

## **The Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian Regime: Toward Confrontation?**

### Event Summary

At a panel event entitled “The Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian Regime: Toward Confrontation?” on Monday March 19<sup>th</sup>, POMED founding member and Associate Shadi Hamid and Dr. Amr Hamzawy, Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, discussed recent issues facing the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Topics discussed included its plans to form a political party, the recent state repression of the group, and the upcoming constitutional referendum in the country.

Shadi Hamid began the discussion with a summary of the current situation for the Brotherhood within Egypt. He stated that situation in the country was getting worse for the Brotherhood as the Mubarak regime was putting on one of the worst crackdowns in the group’s history. Hamid mentioned that severe financial sanctions were being applied to Brotherhood financiers and that the regime may even dissolve Parliament in order to prevent the Muslim Brotherhood from acquiring seats. The upcoming constitutional referendum will try to ban religious political parties and would be seen as a huge blow to the Brotherhood and their political aspirations.

Discussing the Brotherhood specifically, he mentioned that the group announced in January of 2007 that it would form a political party. Hamid stated that, as a political party, the group would have to become more transparent, normalized, and allow for more public accountability. He discussed the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood has tried to modernize its organization. It began a process of democratizing its internal structure, but this was put on hold because of the severe repression from the state. The Brotherhood is currently in survival mode because of the recent crackdown and this has hurt its modernization efforts. Hamid concluded by saying that the Muslim Brotherhood wants to moderate by forming a political party, but the Mubarak regime’s oppression will lead them to radicalize as a group. He mentioned that the current Brotherhood members in Parliament may resign in protest and that the international community has dropped the ball on democracy promotion, leading opposition groups to move away from the mainstream.

Dr. Hamzawy began his discussion with the current regime oppression of the Brotherhood, focusing on the economic crackdown on the group, including the jailing of 29 of the major financiers of the Muslim Brotherhood. He states that this will severely hamper the ability of the group to run election campaigns against the Mubarak administration and it will deal a huge blow to the social services network that Brotherhood operates. Dr. Hamzawy also discussed the different trends within the Muslim Brotherhood leadership. He predicted that those who had been pushing hard for reform and inclusion into political life would be pushed aside by elements that are suspicious of political participation in the midst of the current crackdown.

Dr. Hamzawy also stated that the Mubarak regime wanted to divide up the opposition movements in order to isolate the Brotherhood, its only serious challenger. He said that this was

being accomplished by giving opposition parties alternative stakes in the process from the group, thus turning secular parties against the Muslim Brotherhood. The goal would be to prevent a serious opposition movement by prevent cohesion among the different parties. He also mentioned that the Mubarak regime has done a masterful job of questioning the Brotherhood's dedication to peaceful political participation and forcing them to defend their internal machinations as a political party. This campaign has reignited suspicion of the Muslim Brotherhood in the general populous and the media.

The event was co-sponsored by The Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding and was held on the campus of Georgetown University.