



مبادرة نيل السلام والتنمية وحقوق الإنسان
Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights

Incomplete Equality..

Analysis of Political Representation of Egyptian
Women in Parties and Parliament

maat for peace development and human rights

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Introduction

Political parties play a vital role in supporting women's empowerment and promoting equality. They can integrate human rights into their political systems and programs, leveraging their field presence and wide societal reach to effectively activate this role. Women's empowerment and gender equality are further enhanced when women serve as active party cadres on the front lines. Ultimately, these parties aim to become part of the government authorities through elections, strengthening their position as a pivotal entity in supporting democracy and human rights, especially in promoting gender equality.

By incorporating human rights into their vision and policies, parties can provide opportunities to empower women and give them leadership roles within the party, including decision-making positions. This can enhance the party's efforts to educate women and support their integration and empowerment at all levels of society.

The party can contribute to strengthening democracy and human rights by removing obstacles to women's participation within the party and facilitating their access to various leadership positions, including the position of party president. The party's strategy and vision should emphasize the adoption of influential human rights issues, most notably supporting women's rights and promoting equality. The party's commitment to supporting human rights can be assessed by reviewing its organizational structure and the extent to which it represents the principle of gender equality, starting with the presence of effective female leaders in the party. Failure to do so may lead to the party being described as hostile to human rights and uninterested in the representation and empowerment of women within its basic structure.

Study Methodology

The study addresses the reality of the political empowerment of Egyptian women in parliament and political parties. It reviews women's representation in the House of Representatives and the Senate, evaluating this representation compared to the status of women in previous parliaments, and exploring ways to enhance women's parliamentary participation.

The study also addresses the reality of women's representation in leadership positions within political parties, the suitability of this representation and its response to promoting gender equality, and the interest of political parties of all orientations in empowering women in leadership positions, whether through election or appointment. It also examines how women's participation in political

parties can be developed and their presence in decision-making centers strengthened.

To ensure that women's representation in party leadership positions is measured equally, the study addresses three key positions: the party president, party vice president, and party secretary-general, as these are considered leadership roles common across different parties, while the structure of parties may vary in terms of secretariats and various committees.

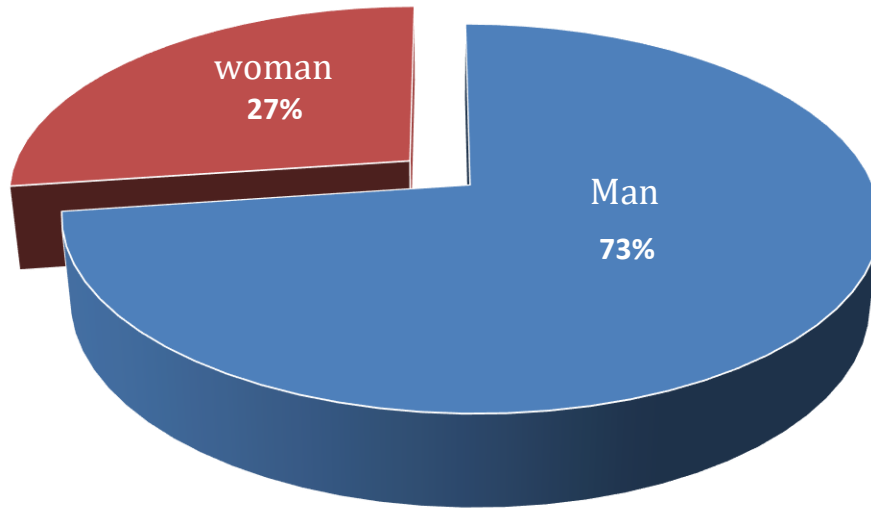
Reality of Women Representation in Egyptian Parliament

Egyptian Constitution affirms the state's guarantee of achieving equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. It stipulates that no less than 25% of the total seats in the House of Representatives must be allocated to women.¹ This constitutional provision was translated into the House of Representatives Law No. 46 of 2014 and its subsequent amendments in 2020, which maintained the 25% quota for women's representation in the lower house of parliament.

In practice, Egyptian women obtained 162 seats in the House of Representatives, whether by election or appointment, out of 596 seats, representing 27% of the total members of the House.² Thus, the current House of Representatives includes the largest number of women's representation in Egyptian parliamentary history, making the Egyptian Parliament rank highly among the parliaments with the most representation of women.

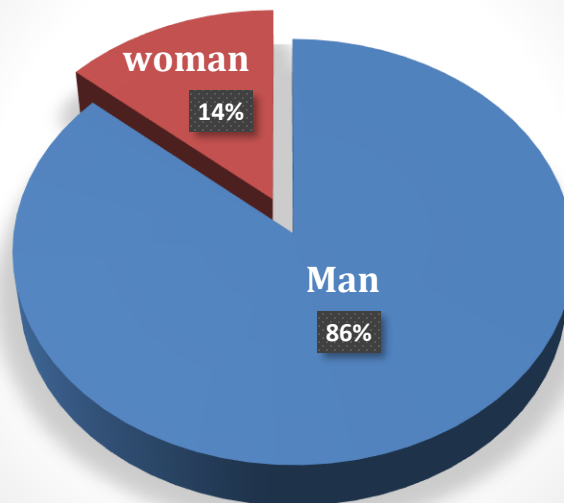
¹ المادة 102 من دستور مصر الصادر في 2014 والمعدل في 2019: يُشكل مجلس النواب من عدد لا يقل عن أربعمئة وخمسين عضواً، يُنتخبون بالاقتراع العام السري المباشر، على أن يُخصص للمرأة ما لا يقل عن ربع إجمالي عدد المقاعد
² 162 مقعداً للمرأة في مجلس النواب 2021، اليوم السابع، <https://2h.ae/gHrm>

Formation of Egyptian Parliament 2020-2025



Senate Law No. 141 of 2020 stipulates that the Senate shall be composed of 300 members, with two-thirds of its members elected by direct secret public ballot, and the remaining one-third appointed by the President of the Republic, provided that at least 10% of the total number of seats shall be allocated to women.³ Indeed, women obtained 41 seats in the Senate, whether by election or appointment, representing 14% of the total number of seats.⁴

Formation of Egyptian Senate 2020-2025



³ شبكة القوانين والأحكام المصرية - قانون رقم 141 لسنة 2020 بإصدار قانون مجلس الشيوخ، متاح: <https://qred.org/5tkE>

⁴ تمكين سياسي للمرأة.. أعلى تمثيل برلماني بنسبة 28%، متاح عبر هذا الرابط، <https://2h.ae/zNAx>

Additionally, Representative Phoebe Fawzi Girgis assumed the position of deputy representative of the Senate for the first time, making her the first Egyptian and Christian woman to hold this position. This unprecedented achievement in women's access to such a high position reflects the development in empowering women at the political level and enhancing women's gains in various fields, as well as providing the opportunity to participate in drafting laws that address women's issues.⁵

Political Parties in Egypt

Political parties represent the most important political organizations that directly affect the functioning and movement of the political system and ensure its continuity and stability. Parties play a role in revitalizing political life and establishing the foundations of democracy. The performance of political parties is reflected in the quality of political life, democratic development, and political modernization, whether negatively or positively. Political parties also serve as a reflection of the political participation of members of society and the expression of the aspirations and needs of society.

According to the State Information Service, the number of Egyptian parties is 105, and in practice, there are 84 active parties, which is an unprecedented number since the introduction of the party system into Egypt in 1907. The current constitution prohibits the permanent dissolution of parties, and the State has no desire, intention, or practice to approach any party, even if it is not active.⁶

While the statistics published on the website of the State Information Service indicate that the number of currently registered parties is 87, this reflects inaccuracy in estimating the number of Egyptian parties, due to the ineffectiveness of many parties in the political arena. This requires updating the lists of political parties through the General Authority for Inquiries, as this data is not readily available through the Party Affairs Committee.⁷

Number of parties represented in Parliament is currently only 13, which is less than 15% of the total number of parties. Despite the representation of women in Parliament through parties, in implementation of constitutional and legal requirements, there is a weakness in the percentage of women's presence in the supreme bodies of parties, and the absence of women in decision-making positions in political parties. This means continued weak representation of women in the institutions of policymaking and political practice, even if parties committed to nominating women in Parliament according to the constitutional percentage.

⁵ تمكين سياسي للمرأة.. أعلى تمثيل برلماني بنسبة 28%، متاح عبر هذا الرابط، <https://2h.ae/zNAx>

⁶ ضياء رشوان: الدولة ملزمة وفقا للمادة 5 من الدستور بتعدد الأحزاب، <https://2h.ae/yASZ>

⁷ الأحزاب السياسية الحالية، الهيئة العامة للاستعلامات، <https://www.sis.gov.eg/section/325/14835?lang=ar>

Status of Egyptian Women in Political Parties

Despite adequate representation of Egyptian women in the House of Representatives and the Senate, enabling them to voice various concerns, the percentage of women's representation in political parties is not at the same level. Women are still far from assuming leadership positions within these parties, which reflects a flaw in the party-political structure and its lack of interaction with current political realities.

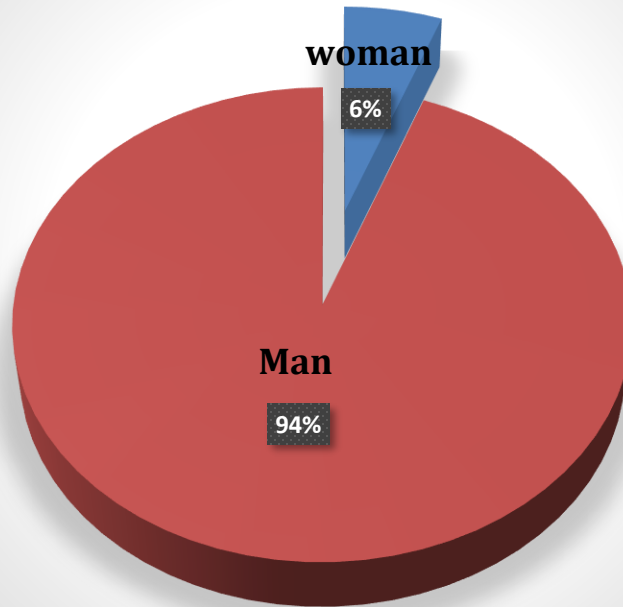
There are no political or legal obstacles preventing women from participating in political parties and taking on the highest leadership positions. However, they often face certain ideas, cultural, and social legacies held by the men actively involved in political parties and entities. It is customary for priority to be given to supporting men in senior leadership positions within parties. The continued connection to political coordination and economic interests makes the role of women secondary in the various parties, limiting their ability to reach senior leadership positions in favor of men.

Looking at the case of Egyptian parties, there is a clear trend towards increasing women's representation at the level of party members and various internal positions. However, their presence in decision-making roles within parties is very limited. This makes women's participation in political parties less extensive compared to men, who maintain control over parties through leadership positions and higher bodies. The lack of openness to empowering women in senior positions can be linked to political and economic interests arranged according to a utilitarian framework rather than democratic values.

1. Women's Leadership of Political Parties

Regarding the presence of Egyptian women as heads of political parties, only 3 out of 105 Egyptian parties are led by women: the Constitution Party headed by Ms. Jamila Ismail, the Egypt October Party headed by Ms. Jihan Madih, and the Free Social Party led by Dr. Ismat Al-Mirghani. This 3% representation reflects the failure of Egyptian parties to adopt a strategy of supporting women and providing them with opportunities to reach this important position, highlighting the weakness of women's political empowerment at the party leadership level.

President of a Political Party

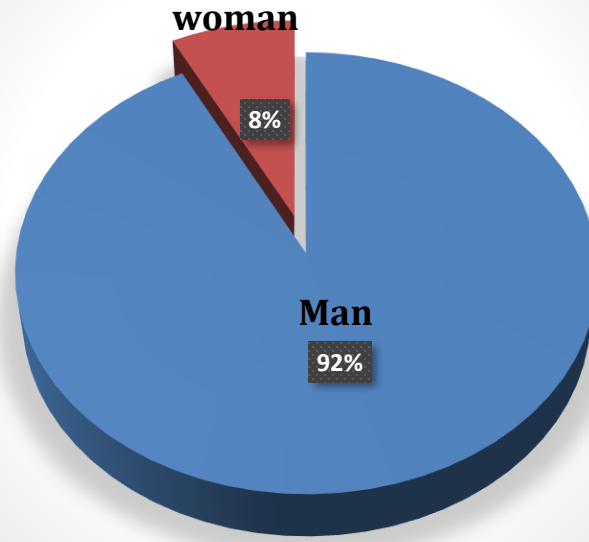


2. Vice President Position

At the level of party vice president position, only 6 parties have granted this role to women. For example, the Egyptian Social Democratic Party has two women serving as vice presidents for administrative and financial affairs, Representative Maha Abdel Nasser, Vice President of the Party for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and Representative Amira Saber, Vice President of the Party for Planning Affairs, and Tagammu Party has Dr. Farida Al-Naqqash as its vice president.

In the Arab Party for Justice and Equality, Ms. Maha Al-Sayyid is the party's assistant president for women, and Representative Mai Mahmoud is the party's assistant president for African affairs. In the Green Party, Dr. Ragia Nour El-Din is the party's vice-president. In the Democratic Union Party, Nabila Sami is the party's vice-president. In the Arab Party for Justice and Equality, Ms. Maha Sharif holds the position of Vice President of the Party, so the percentage of women's representation in the position of Deputy or Assistant Chairman of the Party is only about 8%, which is also a very low percentage.

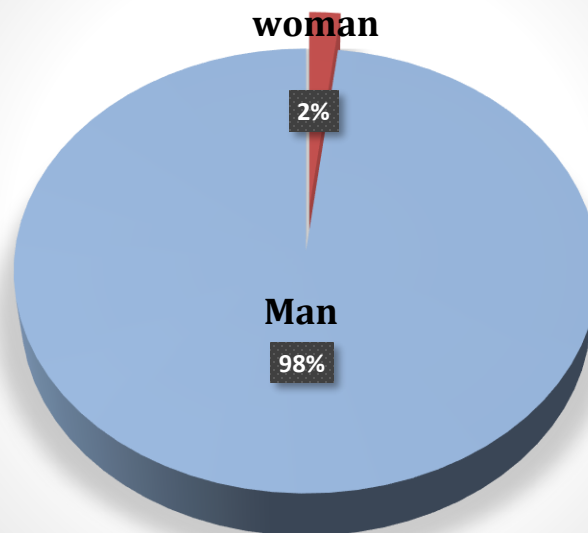
Vice President Position



3. Party Secretary General

Regarding the position of Secretary General of Party, there are only two parties in which a woman holds this position: the Free Egyptians Party, where Mrs. Heba Wasel is the Secretary-General, and the Egyptians Party, where the position is held by Mrs. Naglaa Shata, which is a percentage of only 2%. This reflects the weak representation of women in this senior leadership role.

Party Secretary General



When looking at the Mostaqbal Watan Party, headed by Counselor Abdel Wahab Abdel Razek as the largest party in Egypt in terms of organizational structure and presence within Parliament, there are many deputy leadership positions, but none of them are held by women, while we find a single woman among the senior leadership positions in the party: Representative Rasha Ramadan, who serves as the Central Women's Secretary. This reflects the lack of appropriate placement of women in leadership positions in the party.

On the other hand, the Egyptian Social Democratic Party has a more inclusive approach, with 6 vice presidents of the party, including two women. This reflects the party's interest in empowering women at the leadership level. The party also has 5 women holding other senior positions, including Taghreed Selim as Secretary of the Canal Sector, Mayar Amir Al-Gazzar as Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Amira Fouad as Secretary of the Egyptians Abroad Committee, Maryam Adel as Secretary of Political Affairs, and Amira Haridi as Secretary of Technical Affairs, among 22 leading figures in the party.⁸

The prevailing feature in the majority of political parties is granting women the position of Women's Secretary, which has become the main leadership position for women within parties, while in the rest of the leadership positions, women's representation is very weak.

Looking at the percentage of women's representation in leadership positions in Egyptian political parties, it is clear that there is a female presence in these positions within only about 11 parties, out of a total of 105 political parties, representing only 10%, including the major parties represented in parliament.

The low percentages of women's representation in the leadership of political parties reflect the shortcomings of parties' visions and policies towards enabling women to participate and have a greater influence in the public scene. This requires political parties to re-evaluate their approach to women's empowerment and provide more opportunities for women to reach leadership positions, as well as increase awareness of the importance of women's community and political participation and support their economic empowerment.

It is important to raise awareness and political engagement among women, enabling them to enhance their capabilities for effective political participation at various levels. This involves empowering women to engage with political and economic realities, and mobilizing public support for female leaders who can

⁸ قيادات الحزب المصري الديمقراطي، متاح عبر هذا الرابط، [/https://egysdp.org/board](https://egysdp.org/board)

represent citizens and express their diverse needs. Such support for women's leadership is crucial, as it recognizes their merit-based qualifications, rather than promoting them solely based on their gender.

Challenges of Women Political Leadership

Many challenges persist in empowering women at the political level. Some cultural legacies continue to entrench discrimination against women. There is a need to integrate gender-based planning into the state's development strategies and provide more data related to women.

Additionally, there is a lack of awareness among certain segments of society about the importance of women's political participation, including their role in elections as both candidates and voters. This is exacerbated by the fact that some women still lack national identification cards, which creates an obstacle to their participation in elections and political life.

Organizational structure of political parties also poses challenges. Parties often fail to provide sufficient information about their platforms and leaders, reflecting a deficiency in their ability to communicate with the public. This limits the public's opportunities to engage with parties and understand their political and social programs, in light of the lack of sufficient interest from majority of parties in reaching citizens of all categories, and presenting and promoting Party vision.

While the State can work to increase women's access to senior decision-making positions, political parties have a crucial role to play in empowering women. Parties can raise awareness among women across all governorates, cities, and villages about the importance of political participation. They can also open the doors for women to reach senior leadership positions within the party, which would enable them to play a greater role in public political life. Parties should not be satisfied with simply having women represented at secondary levels but should actively promote their advancement.

Importance of Women Representation in Egyptian Parties

Having women in leadership roles within political parties confirms parties' commitment to increasing women's participation in political work and advancing them in electoral competition. This enhances the presence of women in parties' secretariats at all levels, which can attract more women to engage in political and partisan activities. Parties should also work to address the challenges faced by women who wish to participate in partisanship and run for elections, in order to support the expression of women's issues and encourage their political engagement.

When reviewing the activities of Egyptian political parties, we find a remarkable presence of women in the societal initiatives and events organized by parties through organizing various social events and celebrations, and participating in organizing various societal initiatives. However, this presence is not matched by women's participation at the political level within parties. Women's engagement in parties' core political activities remains relatively weak compared to their role in social services. Although this matter is in the interest of women in general, it reflects that there is a need to emphasize the importance of empowering women at the political level in parties.⁹

While this situation benefits women in general, it also highlights the need to emphasize the importance of empowering women at the political level within political parties. Ensuring women's representation in senior party leadership positions is crucial, as it enables them to contribute to the formulation of party policies, which in turn shape the broader policies of the state. This includes women's participation in parliamentary representation, as well as the adoption of draft laws that address the aspirations of citizens and the policy positions of opposition parties.

Political parties can serve as the primary vehicle to empower women and enhance their political participation. Through parties, it is possible to raise awareness about the importance of women's involvement in political life, and enhance their performance related to identifying natural female leaders to train them to carry out the tasks of parliamentary representation at the national and local levels and develop programs. To support female candidates for the House of Representatives in a way that helps them gain the confidence of voters, and to support female representatives in carrying out their parliamentary work by providing them with knowledge, information and experience that will make their participation in legislation and monitoring more effective, and make their contributions achieve the public interest, to gain voters' confidence in female representatives. This, in turn, can pave the way for increased women's representation in future parliamentary sessions, which aligns with the goals of Egypt's women's empowerment strategy.

Women's participation in political work through political parties is a manifestation of effective citizenship and the achievement of equality among citizens. It is linked to various indicators of democracy and reflects the growth and development of societies, as well as their ability to integrate women into political work and enhance their role in construction and development.

⁹ دور المرأة في الأحزاب.. الوفد: تمارس دورا مجتمعيا وليس سياسيا، اليوم السابع، <https://2h.ae/hcNB>

Recommendations:

- Encourage political parties to remove all direct or indirect barriers that discriminate against women, and support the strengthening of women's capabilities.
- Integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into political party regulations.
- Ensure the representation of women in leadership positions and supreme bodies of political parties.
- Prioritize the education and capacity-building of women, enabling them to advance within the party leadership hierarchy.
- Build women's cadres within parties and prepare them to compete in elections based on merit, rather than relying solely on the quota principle.
- Place women's issues at the top of parties' priorities and choose the most affected women to express these issues.
- Enhance transparency and communication between political parties and the public, supporting public awareness of party management and directions.
- Establish a technical committee affiliated with Party Affairs Committee to support its work and obtain accurate data about Egyptian political parties.