

12 Years Since the July 3 Declaration... Where Are al-Sisi's Partners Today?



At precisely 6 p.m. on this very day 12 years ago, then-Minister of Defense Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, flanked by a carefully selected cross-section of Egyptian society, announced the ouster of the democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi. He suspended the constitution and called for early presidential elections, with the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court appointed to oversee the transitional phase until a new president was elected.

In a masterstroke of intelligence-style media management, al-Sisi ensured that his visual backdrop comprised a 'coalition of representatives of Egyptian society,' lending legitimacy and breadth to his announcement. This carefully choreographed scene aligned with his narrative that the decision followed "consultation with national, political and youth figures without exclusion," and operated on the principle of "from every tribe, a man."

Standing alongside him were ten key figures representing religious, political, judicial, civic, and military institutions:

Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, Grand Imam of al-Azhar

Pope Tawadros II, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church

Mohamed ElBaradei, prominent political figure

Jalal Morra, representative of Salafi Nour Party

Hamid Abdullah, head of the Supreme Judicial Council

Mamdouh Badr and Mohamed Abdel Aziz, from the “Tamarod” movement

Lt. Gen. Sedki Sobhi, then Chief of Staff

Adm. Osama El-Gendy, Head of the Navy

Air Chief Marshal Younes El-Masry, Commander of the Air Force

These ten individuals—each with their own constituencies and aspirations—participated in this moment with hopes of rewards and influence. Yet, as years passed and al-Sisi consolidated power, each followed a distinct fate: some were sidelined, others relegated, and a few either tamed or tokenized.

The Imam Who Exhausted the President

Al-Sisi placed Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb front and center, granting the declaration religious legitimacy. Although Tayeb had opposed the 2011 revolution, deeming it “chaos and un-Islamic,” he supported removing Morsi, endorsing early elections.

However, after the 2013 Rabaa dispersal, which claimed thousands of lives, Tayeb released an audio statement saying he had not been consulted beforehand and retreated to Upper Egypt in seclusion “to prevent civil war and make all parties aware of their responsibility in stopping the bloodshed.”

This post-fact rebuke enraged al-Sisi. The relationship grew increasingly confrontational as al-Sisi’s calls for a “religious revolution” and purification of religious discourse—alongside parliamentary proposals to limit the Grand Imam’s tenure or make him removable—challenged al-Azhar’s autonomy.

Though none of these proposals passed, pro-regime media persistently criticized al-Azhar, labeling it reactionary and resistant to reform.

Since 2013, the effort to weaken al-Tayeb continued. He reflects that he “always wore him out,” a statement confirmed by al-Sisi himself when he said, “You’ve worn me out, Your Eminence, imam.”

Privileges That Failed to Match Aspirations

Pope Tawadros II’s presence was expected amid Coptic fears of Islamist rule and hostile media narratives. His participation aimed to reassure the Christian community and promise a new era of inclusion after years of marginalization.

Under al-Sisi’s rule, Coptic Christians have seen modest improvements: al-Sisi regularly visits the Coptic Cathedral at Christmas, a church-building law was

passed in 2016, thousands of unlicensed churches were legalized, and Christians were appointed to key positions—including the historic appointment of Damietta's first Coptic governor (Mona Gerges in 2018).

However, real representation remains limited. Tensions persist, particularly in Upper Egypt, and bureaucratic obstacles still hinder church constructions in rural areas. Some Christians criticize the church for politicizing its role instead of focusing solely on spiritual matters—fueling internal dissent against Pope Tawadros.

The Nour Party... Gradual Exclusion

Salafi Nour Party, represented by General Secretary Jalal Morra, believed it might replace the Muslim Brotherhood in Islamist politics following Morsi's removal. Morra described the July 3 actions as “necessary to save our children,” justified by patriotism.

However, the party's influence sharply declined:

In 2012, the Islamic Bloc (including Nour) won 123 parliamentary seats.

By 2015, Nour held just 11 seats—in seventh place.

In 2020, it won only 7 seats, ranking tenth.

The state systematically marginalized Nour, curtailing its Islamist activities and reducing it to a symbolic presence without real power or grassroots support.

ElBaradei & Fouad... The Civil Bloc Co-opted by the Military

Representatives of the civil bloc—Mohamed ElBaradei and journalist-consultant Sakeena Fouad—joined in hopes of fostering inclusivity. Yet within six weeks, after the Rabaa crackdown, ElBaradei resigned. He criticized the deviation from peaceful consensus and later labeled al-Sisi's move a coup, rather than a constitutional correction.

Fouad, having previously resigned in protest against Morsi's November 2012 decree, briefly served as adviser to interim President Adly Mansour before vanishing from public view.

Twelve years later, civil bloc figures remain confined within a militarized political landscape—allowed only narrow, controlled space for expression—asserting that nothing moves without regime approval.

Military Generals... None Remain

Every senior military official photographed on July 3 has since disappeared:

Sedki Sobhi, promoted in 2012, became defense minister in 2014 but was ousted—and formally “promoted” to a ceremonial advisory role—in June 2018.

Osama El-Gendy was dismissed in April 2015 and reassigned to the Suez Canal Authority.

Younes El-Masry, removed in 2018, later served briefly as Aviation Minister and then disappeared from public life after 2019.

Personal Rewards for the Revolutionaries

The Tamarod leaders seated behind al-Sisi, Mahmoud Badr and Mohamed Abdel Aziz, were among the revolution's greatest beneficiaries. Badr became a member of parliament and owns a state-linked food factory; Abdel Aziz joined the National Human Rights Council and later became an MP.

A third Prophet, Hassan Shaheen, less fortunate, took part in Hamdeen Sabbahi's run but disappeared after losing. To this day, Badr and Abdel Aziz remain vocal regime defenders, despite declining popularity.

Though less visible, the left-wing bloc—led by Hamdeen Sabbahi, Khaled Youssef, and others—enthusiastically supported July 30 protests, expecting to claim the presidency. Instead, al-Sisi's rise crushed their hopes. Leftist parties were marginalized, some faced arrests and legal harassment (e.g., lawyer Khaled Ali), and internal fragmentation has plagued the movement, leading to its decline and isolation.

Over 12 years since the July 3 gathering, only al-Sisi remains in power. Having shed his partners, either by sidelining or co-opting them, he dismantled the tableau that once legitimized his rise—along with the many promises that accompanied it, including his initial denial of any presidential ambitions.