

Egypt: Anonymous poster campaign backing intelligence chief Omar Suleiman to take over the presidency

By [Global Research](#)

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CAIRO (Agencies) Egyptian police are investigating an anonymous poster campaign backing intelligence chief Omar Suleiman to take over the presidency from veteran incumbent Hosni Mubarak, an officer said on Saturday.

The posters, which showed the reticent spy chief waving, said he was the “real alternative” to lead the country, which is due to go to the polls for a presidential election next year.

The poster campaign in the capital mimicked a similar campaign last month in support of Mubarak’s son and presumed preferred successor Gamal, carried out by a previously unknown group called the “Popular Campaign to Support Gamal Mubarak.”

The police officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the posters in support of Suleiman had been removed. Journalists at two independent newspapers said authorities told them not to publish reports about the poster campaign.

Talk that Gamal Mubarak, 46, could succeed his father has gathered momentum since the president had surgery in March in Germany and because of a poster campaign backing him in 2011.

Officials deny any role in the campaign backing Gamal.

But the pro-Suleiman campaign aimed to derail support for the president’s son and sought to show divisions existed between the army and his business allies.

In a statement issued online but which was later withdrawn the pro-Suleiman anonymous activists appealed to Egypt’s “honourable army” to save the country from “the shame and disgrace of succession which the president’s son seeks”.

“The way to deal with the succession project of Gamal Mubarak and his business clout, is for Omar Suleiman to lead a transitional government,” they said.

Analysts have long thought Suleiman, who is in his mid-70s and known to be a close family friend of the Mubaraks, was a likely successor. But he has never expressed any wish to run for president.

Mubarak, 82 and in power since 1981, has not said if he will seek a sixth term in 2011. Both he and his son deny succession plans.

The activists splashed Cairo's downtown and the upscale Maadi district with posters of the general wearing sunglasses and saluting with his right arm. A poster slogan said: "Omar Suleiman the real alternative as president of the republic".

Launched on Thursday, the campaign hit the streets while the the president, his son, and Suleiman, were in Washington for the launching of direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians.

"A significant time to put these posters up to signal a new direction from the public while Mubarak is outside Egypt," said political analyst Diaa Rashwan, adding that the campaign is likely to grab Washington's attention while Suleiman is there.

Loyal to the MubaraksBorn in 1936, Suleiman served in the military before becoming Egypt's spy chief in 1993. With considerable influence over the country's internal affairs, he is seen as a challenge the army could mount to prevent a father-son succession.

The independent newspaper al-Masry al-Youm had carried a story online about the Suleiman campaign but the report was then taken down from the newspaper's website without explanation.

"There is a censorship ban on all papers not to publish anything on the Omar Suleiman campaign," said Hisham Qassem, a former publisher of al Masry al Youm.

He told Reuters the paper had printed 30,000 copies with a report on the Suleiman campaign that were confiscated late on Thursday by state security, adding that no paper was allowed to publish on the issue. Security sources had no comment.

"Omar Suleiman is in all likelihood Egypt's next president after Hosni Mubarak," Qassem said. "He is the most suitable figure to rule from the military."

Ranked as one of the world's most powerful spies, Suleiman seldom appears in the media and analysts say the censorship move is meant to stem the campaign, signalling his loyalty to Mubarak and his family.

"There is no rivalry between Suleiman and Mubarak's son. Suleiman will only assume power at the behest of Mubarak," columnist Fahmi Huweidi said, adding that Suleiman was seen as one of Mubarak's most trusted officials.

Suleiman is not a member of the ruling National Democratic Party. He is credited with saving Mubarak's life from an assassination attempt by Islamists in 1995 in Addis Abbaba.

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