



# EGYPT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION OBSERVATION INTERIM REPORT

JULY 2015

 **Democracy**  
International



This publication was produced by Democracy International, Inc., for the United States Agency for International Development through Cooperative Agreement No. **3263-A-13-00002**.

Photo credit: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31682021>

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## **Disclaimer**

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# MAP OF EGYPT



Map credit: Egyptian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is based on information gathered through the ongoing efforts of Democracy International's election observation mission in Egypt. Building on work that began in December 2013 and has continued for each successive electoral cycle, DI's core team of dedicated Egyptian and international professionals held numerous meetings with Egyptian stakeholders between February and May 2015.

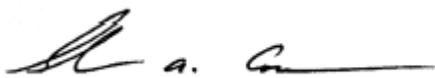
Although we believe that this report reflects the collective findings of our core team observers, DI takes full and complete responsibility for the content herein.

DI is extremely grateful to the High Election Commission (HEC) of Egypt for granting accreditation for DI's observer mission. DI also appreciates the assistance of members of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs who worked to facilitate visas for DI's delegation.

This mission would not have been possible without the hard work of a large number of professionals at DI headquarters and in Cairo. DI is grateful for the commitment and contributions of each one of them.

Finally, DI would like to thank the United States Agency for International Development and the Embassy of the United States in Cairo for their critical support to the mission.

DI believes that the only path to long-term stability in Egypt is through genuine democracy. It is DI's hope that the information provided by DI's successive election observation missions will contribute to a more peaceful, stable, and democratic future for all Egyptians.



Glenn Cowan, CEO



Eric Bjornlund, President



# ABOUT DEMOCRACY INTERNATIONAL

Democracy International, Inc. provides analytical services, technical assistance, and project implementation for democracy, human rights, governance and conflict mitigation programs worldwide. Since its founding in 2003, DI has worked with civil society organizations, political parties, election management bodies, government agencies, legislatures, justice sector institutions, and others in more than 70 countries and in every region of the world, including some of the most challenging environments. DI's core capabilities and principal focus are in international democracy and governance (DG) assistance.

DI offers expertise and practical field-based experience across the entire range of democracy, human rights and governance (DRG) programming. DI has extensive experience and a long track record of successful performance including: (1) promoting participatory, resilient, and inclusive political processes and government institutions; (2) supporting institutions and leaders to be accountable to citizens and to the law; (3) protecting and promoting universally-recognized human rights; and (4) working with development agencies and implementing partners to promote the integration of DRG best-fit principles and practices in development programming.

Democracy International also has extensive experience with analytical services, including assessments, evaluations, project designs, democracy assistance studies, survey research, quantitative methods, M&E, and strategic communications. DI holds indefinite quantity contracts with USAID for Democracy and Governance Analytical Services; Support That Augments Rapid Transition (START), Rule of Law, Programming Effectively Against Conflict and Extremism (PEACE), Evaluation and Performance Monitoring Services, and, previously, for Elections and Political Processes.

DI has conducted extensive election monitoring and election support programs. DI has advised on domestic election observation or parallel vote tabulations for elections in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cote d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Georgia, Ghana, Indonesia, Lebanon, Macedonia, Mozambique, Pakistan, Sudan, Tunisia, and Ukraine, among others. DI conducted comprehensive election observation projects in Pakistan in 2008, in Afghanistan for presidential and provincial council elections in 2009, parliamentary elections in 2010, April 2014 presidential and provincial council elections, June 2014 presidential election runoff, and the audit of runoff ballots. DI has also supported election observation missions in Indonesia, Sudan, and Venezuela. In Egypt, DI deployed a team of observers for the January 2014 constitutional referendum and May 2014 presidential election.

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Civil Society Organization
DG	Democracy and Governance
DI	Democracy International
DRG	Democracy Human Rights and Governance
HEC	High Election Commission
MTO	Medium Term Observer
MSS	Ministry of Social Solidarity
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PEACE	Programming Effectively Against Conflict and Extremism
PEC	Presidential Election Commission
SCC	Supreme Constitutional Court
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
START	Support That Augments Rapid Transition

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On January 8, 2015, the High Election Commission (HEC) of Egypt announced that the election of members of the House of Representatives (“House”), the first legislative election to take place since the promulgation of the 2014 Constitution and the election of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, would take place in March and April. After the constitutional referendum and presidential election in 2014, this election for the House was intended to complete a process called for in the “roadmap” announced after the military’s removal from office of former President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013. In March, however, Egypt’s Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) ruled that elements of two key electoral laws (the Boundary Delimitation Law and the House of Representatives Law) were inconsistent with the 2014 Constitution. This caused the election process to be put on hold until the laws could be amended. As of the date of this report, the amendments to the legal framework are not yet complete and a new electoral timeline has yet to be announced. Reportedly, a third law (the Law on the Exercise of Political Rights) is also being amended.

Before the legislative election was put on hold and with accreditation from the HEC, Democracy International (DI) began an election observation mission. This was to be DI’s third international election observation mission to Egypt, building on comprehensive DI missions for the constitutional referendum in January 2014 and for the presidential election in May 2014.

In February 2015, DI deployed a core team of nine subject-matter experts and political analysts to Egypt. In addition to this core team, DI also planned to deploy observers throughout the country before each election day to observe electoral proceedings. DI held more than 50 meetings with government entities, civil society organizations (CSOs), political parties and movements, independent candidates, international organizations, and embassies. Team members met with stakeholders in Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, Luxor, and Qena governorates.

## Political Environment

After each of the two prior electoral events, DI raised serious concerns about the context of the elections. For example, DI reported on the lack of freedom of expression for individuals and the similarly restrictive environment for parties, and organizations that oppose the government.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the repression of political opposition has increased since the adoption of the Constitution and the election of President Sisi. New legal restrictions allegedly intended to

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<sup>1</sup> DI, Egypt Constitutional Referendum and Presidential Election Observation Reports, <http://democracyinternational.com/publications/egypt-constitutional-referendum-observation-report> and

combat the foreign funding of terrorism, for example, could be applied to punish peaceful non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and have placed additional pressure on dissenting voices. Important rights necessary for genuine democracy continue to be violated. Repressive and selectively enforced laws, such as laws governing demonstrations and the operations of civil society organizations, continue to chill the freedoms necessary for robust democratic participation and debate. There has been an increase in self-censorship by many stakeholders who seem careful to temper their criticism of the state, the government, and its policies in order to minimize the risk of harassment or prosecution for expressing views that challenge the state's policies or contradict its narrative.

DI's meetings highlighted widespread concerns that because of the restrictive political environment and the design of the electoral system, these elections could not result in a House of Representatives that would be truly representative of the range of opinions in Egypt. At present, meaningful political dissent is virtually nonexistent. Once-strong movements and political parties, including most Islamist political parties and several popular movements, such as the April 6 Youth Movement that played a key role in the ouster of Mubarak in 2011, have been silenced. Opponents of the government have been arrested; courts have ordered dissolution of their organizations; and an orchestrated campaign equating dissent with "terrorism" is supported by much of Egyptian media. Several prominent political figures and civil society leaders have reportedly been placed on lists restricting their travel outside Egypt.

Judicial decisions also continue to chill participation in public affairs. The punishment of persons opposed to the government continues, including through mass criminal convictions without due process, and through the ongoing imprisonment of rights activists, journalists, students, and others for exercising their rights in a peaceful manner. This makes participation in the political process by many who oppose the government virtually impossible.

## Legal Framework and Candidate Registration

Egypt issued three laws in 2014 to govern the House election: the Law on the Exercise of Political Rights, the House of Representatives Law, and the Boundary Delimitation Law. The Boundary Delimitation Law established four electoral list districts and 237 districts for individual candidates. Wide disparities in the size of the electoral districts led the Supreme Constitutional Court to declare the law unconstitutional. In July 2015, President Sisi issued the new Boundary Delimitation Law and is expected to issue amended versions of the other two key laws shortly. As of the date of this report, however, only the Boundary Delimitation law has been released publicly.

The candidate registration period took place between February 8 and 19. Many CSO representatives, political actors, and other stakeholders expressed concern about the requirement for each candidate to obtain a medical clearance in order to be eligible for candidacy. The medical exams were expensive and reportedly precluded some individuals from running, particularly young people. Moreover, the specific requirements for passing the medical exam and acquiring a clearance were unclear.

## Electoral System

Although the government's priority in the amendment process has been to focus on amending the electoral laws to comply with the SCC's rulings, many stakeholders have more fundamental criticisms of the new electoral system. Civil society organizations and political parties from across the political spectrum expressed concerns in particular about the large proportion of individual seats, which is likely to weaken the influence of political parties in the House. While Egypt has employed a mixed electoral system with individual and list seats since 2011, the system for the upcoming legislative elections shifts the balance by reducing the percentage of list seats. This will likely have a negative effect on political party development.

Some stakeholders also expressed concern that lists will be elected on a winner-take-all rather than a proportional basis. The list that obtains a majority of votes in the first round or run off will win all the available seats in that district. In a typical list system, seats are allocated to different lists based on the proportion of votes received. Unlike traditional proportional representation list systems, the list system in Egypt is not a vehicle to enable political minorities or opposition views to be represented in the House.

As has historically been the case in Egypt, the President is authorized to appoint a number of House members (up to 5 percent of the number of elected members). This presidential power violates a basic democratic standard by compromising the separation between the executive and the legislature.

## Recommendations

After its observation missions to both the constitutional referendum and the presidential election in 2014, Democracy International made a number of recommendations concerning the political and electoral context. Among other things, DI urged the Egyptian government to end its crackdown on dissenting political voices and to affirm the rights and freedoms articulated in Egypt's new constitution. Unfortunately, however, the climate for political participation has further deteriorated.

In advance of the upcoming House of Representatives elections, DI repeats its call for the political rights of all Egyptians to be respected. We urge the Egyptian government to protect the rights and freedoms guaranteed to all citizens by Egypt's Constitution and to refrain from using security as a justification for unreasonable limits on freedoms of expression, assembly and association. Furthermore, we strongly encourage Egyptian authorities to seek to include the full range of views in the political process, including those who oppose the government, and to encourage meaningful input from a wide range of stakeholders on amendments to the legal framework.

Based on its observation of the process to date, DI makes a number of specific recommendations, which are elaborated in the body of this report. Regarding the electoral system for the House of Representatives, DI recommends a list system based on proportional representation and an increase in the proportion of seats elected through such lists. If those changes are not made before the upcoming legislative elections, the new House should revisit and revise the

laws governing the electoral system. Consistent with international democratic standards, all House seats should be elected and the constitutional provision for presidential appointment of legislators should be eliminated.

Regarding administration of the upcoming legislative elections, DI recommends that the government make candidate registration more accessible, including considering elimination of the medical exam clearance requirement. Electoral boundaries should not only adhere to constitutional requirements requiring fairness and equitability, but factors used to determine ultimate district boundaries should be nondiscriminatory and transparent. Authorities should actively seek to include women and minority groups in the process.

Officials should make every reasonable effort to ensure that elections be held as soon as possible after amendments to the legal framework are complete. The HEC should, to the maximum extent possible, ensure that candidates who obtained medical clearances and organizations that received accreditation prior to the announcement of the delay should not be required to obtain clearance or accreditation again after the reestablishment of the electoral process.

DI also recommends that the government streamline and make more transparent the process of domestic election observer accreditation. In accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, the government should ensure all accredited observers have full access to the entire electoral process, including visas for accredited international observers of appropriate type and duration.

Both state and privately owned media should be encouraged to provide space for diverse political viewpoints, including viewpoints critical of the electoral process and of the government. Journalists should not be punished for the peaceful exercise of their professional responsibility to inform the public. Finally, the HEC should be empowered to conduct a thorough program of voter education that attempts to educate citizens on the complexity of the election system through a wide variety of platforms.

## Looking Forward

Unless there are significant changes, it appears that only a narrow range of voices will likely be heard in the upcoming legislative elections, once they finally take place. Even those candidates, parties, and movements that are able and choose to participate and who express some criticism of the basic nature of the current government are not likely to win seats in an electoral system and environment that makes little room for opposition voices. By making the process more inclusive, Egypt would be making the House more representative and, thus, more legitimate in the minds of the Egyptian people.

Democracy International hopes that this report and its recommendations will assist Egypt's leaders and other electoral stakeholders as they attempt to establish a truly democratic House of Representatives that will reflect the views, the concerns, and the will of the Egyptian people for many years to come.

# INTRODUCTION

This report presents Democracy International's observation and analysis of Egypt's House of Representatives electoral process. DI observers were present in Egypt from February-May 2015 when DI suspended its in-country observation activities. The report covers the period from candidate registration until after the announcement of the delay in the electoral process, including part of the important recent legislative amendment process. DI plans to return to continue its observation of the process as soon as a new electoral timeline is announced.

Democracy International has been monitoring the Egyptian electoral process for the last several years. In 2012 and 2013, DI conducted several small missions to Egypt to assess the political situation and the prospects for democratic elections. In December 2013, DI established a formal observation mission to observe Egypt's January 2014 Constitutional Referendum. With accreditation from the High Election Commission (HEC), DI deployed 83 accredited international observers to 23 of Egypt's 27 governorates. DI's mission was the largest international mission to observe the referendum.

In April 2014, DI received accreditation from the Presidential Election Commission (PEC) to conduct an observation of Egypt's May 2014 Presidential Election. DI deployed 12 international medium-term observers (MTOs) around the country about six weeks before the first election day. For the election itself, DI deployed 88 international observers from 17 countries, including electoral, regional and political experts. DI's observer teams witnessed voting in 25 of the 27 governorates. For both elections, DI made the decision not to deploy observers to all 27 governorates because of security and logistical concerns.

On January 8, 2015, a newly formed HEC announced dates for the election of members of the House of Representatives ("House"), the first legislative election to take place since the promulgation of the 2014 Constitution and the election of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The HEC scheduled the elections to take place over two phases. Phase 1 was scheduled to occur on March 22 and 23, and Phase 2 was scheduled for April 26 and 27.

On January 15, DI applied for accreditation from the HEC to observe the House election. On January 25, the HEC announced that it had accredited DI and four other international organizations. In late February, DI deployed a team to begin observing the early stages of the electoral process.

In March 2015, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) ruled that elements of two key laws of the electoral legal framework, the Boundary Delimitation Law and the House of Representatives Law, were inconsistent with the 2014 Constitution. Specifically, the SCC found that some of the individual districts designated in the Boundary Delimitation Law violated constitutional provisions guaranteeing fair representation of the population and equitable representa-

tion of voters. In another case, the SCC found that the prohibition against Egyptians with a second nationality from registering to be candidates violated their right to participate in “public life” and the political process. Subsequent rulings in March 2015 by the Administrative Court resulted in an indefinite postponement of the electoral process and ultimately in a nullification of all HEC decisions pertaining to the House election. Reportedly, a third law, the Law on the Exercise of Political Rights, is also being amended. The HEC cannot set a new election schedule until all three of the revised laws have been officially promulgated.

As of the date of this report, DI is not operating in Egypt and is awaiting the rescheduling of election dates before re-initiating its observation of the election process. This is not a final report and does not include a comprehensive review of all aspects of the electoral process. DI is issuing this interim report for the benefit of all stakeholders in Egypt’s elections as they begin again the difficult work of organizing and participating in national legislative elections. DI respectfully requests that stakeholders consider these recommendations in their effort to strengthen and improve the House electoral process once that process has recommenced.

## Methodology

After each of the previous two electoral processes, DI released reports detailing the findings of its comprehensive observation missions. In both cases, DI raised serious concerns about the political environment. For example, limits on freedom of expression that hindered the universal exercise of political rights substantially affected the climate in which these elections were conducted.

In preparation for the previously scheduled House of Representatives election, DI deployed a core team of nine international experts, including subject-matter experts and political analysts, to Egypt for approximately two months. DI planned to maintain a core team of experts in Cairo while dispatching teams of professional analysts throughout Egypt to gather information regarding the electoral process before and on election days for each of the two stages of the election. In addition to core team members, DI also planned to deploy additional observers throughout the country before each election day to observe electoral proceedings.

Maintaining the continuity of DI’s mission in Egypt was a challenge. Most DI personnel who travelled to Egypt were granted only a single-entry business visa valid for 30 days in country.<sup>2</sup> Had the process gone forward as planned, given that core team members and observers would need to remain in Egypt for significantly more than one month to observe and assess a multi-stage election, the reluctance of Egyptian authorities to provide visas of appropriate type and sufficient duration created logistical challenges and would have hindered the ability of the election observation mission to access and observe longer-term aspects of the electoral process. DI

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<sup>2</sup> Two DI personnel were able to obtain visas of longer duration.

hopes that the Egyptian government will provide all international observers with visas of appropriate type and duration in the future, preferably six-month, multiple-entry business visas.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the constraints due to visas of insufficient duration, DI was able to hold more than 50 meetings with government entities, CSOs, political parties and movements, independent candidates, international organizations, and embassies. During DI's relatively brief time in country, team members met with stakeholders in Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, Luxor, and Qena governorates.

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<sup>3</sup> Entering Egypt also briefly became a concern for DI. In January 2015, a DI team member with a valid business visa was denied entry into Egypt at Cairo's airport. After Egyptian officials interceded, the team member was ultimately allowed into the country. DI has received no explanation of the reason for this initial refusal to grant entry.

# THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

## Electoral Laws

During 2014 Egypt issued three laws to govern the House election. In June 2014, in one of his final acts as interim President, President Adly Mansour issued the Law on the Exercise of Political Rights (Law No. 45 of 2014) and the House of Representatives Law (Law No. 46 of 2014). The Law on the Exercise of Political Rights, which replaced a previous law of the same name that had been in force since 1956, covered voter eligibility, the competencies of the HEC, the establishment of the voter database, provisions governing campaigning and campaign finance, voting and vote counting, and electoral offenses. The House of Representatives Law established the electoral system for the House (see box below) and established the criteria for candidate eligibility, including the provision requiring that a candidate possess Egyptian nationality only, a provision that the SCC later invalidated.

In December 2014, President Sisi issued the third key piece of electoral legislation, the Boundary Delimitation Law (Law No. 202 of 2014), which established four electoral districts for lists of candidates and 237 electoral districts for individual candidates. The SCC, however, subsequently found that some of these individual districts violated the constitutional provision requiring “fair representation of the population and governorates” and “the equitable representation of voters” (Article 102 of the 2014 Constitution). In July 2015, President Sisi issued the new Boundary Delimitation Law and is expected to issue amended versions of the other two key laws shortly. At the time of this report, however, only the Boundary Delimitation Law has been released publicly.

## Candidate Registration Period

The candidate registration period took place between February 8 and 19. Initially, registration was supposed to have ended on February 17, but the HEC extended the deadline to allow more candidates to finalize paperwork and complete the medical tests necessary to run. The HEC reported that it approved the candidacy of a total of 6,899 individuals, including 1,290 list candidates and 5,609 individual district candidates.<sup>4</sup>

The HEC did not report on the candidates that it rejected. News reports from around the country, however, reported anecdotally on reasons for rejection. These reasons included failure to obtain a medical clearance (e.g., because of evidence of illegal drug use), failure to provide a

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<sup>4</sup> Egypt State Information Service, “HEC announces number of approved candidates in coming House elections,” <http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Templates/Articles/tmpArticles.aspx?ArtID=90860#.VVSbXdpVikq>.

certificate of educational qualifications, failure to provide proof of completed obligatory military service or of an exemption from that obligation, and failure to provide other required documentation. Those who were rejected were given three days to appeal the HEC decisions. The requirement for candidates to receive medical clearance is unnecessarily burdensome. Moreover, it is regrettable that the Constitution requires an education requirement to run for office as this could disqualify many otherwise eligible Egyptians from participating as candidates.<sup>5</sup>

Civil society organizations (CSOs) that observed the candidate registration process did not report any major violations of this process. The most frequently cited concern by CSOs and political actors was about the medical clearance required for candidate eligibility. The exams were expensive and reportedly precluded some individuals from running, particularly young people. Moreover, there was little clarity about the specific requirements for passing the medical exam and acquiring a clearance.

Although there are quotas for representation of women and other groups, these quotas are assigned only to the list seats and not individual seats where most of the seats exist, leaving the quota requirements low. HEC statements indicate that an extremely small number of women candidates registered as candidates.<sup>6</sup> The list system similarly offers quotas for other marginalized or minority groups, including Christians, persons with disabilities, youth, Egyptian citizens residing abroad, and persons designated as “workers” or “farmers.” Yet, these quotas are unlikely by themselves to meaningfully increase the diversity in the House.

## Individual Candidates

Some individual candidates applied to run as independents while other individual candidates had party affiliations. The election was postponed, however, before there was a chance to see the role that parties might play in supporting individual candidates and whether party affiliation would have an impact on races. Many candidates, regardless of affiliation, have a large presence in their communities, both socially and politically, with established networks, family names, and financial resources to support their bid for a seat in the House.

## Political Parties

When it became clear that the elections would be postponed, many political party members told DI they were not surprised. In fact, given the long delay in scheduling the elections, the increasingly restrictive environment—including selective application of the protest law—and the focus of many Egyptians on security and stability, many political parties predicted extended

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<sup>5</sup> Article 102 of the Egyptian Constitution requires that all House candidates hold at least a certificate of basic education.

<sup>6</sup> Cairo Post, “298 women to run in parliamentary elections: HEC,” <http://www.thecairopost.com/news/138151/news/298-women-to-run-in-parliamentary-elections-hec>.

delay or even cancellation of the election altogether. For other political stakeholders, these House elections never mattered in the first place. They believed that because of the restrictive environment in which they were expected to occur and the design of the electoral system, these elections could not result in a House of Representatives that would be truly representative of the range of political opinions in Egypt. For many Islamist groups, such as the once-powerful Freedom and Justice Party, these elections are the final step in an unjust political roadmap that never afforded them a genuine opportunity to participate.<sup>7</sup> For the sake of human rights and democratic principles, other secular or left-leaning parties saw active boycott as their only option. Although some of these political parties previously participated in the political dialogue around election law amendments, they have now returned to their prior stance of boycotting. Since June 30, 2013, the political space in which parties can operate as a practical matter has narrowed significantly, pushing many out of formal engagement with the state, whether by force or by choice.

Among the political parties that remain engaged, there are two broad groupings, distinguishable based on their response to the election law amendment process. One group calls for larger reform that goes beyond the SCC's findings of unconstitutionality. This group wants to see a more representative electoral system, and they are unhappy with the proposed amendments. The second group advocates for minimal reforms; they support essentially only amendments necessary to address the SCC's constitutional objections. This group suggests that this approach is more likely to move things forward faster and lead to earlier elections.

## Lists

The HEC approved a total of seven lists, most of which included a combination of non-party and political party representatives. During DI's presence in Egypt, the *Fi Hob Masr* (For the Love of Egypt) list was perceived as the most powerful. Many stakeholders and analysts suggested that *Fi Hob Masr's* main competitive advantage was that it was the one list with tacit state support. Some stakeholders claimed that candidates or parties that sought to form or join other lists were pressured into dropping out. It remains to be seen, once the electoral process has recommenced, whether there will be any significant shifting of alliances or changes in the composition of these lists.

## The Challenge of Ensuring Constitutionality

Following the initial SCC decision, a legislative amendment committee formed by Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehleb began deliberating about necessary revisions of electoral legislation. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ibrahim al-Heneidy chaired the committee, which included govern-

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<sup>7</sup> The Egyptian Government designated the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization in December 2013, leaving the Freedom and Justice Party in a precarious situation given its affiliation. The Party has been banned from running in parliamentary elections. A court ordered the Party's dissolution in August 2014. See <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/08/09/top-egypt-court-dissolves-fjp/>.

ment officials and legal scholars. As of the date of this report, the committee had reportedly submitted revised versions of all three electoral laws to the President, the Prime Minister and to the State Council's legislative department for review.<sup>8</sup> Only the Boundary Delimitation Law has been issued.

One of the greatest challenges that Egyptian legislative drafters faced is establishing an electoral legal framework that is constitutional in all respects. In addition to redrawing electoral boundaries, so that they pass constitutional muster regarding equality of size and fairness of representation, new districts should not dilute or disenfranchise cohesive communities through gerrymandering or other unfair manipulation of electoral boundaries. Another constitutional issue that drafters have had to address is the SCC-required elimination of the ban on candidates holding dual nationalities.

Several stakeholders said they were pleased that the SCC had issued these rulings when it did and expressed the hope that the ruling now would eliminate the possibility that a later case would result in the dissolution of the House once it has been seated. However, it is not entirely possible to ensure against rulings of unconstitutionality in the future, nor is it advisable to suggest that post facto review should be eliminated. The threat of possible dissolution of the House in the future remains a significant concern. Under the current legal system, electoral laws may be subject to constitutional review after promulgation when challenged by a litigant with legal standing. This means that the electoral laws currently being revised could be declared unconstitutional in the future, including after a House has been elected. The SCC could potentially then compel the dissolution of the House, as in fact took place as recently as June 2012 following an SCC decision regarding the law that governed the election of the sitting lower house of Parliament.<sup>9</sup> Since that time, Egypt has been without a legitimate legislature and all laws have been issued by decree. Some have called for enabling the SCC to rule on the constitutionality of draft electoral laws before they are enacted. International practice with this sort of a constitutional review system varies, but in any event it would not eliminate entirely the possibility of a challenge to these laws after the fact if there were a claim, for example, that the laws were being interpreted or enforced in an unconstitutional manner.

In response to such concerns, the Egyptian government has reportedly finalized draft legislation that would protect the House from dissolution if the SCC finds an election law unconstitutional in the future. News reports have quoted legal scholars and political figures criticizing this new law as contrary to the Constitution and reminiscent of former President Mohamed Morsi's

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<sup>8</sup> Ahram Online, "Egypt rejects opposition's suggested amendments to election laws," <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/132363/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-rejects-oppositions-suggested-amendments-to-.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) ordered the dissolution of the lower house, the People's Assembly, in June 2012 in accordance with the SCC's decision (SCAF Decree 350/2012). Then-President Mohamed Morsi attempted to re-establish the People's Assembly in July 2012 (Decree 11/2012), but the SCC declared this act unconstitutional and blocked its execution.

attempts to issue decrees immunizing the Shura Council and his own authority from constitutional scrutiny.<sup>10</sup>

## Stakeholder Participation in the Amendment Process

Although the government's priority in the amendment process has been to focus on the SCC's rulings, the interests of many other stakeholders are much broader. When the House Law was issued in June 2014, for example, CSOs and political parties from across the political spectrum expressed concerns about the new electoral system. Their criticism focused in particular on the large ratio of individual seats to list seats, which is likely to weaken the influence of political parties in the House. While Egypt has employed a mixed electoral system with individual and list seats since 2011, the system for the upcoming parliamentary elections shifts the balance by reducing the proportion of list seats. The emphasis on individual candidates will likely have a negative effect on political party development. Some critics argue that the legislative electoral system reflects a return to Mubarak-era legislatures, which were characterized by patronage networks, personal economic interests, personality politics, and weak, fragmented opposition.

### **The House of Representatives Electoral System**

The electoral system established in 2014 called for a 567-member House, with 420 members elected from 237 individual districts, only 120 members to be elected from lists running in four large districts, and up to 27 members to be appointed by the President. The electoral framework allowed both party and non-party members to run for individual seats and on lists. The lists include quota requirements for women, Christians, youth, persons with disabilities, persons designated as "workers" or "farmers," and Egyptians living abroad. There are no such quota requirements or other protections for these groups regarding candidacies in individual districts.

Unlike traditional list systems, the list portion of the mixed system in Egypt is not a basis for any form of proportional representation. In proportional representation electoral systems, seats are allocated based on the proportion of votes that each list receives. But in Egypt the list that obtains a majority of votes in the first round or run off will win all the available seats in that district. The Boundary Delimitation Law as amended after the SCC decision does not reportedly propose significant changes to this system, except for an increase in the number of individual seats in the House.

As has historically been the case in Egypt, the President is authorized to appoint a number of House members (up to 5 percent of the number of elected members). This presidential power

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<sup>10</sup> Mada Masr, "Laws passed to protect parliament from dissolution," <http://www.madamasr.com/news/politics/law-passed-protect-parliament-dissolution>.

violates a basic democratic standard by compromising the separation between the executive and the legislature.

Several political party representatives criticized the system and argued instead for a system in which 50 percent or more of the seats would be elected based on lists. Some stakeholders have also expressed concern that lists would be elected on a winner-take-all rather than a proportional basis. The list that obtains a majority of votes in the first round or run off will win all the available seats in that district. This system is essentially without parallel in modern electoral systems. Unlike traditional proportional representation list systems, the list system in Egypt is not a vehicle to enable political minorities or opposition views to be represented in the House. Moreover, the current winner-take-all electoral list system would seem to favor lists with more resources or lists that may be preferred by the state.

The lack of participation of stakeholders in the electoral law amendment process has left many of them feeling frustrated. Although the legislative redrafting committee held dialogues with political parties and accepted proposals for a more sweeping reform of the electoral system, some stakeholders have expressed dissatisfaction, publicly and to DI, with the apparent lack of consideration that the committee gave their proposals.<sup>11</sup> To date, the amendment process appears to represent a lost opportunity not only for consensus building among electoral stakeholders but also for a chance to implement broader reforms of the electoral system.

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<sup>11</sup> The legislative redrafting committee rejected many recommendations for amendments to the broader electoral legal framework, including those put forward by a group of 32 political parties. Ahram Online, "Egypt rejects opposition's suggested amendments to election laws,"

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/132363/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-rejects-oppositions-suggested-amendments-to-.aspx>.

# THE EFFECT OF THE ELECTION DELAY

Many, though not all, political party and political movement stakeholders accepted the electoral delay and indicated that it could give them an opportunity to better prepare or to recruit new candidates. It remains to be seen, however, whether larger, better-funded, and better-connected political parties or movements gain a greater advantage from delay than smaller parties and individual candidates. Smaller, less well-funded candidates and parties may have greater difficulty re-mobilizing their supporters and resources.

It also remains unclear whether domestic and international observer organizations that have obtained accreditation will have to reapply for accreditation for themselves as organizations and for each individual observer of that organization. Particularly in the case of many domestic observer organizations, having to begin the accreditation application process all over again would be particularly burdensome.

## Civil Society Organization Electoral Activities

The civil society sector has become more polarized due to the poor human rights climate in Egypt today. Before the election delay, DI met with some CSOs that had begun or had planned to monitor the electoral process in the lead up to the elections. This monitoring focused on the candidate registration process, media coverage, adherence to the campaign expenditure ceiling, the role of the state apparatus, use of religious slogans in campaigns, and election-related violence. These CSOs, however, tended to be broadly supportive of the government and its policies, or at least were not publicly perceived as anti-government. Other CSOs indicated that they did not enjoy the same space and freedom to operate and therefore did not seek or receive observer accreditation from the HEC. Nonetheless, many CSOs that are not officially observing were closely following the process informally.

To gain accreditation, domestic observer groups had to provide proof of registration with the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MSS) and of prior observer experience and to submit online applications for each individual observer. Observer groups noted that this application process was onerous and that they were given only 10 days to complete the process. Several groups noted that 10 days was insufficient even to obtain an official certificate from MSS affirming their status, let alone to comply with the remaining registration requirements. Also, several accredited organizations that attempted to register individual observers said that they received a signifi-

cant number of rejected applications. In some cases, the rejections were due to technical issues such as an improper photograph. In other cases, the rejections were not adequately explained.

CSOs that applied for accreditation noted some improvements in the procedure in comparison to previous electoral cycles. Most notably, accredited observer groups received their accreditation badges at least one month before the start of the March 2015 polling days. By receiving badges much further in advance in comparison to previous elections, observer groups in turn had more time to deliver badges to observers stationed throughout the governorates.

## Media Coverage

The recent criminal charging and detention of a number of Egyptian and international journalists, bloggers, and other media professionals has had a chilling effect on the operation of the Egyptian media in general. In a recent Reporters Without Borders Press Index, Egypt ranked 158 out of 180 countries.<sup>12</sup> There appears to be a large degree of self-censorship among media, with several outlets softening or avoiding criticism and some journalists opting to leave the field altogether.

Many stakeholders expressed strong opinions about Egyptian media. They felt that the media showed strong bias, either for the government or certain political parties and entities aligned with the government, and against political stakeholders who are perceived to be opposed to the current government. Many rights-focused CSOs noted fiercely negative press coverage of their organizations and their work. Several stakeholders complained that the media was unwilling to air their views or allow them the opportunity to appear in broadcast or print media.

In its coverage of elections and the election delay, mainstream Egyptian media reflected the perplexing nature of the political scene following the announcement of the delay. Although they did not include the views of outlawed groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood or of disfavored political movements or parties, the media did address the delay from different points of view. Newspapers published opinion articles and interviews that expressed the concerns of many political forces. The debate was at times robust. After the delay was announced, for example, a newspaper article by Mohamed Abo El Ghar, President of the Egyptian Social Democratic Party and a prominent political figure, entitled “The Illusory Parliament” claimed that President Sisi did not in fact want a parliament at the present time. The article triggered a fierce debate among political forces, albeit only among those permitted to exist and function by the state.

## The High Election Commission

The High Election Commission faced enormous challenges during the electoral process. In addition to updating a voter registry of more than 54 million eligible voters, the HEC had to develop procedures for the registration of thousands of candidates. Complicating the candidate

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<sup>12</sup> Reporters without Borders, “2015 World Press Freedom Index,” <http://index.rsf.org/#/>.

registration procedure further, the HEC had to react quickly to a January 2015 Administrative Court decision mandating that all prospective candidates pass a medical examination and obtain medical clearance. Based on a March 2015 decision of the Administrative Court, the HEC will now technically have to start from “square one” in mobilizing personnel and resources for the next election.

When the electoral process restarts, better communication between the HEC and observer organizations will be critically important. Strong communication is particularly important in matters where the HEC has denied accreditation requests or other reasonable requests of observer organizations, media, and other stakeholders. As has also been the case in recent elections, all Egyptians and others with Internet access have benefitted from the HEC’s excellent website, which includes relevant laws, HEC decisions, press releases, and timeline information regarding the election.

Although the electoral process was terminated before there was much opportunity to address the issue, the HEC has an obligation to engage in comprehensive voter education to explain to the electorate how to vote and the role of the House in the Egyptian government. No entity is better positioned than the HEC to provide voters with this key information.

## The Current Political and Legal Context

An assessment of the status of civil and political rights in a country is an essential part of electoral observation. Despite the fact that Egypt is confronting violent groups within its borders, demonstrated by the variety and number of terrorist attacks, including the assassination of Egypt’s Prosecutor General Hisham Barakat, security concerns must not be used to justify overly broad laws that punish peaceful protest and dissent. Judicial decisions that punish persons for peacefully exercising their civil and political rights or that result in the detention and sentencing of criminal defendants *en masse* without due process must likewise be avoided. This fight against terrorism should also not be used as a pretext to stifle a vibrant and free civil society sector.

Important rights necessary for genuine electoral democracy remain overly restricted in Egypt. Repressive and selectively enforced laws such as the 2013 Protest Law and the 2002 NGO law, continue to chill the freedoms necessary for robust democratic participation and debate. There has been an increase in self-censorship by many political and electoral stakeholders. As of May 2015, more than 400 NGOs have reportedly been shut down for alleged ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>13</sup>

In February, the so-called Terrorist Entities Law (Law No. 8 of 2015) was issued. It defines terrorist entities using broad, ambiguous and subjective language that can be politicized and

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<sup>13</sup> Daily News Egypt, “Ministry of Solidarity bans 50 NGOs, replaces 27 board of directors,” <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/05/26/ministry-of-solidarity-bans-50-ngos-replaces-27-board-of-directors/>.

used in a discretionary manner. Egypt's cabinet is also discussing another anti-terrorism law. It has subsequently been revised by decree. As it stands in its current draft, it reportedly has many controversial elements, including a large fine for journalists if they are found to contradict the state's official account of any armed attack. Journalists could find themselves subject to prison if they cannot afford to or refuse to pay the fine.

Given these laws and their potential discretionary application, many Egyptian stakeholders believe that the crackdown on freedom of expression, which has been widely acknowledged within the international community, is continuing or even worsening. As a result, many NGOs are careful to temper strong criticism of the state, the government, and its policies, in order to minimize the risk of harassment or prosecution for expressing views that challenge the state's policies or contradict its narrative.

Since the presidential election, new legal restrictions reportedly intended to combat the foreign funding of terrorism but that could be applied to punish peaceful NGOs have placed additional pressure on dissenting voices. Organizations that were able to train candidates and work on voter education activities in anticipation of the 2015 House elections tended to promote messages that were in line with, or at least not in conflict with, the dominant narrative regarding the state of affairs in Egypt today. Other civil society organizations that have expressed strong opposition to the government and some of its policies were denied the space and opportunity to take as active a role in the electoral process and claimed to have faced harassment from the state.<sup>14</sup>

At present, meaningful political opposition is virtually nonexistent in Egypt. Once-strong movements and political parties, including most Islamist political parties and several popular movements, such as the April 6 Youth Movement that played a key role in the ouster of Mubarak in 2011, have been silenced. Opponents of the government have been arrested; courts have ordered dissolution of their organizations; and an orchestrated campaign equating dissent with "terrorism" is supported by much of Egyptian media. Several prominent political figures and civil society leaders have reportedly been placed on lists restricting their travel outside Egypt.

Judicial decisions also continue to chill diverse participation in public affairs. The punishment of persons opposed to the government, including through mass criminal convictions without due process, and through the ongoing imprisonment of rights activists, journalists, students, and others for exercising their rights in a peaceful manner, make participation in the political process by many who oppose the government virtually impossible. The killing of Socialist Popular Alliance Party member Shaimaa al-Sabbagh during a peaceful protest on January 24 by a police officer, who was later convicted of a lesser charge akin to manslaughter in her death, and the subsequent criminal charging of witnesses to the killing for purported violation of the law

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<sup>14</sup> International Service for Human Rights, "Egypt: Cease harassment of Cairo Institute and other human rights NGOs," <http://www.ishr.ch/news/egypt-cease-harassment-cairo-institute-and-other-human-rights-ngos>.

governing protests have caused significant outrage among many stakeholders and ordinary Egyptians.

The election delay provides Egypt's leaders with an opportunity to address these concerns before the process recommences. In the course of re-examining and revising electoral framework laws, Egyptian leaders should review and revise laws that unduly constrain fundamental civil and political rights in accordance with the Egyptian Constitution and international conventions to which Egypt is a party and international human rights obligations that they themselves have agreed to uphold.<sup>15</sup> In accordance with Egyptian law, Egyptian judicial and political leaders should modify or reverse onerous judicial decisions against defendants exercising their rights peacefully, to ensure freedom for diverse movements, parties, and viewpoints during the restarted House electoral process. Doing so will help ensure the election of a more representative House of Representatives.

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

After its observation missions to both the constitutional referendum and the presidential election in 2014, Democracy International made a number of recommendations concerning the political and electoral context. Among other things, DI urged the Egyptian government to end its crackdown on dissenting political voices and to affirm the rights and freedoms articulated in Egypt's new constitution. Unfortunately, however, as highlighted in this report, the climate for political participation has deteriorated rather than improved.

After the presidential election, DI also recommended that the Egyptian government examine the legal limitations on candidate and voter eligibility and consider eliminating those that unreasonably exclude citizens from political life. DI hopes that the election law amendments will address some of these concerns.

In advance of the upcoming House of Representatives elections, DI respectfully offers the following recommendations:

## 1. Civil and Political Rights

In accordance with international legal standards and the Egyptian Constitution, Egyptian authorities should take steps to revise laws unduly restricting civil and political rights of individuals, which impact negatively on political entities, civil society organizations, and the media. Within the bounds of Egyptian law, judicial officials and law enforcement officials should reconsider verdicts that have resulted in the imprisonment of persons and the punishment of organizations for peacefully exercising their rights.

## 2. Electoral Boundaries

It is essential that electoral boundaries not only adhere to constitutional requirements requiring fairness and equitability but also that they ensure that groups within Egyptian society are not prevented from gaining seats through "gerrymandering" or the unfair separation of cohesive communities into minority status within distinct electoral districts. The factors that were used to determine the newly issued district boundaries should be nondiscriminatory and made transparent.

## 3. Electoral System Reform

The current system of closed absolute lists and the high percentage of individual seats weakens political parties and is likely to result in a less representative House. DI recommends a list system based on proportional representation and an increase in the proportion of seats elect-

ed through such lists. If those changes are not made before the upcoming legislative elections, the new House of Representatives should revisit and revise the laws governing the electoral system as soon as possible. DI also recommends that all House seats should be elected and that the constitutional provision for presidential appointment of legislators be eliminated.

## 4. Stakeholder Participation in the Legal Drafting Process

Authorities should encourage and seriously consider input from all political actors regarding the development and enforcement of electoral laws and decisions.

## 5. Inclusion of Women and Minorities

Quotas in the current electoral list system do not go far enough to increase the diversity of participation in the system as a whole. All electoral stakeholders should do more to encourage and promote candidacies by women, including candidacies by women for individual districts, as a step toward ensuring a more representative House and a greater role for women in all facets of the democratic discourse. More needs to be done to institutionalize equality in all aspects of society by, for example, combatting sexual harassment and providing an enabling environment for the growth of civil society organizations advocating for women's rights. All Egyptian stakeholders should also do more to encourage and promote inclusion in all aspects of the political and electoral process for youth, religious minorities, ethnic/tribal minorities, and others who have been traditionally excluded from the political process.

## 6. Domestic Observer Accreditation

The HEC should reconsider the current two-part system for registering domestic observer organizations and their individual observers. Streamlining the entire process within the HEC would reduce the burden on domestic observer organizations. Criteria for accreditation of individual observers and observer organizations should be clear and objective. Organizations should be allowed adequate time to complete the organizational and individual application processes. Domestic organizations that have chosen not to register with the MSS should be given the opportunity to register as observers if they meet the other criteria required of domestic election observation organizations.

## 7. Candidate Eligibility

The requirement for candidates to receive medical clearance is burdensome, unnecessary, and inconsistent with international legal standards, and it should be eliminated. If medical clearances are to be required nonetheless, standards for obtaining clearances should be clear, fair, and uniformly applied. Prospective candidates should be given a full opportunity to challenge denials of medical clearance. Similarly, the constitutional requirement for candidates to meet formal educational requirements should be amended, since it unfairly denies many otherwise qualified Egyptians the opportunity to run for office and unreasonably limits democratic choice for Egyptian voters.

## 8. Electoral Delay

It has now been more than three years since Egypt has had an elected national legislature. Each time an election in Egypt is postponed, it runs the risk of weakening the legitimacy of the process and increasing voter apathy. Understanding that it was the court's invalidation of the election laws that led to the current postponement, DI encourages authorities to make every reasonable effort to ensure that elections take place as scheduled once a new timeline has been established and announced. Officials should make every reasonable effort to ensure that elections be held as soon as possible after amendments to the legal framework are complete.

## 9. Reacquiring Observer Accreditation

The HEC should ensure that domestic and international observers that have obtained accreditation might reacquire it easily, both for organizations and individual applicants. Additional organizations and individual observers should also be given an opportunity to apply for observation status when the electoral process has restarted.

## 10. Reauthorizing Candidate Medical Clearances

If the medical clearance requirement is to be applied, to the extent possible, candidates who successfully registered to run during the previous electoral process should not be required to undergo new medical examinations or resubmit other required documentation that they have already submitted.

## 11. Access

In accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, the Egyptian government and electoral authorities must guarantee all accredited observers full access to the entire electoral process. Observers must be given visas of appropriate type and sufficient duration to observe all stages of the process. Officials should ensure that international observers with proper visas are allowed entry into Egypt.

## 12. Media Fairness and Freedom

Both state and privately owned media should be encouraged to provide space for diverse political viewpoints, including viewpoints critical of the electoral process overall and of the government in general. Media should respect the role of peaceful NGOs in promoting the protection of rights and should cease unfounded attacks on the civil society sector or individual organizations. Journalists, including social media users such as bloggers, should not be punished for the peaceful exercise of their rights.

## 13. Voter Education

Particularly given the complicated nature of the House election and its mixed electoral system, the HEC should be empowered to conduct a thorough program of voter education that at-

tempts to reach citizens through a variety of platforms, including Internet, broadcast and print media.

# LOOKING FORWARD

Unless there are significant changes, it appears that only a narrow range of voices will likely be heard in the upcoming legislative elections, once they finally take place.

Even those candidates, parties, and movements that are able and choose to participate and who express some criticism of the basic nature of the current government are not likely to win seats under an electoral system and environment that makes little room for opposition voices and that rewards local power brokers and well-funded state supporting lists and coalitions. By making the process more inclusive, Egypt would be making the House more representative and, thus, more legitimate in the minds of the Egyptian people.

DI urges the Egyptian government to protect the rights and freedoms guaranteed by Egypt's Constitution to all citizens and to refrain from using security as a justification for extreme limits on freedoms of expression, assembly and association. Furthermore, we strongly encourage Egyptian authorities to seek to include the full range of views in the political process, including those who oppose the government, and to encourage meaningful input from a wide range of stakeholders on amendments to the legal framework.

Democracy International hopes that this report and its recommendations will assist Egypt's leaders and other electoral stakeholders as they attempt to establish a truly democratic House of Representatives that will reflect the views, the concerns, and the will of the Egyptian people for many years to come.

# ANNEX A: TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS JANUARY-MAY 2015

*This timeline provides a representative sample of contextual events and developments related to the election law amendment process during DI's formal in-country observation.*

## 2015

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|----------------------|--|
| <b>January 8</b>     | HEC announces legislative election timeline with first voting dates in March 2015.                       |
| <b>January 12</b>    | President Sisi suggests to political parties that they form one unified list.                            |
| <b>January 20</b>    | State Council requires medical check-up for candidates.  |
| <b>January 24</b>    | Shaimaa El-Sabbagh shot dead during peaceful protest.  |
| <b>January 25</b>    | Fourth anniversary of the 2011 uprising marked by protests.  |
| <b>January 25</b>    | HEC accredits 63 domestic and 5 international organizations.   |
| <b>January 26</b>    | At least 20 people die and 516 are arrested after protests associated with January 25 <sup>th</sup> .    |
| <b>January 29</b>    | At least 26 killed, over 100 wounded in North Sinai attacks.   |
| <b>February 1</b>    | A presidential decree leads to the deportation of jailed Australian Al Jazeera journalist Peter Greste.  |
| <b>February 2</b>    | A court sentences 183 alleged supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood to death for killing police officers. |
| <b>February 7</b>    | The Socialist Popular Alliance Party decides to boycott the elections due to a list of unmet demands.    |
| <b>February 8</b>    | Clashes between police and football ultras kill 27.  |
| <b>February 8-19</b> | Candidate registration period  |
| <b>February 15</b>   | Islamic State releases video showing beheading of Christian Egyptians in Libya.                          |
| <b>February 23</b>   | Activist Alaa Abd El Fattah is sentenced to five years in jail.  |

- February 23** Health Ministry announces that 8203 persons completed the medical check-up.
- February 23** HEC announces registration of 5609 individual candidates and seven lists.
- February 23** Social Solidarity Minister Ghada Waly announces the dissolution of 169 NGOs with alleged links to the Muslim Brotherhood.
- February 24** Sisi issues the new Terrorist Entities Law.
- February 25** Administrative Court receives more than 200 appeals related to HEC decisions on candidate registration.
- March 1** SCC rules that a legal provision defining the individual system districts is unconstitutional. In response, HEC releases a press acknowledging the ruling and indicating that it would abide by it. HEC also states that it will prepare a new election timetable once the necessary legal amendments are made. The Presidency also issues a statement urging that legal amendments be finalized within one month.
- March 2** Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehleb orders the formation of a committee tasked with drafting legal amendments.
- March 3** Administrative Court confirms postponement of elections by officially providing for a halt to the HEC's preparations.
- March 4** HEC announces that candidate registration documents will be kept on file.
- March 5** Minister of Interior and seven other ministers replaced in cabinet shuffle.
- March 7** SCC rules that the legal provision banning dual nationals from running as candidates is unconstitutional.
- March 13-15** Economic Development Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh is held.
- March 17** Administrative Court rejects all appeals previously filed regarding candidate registration.
- March 17** Administrative Court nullifies all decisions issued by the HEC regarding parliamentary elections.
- April 2** Legislative Redrafting Committee begins holding a series of public dialogue meetings to gather public input on the amendments.
- April 4** Police raid the headquarters of Radio Horytna without an arrest or search warrant and briefly detain Ahmed Samih, founder of Horytna Radio and Director of the Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies.
- April 4** Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehleb announces in a televised phone call that the first phase of voting will take place before Ramadan.

- April 12** A court sentences 13 Egyptian journalists to life in prison and one to death in the “Rabaa Task Force Case.”
- April 13-14** Some political parties say they may boycott elections due to dissatisfaction with the current proposed amendments.
- April 14** Amendment committee finalizes proposed amendments or versions thereof. Prime Minister Mehleb reviews the amendments and shares them with President Sisi for his approval.
- April 14-15** Egypt’s Cabinet approves a set of proposed amendments and sends the laws to State Council for consideration. This is the beginning of an extended back and forth between the amendment committee, Cabinet, State Council, and the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics.
- April 15** Several political parties criticize the amendment committee for not taking into account their views. Others indicate that they accept the proposed changes and wish to move forward with the elections.
- April 20** A court finds that it lacks the jurisdiction to decide whether the April 6 Youth Movement is a terrorist organization under the new Terrorist Entities Law and refers the case to the Cairo Court of Appeals.
- April 21** A court sentences former president Mohamed Morsi and several other defendants to 20 years in jail for their violent response to protestors in 2012. A new charge is also brought against Morsi.
- April 22** Minister Heneidy announces that elections will not be held before Ramadan due to technical and security issues.
- April 26** Former president Hosni Mubarak phones into a television show. He speaks about Sinai Liberation Day and encourages Egyptians to support their president.
- April 27** Sisi announces that elections will not take place before Ramadan.
- April 28** A court issues a verdict that restricts the right of public employees to strike.
- April 29** A court sentences 71 alleged Muslim Brotherhood supporters to life imprisonment for violence that occurred in 2013.
- April 30** Local NGO releases a statement reporting that at least 883 students have been suspended or expelled from universities in the last two years for reasons relating to their political activities.
- May 1** Amendment committee announces that it has issued explanatory notes on the draft laws that it proposes.

- May 2** A number of political parties begin organizing together to put forward an alternative version of the election laws.
- May 3** A coalition of 30 political parties issues a joint statement refusing to accept the proposed amendments.
- May 4** 20 NGOs condemn the crackdown on civil society associated in large part with the NGO Law.
- May 6** A court sentences television host Ahmed Moussa to three months in jail and gives him a fine for insulting the director of Egypt's Central Auditing Organization.