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www.afgazad.com

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afgazad@gmail.com

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'The Revolution Isn't Over, It's Only Just Beginning'

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With Hosni Mubarak out of power and the generals temporarily at the helm, Egypt appears to be on a path to democracy. The military has suspended the contested constitution and pledged free elections. German commentators have doubts about the army's commitment to true change -- but say the people have shown they won't stop fighting for freedom.

Egypt's generals are seizing control of the country following the [overthrow of Hosni Mubarak](#), who stepped down on Friday after almost three weeks of public protests. The military council suspended the constitution and dissolved parliament on Sunday, and pledged to organize free and fair elections under a revised constitution. It gave no timetable, however, beyond saying that it would be in charge "for a temporary period of six months or until the end of elections to the upper and lower houses of parliament, and presidential elections."

At present, it is unclear what civilian participation there will be in amending the constitution. The cabinet appointed by Mubarak last month will go on governing, reporting to the army chiefs. The army wants to get Egypt working again, to bring back tourists and attract foreign investments after the economy was damaged by the chaos of the revolution.

The army enjoys public respect, even though it has supported presidents drawn from its own ranks for six decades. Traffic is flowing once again through Tahrir Square and the army warned

on Monday that it would clear the dozens of remaining protestors from the square which was the focus of the revolution.

Protest leaders have warned that Egyptians will demonstrate again if their demands for change are not met. They plan a huge "Victory March" on Friday to celebrate the revolution. That should serve as a reminder to the army of the will of the people.

German media commentators question how committed the army will be to implementing true change -- but express faith in the Egyptian people's determination to turn their country into a true democracy.

The center-left **Süddeutsche Zeitung** writes:

"The generals of Cairo have been part of the Mubarak regime for 30 years: draped with medals and rewarded with privileges. In a country like Egypt, privileges are more than just an official limousine and a private secretary: The men with the golden epaulettes are professional expense account fiddlers. Their army is an industrial and trading company. The military owns land, its factories produce food, televisions and kitchen furniture. It is obvious that part of the income flows into the pockets of the men in uniform. And now these men are supposed to selflessly dismantle a regime in which they flourished?"

"Since the fall of the monarchy in 1952, the country has been ruled by men of the military. The people don't want to see uniforms at the top of the government any more, neither active ones nor retired. The army still has the trust of the Egyptians. But if it abuses it, the people will return to the streets. This revolution isn't over. It's only just beginning."

Conservative **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung** writes:

"There will be a competition between two political camps: a secular, left-wing, liberal stream of Arab character and an Islamic discourse that will have to continue to become more moderate in the competition for votes."

"Egypt is about to regain its old leadership role in the Arab world. That will of course have consequences for the autocrats, dictatorships and monarchies of Arabia, even if the domino stones don't tumble and there isn't a rapid toppling of governments in the coming weeks. Unlike in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, the regimes of Arabia are too different, they aren't united by a common ideology. In Syria, the mighty security apparatus nips any dissent in the bud, and in the Gulf states, oil and gas buy people's loyalty. But the regimes know that their time could come too if they don't allow their citizens more freedom."

"Mubarak's fall is a setback for those people in the West and in Israel who believe that only authoritarian regimes, not democratic order, can guarantee stability in the Middle East."

"The West can help to strengthen the nascent democracy and contribute to a new stability in the Middle East by offering a Marshall Plan to make up for what its ally Mubarak failed to do."

The business daily **Financial Times Deutschland** writes:

"The demonstrators have welcomed the cold military putsch, they even demanded it, and the generals were all too happy to meet that request. But it's unclear whether they will also stick to the second part of the deal and hold elections in half a year -- a glance at history shows that that isn't very likely. The European Union and United States mustn't make the mistake of leaving Egypt to its own devices now that it has managed to stabilize itself to some extent. Germany in particular is in a good position to influence the further developments -- carefully, diplomatically and behind the scenes. Any open interference from outside could damage things. The army must avoid giving the Egyptian public any impression that it is a puppet of the West."

"Instead, the EU and US could offer the prospect of economic advantages if meaningful elections are held in the autumn, for example a further opening of their markets to Egyptian products. And the US could make its continued military aid dependent on democratic progress."

Conservative **Die Welt** writes:

"Much of the army's leadership was trained in the Soviet Union and will hardly be able to act as a convincing agent of change. The opposition is either sclerotic and exhausted or young and inexperienced and not organized in traditional party structures yet. But if there's a reason for hope, it's the happy optimism of the Egyptians. People capable of toppling a ruler who had been regarded by experts as firmly in the saddle, and in just 18 days, have every reason to believe that much more is possible. The fall of the dictator has unleashed an enormous creative force in Egyptians. That is one of the few but important reasons why they can make it."