

No prayers in Egyptian Parliament but daily prayers in Westminster Parliament

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Mamdouh Ismail surprised fellow MPs when he stood up from his bench, calling out "God is great ... Hasten to prayer," a call usually made from the minarets of mosques.

He was met with angry remarks from the Speaker of the People's Assembly, Saad al-Katany: "There is a mosque outside for you to go and recite the Azan in and pray in if you want. This room is for discussion only. You are not more religious than us nor are you more vigilant over prayer than us," Katany added.

Ismail, a Salafi Islamist, protested at the rebuke and eventually his microphone was switched off and he didn't speak again throughout the session.

"We are not in the Vatican, this is a Muslim country, we need to pray on time," Ismail said after the session. Ismail said that politicians had been missing out on many prayers during the parliamentary sessions and this should be resolved.

Nearly a quarter of the new parliamentary representatives come from the ultra conservative Salafi movement that follows a strict interpretation of Islam. The alliance led by the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party took about 47 percent of the seats.

Contrast this with Britain where prayers in parliament are mandatory and cannot be challenged. John Bercow, the Speaker of the House of Commons, insisted that laws dating back to 1689 mean any attempt to end the prayers in the Commons would fail. Sessions in both Houses begin with prayers. These follow the Christian faith only, but attendance is voluntary.

[Read more about it here in a blog by the Labour MP Joe McCarthy.](#)

But how long can the Egyptian parliament's secular credentials last? Not long if [this article](#) is anything to go by.

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