

Egypt MB will not bid for presidency

Contributed by Egypt News
Monday, 02 November 2009

Muslim Brotherhood Leader Mahdi Akef

The leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's biggest opposition group, Mahdi Akef reported that the group won't attempt to challenge the ruling party in the 2011 presidential election under the existing constitution

The group is officially banned, forcing supporters to contest elections as independents. But the hurdles set by the constitution make it virtually impossible for any independent to run for president against the candidate backed by the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's party.

Brotherhood leader Mohamed Mahdi Akef said that this week that his movement, which seeks to establish an Islamic state by non-violent means, would not make an electoral show of defiance.

"There are a lot of preparations that need to be addressed (before discussing) a presidential nomination, and at the forefront are freedom and a clean constitution," Akef said.

Reiterating the Brotherhood's position that it did not want open confrontation with the state, he said:

"I made my own calculations. Should I go by force and clash with the regime? I say no, we don't do that."

The Brotherhood, which renounced violence long ago, is seen as the only group able to muster hundreds of thousands of disciplined supporters against the government, but analysts say it fears sparking a crackdown that could crush it.

It controls about a fifth of the seats in parliament's lower house through supporters who ran in 2005 as independents.

The authorities have since obstructed its efforts to build on those gains in municipal councils or the upper house, and frequently arrest Brotherhood members.

Mubarak, 81 and in power since 1981, has not said whether he will run in 2011. His silence has fuelled speculation about a successor, with the spotlight on his 45-year-old politician son, Gamal. However, officials say the succession is not on the agenda of a ruling party conference this weekend.

Akef said if Gamal, who unlike most presidents of Egypt has no military background, became president, he would be beholden to the security forces.

"Gamal will have no power as he will be controlled by the security apparatus. The security apparatus is what is driving the president and the government and everything," Akef said.

Analysts say other possible presidential candidates are intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman or a dark horse military candidate.

"I pity any future president of the republic, if (his election) is not preceded by giving freedom to the people and establishing justice," he said.

EGYPT NEWS