Cairo: MB And US Embassy Deny Dialogue

The Muslim Brotherhood and the US embassy in Cairo denied any dialogue going on between the two parties.

Following several press reports describing direct communications between the US government and leaders of the MB, the US embassy in Cairo issued press release on May 8, denying the existence of such dialogue. In the statement, the US embassy downplayed the meetings between US lawmakers and representatives of the MB in the Egyptian Parliament "it is normal practice for U.S. diplomats and other government officials to meet openly with parliamentarians, in particular, from both the government and the opposition", according the statement (see later)

Dr. Mohamed Habib, First Deputy Leader of the MB, also denied any ongoing dialogue with the US government. Dr. Habib reaffirmed the MB stance regarding dialogue with any foreign government which must occur through normal diplomatic channels and with the permission of of the Egyptian Ministry of Exterior. Dr Habib added that there are no prospects of any dialogue with Washington in the foreseeable future because of the current political climate on the international and domestic fronts.

Dr. Essam Al Erian, who is in charge of the MB political section, echoed the same stance as Dr. Habib, indicating that the MB believes in dialogue in general as a valuable tool to resolve grievances and improve relations.

Dr. Al Erian added that dialogue between MB and any foreign government has reached a deadlock "the dilemma for any MB/US dialogue is that the Egyptian government itself does not recognize the MB legally, meanwhile, the MB refuses to open dialogue with foreign governments without the Egyptian government permission which is never going to happen"

The two MB leaders spoke with Ikhwanweb agreed that there are many other factors that stand in the way of any dialogue between the US and MB; among them is the hostile US policies in the Middle East and the manipulation of

its domestic affairs to serve US interests

Statement by the US embassy in Cairo

The Egyptian press has reported diverse versions and interpretations of a speech that Ambassador Ricciardone gave at the Lion"s Club on May 6. The Ambassador stated that, as in any country, the U.S. Embassy has dialogue and contacts with a wide range of law‾ abiding citizens. Throughout the world, it is normal practice for U.S. diplomats and other government officials to meet openly with parliamentarians, in particular, from both the government and the opposition. Ambassador Ricciardone did not characterize this contact between American diplomats and independent members of the Egyptian parliament as "a dialogue between Washington and the Muslim Brotherhood."

The following is a transcript of Ambassador Ricciardone's remark, made after his speech, to a question raised about the Muslim Brotherhood:

Question: We have heard that there have been meetings with the Muslim Brotherhood; what is the extent of this?

Answer: Regarding the Muslim Brotherhood, it is natural for us as American diplomats, in any country of the world, to have dialogue, relations, and contacts with the citizens of any country who obey the law and respect the freedom of other citizens; even the various parties and groups which oppose the government legally. It is normal for us in Egypt to speak with, and occasionally have contact with, the members of the Egyptian Parliament, on condition that they are law‾abiding and want to have these contacts; this is natural. This does not mean that we agree with them. With regard to the Muslim Brotherhood, we disagree with them on a lot of subjects, most of their ideas, and even such essential issues as the necessity for peace in the Middle East. This is a principal goal of American diplomacy; we support peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians on the basis of two states living together in peace. This is an essential idea and I believe that it is possible that we differ with many members of this group [on that].

Robert Leiken and research associate Steven Brooke The moderate Muslim Brotherhood