

Crisis in Egypt and Gaza: Longstanding Strategic Relationship in Jeopardy?

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Gaza will remain a matter of national security for Egypt .

And regardless of who is in charge in Gaza , Egypt will also remain a strategic asset for Gaza , a lifeline for its people, and a mainstay of its peace and stability.

These are the irreversible facts of the ties between Egypt and Gaza . In other words, when Egypt sneezes, Gaza catches a cold.

Now some people are trying to drive a wedge between Gaza and Egypt , but they will fail. Even at the lowest point of relations between Gaza and the ousted regime of Hosni Mubarak, few challenged the fact that Gaza and Egypt care for one another.

Today, we hear analysts in the West Bank and Israel predicting the end of Hamas rule in Gaza , just because the Muslim Brotherhood was ousted from power in Egypt .

To those, I wish to say that Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood never hid their ties, were proud of their connections, and made no secret of their cooperation. But the political adversaries of both Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt would have us believe that anything that befalls the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt will befall Hamas in Gaza , which is a massive exaggeration.

It is true that the recent events in Egypt have put an end to the high hopes Hamas had of strategic cooperation between Gaza and Egypt . It is also true that the image of Hamas as a resistance movement has been shaken. But let's not believe everything the political adversaries of Hamas say. Let's not believe their lies, for their only aim is to undermine the Palestinian resistance.

It has to be said, however, that Hamas was optimistic about the Arab Spring and was pleased to see like-minded governments take over in some Arab countries. It is also true that Hamas, perhaps too hastily, assumed that an alliance with Egypt 's Muslim Brotherhood and its backers in Qatar would make up for the loss of its allies in Syria and Iran . Still, we must not forget that Hamas is a resistance movement first and foremost. Its connections with the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt don't change this fact.

Hemmed in by the Israelis, Hamas was always hoping for Egypt to come to its rescue. But even during Mohamed Morsi's presidency, relations between Egypt and Hamas were not free from tensions and differences. Hamas also had problems with Qatar 's view of the Arab peace plan.

Now the adversaries of Hamas would have us think that just as Egyptians brought down the Muslim Brotherhood, the Palestinians in Gaza should expel Hamas from government. It is quite telling that Mahmoud Abbas was one of the first Arab presidents to congratulate the Egyptian army on appointing Adli Mansour as president.

Now Hamas stands accused of interfering in Egypt 's domestic affairs. This accusation was made when Morsi was in power and after he was removed from power. Hamas denied time and again that it interfered in Egypt or in any other Arab countries. And the Palestinian ambassador to Cairo , Barakat Al-Farra, said that no such accusation was ever made by Egyptian officials.

Those who make such allegations not only harm the Palestinians, but also may cause lasting damage to ties between Gaza and Egypt .

I recently heard someone claiming that the Muslim Brotherhood's fall from grace in Egypt will weaken Hamas to the point that makes it more amenable to Palestinian reconciliation. This is nonsense. For one thing, the Palestinian schism predates the Muslim Brotherhood's accession to power in Egypt , and it has nothing to do with Hamas-Muslim Brotherhood ties. In fact, the real reason for the delay in reconciliation is that Mahmoud Abbas is still hoping that US Secretary of State John Kerry will succeed in restarting peace talks with Israel .

Also, the Palestinian presidency continues to oppose any acts of resistance in which Hamas and other Palestinian factions living in Gaza choose to engage.

Implicating the Palestinians in Egypt 's currently divisive scene is neither to the benefit of Palestinians nor Egyptians. But it is good news for Israel .

This article was first published and translated from Arabic by the Al-Ahram Weekly.

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