

Egypt's Weekend Vote Could Open Door to Terrorists

The headlines coming out of the Middle East are troublesome.

News reports detail pro-democracy activists allegedly tortured by Egyptian soldiers, dozens injured in renewed Yemen protests, Saudi Arabia protests turning violent, the brother of al-Qaeda's second-in-command released in Egypt, Iran exploiting Israel-Egypt coordination difficulties, Libyans fleeing to Egypt, and so on.

The Arab revolution may have started in Tunisia, but onlookers say Egypt holds the key to the future of the Middle East—and this weekend is a potential turning point as the people who fought for freedom vote on changes to the constitution. Those changes set the stage for free elections this summer. With such a fast process, many are concerned that the Muslim Brotherhood could sweep the elections.

Hassan al-Banna, a pan-Islamist who opposed the secular tendencies in Islamic nations, formed The Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. It was he who birthed the credo, "Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. Koran is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope."

Muslim Brotherhood is forming a political party called Freedom and Justice. Sa'd al-Katatni has been asked to lead the charge. This is a significant development because it marks the first time in the nearly century-long history of the Muslim Brotherhood that it has successfully organized a political party.

"We need to pray for the entire Middle East because whatever God is going to allow to happen in Egypt is going to influence the whole region," says Dr. Mark Gabriel, who was born and raised in Egypt as a Muslim before converting to Christianity,

changing his name, and moving to the U.S. Gabriel is author of Islam and Terrorism.

“So we pray for the local church in Egypt. We pray for the situation and ask the Lord to come and intervene,” Gabriel says. “We pray for the position of the U.S. as the world leader to handle the transition in Egypt in a very wise way based on clear understanding of the situation.”

Specifically, Gabriel is urging prayer for the U.S. State Department—that the Lord would give the right words to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Gabriel pointed to Clinton’s February statement that tentatively welcomed the Muslim Brotherhood.

“Today we learned the Muslim Brotherhood decided to participate, which suggests they at least are now involved in the dialogue that we have encouraged,” Clinton said. The Muslim Brotherhood quickly spun Clinton’s statement as a warm welcome for the Islamic extremist group, so long as Egyptians chose it through democratic elections.

But there is reason for concern if the Muslim Brotherhood gains political power. Al-Qaradawi is widely recognized as an intellectual force behind the Muslim Brotherhood. His recent sermon to the approximately one million people in Tahrir Square was venomous, calling for war against Israel and a takeover of Jerusalem.

“Al-Qaradawi asked the Egyptian army to open wide the Rafah crossing and to pray for the re-conquest of Jerusalem by the Muslims, so that he and the Muslims could pray in security at Al-Aqsa Mosque. This part of his sermon was cheered and applauded by the crowd,” reports the Middle East Research Center.

When Clinton toured Egypt on Wednesday, her first visit since longtime dictator Hosni Mubarak was forced out of power in the revolution, she said even though Egypt’s foreign policy will

change with the referendum, she thinks there is an interest in keeping peace in the Middle East.

“Egypt has got a lot on its plate. It’s going to have to politically reform, economically reform. It’s got a big agenda ahead of it. I think the last thing it wants is to see any kind of problem between itself and its neighbors, she said, noting that she expected Egypt to work to keep terrorists out of the Gaza Strip.

“I think there’s also an argument that Egypt’s got security interests in not permitting the import and export of arms and possible ingress and egress of terrorists,” she said. “So it’s not only what Egypt will or won’t do with respect to Israel, it’s what Egypt will decide is in its interest to do. And that will be up to the Egyptian government to determine.”

At such a critical turning point in the nation’s history—and with its implications for the rest of the Middle East—Gabriel is urging continued intercession for Egypt: “Pray that the right people are selected to lead Egypt in the coming days and years,” Gabriel says. “Pray for all Christians in the Middle East all over the globe to intercede on the situation in Egypt.”