



PROJECT on Middle East Democracy

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"Egypt's Transition and the Challenge of Security Sector Reform"
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
1779 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
May 18th, 12:15-2:00pm

On Wednesday, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Project on Middle East Democracy co-sponsored a panel entitled "Egypt's Transition and the Challenge of Security Sector Reform." The event featured **Mohamed Kadry Said**, head of the Military Studies Unit at Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo, **Omar Afifi Soliman**, former Egyptian police officer and Supreme Court lawyer, and **Robert Perito**, director of the Security Sector Governance Center at the United States Institute of Peace. The panel discussion was moderated by **Michele Dunne**, senior associate at Carnegie and editor of the Arab Reform Bulletin.

Michelle Dunne opened by underscoring the crucial aspect of security sector reform to democratic transitions in the region, particularly in Egypt. She observed that in spite of its importance, such reform receives little attention relative to electoral reform and building parties. She added that the sectarian violence seen in Egypt as of late is indicative of the country's security problems. Though, the question remains to what extent these security lapses are the result of confusion or sabotage. The military-led transition government has announced a series of security-related forms through which, Dunne suggested, progress in this sector can be measured. Thus far, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has: dismantled the old internal security force, and plans to replace it with a "national security force;" promised to institute rule of law prior to national elections; and **announced that the security forces will come under civilian control—something entirely new to Egypt**. Dunne pointed out that the panel would focus on security sector, as opposed to military reform.

The next two speakers delved into the Egyptian case further. **Mohamed Kadry Said** noted that when he meets international investors in Egypt, their first question is with regards to the professionalism of the police. From there he recounted his argument from an *Al Ahram* article "The Army in Democratic Times" [*al jaysh fi zamaan al dimokratiya*]. He listed the following measures necessary for security sector reform: parliamentary right to military oversight; repeal of the emergency law; **changing the media-military relationship, which has been characterized by secrecy**; changing the public perception of the military, which had been embodied by the films of **Ismael Yassine**; and appoint military representatives to the prime minister's cabinet. Dunne added that **oversight should include budget transparency**.

Omar Afifi Soliman argued that Egypt lacks the infrastructure for security oversight since the courts of the military council are still seated by Mubarak stalwarts. He speculated that the country's lax security was not natural but politically engineered in order to increase reliance on the military. He noted that this laxity takes two forms currently: hooliganism and sectarian violence. He cited the military's economic and institutional interests as proof of its design in the unrest. He added that reliance on a military strongman will allow the SCAF to replace the central security forces with something similarly repressive. Noting that yesterday regime insiders **Fathay Saour**, **Zachriya Azmi** and **Suzanne Mubarak** were released, he called on the police not to put down the protests that would inevitably result. The police should focus on crime not political decisions, he added. In the past, the police had served roles outside of its proper mandate, including issuing visas. Soliman also condemned **the inflated wages of brigadier generals**

who typically earn \$200,000 per month. For reform, he proposed cleansing the ranks and replacing them with law and sharia' students who could easily absorb one to three months of straightforward training, and who would bring a new culture to the system. He recommended that training take place in Western countries to profit from their expertise in the field. Dunne appended that while historically there have been the regular, riot and **secret police in Egypt, the latter is being reshaped as a counter-terrorism force.**

Perito spoke about the theory and practice of security sector reform and the challenges to the United States and international community in supporting it. He noted that security sector reform will require responsiveness to democratically elected civilian leadership and to parliamentary oversight, particularly of resources and budget. **The military and intelligence arms should be focused on external threats, as the police should be on rule of law.** Enforcement should be organized under the auspices of the justice ministry and should be incorporate independent armed groups, where found. Institutions should be based on policy, management and logistical support. Perito observed the difficulty of U.S. consultancy on this sector as it has nothing analogous to Egypt's Interior Ministry or national police force, and hence has very little experience with centralized security reform. The closest experience the U.S. has to anything like it has been in the context of counter-insurgency training. In the Q&A he pointed to **Germany's experience replacing the Staasi as a good model.** Perito closed emphasizing the need to eliminate a police culture that places authority on the individual officer. Instead faith has to be placed in the rule of law, **and locals have to take ownership of law enforcement, noting that no police force in the world can work without cooperation of local residents.**