

Egypt opposition MB chief stays put

Contributed by Egypt News
Tuesday, 20 October 2009

Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood leader Mahdi Akef

The head of Egypt's top opposition movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, said on Tuesday that he has handed down some duties but denied reports of his resignation due to a dispute within the ranks.

"I have not resigned but I have lightened my duties by delegating prerogatives" to deputy leader Mohammed Habib, the Brotherhood's supreme guide Mohammed Mahdi Akef said.

He acknowledged "differences over interpretation of the statutes" within the movement over the appointment to the Brotherhood's politburo of Essam al-Erian, who is linked to its reformist wing.

The row followed weeks of speculation that conservatives led by the Islamist group's secretary general, Mahmud Izzat, were blocking Erian's appointment.

Akef hinted he preferred to stay put because "people in Egypt are not used to someone leaving his post at the top of his own will." Brotherhood members are also "scared of change," said the 81-year-old leader.

But he confirmed he would resign as planned when his term expires in 2010.

The Brotherhood controls a fifth of seats in Egypt's parliament after it ran independent candidates to circumvent an official ban on the movement as a political party. Akef has headed the Islamists since 2004.

EGYPT NEWS