The Egyptian Nuclear Program: Israeli Concerns

By Akhbarek.Net (Egyptian News Site)
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“Elaf,” Cairo: Israel has expressed concern about the possibility of Egypt using its nuclear program, which is being built to create electricity, to produce nuclear weapons. Israel nuclear security expert Rafael Ofik said that “for several years, Israeli intelligence services have suspected that Egypt is not only seeking nuclear power, but it is secretly looking to build military nuclear capabilities, especially since Cairo allocates large sums of money to supply and strengthen the army.”

In his article in the Israeli newspaper “Jeminer” today, Ofik explained: “If this project is implemented, it cannot be directly used to develop nuclear weapons because of the need to use light water reactors to produce continuous electricity and because the plutonium in the nuclear fuel used at these stations is not weapons-grade.”

He continued, “However, in the long run, the presence of nuclear power plants in Egypt could give Cairo legitimacy to build a uranium enrichment plant to enrich reactor fuel at a low rate, so there is a high probability of uranium enrichment at a military level.”

According to the Israeli expert, “the presence of nuclear power plants in Egypt legitimizes its building a facility for reprocessing spent nuclear fuel,” and “if Egypt eventually builds a plutonium plant, it will have a new way to develop nuclear weapons.”

He mentioned that “Egyptian industries, especially its military, have made significant progress in the last few decades, and nuclear weapons have returned to the agenda in Egypt and Saudi Arabia after the Iranian nuclear agreement was reached in July 2015.”

Ofik also pointed out that “Egypt has recently shifted its fight against Israeli nuclear superiority to the diplomatic sphere” and that “one of the steps that it took was joining the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968 and using diplomatic channels to force Israel to sign the treaty as well.”

He warned that “since 1977, Israeli intelligence has monitored Egypt’s interest in establishing a centrifuge project for uranium enrichment, which is much less expensive than plutonium. Israeli intelligence has also attempted to discover Egyptian relationships with European countries, Germany in particular, and with companies that develop and manufacture equipment for uranium enrichment.”

For his part, Egyptian military expert Major General Fuad Hassan said that the Israeli apprehension is not supported by reality, pointing out that the goals of Egypt’s nuclear program are have been well-known since the signing of the contract with Russia.

Hassan explained to “Elaf” that the program aims to establish the Dabaa nuclear plant in order to produce electricity, especially since Egypt is suffering from an energy production crisis; it is not an oil state and does not possess wells of natural gas.
He noted that the nuclear program will meet half of Egypt’s electricity needs. He also pointed out that Egypt is a signatory to the NPT and that it would not be reasonable for Egypt to breach the agreement that it has signed.

Meanwhile, nuclear engineering expert Dr. Mohammed Yousry said that Egypt is beginning huge industry and development projects, so it needs energy. He pointed out that the goal of this project is to produce energy for the establishment and operation of new economic projects.

He continued, “Egypt is fighting the spread of nuclear weapons, and it is adopting an initiative for the Middle East to be a nuclear weapons-free zone. However, some international and regional powers are trying to begin an arms race in the region in order to drain the wealth and resources of the region; Egypt will not be dragged into this quagmire.”