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THE PERFORMANCE OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN THE EGYPTIAN SYNDICATES: AN ALTERNATIVE FORMULA FOR REFORM?

Ninette S. Fahmy

This article examines the role of both the state and the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egyptian professional syndicates. It shows that the ascendancy of the Muslim Brothers in the syndicates came at a time when the latter had been weakened by both external and internal factors. The article attempts to demonstrate that the performance of the Muslim Brothers in the syndicates reflects their inherent inability to manage the affairs of the syndicates efficiently, and also reveals their unethical conduct that is no different from that of their predecessors.

The development of professional associations in Egypt has mirrored the various phases of Egypt's twentieth century history, reflecting the relationship between the regime in power and civil society. Egyptian syndicates, which date back to 1912, have fluctuated between being pluralist or being corporatist organizations depending on the prevailing political conditions. Despite their professional basis, most Egyptian syndicates were, until the early 1980s, under the control of either the government or of a number of liberal forces in society.

After 1982, the Muslim Brotherhood began to develop a strong presence in professional syndicates. Members of the organization even came to dominate some syndicates, including those that were once politically liberal. The aim of this article is first, to explore the factors that contributed to this development; second, to assess the

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performance of the Muslim Brotherhood in some of the Egyptian professional syndicates; and third, to examine the government's attempts to block the influence of the Brotherhood in the syndicates.

THE RISE OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERS IN THE SYNDICATES

There are 22 professional syndicates in Egypt with a total of 3.5 million members.¹ The ascendancy of the Muslim Brothers as a controlling majority took place in the five most politically active syndicates, representing doctors, engineers, pharmacists, scientists, and lawyers. In addition, the Muslim Brothers attempted to control other syndicates through affiliated syndicates outside of Cairo, or through the activities of the syndicates' Liberty and Islamic Law committees.²

The doctors were the first to witness the ascendancy of the Muslim Brothers in their syndicate. In 1984, the Muslim Brothers managed to win seven out of 25 seats in the Doctors Syndicate's governing council, and in 1992 they won the majority of the seats in the Doctors Syndicate's general council and the majority of seats in the affiliated syndicates of Cairo, Alexandria, Giza, and Daqahliyya.³ In 1987, the Muslim Brotherhood won 54 out of 61 seats in the Engineers Syndicate's general assembly and all the seats in the syndicate's council elections held in 1988.⁴

Muhammad 'Abd al-Quddus, the son of the famous Egyptian writer, Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus, and an active member of the Muslim Brotherhood,⁵ rose to prominence in the Journalists Syndicate after its 1985 election. He then became a permanent member in the syndicate council and has remained a member to this day. It should be noted that despite 'Abd al-Quddus' affiliation to the Muslim Brotherhood, he has run as an independent in the syndicate's council elections five consecutive times.⁶ In the 1995 Journalists Syndicate council's elections, another Muslim Brotherhood member, Salah 'Abd al-Maqsud, won a seat in the syndicate's council, raising the Brotherhood's representation in that syndicate to two out of 12 council members.⁷

In the Lawyers Syndicate, the Muslim Brotherhood succeeded for the first time in winning the majority of seats in the syndicate's council elections in 1992, under the presidency of the government-endorsed candidate Ahmad al-Khawaja.⁸ In an interview, Usama 'Asfur, son of Muhammad 'Asfur, a prominent Wafdist lawyer and the leader of

1. 'Abd al-'Ati' Ahmad, *Al-Haraka al-Islamiyya fi Misr wa Qadiyya al-Tahawwul al-Dimuqrati* (Cairo: Al-Ahram Center for Translation and Publication, 1995), p. 252.

2. These committees were established by the Muslim Brotherhood's members in all the syndicates. The aim of these committees is to build support, through conferences and public lectures, for *shari'a* (Islamic law) as the system of law in Egypt.

3. Ahmad, *Al-Haraka al-Islamiyya fi Misr wa Qadiyya al-Tahawwul al-Dimuqrati*, p. 253.

4. Ibid.

5. Robert Bianchi, *Unruly Corporatism, Associational Life in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 114.

6. *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-'Arabi li Sanat 1995* (The Arab Strategic Report for 1995) (Cairo: Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 1996), p. 434.

7. Ibid.

8. *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-'Arabi li Sanat 1992* (The Arab Strategic Report for 1992) (Cairo: Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 1993), p. 334.

the anti-government faction within the Lawyers Syndicate, described to this author how the Muslim Brothers rose to power in the Lawyers Syndicate. Al-'Asfur claimed that this was apparently the result of a deal between Al-Khawaja and the syndicate's members affiliated to both the Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Jihad (another Islamist group). In order to preserve his leadership in the syndicate and to continue to combat the anti-government faction made up primarily of liberal Wafdist, Al-Khawaja accepted a predominantly Islamic council.⁹ It is interesting to note that in none of the syndicates in which the takeover took place did the Muslim Brothers attempt to compete for the presidency of the syndicate. On the contrary, the Muslim Brothers consistently supported the elected presidents, who, in every case, were government candidates, in return for those candidates' mediation with the regime on the Brotherhood's behalf.¹⁰

Some analysts have argued that the reason behind the Muslim Brothers' decision to exert political control over the syndicates was in reaction to the government's harassment in the 1980s of Islamists in Egypt, and its imposition of various restrictions on them both inside and outside parliament. Those restrictions had prevented the Muslim Brotherhood from acting as an opposition party, and had caused a decline in its representation in parliament in the 1990s.¹¹ These analysts see an inverse relation between the rise in power of the Muslim Brothers within the syndicates and their declining representation in parliament.

This argument, however, is untenable because the Muslim Brothers started to rise to power in the syndicates (more specifically in the Doctors Syndicate) as early as 1984, and it was in the 1987 national legislative elections that they achieved their highest level of representation in parliament. This author argues, instead, that the Muslim Brotherhood's

TABLE 1
Islamists in the Egyptian Syndicates in 1995

Syndicate	Total Number of Council Members	Number of Members on the Islamist List
The Doctors Syndicate	23	20
The Engineers Syndicate	61	45
The Pharmacists Syndicate	25	17
The Scientists Syndicate	25	17
The Lawyers Syndicate	25	18

Source: Amani Qandil, *Al-Dawr al-Siyasi li Jama'at al-Masalih fi Misr, Dirasa li-Halat Niqabat al-Atiba'* (The Political Role of Interest Groups in Egypt: A Study of the State of the Doctors Syndicate) (Cairo: Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 1995), p. 34.

9. Interview with Usama 'Asfur, Cairo, April 1997.

10. Ahmad, *Al-Haraka al-Islamiyya fi Misr wa Qadiyya al-Tahawwul al-Dimuqrati*, p. 254.

11. See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 245.

alliance with political parties, as well as its involvement in the professional syndicates, are part of a strategy that targets the educated middle class. In contrast, the Muslim Brothers' work within the Islamic private voluntary organizations has focused primarily on reaching the poorer segments of Egyptian society.

The factors that facilitated the Muslim Brothers' takeover of the syndicates can be divided into three categories: those that relate to the movement itself, those that are the product of the legal and political system in which the syndicates function, and those that result from the internal weaknesses of the syndicates.

Factors Related to the Muslim Brotherhood

During the 1980s, a new generation ascended to leadership positions within the Muslim Brotherhood. Some of the new leaders included 'Assam al-'Aryan, 'Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh, Hilmi al-Jazzar, and Ibrahim al-Za'farani.¹² A decade earlier, these leaders had been politically active in student unions at the universities of Cairo, 'Ayn Shams and Alexandria.¹³ They had been among the founders of the Islamic student movement in Egypt in the 1970s, known as Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group), which later established a military wing. In 1978, when some of the young leaders of the Islamic Group were arrested, the Muslim Brotherhood's lawyers volunteered to defend them in exchange for their joining the Muslim Brotherhood. Some of the Islamic Group's leaders rejected the Muslim Brothers' offer because of the difference in agenda between the two groups. Others, however, were coopted, including such prominent leaders as Muhy al-Din Ahmad and Abu al-'Ala' al-Hadi from Upper Egypt, Al-'Aryan, Al-Jazzar and Abu al-Futuh from Cairo University, and Ahmad 'Umar and Al-Za'farani from Alexandria University.

It was only after President Anwar al-Sadat's assassination in 1981, however, and due to police harassment of the Islamic Group, that the members who had defected from the Islamic group openly affiliated themselves to the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁴ These younger Muslim Brother leaders (in their mid- and late-forties), with the political training and organizational skills they had acquired while working in the student unions, decided to play by the rules and challenge the regime at every level, including in parliament and in civil society institutions such as the professional syndicates.¹⁵

Factors Related to the Legal and Political System

Since the mid-1950s, the government has attempted to control the syndicates and has undermined their power and autonomy. The government's indirect control of the

12. *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-'Arabi li Sanat 1995*, pp. 432–33.

13. Ahmad, *Al-Haraka al-Islamiyya fi Misr wa Qadiyya al-Tahawwul al-Dimuqrati*, p. 246.

14. Hisham Mubarak, "What Does the Gama'a Islamiyya Want? An Interview with Tal'at Fu'ad Qasim," in Joel Beinin and Joe Stork, *Political Islam, Essays from Middle East Report* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 316–17.

15. Ahmad, *Al-Haraka al-Islamiyya fi Misr wa Qadiyya al-Tahawwul al-Dimuqrati*, p. 246.

syndicates can be seen in the syndicates' bylaws, which prohibit the members from involvement in any political activities. The state also employs other devices to exert control over syndicates. For example, during President Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir's era (1954–70), Law number 8 of 1958 was passed requiring all candidates running for elections in syndicates' councils to be members of the ruling party, the National Union, and its successor, the Arab Socialist Union.¹⁶ This law was applicable until 1977, when an amendment obliged candidates running for council membership to first obtain the approval for their candidacy from the state's General Attorney.

Under presidents Nasir and Sadat, the state allocated itself the right to dissolve syndicate councils. In March 1954, for example, Nasir dissolved the Lawyers Syndicate council and dismissed its officers because the Lawyers Syndicate had sided with General Muhammad Najib, in the Nasir-Najib confrontation, and had demanded that the army return to the barracks and that political parties and democracy be restored.¹⁷ That same year, and for the same reasons, the Journalists Syndicate was also dissolved.¹⁸ In 1971, Sadat ordered the dissolution of all syndicates in an attempt to break the power of the Arab Socialist Union and remove its members from syndicates' presidencies and councils.¹⁹ In 1981, because of the Lawyers Syndicate's increasing criticism of Sadat's foreign policy, and particularly of his peace treaty with Israel, Sadat cracked down on the syndicate and dissolved its council. Later, five of its council members, including its president, Al-Khawaja, were imprisoned.²⁰

The government has also intervened in syndicate elections, by officially endorsing particular candidates,²¹ by postponing syndicate elections beyond the official deadlines set by law,²² or by extending or cutting short council terms in office.²³ This happened frequently under Nasir and Sadat, and has continued under President Husni Mubarak.

Coercion against syndicates is yet another means used by the government to control syndicates. Both the Sadat and Mubarak regimes have used the police to prevent some syndicates, especially the Lawyers Syndicate, from holding symposia that were perceived by the regime as critical of state policies or promoting anti-government views. The police was also used by the state, especially in the case of the Lawyers Syndicate, to support government-endorsed candidates against other candidates, and to assist their reinstatement after they lost an election.

Threats to abolish a syndicate were also used by the Nasir and Sadat regimes to warn

16. *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-'Arabi li Sanat 1992*, p. 333.

17. Donald Reid, "The National Bar Association and Egyptian Politics, 1912–1954," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7, no. 1 (1974), p. 640.

18. Donald Reid, "The Rise of Professions and Professional Organizations in Modern Egypt," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16, (1974), p. 55.

19. Bianchi, *Unruly Corporatism, Associational Life in Twentieth-Century Egypt*, p. 93.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 102–104.

21. This occurred in the Lawyers Syndicate elections of November 1966 and in the Journalists Syndicate elections of March 1981. *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-'Arabi li Sanat 1992*, p. 333.

22. This occurred both in the Journalists Syndicate and the Engineers Syndicate at the beginning and end of the 1960s. *Ibid.*

23. For example, extension was enforced in the Lawyers Syndicate when the council's term was extended to four years, and in the Engineers Syndicate. Remission occurred in the Journalists Syndicate.

the members of politically active syndicates to become less active. In 1961, for example, Nasir threatened to abolish all professional syndicates during the meeting of the organizing committee for the National Conference of the People's Forces.²⁴ In 1979 and 1980, Sadat threatened to abolish the Journalists Syndicate and reduce its status to that of a private club.²⁵ These restrictive measures no doubt contributed to the weakness of syndicates and their inability to protect or even represent their members' interests, and had a negative impact on member affiliation and participation in syndicate council elections.

Another factor which has further undermined professional syndicates in Egypt has been the role of political parties in the syndicates. The general weakness of political parties, in the last three decades, and the parties' failure to mobilize support at the grassroots level led them to transfer their political activities to the syndicates. The parties brought with them their feuds, and turned the syndicates into pitched battlegrounds. In the late 1980s, for instance, competing factions of the Wafd Party fought their internal political battles within the Lawyers Syndicate.²⁶

Factors Related to the Internal Weaknesses of the Syndicates

Egyptian professional syndicates suffer from a number of serious problems. A major source of weakness inherent in most syndicates in Egypt, and one which facilitated the rise of the Muslim Brothers, has been the syndicates' internal divisions and factionalism. Power struggles have taken place in most syndicates between various factions that have even resorted to the courts to resolve their disputes. The Lawyers Syndicate, once an active professional association, became paralyzed by internal struggles between 1986 and 1990²⁷ that even prevented it from convening its general assembly. Factional struggles in the Commercial Employees Syndicate over the presidency lasted from 1983 to 1988 and reached the courts, where the dispute was finally resolved in 1989.²⁸

The basis for the formation of any syndicate is a commonality of interests and objectives. Egyptian syndicates, however, are not cohesive because they represent groups that have different interests. For example, the Lawyers Syndicate includes both public sector lawyers, and those who practice law privately, including university professors. Because each segment has different interests and problems, and is affiliated with different organizations, it is hard for the syndicate to cater to the demands of all its members. The same problem exists in the Commercial Employees Syndicate, which includes graduates of the departments of commerce, economics and political science at various universities, as well as graduates of higher institutes of commerce. The Teachers Syndicate fares no better, as its members include elementary school teachers, high school teachers, and

24. *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-'Arabi li Sanat 1992*, p. 333.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 331–33.

26. *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-'Arabi li Sanat 1989* (The Arab Strategic Report for 1989) (Cairo: Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 1990), p. 465.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

college professors.²⁹ The diversity in the social and professional basis of the syndicates not only contributes to internal divisions and factionalism within the syndicates, but also undermines the members' sense of belonging and their loyalty to their professional association.

Egyptian syndicates also suffer from lengthy and autocratic leadership. At a time when a major demand of civil society groups in Egypt is to amend the constitution and limit the number of times a head of state can run for office, the top leadership of all major syndicates remains unchanged. In the Lawyers Syndicate for example, Al-Khawaja's term in office as president of the syndicate extended from 1966–71, then from 1977–80, and from 1982–95. 'Uthman Ahmad 'Uthman assumed the Engineers Syndicate leadership from 1979 until 1991, while Salah Jalal's presidency of the Journalists Syndicate lasted from 1981–87. This longevity in office, which characterizes both the syndicates and the political parties in Egypt, demonstrates the failure of those institutions to rid themselves of the problems for which they criticize the regime so openly.

The problem of longevity in office is exacerbated by the authoritarian way in which the syndicates are managed. In the Lawyers Syndicate, all major decisions were taken by Al-Khawaja and his entourage without the participation of the syndicate's general assembly in the decision-making process.³⁰ In the Engineers Syndicate, major decisions were taken solely by 'Uthman, the syndicate's president, without the approval or the participation of the syndicate's council.³¹ The decision on where to invest syndicate money, for example, was taken by 'Uthman alone without the approval of the syndicate's council. The funds were invested in 16 projects of which 14 were losing money.³²

It is ironic that, while syndicates, political parties and other organizations criticize the government for being intolerant and repressive of opposition movements, the syndicates themselves are intolerant of internal criticism and reluctant to abide by syndicate rules. In the 1990s, for instance, it has become quite common for losing factions to reject election results and to defy the court orders to abide by the results.³³

The credibility and prestige of professional syndicates have been further eroded by charges of corruption, waste of funds and embezzlement that have been made against syndicate members and their leaders, including those in the Lawyers and Engineers

29. Ibid., p. 493.

30. Interview with Usama 'Asfur, Cairo, April 1997.

31. Amani Qandil, "Al-Jara'im al-Iqtisadiyya al-Mustahdatha fi al-Niqabat al-Mihaniyya" (The Economic Crimes that Take Place in the Professional Syndicates), paper presented at the National Center for Social and Political Studies, the 18th International Conference for Analytical Studies and Calculations and Social and Population Research (Cairo: Al-Shu'ubiyya al-Ijtima'iyya, 1992), pp. 19–20.

32. Ibid.

33. For example, in the Lawyers Syndicate, neither the 1989 elections results, nor the court order assigning a temporary committee to govern the syndicate was respected by the competing parties. *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-'Arabi li Sanat 1989*, p. 465. Also, in 1988, in an attempt to resolve the conflict in the Commercial Employees Syndicate between two candidates for the presidency, the council decided to reschedule elections and open them to all candidates, in order to resolve the problem democratically. However, one of the candidates managed to secure a court order denying the right of the syndicate's council to re-open the elections. *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-'Arabi li Sanat 1988*, p. 499.

Syndicates.³⁴ Falsification of syndicate election results has been another charge levied against the syndicates. In 1989, for example, the council of the Commercial Employees Syndicate had to nullify the elections of one of its affiliated syndicates in Alexandria, after it was proven that the results of the elections had been falsified.³⁵

These problems have had an adverse effect on the performance of the syndicates, and have been the principal cause for the low council election turnouts. Membership participation has not exceeded ten percent in most of these elections, including those in the highly politicized Lawyers and Journalists Syndicates, and is as low as three percent in some cases.³⁶ Furthermore, the large gap that exists between the number of enlisted members and those who have the right to vote (because they have paid their annual subscriptions), reflects not only the presence of an apathetic majority, but also the lack of trust of the members in their syndicates as associations that are promoting and protecting their interests. The existence of an apathetic majority and a highly-skilled and organized Muslim Brother minority within the syndicates has facilitated the latter's successful takeover of many of the syndicates' top leadership positions.

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN THE SYNDICATES

A major criterion for assessing the performance of the Muslim Brotherhood within the syndicates is the active participation of its members in council elections. Of the five syndicates (the Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Pharmacists, and Scientists Syndicates) in which the Muslim Brothers have a controlling majority of the governing councils, the Doctors Syndicate is perhaps one of the best examples to use to examine the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the syndicates elections. It was the first syndicate in which the Muslim Brotherhood assumed control of the council (in 1984), and hence provides the longest time frame for an in-depth assessment of the leadership role played by the Muslim Brothers. It is also considered by Islamists a model of good management to be emulated.³⁷

Table 2 shows the electoral turnout in the council elections of the Doctors Syndicate between 1982 and 1992. The table indicates an increase in the number of participants in the syndicate's council elections since 1984, the year the Muslim Brothers took control of the council. An analysis of the electoral turnout in the Doctors Syndicate demonstrates that since 1984, and except for the years 1990 and 1992, the proportion of the participants in council elections to the total number of syndicate members never exceeded 15 percent (and was as low as ten percent in 1984). This low syndicate election turnout confirms the

34. For the corruption in the Engineers Syndicate, see Qandil, "Al-Jara'im al-Iqtisadiyya al-Mustahdatha fi al-Niqabat al-Mihaniyya." Information about the corruption in the Lawyers Syndicate was given to the author in an interview with Usama 'Asfur, Cairo, April 1997.

35. *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-'Arabi li Sanat 1989*, p. 467.

36. Amani Qandil, "Al-Jama'at al-Mihaniyya wa al-Musharaka al-Siyasiyya" (Professional Groups and Political Participation), a report presented at the Symposium for Political Participation in Egypt (Cairo: The Arab Center for Research, 1992), p. 24.

37. Amani Qandil, "Taqqiyim A'da' al-Islamiyyin fi al-Niqabat al-Mihaniyya" (Evaluation of the Islamist Members in the Professional Syndicates), a report presented to the 5th Franco-Egyptian Symposium entitled "The Phenomenon of Political Violence" (Cairo: The Research Center for Political Studies, University of Cairo, 1993), p. 28.

TABLE 2
The Electoral Turnout in the Doctors Syndicate

Year	Number of Syndicate Members	Number with the Right to Vote	Number Participating In Elections	Proportion of Participants to Those Who Have the Right to Vote (%)	Proportion of Participants to the Total Number of Members (%)*
1982	50,000	20,000	2,000	10	4
1984	60,000	30,000	6,000	20	10
1986	75,000	40,000	11,000	27.5	14.6
1988	90,000	50,000	12,000	24	13
1990	100,000	65,000	21,000	32	21
1992	110,000	70,000	30,000	43	27

Source: Qandil, "Taqqiyim A'da' al-Islamiyyin fi al-Niqabat al-Mihaniyya," p. 28. *These percentages were calculated by the author.

existence of an apathetic majority. The increase to 21 percent of the proportion of participants in the council's elections in 1990 and to 27 percent in 1992 is not necessarily an indication of the success of the Muslim Brothers in mobilizing part of the apathetic majority, as some analysts have argued.³⁸ The increase in the proportion of those who actually voted can be attributed in large measure to the Ministry of Health, which paid the membership dues of the pro-government members in the Doctors Syndicate to encourage them to vote in order to counter the influence of the Muslim Brothers.³⁹ It is worth noting that the same strategy of membership mobilization was used by the Muslim Brothers in the Lawyers Syndicate, in the 1992 elections, when they attempted to entice anti-government lawyers to vote for them by offering to pay their dues.

At a time when the Muslim Brotherhood was criticizing both the government and other secular political forces in the syndicates for falsifying the results of a number of syndicate council elections, they were doing the same thing. In fact, the Muslim Brothers appear to have outwitted the government in this area. Before the 1995 council elections of the Engineers Syndicate, for example, the government exerted a huge effort to mobilize its supporters. Those supporters included 18,000 engineers who worked in the public sector, 13,000 engineers who were army officers and whose dues were paid by the armed forces, and a number of engineers who worked for the ministries of irrigation, industry and housing, and whose dues were paid by their respective ministries.⁴⁰ Thus, the total number of government supporters whose dues had been paid by the state and hence had the right to vote, reached 60,000.

However, the Muslim Brothers committee that was assigned to supervise the elections presented the judicial committee with the names of only 70,000 engineers out of

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., p. 26.

40. *Ruz al-Yusuf* (Cairo), 20 February 1995.

a total of 220,000 who had paid their annual dues and who, therefore, had the right to vote. The omitted names belonged to the opponents of the Muslim Brothers, many of whom were government employees.⁴¹ Several complaints were submitted to the judicial committee by those engineers who had paid their dues but had failed to find their names on the voting list. As a result, the judicial committee postponed the elections seven times.⁴² Meanwhile the Muslim Brothers committee that was supervising the elections stubbornly insisted that its list was correct, since it was the committee's computer which had prepared the list.⁴³ This made other members in the syndicate joke that the computer was now expected to provide false results since it was a "Bearded Computer,"⁴⁴ a reference to the beards worn by the Islamists.

In the 1993 council elections of the affiliated Lawyers Syndicate of the Giza governorate, the syndicate's council treasurer, the council's assistant secretary and a former member of the syndicate's council, submitted a complaint to the syndicate's general council asserting that the Muslim Brothers had omitted from the voting lists some of the names of lawyers who had paid their annual dues, and had added the names of 369 lawyers who did not reside or even work in Giza. As a result, the head of the judiciary committee decided to postpone the elections.⁴⁵

The media reported that during the 1990 council elections of the Doctors Syndicate, the Muslim Brothers had tried to prevent Christian doctors from voting. They had done so directly by not issuing voter cards to Christians, and indirectly by holding the elections on Good Friday.⁴⁶ In the affiliated Doctors Syndicate council elections in the Daqahliyya governorate in 1992, the press reported that the names of some Christian doctors had been taken off the voters lists by the Muslim Brothers.⁴⁷ The same thing was reported to have taken place in the 1995 council elections of the Engineers Syndicate, which the Muslim Brotherhood controlled.⁴⁸

Some Muslim Brothers have claimed that change in the council leadership of syndicates under their control has taken place more frequently than in other syndicates. These changes, however, have been confined to members of the Muslim Brotherhood,⁴⁹ and have taken place in an undemocratic way.

Supporters of the Muslim Brothers expected that after they took control of the syndicates councils, unity and cohesion would replace the dissention and fragmentation that had characterized these syndicates during the previous four decades. In fact, nothing changed much: struggles and factionalization continued within the syndicates, this time between the Muslim Brothers and the secular forces in the syndicates. The formation of an independent Association of Egypt's Doctors is the result of the ongoing struggle

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. *Al-Ahali* (Cairo), 22 December 1993.

46. Ahmad, *Al-Harakat al-Islamiyya fi Misr wa Qadiyya al-Tahawwul al-Dimuqrati*, p. 264.

47. *Al-Ahali*, 15 March 1995.

48. Ibid.

49. Qandil, "Taqqyim A'da' al-Islamiyyin fi al-Niqabat al-Mihaniyya."

between a group of secular doctors and the Muslim Brothers within the Doctors Syndicate.⁵⁰ In 1994, the Lawyers Syndicate was torn apart by two sets of conflict which pitted, in one case, some Muslim Brothers against ten members of the council who represented various political perspectives, and, in another case, two factions of the Muslim Brotherhood against each other. One of these factions was led by Sayf al-Banna the syndicate's secretary, and the second was led by Mukhtar Nuh, the syndicate's treasurer.⁵¹ In other words, dissension in the syndicates continues, and has divided even the Muslim Brothers.

Aware of the fact that the corruption of some syndicates' leaders, exposed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, had had a negative impact on syndicate membership and on the performance of syndicates, the Muslim Brotherhood launched its electoral campaign on an anti-corruption platform. Its slogan in the Doctors Syndicate council elections, for instance, was "Vote For The Cleansed Hands."⁵² In practice, however, the Muslim Brothers do not appear to have behaved any better than their predecessors. In the Engineers Syndicate, the Central Auditing Agency⁵³ discovered in 1994 that nearly \$400,000 from the budget could not be accounted for and that additional sums had been spent on activities unrelated to syndicate work. The Muslim Brothers had spent \$120,000 on religious conferences and trips abroad, and moved \$60,000 from the pension fund to the council fund to pay for day to day syndicate expenses.⁵⁴ Thirty thousand dollars had been disbursed as expense allowances to the members of the syndicate council, and \$260,000 had been spent on advertising and propaganda for council members. The result of the investigation into all these transgressions was a court ruling in February 1995, that placed the Engineers Syndicate under judiciary supervision.⁵⁵

In the Lawyers Syndicate, the Central Auditing Agency reported the loss of two sums, \$90,000 and \$140,000, which represented the dues paid by the syndicate members for the pilgrimage and which should have been deposited in the syndicate's account, but which were missing.⁵⁶ In the Pharmacists Syndicate, the Muslim Brothers spent \$10,000 of the syndicate's money to provide Brotherhood members with accommodations and cost of living expenses, and \$88,000 for issuing their own newspaper.⁵⁷

These are but some examples extracted from a long list of charges which show that corruption within the syndicates continued even after the Muslim Brothers took over the leadership of syndicate councils, and claimed they would put an end to those practices.

50. *Al-Ahali*, 23 August 1995.

51. *Al-Wasat* (Cairo), 26 December 1994.

52. They used this slogan in both syndicate and parliamentary elections. It was meant to show that the Muslim Brothers were honest as opposed to the corrupted secular trend.

53. The Central Auditing Agency is an independent official agency that inspects any allegation of corruption, whether inside or outside government institutions.

54. *Al-Mussawwar* (Cairo), 17 March 1995. Figures were converted from Egyptian pounds by the author.

55. *Ibid.* Figures were converted from Egyptian pounds by the author.

56. *Al-Mussawwar*, 3 March 1995. Figures were converted from Egyptian pounds by the author.

57. *Ibid.* Figures were converted from Egyptian pounds by the author.

CONCLUSION

Professional syndicates in Egypt have been weakened by government intervention, and by their own practices, which have reflected negatively on syndicate performance. As a result, membership apathy and weak syndicate loyalty have prevailed. The weakness of the syndicates enabled a well-organized and skilled minority of Muslim Brothers within the syndicates to take over the council leadership of the most prominent syndicates. The Muslim Brothers, however, continued the practices of their predecessors, and hence their performance was no better than that of the forces they criticized. The result of the takeover by the Muslim Brothers of the council leadership of some syndicates has been an increase in the vulnerability of those syndicates vis-à-vis the government, and has given the state the opportunity to tighten even further its grip on the institutions of civil society.

