



The logo features the word "Beehive" in a stylized font. The "B" is large and red. The "ee" is in red with a blue orbital path around it. The "Hive" is in blue. Below "Beehive" is the text "Middle East Social Media" in blue. In the top right corner, there is a logo for Tel Aviv University and the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies (MDC).

Beehive

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Joe Biden's US Election Victory in the Eyes of Egyptians

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The growing probability of Joe Biden victory during the election week gained widespread attention on social media among Egyptian citizens and exiled dissidents. While al-Sisi's supporters responded coldly, expressing concern about the tightening of the new administration's policy towards the Egyptian regime, Egyptian exiled dissidents showed mixed feelings. On the one hand, there are those who express optimism, joy, and anticipation for a change of the American policy that they criticize for being sympathetic to the Egyptian regime. On the other hand, there are those who seek to cool the sense of euphoria, arguing that the American presidency does not intend to change its sympathetic attitude

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towards its traditional allies. Yet, some of the Egyptian exiled dissidents believe that this is the right time to erode the power of the Egyptian regime.

During Obama's presidency, Egypt-US relations were strained due to the perception of al-Sisi's rule as illegitimate, in consequence of the military *coup* against the elected President Morsi in 2013, which led to the oppression of the opposition and violations of human rights. With President Donald Trump's rise to power, there has been a marked improvement in the relations with the Egyptian regime. However, the victory by Joe Biden, who was vice-president under the Obama's presidency, raises grave concerns among the Egyptian regime's supporters regarding the trajectory of relations between the two countries.

Some of al-Sisi's supporters were troubled with the possibility that Biden would follow former President Obama's and Hillary Clinton's policy. In their view, the latter was responsible for Egypt's security and economic deterioration, later rehabilitated thanks to al-Sisi's efforts. According to them, today's Egypt is able to defend its own interests without American support and, therefore, Egypt must not succumb to the dictates of the new administration. Some of al-Sisi's supporters have called on al-Sisi to strengthen Egypt's ties with Russia, China, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), in order to create a safety net if Biden suddenly troubles Egypt.¹ There were also those who criticized the Trump administration's failure to deal with the issue of the Renaissance dam crisis

¹ [@Egy.Pres.Spokesman](#), *Facebook*, 8 November 2020; [@642728429685170](#), *Facebook*, 7 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.

between Egypt and Ethiopia. **Ahmad al-Maslamani**, former adviser of al-Sisi's, noted that Trump was content with statements rather than actions.²

In contrast, many members of the Egyptian opposition welcomed Trump's departure. **Hamdeen Sabahi**, an opposition activist in Egypt and former presidential candidate, welcomed Trump's defeat not only for political but also moral reasons. In his view, Trump symbolized ugliness, lies, ignorance, and arrogance; hence, his defeat "is a moral obligation."³ The supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) as well as Iranian actors have launched a hashtag in the aftermath of the defeat titled "Trump Orphans," in order to mark the loss of a mainstay of support for Arab rulers.⁴

Other Egyptian exiled dissidents welcomed Biden's victory and expressed hope that his victory will lead to fundamental change. **Maha Azzam**, an Egyptian exile and leader of the "Egyptian Revolutionary Council,"⁵ wrote that "Biden's victory is an opportunity for the US to help the principles of freedom and human rights that were barbarously trampled on by Egypt, KSA and the UAE whose partner was the former administration in Washington. We will pressure Washington into changing the trend of not forming an alliance with the dictator."⁶ The MB leadership also called on Biden to "re-examine the policy of aiding dictators and

² [@Almoslemani](#), *Twitter*, 9 November 2020; [@ahmedelmoslemani](#), *Facebook*, 9 November 2020; [@243148156458225](#), *Facebook*, 7 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.

³ [@Hamdeen.Egypt](#), *Facebook*, 3 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.

⁴ [#إيثام_ترامب](#). Accessed 12 November 2020.

⁵ The Egyptian Revolutionary Council (ERC) is a Turkey-based Egyptian political organization that was founded in 2014. Describing itself as a group of Egyptian political forces and groups outside of Egypt, the ERC states that it is committed to the right of the Egyptian people to "bread, freedom, social justice and dignity."

⁶ [@MahaAzzam ERC](#), *Twitter*, 7 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.

the crimes and violations of the rights of peoples perpetrated by tyrannical regimes.”⁷



Maha Azzam's post on [Twitter](#) calling to apply pressure on Biden's administration.

There were also those who objected to optimism prompted by Biden's victory. **Hisham Kamal**, an exiled Salafist Egyptian from the “**Salafi Front**,”⁸ stressed that despite the differences between the Republican and Democratic regimes, both of them consider al-Sisi and other rulers in the Middle East as a “strategic treasure.” He also noted with regret that the Egyptian opposition outside Egypt “has no real value up to this moment,” and, therefore, it has no power for urging Biden to initiate a move that would overthrow or weaken the Egyptian regime's power.⁹ Exiled Egyptian dissidents said in response that the dismal state of the opposition should not be endured and that its ranks should be reorganized in order

⁷ [@fjportal](#), Facebook, 8 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.

⁸ The Salafi Front is an Egyptian Salafist organization that was founded after the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

⁹ [@Dr_Hesham_Kamal](#), Twitter, 7 November 2020; [@Dr_Hesham_Kamal](#), Twitter, 8 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.

to effectively pressure the new presidency in the White House into adopting an aggressive stance against the tyrannical regimes.¹⁰

Qutb al-Arabi, an exiled MB Egyptian journalist, estimated that Biden would treat Egypt differently from the Obama administration and similarly to the Trump administration, but with some important differences, including respectful attitude toward Islam and willingness to negotiate with the MB. He explained that the nature of the new administration is largely related to the election of Muslims of Arab and African descent, such as Ilhan Omar and Rashida Taleb, to the House of Representatives and the Senate.¹¹ In his view, “Biden is not the intended Messiah,” but he will surely promote the issue of democracy and human rights, “something that frightens al-Sisi’s supporters, Ben Zeid and Ben Salman.”¹²

Hamdeen Sabahi agreed with this assessment, but stressed that it was naive to think that Biden’s policy would lead to the establishment of democracies in the Arab world. According to him, the extent of his influence will be limited and he will continue the policy of his predecessors.¹³

Egyptian exiled dissidents have also stated that Biden’s victory has been troubling al-Sisi, especially in consequence of a warning message posted by Biden on his Twitter account in July 2020, saying he would not lend a hand to the continued repression of human rights in Egypt.¹⁴ In their view, this led al-Sisi to take a series of steps seeking to improve the image of the Egyptian regime in the eyes of the new American administration. **Ali Hassan Mahdi**, an Egyptian vlogger who lives in the US, contended that al-Sisi released from prison more

¹⁰ [@sharkawiahmed](#), *Twitter*, 7 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.

¹¹ [@kotbelaraby](#), *Facebook*, 8 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.

¹² [@kotbelaraby](#), *Twitter*, 7 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.

¹³ [@Hamdeen.Egypt](#), *Facebook*, 3 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.

¹⁴ [@JoeBiden](#), *Twitter*, 12 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.

than 400 political prisoners, in order to appease Biden.¹⁵ **Bahey al-Din Hassan**, director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, condemned al-Sisi's hasty hiring of "a team worth 65,000\$ monthly" aiming to improve the relations with the new US administration "instead of releasing thousands of oppressed people from prisons, improving the situation of the Egyptians and stopping the violence against them."¹⁶

The online discourse reveals a cautious sense of optimism among exiled Egyptian dissidents regarding a possibility of a more aggressive policy by the Biden administration towards the Egyptian regime that will lead to change. However, it also exposes the weakness and fragmentation of the exiled dissidents who failed to unite and are divided over their capability and power to promote their agenda. Nevertheless, the supporters of the Egyptian regime seem to be concerned about the establishment of an unfriendly American administration towards Egypt and, therefore, express a willingness to cultivate ties with other world powers.

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¹⁵ [@UC5bWr5uCw_HgW2lvJcqk6WA](#), *YouTube*, 8 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.

¹⁶ [@BaheyHassan](#), *Twitter*, 11 November 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020.