# Egyptian Lawmaker Out By A Nose

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A lawmaker from Egypt's most conservative Islamist party resigned from parliament after he was caught lying to cover up a nose job, claiming the injuries to his heavily bandaged face were from a carjacking and beating. Parliament member Anwar al-Balkimy represented the Al-Nour party, whose members are known as Salafis and follow a strict interpretation of Islam that forbids cosmetic surgery. It is seen as meddling in God's work.
The party said Monday that he had resigned and Al-Nour was forced to issue an embarrassing and apologetic statement. "In light of the regretful incident involving Al-Nour party lawmaker Anwar al-Balkimy, the head of the party, Emad Abdel-Ghafour, went to the hospital with a team of party members to question the lawmaker," it said. The party added that it found his claims of an attack were not true.

Al-Nour spokesman Nader Bakar was quoted on the group's official Facebook page as saying al-Balkimy was expelled from the party. "Based on what the hospital officials said, we decided to expel him from the party, and so he submitted his resignation," Bakar said, adding that al-Balkimy apologized. "We are trying to bring forth a new set of social values in politics based on Islamic principles," he added. "He may be suffering from an emotional disorder."

Local media have been awash over the past few days with pictures of al-Balkimy's face swathed in such heavy bandages that only his eyes, mouth and black-bearded chin could be seen. According to Egyptian media reports, al-Balkimy checked into a Cairo hospital on February 28 for plastic surgery on his nose and the next day checked into a second hospital, where doctors said he tried to claim he had been beaten and mugged. He also reported to police that he was attacked during an attempt to steal his car while he was driving on the outskirts of Cairo. He also claimed his attackers robbed him of more than $16,000.

His false claims led to an outcry against the government for failing to address a crime wave that has been plaguing Egypt since last year's uprising ousted authoritarian leader Hosni Mubarak. Just days before the false report, an Islamist presidential hopeful was beaten in a carjacking, and another Islamist lawmaker was injured in a hit-and-run. While al-Balkimy was in the second hospital, a stream of visitors came to see him, among them the head of parliament who hails from the rival Islamist party of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The episode was a major embarrassment for Al-Nour, fresh off its strong showing in parliamentary elections, which turned out to be the biggest surprise of the first free and fair democratic vote in Egypt in decades. Al-Nour champions one of the most conservative interpretations of Islam, partly inspired by Saudi Arabia's Wahhabism, and wants Islamic law strictly applied in Egypt. It captured a quarter of seats in both

houses of parliament, making it the second largest party. The Brotherhood's party won nearly half the seats in parliament. Together the rival religious parties control about three-quarters of parliament.

The statement apologizing for the lie was posted Al-Nour's official Facebook page, where there were thousands of shares and "likes" on the post. Hundreds responded with comments such as "you all look really bad" and "how embarrassing." One person wrote: "Liars," using the common refrain employed by liberal activists against the country's military rulers.

The state prosecutor is waiting for al-Balkimy's diplomatic immunity to be lifted before interrogating him. If the lawmaker, from the northern province of Menoufia, is found guilty of filing a false police report, he could face prison on charges of "creating anxiety among the public" and "worrying public officials."

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