

Demonstrators rally in Providence for democracy in Egypt / Video

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By Kate BramsonJournal Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — Chanting for democracy in Egypt, Mohamed Abdelrahman joined at least 70 others in front of the Rhode Island State House Sunday afternoon, seeking support from a steady stream of passing cars.

The former president of the Rhode Island Council for Muslim Advancement, Abdelrahman, 63, said he left his country 33 years ago to escape both abject poverty and the emergency rule established after the assassination of President Anwar Sadat. Under that rule, he said, the government detains anyone it wants without judicial action.

As drivers beeped car horns, a large sign outlined the Egyptian people's demands: 1. Mubarak out; 2. transition government; 3. clean constitution [a reference, Abdelrahman said, to insertions Mubarak added to meet his needs]; 4. no emergency rule; 5. free elections.

Those in Providence were rallying to be sure the Egyptians get those demands, Abdelrahman said. And they want the U.S. government "to stand with the people of Egypt," he said, but President Obama and other political leaders here are not doing so "fully and explicitly and clearly."

Abdelrahman knew many in the crowd and pointed out people from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Bosnia, as well as American supporters. Nearby, leading the crowd in chants with a megaphone, was Hesham Aboshady, 38, who lived 12 years in Egypt and whose parents live there.

"I want the people of Egypt to be free, free of this tyrant of 30 years," Aboshady said.

Abdelrahman has spoken by telephone every day to his brothers in Cairo — except Saturday night, he said, that link was gone. He worries the government has now cut off telephone service, after cutting off Internet service late last month.

Asked what he misses of the country he left behind, Abdelrahman pulled out a tissue to wipe away tears: “I love the dust of Egypt, of those standing there for their freedom, because they’ll bring dignity and pride to the whole Egyptian people and all oppressed people in the world. You love every piece of dust there, but you had to leave.”

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