



المعهد المصري للدراسات  
EGYPTIAN INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES

# Articles

11 FEBRUARY  
2019

If Sisi's brutality in Egypt continues,  
the results could be dire for Europe

Dr. Amr Darrag



[WWW.EIPSS-EG.ORG](http://WWW.EIPSS-EG.ORG)

[f Eipss.EG](https://www.facebook.com/Eipss.EG) [t Eis\\_EG](https://twitter.com/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](mailto:info@eis-eg.org)

## If Sisi's brutality in Egypt continues, the results could be dire for Europe

Dr. Amr Darrag

[The Guardian](#) published today (11 February) an opinion article by Dr. Amr Darrag, the minister of planning and international cooperation in the government of Dr. Hesham Qandil, titled: "If Sisi's brutality in Egypt continues, the results could be dire for Europe", as follows:

***Egypt's autocratic government is worse than any before it. It must be dealt with before the country explodes into violence***

The outpouring of joy that followed [Hosni Mubarak's resignation](#) was palpable. It was 11 February 2011 – eight years ago to this day. Egyptians of all faiths and ages and backgrounds, united by a desire for freedom, gathered in Tahrir Square to bring 30 years of tyranny to an end. We believed that as the people of the region's most historic power, inspired by the success of the [Tunisian revolution](#), we were setting in motion a chain of events that would guarantee Egypt's freedom.

But after 30 months the dream became a nightmare. Letting the military manage the transitional period was probably the biggest mistake of all; revolutions never give power to pillars of the old regime. Perhaps later on we were complacent: our first free presidential election, and the subsequent referendum on a new constitution, gave us confidence that the changes taking place could not be stopped or undone. But the solidarity that defined the protests in Tahrir Square was disintegrating, and neither the government of Mohamed Morsi nor any of the other political powers could resolve the differences or abate the fears – of the old regime, the political parties, the army and the people in the street – that had started to infuse public life.

February 11, 2019

We made mistakes. Try as it might, the government, in which I served as a cabinet minister, could not isolate the leftover elements of Mubarak's regime and bring consensus to the country. And all the while there were fuel, gas and electricity shortages to exacerbate the [rising discord](#). We gave priority to establishing democratic institutions, but it took only a minute on [3 July 2013](#) to dismantle them all: the presidency, the parliament and the constitution. Major reform of the remnants of the old regime should have been more of a priority.

When, in November 2012, Morsi announced that his rulings were temporarily above the constitutional court's, some believed he had [proclaimed himself dictator](#) – though his intention was to safeguard the country's new constitution, which limited, rather than extended, his powers. It opened the door to fresh calls for protests and regime change and eventually General [Sisi's military coup](#). The scorched-earth assault on protesters in [Rabaa Square](#) remains one of the [darkest days](#) in modern Egyptian history, and sounded the death knell for the dreams of the Arab spring.

It is painful to remember [Barack Obama's words](#) following Mubarak's resignation: "The people of Egypt have spoken," he said. "They have made it clear that nothing less than genuine democracy will carry the day." Now we find ourselves again in thrall to a brutal and capricious military dictator – only this one is worse than Mubarak, worse than Gamal Abdel Nasser. His impact on Egyptian civil life was immediate. Dalia Fahmy, a political science professor at Long Island University in New York, put it most succinctly when she said, "Egyptian society is being crushed."

By now the horrifying details are familiar: Sisi punishes dissidents and activists daily; there are illegal arrests, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings. Women who speak out against sexual harassment are arrested; Egypt now [jails more journalists](#) on

February 11, 2019

“false news” charges than any other country. Human Rights Watch describes a “[torture epidemic](#)” in Egyptian jails, while [Amnesty International](#) says those on the outside live in an “open-air prison”. All the while, the hidden war in the Sinai Peninsula threatens a humanitarian crisis. And due to Sisi’s failure to handle the terrorism he claims to be fighting, the Global Terrorism Index 2018 puts Egypt in ninth place.

While I was drafting this piece, three youth members of the Muslim Brotherhood were executed: Ahmed Elhendawy, Abdelhamid Metwally and Almoataz Ghanem. Their charges were fabricated, based on confessions made under torture.

And yet Europe is watching with folded arms. In a region disposed to upheaval and violence, a “strongman” like Sisi ensures stability – or at least that is the thinking of leaders such as [Emmanuel Macron](#). But this cold war mentality is pushing Egypt to the brink of total state failure. Sisi’s government spends extravagantly on projects that have not undergone even basic feasibility studies and diverts resources away from schools and hospitals to the bloated military. About [a third](#) of Egyptians live on or below the poverty line, and the Early Warning Project puts Egypt third in the list of countries most likely to experience a major mass killing this year. Yet Sisi and his supporters push for constitutional amendments that would extend his presidency, possibly to 2034. In addition, the amendments call for intervention by the military to “protect the constitution and the state if under threat”. Although this has been routine in Egypt, it is the first time in Egyptian history that it has been constitutionalised.

If Europe does not address the autocracy of Sisi’s government and Egypt fails, the consequences will be almost unimaginable. The twin disasters of the Syrian civil war and the failure of Libya – whose population is less than a tenth of the size of Egypt’s – sent desperate refugees across the Mediterranean in almost unprecedented numbers.

February 11, 2019

If Egypt explodes into violence, the refugee crisis alone would shake the continent to its foundations, and any export of terrorism would animate and inflame rising European nationalism and xenophobia. Although Sisi uses these same arguments to blackmail [Europe](#) into supporting him, it is his regime that is the main driver of instability in Egypt.

Although some think the dreams of the Arab spring are over, the ideals that underpinned it are still alive. Among millions of ordinary Egyptians there is a desire, deeply held, to live in a free and fair democratic society. If Europe is indeed the world's bastion of democracy, its leaders should not abandon their principles for the sake of clumsy realpolitik.

