

**MUBARAK ACQUITTED, BROAD ANTI-TERROR LAWS PLANNED:
“DEEP STATE” RETURNS TO EGYPT**
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Isranet Daily Briefing, December 2, 2014
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**SISI REGIME SHOWS CONFIDENCE AS ‘DEEP STATE’
RETURNS TO EGYPT'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE**

Ariel Ben Solomon

[Jerusalem Post](#), Dec. 1, 2014

The acquittal of former president Hosni Mubarak, his sons, and other close aides demonstrates that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has settled comfortably in power and marks the return of the deep state. The term “deep state” refers to a group of powerful nondemocratic leaders who, though they may be concealed under layers of bureaucracy, are actually in control of the country. To be sure, Sisi has smartly led the important Arab state from the depth of riots, terrorist attacks, economic crisis and outside pressures, but the style and makeup, if not the policies, of the government are reminiscent of Mubarak’s regime.

The fact of the matter is that the Mubarak trial was bound to be based not on a strict reading of the evidence but on the wishes of the regime in power. Muslim Brotherhood spokeswoman Wafaa Hefni admitted as much, saying that if former Islamist president Mohamed Morsi were in power, the ruling would have been different, the *Daily News Egypt* reported. Arab politics is a matter of winner take all, and the court verdicts can be considered as Sisi’s coattails. In March, Robert Springborg argued in an article for the *BBC* that the Mubarak era personalities

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were key to Sisi’s consolidation of power. “At present, [Sisi] he is relying on the military, other elements of the deep state and Mubarak-era technocrats to manage his campaign, thereby suggesting he hopes to rule as a sort of presidential version of King Abdullah II of Jordan or King Muhammad VI of Morocco, balancing off the various political parties and forces under him while relying on the deep state for the essence of his rule.”

“The Mubarak trial was a classical political trial,” Prof. Yoram Meital, chairman of the Chaim Herzog Center for Middle East Studies and Diplomacy at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, told *The Jerusalem Post*. “It was impossible to separate the trial and the political context in Egypt,” he said. Sisi’s regime is largely a continuation of the governing mechanism introduced by Mubarak, but following his fall, processes of dramatic political change took place, and this trial is not going to be the final word on the 2011 January Revolution, asserted Meital. Of course, the verdict is a serious blow for the supporters of the revolution, which opposed the return of an authoritarian regime, argued Meital. “The popular uprising that toppled Mubarak created a new reality in Egypt and planted a new political consciousness among many sectors, particularly the younger generation,” Meital said. “The court’s decision pours oil on the fire of this struggle,” as Egyptian society “is divided in an unprecedented way and the court’s decision regarding Mubarak intensifies the polarization and could lead to further escalation between the regime and the opposition,” Meital added.

Zvi Mazel, who served as Israel’s sixth ambassador to Egypt and today is a fellow at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and a contributor to the *Post*, said that it is too simple to say that Egypt has gone back to Mubarak’s regime. “Sisi is different. He wants to reform Egypt, and he is working on it,” said Mazel, adding, “Mubarak wanted only calm and stability and wasted his tenure.” By contrast, Sisi has promised to maintain basic freedoms through law as he modernizes the country. That the court was able to acquit Mubarak signals that “Egypt has reached a new phase,” Mazel said, as the revolutionary period was emotionally charged with Egyptians seeking vengeance for the failure and poverty that the former president represented. After almost four years of violence, said Mazel, Egyptians are tired after having succeeded in ousting the Muslim Brotherhood regime, preventing “a religious dictatorship.” Now, people want stability and

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economic development and have faith in Sisi, who is doing a great job so far, asserted Mazel.

Regarding the trial, Mazel said that protesters were not killed during the first days but only after the Muslim Brotherhood intervened and attacked the police and public institutions. “In 2012 the court gave a verdict under pressure of the revolution; now - according to the evidence,” said Mazel, pointing out: “Everyone knows that Mubarak was not [former Iraqi president] Saddam Hussein or [former Libyan president] Muammar Gaddafi.” It is true that his police tortured citizens and he did not tackle the social-economic problems of Egypt, but he didn’t just kill people, argued the former Israeli ambassador. Mazel predicts that the Brotherhood will use his acquittal to say that the Mubarak regime has returned. “But this is not the situation,” he said.

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EGYPT’S WAR ON TERRORISM

Neville Teller

[Jerusalem Post](#), Nov. 6, 2014

The tentacles of Islamic State (IS), already coiled around large areas of northern Iraq and Syria, are now reaching out as far as northern Sinai. Egypt's most active militant group is Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, and whether or not it is formally allied with IS and its leader, the self-styled caliph of all Muslims - contradictory reports about that have recently appeared in the press - it is certainly closely aligned to IS, whose objectives it backs, and whose methods it copies. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, which attempted to kill the interior minister in Cairo in 2013 in a car bomb attack, has issued videos of the beheading of captives. It claimed responsibility for the bomb attack in Sinai in September, when at least 11 policemen were killed in a convoy travelling through village of Wefaq, near the Gaza border.

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Based on intercepted phone calls and text messages, Egyptian security officials recently claimed to have uncovered requests for aid from Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis to IS. According to this intelligence, the Sinai-based terror group requested the IS senior leadership to send trained members to Sinai to help carry out terrorist attacks. On Friday, October 24, two attacks in the Sinai peninsula killed 33 Egyptian security personnel. In the first, in the al-Kharouba area northwest of al-Arish, near the Gaza Strip, 30 people were killed and more than 25 wounded. Among them were several senior officers from Egypt’s Second Field Army based in Ismailia. One Sinai-based official said a rocket-propelled grenade was used to target two armored vehicles loaded with ammunition and heavy weapons, at a checkpoint near an army installation. Later, gunmen opened fire on a checkpoint in al-Arish, killing three members of the security forces.

Together the two attacks produced the biggest loss of life in decades for Egypt's army, which has been carrying out an offensive against jihadists in northern Sinai. Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi declared three days of national mourning, during which state television displayed black ribbons on screen. Following a meeting of the National Defence Council, he also imposed a three-month state of emergency in the north and center of the Sinai peninsula where the violence took place, and closed Egypt's Rafah crossing into the Gaza Strip. In short, Egypt now acknowledges that the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip has become one of the region's main exporters of terrorism, and is mounting a major offensive aimed at overcoming the threat and re-establishing effective control. Its aim is to establish a security buffer zone along its shared border with Gaza to prevent terrorists from using smuggling tunnels to launch attacks on Egyptian soldiers and civilians. The Egyptian army's security crackdown includes imposing a curfew on the region, closing the Rafah crossing into Gaza, demolishing hundreds of houses along the border with the Gaza Strip and transferring thousands of people to new locations. In other words - words familiar from their frequent use in castigating Israel - the Egyptians are tightening their blockade on Gaza and collectively punishing not only Hamas, but the Palestinians living there...

Meanwhile, following the firing of a rocket from Gaza into southern Israel on

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November 2 - the second since the end of Operation Protective Edge on August 26 - Israel has also closed the Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings to Gaza “until the security situation allows their reopening”, according to an Israeli Defense Ministry spokesperson, who added that the closure was not meant as a punitive measure, but to protect people working at or passing through the crossings. Emergency humanitarian goods would continue to be allowed through. Hamas leader Musa Abu Marzouk declared that the Israeli closure of the crossings violates the cease-fire agreement which ended Operation Protective Edge, and called the decision “a childish and irresponsible act. This is collective punishment that is being imposed on the Gaza Strip.” But Hamas leaders like the Egyptian actions even less. On November 2 they appealed to the Egyptian authorities to reopen the Rafah border crossing, warning that the continued blockade on the Gaza Strip was in violation of the Egyptian-engineered cease-fire between Hamas and Israel. Eyad al-Bazam, spokesman for Hamas’s Interior Ministry, pointed out that the closure of the Rafah terminal was preventing Palestinians with humanitarian cases from leaving the Gaza Strip.

However, Egypt is convinced that the two-pronged attack on October 24 that killed 33 soldiers was the work of Palestinian militants based in Gaza. Egypt’s Major General Sameeh Beshadi told the Arab newspaper, Asharq Al-Awsat, that there was “no doubt that Palestinian elements had taken part in the attacks.” According to Beshadi, the militants, who infiltrated Sinai via tunnels linking the peninsula to the Gaza Strip, prepared the booby-trapped vehicle used to attack the army checkpoint near El Arish. The use of rocket-propelled grenades and mortars, he asserted, was proof that this attack, like all the large-scale attacks in the area in recent years “involved well-trained Palestinian elements.”

Just at the moment Hamas needs Egypt much more than Egypt needs Hamas. Hamas’s ability to emerge with any credit from its latest conflict with Israel is dependent on the outcome of the indirect Israeli-Palestinian talks on the Gaza truce, being brokered by Egypt in Cairo. It must therefore feel very uncomfortable with the result of the recent terrorist outrage in Sinai - namely, Egypt’s postponement of the latest round of talks until late-November. This may explain why Hamas has denied that its operatives were responsible for firing the rocket that hit the Eshkol region of southern Israel last week, and has arrested five men it

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accuses of the attack. Perhaps Egypt can succeed where Israel has notably failed - in convincing the leaders of Hamas that terrorism is a two-edged weapon that can bring an unwelcome retribution down on its perpetrators.

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EGYPT'S WAR ON TERRORISM:

WORLD'S DOUBLE STANDARDS

Khaled Abu Toameh

[Gatestone Institute](#), Nov. 3, 2014

Three months after the military conformation between Hamas and Israel, the Egyptians are also waging their own war on terrorism in north Sinai. But Egypt's war, which began after Islamist terrorists butchered 33 Egyptian soldiers, does not seem to worry the international community and human rights organizations, at least not as much as Israel's operation to stop rockets and missiles from being fired into it from the Gaza Strip.

The Egyptian army's security crackdown includes the demolition of hundreds of houses along the border with the Gaza Strip and the transfer of thousands of people to new locations. Egypt's goal is to establish a security buffer zone along its shared border with the Gaza Strip in order to prevent terrorists from using smuggling tunnels to launch attacks on Egyptian soldiers and civilians. In other words, the Egyptians are tightening the blockade on the Gaza Strip and collectively punishing the Palestinians living there, not only Hamas.

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All this is happening before eyes of the international community and media. Nonetheless, the UN Security Council has not been asked to hold an emergency meeting to condemn what some Egyptian human rights activists describe as the "transfer" and "displacement" of hundreds of families in Sinai. Egyptian lawyer and human rights activist Gamal Eid said that the Egyptian security measures were "unconstitutional." He noted that Article 63 of the Egyptian constitution prohibits the forcible and arbitrary transfer of citizens in all forms. Egyptian security experts warned this week that the "displacement" of Sinai residents would not stop terrorist attacks on the Egyptian police and army.

Former General Safwat al-Zayyat said he expected the terrorists to intensify their attacks not only in Sinai but also in other parts of Egypt, including Cairo, to prove that the Egyptian army's measures are ineffective. He also predicted that the transfer of thousands of families and the demolition of their homes would play into the hands of the terrorists. Egyptian activist Massad Abu Fajr wrote on his Facebook page that the forcible eviction of families from their homes in Egypt was tantamount to a "declaration of war by the Egyptian authorities" on the three largest and powerful clans in Sinai. He too predicted that the security crackdown would boomerang and further strengthen the terrorists.

But what is perhaps more worrying is the fear that the unprecedented security clampdown in Egypt will drive Hamas and other terror groups in the Gaza Strip to resume their attacks on Israel. The Egyptians, of course, are entitled to wage a ruthless war on the various terror groups that have long been operating in Sinai. However, by tightening the blockade on the Gaza Strip, the Egyptians are also giving Hamas and Islamic Jihad an excuse to resume their attacks on Israel. The two Palestinian terror groups are not going to retaliate by attacking Egypt. They know that Egypt's response to such an attack would be more severe than Israel's military response. That explains why Hamas and other Palestinian groups have been cautious in their response to Egypt's measures — no condemnations or protests thus far. In fact, Hamas is already in a state of panic in the wake of allegations by some Egyptians that Palestinians from the Gaza Strip were involved in the killing of the soldiers in Sinai.

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Once again, Egyptian journalists are calling on their president to go after Hamas in response to the Sinai attack. A previous attack on Egyptian soldiers in Sinai earlier this year prompted similar calls. Reham Noaman, a prominent Egyptian journalist, called on Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to "crush" Hamas and its armed wing, Ezaddin al-Qassam. "Israel is not better than us," she said. "When Israel wants to hit Hamas because of a rocket that is not worth a penny, it does not seek permission from the Security Council."

The Egyptians have finally realized that the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip has become one of the region's main exporters of terrorism. Israel reached this conclusion several years ago, when Hamas and other terror groups began firing rockets and missiles at Israeli communities. The Egyptians have also come to learn that the smuggling tunnels along their shared border with the Gaza Strip work in both directions. In the past, the Egyptians believed that the tunnels were being used only to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip. Now, however, they are convinced that these tunnels are also being used to smuggle weapons and terrorists out of the Gaza Strip. Now that the Egyptians have chosen completely to seal off their border with the Gaza Strip, the chances of another military confrontation between Hamas and Israel have increased. Hamas will undoubtedly try to break out of its increased isolation by initiating another war with Israel.

The Egyptians, for their part, are not going to mind if another war breaks out between the Palestinians and Israel — as long as the military confrontation is taking place on the other side of the Gaza Strip's border with Egypt. And of course, the international community will once again rush to accuse Israel of "genocide" against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Needless to say, the international community will continue to ignore Egypt's bulldozing hundreds of homes and the forcible eviction of thousands of people in Sinai. If anything, the Egyptian security crackdown in Sinai has once again exposed the double standards of the international community toward the war on terrorism. While it is fine for Egypt to demolish hundreds of houses and forcibly transfer thousands of people in the name of the war on terrorism, Israel is not allowed to fire back at those who launch rockets and missiles at its civilians.

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HUNGER GROWLS IN EGYPT

Daniel Pipes

[Washington Times](#), Oct. 6, 2014

Egypt, famed for millennia as the “breadbasket of the Mediterranean,” now faces alarming food shortages. A startlingly candid report in Cairo’s *Al-Ahram* newspaper by Gihan Shahine, titled “Food for Stability,” makes clear the extent of the crisis. To begin, two anecdotes: Although compelled by her father to marry a cousin who could afford to house and feed her, Samar, 20, reports that they “have only had fried potatoes and aubergines for dinner most of the week.” Her sisters, 10 and 13, who left school to take up work, are losing weight and suffer chronic anemia. Manual, a nurse and single mother of four, cannot feed her children. “In the past, we used to stuff cabbage with rice and eat that when we did not have any money. But now even this sometimes can be unaffordable because of rising prices. Our children were always malnourished, but it’s getting even worse.”

These children are not unusual: According to the United Nations World Food Program, malnutrition stunts 31 percent of Egyptian children between six months and five years of age, one of the highest rates in the world. The World Food Program also found in 2009 that malnutrition reduced Egypt’s gross domestic product (GDP) by about 2 percent. One in five Egyptians faces food insecurity and “a growing number of people can’t afford to purchase enough nutritious food,” according to Australia’s Future Directions International. To fill their stomachs, Egypt’s poor rely on low-nutrition, calorie-dense foods (such as the infamous all-starch kushari) that cause both nutritional deficiencies and obesity. Also, 5.2

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percent of the population is actually going hungry, an Egyptian state agency, CAPMAS, reports.

Many factors contribute to Egypt’s hunger crisis. Going from the deepest to the most superficial, these include: Flawed government policies: Cairo has consistently favored urban over rural areas, leading to reduced agricultural research, a lack of financial support, private-sector monopolies, cockeyed subsidies, smuggling, corruption and black markets. Farmers suffer from shortages of expensive yet inferior seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. Most pernicious of all has been the reduction in cultivated land owing to the government’s complicity in unconstrained and illegal residential sprawl.

Reliance on food imports: Historically self-sufficient, Egypt now, according to Future Directions International, imports 60 percent of its food. The country remains largely self-sufficient in fruit and vegetables, but depends heavily on foreign grains, sugar, meat and edible oils. Egypt imports two-thirds of its wheat (10 million tons of a total of 15 million, making it the world’s largest importer of wheat), 70 percent of its beans, and 99 percent of its lentils. Not coincidentally, lentil cultivation has dropped from 85,000 acres to below 1,000 acres. Largesse from friendly oil-exporting states of about \$20 billion in 2013 has been crucial to fund food imports, but one must wonder for how long this subsidy will continue.

Poverty: Such dependence on fluctuating international markets is ever more risky as Egypt becomes increasingly destitute. The previous average of 6.2 percent real GDP growth fell to 2.1 percent in 2012-13, the World Food Program reports. Unemployment stands at about 19 percent. The cotton harvest, once the pride of Egypt, saw a production decline of more than 11 percent in a single marketing year, 2012 to 2013. Twenty-eight percent of young people live in poverty and 24 percent live just above the poverty line, CAPMAS reports, an increase of 1 percent in a single year.

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Water scarcity: The gift of the Nile is already insufficient by 20 billion cubic meters annually because of such factors as a growing population and inefficient irrigation, reducing Egypt’s food production, and with new dams under construction on the Blue Nile in Ethiopia, yet more severe shortages will follow within the decade.

Recent crises: Future Directions International notes “the avian influenza epidemic in 2006, the food, fuel and financial crises of 2007-09, the 2010 global food-price spike, and the economic deterioration caused by political instability since the 2011 Revolution.”

Can the new government of Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi respond in time to reverse these calamitous trends? I am pessimistic. Millions of volatile Cairenes have far greater political clout than the more numerous farmers quietly tending their fields. Moreover, urgent issues — from discontented factory workers to a Muslim Brotherhood rebellion to a Hamas-Israel cease-fire — invariably distract the leadership’s attention from long-term systemic crises such as food production. Starvation in Egypt is yet another of the Middle East’s many deep, endemic problems — problems which outsiders cannot solve, only protect themselves from.

Daniel Pipes is a CIJR Academic Fellow

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[Mubarak ‘Not Guilty’ Ruling Signals the End of Egypt’s Arab Spring](#): **Araminta Wordsworth, *National Post*, Dec. 1, 2014**—Since the heady days of the 2011 Arab Spring, they’ve gone from the military dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak, through democracy of a kind with the Muslim Brotherhood’s Mohammed Morsi, and back to military dictatorship under Mubarak sidekick Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi.

[“Terrorism” in Egypt](#): **Elliott Abrams, *Council on Foreign Relations*, Dec. 1, 2014**—There are acts of terror in Egypt, and there are terrorists—including some linked to Al Qaeda and ISIS.

[Egypt Plans Blanket Anti-Terrorism Law Against ‘Disrupting Order’](#): **Stuart Wilner, *Times of Israel*, Nov. 26, 2014**—Egypt's cabinet approved on Wednesday a draft anti-terrorism law that would give the government blanket power to ban groups on charges ranging from harming national unity to disrupting public order.

[In Egypt, Jihadists Release Video of an October Attack](#): **Kareem Fahim & Merna Thomas, *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 2014** — Egypt’s most lethal jihadist group has released a video that appears to show its militants carrying out an attack that killed more than 31 soldiers in the Sinai Peninsula last month, raising new questions about the readiness of the government’s troops to confront the insurgency.

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