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TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION."



## **February 6, 2011 Transcript**

**GUESTS: PRINCE HASSAN OF JORDAN**

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## TRANSCRIPT

BOB SCHIEFFER: Today on FACE THE NATION, the crisis in Egypt, Day 13. Mubarak still refuses to step down. We'll get the latest from our correspondents on the scene and we'll talk with Jordan's Prince Hassan about concerns the unrest will spread to other parts of the region.

We'll also get analysis from experts in Washington.

It's all ahead on FACE THE NATION.

ANNOUNCER: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now from Washington, Bob Schieffer.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And good morning again. The latest from Cairo, and this could be one of the more significant turns in the crisis. Egypt's Vice President Omar Suleiman met with opposition groups just a while ago. And reports from the media say he has endorsed a plan to allow freedom of the press to release those who have been jailed since the protests began, and to lift the so-called emergency laws when security permits. These are the laws basically that give the government dictatorial powers. We're also told he agreed to set up committees to discuss new constitutional amendments to open up Egypt's electoral process.

We want to go to Cairo to get the latest on all of this from our correspondents who've been covering this from the beginning, Elizabeth Palmer, Mark Strassmann and Terry McCarthy. To Elizabeth first.

Liz, what do you make of these reports that the vice president has now told these opposition groups that he met with this morning, that they are making plans to restore freedom of the press, to release the demonstrators who have been arrested and to repeal the so-called emergency laws which give Hosni Mu-- Mubarak dictatorial powers.

ELIZABETH PALMER: Well, these are clearly substantial talks and the-- the signs are good. The opposition has already said they were positive and that the government has promised to come up with a road map for going forward. But make no mistake, the demonstrators--tens, hundreds of thousands of them are not going to go anywhere until they see the end of Hosni Mubarak. At this stage that may be a symbolic victory but it's going to be necessary to get the people to go home.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And-- and, what about the mood of these demonstrators that are coming into the square this morning, because I understand a lot of people are coming back.

ELIZABETH PALMER: It's extraordinary. This resolve-- once negotiations got underway yesterday, I thought maybe the steam would go out of this thing, because, in effect, this uprising has already won important concessions. Unthinkable concessions even a week ago. However after the workday ended, late afternoon, down they came again. They are not giving up. And as I speak to you, the line up is stretching all the way back over the bridge and the party mood is back, its fiesta time down there.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Do you think, Mark Strassmann that the army will try to clear out these protestors? What sense do you have of-- of what the government is going to do now?

MARK STRASSMANN: Bob, yesterday, that seem like a possibility. They-- they were tightening the ring around the-- the square. The tanks, the security check points became choke points, almost restricting the access of people to a large degree. Today though, I mean look at the crowd behind you, behind me here. It's-- I mean, it's a hundred thousands of people, tens of thousands at least. And-- and-- and people just keep on coming and the army is letting them in. I think for now the army has just decided to back off and let this happen. And I think they like all of us recognize that it's one thing to have ten thousand diehards, day after day come to the square. But with two weeks in, on a workday, you can get a hundred thousand people to crowd the square like this, this is a movement that has staying power and has touched a nerve in this country.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And Terry McCarthy, I know you are just back. You've been across the river there talking to human rights people. What do they think the situation is now? Do you-- do they see some of the brutality that we saw before? Do they think we've seen the end of that or are they still pretty wary about all of this?

TERRY MCCARTHY: No, Bob. I have to say that they're actually extremely worried. Their concern is that what's happening now is the army is doing a cosmetic transition of power from Mubarak to Suleiman. But the security apparatus for which Egypt is renowned throughout the Middle East--Egypt's tortures, Egypt's prisons are renowned throughout the Middle East of their cruelty. And they're afraid that these very brutal methods of repression will stay in place. There's great concern that once the eyes of the media moves away from Cairo that there will be another wave of mass arrests. We know that they've been watching on goers, the activists very closely. And so the human rights watchers are extremely concerned. We ourselves had an experience. A-- a friend of mine was caught just outside where he was staying, just two nights ago by some vigilantes and was pretty viciously beaten up. They were trying to throw him into a truck and-- and he screamed and shouted and finally one person called some policemen who managed to just prise him away just in time. But-- but it's important to remember that that atmosphere of fear is still very close to the surface here. Bob.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And-- and Mark Strassmann, the demonstrators or the leaders, whoever they are, seem to be calling for another million people. Do you think they'll reach that goal? And what will those people do once they get there?

MARK STRASSMANN: It's hard to say whether they'll meet their goal, but clearly, this is their representation of-- of just how many folks out there want to respond. There's supposed to be two more of those million-strong marches this week. And once they get there, you're going to see what you see behind me. At least, that's the plan as far as we know it. This is a sort of a combination of a religious revival, political convention, and-- and-- and block party. And-- and they stand around, they hear the chants for change. They sing. They lock hands. It's all very peaceful. But it's also very passionate. And the passion is what is driving this thing. And so, when they put out the call for more people to come on down, the people are turning out.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Liz Palmer, what do you sense is going to happen now from here on in today? I mean it-- it seems to me that this today has marked some sort of a turning point. How long it lasts, I know none of us can say, but what's your sense of where we are right now?

ELIZABETH PALMER: Well, in a period of serious engagement, everybody is wondering what's going on inside Mubarak's office and-- and his close confidants. It's a black box. We don't know. But I spoke to somebody very influential and well connected recently, and he says, I think he gets the message now. He's furious because he says he doesn't want to bow to the riffraff in the

square. But he is beginning to realize that there's only one-- one way and that's through the exit door.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And what about the participation today of the Muslim Brotherhood? As far as I know, this is the first time anybody there has ever met with them in a serious way. What-- what comes of that?

ELIZABETH PALMER: Well, it's extraordinary. I mean they were a banned political party. They've been terribly repressed in this country since 1954. And today there they were at the table. Extraordinary. They also seem to be showing some real political wisdom. They say they're not going to run a presidential candidate. Apparently they don't want to taint whatever new government is coming with charges of-- of extremism. So that-- that's a very auspicious sign as-- people showing political maturity that I-- I don't think law observers thought was possible.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. I want to thank all three of you for being with us this morning. Stay safe and we'll be coming back to you. Thanks so much.

The situation in Cairo has not gone unnoticed in the rest of the region, of course. There have been demonstrations in Jordan, for example, where King Abdullah has already replaced his entire cabinet. Earlier this morning, I talked to the King's uncle Prince Hassan about the situation there.

PRINCE HASSAN OF JORDAN: There are sporadic demonstrations. And I think that there is a lot of sympathy and empathy with the youth movement that came into the streets on the 25th of January in Egypt. It's all about youth, equity, the-- the participation that is to say unemployment. And I think that this will not go away whatever new government takes over.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Do you think it would help the situation across the region if President Mubarak stepped down now?

PRINCE HASSAN OF JORDAN: Well, I-- I think the question is not whether he'll step down. He said that he will step down but it's a question of what follows. And as I understand his vice president has had the agreement of all the parties to discuss the constitution. I make a distinction that in Jordan we already have a constitution, which I don't think is a subject of major controversy. But in terms of the immediate future, I just want to say that this region is suffering from two elephants in the room. One is the instability of the price of oil which has always been the case. And the other is the Arab-Israeli conflict. So it's almost as if people outside this region are saying you can't reform and you can't improve your civil rights record because of the emergency powers that were implemented because of the scarcity of oil resources, high pricing and so forth that might affect other parts of the world.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Are you concerned that the Muslim Brotherhood will step in to this vacuum?

PRINCE HASSAN OF JORDAN: They are not homogeneous. And they're certainly not al Qaeda. They're certainly aware of Egypt's responsibilities towards that second elephant, the peace treaty, which I hope will cease to be a white elephant and be recognized through the transition of regimes because no man lives forever, and President Mubarak with all due respect is a man of a certain age. So I personally don't think that they're participating as they did in 1989, in Jordan after elections was an end in itself. I mean four years later, many of them were

voted out of office. So I think to test people on the democratic template is better than not to test them at all.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Your Highness, thank you so much for joining us this morning.

PRINCE HASSAN OF JORDAN: Thank you very much indeed.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And when we come back, we'll add context from former Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering, former U.S. ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk and Al Jazeera Washington bureau chief Abderrahim Foukara.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: And we're back now with our panel. I want to go first to Thomas Pickering who has been at the State Department almost as long as I've been at CBS News and undersecretary of state at one point and ambassador to seven countries, I believe, including Russia and several countries in the Middle East.

Ambassador, let me just ask you, how significant are these reports that the Mubarak government is now meeting with these opposition leaders, including the Muslim Brotherhood and they've agreed now, according to reports--it's not official yet that they will lift the restrictions on the press. And they're going to release these protestors that have been arrested. And that they're going to start working on reforms to open up the electoral process?

THOMAS PICKERING (National Committee on American Foreign Policy/Career Ambassador): Bob, against the caveat that you gave that they're not yet confirmed and we don't know yet what-- what I would call the opposition in the street thinks about these. I think, nevertheless, they are very significant. They're the first set of steps that we have seen that is now moving in the direction of change and putting it in a much more concrete form. And doing it in a way that I think reflects what people have been pre-occupied about and indeed worried about for a very long period of time. Will Egypt change? Can they deal with the-- the civil rights and the democracy aspect of change? Can the army manage that kind of pivot and indeed can that be done in a way that doesn't bring violence and huge disruptions to many things that are very important with-- for Egypt. It's economy, the peace arrangements with-- with Israel, among other things being very significant there. So I-- I think you're right, but I think that sort of, at the moment one swallow doesn't make a summer work it out. We'll have to wait and see and look very carefully.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You just heard the Prince Hassan from Jordan, who talked about this and the impact it's having on his country. I-- I thought it was significant that, number one, that he appeared on television. What else did you draw from what he said?

THOMAS PICKERING: Well, I-- I think he-- he-- he wanted to make clear that he thought things in Jordan were different, that they had the chance for more stability, that it was important I think, in his view to have stability in the region. But I've known him for a long period of time. And I-- and I know he also sees the need for economic development and change as being very significant. And this is a major factor which has led Egyptians into the streets over the years. It's-- it's not just the abuses of the government, it has been the instability to move income and indeed prosperity from the top segment across the spectrum even with the growths of-- growth of middle class. And the question of the-- of the people in the streets and the fellaheen in the fields will be if there are free elections, and we certainly hope there will be free elections in

Egypt--will be a very determining factor as to how all this will come out, if it gets that far down the road. One hopes very much it will, because I think that's the direction that we should be supporting. I think is the direction that we are in fact, backing.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Ambassador Indyk. Of course, you were the ambassador-- U.S. ambassador to Israel. Did you find it significant that Prince Hassan conceded that there have to be some change in-- in his country as well as in Egypt?

MARTIN INDYK (Former Ambassador to Israel/Brookings Institution): For certain. Hassan himself has been a bit of a reformer as has King Abdullah in Jordan.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mm-Hm.

MARTIN INDYK: But when it came to political reforms, he was resisted by the East Bank establishment, a phenomenon that you have around the Arab world. It's not just the regimes that are resistant to change but-- but those who have benefited from-- from the regimes and these-- business community and so on. You see it in Egypt as well. And now the question will be whether King Abdullah of Jordan will go to the East Bank establishment and say, gentlemen, it's sink or swim, we have to move now. If so, I think that Jordan can resist the-- the contagion, as it were, of instability.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you also about-- about this. Is the United States sending mixed diplomatic signals? You had President Obama calling on Mubarak last Tuesday to begin a transition, in his words, now. But then, yesterday I guess it was, we had Frank Wisner who was sent to the region to talk to President Mubarak of Egypt coming out and saying this. Listen to what he had to say.

FRANK WISNER: The President must stay in office in order to steer those changes through. I therefore believe that President Mubarak's continued leadership is critical. It's his opportunity to write his own legacy.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And-- and, the administration was quick to say he wasn't speaking for the administration in that. But what did you take from that? Why did he say that?

MARTIN INDYK: I-- I think that-- that Frank, who-- who is a very experienced diplomat, probably has had as many years in the State Department as-- as Tom has, understands that-- that removing Mubarak is going to be critical here. And he's trying to, I think create some space for him to move. But that the administration, particularly the President has it-- a different challenge. He's kind of like a high wire artist, in which he's got to walk a fine line between wanting Mubarak to go but not go in a way that creates chaos; wanting to signal to the street that he's with them in their demands for democracy and universal rights. And so, the-- the message sometimes gets a little blurred because you've got this kind of echo chamber for-- that the administration finds itself in. And it's-- it's a very complicated position, but I-- I would give President Obama a credit here that while he hasn't always got the messaging right, he's got the basic policy right, which is, to get on the side of change and to try to use what-- what influence we have to shape it in a peaceful and orderly way, but to make clear that democracy needs to come to Egypt.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mister Foukara, take it from your point, these are Americans, former diplomats. How does this look to you right now as the bureau chief for Al Jazeera here?

DR. ABDERRAHIM FOUKARA (Washington Bureau Chief, Al Jazeera): Well, if I may just, let me point out a-- a-- a quick nuance. When we talk about opposition parties, I think the feeling in Egypt, especially in Tahrir Square, is that the opposition parties, many of them are masquerading as opposition parties. They-- they're not of any significant political weight. The fact that the Muslim Brotherhood which has political weight has joined the political game, so to speak, is raising questions because up until two days ago, they were saying no talks with the current regime. It's legitimate until Mubarak steps down. And now they-- they seem to be singing a different tune, that has reverberations in Tahrir Square. I was following the-- the coverage just before I came here. And what the people are saying is we don't actually care what these opposition parties are saying. We did not officially delegate them. These are not a trade union. This is-- this is a revolution. The other thing they've been saying is that we don't care what President Obama says, what the State Department says, what Wisner says. What we do care about is that we want Mubarak to step down. And we have the will, the determination and the creativity to actually keep on demonstrating until we get our demands. Whether their demand ultimately that Mubarak not only steps down but also leaves the country will actually be met is a different issue.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, let me ask you about the Muslim Brotherhood. Mubarak has said from the beginning, look, you got to keep me here because if I go, you're going to have the Muslim Brotherhood. Is-- is that a scary prospect?

DR. ABDERRAHIM FOUKARA: I think a lot of people are feeling very jittery about the Muslim Brotherhood inside of Egypt but also in the wider Arab world and also here in the United States. I think Egyptians, certainly those demonstrating in the Tahrir Square yesterday, had a pretty bad day. It-- it was first of all the reported attack on the-- on the gas pipe-- pipeline to Jordan and Israel. And then there was that report that Vice President Omar Suleiman had been the subject of an assassination attempt. And the specter of the Muslim Brotherhood was raised on a-- on a wide scale in the U.S. media. And certainly that has impacted the-- the-- the dynamics. But I think what-- if I may on-- on a personal note speak here, I think what the Obama administration should take from all this is that for a country like the United States, which has the-- the energy and the enterprising spirit, what we are seeing in Tahrir Square, for example, today the-- the-- the cops holding a-- a-- a mass in the Tahrir Square was a wonderful scene--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): They are the Christians. Yeah--

DR. ABDERRAHIM FOUKARA: The Christians--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): --yeah.

DR. ABDERRAHIM FOUKARA: --of Egypt. There was a wonderful scene of a-- a young Egyptian couple getting married in Tahrir Square right in the eye of the revolution. I think that's what the Obama administration needs to get plugged in because ultimately that's the future and that's the gate to the future of U.S. influence in the region.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let me ask our two former ambassadors, what do you-- what concerns you now and what do you think needs to happen next?

THOMAS PICKERING: Several things concern me. Is there a linkage between the people in the square and the so-called opposition parties? Who will be the leadership of the opposition as it goes ahead? Can the military manage this pivot? Will Mubarak's departure become an absolute requirement of people in the square? Can that be managed or does it have to be a clean and

absolute break? That is, will retirement in Sharm el-Sheikh be sufficient? Will Omar Suleiman who is now assumed a tremendously important role, will he in fact be able to make this work and will somebody like Mohammed ElBaradei or Amr Moussa or someone else we haven't seen come forward as the new leader of Egypt. All of those remain open.

BOB SCHIEFFER: About thirty seconds left.

MARTIN INDYK: I-- I think Tom has captured the complicated nature of this exercise. And the key player here is Omar Suleiman--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Yeah.

MARTIN INDYK: --the vice president and the military and so far so good in terms of them not firing on the crowd, stepping back and trying to oversee this process. So even though it's very complicated, I actually am hopeful that this could actually turn out quite well in the end. As we've seen in other cases, like in Indonesia.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, thanks--

MARTIN INDYK: Thank you.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --to all of you so much.

Back in a minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Finally today, the title of former Defense Secretary Don Rumsfeld new book *Knowns and Unknowns* refers to something he once said about Iraq and I am paraphrasing here. There are things we know we know and things we don't know but there are also things we don't know that we don't know. He was talking about Iraq but he might very well have been discussing the current situation in Egypt. We are a democracy. And we say democracy and freedom are the right of all people. But on this one, we are also forced to ask, do we really mean it? Hosni Mubarak is a dictator who has denied freedom to his people but he turned Egypt from the main threat to Israel to its best Arab ally. For three decades, he's been our partner in maintaining Israel's security and a certain level of stability in the region. Some might put it more crudely that we bought him off. But at the least he stayed bought. And Israel is still there. And that is why it is so difficult to chart a U.S. policy in all of this. Clearly, Mubarak has to go. And if we are true to our own core values, we must stand with those in the streets who demand freedom. But what happens if he does go? We can never be against democracy for any people. But we must balance that with patience, common sense and restraint. The last thing needed here is harsh rhetoric from those trying to score political points. On this one, Rumsfeld's words are apt. We are not even close to knowing what we don't know.

Back in a minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: And that's it for us today. Stay tuned to CBS for the latest on the Egyptian crisis. We'll see you here next week for *FACE THE NATION*.