



Reforming the Police Force: How and Why?

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This paper is a result of a closed round table discussion; it expresses the personal opinion of its writers and does not necessarily express the opinion of the Arab Forum for Alternatives or Global Partners Governance

Police brutality was on the main issues that the 25th of January Revolution shed light on, and reforming the police force would be accomplishing on the main demands of the revolution. Not only would it greatly improve the security situation in such a detrimental time, but it would also change the institutional and cultural framework of the police, fostering a sense of respect for constitutional values and human rights. Reforming a police force is a gradual, multi-layered and time-consuming process. Some states have even opted to simply remove the entire existing force and corresponding institutions and reconstruct them. One can also follow the polish example, where the force was divided into 3 groups: a) the first groups are the ones who are holding on to the old traditions and values. These individuals are usually few, high-ranking officials that can be put to retirements, b) the second group is composed of lower ranking officials that are open to change and can be trained according. The third group, is one that rarely exists in transitioning system, but must be established, is to be composed of legal experts, who advice and train the force. The author goes into a quick historical overview of the police force, such as the force's refusal to surrender to the British forces in Ismailiya and their militarization in 1968 to combat the student movement. She suggests structural changes, such as limiting the riot police forces, a decentralization of the units, and separating administrative police work from fieldwork. She also points out that trained civilians could take over administrative police work, such as the issuing of passports or national IDs, thus enabling the force to focus on more pressing security issues. One could also reform the police force, by regularly publicizing the on-going missions and strategies to promote as much cooperation and support from the public as possible. Incentives could be placed to motivate officers to rehabilitate and guide felons towards legal activities and businesses. A system for reporting police brutality must be set-up to monitor and evaluate the performance of the force. Not only must a comprehensive curriculum that includes human rights and values be taught at police academies, but the working conditions of the officers must also be improved. Fostering the human element of this reformation process will guarantee its success in later stages.

Finally, the parliament must regulate and supervise the changes in the system as well as legislate new laws to reform the force. A regulatory body must be set up to constantly monitor the force, and the Supreme Council of the Police Force could be expanded to include civilians. Continuous and close monitoring of the Interior Ministry for budget deficits and corruption as well as binding them to a yearly plan will facilitate the entire reform process.