

Ambassador Tawfik: This Was No Coup

The following are excerpts from remarks by Mohamed Tawfik, Egypt's Ambassador to the U.S., in an interview with Jonathan Karl on ABC's This Week, July 7, 2013.

Karl: Joining us now, Egypt's ambassador to the U.S., who was appointed by President Morsi, Mohamed Tawfik. . . You heard there from the spokesperson for the Muslim Brotherhood, they are willing to die for this; they say it's ridiculous to say that what has happened is not a coup. What is your response?

Tawfik: What has happened is the people of Egypt have decided that President Morsi did not act during his year in office as president for all Egyptians. 22 million Egyptians wrote petitions demanding early elections. My advice to the Muslim Brotherhood is they need to acknowledge the mistakes that they made, and they need to join the process. Let us look ahead to the future. There is room for everyone in Egypt, but there is no room for violence, there is no room for incitement to hatred, and incitement to commit acts of violence.

Karl: . . . They say that Morsi was democratically elected, and he was forcibly removed by the military, and they are willing to die to undo that.

Tawfik: Morsi was elected democratically, I agree. I supported him. I did my best to help him to succeed. Like millions of other Egyptians, I really wished he had acted like a president to all Egyptians. But then, in the last two months, you have had a massive reaction from the Egyptian people. Over 15 million people in the streets saying this cannot go on. President Morsi did not act in the interests of the vast majority of Egyptians. He only looked at his own clique. You can't be a democratically elected president and act that way. So now, we want new elections. We're going to get new elections. We're going to get a new parliament. . . .

Karl: How quickly does this happen?

Tawfik: As quickly as we possibly can put it together. What we need is we need national dialogue. We need everybody to be in the process. We will not repeat President Morsi's mistakes. We want an inclusive process. This is what the Muslim Brotherhood need to understand. They need to look to the future with the rest of Egyptians. There is room for everyone. We want a truly democratic, pluralistic society. . . .

We do not need more violence in Egypt. Yesterday, four teenagers were thrown off the roof of their own house by Dr. Morsi's supporters. This cannot go on. . . .

Karl: This is not a coup?

Tawfik: Absolutely not. Listen, what happened was you had over 15 million people in the street. And President

Morsi—he could have said, “Listen, my people, I listen, I hear you.” But instead of that, he whipped up religious fervor among his supporters, and there was violence in the air. After more than 20 people had been killed, leaders from Egyptian parties, from Egyptian religious establishments, from the military, came together; they said we have to stop this. Otherwise, violence will spiral out of control.

Karl: But now your government and you must be in the oddest situation. You were appointed by President Morsi, and now you are representing the government that has overthrown him. They have closed down Muslim Brotherhood television stations. They have arrested leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood. What is going to happen? Will the Muslim Brotherhood have a role in the new Egypt? What is going to happen to President Morsi? He is under house arrest right now.

Tawfik: Well, people have the right to demonstrate peacefully. This is guaranteed by the constitution. People have the right to express themselves in any way that they want, without inciting to violence. If you start inciting your followers to violence, if you start whipping up religious fervor, if you start talking about jihad, about martyrdom, then, many, many people are going to lose their lives. And that is against the law.



Egyptian Amb. Mohamed Tawfik