



Written by [James Heiser](#) on June 16, 2012

Egyptians Brace for Results of Weekend's Runoff Presidential Elections

As Egyptians await word of the outcome of the next round of elections for a new president for their nation, the fate of the Egypt seems more uncertain than at any time since the "Arab Spring." Only months ago, the Muslim Brotherhood had allegedly been [plotting to export their Islamist revolution](#) to neighboring countries. Now, a panel of judges has dissolved the new parliament, and is permitting Egypt's former prime minister to run for President.



The move which was taken by the judges overseeing the elections has had at least one predictable result: The Islamists who had won an overwhelming majority of seats in both houses of the parliament are enraged. [As reported previously for The New American](#), the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party won 38 percent of the seats in the lower house of parliament, while the Salafist Al-Nour party won 27 percent, providing a clear majority of seats in the lower house of parliament to those who are pledged to bring Egypt into greater conformity with sharia law. Election results were even more lopsided in the upper house of parliament, with over 80 percent of the seat going to Islamists.

Now, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court has nullified those electoral victories. According to [a report from Voice of America News](#), the court disqualified one third of the sitting parliament from holding office. Furthermore, since the process of drafting a new constitution is not yet complete, this weekend's runoff election could result in the nation having a new president who lacks both a parliament and a constitution.

Not surprisingly, Islamists are accusing the court of acting on behalf of the Egyptian military in an alleged effort to avoid a transition to popular rule. [As the New York Times reports](#):

The timing of the ruling seems like a transparent attempt to undermine the Islamists just two days before Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood is set to compete in the runoff against Ahmed Shafik, a former air force general and Mr. Mubarak's last prime minister....

Electing a president without either a constitution or a parliament is like "electing an 'emperor' with more power than the deposed dictator. A travesty," Mohamed ElBaradei, the Nobel Prize-winning diplomat and former presidential candidate, said in a comment online.

In a statement, the Brotherhood's political arm said the court's decisions "confirms that the former regime hasn't surrendered yet and won't give up easily."

Mr. Morsi, the Brotherhood's candidate, charged that the rulings proved some were "plotting against the people," determined to "tamper with the will of the people."

Despite the charges being levied by the Muslim Brotherhood and others Islamists, the courts action appears to have been directed toward upholding the letter and spirit of the rules for selection of the new parliament. As the situation is [reported by the Washington Post](#), the presence of members of



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various parties — including the Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party — competing for parliamentary seats which were specifically allotted for independent candidates is what led to the court removing those partisans who were wrongly elected to fill those seats:

The court’s second ruling on Thursday said that political parties wrongly fielded candidates for the one-third of parliamentary seats that were supposed to be set aside for independent candidates. That could mean that the lawmakers who won those seats will be removed from office and another round of voting held.

However, if chaos returns to the streets of Egypt, it is likely that the fine points of Egypt’s electoral laws will be drowned out. For the moment, however, the Brotherhood appears content to simply deny that the Supreme Constitutional Court had the power to take the course of action they followed; again, in the words of the *New York Times*:

But Brotherhood officials said Thursday that they expected Parliament to meet as scheduled next week. They argued that under the Egyptian system, the high constitutional court does not have the authority to order the dissolution of Parliament and that in any event there were less sweeping remedies available to resolve the court’s complaints.

“The Parliament hasn’t been and won’t be dissolved,” Mr. Morsi said in a television interview. He also vowed to compete as planned against Mr. Shafik.

As there is not a new constitution to guide post-Mubarak Egypt, the issues are undeniably complicated. And, the *New York Times* noted, the matter becomes even more problematic when one considers the relief which secular lawmakers expressed — even when it cost them their seats in parliament:

Some lawmakers said they welcomed the dissolution of Parliament even though it cost them their seats. They were afraid of the power of the Islamists, said Emad Gad, a leader of the secular Social Democratic Party’s parliamentary bloc. He has endorsed Mr. Shafik.

“Definitely it is good,” Mr. Gad said, arguing that the ruling was a blow to the Islamists’ power and prestige, bolstering Mr. Shafik’s chances to win the presidential election. He was less afraid that Mr. Shafik might become a Mubarak-like strongman than he was of the Islamists monopolizing power through their victories at the polls. “We can demonstrate against Shafik, but we cannot demonstrate against the Islamists,” Mr. Gad said.

As reported several months ago for [The New American](#), Islamists brazenly packed the commission charged with drafting a new constitution with those who shared their views; Coptic Christians — and others — felt they had no choice but to resign from the commission in protest. Depending on the results of the elections, the Muslim Brotherhood and their Salafist allies may find themselves wondering whether a more gradual approach would have been more profitable to them in the long run. Having shaken the confidence of their countrymen, the Islamists may find that they have squandered the goodwill which many of their countrymen were prepared to extend to them in the aftermath of the “Arab Spring.”

Photo of Egyptians protesting ongoing military rule in Cairo: AP Images



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