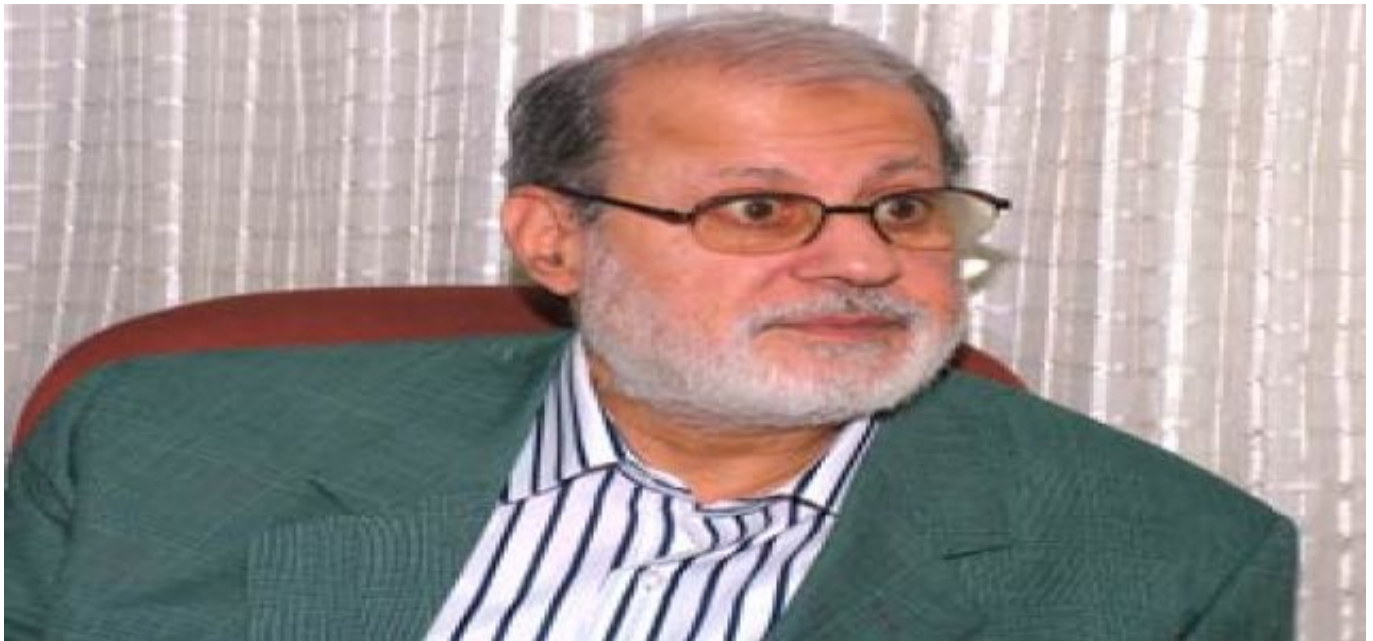


Habib: Muslim Brotherhood's Endorsement of May 4 Strike Urged Gov't to Raise Salaries



Though the call to stay at home on Sunday endorsed by the Muslim Brotherhood and Kifaya to protest political and economic crises was met with limited public participation, it has urged the government to consider some mechanisms to diffuse the public anger that preceded the strike, Muslim Brotherhood Deputy Chairman said in a lengthy statement to Ikhwanweb on Sunday.

Mohamed Habib began by emphasizing that peaceful protest is not an aim in itself, but it is a means to exert pressure on the executive in an attempt to hinder corruption and despotism, and to effect changes in social and economic policies that have led to the chronic disasters which the majority of Egyptians suffer.

The interior ministry has launched a massive campaign at the heels of April 6 to intimidate protestors and internet activists, and arresting Israa Abdelfattah was nothing but a warning sign to prevent any similar mobilization in the future. People became afraid of making their voices heard, and the government has built on that fear. Civil servants received warning memos on the eve of the strike, threatening to punish anyone who responds to opposition calls.

All this have certainly had an impact on the degree of public response to the call, he said.

“However, the strike has achieved some of its desired objectives,” Habib said. The Interior Ministry has been mature in dealing with the strike this time. Prior to the date of the strike, the executive has quickly embarked on some measures to counter the strike including the President’s tender speech on May Day and his announcement of a 30% increase in public sector salaries, relative progress in the bread crisis, and the release of a number of detainees on the eve of the strike.

“But for the Muslim Brotherhood’s endorsement of the strike, the executive would never have hastened to take these measures,” Habib said.

The government promises came immediately after the MB’s decision.

Habib stressed that although the government’s pledge to carry out economic reforms can hardly signal real progress, it is welcomed by the MB as a step forward, which is better than keeping the status quo unchanged.

“We are in desperate need to educate the public how to peacefully voice their protests against an executive authority that blatantly interferes in the legislative and judiciary branches, has no sincere desire to reform, and deals despotically with the people in general and opposition in particular. This is the real problem we are facing.”