

Statement of Morad Abou-Sabe'
for the Congressional Hearing about Human Rights Abuses in Egypt
December 10th, 2013

Introduction:

The events of June 30, 2013 in Egypt, which resulted in the ouster of former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, were in response to the massive and unprecedented protests by the Egyptian People. Morsi's overthrow was supported and facilitated by the Egyptian Military. Since Morsi's ouster, the US-Egyptian relations have gone through abrupt changes that threatened and continue to threaten the special relationship between the two countries.

Historical perspectives on the US-Egyptian Relations:

For a short historical perspective on how we got to this special relationship, one can only begin by crediting the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat for the start of that relationship. When Sadat took his unimaginable and bold steps in the 1970's, which were:

- 1- Ending the Egyptian - Soviet relationship and expelling the Russian advisors on July 18th 1972, and then
- 2- Making his historic trip to Israel on November 20th 1977.

No one understood at the time what he was doing or where he was heading? Sadat ended Egypt's relationship with the Soviets at the time when he was preparing for the 1973 war with Israel. However, Sadat knew and was convinced that the Arab Israeli conflict could only be resolved by the United States and that all that mattered to the US in the region were Israel and the flow of Middle East Oil?

Taking these bold steps Sadat put Egypt in a most precarious position that resulted in his own assassination by the Muslim Brotherhood and the isolation of Egypt for many years afterwards from the rest of the Arab World.

Since then and especially after the signing of the Camp David accord and the peace treaty with Israel, the US-Egyptian relations have been at their most cordial levels. This cordial relationship, as it may have now become clear, was for keeping the Egyptian – Israeli treaty safe? It did not matter what the Mubarak 30 year dictatorship had done to Egypt or the Egyptian people, as long as the peace treaty was safe?

The establishment of the US - Muslim Brotherhood relationship, after the January 25th 2011 revolution in Egypt.

With the January 25th 2011, revolution in Egypt, the US administration aligned itself with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB's), as the most organized group among all political parties and political organizations in Egypt. The MB's were deemed to have the highest likelihood of stepping to the governance of Egypt? This new relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, especially after Morsi's election to the Presidency, was further strengthened when Morsi was able to secure a cease-fire between Hamas and Israel on November, 22nd, 2012 (see attached).

It can be assumed that in this close relationship, the US administration saw possible venues for the resolution of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict. While the MB's saw the possibility of moving forward with their Renaissance project., with the help of the United States? This view is supported by:

- 1- The unusual close relationship between the American Ambassador in Cairo and the MB organization, outside of President Morsi? A matter that caused resentment among the many Egyptians and political parties leaders,
- 2- It was most evident when the US Ambassador took upon herself to meet with MB's officials who had no official status in the Egyptian Government?
- 3- It further confirmed that Morsi, was in fact a figurehead and that the decisions come from the MB leadership offices at Al-Mokattam district of Cairo?

In the meantime, the MB's and President Morsi, were working on establishing legal rights for the Palestinians in Northern Sinai to buy land and settle in Northern Sinai as a prelude to Hamas's expansion into the Sinai. One of the vehicles for achieving that was to grant Egyptian Citizenship to as many as 50,000 Palestinians, in one stroke? Former president Morsi was able to do that by changing an Egyptian Law that defined Egyptian Citizenship which applied only to all persons born in Egypt to Egyptian Fathers.

Morsi and the MB's simply changed the law to allow all those born to Egyptian Mothers to become Egyptian Citizens, opening the door for the thousands of Palestinians whose mothers were of Egyptian Nationality? Simple isn't it? Now the Egyptian government is trying to review these newly acquired citizenship?

Egypt to Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, did not matter. There was no understanding of Egyptian Sovereignty and defined borders? It was just land that they could hand over to whomever they wanted.

Impact of the US Position on the MB's intransigence:

The immediate position taken by the US government, in response to Morsi's ouster, was to call it a military coup. And based on that, the administration initiated the process of suspending the US military Aid to Egypt? Such a response by the administration represented a clear departure from the US long standing position in support of Egypt. It also showed another side to the administration's foreign policy towards Egypt. It showed the newly developed alliance between the US and the Muslim Brotherhood organization and the Morsi Government, as I pointed out above?

Such unlikely partnership was a great surprise and disappointment to all Egyptians, who did not understand why would the US partner with an Islamic group that has historically been implicated in the types of violence that is characteristic of Al-Qaeda and its affiliates?

On the ground, the US administration condemned the military overthrow of Morsi AND cautioned the Egyptian Government against the use of force in dealing with the "Peaceful Protestors?" Little did Washington know that the MB protests and sit-ins were actually militarized. There was no holdback by the MB leadership from issuing their numerous public threats from their own staged platforms and on live TV, of the dire results if any attempts were made to evict them? These were the peaceful protestors who were constantly reported on by the NY Times and other US reporters in Egypt. You could only see the contradiction between what the US media reported and what every Egyptian, including myself watching from here, was viewing directly and live on Egyptian and satellite television, while listening to the MB threats.

There was no hesitation on the part of the MB protest leadership to admit their role in the terrorism against the Egyptian military and security forces that was taking place in Sinai? As they continued to make pronouncements: "If the Egyptian Government yields to our demands, all violence in Sinai, would immediately stop?" These were the peaceful protestors the administration was supporting and the US media reporting?

There was also a human cost to the US support of the MB's, namely it cost hundreds of Egyptian lives that were lost from both the protestors and the security forces, during the forcible eviction of the sit-ins? These lives could have been saved if the MB's did not count on the US support and would have at least allowed the eight-week mediation efforts by the international community to succeed? To this day, the MB's believe that they were the aggrieved, rather than the aggressor and the cause of the violence they perpetrated. They continue to hold violent

protests, block roads and instigate the Egyptian people, irrespective of their unrealistic expectations of Morsi's return to office?

In the meantime, former president Morsi was held in custody for several months, before he was charged in Court on the 4th of November, and was subsequently remanded to Prison awaiting trial, slated for January 2014. Among the alleged charges against Morsi are: incitement to murder and more importantly the charge of espionage, having colluded with international organizations against the interest and security of Egypt. There is a current ban against discussing these charges, since they are still under investigation, (see attached).

The conflicting signals about the Morsi ouster by the US Administration:

The conflicting signals by the administration, with statements from the State department, holding on to the US Egyptian relations while at the same time, other US officials continued to call the ouster a military coup, played a major part in the resistance of the MB's to any kind of mediation and resolution. Significant among these were the statements by senators McCain and Graham, who visited Egypt in July and met with Morsi, After their meetings, they came out and in a press conference once again called the ouster a military coup. In fact Senator McCain in his comments, predicted a civil war in Egypt, as a result? Luckily his prediction did not materialize, at least until now?

These reactions and contradicting statements by US officials simply confirmed the ambivalence of the US foreign policy towards Egypt? Not only that, but it also implied that the US foreign policy in the Middle East, has changed and that a new agenda may be under development as we speak? The same ambivalence was demonstrated by the same US administration after the January 25th Revolution in Egypt, which resulted in the resignation of the US long-standing ally Mubarak?

The unyielding question remains, why was there a relationship with the MB's and what was the purpose of aligning ourselves with a terrorist organization, with a long documented history that backs it up? What was our ulterior motive behind this relationship that we would undertake at the expense of an ally and a regional power like Egypt?

Morsi's one-year Human Rights Abuses report:

On June 26th, 2013, before Morsi's ouster on July 3rd, a report signed by some 20 Human Rights Organizations was published by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, assessing the one-year rule under Morsi. The report was titled "One year into Mohamed Morsi's term, Manifold abuses and the systematic undermining of the rule of law, (see attached).

In this report, the many facets of human rights abuses that were undertaken by the Morsi government, lead by the MB organization, were discussed? The report sites many such abuses, of which I point out two as follows:

- 1- "The constant use of defamation of religion as a tool to undermine freedom of Expression has been one of the landmarks of the first year of Morsi's presidency. " Another item that stands out in the report was:
- 2- "At the same time as jihadist elements have benefited from presidential amnesties and a blind eye to their terrorist activities in the Sinai, smear campaigns against human rights organizations have continued, as has the politically motivated, vindictive trials of their staff..."

These activities under Morsi, were in concert with the ultimate goal of the Muslim Brotherhood to change the character of Egypt into an Islamic State, as a first step to building the MB's dream, that of establishing a Global Islamic State? What the US administration miscalculated, in aligning itself with Morsi and the brotherhood, was not recognizing that:

- 1- Egypt is not an Islamic State, never was and never will,
- 2- That Egypt's secular character was far more ingrained in people's minds that could not be changed by the dictates of the Muslim brotherhood's political ideology?
- 3- There was no anticipation that the Egyptian people would quickly recognize that the MB's were not preaching Islam, but imposing their own political Islamic ideology that was foreign to every Egyptian, and
- 4- There was no realization that such a dramatic change would occur within only one year, while the MB's were busy entrenching their organization into all parts of the Egyptian infrastructure.

These were some of factors behind the total rejection of the MB's by the Egyptian People, to the extent that their possible return and acceptance into the society, is deemed impossible? As such, any thoughts of establishing an Arch of "Moderate Islamic States in the Middle East" as a means of combating terrorism, an apparent foreign policy strategy by the Administration, was clearly based on faulty premises and is unlikely to happen any time soon.

As the administration begins to re-evaluate Morsi's overthrow, and ascertain that it was the Egyptian People's will to rid the country from the Muslim Brotherhood rule, I hope that our relations with Egypt will go back to it's normal state in the very near future.

We recognize that democracy in the Middle East, including Egypt, all be-it an important goal, is a work in progress and will take time to achieve. We also believe that mixing religion with politics in a country that for centuries has kept its peaceful and secular character can only bring unrest, as we have just witnessed under the MB's one-year rule. This is a matter that we do not need nor can afford.

As Egyptian Americans, we are keen on seeing Egyptian democracy built on the same values we have in the US, where separation of Church and State is one of the bedrocks of our democracy, we aspire to have that be the system of choice for Egypt and all Egyptians.

We therefore call upon the President and the Congress to carefully examine our role in fostering peace and stability in Egypt. It is imperative upon us to take the lead in establishing a close relationship with the Government and the Peoples of Egypt. We need to be mindful of the facts behind the events before jumping to conclusions and taking other drastic measures as those that have been taken. We also call upon the US media to bring the truths behind the violence that is perpetrated by the terrorists that want to turn Egypt into another arena for their destructive activities. We are confident that The Egyptian People will repulse with the utmost force any attempts by the MB's to derail Egypt from it's path to democracy which was charted by the January 25th and the June 30th Revolution.

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