



المعهد المصري للدراسات
EGYPTIAN INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES

Articles

9 NOV 2017

After Wahat Attack Challenges & Repercussions

Dr. Amr Darrag



WWW.EIPSS-EG.ORG

 Eipss.EG  Eis_EG

TURKEY- ISTANBUL

Bahçelievler, Yenibosna Mh 29 Ekim Cad. No: 7 A2 Blok 3. Plaza D: 64
Tel/Fax: +90 212 227 2262 E-Mail: info@eis-eg.org

After Wahat Attack: Challenges & Repercussions

Dr. Amr Darrag

The Egyptian scene during the second half of October through early November 2017 witnessed a number of major and successive events that appeared to have confused the Egyptian regime, as well as everyone who follows up the Egyptian scene and tries to find an explanation for the events, or at least a realistic analysis to help understand the reality of this scene. In fact, these events led me to wait a little until the noise calms down, and then try to provide a thorough reading of the current Egyptian scene related to these events, away from the many details associated with them, whether they were correct or fake, to help reach a clearer image consistent with the regional and international events.

The Al-Wahat area in Giza governorate witnessed last October 20th what was then said to be violent clashes between security forces and an armed group, killing 16 policemen, according to the Egyptian Interior Ministry statement. But, contrary to the official statement, some news agencies reported that the [number](#) of policemen killed in the incident reached 52, mostly from the elite of special, anti-terrorism, and national security forces. This incident resulted in a lot of confusion within the regime's security services as well as its media arms.

More than eight days after the incident, specifically on October 28th, and in the absence of accurate official information about the details of the incident and the nature of the armed group that attacked security forces, Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi took a surprise and unexpected step by dismissing Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces Mahmoud Hegazi and appointing him as a presidential advisor for strategic planning and crisis management. Coinciding with the dismissal of Hegazi, several high-ranking officials in the Interior Ministry were also dismissed.

Two days after the [dismissal](#) of Lt. General Mahmoud Hegazi, it was announced that the armed group that had targeted the security forces in Al-Wahat attack was terminated, and that the [abducted officer](#) was released. Also, the Ministry of Defence announced in several videos that it carried out air strikes against the perpetrators and released Captain Mohamed Al-Hayes, who was kidnapped. However so far, no source has provided a coherent account of the incident: how it took place, the number of casualties, how Al-Hayes was released, or the circumstances surrounding the operation.

Regardless of the many details about circumstances of these events and the quest to explore their true details, we can reach several conclusions, which have appeared clearer than ever before, and can contribute to shedding light on the current macro scene in Egypt:

First: Whatever the army and security forces did after the Al-Wahat attack of air strikes and elimination of the perpetrators, the reality that cannot be ignored is that a small newly formed armed group was able to easily overcome trained groups of the Egyptian police's special forces, twice in a row, causing terrifying casualties among them, which gives serious indications about the efficiency and capabilities of these armed groups and the future of such confrontations.

Second: The Al-Wahat incident took place about 100 km from the capital's urban extensions (6th of October City) and not in remote areas far from the grip of the Egyptian security, which highlights the escalating dangers that are almost hitting the inside of Egypt after they had been confined to the Sinai Peninsula only.

Third: The group that carried out the Al-Wahat incident seems to have extensions across the Western desert and even reach the [Libyan inside](#). This could be a great "tributary" for such groups in the future, especially in light of the state of revenge



provoked by the Egyptian bombing of civilians in the Libyan city of Derna killing large numbers of women and children.

Fourth: It seems that the armed group that carried out the incident is related to, or at least linked spiritually with al-Qaeda, which gives the incident greater momentum, as well as a regional and international dimension. "Ansar al-Islam", the group that no one had heard of before, claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement published on a website linked with [al-Qaeda](#).

Fifth: The growing numbers of experienced and highly-trained former army and police officers who joined the armed groups in the western desert and the Sinai Peninsula, according to disclosed official data, made operations more effective and painful, and increased the possibility of attracting new army and police officers to join their colleagues.

Sixth: Military confrontations have become stronger and extended over a wide geographical scale from the Sinai Peninsula in the east to the western desert in the west, with potential extensions in Libya and even the Great Sahara in the circles of influence of groups belonging to the Al-Qaeda, organizationally or just spiritually.

Seventh: Due to the poor capabilities of the Egyptian forces in their confrontations with the armed groups in guerrilla wars, they were proven not to be able to resolve such clashes without getting foreign support. According to [military sources](#) close to the regime, the Egyptian forces received Russian and French support in the western desert to handle repercussions of the Al-Wahat incident. Also, the Egyptian army receives Israeli support in the Sinai Peninsula, which paves the way for further foreign military intervention in Egypt in the future.

Eighth: Given the above facts, the international trust in Al-Sisi's ability to control the security situation in Egypt seems to have declined, especially in light of the persistent reports about the regime's gross violations of human rights. For example, the United

States has recently placed Egypt on top of a list of 11 countries that it identified as high-risk countries (Egypt, Iran, Libya, South Sudan, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq, Mali, North Korea, Somalia and Syria) when President Trump ordered the imposition of restrictions on refugees coming from these countries. Of course, this is a big indication, especially amid the continued warnings for tourists by many countries to avoid travel to Egypt.

Ninth: All these variables come at a time when Al-Sisi is trying to gather all powers in his hand, get rid of anyone who might pose a threat to him, as he did with his closest aide, Lt. General Hegazi. Moreover, large segments of Egyptians bemoan their poor living conditions and the country's economic crises, which increases the challenges facing Al-Sisi, who is seeking a second term in office, starting the middle of next year.

Conclusion

In light of the above facts, and in view of the growing challenges facing the country, all Egyptian political forces must work together to restore the stable democratic path to avoid sliding into serious repercussions that are difficult to overcome, not only in transforming Egypt to failed state, but also in gradually turning large parts of our nation into battlefields.

The international community must also be aware of the dangers of continuing to support the dictatorial regime in Egypt, which could lead to destabilization of the whole region, taking into account all other escalating factors of instability in the region, which is witnessing fundamental changes and unresolved conflicts.