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## ***DEMOCRACY & MARKET ECONOMY IN EGYPT***

### ***NEWS IN BRIEF***

***A SERVICE OF THE CAIRO OFFICE OF CIPE***

***Issue No. 3  
May 24, 2007***

#### ***Ghaly : Egypt's Membership of the Human Rights Council Makes it More Adherent to Supporting Reform.***

#### ***Reporters Without Borders Criticizes Egypt's Membership Labeling the Egyptian Regime as "Oppressive"***

Boutros Ghaly , Head of the National Council for Human Rights and former Secretary General of the United Nations, insisted that Egypt's membership of the Human Rights Council should strengthen the government's adherence to respecting human rights and political reform as well as supporting Egypt's external relations. In the meantime Reporters Without Borders heavily criticized Egypt joining the council calling the move very worrisome. RWB has called the Egyptian regime "oppressive" citing the numerous human rights infractions exercised by the regime which include systemic torture, arbitrary detention and arrest, trying civilians in front of military tribunals, and electoral fraud.

*Al Masry Al Youm, May 20, 2007; p. 1*

#### ***National Council for Human Rights Charged with the Responsibility of Receiving Electoral Monitoring Requests***

The Higher Committee for Electoral Monitoring has delegated the responsibility of receiving civil society organizations' electoral monitoring requests to the National Council for Human Rights. The committee's decision included methods of coordination between the NCHR and HCEM, monitoring indicators, methods for issuing permits, and the need to inform subcommittee heads of HCEM decisions of allowing the presence of civil society during election times. In the meantime observers from civil society organizations cited many infractions a day before the deadline for candidacy nominations for the upcoming Upper House elections. Various administrative obstructions and continued intervention on part of the security forces in addition to "reserving" the crescent and camel symbols for candidates from the ruling National Democratic Party.

*Al Masry Al Youm, May 22, 2007; p.3*

### ***Arab and International Activists : Egyptian Opposition Responsible for the Obstruction of Reform...Religious Institution Supportive of Corruption***

In a two day seminar held at the Cairo Center for Human Rights Studies titled “The Future of Arab Democracy movements”, democracy activists criticized opposition movements for their position towards reform. The activists claimed that a lack of trust exists between the citizenry and opposition movements, which has obstructed reform and mobilization; in addition to that the religious institutions (both Muslim and Christian) were accused of their support of corruption and the consequent backwardness in the country. Saad El Din Ibrahim, Director of the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies, inquired about the reasons behind the successful transitions to democracy in Eastern Europe and the reason for failure in the Arab world. Responses varied from the lack of political will on part of the United States to foster democracy in the region as it can achieve its economic and strategic interests easier by supporting similar dictatorships to the ones rejected in Eastern Europe. While others stressed that the transition process requires time and is not a sudden leap forward, the example of Eastern Europe was given where democratization in Slovakia, Georgia, Ukraine, Croatia and Serbia took about 6 years from 1998 to 2004.

Al Masry Al Youm, May 20, 2007; p. 5

### ***National Associations in Cairo Resort to the President of Federation of National Associations In Row Over Organizing Pilgrimage Trips***

The row between the Ministry of Social Solidarity and national associations has reached a new level. Ezz El Din Farghal, Head of the Regional Federation of Associations in Cairo, has transferred the problem to Abdel Aziz Hegazy, Head of the General Federation of Associations, due to the Minister of Social Solidarity’s insistence on relegating control and organization of pilgrimage trips to the National Pilgrimage Institute that follows the Ministry of Social Solidarity. Farghal has forwarded the requests of many association heads, who stressed the fact that there is sufficient monitoring of association activities as is.

Al Masry Al Youm, May 21, 2007; p.5

### ***The American Ambassador: The American Embassy Will Not Contact the Muslim Brotherhood and American Officials Will Not Visit the Brotherhood Headquarters***

Francis Ricciardone, the current US ambassador to Egypt, announced that a delegation from Congress will visit Egypt within a few days time. Ricciardone negated that there is any contact between the embassy and the Muslim Brotherhood. Ricciardone added that the delegation will meet with parliamentarians from both Houses including those in the opposition. Ricciardone expected that development assistance to Egypt would continue until 2009 with a focus on supporting commercial activity, investment, and free trade.

*Al Masry Al Youm, May 24, 2007; p.1*

### ***Head of the Association of Religious Affairs: Minister of Social Solidarity's National Pilgrimage Institute is Illegal***

Head of the Association of Religious Affairs called on Muslim parliamentarians to discuss the Ministry of Social Solidarity's initiative to create the National Pilgrimage Institute. In a memorandum delivered to two parliamentarians, the head of the association claimed that the Ministry's NPI monopoly over organizing pilgrimage trips would be illegal. According to Law 84 of 2002, associations have the right to organize pilgrimage trips. He added that the Ministry intends to undermine the role of associations by the establishment of the NPI. The illegality of the NPI also stems from the fact that members of this institute are also employed in the public sector which conflicts with Article 35 of Law 84 that considers government agencies to be monitors over associations.

*Al Masry Al Youm, May 22, 2007; p.2*

### ***8 Parliamentary Questionings Accuse the Government of Failure and Inability in Resolving Unemployment***

8 parliamentarians have accused the government of failure in providing adequate solutions to the growing unemployment problem in Egypt. They claim that the government has failed in achieving what was promised during Mubarak's campaign for presidency and providing 4.5 million job opportunities. Questionings posed by the parliamentarians inquired about the number of job opportunities provided, illustrating that 1.5 million are needed thus far. Others have accused the current government of fraud, as it claimed building factories that already existed as part of Mubarak's campaign for the presidency.

*Al Masry Al Youm, May 23 2007; p.*

## ***Bahaa El Din: A Legal Framework for Regulating Bankruptcy and Market Exit is Needed***

Ziad Bahaa El Din, Head of the General Authority for Free zones and Investment, stressed the importance of having a viable legal and judicial framework to organize market exit and bankruptcy in Egypt. The announcement came during the one day conference held by GAFI, the Egyptian Institute of Directors (EIOD), the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Bahaa El Din stated that there is on-going cooperation between GAFI and the National Law Commission that is charged with the responsibility of modernizing economic legislation relevant to bankruptcy reform in Egypt. Head of the National Law Commission, Dr. Janat El Samalouty, announced that a conference will be held in mid June to announce the results achieved by the NLC. El Samalouty had said that the current Egyptian insolvency system is not up to par with ongoing efforts to improve the investment climate in Egypt, despite the changes introduced in the most recent Trade Law number 17 for the year 1999.

*Al Alam Al Youm, May 22, 2007; p.1  
Al Ahram, May 22, 2007; p.28*

## ***Egyptian Stock market to Display Transactions in Real Time on Web Portal***

Sources from the Cairo and Alexandria Stock Exchange have confirmed that modernizing and updating the website is being explored by the Management. A vital change is being undergone in the website to display stock transactions in real time. The current interface displays transactions with a 15 minute delay, which can obstruct timely decision making and transactions on part of shareholders and brokers. Despite the fact that some Egyptian companies do provide real time online coverage of the stock exchange the official website does not. It is worthy to note that most Arab stock exchanges have the information available in real time on their websites. Observers have stressed the importance of the official website displaying credible information in light of the growth of the field and the proliferation of brokerage firms and financial institutions with an online presence.

*Al Alam Al Youm, May 13, 2007; p. 1*

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