



The Challenges of the Popular Mobilization during COVID-19

Voting of Egyptians Living Abroad

(Position Paper)

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In light of regional situations and unprecedented international challenges with the spread of a major pandemic, Egypt is preparing in the coming days for a new test of popular wills and biases in the process of forming parliaments expressing its convictions by voting on the formation of the 2020 Senate. This is the first popular test of amendments to the provisions of the 2014 Constitution which included the addition of the seventh chapter including seven articles restoring the presence of a second chamber for Egyptian legislation under the name of the Senate. Voters living abroad will visit the headquarters of Egyptian diplomatic missions to cast their votes and choose their representatives for the council on Sunday and Monday (August 9-10) 2020 before the Egyptian vote begins on Tuesday and Wednesday (August 11,12) 2020.

Despite the many challenges facing the 2020 Senate electoral process, which ranged from the acceleration of the proceedings in a way that the political or community forces were not qualified for as well as the absence of active and influential public staff in the local environment in a broad sense commensurate with the nature and composition of emerging constituencies in addition to the propaganda campaigns launched by some political groups associated with non-national plans and capabilities to undermine the value of the Council and to eliminate its virtual roles in the service of public life. Additionally, there are major risks and challenges in conducting the electoral process during the pandemic with the number of cases reaching 1,691,1605 around the world, including 663,852 deaths. Consequently, many States and governments have taken exceptional decisions such as travel bans, home quarantining and compulsory accommodation of entire cities before countries expanded their measures and policies of social distancing and adopted work from home policies, which Egypt has implemented as well. Egypt has documented 92,947 cases and 4,691 deaths. Thus, the National Elections Committee announced a series of procedures and rules governing the frameworks and processes of propaganda, including reducing the number and proportions of attendance at mass conferences and expanding indirect and electronic advertising activities in addition to discussing ways and procedures of protection during voting processes, which included the adoption of the postal voting methodology for Egyptians living abroad as an alternative to direct voting through Egyptian embassies and consulates as was the case in previous electoral processes.

In fact, with each new electoral process to renew popular loyalty and measure the extent of satisfaction with the performance of the parliaments, the issue of the voting of Egyptians living abroad returns to the forefront of the scene as one of the most prominent achievements of the popular and public movement in the current decade, especially since the removal of this electoral gain came with a judicial ruling issued by the Administrative Court of Justice in the lawsuit No. (347) of the 12th judicial year presented by one of the lawyers against Marshal Hussein Tantawi, chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, minister of justice, ministers of interior and foreign affairs and chairman of the High Elections Committee demanding the right of foreign workers to vote in the 2011 elections, pointing out that the previous defunct rule corrupted political life in Egypt, especially the elections, whether in the House of Representatives and Senate or the presidential elections, in which the right of Egyptian citizens to vote freely and the right of Egyptians living and working abroad to vote was lost. The lawyer then added that after the 25th of January revolution, a new era must begin during which the right to vote for Egyptians abroad in any special elections or referendums is granted since Article 1 of Law No. 73 of 1956 amended by Law No. 46 of 2011 stipulates that every Egyptian who has reached the age of 18 must practice his political rights, including voting in elections and expressing opinions in referendums. Also, the legislator did not specify within the provisions of the law the necessity that the Egyptian resides at home, in addition to the fact that residency abroad is not considered an impediment to voting, and accordingly, the participation of Egyptians abroad must participate in drawing up Egypt's political future. Egyptians abroad can vote at consulates and embassies and use the passport in the absence of the ID cards, which the court agreed with and issued its decision in response to the popular demand to allow Egyptians residing abroad to exercise their right and participate in elections and public referendums.

The Administrative Court states in its ruling regarding the government's obligation in allowing Egyptians abroad to vote in the elections that the constitutional declaration issued on March 30th has stipulated that sovereignty is for the people and that the people alone are the source of powers and that all citizens are equal in rights and duties without discrimination before the law. Moreover, the court added that the constitutional declaration entrusted the law with the determination of the provisions of the election and referendum and that high committees with judicial formation should supervise the parliamentary elections at all stages. The law regulating political rights require every Egyptian who reaches the age of 18 to begin voicing his opinion and elect the president of the republic, members of the House of

Representatives and the Senate and members of localities. There was no indication that Egyptians abroad would be denied their right to vote, as they did not meet the conditions of denial of direct voting rights. The Immigration Law gave Egyptians the right to migrate individually and collectively, whether permanently or temporarily. Their immigration should not result in violations of their constitutional or legal rights as Egyptians who retain their Egyptian nationality.

The Court confirmed that the High Elections Committee enjoys, per the provisions of the Constitutional Declaration and the Law on the Directing of Political Rights, the competence and authority necessary to enable every Egyptian citizen who has fulfilled the conditions of direct political rights to proceed with his right to participate in the referendums and elections held by Egyptian. Consequently, it is up to the Committee to take all necessary and competent measures to enable citizens abroad and in the countries where they reside to vote in the elections as a constitutional and legal obligation on the Committee.

Accordingly, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces issued a constitutional declaration published by the Official Gazette in its 46th (II) issue on November 19, 2011. Article 1 stipulates that a 39th article should be added to the constitutional declaration issued on the 30th of March 2011 which stipulates that an exception to the provisions of article 39 of this declaration regulates by a special law the voting provisions in elections and referendums of Egyptians living abroad. This was followed by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces issuing a decree by law No. 130 for the year 2011 on the voting of Egyptians living abroad in the general elections and referendums. The first article stipulates that the state guarantees Egyptians living abroad the exercise of the right to vote in the general elections and express their opinions in the referendum according to the rules and procedures stipulated in this decree by law. According to Article 28 of the Constitutional Declaration issued on March 30, 2011, the Presidential Election Commission oversees how Egyptians abroad exercise the right to elect the President of the Republic. The High Elections Committee also oversees how Egyptians living abroad exercise the right to vote and express opinions in legislative elections and referendums as stipulated in Article (39) of the same declaration.

In order to regulate the exercise of this right, article 2 stipulates that those Egyptians abroad, who are bound by the voter database and wish to exercise the right to vote and express their opinions, may submit a request to the Consulate of the Arab Republic of Egypt in the country where they reside. Each consulate

will establish a register for such applications, including electronic registration, and the Presidential Election Commission or the High Elections Committee shall, in any case, issue a decision on the dates and procedures of registration, how to prepare voter statements, how they are displayed, the dates, and place. The voters referred to in this Article have the right to vote and express their opinion in the sub-committees designated for that outside the Arab Republic of Egypt. On the other hand, Article 3 stipulates that the electoral domicile of Egyptians residing abroad is their place of residence inside the Arab Republic of Egypt, indicated in the national ID card. Article 4 clarifies that nothing is accepted in proving the identity of Egyptian voters residing abroad except national number cards or valid Egyptian passports for those who have previously issued an identity card.

Accordingly, the High Judicial Election Commission adopted the mail voting mechanism as a means of giving Egyptians living abroad the right to vote in the 2011 legislative elections, whether by sending the envelope to the Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt by mail or going to the Egyptian Embassy to hand over the envelope. Additionally, voters are allowed to register the application for a change of electoral commission outside Egypt until November 19, 2011. The implementation experiences of those rules showed crude interference in the independence and impartiality of the voter's vote, whether in the supporters of a political current buying the voting forms of a large number of voters, especially in Arab countries, and blackening them in favour of their lists and candidates in the next parliamentary or presidential elections, or in the Egyptians residing abroad registering themselves and then refraining from casting their votes. However, figures indicate that in the 2012 presidential elections, the number of registered voters reached (586,803), of whom (314,329) voters participated, at a rate of (53.6%), while in the referendum on the 2012 constitution, there was (586,491) registered voters, of whom (246,407) voters participated, at a rate of (42%). Moreover, in the referendum on the 2014 constitution, the number of registered voters reached (681,346), of whom (107,041) voters participated, at a rate of (15.7%). This was all before the judicial committee supervising the elections intervened to confront these abuses and amend the voting rules to oblige voters to go to the headquarters of the Egyptian diplomatic mission or the affiliated consulate to directly cast their votes according to the same regulations applied inside the country.

Legislative Development of the Voting of Egyptians Living Abroad

The organised legislative process of voting of Egyptians living abroad shows the development of rules and the accumulation of experiences resulting from the analysis of electoral experiences and learning from the paths of interference and manipulation of the biases of voters abroad compared to the efficiency and discipline of the process of applying the rules of impartiality, integrity and transparency at home. With the issuance of the constitutional declaration and then the law governing the vote of Egyptians living abroad, the Supreme Judicial Elections Committee began to activate these texts factually. The committee issued resolution 27 for 2011 on the voting of Egyptians residing abroad, whose article 1 states that every Egyptian residing abroad who holds a valid national number card or passport who has previously obtained a national number card has the right to exercise his right to vote in the general elections and to express his opinion in the referendum. Moreover, article 2 stipulates that every Egyptian residing abroad registered in the voter database who wishes to exercise the right to vote has the right to express his desire to do so by submitting a request to the Consulate of the Arab Republic of Egypt in the country in which he resides, either by hand or by e-mail. These are the rules that were applied amidst the societal anticipation of how Egyptians exercise the newly developed electoral right and the volume of turnout and voting in embassies and consulates, especially with the presence of numbers of Egyptians residing abroad who can - in case of heavy participation - influence the general results and perhaps change some of them.

However, the actual practice has shown very limited registration processes and even greater limited responses and voting processes, in addition to the accumulation of intervention practices and violation of the right to free and fair voting. This was evident with the referendum on the texts of the 2012 Constitution, which witnessed a sectarian mobilization and the overthrow of all pillars of the civil state based on the logic of overruling and the ability to confuse the rules of the Brotherhood organisation in Arab capitals and even exploit the needs of citizens and expatriate workers to activate the purchasing national ID cards and relying on the mail voting mechanism as a means to escape from media censorship or to implement the rules of the electoral management committees at the headquarters of embassies and consulates despite the crudeness of practices and behaviours.

2012 Constitutional Referendum

1	Number of registrants	586491
2	Number of voters	246407
3	Participation rate	42%
4	Valid Votes	244481
5	Invalid Votes	1926
6	In favour	160795
7	Against	83686

With the start of the electoral process for the Presidency of the Republic, the Presidential Election Commission issued the fourth decision for 2012 with rules and procedures for voting Egyptians residing abroad. Its second article stipulates that Egyptians residing outside the Arab Republic of Egypt, who are listed in the voter database, have the right to vote in the presidential elections in the headquarters described in article 1 of the country in which they reside. Article 3 stipulates that Egyptians residing outside the Arab Republic of Egypt who wish to vote abroad shall register through the website of the Presidential Elections Commission. Article 6 stipulates that the voter's registration in the registers of voters outside the country entails lifting his name from the lists of voters inside the Arab Republic of Egypt and that he is not entitled to vote in the 2012 presidential elections except at the headquarters where he registered to vote abroad. The Elections Committee has reverted to amending those rules by resolution 18 of 2012 adjusting some provisions of resolution 4 of 2012 amending paragraph 2 of Article 9 to stipulate that the voter may, during the days specified for voting by Egyptians abroad, go to the headquarters of the Egyptian diplomatic mission or consulate before which he is registered to cast his vote, from eight in the morning until eight in the evening. In this case, he must present the national number card for the committee chairman to see, sign his name in the voters' list in his handwriting or by his thumbprint, and place the envelope containing the ballot card in the box designated for that. These are the rules that were flagrantly violated during the run-off to ensure the victory of the group's candidate, in a state of complacency and declared support and from the authorities of several countries, especially those in which the extremist group has access and support. This was reflected in the practices that reached

one mailbox sending four thousand ballot envelopes which provoked crises that almost engulfed the votes of entire embassies as a result of these unacceptable abuses.

2012 Presidential Election		
1	Number of Registrants	586803
2	Number of Voters	314329
3	Participation Rate	53,6 %
4	Valid Votes	311875
5	Invalid Votes	2454

The terrorist organisation's hegemony and control over the reins of power in Egypt were eliminated in response to popular demands and massive public demonstrations despite what it provoked from regional and international reactions that varied between the blurry vision resulting by the media affiliated or sympathetic to the organisation and the shock and anger of countries and governments that tried, through that group, to restore their colonial heritage, or to appear strong and influential in the region.

Therefore, it was natural that this environment would create a climate that does not encourage the participation of Egyptians living abroad in the following electoral and voting processes, whether by the reluctance of the members of the organisation to participate or their pressures on the functional sectors that are witnessing heavy Egyptian presence to put obstacles to their going to the polling committees in the headquarters of the Egyptian missions. This was reflected in the decline in voting rates on the Egyptian Constitution 2014. The total number of participants in the referendum on its texts reached 107,041 among the 681,346 voters who registered themselves on the website to make the scene appear as a reluctance and refusal to accept the new form of authority in Egypt.

2014 Constitutional Referendum		
1	Number of Registrants	681346

2	Number of Voters	107041
3	Participation Rate	15,7 %
4	Valid Votes	106541
5	Invalid Votes	500
6	In favour	104464
7	Against	2077

In light of this experience, it was natural for the bodies entrusted with the management of electoral operations to review the form and nature of the procedures for voting Egyptians abroad. Thus, the Presidential Election Commission issued its resolution No. 11 of 2014 with the voting rules and procedures for Egyptians living abroad, including amendments to the form and method of voting of Egyptians living abroad in the general elections. Article 1 stipulates that for every Egyptian outside Egypt on the day the elections for the President of the Republic has the right to vote as long as his name is restricted to the voter's database and holds a national number card or valid passport, including the national number. The voter must practice this right himself. Moreover, article 2 stipulates that it is not permissible to prove the identity of the voter other than with the original national number card or passport with the national number. The most important amendment came within article 3 which stipulates that the vote shall be cast at the consulate, the Egyptian mission or any of the headquarters decided by the High Elections Committee after taking the opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to that amendment, the national situation saw in the support of candidate Abdel Fattah al-Sisi a declaration and recognition of the support of the path and steps taken to rid the terrorist organisation and show popular approval and satisfaction for all the steps that were taken even though they were from citizens residing abroad, which increased its significance. Clear turnout and festivities in front of all embassies and consulates that were determined by the Judicial Committee for the voting of Egyptians living abroad were witnessed.

2014 Presidential Election

1	Number of Voters	318033
2	Valid Votes	313835
3	Invalid Votes	4198
4	Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi	296628
5	Hamdeen Sabahi	17207

As the state moves towards the restructuring of the 2015 House of Representatives and taking executive steps to organise the electoral process, the Supreme Judicial Committee for Elections issued decision 73 for 2015 to organise the voting of Egyptians living abroad in the 2015 elections of the House of Representatives. Its first article stipulates that every Egyptian living outside Egypt has the right to vote and choose candidates in his constituency in the 2015 elections of the House of Representatives as long as his name is registered in the voter database, carries a national number card indicating his address in Egypt or a valid passport including the national number and address in Egypt and submits a statement stating that he is a resident abroad and a document indicating his residence. The committee supervising the elections in the diplomatic mission must accept his indication of residence abroad. The voter must proceed with this right himself. Article 3 confirmed that the casting of votes should be done at the headquarters of the Egyptian mission or consulate or any of the headquarters that are determined by a decision of the High Elections Committee after taking the opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This is a path that the National Elections Authority reaffirmed with its call for the 2018 presidential elections, which witnessed a marked decline in the number of Egyptian voters living abroad despite the high percentages of votes in Egypt. This behaviour can be explained by the low sensitivity of real competitiveness between the president who enjoys overwhelming support (al-Sisi) and his rival (Moussa) in addition to the stability of the Egyptian situation and the announcement of the international community support for the Egyptian choices and the success of the Egyptian president in achieving unprecedented successes at the level of international relations, which made many members of the Egyptian communities go to their work and carry on with their studies with confidence in the results of the electoral practice.

2018 presidential election		
1	Number of Voters	157060
2	Valid Votes	153250
3	Invalid Votes	3810
4	Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi	151331
5	Moussa Mostafa Moussa	1919

Egyptians' Votes in Western Countries

Despite the presence of Egyptian diaspora residing almost stably in Western societies and the presence of focal points with a lot of families, the turnout and voting rates in the general elections between them came very limitedly in behaviour that is difficult to find a convincing justification for, especially since many sectors of them suffered from the challenges of the sectarian scene, which was the reason for the departure of most of them and even their ability to force pressuring negotiations and having gains for the benefit of its interest groups, especially as it coincided with the electoral process that witnessed a sectarian mobilization in addition to the momentum after the mass movement on January 25th. These communities failed to benefit from it to the extent that the highest voting rates in the 2012 presidential elections put forward by the Embassy of London stood at 3,938 voters followed by New York with 3,697 voters and Washington with 2,961 voters. These figures are closer to those at local polling stations than to votes at embassies with tens or even hundreds of thousands of Egyptians living abroad.

Western Embassies (2012 Presidency)		
No.	Embassy/Consulate	Number of Votes
1	London	3938
2	New York	3697
3	Washington	2961
4	Paris	2945

5	Los Angeles	2858
6	Ottawa	2828
7	Montreal	2802
8	Milan	2618
9	Melbourne	1935
10	Germany	1644

However, the votes of Egyptians living in Western societies have witnessed a clear numerical surge in the number of voters as a direct result of the organised work of Egyptian committees abroad and the dialogues and meetings that took place with those communities to explain the situation and challenges in Egypt, which require popular support for the 2014 presidential electoral process as a guarantee to highlight the national scene, expressing genuine satisfaction with the nature of the authority and supporting its path of wishing to give independence to the national decision and diversify its sources of strength as well as the efforts of the organising committees in providing means of transportation and facilitating efforts for those wishing to participate. The numbers of voters reached 9417 in New York, followed by Milan with 9095, Paris with 6421 and Los Angeles with 5905 voters.

Western Embassies (Presidency 2014)		
No.	Embassy/Consulate	Number of votes
1	New York	9417
2	Milan	9095
3	Paris	6421
4	Los Angeles	5905
5	London	4634
6	Montreal	3121
7	Sydney	2790

8	Washington	2618
9	Rome	2423
10	Athens	2402

In the 2018 presidential elections, voting rates in Western capitals declined again, influenced by the community's stability and the lack of real competitiveness in front of President al-Sisi, which may call for a sense of danger that will attract the supportive voting crowd to the ballot boxes. Thus, the lack of an electoral battle failed to evoke the desires of participation especially in light of the difficulties of transportation and the distances between the places of work and residence and between the consular headquarters in which the votes are cast.

Western Embassies (Presidency 2018)		
No.	Embassy/Consulate	Number of votes
1	Milan	5050
2	New York	3231
3	Paris	3179
4	London	2141
5	Los Angeles	1941
6	Athens	1887
7	Sydney	1599
8	Rome	1524
9	The Hague	1208
10	Melbourne	1171

The auditor of the development of the voting process of the main Western capitals will discover the extent to which the voting crowd of Egyptians living abroad is linked to the nature of power within the

country, especially its positions on religious freedoms and freedom of belief. While fundamentalist currents and religious groups dominated the scene, the voting in those headquarters declined significantly, in attempts to disengage from the electoral position and its repercussions. This was contrary to the scenes portrayed by the media and many civil and official institutions from restoring the feeling of belonging and showing off the Egyptian flag and lining up in front of polling stations in national embassies and consulates from different cities and in various Western capitals.

The Evolution of the Vote of Western Capitals				
No.	Embassy/Consulate	2012 Presidency	2014 Presidency	2018 Presidency
1	New York	3697	9417	3231
2	Milan	2618	9095	5050
3	Paris	2945	6421	3179
4	London	3938	4634	2141
5	Montreal	2802	3121	1105

Egyptian Votes in Arab Countries

The votes of Egyptians residing in Arab countries represent an important figure in the Egyptian electoral equation for a variety of reasons, perhaps the most prominent of which is that these Egyptians have a temporary residence with employment opportunities and high income with close contact and association with Egyptian internal affairs and following its developments other than the situation for Egyptians residing in western countries who moved to it for immigration or permanent stability and only track and interfere in events that affect their lives and the lives of their extended families who still live at home. Moreover, the Egyptian situation with its history and status represents a political tsunami with its effects extending beyond its borders, reaching surrounding countries that have interests and are intervening in Egyptian affairs seeking to establish a situation that benefits their interests. Egyptian labour, with its intensity and voting trends, is an active element in the scene and its repercussions. Finally, the strong and influential presence of political Islamic groups for the sake of residence and historical stability as well as these groups benefiting governments through their employment during their struggles with Egypt,

which they sought to exploit to dominate the voting scene, whether by mobilizing their members or buying voting papers from simple workers to support their candidates at home by a strong voting dominance in the local electoral struggle.

In this context, the mass voting scene in Arab capitals during the initial voting processes after the popular wave in January, which was driven by the ambitions and desires for change and reform, as well as the activity of the groups in registering their members and followers through the postal voting base to find the votes of Riyadh alone reaching 84,005 voters exceeding all western capitals combined, followed by Kuwait with 58,826, Jeddah with 26,934, Dubai with 21,312 and Doha with 19,164.

Arab Embassies (2012 Presidency)		
No.	Embassy/Consulate	Number of Votes
1	Riyadh	84005
2	Kuwait	58826
3	Jeddah	26934
4	Dubai	21312
5	Doha	19164
6	Abu Dhabi	15234
7	Muscat	5604
8	Bahrain	3915
9	Jordan	1431
10	Sudan	601

Despite the successive Egyptian events and the gathering of Egyptians in a historic scene to demand salvation from the sectarian and authoritarian rule of the group, which culminated in the demonstrations of the 30th June and the third of July, which state institutions supported accompanied by hard-line international positions and inflammatory media speech led by the Qatar Channel Group (Al Jazeera). Egyptians residing in these countries have proved a national and historical position by lining up in

unprecedented numbers in front of polling stations abroad carrying Egyptian flags and pictures and singing national songs by exceeding the numbers of votes in the 2014 Egyptian presidential elections compared to all their previous votes combined, especially in the major Arab capitals, which announced from the first moment their support to the Egyptian will (Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait)

Arab Embassies (Presidency 2014)		
No.	Embassy/Consulate	Number of votes
1	Kuwait	65330
2	Riyadh	39519
3	Jeddah	37090
4	Dubai	28645
5	Abu Dhabi	23611
6	Doha	21237
7	Oman	10899
8	Manama	6025
9	Muscat	5299
10	Beirut	4736

As for the 2018 presidential elections, the voting index took a relative decline, influenced by the nature of the electoral practice, whether because of the stability of the international situation or the overwhelming popularity of the president or the weakness of his rival, which severely affected the turnout of Egyptians residing in Arab countries to leave their workplaces and go to the polling stations.

Arab Embassies (2018 Presidency)		
M	Embassy/Consulate	Number of votes
1	Kuwait	35165

2	Jeddah	18464
3	Riyadh	16405
4	Dubai	13710
5	Abu Dhabi	13377
6	Oman	5780
7	Doha	5367
8	Muscat	3535
9	Manama	3423
10	Beirut	2216

In fact, reading the development of the voting processes of Egyptians residing in Arab countries in the general elections reveals the dominance of voters from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Qatar on the Arab scene due to the high volume of Egyptian labour in those countries in addition to the relationship of their governments regarding the composition of the Egyptian authority, whether in a positive supportive manner making the guarantees and facilitation of casting votes well available to Egyptian workers there (Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait) or the hostile position dependent on regional agendas by the Qatari government, which turned into a media machine and financier of terrorist operations and the diaspora of the opposition to distort the Egyptian scene, creating a special stimulus for the Egyptian workers residing there to defend themselves. It also created a clear distinction between their presence associated with their jobs and their biases linked to national agendas, which appeared through the ballot boxes in all the successive electoral processes.

The Evolution of the Votes of Arab Capitals				
M	Embassy/Consulate	2012 Presidency	2014 Presidency	2018 Presidency
1	Kuwait	58826	65330	35165

2	Riyadh	84005	39519	16405
3	Jeddah	26934	37090	18464
4	Dubai	21312	28645	13710
5	Doha	19164	21237	13377

Voting Challenges in 2020 Senate Elections

Within the framework of the National Elections Authority's role and competence stipulated in article 209 of the Constitution as well as item 10 of Article 3 of Law 198 of 2017, which makes the National Elections Authority competent to establish the rules governing the voting procedures of Egyptian residents abroad in referendums and elections in accordance with their conditions and the determination of the headquarters of these committees and their number and those who are responsible for them, all while providing guarantees to ensure the integrity and impartiality of the referendum process or elections. The Authority issued on July 20, 2020, its resolution No. 44 for 2020 organising the voting procedures for Egyptians abroad. The resolution's article 1 stipulates that Egyptian living abroad has the right to vote in the Senate elections as long as their name is restricted to the voter database and holds a national number card or valid passport including the national number. While article 2 stipulates that Senate elections shall be held for Egyptians living abroad by mail to each voter and ballot papers shall be sent to the election committees set out by the decision of the National Elections Authority on Sunday and Monday, August 9, 10, 2020 and in the event of a run-off on Sunday and Monday, September 6, 7, 2020. The committees will begin their work from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. to receive voting letters from Sunday, August 9, 2020, till Wednesday, August 12, 2020, and in the event of a run-off from Sunday, September 6, 2020, to Wednesday, September 9, 2020, in accordance with the local timing of the mission conducting the voting. This is a voting method developed by the Authority as an alternative to direct the voting of voters within the headquarters of the polling stations specified in embassies and consulates in line with the World Health Organization's recommendations and the decisions and controls put in place by the countries of the world to contain the virus and reduce the chances of its spread.

As part of the regulation of the exercise of this voting right and to ensure that the protection of voters and that their rights are not violated, article 3 stipulates that every voter residing outside Egypt must

register his or her data and the Egyptian diplomatic mission of his residence abroad through the official website of the National Elections Authority from Saturday, July 25, 2020, until Friday, July 31, 2020, and show the registration number if his name is confirmed in the voter database and keeps the number without informing anyone else until the end of the electoral process. Moreover, article 4 has completed the rules governing and the executive steps guaranteeing the vote by stipulating that ballot papers of all constituencies shall be available to the individual systems and lists on the official website of the Authority during the two days of elections abroad, taking into account the timing of each state and obtained by those who have already registered their data following the previous article according to the constituency of his residence using the registration number once and print them and express their opinion on it by selecting several candidates for the individual system equal to a number of seats of the constituency and selecting one of the lists with the card allocated to the list system. The voter then puts two ballot cards inside an envelope and closes it without recording any data on it and puts it attached to a photocopy of the identity card or valid passport including the national number and the document of residence in the state of voting and the statement of the vote attached to the full data and signed by the voter himself inside an envelope including all those documents and with his data and the address of the Electoral Commission of the diplomatic mission sent to it written on it. Finally, these papers are sent to the Committee by express mail.

Despite the value and importance of these rules and procedures adopted by the National Elections Authority to activate the participation of Egyptians living abroad in the Egyptian elections, whether in maintaining the life and health of voters or in line with the rules of maintaining public health pursued by governments and international organisations or facilitating the means of voting for the voter to increase the participation of Egyptians abroad in the elections. However, the percentages of voter turnout and trends will remain coupled with a number of challenges and restraints as follows:

First: The position of governments or countries that will witness the voting processes of the Egyptian elections in the light of its policies of social distancing and reducing assemblies in closed places, which requires the pursuit of alternatives and policies commensurate with the nature of the situation without affecting the neutrality and integrity of electoral practice.

Second: The absence of seats allocated to represent Egyptians living abroad from the composition of the Senate in accordance with the constitutional text (amendments 2019) or the Senate Act (141) of 2020 as is present within the composition of the House of Representatives, which makes the association of diaspora with the Council or their interest in its performance very limited.

Third: The absence of mechanisms and tools of communication and popular cohesion between residents abroad and institutions in Egypt, which made large sectors of Egyptians living abroad reluctant to participate or pay attention to details and interactions of internal affairs, which may require a review of performance and the adoption of alternative national policies.

Fourth: Egyptians living abroad do not feel the importance and influence of Egyptian parliaments on their lives or that they can strengthen their position in the alternative communities in which they live, which may create a reformed association that enhances opportunities for participation and attention.

Fifth: The financial cost associated with participation processes, which collide with convictions that have taken root among many communities living abroad that the goal of being abroad and enduring its hardships is to form and seize money, which makes them think a lot before engaging in any activity that may require more expenses.

Sixth: The lack of awareness of large segments of Egyptian employment with limited knowledge of the ways and tools of remote voting as a result of the lack of awareness campaigns and the weak activity of national political groups among them (an issue that needs to be reviewed and discussed).

Seventh: Parties and political forces competing in Egypt disregarding the international front and the lack of coordinators among the functional sectors abroad that practice propaganda and mobilization of voters in successive electoral processes (which reveals the dilemma of the parties and the political power in their communication with the mass or their ability to direct it or benefit from it despite many years of the ruling of the judiciary granting Egyptians living abroad the right to vote)

Eighth: The absence of the electoral discourse directed at Egyptians abroad and the absence of their demands and problems from the electoral programs of potential candidates, which made citizens lack their sense of value in the industry of that elite or support the presence of its elements (something that can be monitored when analysing the intellectual content of the candidates' electoral programs)

Expected Voting Trends

Developments in the world during the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for the political scene reveal several possible trends in the voting of Egyptians abroad in the Senate elections:

The government's response to COVID-19 reinforces a kind of political bias: A segment of Egyptians abroad are likely to look positively at Egypt's response to the situation of Egyptians affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and facilitating the procedures of those stranded abroad, which may lead to more voters supporting Egypt to engage in the voting process while taking more health precautions. For example, the Minister of Planning and Economic Development said that Egyptians returning from abroad represent a number of different governorates, which can be invested in utilizing their energies and skills in a range of programs that help overall development.

Egypt's efforts were not limited to the above, the state adopted new mechanisms to help Egyptians abroad vote. Egypt has announced through the National Elections Authority that the voting process will be conducted through a new mechanism, namely, rapid mail to prevent gatherings in front of embassies in light of the emerging Coronavirus crisis.

Voting Variation: Egyptian turnout is expected to largely vary on the ballot box in the Senate elections. Less participation is expected in countries that still impose restrictions on gatherings, as well as in States which have witnessed significant COVID-19 deaths. This trend increased particularly after the imposition of curfews, as many countries around the world warned of the risk of an outbreak of coronavirus if safety rules, imposed by the authorities, are not adhered to. Thus, there is a possibility of

a decline in participation rates among Egyptians abroad. Despite the interest of many Egyptians, the lockdown conditions in many countries around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic may pay a lot to refrain from participating for fear of gatherings that provides a fertile environment for the spreading of the COVID-19 pandemic. High levels of mortality in States where Egyptian expatriates are present may encourage older voters to change their minds about participation in the Senate elections.

On the other hand, participation rates are expected to decline in countries that have terminated the employment contracts of some Egyptians, as well as countries where Egyptian employment is suffering from complex situations. Relative participation is also expected in some countries that have reduced lockdown measures, particularly in European countries that have begun to lift lockdown and return to normal.

Boycotts in countries that host Islamists: Egyptians residing in countries such as Turkey and Qatar are expected to refrain from participating in the electoral process, participate in negative voting without choosing any of the participating lists. This is due to the presence of political Islam currents in these countries, and some of the political currents loyal to them, which may play a role in influencing the Egyptians not to participate. This is revealed by the media and the remarkable activity in the Brotherhood's channels - Al Sharq, Mekameleen and Watan - in addition to the electronic space through social networking sites for calls aimed at reducing the political weight of the Senate, and that the Council is nothing more than a democratic decor that the regime employs to beautify its image. The Brotherhood in countries that oppose Egypt, and that represents a haven for political Islam currents, may play a role in mobilization operations in the interest of boycotting the electoral process for the Senate, given their ability to deal with Egyptian gatherings in these countries, and their ability to influence voting trends.

Community forces abroad may influence non-participation: the spread of COVID-19 has contributed to growing fears of community forces from Egyptians abroad, in many ways, most notably the possibility of a wider spread of the pandemic due to lack of social distancing. In addition, the fear of the spread of infection stopped the agents of the candidates in the Senate elections or the supporters of the political forces participating in the Senate elections, regardless of their orientations in practising electoral propaganda among the Egyptian diaspora.

Declining fortunes of small parties: Although turnout is expected to decline on the Senate ballot, the percentage expected to contribute to the voting process, whether by going to electoral headquarters or voting by mail, maybe geared towards selecting figures who are more capable of leading the country in light of the current world crisis during COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, Egyptian voters abroad are likely to move away from small parties such as National Progressive Unionist Party, Pioneer Party, Union Party, Human Rights and Citizenship Party, Liberal Constitutional Party, and The People’s Voice Party due to their weak presence in the Egyptian political life, as they seem closer to seasonal parties floating on the surface of the political arena during election season.

Finally, it can be said that the Senate elections, although they are the first of their kind after the return of the Shura Council in a new form, and with clear and specific powers, but the political participation of Egyptians abroad is expected to be minimal due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the return of large segments of Egyptians abroad in addition to the serious concerns of many countries of electoral gatherings, which prompted the High Elections Committee in Egypt to peruse voting by mail.