


**FP**

Foreign Policy

Your portal to global politics, economics, and ideas

ARTICLE INDEX | SEARCH

GO

Subscribers Only R B

WHAT ARE THESE?

Home

Current Issue

FP Passport

Special Reports

Resources

About FP

Services

Subscribe to FP

Free FP e-Alert

Enter E-Mail

More Info

Worldwide Links

FP Forum

FP in the News

FP e-Alert Archive

Surprises of Globalization

Press Room

Ads by Google

[Foreign Policy](#)

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT

FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

## Current Articles

PRINT | EMAIL | FORUM

# Letters: Engaging the Muslim Brotherhood

Page 1 of 2

November/December 2007

**The FP Memo: Brothers in Arms** author Marc Lynch gets hit from all sides as A. Fahmy, Joshua A. Stacher, and Martin Kramer air their thoughts on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.

I read with great interest Marc Lynch's memo to the Muslim Brotherhood's Chairman Mohammed Mahdi Akef ("[Brothers in Arms](#)," September/October 2007). I believe that this memo should have been written not only to the chairman but to all Brotherhood members, as the Muslim Brotherhood is a democratic body whose decisions are always made after proper consultations within its elected institutions.

In his memo, Lynch urges Akef to "use your political capital" and remain committed to democratic processes. But I feel that our commitment to democracy should not be the real concern of Western intellectuals and policymakers; our belief in democratic processes is ideological, not tactical. The real concern should be the negative impact of government crackdowns on moderates and the entire democratic process in the Middle East. The Muslim Brotherhood is a moderate, mainstream movement that is capable of overshadowing radical ideologies, yet we are only able to do so effectively in an atmosphere of freedom.

Lynch advises Akef to "watch what you say." I may have to partially agree with him on that. Although Akef's aim is winning the hearts of many Muslims with a war of words, diverting them from radicalism, I believe that winning peace in the world today is a higher moral objective. The Brotherhood is playing a unique role in the world today. It acts as a safety valve—and sometimes the valve needs to release excess pressure to avoid explosion.

The Muslim Brotherhood is a large organization representing a reformist school of thought. During its historical journey, different lines of thought have influenced the organization, enriching it by adding diverse ideas and opinions. It is therefore natural that some of the group's leaders and members are more moderate and tolerant than others. Some are more pragmatic and more willing to engage in dialogue than others. But it has become increasingly clear over the past couple of years that the Egyptian regime has taken a ruthless stance against those moderate leaders.

Dialogue between moderate Islamists and the rest of the world would threaten the very existence of the authoritarian Egyptian regime. The regime seeks international support for its oppression by portraying us as radicals, terrorists, or theocrats. It is only through dialogue that such claims can be proven groundless. Therefore, the regime has tried to prevent such communication from taking place by keeping the moderate leaders of the Brotherhood, such as Deputy Chairman Khayrat El Shater, behind bars, by resorting to illegal measures, and by engaging in a deceptive smear campaign against the movement and its leadership.

Lynch's memo lays the foundation for healthy dialogue between moderate

Shop at FP

Subscribe to FP

My Profile

Welcome dfahmy!

Log out



Texas A&amp;M University

Certificate in Advanced International Affairs

Certificate in Homeland Security

Certificate in Non Profit Management

 FIND OUT MORE  
 extended Ed@bushschool.tamu.edu  
<http://bush.tamu.edu>  
 1-866-988-BUSH (2874)


Ads by Google

**[The Secret Oil War](#)**

The Truth Behind Oil & the "Real" War Machine. Free, New Report.

[EnergyAndCapital.com/Oil](http://EnergyAndCapital.com/Oil)

**[China Pictures](#)**

Detailed Info Of Almost Anywhere In The World From National Geographic!

[nationalgeographic.co.uk/](http://nationalgeographic.co.uk/)

**[Gold, Peace, Prosperity](#)**

\$11.00 By Congressman Ron Paul

[www.Mises.org/store](http://www.Mises.org/store)

**[Iraq 1941](#)**

Basra, Fallujah & Baghdad Illustrated military history book.

[www.OspreyPublishing.cc](http://www.OspreyPublishing.cc)

Islamists and the United States. It seeks answers for questions shared by many Americans, intellectuals and policymakers alike. However, it is important to understand that Islamists, just like other opposition groups in Egypt, are skeptical about the sincerity of the U.S. government in promoting democracy in the Middle East. Americans, just like Islamists, are therefore required to clarify their stances on some issues to achieve mutual understanding and boost the potential for a healthy dialogue. This should include a stronger position toward the ongoing violations of human rights in Egypt—whether it is toward Islamists or other Egyptians.



—A. Fahmy

*Leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood  
Chief Executive Officer  
IkhwanWeb, the voice of  
the Muslim Brotherhood in English  
Cairo, Egypt*

Lynch does an excellent job of capturing the U.S. political establishment's skewed debate about the Muslim Brotherhood—a debate premised on outdated assumptions. Empirical evidence demonstrates that the Brotherhood is just as committed—if not more committed—to civil nonviolence than other democracy movements that the United States has belatedly supported in places such as the Philippines, South Africa, and Indonesia. Yes, the Brotherhood is socially conservative. But the group is also politically pragmatic, believes in institutional development, and responsibly opposes authoritarian government.

The question for Americans should be: Why are we questioning the Brotherhood's commitment to nonviolence, and not the Egyptian government's appetite for repression? The United States provides billions of dollars in military aid to Cairo, yet the State Department remains silent when Brotherhood members are detained without charge, tortured, and referred to military tribunals. The debate would be far more constructive if it focused on U.S. complicity in suppressing civil demonstrators and nonviolent local opposition groups in Egypt. One step toward curbing violence in the country would be to stop participating in it.

Until that happens, the Muslim Brotherhood's leaders and supporters have little incentive to court the approval of American politicians and academics. Until the U.S. government repudiates Hosni Mubarak's repressive state, it would be imprudent, to say the least, for the Muslim Brotherhood to try to win hearts and minds in Washington.

—Joshua A. Stacher

*Postdoctoral Fellow  
Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs  
Syracuse University  
Syracuse, N.Y.*

1 2 [next](#) >

FOREIGN POLICY welcomes letters to the editor.  
Readers should address their comments to [fpletters@CarnegieEndowment.org](mailto:fpletters@CarnegieEndowment.org).

## Related Stories

- ▣ Jan Banning - [Wide Angle: The State at Work](#)
- ▣ FOREIGN POLICY & *the Fund for Peace* - [The Failed States Index](#) [Subscribers Only](#)
- ▣ Jane C. Loeffler - [Fortress America](#) [Subscribers Only](#)
- ▣ Alasdair Roberts - [The War We Deserve](#) [Subscribers Only](#)
- ▣ Daniel Kimmage, Kathleen Ridolfo - [Iraq's Networked Insurgents](#) [Subscribers Only](#)

---

| [Privacy Policy](#) | [Disclaimer](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Site Map](#) | [About CEIP](#) | [Subscribe](#) |

---



1779 Massachusetts Avenue, NW | Washington, DC 20036 | Phone: 202-939-2230 | Fax: 202-483-4430

FOREIGN POLICY is published by the [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#).

All contents ©2007 [ForeignPolicy.com](#). All rights reserved.

Site design by [bevia.com](#); Programming by [Enovational Design](#)