



# In Brief: Egyptian election 2011

Standard Note: SN/IA/6138

Last updated: 25 November 2011

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## 1 Parliamentary election

Egypt goes to the polls, starting on 28 November 2011 for the first time since the fall of Hosni Mubarak in February. The election will take place in three stages with results due on 13 January. It has been staggered to allow judicial supervision of the votes. Both houses of parliament, the People's Assembly and the Shura, will be elected. Two thirds of the People's Assembly will be elected by proportional representation using party lists and the other third will be elected by first-past-the-post. Half of the individual seats are reserved for professionals and the other half for workers and farmers.

## 2 Parliament's powers

The most important job of the assemblies will be to draft a new Egyptian constitution. This will be done by setting up a 100-member committee, drawn from the parliament, whose role in shaping Egypt's political future will be crucial. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has, however, laid down certain preconditions. These include the maintenance of the Armed Forces' role as guardians of the constitution and the protection of the forces' budgets from parliamentary scrutiny.

As well as setting up the constitutional committee, the parliament will have powers to initiate legislation and oversee the work of the executive. Importantly, the president (or the SCAF) must seek the approval of the People's Assembly to maintain a state of emergency. Presidential powers will remain with the SCAF until a president is elected. The SCAF will be able to initiate and to veto legislation, set public policy, convene and adjourn parliament, and appoint and dismiss the prime minister and other cabinet ministers.

The real balance of power in Egypt will not be clear until the new constitution and a new president have been in place for some time and the institutions have worked together for a while.

## 3 Parties and candidates

There are more than 40 parties and more than 6,000 candidates have registered to run in the election. With such a profusion of parties, and smaller parties concerned about the organisational advantage of the Muslim Brotherhood, many parties formed into blocs to fight

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the election.

The **Democratic Alliance** was a broad grouping of Islamist and secular parties when it was formed, but several parties abandoned it, leaving the **Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice party** dominant. Also still in the Democratic Alliance is Ayman Nour's **Ghad** party.

The **Egyptian Bloc** is a secular grouping composed of the **Free Egyptians** party, the **Egyptian Social Democratic** party and **Tagammu**, or the **National Progressive Unionist** party, among others.

The **Islamist Alliance** was formed by parties who found the Muslim Brotherhood's policies insufficiently conservative and left the Democratic Alliance. The parties are broadly Salafist and include **Nour**, the **Building and Development** party and **Authenticity**.

The **Revolution Continues Alliance** is a collection of parties that split from the Egypt Bloc because they wanted to pursue more radical policies. Parties in the bloc include the **Egypt Freedom** party and the **Egyptian Current** party.

Egypt's oldest political party, **Wafd**, a free market secular party is running alone but is not thought to have strong prospects.

The party of former dictator Hosni Mubarak, the **NDP** was disbanded by a court order after his fall, but the ban was overturned in November 2011, and former NDP figures have been allowed to stand. Former NDP members are said to be standing in range of smaller parties, and in the Wafd party, although they are generally keeping a low profile and parties are not advertising their presence. With so much of Egyptian politics depending on connections and client groups, however, ex-NDP members may win considerable influence in the new parliament.

#### **4 Presidential election**

On 22 November, after continuing demonstrations and violence leading to the deaths of over 30 protesters, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) announced that the presidential election would be brought forward by some six months to **June 2012**. Protesters and others had complained that the SCAF was proving reluctant to hand over power to a civilian administration, despite its undertakings. The SCAF also appointed a new prime minister on 25 November, after the resignation of the previous incumbent over the continued unrest. The new prime minister is Kamal al-Ganzuri, who had served as prime minister under Hosni Mubarak. He was not popular with the protesters of Tahrir Square.