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FROM THE **ARAB WORLD**

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ABOUT THE MENA REPORT

The MENA Report, published monthly by The Cordoba Foundation, provides unique insights and analysis of events and developments in the Middle East and North Africa. Seeking to provide impartial, accurate and authoritative content and analysis, we do this through The Cordoba Foundation's unique access to rare and highly important primary sources in the Middle East and beyond.



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WELCOME



The concept of justice is one of the most used in international relations, though selectively. The inherent materialistic nature of the modern national state imposes the dynamics of the search for the welfare of the citizens irrespective of what goes on behind the national borders. The current era of aggressive consumerism, global economy, transatlantic companies, and the rapid depletion of earth's natural resources dictates that moralistic and ethical policies take second position to rapid economic growth. Ideology, ethical values and trans-border ideas and religions lost their effectiveness and shared principles once on the other side of the border. Religion has become a nationalised entity even in the most faith-driven societies such as the Middle East and North Africa.

The application of double standards in judging political, social and economic strategies, policies and events is not an issue synonymous to the West as many want us to believe. Take for example the conditions of migrant workers in the Gulf States. For decades we have been told by the

Arab media that Palestinians in the Occupied Territories have been treated as third class citizens and were denied their human rights and proper work regulations and pay. However, the same media backed by an army of Arab intellectuals never mention or remotely touch upon the dire, inhumane and morally abhorrent conditions of migrant workers (incidentally the vast majority are Muslims, making it even worse for the religious establishment) and the Bidoun (those without nationality).

Similarly, the well-established democracies are implicated in the slur of double standards but on a different level. Countries such as the United States, Britain and the rest of the European Union abide by international laws and ethical policies of free speech, the respect of human rights and freedom of association on the local level but they are less scrupulous with regards to the international arena. Respective Western national interests have kept hundreds of millions of people in the MENA region in a pressure cooker of dictatorship, tyranny and economic backwardness for

decades in the hunt for stability and the uninterrupted flow of oil and cheap raw materials. This enforced policy of keeping the will of people shackled is both illegal according to an unbiased interpretation of the international law and immoral if measured by any religious ethical yard stick.

Injustice will never produce stability, it will breed antagonism, mass migration, and at worst, terrorism and instability. Our best bet as humans is to abide by unified non-partisan international standards locally and internationally, if we ever want to be respected for our values rather than force or materialism.

Dr Fareed Sabri

HEAD OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA PROGRAMME
THE CORDOBA FOUNDATION

CAN FREEDOM BE REALISED WITHOUT **JUSTICE**?

The ancient struggle of humanity has always been towards the pursuit of happiness and good living. This is why happiness for some of us can only be achieved if we or “they” acquire as much of the finitely available resources as possible. The human’s endeavor to compete for the biggest share of the pie without legal and moral constraints is the main foundation of tyranny and injustice. How then could justice be achieved? And what comes first, justice or freedom? We can argue that freedom from tyranny is paramount to achieving justice but once in power, as often the case, those who oppose tyranny turn against each other or against their fellow citizens. ‘Justice’ is a legal term that concerns what is legally right or wrong while ‘ethics’ concerns what is morally right or wrong, though justice is quintessentially ethical.

Justice and morality are inseparable. We shall use both terms to refer to the immoral or unjust conditions in regards to international politics because there is no international standard to qualifying and quantifying justice. The United

Nations and the various international organisations are either inherently undemocratic or they intensely represent a narrow vision of national interests. When the choice of the majority of people in a given country is brushed aside and concerted efforts are spent in the name of foreign national interests to create mayhem and instigate a military coup; morality becomes the main domain for characterising such acts.

What are the main causes of injustice or morally unsound politics?

Is it just a misperception, essentialism and the inability to fathom the inherent differences between different nations, or is it pure racism as we have witnessed in the previous centuries? Are we witnessing today a continuation of the aforementioned strategy but in different forms and justifications? To accuse certain politicians of being essentialists or even the more serious charge of being

racist is very difficult to prove or pinpoint. It is difficult because simply we are dealing with usually undeclared intentions often justified with plausible reasons. The inner self of people is an enigma in itself and usually undeclared principles are shared among organisations, states and institutions.

Let us start with the lesser charge of misconception in international politics. In a book entitled *Perception and Misconception in International Politics*, the author pinpointed five factors which degrade the ability of specialists in International Relations from reaching the right perception on a given case. These are first; more attention is paid to emotional rather than cognitive factors, wishful thinking, defense mechanisms and other motivated distortions of reality in drawing inference from highly ambiguous evidence.¹ It is sad to see politicians and specialists in political Islam and international politics unable to follow the progress and development in the political theory and attitude of the proponents of political Islam for at-least the

past 20 years.

As we explained in the previous issues of *The MENA Report* most misconceptions about the mainstream Islamic movements is generated out of inference with either a fringe organisation or highly emotional individuals. It is understandable that politicians in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and the UAE would use misconception as a cover to the real reasons, since their quarrel with the other is either ideologically-based or to protect the ruling families such as in the case of the Gulf States. But what is unacceptable is the failure of many academics, specialists in international relations and Western politicians to notice the big changes and the diversity of political Islam. The Cordoba Foundation once proposed to a head of department in one of the most reputable universities in the UK to take on research titles to investigate the noticeable development in the politics of Islamic movements in the past few decades. This development in the political theory of political Islam is mainly a result of exposure to Western politics and political



Recent events in Egypt are proof of Islamist politicians being more receptive of the dynamics and principles of democracy.

theory by exiled Islamists and the first-hand experience of the catastrophic consequences of dictatorship and totalitarianism in the Middle East and North Africa.

The recent events in Egypt are proof of Islamist politicians being more receptive of the dynamics and principles of democracy. They were also more malleable and less rigid than the liberal and secular opposition. Here again the terms are misleading and will certainly lead to misconceptions. The terms, secular and liberal, in the Middle East and North Africa do not necessarily mean the belief in the secular and liberal ideals as known in Western tradition. These are terms meant to distinguish them from the proponents of political Islam. In addition to the small number of people for whom secular principles and democracy have a resonance in their political lives, the term also includes xenophobic nationalists, special interest groups linked to the ruling regimes, high-ranking army officers hand-picked by the regimes, the security apparatus whose fate is linked to the regimes, and a plethora of sectarian and ethnic groups.

Since the establishment of the national state in the Middle East and North Africa, the abovementioned groups dictated the political dynamics in the region, aided by outright international acquiescence even to the most murderous, archaic and corrupt governments. Why would some Western academics, politicians and governments continue their misconceptions that these corrupt governments are better for the national interests of their people? Anecdotal evidence shows that 90% of the terror acts against the people in the Middle East and the West are either sanctioned or were a product and reaction to bad governance and human rights abuses by the so-called secular regimes such as those in Libya, Iraq, Syria, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt. Let us not forget that the majority of the people who committed the terrorist act on September 11 were Saudis. They are the product of the local politics of corruption, inequality, and lack of political and social freedoms. These terrorist acts are only framed in Islamic paradigm because it is the only language understood by the local people.



Tyranny could also be extended to governments with enough resources to buy the acquiescence of their citizens.

The Saudi society for example has never been open to international principles of freedom, human rights and justice. Eventually, the young, educated and highly moralised only see justice and ethical values in the present through the prism of traditional Islamic principles. The United States and the West in general are seen as the main reason for their sad and corrupted reality because with their help corrupt regimes continue to impose their will on the ordinary people.

In the last issue of *The MENA Report*, we highlighted the importance of going back to the spirit of the law rather than the tradition and the vast array of opinions based on different space and time. Unless the West and the proponents of moderate political Islam have the courage to step forward towards understanding each other's perceptions, principles, and interests, we will all continue to suffer. However, we believe the suffering will be mostly felt by people of the MENA region if the corrupt and archaic regimes continue to relish in the protection of the

international community.

This dilemma will return us to the definition of justice and whether it is right to castigate democratic regimes as unjust or immoral if they ignore the suffering and plight of the people under tyrannies such as the ones in the Middle East. Let us not forget that tyranny could also be extended to governments with enough resources to buy the acquiescence of their citizens; but at the same time their corruption, human rights abuses and inequality breeds racism, extremism and eventually terrorism. Such affluent countries usually escape the categorisation of theocracy, dictatorship and totalitarianism only because they have enough money to bribe their citizens and part of international public opinion.

Take Egypt as a case in point, yet again we are bombarded by wrong perceptions and incorrect analyses, unfortunately not just by the Arab media but by reputable Western institutions who base their opinions entirely on an Egyptian

media that has been known in the Arab world for decades for exaggerations, blatant lies, and lack of professionalism. The tradition of exaggeration and dogma in the Egyptian media has been the laughing-stock of the Arab world, especially after the 1967 war with Israel when the media was trumpeting the unfounded success of the Egyptian army when in reality the army, navy, and the Egyptian air force were routed in the first few hours of the war. In such tradition of unprofessional conduct it would be amazing to rest our judgment on the analysis and data provided by the media, academic institutions, and people still loyal to the Mubarak regime.

The Washington Institute, for example, managing director Michael Singh posted an article titled, “Getting Egypt Right This Time” in which he repeated the accusations by the Egyptian media at face value without proper analysis or further investigation.² Not one piece of evidence was sighted to prove the charge of amassing power and authority by the deposed president. The simplistic and

unprofessional dependence on notoriously unreliable sources is quite unacceptable and dangerous in academic terms since it legitimises and sets standards for future analysis of events. The following extract from the article is a case in point:

“Morsy sought to institutionalise Islamist ideology and amass as much power as possible for his own movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, to the exclusion of others”.

Yet Singh did not give one example to back-up this claim. Politics in Egypt over the past year or so has been immensely complicated and is not a simple dichotomy between yes and no, or with or against. The nascent democracy faced a plethora of obstacles and challenges as indicated earlier. The army and the judiciary were at the helm of the proponents of dictatorship and the return to military rule. The writer spills the true intentions of the American Administration when he admits that his government disagrees with the scenario of



events but it fully backs the end result.

“Washington would have preferred that Morsy be removed -- or his power diluted -- through a political power-sharing deal, which would have avoided the first problem by keeping the Brotherhood in politics and off the streets, and which would have potentially helped address the second. The challenge for U.S. policymakers now is to achieve the result that Barack Obama’s administration seemed to prefer before June 30 -- a coalition government focused on alleviating Egypt’s crisis -- against the backdrop of a military intervention and escalating violence”.

This blatant disregard for the will and wishes of the Egyptian voters is quite astonishing. Singh continues with his advice to the US government to disregard the democratic route in order to avoid the return of the Islamists to power.

“In practical terms, this requires a quick transition from

military rule to a civilian government, though not necessarily an elected one at first. To avoid a repeat of the mistakes and turbulence of Morsy’s tenure, the United States should emphasise pluralism and respect for human rights; the building of democratic institutions, especially a constitution conforming to broad principles to which most Egyptians can agree, and the development of political parties; and the development of a plan for resolving the economic crisis -- rather than calling for immediate elections. Elections are necessary but, as Morsy so clearly demonstrated, not sufficient to make a democracy”.

What Singh really means in practical terms is to write a constitution outside the will of the majority of the Egyptian people to ensure limiting the powers and representation of the Islamic trend and to ensure maximum power to fringe movements such as the Nasserites, Copts, remnants of the previous regime and a myriad of fragmentary unions and Westernised elites. The deposed president pleaded with the

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The [Egyptian] opposition's stand was that the Islamists will win the majority vote in any forthcoming election, [therefore best] to have military rule and a few years breather...

opposition to show their real strength in a few months when the parliamentary elections start. Amazingly the opposition's stand was that the Islamists will win the majority vote in any forthcoming election, hence the best solution is to have military rule and a few years breather until they can muster enough popular support.

1. http://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=qqAluHgi2hoC&oi=fnd&pg=PA3&dq=justice+in+international+politics&ots=7SDkLkMm6j&sig=ZYixgXMWDAaczQZcYq4jmTyQGKs&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=justice%20in%20international%20politics&f=false.

2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/getting-egypt-right-this-time>.

THE DEATH OF A MIDDLE EASTERN **DEMOCRACY**

On 3rd July, 2013, the nascent Egyptian democracy was abolished after a long and concerted campaign by myriad groups; secularly-orientated movements, the old regime's security and judicial institutions, the army, state and private media syndicates and the Gulf States, in particular Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Barely a few hours had passed since the overthrow of president Morsi the Saudi King sent a letter of congratulations to the leader of the military coup, General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi. Similarly, other Gulf States like the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait pledged in total 12 billion dollars to the new government to help stabilise the Egyptian economy and instil popular confidence in the new political arrangements.

The Western response was more reserved and wise; Britain and the United States in particular expressed reservations and called upon the Egyptian military to restore democracy as soon as possible. In the meantime both governments expressed their willingness to work with the new transitional government. In effect, the United States and Britain legitimised the coup without being candid about it. Both

countries are aware that the Egyptian military is not known for its protection of civil liberties and political freedoms. Hence they anticipated that the army and the Ministry of Interior would clamp-down on the opposition, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood and their allies.

The new constitution which was voted for by more than 62% of the voters was the first victim of the military coup. It was suspended among a number of decrees which circumvented political life, free speech and the freedom of association. More than seven television stations were closed with their entire staffs arrested including the staff of Al-Jazeera. Furthermore, hundreds of political activists with Islamic inclinations were rounded-up. The army wouldn't have had the courage to curtail the nascent democracy without being assured by major players in the arena of international politics.

Egypt is fast descending into a similar atmosphere of fear and political animation of the 1960s when the late Egyptian president Abdul Nasser stifled all facets of political

life. It is a very dangerous situation, especially when all indications point to the complicity of countries that are supposedly the flag-bearers of democracy, human rights and freedom of speech. We find ourselves in a situation where morality-based politics is being undermined by interest-based politics. The former brand of politics is easier to understand, is more just and has a global appeal since it is part of inherent human nature, be it religiously-orientated or otherwise. The Islamists have always been critical of the double standards of the West when it comes to the pursuit of freedoms, justice and liberties in the Middle East in particular.

The West's politics of self-interest is highly subjective, self-centred, and very difficult to quantify. Unmitigated support towards unconstitutional monarchies, dictatorships, Sheikdoms, and military rules in the Middle East caused and continue to cause human suffering, economic and technological backwardness -- and above all the retreat of important values such as liberties, freedoms and justice. From our anecdotal evidence, in the latest clamp down on

civil liberties in the UAE, the majority of the population were supportive of the security services' unlawful measures, or at-least, indifference. Understandably, in countries of great oil-based wealth such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, the population has no urgent interest in equality, freedom of speech and democracy, as long as the state assures them easy living standards.

Naturally, the situation will change with the rapid increase in the population and the probable reduction in oil prices. By that time if democratic culture, institutions and experience is not well established, extreme theocracies will be the only alternative.

Although the official American position towards the military coup in Egypt was reserved, the signals of acquiescence and backing for the military were very obvious. The Egyptian army took this endorsement to a dangerous level when they shot dead scores of protestors and injured nearly a 1000 on the morning of the 8th of July. Two days earlier the American Secretary of State, John Kerry issued a press statement



loaded with messages iterated earlier by the leader of the coup. Al-Sisi and his fellow officers warned the opposition not to provoke divisions and oppose the transitional government. He also asked the Egyptian people to unite behind the newly installed president.

An extract of Secretary of State John P. Kerry issued on the 6th of July:

“The United States is deeply troubled by the violence across Egypt. We strongly condemn any and all incitement to violence or attempts to divide and provoke, rather than unite, all Egyptians. The United States strongly condemns the violence by all parties and urges calm. At the same time, we firmly reject the unfounded and false claims by some in Egypt that the United States supports the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood or any specific Egyptian political party or movement. The United States has always been and remains committed to the democratic process, not to any party or personality. We want Egyptians to make

their democracy work for the good of all Egyptians. At this sensitive moment, we call on all Egyptian leaders to condemn the use of force and prevent further violence among their supporters and we urge all those demonstrating to do so peacefully.

The United States wants to see Egypt’s ongoing transition succeed for the benefit of the Egyptian people. The Egyptians themselves must come together and make the tough decisions necessary for that to happen. As I said in March when I was in Cairo, the United States supports the people of Egypt in their continued transition to a stable, sovereign Egyptian democracy”.

Careful analysis of Kerry’s statement leads to the following conclusions. First, the American government considers the demonstrations by the followers of the deposed president as an attempt to divide the Egyptian people and the best way forward is to acquiesce to the roadmap laid out by the coup leaders. Secondly, the United States backs the outcome



What is clear from the death toll and witness evidence is that the [Egyptian] army responded with lethal force that far exceeded any apparent threat to the lives of military personnel. - Human Rights Watch

of the coup and supports the decisions of the military leadership.

As a direct result, and barely two days after this statement, the Egyptian army committed one of the bloodiest massacres in its modern history against protestors outside the barracks of the Republican Guards responsible for the incarceration of the deposed president. The international response to the massacre was muted, but strangely enough all the secular forces in Egypt portioned the blame on the victims and exonerated the army. Nearly all state and private media ignored the damning evidence against the army and imposed self-censorship for fear of retaliation by the army and security forces were clearly set on revenge against those who deposed Mubarak in 2011. We wonder how the American Department of State will deal with the latest damning report by Human Rights Watch implicating the army in the aforementioned massacre.¹ The following extract from the report sheds light on the gravity of the situation and the criminal intent of the officers responsible of the situation:

“What is clear from the death toll and witness evidence is that the [Egyptian] army responded with lethal force that far exceeded any apparent threat to the lives of military personnel.”²

Furthermore, the report clearly supports or claims that the corrupt Egyptian judiciary is in cahoots with the army.

“Prosecutors arrived at the scene at-least four hours after the shooting started, and witnesses said that, as far as they were aware, prosecutors had not questioned any witnesses and family members in relation to the 51 deaths. Two Muslim Brotherhood lawyers told Human Rights Watch that they began calling prosecutors at 10 a.m. to come to the scene, but that they appeared at 1:30 p.m. Prosecutors arrived at the Health Insurance Hospital at 1:30 p.m. and told Human Rights Watch staff at that time that they were just starting the investigation, and would visit only formal hospitals and not the informal field hospital at the sit-in. Prosecutors are investigating only Muslim Brotherhood members,



The army's only hope for total control over the political space in Egypt is by maintaining the big divisions between the plethora of political trends, but at the same time they have to tempt fringe secular parties with a piece of the cake.

for their alleged role in throwing rocks at the military and for the deaths of the two policemen and one military officer. Lawyers for the victims told Human Rights Watch that prosecutors have not summoned any police officers or attempted to summon any military officers to investigate their role in the killings".³

As we stated in previous issues of *The MENA Report*, the Egyptian revolution against the Mubarak regime was half-baked. All the old and corrupt institutions of the old regime remained intact. The army, police, media, the judiciary remained loyal to the old regime. The media orchestrated an unrelenting campaign of slur and propaganda while the judiciary worked hard to overturn all the president's constitutional decrees rendering his office powerless. They also annulled the results of the elected parliament after the Egyptians voted in a majority of Islamists. In an interview by *Al-Masry al-Yaum* in August of last year, the deputy leader of the Freedom and Justice Party Rafiq Habib accused the "deep state" of using the judiciary, the army, and al-Azhar University to overthrow Morsi. In his essay, "The Manacled

Democracy: A Plan to kill the Revolution", this Christian politician accused the army of being the hub and the strong arm of the deep state.⁴

The army's only hope for total control over the political space in Egypt is by maintaining the big divisions between the plethora of political trends, but at the same time they have to tempt fringe secular parties with a piece of the cake. Egypt's Junta are treading the political scene very carefully in order not to alienate the secularly-based civil movements and the fringe political parties like Al-Wafd, the Nassirites, Al-Dustur, Ghad al-Thawra, Al-Ahrar al-Eshtrakeen, and the Communists. Until such time when the dynamics of the street demonstrations has fizzled away or at least popular support for the majority of young demonstrators is diminished, the army will no doubt continue to consolidate its grip on power through more direct rule. The crux of their demands is to ensure their influence in the next constitution and add a clause to put itself outside the jurisdiction of the civilian government. This was their demand after the demise of the Mubarak regime, but they were opposed by the

Islamists and the majority of the secular and liberal forces in the Egyptian society. It will be interesting to monitor the demeanour of these secular forces in regards to such intrusive powers after the army came to its rescue against the Islamists.

Interestingly, the political divergence between Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States (apart from Qatar) and their Shi'i protagonists like Iran, Syria, Iraq and Hezbollah diminished. All the aforementioned countries and organisations welcomed, in one way or another, the overthrow of Morsi. The Saudis in particular are very weary of the rise of internal demands for proper distribution of the huge oil revenue and for more political freedom. In the past, loyalty to the royal family has been exchanged for money through jobs, high service standards, and virtually no tax. However, the rapid rise in the population that is outpacing economic growth, availability of services, and proper infrastructure in the country. Population growth in Saudi Arabia was last reported at 2.29% in 2011, according to World Bank report published in 2012. Despite the hike in oil prices, the Saudi government

is finding difficulty in narrowing the gap between the ability of the economy to create jobs and the number of people entering the employment sector each year.

What is making matters even more difficult is the internal consumption of energy to fuel the huge demand and dependence on water desalination, generating electricity, and local commercial and private oil consumption. According to a Chatham House report, at the current rate of Saudi internal consumption of energy the country could be forced to import oil in 2038 to fuel its local consumption.⁵

All the above factors make the Saudi government nervous towards increasing calls for democracy in its neighbouring countries, especially when it realises that the carrot used to keep the ever increasing youth population quiet is nearing its end. The only thing left at the regime's disposal is the stick which has very limited effect in the absence of the financial incentives and the presence of social factors such as religion which fuel the demand for equality, and political representation.



Whatever the future holds for the military coup in Egypt, the dynamics for change in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States are very much in place.

Standing with the secular movements and the military coup in Egypt stripped the Saudi royal family of its other main backer, the religious scholars. This time the majority of religious scholars, who traditionally used to tow the official line, rejected the government's position. Many of them chose to air their differences on twitter, they include prominent names like Shaykh Mohamed al-Uraifi, the Imam of Makka and the holiest mosque in Islam, Shaykh Sa'ud al-Shuraim and Abdul Aziz al-Fawzaan.

The other major obstacle facing the Saudi royal family is the increasing political and social demands of the Shi'i minority in the Eastern province. One tactic the government used before, and would no doubt use again, is to try to rally the majority of the Sunni population against Iran and the Shi'i minority to alleviate internal social and political demands, but for how long.

Trying to reverse the winds of democracy in Egypt might have had the opposite effect in deepening the schisms, increasing disputes, and raising the level of social and

political demands at home. Whatever the future holds for the military coup in Egypt, the dynamics for change in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States are very much in place. However, the economy will remain as the only factor which could dampen the dynamic for change.

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1. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/14/egypt-investigate-police-military-killings-51>
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/1043686>.
 5. http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Energy,%20Environment%20and%20Development/1211pr_lahn_stevens.pdf.

INTERVIEW WITH JUMU'A AMIN

THE MENA REPORT CONTACTED A NUMBER OF EGYPTIAN POLITICIANS, IDEOLOGUES AND ACTIVISTS TO SHED LIGHT ON CURRENT EVENTS FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES FROM WITHIN THE EGYPTIAN SOCIETY. WE HAVE SECURED INTERVIEWS WITH TWO PROMINENT FIGURES FOR THIS EDITION OF THE REPORT, ONE OF THEM IS A HIGH-RANKING MEMBER OF THE EGYPTIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, AND THE OTHER IS A FORMER LEADER OF THE RADICAL AL-GAMA'A AL-ISLAMIYYA IN EGYPT.

Jumu'a Amin, one of the most prominent members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, was born in 1934 in Bani Sweif. In 1995 Amin was elected by the grassroots to sit on the Office of Guidance (*Maktab al-Irshad*), the highest organisational committee in the movement. Amin is also considered one of the main ideologues and a prolific writer on the history and ideology of the organisation. We caught up with him during his short trip to London.

The MENA Report: Let us start from where the democratic process ended in Egypt. Did the organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood anticipate the military coup and what indications did you notice before it happened?

Jumu'a Amin: The organisation with all the information at its disposal predicted many scenarios against the president

and the democratic process starting from the constitution which was ratified by 64% of the voters to the first elected president in the history of Egypt. We did not exclude the coup but it was last on the list of scenarios. It is obvious that the army maneuvered cleverly but they betrayed the trust and their oath to the president to respect the law and the constitution.

TMENAR: What are your demands at this juncture? Do you insist on the return of Morsi to complete his tenure, or will you accept compromises?

J.A.: The coup exposed its dictatorial trend from day one. They want to return to the old military rule. All their promises of respecting the human rights of the people fizzled away in the first day when they incarcerated leading

members of the movement and curtailed free speech. They continued with their campaign of physical assassinations, propaganda and blatant lies. It has never happened in the history of Egypt, that a new regime would kill more than 100 people from the supporters of the legitimate president, and injuring hundreds more. After all this how do you expect us to compromise? Our short answer is a demand for the return of the democratically elected president.

TMENAR: What are the main themes of intellectual revisions the Muslim Brotherhood adopted in the past 40 years, especially in relation to the notions of Caliphate, National State, Pluralism, and political participation?

J.A.: The themes are as follows:

- Egypt is for all, we all should take part in running it.
- The state should respect all creeds and religions and ensure the freedom of worship within the

limits of the law and the constitution.

- We don't believe in the theocratic state but we aspire for a democratic state built on the principles of the respect of the will of the people in choosing their leadership and the system of governance.
- Peace and stability within the state and with the international community are two of the main pillars of the state.
- Non-alliance and independent will are assurances for the effectiveness of regional and international organisations.

TMENAR: The political paradigm, rhetoric, and media strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood and the political arm [i.e. the Freedom and Justice Party] are mainly based on morality and ethical values to reform the society. Don't you think that this strategy is failing you especially when the opposition forces were Machiavellian in their strategy to affect the

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Egypt has just emerged from an alien tradition of a loss of ethical and moral values and a separation from our long history.

downfall of president Morsi?

J.A: Egypt has just emerged from an alien tradition of a loss of ethical and moral values and a separation from our long history. It is an imperative for reform to return to ethical values in all facets of life, including the political. The old Egyptian corrupt media used lies and defamation and altered the reality and the facts. They will be responsible in front of God and in front of the people. We don't believe in the principle of 'means justifies ends' whatever the disadvantage to us will be.

TMENAR: Some would argue that the president was deposed because he tried to *ikhwanise* the state institutions. What is the truth about this charge?

J.A: This charge is silly, to prove how silly this charge is I will list the following:

1. In the Ministry of Defence in its entirety; there

was no one affiliated to the MB among its staff.

2. The Ministry of Interior in its all divisions; there was no one affiliated to the MB among its staff.
3. There was no one from the MB in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
4. From the 35 ministers in the cabinet only 9 were from the Muslim Brotherhood.
5. Out of 27 provincial mayors only 9 were from the Muslim Brotherhood.
6. The rest of the government institutions; only 1% of its staff were known to belong to the Islamic trend.

TMENAR: In hindsight regarding all that has transpired recently, would you have nominated one of your ranks to be president again, and what would be your alternative strategy?



Those who were defeated in the last presidential elections backed by the remnants of the old regime.

J.A: Our late leader Imam Hassan al-Banna used to revise his strategy and would say I should have done so and so. Our movement is used to revising its political strategy and its conduct in general. However, nomination for the presidency was a collective and democratic decision taken by the *Shura Council* (Consultative Committee) based on the context of events and political necessities at the time.

TMENAR: What are the main reasons and forces that contributed to the downfall of the democratic process in Egypt?

J.A: A strange mix of the far right and the far left on the political spectrum. In spite of all the schisms and differences between the two, I can summarise it as follows:

1. Those who were defeated in the last presidential elections backed by the remnants of the old regime.
2. Influential families that have run the Egyptian

economy during the military rule over the past few decades.

3. Regional powers saddened by the latest change in Egypt which has exposed corruption that has shackled our independence and free will.
4. International powers that have always worked to undermine and weaken our country.

TMENAR: What is, in your opinion, the solution to this dilemma in the current polarised public opinion against the Muslim Brotherhood?

J.A: This is not true; there is no polarised public opinion against the Muslim Brotherhood. Despite all the efforts to manufacture this polarisation by the plethora of fringe organisations, the latest military coup reversed all their efforts to stain our reputation.

TMENAR: How will you deal with the judiciary, the media and the security forces in the case of the return of the deposed president to his office, knowing that these forces were the main factors behind the coup?

J.A: As president, Morsi always reiterated that there is no alternative to following the letter of the constitution and we will never return to the old days of state of emergency and special decrees.

TMENAR: In your opinion, what is the reason behind the enmity of some of the Arab states to Morsi and what is your message to these countries and to the West in general? What would you say to them?

J.A: Their antagonism is because our people freed their will from the shackles of tyranny and they decreed that the will of the people will remain free. We understand that those who don't believe in the free will of the people don't like to see it in Egypt. We would like to say to all that

the era of control and subjugation is no more. And for the sake of all our people around the world, and for the sake of international peace and harmony, we should realise that peaceful rejection of tyranny and injustice will win in the end and those who opposed the will of our people will be the only losers.

INTERVIEW WITH OSAMA RUSHDI

Osama Rushdi is a former leader of the Egyptian radical group al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, (The Islamic Group). When he left the group and renouncing violence, he was forced to flee Egypt, passing through Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Albania and the Netherlands, before finally settling in the United Kingdom.

Although a qualified chemist, Rushdi worked as a Journalist in Britain for a number of years. With other Egyptian compatriots, he established the Egypt Salvation Front in April 2005. For many years the front acted as a voice for the opposition to the Mubarak regime in exile. In 2011, he returned to Egypt after a forced exile of 23 years. Rushdi is a member of the Command Committee of the Building and Development Party in Egypt. In February 2013, he was elected to the National Forum for Human Rights by the Egyptian Shura Council, where he managed the forum's media department. He also established a unit to cater for the welfare of Egyptian expatriates and a committee to foresee issues related to transitional justice. Recently, Rushdi initiated a project to reform the prisons and the penal

institutions in Egypt.

TMENAR: What are the main reasons behind the support of a big chunk of the Egyptian youth and other political parties, especially the secular ones, to call for a military coup?

O.R: After the success of the revolution of the 25th of February, Egypt witnessed an acute intellectual and political division between the supporters of the revolution themselves. The secular forces rejected all the election results since the referendum of March 19th, 2011 and they also rejected the results of the parliamentary elections, the Shura Council, the presidential elections, and finally the referendum on the constitution last December, all because the Islamists had the upper-hand in these elections.

On the other hand, remnants of the old regime fearing a loss of their power structures and financial interests planned with the secular trend to reverse the revolution after they lost all faith in the democratic route to protect their interests. Hence, they relied on the army and all the forces that

protected the old regime because it remained intact and active. The army, police, intelligence, the judiciary, foreign office, and nearly all the government institutions remained loyal to Mubarak.

What happened on 30th of June is a conspiracy to wipe out the achievements of the revolution of the 25th of February. This is proof of the differences between the Islamic trend and the so called secular trend in Egypt are bigger than their differences with the defunct dictatorial regime .Unfortunately, they backed a coup against the legitimacy of five consecutive elections.

TMENAR: Do you have any idea of how you may deal with a corrupt Egyptian judiciary and the highly unregulated media syndicates?

O.R: There are failures in tackling the crimes of the Mubarak regime, be it by the SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) or even by president Morsi. We have ignored experiences and models tried by other countries in

regards to transitional justice and neglected them to form investigation committees to make sure no one escapes justice or at-least to compensate the affected parties. We also neglected reforming the judiciary and the security. The government opened-up the space of free media to an extent that the media used this free space to stir-up hate and violence against the president and the Muslim Brotherhood. Any democratic regime has to reform the judiciary and install proper regulations for the media to avert chaos and civil strife.

TMENAR: In your opinion, what are the main failings of president Morsi and what were his best achievements? Do you think that these shortcomings are the main reasons leading to his overthrow?

O.R: Dr Morsi took office during austere times and economic hardship. The hard currency reserve in February 2011 was 36 billion dollars, but when president Morsi assumed power in June 30th 2012 the reserve was down to 11 billion, barely enough to cover imported food for 3 months. From day one

those who rejected the successive election results worked very hard to make the president fail in his job. They started demonstrations to destabilise the country and stop the tourism industry and create an unfavourable atmosphere for foreign investment, which eventually reduced our credit rating. As a result, the IMF bank rejected a loan for Egypt despite all the economic reforms achieved under Morsi.

To add to all the internal hardship, regional governments, as we have seen lately, injected 12 billion dollars into the Egyptian economy after the overthrow of Morsi. Two months ago the American foreign secretary said in Congress that regional governments send money to local groups inside Egypt to create disturbances. We all witnessed the artificially created shortages in gas, electricity and water just before the coup, but all these shortages were resolved the next day after the coup.

Despite all the aforementioned efforts by the opposition, the GDP rose during the tenure of president Morsi from 0.8% to 2.4% and the deficit in trade balance in the last three

months was reduced from 11.2 billion dollars to 2.1 billion. Furthermore, the tourist industry increased by 1 billion dollars. Our export in the same period was increased by 5% and the liquidity in the Egyptian banks increased. All these statistics are from the Egyptian Central Bank. The Egyptian farmers received 9 billion Egyptian pounds from the state which lead to an increase of 30% in the production of grain. The new budget carried a wage increase of 33 billion Egyptian pounds. Many other reforms were carried out to benefit the poor and people at the bottom of the wage ladder.

Listing all the above achievements does not mean that the president had a clean slate or he has no failures. Above all he failed to market his achievements, and he failed in regulating the media. His office also didn't attract enough national experts to serve and put forward development plans. I think this is a common symptom among Islamic movements that mix political activities with religious and moral activism. The opposition seized the opportunity to castigate the president and his Freedom and Justice Party as a subservient to the



The secular trend failed to abide by the rules and ethics of democracy; they rejected pluralism, accepting the other, and difference in opinion.

mother organisation i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood, and that the real president behind the scenes is the Office of Guidance (Maktab al-Ershad).

TMENAR: As an independent Islamist and non-affiliate to the MB, do you think the charge of Ikhwanising the State (filling important official offices with members of the Muslim Brotherhood) is true. If so, what are the main ministries and institutions that have been staffed with members of the MB?

O.R: There has been much exaggeration in this regard. This was one of the tactics used by the opposition to stir unrest and antagonism. However, there were mistakes but not in the magnitude claimed by the opposition. It was said that the leader of the [salafist] Al-Noor Party, Dr Younis Makhiyoon had a list of 13000 leading members of the MB that had been added to the government offices. When I personally asked about his charge he retracted his first claim and said he had names in 13 provinces, but he couldn't prove more than 56 cases in the district of Kafr al-Shaikh.

TMENAR: Many would say that the sticking point between the president and his protagonists is not basic amenities or the economy, but is a case of struggle between the proponents of Political Islam and the secular trend in general.

O.R: There is no doubt that there is a polarisation of opinion and there is a rejection for the election results by the secular trend. The secular trend failed to abide by the rules and ethics of democracy; they rejected pluralism, accepting the other, and difference in opinion. In fact the political horizon was quite clear and open because in a few months we would have had parliamentary elections. The new house has more authority than the president himself. Unfortunately, the secular trend returned Egypt to square one with their rejection of any sort of compromise and their support for the military coup. They knew very well that the president was on top of the economic hardship and if they left him the space and time he would certainly have remedied our economy. Reform needs time and stability.

TMENAR: What regional factors in your opinion have helped to hasten the end of the democratic process in Egypt?

O.R.: There was regional celebration starting from the murderous Assad regime in Syria to Kuwait, Saudi and the UAE. They fear the winds of democracy hitting their shores. All they want is to turn the democratic experiment into failure so they can continue subjugating their people. These governments spared no effort or resources in the past two years to aid all opposition groups in Egypt; they also tried to use the leverage of financial aid to win the freedom of Hosni Mubarak and his henchmen. This will eventually happen after the coup.

TMENAR: Isn't it strange that the Iranian and the Iraqi governments were very enthusiastic for the demise of president Morsi? What are the reasons for this bearing in mind that the Gulf States accused Morsi in the past months of being an ally to the Iranians and the Shi'a in general?

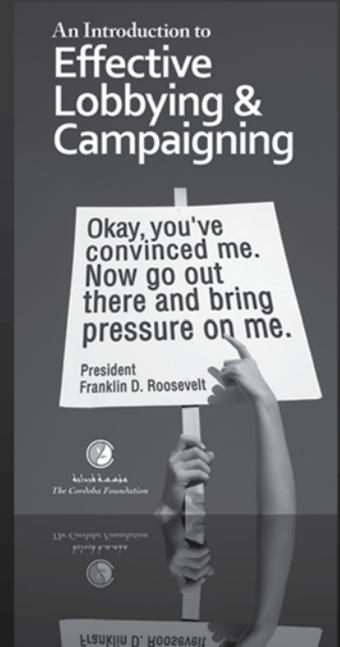
O.R.: Morsi's opposition to the ongoing slaughter against the Syrian people and his refusal to trade Iranian financial

help for a foothold in Egypt angered the Iranians and scared the Gulf States because they realised that the new Egyptian leadership is independent and not prone to pressure or temptation.

TMENAR: What is, in your opinion, the solution to this impasse? Do you think the insistence on the return of president Morsi to his office is a viable solution?

O.R.: There must be a political solution to the problem starting from the respect for the legitimacy of the democratic route and the respect of the constitution that has been ratified by 64% of the Egyptian voters. At the same time I don't rule out a referendum on whether the president should continue his term in office or the possibility of relinquishing his powers constitutionally to a unity government until we carry out new presidential elections.

I reiterate that we should not accept the military coup or the tampering with the will of the people in any way. The army should never meddle in political affairs and support the losing side in the elections as has happened in Egypt.



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