

Egypt will never be the same: Obama Urges 'genuine democracy'

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama has called on the Egyptian military to ensure a transition towards "genuine democracy" after the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak, saying the people of Egypt had spoken.

Obama issued a statement Friday, soon after it emerged from a euphoric Cairo that Mubarak, a 30-year US ally who America subtly helped push towards the exit, had resigned after days of raging street protests.

"The people of Egypt have spoken -- their voices have been heard and Egypt will never be the same," Obama said.

"Egyptians have made it clear that nothing less than genuine democracy will carry the day," Obama said, praising the military for safeguarding the state but also calling on them to secure a credible political transition.

"By stepping down, President Mubarak responded to the Egyptian peoples' hunger for change," Obama said in his brief statement.

On assuming power Friday, the military

moved quickly to reassure the citizens that it would respect the popular will.

The White House also called on them to honour existing peace agreements with Israel.

"The word Tahrir means liberation. It's a word that speaks to that something in our souls that cries out for freedom," Obama said.

The president also drew parallels to other tumultuous world events, referring to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Indonesian revolt against president Suharto and Indian independence icon Mahatma Gandhi.

He called on the armed forces to ensure a political transition that was "credible in the eyes of the Egyptian people," warning of "difficult days ahead."

"Egyptians have inspired us and they've done so by putting the lie to the idea that justice is best gained through violence," Obama said.

Meanwhile, US media reacted with cautious optimism to the events in Egypt, saying Egypt now has an opportunity to change the Arab world.



An Egyptian anti-government protester offers a flower to a soldier guarding Cairo's Tahrir square yesterday, a day after President Hosni Mubarak stepped down. PHOTO: AFP

PEACE TREATY Israel hails Egypt's assurance

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday welcomed assurances from Egypt's military that Cairo would respect its 1979 peace treaty with the Jewish state, in a statement from his office.

It said Netanyahu "welcomes the statement of the Egyptian military that Egypt will continue to honour the peace treaty with Israel."

"The longstanding peace treaty between Israel and Egypt has greatly contributed to both countries and is the cornerstone for peace and stability in the entire Middle East."

Earlier yesterday, Egypt's army said Cairo would "remain committed to all its regional and international treaties."

Thousands rally in Algeria and Yemen

AFP, Algiers, Sanaa

Thousands of demonstrators held rally in Algeria, Yemen yesterday, calling for their Presidents to step down and follow the example of Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak, an AFP correspondent said.

In Algiers, ringed by hundreds of anti-riot forces, some carrying automatic weapons in addition to clubs and shields, they waved a large banner reading "Regime, out".

But police deployed in their thousands prevented a planned march from May 1 Square of some four kilometres to Martyrs Square.

There were scuffles with security forces and numerous arrests well before the march had been due to begin at 11:00am, witnesses said.

At least 400 people had been arrested, said witnesses. Meanwhile, several thousand young Yemenis gathered in central Sanaa yesterday, calling for President Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down.

"After Mubarak, it's Ali's turn," chanted some of the estimated 4,000 protesters, mostly young students.

The protesters then headed off towards Sanaa University, with some crying: "Get out, Get out Ali" and others chanting: "The people want the regime to fall."

Indonesia plane crash kills five

AFP, Jakarta

All five people on a test flight were killed in Indonesia yesterday when their small plane crashed having changed one of its engines, a transportation ministry spokesman said.

The Cassa aircraft of Sabang Merauke Raya Air Charter left Batam island and crashed on Bintan island, both in Riau Islands province, near Singapore.

"The pilot, co-pilot and three technicians died in the accident. They were on a flight test after they changed one of the engines for the aircraft," transportation ministry spokesman Bambang Ervan said.

Killers out on bail

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difference if we kill you and your other family members," she quoted Mithun as saying.

Both the accused also threatened her not to continue the murder case.

Bithi said she filed a general diary with Badda Police Station in this regard on January 29.

Momtaz Begum claimed Rubel and Mithun scared her daughter and Bithi off school and university after they were released on bail.

"We cannot lead a normal life and are passing days like refugees due to threats from them," she added.

The HC had earlier directed Dhaka Metropolitan Police to ensure security of the victims' family members after The Daily Star published a report on August 14 last year headlined "Killers now target two daughters."

Bithi's only brother Shihab is a guest worker in Malaysia, while her other sister Sathi studies in Japan.

Police pressed charges against four people in the double murder case. They are Rubel, Mithun, Rubel's maternal uncle Mohammad Altaf Hossain Altu, and husband of Rubel's sister Mohammad Mohiuddin Azad.

Altaf allegedly supplied the weapon used in the crime and Azad gave shelter to the alleged killers. Both of them are on bail.

The case is under trial at the Speedy Trial Tribunal Court-3.

Hundreds escape Cairo prison during riots

AFP, Cairo

About 600 prisoners broke out of a Cairo prison yesterday after riots erupted, security officials said.

Several people were killed and wounded as the prisoners rioted and unknown assailants outside the prison fired at guards, the officials said. It was not immediately clear who the casualties were.

It was the second mass escape from the Marg prison since anti-government riots targeting police stations and several prisons erupted on January 28 alongside the popular uprising that ousted president Hosni Mubarak.

Create proper atmosphere

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countries, including food security, global health and counter terrorism.

After the meeting, Geoffrey told the reporters that America hoped that all political parties in Bangladesh will actively participate in parliament over the time to attain the cherished goal of democracy for people of the country.

BNP Vice Chairman Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury, who was present at the meeting, said BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia told the US envoy that BNP has trust in parliamentary democracy as the party introduced the parliamentary democracy in the country.

Khaleda said proper atmosphere is necessary for making parliament effective and it is essential to create proper environment so that all can play effective role in the parliament.

On counter terrorism, the former prime minister said only applying of weapons to curb terrorism is not sustainable but it needs people's involvement to completely attain the desired goal.

The US envoy appreciated Khaleda's notion.

The BNP chief said there existed excellent relations between Dhaka and Washington during the tenure of BNP and it will continue in the future.

Khaleda's advisers Reaz Rahman and Sabihuddin Ahmed and US Ambassador in Dhaka James F Moriarty were present at the meeting.

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