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17 AUGUST
2017



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Positions and Testimonies: Essam Sultan and Muslim Brotherhood in Prison

A state of cautious anticipation prevailed after publication of an article by Essam Sultan, a parliamentarian, lawyer, and vice chairman of Al-Wasat (Center) Party, who is now detained in Al-Aqrab (Scorpion) prison. Essam Sultan's article, titled "My testimony over Brotherhood imprisonment", was published on August 15 2017. Sultan began his article talking about the suffering experienced by detainees inside cells, especially the detainees who belong to Muslim Brotherhood (MB). He stressed that the Al-Sisi regime has been trying by all means to subjugate MB members in prisons, but it failed miserably to break or subdue any of them.

He pointed out that "The regime has used every means of torture and oppression, ranging from the deprivation of food, drink, medical treatment, visitation, books and exercise to using live ammunition, incendiary materials and sniffer dogs. All of this is in the framework of a deliberate program to subdue the Brotherhood, but so far, I haven't seen anyone retreat or surrender," Sultan explained quite clearly in his article. He described how the Brotherhood spent their time inside cells "The Muslim Brotherhood members spend their time praying, fasting, performing night prayers, and organizing daily programs between the Maghreb and Isha prayers that include lectures, competitions and reflections," he said.

Sultan, who expressed his pride at the steadfastness of Brotherhood members, whether they were young or old, inside cells, reported a debate between him and some of the MB leaders on the Turkish experiment in modern history, when Erdogan, Abdullah Gul, and Davutoglu separated from the Rafah (Welfare) Party led by Erbakan,

and how they overcame their teacher 'Erbakan' (after they later established Justice and Development Party).

What is remarkable in that debate was not the fact that one MB member objected to the AK Party's experiment, or that another one expected its downfall; but in fact the debate revealed the awareness of the MB General Guide, Dr. Mohamed Badie, (as well as Dr Al-Katatni, and a number of MB leaders) and his condemnation of these grave comments, "deeming them personal opinions that do not reflect the opinion of the Muslim Brotherhood," which highlights Badie's keenness on removing any comments that could be counted against the MB, even under his difficult health conditions in his cell. (It is noteworthy that Dr. Mohamed Badie is 75 years old and suffers from a number of severe illnesses, starting from his mouth, as they've deprived him from his dentures, to haemorrhoids that prevent him from sitting on the seat in the prison transportation vehicle and in the courtroom, according to Essam Sultan's testimony.) Due to the difficult health condition of old-aged MB Guide, Sultan avoided holding a discussion with him on the practices of the Muslim Brotherhood after the revolution. However, there are many important points that Sultan indicated briefly, shedding light on them, including:

1. What do the Brotherhood members study in their families (small groups)? And here I add a question posed by women, men and children: Have the Muslim Brotherhood change their curricula in light of the circumstances that the group, the country, and the whole nation are passing through after four years after the military coup?

2 - The idea of learning from the past and not reproducing the same methodology. What happened under Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1950s (when he decided to annihilate the Muslim Brotherhood), was repeated under Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, the traitor, but much worse than what happened during Abdel Nasser's era. – This is because the MB adopted their old methodology without studying the reality of politics.

3 - Sultan also shed light on a very important point, i.e. that MB should not deal with politics the same way they deal with preaching or educational activities. Also, they should not export of the idea of 'presuming good faith on the part of others' (in preaching you are instructed to give your brother 70 excuses) because in politics, one cannot rule out bad intentions. In fact, politics has nothing to do with good or bad intentions, but it is rather concerned with results. Also in politics there are no excuses, a fact that has not been understood by many so far.

Conclusion

Sultan's testimony and others reveal many things that are up to the level of facts, which requires dealing with them realistically and objectively by the Brotherhood, and not through angry and nervous reactions. Therefore, it is incumbent on those interested and influential within the Muslim Brotherhood to deal seriously with such important points that could change reality and solve many accumulating and complicated crises. The solution is never to attack advisors or to turn a blind eye to their role in change. It is also important to emphasize that the MB's stereotype way in dealing with adversities, and their satisfaction with imprisonment and tribulations can never contribute to any kind of empowerment or victory. This is a reality that Egyptians have been living in Egypt's experiment since the January 2011 revolution. However, those who remain steadfast in the regime's cells become symbols of resistance and struggle; and everyone should deal with their steadfastness in the appropriate way they deserve!