

## Combating Fayoum Poverty: Dialogue in Cairo

By Ibrahim Al Bahrawy  
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My previous article “Fayoum: A Model for Egypt ... How Do We Overcome Poverty?” has generated many reactions from officials and intellectuals. These reactions show the following views about the society and the government:

- 1- The issue of severe poverty suffered by many Egyptians and ways to combat poverty stirred the conscience of all who commented on the article. This shows that Egyptians are ready to **prioritize the issue of poverty as a national program**. The saying of the Great Khalifa Ali Bin Abi Taleb, “if poverty were a man, I would kill him,” was repeated by everybody who called.
- 2- The **failure of government to solve the problem of extensive poverty** becomes terribly evident when comparing the development of Egyptian capitalism with the Malaysian model led by Dr. Mahatir Mohamed. He succeeded in implementing a model that increased the annual per capita income from \$100 to \$10,000. Accordingly, most who commented on the article considered that the primary responsibility for the spread of poverty lies within the government and that the executive authority needs to lead efforts to combat this phenomenon which threatens the social and national security of Egypt.
- 3- Many questioned **the striking gap between the lavish government expenditure on such things as government buildings, vehicles for senior officials, and medical treatment outside of Egypt, and the poor level of expenditure on the development process** essential in generating jobs to combat poverty.
- 4- Many questioned the **criteria for appointing senior executive officials** and evaluating their performance. Reviewing these criteria ensures that only highly qualified cadre who have a spirit of initiative are appointed for senior positions.
- 5- Some said that the Fayoum governor has integrity and international experience in agriculture. Others questioned the **nature of the obstacles that cripple a senior executive officer** such as a minister or a governor. Is it the limited authority given to him or a fear of the centralized executive leadership that makes him reluctant to take initiative?
- 6- Some spoke of the **egotism** that controls the behavior of many when they are nominated for senior executive posts. This leads the officers, regardless of their posts, to arrogantly deal with citizens and their problems and to believe that the public wealth is their own. They operate under the assumption that they are a class chosen by God to manage, own, and rule in their own interests. **This phenomenon is primarily responsible for the deterioration of government performance, neglect of the interests of the nation and society, widespread poverty, and the lack of hope in reform.**

- 7- Some referred to **the governor of Alexandria as a successful model** of senior executive. He encompasses the spirit of initiative and is capable of mobilizing civil society in the development of Alexandria and to combat poverty in the governorate. This indicates that capable officials can overcome the obstacles set by the government and its bodies, and can also overcome the destructive egotism.
- 8- Many recognized that **poverty is not just limited to the neglected vulnerable groups** but it is also affecting the standards of living of the middle class which is the primary force in the development process.