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## Interview

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# Mohammed Abdellah, Foreign Affairs Chairman of the Egyptian National Assembly

*The following is an interview with Dr. Mohammed Abdellah, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Egyptian National Assembly, conducted in Cairo on Dec. 23, 1982.*

**EIR:** What is Egypt's orientation right now to the Non-Aligned movement?

**Abdellah:** Egypt is one of the three founders of the Non-Aligned movement, along with India and Yugoslavia. After Camp David, there was a kind of counterattack for a short while from within the movement to try to freeze Egypt's membership, but it did not succeed. When President Mubarak came to power, he emphasized the role of Egypt in this movement and tried to coordinate his efforts with Yugoslavia. He went to Yugoslavia, and, with India, assumed responsibility for the three countries in taking lead of the movement. This has been one of the main lines of Egyptian foreign policy since the July Revolution in 1962. It is not a new phenomenon. We are now continuing the same line, but emphasizing a little more the role of Egypt.

**EIR:** What do you see as the principal objective of the Non-Aligned movement in the context of world politics and the two superpowers?

**Abdellah:** Since the creation of this movement, our objective has been to find a means for the Third World to try to express themselves, away from the Cold War confrontation between the two superpowers.

**EIR:** We see in the North-South relationship two situations of adversity. We see economic pressures coming from certain interests in the North against the South, and we also see the potential for military threats—for example, out-of-area NATO deployments. Do you think the Non-Aligned movement will take these issues up for discussion?

**Abdellah:** Since the beginning of the movement, the main goal was to find ways and means for the countries of the Third World to move out from under economic pressures and military repression. There is coordination among the countries of the Third World that could give them more bargaining power. It's nothing in comparison to the power of the big

powers, but it is more bargaining power.

**EIR:** We now believe that unless debt renegotiation occurs, the existing debt structure is going to collapse, and there will be catastrophe for the debtors. However, the creditors do not seem willing to reorganize. We consider this to be one of the primary problems that the Non-Aligned movement should address and try to resolve.

**Abdellah:** I do not know the agenda of the Non-Aligned summit to be held in New Delhi in March. I believe that this is a very important subject and that the movement must study this issue because it is a big concern for all the Third World countries, not only Latin America. What Latin American nations are facing today, other countries of the Third World will face tomorrow.

**EIR:** What is your evaluation of current U.S. policy toward the Middle East?

**Abdellah:** I believe the United States has been playing an active role since Camp David and is a full partner in the agreements of Camp David, despite all the obstacles that Israel is putting in the path of peace.

**EIR:** Do you think the United States' role is positive?

**Abdella:** There are three important facts. First of all, the right of Israel to survive, to be recognized and live inside secure borders. Second, the acceptance by Israel and by the international community, and by the United States mainly, of the fact that the Palestinian problem is the core of the Middle East problem. A lasting peace will not prevail except by finding a just solution to the Palestinian problem. The third fact is that Israel must understand quite well that nobody can accept a flexible definition of security—which could be used as an umbrella to achieve expansionism, to annex Arab lands, which is what is happening now on the West Bank; which gives them the excuse to attack the Iraqi atomic plant in Baghdad; which could be used to morally justify aggression against any neighboring country. We have to start from these three points, and these could lead to peace. It is not an easy or short road, but it could lead to peace.

**EIR:** What is the attitude of the Israeli government, the U.S. government, and the principal European governments to these points? Are they acceptable bases for negotiations?

**Abdellah:** I think that if you go back and look at the evolution of the United Nations, and the European Parliamentary Union, and UNESCO, and all kinds of international forums, you will find that these principles are accepted. If you review Camp David, you will find these principles clearly. That is the spirit of Camp David. All the United Nations resolutions contain the same principles. The Egyptian-French initiative was founded on the same principles.

**EIR:** Where does the Egyptian-French initiative stand at this point?

**Abdellah:** For the time being, we are keeping it on the side, to give a chance to the Reagan initiative, and this is by agreement between Egypt and France.

**EIR:** Was this discussed with the United States?

**Abdellah:** No, this came from the Egyptians and the French. We are giving the Americans a chance to try to act on the basis of the Reagan initiative.

**EIR:** So this posture is going to be maintained until President Mubarak goes to the United States, and then you are going to renew the French initiative?

**Abdellah:** We are not putting a deadline on it. We want to give the Reagan initiative enough time to move.

**EIR:** How about the other Arab nations and governments? Some of them have difficulties giving Israel the right to live in secure borders?

**Abdellah:** I think that if you go back to the Fez resolution, it is clear that acknowledging the right for all countries in the area to live in peace includes Israel.

**EIR:** Why is Israel refusing to respond to the Fez resolution?

**Abdellah:** Because I believe that some people in power in Israel still don't want to see the real facts of the Palestinian problem.

**EIR:** Do you see a future role for the Soviet Union in Middle East peace negotiations?

**Abdellah:** I think that for the time being we are working on what we have in hand, and on the gains which are already on the table. My own assessment is that we cannot reach something under any initiative unless it is accepted by all parties in the area, which means Israel and the Arabs. I believe that this must be the basis for accepting any initiative. As Egyptians, we will always say that the door is open for any initiative that will provide a step forward, provided that it is in the spirit of the United Nations resolutions and accepted by all parties—Israeli and Arab.

**EIR:** Your government appears to be taking certain new

initiatives toward Africa. Can you give us a description?

**Abdellah:** Since we are part of the African continent, we were always very helpful to the African countries in their fight for independence. We were the founders of the OAU [Organization of African Unity], and we are keen to maintain the unity within this organization and to try to settle any kind of dispute in a peaceful way. Our goal is to try to maintain stability in Africa and to help Africa achieve as much as it can.

**EIR:** There are certain situations which are destabilizing Africa, such as the situation in South Africa, Angola, Libya. What is the Egyptian approach to such problems?

**Abdellah:** First of all, we are against any sort of apartheid, any sort of racism. However, we don't interfere in domestic disputes, because it opens the door to further interference. We prefer that the Africans settle their problems by themselves.

**EIR:** This applies to the Cuban military presence, for example?

**Abdellah:** It applies to any military presence. You must distinguish between when a government calls for foreign aid and when there is a foreign invasion. Basically we are against any foreign interference. But when a country asks for help, this is an action that differs from a foreign invasion. That does not mean we are happy to find foreign troops coming into Africa, however.

**EIR:** How do you see future relations between Egypt and the other Arab countries that were alienated from you? Will relations be restored?

**Abdellah:** I think there is an improvement in the atmosphere and a de facto rapprochement between Egypt and the other Arab countries. Your question is a question of formality. Relations between Egypt and the other countries were never cut. They withdrew their ambassadors, and we did the same, but the relations between Egypt and the Arab world continued. Since President Mubarak came to power, the first decision he took was to stop any kind of polemic between our media. His position was clear: We don't want to escalate any kind of campaign. Even if some official Arab media continue to attack us, we will not answer. This was a very important step to create a new climate in the area. Now we have contact with the majority of the Arab countries. We exchange messages; we receive envoys; we send envoys. So I believe that relations between Egypt and other Arab countries are good and are improving.

**EIR:** How do you see relations between Egypt and the PLO?

**Abdellah:** You know that the PLO kept its representation in Cairo. The office was never closed here. There is a tradition in the nation, a very old one between Egypt and the PLO. Since the Beirut crisis, we have had very frequent consultations on high levels between us and the PLO.