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THE EGYPTIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD AND HUMAN RIGHTS: WHICH COMMITMENT?

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During the last four years, Egyptian politics has been characterized by a wide variety of events, from the Revolution to the fall of Mubarak, from the parliamentary elections won by the Islamists to the Morsi presidency and the return to power of the military. The transitional experience has been deemed unsuccessful by the new president al-Sisi, the revolutionaries themselves and at the same time by lots of scholars and experts. Most of these critics, however, has converged towards one particular target: the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, the movement has been accused of having betrayed the Revolution, while after the military removal of president Morsi the organization has been labelled as terrorist and most of the responsibilities of the political and economic failures have been laid on it.

Specific accusations have been directed to the Muslim Brotherhood management of human rights issues. The Constitution issued in December 2012 was deeply contested by the young revolutionaries, as it was said to include some provisions that reminded to the Mubarak era and, moreover, it contained some unclear references to religion that did not meet the aims of the Revolution. Furthermore, some bills presented by the government sparked protests from human rights and civil society organizations. On the base of these premises, therefore, some questions arise as regards the political thought of the Muslim Brotherhood as regards human rights, while at the same time other doubts emerge on the commitment of the organization in this specific field. As a consequence, the paper tries to put some light on this matter, analyzing the evolution of the political thought of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood with respect to human rights, as well as the practical activities carried out by the organization in this field. The period taken into account will range from the beginning of the XXI century until the 2011 Revolution and the fall of Morsi, in order to understand the importance given to this specific topic by the organization, as well as the attempts – if there were – to put human rights in practice both before and after the Revolution.

To begin with, the political, social and economic environment of the last decade of the Mubarak regime will be taken into consideration, in order to prepare the ground for the main analysis. Moreover, the framework of human rights in Egypt during the

years 2000s will be examined, focusing on civil and political liberties but also on social and economic ones.

After that, the theoretical approach of the Muslim Brotherhood on human rights will be analyzed, trying to comprehend the commitment to the international body of laws as well as the organization's interpretation of the fundamental rights. Furthermore, the paper will try to analyze if the Muslim Brotherhood carried out activities related to human rights, both in the political field and in the socio-economic one.

Finally, the attitude of the Muslim Brotherhood towards human rights during the brief period they had a parliamentary majority will be examined, as well as the presidential activity with respect to this theme until the deposition of Morsi. Therefore, positive and negative sides of the matter will be discussed, making also a comparison with the pre-revolution period. At the same time, an analysis of the possible obstacles, both internal and external to the movement, to the implementation of human rights measures will be carried out, in order to make the picture as more complete as possible.

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