

Interview with the Chairman of the Muslim Brotherhood's Political Department

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Transcript of interview with Dr. Mohamed Morsi, Chairman of Muslim Brotherhood Political Department, member of Executive Bureau of MB and ex-member of Egyptian Parliament.*

Attitudes to democracy within the Egyptian population

Mikkel Kastrup

How do you view the attitudes within the Egyptian population to the idea of democracy?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

All Egyptians want democracy

Mikkel Kastrup

How do you view the attitude of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt towards the idea of democracy and a democratic government in Egypt?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

MB is wholly committed to creating democracy in Egypt, this is one of our main goals.

Mikkel Kastrup

How do you view the influence of Islam (as culture and religion) with respect to democracy in Egypt? Is Islam a hindrance, is it neutral, or is it a force for democratization?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

Islam is a force that works for democracy; the concept of Shura in Islam specifies how the government must rule by the consent of the people; so a government or a society which functions according to Islam will be a democratic society.

Popular support for the government

Mikkel Kastrup

How do you view the level of support for Mubarak and his regime within the Egyptian population?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

The level of support is very low.

Mikkel Kaastrup

What do you think are the main factors explaining this?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

Over time, people have become less and less satisfied with the government, both because of the bad economic situation and the many practical problems that people have in their daily lives, and because people sense clearly that they do not have any influence upon the government.

Mikkel Kaastrup

What do you think is more important in determining the support of Egyptian citizens for the government:

I The economic situation in the country

I The degree to which Egyptian government functions according to 'rule of law' (including protection against wrongful arrest or prosecution, fair trials, equal legal rights for citizens, freedom of speech and of congregation)?

I The degree of democracy in the country (abolishment of the state of emergency, free and fair elections both to the parliament and to the office of the president)?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

The economic situation in the country is the most important factor

Mikkel Kaastrup

How do you explain this?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

People also care about whether this country is a democracy or not, but they have to deal with issues of survival first, before they can deal with abstract principles of democracy.

Influences from abroad

Mikkel Kaastrup

How do you view the influence of foreign states and organisations in terms of promoting or hindering democracy in Egypt?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

The international community doesn't really exert a pressure for democratization on Egypt.

Mikkel Kaastrup

How do you view the influence of the USA in terms of promoting or hindering democracy in Egypt?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

The United States has done nothing to promote democracy in Egypt despite its claims to the contrary.

Mikkel Kaastrup

How do you view the influence of the European Union in terms of promoting or hindering democracy in Egypt?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

(While ordinary people in Europe want democracy in Egypt as well, their political leaders does very little to affect this, partly because they are being prevented in this by the United States)

Mikkel Kaastrup

How do you view the influence of other Arab countries in terms of promoting or hindering democracy in Egypt?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

The other Arab countries are not democracies themselves, so they cannot support democracy in Egypt. But if Egypt were to become a democracy, it could help to spread democracy to other Arab countries.

Mikkel Kaastrup

What effect, if any, does the Israeli/Palestinian conflict have on the prospect of democratization in Egypt?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

Israel has an interest in Egypt being non-democratic, for a democratic regime in Egypt would do more to support the Palestinians.

Possibilities for democratization

Mikkel Kaastrup

What do you consider the main obstacles for democratization in Egypt?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

The regime and its undemocratic practices; suppression of people's rights, arresting people etc. etc.

Mikkel Kaastrup

Which are the main forces promoting democracy in Egypt?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

The Muslim Brotherhood and the people of Egypt; there has been a slow and gradual development of desire for democracy in Egypt. People feel how they are excluded from the decision-making process and resent this, and the mass-media, satellite TV etc. make people more aware what is happening everywhere in the world. This in turn influences people's consciousness and make their desire for democracy stronger. The other opposition parties in parliament are also working for democracy, although they are weak and do not have much popular support.

Mikkel Kaastrup

How do you view the likelihood that the president and NDP will voluntarily begin a process of democratization?

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

I do not consider this to be a realistic possibility.

Mikkel Kaastrup

What do you consider the most likely way in which Egypt could become a more democratic society? (The most likely scenario for democratization)

Dr. Mohamed Morsi

We in the Muslim Brotherhood are trying to create a democratic development in Egypt in a slow and gradual way. We believe this development must take place without violence (Islam forbids using violence against people, or a regime), since we don't think violence will help create a well-functioning society or democracy. This slow and gradual development requires patience and the ability to endure the hardship, injustice and suffering that is inflicted upon us by the regime, but we believe that this is the right way to do it.

*This interview was conducted by Mikkel Kaastrup, a Danish researcher who is writing a thesis about the prospects for democratization in Egypt, the department of International Development Studies, Roskilde University, Denmark. It was attended by Ikhwanweb.