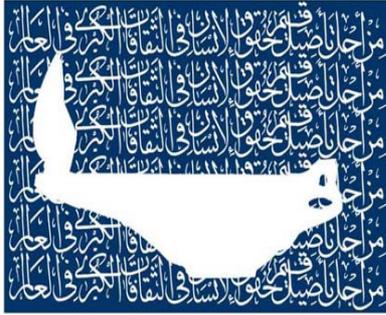


Second Interim Report on Media Performance in the 2014 Egyptian Presidential Election Campaign



May 15, 2014 – June 1, 2014



**CAIRO INSTITUTE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES**

Institut du Caire pour les études des droits de l'homme

مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان

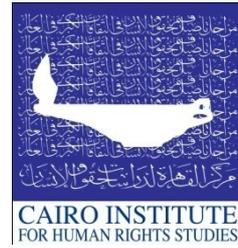
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This project is supported by



Publisher:
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
(CIHRS)



Specialized Reports

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June 2014

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This Report

This second interim report presents a summary of the quantitative and qualitative findings of the CIHRS media-monitoring project.¹ The CIHRS observatory monitored the performance of fifteen media outlets, including five newspapers (*al-Ahram*, *al-Gomhouriya*, *al-Masry al-Youm*, *al-Shorouk*, and *al-Watan*), eight television channels (Egyptian Satellite Television, Nile News, ONTV, CBC, al-Qahera wal-Nas, Sada al-Balad, MBC Egypt, and al-Jazeera Egypt), and two radio stations (Radio Egypt and Radio 90:90). The outlets were monitored daily (nine hours each for television and radio)² throughout the voting period for the 2014 Egyptian presidential election, both in Egypt and abroad.

This report monitors, analyzes, and evaluates³ the performance of the media starting on May 15, the day the polls opened abroad, to June 4, the day the final election results were announced. For the period of May 15–19, the report focuses solely on the expatriate vote⁴ because the first interim report addressed the media coverage of the campaigns of both candidates during this period.⁵

The CIHRS media observatory selected the media outlets under review based on three main factors: audience share for all three types (visual, print, and audio),⁶ diversity

¹ The CIHRS began monitoring media coverage in 2005, issuing [a report on media performance in the run-up to the parliamentary elections](#), followed by [a report on the media and presidential elections](#) in January 2006. The media observatory monitored [media coverage of the 2010 parliamentary elections](#), as well as the [2011 parliamentary elections](#). The observatory issued three interim reports covering the [campaign](#), [vote](#), and [runoff](#) of the 2012 presidential elections. It further monitored media coverage of the referendum on the 2012 constitution and the 2014 referendum on the constitutional amendments, and issued interim reports on the [constituent assembly's work](#) and [the social dialogue on the charter](#).

² Media was monitored daily in morning and evening prime-time hours, from 9 am to noon and from 7 pm to 1 am for television and 10 am to 7 pm for radio. For print media, the monitoring covered newspapers' second edition.

³ The observation and analysis was undertaken by team of 20 monitors trained in quantitative and qualitative observation and content analysis, in order to make accurate, documented findings that reflect the media's positive and negative biases toward all parties to the elections.

⁴ The vote abroad was slated to end on May 18, but the PEC issued a decree extending the vote by an additional 24 hours to the evening of May 19, in order to "increase turnout," according to the PEC. See the decree extending the expatriate vote (Decree 30/2014), published in the Official Gazette no. 20 at https://www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/decrees/pec_qararlagna-30_2014.pdf.

⁵ The first interim report covered the presidential campaign period from April 20 to May 20. Find the report at <http://www.cihrs.org/?p=8621>.

⁶ There is an issue related to the lack of Egyptian firms that specialize in audience research, particularly after several satellite channels objected to the findings of international companies. The researchers thus conducted a small poll of a varied sample of the public to determine the most watched and therefore most influential channels for the presidential election, taking into consideration other factors governing the selection of the sample, including material and human capacities.

and representation of all views in society,⁷ and the diversity of ownership models. The monitoring assessed the professionalism of the media in accordance with international standards for media professionalism during elections,⁸ showing due regard for the differences in the role of state-owned and private media, using the observation methods appropriate for each type of media outlet and its ownership model.

This report is divided into four thematic sections covering the final three phases of the elections: the poll outside Egypt and the announcement of expatriate voting results; the final hours in the run-up to the vote in Egypt (the 72 hours preceding the vote,⁹ in addition to the two days of the moratorium on campaigning); and the three days of the vote in Egypt, the ballot count, and the announcement of the results. Since the coverage of al-Jazeera English diverged significantly from that of other outlets and was marked by distinct features, biases, and violations, the fourth section is devoted to a separate analysis of that channel's performance.

General Context of the Presidential Vote

On June 4, 2014, the Presidential Elections Committee (PEC) announced that candidate Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi had won the presidency, receiving more than 96 percent of the 25 million votes cast, at a turnout rate of 47 percent.¹⁰ Voter turnout was the subject of a heated conflict over the three days of the vote in Egypt, with some media reporting weak turnout and others confirming high turnout later in the day. The PEC extended voting to an extra day, despite objections from both candidates, a decision that several media figures considered damaging to the electoral process and attributed to false media reports and exaggerations.¹¹

There can be no doubt that the political climate surrounding the elections had a negative impact on the final result. Under international standards for free and fair elections, the electoral process cannot be considered fair if the overall political climate lacks minimum guarantees for respect for rights and liberties and the rule of law. The presidential elections took place in an unprecedented context of the suppression of civil liberties and the political rights of Egyptian citizens. The security apparatus

⁷ There is also a problem related to the lack of diversity in the Egyptian media after several pro-Islamist channels that rejected the presidential elections were shut down, along with *al-Hurriya wal-Adala*. This led the researchers to include al-Jazeera Egypt in the project, in order to preserve a representative voice of this party, even though the channel is not Egyptian. The project also included MBC Egypt, another non-Egyptian channel representing a different view with high viewer ratings in Egypt. In this way, it was hoped to represent non-Egyptian channels in a more balanced way.

⁸ For more information on the role of the media in general elections, see the CIHRS book on the topic at <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=3617>>.

⁹ This refers to media coverage of candidates' campaign activities on May 21, 22, and 23, immediately before the moratorium. This period was not covered by the first interim report, which addressed campaigning from April 20 to May 20.

¹⁰ For the final results of the presidential election, see the PEC website, <<https://www.elections.eg/presidential-elections-2014-results>>.

¹¹ This was the opinion of many media figures after the decision to extend the voting. For more details, see part three of this report.

tightened its grip on the public sphere to deny Egyptians their right to the free political participation they demanded in the uprisings of January 25 and June 30. Successive governments after July 3, 2013 used numerous pretexts to breach their constitutional and legal obligations, citing “a war on terror” to justify and legalize repressive security practices. Although the CIHRS recognizes the danger of terrorism currently facing Egypt,¹² the practices of the current government indicate that it is not only countering terrorism, but using terrorism as a cover to assault and infringe basic human rights and liberties, most prominently the right to life, the right to a fair trial, and the right to bodily safety. All of this precludes elections conducted in a free, democratic space.

Although the voter turnout rate announced by the PEC was relatively high, it did not meet the expectations of media figures or their exaggerated rhetoric on anticipated turnout. Even media outlets that touted Sisi’s likely victory targeted a level of voter turnout not required by law to lend the candidate extra legitimacy.¹³ “If the field marshal wins, he can’t just win with 50 or 60 percent, but if people don’t go, that’s what will happen,” said an announcer on Radio 90:90. “We’re the popular backing for the next president, giving him the ability to make decisions.”¹⁴ The media raised the level of expected voter turnout to more than 40 million, or over 75 percent of all eligible voters. This number was also cited by one of the candidates, who said in a television interview, “Let’s see 40 million Egyptians go out and vote and I’ll stand with them before the world.”¹⁵ The media also constantly linked high turnout with support for January 25 and June 30, stressing that elections should see the same massive participation as the uprisings.

This exaggeration and inflation perhaps explains the hysteria that gripped most media figures, as this report will show, when they found that youth tended either to avoid the polls entirely, despite being the engine of the uprisings, or spoil their ballot—the PEC final tally estimated that 1 million ballots were invalidated—preferring to demand freedom for a detained activist¹⁶ or inscribe a revolutionary demand on the ballot

¹² For more information on the stance of the CIHRS on terrorism laws and counterterrorism measures, see, “Two Counterterrorism Bills Will Intensify Terrorist Crimes,” <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=8487&lang=en>>. See also, “CIHRS Sends a Legal Memo to the President,” <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=8541&lang=en>>.

¹³ Some media figures objected to the rhetoric used by some outlets that made the legitimacy of the election dependent on a certain level of turnout. This includes a presenter on ONTV, who said during “Egypt’s President” on May 26, “We’ve done something very strange and distressing. We’ve said to ourselves that during the last presidential elections nearly 26 million Egyptians voted, so these elections, to be true, there must be more than that. Who told you this nonsense? Why do we want a higher turnout? We want a normal rate of turnout, growing out of the conscience of the Egyptian people.” Another presenter on EST criticized the same tendency at the opening of his show on May 27.

¹⁴ Host of “What and Why” on Radio 90:90, May 17.

¹⁵ Statement by Sisi in a televised interview with several presenters. It was broadcast on numerous channels, including al-Qahera wal-Nas and al-Mehwar on May 23. See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1V0rP1MgKM>>.

¹⁶ *Al-Watan* reported on May 30 that “Free Mahienour” was the most common slogan written on spoiled ballots in Alexandria. See <<http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/494052>>. For more information on Mahienour’s case, see “Confirmation of the Verdict against Mahienour El-Massry,” <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=8631&lang=en>>.

instead of giving their vote to one of the candidates. Others simply chose not to take part in an election with a predetermined outcome, in which their vote would not strengthen the chances of either candidate, but would instead send “a message to the world,” according to campaign slogans,¹⁷ that they supported the roadmap pursued by one of the candidates.

The media’s outsized expectations were a primary reason for a shift in rhetoric in the final run-up to the poll and during the vote, as media workers began using every last trick to push voter turnout to the level they had promoted and predicted. At times, the media deployed sectarian rhetoric and evoked civil strife, reminding Copts of the churches torched and violence against them in an attempt to persuade them that voting would be a form of revenge against the faction that had long persecuted them and burned their churches.¹⁸ At other times, the media carried anonymously sourced reports that the Muslim Brotherhood had issued orders to organize voters for Hamdeen Sabahi in order to retaliate against his competitor, who had ousted their leader,¹⁹ or that people were being paid to boycott.²⁰ Putting forth what he saw as the strongest argument for voting, one agitated program host told his audience, “If 8 or 10 million take part in the presidential elections, what will that tell the world? We’ll have to open the prison gates, bring back Mohammed Morsi, and tell him to rule again because Egyptians didn’t want the roadmap.”²¹ Another, citing unnamed sources and encouraging voter turnout, said, “Mohammed Morsi had a nervous breakdown when he saw the voting lines and screamed ‘It’s a farce!’”²²

The media also employed sentimental rhetoric to encourage Egyptians to vote, noting that low turnout might vex or disappoint their favored candidate. Some even suggested that the candidate with the highest chances might withdraw his candidacy if Egyptians let him down,²³ prompting his campaign to issue a statement—virtually a denial—emphasizing his strong stance and his utmost optimism. His campaign also denied holding any emergency meetings to discuss low turnout.²⁴ The candidate

¹⁷ Most get out and vote- ads used this rhetoric, with promos ending with taglines such as, “Go vote: just going is a sign to the entire world that the biggest gathering in human history was no accident”; “We must go out and show the world what we’ve done”; “Numbers matter”; “Before the whole world”; and “Go out to make the world understand what it means to be Egyptian.”

¹⁸ CBC’s “The Capital Here,” May 27, after the second day of voting. She also said, “I say to Copts: remember the terrorism you faced and the burned churches.” See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7OcgwSSg8M>>.

¹⁹ See for example May 26, “Egypt Victorious,” Sada al-Balad, when one presenter stated, “Right now the Brotherhood international terrorist organization is meeting to make a decision to send out Brothers tomorrow to the elections.” See also an interview published in *al-Masry al-Youm* on May 25 titled, “Dissident Brother: the Group’s Leaders Ordered Members to Participate in Elections and Spoil their Ballots.”

²⁰ See *al-Youm al-Sabi’*, May 25, “Scoop: Brotherhood Gives LE1,000 for those Who Don’t Vote,” <<http://www1.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=1685547#.U4py3XKSsw2I>>.

²¹ See “Cairo Today” on al-Youm, May 26, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQLX9mskxw#t=10>>.

²² See “Tahrir Studio,” May 27, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRi5ItGrxxs&feature=youtu.be>>.

²³ See for example, *al-Shorouk*, May 27, “Mustafa Bakri: If Sisi Wins with Low Turnout, He’ll be Frustrated and Perhaps Bow Out of the Presidency.”

²⁴ See *al-Shorouk*, May 27, “Sisi Campaign Sources: The Field Marshal Thanks the People; We Blame Media Figures for Hiding Poison in the Honey,” a story affirming the campaign’s optimism and denying that any emergency meetings were held to discuss low turnout, as claimed by some media outlets.

himself chose a more intimidating language in his only comment, made to al-Hayat, broadcasted numerous times, “The citizen’s failure to perform his patriotic role will have unpleasant outcomes in the future.”²⁵

Also in an effort to increase voter participation, the media resorted to slandering and at times insulting boycotters,²⁶ using patriotism as a means of pressure²⁷ and urging boycotters to at least spoil their ballot to boost turnout.²⁸ The media also repeatedly covered the crisis of voters living outside of their voting districts, citing inflated estimates of their numbers—which could make a difference in turnout—and accusing the PEC of failure to register them.²⁹ This led the PEC to issue a statement condemning and responding to the media assault.³⁰ On the voting days themselves, the media reported inaccurate, contradictory turnout numbers, particularly at the end of the first day, in order to urge citizens to vote, at times inflating the numbers and at others noting they were less than expected.³¹

It should be noted in this context that the role of the media during the vote is to cover the voting process and encourage the citizenry to take part without resorting to intimidation or incitement and without magnifying or minimizing turnout data. This role is related to the media’s ability to deliver unbiased coverage and guarantee the integrity of the voting process.³² Encouraging voter participation should proceed from the principle of citizenship and the citizenry’s right to choose, not on the basis of retribution against a particular political faction, to send a message to the world, or to spite certain international parties. This releases the media of any responsibility for election outcomes or shifts in voting patterns. This may explain why several media

²⁵ Al-Hayat al-Youm, May 27, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbb5d6o0kyM>>.

²⁶ A presenter on ONTV on May 25 described them as “bums, worthless layabouts. They have no political weight, no job weight, and no academic, scientific, or human weight.” A presenter on al-Farain described boycotters as “people who need a slap on the neck.” See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiHHe-swBeA>>. Also see *al-Masry al-Youm*, May 22, “Boycotters: So, how many kilos do you weigh?”

²⁷ A presenter on Tahrir TV on Tuesday, May 26 at 2:16 called them “traitors. They’ve lost the country. They sold the country to the Brotherhood. They carried out the terrorist plans. They sold the nation cheap. They have no conscience.” See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llhMtt1OioE&app=desktop>>.

²⁸ See for example, the host of “The Third Dimension,” on Nugoum FM, May 27, who exhorted listeners to “go out and spoil your ballot so you’ll be counted.” A presenter on Tahrir TV, offering live coverage of the vote on May 27, directed her words to boycotters: “Even though it’s not nice, for me you will have done your duty. You will have stood in line and been counted on the next president’s list of priorities.”

²⁹ See for example a news story on Mobtada Radio, reported on Radio 90:90, titled “Tehani al-Gebali: Mansour is responsible for the loss of nine million votes.” See <http://www.mobtada.com/news_details.php?ID=195294>.

³⁰ See PEC statement no. 45, <https://www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/press-releases/PEC_2014-press_release-45.pdf>.

³¹ The host of al-Nahar’s “End of the Day,” May 26, said, “The number that voted the first day is big, but is not up to expectations. The scene in front of many polling stations is not what we want.” See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgtFqUpf0Yk>>.

³² A correspondent for Radio Egypt criticized what he saw as a media frenzy with turnout and the tendency to turn to correspondents only to inquire about turnout levels. He said on May 27, “The Egyptian media is obsessed with turnout. It’s also our job to observe the numbers and monitor the integrity of the electoral process—are there any violations or facilities afforded? Turnout will be announced by the judge. The most important thing for us is to monitor the electoral process, to see if anyone is breaking the law and impeding the process.”

figures condemned one another after the PEC extended voting to a third day, having seen the decision as a response to inaccurate media reports and scare-mongering that did not coincide with numbers reflecting heavy voting.³³ Several media workers also viciously attacked the PEC for responding to these exaggerations, saying that polling stations would be empty on the third day³⁴ and that the decision embarrassed the candidates and undermined the process.

For its part, al-Jazeera Egypt highlighted the weak turnout in its biased coverage,³⁵ depicting polling stations as totally empty and lauding boycotters in an attempt to prop up the legitimacy of the Morsi regime, despite confirming that the boycott did not necessarily imply a recognition of the pre-June 30 regime. Al-Jazeera made several grave professional lapses to support this allegation, for example by airing a camera feed of the Alexandria beach showing it full of beachgoers who presumably did not vote.³⁶ This was a flagrant example of massaging the facts, rising to the level of outright fabrication.

The unexpected level of turnout was a shock not only to the media, but also the government and the PEC, which exhibited bias not toward a particular candidate, but rather to high turnout. At times the committee employed intimidation tactics, stating that it would count boycotters and refer them to the Public Prosecution³⁷ or fine them and dock it from their paychecks.³⁸ At other times, it cajoled voters, making it easier for them to express their choice with a word or illustration.³⁹ The PEC also added an extra day of voting, in Egypt and abroad, to meet voters' needs,⁴⁰ despite objections from both candidates to the vote extension in Egypt, after the PEC stated that it would

³³ See for example "The President and the People" and "Egypt Elects the President," on al-Qahera wal-Nas, May 27; see also EST, May 27.

³⁴ See for example an agitated presenter on Sada al-Balad on May 27 who accused the PEC of "wanting to show us to the world tomorrow while the polling stations are empty. Al-Jazeera will be thrilled!" See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVfWsykOscs>>.

³⁵ See part four of this report on al-Jazeera coverage.

³⁶ See the image at

<http://www.cihrs.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/10390089_10152503703876057_6610702125610263019_n.jpg>.

³⁷ The news was reported in the press, quoting an official statement to al-Hayat TV. *Al-Watan* carried the following headline on its website on May 27: "al-Hayat: a PEC Source Says Boycotters to be Referred to Public Prosecution." See <www.elwatannews.com/news/details/491464>. The head of the PEC reportedly made similar statements on May 9 and 10 during a meeting held by the Ministry of Youth and Sport to discuss elections, according to various newspapers. See for example *al-Shorouk*, <<http://www.shorouknews.com/mobile/news/view.aspx?cdate=08052014&id=5f7a5bca-3270-41cb-9e36-23850f65802e>>.

³⁸ This was also briefly reported by al-Hayat as breaking news, attributed to an official source in the PEC on the evening of May 27. Other outlets picked up the story, including "Egypt Now" on MBC. See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnCOot1VED4>>.

³⁹ The PEC announced its stance in statement no. 42. See <https://www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/press-releases/PEC_2014-press_release-42.pdf>.

⁴⁰ The extension order was issued as Decree 34/2014, published in the Official Gazette in no. 21 (bis d) on May 28. Find the decree at <https://www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/decrees/pec_qararlagna-34_2014.pdf>.

not resort to an extension.⁴¹ The PEC adopted the same rhetoric as the media, which saw the need to top the turnout rate in previous elections—particularly the presidential poll won by Morsi—as a primary incentive to vote. In its press statements during the expatriate vote, the PEC lauded the hour and minute at which turnout exceeded that of the referendum on the 2014 constitution.⁴² In another statement, it celebrated the fact that turnout had exceeded turnout in the 2012 presidential election 45 minutes before the polls closed.⁴³ Some interpreted this statement within the context of PEC Decree 30/2014 extending the expatriate vote by an additional day, after the first four designated voting days failed to reach this goal. The PEC, however, said in its decree extending the vote that it had done so in response to the heavy turnout of Egyptians abroad.⁴⁴

The government also seemed invested in increasing turnout after the first day of the vote in Egypt, evidenced in its decision to declare the second day of voting an official holiday.⁴⁵ Although just a few hours earlier, the Ministry of Manpower and the government had affirmed that the next day was a working day,⁴⁶ they ultimately yielded “to the will of voters,” according to a Cabinet statement.⁴⁷

In the final analysis, Sisi’s victory came as no surprise and there was virtually no suspense during the election. More important than the final result, however, is the integrity of the democratic process, which is not confined to the ballot box, but rather extends to the neutrality of state institutions and the commission overseeing elections and sound procedure that raises no doubts about credibility (although the PEC had already immunized itself against challenges to the process). Most important is the general context in which elections take place. A healthy context renders the election

⁴¹ In statement no. 42, the PEC denied that it intended to extend voting to a third day. See <https://www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/press-releases/PEC_2014-press_release-42.pdf>.

⁴² This was the gist of the PEC statement on the expatriate vote before the end of the second day, statement no. 29. The statement affirmed that at exactly 3:32 pm on the second day of voting, voter turnout exceeded that of the last referendum. See <https://www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/press-releases/PEC_2014-press_release-29.pdf>. It should be noted that turnout for the 2014 constitutional referendum was less than turnout for the 2012 constitution.

⁴³ PEC statement no. 34, issued at 8:15 pm, May 19, the last day of the vote abroad. The statement opened, “At 8:15 pm on Monday, voter turnout exceeded the turnout during the 2012 presidential elections.” See <https://www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/press-releases/PEC_2014-press_release-34.pdf>.

⁴⁴ The text of Decree 30/2014 extending the vote abroad can be found at <https://www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/decrees/pec_qararlagna-30_2014.pdf>.

⁴⁵ On May 27, the prime minister’s office decided to extend voting to a third day. The story was covered by most media and published on the official Cabinet Facebook page.

⁴⁶ More than one media outlet published statements from the Ministry of Manpower affirming that the voting days were not official holidays. See, for example, the statement published on the site of the specialized Nile channels, <<http://www.niletc.tv/News/29294/11/Main#.U4qT5HKS2I>>.

⁴⁷ According to PEC statement no. 47, issued at the end of the second day of the vote, May 27, the extension was in the interest of voters and in response to the wishes of various segments of the people. See <https://www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/press-releases/PEC_2014-press_release-47.pdf>. The Cabinet decree declaring Tuesday, May 27, an official holiday, opened with the phrase, “Responding to the wishes of the people...” See the news on the Cabinet’s official Facebook page, <<https://www.facebook.com/Egyptian.Cabinet.Of.Ministers/photos/a.202138989797689.57361.202103219801266/804818869529695/?type=1&theater>>.

one step on the path to democracy and lends transparency and fairness to the elections,⁴⁸ rather than reducing them to a mere façade for a lack of democracy. Before the outcome of the election was announced, the media had already begun preparing the public by demonizing the opposition. An extremely prominent media figure coined a new slogan that was soon adopted by others: “The people will not allow an opposition that obstructs the president!” One sheikh issued a fatwa declaring rebellion against the president to be prohibited under Islamic law.⁴⁹

Part One: Media Coverage of the Expatriate Vote

Most media outlets began covering the election abroad when the polls opened; only a few of the outlets under review showed any interest in voter education for expatriate Egyptians prior to the first day of the vote on May 15. With the exception of Nile News, Egyptian Satellite Television (EST), and CBC, there was virtually no reference to the vote abroad prior to the evening of May 14 in most audio and visual media.⁵⁰ Starting on May 12, Nile News began reviewing PEC instructions and decrees regulating the vote abroad in its newscast, fulfilling its role of educating voters. EST and Nile News also covered the expatriate vote in segments on their talk shows from May 11 to 14.⁵¹ CBC provided advice on how to properly fill out ballots and encourage Egyptians abroad to vote; it also took phone inquiries and responded to them in the 48 hours preceding the vote.⁵²

Starting on May 15, all television and radio stations under review carried special coverage of the expatriate vote, interviewing ambassadors and consular officials, who gave divergent depictions of the vote in their countries. The press also covered voter turnout and relevant PEC decrees. The media generally encouraged Egyptians abroad to participate and lauded them for doing so, first of all to encourage Egyptians in Egypt to vote⁵³ and secondly because the vote told the world that Egyptians welcomed the election as a step on the roadmap adopted after July 3, 2013.

A few outlets, most prominently Radio 90:90, focused on voting trends, not only on participation and turnout, which entailed implicit bias toward one of the candidates. Announcers on the channel repeatedly asked correspondents and embassy press officials in polling stations about the direction of the vote, a question that violates

⁴⁸ This was the primary comment of the EU election observation mission, which although it affirmed the procedural soundness of the electoral process, said that the election was taking place in a context lacking democracy that did not meet international standards for fairness. See the EU preliminary report at <http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/egypt/press_corner/all_news/news/2014/20140529_en.pdf>.

⁴⁹ The vice-president of the Salafi Dawa said that rebelling against Sisi was prohibited in Islam, saying that he could only be brought down through the ballot box. See <<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/455586>>.

⁵⁰ The print media carried only limited coverage, publishing the text of PEC decrees on the expatriate vote as they were issued.

⁵¹ See, for example, “From Cairo,” Nile News, May 13, and “Named after Egypt,” EST, May 11.

⁵² See, for example, “The Capital Here,” May 12 and 13.

⁵³ See the editorial in *al-Ahram* and *al-Gomhouriya*, May 15, on the beginning of the vote abroad.

professional standards, which dictate respect for the secrecy of the ballot and deter using voters' answers to direct others who may not have cast their vote yet. This is particularly important considering that all the responses to the question were, "Of course, for Sisi." This opens up the media outlet to accusations of selectivity and covert campaigning for one candidate over the other.⁵⁴

Most Significant Observations on Media Coverage of the Expatriate Vote

1. Reports of High Turnout

The media inflated and exaggerated the level of expatriate voter turnout, which was criticized by some writers in the press who believed that the media had provided inaccurate information about turnout, particularly on the first days of the vote.⁵⁵ In the early hours of the first day of the vote, media newscasts called turnout "unprecedented," "peerless," "heavy," "exceeding expectations," "very high," "a patriotic epic," and "fantastic."

For example, *al-Ahram* on May 16 (available on the evening of May 15, only hours after voting began) declared in its front page headline, "Thousands of Egyptians abroad respond to the appeal of the nation," describing the scene as "awesome" and reporting thousands standing in lines snaking for kilometers in front of the polling stations. In its front-page headline, *al-Gomhouriya* declared, "Votes of Egyptians abroad shake the world." On the inside pages, it described the lines of expatriate Egyptians as "a national epic," stating that some 65,000 people voted the first day, although the paper hit the streets even before the poll's closed on the first day. *Al-Shorouk* diverged from the exaggerated coverage of *al-Masry al-Youm* and *al-Watan*, its front page of May 16 stating, "Egyptians' votes abroad support June 30," avoiding any description of turnout on the front page. On the interior pages, however, it described the turnout as "a state victory," and, quoting the PEC, described turnout as "unprecedented." The paper more clearly stressed the high turnout in its headlines of May 17.⁵⁶

Both program presenters and the press began estimating the number of Egyptian expatriates, citing anonymously sourced, contradictory numbers. It is particularly serious for newspapers to publish turnout rates since most of them went to press early in the day, many hours before the polls closed, and their numbers are thus necessarily inaccurate. In addition, programs airing in different time zones also reported on turnout, largely offering anonymously sourced, typically exaggerated estimates of turnout, meaning that voters received contradictory numbers. Most of the figures cited were anonymously sourced since the PEC did not release figures daily, a reasonable

⁵⁴ See, for example, the newscasts at 10 am, 1 pm, and 3 pm on Radio 90:90, May 17.

⁵⁵ See, for example, "The Expatriate Vote: An Unrealized Feat," *al-Masry al-Youm*, May 22, and "The Expatriate Vote: A Negative Indicator of Turnout," *al-Masry al-Youm*, May 20.

⁵⁶ The paper called the vote the next day "a shocking message to the Brotherhood" and "an awesome message to the world."

choice considering the procedural difficulties involved.⁵⁷ Much of the media adopted the tone of the PEC, which in most of its press statements stressed heavy turnout. The media also accepted the PEC's explanation for the decision to extend voting abroad, taking it as evidence of high turnout.⁵⁸

2. Global Distribution of Coverage

The media communicated with Egyptian embassies and consulates to follow the course of the elections abroad. Most countries were well served by the coverage, reflecting most outlets' success in providing comprehensive coverage of the expatriate vote. Nevertheless, there was some unbalanced coverage. The monitoring team found that the media was particularly interested in the vote in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, and images from these countries—which portrayed high turnout—were the most frequently used in the visual and print media.⁵⁹ The media also frequently saluted Egyptians abroad, especially Egyptians living in the Gulf states, particularly after the PEC stated that voter turnout was high in these countries, without reference to turnout in other countries.⁶⁰

Coverage of the vote in Qatar and Turkey, however, differed. On the first and second day, the media reported the PEC's statements that there were no problems with the vote in Istanbul, as claimed by some electronic media.⁶¹ Yet *al-Masry al-Youm* reported weak turnout in Qatar and Istanbul on page 6 of its May 16 edition, while on the same day *al-Shorouk* called the vote in Qatar "a surprise to Egyptians." Meanwhile, on EST's "Named after Egypt" on May 17, one presenter stated, "The turnout in Qatar was historical and unprecedented." The presenter then commented, "Of course, we know where Qatar stands. Egyptian citizens anywhere aren't afraid, they act. That's what they've proven even under the strength and power of the Qatari regime and the role of Qatar, which is trying to escape its midget status, but is ultimately just a midget." This is illustrative of the discrepancy in the coverage of the vote in Qatar and media attempts to interpret voting trends in that country in particular, in contrast to other countries where the media simply reported on events.

⁵⁷ For example, while *al-Shorouk* of May 17 reported the result of the first two days (May 15 and 16) at 136,000, the front page of *al-Gomhouriya* reported it as 125,000. A source on EST's "Named after Egypt," said the same day that the 223,000 Egyptians voted abroad, while the screen reported 243,000. The next day, May 18, a presenter on Radio Egypt's "Egypt: the Mother of the World," said that 253,000 Egyptians had voted thus far, while the host of CBC's "The Capital Here" reported that turnout reached 288,000. On May 19, *al-Gomhouriya* stated that a quarter million Egyptians had voted for the new president, which was relatively close to reports in *al-Shorouk* on May 19, which stated, "255,000 voters cast their ballot as of Sunday afternoon."

⁵⁸ For example, the host of EST's "Named after Egypt," May 17, reported the news of the extension of the vote abroad by noting that "turnout was heavy. It was honorable, it was amazing. It really represented Egypt, so that's why the extension decree was issued."

⁵⁹ The results later confirmed high turnout in those countries.

⁶⁰ See PEC statements no. 28, 29, and 31 at <<https://www.elections.eg/committee/press-releases>>.

⁶¹ See, for example, *al-Ahram*, May 16, page 7.

3. Preempting the Results of the Expatriate Vote

In general, all media outlets under review published preliminary estimates of turnout abroad and votes garnered by each candidate before the PEC made its official announcement of results, but many of these estimates were contradictory and most of them were anonymously sourced. Many outlets, most significantly ONTV, *al-Shorouk*, and *al-Masry al-Youm*, relied on the preliminary figures provided by the official Sisi campaign.

The media evaluation committee urged all media to refrain from releasing any preliminary results of the expatriate vote, as it might influence voting trends in Egypt.⁶² But *al-Ahram*, for example, declared in a front-page headline on May 20, before the PEC announced the results, “Preliminary results from the expatriate vote show Sisi leading.” On page 4 of the May 21 issue, it published a graph of voting trends showing Sisi leading by 95 percent and ranking Arab states by turnout. In preliminary estimates published the same day, *al-Shorouk* reported that Sisi won more than 92 percent of votes, while *al-Masry al-Youm* reported that day that he won more than 90 percent, hours before the PEC announced the final result at 3 pm.

Shortly before the PEC declared the results, there was confusion as some media outlets, including the state-owned Radio Egypt, reported that the committee would not provide detailed results or would only announce the turnout rate, but not the winning candidate.⁶³ The PEC resolved the issue with media statement no. 35, in which it stated that it would announce the results in full in a press conference in the presence of the media and the candidates’ representatives. All media outlets subsequently published the election results, despite the appeals of the media evaluation committee. This led one host of ONTV’s “The President” to wonder accusingly, “Should we be hearing these numbers in Egypt now, before we vote?”⁶⁴

The PEC bears primary responsibility here, since the media is obligated to report the committee’s official findings as part of its role in covering the committee’s election statements and decrees.

We wish to emphasize the problem of announcing the results of the expatriate vote prior to the vote in Egypt insofar as this may influence voters and lead them to cast their ballot for the more popular candidate.

⁶² See the story in *al-Ahram*, May 19.

⁶³ In its newscast of May 20, Radio Egypt reported that the PEC would announce the results of the vote in Egypt with the results from abroad. The next day, it reported on the PEC statement that it would announce the full results of the expatriate vote in a press conference on May 21.

⁶⁴ See ONTV’s “The President,” May 19.

Part Two: Media Coverage of the Final Hours of Campaigning and the Campaign Moratorium

This section looks at the most significant media developments and biases seen in the final week before the vote, including the last days of campaigning and the campaign moratorium.

1. Shift in Advertising Trends in the Final Hours of the Campaign

The end of the campaign period saw some marked changes in media advertising, summarized as follows:

- State-owned media joined the advertising fray: in the final days, pro-Sisi campaign ads appeared in “The President,” a supplement to *al-Ahram* on May 22, where previously the newspaper’s pages had been free of ads for either candidate. *Al-Gomhouriya* continued to publish pro-Sisi ads, with the ad sponsored by the Association of Arab Tribes appearing in the front page more than once. State-owned Radio Egypt intensified its pro-Sisi ads while hosting no ads for his competitor. Nile News continued to be ad-free—the only channel that did not air ads for either candidate—while pro-Sisi ads on EST became more frequent and more direct,⁶⁵ having previously been limited to an ad encouraging voter participation, appended with the slogan, “Long Live Egypt,” the tagline of the Sisi campaign.⁶⁶
- Pro-Sabahi ads appear for the first time: these ads were aired only on ONTV and CBC, starting on May 18. The two channels also broadcast ads for Sisi, but they were ads already aired in other outlets, unlike the Sabahi promos. The channels that had previously aired pro-Sisi ads began putting them in heavy rotation, especially al-Qahera wal-Nas and Sada al-Balad.
- The private press: the three private newspapers under review carried no ads for either candidate throughout the period under review, but on May 25 they did publish a two-page want-ad for an Emirati company, which included images of Sisi with a company official. They also carried ads for satellite channels announcing their interview with Sisi, accompanied by a photo of the candidate and the scheduled time of the interview.
- Appearance of ads produced by the armed forces’ Morale Affairs Department and anti-Brotherhood ads to encourage turnout: this is in addition to ads prepared by the Audiovisual Media Chamber, which were put in heavy rotation

⁶⁵ Starting on May 15, EST aired the Sisi campaign ad that began by describing him as “the man of the moment,” and ended by urging citizens to vote for him. On May 19, it began broadcasting pro-Sisi ads by National Gas as well as the campaign ads with the campaign tagline.

⁶⁶ EST had begun airing an ad urging citizens to vote on May 11, appended with the Sisi campaign tagline, “Long Live Egypt.”

in the four days before the vote. Al-Qahera wal-Nas repeatedly aired promos produced by the Morale Affairs Department. Starting on May 26, these ads showed various images of the Egyptian army and did not comment directly on elections or either candidate; the ads ended with the phrase, “Your army is here, ready to protect you. Go out and express your opinion. Take part in creating a new future for your country.” Starting also on May 26, the same channel began airing two new ads. Spotlighting the Muslim Brotherhood’s efforts to impede the elections, the first ad stated, “Why will the Brotherhood be out in force on the 27th, the second day of elections? To obstruct voting lines. How will they obstruct them? Many ways. They will let you go on the 26th, the first day, to reassure yourself, then they will go out the second day...”

- Various ads observed throughout the period under review cited the Brotherhood as an incentive to vote, but this ad explicitly stated that the group had a fixed plan timed to coincide with the end of the first day’s vote (the ad was prepared for broadcast after the first day of voting). According to the ad, starting on the second day, the Brotherhood would interfere with voting lines. It went on to explain the methods they might use, saying a Brother might “enter the polling station to vote and then come out and stand in line again, then go back and start over, until you get sick of waiting and leave. Take note of the line. Take note of anyone who goes to the back of the line again.” The ad presents speculation as if it is confirmed news, thus misleading the viewer.

2. Increase in Biased Campaign Promos in the State-Owned Media

The state-owned media underwent a clear shift in the final days preceding the campaign moratorium, becoming more openly biased toward Sisi compared to his competitor. *Al-Ahram* continued to carry front-page headlines about Sisi while placing news of Sabahi on pages filled with advertisements, thus reducing the space allotted to him.⁶⁷ *Al-Ahram* also began carrying stories that appeared unrelated to the candidates but actually exhibited a clear bias to one of them. For example, on May 23 it published a psychological analysis of the Egyptian temperament, in which sources pushed the idea that pro-Sisi Egyptians were generally in positive, high spirits while pro-Sabahi Egyptians were somewhat frustrated but nevertheless sticking to their candidate and boycotters were a small, negative bunch. On May 22, the *al-Ahram* election supplement, “The President,” showed virtually no diversity or balance at all, after the paper had attempted to maintain, at least on the surface, formal neutrality throughout the campaign period. In that issue, paid Sisi ads—four of them—appeared for the first time, whereas the paper had previously carried no ads for either candidate. In addition, the news in the supplement was clearly biased to Sisi, while coverage of Sabahi was limited to only two news stories in the entire supplement.

⁶⁷ See for example, the front-page headlines of *al-Ahram*, May 21, as well as pages 4 and 5 of the same issue. See also the first interim report covering the campaign period, <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=8621>>.

Al-Gomhouriya also continued to exhibit clear bias toward Sisi, although it became more obvious in the balance of stories devoted to each candidate and the layout of the stories in the run-up to the vote, while the op-ed pages became even more hostile to Sabahi.⁶⁸

At the same time, satellite channels, especially those known for their bias from the outset, continued to follow the same line, but even more intensively, extending even to the newscast.⁶⁹ Satellite channels also hosted virtual debates between the candidates, some of which exhibited clear biases.⁷⁰ Nile News continued to maintain a neutral stance when reporting on the last-minute activities of the two candidates.

3. Observance of the Campaign Moratorium

Compliance with the moratorium on campaigning varied. Some outlets saw it as a restriction that could be evaded. One host of “The President of Egypt” on ONTV said on May 23, only minutes before the moratorium went into effect at midnight, “We’ll try, since we’re in the moratorium period, to work our way around the stories, like we tried to do yesterday. It’s my luck that I came on at 11 pm during the moratorium. There are words stuck in my throat, and I’m sitting here in silence like this [puts hand over his mouth].” On its program “The President and the People,” al-Qahera wal-Nas circumvented the moratorium on May 24 by choosing to air an entire segment about the Egyptian army, including its capabilities, the wars it has fought, and its armaments. During the segment, the host declared, “So that no one can say I’m violating the moratorium, I’ll just say, Long live Egypt, Long live our armed forces.”

Sada al-Balad also failed to comply with the moratorium. Often the host of “Hold Me to Account” and the two hosts of “Egypt Victorious” engaged in several forms of direct and indirect propagandizing for the candidate they had already endorsed.⁷¹ The channel also broadcast program breaks bearing images of Sisi.

Among the channels under review, only Nile News and MBC Egypt wholly observed the moratorium, while ONTV complied with it to some extent, hosting election-related segments on talk shows on the issues the incoming president would face. This often led program guests to discuss the candidates’ platforms and their stances on the issues, but without using their names.⁷² On CBC, the host of “The Capital Here” cut

⁶⁸ See *al-Gomhouriya*, May 21, 22, and 23.

⁶⁹ See the newscast of May 24 and 25 on al-Qahera wal-Nas and Sada al-Balad.

⁷⁰ See, for example, the virtual debate between the two candidates prepared by MBC Egypt, aired on May 22, and another one aired on May 21 on ONTV’s “ONTV Morning.”

⁷¹ The presenter of “Egyptian Victorious” told a caller on May 25 who expressed her support for Sisi, “Say what you want, but we’re in the campaign moratorium so none of us will say anything.” Only minutes earlier, the host had told a caller who said she was supporting Sisi, “You’ll go by yourself? Or you’ll take people with you?” The caller answered, “We’ll take the whole house, all of it will go vote for Sisi.”

⁷² See EST’s “Good Morning, Egypt,” May 25, and ONTV’s “The President of Egypt,” also May 25.

off one phone-in caller on May 25 saying, “We’re in the moratorium period. I apologize to the committee on media performance. We don’t know what people are calling in to say.” But on May 24, the same presenter said on the same program, “Sisi supporters need to know that the whole world is waiting and saying, How much will he win by? Will he eke out a win like Morsi? Will we say that we have a president who won by a hair?”

Among the newspapers, *al-Shorouk* partially⁷³ honored the moratorium, replacing campaign promotionals with affirmations of the role of the army and police in securing the elections and highlighting Brotherhood threats to obstruct the electoral process.⁷⁴ *Al-Watan* flagrantly breached the moratorium, with every page carrying news of the candidates, their campaigns, and their supporters in a special issue on May 25, titled “Make Your Decision.” The issue featured several headlines referencing the stories covered: “Sisi and Sabahi: Strengths and Weaknesses”; “With the Star: a Tilt Toward the Poor, the Return of Security and Balance with the World”; and “With the Eagle: Against Corruption, a Greater Role for Youth, the End of Dependency.”

Al-Masry al-Youm and *al-Ahram* clearly violated the moratorium on May 24, on the pretext that they were covering the final hours of candidates’ campaigns prior to the moratorium.⁷⁵ Their op-ed writers were also freely allowed to disregard the moratorium, although it applies to opinion pieces as well,⁷⁶ for which the paper is still responsible. The same day, *al-Ahram* also carried the most important statements from Sisi’s final television interview on page three (the second front page). The next day, May 25, both papers again violated the moratorium, but only on the opinion pages, most of which lauded one candidate and criticized the other.⁷⁷ In the same issue, it carried a story about the candidates’ final campaign preparations.⁷⁸ *Al-Masry al-Youm* discussed the candidates in various formats. Ironically, on May 27, page 2, *al-Ahram* reported that the committee monitoring the campaign had complained about Sada al-Balad for breaking the campaign moratorium, while the channel insisted it had not.

Al-Gomhouriya clearly violated the moratorium in the issues of May 24 and 25, with news sources making statements in support of one of the candidates.⁷⁹ The paper also

⁷³ During the moratorium, the paper published a want-ad from an Emirati company. The two-page spread included a photo of Sisi with company officials.

⁷⁴ See *al-Shorouk*, May 24, pages 1, 3, and 5, and May 26, page 7. The threats were also published by *al-Masry al-Youm* the same day, but in a less strident tone.

⁷⁵ See the front page of *al-Ahram*, May 24, “My President: The Final Hours.” See also page 3 of the same issue and the front page of *al-Watan*, May 24.

⁷⁶ See the articles on page 4 of *al-Masry al-Youm*, May 24.

⁷⁷ See the articles on pages 10 and 11, *al-Ahram*, May 25, and *al-Masry al-Youm*, May 25, for pro-Sisi articles on pages 16 and 17.

⁷⁸ See the news published on page 4, May 25, titled, “The Sisi Campaign Follows Using 14,000 phone Lines” and “The Sabahi Campaign Completes Preparations to Monitor the Ballot Boxes.”

⁷⁹ Sis was praised by some of his supporters in a story on the front page on May 25. They said, “Sisi is the modern image of the leader of the nation, Gamal Abd al-Nasser”; “He has charisma, especially next to his ability to restore the standing of the office”; “Sisi carries the concerns of the Egyptian people in his conscience

covered stories in the Arab and foreign press about the elections and the candidates, including headlines and quotes that supported one in particular.⁸⁰ Moreover, it gave space to its writers to break the moratorium.⁸¹

The program presenters on Radio 90:90 attempted to maintain campaign silence, but the station continued to air pro-Sisi ads and segments of his speeches on programming breaks, exhibiting the bias it had shown since the beginning of the period under review. It is a credit to the state-owned Radio Egypt that it observed the moratorium on its programming and ad breaks as well on talk shows and newscasts.

Notably, many media outlets replaced discussions of the candidates with a focus on impugning the patriotism of boycotters and stressing the Muslim Brotherhood's desire to impede the elections. Al-Qahera wal-Nas opened its newscast on the first day of the moratorium with the teaser: "That the elections are already decided is a trick used by the Brotherhood and juvenile people to spoil the elections—the Brotherhood, political juveniles, people funded from abroad, and the patriotically derelict." On the newscast the next day, the same channel urged viewers to "Watch out: the Brotherhood will not boycott, but will spoil their ballots...Don't believe appeals from the Brotherhood and political juveniles that the presidential elections are predetermined. This is a childish, Brotherhood ploy."⁸² On May 25, a presenter on "Shot on the Road" on Radio 90:90, used a well-known cinema reference to impersonate boycotters as saying "O' I'm a very bohemian artist. I'm so bohemian. I do whatever I want. I'm 'Issawi,⁸³ Go vote? No need. To make yourself out to be cool, you say, I'm not going out, I'm boycotting or I'm going to spoil my ballot." The presenter then declared, "Don't be cool now. Egypt needs you. Be cool later." Radio Egypt repeated an item in four newscasts on May 24 about police thwarting a terrorist attack in Beni Suef that aimed to obstruct elections; Muslim Brotherhood elements were apprehended during a meeting to plan attacks.

Al-Gomhouriya reported that the Brotherhood was seeking to impede the elections in a story on page 3 on May 25, headlined, "The National Movement Warns: The Brotherhood is Planning to Burn Party Headquarters the Two Days of the Presidential Elections." The paper also carried several articles attacking boycotters over the two days of the moratorium.

and heart"; "All dreams will be realized with the field marshal." See also statements by sources in the story, "Political Forces: The People Confirm their Revolution," page 6, May 25.

⁸⁰ See the story titled, "Global interest in the second round," page 4, May 25.

⁸¹ See the articles on pages 18 and 23, May 25.

⁸² The same rhetoric was used by the channel on most of its talk shows during the moratorium (May 24 and 25), especially "The President and the People," in order to attack the Brotherhood. See the episode of May 25.

⁸³ 'Issawi was a character in a 1984 Egyptian film. The character was a failed artist, whose famous lines the presenter plays on.

Part Three: Media Coverage of the Three Voting Days, Ballot Count, and Up to the Announcement of Results

This section looks at media coverage of the vote itself, which lasted for three days after the PEC extended the vote by an additional day. It highlights the most prominent professional lapses made by media outlets during their coverage.

It should first be noted that there is a legal question about the campaign moratorium: the law does not clarify whether the moratorium, which begins 48 hours prior to the vote, extends to the vote itself or expires when the polls open. This is a question related to the underlying philosophy of the moratorium, which is designed to give voters a chance to consider their electoral choice deliberately, free of the media's biases and the impact of campaign ads. This is even more important over the two days of the vote itself—not only the preceding 48 hours—especially considering how campaign rhetoric on the first day of the vote can influence voting behavior later that day or the next day. The issue is also related to the nature of the media, which can, if it wishes, circumvent the law. The audio and visual media can, for example, flagrantly engage in campaign promotions on their evening programs, after midnight until dawn on the days the polls open, arguing that the moratorium has expired, although the vote had not yet begun. This was precisely what happened on several television channels, when at midnight on the eve of the vote, program presenters announced that the moratorium was over and they were therefore entitled to freely promote their favored candidate, thus wholly undermining the moratorium.

This section also looks at the media coverage of the ballot count, reactions to it, and the preliminary results announced by the media, both for turnout and the percentages won by each candidate.

On the evening of May 27, the president of the PEC announced that voter turnout had reached 37 percent, or nearly 21 million voters.⁸⁴ The Sisi campaign declared that as of the morning of May 28, some 22 million people had voted,⁸⁵ amid expectations that a decision to extend voting to a third day would not significantly increase turnout, bolstered by some media outlets' report from polling stations on the third day. The final turnout rate of 46 percent announced by the PEC raises questions about the success of the third day's vote, which increased turnout by a full 10 percent, or more than five million votes.

⁸⁴ See, for example, the front page of *al-Shorouk*, May 28, which reported on the statement given by the head of the PEC to "Life Today" on al-Hayat, May 27.

⁸⁵ According to *al-Watan*, May 28, in a story titled, "The Sisi Campaign's Operations Room: 22.4 Million Voted."

The following are the most significant observations about media coverage in this period:

1. Media Frenzy Regarding Turnout

Examining media reports of turnout during the three-day vote turns up extremely contradictory numbers, not only between one outlet and another or one day to the next, but also from hour to hour,⁸⁶ or one newspaper edition to another⁸⁷ or even story to story in the same edition. This may appear reasonable given the developing turnout, but exaggerated reports on the first day posed a dilemma for the media after evening presenters revealed that turnout had not been unprecedented, as described that morning. This was also a problem for newspapers that hit the streets prior to the opening of the polls,⁸⁸ some of which made assumptions about turnout that did not pan out, at least on the first day.

Most of these estimates were proven false after the PEC announced the final results. For example, the turnout rate announced by the PEC was lower by one million votes than the number announced with great fanfare by a presenter on Sada al-Balad in the middle of the third day.⁸⁹ The same day, another presenter on the same channel announced a rate that was 2.5 million votes less than that declared by the PEC.⁹⁰

Most of the print media under review chose to report heavy voting on the first day, maintaining the same line as much as possible over the next two days.⁹¹ In contrast, satellite channels, especially private outlets, changed their tune on the evening of the first day of voting, with many presenters exhibiting panic and grief—what one person called “hysteria”⁹²—over the turnout, which at best they called less than expected.⁹³ The channels took calls from both experts and the public who were shocked at the low turnout⁹⁴ or tried to explain it,⁹⁵ while presenters urged voters to make an even bigger

⁸⁶ Naturally, turnout estimates on the morning shows differed from those on the evening programs, which should ostensibly have a better picture of the day as a whole.

⁸⁷ The time the paper is sent to press depends on the information in its pages compared with its ability to follow electoral developments.

⁸⁸ The paper’s editions of May 26, which hit the streets the night before, May 25.

⁸⁹ According to a presenter on Sada al-Balad, May 28, “So far, the turnout looks to have reached 26.135 million, a rate of 48 percent. For the world’s democracies, this is considered good.”

⁹⁰ A host of “Egypt Victorious” said on May 28, the third day of voting, “We’re talking about 35 to 37 percent, approaching 40 percent. The oldest democracies in the world don’t see this rate. So that’s great in itself, thank God.”

⁹¹ See the photo showing Egyptian press headlines on the morning of May 27 at <http://www.cihrs.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/10338338_10152499049643408_5816592427759637128_n.jpg>.

⁹² According to the host of “The Last Word,” May 27, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AG2y9KlaeI>>.

⁹³ *Al-Masry al-Youm* polled the reactions of some media figures on the first day’s low turnout for a story, accompanied by an video segment published on its website, May 27, titled, “Media Figures on the Weak Turnout: “Losers,” “Bring Morsi Back,” “Where are the Mandate People?”

⁹⁴ For example, the host of “Hold Me to Account,” took a call from a citizen complaining that the polls were empty, May 26, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3Pfl8gkzqw>>.

⁹⁵ Al-Jazeera prepared a television report that put together excerpts in which media figures confirmed the poor turnout and their guests urged citizens to vote. The segment was titled, “Astonishment and Shock in the

showing the next day, both intimidating and beseeching viewers to get out the vote. The state-owned media attempted to offer a more optimistic depiction of turnout on the morning of the third day,⁹⁶ leading one guest live on EST to accuse the host and the street correspondent (who affirmed heavy turnout) of misleading people.⁹⁷ A presenter on Radio Egypt accused street correspondents of pessimism and cut transmission after one correspondent told him on the second morning of the vote in Sohag that the vote was negligible and turnout was moderate.⁹⁸

Most newspapers appearing on May 27 disregarded the previous evening's reports of low turnout, carrying headlines that touted heavy voter participation. For example, *al-Ahram* described turnout as "a popular festival" (page 1) and "a day of great turnout" (page 4), reporting that millions of Egyptians had queued up in long lines at polling stations at least an hour before the polls opened (page 3). That issue carried 103 stories about elections using phrases such as "the democratic nuptials," "the governorates champion Egypt and vanquish terrorism," "an amazing epic," and "an awesome democratic scene." *Al-Gomhouriya* pursued the same tack in its front-page headline, declaring, "The people choose the future"; that issue carried 153 items about the elections and followed turnout in most governorates. *Al-Watan* and *al-Masry al-Youm* exhibited a similar degree of exaggeration.⁹⁹

Al-Shorouk was virtually the only paper that recognized the weak turnout¹⁰⁰ in several districts¹⁰¹ in the issue that hit the streets before the polls had closed on the first day (the issue of May 27)¹⁰² and in later issues. The paper also gave space to op-ed writers to question turnout rates and analyze the causes for the poor showing,¹⁰³ and it cited statements by political figures pointing to low turnout on the first day.¹⁰⁴ The paper

Egyptian Media Due to Poor Turnout." It used this to confirm its reports on the boycott over the three days of the vote. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jt_hnbGAg2o>.

⁹⁶ For example, see EST, 12:23, May 27, when the correspondent confirms poor turnout in an attempt to find a justification for it. He also states that turnout picked up later in the day, which the presenter attempts to ignore, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsXrbXRwIuU&feature=youtu.be>>.

⁹⁷ EST, May 28, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7s9fG9oyMBs>>.

⁹⁸ On the same day, a correspondent for Radio Egypt tried to find justifications for the poor turnout in Daqahliya, mentioning the predetermined outcome of the elections, the lack of genuine competition, and the poor performance and visibility of the candidates' campaigns on the ground: "Operations on the ground were not there. We can't rule out that there is some devilish mechanism working quietly to say that the elections are already decided. We hope that in the coming hours, every citizen goes out to cast his ballot."

⁹⁹ See the two papers, May 26 and 27.

¹⁰⁰ On May 28, the final day of the vote, *al-Gomhouriya* carried only one story on page 5, titled, "Imbaba Complains of Poor Turnout."

¹⁰¹ See May 27, page 8, "Head of the Alexandria Station: 20 Percent Turnout, Less than Hoped"; also the main front-page headline on May 28, "Ballot Boxes Looking for Voters," and on the same page, "PEC Addresses Weak Turnout With an Additional Day."

¹⁰² Also on May 27, *al-Shorouk* tried to avoid exaggeration in its main headline, using a formulation that did not specify voter turnout: "Egypt Responds to the Appeal and the Lines Support the Revolution." On pages 4 and 5, it stated, "The Lines Declare the Birth of a New Age in the Capital's Streets."

¹⁰³ See the articles in *al-Shorouk*, May 27, and pages 4 and 16, May 29.

¹⁰⁴ See for example, the statement by the head of the Wafd party, May 28: "The poor turnout is the fault of the corrupt people who took the lead and gathered around a certain candidate [Sisi] in an attempt to wash their hands of corruption."

also covered global reactions to the turnout, carrying headlines on May 29 from several international papers that reported low turnout.

In general, media workers used different tactics to increase turnout and urge citizens to vote, though the rhetoric of counterterrorism and hatred of the Muslim Brotherhood were the most commonly employed.¹⁰⁵ The host of CBC's "The Capital Here" reminded Copts of the burned churches and violence against them in an attempt to persuade them that their participation would exact revenge against the faction that had long persecuted them and torched their churches.¹⁰⁶ The host of "Hold Me to Account," on Sada al-Balad showed a documentary clip with images of the bombing of security directorates, torched churches, burned out officers' vehicles, and grieving mothers crying and screaming for their children, as well as excerpts from threats made by prominent Islamists and the confessions of arrestees. At the end of the clip, the voice of Sisi declared, "The fall of these martyrs will only increase our persistence, determination, and conviction to continue to fight every person who fights us, every person who raises a weapon against the army, the police, and the state." The host then remarked, "We must go vote, so these scenes are not repeated. I'm airing this to remind viewers of the crimes of the terrorist group. Don't you dare forget the crimes of this terrorist group."

The host of "Egypt Elects the President," aired on al-Qahera wal-Nas on May 27, found another reason: "We're not going out to vote for a president. We're going out to vote against the American project imposed on us by the Brotherhood." She continued, "Maybe this enthusiasm comes from the fact that I'm going out to cast my vote against the American project." Another presenter on the channel employed the rhetoric of intimidation, directing his words to boycotters: "It's appalling—a lazy person who doesn't go to vote, who's just sitting in Marina or lounging around watching television. I say to our lazy brethren: your fate could very easily have been to have your head nailed to the door of the house you're now lounging around in. Anyone who doesn't believe me can turn on the television and see the heads of our brothers in Syria, which were hung on the gates of their towns."

The same point was stressed by the host of "Egypt Victorious" on Sada al-Balad on May 26. Encouraging people to vote, he said, "The coming option is worse, much worse than you can imagine internationally if at least 25 million don't go out to vote, so we can break the 30/34 million barrier. We'll have a crisis on our hands in this nation, and everyone will pay the price, he and his family." The host added, "That year you saw? Another year worse than you can imagine."

¹⁰⁵ Most significantly, media channels and sites claimed that the Brotherhood had met on the first day of the vote and decided to turn out in support of Sabahi or boycott. See, for example, "Egypt Victorious," Sada al-Balad, May 26.

¹⁰⁶ The host of CBC's "The Capital Here" said on May 27, at the end of the second day of the vote, "I say to Copts: remember the terrorism you faced and the burned churches." See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7OcgwSSg8M>>.

It must be repeated at this juncture that the role of the media during elections is to report on the vote and encourage citizens to participate, without resorting to incitement or intimidation and without exaggerating or minimizing turnout. This is related to the media's ability to report events neutrally and guarantee the integrity of the electoral process¹⁰⁷; encouragement to vote should proceed from the principle of citizenship, which gives citizens the right to take part in decision making, not in order to retaliate against a particular political faction, send a message to the world, or demonstrate hostility to certain international parties. This absolves the media of responsibility for the results of elections and shifts in voting trends. This also explains why many media workers condemned one another after the PEC decided to extend the vote to a third day. Some saw the decision as a response to media misinformation and exaggerations of turnout.¹⁰⁸ Several media figures attacked the PEC for responding to such panic-mongering, opining that the polls would be empty on the third day¹⁰⁹ and that the decision embarrassed the candidates and undermined the process.

2. Attack and Slander of Boycotters¹¹⁰

Claims of low turnout occasioned a spike in attacks on boycotters, as the media smeared and at times swore at them¹¹¹ as another means to encourage citizens to vote, attempting to use patriotism and national sentiment as a pressure point. In doing so, the media used all formal and substantive means at their disposal; visual media used television ads and programming breaks, program presenters and hosts described boycotters in harsh terms, at times inciting to hatred and exclusion, and newspapers highlighted quotes that attacked boycotters and published vicious broadsides describing them as ignorant traitors.¹¹² For example, on May 26, only hours after the polls opened, an announcer on “The Talk of Downtown,” carried on state-owned

¹⁰⁷ One correspondent for Radio Egypt on May 27 criticized what he considered the media frenzy with turnout and the way correspondents were consulted only to speak about turnout: “The Egyptian media is obsessed with turnout. It’s also our job to observe the numbers and monitor the integrity of the electoral process—are there any violations or facilities afforded? Turnout will be announced by the judge. The most important thing for us is to monitor the electoral process, to see if anyone is breaking the law and impeding the process.”

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, “The President and the People” and “Egypt Elects the President” on al-Qahera wal-Nas, May 27; also EST, May 27.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, an agitated presenter on Sada al-Balad on May 27 who accused the PEC of “wanting to show us to the world tomorrow while the polling stations are empty. Al-Jazeera will be thrilled.” See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVfWsykOscs>>.

¹¹⁰ This attack did not begin with the vote in Egypt, but with the expatriate vote. An article in *al-Gomhouriya* on May 19 said they were “interlopers, planted among us, claiming they’re Egyptians like us. They’re liars, fakers, envious who do not belong to this pure people in any way.” See also a story in the same paper, May 22, page 18, titled, “Egypt Awaits Us, No excuse for the Laggards.”

¹¹¹ For example, a host of ONTV’s “The President” on May 25 called them “bums, worthless layabouts. They have no political weight, no job weight, and no academic, scientific, or human weight.”

¹¹² See, for example, an article titled, “Hamdeen, why don’t you answer the question?” in *al-Masry al-Youm*, May 20. In it, the author writes, “The boycotters are now advocating a repeat of the hold-your-nose era by voting for Hamdeen, using the same style of trafficking in the blood of martyrs and the revolution! You ignorant people who never learn and want to destroy the country: may God take you.” See also, “The Last Chance,” in *al-Ahram*, May 21, in which the author writes, “We can do nothing in the face of the stupidity of the boycotters and nose-holders but let them go on living in their never-ending coma.”

Radio Egypt, said that boycotters “are seen as Egyptians, they take of Egypt’s bounty and receive subsidies. What a waste. They’re treated in Egypt’s hospitals. Some of them betray our trust and spread blood while others are silent, saying nothing.” Starting on 28 May, al-Qahera wal-Nas aired a program break featuring a child, approximately six years old. A question flashed across the screen: “Do you love Egypt?” The girl responds, “Of course.” Another question flashes on the screen—“What do you say to people who don’t go vote?”—to which the girl responds, “I say you’re a terrorist. Go live in another country, not here, because this is Egypt. You don’t know what Egypt means. If you’re going to go out and take part, live in Egypt and take your freedom. If you’re not going to participate, get out of Egypt!”

The same channel’s hostility to boycotters was exhibited in a tagline that appeared several times on the screen over the days of the vote: “A person who abandons his nation’s fate has no dignity. A truly religious person must do his duty toward his nation. If there is no commitment to religion and nation, there is no dignity. Egyptians: protect your dignity in your nation by voting.” The channel also attacked boycotters in its talk shows and newscasts.

No media outlet attempted to poll boycotters about the reasons for their decision, the way they polled other voters. When *al-Shorouk* canvassed some boycotters for a story titled, “Boycotting Youth in Suez: The State Neglected Us and Punished Us with the Protest Law,”¹¹³ it accompanied the story with a photo of an army soldier kissing a child, captioned, “General Osama Kisses a Child in Front of a Polling Station in Suez.”

3. Inaccurate, Misleading Coverage of the Vote

Accuracy was clearly absent in media coverage of the vote, illustrating obvious bias on the part of some media outlets. For example, *al-Masry al-Youm* published photos of voters wearing winter clothing in its issue of May 27, accompanying a story titled, “Southern Upper Egypt: Vote Under Helicopter Guard.” The photo was captioned, “Lines of Voters Since the Morning in Sohag.” Although the photo was clearly an archive shot taken from a previous election, the paper used it to illustrate high turnout in Sohag.¹¹⁴

Sada al-Balad carried live coverage from Suez—according to the screen caption—but the school that appeared on the screen, labeled “live from Suez,” carried a sign identifying it as the Eastern Mahalla al-Kubra Education Directorate. On May 21, “Hold Me to Account,” a program on the same channel, carried a pro-Sisi segment that featured the star logo, Sisi’s electoral emblem. The story claimed to show a pro-Sisi demonstration, but the images broadcast were from demonstrations in September

¹¹³ May 28, page 7.

¹¹⁴ For the photo, see < <http://j.mp/1wPPy1f> >.

2010 held to protest the killing of Khaled Said in Alexandria; taken from Reuters, they were previously published in *The Guardian*.¹¹⁵

On May 28, CBC divided its screen into 23 squares to show live coverage from various areas of the country. At first glance, the small screens appeared to cover all governorates, especially since the channel stressed its geographic reach. Each small square was captioned with the name of the governorate being covered by the live feed, with no mention of neighborhood or polling station. A closer inspection revealed that three of the small screens—not adjacent to one another—were tagged “Alexandria now,” with no indication as to whether these were different areas in the city or images from the same polling station. Six squares scattered across the screen showed neighborhoods in Cairo and Giza—Doqqi, Maadi, Heliopolis, Imbaba, Downtown, and Giza—while the other boxes covered entire governorates.¹¹⁶ Standards governing live coverage generally dictate that basic information should be clearly and accurately written on the screen; the media outlet should identify the specific site of the live feed (the name of the polling station from which it is broadcasting) and avoid generalities, which may suggest that events at one polling station are representative of polling stations across the governorate. Live coverage should also be time-stamped; in this case, television channels often wrote the word “now,” on the screen for footage that had been taped several hours earlier, thus misleading the viewer.

Monitors also observed that EST on its ostensibly live feed repeatedly aired the same scenes at different times of the day, when the scenes and faces should change even if the camera is fixed in one place. The channel carried the same scenes at different times of the day, each time adding the onscreen caption “now.”

Al-Ahram reported inaccurate information in the May 28 issue on page 8. The story carried statements attributed to Father Boula, the bishop of Menoufiya—Boula is the bishop of Gharbiya—who said that all Copts in Menoufiya were keen to vote and express their opinion with full freedom.¹¹⁷

Some private newspapers repeatedly cited anonymous sources for information whose origin was widely known, promoting such stories as exclusives. The PEC issued a statement to all media, reproduced on its website, prior to the end of the second day of the expatriate vote (May 16), reporting that turnout on the second day had exceeded turnout in the previous referendum on the constitution; on May 17, *al-Masry al-Youm* published an anonymously sourced story—touted as an exclusive—titled “Turnout abroad exceeds numbers in referendum.”

Images published on social media and monitors’ observations of media not under review confirm the same trend of inaccuracy. For example, at one point in CBC

¹¹⁵ The image appeared in a story on Sada al-Balad at exactly 8:43 pm, May 21. See the image of the original demonstration at <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/24/khaled-said-death-egypt-protests>>.

¹¹⁶ See the image at <<http://www.cihrs.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/111.jpg>>.

¹¹⁷ *Al-Ahram*, May 28, page 8.

Extra's election coverage, the channel had two screens on view, one labeled "Beheira Now" and the other captioned "Sharqiya Now,"¹¹⁸ but the two screens depicted the same place and the same people. The same thing occurred on Nahar in its coverage of May 26, when it carried identical images on the screen that were labeled "Alexandria Now" and "Menoufiya Now."¹¹⁹

4. Professionalism of Correspondents and Geographic Distribution of Coverage

During elections, the professionalism of on-the-ground correspondents is closely assessed, as these reporters are the source of direct media coverage of the electoral process. The professionalism of the coverage thus often depends on the professionalism of an outlet's correspondents. In this election, not all correspondents can be painted with the same broad brush, for there were clear differences, even between reporters working for the same media outlet. Here, we wish to focus on some correspondents' professional lapses during their coverage:

Reporting violations as ordinary and laudable practices: for example, the correspondent for Radio Egypt in Sohag on May 26 spoke positively of the presence of the pro-Sisi Nour Party at the doors of the polling stations and its role in accompanying voters to the polls, providing transportation, and urging people to vote while standing at the polls.¹²⁰ These are flagrant breaches by supporters of one candidate that should have been questioned.

Another correspondent lauded the celebratory mood in the polling stations, which included songs supporting one of the candidates, while on a private television channel, a businessman known for the support he lent to one candidate boasted that he had designated buses at his factories take workers to the polls. The program presenter praised him for this without asking if the workers were given any instructions.¹²¹

Violations of secrecy of the ballot: voters were asked how they casted their ballot, reported to viewers and listeners. This is a grave professional error by correspondents at polling stations—whether before or after the interviewee has voted—because it influences voters at the same polling station as well as the audience that may not have yet cast their vote. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this practice was less frequent than in previous elections. More seriously, Sada al-Balad on the morning of May 27 aired footage showing a person casting their ballot inside the voting booth itself. In a flagrant violation of the secret ballot, the camera clearly showed that the voter had chosen Sisi.

¹¹⁸ See the image at < <http://j.mp/1wPPE92> >.

¹¹⁹ See the image at < <http://j.mp/1wPPD4X> >.

¹²⁰ The host did not pause at the words or inquire as to whether the workers had been instructed to adopt the party's stance on the candidates.

¹²¹ Caller on Sada al-Balad, May 27.

5. Coverage Affirms Low Turnout Among Youth, High Turnout Among Women

Most media outlets agreed that women turned out in high numbers. Correspondents in all governorates highlighted women's role and their voting lines,¹²² also focusing on their expressions of joy, such as ululations, songs, flag carrying, and at times dancing. Program hosts and guests singled out women to salute them for their participation. A presenter on Sada al-Balad on the morning of May 27 recognized women saying, "By God, Egypt, if it weren't for women, you would have been utterly disgraced."

Al-Ahram heavily focused on the female vote over the three days of the poll, as a source of news, in images, and in headlines. Depicting how women took part regardless of their personal circumstances, the paper highlighted a pregnant woman who gave birth at the polling station,¹²³ a woman at the polls with her nursing infant,¹²⁴ an elderly woman who struggled to vote,¹²⁵ and a disabled woman whose hands had been amputated and who cast her ballot with her feet.¹²⁶ *Al-Gomhouriya* described women's participation in its May 27 issues as "a living embodiment of the Isis myth and her re-animation of Osiris, who is Egyptian society, to spark the revolution and give birth to Horus, who is the new age all of Egypt is awaiting."

In contrast, some correspondents repeatedly mentioned the low youth turnout,¹²⁷ while others simply ignored youth when program presenters asked them about voter makeup, which raises questions about youth participation in the election.

The media's disregard for the youth vote also occasioned some criticism, after the media was attacked for promoting an inaccurate image of turnout. In turn, many media outlets carried headlines and statements from sources affirming youth participation, in contrast to media claims. For example, in the newscast of May 28 on al-Qahera wal-Nas, the chair of the Arab League mission said that turnout levels were good and that the mission had observed young people in lines, in contrast to their alleged absence. On its front page on May 28, *al-Ahram* captioned one photo of voters, "Youth Affirm their Presence Yesterday After False Claims of Low Turnout." Another story on page 4 carried the headline, "Voters Turn Away From the Boycott, Youth Participate in High Numbers."

¹²² See, for example, the coverage of most correspondents on Radio Egypt on the first day of the vote.

¹²³ See *al-Ahram*, May 27, page 3, for a story titled, "She Gives Birth to a Boy While Voting in Alexandria and Names Him Sisi."

¹²⁴ *Al-Ahram*, May 28, page 1, for a photo of a woman carrying her infant child with an Egyptian flag in his hand, captioned, "The Egyptian Flag in the Hand of a Newborn."

¹²⁵ *Al-Ahram*, May 28, page 5.

¹²⁶ *Al-Ahram*, front page, May 28, a story titled, "She Insisted on Voting With Her Foot After She Lost Her Hands." A photo accompanied the story showing a woman voting with her feet.

¹²⁷ For example, a correspondent for Radio Egypt and the director of the Daqahliya bureau of *al-Akhbar al-Youm* said, "Youth turnout in the elections is less than anticipated," in responding to questions about turnout. The Beni Suef correspondent said, "Their turnout is moderate." Asmaa Hassan the correspondent for Gharbiya governorate, said, "I've seen no participation by youth as of this moment. Turnout is seen by the elderly, women, and men."

6. West and Western Groups Accused of Attempting to Spoil Elections, Gulf is the biggest Supporter

The media continued to focus on the foreign press in its election coverage, also continuing its selective review of the content of foreign media.¹²⁸ While al-Jazeera covered only foreign media that questioned the democratic nature of the election and considered the outcome predetermined, the Egyptian media cited these statements to confirm Western bias and condemn the West for what they considered to be an attempt to ruin democracy in Egypt. For example, a presenter on al-Qahera wal-Nas on May 28 said that the West was intentionally “falsifying the picture,” adding, “What Egyptians describe as joy, the West, which seems to be waiting to pounce, describes differently. News from foreign agencies is proclaiming that there is a taint of failure. If this indicates anything, it indicates the true intentions of the West at this moment, which the people should recognize. In turn, heavy turnout is imperative.”¹²⁹

In the period under review, a crisis erupted with the EU election observer mission.¹³⁰ The stance of the Carter Center was cited, providing an entryway for a broad attack on the Western community. Some media saw the crisis as a prelude to a critical report about the elections from the EU. A presenter on EST said, “This organization [the Carter Center] and the EU want to bring Egypt to its knees...they abandoned the observation because Egyptians took the Tahrir squares of June 30 to all countries in the world in front of their embassies.”¹³¹

Al-Ahram, in its final issue before the vote, published a cartoon on page 12 that showed an international election monitor declaring, “I can’t believe all these millions!” A long line of voters are waiting to cast their ballot, among them a woman wearing an Egyptian flag—a stand-in for Egypt—who responds, “You’ve seen for yourself, this is Egypt!” The paper commented at the top of the cartoon, “EU Observers to *al-Ahram*: The Egyptian Authorities Offer Full Support for the Electoral Process.”

In contrast, support for Gulf states was magnified during the elections,¹³² especially after expatriate results revealed high turnout in the Gulf. Several analytical pieces

¹²⁸ The state-owned media, especially *al-Gomhouriya*, focused on foreign press headlines that praised the electoral process or Sisi. See for example, *al-Gomhouriya*, May 28, page 21.

¹²⁹ See also the long story in the *al-Ahram* supplement, May 22, titled, “Western Media Coverage of the Elections.” It describes the Western media as showing contempt for the elections and reporting inaccurate information, referring to “naïve mistakes,” “flagrant errors,” “non-objective coverage,” and “repeating the Brotherhood discourse.” The article accuses Western coverage of being dishonest and trying to ruin the scene.

¹³⁰ Two hours before the vote opened, the EU delegation announced that it would not observe the elections as agreed with the PEC because the Egyptian authorities and the PEC had not provided the necessary capacities for observation. The PEC quickly issued a statement, no. 33, reporting that the problem had been resolved and the delegation was proceeding, which was later confirmed by the delegation.

¹³¹ EST’s “EST Exclusive,” May 16.

¹³² This was also true during the vote abroad, when the Egyptian press focused on the election coverage of several Arab newspapers and carried their statements praising the process. See for example, *al-Gomhouriya*, May 17, page 4.

focused on Sisi's stated appreciation for the role of the Gulf in supporting Egypt and his pledge to protect them for "the whole nine yards."¹³³

Al-Shorouk on May 29 was the only newspaper that addressed Arab press reports of low turnout, contrary to other excerpts covered by the Egyptian media. According to *al-Shorouk*, the Lebanese *al-Safir* reported that the seventh election in Egypt since the January 25 uprising had not met expectations, with very modest turnout, while the Emirati *al-Khalij* said that the PEC decision to extend the vote to a third day had sparked controversy and contradictory speculation on rates of voter turnout.¹³⁴

7. Media Declares Results Four Days Before PEC, Starts Speculating on New President's Government

On the evening of May 28, the final day of the vote, Sada al-Balad aired a profile of Sisi, the announcer stating at the outset, "Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi is the president of Egypt in 2014. The people have spoken. Millions lined up and chose their president freely and democratically. Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi will serve as president of the republic for the next four years under the constitution of 2014." The report continued, "Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi was no ordinary candidate who entered the presidential race. He declared his candidacy at the behest of the masses." This was only one example of the way the private media covered the end of the elections; it did not so much anticipate the outcome as consider it already decided, although the PEC had announced no results at all.

This was not the only example of the media preempting the declaration of the results. On the evening of May 28, CBC presenters celebrated Sisi's victory. Looking joyous and victorious, they stated that they had been singing and dancing during the commercial break. "Enough with this media neutrality," one of them said. "We're sick of it. I can't control myself any longer. Congratulations to the president, congratulations to President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi."¹³⁵ Page 10 of the May 29 issue of *al-Masry al-Youm*, which appeared on the market before the polls had closed, declared in large, red font, "Sources: Sabahi Campaign Meets to Discuss Concession Statement," announcing Sisi's victory even before the ballot count had begun.

The media not only anticipated the outcome, but began treating the winning candidate as president from the moment the polls closed, addressing him as such and speculating about his presidential team and his stance on the current government.¹³⁶

¹³³ See for example, the article titled, "Egypt, the Gulf: the Whole Nine Yards," *al-Ahram*, May 19, page 12, and a story in the *al-Ahram* supplement, May 22, on Gulf countries' support for Egypt, in which it is noted that the first print ad for Sisi appeared in a Kuwaiti paper that expressed its support for the Egypt's democratic march to the future.

¹³⁴ In contrast, the Arab papers spotlighted by *al-Gomhouriya* on May 28 all declared high turnout and an overwhelming victory for Sisi.

¹³⁵ CBC, approximately 1:30, May 28, see <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDHIMt6vSLg>>.

¹³⁶ See for example, "Hold Me to Account," Sada al-Balad, May 31.

The day after the election results were announced, *al-Masry al-Youm* carried a story sourcing a social media page allegedly belonging to an army officer, with photos.¹³⁷ The story revealed the secret of Sisi's tan, seen as soon as the results were announced: he was reportedly conducting unannounced field visits since May 31, four days before the declaration of results, checking out youth greenhouse projects, solar energy installations that would be used to power them, and desalination plants used to supply them, as well as trucks used to transport crops and produce and sell it to consumers, also youth operated.¹³⁸

Some newspapers announced the result even before the vote began. On May 21, *al-Shorouk* carried a front-page headline declaring, "Sisi Begins Discussions to Choose his Aides and Reshuffle the Presidency," while on May 23, it reported, "Sisi Forms his Presidential Team and Retains Mehleb Government until Parliamentary Elections."¹³⁹ *Al-Ahram* published an article on May 21 that stated, "After the votes of expatriate Egyptians were counted and the results declared, we can say in full confidence: hearty congratulations to Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi, Egypt's president for the next four years."

Part Four: Al-Jazeera's Coverage of the Presidential Elections

Initially, al-Jazeera paid no attention to the expatriate vote. Treating it as non-existent, the channel's programs carried no reports from correspondents or embassies or coverage of the events for the entire voting period (May 15–19), a clear lapse in its role as a news channel that claims to cover Egypt and a clear expression of its bias.

Instead, during this period, the channel continued to cover what it termed anti-coup demonstrations¹⁴⁰ and the activities of the Alliance to Support Legitimacy, permitting its hosts and guests to use all manner of negative terms—at times even insults and accusations—to describe the elections, calling them a farce and a presidency of blood. It described the current authority as a gang of mercenaries and armed militias while calling Sisi a murderer, traitor, superficial, and saying he was "hiding behind screens."¹⁴¹

During the expatriate vote, al-Jazeera more frequently aired a segment showing Sisi averring that he did not seek power, commenting that the candidate had broken his promise not to run in the elections.

¹³⁷ The newspaper is still responsible and should cite genuine, official, trustworthy sources for its news, confirmed prior to publication, since it is responsible for the news even if it is attributed to another source without confirming or denying it with an official source.

¹³⁸ See <<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/458974>>.

¹³⁹ This news was anonymously sourced, making the newspaper responsible for promoting a certain victory and undermining the credibility of the electoral process. In general, the use of anonymous sources was one of the most significant violations in the private press, especially in *al-Shorouk*.

¹⁴⁰ One of the guests on the election segment on al-Jazeera's "Egypt Tonight" objected to the use of the word "coup," after which the host responded firmly, "No, we say 'coup' here." See the episode of May 25.

¹⁴¹ See al-Jazeera coverage throughout May 16.

Starting on May 23, al-Jazeera began throwing its support more clearly behind Sabahi, even airing ads and programming breaks that worked to his favor. One ad put the two candidates in a virtual debate, featuring their statements side by side. Sabahi's statements were all positive and seemed to respond to those of his competitor.¹⁴² Other segments used the words of political dissidents to condemn Sisi and the electoral process. The channel also aired excerpts from the candidates' speeches. Although they were quantitatively equal, Sabahi's statements were stronger than those of Sisi. It should be noted, however, that some of the channel's programs also viciously attacked Sabahi (for example, "The Farmer's Voice" on May 24) and aired statements from ordinary people that were extremely negative about both candidates.

On May 25, the channel began promoting the tagline, "Boycott the elections of blood. A murderer will not rule Egypt." It focused on the appeal to boycott from Clerics Against the Coup and broadcasted a fatwa that declared the elections void, banned participation in them, and called voting a betrayal of the nation (in a press conference in Istanbul).

Al-Jazeera gave heavy coverage to boycotters, reporting the names of parties and movements that were boycotting in detail, with the reasons given by each,¹⁴³ including the Alliance to Support Legitimacy, Strong Egypt, April 6, and the Revolutionary Socialists. It also stressed the Carter Center's decision not to monitor the elections and its reasons, noting that the Egyptian climate was not promising and was marked by severe polarization.

Al-Jazeera in no way observed the campaign moratorium. It re-aired a segment on the election on "Egypt Tonight" on May 25. Trying to exhibit a degree of balance, it invited a Sabahi supporter along with a guest who rejected the elections and considered them illegitimate; there was no representative for the other candidate. Although the show seemed formally balanced to some extent, the host exhibited clear bias against Sabahi's representative, interrupting him, mocking his opinions, belittling

¹⁴² The ad stated:

Sisi: Who am I? Don't you want to know who I am? I'm with the poor man, who I heard as he was crying out, years ago.

Hamdeen: I offer myself as a believer in our people, after only God. The army is what supports us. We, the people are the root. No one puts the Egyptian people in second place.

Sisi: We hope through this plan that Egyptians will feel change.

Hamdeen: We'll preserve subsidies for the poor. We won't touch them and may increase them.

Sisi: I can't give you anything.

Hamdeen: I don't want a state that possesses, I want a state that empowers.

Sisi: If only those 25 million families saved a round of bread a day. I'm talking about a country that's slipping away. Anyone who thinks otherwise just wants to destroy Egypt.

Hamdeen: No one will teach the Egyptian people, no one will stop them.

The ad ends with a shot from a pro-Sabahi rally with Sabahi saying, "The Egyptian people have the right to see the candidates before them in a live, public debate."

¹⁴³ The channel also reviewed the names of the parties and movements that supported the elections, but without detail or comment.

the candidate for taking part in “the farce,” and countering arguments for the need to vote with his own.

Al-Jazeera also continued to spotlight the international press, especially the American press. On May 25, it aired a segment on “Egypt Tonight” titled, “The New York Times: the world knows they are fake elections that the military man will win.” The segment covered a *New York Times* report about the election that, according to al-Jazeera, mocked Sisi’s statements and his vision for solutions to the Egyptian crisis. This was followed by a report on a short US film titled, “Egypt under Sisi,” produced by Vice News, which documented the past year’s deaths, arrests, human rights violations, the resurgent police state, and killings and arrests during the dispersal of opposition demonstrations. Commenting on the segment, the program host reported that the *Times* said that Sisi is leading Egypt to an authoritarian economy. Repeatedly showing excerpts from the report throughout that night’s show, the host made comments such as, “Sisi presents himself with his sentimental talk, playing on Egyptians’ emotions” and “Sisi sees the people as the problem. They are responsible for the state’s current crises.”

When the polls opened on May 26, al-Jazeera split its screen in two, with one side devoted to anti-Sisi demonstrations (the place and date unidentified) and the other to polling stations,¹⁴⁴ one of them in Kerdesa and the other labeled simply “Cairo.”¹⁴⁵ The studio launched into an analysis of the process that ended with an attack on both candidates, punctuated by correspondents reporting low voter turnout, most of them women and Copts.

The channel also featured a report comparing the 2012 and 2014 elections. It began with the commenter announcing, “Elections that seem closer to a referendum—this is what Egyptians are seeing in the first elections produced by the military coup after the ouster of the first elected civilian president...No debates, no rallies, nothing to reach out to the masses. This is what Sisi wanted, and he got what he wanted.”

During the three-day vote, al-Jazeera newscasts honed in on violations by the Sisi campaign in tandem with poor turnout, reporting on the habit of the campaign and Sisi supporters—especially the Nour Party—of campaigning at the polling station doors and environs, stressing that neither police nor army forces intervened to prevent them from influencing voters.

The channel chose certain talking points to comment on during its programs and newscasts and raise for public discussion, noting, for example, “Most of the Copts’ votes will go to Sisi”; “Even if Hamdeen Sabahi wins the vote, what will stop another

¹⁴⁴ The camera angle typically depicted the polling station as empty and turnout weak. Nor did the channel label the site of the live feed.

¹⁴⁵ When the channel featured no programs and simply allowed viewers to follow the elections on the live feed, it carried a caption: “Elections and the Boycott: Some Vote in the Presidential Elections and Some Citizens Demonstrate to Bring Down Military Rule.”

coup against him?"; "Dancing spreading among a people known for their innate religiosity"; "Members of the dissolved National Democratic Party are leading the field marshal's campaign"; "The roadmap after low turnout"; "The third day and the polling stations are empty, the ballot boxes lean"; and "The people boycott despite blandishments and intimidation."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ These were the most prominent headlines and topics observed on the channel on May 26, 27, and 28.