



Political Islam Online

A Division within the Muslim Brotherhood?

**“YES” to Women and Non-Muslims holding highest Executive Office
“NO” to Oversight by Political Supreme Religious Body**



Two of the Muslim Brotherhood’s leading personalities, *Gamal Hishmat* and *Abdel-Moneim Abu-Al-Futuh*, both signaled their disagreement with the three most controversial points of the Brotherhood’s platform, pointing towards an important split within their ranks.

Women and non-Muslims to Compete in Presidential Elections:

Hishmat openly criticized the platform for forbidding women and non-Muslims to run for the presidency. “[T]his kind of attitude is neither suitable in dealing with reality or our present circumstances nor is it in agreement with the civil society outlined in the preamble to the Brotherhood’s platform,” he said. He added that this position is irreconcilable with the principle of “citizenship” where all citizens are equal in presenting themselves for election to any [political] position. Dr. *Abu-al-Futuh* appeared to be in agreement with *Hishmat* on this issue, but seemed to portray the controversy as a misunderstanding over something that was never the established position of the Muslim Brotherhood. **In this debate, *Abu-Al-Futuh* seemed to be splitting hairs, which will likely generate much discussion in the coming days. He explains his acceptance of women in office on the grounds that the presidency is simply “the head of the executive branch” of government. He further points out that the executive branch does not come under the Muslim body known as the “Great Guardianship” or “Sublime Imamate,” which according to Islam is the highest authority and cannot be headed by a woman.**

Supreme Religious Oversight Council:

Hishmat totally rejects the establishment of a supreme religious oversight council and believes that most of the Brotherhood’s members do not support this idea. *Abu-al-Futuh* was less emphatic in rejecting the idea, but emphasized that the responsibilities of such a council would be to provide clarifications in response to questions raised by the Supreme Court. He also noted that the legislative branch and the president must consult this body of important religious scholars whenever they establish laws. The council would also be responsible for electing the head of *Al-Azhar*, the highest religious organization in the country. In essence, *Abu-al-Futuh* would, at least for now, keep intact the responsibilities of the council without giving it enforcement power. It would be a consultative rather than an oversight council.

It remains to be seen whether the Brotherhood will be able to reconcile the limitation of the council’s power with their emphasis on its religious superiority. In addition, the introduction of the “Great Guardian” into the political equation, if taken seriously, will prove problematic for all parties who try to apply an Islamic Caliphate form of ruling to the present Egyptian governing structure.

Source: Reporters: Iman ‘Abd-al-Mun’im & Muhammad Baha’ – Islam Online – 10/6/2007
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