

### Egypt Program Summary

While popular participation in Egypt's democratic transition is crucial, years of political stagnation has left Egyptian political forces and civil society unprepared for large-scale participation in a multi-party democracy. To support Egypt's transition, the International Republican Institute (IRI) works with Egyptians to strengthen their knowledge of political party development, campaign strategy and voter education and advocacy campaigns.

Regrettably, the December 29, 2011 raids on IRI's offices and other democracy and human rights organizations by Egyptian security forces have halted the Institute's assistance efforts. Not only is IRI currently unable to help Egyptian political and civic activists, but some of the Institute's staff were convicted of charges deemed politically motivated by the international policing agency Interpol. IRI's application for registration with the government of Egypt has been pending since 2006 and was updated in January 2012 at the request of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

IRI has worked in Egypt since 2005, first conducting an assessment of the presidential election in 2005, and has since trained thousands of Egyptians in topics such as political party building, campaign management, use of new media, advocacy campaign training, voter education and survey research. In addition to its training program, IRI also supports exchange visits for Egyptians to see firsthand working models of political participation and the role of civil society in elections. In 2010, IRI launched an online university that makes training materials and other information available to Egyptians.

IRI's work in the country was at an apex on the eve of the December 29 raids. The Institute had just concluded an extensive campaign management training program in preparation for the 2011 parliamentary elections. Working alongside Egyptian civil society organizations and political parties, IRI undertook a massive training effort centered on voter education and party election monitors training to help ensure the success and credibility of Egypt's elections. IRI was also experiencing a period of unparalleled partnership with the government of Egypt after the Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited and officially sanctioned IRI to witness the people's assembly elections. Puzzlingly, the raids took place on the eve of the final phase of the largely successful elections which IRI had certified as an encouraging step in the country's historic transition to democracy.

### Political Party and Candidate Strengthening

In anticipation of Egypt's 2011-2012 people's assembly and presidential election cycle, IRI's assistance strategy concentrated on supporting the organizational and electoral development of new and existing political parties in Egypt through a program of technical training for party members. IRI conducted trainings on a wide range of topics including campaign strategy, use of new media, public opinion research, platform development, grassroots campaigning, coalition-building and fundraising. Campaign management and poll watcher training were also offered to prepare parties for effective participation in electoral events. IRI does not provide monetary or material support to political parties in Egypt.

### Civil Society Strengthening

Applying experience and knowledge gained from civil society programs in other transition countries, IRI conducted advocacy and voter education trainings to develop the long-term capacity of Egyptian civil society to participate in democratic processes. IRI's training modules included issue identification, campaign management, coalition building and the role of civil society as oversight and citizen advocates.

IRI trainings placed an emphasis on the use of new media tools in organizational development and activities.

## Survey Research

An important feature of many transitioning countries is the lack of reliable information on public opinion regarding political issues and public priorities. The lack of information creates an environment in which elected officials and political parties risk being out of touch with the needs of the population and calls into question their responsiveness to constituents. To address this dilemma, IRI provided Egyptian political parties and candidates with polling and focus group data so they could be aware of public opinion, identify key issues and develop campaign messages and platforms. In the post-election environment, IRI planned to conduct survey research to inform effective issue-based advocacy by civil society to hold newly elected leaders accountable to constituent needs and priorities.

## Election Assessment

Elections alone do not make a democracy. However, no country can be a democracy without transparent, open, competitive elections in which individual's votes are secret. To ensure elections meet these standards, IRI trains local election monitors, conducts pre-election assessments, monitors elections and publishes reports on election outcomes in an effort to promote free and fair election processes that voters perceive as credible. IRI sought to support pivotal people's assembly and presidential elections in Egypt by gaining a complete perspective of electoral processes that constitute a central component of the country's political transition. At the invitation of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IRI observed Egypt's 2011-2012 people's assembly elections despite the raids that occurred shortly before the third phase of voting. Supported by a long-term monitoring effort, which assessed the pre-election environment, IRI fielded international short-term delegations to observe all three phases of the parliamentary poll.

