



## EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

Since the beginning of October, followers of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood have taken to the streets once again. In violent clashes with security forces, they are protesting against the ousting of elected President Mohammed Mursi in June, who is being held by the army at an undisclosed location. The majority of the leading figures of the Muslim Brotherhood have since been jailed. This means that the most important actor of political Islam in Northern Africa has been driven underground, as occurred previously under former ruler Hosni Mubarak. By contrast, Islamic forces are still in power in other countries of the region. Morocco, for instance, is being governed by an Islamist party, albeit under the prerogative of the King, as Helmut Reifeld explains in this issue.

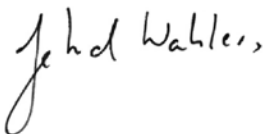
Apart from a few encouraging exceptions the situation is as follows: In Egypt as well as in other countries of the region, expectations associated with the “Arab Spring” have not been met to date. Democratic elections gave power to Islamist parties, whose political convictions do not necessarily match the ideas that had been advocated by the predominantly young protestors: freedom and justice, participation and pluralism. Instead, they have been concerned with shoring up their power – in conjunction with the goal of never having to yield to a different democratically elected actor in the future and convinced that they alone would be able to create the state that is God’s will.

In many cases, the setting up of democratically elected parties of political Islam in countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa that had previously been governed by authoritarian secular powers has raised the question as to whether these may be natural partners of those German political parties that have a “C” in their name. There is, however, one crucial difference here, and it is not the difference between Christianity and Islam but the difference

between religious parties and parties whose platform is based on religious values. Today, Christian Democrats base their political principles and action on the Christian view of humankind, thus advocating dignity of the individual, freedom of opinion and equality of all people. However, they do not regard the Holy Book as an instruction manual for political action that must be implemented down to the letter.

In discussions with representatives of political Islam, we hear statements asserting that they will support pluralism, tolerance and democracy. But experience has taught us that we should judge Islamic political actors by their deeds and not by their words. Anyone who advocates the above-mentioned principles must answer the question as to whether they support the freedom to exercise one's religion with a clear affirmative. People who practice the Christian faith – including converts to Christianity – must be comprehensively protected in Muslim countries. Unfortunately, the opposite is frequently the case, and the events of the "Arab Spring" have not brought about any great change in this respect.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung runs numerous projects in Germany and abroad to encourage the involvement of Muslims in civil society. At the same time, we collaborate with experts in Germany and around the world who are examining the topic of "Islam and Democracy". We are keen to enter into dialogue, to include dialogue with actors of political Islam. However, the acid test remains the stance the other party takes with respect to democracy and the rule of law, and, not least, the protection of religious minorities.



Dr. Gerhard Wahlers  
Deputy Secretary General

gerhard.wahlers@kas.de