



January/February 2021

# Egypt Newsletter



## President el-Sisi wishes Egyptians Merry Christmas.

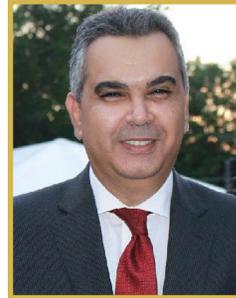
Over video conference with Pope Tawadros, President El-Sisi wished Coptic Christians a merry Christmas. El-Sisi is the first Egyptian president to make it customary to visit the Saint Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral on January 7 of every year since 2015 – a move that Copts in Egypt have received positively. In the video conference, which replaced the in-person visit this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, the president emphasized that no Egyptian's rights and duties should be determined by their religion.



## Egypt's New, Diverse Parliament Gets to Work.

Egypt's two-stage parliamentary elections for its House of Representatives were held between October 24 and December 8, 2020. The new parliament, which convened for its inaugural session on January 12, is also a parliament of remarkable diversity; 13 political parties, 472 party members, and 93 independent members are represented. This comes in addition to significant representation through female Members of Parliament (MPs) who are a notable feature of this legislative term. In the opening session, Egypt's parliament elected Hanafy Ali el-Gebaly as its new speaker, and has already begun working to serve the Egyptian people.

## Ambassador's Corner



Last week, Ambassador Zahran was featured in a podcast interview in Al-Monitor's On the Middle East. The [interview](#) was comprehensive on many issues. It addressed U.S.-Egyptian relations, GERD, Libya, the economy, COVID-19 and other topics.



## New Discoveries of oil and gas off the Mediterranean.

Egypt has witnessed a 13% surge in the discovery of oil and gas reserves in 2020 compared with the previous year, driving forward economic growth and investment partnerships. According to the country's Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, 62 oil and gas reserves were found in 2020. The 47 crude oil and 15 natural gas reserves were found in the Western Desert, the Eastern Desert, Gulf of Suez, Nile Delta and the Mediterranean Sea. these "positive results" indicate the success of research and exploration in current oil fields, and suggest the existence of further petroleum resources that are yet to be discovered. In 2020, Egypt also signed 22 agreements with global firms such as ExxonMobil and Chevron to make investments worth \$1.6 billion. These agreements will develop the reserves and provide for oil well drilling at 74 sites.



# Embassy of Egypt

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**Egypt's Growing Economy.** The International Monetary Fund (IMF) raised its growth forecast for Egypt's economy this financial year to 2.8%, up from a 2.0% prediction in June 2020. So far, the impact of COVID-19 on the country's economic growth has been less severe than expected, in part due to strong consumption, which offset weaker tourism and investment trends. Egyptian authorities also noted some flexibility in reallocating spending to support more vulnerable sectors and groups during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, Egypt announced a 100 billion Egyptian pound (\$6.39 billion) stimulus package, including compensation for day laborers affected by lockdown measures and support for the tourism sector.



**Egypt's Mayar Sherif Wins Historic Tennis Match.** On Tuesday, February 9, Mayar Sherif of Egypt advanced to the second round of the Australian Open, making her the first Egyptian woman to win a main draw Grand Slam match. Playing in her second Grand Slam tournament, Sherif defeated France's Chloe Paquet in two sets, and is moving on to the second round against Slovenia's Kaja Juvan. In an interview, Sherif was enthusiastic about the amount of support she receives, including from the Egyptian diaspora in Australia and elsewhere.



**Cairo's Mugamma' al-Adyan Complex: A Message of Peace for Egyptians and Beyond.** The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) published an article highlighting religious diversity in Egypt, which is known by Egyptians as "the mother of the world." The country is deeply rooted in the history of the Abrahamic religions; Moses was born and raised in Egypt, Jesus's visit to Egypt is considered a momentous event in Egyptian history, and Islam entered Egypt in the seventh century. The author discusses Egypt as a cradle of religions and cultures and reflects on a visit to the Mugamma' al-Adyan in Cairo. Like much of Egypt's history, "the Mugamma' al-Adyan" is an ancient archaeological complex that has been able to unite structures for all three religions in peace and tolerance for hundreds of years. It exists as a testament to Egypt's shared religious past rather than a modern structure constructed to bring together sacred religious sites for tourism purposes. The author concludes by suggesting Egyptians should learn history from the spaces in Egypt that continue to evoke the sense of harmony between religions.

## Events

On February 1, the Embassy of Egypt hosted a congressional briefing on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) with a group of bipartisan staffers. Further information on the GERD can be found on the [Fact Sheets section](#) of the embassy website.

On February 23, the Middle East Institute will be hosting Ambassador Zahran for a conversation on U.S.-Egypt relations.