



Are the Arab Islamist Movements in Decline? – From Jordan to Morocco, a Study by *Khalil Al-'Anani*

In his article “Is the Arab Islamists Spring Over,” writer *Khalil Al'Anani* correctly points out that what appears to be a recent decline in the influence of Islamist movements is not a sign of victory for the present political systems. Rather, he sees the decline as stemming from the absence of a vision for change within the nascent democratic process at work in the Arab world over the past three years. The author warns that the real casualty of the current problems would be the traditional parties sympathetic to moderate Islamic views, will fall under the “flowing”¹ cloak of the Jihadi Salafi Movements, eventually leading to their unfortunate but deserved demise.

The author bases his conclusions on an examination of the most recent Moroccan elections in which the Islamic-inspired Party of Justice and Development (PJD) came in second, winning only 47 seats out of the 325 in the lower house of parliament. These results show the “fragility” of the traditional view that, given the chance, the Islamists could dominate any election by capturing the votes of ordinary Arabs. The very low turnout rate (37%) in the election also raises a serious question regarding the maturity of the democratic concept in Arab consciousness. The author derides what he views as a false analogy drawn by many writers between the Turkish and the Moroccan elections and notes the social and cultural differences that exist on both sides of the Mediterranean.

Al-'Anani then asks whether the demise of Islamic political power is a phenomenon throughout the Arab World, forming an arc of failed experiences from Jordan in the East to Morocco in the West, encompassing the Muslim Brotherhoods in Egypt and Jordan, Hamas in Palestine and the PJD in Morocco.

It is natural, the author contends, for some to dispute generalizations about these four groups and instead try to focus on particular differences between them. Nevertheless, the truth remains that all four movements are in real crisis. He notes the problems the Muslim Brotherhood platforms in Egypt and Jordan have created with political allies and the movement's lack of vision and adaptability in both countries. He also denounces the Hamas movement for their lack of political vision, practice of self-flagellation and ignoring the disastrous consequences of their unwise Gaza take-over in June. He proceeds to advise Hamas to revisit the writing of Sheikh Al-Qaradawi five years ago detailing “the ten errors of the Islamic awakening.” He sees the problem in Morocco as a movement out of touch with their constituent population. The author contends, however, that for a large portion of the Arab population, the Islamic experience has not

¹ A word which also means bombastic and grandiloquent

lost its appeal, despite recognizing the lack of political evolution and inadaptability to the changing circumstances.

Notwithstanding his criticism, *Al-'Anani* sympathizes with the basic ideology of the Islamic movements and denounces the attitude of the political establishments in Jordan and Egypt towards them. He also explains that the Jordanian, Egyptian and Palestinian experiences seem to share a common characteristic – material and moral pressure on Islamic institutions by the authorities – while the Moroccan experience lacks this coercive element. He concludes that this raises the most important question: “How persuaded are the Arab masses of the success of the Islamic solution as presented by Islamists.”

***Al-'Anani* states that, if Arab Islamists are meeting their downfall the same way as the preceding democratic, liberal and secular experiences, he is hopeful that the “seed of change” would be able to produce an Arab generation who believes in the “democratic answer” and is capable of implementing it. The only missing element in the author’s analysis is that, while he recognizes the value of the democratic process, he does not address the anticipated kind of ideological system that such a process would produce.**

Source: Al Hayat – Author: Khalil Al-'Anani – 9/27/2007

<http://www.daralhayat.com/opinion/09-2007/Item-20070926-42f60a75-c0a8-10ed-00c3-e8c477ec2c9e/story.html>

Return to www.politicalislam.org