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# Gamal Mubarak: leader to watch?

## Bikya Masr Staff

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CAIRO: Gamal Mubarak has topped a list of 10 leaders who are expected to lead the African continent in 2010, according to an American research company report published this week. Bello and Manchau, an African political assessment consultancy firm, said that the son of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) Policies Secretariat is “expected to lead” Africa next year.

The younger Mubarak was on the list of leaders in the report titled “The Top 10 African Leaders to Watch in 2010.” Also making the list are Nigerian President Umaru Yar’ Adua, South African President Jacob Zuma, Congolese President Joseph Kabila, Ghana President John Otameles and Botswana President Iam Khama.

The American advisory and research company “Bello and Manchau” pursues research on African Affairs, and is based in New York.

It said in its report that “Gamal Mubarak, who turns 47 in December 2010, is primarily credited with recruiting a new generation of neoliberals into the NDP and [the] Egyptian government with his reformist vision for Egypt’s future.”

The report continued arguing “as such, he is popular with many, especially younger, Egyptians, who see him as a clear break from the old guard of the NDP.”

The company added in the report that “since Egypt is a de facto single-party state with the NDP holding an overwhelming majority of seats in Parliament, Gamal’s position gives him vast powers in setting national policy.”

Egyptians, however, are not as convinced as to the younger Mubarak’s positioning to take the helm of leadership in the country.

“It will be more of the same,” said George Ishaq, a leading activist. “The government, whether it is Mubarak old or Mubarak young, or Soliman, or whoever, they will continue to be corrupt, dictatorial and arrest people in this country who want freedom.”

The report added that for the last decade, persistent international and local speculation, both popular and scholarly, has been that long-serving Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who will turn 82 in May 2010, has been grooming his younger son for taking over the presidency, a claim both have vehemently denied. However, Gamal’s high profile and his rising status within the ruling NDP are more than telling indications of the increasing inevitability of this development, the report stated.

It pointed out that Gamal Mubarak was “strongly was promoted in Washington,” where he visited in 2003 as leader of an official Egyptian delegation that met with then Vice-President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice.

The consultancy said that Gamal, who is neither an elected or appointed government official, also paid a private visit to the White House in May 2006, an honor rarely afforded even elected presidents across the globe.

“Egypt’s political climate is already overheated with widespread opposition to hereditary succession and President Mubarak’s rule in general. And any serious talk of Gamal taking power could prove the tipping point for widespread public protest and instability,” the report did warn.

It concluded in its report that Gamal’ succession would depend on the acceptance of the Egyptian people “who have suffered decades of failed promises under President Mubarak” as well as the position of the military establishment of the “leadership of someone who does not carry the credentials of the country’s military for the first time in its history.”

Former General turned military analyst Mohamed Kadry Said says that Mubarak junior must be careful when it comes to the armed forces. The Al Ahram Political and Strategic Studies analyst argues that unlike the past, when presidents were military men, “the Egyptian military is very weary of a civilian as leader.”

Said believes that Gamal would need to win a “somewhat open election in order to get the military on his side.”

\*\*reporting by Mohamed Abdel Salam

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