

Democratic Experiences of Egypt after fall of Brotherhood Government

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Abstract

Sisi after becoming president in 2014, made much tactical promises and assured the people of Egypt that he would revive economy, end terrorism, improve the infrastructure and education standard, secure human rights and would create a healthy atmosphere for democracy. But after four year in power, on both economic and political level Sisi showed very poor performance. With his (Sisi) coming into power transition of Egypt looks in danger of reviving the dreadful revival of the Mubarak era, military still hold the political dominance and enjoy the autonomy. During the period of both interim government and Sisi violent suppression of dissent particularly the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters was seen at large scale. Egypt thus is worse on most standards of measure and is far from a healthy democratic state. This paper highlights the Political Space, Status of Opposition and Human Rights during the Morsi rule.

KEYWORD: political opposition, human rights, political space, human rights.

Though little but even under Mubarak the political space was provided and to some extent freedom of expression was allowed, which could not be seen in this new military rule has been firmly shut and prisons (mostly political) are teeming with detainees. In the beginning some hopes were seen and Sisi depicted himself as survivor of Egypt, but the subsequent actions of this military regime led many to reconsider the implications of the takeover, which was evident from the division of political opinion at the time of 2015 parliamentary elections. Some sections of Egypt seemed fully convinced with the promises made by Sisi like restoration of economy, stability and law and order and bringing back the influential status of Egypt in region in particular and in world in general, but some sections continuously opposed him. Among his critics were not only the people of Islamic bent but also the leftist, liberals and youth. The bias coverage of media depicted the protesters as only Morsi supporter but it was not so, many other section advocating free will were also against Sisi. Moreover one more sections which went unnoticed was the labor protest agitation for solution of their socio economic problems, they were highly unsatisfied with the government capacity and willingness to solve their problem, the labor protests which demanded the improvement in their socioeconomic condition could not in any way be classified as pro Morsi protest.¹

The main stream political parties also got threatened and showed their concern about the determination of Sisi government to limit participation close the political space. At the time of presidential elections majority of political parties kept quiet, majority was backing Sisi and a few had chosen to back Hamdeen Sabbahi or asked their followers to

boycott the elections, but they were doing all this while sitting on the sidelines. But with the coming of parliamentary elections the political parties became more vocal because and the new parliamentary law had restricted their political space minimized the role of all political parties. The constitution of 2014 provided for approximately 75 percent of the seats (448 out of 596) to be filled by independent candidates and party list was provided with only 20 percent of seats (120) to be contested, the president was given power to appoint additional members up to 28.² This was intentional move to limit the ability of parliament to challenge the president. This situation leads to the unanimous condemnation of draft by political parties over their role being threatened by the law, they even threatening to boycott the elections and some also did.

With the backing of many anti-Muslim Brotherhood gulf countries like United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, a bloody crackdown was carried out on Islamists in general and Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters in particular which constitute the main opposition force and serious threat to the plans of military. All assets of Muslim Brotherhood were confiscated and it was declared as a terrorist organisation. Freedom and Justice Party, the political wing of Muslim Brotherhood was also dissolved and debarred from any future participation in political process.³ After military coup Thousands of supporters of Muslim Brotherhood were killed and more than forty thousand were detained within a year, moreover a huge number of people were reported tortured and disappeared at the hands of security forces.⁴ on 25 march 2014 an Egyptian court has opened and adjourned a mass trial of 683 people mainly Islamists allegedly supporters of Brotherhood and deposed president Mohamed Morsi, including the top leaders of Muslim Brotherhood, on charges of incitement of violence murder, and sabotage. In same month before these trial 529 alleged supporters of Morsi were given death sentence on charge of attacking a police station. In those trials many times defence lawyers were not allowed to present their case.⁵ In 2015 only 29,000 of Muslim Brotherhood leaders, supporters and sympathisers were taken into custody.⁶ In 2015 itself ousted president Morsi along with 105 others was given a death sentence, which was later postponed and court on 16 June 2015 confirmed the sentence.⁷ Fifteen men were hanged on 26 December 2017 on charge of an attacking in the Sinai Peninsula in 2013, which was highest since six Islamists were hanged in 2015.⁸ These manipulated charges and verdicts were part of military strategy to suppress Islamists in general and Muslim Brotherhood in particular, the potent political opposition and rival of military.

Apart from the usual repression of Islamists, Sisi also had crack downed on watchdogs and liberal groups particularly the pro democracy forces which were involved in 25 January revolution and were continuously challenging him. The strategy of Sisi to weaken the decent particularly liberal opposition goes back to 2013 when Sisi government arrested large number of liberal activists protesting against the draconian law

which imposed restriction on protest and public speech, for example leading figures from pro democracy movement, Ahmed Douma, Mohamed Adel, Ahmed Maher were arrested and were slammed three imprisonment for protesting against the new protest law.⁹ Apart from them thousands other protestors against this law were also arrested and got long term jail after facing unfair trials. Moreover, western journalists were not allowed by Sisi administration to enter on visit of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in 2016, out of fear that they might ask question about the dissident jailed by Sisi administration.¹⁰

New regime targeted many Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) like Sisi administration on 9 February 2017 closed the office of Al-Nadeem Centre for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, which was formed in 1993 to provide legal support, counselling services and other assistance to victim of torture, on ground of license violation, but Aida Seif al-Dawla the director of organisation called it a political move of Sisi government.¹¹ Hisham Genina a top auditor of the country was dismissed in March 2016 by Sisi administration, giving the reason of national security, by using another draconian law passed by Morsi government in 2015 which provide him the unlimited power to dismiss the heads of supervisory boards of government bodies if there is a threat to national security. Genina in a public speech had accused the government, a few months before, of stealing sixty billion dollar from public funds in past four years, which became cause of his sack. He also on various occasions accused the government of corrupting the prominent institutions of country like judiciary and police.¹² Another example of Sisi's intolerant approach toward the critics and corrupting the judiciary was the sentencing of 152 people from two to five years imprisonment for protesting against the transfer of two Red Sea Islands to Saudi Arabia.¹³ The future plans and approach of Sisi towards the opposition also seems dubious, for example on Nov. 29, 2017 Former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq announced that he would run the forth coming presidential elections, immediately after announcement a case of stimulating public unrest and issuing inciting statements on various anti government channels was reopened, and UAE government, where he was residing since 2012, prevented him to move without permission.¹⁴ On mounting pressure Shafiq withdrew its candidacy and announced he will run in 2018 presidential elections.¹⁵ Similarly Col. Ahmed Konsowa was also summoned by military prosecution on Dec .2 , 2017 when he announced his intention to run for presidency in 2018 and was detained for 15 days for questioning, he was charged for "behaviour detrimental to the requirements of the military regime" over posting of a video expressing his political views and wearing uniform while expressing his political views.¹⁶ later the North Cairo Military Court on Dec. 19, sentenced him to six years in prison for violating the military orders and instructions and military regime.¹⁷ Prominent lawyer Khalid Ali, was also sentenced for three month in prison and fined 1,000 Egyptian

pounds, after his announcement for forth coming presidential election.¹⁸ The way recently Sisi used judiciary to block any potential rival from running in the presidential election of 2018, shows the shrinking political space and depict that Sisi regime is fully prepared to use any means to prevent any threat to Sisi for presidential election of 2018.

This suppression and torture of opposition, violent crackdown on opposition, mass unfair trials of opposition, and execution of critics in military motivated military court shows the intolerable approach of Sisi towards the opposition and critics like that of Mubarak. Political space since coming of Sisi into power has considerable shrieked and voices against the regime have been taken with heavy hand.

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