



Political Islam Online

Unexpected Alliance The Muslim Brotherhood and the European Parliament



With the Egyptian government coming under the fire from the European Parliament and the Muslim Brotherhood for human rights abuses, [PI Online](#) examines how two unlikely entities joined forces for a shared cause.



Islamist Ex-Parliamentarian turned journalist *Muhammad Gamal Hishmat* unleashed his criticism at the Egyptian government for their angry outcry in response to the European Parliament's resolution condemning human rights in Egypt. It was, however, first and foremost the Europeans that took the Egyptians by surprise.

On January 17th the European Parliament in Strasbourg, ignoring Cairo threats, passed [resolution B6-0023/2008](#) which expressed "its grave concern about the deterioration of the human rights situation in Egypt." Citing general and specific restrictive measures imposed by Egypt on the rights of institutions, unions and religious minorities, they called on the government "to end all forms of harassment, including judicial measures, detention of media professionals and, more generally, human rights defenders and activists." In response, Egypt cancelled talks with senior European officials scheduled for this coming week. Both the resolution and Egypt's response were major news in the Middle East over the past two days.



The controversy continued as Green leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit responded to the Egyptian outcry: "If we have to criticize the situation of Human Rights in Egypt or Guantanamo or anywhere else, we're going to do it. I couldn't care less what they think in the Egyptian capital."

Hishmat characterized the Egyptian initiative to put pressure on the European parliament as naïve. Egypt summoned all twenty-seven ambassadors of the European parliament to express their objection prior to the vote on the resolution. The author was careful not to antagonize the Egyptian foreign minister, who had vigorously condemned the resolution, reserving his major criticism for the Egyptian parliament. Parliamentarians in Egypt are considered "open targets" for critics expressing the population's concerns. Typically critics steer clear of the presidency or the executive branch even though some writers are starting to target ministers they consider vulnerable and lacking total presidential support.

The writer ridiculed the statement by the speaker of the Egyptian Parliament *Ahmed Fathi Surur* that "a peaceful dialogue between parties would produce the impossible" and suggested that there is no dialogue between the government and opposition parties in Egypt. *Hishmat* also mocked *Surur's* positions of abstaining from comment on human rights abuses in Europe out of respect for the historical relations between Europe and Egypt.

PI Online believes however that clause 10 of the European resolution which “Welcomed the efforts made by Egypt to secure the border with Gaza and encourages all sides concerned to step up the fight against smuggling through tunnels into the Gaza strip” was unrelated to human rights violations and made the entire resolution suspect of Israeli influence. That part of the resolution led to the accusation leveled by the Egyptian government against the European parliament that “adversarial forces were instrumental in drafting the resolution.”

Hishmat seemed unaware of that clause as he questioned the reasoning for the speaker of the Egyptian Parliament to make such an accusation. The author proceeded to provide various examples of human rights abuses, lack of transparency in internal issues involving financial embezzlements and other cases of neglect or criminal activities by governmental authorities. He added that the Egyptians do not need a European or American report to expose the miserable treatment experienced by the people from the government.

While *Hishmat* seems to revel in the European Union’s passed declaration, he nevertheless makes the debatable observation that these foreign entities lack the will, the popularity and the legitimacy to exercise any notable political influence in Egypt. Using an Arabic syllogism, the author ends his article by boldly suggesting that, while the government’s action can be a reflection of their fear of internationally opening Pandora’s box on human right abuse files, it may also be the confused and desperate act of a dying administration.

Source: Al-Masryon Newspaper – author: *Muhammad Gamal Hishmat* - Date: 1/19/2008
<http://www.almesryoon.com/ShowDetailsC.asp?NewID=43684&Page=7&Part=1>

Return to: www.politicalislam.org

Political Islam Online holds copyrights in all translations & analyses presented on this site. Materials may only be cited or reproduced with proper attribution.