



## **POMED Congratulates the Egyptian People**

February 11, 2011

The Project on Middle East Democracy congratulates the Egyptian people on this historic day. Their indomitable courage and resilience have been an inspiration to observers all around the world. Following 18 days of protests that saw millions of Egyptians from all segments of society come together, the government has finally responded to the first of their clear demands: Hosni Mubarak has resigned. Through determined peaceful demonstrations, Egyptians have shown the powerful strength of a population united in pursuit of freedom. This struggle did not come without sacrifices, however, and we honor and remember those who lost their lives in their brave quest for freedom.

As we celebrate this moment, we must also remember that the transition to genuine democracy in Egypt has only just begun. The many steps ahead will be long and difficult. We hope that the Supreme Military Council along with the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court will oversee a peaceful transition that will usher in a new constitution, a genuinely open political environment, and free and fair elections. The Egyptian military is to be lauded for exhibiting relative restraint in the face of a tenuous security situation. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the military leaders now in control of the country are members of the old regime and they share responsibility for its brutal and repressive tactics. In order to gain the trust of the people, decisive and meaningful steps must be taken in the days ahead, including the immediate repeal of the State of Emergency Law and the inclusion of a broad range of opposition voices in the interim government that will guide Egypt toward genuine elections. Moreover, with control more explicitly in the hands of the military, it must exert its authority to ensure that no violence is perpetrated by any part of the security apparatus.

President Obama responded to today's events by saying that the "United States will continue to be a friend and partner to Egypt." We commend the administration for supporting the rights of the protesters and insisting that the military not suppress those rights through violence, while recognizing that the struggle for democracy must be led by Egypt's citizens. At this crucial juncture, it is imperative that the United States continue to follow events closely and provide rhetorical, technical, and financial support to the Egyptian people.

The people of Egypt, following the example of those in Tunisia before them, have sent a powerful message to autocratic rulers throughout the region: governments that are not accountable to their people, that rule through intimidation and violence, and that amass fortunes while their citizens go hungry, will not reign forever. These leaders are now faced with a crucial choice: listen and respond to the demands of your people or go the way of Hosni Mubarak and Zine el Abidine Ben Ali. We offer our admiration, support, and best wishes for the challenges ahead.