

The Honorable Barack H. Obama  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

February 7, 2011

Dear Mr. President,

We are concerned by reports suggesting that your administration may acquiesce to an inadequate and possibly fraudulent transition process in Egypt. The process that is unfolding now has many of the attributes of a smokescreen. Without significant changes, it will lead to preservation of the current regime in all but name and ensure radicalization and instability in the future. Throwing the weight of the United States behind the proposals of President Mubarak and Vice President Suleiman, rather than the legitimate demands of the opposition, would be a serious error. What we seek in Egypt is not the current regime without the Mubarak family, but a true transition to democracy and an open political system that protects civil rights and liberties. The transition cannot be run exclusively by members of the old regime. It must include leaders of the democratic opposition who are empowered to effect the crucial changes necessary for full democracy.

You have indicated that the transition must begin “now” and that Egypt cannot “go back” to where it was before the demonstrations began. For those words to have meaning, your administration must commit itself to full democracy in Egypt that can only be brought about with the participation of all of the democratic opposition and the unmistakable departure of Hosni Mubarak from the scene.

The need for constitutional changes is not a justification for the continuation in power of Hosni Mubarak. It is ironic that after years of manipulating the constitution to remain in power, Mubarak now presents himself as essential to preserving constitutional legitimacy. Moreover, Vice President Suleiman’s effort to intimidate the international community by arguing that Mubarak’s departure would necessitate elections within 60 days is disingenuous. There are avenues within the current constitution to avoid holding elections that quickly. What is missing here is political will to bring about real change in the Egyptian system.

We urge you to press for an unmistakable and irreversible transition to democracy with the following elements:

- participation of democratic opposition leaders in all aspects of the transitional process
- expeditious departure of President Mubarak from the political scene
- immediate abrogation of the emergency law and the release of political prisoners
- clear commitment by the Egyptian government to guarantee freedom of association and expression for all Egyptians
- extensive constitutional amendments to pave the way for free presidential and parliamentary elections

- supervision of elections by independent judicial authorities and access to all aspects of elections by domestic and international monitors

If you would like to respond to this letter, please direct correspondence to:

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Sincerely,

Michele Dunne (Carnegie Endowment)  
Robert Kagan (Brookings Institution)

*On behalf of the Working Group on Egypt*