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Interview: Abdel Hamid Bakoush

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# Libya's Qaddafi fails in assassination attempt against exiled leader

*For the second time in a year, Libyan terrorists have deployed into Egypt in an attempt to assassinate former Libyan Prime Minister Abdel Hamid Bakoush. While the Nov. 16, 1984 attempt had involved a small group in a precisely targeted operation, the more recent Nov. 6 operation was a military, guerrilla-style assault, aimed at killing not only Bakoush, but also 10 other Libyan exiles with him, notably Mohammed Youssef Magarieff, leader of the National Front for the Salvation of Libya. Members of Magarieff's organization took part in a May 1984 military operation against Qaddafi's Tripoli headquarters. In sum, Qaddafi planned a massacre, born of revenge against the total isolation of his regime within Northern Africa, and increasing domestic dissent, notably within his own army—a massacre planned on the assumption that Libya need not fear retaliation. Indeed, Qaddafi's recent visit to Moscow and the large-scale military deal he signed there, underlined that, minor diplomatic quarrels aside, Qaddafi is an indispensable Soviet ally.*

*As early as Nov. 2, as the Libyan assassins reached Alexandria, they came under constant surveillance of Egyptian police, who recorded and filmed their movements. Egyptian intelligence revealed, in fact, that five Libyans had penetrated Egypt in July through the old smugglers' routes crossing the Egyptian Western Desert.*

*As Mr. Bakoush points out in the interview below, the timing of such an operation now, raises the question of the real aim of public outlets such as the Washington Post's Nov. 3 "exposé" of a so-called CIA-sponsored plot against Qaddafi. Did it aim at merely embarrassing the U.S. administration, as well as the governments of Algeria and Egypt, which were described as "accomplices" of the CIA operation? Or, in addition, was it aimed at once more saving Qaddafi and boosting his image internationally by sabotaging the openly growing relationship between Algeria, Egypt, and Tunisia? Either way, the policy is coherent with the Washington Post's support for the Colombian M-19 terrorists, which are also, according to the Nov. 8 London Times, financed by Qaddafi.*

*The following interview was conducted by EIR's Mideast Editor Thierry Lalevée.*

**EIR:** What happened exactly?

**Bakoush:** In late October, I was warned by the Egyptian



security services that some Libyans had infiltrated Egypt and were preparing an operation either against me or somebody else.

I have a friend who has an up-country villa in Kingy-Marriott some 20 km south of Alexandria, where we are generally meeting. As it came out, the Libyans had full information on these meetings, through one of their local agents who followed my activities, and wherever I met somebody. Last Wednesday, Nov. 6, I was in Alexandria and went to this house for lunch. It is a villa which has high walls. I could see a police car, and one which was hidden. I thought these were the normal Egyptian security precautions, which they take from time to time. Around 15:00 p.m. we heard a lot of shooting, which lasted approximately 15 minutes. We waited for it to die down, and then we went out. We saw that there were some three Libyans wounded on the ground and the sight of a battlefield with a lot of smoke, machine guns thrown on the ground. Four Libyans were dragged by the

police to their car. I recognized one of them as a man named Farahat, who used to be one of my prison guards when I was in jail in 1974-75.

**EIR:** What will be the consequences for Egyptian-Libyan relations?

**Bakoush:** The relations between the two countries are bad enough. I cannot ask the Egyptians for more harsh reactions. I do not want to interfere in their own political decisions. I am very happy with the protection they are giving me.

Libya does whatever it wants, because it knows there will be no reaction. That goes for the Arab countries, but for the rest of the world, too.

**EIR:** Won't this operation strengthen cooperation between Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt against Libya?

**Bakoush:** I must say that it is impossible right now to have full North African cooperation. There is a severe crisis between Algeria and Morocco over the Western Sahara. As long as this is not resolved, regional cooperation is impossible, and I do not see a resolution of this problem in the near future. There is also a pact of unity between Libya and Morocco, though Libya never stopped working against Morocco's King Hassan. Libya is also opposed to Algeria, because it thinks that Algiers wants to control North Africa, and Tripoli thinks it is best for such a role. Libya is also committed to rule Tunisia through its own agents in the post-Bourguiba period. It thinks it can also rule Egypt if the present government is overthrown.

**EIR:** what do you make, then, of the Nov. 3 article in the *Washington Post*?

**Bakoush:** I do not have any proof, but the scenario outlined in the article sounds very silly. Why would the United States have to think of such bizarre and unachievable plans against Libya? It is known that there are easier and more achievable means to deal with Qaddafi. As an observer, I can only say that the CIA is building Qaddafi's image, describing him as a powerful enemy of the influence of the United States in the region. Qaddafi made much use of that, in his own propaganda.

**EIR:** why do you say the CIA is building Qaddafi's image?

**Bakoush:** Well, whatever the *Washington Post* wrote, the CIA didn't deny, and President Reagan ordered an investigation into the leak, but didn't deny the plans either. For such a powerful country as the United States to attempt to get rid of Qaddafi in this way is ridiculous; such plans only serve Qaddafi.

One wonders why the United States cannot use legal and more acceptable procedures such as an economic boycott. Qaddafi has no importance, and has no qualifications other than his money, with which he pays agents and terrorists worldwide. Boycott Libyan crude oil and then Qaddafi will

be paralyzed, and will be left only with his own words. If the United States is really committed to fight Qaddafi, then it should organize such a boycott, and then it will receive more support than it does by planning such conspiracies.

**EIR:** What will happen, regionally, then?

**Bakoush:** Qaddafi cannot plan, but is always able to exploit any situation; if there is some trouble, he can always make it worse. That will be the case with Tunisia, and the political crisis which will follow the death of President Bourguiba. He will make it worse and it will be very bad. He is doing the same in Algeria and in Egypt; he is financing and sending weapons to several groups in Lebanon, and is preventing a return to democracy in the Sudan. Qaddafi is like the devil sitting on the fence, exploiting any trouble, whenever it occurs.

**EIR:** On another matter, how do you see the role of Egypt in the region, and the perspective of peace?

**Bakoush:** Egypt has practically no role. As far as Arab governments are concerned, they are officially keeping aloof from Egypt, either under the pretext of excuses, such as Egypt's commitment to Camp David, or because of rivalries. Many countries are happy about the absence of Egypt from the Arab political scene; however small a country is, it may appear bigger, if the really strong and bigger countries are out. However, despite that, Egypt has a lot of influence on the thinking, general policies, and culture of the rest of the region.

There is little hope for the region. The only hope is the PLO-Jordan agreement. Cairo has put all its weight behind it, and is trying to force the United States to recognize it, too. If the United States does, then there is a chance for peace. The Arab extremists like Syria and Libya are committed to the destruction of the peace process. If they succeed, there will never be peace.

Syria and Libya have no real economic and financial weight. However, they succeed in scaring the other countries. Hence, right now you have a line-up of countries like Egypt, Jordan, and the PLO fighting for peace, against Syria and Libya. All the other countries are sitting on the side, they do not dare to join Syria or Libya, but they do not have the courage, either, to join the side of Wisdom.

**EIR:** What do you expect from the U.S.-Soviet negotiations in Geneva, and how do you see Soviet policy in the region?

**Bakoush:** I am not optimistic. I do not think there is any basis for an understanding between the two superpowers on what to do, and I do not see them fostering peace in the Middle East. The Soviets have been able to exploit the situation to the best of their advantage recently. They are succeeding where everybody else failed. It is not a matter of the region being given to them; they are taking it. That's against the interests of the West and of the Arab nations.