendments were subsequently referred to the General Committee of the House, and its members approved the initiative for debate, leading to an initial vote on the amendments by the entire legislature.<sup>6</sup> The House agreed in principle to the amendments package by a vote of 485-18. The amendments were then referred to the Constitutional Affairs Committee where individual representatives could offer suggestions to the package, and the committee consulted experts on the proposed amendments. The House ultimately complied with its parliamentary bylaws in holding public forums with experts to discuss constitutional amendments per Article 138 of the bylaws.<sup>7</sup> After the consultative period, the Constitutional Affairs Committee finalized the amendments leading to a final vote for the entire legislature in which the House approved the measures by a tally of 531 to 22.

## Analysis

Though the Ethics Committee never convened in the fourth session, the committee continued trends from previous legislative sessions of being invoked for political disputes rather than procedural infractions. Rather than employing the Ethics Committee to address parliamentary transgressions, the House increasingly relied on requests to raise representatives' immunity. Yet this dynamic is particularly troubling, as representatives faced these immunity requests due to felony and misdemeanor charges that they faced. By only addressing parliamentary immunity requests, the House demonstrated that procedural violations can occur without consequence.

As in previous parliamentary sessions, the House technically adhered to constitutional requirements during the legislative process. As previously noted, legislation was expedited through the House despite public objections to approving those laws. While they, notably the NGO Law, adhered to constitutional requirements in the drafting and debate process, the expedited process through which legislation was approved demonstrates a lack of regard for constitutional and institutional procedures. Similarly, the hosting of public forums for the constitutional amendments was in line with parliamentary requirements per the bylaws, but the state bias present among the attendees and the failure to incorporate opposition voices in the forums' discussions signifies another violation of the spirit of the institutional requirements for debate. Representatives frequently ignored

**“ By only addressing parliamentary immunity requests, the House demonstrated that procedural violations can occur without consequence. ”**

or violated parliamentary bylaws by not attending plenary sessions. As previously noted, repeated infringements of parliamentary bylaws have become inconsequential as representatives have only faced repercussions for criminal behavior. The lack of observance of the bylaws has essentially rendered them

non-binding except in situations that benefit the House's political agenda, such as the required

<sup>5</sup> Article 226 states that in all cases, texts pertaining to the principles of freedom and equality stipulated in the constitution may not be amended unless the amendment brings more guarantees.

<sup>6</sup> The 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.

<sup>7</sup> For more background information on the parliamentary forums as part of the constitutional amendment process, please consult the "Public Engagement and Transparency" section of this report.

forums for the constitutional amendments which the House primarily used for positive press in the wake of international criticism of the amendments.<sup>8</sup>

## Public Engagement and Transparency

### Media Access on Parliamentary Activities Further Restricted

Media access on parliamentary activities continued to be limited, in keeping with trends from previous legislative sessions. *Al-Youm al-Sabaa*, owned by General Intelligence Services holding group

“**The lack of observance of the bylaws has essentially rendered them non-binding.**”

Eagle Capital, and its subsidiary outlet Parlmany maintained their primary access to representatives and relevant news within the House, though stories published by these outlets were generally limited in detail. This lack

of access mirrors trends from prior sessions during which *al-Youm al-Sabaa* was granted exclusive access to stories unavailable to other media outlets not associated with the General Intelligence Services. Notably different from previous sessions was that *al-Youm al-Sabaa* reduced the amount of information that it revealed about legislation approved by the House. In prior sessions, *al-Youm al-Sabaa* published the full text of bills approved by the House and provided detailed background information on when a bill had been approved. Yet in this legislative session *al-Youm al-Sabaa* generally refrained from noting when a bill had been approved or providing the full text of a law, instead usually only reporting that a bill would be discussed on a specific day in plenary session by the House. Despite *al-Youm al-Sabaa*'s increased media access, independently-owned media outlets such as *al-Masry al-Youm* and *al-Shorouq* published more information about legislation in the House. The full text of laws always appeared in the Official Gazette once ratified by President Sisi, but the timing of ratification varied from law to law. At the time of the publishing of this report, some legislation approved by the House during the fourth session has yet to be officially ratified by Sisi.

### House Limits Publicized Information on Daily Proceedings

The House made both positive strides and regressed in other aspects regarding transparency around its daily activities. Since convening in 2016 for its first legislative session, House officials have pledged that they would soon begin a livestream of meetings. While the House did not start a livestream during the fourth session, Abdel 'Al and other leaders in the legislature asserted that a livestream will be operational for the start of the fifth legislative session, though Media Committee Chairman Osama Heikal recently expressed doubt that a livestream would occur due to logistical and constitutional concerns; the fifth session opened without the introduction of a livestream. Similarly, the House began a YouTube channel that was updated monthly, documenting delegation visits both in Egypt and to other countries and the activities of prominent officials such as Abdel 'Al. Constituents were also able to message their representatives on WhatsApp and ask any pertinent questions. This service was offered at the beginning of the 2019 calendar year, and parliamentary reports indicated that the House received hundreds of messages each month using this service, though information about specific messages was not released.

<sup>8</sup> For more background on the constitutional amendment public forums, please consult the “Public Engagement and Transparency” section of this report.

During the fourth session, multiple House officials reported that legislation would not be made public. At the start of the legislative session, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Omar Marwan **announced** that the House had created a private database to track all legislation proposed by representatives from the time of submission until passage; this database would be utilized solely by parliamentary officials and would not be publicized. Meanwhile in March 2019, Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah **stated** that parliament would refrain from releasing the text of any draft legislation until after the House consulted relevant experts on the bill in question. Similar to the past legislative session, the House released a **report** documenting its achievements upon completing the session in July, and the report claimed that the House approved 156 laws during the session. However the report did not provide a comprehensive list of the legislation approved by the House during the fourth session to verify the 156 laws. TIMEP's monitoring only accounted for 48 laws approved by the legislature, and the House's dwindling transparency for its legislative endeavors further highlights the difficulty in corroborating this figure.

In addition to limiting the media attention given to legislation, voting procedures continued to remain opaque. Representatives conducted votes via standing count, rather than through roll call. According to TIMEP's monitoring, the one occasion when votes were counted through roll call occurred during the constitutional amendments **process**. However before roll call voting was conducted

in that instance, Abdel 'Al **conducted** an initial standing vote to gauge if the House would meet the required two-thirds majority to approve amendments to the constitution. An official tally of the vote was not released by the

“**The House did not provide a comprehensive list of the legislation that it claimed to have approved.**”

House, and media outlets (primarily *al-Youm al-Sabaa*) **published** the final vote count for the amendments after relevant information was leaked to them.

### The House Consults Relevant Experts on Constitutional Amendments

Per parliamentary bylaws, representatives in the Constitutional Affairs Committee consulted experts and relevant stakeholders in official meetings once the committee received the amendments for internal review. According to Parliamentary Spokesman Salah Hassiballah, the House received over 4,000 suggestions for the amendments from citizens and concerned parties during this two-month consultative period, and the House held six separate sessions to discuss the proposed amendments. These public forums were **chaired** by Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al rather than Constitutional Affairs Committee Chairman Bahaa Abu Shoqa, which is allowed under parliamentary bylaws. The six sessions included **religious officials** and **media institution members**, **legal officials**, **members** of professional syndicates, **economists**, **political party** officials, and **civil society members**. The committee **composed** a list of 720 attendees across the six forums.

While the House bylaws do not specifically note whom the committee must consult with during an amendment process, individuals seemed to be chosen based on their prior support for state policies; few to no opposition voices were present. Some of the chosen individuals included Lawyers Syndicate Chairman Sameh Ashour, Supreme Council for Media Regulations Chairman Makram Muhammad Ahmed, and Manufacturing Union Chairman **Muhammad al-Suweidi** (al-Suweidi is also a current member of the House and the former Chairman of the Coalition in Support of Egypt bloc). While attending officials raised concerns about the proposed amendments relative to their

areas of expertise, such as Ashour **questioning** judicial independence under the proposal, Abdel ‘Al **attempted** to alleviate concerns about the amendments, rather than serve as a neutral moderator of the discussions. Almost all of the attendees ultimately expressed their support for the proposed amendments during their respective forums, while few opposition figures were given an opportunity to attend the sessions and express their views. Magdi Abdel Hamid of the Civil Democratic Movement attended the session relevant for political parties, where he **announced** his opposition

due to the implications for rule of law. Meanwhile, some opposing figures notably did not attend the sessions despite being invited, such as Conservative Party Chairman Akmal Qartam, who **expressed** the party’s official opposition to the amendments.

## “ Participants in the constitutional amendment forums were chosen based on their support for state policies. ”

### Political Parties Engage in Measures to Promote or Campaign against Proposed Amendments

Once the constitutional amendments were formally introduced in the House in early February 2019, representatives engaged in two different types of public forums to discuss the amendments. Representatives and political parties launched promotional events throughout the country after the amendments had been submitted in parliament to educate citizens on the amendments and encourage them to participate in the anticipated national referendum and vote to approve the amendments. The Nation’s Future Party reportedly **organized** at least 300 of these forums. Other political parties such as the Wafd Party **launched** their own promotional campaigns, encouraging citizens to approve the amendments in the anticipated referendum.

While political parties and representatives advocating for the constitutional amendments were allowed to hold such promotional events, political parties and representatives opposed to the proposal were repressed by state authorities. The Conservative Party, along with other political parties that do not hold seats in the legislature, jointly **launched** the Union to Defend the Constitution. As previously noted, some members of the Dostour Party associated with the Union were **arrested** following the group’s formation. Similarly the Civil Democratic Movement, a political movement that originated prior to the 2018 presidential election opposing Sisi, **submitted** a request in March 2019 to hold a demonstration outside of the House’s headquarters to protest against the amendments. The group’s request was **denied**, along with their subsequent **appeal**, and the group was subsequently prevented from expressing their opposition views during the amendment debate process.

### House’s Domestic Efforts Reflected Relevant Committees’ Expertise

In terms of the House’s domestic efforts, representatives and committees traveled to various locations nationwide to address specific concerns within their constituencies. The Human Rights Committee **visited** four separate detention facilities during the nine months parliament convened. Though the committee **visited** locations well-known for human rights abuses such as Tora prison, representatives **spoke** glowingly about detention conditions following each visit.<sup>9</sup> Notably in the fourth session, Egypt hosted the African Cup of Nations in June and July 2019. Leading up to the tournament, representatives from the Youth and Sports Committee visited various arenas and met with participants in the tournament prior to the start of the matches.

## Analysis

The House improved its public engagement and transparency in some aspects, while the legislature regressed in this area due to other developments. Similar to the third legislative session, representatives and political parties were active in engaging with their constituents as part of the constitutional amendments process. Yet this trend is alarming as the House's increased engagement with the public comes as parliament's agenda coalesced behind state policies, in this case the constitutional

**“ Political parties and representatives opposed to the constitutional amendments were repressed by state authorities. ”**

amendments with damaging implications for the future of the country.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the House's public forums with relevant stakeholders were particularly troubling, as attendees were hand-picked to participate in the sessions based on their support for state policies. Though some

of these participants expressed reservations about different components of the amendments, nearly all of the attendees ultimately announced their support for the proposed amendments at the conclusion of their respective hearings. During these sessions, Abdel 'Al defended the constitutional amendments rather than serving as an independent moderator for the debates. While the House's activities during the constitutional amendments process appeared to be transparent, the sessions lacked meaningful discourse and opposition figures were limited in their opportunities to contribute to these discussions.

Similar to the constitutional amendments process, representatives' increased international presence presented an opportunity to support state policies rather than operate as an independent institution. Had President Sisi not assumed the chairmanship position of the African Union, there is no indication that the House would have exerted similar efforts to increase its diplomatic presence on the African continent. Furthermore, domestic public appearances by representatives echoed state narratives despite credible evidence of human rights abuses, such as the case when the Human Rights Committee visited multiple detention centers. Despite the House's mandate to investigate and exercise "oversight authority" per the constitution, the House did not fulfill its investigatory requirements when facing domestic issues, such as the rights abuses in detention facilities.

The fourth legislative session was the least transparent yet. Media access to House activities continued to be limited primarily to state-aligned media outlet *al-Youm al-Sabaa*. Stories issued by *al-Youm al-Sabaa* were intentionally limited in detail, and this trend continued in the fourth session when the website failed to report on legislation approved by the House despite the outlet's prevailing access to parliamentary sources. Furthermore, the House's decision to keep legislative efforts intentionally private is a red flag when assessing the institution's transparency. The House continued to conduct voting procedures via standing vote rather than roll call, which eliminates any possibility to track a representative's individual voting record, further limiting the House's institutional transparency. While the YouTube channel is a step towards greater transparency, the channel was not regularly publicized in the media and information detailed in each video was kept relatively limited.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on detention facilities in Egypt, please consult TIMEP's "Detention Conditions in Egypt" brief.

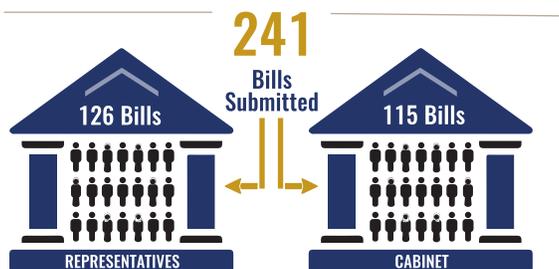
<sup>9</sup> For more context on the constitutional amendments and the implications of the initiatives for the country after their approval, please consult TIMEP's *Coverage Compilation: Analyzing Egypt's Constitutional Amendments, Process and Implications*.

Ultimately the House's public engagement and transparency reached its worst levels since it reconvened in 2016, and there is little indication that this lack of transparency will improve in the future.

## Legislative Capacity

### The House Advances and Expedites Cabinet-Submitted Legislation

TIMEP monitoring accounted for 241 bills submitted to the House by both representatives and the cabinet during the fourth legislative session. This number is notably lower than previous sessions when parliament typically debated at least 100 additional bills, which can be attributed in part to the House discussing the constitutional amendments for two months without devoting much attention to other bills. Of the 241 bills submitted to the legislature, 126 were submitted by representatives while the remaining 115 were submitted by the cabinet; this near-equal breakdown follows similar trends from previous sessions. Also continuing a trend from the previous session, 92 percent (44 bills) of the laws approved by the House were government-drafted, while the remaining 8 percent (four bills) were drafted by members of the House. Of the 48 laws approved by the House, 27 focused on administrative and appointment issues (57 percent), 16 focused on economy and state issues (33 percent), three focused on military and security issues (6 percent), and two focused on social and political rights (4 percent). These percentages closely resemble the breakdown of legislation from the third session, though more legislation concerned with economic issues was approved in the most recent session.



Of the 241 bills submitted to the legislature, 126 were submitted by representatives while the remaining 115 were submitted by the cabinet

Similar to previous legislative sessions, the House expedited controversial bills through the drafting process. The best example of this trend was the 2019 NGO Law, which the House **approved** in its entirety less than two weeks after **receiving** the draft from the cabinet. The cabinet **sent** the draft law to the House for review days before parliament was set to adjourn for its summer recess, which angered many representatives at a shortened break. Speaker of the House Ali Abdel 'Al was notably **critical** of the government for this decision, and Social Solidarity Committee Chairman Abdel Hadi al-Qasbi, whose committee reviewed the bill, admitted that the committee was not given

enough time to appropriately debate it. Despite their criticisms, the bill was ushered through the House in less than two weeks after being submitted as the House adjourned for its summer recess immediately upon approving the law.

### Representatives Legislate Unilaterally without Properly Consulting Experts

In terms of the drafting process, representatives continued to be opaque and generally acted unilaterally when preparing legislation. Laws were usually attributed to one representative, though representatives acquired the necessary 60 signatories in order for a bill to be admissible on the House floor. How much information representatives disclosed about a draft law prior to it being formally submitted ultimately varied. For example, Representative Osama al-Abd spoke at length about his draft law to regulate Dar al-Ifita, a religious institution in Egypt, throughout the fourth session. al-Abd originally submitted this bill during the third legislative session, and the Religious Affairs Committee **approved** the bill in December 2018 though it still awaits a final vote by the entire

legislature. Meanwhile, Representative Muhammad al-Suweidi's amendments to the Gas Markets Law received little attention from him or in the media before being **agreed** upon in principle by the House in February 2019. Legislation approved by the House tended to include broad language, making it difficult for citizens to know how the law would the rights guaranteed to them. For example, the 2019 NGO Law frequently mentions that the purpose of civil society organizations is to promote "societal development," without defining the term or offering examples of what "societal development" entails.

As previously noted, the House consulted multiple experts and relevant stakeholders as part of the constitutional amendment process, though these experts were almost always state-aligned and did not provide substantive feedback. Similar to the amendment process, the House occasionally consulted experts on legislation in question. Yet the experts consulted were usually cabinet officials and members from civil society groups whom the House failed to disclose, but who have in the past worked for pro-state civil society groups. This was the case for the draft Advertising Syndicate Law submitted by Representative Farag Omar, when the Manufacturing Committee consulted officials from the Ministry of Justice and undisclosed non-governmental organizations; the bill was approved by the committee but awaits a final vote by the legislature. In cases of bills drafted by the government, representatives did not consult experts intentionally, notably with the **2019 NGO Law**, asserting this process would be repetitive after the cabinet had already collaborated with relevant officials.

### Constitutional Amendments Further Comprise State Institutions

Continuing a trend from previous sessions, bills approved by the legislature failed to adhere to Egypt's constitutional and international legal obligations. As previously noted, the process for the constitutional amendments ultimately followed constitutional and parliamentary requirements in terms of timeframe and review by the relevant parliamentary entities. Yet the amendments themselves entrenched policies that exacerbate constitutional and international legal violations, while

“**The NGO Law was ushered through the House in less than two weeks after being submitted.**”

further empowering the House to continue to advance additional problematic legislation. The amendments notably designated the military as the "defenders of the constitution," extended presidential term limits that would

allow President Sisi to remain in office until 2030, and called for the creation of an upper legislature, a significant portion of which would be appointed by the president, though there is outstanding **legislation** on the House floor that will be debated in the fifth legislative session that will determine the exact electoral composition of this anticipated upper legislature.

Another notable component of the amendments package allows the president to appoint the heads of various judicial bodies pending legislation. Though these particular amendments were **contested** by judicial experts who argued that the amendments eliminated judicial independence in violation of the constitution, they were ultimately approved by the House and later ratified in the national referendum. Weeks after the referendum, the government submitted three draft laws to the House to update the judicial branch in accordance with the recently-ratified amendments. One draft law **allowed** the president to appoint the heads of the Administrative Prosecution, State Lawsuits

Authority, Military Judicial Authority, Court of Cassation, Prosecutor-General, and State Council; another draft law **granted** the president authority to appoint the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court; and a final draft law **called** for the creation of a supreme judicial entity comprised of various judicial officials from the aforementioned bodies to deliberate judicial appointments and discuss laws impacting the judiciary. This Supreme Judicial Entity draft law also granted the president a seat on the council and ultimate veto authority over any decision made by the council. While this particular draft law **failed** to pass through parliament due to disputes between Abdel 'Al and the Minister of Justice, it is expected to be debated again during the fifth legislative session. The first two draft laws, which allowed the president to appoint the heads of various judicial bodies, were ultimately approved by the House one month after being introduced in the legislature. Collectively, these amendments and the laws that implement them corrode the separation of powers and interfere with judicial independence, violating multiple provisions in the constitution.

### Legislation Violates Constitutional and International Legal Obligations

Continuing a trend from previous sessions, prominent legislation approved by the House in the fourth session did not adhere to Egypt's constitutional or international legal obligations, raising concerns about how these laws would further human rights violations against Egyptian citizens. For example, under the 2019 NGO Law, the work of civil society groups is categorized under a narrow definition of "societal development"; the Ministry of Social Solidarity may temporarily halt the operations of an organization without judicial permission; and the Ministry of Social Solidarity may challenge the appointment of board members for civil society groups.<sup>12</sup> Yet Article 75 of the Egyptian constitution grants citizens the right to form civil society groups free from government interference, including in the appointment of an organization's board members. Similarly, Egypt is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as well as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, both of which grant individuals the right to freedom of association without state interference (Article 22 of the ICCPR and Article 10 of the African Charter).

In a second example, the Public Shops Law approved by the House in July 2019 **requires** restaurants and shops to place surveillance cameras within their business and overlooking adjacent streets. Under the law, state authorities do not possess direct access to the footage but can access the surveillance recordings at any time upon request. The Public Shops Law and its surveillance program directly infringe upon Egyptians' right to privacy outlined in Article 57 of the constitution, as well as Article 17 of the ICCPR.

### Analysis

The fourth legislative session contained similar lack of rigor in terms of legislative capacity to prior parliamentary sessions. The House failed to draft meaningful legislation, instead relying on the cabinet and other state bodies to assume the majority of the legislative work. Similarly, representatives failed to meaningfully debate legislation on the floor of the House. Representatives relied on previous consultative efforts by the cabinet when debating government-drafted bills, and they either consulted government officials or pro-state experts when discussing representative-written bills. The House's failure to seriously consider legislation and consult experts highlights its poor legislative capacity and rubber-stamping tendency of executive policies. Additionally, the constitutional

<sup>11</sup> For more context on the constitutional amendments package and their potential impact on the country, please consult TIMEP's Coverage Compilation: Analyzing Egypt's Constitutional Amendments, Process, and Implications.

<sup>12</sup> For more information on the 2019 NGO Law, please consult TIMEP's Law No. 149 of 2019 (NGO Law) Law Brief.

amendments approved by the House further weaken state institutions and centralize authority in the executive branch.<sup>13</sup>

Multiple pieces of legislation approved by the House notably violated Egypt’s constitutional and international legal obligations, further entrenching concerns that the House operates as a tool of the executive branch rather than a voice for constituents. Furthermore, the House’s inability to follow constitutional principles highlight concerns about the House’s ability to follow rule of law. The

**“ The House failed to draft meaningful legislation, instead relying on the cabinet and other state bodies to assume the majority of the legislative work. ”**

constitutional amendments approved in April 2019 notably restricted political and civil rights, raising questions about the role of the House of Representatives in the future regarding its legislative endeavors.

*What follows is a register of all of the laws and amendments approved by the House during this*

*legislative session that TIMEP has been able to track. Please note that not all of these laws have been ratified by President Sisi, and thus they have not all gone into effect.*

<sup>13</sup> For more information on the impact of the constitutional amendments on rule of law in Egypt, please consult TIMEP’s 2019 Constitutional Amendments Law Brief.

# Table of Laws

Legislation Name	Description of Legislation	Genesis	Date Approved by Parliament	Type
Amendments to the Investment Law Regulations	Ensures that the sale of businesses between 2011 and 2014 abide by current legislative standards.	Government	June 11, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Amendments to the Real Estate Tax Law	Extends the Real Estate Authority's time to complete data collection pertaining to property tax evaluation by a period of one year until December 2021, rather than the previous date of December 2020.	Government	December 23, 2018	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Innovator's Fund Law	Establishes a fund under the government's jurisdiction to promote research among individuals and universities. Imposes a licensing fee of 5 percent (based on a university's budget) for universities to pay into the fund as an initial fee. Universities are also required to pay an annual fee of 2 percent of each school's tuition to the fund.	Government	December 23, 2018	Administrative and Appointments/ Economy and State Issues
Amendments to the Medical Practice Law	Requires medical professionals to obtain a minimum of a bachelor's degree from a university in Egypt or the same degree from an accredited university in another country. Medical professionals must also undergo government-sponsored training in order to be recognized by the Ministry of Health.	Government	March 12, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/ Economy and State Issues

Legislation Name	Description of Legislation	Genesis	Date Approved by Parliament	Type
Amendments to the Education Law	Requires that educators possess Egyptian nationality or originate from a country with similar standards for public positions, possess a bachelor's degree from either an Egyptian university or an international university with similar accreditation standards, and oblige by professional development standards.	Government	February 5, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Amendments to the State Property Law	Establishes new procedures for land allocation filings. Also seeks to promote investments in state property by reorganizing the registration process for real estate ventures.	Government	November 11, 2018	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Amendments to the Economic Courts Law	Grants economic courts the ability to hear criminal cases for money laundering, micro-financial activities, and cyber-financial crimes, among others. The law also addresses technological concerns associated with the organization of individual courts.	Government	July 15, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Amendments to the Wetlands Law	Designates authority to local officials to determine whether a swamp or pond area ought to be filled. The law also permits private citizens to legally object to the decision to fill waterways on private properties.	Representative Hamdi al-Sisi	December 23, 2018	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State issues
Amendments to the Agricultural Land Maintenance Law	Adds field irrigation as a type of land maintenance protected under the legislation.	Government	February 4, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues

Legislation Name	Description of Legislation	Genesis	Date Approved by Parliament	Type
Amendments to the Manuscript Protection Law	Combines representatives from the Ministries of Endowments, Defense, and Justice, al-Azhar, and various libraries to manage specific manuscripts and alert relevant state bodies about discrepancies with documents falling under their jurisdiction.	Government	November 25, 2018	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Amendments to the Manufacturing Federation Law	Separates the Manufacturing Federation and makes the entity a more independent body from government association in order to allow the federation to cooperate more closely with private businesses.	Representative Ahmed Samir Salah	March 11, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Technological Universities Law	Aims to alter state priorities to devote more attention to improving the technological sector within higher education.	Government	April 16, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Reconciling Building Violations Law	Designates new restrictions on construction in land assigned for agricultural purposes. Also imposes fines for individuals who violate paperwork procedures under the bill of at least LE 10,000 and five years' imprisonment.	Government	March 12, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Amendments to the Anti-Monopoly and Supply Affairs Law	Imposes a fine ranging from LE 100,000 to LE 1 million for companies that distort sales numbers, supply quantities, and prices in regards to petroleum products and food distribution products.	Government	February 5, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administration and Appointments

Legislation Name	Description of Legislation	Genesis	Date Approved by Parliament	Type
Amendments to the Fine Arts Syndicate Law	Stipulates that 10 percent of members are required to attain quorum during syndicate meetings. Outlines new procedures for the syndicate to abide by if quorum is not attained.	Government	December 23, 2018	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Public Shops Law	Requires all shops to apply for operating licenses from a government-led licensing committee before beginning operations, changing locations, or changing business structure. Businesses that have already complied with previous licensing procedures will have one year to comply with the new law and its standards. Also requires shops and restaurants to install surveillance cameras inside and outside its facilities, which can be accessed by security authorities upon request.	Government	July 15, 2019	Military and Security/Economy and State Issues
Amendments to the Trade Unions Law	Reduces the number of workers needed in a syndicate and its various standing committees in order to be officially recognized by the government as a union. Replaces prison sentences for perpetrators of the law with financial penalties.	Government	July 9, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Amendments to the Social and Health Fund for Police Law	Raises the maximum fee that the Ministry of Interior or other police official can obtain from fees to LE 15 per document.	Government	December 23, 2018	Administrative and Appointments/Military and Security

Legislation Name	Description of Legislation	Genesis	Date Approved by Parliament	Type
Amendments to the Weapons and Ammunitions Law	Intensifies the punishment for possessing a light weapon (e.g. pistol, airsoft gun, ammunition) in gatherings, places of worship, and transportation centers without proper licensing.	Government	December 23, 2018	Military and Security/ Administrative and Appointments
National Council for Disabled Individuals Law	Establishes a national council for disabled individuals under the government's authority to promote the interests of disabled individuals. The law permits the government to choose council members, noting that eight of the 17 council members must possess some type of state-defined disability. The council may take up any issue pertaining to disabilities either on its own initiative or based on a request by the government.	Government	January 13, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/ Social and Political Rights
Amendments to the Income Tax Law	Includes new regulations on bonds aimed at reducing the budget deficit.	Government	February 5, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Internal Land Navigation Law	Establishes an agency to monitor all commercial shipments and passenger transport within Egypt in order to codify the domestic transportation system.	Government	February 5, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/ Economy and State Issues

Legislation Name	Description of Legislation	Genesis	Date Approved by Parliament	Type
Western Desert Excavation Law	Authorizes the Minister of Petroleum and the Egyptian General Phosphate Company to excavate for oil resources in the Western Desert.	Government	March 11, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Egyptian Black Sands Company Excavation Law	Authorizes the Ministry of Electricity to contract with the Egyptian Black Sands Company to mine for black sands.	Government	January 27, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Electronic Payments Law	Requires companies to pay their employees (except temporary workers) using electronic payment systems in order to phase out cash transactions.	Government	March 11, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Dia Suez Exploration Law	Authorizes the Egyptian General Petroleum Company and Dia Suez Company to explore for oil products in the Gulf of Suez.	Government	January 27, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Amendments to the Combating Drugs Law	Punishes individuals with the death penalty if they are found guilty of distributing illegal drugs as defined by the government. Also includes life imprisonment and a fine ranging from LE 100,000 to LE 500,000 for individuals found guilty of attempts to distribute illegal narcotics.	Government	June 11, 2019	Military and Security/Economy and State Issues

Legislation Name	Description of Legislation	Genesis	Date Approved by Parliament	Type
Amendments to the Gas Market Activities Law	Nullifies an article of the preexisting law which determines how gas-related funds are allocated in the state budget based on revenue gained from licensing procedures and business transactions.	Representative Muhammad al-Suweidi	March 11, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Amendments to the University Law	Reduces restrictions placed on faculty members' paid administrative leave. Also reduces limitations placed on faculty members preventing them from holding positions at two separate institutions simultaneously.	Government	March 11, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Financial Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation Law	Establishes a fund to promote and fund services under the authority of the relevant minister related to science, technology, and innovation.	Government	June 11, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Amendments to the Civil Service Law	Grants all public employees an annual bonus based on a range of 7 to 10 percent of their annual salary.	Government	June 24, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Amendments to the Financial Markets Law	Requires the relevant authority created under the original law in 2009 to distribute 80 percent of its funds to the state treasury.	Government	April 16, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues

Legislation Name	Description of Legislation	Genesis	Date Approved by Parliament	Type
Amendments to the Private Universities Law	Designates authority of the Supreme Commission for Higher Education to the Minister of Higher Education. The commission will also consist of university officials from public and private universities in addition to individuals that work in education.	Government	July 11, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
2017–18 Fiscal Year State Budget Linking Law	Links the 2017–18 fiscal year budget for the National Military Production Commission to the official state budget for the same fiscal period.	Government	March 26, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Fiscal Year 2019–20 State Budget	Designates the government’s budget for the 2019–20 fiscal year, amounting to LE 1.575 trillion.	Government	June 24, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Salary and Pension Increase Law	Raises monthly pensions for public officials from LE 750 to LE 900, while also increasing monthly salaries for public officials by 10 percent.	Government	June 9, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Ministry of Justice Budget Linking Law	Ties the budget for the Ministry of Justice for the 2017–18 fiscal year to the official state budget.	Government	March 26, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Amendments to the Stamp Tax Law	Imposes a tax on stamps ranging from 1.25 to 1.75 percent per item.	Government	July 11, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments

Legislation Name	Description of Legislation	Genesis	Date Approved by Parliament	Type
NGO Law	Eliminates prison sentences for violators of the law in exchange for harsher financial penalties compared to the 2017 version, while also eradicating the security-heavy National Agency to Regulate the Work of Foreign NGOs. Defines the purpose of NGOs as “societal development,” requires foreign NGOs to apply to the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be officially recognized, requires all NGOs to seek approval from the ministry for sources of funding, and permits the ministry to halt an organization’s operations without obtaining prior judicial consent.	Government	July 15, 2019	Social and Political Rights/ Economy and State Issues
Cumulative Amendments to Judicial Figures Laws	Allows the president to appoint the heads of various judicial authorities including the Administrative Prosecution, State Lawsuits Authority, Military Judicial Authority, Court of Cassation, Prosecutor-General, and State Council. These officials would be allowed to serve in their positions for one four-year term.	Government	June 11, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Social and Political Rights
Amendments to the Supreme Constitutional Court Law	Allows the president to appoint the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court. The president is also allowed to select the deputy head of the court.	Government	June 11, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Social and Political Rights
Amendments to the Nationality Law	Requires foreign-born residents seeking Egyptian citizenship to pay a fee of LE 10,000 as part of the application process.	Government	July 7, 2019	Social and Political Rights/ Administrative and Appointments

Legislation Name	Description of Legislation	Genesis	Date Approved by Parliament	Type
Amendments to the Port Said Development Commission Law	Clarifies the budget for the commission created under the law, especially pertaining to return on investments and commission expenditures.	Government	July 11, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments
Supreme Council for Medicine Law	Places all public medical employees under the authority of the council, which subsequently falls under the auspices of the prime minister.	Government	July 11, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Amendments to the Lawyer's Syndicate Law	Permits the head of the syndicate to serve for a maximum of two four-year terms effective from the law's passage. Also regulates the process for members to express a vote of no confidence for elected officials within the syndicate.	Representative Soleiman Wahdan	July 15, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Social and Political Rights
Amendments to the Social Insurance and Pensions Law	Designates the National Insurance Commission subordinate to the authority of the Ministry of Social Solidarity. Also allows the state to invest up to 75 percent of bonds and bills available in the treasury reserve.	Government	July 15, 2019	Administrative and Appointments/Economy and State Issues
Amendments to the Mineral Resources Law	Grants the Egyptian General Authority for Mineral Resources authority to approve permits for explorations of mines and quarries. Also requires a one percent fee to be paid to the state for each licensing fee.	Government	July 8, 2019	Economy and State Issues/ Administrative and Appointments

# Timeline of Events

**October 2, 2018:** The House of Representatives **reconvened** in plenary session, officially inaugurating the fourth legislative session.

**October 21:** The House **approved** President Sisi's decree to renew the state of emergency for a three-month period retroactive to October 15.

**October 22:** The House **announced** it launched a YouTube channel to highlight notable events that occur in the legislature.

**November 29:** In light of perceived inaction in the investigation of Italian student Giulio Regeni's death in Egypt, the Italian Chamber of Deputies **announced** a temporary cessation of diplomatic ties with Egypt's House of Representatives.

**January 13:** The House **voted** to renew the state of emergency for an additional three months.

**February 3:** Five representatives from the Coalition in Support of Egypt submitted a package of constitutional amendments to the House for discussion. Per parliamentary bylaws for reviewing amendments to the constitution, Abdel 'Al subsequently **referred** the proposal to the House's General Committee to deliberate.

**February 14:** The House **agreed** in principle to the proposed constitutional amendments by a vote of 485 to 18. Following the vote, Abdel 'Al referred the package to the Constitutional Affairs Committee to review for a period of up to 60 days, per the parliamentary bylaws.

**April 16:** The House **approved** the constitutional amendments package during a roll call vote by a vote of 531 in favor, 22 against, one formal abstention, and 42 not participating.

**May 4:** The House **convened** in an emergency plenary session to approve the state of emergency issued April 23, despite the fact that the state of emergency had already gone into effect (per the decree) on April 25.

**June 11:** In implementation of the constitutional amendments, the House **approved** the cumulative amendments to the laws governing various judicial entities. The House also **approved** the amendments to the Supreme Constitutional Court Law.

**June 24:** The House **approved** the government's proposed budget for the 2019–20 fiscal year, amounting to LE 1.575 trillion.

**July 15:** The House **approved** the 2019 NGO Law.

**July 15:** Abdel 'Al **adjourned** the fourth session and the House broke for its summer recess.

# Methodology

The Egypt Parliament Watch report series was developed as part of a longer-term project to monitor and evaluate the function of the Egyptian House of Representatives. The project and the report address several fundamental research questions: What is the role of the Egyptian parliament in its political landscape? Does it embody the democratic entity that was envisioned as a final step in the transitional roadmap? How effectively does the parliament function per its constitutional obligations and international legal norms? Who are the main actors driving trends and developments in the political and legislative landscape, and what effect do they have on the previous questions?

To answer these questions, the Egypt Parliament Watch project draws on existing literature and praxis related to legislative monitoring, and it is based on TIMEP's independent and systematic media monitoring and analysis, legal review of legislation for compliance, review of official documents, and extensive consultation with policymakers, journalists, human rights practitioners, and experts in Egyptian and international law, politics, and civil society. Data collection for the project began in late 2014, at the time of the announcement of parliamentary elections, and is ongoing. Since that time, TIMEP has conducted daily media monitoring of local and international Arabic and English-language press and social media, collating and reviewing statements made by policymakers or Egyptian political figures. TIMEP conducted extensive background research into the platforms and ideologies of the political parties and collected electoral data to conduct quantitative analysis related to its prior parliamentary elections project.

With Egypt Parliament Watch, TIMEP continues to monitor statements and media from within or about the House of Representatives, comparing this to existing research and data on political platform and ideology. The project also relies on the Official Gazette, parliamentary reports, and published legislation from the government; where possible, the project references data from these primary sources. To develop the key indicators used to assess the parliament's performance, TIMEP conducted a review of the seven leading parliamentary performance monitors' indicators, distilling a targeted list that was most appropriate to the Egyptian context. These four overarching indicators were broken into sub-indicators, with a series of questions outlined for each to ensure uniformity in assessing performance over time and to facilitate measurability for each sub-indicator. Further information and detail about these indicators or methodology is available upon request.

**The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to influencing policy toward the Middle East and North Africa through rigorous research and targeted advocacy efforts that promote local voices. TIMEP’s work is founded on the principle that security, rights, rule of law, and economic prosperity are parts of a whole, rather than measures on a balance. TIMEP was founded in 2013 and currently has offices in Washington and Brussels, with a network of expert fellows located throughout the world.**



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## EGYPT PARLIAMENT WATCH

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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.