



The Arab Republic of Egypt

Capital: Cairo (Al-Qahirah)

Population: 80,085,862

Total Area: 1,001,450 km²

Currency: 1\$ = £5.9 (EGP) (2011)

National Holiday: July 23, National Day

Language(s): Arabic

Government: On February 11, 2011, long-time Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak was ousted by the Egyptian military in response to mass popular demonstrations against his rule. Since then Egypt has been ruled by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) through an interim civilian government led by Prime Minister Essam Sharaf. The SCAF and government are committed to a democratic transition that should produce new parliamentary elections in the fall of 2011, a new Egyptian constitution following those elections and the election of a new civilian president by early 2012.

Canadian exports to Egypt: \$628,347,639

Canadian imports from Egypt: \$298,172,953

Egyptian direct investment in Canada: \$700 million (approx.)

Canadian direct investment in Egypt: \$2 billion (approx.)

Egypt is a major Canadian market in terms of hydrocarbons, petrochemicals, mineral resources, and information and communications technologies. Canadian investments in Egypt total more than \$2 billion, while Egypt's largest telecommunications operator, Orascom, has invested close to \$1 billion in Canada. Our balance of trade is largely positive. Egyptian immigrants to Canada, who are generally well-educated, create a very strong link. Egypt did a good job of pulling itself out of the 2008–2009 financial crisis. Canada's limited foreign aid here is concentrated on the entrepreneurship of small and medium-sized enterprises, especially those run by women.

On the bilateral front, Canada and Egypt maintain a strategic dialogue that the new interim regime has suggested continuing in due course. The main subjects of debate are the Middle East peace process and, more recently, the impact of the Arab Spring on regional security. We often have frank discussions on multilateral issues. We hope that past discords will fade away

as a more inspired Egyptian foreign policy takes shape, under a more democratic regime that is aware of the obligations of the new international governance, including respect for human rights.

Obviously, a lot of things have changed here since the protests of January 25, but perhaps not as much as the young revolutionists might have hoped. Despite the waves of demonstrations that took place in Tahrir Square and the population's initial infatuation, apart from Mubarak's departure, daily life in Cairo is simply more disorganized than before. The police force is absent or more inefficient than before, a military regime in sheep's clothing whose officers are thinking only of returning to their barracks and not of the rocky economy they are leaving behind. The business community is worried because the systematic corruption it profited from is slowly being brought to light. It is not surprising, then, that foreign investment is basically non-existent here. However, what is happening in Egypt is fundamental, and the success or failure of this revolution has colossal importance for the future of countries in the region and stability in the world.

The recent events in Egypt have left me with lasting memories. It has not been easy. I was flabbergasted when I learned one morning that the first plane for the evacuation of Canadians would arrive in just six hours. That did not leave us with much time to prepare for arrivals and departures at the airport, never mind the real risks in terms of security faced by all members of my team, who showed incredible courage. I can tell you, late-night run-ins with groups of sinister-looking people armed with clubs, knives and even scimitars makes your foot hit the accelerator pretty hard.

However, I still have hope for the future of Egypt, which should draw on the spirit of its past to move beyond this crossroads—and return to its former glory.

Ferry de Kerckhove is Canada's ambassador to Egypt.