
Anti-succession campaign against Egypt Mubarak

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Ayman Nour

A prominent Egyptian opposition leader said on Wednesday he was launching a campaign to block Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak from passing on his post at the helm of the most populous Arab country to his politician son Gamal

Ayman Nour, who came a distant second to Mubarak in a 2005 presidential vote before being jailed for over three years on forgery charges, said he was launching the campaign alongside other opposition activists including Islamists and liberals.

"One of the goals of the campaign is to get rid of this ghost of succession and oppression and corruption," Nour told Reuters on the sidelines of a news conference to announce the move at the headquarters of his liberal al-Ghad party.

"This preparatory committee that founded the campaign realises that its position is not against a specific person, but above all else it is against stolen constitutional rights," he said.

Mubarak, 81, in power since 1981, has dodged making a commitment on whether he will seek a sixth six-year term and has never appointed a successor, encouraging speculation about who will govern next. Many expect his son Gamal to succeed him.

Hassan Nafaa, a university professor with a leading role in the anti-succession campaign, said supporters would hold peaceful protests against succession.

Speculation about succession has gathered pace as the next presidential race in 2011 draws closer and ahead of the National Democratic Party's annual conference, which opens on Oct. 30.

Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif said last month that the ruling party was unlikely to pick a candidate for the 2011 presidential election at the conference, which would leave it open whether Mubarak will run again.

Political analysts say the rules governing the presidential race make it almost impossible for the ruling party's candidate to face a serious challenger. Nour is unable to run because of his conviction on forgery charges he says were fabricated.

The most common view is that Mubarak's son Gamal, 45, a former investment banker, is being groomed for office. He already holds a senior post in the ruling party, where he heads the policy secretariat.

Both father and son deny such plans. Mubarak repeated this position in an August interview. "Look, this was never raised between myself and my son," he said.

Analysts say a succession by Gamal Mubarak is not a certainty, partly because the president's son may not have the power base or influence to secure the top post.

Gamal Mubarak has no military background, unlike all three presidents since the monarchy was overthrown in 1952 -- including his father who was an air force commander.

The most commonly discussed alternative name is Omar Suleiman, Egypt's intelligence chief, who has played a key role in Middle East peace mediation efforts.

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