



## To the Washington Post from the Muslim Brotherhood

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*The following is what a letter from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to the Washington Post might say:*



To the Editorial Board of the Washington Post:

In the past month the Washington Post has heaped criticism on the Egyptian government, accusing it of pervasive fraud in the latest parliamentary elections. In a December 4<sup>th</sup> editorial, the Washington Post also took aim at the U.S. government's timid response, stating that the "*Obama Administration appears to be thoroughly intimidated by Hosni Mubarak –*

*when what it ought to be worried about is who or what will succeed him*". The Post seems to have missed the point, so obvious to those of us in the Brotherhood, that this is precisely what Secretary of State Clinton and the White House are worried about. The question is what to do about it. The Post's solution is a simple call for the spread of democracy in Egypt in the form of free elections. The Brotherhood wholeheartedly agrees! Democracy in Egypt is just what the Brotherhood needs – our thanks to the Washington Post.

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I see you scratching your heads. But, think about it a minute and you'll see my point. Democracy and free elections work best when the population is educated, well informed and engaged. Where the citizenry is largely uneducated and uninformed, it is far easier to manipulate the electorate with simple slogans and religious ideology. For more than forty years, Egypt has squandered its once rich culture and made a shambles of its educational institutions. You cannot credit President Mubarak alone for the current state of affairs. The process started with Nasser's socialist government in the sixties when education became free for all Egyptians, but cranking out the largest number of graduates possible was more important than whether they learned anything along the way. And don't forget that when Nasser took control in 1952 Egypt's population was only 24 million; we're now approaching 85 million and almost 50% of the population is under the age of twenty-eight and poorly educated, if at all. After so many years of a failing educational policy, the vicious cycle is becoming difficult to overcome. Graduates joining the teaching profession no longer even have the basic skills necessary to teach.

In such fertile ground, Islamists have put down strong roots, as any casual visitor to Cairo can see. We have gradually managed to increase the ranks of conservative Moslems and impose the wearing of the veil on most women. Our slogan "Islam is the Answer" has so terrified the government they have outlawed its use. We have infiltrated the universities and many of the professors are our strongest supporters. The government has played its part, by increasing the rate of frustration among the average citizen because of the lack of basic needs and the large disparity in income between the rich and the poor. They may harass and imprison us, but we prevail. Winning seats in a parliament, which possesses zero power, is not our primary goal; it's the presidency that counts. For now, we continue to wield power from the pulpit, permeating the airwaves and minarets with *fatwas* that, regardless how trivial, consume the daily discourse of average citizens. The secular segment of the population is now small and with limited influence and the secular political opposition is a laughing stock. For a

time, I must admit, we were worried that the United States might use the 28 billion dollars it has spent on economic assistance to Egypt over the past thirty years<sup>1</sup> to improve the health and education system and to strengthen Egypt's secular institutions or parties. But (Allah be praised), you did little. On the contrary, we see that faith based politics is on the rise in the United States and your educational system seems to be suffering as well compared to other industrialized nations– welcome to our world.

Even our radical writers, like *Fahmy Huwaidi*, have, like the Washington Post, embraced the notion that the spread of democracy is of paramount importance. Why? – Because the end justifies the means. *Huwaidi*, like me, is quite convinced that if a free democratic election were held in Egypt today, the present government will most likely be defeated. In the absence of any legitimate secular political alternative, the chances for the Muslim Brotherhood will be quite good. How we will govern afterwards however, is a well-guarded secret! That brings me back to the dilemma facing Secretary Clinton regarding “*who or what will succeed Hosni Mubarak?*”



What kind of policies would a government with religious intonations at the helm pursue? Would such a regime emulate Hamas in Gaza or the Turkish model? Would Israel allow one or the other to exist on its Western border? Does the United States have the power to influence the outcome? These are all questions that neither the Washington Post nor the Secretary of State can answer. We know however that uncertainty is something the United States cannot tolerate.

So, in the 2011 Egyptian presidential elections, despite any allegations of fraud and cries for democracy, the United States will have no choice but to support *Mubarak* or his anointed successor, whether it be his son *Gamal* or someone else. That is the point that the Post does not seem to understand or accept. *Mubarak's* son, *Gimmy* as he is known here, represents the new (younger) guard that has emerged over the past ten years and is composed mostly of the business elite who have made their fortunes in private enterprises and which, until lately, seemed to have enough power to dictate most government decisions. Lately, *Gamal* has shown signs that he is actively interested in improving the daily life of the average citizen. That's smart, though it remains to be seen whether this is simply posturing before the election or a sincere conviction on his part that could result in genuine reform. This year however, the ascendance of the new guard seems to have stalled. The old guard, represented by *Mubarak's* most trusted chief of staff *Zakaria Azmi* and the NDP Secretary General *Safwat Al-Sherif*, has flexed its muscles and played a major role in reducing the power of *Mubarak's* son and his entourage. Neither *Mubarak* nor the United States likes the internal fight between the old and the new guard. It therefore seems likely that a neutral figure, someone close to the president and to the military, will come into the picture. The Brotherhood has been following the rumors that that role could be filled by Air Marshal *Ahmad Shafiq*, formerly head of the Egyptian air force and currently the head of civil aviation, who is considered a moderate and untainted by the average Egyptian's negative view of the present government. Such a scenario could allow *Mubarak* to run for another term, naming the general as his vice president and thereby avoid a power struggle after his death. A Wall Street Journal story this past weekend<sup>2</sup> supports that theory and it is also rumored that such a plan would have the blessing of the U.S. CIA.



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<sup>1</sup> USAID Egypt - <http://egypt.usaid.gov/Default.aspx?pageid=573>

<sup>2</sup> Wall Street Journal by Charles Levinson, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704447604576007143222774156.html>

In any event, the Post's call for more U.S. pressure on the Egyptian Government, while out of touch with the U.S. interests, is good for the Brotherhood. As things stand now, democracy in Egypt is good for those of us who have religious political ambitions and the longer it takes Egypt to improve its educational system, create vibrant secular institutions and parties and an independent secular judiciary, the better it is for the Brotherhood.

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