

## **PARTICIPATING IN A REFERENDUM IS A NATIONAL DUTY**

There is a political term that the world has agreed to designate as the “silent majority”, which is the majority of people, who do not participate with their opinion, except on daily matters and on the nature of their work.

This does not apply only to participation in elections, but we see it in all walks of life, such as students’ movements and trades union, where only a distinguished minority displays positive participation, while the greater majority remains silent. Participation in elections is not much different.

However, this gives a better chance to new and small parties to attract this wide silent majority, a matter that is far easier than trying to change viewpoints of members of opponent parties.

When some parties insinuate that they are refraining from participating in a referendum, this becomes a grave matter, as they would be joining the “silent majority”, instead of attracting the latter to become actively participating members.

This is a case of swimming upstream, against the current of progress and democracy and the current of opposing opinions.

Undoubtedly, the decision to refrain from participating in a referendum would lead to grave consequences in the future, such as losing the confidence of the people in a small party, on which high hopes were tied.

The “silent majority” in developed countries ranges between 25 – 40%. In Germany, the electoral participation in choosing the German Counsellor

reached 70%. Hence, the “silent majority” was barely 30%. This figure reached 40% in the last USA presidential referendum. As for Third World countries, the rate of participation falls down to 50% in average. However, the Egyptians have always displayed much higher and stronger voting rates on vital or strategic matters.

Strangely enough, some parties are still submitting new proposals, now that we are so close to the referendum date, and after the People’s Assembly and the Shura Council have heard, discussed and decided on all opinions and proposals.

When we were small, we were taught to answer our exams in the right place and within the fixed time.

A lawyer in court has a time to lay down his case. As for questions & answers, inquiries, discussions and alternatives, all this has a time, too.

More astonishing still is the attempt of the minority to impose its opinion on the majority, where its own opinions are debatable and controversial.

It would have been far better for these opposing parties to abide by the rules of democracy and to go and vote in negation, instead of joining the “silent majority” and losing a long-sought right of forming an official party and winning internal and external advocates.

President Hosni Mubarak has settled the matter, when he exempted all parties nominating a presidential candidate from obtaining any number of votes in favour of the candidate.

This way, he left the door wide open for all parties to enter into competition, postponing the application of the system for future times. In doing so, he

deprived the opposing voices of any political reference or legitimacy in adopting a rejecting or boycotting stance.

Finally, a truthful word needs to be said: Egypt is embarking on a vast reform movement at all political, economic and social levels.

What we are witnessing now from constitutional amendments is an introduction to this comprehensive and well-studied reform movement that will extend to all walks of life in Egypt.

Now, more than ever, we need to concert our efforts, unite our visions and strengthen our resolutions, in order not to be hampered by useless and futile voices that add nothing concrete to our plan. Now, we are in need of every conscious and heedful opinion, especially those coming from the Opposition.

**Final Word:**

In Egypt, we consider ((Al Akhbar)) a national independent non-partisan newspaper. This should be specifically noted in its title, because – by all standards – it is not affiliated to the NDP that has its own independent paper.