



Egypt's Parliamentary Elections: An Historic Milestone for New Governance

"I look forward to the contributions that Parliament will soon make in rebuilding Egypt, crafting new laws to foster the country's path toward development and greater shared prosperity, and monitoring the government's performance and representing the interest of the people."

President Abdel Fattah El Sisi, *The Wall Street Journal* 27 September 2015

Egypt has made considerable progress in two years toward accountable, representative and effective governance. By popular vote, the Egyptian people have approved a progressive new Constitution and elected a new President. On 17 October 2015, Egypt begins voting for a new Parliament, which will be seated in December. By casting ballots in the first parliamentary elections since January 2012, Egyptians at home and abroad are set to fulfill an important milestone in Egypt's democratic evolution. Parliament's oversight function and duty to determine whether Egypt's current laws live up to the Constitution – and to craft new laws where they don't – establishes it as a co-equal political partner with the executive branch. Egypt's new Parliament will play a crucial role in realizing the Egyptian peoples' desire for dignity, freedom, stability, prosperity and social justice.

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The new House of Representatives will be composed of 596 members, the highest number in Egypt's 150-year parliamentary history.

There are 205 individual electoral constituencies and four geographical electoral constituencies.

- From the electoral constituencies, voters will elect 448 independent candidates
- From the geographical constituencies, voters will elect 120 party-based candidates, with guaranteed seats for women, minorities, Christians and youth
- The remaining 28 will be appointed, with half required to be women

This form of mixed voting system is used in several other democratic nations, including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines.

- In these countries, just as in Egypt, voters cast dual ballots to elect members of Parliament: one elects a local individual representative, while another elects regional party-based candidates

Voting will occur over two phases between 17 October and 2 December. 16,000 members of various judicial bodies will supervise over 350 main polling stations as well as thousands of auxiliary ones. Results for the first phase will be announced on 29 October while final results of the second phase and the overall ballot will be announced on 3 December.

WHO'S RUNNING?

5,420 independent candidates, plus 9 party lists are vying for seats. The individuals, coalitions and parties running represent a diverse array of the Egyptian population, including political Islam, social justice factions, socialists, centrists as well as 308 women. The parties and coalitions running include: The Nour Party; For the Love of Egypt; Egyptian Front Coalition; Independence Current; the Republican Alliance of Social Forces; the Independent National Reawakening bloc; and the Call of Egypt.



NEW PARLIAMENT BREAKDOWN





Embassy of Egypt

WASHINGTON, D.C.



INTERNATIONAL AND MEDIA OBSERVERS

In total, 81 organizations comprising over 97,000 local and 790 foreign observers were approved to witness the vote, including six international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Approved international NGO election observation missions include:

- U.S.-based Democracy International is expected to send hundreds of observers to “assess the electoral environment and political context including the campaign environment, the legal structure, civil engagement, and political party and individual candidate participation.”
- Norway-based Global Network for Rights and Development; Switzerland-based Ecumenical Alliance for Human Rights and Development (EAHRD) and International Institute for Peace, Justice and Human Rights and; and South Africa-based Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa.

International bodies such as the Arab League, the African Union and the European Union will also have teams on the ground to observe the polls. The African Union is expected to send up to **100** observers, headed by former Tunisian prime minister Mahdi Gommaa.

60 foreign diplomatic missions have been approved to observe the elections, including the U.S. Embassy as well as several embassies from Asian and European Union nations. **44** press and media institutions, **13** news websites, and **768** foreign media correspondents have also been credentialed to cover the elections across Egypt.

A STRONGER PARLIAMENT

Egypt’s new Constitution was crafted to address shortcomings of the past, when weak parliaments lacked authority to provide genuine checks and balances. The Constitution now enables clear separation of powers as well as more equilibrium between the legislative and executive branches. Similar to parliamentary systems in many democratic countries, Egypt’s new Constitution provides the House of Representatives with strong oversight authority over executive actions, with the aim of limiting the power of the President.

Budgetary Oversight: The House of Representatives must approve the state budget and has the power to amend and authorize executive expenditures.

Declaration of War: The President cannot declare war without a two-thirds majority vote from the House of Representatives.

State of Emergency: Any state of emergency declaration must be approved by the House of Representatives. States of emergencies may not exceed three months and can only be extended with parliamentary approval. The House of Representatives may not be dissolved during this period, and may not be dissolved under any circumstance without a popular referendum.

Oversight on Policies and Laws: All laws are subject to parliamentary approval. Within 15 days of convening, the House of Representatives must be presented with and may approve or reject any laws or decrees introduced during its absence.

Executive Oversight:

- The Constitution creates term limits for the President of two four-year terms. The House of Representatives may withdraw confidence from the President if the motion is signed by a parliamentary majority and approved by a two-thirds majority. If the motion is then approved by a public referendum, early presidential elections would be held within 60 days.
- The President’s nomination for Prime Minister is subject to parliamentary approval. Failure to do so results in a Prime Minister appointed directly from by the party or coalition that holds the majority or highest number of seats.
- The House of Representatives may form special fact-finding committees to inspect the activities of an administrative body, public agency or public projects and is entitled to obtain any data or information from the executive branch.
- The House of Representatives can exercise authority, for the first time, to officially accuse a President of violating the Constitution, not only for criminal violations and corruption, as was the case in previous Constitutions.

“The upcoming parliamentary elections represent the culmination of Egypt’s post-transition roadmap after the Constitutional referendum in January 2014 and the presidential election in May 2014.”

- Democracy International

