



ماعت للسلام والتنمية وحقوق الإنسان
Maat For Peace, Development, and Human Rights

Local Administration in Egypt

A Vision for Reform in the Light of Proposed Legislation



Issued by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights

Local Administration in Egypt: A Vision for Reform in the Light of Proposed Legislation

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Prepared by: Fadia Saif

Reviewed by: Aly Mohammed Al-Gammal

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148 Misr Helwan El-Zyrae Road, El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, Cairo, Egyp

380 Jawhara El Maadi Towers, Maadi Corniche, Cairo, Egypt

www.maatpeace.org - info@maatpeace.org

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Foreword / By Ayman Okeil



Developing the laws related to local administration in Egypt constitutes a constitutional requirement and reflects a political direction from the highest levels. This has been reflected in the efforts led by the subcommittee responsible for preparing a draft law on local administration in Egypt, which has settled on issuing two laws. The first concerns elections for local popular councils, so that it includes the quotas and percentages specified by the Constitution for the representation of women, youth, and other categories mentioned in Article 180 of the Constitution. The second concerns local administration, including the authorities and competencies of local popular councils and governors, as well as the financial resources of the five levels of local administration.

Here I would like to discreetly urge the drafters of these laws to keep in view the specific provisions on the “local administration” branch within the Constitution, particularly about fulfilling the quotas established for the categories stated in the aforementioned Article, so that constitutional challenges do not affect the provisions of the local administration laws and thereby complete the constitutional requirement. The truth is that when Egypt adopted the local administration system, it aimed, through it, to achieve progress and advancement in the governorates by providing services befitting citizens. However, a wide gap soon emerged between theory and practice. No matter how carefully and precisely a law is drafted and written, how clear its purposes and objectives may be, all of that can be emptied of its substance if the opportunity for its practical implementation is not made available.

Therefore, any local administration law must limit conflicts of jurisdiction between local administration at its different levels, on the one hand, and between it and central authorities, on the other. The law should also grant local units the powers, authorities, and competencies needed to achieve their objectives in operating and managing local facilities, and to maximize their own resources, because this does not appear to exist at present, given that central units have monopolized all powers related to managing public facilities that fall within local administration's jurisdiction. Moreover, apart from the law regulating elections for local popular councils and the debate over what electoral system might be followed, whether closed lists, proportional representation, or the individual (district) system, it may be useful for the local administration law to focus on decentralization in implementation by granting localities substantial powers, and to establish effective popular oversight over implementation. It should also provide an opportunity for local popular cadres to be trained in democratic practice, as well as to strengthen oversight by executive bodies, so that local authorities are supportive and enabling for all development projects, perhaps most importantly the Decent Life (Hayat Karima) project for the development of rural Egypt.

What this study intends to convey is that law alone will not be sufficient; it should be followed by continuous capacity-building for members of local popular councils. It should also allow stakeholders and civil society to participate in the capacity-building process. The Local Administration Committee in the House of Representatives should continue even after any potential elections by holding hearings with leaders of the executive apparatus and local councils in the governorates, to elicit their views and present their proposals on developing local administration and supporting decentralization in Egypt.

Local administration reform will also lead to administrative reform and tackling corruption. Combating corruption should begin first within the administrative

apparatus of the state represented by localities. I believe it is also important that central oversight of local popular councils be clearly defined to prevent duplication and overlap among oversight bodies. It is also necessary that such oversight be limited to the Central Auditing Organization financially and the Central Authority for Organization and Administration administratively.¹

This study is part of Maat's commitment to supporting decentralization and good governance. Maat pursues this through its Decentralization Support Programme, which seeks to contribute to developing Egypt's local administration system so that it aligns with standards of local administration based on participation, accountability, decentralization, and respect for citizens' rights related to public services.

Previously, Maat implemented several key projects, including: a rights-responsive decentralization project for citizens' rights in cooperation with the German Hanns Seidel Foundation. The programme aimed to strengthen decentralization and improve local administration conditions in a manner that makes them more responsive to the needs of the local citizen. The project achieved success in strengthening the participation of media, civil society organizations, and youth in advocating for the development of Egypt's local administration system. Decentralization and effective professional practices: also in cooperation with the German Hanns Seidel Foundation, carried out in five governorates during 2011. The project targeted the enhancement of the capacity of local executive officials in professional practices related to decentralization. It succeeded in strengthening the capacities and improving the practices of more than 100 local executive leaders regarding the use of delegation and participatory planning for local development.

¹ Article Two of the Central Auditing Organization Law stipulates that the agency shall undertake the task of monitoring local administration budgets in all governorates. These budgets include the governorate general office, in addition to the budgets of local units in centers, neighborhoods, cities, and villages within the scope of each governorate. It also includes the budgets of service directorates whose powers have been transferred to local administration units.

Maat also held a workshop entitled “Towards a Legislative Framework Supporting the Implementation of Decentralization”, in cooperation with the German Hanns Seidel Foundation. The workshop aimed to produce a vision and outline for the state of local administration within the Egyptian Constitution, and to draft proposals for provisions of local administration in the Constitution. Through this workshop, Maat contributed to a major constitutional shift supporting decentralization after the new Constitution endorsed decentralization, granted extensive powers to local councils, and dedicated an independent section for local administration within the Constitution.

Ayman Okeil

Chairman, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights

August 2026

Introduction

The local administration system is one of the fundamental pillars of modern public administration, as it plays a role in improving the efficiency of delivering public services, strengthening popular participation in managing local affairs, and supporting sustainable development efforts. In Egypt, the local administration system has undergone successive constitutional and legal developments. However, this development stalled in 2011. Local administration remained governed by Local Administration Law No. 43 of 1979, alongside the absence of elected local popular councils. In 2011, the Administrative Court ruled to dissolve the existing local popular councils. The reasoning included: "Accepting the claim in form, and suspending the implementation of the Council of Ministers' negative decision refraining from dissolving the existing local popular councils at the level of the Republic in all local administration units," which led to the widening gap between the constitutional and legal framework regulating local administration and actual practice on the ground.

It is worth noting that the last elections for local councils were held in 2008. On 18 June 2011, the Administrative Court ruled to dissolve local councils throughout the Republic and ordered the then ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and the government to issue a dissolution decision, which was subsequently implemented. Therefore, the 2014 Constitution, amended in 2019, established a constitutional obligation concerning local administration. The Constitution dedicated the third section of the chapter on the executive authority to local administration. Article 175 provides for dividing the state into administrative units endowed with juridical personality, including governorates, cities, and villages. It also allows the creation of other administrative units endowed with juridical personality if the public interest so requires. When creating or abolishing local units or adjusting their boundaries, regard must be given to economic and social conditions, in the manner regulated by law.

Article 176 further ensures that the state supports administrative, financial, and economic decentralization. The law regulates the means to enable administrative units to provide local services, advance them, and manage them well, and it specifies the timeline for transferring powers and budgets to local administration units. Egypt includes a large number of local units, such as governorates, districts/centers or cities, districts/neighborhoods, and villages, which requires substantial legislative and technical work to ensure that any law reached through consensus does not later become subject to constitutional challenge. Despite this, the local administration law has remained pending in the corridors of the House of Representatives, and local popular council elections have not been held.

At the same time, Maat observes that there is political will to activate the role of local councils and to conduct local elections, as reflected in the President's directives to expedite preparations for local council elections. One of the most recent directives was issued on 4 July 2026, returning this file to the forefront of legislative and political reform priorities. This is because local elections constitute one of the postponed constitutional obligations and a key entry point for strengthening administrative decentralization, expanding political participation, and improving the efficiency of local administration.

This political will stems from the constitutional obligation set out in Article 242 of the Egyptian Constitution of 2014, as amended in 2019, which provides for the need to "move to a new local administration system within five years from the date of adoption of the Constitution." The provisions from Articles 175 to 183 outline the general features of this system in the third section dedicated to the executive authority, which should be reflected in any new law, most notably, support for administrative, financial, and economic decentralization.

Within this framework, Maat presents this study on local administration in Egypt. It emphasizes the need to expedite the issuance of a new local

administration law, the guarantees it provides for participation and representation in local council elections, and the impact of the electoral system on the nature of local representation and opportunities for political forces to participate. It also highlights the opportunities that local administration and elections for local popular councils provide for political parties and forces to strengthen political participation and build cadres through local councils. Although this study addresses, to a large extent, the legal developments and the current proposals before the House of Representatives for local administration bills, it goes beyond merely adopting a law. It presents a vision for what any such law should be, so that it can be effectively implemented and can address current problems in local administration in Egypt.

The focus on a new local administration bill also comes in light of the broad changes Egypt's local administration system has witnessed in recent years, and the national development projects that have been implemented, most notably the national project to develop rural Egypt, "Decent Life (Hayat Karima)." This underscores the need for a new law that aligns with the accelerating developments in regional development, local administration, and good governance, implements the constitutional obligation, and enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of local administration while strengthening its capacity to respond to development priorities and citizens' needs.

First: Constitutional and Legal Developments of Local Administration in Egypt

The development of the local administration system in Egypt has been linked to the evolution of the modern state, and to changes in its administrative functions. It gradually moved from a model based on centralized authority in managing local affairs to an attempt to build a system that is more reliant on distributing competences and strengthening the role of local units. This evolution has also been tied to changing perceptions of the role of local

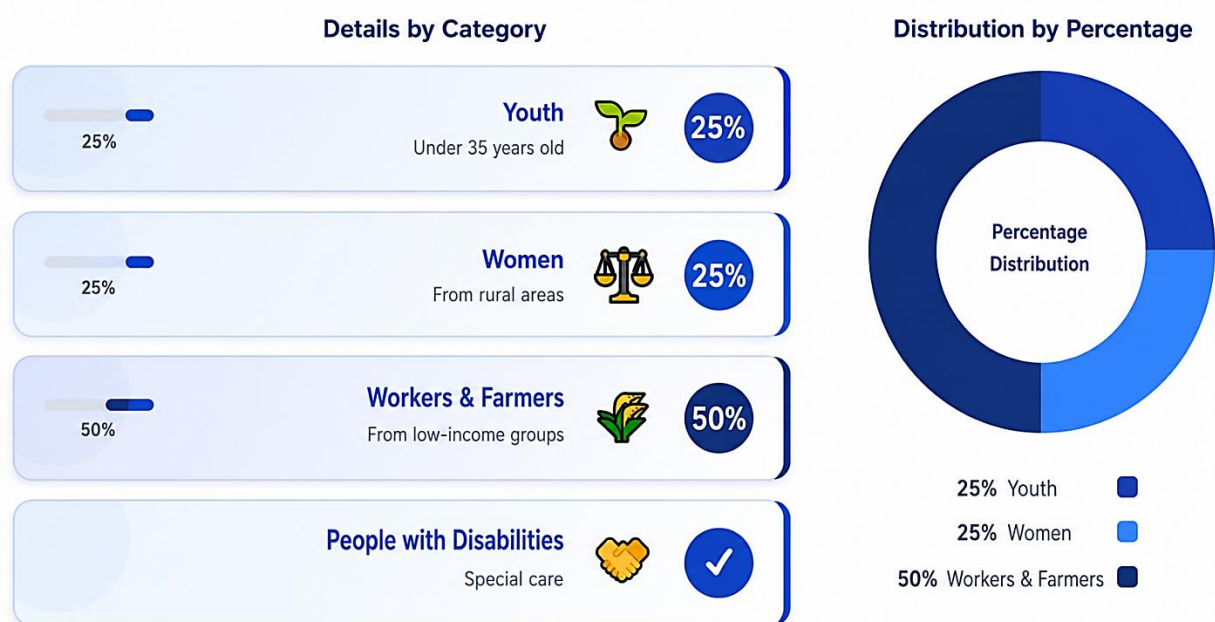
administration. It is no longer viewed merely as an instrument for implementing central decisions; instead, it is increasingly seen as an administrative level capable of contributing to planning and development and of helping set priorities for local communities. With the development of the concept of modern public administration, and the emergence of international trends supporting principles of decentralization and good local governance,² the Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt (2014), as amended in 2019, represented an important turning point in the trajectory of organizing local administration. It adopted a more advanced vision based on decentralization and emphasized the election of local councils and granting them oversight and development competences, thereby opening the door for reconsidering the existing law and preparing a new one consistent with modern constitutional philosophy.

Accordingly, Egypt has experienced clear constitutional and legal development in local administration. Between 1923 and 2012, Egypt saw many constitutions; each differed in how it addressed decentralization and local administration, yet they included certain gaps. The 2014 Constitution, as amended in 2019, addressed these negatives. This Constitution dealt with local administration in the third section of the executive authority in nine articles, from Article 175 to Article 183. Article 175 provides for dividing the state into independent administrative units, listing, among others, governorates, cities, and villages. It also refers to the legislative authority, the power to create or abolish any other units through laws, according to the public interest.³ The Constitution provides that the state is divided into administrative units that enjoy juristic personality. It also confirms the election of local councils by direct, secret universal ballot for four years, and grants them oversight and development competences related to following up on the implementation of development plans and

² Under current laws, Egypt uses the term local administration, not local government

³ See Article 175 of Amended Egyptian Constitution of 2019, at: <https://manshurat.org/node/14675>

monitoring the performance of executive bodies. The Constitution also includes guarantees for the representation of a number of categories within local councils. It allocates quotas for youth and women, and emphasizes appropriate representation for Christians and persons with disabilities, strengthening political participation at the local level. It further refers to the necessity of providing the financial resources required to enable local units to carry out their competences.⁴



Despite the Constitution's provision of a more developed framework for local administration, the activation of these principles has remained linked to issuing a new law consistent with the Constitution, particularly in light of the continued operation of Local Administration Law No. 43 of 1979. This has resulted in the persistence of a gap between constitutional texts and practical implementation,

⁴ Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt for the year 2014 and its amendments, Chapter Five: System of Government, Chapter on Local Administration, Articles (175–183). <https://tinyurl.com/y5clwrx7>

making the issuance of a new law an essential step to complete the local administration system.

Across successive decades, Egypt has witnessed multiple attempts to regulate local administration through different laws. The most prominent was Local Administration Law No. 124 of 1960, introduced in the context of the state's then direction to reorganize the relationship between central authority and local units, and to establish elected local councils to perform roles related to local services and development. However, the nature of the political and administrative system during that period remained highly centralized in decision-making, with limited financial and administrative independence for local units.⁵

The issuance of Local Administration Law No. 43 of 1979 marked Egypt's shift to a legal framework that remains the current basis governing local administration to the present time. Although the law is important as an attempt to reorganize local administration more clearly, practical application has shown the persistence of challenges related to the nature of the relationship between the central and local levels, especially regarding the limits of local units' independence, and whether they possess the resources and powers necessary to exercise their competences. As a result, a centralized pattern continues in the management of many files that localities are supposed to handle.⁶ This can be understood to mean that the problem was not the absence of a legal framework for local administration, but rather the limited transfer of actual competences to local units. This has kept centralization as the prevailing feature of local administration despite successive legislative developments.

⁵ Local Administration Law No. 124 of 1960: <https://manshurat.org/node/34672>

⁶ Local Government System Law No. 43 of 1979: <https://manshurat.org/node/13261>

Second: Opportunities Available to Reach an Effective Law

There are currently four local administration bills before the House of Representatives. They are: the Government's Bill, which the government submitted to the House. This is the bill that had previously been prepared and submitted in 2016; a bill submitted by Dr. Mohamed Attia Al-Fayoumi, deputy chair of the House's Local Administration Committee; a bill submitted by Member Amr Darwish, Member of Parliament representing the Youth of Political Parties Coordination; and a bill submitted by Member Sahar Osman, MP representing the Justice Party. Parliamentary discussions concluded with the formation of a subcommittee of the local administration bill to examine the four proposals submitted. The House committee would then present a new bill, or alternatively a comparative study of these different bills.

Local Administration Bills Submitted to House of Representatives

1. Government's Bill

The bill was submitted in 2016 and then re-submitted again without change. It includes 4 chapters.

- Chapter One: basic organization of local administration, containing 9 chapters and 43 articles.
- Chapter Two: local councils, containing 10 chapters and 84 articles.
- Chapter Three: financial resources, containing 4 chapters and 11 articles.
- Chapter Four: planning and financial affairs of local administration units and their councils, containing 3 chapters and 19 articles.

This bill provides a comprehensive legal framework regulating local administration, including the organizational structure, competences, and financial resources.

2. Bill by Dr. Mohamed Attia Al-Fayoumi

The deputy chair of the House's Local Administration Committee submitted this bill. It sets out a vision to develop the local administration system, focusing on decentralization and good governance, and strengthening the role of the local community in decision-making. The bill consists of 10 main chapters covering the structure and organization of local administration units and oversight of them. The ninth chapter focuses on tools of popular and financial oversight, including planning, budgets and final accounts, local taxes and fees, among other matters.

3. Justice Party Bill

The Justice Party submitted a bill for local administration; more precisely, it included two proposed laws: one on local administration: defining it and organizing it, and the other regulating the election process for local popular councils. The two bills were submitted to the House of Representatives and referred to the specialized committees. The bill provides governorates with greater financial and administrative independence by establishing special funds and budgets for each governorate, according to its needs and priorities. This budget would rely on each governorate's own resources, in addition to allocations from the state's general budget.

4. Bill by MP Amr Darwish

MP Amr Darwish, representing the Youth of Political Parties Coordination, submitted a bill focusing on empowering youth in local administration and modernizing administrative mechanisms using modern technology. The bill also proposes a mixed electoral system: 75% of seats for each local council would be allocated through an absolute closed list system, and 25% through the individual system. It further includes general provisions on financial resources for local

popular councils, and additional provisions to ensure transparency and accountability at all levels.

Maat does not take a position in favor of any of the four draft laws. However, it hopes that a final bill will be reached that incorporates the best provisions contained in those four laws. Maat also supports the current approach to issuing two separate laws: the first would govern the process of elections to local people's councils for purposes of implementing the quota⁷ and proportionality requirements established by the Constitution; the second would address local administration, to define the powers of local people's councils, governors, financial resources, oversight mechanisms, and other related matters.⁸

With regard to the ongoing debate on the electoral system to be included in the law on elections to local people's councils, opinions differ. Some favor a closed-list system, others support a proportional list system (whether open or closed), and still others prefer a single-member system. This debate stems from differences in how votes are counted. Under a closed absolute-list system, the list that receives 50% + 1 of the votes wins all seats in the electoral district. By contrast, under a proportional list system (open or closed), the list that exceeds a minimum threshold of votes, known as the electoral threshold (for example, 5%), receives a number of seats equal to its share of the votes. These seats are

⁷ Article 189 of amended Egyptian Constitution of 2019 stipulates that "each local unit shall elect a council by direct, secret public ballot, for a period of four years. The candidate must be at least twenty-one years old. The law regulates other candidacy conditions and election procedures, provided that a quarter of the seats are allocated to youth under the age of thirty-five, and a quarter of the number is allocated to women, provided that the representation of workers and peasants is not less than fifty percent of the total number of seats, and that this percentage includes an appropriate representation of Christians." And people with disabilities. Local councils are responsible for following up on the implementation of the development plan, monitoring various aspects of activity, and exercising oversight tools over the executive authority, such as proposals, directing questions, briefing requests, interrogations, etc., and withdrawing confidence from the heads of local units, as regulated by law.

⁸ The subcommittee for preparing the draft local administration law agreed in May 2026, unanimously among its members, to divide the draft laws before it into two laws; The first is regarding local units, and the second is regarding local council elections, provided that the committee begins its work by studying and preparing a draft of the first draft law, as it is the basic rule for the local administration system.

then allocated to candidates on the list according to their order, starting with the first and then the next.

In parallel, Maat supports considering the recommendations of the first phase of the National Dialogue on local affairs, in which the organization participated in several sessions. Those recommendations included the following:

- Agreement on the electoral system for local people's councils, combining a closed absolute list system at 75%; and a reduced proportional list system at 25%, with a minimum of three individuals on that list.
- Ensuring that the number of members in each local council is divisible by four. For example, if the total number of members of a local people's council is 24, then: 24/18 members would be elected under the closed absolute list system, and 24/6 of them would be elected under the reduced proportional list system. Accordingly, each closed absolute list must include the following numbers:
 - 6 seats for women (one quarter of the local council).
 - 6 seats for youth (one quarter of the local council).
 - 12 out of 18 seats for workers and farmers (equivalent to half of the council). (Women or youth may fill these seats.)
 - At least 1 seat for Christians. (A woman or youth may fill this seat.)
 - At least 1 seat for persons with disabilities. (A woman or youth may fill this seat.)
- Proposed text on the electoral system for local councils (with final drafting dependent on the number of members in each local people's council): Each local unit shall elect a council by direct, secret, universal ballot for a term of

four years. The election of each local council shall be based on allocating three-quarters of the total seats through the closed absolute list system and one-quarter of the seats through the reduced proportional list system. Political parties, political coalitions, and independents may nominate candidates for any of them.

- Allocation within the closed absolute list: One third of the seats in the closed absolute list for youth, and one third for women. The representation of workers and farmers must not be less than two thirds of the number of seats in the list. Christians and persons with disabilities among them must be represented appropriately.
- The number of candidates for each proportional list must not be less than 50% of the total number of seats allocated to that system. A candidate may not combine nomination under the closed absolute list system and nomination under the proportional list system. A candidate may not stand for more than one local council. In all cases, the last nomination shall be considered as recorded in the official registers prepared for that purpose.
- Revisiting Egyptian legislation by expanding the category of “workers and farmers” eligible to run for membership of local people’s councils.
- Considering new cities and ensuring residents’ voting rights in newly developed urban communities, in a manner that guarantees governance and transparency, and applying the principles of equality with other citizens who enjoy the right to elect members of local people’s councils.
- Providing local councils with mechanisms and measures to enable citizen participation in planning and managing projects and facilities, including

through the establishment of participatory planning committees, to build on the experience of “decent living” in clarifying and consolidating its meaning.

- Providing appropriate practical and professional training for members of local people’s councils, and qualifying youth cadres who will be coming forward as candidates in local council elections.
- Precisely defining the competencies of local people’s councils, and granting effective oversight mechanisms to members of local councils, including specific controls such as questions and interpellations.
- Electoral list composition rules: each electoral list must include, for the closed absolute list system, a number of candidates equal to the required number to be elected in the unit, and a number of alternates of not less than half the number of seats allocated to that system, while ensuring that among the alternates there are representatives for all the electoral categories stipulated by law.
- Limits on seats for the proportional list: the proportional list may not obtain a number of seats greater than the number of candidates on that list if the percentage of votes obtained exceeds the number of candidates. Any remaining seats shall then be reallocated according to the vote proportions obtained by the other lists.
- Multiple electoral category eligibility (closed absolute list): under the closed absolute list system, a candidate may hold one or more electoral attributes stipulated by law, up to a maximum of three attributes, without prejudice to the attributes of youth or women. Such attributes must be explicitly stated in the lists of candidates announced by the competent committee.
- Party and independent candidates within the same list: the electoral list may include candidates from one or more political parties; it may also be composed of independent candidates not affiliated with parties, or combine

both types. In all cases, the party name or the candidate is independence must be indicated on the nomination documents within the same list.

Third: Proposals to Reform Local Administration in light of Proposed Laws

This study presents a set of proposals that any law adopted for local administration should incorporate, as follows:

- **Maximizing the Capacity of Localities to Strengthen Their Own Resources**

Localities' own financial resources cover only about 10% of the total spending. Spending by local people's councils increased from 171.9 billion Egyptian pounds in the 2020-2021 budget to 322.3 billion Egyptian pounds in the 2025-2026 budget, representing an increase of approximately 87% and reflecting higher levels of service delivery at the local level.⁹

Therefore, any agreed-upon law should not restrict localities from strengthening their resources, while ensuring that this does not come at the expense of citizens. In parallel, the lack of precise definition of the distribution of competencies and responsibilities between the central authority and local bodies must be addressed, as this may open the door to waste through multiple entities spending on the same sector due to conflicting competencies, or to assigning spending to an entity that is not competent in the matter, resulting in inefficient use of funds.

- **Combating Corruption**

In all cases, whether the current laws under discussion are integrated within the subcommittee preparing the bill, or whether one of them is amended, any of them should include provisions to strengthen oversight of localities to combat

⁹ Financial decentralization and its role in supporting local development in Egypt: a comparative study with the experiences of Brazil and Indonesia, at the following link: <https://shorturl.at/cFQi8>

corruption, in line with the National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2023-2030. There is consensus among ministers, members of the House of Representatives, and officials in oversight bodies that corruption at the local level exceeds that in other institutions, and that oversight bodies' reports document many corruption cases at all levels of local administration. A report issued by the National Planning Institute indicates that the cost of corruption in localities reaches 40 billion Egyptian pounds. Reports also document corruption incidents daily in localities, including, by way of example and not limitation, the following:

- On 27 April 2026, the Public Prosecution in Al-Ibrahimiya, Sharqia Governorate, ordered the detention for four days of the head of a local unit, three employees, and a citizen, pending investigation, on allegations of forging official documents, abusing public office, and profiting from issuing building permits in violation of the law.
- On 4 May 2025, 16 accused persons and officials were arrested for involvement in exploiting their job positions to facilitate building violations through circumvention of the law, thereby causing harm to the state's entitlements and increasing building violations.
- On 19 February, the Administrative Control Authority arrested the head of the New Aswan City Authority, accusing him of receiving bribes worth 3 million Egyptian pounds, in connection with alleged collusion with some contractors with whom he had contracts to implement projects within the scope of his supervision.

- **Prevent Overlapping Competencies between Local Councils and Executive Authority**

Any law adopted by the House of Representatives should include provisions that prevent overlap between the competencies of these councils and the executive

authority, whether the Ministry of Local Development or others. This would implement the Constitution, which states in Article 181 that: “The decisions issued by these councils, within the limits of their competencies, shall be final, confirming that the executive authority may not interfere, except to prevent the councils from exceeding those limits or harming the public interest or the interests of other local councils.”

In the event of a dispute over the competencies of local councils at levels below that of the governorate, the authority deciding the dispute shall be the Governorate Council. However, in the event of a dispute over the competencies of the local council of a governorate, the matter, on an urgent basis, is decided by the General Assembly of the Divisions for Opinion and Legislation in the State Council, not the Supreme Constitutional Court.

- **Consider Transfer of Powers, Competencies, and Responsibilities to Elected Councils**

It is essential that any law adopted by the House of Representatives provides for transferring powers, competencies, and responsibilities to elected councils. These powers expanded in favor of executive councils in the years preceding, at the expense of elected people’s councils, in addition to the overlap of competencies among the five levels of local administration on the one hand, and between them and executive councils on the other, as well as the predominance of the central role in oversight and supervision of local councils more generally. This is consistent with the Constitution’s Article 176, which refers to a law to renew the time-bound programme for transferring powers and budgets to local administration units.

Differences Between Local People’s Councils and Executive Councils

Local People’s Councils	Executive Councils
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Their members are elected directly	Their members are appointed
Approve local development plans and oversee various local facilities and activities	Manage the day-to-day business of the administrative unit
Set policies and plans and make decisions	Have executive functions

- **Prevent dual oversight over local executive bodies**

Central ministries should retain the ability to follow aspects of their competencies delegated to localities. However, this duality in oversight has created gaps that allow employees to evade oversight by either side and commit violations that are difficult to detect at the time. This contributes to the spread of corruption in localities. Therefore, any law reached by agreement should prevent this duality.

- **Expand the powers of elected local people's councils**

Because the decisions of elected local people's councils do not have binding force over executive bodies, but are merely proposals or recommendations, local councils are unable to effectively oversee the performance of the corresponding executive bodies, and they lack the power to hold them accountable. This is because what councils' issue is only proposals and recommendations. The governorate people's council is granted only the right to direct questions and requests for information, while the right of interpellation has been abolished on the basis that people's councils are part of the executive authority, not a separate popular authority facing the executive. For that reason, it is important to expand the competencies of people's councils so that they can effectively monitor the performance of executive bodies.

- **Study the appointment of the Minister of Local Development as head of the Supreme Council for Local Administration**

The Supreme Council for Local Administration was established under Law No. 124 of 1960, and it has been reorganized several times under different names, including the Ministerial Committee for Local Administration and the Ministerial Committee for Local Governance, up to the adoption of its current name in 1988. The Council reports directly to the Prime Minister. Its membership includes the Minister responsible for local administration, governorate governors, and the heads of the people's councils of the governorates.

Maat's position is that the Minister of Local Administration should be the chair of the Supreme Council for Local Administration and be granted the moral and legal standing that enables him to manage the Council's work, rather than the current arrangement under some draft laws presented to the House of Representatives, which provide for the chairmanship of the Supreme Council by the Prime Minister.

- **Update other laws related to local administration**

It is not possible to implement decentralization if the approach is limited to developing only the local administration law. The required changes must extend to a set of related amendments to the local administration system, most notably including: the Civil Service Law, the Unified Building Law, the State General Budget Law, the Law on the Regulation of Government Contracting, and the Law on New Urban Communities.

- **Determine the powers of the local council for a center/city**

The local council for the center/district/city does not currently have clearly defined and specific powers. Rather, under the currently applicable law (Law No. 43 of 1979), powers are described in vague terms such as setting general rules

for the use of center properties, the principles for dealing with the public, and organizing public facilities. Accordingly, it is important to specify the powers of these local units in the law approved by the House of Representatives.

Fourth: Potential gains from the current local administration reform momentum

- **Updating the current legal framework for local administration**

Adopting a new law on local administration would update the legal framework for local administration, which has been stagnant since Law No. 43 of 1979, along with other amendments thereto, including Law No. 50 of 1981, up to Law No. 145 of 1988 amending some provisions of Law No. 43 of 1979. Under that law, the term “local governance” was amended and replaced with “local administration,” and the minister responsible for local governance was replaced with the minister responsible for local administration, in addition to Law No. 9 of 1989.¹⁰

- **Implementing Egypt’s Vision 2030**

Although draft laws to develop local administration clearly reflect a trend toward strengthening decentralization and expanding the role of local units, the success of this transformation will remain dependent on the state’s ability to convert legislative provisions into practical, applied measures on the ground. Achieving this would contribute to implementing the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and Egypt’s Vision 2030.

This is primarily because many central governments recognize the difficulty of achieving development across all regions of the country and maintaining it over time if decentralization is not effectively implemented. By contrast, multiple experiences have shown that development achieved through local councils and local citizens is feasible and sustainable. Applying decentralization would also

¹⁰ Amending some provisions of the Local Government System Law by Law 145 of 1988, at the following link: <https://manshurat.org/node/13266>

help reduce disparities between urban and rural, or marginalized, areas, producing more than one outcome from the second axis of the National Human Rights Strategy.

- **Strengthening the roles of political parties**

The ongoing momentum regarding local administration laws is likely to increase attention on the file of local council elections. As a number of political parties move to reorganize their internal structures and launch programs targeting the preparation and training of cadres capable of participating in local work, this reflects an understanding that the success of the local administration experience depends not only on enacting laws and regulations or holding elections, but also on the existence of local representatives who possess knowledge of the councils' oversight and development competencies, as well as the ability to communicate with citizens and respond to their needs.

In this context, parties have moved toward focusing on political training and capacity-building as essential prerequisites for preparing for elections of local people's councils. Several parties have announced programs to qualify youth and party members to run in local council elections, including the People's Republican Party, through launching the third phase of the "Your Role (Dawrak)" initiative to qualify local cadres. The aim is to provide participants with legal and administrative knowledge and leadership skills necessary for local work. The initiative includes establishing a localities academy and organizing a simulation model of local councils, to provide practical training for youth on how councils work and how to discuss issues related to citizens' needs. This shift indicates a move from merely selecting candidates to building cadres with prior experience in the nature of local administration and its oversight and development roles,

thereby enhancing parties' ability to participate effectively in the coming localities system.¹¹

The Justice Party represents another example of political parties preparing for local council elections. It focused on combining the preparation of party cadres with legislative engagement related to developing the local administration system. Accordingly, the party announced the relaunch of the "1000 Local Leaders" program to qualify cadres able to run in local elections and participate in managing local affairs, alongside presenting legislative visions regarding the organization of local councils and local administration. This approach reflects an attempt to link the political dimension, preparing candidates, with the institutional dimension, developing the legal framework regulating localities. This, in turn, supports the ability of elected councils in the future to perform their oversight and development roles.¹²

Other parties, including Future of the Nation and the National Front, have also witnessed organizational moves and training programs to prepare cadres for participation in local elections. These developments suggest a relative shift in the party role: election preparations are no longer limited to choosing candidates, but now also include building prior political and organizational competencies. This is an important factor for the success of the local administration system, especially given the long period since the suspension of elected local councils following 2011, which has resulted in limited practical experience among newer generations in local work. However, these initiatives must be ongoing and characterized by sustainability.

• Recognition of Civil Society's Contributions

¹¹ The Republican People announces the launch of the third phase of the "Dawrak" initiative to qualify local cadres and organize a local council simulation model, Republican People's Party, July 2026: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18oRhHTxYz/>

¹² Justice announces its readiness for local elections... and submits a draft law soon, Al-Shorouk, February 2026: <https://tinyurl.com/2b3e348w>

Adopting an effective law on local administration may enable civil society to participate in enhancing the effectiveness of local governance. It is well established that civil society plays an active role in educating local political leaders and citizens to promote effective political participation and sustainable local development. Accordingly, the role of civil society organizations is no longer limited to providing services or implementing community initiatives; rather, it has become one of the actors capable of supporting the development of local administration through raising awareness, building capacities, and strengthening citizens' participation in public affairs.

The importance of this role increases during the preparatory phase for the return of elected local popular councils, given that civil society participation constitutes an enabling factor for creating the social environment necessary to ensure the success of the decentralization experience. Moreover, encouraging civil society to cooperate with local administration is likely to contribute to the sound transfer of competences from the central government to local popular councils, in accordance with the time frame stipulated in the Constitution, estimated at approximately five years.

There are also several key roles for civil society, including contributing to raising awareness of the powers and competences of local councils, qualifying youth and community leaders, and issuing studies that strengthen knowledge of local development, thereby helping to raise the level of popular participation.

Fifth: Recommendations to Enhance the Effectiveness of Local Administration in Egypt

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights affirms that completing the local administration system is not merely the fulfillment of a constitutional obligation; rather, it constitutes an opportunity to rebuild the relationship between the State and citizens at the local level, and to entrench the principles

of decentralization, accountability, and popular participation. The success of this course will remain contingent upon the State's capacity to complete legislative reform, empower local units, build qualified cadres, and enhance cooperation between State institutions, political parties, and civil society organizations. This, in turn, would contribute to establishing more efficient and capable local councils that support development and respond to citizens' needs.

In light of the foregoing, Maat considers that the success of legislative reform will not be achieved by legislative measures alone; it requires a comprehensive package of legislative, institutional, political, and societal actions, which may be summarized as follows:

First: Completing the Legal and Institutional Framework for Local Administration

- Accelerate the issuance of the Local Administration Law and the related laws governing elections to local popular councils, ensuring the existence of a clear, up-to-date legal framework organizing the competences of elected councils and executive bodies.
- Establish clear implementation mechanisms to translate the constitutional principles related to decentralization into practical measures, consistent with the constitutional requirement.

Second: Investing in Building Local and Political Capacities

- Launch sustainable training programmes targeting candidates, members of local councils, and personnel working in local administration, to strengthen legal and administrative knowledge and leadership skills.

- Support cooperation among State institutions, political parties, civil society organizations, and universities to prepare local cadres capable of carrying out their roles effectively.
- Focus on empowering youth and women, as two essential elements in building more representative local popular councils.

Third: Strengthening Political and Community Participation in the Local Governance System

- Encourage political parties to move from the election-preparedness stage to building sustainable local programmes linked to citizens' needs.
- Support the role of civil society in raising awareness of the competences of local councils, and encourage citizens to engage in community participation.
- Develop communication channels between citizens and local popular councils to ensure that the needs of local communities reach the circles responsible for decision-making.

Fourth: Ensuring Competence and Integrity of Electoral Process and Activating the Role of Councils After Their Formation

- Work toward providing an electoral environment based on programmatic competition and the selection of qualified candidates able to carry out local work.
- Enhance transparency and provide information related to the electoral process and candidates, in support of citizens' participation.
- Ensure the provision of the financial and administrative resources necessary for councils to perform their oversight and development functions, while

developing monitoring and evaluation systems and enabling digital transformation within local administration.

Fifth: Developing a Partnership Model Between the State, Political Parties, and Civil Society

- Adopt a participatory approach that makes the development of local administration a shared responsibility among various stakeholders, ensuring the sustainability of reform and preventing it from being limited to issuing legislation or conducting elections only.
- Leverage the expertise of civil society and academics in assessing the performance of local councils, and in submitting proposals for continuous improvement.