



Egypt Democracy Compass

Coverage Period: April 2014

The Egypt Democracy Compass is designed to provide a snapshot of the country's trajectory, either toward or further away from a truly democratic system, over the preceding calendar month. Each of the eight topical categories receives a status designation—**Backsliding, Stalled, Progress, or Achieved**—based on recent developments regarding the listed goals for that category. The reasons for each designation are explained in a brief summary of major events or trends. It should be acknowledged that while some of the specified goals could be achieved almost overnight, others may take years to accomplish. The purpose of this tool is simply to determine whether Egypt is headed in the right direction. *See next page for a full listing of the goals for each category.*

 **BACKSLIDING**

 **STALLED**

 **PROGRESS**

 **ACHIEVED**

1. CONSTITUTION

A new constitution, which was drafted by an unrepresentative committee chosen by the military-backed government, was adopted in a tightly controlled referendum in January. The document suffered from significant flaws, including provisions that granted expanded power and autonomy to the military and allowed for military trials of civilians. It contained nominal improvements in the protection of women's rights, freedom of expression, and other civil liberties, but enforcement remained weak to nonexistent in April, as authorities continued a crackdown on such rights in practice.

2. ELECTIONS

There is currently no legislative body in place, and executive powers are shared by the unelected interim president and prime minister. A presidential election is scheduled to be held May 26–27 after a brief 20-day campaign period. The election commission, headed by the Supreme Constitutional Court, is nominally independent, but the fact that its decisions cannot be appealed reduces its accountability. De facto military leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and leftist politician Hamdeen Sabbahi are the only two candidates; a third dropped out just before the April 20 registration deadline, claiming he had received a sign from God that Sisi would win. Indeed, Sisi's victory is almost certain due to the suppression of opposition groups and opinions. As president he would be in a position to further shape conditions for subsequent parliamentary elections.

3. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The government took another deplorable step in its crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in April, as 683 defendants—including the Brotherhood's "supreme guide," Mohamed Badie—were sentenced to death for the alleged murder of a policeman. More than 1,200 people have now been sentenced to death or life imprisonment for the alleged murder of two policemen, though many were tried in absentia. More than 16,000 suspected Islamists have been jailed since the July 2013 coup that deposed then president Mohamed Morsi. The authorities also dealt a severe blow to liberal political activism when a court banned the April 6 movement, one of the prodemocracy groups that catalyzed the February 2011 uprising against longtime authoritarian ruler Hosni Mubarak.

4. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The new constitution made the right to freedom of religion "absolute" and was well received by religious minorities. However, an atmosphere of insecurity and repression persisted in April, with the government dictating weekly sermon themes at mosques and Islamist militants continuing to target Christian places of worship. The government also promised a crackdown on atheism and blasphemy.

5. MEDIA FREEDOM AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The government in April continued to punish media outlets that carried dissenting views. At a court hearing for three Al-Jazeera journalists accused of conspiring to broadcast false reports of political turmoil, prosecutors were unable to present any credible evidence of the alleged crimes, instead showing confiscated photos of the reporters' family vacations and past assignments. Nevertheless, the journalists were not released and remain in custody. Political comedian Bassem Youssef's television show, *Al-Bernameg*, was put on mandatory hiatus at the end of April, with its host channel claiming that the break was necessary to prevent its content from influencing voters prior to the election. It is increasingly difficult for journalists to access and report on the Sinai, where an insurgency has left militants in control of more than a third of villages despite a destructive and unpopular military campaign.

6. CIVILIAN CONTROL AND SECURITY-SECTOR REFORM

Sisi resigned from the army when he announced his presidential candidacy on March 26. However, he remains the country's dominant political figure, and his likely election would leave the military in de facto control and resistant to accountability for human rights abuses.

7. PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND CIVIC ACTIVISM

Protests by Morsi supporters and other opponents of the interim government continued throughout the month, often ending in clashes—some of them deadly—with police and local residents. Hundreds of protesters who had been arrested on the January 25 anniversary of Mubarak's 2011 ouster remained in detention in April, and more demonstrators were arrested. Protests were particularly common at universities following the authorities' February decision to allow security forces on campuses.

8. JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE AND RULE OF LAW

The arbitrary April 28 death sentences against 683 supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood confirmed the judiciary's willingness to back the government at the expense of the rule of law and even basic legal coherence. As with a similar mass trial in March, the accused were not allowed to present a defense, and the case lacked any hint of due process. The banning of the liberal April 6 movement revealed the courts' commitment to suppressing all forms of opposition.



Egypt Democracy Compass – Goals



1. CONSTITUTION

- a. The constitution and constitutional amendments are the products of a fair process that reflects consensus among all major political factions.
- b. The constitution protects civil liberties, including the rights of women minorities, in keeping with international standards and Egypt's existing treaty commitments.
- c. The constitution is in effect.

2. ELECTIONS

- a. National elections are conducted under electoral laws and procedures that meet international standards.
- b. National elections are monitored and deemed credible by qualified international observers.
- c. A directly elected legislature has been seated, and a directly elected executive authority has taken office.

3. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

- a. All major political factions participated in national elections.
- b. All political factions that won legislative seats participate in legislative activity.
- c. No public figures or activists are being detained for political reasons.

4. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

- a. All religious groups are able to preach and practice their faith without state interference.
- b. Specific religious beliefs and practices are not imposed, enforced, or favored by the state, including with respect to the construction of houses of worship.
- c. Individuals and groups are free to peacefully exercise their beliefs without interference or coercion from nonstate actors, and any communal or religious violence is vigorously and fairly prosecuted by the state.

5. MEDIA FREEDOM AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- a. The media collectively convey the views of all major political factions, and state media are editorially independent and free of obvious political bias.
- b. Journalists are able to work without facing violence, arbitrary detention, or unjustified interference with news dissemination.
- c. Journalists and other Egyptians are not subject to criminal prosecution for blasphemy, defamation, or insulting state officials and entities.

6. CIVILIAN CONTROL AND SECURITY-SECTOR REFORM

- a. The military is subordinate to the constitution and elected civilian authorities, playing no role in politics or trials of civilians.
- b. The military budget is subject to review and approval by an elected legislature.
- c. The police and military have been reformed and retrained to meet international standards on crowd control, criminal investigation, treatment of suspects in custody, and accountability for abuses.

7. PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND CIVIC ACTIVISM

- a. All political parties and segments of civil society are free to assemble peacefully without encountering violence or arbitrary arrest by state actors.
- b. All political parties and segments of civil society are free to assemble peacefully without encountering violence from nonstate actors.
- c. Nongovernmental organizations promoting democratic reform and human rights are able to operate without interference from state or nonstate actors.

8. JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE AND RULE OF LAW

- a. The judiciary is free of political influence or bias, and judges are appointed, promoted, and removed using apolitical procedures and criteria.
- b. The judiciary upholds and defends the constitution and the rights it guarantees.
- c. Criminal suspects and defendants are afforded full legal rights and due process, including access to counsel and transparent court proceedings.