



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 2, 2011

Egyptian President Announces He Will Not Seek Re-Election

The anger of protesters in Egypt, reportedly aimed at a number of issues including President Hosni Mubarak's failure to indicate whether he plans to seek re-election, should have been assuaged to a degree by the President's announcement that he will not be seeking re-election at the end of his term in September. Unfortunately for Mubarak, it was not. Video footage of crowd reactions to Mubarak's announcement reveal the people chanting "No!" "No!" "No!"



One of the concerns of the Egyptian protesters was that President Mubarak would seek re-election, which would perpetuate the harsh rule under which they live. They were also angry over rumors that even if he did not seek re-election, he would be grooming his son Gamal for succession.

At the urging of President Obama, however, Mubarak came to a decision. According to unnamed sources cited by Arab TV outlet Al Arabiya:

President Obama has told the embattled president of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, that he should not run for another term in elections in the fall, effectively withdrawing American support for its closest Arab ally, according to American diplomats in Cairo and Washington.

Al Arabiya television, citing unnamed sources, reported that Mr. Mubarak would announce in a nationwide address Tuesday evening that he would not run for another term.

The message was conveyed to Mr. Mubarak by Frank G. Wisner, a seasoned former diplomat with deep ties to Egypt, these officials said. Mr. Wisner's message, they said, was not a blunt demand for Mr. Mubarak to step aside now, but firm counsel that he should make way for a reform process that would culminate in free and fair elections in September to elect a new Egyptian leader.

This back channel message, authorized directly by Mr. Obama, would appear to tip the administration beyond the delicate balancing act it has performed in the last week — resisting calls for Mr. Mubarak to step down, even as it has called for an "orderly transition" to a more politically open Egypt.

[ABC News](#) reports that President Obama also told Mubarak that his son should not run for the presidency in September.

In a [speech](#) on Tuesday, Mubarak declared, "In all sincerity, regardless of the current circumstances, I



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never intended to be a candidate for another term,” adding that he will use his “final months” to carry out “the necessary steps for the peaceful transfer of power.”

Mubarak also denounced the protesters, threatened to take legal action against those instigating the protests, and withdrew his offer to have his vice president speak to opposition leaders. To those who demanded his departure, Mubarak insisted that he would not leave, but would die in Egypt.

However, despite the announcement that Mubarak will not run for re-election, Egyptians remain unhappy. News One reports:

Television cameras showed the vast crowds gathered in central Tahrir Square in Cairo roaring, but not necessarily in approval. The protesters have made the president’s immediate and unconditional resignation a bedrock of their movement, and it did not appear that the concession would mollify them.

Mubarak has [rejected](#) international calls from British Prime Minister David Cameron and European Union Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton for an immediate transition to democracy.

Though President Obama is reported to have played a role in Mubarak’s decision, he continues to stay vague as tensions in Egypt mount. During yesterday evening’s news conference, Obama indicated that he appreciated Mubarak’s patriotism and willingness to begin the transition, and that the process “must begin now.”

According to [Fox News](#), the President’s choice of words was vague, and the phrase “must begin now” is “up for debate”:

Mubarak would argue that the process has begun with his declaration that he would not run and the appointment of a new cabinet and vice president, but Obama seemed to be saying that Mubarak’s pace was insufficient.

[Hani Sabra](#), a Eurasia Group analyst, indicates:

Mubarak’s announcement that he will not seek re-election in September 2011 represents the start of a long, drawn out, and messy negotiation process between the government and the opposition. Both Mubarak and the opposition will downplay the significance of the speech. But it represents a breakthrough. In the medium term, these negotiations will likely produce an Egypt best described as a hybrid democracy, combining a strong military with a more pluralistic electoral system.

Thus far, no word has been heard from Mubarak’s son Gamal — believed to be his father’s successor prior to the protests despite Egyptian opposition — who [fled](#) with his family to Britain immediately following the outbreak of protests.

Of President Obama’s continuing [role](#) in the Egyptian conflict, Fox News observed,

So far, Obama hasn’t called for anything in Egypt other than a best-case outcome of free elections that reaffirm human dignity, all on a non-specific timeline. But, like the Egyptian army, Obama may soon be forced to make a choice among bad options in an effort to preserve stability or not choosing and potentially losing a key ally in the world’s most dangerous region.

Photo: Clerics from Al Azhar Islamic university, some holding their identity cards, chant anti-government slogans during a protest in Tahrir, or Liberation, Square in Cairo, Egypt, Jan. 31, 2011.: AP Images



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