

[Egypt | Planned presidential vote neither free nor fair](#)

13.02.2018



The government of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has relentlessly stifled basic freedoms, arrested potential candidates and rounded up their supporters.

“Egypt’s allies should speak out publicly now to denounce these farcical elections, rather than continue with largely unquestioning support for a government presiding over the country’s worst human rights crisis in decades,” the organisations said.

The United States, European Union, and European States, which provide substantial financial assistance to the Egyptian government, should consistently integrate human rights into their relations with Egypt. These countries should halt all security assistance that could be used in internal repression and focus aid on ensuring concrete improvements to protect basic rights.

The repression in advance of Egypt’s presidential election is a substantial escalation in a political environment that denies people’s rights to political participation and to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. The authorities have successively eliminated key challengers who announced their intention to run for president. They have arrested two potential candidates, retired Lt. Gen. Sami Anan and Col. Ahmed Konsowa. A third potential candidate, Ahmed Shafik, a former prime minister and air force commander, apparently was placed under undeclared house arrest in a hotel until he withdrew from the race. Two other key potential candidates, the human rights lawyer Khaled Ali and a former parliament member, Mohamed Anwar al-Sadat, backtracked on formally registering, citing the repressive environment, concerns over the safety of their supporters, and government manipulation.

The only current candidate running against al-Sisi is Mousa Mostafa Mousa, the leader of the Al-Ghad Party, which supports the government. He registered his candidacy on 29 January, the [last possible](#) day, after efforts from pro-government parliament members to convince him to run. Until the day before he registered his candidacy, he was a member of a campaign supporting al-Sisi for a second term. In this context, the right of every citizen to freely stand and vote in elections that reflect the free expression of the will of the electors appears meaningless.

These government actions are in contravention to Egypt’s Constitution and a clear violation of its international obligations and commitments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), and the 2002 [African Union Declaration](#) on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa. Article 25 of the ICCPR and Article III of the African Union declaration link political participation, as a voter and as a candidate, to the freedoms of assembly, expression, and association. An EU [handbook for elections observations](#), detailing standards of fair elections,

says that these are rights “without which it [election] cannot be meaningfully exercised.”

The current atmosphere of retaliation against dissenting voices and the increasing crackdown against human rights defenders and independent rights organisations have made effective monitoring of the elections extremely difficult for domestic and foreign organisations. Media reports have said that the number of organisations that were granted permission to monitor the elections was 44 percent lower than in the last presidential election in 2014 and that the number of requests, in general, has gone down.

Several opposition parties called for boycotting the elections. A day later, al-Sisi threatened to use force, including the army, against those who undermine “Egypt’s stability and security.” On 6 February, the Prosecutor-General’s Office [ordered an investigation](#) against 13 of the leading opposition figures who called for a boycott, accusing them of calling for “overthrowing the ruling regime.”

“Seven years after Egypt’s 2011 uprising, the government has made a mockery of the basic rights for which protesters fought,” the 14 human rights organisations said. “Egypt’s government claims to be in a ‘democratic transition’ but moves further away with every election. The Egyptian authorities should immediately release all those arrested for joining political campaigns or for stating their intention to run as presidential candidates in the elections”.

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CIVICUS “World Alliance for Citizen Participation”
CNCD-11.11.11
EuroMed Rights “The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network”
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
International Commission of Jurists
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
Project on Middle East Democracy
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Solidar
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

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