



European Forum

for Democracy and Solidarity

Egypt

Last update:	15 March 2017
Population:	91,508,084 (World Bank 2015 est.)
Prime minister:	Sherif Ismail
President:	Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
Governemental type:	Republic
Ruling coalition:	-
Last election:	2015 (parliamentary elections)
Next election:	2018 (presidential elections)
Sister parties:	Egyptian Social Democratic Party (ESDP)

Between 18 October and 22 November 2015, parliamentary elections were held in Egypt. A record number of 596 MPs was chosen. The elections were the result of the new constitution and formed the final step of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's political roadmap after the ouster of former Islamist President Mohammed Morsi. The elections saw al Sisi's loyalist 'For the love of Egypt' coalition win all 120 party-based seats, while candidates backed by the liberal Free Egyptians Party won most of the 448 seats assigned to independent candidates. Although still very underrepresented, women and Copts were elected in greater numbers than in any other election in the country. Despite several violations reported during the campaigning and election day, these elections formed an important part in the transition process of the country as its first parliament in over three years was elected.

Political Situation

In 2015, Egypt has been in the final stages of the transition period that started with the 2013 ouster of former Muslim Brotherhood President Mohammed Morsi. In 2014, the former head of the Egyptian Armed Forces, Abdel Fattah al Sisi, was elected President. In order to overcome the mass protests and chaos in the country, al Sisi introduced a roadmap to help the transition of the country. One of the most important steps of the roadmap was the introduction of a new constitution, drafted by a 50-member committee. The constitution was approved by a referendum in January 2014, although serious doubts over the fairness and the political climate during the referendum have been cast. In 2015, many former Muslim Brotherhood leaders and members have been jailed, sentenced and completely banned from political participation. Journalists have been persecuted on a large scale and media freedom has been restricted. Furthermore, instability in the Sinai provinces has grown, where insurgents are fighting the Egyptian army. As a result Egypt closed the Rafah border crossing with the Palestine Territories, but talks to reopen the border are ongoing.

Egyptian revolution, 2011

The Tunisian revolution that broke out in December 2010 sparked the Egyptian people to take to the streets as well. Starting from the 25th of January large scale demonstrations were organised in different cities in Egypt calling for an end to President Hosni Mubarak's three-decade rule. Dissatisfactions over corruption, lack of freedom of speech, economic issues as food price inflation, high unemployment, low wages and the enrichment of the ruling elite were the reasons for the protests. Mubarak repeated he would remain in power until September. Angry that Mubarak did not step down, protests resulted in a nationwide escalation dubbed 'Farewell Friday' on the 11th of February. At 16.00 hour the same day the Egyptian Vice-president Omar Suleiman announced in a televised address that President Hosni Mubarak had stepped down and had handed over authority to the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), which announced that it would remain in charge of the country until a president would be elected. Around one month after the revolution Egyptian voters overwhelmingly approved a referendum on constitutional changes, which paved the way for new elections. From November 2011-January 2012 the first free parliamentary elections were held in Egypt. The Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, was the big winner.

Egypt under President Morsi, 2012-2013

On 24 June 2012, Mohamed Morsi, leader of the FJP, was pronounced as the winner of the first free presidential elections after the fall of the Mubarak regime. A few months later, in November 2012, President Morsi issued a temporary constitutional declaration that in effect gave him unlimited powers, which led to the outburst of mass protests. By the end of June 2013 the protests, which

We are supported by



European Forum

for Democracy and Solidarity

were also fueled by the prosecutions of journalists and attacks on non-violent protesters, escalated after opposition parties and millions of protesters urged Morsi to step down. In July 2013 Morsi was removed from office by a coup d'état led by the army under General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The Muslim Brotherhood protested against the military coup, but these protests were crushed in the August 2013 massacre in Rabaa in which at least 817 civilians were killed. Since his overthrow, Egyptian prosecutors have charged Morsi with various crimes and sought the death penalty, a move denounced by Amnesty International as "a charade based on null and void procedures".

Pre-uprising situation

While Egypt has long been a presidential republic, with presidential elections every six years, the pre-uprising political situation can best be described as a dictatorship. Hosni Mubarak, who took over from the assassinated Anwar Sadat, was serving his fifth term as president when he was turned over in 2011. In the 2005 presidential elections Mubarak was re-elected with 88.6%. The lack of fair elections and lack of change had turned many Egyptians away from politics in this period, turnouts rarely exceeded 15%, even though official figures were reported as much higher. Mubarak was also the leader of the National Democratic Party which dominated the parliament, with 420 out of 518 seats, while the popular Muslim Brotherhood gained only 1 out of 88 seats reserved for independent candidates. The lack of true influence on political life, for example by fair and free elections, was one of the major motives to start protesting in early 2011.

Elections

Electoral system

The constitution of 2014 abolished the old Shura Council (Upper House), while the old People's Assembly (Lower House) was replaced by the House of Representatives. In total 596 MPs are elected in two rounds. 120 of them are elected through coalition based lists. Their election is based on a 'winner takes all' system, that awards all the seats to one party if they surpass 50 percent of the votes. Furthermore, 448 independent candidates are elected, some of them backed by political parties. The final 28 MPs are appointed by the President. The MPs are elected from 205 districts. The coalition based lists have quota for Christians and women. Of those appointed by the President, 14 have to be women and all have to be independent from political factions.

Constitutional referendum, 2014

In January 2014 Egyptians voted for the first time since Morsi's ouster in a referendum on a new constitution, which replaced the constitution passed under Morsi. It was drafted by a 50-member committee including only two representatives of Islamist parties. The Muslim Brotherhood was not represented. Therefore, an Islamist coalition led by the Muslim Brotherhood called for a boycott and "civilized peaceful protests" during the two-day referendum. Many of Egypt's secular opposition joined the protests against the government and the new charter. On the first day of voting, nine people were killed in clashes between security forces and those who opposed the new constitutional amendments. On 18 January 2014, the Supreme Electoral Committee announced that 98.1 percent of Egyptians voting in the referendum approved the amended national charter, with a turnout rate of 38.6 percent. The new constitution will boost military powers, allowing the army to appoint a defense minister for the next eight years. It also allows civilians to be tried before military courts. It also stipulates that the military's budget will be beyond civilian oversight. Critics said the new constitution will strengthen state institutions that defied Morsi: the military, the police and the judiciary at the expense of the people. US-based Democracy International (DI), the largest international organization that monitored the referendum, expressed "serious concerns" about the political climate, which virtually guaranteed a Yes vote. "There was no real opportunity for those opposed to the government's roadmap or the proposed constitution to dissent," the statement noted, citing "a backdrop of arrests and detention of dissenting voices".

The previous referendum dates back to 19 March 2011, one month after the revolution.

Parliamentary Elections

Between 18 October and 22 November 2015, elections for the House of Representatives were held in Egypt in two rounds. These were the first elections after the 2014 constitution. 5420 independent candidates and 600 party-based candidates representing 84 parties ran in the elections. Political parties formed coalitions in order to yield as many candidates as possible on the party-based

We are supported by





lists, including the Al-Sisi loyalist ‘For The Love Of Egypt’ coalition, that was the only coalition to run in all constituencies.

Results

In the first round, held between 18 to 19 October, voter turnout was 26.56 percent. For The Love Of Egypt managed to win all 60 party-based seats, while only 4 independent candidates were elected directly. During the run-offs for the first round on 27 and 28 October the other independent candidates were elected, most of whom were backed by political parties. Candidates backed by the liberal Free Egyptians Party won 41 seats, candidates backed by the pro-regime the Nation’s Future party won 26 seats, candidates backed by the liberal Wafd Party won 16 seats and candidates backed by the Salafist Nour Party won 8 seats. Candidates backed by the Egyptian Social Democratic Party managed to gain 3 seats. Of the 284 seats elected in the first round, a record of 32 seats was secured by the 110 women running in the first round and 16 seats by Copts. In the second round, held between 22 and 23 November, voter turnout was slightly higher with 29.83 percent. The For the Love of Egypt again managed to win all the party-based seats, gaining 120 seats in parliament in total. Only 9 independent candidates managed to be elected directly, while the remaining MPs were elected in the run-offs. After the run-off, the Free Egyptians party backed candidates won 24 seats, candidates backed by the Future of the homeland party won 17 seats, candidates backed by the Wafd party won 16 seats and candidates backed by the Nour party won 3 seats. In total, women secured 87 seats in the 596 member parliament (6.8 percent), of which 56 were elected on party-based lists, 17 ran as independent candidates, and 14 were appointed by the president. This marks a historic high number of women in parliament.

Party	Seats in parliament
Free Egyptians Party	65
Nation’s Future Party	53
Al-Wafd	36
Homeland Defenders Party	18
Republican Peoples Party	13
Conference Party	12
Nour Party	11
Conservative Party	6
Democratic Peace Party	5
Egyptian Social Democratic Party	4
Egyptian National Movement Party	4
Modern Egypt Party	4
Other (7) political parties	15
No party Affiliation	350
Total	596

Observers

Dozens of violations were reported during the campaigning and election day, mainly bribery. Various observer missions observed the elections, including the international-local Maat foundation. According to their spokesperson violations were reported in both rounds but “candidates were well prepared for the second round; they avoided repeating the mistakes of the first round, and used creative methods of bribery”. The Journalists against Torture Observatory (JATO) said they reported 104 cases of violations against journalists during the second round of elections. The most violations consisted of preventing journalists to properly cover the elections. During the election period a local Nour candidate was shot in North Sinai. After the killing five candidates withdrew from the elections in North Sinai. There were more reports of violence being used against Nour candidates, as well as reports of intimidation of Copts. Overall, the rate of violence during the elections was in line with the level of violence during the rest of the year.

Presidential Elections

On 26 and 27 May 2014, Egyptian voters could cast their ballots for the presidential elections. Because the turnout was low on the 26th, the government declared a national holiday on the 27th, which they had hoped would lead to a higher turnout. In the end, 47 percent of the country’s 54 million people voted. This percentage was lower than expected. The Egyptians could chose between two candidates: former field marshal Al-Sisi – who quit the army in order to run - and left-wing former presidential candidate

We are supported by





Hamdeen Sabahi. Candidates who ran in the 2012 elections did not run this time because “the climate was not conducive to democracy following a crackdown on Islamist and other opposition groups”.

Results

Al-Sisi gained 96.91 percent of the votes. Despite his victory, Al-Sisi still has to meet up to the expectations of the voters who currently back him. This will be a difficult task due to the amount of “poverty, unemployment and other social problems”. Al-Sisi is aware of this and said at the beginning of May 2014 that people “should lower their expectations for change”, Egyptians should not expect “instant democracy or rapid economic reforms”. He furthermore argued that shared sacrifice is a necessary condition. For Al-Sisi’s supporters these statements show that he is “a decisive man of action”, while his opponents argue that these “are signs of a new autocrat in waiting”. Sabahi conceded his defeat but said the official turnout figures were too high and were “an insult to the intelligence of Egyptians”.

Candidate	Number of votes	Percentage
Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi	23.780.104	96.91%
Hamdeen Sabahi	757.511	3.09%

Observers

The international community also had some remarks. Democracy International (DI) said the decision to extend the election into a third day was “just the latest in a series of unusual steps that have seriously harmed the credibility of the process”. It also “raises more questions about the independence of the election commission, the impartiality of the government, and the integrity of Egypt’s electoral process”, DI added. A team of EU observers said that, despite guarantees in Egypt’s Constitution, respect for the essential freedoms of association and expression “falls short of these constitutional principles”.

Social Democratic Parties

Egyptian Social Democratic Party

Party Leader: Mohammed Abou El-Ghar
Number of seats: 4
<http://www.egysdp.com/>

The Egyptian Social Democratic Party was founded shortly after the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak by the merger of two minor parties, the Egyptian Democratic Party and the Liberal Egyptian Party. The party straddles a fine line between free enterprise and social justice. It advocates a civil state based on citizenship and social and economic rights are important issues. In the 2015 elections ESDP did not participate in any of the coalitions but backed independent candidates. Ahead of the elections the founder of the party, Mohammed Abou El-Ghar, resigned from his position as Secretary General, citing a split in the group.

Tagammu Party

Party Leader: Mohamed Rifat Al-Saeed
Number of seats: 1
<http://www.al-ahaly.com/>

The Tagammu’ Party, or the Nationalist Progressive Unionist Party, was created in 1976 out of the left wing of the Arab Socialist Union. It is a leftist party which calls for the establishment of a socialist society free of exploitation. It believes in a class struggle that should be resolved peacefully and bases its programme upon the goals of the 1952 revolution. The most important goals are rejecting religious extremism, building the character of the Egyptian citizens, ending the state monopoly over the media, raising awareness of environmental issues, and developing Egyptian industries. While the party once enjoyed strong support from the working class, professional unions, universities and intellectuals, its influence among these groups has since waned. It gained two seats in the parliamentary elections of 2015.

We are supported by





European Forum
for Democracy and Solidarity

Other Parties

Free Egyptians Party (Hizb al-Masryeen al-Ahrar)

Party Leader: Essam Khalil

Number of seats: 65

<http://www.almasryeenalahrrar.com/>

The Free Egyptians Party (FEP) is a liberal party that was established after the 2011 revolution by Coptic businessman Naguib Sawiris. It participated in the 2011 elections as part of the Egyptian Bloc along with the Egyptian Social Democratic Party and the Tagammu Party, opposing the block of the Muslim Brotherhood. It gained 15 seats in Parliament, but soon took part in secular opposition movements against the Islamist government. It boycotted the 2012 constitutional referendum and supported the ouster of President Mohammed Morsi. In 2013 the Democratic Front Party merged with the FEP. In the 2015 elections the FEP gained 65 seats, being the big winner. It was part of the For the Love of Egypt coalition

Nation's Future Party (Hizb Mostaqbal Watan)

Party Leader: Mohamed Badran

Number of seats: 53

The Nation's Future Party was founded in 2014 and first participated in the 2015 elections. Nation's Future has been supportive of the government and its leader Badran is considered a close ally of President Al-Sisi. Among the political parties, Nation's Future is considered a youth party as it attracts young voters and has a young leadership. Before its foundation, members of Nation's Future campaigned across the country to promote Al-Sisi's transition road map and later on also Al-Sisi's candidacy for the presidency. In its spread across the country it has been able to capitalize on student unions. The party has expressed that defending the interest of the nation and state is their priority and that they do not feel aligned with any political ideology. In the 2015 elections the party wielded both independent candidates, as well as some candidates on the list of 'For the Future of the Nation'.

New Wafd Party

Party Leader: Sayyid al-Badawi

Number of seats: 36

<http://alwafd.org/>

The New Wafd Party, also known as the Al-Wafd party, created in 1978, is essentially a continuation of the pre-1952 Wafd Party. It is a liberal capitalist party that calls for public freedoms and a maximum reduction of the economic role of the state. It encourages Arab and foreign investment, the liberalisation of foreign trade and the exchange rates, and privatisation of certain parts of the public sector. Most of the Wafd economic ideas had been taken over by the former NDP. On the issue of political freedom and democratic reform, however, the Wafd is much more liberal than the NDP used to be. The Al-Wafd is often regarded as a strong opposition party. This is due to the legitimacy of the old Wafd, the possession of greater financial resources than other parties, and the several offices throughout the country. In the 2015 elections Wafd had the third most elected candidates, supporting both independent candidates as well as ten Wafd candidates on the list of 'For the love of Egypt'.

Al-Nour Party

Party Leader: Emad Abdel Ghaffour

Number of seats: 11

Al-Nour is a Salafi political party founded after the January 2011 uprising. Salafism is an orthodox branch of Islam which sees the first generations of the followers of the prophet Muhammad as examples for how all aspects of life should be organized. The party advocates gradual reform under the slogan: "The only reform we desire is the reform we can achieve." This slogan is based on a

We are supported by





European Forum

for Democracy and Solidarity

view of the principles of Islam as a comprehensive framework for religion and state. In the 2015 elections Nour was the only Islamist party, yielding both individual candidates as well as participating on one party list in the West Nile Delta constituency.

Conference Party

Party Leader: Amr Moussa
Number of seats: 12

The Conference Party was founded in 2012 by Amr Moussa, former secretary-general of the Arab League, and is a merger between a great number of parties including the Democratic Front Party and offshoots of the National Democratic party. The party is seen as moderate and secularist.

Conservative Party

Party Leader: Akmal Kertam
Number of seats: 6
<http://almohafezeen.com/>

The Conservative Party was founded after the January 25 Revolution and gained 6 seats in the parliamentary elections of 2015. The party has a conservative liberal ideology. "A Party working for all Egyptians" is the party's slogan. Leader Akmal Kertam is a former leading member of the National Democratic Party (NDP), the party of former President Mubarak. Kertam resigned from parliament in November 2016, voicing criticism on the parliamentary bloc Support Egypt and the process of committee chair elections.

Homeland Defenders Party

Party Leader:
Number of seats: 12

The Homeland Defenders Party won 12 seats in the 2015 parliamentary elections.

Democratic Peace Party

Party Leader:
Number of seats: 5

The small Democratic Peace Party has a largely secular and liberal identity. They won five seats in the 2015 parliamentary elections.

Biographies

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi

President

Former head of the Egyptian Armed Forces, Minister of Defence Abdul Fatah al-Sisi was born on 19 November, 1954 in Cairo. He graduated from the Egyptian military academy in 1977 and continued training in the United Kingdom, Egypt and the United States.

Under Mubarak's regime Al-Sisi served as a military attaché in Saudi Arabia. In August 2012 Al-Sisi was appointed as head of the

We are supported by



European Forum

for Democracy and Solidarity

Egyptian Armed Forces and as Minister of Defence by Morsi. Despite some accusations of being too close to the Muslim Brotherhood he presented himself and the army as “guardians of the people’s will”, following nationwide protests in June 2013. He played a leading role in the military coup of July 2013, which ousted Morsi when he did not meet up to the army’s ultimatum to the government and its opponents to resolve the country’s crisis within 48 hours. Al-Sisi remained on his post as Defence Minister in the interim government, but in early 2014 he resigned from his post in order to run for president. He was elected president in June 2014, after it was announced that 96.91% of the votes were in his favour.

Sherif Ismail

Prime Minister

Sherif Ismail is since 19 September 2015 the Prime Minister of Egypt. He was appointed by President Fattah al-Sisi after having served as Minister of Petroleum in the preceding two cabinets from 2013-2015. He was born on 6 July 1955 and studied mechanical engineering. He already had experience within the oil industry. He held managing positions in several oil companies, for example EGAS, and was deputy Minister of Petroleum between 2000 and 2005. As a politician he is described as apolitical and bureaucratic.

Ismail became prime minister after the dismissal of Ibrahim Mahlab, who had to step down due to a corruption scandal. Ismail could officially form his government after elections held between 17 October and 2 December 2015. In February 2017 he reshuffled cabinet positions (including nine ministries) again, in a time of great economic instability. While the reshuffle was approved by parliament, it is not very popular: People doubt whether the changes in the cabinet will have a positive effect on the economy.

Source

- AhramOnline, Voter turnout surges in final hours of Egypt presidential runoff <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/36/122/45322/Presidential-elections-/Presidential-elections-news/Voter-turnout-surges-in-final-hours-of-Egypt-presi.aspx>
- Alarabiya, Mursi will face Shafiq in presidential run-off <http://acceptatie.europeanforum.net/>
- Alarabiya, Egypt's open presidential race polarizes nation <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/05/24/216302.html>
- www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/01/201212385710930414.html
- Al Jazeera, "Egypt's new assembly appoints speaker", available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/01/201212385710930414.html> (14 February 2012)
- Al Jazeera Senter for studies, "Reports: Egypt's Legislations: Islamists Win the Majority in the Second Round" (5 January 2012), available at <http://studies.aljazeera.net/> (14 February 2012)
- Al Jazeera, "Egypt's Brotherhood claims early lead." <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/05/20125254752787143.html>
- Arabist, "People's Assembly Elections Partial Results (First and Second Round)" (available at http://www.arabist.net/storage/uploads/egypt_election_results_round1-2.pdf) (14 February 2012)
- Biographies: [Mansour](#), [El-Beblawi](#), [Al-Sisi](#), [Abul-Ghar.Morsi](#), [Mubarak](#)
- Carnegie endowment, "Egypt's Transition" (available at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/02/06/egypt-s-transition-finding-way-out-of-vicious-circle-pub-47093> / CIA World Factbook, available at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/eg.html>
- Egyptian Association for the Support of Democratic Development: Press Releases November 9 – December 7 2005
- El-Ghobashy, M.: "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers", in International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 37 (2005) pp. 373-395
- Human Rights Watch: "Egypt: Ayman Nur Trial Badly Flawed", New York: December 7 2005
- Independent Committee on Election Monitoring: Press Statements / Preliminary Reports November 9 – December 7 2005
- International Crisis Group: Reforming Egypt: In Search of a Strategy, Middle East / North Africa Report no. 46, 4 October 2005
- International Crisis Group: The Challenge of Political reform, Middle East briefing, Cairo / Brussels, 30 September 2003
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance / Arab NGO Network for Development: Building Democracy in Egypt, Stockholm 2005
- Sada journal, "What the Brotherhood lost", available at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/07/12/what-brotherhood-lost/covv>
- Sullivan, D. : Egypt, in: Countries at the Crossroads 2005: A Survey of Democratic Governance (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield 2005) p. 213 available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/crossroads/2005/Egypt2005.pdf>

We are supported by



European Forum

for Democracy and Solidarity

- The Guardian, "Egyptian elections: the parties and where they stand - interactive", available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/nov/22/egypt-election-political-parties-interactive> (14 February 2012)
- The Tahir Institute for Middle East Policy, Election 2015 results available at timep.org/pem/
- The New York Times, Amid Uncertainties on Role, Egypt's President-Elect Begins Rituals of Office http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/26/world/middleeast/named-egypts-winner-islamist-makes-history.html?_r=2&pagewanted=all

We are supported by

