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**US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg to Egyptians: Look to the Constitutions of South Africa or Canada, Not to the US Constitution**

*Following are excerpts from an interview with US Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, which aired on Al-Hayat TV on January 30, 2012.*

**Ruth Bader Ginsburg:** It is a very inspiring time - that you have overthrown a dictator, and that you are striving to achieve a genuine democracy. So I think people in the United States are hoping that this transition will work, and that there will genuinely be a government of, by, and for the people.

[...]

I met with the head of the elections commission. I think that the first step has gone well, and that elections have been held for the lower house that everyone has considered to be free and fair. So that's one milestone, and the next will be the drafting of a constitution.

I can't speak about what the Egyptian experience should be, because I'm operating under a rather old constitution. The United States, in comparison to Egypt, is a very new nation, and yet we have the oldest written constitution still in force in the world.

[...]

Let me say first that a constitution, as important as it is, will mean nothing unless the people are yearning for liberty and freedom. If the people don't care, then the best constitution in the world won't make any difference. So the spirit of liberty has to be in the population, and then the constitution - first, it should safeguard basic fundamental human rights, like our First Amendment, the right to speak freely, and to publish freely, without the government as a censor.

[...]

You should certainly be aided by all the constitution-writing that has gone on since the end of World War II. I would not look to the US constitution, if I were drafting a constitution in the year 2012. I might look at the constitution of South Africa. That was a deliberate attempt to have a fundamental instrument of government that embraced basic human rights, had an independent judiciary... It really is, I think, a great piece of work that was done. Much more recent than the US constitution - Canada has a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It dates from 1982. You would almost certainly look at the European Convention on Human Rights. Yes, why not take advantage of what there is elsewhere in the world?

[...]

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