



Egypt's New Parliament: The Most Empowered and Diverse in Our History

From October through December at polling stations across the country and abroad, millions of Egyptians exercised their democratic right to vote in Parliamentary elections. With significant participation from women, youth and Christians, Egypt elected the most diverse and empowered Parliament in our history. The Parliament will be seated with expanded authorities and will derive its power from a progressive new Constitution, which was approved through referendum in January 2014 and marked the first in a series of key milestones in Egypt's democratic evolution. Parliament's oversight function and responsibility 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. The newly elected members of Egypt's House of Representatives will now play a pivotal role in fulfilling the peoples' desire for equitable prosperity and enduring liberty, stability and social justice.

A DIVERSE, REPRESENTATIVE PARLIAMENT

Parliamentary election results indicate that 318 of the 596 new House of Representative members are independents unaffiliated with any political party, a significant shift from Egypt's historical trend of empowering majority parties to govern Parliament. Two hundred thirty-seven candidates affiliated with political parties were elected, with the Free Egyptians Party, headed by a Coptic Christian business leader, taking the highest number of seats at 65. Nation's Future, a political party aimed at giving a voice to young Egyptians and founded by a 25-year old who is the youngest head of party in Egypt, came in second with 51 seats. Individuals under 35 years old won nearly 10 percent of total seats contested.

In addition to the historic advances made by Egyptian youth, women also made extraordinary gains by winning 87 seats. This impressive number was attributed in part to the unprecedented number (275) of women competing for individual candidate seats. Amongst elected party list candidates, 56 were female, constituting an impressive 47 percent of the field.

The ranks of Coptic Christians set to serve in Parliament also grew considerably, with 24 Copts gaining seats via party list voting and 12 attaining positions as independent candidates. Media personalities and journalists won 11 seats, while disabled individuals and Egyptian expatriates won eight seats apiece.

Despite threats to voters from terrorists seeking to disrupt the election, Egyptian security forces successfully ensured the safety of over 15 million Egyptians who cast ballots across the country. In fact, despite ongoing violence, the highest turnout among the 27 governorates in both stages was North Sinai with a turnout of 41.6 percent.



EGYPTIAN PARLIAMENT BY THE NUMBERS

596
TOTAL SEATS

POLITICAL COMPOSITION OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT:

- 318 / 57%**
Independent Members
of Parliament
- 237 / 40%**
Party-Affiliated Members
of Parliament
- 11.7%**
Free Egyptians Party
- 9.2%**
Nation's Future Party
- 5.8%**
New Wafd Party
- 2%**
Nour Party
- 15 / 16%**
Other Parties
- 28 / 3%**
Appointed Seats

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT:¹

87	54	36
Women	Youth	Christians
11	8	8
Media	Disabled	Expatriates

1. Numbers based on preliminary results as of 15 December, 2015.



AN EMPOWERED PARLIAMENT

Egypt's Constitution empowers the members of the new House of Representatives with strong oversight authority over executive actions. As opposed to previous Parliaments that lacked authority to provide genuine checks and balances, the Constitution now establishes a clear separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches. These powers include:

- **Strong Legislative Oversight:** 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.
- **Budgetary Power:** The House of Representatives must approve the state budget and has the power to amend and authorize executive expenditures.
- **Must Approve Any State of Emergency:** Any state of emergency declaration by the executive branch 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.
- **Authority to Declare of War:** The President cannot declare war without a two-thirds majority approval from the House of Representatives.



The Constitution also balances power between the executive and legislative branches more equitably:

- **Term Limits:** The Constitution limits the tenure of the President to 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.
- **Prime Minister Appointment:** The President's nomination of a Prime Minister is subject to parliamentary approval. Failure by the House of Representatives to do so would result in a Prime Minister appointed directly by the party or coalition that holds the majority or highest number of seats.
- **Fact-Finding Committees:** The House of Representatives may form special fact-finding committees to inspect the activities of an administrative body, public agency or public project and is entitled to obtain any data or information from the executive branch.
- **Presidential Accountability:** The House of Representatives can exercise authority, for the first time, to officially accuse a President of violating the Constitution, not limited to criminal violations and corruption, as was the case under previous Constitutions.

Parliament is expected to hold its first session before the end of 2015.

VOTER PARTICIPATION

Unlike countries that restrict voting only to those who register on or before election day, all voting-age Egyptians are eligible to vote. Turnout percentages in Egypt are therefore calculated by comparing those who voted to the total voting-age population. Other countries compare those who voted only to those registered to vote.

For example, during 2014 midterm congressional elections in the United States, 81 million people voted out of roughly 191 million registered voters. However, with a voting-age population of 246 million in the U.S., 2014 turnout based on eligible voters was only 32.9 percent, closer to the 28.3 percent of Egyptians who voted in 2015 Parliamentary elections.



55M
VOTING-AGE
POPULATION

28.3%
2015 VOTER
TURNOUT



246M
VOTING-AGE
POPULATION

32.9%
2014 VOTER
TURNOUT