**Cautious suspense in Israel amid Egyptian president’s power play**

*Following Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi’s decision to dismiss top military brass, Israeli officials brace to see how this will affect their relationship with Egypt.*

By Israel Hayom/Exclusive to JNS.org

Israel was cautiously monitoring its relationship with Egypt following Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi’s stunning decision to dismiss Cairo’s two top generals and quash a military order that had curbed the new leader’s powers.

The Jewish state was reportedly surprised by the decision to dismiss Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and Minister of Defence Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, and Chief of Staff Sami Enan, and is watching the evolving situation with some concern. Morsi stunned the world on Sunday, when he announced that he would be replacing them—in essence dismissing the most powerful figures of the post-Mubarak era in Egypt.

A senior government source told *Israel Radio* on Monday morning that the incoming heads of the Egyptian military are well-aware of the importance of cooperation with Israel over the situation in the Sinai Peninsula and along the border between Israel and Egypt. However, the source added, that it was as yet unclear whether they fully appreciated the vital necessity of military cooperation between the two countries. Morsi’s current position of no direct communication with Israel makes it very difficult to establish any sort of dialogue and cooperation, and also makes it more difficult to formally assess the plans of the new Egyptian government.

In an interview with *Army Radio* on Monday, former IDF Deputy Chief of General Staff Dan Harel said that “This is a belated result of the elections and is a legitimate move … The question is whether this move is good for Israel. We are waking up to a Middle East that is a lot less convenient for us. The strategic environment around us is very complicated … We should find a way to cooperate with the largest Arab country in the area.”

Former Israeli Ambassador to Egypt Zvi Mazel commented that we may see a brief period of crisis in Israel’s relations with Egypt. He added that support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is actually lower than the support it managed to secure ahead of the elections. The organization would therefore have to invest efforts in the coming months to lay down secure foundations for its leadership in Egypt.

MK Benjamin Ben-Eliezer (Labor), who had close links to ousted Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and his regime, told Israel Radio on Monday that he had not been surprised by Morsi's decision. He said it was an internal decision and one that should have been expected. The only thing that should interest Israel is whether he continues to respect the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, he added. He also said that Israel should carefully follow what is happening in Egypt, particularly the Islamic camp, and warned that no one should delude themselves that after 80 years, the Muslim Brotherhood will abandon its roots. Ben-Eliezer praised Morsi’s on-going campaign in Sinai following last week’s attack on the Israel-Egypt border that left 16 Egyptian soldiers and police officers dead. He said that Sinai “has become a state within a state—a terror state within Egypt.”

Former Mossad chief and Labor Party MK Danny Yatom told Israel Radio that he believed Morsi’s decision was an attempt to sever the final link to the old, secular regime, adding that time will tell how it will influence Egypt's relationship with Israel and the west, in particular the United States. He thought security cooperation with Israel would continue as changes had not yet been made at the operational level, but Israel would now have to try and build and strengthen ties with people it hadn't had contact with up until today.

Morsi’s decision appeared to please the Hamas government in Gaza. Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh telephoned the incoming defence minister, Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Sissi to congratulate him on his appointment. He promised Sissi that Hamas would continue to help maintain stability and peace in Egypt.