

# Former Elected President Morsi: Sentencing Justice to Death in Egypt

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*It is utterly disgraceful that the first democratically elected president of Egypt has become the first Egyptian president in history to be sentenced to death by the highest judicial and religious authorities in his country.*

Dr. Mohamed Morsi was elected president in June 2012 in an election that was judged “free and fair” by a number of domestic and foreign observers. He secured 52% of the popular vote. Morsi also initiated a referendum on a new national constitution that was endorsed by 64% of those who voted.

The Egyptian Court that upheld an earlier death sentence against Morsi for allegedly plotting a jail break and attacks on the police during the January 2011 popular uprising against President Hosni Mubarak based its decision on what appears to be fabricated evidence challenged by lawyers from within and without the Arab world. This 16 June 2015 verdict was accompanied by another travesty of justice — the imposition of life imprisonment upon Morsi for purportedly spying for foreign elements, namely, the Palestinian Hamas, the Lebanese Hezbollah and Iran. In another trial in April this year, Morsi was sentenced to 20 years jail on charges of inciting violence against protesters in 2012 when he was president.

All Morsi’s sentences culminating in the re-affirmation of the death penalty two days ago, endorsed by the Grand Mufti of Egypt, have been politically motivated. Not one of the sentences meets the minimum requirements of justice as spelt out in Egyptian domestic law or in international law. They certainly violate the exacting canons of justice embodied in Islamic jurisprudence.

It is not just the persecution of Morsi through the abuse of the law that concerns defenders of justice in many parts of the world. The world is appalled by the hundreds of death sentences meted out to leaders and activists associated directly or indirectly with the Ikhwanul- Muslimin (the Muslim Brotherhood) — of which Mohamed Morsi is also a leader — through speedy mass trials. The Mursyidul Am (the principal guide) of the Brotherhood, Mohamed Badie, and one of its prominent leaders, Khairat el-Shater, have also been sentenced to death. Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi, the Brotherhood’s spiritual adviser, has been handed down the death penalty in absentia. The United Nations has described this multitude of death penalties as “unprecedented in recent history.”

These death sentences are part of a much larger drive on the part of the government of

Abdul Fattah al- Sisi to crush the Brotherhood. According to some human rights groups, hundreds of Brotherhood activists have already been killed while over 40,000 have been jailed. The Brotherhood itself was classified as a “terrorist group” in December 2013. The antagonism between the Brotherhood and the dominant force in Egyptian politics which al-Sisi represents, namely, the armed forces, has a long history behind it, going back to the fifties. Since al-Sisi ousted Morsi through a military coup that had a significant degree of popular support in July 2013, eliminating the Brotherhood’s apparatus of power has become the former’s primary preoccupation. In a sense, he is attempting to get rid of all dissent, including those groups that are not linked to the Brotherhood or other Islamic actors. This is why al-Sisi has also banned the democratically oriented April 6 Movement that played a major role in the uprising against Mubarak.

But he is not succeeding. Since he usurped power two years ago, Egypt has become even more unstable. Bloody incidents have become more frequent. The divisions in Egyptian society are getting deeper. Foreign hands that continue to manipulate Egyptian politics and the economy — Israel, the United States and Saudi Arabia — have only exacerbated the situation.

This is not to suggest that Morsi and the Brotherhood did not contribute to the mess Egypt is in today. Their religious exclusiveness and their inability to deal with some of the political and economic challenges of the day with greater strategic astuteness undermined their own interests. Nonetheless, al-Sisi’s brutal suppression of dissent in the last two years remains the fundamental cause of the current malaise in Egypt. His suppression has diminished the worth and value of some of his economic programmes which have generated some employment and brought a glimmer of hope to the disadvantaged such as the new Suez venture.

The world should demand that al-Sisi stops the suppression of dissent immediately. All death sentences should be annulled. Political prisoners should be released. The judiciary should be restructured to make it truly independent and credible. The rule of law should be established and implemented to the fullest. The ban on the Ikhwanul Muslimin and other political and social actors should be lifted. Meaningful economic and social reforms aimed at eradicating poverty, reducing the gap between the rich and poor, providing jobs and houses to the needy, ensuring a steady supply of energy and water to the people, and most of all, rooting out endemic corruption and kleptomania, should become al-Sisi’s central mission.

In a nutshell, the world should intensify its scrutiny and censure of al-Sisi. It should not close its eyes to the crisis that is engulfing the Arab world’s most important and most populous nation.

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