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Since he was appointed as Defense Minister by Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi, against whom he led a military coup in 2013, General Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has been keen on attending the educational seminars organized by the Egyptian armed forces' department of morale affairs for military personnel, along with commanders of the armed forces, a number of interior ministry officials as well as a number of ministers, media men and clerics. It should be noted that Sisi has been used to making his boldest and strangest comments during these seminars.

First: Review of the Seminar

On Sunday, 13 October 2019, Sisi attended the proceedings of the thirty-first educational seminar organized by the Egyptian armed forces' department of morale affairs for military personnel, under the title "October: Will and Challenge". The seminar was held at the Egyptian Center for International Conferences and Exhibitions, in coincidence with the celebrations of the 46th anniversary of Egypt's victory in the war against Israel on October 6th, 1973.

The seminar included screening a documentary film, entitled "Truth and Challenge", produced by the army's department of morale affairs, featuring challenges facing Egypt in the past and the present, most notably the 1967 setback and the Israeli occupation of Sinai. The documentary highlighted how the defeat of the 1967 war was turned into a military victory in October 1973 and showed how Egypt began its struggle to re-build the Armed Forces and begin the War of Attrition against Israel.

A lecture entitled "Diplomatic Efforts in the Attrition Stage and the October War" was presented by Dr. Moustafa El Fiqi, the director of Bibliotheca Alexandrina. El Fiqi paid tribute to the Egyptian armed forces that was able to gather its main elements in the shortest possible time after the 1976 defeat and even carry out guerrilla operations against the enemy. Addressing the ceremony, El Fiqi said Egyptians' ability to stand on their feet quickly after the 1967 setback was admired by all the world. The director of Bibliotheca Alexandrina said Egypt had all diplomatic support from friendly countries during this stage. He also referred to UN Security Council Resolution 242 that was issued in the aftermath of the October war. Fiqi also paid tribute to the Egyptian people that turned defeat into

victory and chaos into safety. "Egyptians are sure capable of countering political strife at the international and regional levels", he concluded.

Lt. Gen. Abd Rab el Nabi Hafez, former commander of the 16th infantry brigade and former chief of staff of the armed forces, gave a lecture on the victory of October. The former chief of staff talked about the heroics and sacrifices made by the fighters of the armed forces to restore the Arab nation's pride and dignity, adding that his troops took part in dozens of battles during the War of Attrition and October War. He paid tribute to troops of the 16th infantry brigade who insisted to continue fighting despite counter attacks by Israel in the battle of tanks on October 16-17. He recalled the war of attrition and the first airstrike in October War, breaking into the Bar-Lev line and the collapse of the Israeli enemy fortifications and its loss of equipment and personnel, resulting in a complete loss of balance and inability to return to the theater of military operations.

Mohammed al-Gendi, Deputy Chairman of the Technological Research Center at the British University in Egypt (BUE), gave a lecture entitled, "Remote Invasion", noting that Egypt in this century is witnessing a new type of invasion which he called "the remote invasion". He also addressed the fourth and fifth generation warfare and asserted that technology has become an active player in influencing a state's infrastructure of informatics as well as national security through spread of rumors and destructive ideas. He also noted that the change in globalization tools topped by information technology and communication have paved the way for the surfacing of new risks which he called "the fifth-generation" warfares.

The seminar also witnessed the honoring of a number of soldiers wounded in the armed operations in North Sinai Governorate; where Sisi honored the soldier Ahmed Fawzi Hassan who lost his legs while safeguarding Rafah in North Sinai in 2015.

Following addresses by several participants, scenes from "Al-Mamar" movie were screened in the presence of a number of stars that had participated in the film to highlight the heroic actions and victories achieved by the Egyptian army and its steadfastness in the face of the Israeli enemy along with the challenges that were overcome by the Egyptian soldiers and the gross damage inflicted on the Israeli army during the War of Attrition and the October War. Addressing the ceremony, "Al Mamar" leading actor Ahmed Ezz voiced happiness over participating in the glorious October War anniversary celebrations, noting that the success of the movie has sent a message from the Egyptian

people who have always been supportive of their army. Ezz said every soldier should feel proud and honored to serve his country at any time. Meanwhile, actress Hind Sabry said "Al Mamar" has shown the tough pathway Egypt and the Arab countries went through to turn defeat into victory.

Second: Sisi's Messages during the Seminar

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi exploited his presence among the leaders, officers and personnel of the armed forces, as well as State men and public figures in sending some messages to the Egyptian people as follows:

1- After each section of the seminar, Sisi commented on what was discussed during that section; and because the seminar came after the demonstrations of September 2019, which Egyptian Businessman Mohamed Ali called for after he had disclosed details about the corruption of the military system under Sisi's management, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said that the Egyptian army was exposed to a conspiracy to distort its image. "The Egyptian people did not lose confidence in themselves during the October 6 War," Sisi said, in attempt to send a message that the army represents the Egyptian people. "There is a conspiracy to tarnish the image of the Egyptian army and its ability to protect the people and the country, but the people have great confidence in their great army," he said.

2- Sisi also tended to warn the Egyptian people that the alternative to his regime would be a state similar to that experienced by countries such as Iraq and Syria that have been suffering from civil war, in clear expression of the strategy of "either me or chaos". Therefore, Sisi sought to distort the January Revolution and accuse it of being the cause of the current situation experienced by the Egyptian state.

3- One of the most important messages that Sisi wanted to send to the army and the Egyptian people during the 31st. educational seminar, was aimed at provoking the sympathy of the Egyptian people by recalling the people's adherence to President Gamal Abdel Nasser after the defeat of 1967. "The Egyptian people adhered to supporting the leader (in reference to Nasser) at the time of defeat in 1967," he said. However, some interpreted that Sisi feels a state of defeat and failure because of the corruption that Mohamed Ali has recently revealed and agitated both the army and the people. Others believe that there is a state of loss of confidence in the military institution leadership among a broad section of officers because of the videos that were released by Egyptian businessman Mohammed Ali.

In fact, this is what Sisi meant during the youth conference that he attended in September 2019, when he said that distortion of the Egyptian army leadership leads to loss of confidence in leadership of the military institution by the junior officers, adding, “the aim of this is for destroying your will, loss of hope and trust, and destroying the country.”

4- Within his address during the seminar Sisi was systematically keen on reiterating that the the country is facing a war in the Sinai Peninsula against an organization that has its internal and external extensions, where he wanted to send the Egyptian people a message to the effect that facing such events must take the most priority over all other things, to justify his failure in facing the economic challenges that the country is going through, and win the sympathy of his supporters again.

Finally, as some believe, the messages which Sisi tried to send to the Egyptian people during the 31st. educational seminar of the armed forces came at this specific time in an attempt to regain his popularity which has recently declined due to pervasion of corruption and failure within the Egyptian state, part of which has recently been revealed by Egyptian contractor and businessman Mohamed Ali.