



Egypt: Ensure Women's Full Participation in the Constitutional Process and Promote their Rights



Demonstrating for a democratic Egypt
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“I have always had a dream for my country that includes equality and justice for all and for women to finally be given respect. I am very worried now about the continued exclusion of women from the constitutional process. Unless women are treated as real partners in deciding the future of Egypt, women and girls will suffer the consequences,” Egyptian women’s activist, Azza Suleiman told Equality Now. On 8 September, a constitutional committee established by the new interim Egyptian government began working on a new constitution for the country. However, Article 29 of the constitutional declaration, issued by interim president Adly Mansour, reserved only 10% of the 50 committee member positions for “women and youth.” This effectively ignores women’s demands for full participation. The women selected have mostly been limited to representatives of government bodies, which does not reflect the full range of civil society interests, expertise, and demands.

Egyptian women are also disturbed that the 10-member so-called expert committee, which worked in secret to prepare recommendations on constitutional amendments for the 50-member committee, did not include any women, let alone any experts in women’s rights. Drafts of the proposals leaked to the media are giving our partners cause for alarm as they are apparently rolling back on achievements already made for women.

Egyptian women’s groups, who participated so strongly and positively in the revolution for everyone’s rights and freedoms, including the Center for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance (CEWLA) and the Egyptian feminist coalition, are shocked by these new moves and denounce the systemic exclusion and the deterioration of women’s already limited political participation. Equality Now’s partners are therefore calling for a change to the make-up of the 50-member constitutional committee to include at least 35% women, representing all segments of society and particularly those with expertise in women’s rights. They also maintain their call for the full implementation of the 2011 [Egyptian Women’s Charter](#), drawn up by more than 3,000 women and endorsed by half a million Egyptian citizens, both men and women.

Equality Now supports our partners’ [continuing efforts](#) to hold the authorities accountable for the promotion and protection of their human rights and urges the Egyptian authorities to realize the following demands:

1. Ensure a broad base of participation from all sections of society in the 50-member constitutional committee to guarantee fair and representative governance and respect for women’s needs and aspirations as previously formulated by a diverse group of women from across Egypt.
2. Ensure that, at minimum, 35% of the constitutional committee members are expert women, including representatives from civil society.

Women’s groups are also asking the interim government to consider the following proposals to ensure a transparent, democratic and well-informed political process:

- women’s participation of at minimum 35% at all levels of decision-making, including the executive, legislative and judicial authorities (which should be enshrined in the Constitution) and women’s representation in all offices and all specialties of the presidency.

- compliance with, and guarantee that the Constitution respects, all international treaties that protect the rights of women and men.
- preservation of the social and economic rights achieved by women in their previous struggles and a guarantee of their ability to attain them.
- establishment of full citizenship rights and the rule of law that will lead to the revocation of all forms of discrimination based on sex, age, marital status, class, ideological affiliation, etc.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Please call on Egyptian authorities to heed the voices of Egyptian women, in line with Egypt's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to ensure full equality between men and women. Urge them to:

- change the composition of the 50-member constitutional committee so that women are better represented, with a minimum level of 35%, and ask them to employ a selection process that is representative, transparent and fair and reflects the rights of all of Egypt's citizens.
- form a women's rights committee to assist the 50-member committee in incorporating women's rights in the Constitution. This committee should include the expertise of a wide-range of women, from feminist civil society and the women's movement, rather than just women representatives of political parties.

Letters should go to:

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Prime Minister Hazem el-Beblawi
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Email: pm@cabinet.gov.eg

With a copy to:

Amre Moussa, President of the Constitutional Committee
Email: amremoussa@gmail.com

Please keep Equality Now updated on your work and send copies of any replies you receive to:

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Equality Now, P.O. Box 2018 - 00202, Nairobi, KENYA, Fax: +254-20-271-9868; or
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