



## Morsy ratifies Shura Council list

PRESIDENT NAMES APPOINTED MEMBERS OF THE SHURA COUNCIL, 75 OUT OF THE 90 NOMINEES ARE NON-ISLAMISTS

By Nouran El-Behairy

President Mohamed Morsy ratified the list of appointed Shura Council members late on Thursday, but several selected members and parties are unwilling to accept their appointments.

The Shura Council is formed of 270 members, 180 of them are elected directly by the people and 90 are appointed by the president.

The 90 presidential appointees include 75 non-Islamists, according to state news agency MENA.

A media spokesperson for the Shura Council said the requisite presidential decree to appoint the proposed members has not been issued yet.

"Many figures like Ayman Nour and Selim El-Awa who were chosen for appointment had reservations about the concept of appointment; maybe that's why the decree isn't issued yet," he said.

He added that the theory behind the appointments is to compensate for the lack of legal and constitutional experts in the council.

"The appointments aim to balance the council. Especially since it will be responsible for legislation, more political and legal figures are needed," he said.

He added that he was waiting for the decree to be sent to the council and be published in the official gazette.

The unfinalised list includes representatives from 17 political parties and movements, 12 Coptic Christians and representatives from Al-Azhar.

Sinai tribes, Bedouins, Nubians, artists and athletes are also represented.

The Shura Council will take over the legislative powers, which are now controlled by the president, if the new constitution is approved.

A mini legal committee was formed following the constitutional

declaration at the end of November, to hold a national dialogue with different political groups. The last round of dialogue was regarding the Shura Council nominations, under the auspices of President Mohamed Morsy.

The committee, headed by Vice President Mahmoud Mekki, received nominations from different parties and civil institutions for Shura Council membership.

However, the National Salvation Front refused to send nominations or to participate in the process.

"The 90 nominees are mostly from parties that participated in the national dialogue, many of them were members of the Constituent Assembly" said Youssry Al-Azabawy, strategic expert at the Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies.

He added that the Shura Council was used in Mubarak's era to reward those who were loyal to him, now it is used to reward those who participated in the national dialogue.

## Badie explains his message

Mohamed Badie, the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood says he was not referring to the military leadership in his weekly message

By Hend Kortam

Mohamed Badie, the Muslim Brotherhood's Supreme Guide, said that he did not offend the leadership of the Egyptian army in his weekly message.

Badie's last message, released as a written statement on Thursday, titled, "The People of Egypt speak for themselves," stirred up some controversy.

The lines that caused a stir part read: "...and the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) describes the people of Egypt in his precious will as the best forces on earth, which means that they are obedient soldiers who need leadership. When there were corrupt leaders, these soldiers followed..."

Youssry Al-Azabawy, strategic expert in Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies (ACPSS) said that the text is directed towards the army. "The esoteric meaning expresses what the Brotherhood and its leadership feel about the army," he said.

Badie released an explanation on Friday saying that there are people who are trying to reproduce the old regime and they are twisting the meaning of words to serve their own purposes. They "will not fool the generous Egyptian people, in the heart of them, is the Egyptian army, which we appreciate and cherish..." Badie's Friday statement said.

Amr Farouk, spokesperson of Al-Wasat Party agreed with Badie's explanation. "I do not think the text refers to the army. I think it is referring to the people," Farouk said.

**Strategic expert**  
Youssry Al-Azabawy said that the text is directed towards the army. "The esoteric meaning expresses what the Brotherhood and its leadership feel about the army"

Al-Azabawy believed that the position of the army is very odd. "The editor-in-chief of Al-Gomhouria was investigated and dismissed and the Supreme Guide says this and nothing happens," he said.

"This is something they (the Muslim Brotherhood) should be envied for. If you or I say something about the army, we can be tried by the military," he said.

The contentious lines came under a section in the statement called, "the Holy Quran immortalises Egypt." Badie quoted verses in the Quran, in which Egypt is mentioned, followed by the prophet's mention of Egypt's soldiers.

Badie called on the media to be accurate, objective, honest and professional. He added that the media should not seek to sensationalise or cause strife between Egyptians.

## Cassation court to decide Mubarak's fate

The former president and his interior minister could be retried with possibilities of increased or reduced sentences



The Court of Cassation is preparing to examine the legal challenges to the sentences of former President Hosny Mubarak and his Minister of Interior Habib El-Adly

By Ahmed Aboul Enein

The Court of Cassation will examine former President Hosny Mubarak and his Minister of Interior Habib El-Adly's challenges against their 25-year prison sentences Sunday.

Mubarak and El-Adly's lawyers are calling on the court to assign the case to a different court and order a retrial. The public prosecution is also challenging the ruling and requesting a retrial in a different court.

The former president and his security chief were sentenced to 25 years in prison for their role in the killing of peaceful protesters during the 25 January uprising. The court found that they could have stopped the killings but did not do so.

Six of El-Adly's top aides, also accused in the same case, were found innocent and acquitted. Both sets of defence lawyers are using these rulings to argue that Mubarak and El-Adly should also be set free. Meanwhile the prosecution demanded the police leader be convicted.

"The court acquitted the assistants to the Minister of Interior of charges it convicted Mubarak and El-Adly on, even though the same evidence was presented against all defendants," the prosecution wrote in its memo.

The prosecution added that the court ignored evidence pointing towards the defendants' guilt as two former Ministers of Interior testified that policemen could not have shot at protesters without their superiors' orders or approval.

The Court of Cassation, the highest court in the land, is also the highest court of appeal. It will decide whether to uphold, reduce, or overturn the sentences delivered by the Cairo Criminal Court or assign a different court to retry the defendants.

The court has so far cancelled all verdicts and ordered retrials for all cases involving former regime officials, citing that the trials had taken place during "severe pressure from public opinion."

Mubarak and El-Adly will not be required to attend the sessions themselves.

## Almost a hundred arrested after Al-Qa'ed Ibrahim clashes

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Soudan stated that the 18 Islamist detainees belonged to separate Islamist groups. He denied that any FJP or Brotherhood members were arrested. "Brotherhood youth follow their leaders' decisions," Soudan said. FJP leaders decided to withdraw from the demonstration around 4 pm Friday to "prevent bloodshed". Despite the withdrawal of all Brotherhood and Salafi demonstrators, Soudan claimed, a minority of Islamists decided to remain.

Political activist Ramy Abdel Gelil, who was present during the clashes, claimed that the police began arresting people at night. He stated the police surrounded Al-Qa'ed Ibrahim Mosque, arresting any passersby who arrived in its vicinity.

"A day which witnessed such violence cannot pass without the police arresting somebody to accuse of all the crimes committed," Abdel Gelil said.

Opposition political parties, including the National Salvation Front

(NSF), denounced the acts of violence committed, adding that none of their members took part in the clashes. NSF spokesperson Hussein Abdel Ghany blamed leaders of the Islamist current for the clashes by charging their supporters against those opposing the constitution, according to state-run Al-Ahram.

Abdel Gelil denied recognising any opposition party members at Friday's clashes. He added that protesters from both sides seemed to be provoking confrontation.

The ministry of health reported at least 77 injuries in light of the clashes.

Former disqualified presidential hopeful Hazem Salah Abu Ismail called upon his supporters to pray the Friday prayers in Al-Qa'ed Ibrahim Mosque Friday. Reuter's reported the Muslim Brotherhood also called upon its members to protest last week's siege when Sheikh Ahmed Al-Mahallawy and his congregation was trapped in the mosque for over 12 hours after urging those praying to vote 'yes' in the referendum last Friday.

## President's assistant announces dialogue initiative

By Fady Salah

Assistant to the president and head of Al-Nour Party Emad Abdel Ghafour announced on Saturday a new initiative for dialogue between different political groups.

The initiative, initially named "Egyptian political work convention," seeks to find a consensus between Egypt's different political groups who currently have severe disagreements.

In an official statement issued by Abdel Ghafour, he called on political groups to start working on the initiative after the result of the

constitutional referendum is announced, regardless of what the result might be.

Sayed Khalifa, high board member of Al-Nour Party, said Ghafour started this initiative as the president's assistant for social communication and not as the head of Al-Nour Party. Khalifa explained that Ghafour had to start a national initiative at this critical period because the current political climate is becoming extremely polarised, threatening the future of Egypt.

Khalifa asserted Al-Nour Party would support the initiative, as it aims

for the good of the Egyptian people.

In his statement, Ghafour called on political groups to consider the initiative as an initial proposal which could be amended to reach complete consensus between everyone. He mentioned that the initiative entails ten main targets, including saving the soul and dignity of Egyptians, protecting money and property, supporting Egyptian interests, respecting elections' results, and renouncing all forms of violence.

Ghafour said the initiative comes at a very crucial time, which requires all the national forces to work cooperatively for the sake of Egypt.

## Timeline of the Doctor's strike



Doctors continued to provide medical care to patients through the partial strike

### 21 September

The Doctors' Union held an extraordinary general assembly and over 1,000 doctors elected a committee to manage the partial strike which they decided will start on 1 October

### 26 September

The committee sent out faxes to hospitals encouraging patients to pick up their prescriptions ahead of the strike.

Throughout the strike Thursday was the day designated for patients to pick up their prescriptions.

### 1 October

The partial strike started. It revolved around offering patients healthcare for free in the internal hospital departments, rather than treatment in the outpatient clinics, where they would be charged.

### 7 October

The doctors decided that the theme of the strike for the second week would be the "free treatment strike."

### 13 October

Strike leaders announced a campaign to collect mass resignations, to be handed in when they reach a minimum of 15,000.

They were never handed in.

### 21 October

The doctors held a large protest outside the Ministry of Health in Downtown Cairo.

They held several smaller marches and protests nationwide to bring attention to their cause.

### 1 November

The doctors held a human chain in Qasr Al-Eini Street. They were supported by several

### 8 November

A symbolic funeral for health was held in Downtown Cairo. It marked the 37th day of the strike.

### 11 November

The strike entered week seven. Doctors on strike were preparing for a long battle despite facing intransigence from hospital administrations. Some were even investigated for supporting the strike.

### 16 November

The committee governing the strike held an emergency meeting and announced that they will not resort to a full strike.

The strike slipped off the radar in the following period because of President Mohamed Morsy's 21 November constitutional declaration which left the country in turmoil.

### 21 December

An emergency general assembly was held and decided to suspend the strike until the ordinary general assembly is held in March. The 80 day strike was suspended to give officials the chance to pass a new wage law.

In addition to demanding a new law that guarantees a minimum wage for everyone who works in the Ministry of Health, not just doctors, the doctors also demanded the gradual raising of the state budget for health to 15 per cent of government spending and tougher punishments for people who attack hospitals or medical staff.

The Doctors' Union told the Ministry of Health to suspend investigations and punishments that doctors have faced because of the strike.

## NSF lists over 700 violations in second round of voting

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Other violations included judges supervising ballot stuffing, group voting and judges leading voters to cast "Yes" votes which happened in at least eight polling stations.

There were administrative violations as well including several stations opening late, ballots not being stamped with the official seal and official voter registration lists missing names.

The NSF reported that members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 17 governorates where voting took place coerced and directed people to vote "Yes" for the constitution.

Female employees refused to properly check the identity of women wearing Niqab and by not asking them to take off their face veils. It was also reported that in some voting stations, the phosphorous ink voters were meant to place their fingers in was either too thin and did not leave a strong enough mark or left no mark at all.

Judges would slow down the voting process in stations where the majority of voters were Coptic Christians or voting "No" to the constitution, the NSF reported.

Cars and buses belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood and its political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party



An Egyptian woman dips her finger in ink after voting in the second round of the referendum in Giza, south of Cairo

were witnessed transporting large amounts of people for group voting at polling stations.

Several polling station supervisors refused to show identification proving they were judges while others closed down stations for prolonged periods of time for either eating or praying.

A member of the Muslim Brotherhood was arrested in possession of a laptop inside a polling station in Giza where he was directing voters to vote "Yes." The judge refused to file election monitors' complaints against him and open a case, and instead ordered his release.

In several other stations judges kicked out election monitors from the NSF and civil society organisations, allowing only those that belong to the Muslim Brotherhood. In one station a child was entrusted with stamping the ballots, rather than a judge and another had two separate boxes for "Yes" and "No" votes.

The NSF has called for a press conference Sunday to further discuss the violations. Front leaders such as coordinator and Nobel Laureate Mohamed ElBaradei, former Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa and Popular Current leader Hamdeen Sabahi are scheduled to make an appearance.

## What's after the referendum?

Experts explain the next steps following the forthcoming results of the constitutional referendum

By Nouran El-Behairy

Following the second and final phase of the constitutional referendum, the political path of Egypt will be determined.

After the very close gap between "Yes" and "No" votes in the first stage, the potential scenarios have been explained by political and constitutional experts.

Constitutional Expert and Constitutional Law Professor Raafat Fouda explained that if the constitution is approved, legislative authority will be transferred from the president to the Shura Council.

The council will perform the duties of the People's Assembly until a new lower house is elected, except for monitoring functions; as they weren't mentioned in the constitution.

"This means the government will continue without any monitoring or supervision," Fouda said.

The People's Assembly will be elected within two months and then

within six months Shura Council elections will also be held.

"A new government will be appointed, the president will perform his new duties and authorities for four years, and there will also be changes regarding the Supreme Constitutional Court," Fouda added.

The other scenario, which is for the constitution to be rejected by the majority of voters, will lead to a different path.

"The president will call for directly electing a new Constituent Assembly of 100 members within a maximum of three months" as stated in the constitutional declaration issued 8 December.

The Constituent Assembly will finish the constitution in a maximum of six months. The president then calls for a referendum within 30 days of receiving the draft constitution.

In this case a committee for national dialogue would discuss the laws for electing a new Constituent Assembly.

Political groups, except for the National Salvation Front (NSF), partici-

pated in the fourth round of a national dialogue on Wednesday.

The dialogue committee, sponsored by President Mohamed Morsi, discussed the future path of its activities, which will depend upon the results of the referendum.

The committee agreed that in case the constitution is approved, they would discuss parliamentary elections' law as well as the constitutional articles to be modified and proposed to the next People's Assembly.

"Whatever the result is it won't solve the problem in Egypt now. The divisions and polarization we are witnessing can only be solved through comprehensive national dialogue," said constitutional expert Gaber Nassar.

He added that the government was about to take some austerity measures and raise prices and these could not be applied without an atmosphere of understanding and accordance.

"It is apparent that the president only wants to comply with the will of the Brotherhood," he said.

The complaint is a common one among those dependent on Egypt's

## Voters, but few tourists, in the shadow of the pyramids

By Haitham El-Tabei (AFP)

tourist industry, a key earner for the economy.

Cairo - For millennia, the Sphinx guarding Cairo's famed pyramids has gazed upon the rise and fall of civilisations and the passage of countless visitors.

Now though, the ancient statue is looking on an absence of foreign tourists.

They have been chased away, the coterie of local souvenir hawkers and guides in its shadow say, by the political turmoil swirling over the country.

On Saturday, as polling stations nearby received voters for the second round of a referendum on an Islamist-backed constitution, the Giza Necropolis, as the site comprising the Great Sphinx and the pyramids is known, was all but empty.

"Currently there is no tourism in Egypt," grumbled Adel Anwar, the 32-year-old owner of a trinket stall.

"The new Islamist government has no experience in managing the state," he said. "The Islamists care only about their interests, not us. They forgot about everyone else."

The complaint is a common one among those dependent on Egypt's

Abdel Tawab, a 33-year-old tour guide who has seen his daily earnings shrink from \$32 per day to \$11.

"I have no hope there will be stability," said Yasser Bahol, 33, in his own souvenir stand as he idly surveyed what would previously have been a bustling, high-season flow of visitors. Only a few Egyptian visitors wandered past, spending little.

"The constitution doesn't mention tourism at all even though tourism is a major pillar of the economy," he said. He added he was now looking to start a business outside the tourism sector to earn money.

Only one person there, Ahmed El-Leby, 52, was found supporting the constitution and Morsi's government.

"I'll vote yes for stability," he said. "The opposition isn't patriotic."

That assessment was not shared by Demerdash Ghoneim as he waited in vain for tourists to ride one of his 10 horses. "Extremist Islamists are keeping tourists away from Egypt," he said.

The referendum result will solve nothing, Ghoneim predicted. "The Muslim Brotherhood divided the country with the constitution."

## Egyptians wait in line for the referendum

Voters intent on casting their vote on the draft constitution

By Rana Muhammad Taha

People queued at the polling stations Saturday as the second stage of the referendum on the draft constitution got underway.

Voters of different ages and backgrounds lined up to cast their votes in a relatively quiet atmosphere. Opponents and proponents of the constitution were almost equally present, and almost all voters had a justification for their choice.

"Of course I'm voting 'Yes,'" said Ayat, a fully veiled female voter, while standing in line outside the polling station. "I want Islamic Shari'a to be implemented so that those girls walking in the street can be guided towards Allah's path." She was referring to girls who do not strictly abide by Islamic dress.

Ayat, who preferred not to reveal her last name, said that she is generally familiar with the articles of the constitution, but that she hadn't read the full draft. "It is sufficient for me that the president knows the Quran by heart and that his wife is wearing Islamic dress. Anybody would be proud if this constitution is implemented in their country."

Ayat said that being veiled isn't the reason why she wants Islamic Shari'a



Voters wait in line to enter a polling station in Giza

implemented. She said that a number of Coptic Christians also want to implement Shari'a because it's a system which serves all faiths.

Another proponent of the draft constitution was Noha Za'za', a German Language professor at Cairo University. Za'za' stressed that she

doesn't belong to any Islamic movements. "I will vote 'Yes' because I have read the draft constitution and heard the false accusations about it," Za'za' expressed her full support to the members of the Constituent Assembly and her faith in President Morsi.

"I believe Morsi is stalled from action," she said, adding that stability is needed to allow him to work.

Nada Sabry, a young, unveiled woman, said "I will definitely vote 'No'." She said the main problem with the constitution lies in the uneven formation of the Constituent Assembly.

She also cited a number of points she has against the draft itself: the absence of clearly outlining women's rights, allowing girls to be married before they turn 18 years old and allowing child labour. "Honestly, we will always just go against what those currently in power want."

Sabry said she expected the final result to come in favour of the constitution. She nevertheless added that so long as people exert enough effort to make their voices heard, "God shall support their cause."

An elderly woman who refused to reveal her name said she voted in favour of the constitution after reading it and finding no faults with it. "I'm neither with the Muslim Brotherhood nor with the National Salvation Front. Everyone is pursuing their personal interests, while the country is getting lost."

Mai Abdel Hafez, an unveiled young woman, said she would vote against the draft constitution. "The article necessitating that science is practiced only in Arabic is enough of a turn-off for me."

Alaa Al-Sayed, a middle-aged man, said he rejects the draft constitution for several reasons. Al-Sayed said the constitution only serves a certain faction of Egyptians, leaving out the rest.

Sayed Ahmed, a young man who shared Al-Sayed's opinion on the constitution, stated his reservations on the constitution began with the formation of the Constituent Assembly. "I didn't intend on coming to cast my vote since I have no doubt the results will be in favour of the constitution."

Ahmed had brought his small children along to the polling station. "I want them to get used to the process. Besides, they enjoy coming here."

Salah Hussein, a middle-aged man said "I want to do the right thing." Explaining why he will vote "Yes."

"Approving the constitution will comfort the people and stabilise the state." Hussein thought that the majority would vote "Yes", adding that if the majority wanted "No" to prevail, he would vote against the constitution.

The second and final stage of the draft constitution includes the Giza governorate alongside 16 other governorates. The 10 remaining governorates voted on the constitution during the first phase last Saturday. The official results of the first round haven't been announced yet.

Preliminary results suggest that "Yes" votes won the first round with a simple majority.

## NATO says Syria regime firing 'Scud-style missiles'

Damascus (AFP) - NATO has accused the Syrian regime of firing Scud-style missiles at rebels, amid Russian criticism that the west's "dangerous" stance risks bringing chaos to the country and beyond.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen on Friday called the Syrian army's use of missiles against rebels an act of desperation.

"I can confirm that we have detected the launch of Scud-type missiles; we strongly regret that act," Rasmussen said. "I consider it an act of a desperate regime approaching collapse."

The latest launches were detected on Thursday, a source close to NATO said, and that was corroborated by an activist in the rebel-held town of Maera in the northern province of Aleppo.

Abu Hisham told AFP he had been awoken to "the sound of a very loud explosion. It was raining heavily and there were many clouds, so we knew it was unlikely to be aerial bombardment."

"The first missile fell outside Marea. Had hit the town it would have caused a massacre. The second, my friends told me, fell outside [the nearby town of] Tel Rifaat."

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Friday denounced the west's "dangerous" stance in support of Syrian rebels seeking to unseat President Bashar al-Assad.

"Our western colleagues have started dividing terrorists into 'bad' and 'acceptable.' That is very dangerous," he said in an interview with the English-language Russia Today channel.

Lavrov reiterated Moscow's position that the Syrian people should be allowed to decide their own destiny without outside agencies seeking to help oust the regime.

"We are not in the business of regime change," he insisted.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin said that Moscow, one of the last supporters of the Assad regime, wanted



An image grab taken from a video uploaded on YouTube allegedly shows fire rising from a car which exploded in the Qabun district of Damascus

to avoid "chaos" in Syria, calling for political talks between all parties to take the war-torn country towards a democratic regime.

"We are interested in this because this is all very close to our borders. We really would not like to see any potential changes in Syria to lead to the chaos we are witnessing in other countries of the region," Putin stressed after an EU-Russia summit in Brussels.

For the second time in two days, Putin denied propping up Assad's regime and appeared to acknowledge the possibility of change, saying: "We do not advocate the government of Syria."

In Damascus, Palestinian refugees streamed back to the Yarmuk camp after a reported deal to keep it out of the conflict, following fierce clashes earlier this week and briefly on Friday.

An AFP correspondent heard sporadic shooting, and a main road was blocked with boulders to keep out cars, although a van full of passengers

still entered through a side street.

The fighting forced about 100,000 of Yarmuk's 150,000-strong population to flee, with many taking refuge in Damascus parks and squares, said the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees.

Hours after they returned on Friday, fighting again flared in the camp for about an hour and a half, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

"The fighting pitted anti-regime Syrian and Palestinian rebels against members of the pro-regime popular committees," said observatory director Rami Abd el Rahman.

The clashes were between fighters who had not withdrawn from Yarmuk despite a reported agreement after talks that began on Wednesday aimed at removing both rebel and government fighters from the camp.

Newspapers in neighbouring Lebanon said an agreement had been reached under the auspices of Mokhtar Lamani, the representative of UN-Arab League peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi.

The UN's World Food Programme said it was to start providing food to 125,000 "vulnerable Palestinians and displaced Syrians" in and around Yarmuk.

Elsewhere, violence raged in flashpoints across Syria, with the Britain-based monitor saying at least 82 people were killed.

And a rebel attack on an electricity pylon caused a power outage in several areas of Damascus, state television said.

Despite the violence, protesters took to the streets in several anti-regime areas, renewing calls for the fall of Assad's regime, it said.

Last week a former Syrian officer said regime forces had fired Scuds, despite the government denials.

Former first lieutenant Aarab Idriss, who defected 10 months ago and has joined the rebels, said serving officers told him the army fired "Golan-1" missiles, either Russian-made or Russian modified, with a range of up to 300 kilometres.

## Oman holds first local elections

Muscat (AFP) - Omanis went to the polls on Saturday for the Gulf sultanate's first ever local elections but the 192 elected councillors will have only advisory powers.

By midday, turnout among the 546,000 voters was "good," the official OMA news agency reported.

There were 46 women among the 1,475 candidates, all of whom were standing as independents in a country where political parties remain banned.

elected members.

Previously only the capital Muscat had a city council and its members were all appointed.

The councils will have no executive powers, according to a decree issued by Sultan Qaboos last year, in which he said that they will "present recommendations regarding improving municipal services."

Oman's elected Majlis Al-Shura, created in 1991, has the authority to question ministers and advise the

government on socio-economic issues but has no legislative power or role in defence, internal security or foreign policy.

The sultanate also has an all-appointed Council of State, a 57-seat upper chamber which together with the Majlis makes up the Council of Oman.

After last year's protests, the sultan decreed changes to the basic law giving the Council of Oman some legislative and oversight powers.

## Police clash with Delhi gang-rape protesters

New Delhi (AFP) - Indian police on Saturday baton-charged, tear-gassed and fired water cannon at demonstrators who were demanding better safety for women following the brutal gang-rape of a student last weekend.

Thousands of protesters, who rallied at the India Gate monument in the heart of the Indian capital and surged toward the president's palace, were calling for stepped-up security for women across the country.

Angry protesters, demonstrating for a sixth day, shouted "We want justice" as police struggled to control the crowd, with the 23-year-old victim still battling for her life in a New Delhi hospital.

Some carried banners that read: "Hang them now."

Six drunk men were joyriding in a bus when they picked up the physiotherapy student and her 28-year-old male companion. They took turns raping the woman before throwing the pair off the speeding vehicle.

She was attacked with an iron rod, causing serious intestinal injuries, after being raped in what was the latest in a series of violent assaults on women in the capital.

On Saturday, riot police were called in and routes leading to the



Indian demonstrators shout slogans during a protest calling for better safety for women in front of the Government Secretariat and Presidential Palace in New Delhi

protest site were cordoned off to contain the protests in which some of the demonstrators were also seen throwing stones.

Clashes erupted when a group in the crowd, made up mainly of young women and men, tried to break through police barricades and march towards the president's house.

Doctors at the hospital where the woman was being treated said in a

statement she was in a critical but stable condition and had been removed from a ventilator.

They described her as "very optimistic and very positive".

The government, meanwhile, appealed for calm as outrage intensified over last Sunday's attack on the woman.

"This is not a way to protest. Trying to storm buildings and breaking barri-

cades is not a way to start a dialogue," junior home minister R.P.N. Singh told India's CNN-IBN television network.

"The government is trying to do whatever it can to take measures and make sure that women are safe in the country."

The government said on Friday it would press for life sentences for the woman's six attackers and promised stricter policing. They also promised to pay the victim's medical bills.

Ravi Shankar Prasad, spokesman for the main national opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, said New Delhi "is becoming the rape capital" of India.

The number of rape cases in New Delhi has risen 17 per cent from 2011 to 661 this year, according to government figures.

Prasad appealed to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh "to please respond to the deep sense of pain, agony and concern of the young people".

Experts say a combination of abusive sexual behaviour, a scant fear of the law and India's creaky judicial system encourage such attacks in the bustling city of 19 million people.

Five of the suspects were arrested soon after the crime and a sixth was caught Friday.

## POLITICS

### US gun lobby urges armed police in every school

By Fabienne Faur

Washington (AFP) - The US's most powerful pro-gun lobbying group is suggesting that armed police be deployed to every school in the country following a mass shooting that left 20 young children dead.

The National Rifle Association, which supports a broad interpretation of US citizens' constitutional right to bear arms, had been under pressure to respond in the wake of last week's massacre in a Connecticut elementary school.

Even as the NRA leaders made their combative and determined appearance, another four people died in Pennsylvania in America's latest shooting spree, including the alleged shooter.

And a string of celebrities including Jeremy Renner, Gwyneth Paltrow and Beyoncé launched a video to back a campaign to clamp down on gun sales following the Newtown school massacre.

But the pro-gun lobbyists ceded no ground to those calling for tougher gun laws.

"The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun," declared NRA vice-president Wayne LaPierre Friday, in his first public comments since the shooting at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

"I call on Congress today to act immediately to appropriate whatever is necessary to put armed police officers in every single school in this nation," he said, in a lengthy statement. He took no questions from reporters.

LaPierre said the NRA was ready to help train security teams for schools and work with teachers and parents to improve security measures, and accused the media and the political class of demonizing gun owners.

Last Friday, a troubled 20-year-old man burst into the Sandy Hook school and gunned down 20 six- and seven-year-old children and six staff members trying to protect them, before taking his own life. He also fatally shot his mother.

As LaPierre and his allies were on stage in Washington on Friday, police in Pennsylvania shot dead a man who had killed three people and wounded "several" others, state troopers.

These deaths were the latest in a series of mass shootings in the United States this year, and prompted President Barack Obama to throw his weight behind plans to revive a ban on assault weapons.

America has suffered an epidemic of gun violence over the last three decades, including 62 mass shooting incidents since 1982. The vast majority of weapons used have been semi-automatic weapons obtained legally by the killers.

There were an estimated 310 million non-military firearms in the United States in 2009, roughly one

per citizen, and people in America are 20 times more likely to be killed by a gun than someone in another developed country.

But LaPierre insisted gun ownership is not the problem.

"You know, five years ago after the Virginia Tech tragedy when I said we should put armed security in every school, the media called me crazy," he said, referring to a 2007 campus shooting that left 32 people dead.

"But what if, what if when Adam Lanza started shooting his way into Sandy Hook Elementary School last Friday, he'd been confronted by qualified armed security?" he demanded.

"Will you at least admit it's possible... that 26 innocent lives might have been spared that day? Is it so abhorrent to you that you'd rather continue to risk the alternative?"

The statement immediately drew criticism from supporters of tougher gun control, who are pushing to ban semi-automatic assault weapons like the .223 Bushmaster rifle that Lanza used in Friday's shooting.

The statement immediately drew criticism from supporters of tougher gun control, who are pushing to ban semi-automatic assault weapons

"The NRA leadership's drive to fill our schools with more deadly guns and ammo is wildly out of touch with responsible gun owners and the American public," New Jersey Senator Frank Lautenberg said.

The New York Times, in an editorial Saturday, did not mince words, calling LaPierre's remarks a "mendacious, delusional, almost deranged rant."

One of the protesters, who attempted to drown out LaPierre's statement, bore a banner reading "NRA kills our kids" the other "NRA has blood on its hands." They were led away by security.

Hollywood stars including Julianne Moore, Jamie Foxx and Jon Hamm meanwhile recorded a video backing a campaign calling notably for a ban on assault weapons, as well as criminal background checks for every gun sold.

"Columbine. Virginia Tech. Tucson. Aurora. Fort Hood. Oak Creek. Newtown. Newtown. Newtown," they intone in the black-and-white video, taking turns to list the names of America's worst gun massacres of recent years.

"How many more? How many more colleges? How many more classes? How many more movie theaters? How many more houses of faith? How many more shopping malls?" they add in the video on the "Demand a Plan" campaign website.

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## Al-Saeed: Tax reforms are part of a programme to overcome the current crisis

Continued from page 1

The reform programme was designed during a recent meeting between Al-Saeed and Ahmed Al-Wakil, President of the Board of Directors of Egypt's Chambers of Commerce. This was the first of what is to be a series of meetings between Al-Saeed and various members of the country's political and economic elite.

The meetings were called by President Morsy to address issues facing the country, in particular the government's recent amendments to Egypt's tax code. Other officials present at the meeting included aide to the finance minister Hani Qadri, president of the finance minister's office Ayman Gowhar, president of interest taxes Mumdua Omar, president of real estate interest Taxed Hasan Abbas, tax advisor to the finance minister Muhammad Surur, president of the tax regions sector Mustafa Abd al-Qadr, president of the Cairo Chamber of Commerce and vice president of the Chambers Union Ibrahim al-Arabi, and second vice president of the Chambers Union Muhammad al-Masri, in addition to other members of the Chambers Union.

Al-Saeed went on to say Egypt's budget deficit could reach anywhere between EGP 185 billion and EGP 200 billion if the country does not undergo serious reform. He pointed out the country's revenues are only enough to cover 60 per cent of its expenditures, and in order to address this problem the government must either decrease spending, raise taxes/revenues or do both.

The third option, he added, was most likely what the government would do when implementing its re-

form programme. Al-Saeed went on to say that the government had hoped to prioritise EGP 40 billion worth of spending, but with repeated postponement of tax increases, the most they would be able to put together is an EGP 10 billion spending package.

He predicted that these measures would not have a large enough long- or short-term effect on the poorer cross sections of Egyptian society.

He said that the reform programme also sought to prevent instances of tax evasion in addition to increasing accountability and simplifying the nation's tax code.

The government's attempt to simplify the tax code, Al-Saeed said, was reflected in two new policies aimed at putting an end to taxation of Egypt's informal sectors and exempting capital goods from taxation altogether. He added that Egypt's period of late tax performance incentives had been extended from December 2012 to the end of March 2013, and would be determined on the basis of taxes owed, as opposed to delayed interest and fines.

Al-Saeed claimed that changes in the tax code had been approved after the Ministry had consulted with various business organisations. Housing organisations for example were moved into a higher tax bracket in order to match the rate at which their salaries and production had been taxed until now. Steel and cement companies were also consulted before decisions were made to raise taxes from 15 per cent to 18 per cent on those sectors.

Hani Qadri, aide to the Finance Minister, stated that a EGP 25 pound tax would be put on phone lines that had only been used once, in an attempt to combat the phenomenon

of people buying multiple phones and using each one for short periods before moving on to the next.

He said there would be a 75 piastre increase on taxes on local cigarettes, as opposed to a EGP 1.25 increase on imported cigarettes. He added that these taxes may at some point be lowered in order to balance the production of local cigarettes with imported cigarettes.

Qadri went on to say that there were some sectors that would not see tax increases, such as subsidised flour, sugar, pasta, rice, medicine and general food supplies. Cement and soda water would not be subject to the 10 per cent general tax bracket and would instead remain at 5 per cent. While these sectors would not see tax increases, he pointed out, accountability methods for collecting taxes would change.

In response to questions regarding recent amendments to Egypt's tax code and demands by some to change and alter those amendments, Qadri said a new set of amendments had already been proposed that would affect 50 different products. It included new products that had not previously been considered, and excluded others that earlier had been set to have their rates increased.

Ahmed Al-Wakil, president of the Egypt's Chamber of Commerce, said his organisation had reviewed the list of amendments made to Egypt's tax code, emphasising that only some products would see their taxes increase, but not all. He said that issues regarding Egypt's tax code would be discussed within the country's local Chambers of Commerce in an attempt to hash out all points of contention and create a unified economic vision for Egypt.



Finance Minister Mumtaz Al-Saeed

rates increase since 1991 despite the fact that the cost of many of those products had risen considerably.

Regarding recent amendments to the country's stamp tax on advertising, Al-Saeed claimed that these measures were done to help facilitate the actions of Egypt's business community, pointing out that the price of electricity, water and gas for residential use had not been raised.

The Finance Minister also approved amendments to Egypt's income tax, widening the country's tax base in order to ease the burden on the country's payroll managers. He also announced plans to amend the country's real estate tax within three months, saying that Egyptian tourist and industrial facilities would be subject to new rates.

Mohamed Al-Masry, vice president of Egypt's Chamber of Commerce, said steps were needed to be taken in order to encourage investment in the country. These steps included facilitating the creation of new businesses and development projects.

He added that it was necessary to revamp the authorisation process for such investments so that businesses and investors could receive approval for such ventures in a timely manner. Al-Masry said this would help stabilise Egypt's labour market, and foster a positive environment conducive for exploiting the country's natural resources.

Mumtaz Al-Saeed further said that the government had increased its amount of funding for local investment projects from EGP 28 billion to EGP 43 billion. He pointed to this last measure as a testament to the government's efforts to strengthen and guide Egypt's economy.

## ENBD to acquire BNP Paribas Egypt for \$500m

By Mohamed SalahEldin

Emirates National Bank of Dubai (ENBD), the largest bank in United Arab Emirates (UAE), is set to buy 95.2 per cent of BNP Paribas Egypt shares for \$500m, a deal that allows ENBD to expand in the region, and BNP to support its capital.

The deal confirms the gulf investors' interest in the Egyptian market despite the political situation, especially after the acquisition of NSGB by the Qatar National Bank in a \$2.5bn worth deal.

As per the Egyptian regulations, ENBD will make an offer to minority shareholders for the remaining stake, said a press statement issued by the bank on Thursday.

The deal has to follow the usual

regulatory steps imposed by the financial supervisory authority (EFSA) before getting the final approval, which is expected to materialise by the end of the first quarter of 2013.

The bank's offer exceeded that of the Moroccan Bank Wafa to buy the asset, priced at 1.6 of its book value in September 2012.

BNP Paribas, one of the biggest French banks, put on sale its assets in Egypt last June to increase its capital and exit non substantial operations.

The BNP Paribas acquisition is the first major expansion of the regional presence of ENBD which was created in a state-backed merger between Emirates Bank International and National Bank of Dubai in 2007.

Chief executive officer at ENBD,

Rick Pudner said the bank is looking for acquisitions in fast-developing African markets to satisfy investor demand for growth it is unlikely to deliver at home, in an interview with Reuters last month.

The bank's chairman Sheikh Ahmed Ben Saeed Al-Maktoum stated that this deal is an excellent opportunity for ENBD to enter the promising Egyptian market and to achieve their strategic plans to expand in the region.

The deputy CEO at PNB Paribas Egypt, Shahinaz Foda, told the media that the agreement was signed, and the Egyptian unit's role was to perform the Due Diligence by providing the financial data and the details related to the economic institutions being sold or acquired.

## ITIDA targets 17 per cent growth in IT sector by 2013

By Mohamed Fawzi

The head of the Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA), Yasser Al-Qadi, said that the information technology sector has witnessed between a 12.5 per cent rise in growth in the last quarter of 2012, a four per cent increase compared to the same period during the previous year. He added that ITIDA aims to achieve a 17 per cent growth in 2013.

Al-Qadi added that huge leaps have been made in 2012 after new financial and credit incentives were approved by banks for industrial sectors. The banking sector was encouraged to grant a new series of financial packages to address the needs of companies and convince them to register on

Egypt's stock exchange.

He added that contracts signed between ITIDA, the Social Fund for Development (SFD), United Banking and the National Bank of Egypt (NBE), estimated to be worth EGP 450m, had helped revive the technological industry.

The agreements signed between ITIDA and the Egyptian Stock Exchange were successful in helping to register five Communications and Information Technology firms on the Egyptian stock exchange.

Recent co-operation between ITIDA and Egypt's banking sector was aimed at creating new sources of funding for information technology companies, said Al-Qadi, adding that the biggest challenge facing these companies in 2012 was lack of

a uniform set of banking standards aimed at determining how to provide funding for new projects, and what type of funding would be best to help transform ideas into tangible projects.

In order to address these challenges, ITIDA has been in coordination with the SFD, NBE, the United Bank and the Egyptian Stock Exchange in holding conferences and workshops to inform companies about possible financing packages made available by banks and the benefits of going public.

Al-Qadi added that 23 companies secured loans from SFD totalling EGP 26.808m, and that nine other companies are in the process of doing the same. In total 280 companies have been granted loans with updated registration requirements based on the standards of ITIDA.

## Last week's EGX30 index performance

Company Name	Reuters Code	Sector	Last Price	Close Price	Returns		Week Performance		Turn Over (EGP Mill.)	Volume Trade	Market Cap. (EGP Mill.)
					1-Week	YTD	12-Mths.	Max. Price			
Commercial Bank	COMI	Banks	35.55	35.40	7.66%	89.30%	77.44%	36.00	33.40	41.61	1,175,405
NSGB	NSGB	Banks	33.87	34.04	-3.95%	67.60%	59.81%	34.15	33.02	10.869	319,293
Ezz Steel	ESRS	Basic Resources	10.25	10.20	9.21%	173.46%	151.85%	10.33	9.30	13.81	1,354,046
ELSWEDY ELECTRIC	SWDY	Industrial Goods and Services and Automobiles	23.15	23.11	5.14%	11.43%	9.37%	23.55	21.75	2.292	99,191
MRRIDIVE	MOIL	Industrial Goods and Services and Automobiles	1.12	1.11	3.72%	14.03%	-10.69%	1.12	1.08	1.86	271,593
AIC Contracting	AIND	Financial Services excluding Banks	0.49	0.49	6.52%	-5.77%	-3.92%	0.49	0.46	2.390	4,922,333
Amer Group Holding	AMER	Financial Services excluding Banks	0.68	0.67	-6.94%	21.82%	13.56%	0.72	0.67	16.79	24,970,130
EK Holding	EKHO	Financial Services excluding Banks	1.21	1.20	6.19%	22.45%	23.71%	1.21	1.15	3.206	432,158
EFG-Hermes	HRHO	Financial Services excluding Banks	11.39	11.26	6.83%	12.49%	13.74%	11.45	10.59	41.62	3,697,077
Pioneers Holding	PIOH	Financial Services excluding Banks	4.91	4.82	16.71%	117.12%	103.38%	4.95	4.12	41.055	8,524,487
Citadel Capital	CCAP	Financial Services excluding Banks	3.89	3.79	12.46%	48.63%	41.95%	3.90	3.35	28.19	7,434,435
Raya Holding	RAYA	Technology	5.68	5.51	8.46%	58.33%	55.21%	5.68	5.00	5.717	1,036,685
Telecom Egypt	ETEL	Telecommunications	13.9	13.71	6.94%	3.79%	4.02%	14.00	12.86	8.64	630,069
Orascom Telecom Media And Technology	OTMT	Telecommunications	0.56	0.56	3.70%	62.19%	62.19%	0.57	0.53	26.531	47,522,302
Orascom Telecom	ORTE	Telecommunications	3.89	3.90	2.90%	125.64%	125.64%	3.92	3.77	23.68	6,072,075
Sidi Kerir Petrochemicals	SKPC	Chemicals	13.43	13.42	4.93%	12.68%	12.58%	13.50	12.80	6.892	513,455
Egyptian Financial and Industrial	EFIC	Chemicals	10.45	10.16	9.25%	14.03%	17.32%	10.50	9.30	10.89	1,071,660
AMOC	AMOC	Oil and Gas	74.00	73.45	-0.61%	9.73%	10.68%	74.00	70.11	0.981	13,363
Juhayna Food Industries	JUFO	Food and Beverage	7.31	7.25	8.37%	85.90%	81.25%	7.40	6.72	7.55	1,041,968
Orascom Construction Industries (OCI)	OCIC	Construction and Materials	251.98	251.10	3.21%	24.83%	23.80%	253.50	243.80	34.217	53,016,03
Delta Construction & Rebuilding	DCRC	Construction and Materials	6.42	6.41	5.95%	-16.64%	-20.37%	6.48	6.10	1.63	254,227
Modern Co. For Water Proofing	WATP	Construction and Materials	1.86	1.83	6.40%	-20.43%	-12.44%	1.86	1.74	1.669	912,624
Palm Hills	PHDC	Real Estate	2.53	2.52	13.00%	131.19%	125.00%	2.57	2.22	38.43	15,241,377
TMG Holding	TMGH	Real Estate	4.53	4.51	8.67%	52.36%	45.02%	4.57	4.15	22.809	5,060,449
National Real Estate Bank	NRPD	Real Estate	20.93	20.90	13.46%	6.52%	5.34%	21.19	19.00	2.05	98,185
Six of October	OCDI	Real Estate									

## Columnists warn against growing polarisation

After voters had queued up to cast their votes in the second stage of the controversial constitutional referendum on Saturday, many columnists condemned the growing polarization pervading Egyptian society today. Instead of uniting Egyptians, the constitution crisis has pitted citizens against each other according to their political and religious inclinations. Op-ed columnists explore this growing division and ask "what comes next?"

### For the sake of stability

**Mohamed Salmawi**  
Al-Masry Al-Youm newspaper



Al-Masry Al-Youm op-ed writer Mohamed Salmawi called upon his readers to vote against the constitution, which he believes will lead to more polarization in Egypt. He argued that the current constitution will pave the way for the Islamists to dominate the country even more and will also marginalize the minorities. The constitution differentiates between men and women, Muslims and Christians and does not grant the right of freedom of belief to everybody, wrote Salmawi. Because of fraud and forgery he claimed was pervasive during the first round of the referendum, Salmawi asked Egyptians to vote 'No' to the constitution in the second phase.

Salmawi cited a Los Angeles Times article published on 13 December that said the constitution could never contribute to achieving stability in Egypt. It will rather add to the already existing atmosphere of confusion and push the country to more division, he explained. Through the constitution, he continued, the Muslim Brotherhood is exercising more control over Egypt and leave no space for any of the opposing political powers striving to live in the scene. This constitution does not represent anyone but the brotherhood, Salmawi claimed. In order for Egyptians to achieve stability, he surmised, people have to vote against the constitution and then request a new one that fairly represents all segments of the society.

### Egypt's decision: a matter of life or death

**Emad Al-Din Adeeb**  
Al-Watan newspaper



Preventing Egyptians from splitting up is more important than passing the constitution itself, said Emad Al-Din Adeeb, an op-ed writer for Al-Watan Newspaper. If the constitution is a sign of political and social accord which regulates the relationship between the society and the state, wrote Adeeb, all articles in the current constitution will be meaningless, if divided between Egyptians. The writer warned against the dangerous polarization status in the society that pushed colleagues of one work place to clash over their different political views, and members of one family to fight over their views of Shari'a. Suddenly, Egyptians are fractured into portions of Islamists and non-Islamists, Adeeb said.

He explained that even in evening TV talk shows, some guests refused to appear in the program if other invited guests represented an opposing political inclination. Adeeb criticised how the society clearly distinguishes between a Muslim and a Copt or between veiled and non-veiled women. He continued saying the constitution crisis led Egyptians to discover the dilemma of intolerance and their inability to adjust to different political views. Adeeb asked what will happen after this division. Do we just decide to live in peace and harmony, he ponders, or are we choosing to proceed with our internal clashes and destroy a state that goes back to more than 7,000 years?

## COMMENTARY

**Disclaimer:** Commentaries published by Daily News Egypt do not reflect the position of the paper, but the independent opinions of their authors.

## Washington must think differently about "the region"

After decades of dormancy, the Levant is rising again. Syria's war, Lebanon's seasonal conflicts, and ongoing shifts in Iraq, Egypt and Turkey are restoring the Levant's characteristic chaos and cosmopolitanism. In turn, instead of continuing to approach the region disjointedly, Washington must resurrect the Levant as an idea.

Beirut, Babylon and beyond: The Levant emerges and expands as a political order

The Levant is the Middle East's battleground, home to ideological, social and geopolitical struggles, which overlap nicely with long-running local disputes. Over the coming decades, this struggle will deepen and expand.

Some regimes will crumble or survive as rump factions; others will consolidate their grip. Elements of the old guard will adapt, as elites and counter-elites jostle for power. Foreign states will compete for influence (almost as a matter of right). Money, weapons, technology, people and ideas will flow across borders. States will erode in some ways and solidify in others: Their boundaries and formal agreements will matter less, but their norms, elites, groups and institutions will matter more.

Rival Levantine factions, collections of Lebanese and Syrian elites, political vehicles and foreign patrons, will expand their long struggle over the region's heart. Alongside Beirut, Damascus will emerge as a stage in its own right. The countries' intimate, complex relationship will require creative management, particularly as the brutality, social disruption and seductive opportunity of violence take hold.

Over time, the Greater Levant may increasingly resemble and interact with the Syro-Lebanese core. Iraq may splinter or it may settle into a decentralize order: With tribal, ethnic and religious roots, Iraq's regions won't submit easily to Baghdad. In any event, provinces and communities will retain autonomy and develop varied relations with their neighbours.

The Kurds have already cultivated foreign investment and tentative relations with groups across the region. The Shiites will look to Iran, as Sunnis remain tied to the Gulf Arabs. All will seek America.

Jordan and Israel will resist. With few resources, a Palestinian majority and a rapidly growing population, the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan will confront a challenging future even in more stable times. Demographically vulnerable, geographically precarious and militarily titanic, Israel worries the new regimes may increasingly challenge its policies and, someday, its right to exist.

But change could favour both countries. In a region dominated by centralized regimes clinging to enforced illusions of homogeneity and vast peripheral powers interested in order, Israel and Jordan were geopolitical anomalies. If the emerging environment consists of more diverse states, do facto statelets, or competing centres of power within each, then Israel and Jordan would be less at odds with their surroundings. (Palestinian questions will challenge both states, regardless of other outcomes.)

The peripheral powers: Turkey, Egypt, Iran and the Gulf Arabs, have defined the Levant's contours for centuries. (And parts of Turkey and Egypt would fall under its historical definition.) After the Ottoman collapse, insecure regimes and the Israeli-Arab conflict nurtured insularism and interrupted the Levant.

New opportunities, mainly economic and diplomatic, will attract these powers. New challenges, mainly political and social, will deter and draw them. And so the peripheral powers will drift from encircling to engaging the region.

With an eye to the West, Turkey will increase political and economic ties with Arab neighbours, attempt to manage Kurdish separatism and delicately counter Iran.

Of course, Turkey's power rests on the Kemalist military's ideological coherence and cooperation with the United States. But economic appetite, cultural affinity and a developing Islamic veneer will pull Turkey toward the Arab world, sometimes as a player, sometimes as a referee.

**Economic appetite, cultural affinity and a developing Islamic veneer will pull Turkey toward the Arab world, sometimes as a player and sometimes as a referee**

Despite its tumult, Egypt may grow more energetic. (Under Mubarak, Egypt was steady. Unfortunately, it was also stale.) At home, the Muslim Brotherhood and the political-military establishment will carve out spheres of influence. The Salafists and liberals, a fragmented Koshary Coalition, will probably compete on the fringes and on particular issues. Fitfully, the country will steward growing trade. Cairo will recover as an intellectual hub; Egypt will regain its voice on Arab-Israeli affairs. To guard order, promote investment and tourism, protect vital energy and trade routes, and support like-minded groups elsewhere, Egypt will eventually reengage the Levant.

Iran and the Gulf Arabs will continue a contest marked by Sunni-Shiite, Arab-Iranian and nakedly geopolitical rivalries. For decades, they've struggled in the Levant; now the gloves are off. To the extent possible, Iran will bolster the Assad regime and its base in Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, various Shiite factions in Iraq and Hamas in Palestine. (With Iran constrained like never before, more symbiotic relations will develop within its network, as proxies, particularly Hezbollah, increasingly support it and each other.) Undecided, the Gulf Arabs will support militants and moderates throughout the

Levant: exiles and rebels in Syria; emerging Islamists and established elites in Lebanon; the old guard, the Brotherhood and Salafists in Egypt; Baath remnants, tribes and Islamists in Iraq; and Fatah and a host of Palestinian parties.

**Chaos and cosmopolitanism in the Levant: A region resurges itself**

For centuries, the Levant has existed as a geographic area and a theatre for competing influences. But since the rise of Arab dictators in the mid-20th century, the Levant's social and political manners have withered. In Egypt, Nasser killed Alexandria and Mubarak stifled Cairo. The Baghdad of old perished under Saddam. And the Assads quelled Damascus even as they tried, and failed, to tame Beirut, today's only Levantine city.

Similarly, the Levant has since expired in Washington. Of course, it has survived on letterheads and business cards, in the tangential concessions of policymakers and analysts, and in the tomes of archaeologists, historians and travel-writers. But it's a shade of an idea: convenient shorthand for a collection of states, not an overarching understanding of the place.

To be fair, compartmentalised thought suited the old order... Syria was stable. Lebanon was a sideshow. Jordan was dependent. Egypt was reliable. Iraq was tame. Turkey was friendly. Israel was; Palestine was not. Moreover, while events in these states influenced those in others, they weren't, and weren't seen to be, unfolding in the region's common spaces.

Change is already underway. To craft policies, allocate resources, cultivate expertise, train and deploy personnel, and manage its interests effectively, Washington must change too.

**The Levant: Think about it.**

Anthony Elghossain is an attorney at a global law firm in Washington, DC. He blogs at Rational Security and Page Lebanon.

The article originally appeared in NOW

## The army and the current crisis

The crisis that broke with Morsy's constitutional declaration on 22 November reconfigured the political scene in Egypt. The map of political forces has changed a lot in this past month. Inside the opposition camp, a new alliance formed between liberals, leftists and conservatives to create the National Salvation Front.

Inside the state's camp, the Muslim Brotherhood has bluntly announced its multi-dimensioned support to President Mohamed Morsy, which extends to physical confrontation with those who oppose him.

The Salafis have offered their political and ideological support to the president. Politically, they are using Al-Nour party as a front for support and ideologically, they are mobilising people in the name of religion via mosques and satellite channels.

Meanwhile, the crisis has introduced a loose cannon to the scene, which seems to be doing the dirty work of other political and religious groups, the disqualified presidential candidate Hazem Salah Abou-Ismail.

In the middle of this political mess, questions started to be asked about the position of the army. Some dreamed about a January-like scenario where the army would step in to overthrow the president. Others feared the nightmare of being thrown out of Morsy's frying pan and into the army's fire. Yet others simply asked the logical question, where does the army fit in all this? It is a logical question because since 1952 the army has either been the executive branch of the state or (more recently) maintained a firm grip on the executive branch through the president and other army personnel scattered in various executive positions. But since Morsy was declared President, the army has lost its direct involvement in the executive branch. Does that mean that the army is out of politics as Morsy, the Brotherhood and the army generals like to claim?

The current crisis demonstrates that the army is indeed into politics, and still is a major player in political decision-making in Egypt. However, the army is clearly as-

suming a different role than the one it has played for the past 60 years. Instead of the army being the direct actor on the scene, it has taken a step back and decided to be the guardian and guarantor of fundamental interests. Those interests are ones that directly affect the army and ones that the army has no intention of giving up. As long as domestic political turbulences do not threaten those interests, the army will remain neutral. At the moment, those interests are best served by the army's position in the new constitution, which allows the army to overlook its direct and fundamental interests without being directly involved in the executive.

The new constitution does not make the army's budget public. Article 197 states that the army's budget is only to be discussed inside the National Defence Council, which is made up of a majority of army personnel. The same article states that this council is to be consulted on all laws related to the armed forces.

Article 197 allows the army to

dominate its own realm through economic and legislative means. Article 198 allows military courts to put civilians on trial for crimes that harm the armed forces (without specifying what those crimes are). By virtue of this article, the army has the authority to decide who poses a threat to it and at the same time take the necessary coercive measures through military tribunals unchecked by any other authority. Through this article, the army has secured itself from domestic criticism. Finally, article 146 does not allow the president to declare war or deploy units of the armed forces outside Egyptian territory except after consulting the National Defence Council. In the previous constitution of 1971 (article 150), the president was allowed to declare war in his capacity as supreme commander of the armed forces after the parliament's approval. The new constitution included the National Defence Council in the process.

The position of the army in the new constitution makes it directly responsible for its internal policies. This does not necessarily mean



**ZIAD AKL**

that the army has a strategic alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood; it rather means that both the Brotherhood and the army have a mutual balance of interest where they equally serve each other. The army on one hand turns a blind eye to political tension and refrains from direct involvement in the executive; and on the other hand, the Brotherhood drafts a constitution that secures the army from any civil intrusion.

The army did not withdraw from politics; it simply decided to have political forces take care of the army's interests in exchange for the army's consent on the domestic administration of the country. The army will never be a safe exit from the crisis; it is a genuine part of the problem.

**Ziad Akl** is a political sociologist and a Middle East specialist at the Ahrar Center for Political and Strategic Studies. He is a senior researcher at the Egyptian Studies Unit and managing editor of the periodical "Egyptian Affairs." ziadakl31@gmail.com





# ART & CULTURE

Art should make a statement and Culture is what surrounds us

## EVENTS

## MUSIC

## The Nutcracker

No one does ballet better than the Russians, and the master of Russian ballet, Tchaikovsky, will have his work featured as the timeless Nutcracker is shown at the Cairo Opera House. Tickets are available from the ticket office.

Cairo Opera House  
El Borg Gezira  
Zamalek, Cairo  
Tel: (02) 2739 0114  
23 December 8pm

## Farid Al-Atrash Night

Celebrating the life and career of the legendary Farid Al-Atrash, musicians will take to the stage at the unique Wikalet Al-Ghouri. Attendance is free.

Wikalet Al-Ghouri  
Mohamed Abdou St., Off Muezza St., Al Ghoreya  
Al Hussein, Cairo  
Tel: (02) 25107146, (02) 25110472  
23 December 8pm

## FILM

## Sufi Film Festival

Zamalek's favourite book cafe is showing all the films from its movie nights back to back over two days. If you enjoy a nice cup of tea and international cinema, this is for you. Tickets are EGP 40, including one pop corn.

Suf  
12 Sayed Bakry Street, Zamalek  
Tel: (02) 27381643  
23 December 3pm

## MISCELLANEOUS

## Flea Market

Everyone and their mother's favourite culture venue, Sawy Culture Wheel, is hosting a flea market for you to get rid of everything from books to toys and old clothes.

El Sawy Culture Wheel  
River Hall  
End of 26th of July Street  
Zamalek, Cairo  
Tel: (02) 2736 6178  
23 December 10am

## World Arabic Language Day

Celebrate the world's most poetic language at the 17th century "house of poetry" in Old Cairo, where there will be readings, discussions and Q&As with poets and writers in honour of the language.

Beit El Sit El Wasila  
Mohamed Abdou Street  
Al-Azhar, Cairo  
Tel: (02) 250 103 171  
23 December 7pm

## EXHIBITIONS

## Takeoff... Landing?

Hisham El-Zeiny captures the Egyptian revolution in a bold new way by using the metaphor of a plane that has successfully taken off but has trouble landing, with an accompanying narrative.

Mashrabiya Gallery  
8 Champillion Street  
Downtown, Cairo  
Tel: 010 0170 4554  
23 December 10am

## Christmas concert at the Opera House

By Ahmed Aboul Enein

An enthusiastic crowd watched and listened to Neveen Allouba and a dozen of her students perform several all-time Christmas classics, some with a twist, on Friday night at the Cairo Opera House.

Allouba, one of the Cairo Opera House's renowned and celebrated stars, ushered in her students, several of whom were making their opera debuts. She provided short backgrounds for each of the students before introducing them.

The diva was more than just a master of ceremonies, chiming in during several traditional carols sung throughout the night and playing a supporting role to a couple of other performers. She also performed three solos, including a beautifully executed rendition of Little Drummer Boy.

Highlights included Star Academy winner Nesma Mahgoub performing the classic arrangement of Ave Maria (the show would go on to include two other versions), as well as a duet with fellow American University in Cairo student Nathalie Alain singing There can be Miracles from The Prince of Egypt. Allouba called the pair her Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey, a testament to their strong voices.

Alain, herself no stranger to the Cairo Opera House, treated the audience to a performance of My Grown Up Christmas, although her



Tis the season to be jolly

most memorable moment came later with the entire team's performance of Twelve Days of Christmas.

Entrusted with the fifth day of Christmas, Alain's strong "five golden rings" broke up the regular ta-na-na-nana of the song. She would face the audience

and show off her rings in the manner of an Egyptian woman casting out the evil eye with her khamsa we khmesa.

Her regular banter with Mostafa Rashad, bearer of the four calling birds left the audience with tears of laughter. Rashad's visible and grow-

ing irritation with Alain culminated in him cutting her off and singing her line himself at one point just to stop her.

In the following round she stepped in front of him, sang her line in the loudest way possible, and stuck her five golden rings in his face.

Rashad, a rocker and band vocalist expanding his singing horizons, as Allouba told the audience, dazzled us with Star, from Les Misérables, and White Christmas. His high point however was a duet with Allouba when they sang a special version of Ave Maria.

Allouba sang the traditional Latin lyrics, contrasted by Rashad who simultaneously chanted parts of the *adhan* and other Islamic chants.

Several of the newcomers also impressed. Dalia Fadel gave a passionate Mary Did you Know, as well as a rendition of I Could Have Danced All Night from My Fair Lady, assisted by Hilary Baboukis.

The peppy Sherif Rizkallah, only 17 years old and one of Allouba's students at the DEO German school, delivered cheery upbeat performances of Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer and Razzle Dazzle from Chicago that had audience members clapping along.

Rana Mahmoud's high, strong voice impressed as she sang Art is Calling for Me where she asserted herself as a "prima donna" in possession of copious amounts of "tra-la-la-la-la."

Other performers included Hilary Baboukis, Myrna Ghanem, Rita Ashkar and the youngest member of the group at only 12 years old, Laila Ashraf.

Distinguished Scottish pianist and Bartholdy Trio founder Greig Martin played piano, as was Allouba's own son Seif El-Din Sherif.

## New in the movies

## The Impossible

The Impossible tells the true story of a Spanish family's endeavours in surviving the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. The filmmakers decided to make the family English (because, let's face it, who wants to hear that Castilian lisp anyway), but they have brought in Naomi Watts, who is Australian, and Ewan McGregor, who is Scottish, to do it.

The film's plot follows the family members after the devastating tsunami hits and separates them, which signals the start of a desperate and frantic search for each other.

The film has received much praise from critics upon release, especially for the strong performances for the two leads, Watts and McGregor, as well as Tom Holland, who plays their son.

The Guardian gave this one four stars out of five and Ebert of the Chicago Sun Times gave it a perfect four, claiming it was one of the best films of the year. Not everyone was impressed, however, and Stephen Whitty of the Newark Star-Ledger had this

to say: "If you really are going to push the stories of nearly 220,000 people into the background, you need a much better one than this to put into the spotlight."

Showing at: Plaza Cinema, Galaxy, Galaxy Cineplex, Stars Cinema, Stars Golden Cinema, Alexandria: Green Plaza

## Killing Them Softly



## Ray Liotta and Brad Pitt team up for American neo-noir in Killing Them Softly. The film tells the story of three guys who rob a mob-run card game and collapse the local criminal economy. Brad Pitt is hired to track them down and restore things to the way they were.

With its unlikely dark humour and gritty performances, the film has received positive reviews and has competed for the Palme D'Or award at the Cannes film festival in 2012.

Though the film is described as being stylish and intelligent, critics are quick to point out that it is not in the same league as classics like Goodfellas, but we say you cannot go wrong with Pitt and Liotta.

Showing at: Galaxy, Galaxy Cineplex, Ramses Hilton, Concorde El-Salam Cinema, Plaza Cinema, Stars Cinema, Golden Stars Cinema

## Sinister

With such creative use of titles, have no illusions about what it is that Sinister is trying to do; freak you out by giving Ethan Hawke the lead role. The film is about a true-crime writer who moves into a house with his family where a horrific murder has taken place. He finds a box of snuff films that suggest the murder he is investigating is the work of a certain serial killer.

Though you must have surely lost interest by now, the film obviously takes a

turn for the worse and the family suffers as a result of the decision. Not only does the film feature the flailing career of the lead character that justifies his bad decision-making but also a token local professor who is an expert in "occult and demonic phenomena."

We leave you with this, from the Toronto Star: "more stupid than scary, Sinister can't even figure out who its real demon is."

Showing at: Galaxy, Galaxy Cineplex, Family Cinema, Plaza Cinema, Stars Cinema, Odeon

## Historic house of poetry celebrates Arabic language



The beauty of Arabic is in more than the script

## By Omar El Adl

"Language is wine upon the lips," Virginia Woolf once said, evoking an image that seems especially appropriate for a language of poetry like Arabic, where vivid metaphors are the norm.

Though much has changed from the days where Arabic was a dominant language across the Mediterranean, its legacy, in the form of more than 400 million speakers, endures. The 18 December this year was declared Arabic language day by UNESCO for the first time ever, and the recently-restored Beit El Sit El Wasila is celebrating the poetic language with a series of activities that will host poets and writers from all over the country.

UNESCO says that celebrating the Arabic language is also celebrating the contribution of the language and its speakers, to human civilisation. From Al-Farabi and Averroës to the father of

Egyptian realism Naguib Mahfouz, Arabic is the language many great minds have expressed invaluable ideas. It has also been paramount in the transfer of knowledge from classical Greek to medieval Europe.

After the decline of the language with the advent of colonialism and the end of the Islamic golden age, the language has seen a revival in the 19th and 20th century, starting in Egypt and spreading to other territories such as Lebanon and Syria. The renaissance consisted of a period of reform and modernisation in many fields including language, literature, media and politics.

The rise of the use of Arabic as an internet language, and new vocabulary being added the language, courtesy of the Arab Spring and especially in colloquial form, has some wondering whether the language is about to witness another bloom.

Irina Bokova, the Director General of UNESCO said that the Arabic language day was a chance for the organisation to celebrate the language of more than 400 million speakers and 1.5 billion Muslims across 22 member states of UNESCO.

The venue hosting the festivities for the Arabic language day could not be more appropriate; the Beit was built in the 17th century and was forgotten until the Ministry of Culture restored it and it became famous as a place for hosting poetry sessions, eventually becoming known as the "house of poetry." The Beit neighbours other famous and equally beautiful houses of similar age, Beit El Harrawi and Zeinab El Khatoun, which also feature distinct architecture and spacious courtyards.

The event will take place today at 7 pm and will include seminars, discussions, Q&A sessions and poetry sessions, entry is free.

## Camels

Foreigners often think of camels when they think of Egypt, but our brothers across the water in the UAE know how to treat their camels.

Held in the Liwa desert, 220 km west of Abu Dhabi, the Mazayin Dhafra Camel Festival attracts participants from around the Gulf region. The festival includes a display of UAE handicrafts and other activities aimed at promoting the country's folklore.

But our personal favourite is the camel beauty contest and we think it is time Egypt should hold its own version.



AFP Photo / Karim Sahib

## Weather



Sunday, December 23

Alexandria	21°C / 11°C
Aswan	22°C / 9°C
Cairo	21°C / 11°C
Hurghada	24°C / 13°C
Luxor	22°C / 9°C
Sharm El-Sheikh	24°C / 14°C
Suez	18°C / 7°C



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