

Katatny Calls on Gov't to Address People's Demands



Strong criticism of the human rights situation in Egypt and the ongoing crackdown on opposition was the dominant theme of a speech delivered by Saad Al-Katatny, head of Muslim Brotherhood parliamentary bloc, at Cairo's Press Syndicate on Thursday.

Although the speech came on the sidelines of Sixth Cairo Conference Against Occupation, it was dominated by anger at the status quo that followed the surprising results of 2005 parliament elections, in which the MB won 20% of seats despite widespread vote rigging.

Al-Katatny blamed both U.S. and its Arab allies for sponsoring occupation and authoritarianism in the region. As occupation of Palestine and Iraq depends largely on Arab silence, authoritarian regimes practice endless despotism with the implicit approval of their western allies, he said.

The military tribunal of 40 MB professors and businessmen is one of a series of injustices practiced by the Egyptian regime which has tarnished the reputation of Egypt in the world, he added. Despite four civil court acquittals, they were transferred to a military court which lasted for 70 sessions without any clear evidence against the accused.

Egypt's reputation was further denigrated by the unprecedented violations ahead of the April 8 local elections, where almost 90% of candidates are appointed rather than elected. Potential MB candidates could not register, and hundreds of verdicts giving them right to register were not respected, not to mention the 850 MB detainees in a one month period.

Al-Katatny also lamented the "unfavorable" status of political parties which suffer a lot of government intervention that weakens their performance.

He dismissed last year's constitutional amendments as "a flagrant violation of Egypt's constitution" as they reinforced the NDP's grip on power and placed insurmountable hurdles on public freedoms. He cited the examples of amendment to article 88 which cancelled complete judicial supervision on elections, amendments to article 76 that limited nomination for presidency to NDP members, as well as the anti-terror bill that will act as a permanent substitute to the notorious emergency law.

Al-Katatny stated that if the Egyptian government is truly ready for a reconciliation with the people, it should



address several demands including canceling the MB Military tribunal, releasing all prisoners of conscience, respecting freedom of forming political parties and freedom of the press, sponsoring free and fair election with complete judicial supervision, eliminating the state of emergency and the proposed anti-terror bill.