

# “Arab Spring” in Egypt

On January 25, 2011, thousands of Egyptian protestors rushed Tahrir square in Cairo, as well as numerous other locations around [Egypt](#), to demand the resignation of President [Hosni Mubarak](#) and the implementation of a new, democratically-oriented government. On the morning of February 12, following more than two weeks of brutal government resistance, Vice President [Omar Suleiman](#) announced [Mubarak](#)'s resignation from the presidential post.

Following Mubarak's ouster, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), led by Commander-in-Chief Mohamed Tantawi, took temporary control of governing [Egypt](#)'s transition to democracy. In the months following its rise to power, the Council released numerous statements in which it assured the country and international community of its intention to suspend the four decades-old emergency laws, provide a safe transition to democracy through open elections, honor all regional and international obligations, and ensure that peace and security be maintained for all citizens of [Egypt](#).

It has been nearly a year and a half since the revolution began and [Egypt](#) has certainly undergone dramatic changes – for better and for worse.

Free and open elections were held for both the national parliament and the [presidency](#), military tribunals against civilians have been cut, an imprisoned Israeli-American accused of spying was set free, there have been positive developments in human rights. On the other hand, official relations with Israel have soured and with Iran have grown, the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) - whose candidate [Mohamed Morsi](#) won the [presidential election](#) - and other Islamist organizations have gained more political clout, and the SCAF actually dissolved the just-recently elected parliament.

Given Egypt's importance in maintaining stability, a balance of power, and peace in the [Middle East](#), as well as its close alliance with the [United States](#), it is important to keep track of the nation's progress as it continues down the path of reformation and change.

## Relations with Israel

### **Peace Deal**

Since signing a [peace deal with Israel in 1979](#), [Egypt](#) and the [Jewish state](#) have remained diplomatically friendly and maintained at worst a cold peace. Though many in the Egyptian public opposed the deal with [Israel](#), Mubarak fully honored the terms of the agreement signed by his predecessor [Anwar Sadat](#). The peace deal led to a softening of tensions between the two

countries and even helped facilitate the signing of a 15-year contract for [Israel](#) to buy natural gas from [Egypt](#) at a slightly below-market price.

The new temporary government in [Egypt](#), more responsive to the wishes of the people, may be aiming to renege on both treaties with [Israel](#), citing solid support for such a change. A recent [poll](#) suggested that more than 50% of Egyptians are in favor of tearing up the decades-old [peace agreement](#) and 36% would support overhauling it with major changes.

Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi said that “any issue is negotiable” and referred specifically to the stipulation in the peace treaty that [Sinai](#) remain a demilitarized zone.

Presidential candidate [Amr Moussa](#) has said that, if elected, he would not seek to scrap the treaty or the peace that it entails. He maintains, however, that the direction of peace between the countries is very much dependent on future Israeli policy. “We want to be a friend of [Israel](#),” Moussa said, “but it has to have two parties, it is not on [Egypt](#) to be a friend. [Israel](#) has to be a friend, too.”

On the other hand, [Mohammed ElBaradei](#), another potential presidential candidate, has made it clear that he would not necessarily honor the [peace treaty](#) with [Israel](#). “If [Israel](#) attacked [Gaza](#), we would declare war against the Zionist regime,” ElBaradei was quoted as saying by the Tehran Times. In February 2011, however, ElBaradei had suggested that the [peace deal](#) with [Israel](#) was “rock solid” and that “[Egypt](#) will continue to respect it.

Another presidential candidate, Muhammad Salim al-Awa, made a public address on Egyptian television in which he explicitly called for “affirmation of the enmity” with Israel, namely to officially recognize that “[Israel](#) is an enemy ... the enemy of all the Arab and Muslim countries, with Egypt first and foremost.” He said that the [Egypt-Israel accord](#) is not a peace deal but rather a truce, meaning that it is temporary and does not mean that [Egypt](#) must treat [Israel](#) as an ally or a friend.

On July 23, 2011, though, the head of Egypt's ruling military council Field Marshall Mohammed Tantawi announced publicly that the Egyptian government intends to obey all previously signed international agreements - including the [Egypt-Israel peace accord](#) - and that [Egypt](#) will continue to work towards achieving peace in the Middle East.

On September 17, 2011, Moussa reiterated his position that the 1979 peace treaty is untouchable. Moussa, quoted by the Kuwaiti paper Al-Jurida, said that “the treaty has become a historical record.” Though he had originally noted that he would not seek to scrap the treaty if elected president, Moussa had later noted that the treaty could definitely be amended since it is “neither a Quran nor a Bible.

On September 27, 2011, Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed Amr told the Associated Press that Egypt will always respect the 1979 landmark U.S.-brokered peace treaty with Israel.

In January 2012, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, which now has a plurality in the parliament, announced that it will not change the industrial zones jointly managed by Egypt and Israel to promote trade between the two peace partners. However, on January 26, a Brotherhood spokesman told a London-based Arabic-language newspaper that the Muslim Brotherhood's position of "reject[ing] any request from the [Israeli] Embassy to meet with leaders of the Brotherhood [is] clear and not up for discussion." Israel insists that it is open to the new Cairo government and is happy to conduct dialogue with anyone willing to talk with them, but the Brotherhood's spokesman said further that "our group is not prepared to conduct dialogue with Israel - that is our decision."

### Natural Gas Treaty

One foundation of the [1979 peace deal](#) was Egypt's agreement to supply oil and natural gas to [Israel](#), though a commercial contract was also to be negotiated for fair price value. In 2005, the two countries signed [a memorandum of understanding](#) noting that the supply of natural gas - slated for an additional 15 years - "will contribute to enhancing peace and stability in the Middle East." Under the memorandum's terms, Cairo "guarantees the continuous and uninterrupted supply" of gas which accounts for nearly 40% of [Israel](#)'s total natural gas imports.

This treaty, however, had long been a contentious source of debate among Islamists in [Egypt](#) and, in the post-Mubarak Egypt, came under considerable renewed heat. Many Egyptians expressed weariness of the gas deal, believing [Israel](#) to be paying below-market prices and the former government oil minister who was in charge of maintaining the [deal with Israel](#), is rumored to have been tried in court on charges that he "wasted public money" to the tune of almost \$800 million.

Additionally, since the revolution began in January 2011, the pipeline has been attacked no fewer than twelve times by assailants, causing major blockages in shipments to Israel that in turn have forced considerable price hikes and shortages. Israel's Minister of National Infrastructures [Uzi Landau](#) estimates that electricity prices will rise by some 20% and the Israel Electric Company has stated that the cost of these attacks to the Israeli economy is liable to reach some 3-3.5 billion shekels. No organizations have taken responsibility for the attacks, though many Egyptians point an accusing finger towards groups operating out of the [Gaza Strip](#), namely al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad and Jaish al-Islam. The success that these groups have had in attacking the pipeline and subsequently escaping law enforcement underscores how they are considerably exploiting the increasingly lawlessness that is taking over the Sinai Peninsula.

On May 5th, the Arabic newspaper *Al-Masry Al-Youm* reported that Egyptian government officials would seek to raise the sale price to almost double what Israel pays currently. Specific details on the future of the deal have yet to be revealed. In early July, the Egyptian finance



minister announced his intention to raise the price of gas to Israel by some 2.5 billion shekels, and another senior Egyptian official even offered an assessment that the attacks on the gas pipeline “is expected to continue unless implementation of the [gas] agreement in its present format is not halted.”

After the fifth attack against the pipeline in late July, Amit Mor, CEO and energy specialist at the Eco Energy Consulting Firm in Israel, spoke about the Egyptian-Israeli gas deal. “It is crucial to Israel that the Egyptian government establishes security control, especially in northern Sinai to secure the natural gas pipeline to Israel,” Mor said. “I think the major consumers and government all have given up on the supply of Egyptian gas to Israel.” He added, “The resumption of the full contractual obligation of gas supply to Israel can be used as a test-case of the Egyptian government to maintain its international obligations visa- vis foreign direct investments in Egypt on the one hand, and its future relations with Israel on the other.”

On April 19, 2012, Mohamed Shoeb, head of the Egyptian Natural Gas Holding Company, announced that Egypt was terminating the gas deal due to what he termed “Israel’s repeated breaching of the agreement.” The termination of the agreement is not expected to raise Israel’s electricity prices, however, because the recent price hike of nine percent was made while taking into account that no gas would be delivered from Egypt.

### **Public Discourse**

On May 15, 2011, thousands of Egyptians marked Palestinian “[Nakba](#)” day in Cairo by demonstrating in front of the Israeli embassy in the city. Despite the awkward relations, Egyptian security cracked down on the demonstration. The Egyptian Health Ministry estimated the number of protestors injured at over 350.

Conspiracy theories about Israeli influence in Egyptian politics also continue to spread both in the media and through government sources despite the beginning of an era of accountability and more open democracy. In June, Deputy Prime Minister Yehia El-Gamal told the Lebanese news site Al-Nashra that Israel was inciting sectarian strife between Muslims and Christians in the country. On July 20, minister Ayman Abu-Hadid responded to calls that an Egyptian export had been the cause of an E.Coli epidemic that killed almost 50 Germans by blaming Israel. “Israel is waging a commercial war against Egyptian exports,” he explained, and with that the case was closed.

Such conspiracy theories, touted often under the Mubarak regime, lie close to the heart of Egyptian society and it may take more than a popular uprising to change this discourse. “Conspiracy theories are part of the texture of our culture,” Hani Henry, a psychology professor at the American University in Cairo, told The Media Line. “Even if we have a democratic government, the problem will not go away.” He says blaming Israel for Egypt’s problems could be both a cynical attempt by politicians to distract the public or an honest belief that Israel is

constantly conniving against Egypt. In either case however, conspiratorial thinking is deeply ingrained in the Egyptian mindset.

In the wake of the IDF mistakenly killing 5 Egyptian soldiers during an assault on terrorists that had committed the August 15 terror attacks that killed 8 Israelis just inside the Sinai border, protests and demonstrations broke out in Cairo. Some of the demonstrations were centered near the Israeli embassy in the city with protesters calling for the ouster of the Israeli ambassador and many were holding Palestinian flags and chanting pro-Palestinian slogans.

On August 23, protesters outside of the residence of Israeli ambassador to Egypt, Yitzhak Levanon, forced the Egyptian police guarding the compound to remove the Israeli flag from the top of the residence. This follows a similar event from August 21 when protesters outside the Israeli embassy scaled the 15 story building and replaced the Israeli flag with an Egyptian one, in full view of Egyptian soldiers and police officers. The two flags were both thrown into the large crowds who proceeded to tear it up and chant anti-Israel slogans. On August 26, the Israeli Foreign Ministry demanded that the government in Egypt replace the two flags saying that the incident borders on a violation of international law. On August 30, Cairo's Israeli Embassy replaced the Israeli flag.

At the beginning of September 2011, the Egyptian government built a concrete wall to surround the compound housing Israel's embassy in order to protect it from violent demonstrations. It did little to help. On September 9, a horde of around 4,000 protesters gathered at the newly erected wall and used hammers and other tools to destroy the concrete barrier. After knocking down the wall, the protesters entered the compound, climbed the outside of the building and again tore down the Israeli flag flying overhead. Witnesses relate that cheers of happiness and calls to destroy Israel were heard amongst the crowd as the flag was thrown to the ground and eventually burned.

Then, on the evening of Friday, September 10, thousands of Egyptian activists who had come to Tahrir Square to protest domestic Egyptian issues walked two miles to the Israeli Embassy and began demolishing a security wall surrounding the embassy. By 12:30 a.m., the protesters had completely destroyed the wall and were setting police cars on fire. A handful of protesters reached the entrance hall and threw pamphlets from the foyer out of windows. At 2 a.m., Defense Minister Ehud Barack reported that Israel appealed to the United States to help guard its Cairo embassy, and thirty minutes later, U.S. President Barack Obama told Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu that "I will do all that I can." According to reports from many reputable newspapers, it was indeed the U.S. intervention that enabled the rescue of the six Israeli security guards who were trapped inside the embassy.

As of September 19, Israeli embassy staff have reoccupied the building and resumed their work. According to former Israeli ambassador to Egypt Zvi Mazel, "Hatred towards Israel is the only



common ground for the deeply divided forces battling for control in Egypt” right now. On November 20, Israeli ambassador Yitzhak Levanon returned to Cairo through Istanbul.

## **Gaza/Egypt Border and Sinai**

[Relations with Israel](#) continued to dwindle on May 25, 2011, when the temporary government announced that it would officially open the border crossing between Egypt and the [Gaza Strip](#). Israeli diplomatic officials had urged Egypt to continue blockading the [Hamis](#) government in Gaza, but to no avail. “Israel has no problem with civilian goods getting into the Gaza Strip,” said an Israeli government official, who would discuss Israel’s position only on the condition of anonymity. “Our focus is on preventing Hamas from building up its very deadly terrorist military machine.”

Former Israeli [Shin Bet](#) chief and current Parliament member Avi Dichter ([Kadima](#)) said that Egypt opening its Gaza border is less important than its continued policy regarding illegal smuggling. “What’s important is not whether the crossing is open or not,” said Dichter, “but whether the Egyptian policy has changed” with regards to their attempts to halt the smuggling business.

Unfortunately, Egyptian security forces have mostly been unattentive to the smuggling problem from Sinai into Gaza as the large bedouin tribes in the peninsula have taken advantage of the lack of responsible and coordinated security measures to move large amounts of weapons into Gaza. “They’ve all gone home,” laughs Mosaad, a powerful bedouin leader from a small village near the Gaza border. As of July, according to highly credible intelligence sources, terrorist groups in Gaza have amassed more than 10,000 rockets of all types and thousands of anti-tank missiles and even possibly hundreds of anti-aircraft missiles. The continued buildup in Gaza means that Hamas and Islamic Jihad will be even more capable of disrupting life in southern Israel and of posing a greater danger to [IDF](#) forces operating in the area.

But smuggling is not only going in the direction of Gaza; the bedouins also help to smuggle Palestinians out of the strip and into Sinai - many of whom are innocent people looking for a better life, though some also come to join radical organizations who are attempting to sabotage Egypt’s transition to democracy. One of these groups, Takfir-wal Higura, has already shown its growing strength after it attacked a protest in the northern Sinai city of [El-Arish](#), killing a number of protesters and handing out flyers that called for Jihad, said they were linked to Al-Qaeda and told Egyptians that Islam is the only true faith and they need to dismantle the [Camp David treaty](#) with Israel. Egyptian security forces noted that there were a good number of Palestinians that joined Takfir-wal Higura on the raid, and at least one of them was killed in the melee. “The terrorists were joined by members of Palestinian factions and they are currently being questioned by military intelligence. We arrested 12 assailants including three Palestinians,” the head of security in northern Sinai, General Saleh al Masry said.

After the deadly terrorist attack in Israel on August 18 that killed eight people, the lawlessness and porous nature of the Sinai border is becoming ever more evident. Israel has said that a group of no fewer than 15 terrorists left Gaza, entered the Sinai and then crossed into Israel to execute their attack. They attempted to retreat and escape along the same corridor but were tracked by the IDF and at least 7 of the terrorists were killed in the ensuing battles. Regrettably, in the melee of the battle, the IDF mistakenly killed five Egyptian border guards when attack helicopters fired on their positions just inside the Sinai-Israel border.

Diplomatic tensions rose quickly in the wake of these deaths, with wire reports that Egypt had withdrawn their ambassador from Tel Aviv floating around, but in the end PM Netanyahu and FM Barak were able to ease tensions at least slightly by having an apology hand delivered to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry in Cairo.

### **Ilan Grapel**

In early June 2011, American-Israeli citizen Ilan Grapel was arrested along with hundreds of other foreigners in Cairo under suspicion of spying and inciting violence. Though all the other prisoners were quickly released, the Egyptian police kept Grapel in custody. Egypt then charged Grapel with being an agent of the [Mossad](#), the secretive Israeli spy organization with agents all over the world, and accused the 27 year old student of "inciting sedition, spreading rumors, and urging protesters toward friction with the armed forces and to commit acts of violence."

Grapel, an Israeli citizen by birth who grew up in the United States, earned a bachelors degree in international studies from Johns Hopkins University in [Baltimore](#) and is currently in law school at Emory University in [Atlanta](#). After his studies in Baltimore, Grapel moved back to Israel where he was drafted into the paratroopers division of the Israeli [infantry corps](#). He served in the [Second Lebanon War](#) in 2006 during which he was wounded in battle. He is described by friends as "very liberal, very open-minded" and "pro-conciliation" and was supposedly unaffiliated with all political groups.

A picture of Grapel in uniform from his service in the Israeli [paratroopers](#) unit was uncovered by the Egyptian authorities and was quickly spread by the media in [Egypt](#) with the attached headline, "Mossad officer who tried to sabotage the Egyptian revolution." More pictures of Grapel in the [IDF](#) and during his visit to [Egypt](#) before the arrest were also found and distributed through the Egyptian media networks.

Grapel's family, who say that Ilan was in [Egypt](#) for a legal aid project, deny any allegations that their son is a Mossad spy. "He's a good boy, he was over there doing good work," Irene Grapel, Ilan's mother said. "I hope that he'll be free based on who he is. He's not a Mossad spy by any means." The Israeli government, as well, denied the charges that Ilan is a spy working for their interests.



On June 19, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that [Israel](#) offered to exchange three Egyptian prisoners for the release of Grapel but were turned down by Egyptian authorities. Since Grapel was visiting [Egypt](#) on his American passport, Israeli officials have not been allowed to meet with him.

On July 9, the Egyptian attorney general announced that Grapel's detention in jail would be extended at least 15 more days to allow the authorities more time to continue their investigation into his alleged spying. The American Embassy in [Egypt](#) continued, at the time, to work for his release before an indictment could be handed down.

In mid-October, Egyptian officials confirmed that [Israel](#) and [Egypt](#) had reached a prisoner-exchange agreement that would see free Grapel and have all charges against him dropped. Coming in the wake of the Egyptian-brokered exchange between [Israel](#) and  [Hamas](#) that swapped more than [1,000 Palestinian prisoners](#) for kidnapped IDF soldier [Gilad Shalit](#), the Grapel deal took place on October 27 and included the release of 25 Egyptian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

Grapel finally returned to [Israel](#) after spending more than 5 months in jail, first charged with espionage which was then dropped to incitement. The prisoners released for Grapel, whom [Israel](#) says are not security prisoners but rather smugglers or illegal immigrants, crossed back into their home country via the Taba crossing in the Sinai.

## **Relations with Iran**

Under Mubarak's regime, ties between [Egypt](#) and the [Islamic Republic of Iran](#) had been cut for more than 30 years. With the ascent of a government that is more in tune with public sentiment, relations between the two influential Middle East nations are beginning to thaw quite rapidly.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar-Salehi and his [Egyptian](#) counterpart, Nabil al-Arabi, have already initiated discussions to reestablish their diplomatic ties. In March 2011, after the Iranian leadership called on [Egypt](#) to take a courageous step" to reunite the two countries, Minister al-Arabi noted that Cairo was ready "to open a new page with Iran" and noted that "the [Egyptian](#) and Iranian people deserve to have mutual relations." Al-Arabi added that, "[Iran](#) is not an enemy [of Egypt]. We have no enemies."

[Amr Moussa](#), Egyptian presidential hopeful and former secretary-general of the [Arab League](#), also reiterated Egypt's desire to open bilateral relations with [Iran](#). In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Moussa said that "Iran is not the natural enemy of the Arabs and [Egypt] has a lot to gain by peaceful relations with [Iran](#)."

On June 25, 2012, Egyptian president-elect [Mohamed Morsi](#) gave an interview with Iranian Fars News Agency in which he reportedly said he was looking to expand ties between [Egypt](#) and [Iran](#) to create a strategic balance in the region. [Morsi](#)'s spokesperson is now denying such statements, but the interview raises suspicions among observers of the situation of the new Egyptian president's intent to move his country closer to the [Islamic Republic](#).

## **Relations with Hamas**

Despite Israeli objections, the new government in Cairo has decided to reopen the Egyptian border with [Gaza](#) at Rafah, in essence making a statement that Egyptian relations with [Hamas](#) will be restored. The border has been closed since 2007 when Mubarak decided to blockade the Strip and fight against smugglers who were funneling weapons and ammunition into Gaza through elaborate tunnels from Sinai. The government even built a subterranean steel wall to prevent smuggling.

In April, Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi called “shameful” Egypt's 2007 decision to close and blockade the [Gaza](#) border. Presidential hopeful Amr Moussa added that “blocking [Gaza](#) and enforcing the siege along [Gaza](#) — people didn’t like that,” and that he is hopeful [Egypt](#) will normalize relations with the Palestinians.

On May 4th, the military government hosted [Hamas](#) and [Fatah](#) leaders in Cairo and brokered the unity agreement between the leading Palestinian political parties. Bringing Hamas leaders into Cairo was viewed in Egypt and Gaza as an historic development coming after years of government antagonism towards the Islamic party and support for their rivals, Fatah. However, Mustafa Labbad, head of the Al-Sharq center for Regional and Strategic Studies, said that “[Egypt](#)'s role in this reconciliation is a matter of national security rather than a change in its political ideology.” [Amr Moussa](#) indicated that [Hamas](#) should not be viewed as a terrorist organization.

On May 9th it was reported that [Egypt](#) is now using its leverage with [Hamas](#) to push for a renewed effort to release kidnapped Israeli soldier [Gilad Shalit](#). Though [Egypt](#) has been involved with formulating past efforts at reconciliation in this matter, [Hamas](#) usually viewed their assistance with suspicion and talks rarely moved past initial stages. [Hamas](#) security personnel are believed to have met with their counterparts in [Egypt](#) in the beginning of May to discuss potential deals for [Shalit](#).

On May 25th the government announced that it would officially reopen the border between [Egypt](#) and [Gaza](#). “[Egypt](#) has been under significant domestic and regional pressure to open the crossing and change the policy on Gaza,” said Elijah Zarwan, a Cairo-based analyst with the International Crisis Group think tank. “I think there’s been recognition for a while that the



crisis in Gaza had been a ticking bomb on Egypt's doorstep." "The decision is a correction of an immoral and ineffective policy of the past," said Nabil Fahmy, a former Egyptian ambassador to the U.S. "It reflects a posture that Egypt will pursue policies in line with those of everyone else in the Middle East."

### **The Muslim Brotherhood**

Under toppled President Mubarak, the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) was officially banned, though it was tolerated within limits - notably being allowed to operate in mosques and within religious capacities. For years, Mubarak's government used military trials and security sweeps to repress the group in an effort to dispel its power and weaken its ranks. Despite these efforts, the [Brotherhood](#) kept a relatively broad support network across Egypt which they continued to build through their religious, social and charity endeavors. In a 2005 parliamentary election, the Brotherhood won 20% of the seats, despite the election being purposefully rigged by Mubarak.

Though the [Brotherhood](#) kept a surprisingly low profile during the January 25th revolution, a recent poll by the Pew Research Center found that about 75% of Egyptians said they had either a favorable or a very favorable opinion of the Brotherhood. Seizing on this support, the group has since built a legitimate political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, and is gaining confidence that it can take more parliamentary seats in the November elections. "They have substituted the dictatorship of [Mubarak](#) with the dictatorship of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#)," said Naguib Sawiris, the second wealthiest man in [Egypt](#) and founder of the Free Egyptians Party. "That's where [Egypt](#) is going now ... It's not a fair fight."

The [Muslim Brotherhood](#) remains one of the more organized, experienced and powerful organizations in [Egypt](#). Mustafa Kamal Al Sayyid, a political-science professor at the American University in Cairo, said that there is no serious competitors to the Brotherhood right now and "there are no other political parties that could claim to get the support of as large a number of people." Nabil Fahmy, dean of the School of Public Affairs at the American University in Cairo and a former ambassador to the [United States](#), echoed this sentiment when he said that all other parties "have not had enough time to mature" as has the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood initially said it would not field a candidate in the presidential elections, yet on May 12th a senior member of the organization, Abdel Moneim Abul Futuh, announced his intention to run for president- though he will run as an independent. Many observers fear that Abul Futuh's candidacy will draw votes from the large Islamist population and help the Brotherhood gain more power, though another group leader, Sobhi Saleh, said that "Abul Futuh's decision counters the Brotherhood's official decision." On their official webpage,

the [Brotherhood](#) says it had no intention of honoring Abul Futuh's decision and made clear that he would not be officially representing their organization.

A poll published on April 22 in the state-run *Ahram* newspaper showed Abul Futuh - even before his campaign started - and outgoing [Arab League](#) Chief [Amr Moussa](#), with the highest voter support at 20 percent, while [Mohamed ElBaradei](#), a retired [UN](#) diplomat, had 12 percent support.

The Brotherhood then announced its formation of a new political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, that would run under their platform in the upcoming elections.

On June 22, the [Brotherhood](#) announced its decision to join with the Pakistani Muslim political party of Jamaat e Islami to solve global issues that Muslims face and to promote Islam's true image. On July 5, the party expelled five of its more outspoken youth leaders in a sign that its established leadership wants to buttress the Brotherhood's organizational and ideological rigidity against those party members who yearn for wider political and religious freedoms. The ejected members were the founders of their own political party after they decided not to join the brotherhoods newly created Freedom and Justice Party. One of the expelled members, lawyer Islam Lotfy, spoke out. "The [Muslim Brotherhood](#) is out of step," Lotfy said. "It is against the concept of revolution. Its literature never called for a revolution to change the government. That was too radical. They wanted to gradually change society from within. I used to think like that," he added, "but it got us nowhere. We were like the man pushing the stone up the hill and having it roll back over him."

In mid-July, the former spokesman of the Muslim Brotherhood, Kamal al-Halbawi called on Egypt and Iran to "take the necessary steps" to get rid of Israeli, American and even Saudi Arabian influences on Egyptian society. "Both nations [Egypt and Iran] underline the necessity for Muslim nations to maintain solidarity and unity to annihilate this cancerous tumor (Israel)," he reiterated.

In a troubling sign to those in the West that see the [Brotherhood](#) as a radical organization, many Egyptians in the ruling Supreme Council have begun to cultivate ties with the Brotherhood as that organization distances itself from the original January 25th protestors. On July 25, Major General Mohammed al-Assar, a member of the Supreme Council, praised the Brotherhood and noted that they are playing a constructive role in the development of a "new" Egypt. "Day by day, the Brotherhood are changing and are getting on a more moderate track," he said in a speech in Washington at the United States Institute of Peace. "They have the willingness to share in the political life ... they are sharing in good ways."

On January 23, 2012, the first democratically elected Egyptian Parliament saw the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party take a plurality of 47% of the vote, a huge win for the group that was technically banned under Mubarak and was still supposedly on the fence in terms of public opinion.



In the wake of their resounding victory, the [Brotherhood](#) announced that it still categorically rejects dialogue with Israel and that this position is “clear and not up for discussion.” [Brotherhood](#) spokesman Mahmoud Ghazlan said it would “reject any request from the Israeli embassy to meet with leaders of the [Brotherhood](#).” He added, “It is illogical to open dialogue, any dialogue, given the current Israeli policies against the Arab peoples,” he said. “We will reject any request from the Israeli embassy to meet with leaders of the group.”

Following the victory, the FJP officially announced that they would be raising Brotherhood member [Khairat El-Shater](#) as their candidate for the presidential elections in May 2012. However, in April 2012 the Supreme Presidential Election Committee disqualified [Shater](#) from running based on him having prior criminal convictions. In his place, the FJP decided to support the candidacy of [Mohamed Morsi](#) to run for the [Brotherhood](#) in the elections.

In the the first round of elections for the Presidency in May, [Morsi](#) won the plurality (24.8%), but since he nor any other candidate received the minimum 50% for victory, the top candidates - Morsi and former Prime Minister [Ahmed Shafik](#) - were pitted against each other in a final run off election. That run-off took place in mid-June, and Morsi narrowly won, commanding 51.7% of the votes.

With [Morsi's](#) victory, the Brotherhood officially took control of the Presidency, marking the first time in history that an Islamist organization had a candidate win for head-of-state in elections in an Arab country.

## **Democracy**

### **Constitution**

On March 19, 2011, with nearly an 80% approval vote from a record turnout, the Supreme Council passed a number of amendments to the Egyptian constitution that established, among other things, presidential term limits, nomination procedures, judicial oversight for elections and rules governing the implementation of a state of emergency. While the passing of these amendments is an optimistic sign, the transition to a democratic government will not be easy and will necessitate a patient approach.

Nadya Khalife, a Middle East and North Africa women’s rights researcher, noted how the amendments to the constitution did not explicitly allow for females to be elected into power. “It is unacceptable for a constitution that is supposed to allow for a transition toward democracy and a new Egypt to even give the possibility of excluding women from public office,” Khalife said.

“After women fully participated in the movement to oust President [Hosni Mubarak](#), it is offensive to suggest that a woman cannot be president.”

On July 12, the ruling military Supreme Council announced that it was drafting new ground rules for a new constitution and that it planned to adopt "a declaration of basic principles" to govern the drafting of said constitution. This move was initially welcomed in Egypt and was seen as a concession to the demand for a "bill of rights" style guarantee, but legal experts see this merely as a ploy by the military to strengthen, protect and potentially expand its own power.

Some are already criticizing the military's plans as a usurpation of the democratic process. Ibrahim Dawrish, an Egyptian legal scholar involved in devising a new Turkish constitution to reduce the political role of its armed forces, said the Egyptian military appeared to be emulating its Turkish counterpart. After a 1980 coup, the Turkish military assigned itself a broad role in politics as guarantor of the secular state, and in the process, contributed to years of political turbulence. “The constitution can't be monopolized by one institution,” he said. “It is Parliament that makes the constitution, not the other way around.”

Hours before the final runoff presidential election vote on June 16 and 17, 2012, the ruling military Supreme Council issued an interim constitution effectively giving itself broad power over the country's future government - including control of all laws, the national budget, immunity from any oversight and the power to veto a declaration of war - and all but eliminating the new president's authority. The Council also seized control of the writing process of the permanent constitution. In spite of [Mohamed Morsi](#)'s presidential victory on June 25, there remains a stand-off between the powerful military generals and the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) over the institutions of government and especially the future constitution.

## **Military Tribunals**

Another step that the new government needs to take to ensure more democratic advances is to end the practice of trying arrested civilians before military courts, courts widely believed by Egyptians to be corrupt and unjust towards the actual severity of the crimes. “[Egypt](#)'s military leadership has not explained why young protesters are being tried before unfair military courts while former [Mubarak](#) officials are being tried for corruption and killing protesters before regular criminal courts,” said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “The reliance on military trials threatens the rule of law by creating a parallel system that undermines Egypt's judiciary.”

## **Basic Liberties** [top](#)

Human Rights Watch is also concerned about the lack of freedoms with regard to open speech and expression, bulwarks of a good democracy.



For example, on April 11th, blogger Maikel Nabil was sentenced by a military court to three years imprisonment for using “inappropriate language” and defaming the military. HRW Director Stork commented that the “three-year sentence may be the worst strike against free expression in Egypt” and was imposed after an unfair military style trial. Stork added, “State institutions, including the military, should never consider themselves above criticism. It is only through a public airing of abuses and full accountability measures that [Egypt](#) can hope to transition away from past human rights violations.”

A few days after the sentence, the Supreme Council announced it would review cases “of all young people who were tried during the last period.”

Finally, on January 24, 2012, Egypt's ruling military court released Nabil.

In mid-July, host of a popular TV political commentary show Dina Abdel-Rahman was fired from her station after repeated criticism of the actions of the ruling military council. Gamal Eid, a human rights lawyer, said her firing was a warning to others. "Fear of the military is still great," he said. "I expect a clash between the two sides," said analyst Hala Mustafa. "There exists a huge gap in their vision and tempo. Unlike the revolutionaries, the generals want to reform the system from within while they want to bring it down and build a new one in its place."

## **Elections**

Though national parliamentary elections were originally scheduled to be held in September 2011 to determine the next leaders, the ruling military council announced on July 20 that elections be pushed back to November. In addition, Major General Mamdouh Shahin, the military council's legislative adviser, said that international election monitors will not be allowed to observe the elections on the grounds of national sovereignty.

“This is a very terrible development,” says Bahey El Din Hassan, director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. “It was usual to hear this from the Mubarak regime because the elections were always fraudulent.”

On January 23, 2012, the first democratically elected Egyptian Parliament in more than 60 years began with thousands of Egyptian people demonstrating outside in celebration and protest. 47 percent of the 498 legislators belong to the Muslim Brotherhood, including the elected parliament speaker, Saad el Katatni, a prominent [Brotherhood](#) member. Another 25 percent of the parliament is represented by Salafis, a more radical Islamic group who last year said democracy was a violation of God's law but now claim they see government as the way to bring about God's law.

On June 15, Egypt's military rulers formally dissolved the Parliament, just days before [presidential elections](#) were held. It remains to be seen which leading figures will constitute

the new Parliament, but the power struggle between the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) and the SCAF will make for an interesting outcome.

## **Mubarak Trial**

On August 3, 2011, a bedridden [Hosni Mubarak](#) was wheeled into an Egyptian courtroom to face charges stemming from allegedly ordering the killing of protesters during the January 25th revolution. Along with his sons, Gamal and Alaa, and former Interior Minister Habib el-Adly, Mubarak denied culpability and entered a plea of not guilty. “I deny all these charges and accusations categorically,” Mubarak said. Mubarak faces the possibility of a death sentence if convicted. After the proceedings, Judge Ahmed Refaat adjourned the trial until August 15, saying that he needed time to review the plethora of motions raised by attorneys on both sides.

Since his imprisonment, [Mubarak](#)'s health has been the subject of constant speculation and on June 19 conflicting reports about his deteriorating health circulated in the press. One news source declared him "clinically dead" but the next day, one of his lawyers said Mubarak simply fell down in the prison bathroom, which resulted in a blood clot on his neck and thus he was removed from prison long before reports of his supposed death started circulating.

## **Developments in Human Rights**

Despite assurances that peace and security would be kept for all citizens of [Egypt](#) in the aftermath of a revolution that sought to end years of abuses and unite the various religious sects, the human rights situation in Egypt has yet to improve. There have yet to be advances made for women's rights, freedom of speech and religious protection for [Christian Copts](#) and other minorities.

From the middle of February until early March 2011, the ruling military council was charged with abusing demonstrators and even torturing detainees. “The Supreme Military Council has been ignoring credible reports of arbitrary arrest and torture,” said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East and North Africa Director at Human Rights Watch. “There can be no break from the abuses of the past while security forces - including military personnel - abuse people with impunity.” In addition, the Egyptian army continued its practice of arresting civilians and holding them in military prisons, even subjecting them to harsh interrogations and tribunals without lawyers. [Egypt](#)'s authorities even refuse to release lists of those they have imprisoned and hold numerous men without solid charges. While there are no totally reliable statistics of the number of people being held in detention, human rights groups estimate that at least 5,000 people have been imprisoned since the military council took over.

On March 8, 2011, the harassment and victimization of women in public continued unchanged as gangs of men attacked women marching for International Women's Day in Cairo's Tahrir Square,



the same site where earlier demonstrations that included hundreds of women helped lead to the demise of the Mubarak regime. Soldiers intervened to disperse the mobs only before telling the women it was wrong from them to demonstrate in public.

If the International Women's Day attacks are any sign of what is to come, women's ability to participate in political life may be at risk," said Nadya Khalife, Human Rights Watch Middle East and North Africa women's rights researcher. "As Egypt moves toward elections, officials need to provide protection for women who wish to demonstrate publicly, and ensure that anyone attacking peaceful protesters is held to account."

On March 24, 2011, the Egyptian cabinet passed legislation that outlawed public demonstrations and strikes despite the fact that it was these exact things that helped spark revolution. "This virtually blanket ban on strikes and demonstrations is a betrayal of the demands of Tahrir protesters for a free [Egypt](#), and a slap in the face of the families whose loved ones died protesting for freedom," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "Any genuine transition toward democracy must be based on respect for the basic rights of the people, including their right to demonstrate."

On May 7 and 8, 2011, the [Christian Copt](#) community, a very small religious sect that suffered greatly at the hands of Muslim extremists during the Mubarak era, was attacked by Muslim Salafi's who fired guns and threw Molotov cocktails at churches and homes. Twelve Copts were killed in the riots and no fewer than 230 sustained injuries; in addition, three churches, an apartment complex, two houses and a Coptic-owned building were torched. Despite being alarmed to the riots and fires, the Egyptian fire brigade and military were incredibly slow to respond and, once they did, were held back from assisting by throngs of Salafi extremists. Renowned Muslim liberal writer Nabil Sharaf el Din said, "The army is either incapable or is an accomplice to the Salafi's ... If the army does not take a stern position with the Salafi's they will look real bad."

On May 11, Parliament voted to extend for two years the Emergency Law for which most Egyptians protested to have repealed once and for all after [Mubarak](#)'s fall. The law, in place since the 1981 assassination of Sadat, gives the government unlimited power in arresting and detaining prisoners without cause, denying freedoms of speech and assembly and maintaining a special security court to rule in most criminal cases. Mubarak used the law primarily to keep a lid on the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) and other opponents of his regime.

The emergency law represents one of the toughest laws against basic civil liberties and human rights. Though officials say the provisions will be used only in cases of terrorism and drug trafficking, and not on a widespread scale as was the case under [Mubarak](#), many do not believe their words. "Even the claim that emergency powers will now be limited to terrorism and drug trafficking cases only is false," said Hossam Bahgat, executive director of the Egyptian Initiative

for Personal Rights. “More dangerously, the culture of exceptionalism stays, and with it the message that security agencies are still above the law.”

Sarah Leah Whitson, director of the Middle East and North Africa for Human Rights Watch, added “they use this law to prosecute any political activist who criticizes the government.” Martin Scheinin, the [UN](#) special representative on terrorism and human rights, noted, “Basically there is no legal certainty as long as there is an emergency law in place.”

On May 31, the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information released a statement saying that the questioning of journalists or bloggers was an attempt to silence critics and create “an atmosphere of fear.” It warned: “The military council is committing a grave mistake if it continues to shut the mouths of those criticizing it. The council is not made up of angels.”

On June 1, Egypt’s Interior Minister Mansour el-Essawy in a rare move ordered an investigation into reports that a detainee was tortured to death while in police custody.

On July 13, the Supreme Council announced that it would be retiring more than 600 senior police officers in an attempt to mollify concerns of protestors over the continued employment of police officers loyal to Mubarak who have been heavily involved with wrongdoing and brutality. At least 18 generals and 9 other senior officers were forced into retirement after accusations arose that they were all involved in killing protestors during the January uprising. Hundreds of other policemen were shifted to clerical work and many will also be forced into retirement.

Ahmed Ragheb, a human rights advocate who runs the Hisham Mubarak Law Center and helps lead a police reform project, called on the government to continue such practices of suspending police officers accused of violent behavior. “We want them to suspend all of the officers who were accused of any human rights violations,” he said, and he faulted the ministry for failing to identify the officers removed from their posts.

On July 23, despite the announcement of the retirings, thousands of protestors led a non-violent march on the Defense Ministry in Cairo to push demands that more police officers responsible for the killing of some 800 protestors be brought to justice. The protestors, though, were attacked by bands of armed men wielding clubs and firebombs while the anti-riot police and military stood by without intervening. More than 300 protestors were injured during the confrontation, many seriously.

According to an Egypt-based NGO report, approximately 93,000 [Coptic Christians](#) have left [Egypt](#) since March 19, 2011, and the Egyptian Federation of Human Rights chair predicts the number may increase to as high as 250,000 by the end of this year. Of the thousands who left, about 42,000 went to the [United States](#) while others have settled in [Canada](#) (17,000), [Australia](#) (14,000), the [Netherlands](#), [Italy](#), [England](#), [Austria](#), [Germany](#) and [France](#) (20,000 went to [Europe](#)).

On October 9, a [Christian](#) demonstration spurred by anger at a recent attack on a church led to a violent night of clashes between [Coptic Christians](#) and Egyptian police. 24 people died and over 200 were wounded in the outburst of violence.

On January 24, 2012, Egypt's ruling military court released a pro-[Israel](#) Egyptian blogger, Maikel Nabil, after about 10 months in prison for denouncing the military, which has held power since former president [Mubarak](#)'s ouster in February 2011.

On January 26, Egyptian officials barred six Americans working for large well-known, publicly funded U.S. organizations promoting democracy in [Egypt](#) from leaving the country, prompting outrage from American officials and the public. "These organizations have been operating for years. They meet with the government. Their funding is known. There can be no motivation except a desire to control and silence the human rights community," a Human Rights Watch in Cairo employee said.

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