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Munich, July 29, 2013

Your Statement to the Friends of Egypt of 28 July 2013[1]

Dear Mr. Anwar El-Sadat,

Having been an addressee of your statement above I would like to respond with some remarks:

Not only last weekend German journals and television programs were packed with reports and details about the developments in Cairo, in Alexandria, and elsewhere (let alone the terrible in-fights in Syria). Today the two leading German newspapers published their commentary under the headlines “One-way Road” and “Democracy on Dead Bodies.”

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[1] *In seinem jüngsten Rundbrief bat Anwar E. El-Sadat um Verständnis für den öffentlichen Aufruf des ägyptischen Verteidigungsministers Abdel Fatah El-Sisi vom 26. Juli, angesichts der Proteste der Moslembrüder die Normen des Rechts gegen „Gewalt und Terrorismus“ zu verteidigen. Dabei äußerte sich der Autor leicht ironisch über die amerikanischen und europäischen Freunde, die sich für „volle Toleranz“ einsetzen und „außerordentliche Maßnahmen gegen Politiker“ beklagen. Gleichzeitig bleibe für ihn, El-Sadat, die Frage nach einer „realistischen Rolle unserer Freunde ohne Einmischung in die Souveränität Ägyptens und ohne die Gefühle der Ägypter zu provozieren“, offen. Abschließend bat er die Adressaten seines Rundbriefs um ein Feedback.*

*Der Autor ist einer der führenden politisch aktiven Intellektuellen Ägyptens und gehörte dem Parlament an, das im Sommer 2012 per Gerichtsbeschluss an der Fortsetzung seiner Arbeit gehindert wurde. Er ist der Neffe des 1982 ermordeten Präsidenten Anwar El-Sadat. Persönlich bin ich ihm als Begleiter des Bundestagsabgeordneten Wolfgang Gehrcke (DIE LINKE) im Januar 2011 bei einem Abendessen begegnet, zu dem der deutsche Botschafter Michael Erhard Bock in seine Residenz in Kairo-Zamalek eingeladen hatte.*

I did not join the position of those who spoke of a putsch against President Mohammed Mursi on July 3, since I do not believe that orderly elections alone make up democratic standards. However, the Presidency made too many mistakes and did not relieve the Egyptian people of their misery and distress. But what we have to learn now has nothing to do with the application of the rule of law. Instead, there is the prevalent impression that Egypt is amidst the danger of a full-fledged civil war. The warnings of Dr. El-Baradei, of “Tamarod”, and “Human Rights Watch” are trustworthy.

I belong to those ridiculed “Europeans” who do not believe in military power as a means to suppress a considerable portion of the population like those of the Muslim Brothers in order to create “a climate of national consensus” under the umbrella of the security apparatus using life-ammunition in the tradition of the Mubarak era. And it does not seem appropriate to convey to the opposition with a large support basis an ultimatum to agree to conditions as long as Defence Minister El-Sisi and his staff decide in their capacity as transitional rulers about the very substance of their political intentions. In your statement you write that your “ideas are on the table for discussion when the timing is right and the Egyptian people are ready.” To my mind this looks like a self-authorization to determine what is good for the people.

I am far away from being a fellow-traveller of the Muslim Brothers. Additionally, I never interfere into the sovereignty of a foreign country as dear as it may be to me. Beyond your calls for foreign assistance, to which I agree completely, I try to explain only my understanding of human rights and democratic criteria as a scholar

in modern history. For me this is *the* “realistic role” as a friend of Egypt and the peoples around the Mediterranean.

Sincerely yours,
Reiner Bernstein

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[Cairo, July 29, 2013]

Dear Dr Bernstein,

Thank you for your response to the statement I sent yesterday. I agree with you that above all, we must pay special attention to human rights and ensure that the inclusion of all decision makers is prioritized in our transitional process.

I believe that the call for support to the Egyptian people from Minister El Sisi was to determine a way to act with legitimacy in the absence of any elected official institution, such as a Parliament, which would serve in its role to legitimize action taken against violence that threatens Egypt to chaos. Of course, we would like to avoid this as best we can, given the already weak nature of our economy and political structure.

It is imperative that we achieve our goals rapidly so we are not subject to the possibility that the violence and instability happening on either side of this conflict is introduced as whole body politic.

We can learn a lot from each others' experiences and interpretations of situations, which is a reflection on why inclusion of

so many varied perspectives is absolutely necessary to the development of Egypt. Your support in any capacity means a lot to me and to others who are working hard to ensure that we get through this process in a sustainable way.

Wishing you all the best,
Anwar E. El Sadat