

E G Y P T

E L E C T I O N S

Election Dates Finalized

November 28 is the official day when the People's Assembly poll will take place.

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Parties Announce Candidates

Over 1,000 party candidates will contest the November poll.

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Using Street Theater to Educate Voters

Partners in Change will field actors to perform in 27 governorates to raise voter awareness.

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Bloggers Launch Youth GOTV Campaign

Young Egyptians create website to encourage their peers to obtain and use their voter cards.

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Countdown to the Election

On October 21, President Mubarak issued a presidential decree scheduling the People's Assembly election on November 28 and the run-off, if needed, on December 5. Political parties have recently announced the number of candidates they intend to field, although many candidates have been campaigning in earnest since the month of Ramadan (August/September). Thousands of women are also preparing to contest 64 seats that have been reserved as a result of a new quota (see page 4). Meanwhile, the High Electoral Commission (HEC) announced a campaign expenditure ceiling of 200,000 Egyptian pounds for the election and 100,000 pounds for the runoff. These regulations have been viewed as irrelevant by many given reports that some candidates have already spent millions of pounds on their campaigns.

The governing NDP will run candidates for every seat, and has instituted an "electoral college" system in which local and national party leadership select candidates in each district. Before applying to run as an NDP candidate, aspiring parliamentarians must first sign a waiver allowing the Party to withdraw their candidacy if they

are not chosen. This is intended to

prevent unselected candidates from running as independents, a phenomenon that has caused the ruling party embarrassment in the past when these candidates have beaten their officially endorsed rivals. Warnings of a split within the ruling party are looming, with reports that as many as 1,500 members intend to run as independents for fear the party will not choose them as candidates. The NDP was supposed to announce its official candidate list on October 24.

PARTY	CANDIDATES
National Democratic Party	508
Opposition Bloc*	400
Wafd	210
Tagammu	75
Nasserite	60
Social Justice Party	51
Reform and Development Party	18

** Includes the Ghad (Moussa's faction), Ahrar, Shabab Masr, Takaful, Geel, Green Party, and Arab Socialist Party.*

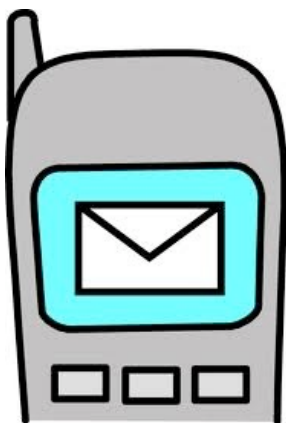




Although the parliamentary election date was only recently announced, candidate campaign posters have been visible throughout the country since September. Above is the campaign poster of a candidate running for the professionals seat in the Mansoura City district.

dubious validity. Meanwhile on October 5, the independent *Al-Dostour* newspaper sacked its outspoken editor-in-chief, Ibrahim Issa, raising protests within the journalistic community. *Al-Dostour* was recently purchased by the newly elected president of the Wafd Party, Al-Sayyid Al-Badawi, and the decision to fire Issa has been considered by some as further evidence of Al-Badawi's links to the ruling regime. It is noteworthy that the Wafd Party is fielding its highest number of candidates since the 1995 parliamentary election.

Later, on October 14 the government shut down four satellite channels under the pretense that they had incited sectarian strife. Lastly and most disturbingly, on October 12 the state-run *Al-Ahram* newspaper wrote that the Ministry of Communications is planning to impose new regulations on mass text messaging, curtailing not only commercial texting, but possibly also the use of text messaging by candidates, activists, and election monitors. The Internet seems to be the only unrestricted outlet and platform for opposition candidates, popular movements and civic activists to get their message out to the public, as the state apparatus tightens its grip on the Egyptian street.



Meanwhile, most opposition parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood, have announced that they will contest the upcoming election despite calls for a boycott by Mohamed El-Baradei's National Association for Change. The Brotherhood declared that it would contest 30 percent of the seats in parliament, including 15 of the women's quota seats. However, many commentators have questioned the group's ability to field such a large number of candidates given increasing pressure from the security services.

Just as the NDP is attempting to exert greater control over the candidate selection process, it appears that the government is also attempting to rein in the media before the elections. Earlier this month, the Orbit satellite channel was forced to cancel *Al-Qahira Al-Youm*, a popular and often controversial political talk show, due to a legal dispute of



The Internet and new media will play an unprecedented role in the November parliamentary election as parties and candidates try to reach out to younger voters. This campaign poster for a Muslim Brotherhood candidate features his blog address at the bottom.

“The coming election can be seen as an opportunity for NGOs to carry out their task [election monitoring] independently according to the legal regulations.”

Dr. Mofeed Shehab, Minister of State for Legal Affairs and Legislative Councils - *Al Ahram*, 10/17/10

Also this month, the Egyptian Coalition for Election Monitoring (ECEM), which recently issued its second report on the electoral process (available at www.mosharka.org), won a court decision to allow it to contact the High Electoral Commission (HEC) directly to obtain monitoring credentials, rather than go through the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR). The NCHR is a semi-official body that has acted as an intermediary between civil society groups and the HEC in the past, with the result that election monitors rarely receive accreditation. While the court’s decision may be a positive

step, it is doubtful that ECEM will receive accreditation from the HEC, which retained final authority over observer accreditation under the old system and has responded by declaring that it will issue the necessary credentials for election observers through the NCHR.

Responding to international and domestic calls for international observation of the parliamentary election, government officials publicly stated their support for domestic observation efforts in order to push back on demands for an international one. Such a response is unprecedented and could indicate that there will be greater access for domestic observers to observe the electoral process in November.

Quote for Concern?

Counselor Mokbel Shaker, Vice President of the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR), stated that the Council will train a cadre of **security officers** and local leaders on how to facilitate the work of civil society organizations while monitoring election. - *Al Wafd*, 10/15/10

NGOs Train on How to Use Street Theater to Educate Voters



Partners in Change (PIC) actors will use street theater to educate and mobilize Egyptian voters in 27 governorates.

From October 12 -16, NDI held a workshop on street theater for the Partners in Change coalition, a group of Egyptian NGOs who are working on a voter education initiative ahead of the upcoming election. The Coalition’s team of ten NDI-trained actors will conduct interactive performances in 27 Egyptian governorates prior to the elections as a way to mobilize and educate citizens on the importance of their vote. The Coalition’s voter education and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) activities are funded by the National Endowment for Democracy

(NED). In addition to street theater, the program will include a citizen monitoring effort using streaming video and online radio, as well as candidate roundtables and debates to encourage citizen participation in the electoral process. Partners in Change conducted the first-ever candidate debates in Egypt prior to the June 2010 Shoura Council election.



Partners in Change (PIC) actors rehearsing scenario during NDI’s street theater training

Bloggers Launch Youth GOTV Campaign



On October 6, NDI's local partner the Bridge Center for Dialogue and Development (Bridge) launched a multimedia youth GOTV campaign which includes a website and promotional videos. With support from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), NDI assisted Bridge in developing the campaign videos and website, www.vote4egypt.com, which provides information for young people about how they can obtain their voter cards and what to do on election day. While Egyptian citizens born after 1982 are automatically registered to vote on their eighteenth birthday, they must go to their local police station to get their voter cards. This intimidating process is deterring many eligible voters from going to get their cards. Bridge's campaign seeks to dispel these fears, and, as a group of prominent Egyptian bloggers, they are employing the latest technology in their effort to reach an increasingly Internet-savvy Egyptian youth population.

NDI Provides Ongoing Support to Domestic Election Observers

With support from USAID, NDI is also working with its key domestic election monitoring partner the Egyptian Association for the Support of Elections (EASD) to upgrade its website, www.egyelections.com, and review the observer deployment plan ahead of the polls. NDI has also responded to requests for technical assistance from other domestic monitoring NGOs, including: Ibn Khaldun, Egyptian Democratic Academy, Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement, and Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. Based on the proposals of these NGOs and other groups interested in fielding election monitors, there could be as many as 12,000 trained domestic election observers throughout Egypt on election day.



New Quota for Women Changes the Face of Egyptian Politics

Egypt's new quota for the upcoming People's Assembly election adds 64 reserved seats for women to the parliament (these seats are split between the existing quota for workers' and professionals' seats). The quota seats are distributed by governorate¹, rather than by district, which means women candidates are competing for only 2 seats that cover as many as 14 or more districts. Any woman is eligible to run for the quota seats, provided she already qualifies as either a worker or professional candidate, though some parties, namely the ruling NDP have specific internal selection processes for their candidates (see page 1). These governorate-wide quota races are proving to be enormously challenging for women, who do not have the grassroots or party support, visibility or financial means to reach all the voters in their constituency. Many groups are saying the only women who will win in 2010 will be those with money and strong party-backing.

President Mubarak has amended the law on exercising political rights with respect to the new women's quota. Among the amendments introduced:

- a different color will be used for women's quota ballot cards
- separate ballot boxes will be used for women's quota ballots

¹ According to the recently amended law on exercising political rights, there will be 32 women's quota districts – one district for each governorate, except for the governorates of Cairo, Sohag, and Dakahlia that have two districts each.

These challenges, combined with the strain of standing up against social pressures, threats of violence and traditionally held stereotypes about women's role in politics, are causing many women to drop out of the running. Still, the quota will distinguish this election from those past in that at least 64 women will join the next People's Assembly, bringing with them 64 voices and votes that were not there before. In the immediate term, the strongest women candidates need as much technical support as possible to effectively gather volunteers, raise their visibility across their governorates and signal to their parties that they are serious political contenders for future elections.

Women Candidates Hone Public Speaking Skills Through On-Camera Training

During the month of September, NDI brought former CNN international correspondent and communications expert Kelli Arena to Egypt to provide one-on-one consultations to women candidates on message development, public speaking (including on-camera presence) as well as handling criticism from the media and opponents. Arena met with candidates from the NDP, Wafd, Ahrar and Tagammu parties. NDI-Egypt is providing technical support to women candidates running for the People's Assembly, while encouraging parties to enhance the role of women leaders within their parties by running qualified women candidates, and effectively using the quota as a means of increasing their representation in parliament. NDI also organized a networking reception for the alumni from several of NDI's young women's leadership programs, including the Youth of Tomorrow Leaders of Today (YOTLOT) initiative, the Women's Campaign School at Yale University and the Young Women's Leadership Academy (YWLA) to brainstorm with Arena on how they could use their acquired skills to play a role in the upcoming election.

Creative Campaigning



When TOMATOES become a tool for electoral campaigns: In the constituency of Bolak AlDakroun in Cairo, a candidate for the professionals' seat named Abdel Ghany Al Gamal attempted to attract voters by selling tomatoes for only 3 pounds, which is three times less than their real price on the Egyptian market.

Meanwhile, women candidates in Beni Sowif also attempted to win their constituents' support through selling gas tanks, meat, tomatoes and other basic goods at cheaper prices. *Al Ahram*, 10/12/10

The SPY next door: Hanna Sharkawy, a women candidate from the Luxor governorate, put her photo next to the picture of Gomma Al Shawan, a well-known Egyptian intelligence agent, on her campaign posters. With hopes of persuading voters, Sharkawy's campaign posters read: "Mossad's defeater, who demolished the myth of the unbeatable Israeli army, supports his friend's daughter Hanna Sharkawy with all his loyal patriotism to represent Luxor in the People's Assembly." *Al Wafd*, 10/15/10



Youth Organize SHADOW Election: The 6th of April Youth Movement announced that they are going to hold a shadow election on the same day as the official election, in cooperation with other protest movements. This is part of the Movement's "black circle" campaign, which urges citizens to pressure the government to guarantee free and fair elections. *Al Wafd*, 10/15/10

The Election Enigma - Questions Waiting to be Answered

Debates Over Campaign Finance Regulations

In 2005, total campaign expenditures for the People's Assembly election amounted to six billion EGP (approximately \$1 billion USD), according to a study by the Front Center for Political and Economic Studies, and was largely unregulated. Recently, the High Electoral Commission (HEC) announced a campaign expenditure ceiling of 200,000 Egyptian pounds for the 2010 election and 100,000 pounds for the runoff, however media reports are raising concerns that Ministers and high level leaders running for office are already spending millions and abusing their positions for campaign gains:

- The Egyptian Doctors' Syndicate Chairman offered 12 job opportunities and 100 scholarships to his constituents in the districts of Nozha and Al Salam where he is running for the professionals' seat. *Nahdet Masr*, 10/18/10
- The Minister of Social Solidarity used public funds to build three thousand houses and distribute ten thousand cows in the district of Abo Kebeer where he is running for the professionals' seat. *Al Wafd*, 10/18/10

Such reports are stirring debates among Egyptians over whether Ministers and such leaders should resign from their posts before they choose to wage an electoral battle, to ensure the competition is fair.

"Although the polls are just two months away the HEC has taken no action at all to ensure that they will be fair. The HEC might as well be a secret organization. No one knows where it is located. If you want to contact it no one can give you an address or a phone number, a fax or an e-mail."

Tagammu leader Rifaat El-Said,
<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2010/1017/eg6.htm>

Expatriate Voting?

Egyptians living abroad are demanding their right to vote in the upcoming election and have threatened to legally challenge the results of the parliamentary election if they are not allowed to cast their ballots. Government officials such as Dr. Mofeed Shehab, Dr. Ali El Din Hilal and Aisha Abdel Hady affirmed that the constitution grants all Egyptians, including those who are outside the country, the right to participate in elections, but there is no indication that measures are being taken to allow expatriates to vote from abroad in November. Abdel Hady recently stated expatriates will be allowed to vote in the 2011 presidential election. Egyptian expatriates are approximately eight million in number.

Who is Making the Decisions? El-Sherif vs. HEC

While the Higher Election Commission (HEC) is authorized to administer the upcoming election, it is NDP Secretary General Safwat El-Sherif who is making public statements on how the electoral process will be organized. He has been quoted as saying that for the first time ever in the upcoming parliamentary election, registered voters will be able to cast their votes using their national IDs and polling stations will be relocated closer to highly populated areas. While El-Sherif is a high-ranking official in the ruling party, by making these proclamations he is contradicting his own statements about the HEC's independence and undermining public confidence in its authority over the electoral process.