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von hkhatib

in Demokratisierung,  
Innere Sicherheit,  
Terrorismus

Kommentare ( 0 )

## Why Despotism Is Not the Solution for Egypt

by *Hakim Khatib*

The assassination of the man in charge of thousands of prosecutions including the controversial death sentences against Muslim Brotherhood followers paved the way for the incumbent Egyptian president for a one-time knockout against dissent once and for all.

Speaking at the military funeral of Hisham Barakat, the Prosecution General of Egypt killed in a car bomb on June 29, the President Abdulfattah Al-Sisi threatened to amend the laws to make them responsive to the implementation of justice. "Under such circumstances, courts are useless and so are laws," said Al-Sisi promising to carry out any death or lifetime sentences against what he called "terrorists".

"The arm of justice is chained by the law," Al-Sisi said. "We are going to amend the law to allow us [to] implement justice as fast as possible," he added, emphasizing that the authorities are going ahead with the death sentences. This raises the issue of the provisional death sentences against the Muslim Brotherhood including the ousted first democratically elected president Mohammad Morsi, who was accused of "the biggest case of espionage in the history of Egypt".

Consolidating his despotic power faster than any other dictator in the Middle East to impose his decisions over the Egyptian population and territory, Al-Sisi seems to co-opt the judicial system as well as communications means. Succeeding in doing so, Al-Sisi might be able to control the means of persuasion – the law, government loyal clergy and media, and the means of coercion – military, police and security forces.

Due to the fact there hasn't been an elected parliament in Egypt since 2013, Al-Sisi enjoys the privilege of passing laws in the form of decrees. The assassination of Barakat can be easily – and in fact is already being – politicized, accelerating the process of power consolidation even more. Implying that the Muslim Brothers are responsible for the terrorist attack against the prosecutor, Al-Sisi stressed that legal processes that could take years to enforce should be expedited when facing terrorism: "We are facing terrorism. The laws and courts shall respond to it," he said.

To confirm his control of coercive instruments, on 4 July 2015 Al-Sisi appeared wearing his military uniform, talking to police and military forces in the north of Sinai about their important role in fighting terrorism and any plans against Egypt, according to the official Facebook page of the Egyptian Presidency. Al-Sisi said: "Under control is not enough ... everything should be stable". However controlling instruments of persuasion and coercion doesn't seem to be enough in both internal and external matters: Therefore, Al-Sisi claims that fighting terrorism will not only defend Egypt but the whole civilized world.

While Egypt seems to be divided now between those who kneel to Egypt's sole leader and those who see injustice and despotism and thus refuse to kneel, voices of a different rhetoric are seldomly heard. Actually, the speed of

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events and the severity of the regime's crackdown – not only against the Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters but also against any voices different from the regime – leaves very little or no space for different narratives and constructive criticism. Intellectuals had failed to present alternative narratives and perspectives on politics to the dominant discourse of the Egyptian regime, putting social coexistence on the periphery. The mainstream bulk of clerics is either loyalists or strained from opposing the regime due to mounting fears.

Hassan Nafa'a, professor in political science at Cairo University said that amending the law does not hinder terrorism. It is rather despotism what offers a haven for terrorism to flourish. Nafa'a's point can be traced back in Egypt's history when the Muslim Brotherhood, like in present times, was dissolved in 1948 following involvement in violence in Palestine. The Muslim Brotherhood continued to grow despite Nasser's despotic measures against them. He ordered the arrest of more than 27,000 people in 1965, allegedly all were Muslim Brothers, and hundreds were sentenced by a special court, with more than 20 subsequently tortured to death.

The harsh crackdown continues under Al-Sisi in the name of the fighting against terrorism, which increases the sense of victimization for a considerable segment of the Egyptian society. While channels to find justice seem absent in Egypt, the feeling of victimization remains as long as their case is still unsettled. "Mass death sentences are fast losing Egypt's judiciary," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Human Rights Watch director of Middle East and North Africa division. "Instead of weighing the evidence against each person, judges are convicting defendants en masse without regard for fair trial standards."

While media outlets are busy justifying Al-Sisi's harsh policies, several out-of-tune journalists were banned, imprisoned or pushed into exile. Despite its political implications between Qatar and Egypt, the case of Al-Jazeera Journalist, Mohamed Fahmy, who had to renounce his Egyptian citizenship to be freed last February, is a case in point. According to the Egyptian Newspaper Rassd, only over the past two years, 26 Egyptians, most of them talented contributors, renounced their citizenship for among others Israeli, Saudi Arabian and American ones. This tendency, according to the paper, owes to the lack of freedom, citizenship and feeling of belonging, poverty, oppression and injustice, which forces Egyptians to change hearts.

As a defence minister two years ago, Al- Sisi warned of using violence against citizens and stressed on the fact that the use of violence produces violence. Unfortunately, the teacher is doing exactly what he deemed useless. By isolating segments of the society, no matter how the elimination process happened and how long it took to crystallize, new resistance forces are forming in the backyards far from the regime's surveillance.

*Alas*, a draconian era is still to come on the heads of Egyptians, and is more likely to fire back at those who despotically coordinated to elevate the level of depression, should the same policies continue. The present is different when compared to Nasser's era. People have learnt that they can dispose of a military dictator – Mubarak, or an Islamist would-be dictator, Morsi – and it wouldn't be far fetched for them to work towards the same end under Al-Sisi.

 Tags: [Al-Sisi](#), [Authoritarianism](#), [death sentence](#), [despot](#), [Egypt](#), [hisham barakt](#), [terrorism](#)

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Bürgerkriege (24)

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Demokratisierung (14)

Drohnen (15)

Flüchtlinge (17)

Humanitäre Interventionen (15)

Innere Sicherheit (32)

Interviews (10)

Katastrophen (4)

Konferenz (29)

Militär (31)

Pandemien (2)

Podcast (7)

Popkultur (22)

Raketenabwehr (1)

Sanktionen (8)

Security Culture (27)

Sicherheits-Kommunikation (16)

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