

**Outcomes of Egyptian presidential elections and their implications on the
Palestinian situation**

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Introduction:

After the victory of Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Mursi in Egypt's presidential elections it is imperative to consider the implications of this victory on the Palestinian situation, especially in terms of reconciliation efforts and the way Hamas has impeded its progress through barring the Central Elections Committee from working in the Gaza Strip.

Since the change in Egypt will no doubt have an effect on the Palestinian situation given the historical and geopolitical connection between the two, it is important to see how much Egypt can play a role vis-à-vis the Palestinian cause in light of its own internal challenges.

Discussion:

It is clear that the Arab revolutions have turned into platforms for the Islamic movement, which calls for an Islamic state at the expense of a national agenda, which is exactly what Hamas is wagering on.

Hence, Hamas stalled the reconciliation after Mursi's win on the premise that the Gaza Strip was now in a better political position.

With Egypt's internal instability as a result of competition between the military council on the one hand, and the president and the Muslim Brotherhood on the other and a third trend that includes the remaining forces from the revolution which refuse to recycle the previous regime, there is a fear that internal confrontations will erupt. There is a notable test of power by these forces to explore the balance between the presidency and the military council in a way that will reflect Mursi's status and authority as president with a clear disadvantage for the Muslim Brotherhood. In spite of the Brotherhood's superior organizational abilities, its electoral power was weak. And while they were able to take control over the government and the presidency but it is apparent that most of President Mursi's jurisdictions are in the hands of the military council, meaning that he is not the one to make the final decision in formulating foreign policy.

At a time when the Palestinian cause is supposed to be progressing or at least maintaining its historical status at the top of Arab political priorities, there has been a clear retreat in interest in

the Palestinian cause as a basic national cause. It was expected that the new leadership in Egypt would not take any dramatic foreign policy decisions, especially regarding the relationship with Israel and the United States before addressing internal social and economic issues. And because of this preoccupation with the internal situation there would inevitably be a setback in the Egyptian role in influencing the Arab and Palestinian realities in the near future. Still, this did not prevent it from trying to gain international legitimacy, something which the Muslim Brotherhood has been seeking since the start.

It is clear that Egypt wants Palestinian reconciliation, the lack of which will not be in its interests as a country with a leading role in the Arab world. However, at the same time, it does not want to assume direct responsibility for Gaza. Hence, Mursi's announcement that he would honor signed agreements was a lesson to Hamas, which entered Palestinian elections even though it did not recognize the agreements on which these elections were based.

And since the Egyptians cannot be the major supporter of the Palestinian cause, the Palestinians must get their own Palestinian house in order.

Israel is still unclear as to where it stands on Mursi even though it welcomed the latter's announcement that he would honor previously signed agreements. It is still unclear whether Israel will direct a strike at Hamas in order to sabotage any strategic alliance between Hamas and Egypt in the future.

Egypt is interested in the Palestinian cause for national reasons, because of its links with Palestine and because of Egyptian-Israeli relations in light of the Camp David Accords. There is also the geographic-security link; it is in Egypt's interest to encourage Hamas towards moderation, to enter into the legitimate Palestinian legal system and to move forward in the reconciliation effort so that it is not a political, economic and security burden on it. This is at a time when Egypt is looking for regional stability and to regain its role in the region in order to gain American support at the political and economic levels.

Furthermore, Mursi cannot deal with the Hamas authority in Gaza as an independent state and thus achieve Israel's goal of throwing the Strip into Egypt's lap, which would also kill any chance for ending the occupation and establishing a Palestinian state on land occupied in 1967 including Jerusalem.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

1. We must be cautious not to fall prey to false interpretations, especially by Hamas, and wrongly bet on the changes in Egypt; we are still in uncharted waters.
2. In the long run, democracy and the growing influence of the people on the decision-making process will be to the benefit of the Palestinian cause
3. The Palestinian leadership must take the initiative and take responsibility in a way that will serve its interests first and not wait for others or blame them. This also means not making pleas to the Americans or Israelis. The priority must be to get the internal house

in order and set the groundwork for reconciliation and not waste time in calls to resume the negotiations.

4. It is in Hamas' interest to show flexibility in returning to the course of reconciliation because it needs the siege to be lifted and to cancel out the negative model of governance it assumed, which also set back its popularity.
5. The change of system in Egypt is a source of concern for Israel and a motivation for it to reconsider its strategic calculations. In any case, the implications of the revolutions will revamp Arab relations with the West.