

IN THE SHADOW OF THE 'ARAB SPRING': THE HISTORICAL PIVOTAL ROLE OF EGYPT IN LIBERATING AND PRESERVING ISLAMICJERUSALEM

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ABSTRACT: *During the last three years, a number of Arab countries have witnessed mass uprisings "Arab Spring" resulted in the fall of some authoritarian regimes in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen. The fall of these regimes paved the way for many Islamic movements, such as the Muslim Brothers and others to rise on the scene, and win the presidential election, as is the case in Egypt and parliamentary elections, as happened with other countries to varying degrees. These changes, especially in Egypt recalled the historical pivotal role of Egypt in liberating and preserving Islamicjerusalem. It may be historically argued that the relationship between Islamicjerusalem and Egypt was established immediately after the Muslim conquests of both regions during the reign of Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab. This relationship has developed dramatically with the passage of time on various levels. The purpose of this article is to present a critical analysis of the historical role of Egypt in liberating, controlling and maintaining Islamicjerusalem. It will also endeavour to answer the following questions: how did Egypt play a crucial role in liberating and preserving Islamicjerusalem? How could Egypt resume its vital role towards Islamicjerusalem, especially with the recent developments following the "Arab Spring"?*

KEYWORDS: *Arab Spring, Muslim Brothers, Islamicjerusalem Egypt, Crusaders, Jaffa treaty, Camp David Accord.*

Introduction

It was not long after the Muslims took Islamicjerusalem in the year 16AH/637CE, that Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab sent in 20AH¹/639CE (Ibn Khayat, 1993: 100) a Muslim army under the leadership of 'Amr Ibn al-'Aas to conquer Egypt. Before these

conquests, both Islamic Jerusalem and Egypt were under the rule of the Byzantine state. The strategic plan to conquer Egypt did not occur in a vacuum, but was inspired by many factors. It is historically proven that Egypt was the gate to Islamic Jerusalem; therefore, whoever possessed Egypt possessed Islamic Jerusalem. This is evident when one considers that even during the late Crusade campaigns, i.e., the fourth, fifth and seventh, the idea of invading and controlling Egypt first, was an inevitable step to occupy Islamic Jerusalem.

Shortly after Egypt was conquered, the link between Islamic Jerusalem and Egypt was established and strengthened. This relationship developed rapidly in many dimensions, including the political, economic, cultural and religious. For almost 1400 years, rulers, governors and sultans of Egypt had paid great attention to Islamic Jerusalem and made great efforts to save, protect and to liberate it from enemies. Historical literature provides us with several examples from the policies of the Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids, Ayyubids, and the Mamluk sultans and others, where Islamic Jerusalem witnessed sustained growth in all aspects.

However, on 17 September 1978, the official (not grassroots) relationship between Egypt and Islamic Jerusalem was diminished when the late Egyptian president, Anwar al-Sadat, signed the Camp David accord with Israel. In this accord, Egypt recognised Israel -including the western part of Jerusalem- as a state. By this recognition, Egypt surrendered the important role it used to play in protecting and preserving Islamic Jerusalem. The unhealthy attitude of the rulers of Egypt did not stop with the assassination of al-Sadat in 1981. On the contrary, it continued when the ousted president of Egypt, Mohammad Hosni Mubarak, assumed the presidency. During the reign of Mubarak (1981-2011), Egyptian relations with Israel were developed and dramatically strengthened on one hand, while on the other, the role of Egypt in protecting and preserving Islamic Jerusalem, I would argue, was deliberately diminished and eventually vanished.

On 11 February 2011, Mubarak was ousted from his post under the pressure of the Egyptian revolt, which erupted on the 25 January 2011. With the end of Mubarak and his regime, a new phase in the history of Egypt began. It is interesting that the Muslim Brothers who, for many years were subject to repression and exclusion by the Egyptian governments, and were prevented from playing any substantial role in the political arena in Egypt, have won a sweeping victory in the country's parliamentary and *shura* council elections, and later on, won the presidency of the country. This victory was not confined only for the Muslim Brothers. The *Salafi* movement has also claimed a good number of seats in both the parliamentary and *shura* council elections.

Interestingly, According to El-Awaisi (1998: 9) for the Muslim Brothers, Palestine and Islamicjerusalem had special significance that distinguished them from other Muslim areas. He went further to say that, for Muslim Brothers, Palestine and Islamicjerusalem are part of the Islamic belief, and therefore, it is not merely the property of the Palestinians or the Arabs, but they are for all Muslims who must participate in defending them (El-Awaisi 1998:10). This statement of El-Awaisi² and the recent developments in Egypt encouraged me to conduct this research.

This article aims to provide a critical analysis of the historical role of Egypt in liberating, controlling and maintaining Islamicjerusalem. It will attempt to answer the following questions: From a historical perspective, how did Egypt play an essential role in liberating and preserving Islamicjerusalem? How could Egypt resume its vital role towards Islamicjerusalem, especially with the recent developments following the "Arab Spring"?. To be able to answer the above questions, I will be focusing on a number of historical incidents from different historical periods.

Egypt's Role in the History of Islamicjerusalem: Early Stages

It seems that the significance of Egypt towards Islamicjerusalem and its vital role was clearly demonstrated from the very early stage of the Muslim history - during the Umayyad period, and more

particularly, in the reign of the fifth Umayyad Caliph, Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan (d.86AH/705CE). It was reported by Mujir al-Din al-Hanbali (1966: vol. 1, 272), that when Caliph Abd al-Malik decided to build the Dome of the Rock to shelter the Muslims from the elements, he assigned the land-revenue (*kharaj*) of Egypt for seven years for that purpose. He also appointed the two well-known engineers, Raja' Ibn Hayweh and Yazid Ibn Salam, to administer the construction and ordered them to spend generously on it. When the project was complete, a hundred thousand dinars remained from its budget. The Caliph offered the money as a reward to his two engineers, but they declined, indicating that they had already been generously rewarded. Abd al-Malik then ordered the gold coins to be melted and cast on the dome's exterior.

The exclusive role of Egyptian revenue in the construction of this important building within the enclave of al-Aqsa Mosque was an important link that strengthened the relationship between Egypt and IslamicJerusalem. It is true that, as Shurrah (1994:367) argues, Caliph Abd al-Malik was, at that time, in control of only Egypt and historical Syria; and since the Arab Peninsula and Iraq were under the control of Abdullah Ibn al-Zubair, with whom he was in conflict, there were few other sources of revenue available at that time for the project. But this only underscores the fact that, though Caliph Abd al-Malik could have used the resources from Egypt in his conflict with Ibn al-Zubair, he used them, instead, for building the Dome of the Rock. This raises the question why, under those circumstances, Caliph Abd al-Malik would prioritise the construction of the Dome so highly? Al-Ratrout (2004: 455-462) has thoroughly discussed his motives in this regard, noting that that their true nature has always been debated among both Muslims and non-Muslim scholars. Regardless of how this stands, it remains that despite the political crisis, Abd al-Malik saw the Dome of the Rock as an important enough priority to dedicate seven years of the Egyptian revenue to its construction. This constitutes a major link in the history of the two regions.

Egypt, Islamic Jerusalem and the Crusades

As a demonstration of the importance of Egypt to Islamic Jerusalem, and how strong is the link between the two regions, a notion had prevailed in Europe after the third Crusade (1189-1192CE), that the best course of action would be to attack and occupy Egypt before attacking and occupying Jerusalem, and that there would be no benefit in occupying Jerusalem as long as Egypt was strong. Therefore, the first step towards implementing this notion took place during the fourth Crusade (1202-1204CE), which was originally projected to seize Islamic Jerusalem from Muslims through invading Egypt. In fact, the intended plan of the fourth Crusade was not achieved, as in April 1204CE, the Crusaders instead of invading Egypt, they attacked and occupied Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire (Phillips, 2010:190-196). Some years later, the above notion was asserted during the fourth Lateran Council which was held in 1215CE in the Lateran Palace in Rome, and was convoked by Pope Innocent III. (Phillips, 2010:216). Among the purposes of the council was the recovery of Jerusalem and "to eliminate from the Holy Land the filth of the pagans" (Phillips, 2010:166). Consequently, as an implementation of the decisions of the above council, the fifth Crusade (1217-1221CE) was launched where Egypt was the target (Da'kur, 2006: 189). Interestingly, it seems that the Muslim historian Ibn Wasil (d. 697AH/1298CE) was well-aware of the Crusaders' new trend. He clearly stated that the wise men amongst the Crusaders insisted on occupying Egypt as a first step in occupying Jerusalem. He quoted the Crusaders saying that "Salah al-Din was able to seize cities and towns, and to wrest Jerusalem and the Syrian coast from the Crusaders only after he controlled Egypt. Therefore, for the Crusaders' great benefit, Egypt must be under their control, so they can seize Jerusalem and other places easily" (Ibn Wasil, 1957: vol.3, 256)

From the above discussion, it is evident to see that the Crusaders were trying to break the link between Islamic Jerusalem and Egypt, by putting the latter under their control or at least neutralise it, and thus, the Muslims would not be able to hold Islamic Jerusalem for very long. Although, the efforts of the Crusaders achieved nothing

but failure during the fifth (1217-1221CE) and the Seventh (1248-1254CE) Crusades, the above notion confirmed how successful the strategies adopted and implemented by the Crusaders, which helped them to continue to occupy Islamic Jerusalem for 88 years but Salah al-Din was able to liberate it. Some of these strategies for example were, isolating Islamic Jerusalem from its neighbouring Muslim entities, maintaining the manifestations of disunity among Muslims, neutralising Egypt and some other Muslims entities. These strategies were mentioned by Jubran and al-'Amady (2000: 26-31) in their book. Finally, it is clear that Salah al-Din greatly benefited from some of the Crusaders' strategies during his process to liberate Islamic Jerusalem. He adopted many of them, reverted them to his advantage and eventually liberated Islamic Jerusalem (Jubran and al-'Amady, 2000: 90-91).

Contrasting the Past with the Present

The situation of the Muslim world on the eve of the first Crusade (1095-1099CE) and the situation of the Muslim world on the eve of the Zionist occupation of Palestine and Islamic Jerusalem (1948, 1967) I would argue, is almost the same. After the fall of Islamic Jerusalem at the hands of the Crusades, the Muslims were aware that the weaknesses characterising their society at the time - the divisions and poor administration - had made the fall virtually inevitable. For example, Muslim countries were subject to the rule of two conflicting states, namely the Abbasid caliphate based in Baghdad and the Fatimid caliphate in Cairo. Within these two caliphates were numerous states and emirates headed by leaders loyal either to the Fatimid state in Egypt or to the Abbasid one in Baghdad; a sense of weakness, disintegration and disunity was their one binding characteristic. (Gibb, 1968: 85-87) The Saljuq and Fatimid empires had both disintegrated, leaving disorientation and anarchy in their wake. Years of on-going fighting between these entities had by the end of the century left the Muslim world weak, fragmented and without any strong leaders or states. Unfortunately, the Muslim and the Arab states in the 20th century mirrored the above situations of the Muslims on the eve of the first Crusade. Therefore, the liberation of Islamic Jerusalem and other areas was not possible until Salah al-Din was able to resolve

these weakening factors in the Muslim and the Arab world. This strategy of Salah al-Din resulted in the unity between the two most important parts of the Muslim world, namely Egypt and Syria, and finally, the liberation of Islamic Jerusalem. Of course, Salah al-Din's remedy did not happen overnight, it took him almost 12 years (1174-1186 CE) for this task to be accomplished (Da'kur, 2006: 71-106).

Egypt as the Gate to Islamic Jerusalem

Islamic Jerusalem occupied a very distinctive position in the mind of Salah al-Din (Glubb 1999: 49-69). There is no doubt that he saw the liberation of the region as a priority, and between his appointment as Wazir of Egypt in 1169 CE (Da'kur 2006: 38) and his eventual departure to recover Islamic Jerusalem from the Crusaders 1187 CE, he spent time consolidating the Muslim armies and uniting Muslim territory, as well as reminding Muslims of the importance of this holy region. In a speech to his fellow Muslims, reported by 'Imad al-Din al-Asfahani (Salah al-Din's Secretary), Salah al-Din said:

If God blesses us by enabling us to drive His enemies out of Islamic Jerusalem, how fortunate and happy we are going to be! For the enemy has controlled Islamic Jerusalem for ninety-one years, during which time God did not accept any deeds from us. At the same time, the zeal of the Muslim rulers to deliver it faded away. Time passed, and so did many generations, while the crusaders succeeded in rooting themselves strongly there ... (al-Asfahani, n.d.,: 39)

Thus, recovering Islamic Jerusalem was Salah al-Din's ultimate target. Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad, heard Salah al-Din say: "When God enabled me to gain Egypt, I realised that he willed the conquest of the coast (Syrian coast), because he had put the idea in my mind." (Ibn Shaddad, 2000: 26) It seems that Salah al-Din considered the recovery of Islamic Jerusalem and the Syrian coast, as well as his rule over Egypt, to be a divine command that he was obliged to fulfil. These two objectives were not new; they were the common ambition of all Muslims, and he had grown up with them. But given his position, Salah al-Din felt more responsible

than other Muslims for achieving these goals because he had the power to do so.

After the death of Nur al-Din in Damascus in 569 AH /May 1174 CE, leaving a 12-year-old son with no institutional procedure for succession, the political situation was very dangerous; the Sultanate could not be governed by a young child. A struggle for succession between its most powerful commanders threatened the stability of the region and plunged al-Sham into a civil war that destroyed all that Nur al-Din had achieved. Salah al-Din received many invitations from commanders, religious leaders and Muslim thinkers asking him to come to al-Sham to resolve the situation. 'Imad al-Din al-Asfahani wrote informing him of the situation in al-Sham, the danger that this posed to the Muslim nation, and urging him to intervene to prevent the country being fragmented by power struggles. Five months after the death of Nur al-Din, Salah al-Din set off for al-Sham. According to Ibn Shaddad (2001: 49-51):

When Salah al-Din received confirmation of Nur al-Din's death, and as he was aware that his son was a child unable to shoulder the burdens of kingship and incapable of taking on the defence of the lands against God's enemies, he made his preparation to march to Syria, since it was the cornerstone of Muslim territory ... Salah al-Din arrived in Syria demanding that he himself should take on al-Salih's guardianship, direct his affairs and set straight what had gone awry. Salah al-Din reached Damascus, without having renounced allegiance, and entered the city after a peaceful handover on Tuesday, the last day of Rabi' al-Thani 570 AH (27 November 1174 CE), and he took over the citadel.

It seems that Salah al-Din was certain that what he did was an essential step towards recovering IslamicJerusalem. He realised that uniting Muslim ranks and saving Nur al-Din's kingdom would allow the Crusaders further south to be effectively resisted, and would ensure that he would not be attacked from the rear.

The Link between Egypt and Islamic Jerusalem after Salah al-Din

On Friday, 27 *Rajab*, 583AH /2 October 1187CE and after almost 88 years of occupation, Sultan Salah al-Din liberated the walled city of Islamic Jerusalem from the Crusaders (al-'Asali, 1978: 130). In 1193 CE, Salah al-Din died feeling content that his aim in liberating Islamic Jerusalem has been achieved and was sure that his successors would safeguard his achievements. Moreover, He was confident that the extreme efforts carried out by him and other Muslims to liberate Islamic Jerusalem would not be lost and that Islamic Jerusalem will not be ruled again except by the Muslims. Unfortunately, these hopes and wishes of Salah al-Din were achieved for a short period and Islamic Jerusalem had once again ruled by the Crusaders. This happened when the Ayyubid sultan al-Kamil and Emperor Frederick II had signed the Jaffa treaty in 1229 CE in which Islamic Jerusalem was handed over to the Crusaders to be ruled by them for the next ten years, five months and 40 days (al-Khatib, 2001: 288-289).

Both Muslim and non-Muslim historical literature report different reasons that persuaded al-Kamil to give Islamic Jerusalem back to the Crusaders, at a time where he was relatively in a strong position (Jubran and al-'Amady, 2000: 159-162). Moreover, these sources report the negative reactions by both Muslims as well as non-Muslims towards al-Kamil and Frederick agreement and its consequences (Al-Sallabi, 2009: 297-299). Moreover, a number of historians considered al-Kamil's act as a sign of underestimation of the important strategic role of Islamic Jerusalem to the Ayyubid state. Little (1990: 181) for example, claimed that "But once safely back in Muslim hands, interest in Jerusalem again dropped; 'the simple fact soon emerged that Jerusalem was not essential to the security of an empire based in Egypt or Syria". On the same line, Hillenbrand (2006:221) argued that: "the fact of the matter was that strategically Jerusalem was not crucial to Ayyubid ruler whose power base was in Egypt or Syria. Jerusalem always had its political price so long as the Franks still desired to possess it. However many individual Ayyubid rulers may have embellished

the city of Jerusalem with new monuments and pious foundations, in the end this counted for less political expediency".

Contrary to the above claims of most Muslim and non-Muslim historians, I argue that al-Kamil's step to hand over Islamic Jerusalem was part of a strategy to protect Islamic Jerusalem itself rather than an underestimation of its status in the hearts and conscience of Muslims. In other words, al-Kamil in this step was succeeded in derails the Crusaders from going to Egypt which was the target of the Crusaders as a key to Islamic Jerusalem. Interestingly, Little (1990: 186) mentioned an important statement an advise from Sultan Najm al-Din Ayyub to his son Turanshah on the eve of the seventh Crusade, which reads "if you an able to contain the God - forsaken enemy and they march out of Damietta against you [in Cairo] and, if you lack power to cope with them and help fails to reach you in time, and they demand from you the cost [of Palestine] and Bayt al-Maqdis, give these places to them without delay on condition that they have no foothold in Egypt". This advice of Sultan Najm al-Din shows clearly that Egypt must not fall in the hands of the Crusades. This is because if Muslims have lost Egypt, they will lose Islamic Jerusalem. It seems that in order to understand more about the reasons which persuaded al-Kamil to surrender Islamic Jerusalem to the Crusaders, there is a need to have brief background of the circumstances.

Historical Background

Shortly before his death, Sultan Salah al-Din divided the territories of his kingdom between his relatives, the most important and strategic locations were assigned to some of his sons, while the less important were given to his brothers and to the rest of his sons (Jubran and al-'Amady, 2000: 134-135) Historians commented on Salah al-Din's act as a way of protecting the state by entrusting his sons on the important areas including Islamic Jerusalem, which they were in a way part of the process of its liberation. Moreover, we read that shortly after the death of Sultan quarrel over Salah al-Din's territory and sovereignty led to internal frictions with the Ayyubid family (Little, 1990: 209) and the unity and loyalty Salah

al-Din had been able to nourish in the Ayyubids diminished with his death.

His relatives including his sons and brothers waged wars against each other, and each of them tried to gain as many territories as they could from the other relatives (Jubran and al-'Amady, 2000: 136-206). This in fact, created a deep fracture amongst the heirs of Salah al-Din, weakening the state and paved the way for the Crusaders to return to Islamicjerusalem, especially when at some stages, some of Salah al-Din's hires approached the Crusaders for help against other members of the Ayyubids. Sultan al-Kamil was a clear example of that, he offered Islamicjerusalem to Emperor Frederick II in return for the latter help and support against his brother, al-Mu'azzam Issa, when al-Mu'azzam sought the help of Khawarizm against al-Kamil (al-Khatib, 2001:271-279). Shortly before the arrival of the Emperor Frederick II to Acre, al-Mu'azzam Issa has died in 624AH/1226 CE. Logically speaking, there was no need for the Emperor Frederick to come to the east as the threat al-Mu'azzam had ended with his death. Nevertheless, al-Kamil, went further and concluded the Jaffa treaty in 1229CE (Phillips, 2009: 234) and submitted Islamicjerusalem to Emperor Frederick. The question that arises here, was al-Kamil aware of the long process and the hard steps that were taken by his uncle Salah al-Din to bring Islamicjerusalem back to the Muslim hands?

No doubt that al-Kamil was fully aware of the importance of Islamicjerusalem to Muslims, Also, he was aware of the process to liberate it from the Crusaders. Moreover he was sure that, the ostensible purpose of the late Crusades campaigns were to facilitate the capture of the Holy City by attacking and occupying the seat of Muslim power in Egypt. Unfortunately, with this dispute between al-Kamil and his brothers, and this spirit of disunity between Muslims, Egypt will sooner or later fall to the hands of any crusader campaign. I argue that choosing Emperor Frederick in particular to serve this task and in return the Emperor will receive Islamicjerusalem as a reward, was not out of vacuum, but was inspired by many factors:

1. The good attitude of Frederick towards Muslims and Arabs, as he has grown up within them in Sicily. On top of that, he was fluent in Arabic and aware of Arab and Muslim culture. This is evident when Frederick entered the al-Aqsa enclave and showed his respect to Muslim rituals (Phillips, 2009: 235).
2. The attitude of Frederick towards the Pope and the decision of the Pope to excommunicate the Emperor for his indirect rejection to participate in the Fifth Crusade So, al-Kamil was trying to exploit this dispute between the two men.
3. By concluding the Jaffa treaty, al-Kamil was able to delay any future Crusader campaigns for more than 10 years. These 10 years were enough to help him to build up a strong army. This was later proved when the army of al-Kamil's son (Najm al-Din) defeated the army of the Seventh Crusade and captured the leader of this campaign, King Louis IX (al-Sallabi, 2009: 267-268).

Egypt and IslamicJerusalem in the Mamluks Era

From the first day of their rule, the Mamluks approached IslamicJerusalem with care and consideration. The Mamluks made substantial contributions to IslamicJerusalem by building and maintaining mosques convents Sufi centres, schools, hospitals and hospices. It has been argued that because the Mamluks had at one time been slaves, religious factors played an important part in strengthening their power ('Ali, 1986:26). In Islam, the caliph, sultan or ruler of a Muslim state had to be of Qurayshite descent and a free man (al-Mawardi, 1996:21) but the Mamluks met neither criterion. The problem was solved when, in the revival of the Abbasid caliphate in 659 AH/ 1261CE , the caliph delegated the authority to Sultan Baybars.('Ashur 1983:88) Even so, the Mamluks still wanted to incorporate religion into their rule and considered themselves protectors of Islam and the guardians of its safety. One way to implement this was to take utmost care of the most holy Muslim places in Makkah, Madinah and, in particular, IslamicJerusalem ('Ashur, 1983:89). Consequently, during the Mamluks' reign, IslamicJerusalem enjoyed sustained growth and development in all religious, intellectual, economic and political aspects of life (Little, 1990:191), with the large number of educational, religious and political institutions built and sustained

in Islamic Jerusalem during their period a testament to their commitment

Many books and articles discussed the position of Islamic Jerusalem under the Mamluks, and how the latter cared about Islamic Jerusalem. As an example, 'Ali al-Sayyid 'Ali, wrote an interesting book on this matter in which he presented a clear picture of the policies of the Mamluks towards Islamic Jerusalem.

Egypt, Islamic Jerusalem and the "Arab Spring"

The rise of Islamist movements during the Arab Spring, which has been witnessed in a group of Arab countries³ in the last three years, and continues in some others⁴, represents an important milestone in the history of the Middle East. As a result, a number of authoritarian regimes have collapsed and in many of these countries major Islamist movements have triumphed in parliamentary elections. These developments set a precedent that has not been seen in the Arab world in recent history. I argue that this development, particularly in Egypt, is an opportunity for Egypt to resume its important role towards Islamic Jerusalem. The Muslim Brothers are now ruling Egypt, and as mentioned earlier, they assumed this position after free and democratic elections. At the same time, Egypt still has an accord with Israel. Egypt could now benefit from both the victory of the Islamists and their peace accord with Israel. This can be done through several steps.

1. Egypt needs to take steps to modify the articles of the Camp David accord, so it can be involved with the issue of Palestine and Islamic Jerusalem.
2. Egypt must put pressure on Israel to stop its measures against the Muslim Holy places in Islamic Jerusalem.
3. Egypt must lead the Muslim and the Arab Countries in the International Organisations to assert the right of Arabs and Muslims in Islamic Jerusalem.
4. Egypt must collaborate with Islamist-led governments in the Arab and Muslim countries to affirm that Islamic Jerusalem is not only a Palestinian, but Muslim concern, and that Muslims around the world have a duty to protect Islamic Jerusalem.

I argue that if Egypt starts to implement the above steps, the position of IslamicJerusalem will be better, and Israel will reconsider before taking any action toward IslamicJerusalem. One might argue that the political and economic situation of Egypt, and the position of the Muslim Brothers, is not stable enough to be able to start implementing the aforementioned actions. In fact, this argument is acceptable for many, as the situation in Egypt, since the revolution, is moving from bad to worse, and Muslim Brothers are encountering with a massive wave of opposition from liberal and secular Egyptians parties, in addition to biased Egypt media outlets. On the contrary, I would like to argue that Muslim Brothers could gain massive support if they put the issue of IslamicJerusalem on the top of their agenda and priorities. This is because, for most Egyptians, IslamicJerusalem has a very distinctive place in their hearts and minds, and that the majority of Egyptians never agreed with the normalisation of relations with Israel. Therefore, if the Egyptian leadership (Muslim Brothers) demonstrated this care towards the issue of IslamicJerusalem, the political situation will be better, and people will turn to their side and support them in this matter.

Conclusion

To sum up, the "Arab spring" provides an opportunity for Egypt and many other Arab countries to reclaim their natural positions as a defenders, protectors and liberators of IslamicJerusalem. It is clear from the above discussion that, IslamicJerusalem was lost to the Crusaders and the Zionists respectively as a result of the disunity between Arabs and Muslims, and that IslamicJerusalem was liberated by Salah al-Din when he eliminated all factors of disunity between Muslims. I argue that with the Islamists in power in many Arab countries, the notion of unity between Arab and Muslims- which is a step to liberate IslamicJerusalem- will not be a strange as it was before the "Arab spring". Finally, I would like to assert that if Egypt starts to implement the steps I listed above, the issue of Palestine in general and IslamicJerusalem in particular will be better.

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- 1 According to al-Baladhuri, the Muslim campaigns to conquer Egypt started on the year 19AH. See Al-Baladhuri, Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad Ibn Yahya (1987) *Futuh al-Buldan* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Ma'arif). p. 298.
 - 2 For more information about the Muslim Brothers and their attitudes towards Palestine and Islamicjerusalem, see El-Awaisi, Abd al-Fattah (1998). *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question 1928-1947* (London-New York: Tauris Academic Studies). pp. 21-101.
 - 3 Such as Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.
 - 4 Syria and Iraq