

Tuesday, 2 April 2013

From politicians to bakers, Mursi battles with many

Despite the huge optimism that reigned after Mubarak's regime was toppled, it is not expected for the first Egyptian president who came after the former regime to rule in peace, even though he was quickly elected and even though all his opponents were satisfied with him.

It seems that President Mursi's journey has been rougher than he had estimated. Some of the obstructions were caused by his rivals but most of them were caused by him. The number of his rivals increased with time to include people from all areas, from Cairo to Suez as well as segments: politicians, activists, media, security and military figures, youths from the revolution, liberals, Copts, academics and even Islamists, sports fans and bakers. How can any president run a state amid these mass complaints and confrontations?

Unraveling the crisis

The president and his group picture the crisis as one caused by individuals from the old regime and that part of it is caused by foreign parties. Perhaps some of this is true. But it is obvious that most of the crisis is the result of his policies that eliminated all other powers. Mursi worked at a fast pace aiming to impose his decisions despite his inability to understand the legal and bureaucratic rules of the state. He rushed so he had his MPs write the constitution without considering the rest of the country. Thus he unleashed the gates of hell upon himself. He insisted to set a date for the parliamentary elections without caring about administrative and legislative procedure, so the court intervened against him. He thus retreated and became willing to hold the elections in next October - that is after he had rejected to wait half of that period. He had also sacked the attorney general and assigned another of his own choice, ignoring legal procedure. He did this although the attorney general post is a very critical judicial one, it is a post which can be used to chase and eliminate Mursi's rivals if appointed with a Mursi supporter. The court ordered Mursi to reverse his decisions and commit to the law. However, he has not only failed with judges and politicians, he has also placed himself in big trouble with bakers! He wanted to control the price of bread so he targeted bakeries. He wanted to display his strength to football fans during the Port Said trial and he ended up being part of the confrontation. Clashes during a Port Said game killed 71. Afterwards, the court served a ruling of execution for 21 people from among the supporters of the Port Said club. The city's residents were outraged and as a result 30 more were killed in new confrontations. Where did Mursi go wrong, especially when he had nothing to do with some incidents?

Cooperation is key

When Barack Obama became U.S. president, the country was witnessing a serious economic crisis. It was the new president's right to manage the crisis as he saw appropriate but he estimated that the situation was very serious so he decided to involve his rivals from the Republican Party in the work of parliamentary and presidential committees. So he overcame the country's dangerous crisis by cooperating with the losing party. Mursi does not have to cooperate with his rivals. But Egypt is going through a serious phase that requires cooperation among all governance partners. It is impossible for Mursi to bear all these terrible pressures and confront all these problems, whether new ones or inherited ones, without cooperating with all parties and without reassuring them that they are part of the transitional phase from Mubarak's regime towards a new regime. His rivals are the means towards salvation amid a phase of conflicting parties, causes and requests which are impossible for him to confront alone no matter how legitimate he is and no matter what his capabilities are. The ruling party in Egypt seems arrogant. It deals with its rivals with an air of superiority and it thinks it has the right to absolute power. It even desires to dominate the authorities that, in the democratic system, do not fall under its power and are considered independent authorities like the parliamentary assemblies, the judiciary and the media. In the end, it will fail. And after that it will seek its rivals' help. In this case, no one will be able to save the party which is drowning in crises. Why is Mursi leading his governance, party and followers down this rough road when he is not obliged to?

This article was first published in Asharq al-Awsat on April 2, 2013.

_____ Abdulrahman al-Rashed is the General Manager of Al Arabiya News Channel. A veteran and internationally acclaimed journalist, he is a former editor-in-chief of the London-based leading Arab daily Asharq al-Awsat, where he still regularly writes a political column. He has also served as the editor of Asharq al-Awsat's sister publication, al-Majalla. Throughout his career, Rashed has interviewed several world leaders, with his articles garnering worldwide recognition, and he has successfully led Al Arabiya to the highly regarded, thriving and influential position it is in today.