



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on January 16, 2014

## Large Majority of Egyptian Voters Approve New Constitution

Preliminary results indicate that more than 97 percent of Egyptian voters have voted “yes” to approve the nation’s new constitution, national officials and the media announced on January 16.

The Egyptian daily [Al Ahram](#) reported that of 19,311,010 voters casting ballots, 18,631,844 (97.7 percent) voted “yes, with 366,410 (2.3 percent) voting “no.”

*Al Ahram* reported that the newly amended constitution “improves upon the one drafted in 2012 under an Islamist government headed by then-president Mohamed Morsi. That charter was suspended after his 3 July ouster.” The influential Egyptian newspaper also noted that the Muslim Brotherhood, of which Morsi is a prominent member, announced a boycott of the referendum and held protests during the voting to denounce what they called an illegitimate political process.

*Al Ahram* further reported that the Strong Egypt Party, founded by former Brotherhood member and prominent Islamist Mohamed Abul-Fotouh, initially campaigned for a “no” vote, but after some of its members were arrested for passing out fliers against approving the new constitution, it called for an outright boycott of the referendum.

[Fox News reported](#) that the amended constitution just voted on not only provides a blueprint for new presidential elections, but was also a test of public opinion about the coup that removed Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood. The new constitution is a heavily amended version of the document written by Morsi’s Islamist allies and ratified in December 2012 with about 64 percent of the vote.

The overwhelming “yes” vote is also seen as a mandate for General Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi — commander-in-chief of Egypt’s armed forces, Minister of Defense, and First Deputy Prime Minister — to run for president later this year.

As commander of the armed forces, el-Sisi played the leading role in ousting Morsi. El-Sisi is a Sunni Muslim with ties to the West, having attended the Joint Command and Staff College in the U.K. and the U.S. Army War College.

Reuters reported that el-Sisi is very popular and is seen as the only serious candidate for the presidency. Mohamed Qadri Said, a retired army general who works at the state’s Al-Ahram Centre for Strategic and Political Studies, told the news service, “I believe this is the most convenient time for Sisi





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to make an announcement if he has the intention to run. I do not see anyone else running against him. He has done great things to the country and the people like him.”

The Fox report noted that many Egyptians regard the overwhelming “yes” vote as a fatal blow to the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist politics, which have held a dominant position since the 2011 ouster of President Hosni Mubarak. In the past three years, the Islamists swept the vote in parliamentary and presidential elections, and seemed to have secured a well-entrenched position of power.

An article in the [Financial Times](#) by Cairo correspondent Heba Saleh noted that Egypt’s military-backed authorities will be able to cite the result of the referendum as proof that Egyptians are ready to abandon the Muslim Brotherhood, which briefly assumed much influence when Morsi was elected president in June 2012. Saleh wrote that “some media have described it as ‘the death certificate’ of the Brotherhood.” Saleh continued:

Many Egyptians said their support for the charter was a vote for stability and order after continuous turmoil in the three years following the 2011 revolution which ended the rule of Hosni Mubarak, the autocrat who held power for three decades.

The charter was also backed by secular and liberal parties as well as by the ultraconservative Islamist Nour party — all political enemies of the Brotherhood which has led in elections held since 2011 but has now been designated a terrorist organization. Egypt’s business community and much of its elite also appear to be investing in the new military-led order.

The Egyptian referendum results were also viewed with interest in Israel, where the [Haaretz](#) newspaper reported on the development. Echoing reports found in other news sources that the vote signals the death-knell of the Muslim Brotherhood, *Haaretz* pointed out that Egypt’s government declared the Brotherhood a terrorist organization on December 25.

The Israeli paper stated the opinion that “A Sisi presidency would turn back the clock to the days when the post was controlled by military men and could kill off any hope of a political accommodation with the Islamist opposition.” “You could see the re-emergence of a domineering president,” said Nathan Brown, a professor of political science at George Washington University identified as an expert on Egyptian affairs.

What was left unsaid, however, is that in Muslim-dominated countries, military men are often among the most westernized and moderate of rulers, and life for Christians under their rule is often much better than under the “Islamist opposition” that usually replaces them following a political upheaval.

*Haaretz* reported that the new constitution deletes Islamist-inspired provisions that were approved when Morsi was still in office, and strengthens the government bodies that opposed him: the army, the police, and the judiciary.

Writing for the *Christian Science Monitor*, journalist Dan Murphy viewed the news from Egypt with pessimism, asking rhetorically, “Is this is a complete disaster?”

Murphy continues, “Well, if you believe that democracy is the answer to all a society’s ills, then yes. Gen. Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, who leads Egypt’s interim military government, is now in pole position to win Egypt’s presidency and he’s not that different from Mr. Mubarak.”

However, Murphy acknowledges, “But it also can’t be ignored that what’s going on in Egypt right now is very popular among Egyptians.” He notes: “The country is moving further away from democracy and vast numbers of Egyptians, perhaps even a majority, seem OK with it.”



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Perhaps most Egyptians, having had a taste of Islamic-style “democracy,” have discovered it is not all it’s cracked up to be, and that in a Middle Eastern nation a military strongman is preferable to an Iranian-style, radicalized, Islamic theocracy.

Democracy has not worked out too well in Western nations, either, if the views of our founding fathers are any indication. For example, John Adams said in 1814, “Remember democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.” Alexander Hamilton said, “We are a Republican Government, Real liberty is never found in despotism or in the extremes of democracy.” And James Madison said, “Democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their death.”

Egypt’s Christians — mostly Copts — suffered greatly following the “democratic” change in government that replaced Mubarak with Morsi. A report from CNN last August 16 noted, “Christians all around Egypt are cleaning up in the aftermath of a spate of attacks, which came on the country’s deadliest day since the 2011 revolution that overthrew longtime President Hosni Mubarak.” The report cited Bishop Angaelos, the Cairo-born head of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom, who said he was told by colleagues in Egypt that 52 churches and numerous Christians homes and businesses were attacked in a 24-hour period that started Wednesday, August 14.

CNN noted that these attacks, and others, have been blamed on supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood — the Islamist movement that was engaged in confrontation with the interim government that replaced Morsi.

An AP report headlined “Egypt’s Christian minority rally behind charter” noted, “Tensions, not new between Islamists and Christians, took a turn for the worse after the Islamists’ rise to political prominence following the ouster of longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak.”

Not surprisingly, Christians turned out in large numbers to vote “yes” on the latest referendum approving a constitution likely to restore order and end violence against Christians in Egypt.

“For the Copts, the responsibility these days doesn’t permit for any apathy,” AP quoted Muntassir Malek, an active get-out-the-vote organizer from the village of Aziyah and founder of its new three-story church.

The new constitution will ban political parties based on religion, give women equal rights, and provides that a law to protect the status of Christians be drafted within a year.

While Egyptians have a long way to go to establish a government that protects the rights of all its citizens, for the nation’s Christians, at least, life under the new constitution promises to be better than under the Muslim Brotherhood.

*Photo of election workers in Cairo counting ballots in the referendum for Egypt’s new constitution: AP Images*

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