



Written by [James Heiser](#) on April 7, 2012

## Muslim Brotherhood “Charm Offensive” Includes U.S. Chamber of Commerce

According to a recent article for the *Washington Post* (“[Muslim Brotherhood officials aim to promote moderate image in Washington visit](#)”), the Islamist organization has been engaged in a “week-long charm offensive” in Washington, D.C.:

In meeting with U.S. officials, Brotherhood representatives were expected to depict the organization as a moderate and socially conscious movement pursuing power in the interest of Egyptians at large.

“We represent a moderate, centrist Muslim viewpoint. The priorities for us are mainly economic, political — preserving the revolution ideals of social justice, education, security for the people,” Sondos Asem, a member of the delegation, said Tuesday in an interview with reporters and editors of *The Washington Post*.



But even as Asem was proclaiming the Brotherhood to be “moderate,” the presidential candidate of the Freedom and Justice Party was busy making the imposition of sharia law the heart and soul of his campaign. As Reuters reported on April 5:

The Muslim Brotherhood’s candidate for the Egyptian presidency, Khairat al-Shater [above left], declared that introducing sharia law would be his “first and final” objective if he wins elections in May and June....

“Sharia was and will always be my first and final project and objective,” Shater was quoted on Wednesday as telling a meeting of the Religious Association for Rights and Reform — a group of which he is a member, along with figures who belong to the hard-line Salafi school of Islam.

In comments reported in a statement issued by the Association, Shater told the meeting held on Tuesday night that he would establish a special entity to help parliament achieve this objective.

It is hardly a recent development for candidates for high office to tailor their positions according to their audience, but al-Shater’s comments regarding the role of sharia law under his presidency were made while speaking to his electorate, while the “charm offensive” underway in Washington serves a very different end.

Reports have now surfaced that the organizations that have met with the Muslim Brotherhood included the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#) (USCC). An [article](#) by Doug Hagmann for the Canada Free Press



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provides details of the meeting:

Reports of a meeting between representatives of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and members of the Freedom and Justice Party of Egypt, the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, were confirmed today. According to information provided by Bobby Maldonado, Manager of Media Relations for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the U.S.-Egypt Business Council hosted members of the Freedom and Justice Party of Egypt including Dr. Abdul Mawgoud Dardery, FJP's Member of Parliament serving on their Foreign Relations Committee. The meeting was held at the Chamber offices in Washington, DC....

Abdul Mawgoud Dardery, a VIP of the delegation hosted at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, is an outspoken proponent of Sharia law over democracy and openly critical of American business influences in Egypt. In the same *USA Today* report, Dardery complained that "American non-profit groups were working toward a type of democracy that will not bring Islamists to power, and this is wrong."

Mr. Maldonado said the meeting that was held today, although private and by invitation only, focused on open and constructive dialogue to advance business opportunities between the U.S. and Egypt. The meeting was conducted to address business and investment opportunities for Egypt and the West.

Before any questions about the anti-democratic business environment in Egypt could be raised, however, Mr. Maldonado was emphatic that political beliefs played no role in today's meeting.

[PipelineNews.org also covered the meeting](#) between capitalists and Islamists, expressing a sense of shock common to critics of closer relations between the West and advocates of sharia law:

In that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is regarded as one of the bedrock [generally conservative] institutional proponents of American enterprise and capitalism, today's meeting with the FJP is simply inexplicable. Perhaps those responsible for arranging this meeting are unaware that the Brotherhood's motto is, "Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. The Qur'an is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope."

We fail to see how American values are advanced by a meeting between the Chamber and the FJP. Rather, we see a hallowed American institution providing undeserved legitimacy to the Muslim Brotherhood which has spread the ideology of Islamist terror worldwide.

While the Muslim Brotherhood is busy carrying out its "charm offensive" in Washington, the news from Cairo hints at aspects of the recent developments which could be appealing to Egyptian corporate interests. According to [a report from Ahram Online](#), the rise of Islamists within the government does not mean that corporate and banking interests are on the wane: far from it. In fact, a number of the men charged with drafting the new constitution are quite well connected to Egyptian political, banking, and corporate interests:

From the eight economic experts initially chosen for the constituent assembly, three have resigned in protest at alleged Islamist domination of proceedings.

Their withdrawal, however, has left a yet-greater Islamist majority in charge of drafting policy.

The five remaining members are: Tareq El-Dessouki, Hussein Hamed Hassan, Maabad Ali El-Garhi, Ibrahim El-Arabi and Hussein El-Qazaz.

- Tareq El-Dessouki is a businessman and now MP with the Nour Party. Heading the



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economic committee in Egypt's new parliament, among his duties are settling disputes with Saudi investors in Egypt.

- Hussein Hamed Hassan, 80 years old, is an expert in Islamic finance who has held executive posts at the Islamic International Bank, Dubai Islamic Bank, Al-Sharja National Islamic and the International Union of Islamic Banks.
- Maabed [sic] Ali El-Garhi is head of the International committee of Islamic economy and an ally of Salafist Sheikh Mohamed Hassan.
- Ibrahim El-Arabi is a businessman close to the Muslim Brotherhood and a member of Cairo's Chamber of Commerce.
- Hussein El-Qazzaz [sic] is director of a business consultancy and a friend of the recently-announced Brotherhood presidential candidate Khairat El-Shater.

By way of contrast, only three members have connections with Egyptian trade unions, and two of them are members of the Freedom and Justice Party — a situation that has drawn criticism within the Egyptian parliament. Ahram Online cites the words of one critical member of parliament:

“The limited number of economic experts, peasants or workers’ representatives reflects the lack of interest the economy holds to those drafting the constitution,” says Moustapha Kamel El-Sayed, a political expert who is also a member of the assembly.

“There is a lack of economic experts capable of achieving balance between economic development and social justice. We need representatives of the different currents — liberal or capitalist — in order to establish an economic orientation that achieves the right balance,” he adds, describing the Muslim Brotherhood’s members as “inexperienced” in economic areas.

Despite its “charm offensive,” as the Brotherhood moves Egypt toward greater adherence with sharia law, the triumph of sharia extends to economics, as well.

*Photo of Khairat al-Shater: AP Images*



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