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Introduction

In a surprising decision, al-Sisi fired Khaled Fawzi, the director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Service (GIS), and appointed General Abbas Kamel, the former director of his office, as Egypt's new GIS director. Al-Sisi also assigned his son Mahmud al-Sisi – a military intelligence officer who has been working in the General Intelligence Service for several years – to work at the GIS director's office.

Sisi's change of the head of the General Intelligence Service is the second of its kind since he came to power in May 2014, in addition to frequent referrals of many GIS agents to retirement. The decision to dismiss Maj. Gen. Khaled Fawzi is significant as it came shortly before the 2018 presidential elections.

First: General Intelligence Service .. Inception and Tasks

The General Intelligence Service (GIS) is an Egyptian intelligence agency responsible for providing national security intelligence, both domestically and transnationally, with a counter-terrorism focus. It is an independent sovereign security and information body affiliated to the Presidency. The GIS is part of the Egyptian intelligence community, together with the Office of Military Intelligence Services and Reconnaissance and National Security.

The decision to set up an Egyptian intelligence service was taken by President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1954, and placed under the command of Zakaria Mohieddin. The agency's importance rose when Nasser assigned its command to Salah Nasr, who held

the post of director of the GIS from 1957 to 1967 and thoroughly reorganized the agency. Under Nasr's supervision, the GIS relocated to its own building and established separate divisions for Radio, Computer, Forgery and Black Operations.

To cover the agency's expenses, Nasr set up Al Nasr Company, ostensibly an import-export firm, as a front organization. He played a very important role helping Algeria, Southern Yemen and many Arab and African states gain independence. Although the Egyptian foreign ministry was officially responsible for foreign affairs, GIS initiated and aided many Arab and African movements for independence as a part of Gamal Abdel Nasser's anti-imperialist policies. Nasr established good relations with other intelligence agencies across the globe, which helped providing Egypt with wheat and establishing industries such as (Al Nasr Company for Motor Cars). One of his constructions is the Gezeera Tower in Cairo.

For several years the name of GIS director was a secret only known to high officials and government newspapers chief editors. However, Major-General Omar Suleiman, who was the head of the GIS from 1993 to January 2011, was the first one to break this taboo. His name was published before he himself became a known face in media after being envoyed by former Egyptian president Mubarak to Israel, USA and Gaza on several occasions.

The Director of the General Intelligence directly reports to the President. The Director is a civilian or a general or flag officer of the armed forces appointed by the President. The current director is Major General Abbas Kamel, while the Deputy Director is Nasser Fahmi.

Since its inception, the general intelligence service has been carrying out internal and external security files. The GIS has played a large role in monitoring the political files

inside the Egyptian country with a strategic dimension. Regarding the external files, the GIS used to be responsible for the issues that threaten the Egyptian national security. The GIS played a significant role in the Egyptian-Israeli conflict during the period of war that ended in October 1973.

Since Omar Suleiman took over the leadership of the apparatus in 1993, the role of the General Intelligence has been clearly activated, especially as Major General Omar Suleiman's period in office was the longest period in the history of the General Intelligence Service, about 18 years. At that time, the apparatus assumed most sensitive files inside and outside the Egyptian state, such as the Islamic groups file, the management of political life within the Egyptian state, the management of the Palestinian file and the files related to the African continent, as well as the file of the Egyptian-Israeli relations. The GIS under Suleiman also used to coordinate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the management of many files concerning the Egyptian relations between several countries, including the United States, Federal Russia, North Korea, and others.

However, the GIS role was frozen in some files after the January 2011 revolution, with referring some of the files that were administered by the agency to the military intelligence, such as the Palestinian file, which the Military Intelligence had run from January 2011 to the beginning of 2015. However, after Maj. Gen. Khaled Fawzi was appointed as GIS director, Sisi returned some of the files that were managed by the agency, including the management of the Palestinian file, which was managed by the GIS before the January 25 Revolution (2011).

Second: Restructuring the General Intelligence Service

Sisi is aware of the seriousness and impact of the General Intelligence Service within the Egyptian state. Since the coup of July 3, 2013, Sisi has restructured the apparatus to ensure that it is strongly loyal to him as follows:

1- From the first moment of the coup, Sisi dismissed Major General Mohamed Raafat Shehata, who was appointed in 2012 at the time of President Mohamed Morsi from his post as GIS director, replacing him with Major General Mohamed Farid Tohami, who had been head of the Administrative Control Authority before taking office.

2- Interim President Adly Mansour, who assumed power after the 2013 military coup, issued Decree No. 634 of 2013 referring ten GIS agents to pension. It is known that the decision was formally issued by interim President Adly Mansour, but in fact Sisi was the real ruler at the time after his move against Egypt's first democratically elected president Mohamed Morsi. Such proactive measures began before the commencement of the procedures that put Abdul Fattah al-Sisi on the path to run for president.

3- On July 2, 2014, Sisi approved the retirement of 14 General Intelligence agents, who were appointed in civilian posts.

4- On February 5, 2015, Sisi issued a number of decisions transferring three GIS employees to work in some civil ministries.

5- Sisi continued his procedures of discharging the device from some of its agents. On June 18, 2015, Sisi issued a decree referring nine GIS agents to pension.

6- In late July, Sisi decided to transfer some of the GIS employees to a number of civilian posts.

7- In December, Sisi referred 11 GIS leaders to pension.

8- On July 3, 2016, Sisi issued a Presidential Decree No. 281 of 2016, referring 17 CIS agents to pension on the pretext that this was “at their request”. On the same day (July 3, 2016), Sisi issued Decree No. 282 of 2016, transferring 7 GIS employees to other civilian posts.

9- On January 26, 2017, Sisi issued a presidential decree (No. 29 of 2017) to refer 19 GIS agents to pension.

Third: Pre-dismissal of Maj. Gen. Khalid Fawzi

Before the dismissal of Major General Khalid Fawzi from his post as director of the General Intelligence Service, the Egyptian state witnessed many developments in several files, most notably:

1- The leaks from within the Egyptian state apparatus, including leaks from the Sisi office, leaks showing control of the military intelligence over the Egyptian media, leaks about Ahmed Shafiq’s attempt to run for presidential elections, and leaks about how to address Trump’s decision to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem.

2- The Attempt to assassinate the Minister of Defense Sedki Sobhi and Minister of Interior Magdi Abdel Ghaffar during their visit to the city of Arish, North Sinai.

3- Announcement of the intention of Lt. General Sami Anan, former chief of staff of the Egyptian armed forces, to run for the presidential election of 2018, which raised controversy about his relationship with a number of security services, including the General Intelligence Service.

Fourth: Reasons and Interpretations

With the dismissal of the head of the General Intelligence Service, at that time, several explanations have emerged:

1) Communication with potential candidates

- This hypothesis is based on a suggestion that Lt. General Sami Anan at this time came after coordination with some sovereign bodies and reports that Sami Anan directly communicated with the General Intelligence Service to support him in the upcoming elections. Sources said that the GIS loyalty to Anan was one of the reasons behind the dismissal of Maj. General Khalid Fawzi at that time. Other sources said that Sisi was strongly convinced that Fawzi was behind pushing Sami Anan towards running for the presidential elections at the last moment, and that Anan's move came with a green light from the General Intelligence Service after the withdrawal of former Egyptian Prime Minister, Ahmed Shafiq, from the election race because of threats he received from the regime.
- According to some sources, Khalid Fawzi was pushing for conducting a change inside the military institution, replacing Sisi by Shafiq or Anan, in an attempt to rescue the country and get it out of the dark tunnel it suffered during the Sisi regime.
- Other sources said that the General Intelligence Service was behind the campaign to collect the powers of attorney needed for the nomination of Sami Anan in some governorates to be Sisi's rival in the elections of 2018.
- Some believe that the main reason behind dismissal of Fawzi was the dissatisfaction of the General Intelligence Service because of Sisi's policies towards the apparatus and his attempts to fully control it.

2) Media Leaks

Since 2014, leaks coming out to the public have not stopped inside sensitive areas of the Egyptian regime. The last of these leaks came early January 2018, and revealed how the military intelligence service controls the Egyptian media, and how it shapes

the content of issues that the media address in TV programs. Some analysts say that the General Intelligence Service was behind those leaks, and that the decision to dismiss Major General Khalid Fawzi at that time came because of suspicions that he was behind those leaks that embarrass the Egyptian regime.

Based on what was reported by [Yoni Ben Menachem](#), an Israeli expert on Arab affairs, the New York Times media leaks for the Egyptian military intelligence officer were behind the dismissal of General Khaled Fawzi from his post. Ashraf Kholi, a GIS officer, who called a number of Egyptian media men and ordered them not to oppose US President Donald Trump's announcement that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel.

3) Control of the General Intelligence Service

This hypothesis is based on the fact that Sisi is now working in the pre-election phase to control the General Intelligence Service before his second term in office. Also, the appointment of Maj. General Abbas Kamel, Sisi's right arm from outside the GIS as the first man within the General Intelligence Service, suggests that he did not trust the loyalty of any major leadership within the apparatus for occupying this sensitive post; and that the move of transferring Mahmoud Sisi to the office of the GIS director was a preliminary step to Mahmoud Sisi for becoming the future GIS director, after Sisi's winning in the 2018 presidential elections. It is to be mentioned that Mahmoud Al-Sisi used to attend all the important meetings attended by former General Intelligence Service Director Maj. Gen. Khaled Fawzi since early 2014, according to informed sources.

4) Differences between GIS and military intelligence

Some observers see that the dismissal of Khalid Fawzi as an indication of the aggravation of conflicts between the security services to a degree that cannot be

postponed until after the presidential elections. Others suggest that this step was taken to avoid the GIS potential impact on the chances of Sisi's success in the 2018 elections, due to the conflict between the General Intelligence Service and the military intelligence.

Citing the French periodical Intelligence Online, Middle East Monitor said "Arab diplomatic sources in Cairo blamed the Rawda Mosque incident on the failure of Egyptian intelligence officers to work together," adding that the differences between Major General Khaled Fawzi, Director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Service, who is responsible for foreign intelligence and combatting terrorism, and military intelligence chief General Mohamed El-Shahat were noted by the journal. This, apparently, resulted in the failure to exchange intelligence between the two agencies that are supposed to be leading Egypt's counterterrorism work in the Sinai Peninsula."

[Intelligence Online](#) also claimed that there have been numerous accusations in recent months directed by Fawzi against the military intelligence agency, which submits reports directly to the Defence Ministry, bypassing the General Intelligence Service. Despite this, the military intelligence agency still receives support from Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. In December 2016, Al-Sisi expanded El-Shahat's authority and privileges, giving him the responsibility for counterterrorism in Egyptian cities. This is a task that was once the exclusive preserve of Fawzi and his GIS. Also, reports said there were serious tensions between Fawzi and former Egyptian Interior Minister, Magdy Abdel Ghaffar, who was largely responsible for combatting jihadist groups, according to the periodical. Abdel Ghaffar lost some of his influence after being criticized by several senior military and intelligence officials for not coming up with a new and more effective counterterrorism strategy.

5) GIS failure in external files

Some believe that the former GIS director's [rejection](#) of US President Trump's peace "deal of the century" for solving the Arab-Israeli conflict is the main reason behind his dismissal. Observers believe that this narrative is supported by a recent New York Times article based on leaked audio recordings of an Egyptian intelligence office, Ashraf Al-Kholi. The article described covert efforts to swing Egyptian public opinion in favor of the American recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, a position contrary to Egypt's public position.

Andrew Miller – deputy director of the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) and served as the Director for Egypt and Israel Military Issues on the National Security Council (NSC), and was responsible for coordinating U.S. policy towards these countries from 2014 to 2017 – said that thanks to Khalid Fawzi's efforts to restore influence, the GIS has become an important channel in the relations between the United States and Egypt in recent years. The Egyptian spy agency hired Weber Shandwick, a public relations agency based in New York, to represent its interests; but Miller said some US officials found it difficult to work with Mr. Fawzi, who saw Egypt's problems as the result of foreign intervention. Miller considered Abbas Kamel who succeeded Fawzi is a more moderate figure.

Also among the files that some saw were behind Sisi's decision to fire Fawzi was the GIS failure to handle the file of the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and the Egyptian-Sudanese [relations](#).

Conclusion

The final outcome is that Sisi is working to rebuild the implicit agreement between him and the military and security bodies with new rules. As a result of that agreement, the

SCAF has harassed Lt. Gen. Sami Anan after his candidacy for the presidency. Also, Al-Sisi is seeking to impose more hegemony over all joints of the state, which will never happen without controlling all security, intelligence and military bodies.

Annex:

Following is a list of the General Intelligence Service directors from 1954 until January 2018:

GIS List of Directors

- 1- Zakaria Mohieddin (1954–1956)
- 2- Ali Sabri (1956–1957)
- 3- Salah Nasr (1957–1967)
- 4- Amin Howeidi (1967–1970)
- 5- Mohammed Hafez Ismail (1970)
- 6- Ahmad Kamel (1970)
- 7- Karim Abdelrahman El-Leithy (1970–1973)
- 8- Ahmad Ismail Ali (1973–1974)
- 9- Ahmad Abdulsalam Tawfiq (1974–1975)
- 10- Kamal Hassan Ali (1975–1978)
- 11- Mohamed Saeed El Mahy (1978–1981)
- 12- Mohamed Fuaad Nassar (1981–1983)
- 13- Mohamed Refat Jibreel (1983–1986)
- 14- Ameen Nummur (1986–1989)
- 15- Omar Nagm (1989–1991)
- 16- Nour Eddien Afeefy (1991–1993)

- 17- Omar Suleiman (1993–2011)
- 18- Murad Muwafi (2011–2012)
- 19- Mohamed Raafat Shehata (2012–2013)
- 20- Mohamed Fareed (2013–2014)
- 21- Khaled Fawzy (2014–2018)
- 22- Abbas Kamel (2018–present)

