

# Presidential election in Egypt: Coalition of youth groups claims 'Sisi idol' fell apart in election

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## Coalition of youth groups claims 'Sisi idol' fell apart in election

On Wednesday, a coalition of seven youth-based opposition groups issued a joint statement during a press conference, denouncing Tuesday night's last-minute extension of Egypt's presidential elections amid lower-than-expected turnout rates, and describing Wednesday's extension as "unjustified."

This coalition includes: The Democratic Front, the Ahmed Maher Front, the liberal April 6 Youth Movement, the Leninist Revolutionary Socialists, the Youth for Justice and Freedom, the Egyptian Current Party, the Student Resistance Movement, and the moderate Islamist Strong Egypt Youth Movement — amounting to a few thousand members.

Their statement, titled, "The idol has been broken before becoming a god," criticized the Presidential Election Commission and interim authorities in their numerous attempts to boost voter turnout in favor of former Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

"They are attempting to create a new pharaoh and to promote him amongst the masses," while also trying to create an "Egyptian Army Party" as the country's new ruling party.

The authorities are using all means available to boost voter turnout so as to surpass the participation figures witnessed during the 2012 presidential elections. They are hoping to give Sisi legitimacy over the president he ousted through the ballot box, the statement said.

Morsi won just over 13 million votes in the second round of the 2012 presidential elections. As of Tuesday it looked as though Sisi may have garnered fewer votes.

The groups accuse the authorities of using both incentives and threats to mobilize the populace into voting, including: Officially granting a public holiday (on Tuesday) in order to facilitate voting, providing free transportation and extending elections by a whole day (on Wednesday), while simultaneously threatening to impose fines of LE 500 on every eligible voter who does not take part, as well as denouncing the boycott movement via the mainstream media.

The statement mentions a list of violations they allege took place during the elections, including: The arrest of Hamdeen Sabbahi's electoral delegates, campaigning for Sisi at polling stations, claims of ballot-fixing and vote fraud, among other charges.

Free and fair elections cannot be held under a state of intimidation and security crackdowns, as have been witnessed throughout Egypt since the interim authorities wrested control of the state's apparatuses on July 3, the statement asserts.

The coalition says an estimated 41,000 opposition figures have been arrested since July 3, while security forces have killed an estimated 3,000 others, although human rights organizations

(including Amnesty International) claim that some 1,400 lost their lives.

On Wednesday, Human Rights Watch issued a statement, “Elections Amidst Political Repression,” in which they denounced the interim authority’s arrests of at least 16,000 opponents — including both Islamist and secular opposition figures — and the trial of 16 journalists.

The statement claims that since the June 30 Uprising against President Mohamed Morsi, the interim authorities and allied businessmen have used the mainstream media to misguide the masses into accepting Sisi as Egypt’s “savior.” They also describe the former defense minister as being the candidate of the “counter-revolution.”

The Strong Egypt Party, along with the April 6 Youth Movement and the Revolutionary Socialists, supported and campaigned for Morsi during the second round of presidential elections in June 2012 — against his contender Ahmed Shafiq (Hosni Mubarak’s last prime minister). Less than a year later, these forces moved to oppose Morsi’s rule and the “Brotherhoodization” of the state.

Most of these groups allied in the June 30 Uprising against Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood. They welcomed Morsi’s ouster at the hands of Sisi’s Armed Forces, and sections of them even referred to it as a “popular revolution.”

The April 6 Youth Movement witnessed divisions within its ranks since the 2011 Uprising against Mubarak, which it helped to lead — splitting into the Democratic Front and the Ahmed Maher Front.

On April 28, a court verdict outlawed the April 6 Youth Movement and ordered its assets frozen. Two of its leading members — Ahmed Maher and Mohamed Adel — had previously been sentenced (in December) to three years in prison for protesting without authorization and violating the provisions of the new Protest Law, issued in November.

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\* <http://www.madamasr.com/content/coalition-youth-groups-claims-‘sisi-idol’-fell-apart-election>