

American University in Cairo

AUC Knowledge Fountain

Papers, Posters, and Presentations

2011

Within the gated: before and after the Egyptian revolution

Safaa Marafi

Follow this and additional works at: <https://fount.aucegypt.edu/studenttxt>



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Marafi, Safaa, "Within the gated: before and after the Egyptian revolution" (2011). *Papers, Posters, and Presentations*. 14.

<https://fount.aucegypt.edu/studenttxt/14>

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by AUC Knowledge Fountain. It has been accepted for inclusion in Papers, Posters, and Presentations by an authorized administrator of AUC Knowledge Fountain. For more information, please contact mark.muehlhaeusler@aucegypt.edu.

Within the Gated: Before and After the Egyptian Revolution

By Safaa Marafi

Table of Contents

Within the Gated: Before and After the Egyptian Revolution.....	2
Introduction	2
A Brief Look at Political Life in Egypt.....	4
Political Participation in Al-Rehab	5
A Glimpse of the April 6th Movement	6
6th of April Movement in Al-Rehab	10
A Short Description of the Egyptian Revolution	14
Freedom from Fear.....	16
In Al-Rehab, the Echo of a Revolution?	18
Conclusion.....	23
Work Cited.....	26

Within the Gated: Before and After the Egyptian Revolution

Introduction

Based on quantitative ethnographic approach in collecting data, this research explores the relationship between political events in Egypt and the associated riots occurring in the city of Cairo, with the sense of security felt by the residents of gated community, namely, Al-Rehab City¹, during those events. In other words, the ways in which political and social protests in the city affect Al-Rehab's residents' sense of security while living in a gated, suburban community, will also be questioned. The answer will be found in the interviews of the residents themselves, as they articulate their views of the events of '6th of April' day and the dramatic Egyptian revolution which began on January 25, 2011. In addition, this research paper presents a hypothesis regarding the relationship between the political participation of residents and their living in a segregated, residential suburban neighborhood. The ways in which neoliberal urban segregation plays a role in isolating Al-Rehab's residents from the political sphere in the city will be examined. This work draws upon sociologist Mona Abaza's concept of "the neoliberal dream of segregation"² in order to understand this phenomenon of change taking place in Egypt, which pulls together economic interests with social perceptions held by the elites toward the lower classes. During the last two decades, Egypt went through active steps toward structural adjustment directed by international financial organizations that resulted in additional

¹ It is part of New Cairo. As its official website explains, "Al-Rehab is located ten minutes from Heliopolis and Nasr City, on the Cairo Suez Road, and 20 minutes from downtown Cairo via the first ring road which intersects the Cairo Suez Road." Al-Rehab City official Website. "Location". <http://www.alrehabcity.com/newrehab/Location.aspx>, accessed November, 12, 2009.

² Abaza, Mona. 13 December, 2008. "التعليم الخاص والاستهلاك والموت" [Privatized Education, Consumption and Death]. <http://www.almasy-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=190111>, accessed, January 8, 2010. Abaza's phrase is: [The Neoliberal dream of Segregation] translated from Arabic 'الحلم النيو- ليبرالي لتقسيم أو فصل المدن'.

encouragements of privatization and liberalization of the Egyptian economy that coexisted with the emergence of a new group of businessmen and tycoons, who are recomposing the Egyptian economy (Abaza 2006:31). The obvious product of this structural adjustment has been land speculation that resulted in enriching the owners of property and at the same time enlarging social inequalities (Abaza 2006:33). The neoliberal dream of segregation can be defined as a political-economic agenda adopted by the Egyptian government, which fostered and supported rich local and foreign investors in building gated communities in Cairo's suburbs. By constructing these enclaves for the richest layer of Egyptian society, these development projects created a physical segregation in Cairo's urban fabric. This neoliberal urban segregation is evidenced in the way the residents of these hinterlands are protected by private security systems, walls, fences, gates, and private security guards. In short, I conceptualize the neoliberal dream of segregation as the urban polarization between the rich and poor layers of society which has occurred through adaptation of neoliberal policies by the Egyptian government. These policies taken by the Egyptian government foster free trade and an open market, and require the government to secure property rights and foster privatization of public assets (Harvey 2005:2 and 2007:145). Neoliberalism is both a political and economic ideology (Harvey 2005:2, and 2007:145) adapted by the Egyptian government. The neoliberal dream (independent from segregation) is the implementation of these neoliberal policies, which have benefitted the Egyptian growth government's financial statements, in last decade. Yet, this only is benefitting a narrow portion of Egyptian society- mainly the local investors who accumulated substantial wealth. This growth however has not echoed in the everyday life of most Egyptians- the lower classes who constitute the largest layer of Egyptian society.

A Brief Look at Political Life in Egypt

The political voice of Egypt's citizens has been criminalized by the state. Under the thirty years of the rule of President Hosni Mubarak, the government crushed social movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) using emergency provisions, anti-terror laws and other restrictive mechanisms against association in order "to justify the arrest of even the most moderate of dissident journalists, scholars, journalists, and activists" (Singerman and Amar 2006:5). A particularly noteworthy instance of such policies' consequence was the arrest and imprisonment of Egyptian sociology professor Saad Eddin Ibrahim. Jailed in 2000 for over a year, Ibrahim is an Egyptian democracy and human rights activist, and founder of the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies³ which focuses on democratization and issues of social and political development. According to the official explanation, his arrest was due to his NGO's alleged illegal receipt of international funding. But in truth he was arrested because of the organization's pro-democracy agenda. Fearing that he would be arrested again after his release, Ibrahim lived in self-imposed exile his return to Egypt on August 11, 2010. Even then, his wife stressed that his return was merely for a family visit.⁴ A peaceful academic jailed under false accusations because of his pro-democracy activities, Ibrahim was made an example to all Egyptians in an attempt to prevent them from acting on his ideas.

In the last decade, a series of trials against NGOs, journalists, and opposition party-leaders have, as Singerman and Amar, "ravaged the notions of citizenship and colonialized the private and public bodies of Egypt's people" (2006:5). Other recent and notable examples of political oppression in Cairo include the arrest and imprisonment of citizens like Ayman Noor,

³ Its official website.<http://www.eicds.org/>, accessed March 30, 2011.

⁴ Samaan ,Magdy. August 13, 2010. Saad Eddin Ibrahim: Egypt is on the Brink of a Revolution. <http://thedailynewsegypt.com/people/saad-eddin-ibrahim-egypt-is-on-the-brink-of-a-revolution-dp1.html>, accessed 26 February, 2011.

leader of the Tomorrow Party (Hizb al-Ghad), who was stripped of his parliamentary membership and imprisoned⁵ for allegedly forging signatures to launch his political party (Singerman and Amar 2006:5-6). While these political tensions occurred in Cairo, the government and National Democratic Party (NDP) were dominated by businessmen, who encouraged economic privatization of public land. These elite members of the NDP and the Egyptian government supported the invasion of public, suburban desert land in order to achieve their neoliberal dream, while neglecting any serious engagement in the development of informal areas. Around two-thirds of the Egyptian population of greater Cairo” (Sims 111:2010) live in these informal areas.

Political Participation in Al-Rehab

Residents of gated communities have what Eric Denis calls “private democracy”, in that all of the basic needs of their lifestyle are met. This includes protection, which is provided by their own private management department, with which they can make demands or discuss needs and the problems of their private communities (Denis 2006:60). This is unlike the residents of the city including the middle-upper and upper classes people, who live in the city as they have no choice except dealing with bureaucratic and in many cases corrupted governmental units in their local neighborhoods, which maybe encourage some of its residents to participate in political participation and activism. Through numerous interviews with residents of Al-Rehab, it is unsurprisingly that the political participation of the majority is low, a likely result of their detachment from the city enforced through neoliberal segregation. Political scientist Nael Shama⁶ regarding the political participation of the residents of gated communities, the residents

⁵ Noor was released in 2009.

⁶ Nael M. Shama. Email interview conducted on October 21, 2010.

have “a sense of detachment from the myriad political activities that take place in the heart of the city.” Shama believes that the discourse of neoliberal segregation “could foster an isolationist, inward-looking attitude among these residents,” since their basic needs of public services, such as electricity, water, and security are “steadily provided”. On the national level, the Egyptian society has witnessed intensification of political repression and exclusion (Denis 2006:60)

Gated communities represent the socio-political results of economic neoliberalization. Here private democracy metalizes. While estimating that public institutions cannot assure the well being and the defense of the collective, a restrained community of like-minded people itself takes charge of the residents of the gated community of Mena Garden City, for example, manages shared spaces, lighting, and the roadways. [Denis 2006: 60]

As Shama argues, this isolationist attitude contributes to individuals feeling a “public malaise that affects, in fact overwhelms, the lives of the vast majority of Egypt's population.” Shama’s view seems accurate: That a lower level of political participation among the residents of the suburban residential enclaves will be found compared to the city of Cairo’s neighborhoods. However, this does not denote a total disinterest in what occurs beyond the gates of these enclaves, since the residents there “have a vested interest in witnessing an improvement in economic conditions, [and] an upgrade of public services”, according to Shama.

A Glimpse of the April 6th Movement

In April 2008, a new opposition movement of young educated Egyptians (the 6th of April Group) emerged, and called for political and economical reform. The movement declared that it is not a political party, and soon created a page on Facebook, a social networking site, which attracted around 100 thousand members.⁷ It was a risky activist movement since the names of the members would likely be monitored and traced by the Egyptian security. The group was founded

⁷ Beinun ,Joel. January 31, 2011. “Egypt at the tipping point?” http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/31/egypt_at_the_tipping_point, accessed May 8, 2011.

to support one of the public sector factory's labors' strikes that the name of the movement was inspired by its protesting date. On April 6th, 2008, the city of Al-Mahalla Al-Kubra (located 120 kilometers north of Cairo and home to the largest public sector textile factory in Egypt) witnessed a call for strike on by labor leaders against insufferable low labor wages and the increases in the price of basic goods.⁸ Opposition party called Kifaya (means literally in Arabic enough) that is emerged during 2004 around year before the presidency elections. The name Kifaya is meant to say enough of decades of President Mubarak's dictatorship presidency and enough of the presidents' maneuver to set his Son Gamal to succeed him.⁹ Kifaya party supported Al-Mahalla's strikes by declaring on April 3rd for demonstrations on a national scale in solidarity with the labors on April 6th. This resulted in arresting around 50 members of Kifaya as the protest started in Al-Mahalla on April 6th.¹⁰

Despite the fact that plainclothes security agents were sent in to prevent the strike from taking place, workers went ahead and started their strike at the end of their working day-shift.¹¹ The laborers and thousands of Al-Mahalla Al-Kubra's residents went into the streets to demonstrate, and they stayed there until the next day.¹² It did not end smoothly, however, as the

⁸ Egypt: Investigate Police Use of Force at Protests: Security Forces Arrest Pro-Democracy Movement Leader. Human Rights Watch April 10, 2008 <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/04/10/egypt-investigate-police-use-force-protests>, accessed March 14, 2011.

⁹ Washington Post. March 15, 2005. 'Kifaya' in Egypt. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A35379-2005Mar14.html> , accessed July 25, 2011.

¹⁰ Egypt: Investigate Police Use of Force at Protests: Security Forces Arrest Pro-Democracy Movement Leader. Human Rights Watch April 10, 2008 <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/04/10/egypt-investigate-police-use-force-protests>, accessed March 14, 2011.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

police used force against the protesters, with “rubber bullets and live ammunition as well as tear gas.”¹³

Two years later, on April 6th, 2010, Egyptian security forces controlled a demonstration scheduled to be held in central Cairo by the 6th of April Movement. The streets and squares of central Cairo, including Tahrir Square and Talaat Harb, were filled with thousands of security personnel.¹⁴ Security forces spread to the rooftops and hotels imposed strict security measures at the Association of Journalists, the Association of Lawyers, and the Supreme Court because these for many years are venues of anti-state dissent. The police forces feared that the protesters, who began their march from the center of Cairo, would cause a repeat of the riots which occurred during the 6th of April 2008 strike in Al-Mahalla Al-Kubra.¹⁵ When the members of the 6th of April Movement publicly declared their intention online to organize demonstrations in Cairo and other governorates in 2010, demanding an end to the emergency law,¹⁶ this gave the opportunity for security forces to brace themselves and pre-empt any demonstrations.¹⁷ The result was the arrest of dozens of youths on suspicion of belonging to the movement, and alleged intent to demonstrate near Talaat Harb square in downtown Cairo that day.¹⁸

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴ Masrawy, April 6, 2010. “Security frustrates demonstration (6 April) in the Center of Cairo and Clashes with the Protesters and Arrested Dozens <http://www.masrawy.com/News/Egypt/Politics/2010/april/6/6April.aspx>, accessed June 7, 2010.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Elections in Egypt: State of Permanent Emergency Incompatible with Free and Fair Vote. December, 2010. Human Rights Watch. Page: 4. <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/11/23/elections-egypt-0>, accessed March 14, 2011.

¹⁷ Masrawy, April 6, 2010. “Security frustrates demonstration (6 April) in the Center of Cairo and Clashes with the Protesters and Arrested Dozens <http://www.masrawy.com/News/Egypt/Politics/2010/april/6/6April.aspx>, accessed June 7, 2010.

¹⁸ Ibid.

These arrests and blocking on demonstrations are based on the emergency law which has been in place since 1982. This law permits the government to ban strikes and demonstrations.¹⁹ The government promised to cancel the emergency law but has instead renewed it many times, the latest in May 2010, for two more years. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW),²⁰ although the government declared that the law would be limited to drug related crimes and terrorism, security officials continues to use the emergency law to arrest citizens in cases which did not relate to terrorism. Instead it was used as a means to “target political dissent,” arrest activists, members of the opposition movement of Muslim Brotherhood, and activist bloggers.²¹ The emergency law has played a great role—in many venues—in violating human rights and continues to contribute, as Ibrahim states, “to a collective sense of insecurity among the Egyptians” (2004:169). If this is true for Egyptians generally, it is important to investigate the relationship of the political events that lead to arresting Egyptian citizens and blocking of strikes which occur in the heart of the city of Cairo, and how the sense of security is felt by Al-Rehab’s residents. This is essential since this relationship was not explored before in the Egyptian context. Additionally, in order to understand the effects of the neoliberal urban segregation that is based on class, it is useful to explore the relationship between their living in a segregated residential suburban neighborhood and their political participation. In other words, few questions need to be answered: In what way does neoliberal segregation play a role in segregating Al-Rehab’s residents from the political sphere in the city? In what way do the protests that happen to be during the 6th of April movement and the Egyptian revolution in the city affect residents’

¹⁹ Leila, Reem. June 2010. “Ongoing Emergency.” *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*.(No. 1001), 3-9. “The emergency law” has been operating “since President Anwar El-Sadat's assassination in 1981”... [It] “allows the government to ban strikes, demonstrations and public meetings, censor or close down newspapers and other media, and monitor private telephone calls.” <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2010/1001/eg4.htm>, accessed on June 12, 2010.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch. March10,2010. “Egypt: Government Renews State of Emergency.” <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/05/11/egypt-government-renews-state-emergency>, accessed on June 13, 2010.

²¹ Ibid.

sense of security while living in their gated, suburban community? In what way is their political involvement affected by living in the community?

6th of April Movement in Al-Rehab

There is a noticeable lack of involvement with the 6th of April movement among the residents of Al-Rehab. Indeed, no plans were ever announced by the group for protests in Al-Rehab. Nonetheless, on April 6, 2010, residents in the exclusive community observed an intense police presence as well as high ranking officers gathered close to Gate 13, one of Al-Rehab's main gates, near the police station. The large trucks of the *a'mn al-markazy* (the Central Security Forces) were also there. I had the chance at this time to conduct informal interviews of male and female residents along different streets and also at the food-court in order to get diverse views.

Most of my interview subjects shared similar reactions of surprise at the security presence, based in part on their sharing similar views on the type of people they believe reside in Al-Rehab. For instance, Khaled²², a man in his mid-thirties, says: "We (the residents of Al-Rehab) are peaceful people and I do not know why [the Central security forces] are here..." Khaled is not the only one surprised. Silvia, a woman in her mid-twenties, does not understand the reason for having the security forces in Al-Rehab. She tries to find justification for their presence in her community by guessing: "Maybe they are aware that some of the regime's opposition lives here, such as the lawyer Montaser Zayat of the Muslim Brotherhood... For that reason, they may expect members of the Islamist movement to demonstrate here!" It is apparent that Silvia does not know much about the 6th of April movement. Silvia, as an example, seem to equate a police presence with a risk of Islamist involvement of some kind which demonstrate that people think 'islamists' when they see 'security'. This could indeed indicate that she has absorbed the government's messages

²² Names of all interview subjects have been changed.

which were part of the whole moral panic effort over the years. Silvia does not think of others, such as a secular, cross-sectarian, progressive democracy movement. This shows yet another example of the successful efforts by the government to instill moral panic about the Islamists.

Moral panic can be understood as defined by Stanley Cohen (2002):

A condition, episode, person or a group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests, its nature presented in stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media. [2002:1]

Building on Cohen's definition, I operationalize the notion of moral panic as exaggerated fear felt by the rich toward the poor—the *other*—such as those who inhabit Cairo's slums, and who are criminalized by the media.

As Egyptian society witnesses social tensions between the rich and the poor, at the political level there are also serious tensions between the government and its opposition. In the last four years (2006 to 2010), the city of Cairo witnessed an increased number of strikes,²³ acts of large-scale vandalism and violent riots,²⁴ all of which the government tried to control.²⁵ The discourse of "urban risk" which can be defined as identification of the city of Cairo and its poorer inhabitants with pollution, disorder, poverty, violence, criminality, and terrorism (Denis as cited in Singerman and Amar 2006:11). This discourse is fueled by exaggerated fears of terrorism, which is itself an invention of the state's current neoliberal order (2006:61). Referring to the work of Jutta Weldes, et al, Denis notes that the normalization of collective fears is due to the apparition of risks, which is projected via the media (2006:51). In this context, the

²³ Egypt issues strike warning. 2008. Aljazeera English Online. <http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/violent-riots-hit-egypt/>, accessed Nov, 14, 2009.

²⁴ "Angry demonstrators have been clashing with police as a nationwide strike has turned into a protest against the government of President Hosni Mubarak". Violent Riots Hit Egypt. 2008. PJTV. <http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/violent-riots-hit-egypt/>, accessed Nov, 14, 2009.

²⁵ Al Malky, Rania. Reflections: Bread or freedom? 2008. Daily New Egypt Online. <http://www.dailystaregypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=12918>, accessed Nov, 14, 2009.

development of gated communities in the outskirts of Cairo can be seen within a larger phenomenon of urban flight, which is a crucial step towards the neoliberal dream of segregation.

The point of intersection between urban risk and moral panic is that both involve the sense of fear, yet the former is linked to a mood of *uncertainty*, whereas the latter is linked to a mood of *certainty*. Denis builds his argument on Ulrich Beck's Risk Society, in which the notion of urban risk raises a fear which itself contains a mood of *uncertainty* about the future (2006:52). Moral panic implies that there are *certain* agents. In Cairo, the wealthy classes assume that these criminals are the inhabitants of informal settlements in the city. As will be shown below, this exaggeration of fear is a product of the deliberate stigmatization of the lower classes, mainly the inhabitants of slums, by the Egyptian media.

The media has taken issues of "law and order" and raised them to the level of national security (Ismail 2006:140). *Baltaga* (thuggery) for example is an important term used to tarnish and de-legitimize the Islamist militant activists in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The word has remained important in the vocabulary of neoliberal discourse, and has been used to legitimize the continued use of emergency law.²⁶ Salwa Ismail (2006) demonstrates that the notion of *baltaga* was reinvented by the state. In the late 1980s, Egypt's unofficial and official state media assigned the epithet *baltaga* to Islamist leaders (Ismail 2006:140). More recently in Egyptian media, the argument has been made that (civilian) *baltagiyya* (thugs) are as dangerous as the militant Islamists (Ismail 2006:139-146). The notion of *baltaga* denotes a wide range of illegal activities carried out by a social actor who destabilizes the order of society (Ismail 2006:140). As defined by Ahmed Al-Magdoub, a professor of criminal law at the National Center for

²⁶As the Egyptian Organization of Human Rights pointed out, "this has been taken from the new laws integrated into the legal system, as for example, Law 97 of 1992, known as the law for combating terrorism." "This law gives greater powers to the security apparatus and further limits the liberty of citizens" (Ismail 2006:151).

Sociological and Criminological Research in Egypt, the *baltagi* is “a young, unemployed, poor, illiterate man” who “lives in a shanty or slum area, but usually works in middle and upper class districts where people need his services to replace the rule of law” (Ismail 2006:143). In Cairo, besides the Islamist thugs as named by the government, there are regular street criminals, and the paid-thugs or state agents who are sometimes used by the government (Ismail 2006:139-146). The representation of both the civilian and Islamist thugs has been “articulated within a wider public discourse engaged in the production a moral panic” (Ismail 2006:143).

Meanwhile, in Al-Rehab, others find the presence of the security forces in their community to be unjustifiable. One example is Farah, a woman in her late-twenties, who says: “The Central Security Forces are choosing the wrong place, since most of the residents, like me, are not part of such movements.” The 6th of April movement is stereotyped by the participants, who see them virtually as evil, away from their paradise community. For instance, Mustafa, a man in his mid-twenties, says: “Thanks that we are living in Al-Rehab away from this chaos in other parts of Cairo, but I do not know why the security forces are here.”

The residents are aware of the consequences of the emergency law, and the abuse of authority by the police, including during demonstrations. Marwa, a woman in her late forties, says: “Thanks to God that the demonstrations are in downtown... If I were still living near downtown (she refused to say in which area exactly), of course, I would ask my sons to stay at home to avoid being mistakenly taken by the police forces...” In even the best situations Egypt’s police do not abide by the principles of human rights, and in chaotic conditions they are especially likely to make arbitrary arrests of people on the streets. Passers-by could be arrested even if they did not take part in the demonstrations. Marwa adds, “I doubt that any of Al-Rehab’s

residents will be involved in these demonstrations.... People in Al-Rehab are very peaceful.... But, it is good to have the Central Security Forces in Al-Rehab to prevent any of the outsiders from demonstrating here.” To Marwa and others like her, the presence of police forces in the community is a good thing, as they will be able to keep away any intrusions or undesirable disorder, such as protests, within their peaceful community.

The fear of the chaotic ‘other’ is apparent in Marwa’s use of the description ‘peaceful people’ when speaking of Al-Rehab’s residents. This implies that the others, those outside the community’s gates, are *not* peaceful; indeed they are troublemakers. Therefore the only reason for the presence of the security forces, in the view of Marwa and others interviewed, is to protect them from the outsiders. However, the presence of the police forces might also be a sort of reminder, a concealed signal to the members of the community that, ‘We are here, so do not even think of protesting’. This could further contribute to the ‘culture of fear’ among the residents. There is the danger of violence used against them under the umbrella of the emergency law, which they might face in case they decide to protest. Inside their peaceful community though these participants feel secure, away from the troublemakers and disorderly outsiders from the city. Their sense of security is based on, and fed by, the neoliberal segregation which sustains their isolation from the chaotic city and its inhabitants.

A Short Description of the Egyptian Revolution

I really do not understand what the interior minister, before he goes to sleep at night, thinks he is doing to us. Does he realize that we are educated, well brought up people? Does he realize how much we are abused by his policemen on the streets? When his head’s on his pillow, does he realize that we are done for taking it? We are killing ourselves to make a living, and the Interior Ministry treats us as criminals, and lairs of course. We are all liars as far as any police officer is concerned. It is clear they teach them that at Police College, that human beings

are born liars, live as liars, breathe as liars and die liars. [Khaled al Khamissi 2008:128]

On January 25th, 2011, Egypt's official Police Day holiday, a group of young protestors took to the streets of Cairo. The idea of protesting on this specific day started and created a page on Facebook titled 'We Are All Khaled Saeed', called for a mass protest.²⁷ Khaled Saeed was a 28-year-old Egyptian blogger from the city of Alexandria.²⁸ He was killed in June 2010 by two policemen after he exposed police corruption. The officers dragged him from an internet café in Alexandria and proceeded to beat him to death.²⁹ That month, photos of the young man's "deformed face and bashed head" were circulated online.³⁰ These photos contributed in motivating many young people who later participated in protests calling for the two policemen to be brought to justice for his murder, and for the end of the emergency law.³¹ Eventually, Saeed's murder was recognized not only in Egypt but also internationally as an example of Egypt's police brutality. This resulted in charging the two policemen with torturing and beating Saeed to death.³² It also interesting to note that the slogan of the police force was changed, from *al-shurta fi khidmat al-sha'ab* (the police are in the service of the citizens) to *al-shurta wa alsha'ab fi al-khidmant al-watan* (the police and the citizens are in service of the nation). This change took place immediately after Habib al-Adly assumed responsibility of the ministry. The reasons behind these changes were never stated by any official party.

²⁷ El-Hennawy, Noha. August 4, 2011. "We are all Khaled Saeed: Redefining political Demonstration in Egypt" <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/61266>, accessed March 17, 2011.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Aljazeera. Middle East. 16 November, 2010. "Egypt Police Blamed for Death". <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/11/2010111516111485865.html>, accessed March 17, 2011.

³⁰ El-Hennawy, Noha. August 4, 2011. "We are all Khaled Saeed: Redefining political Demonstration in Egypt" <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/61266>, accessed March 17, 2011.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Aljazeera. Middle East. 16 November, 2010. "Egypt Police Blamed for Death". <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/11/2010111516111485865.html>, accessed March 17, 2011.

Activists of belonging to the ‘6th of April Youth’ and ‘We Are All Khaled Saeed’ groups created a page on Facebook calling³³ for mass peaceful protests on January 25th, 2011, against poverty, corruption and police brutality. It was no coincidence that this was to be held on the national police holiday.³⁴ In “the ferment of the moment,” however, the protesters added four additional demands: the resignation of Interior Minister Habib Al-Adly; a fair minimum wage; the end of the Emergency Law; and a two-term limit on the presidency.”³⁵ The protestors were not limited to one group of people but came from almost all layers of Egyptian society in terms of age, political affiliation, religion, class, and gender.³⁶ There was a great feeling of solidarity among the protestors. Many demonstrators there that day did not leave Tahrir Square until President Mubarak stepped down on February 11th, 2001.³⁷

Freedom from Fear

Sociologist Asef Bayat states that this newly found freedom from the fear of persecution has allowed working people to aggressively pursue their complaints.³⁸ Examples include laborers calling for independent unions in order to achieve change, freedom, and social justice; small scale farmers who are organizing independent syndicates; and still others who are fighting for better wages and conditions. As Bayat notes,

The first Organization of the Residents of Cairo’s *[a]shwa’iyyat* (slums), established recently, has called for the removal of corrupt governors, and for the

³³ Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (I): Egypt Victorious? Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa. 24 February 2011. Report Number 101. Page: 3.

³⁴ “Egypt: End Crackdown on Peaceful Demonstrations”. January 27, 2011. <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/01/27/egypt-end-crackdown-peaceful-demonstrations>, accessed March 17, 2011.

³⁵ Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (I): Egypt Victorious? Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa. 24 February 2011. Report Number 101. Page: 3.

³⁶ Rizk, Philip. February 15, 2011. “Egypt and the Global Economic Order”. <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/opinion/2011/02/20112148356117884.html>, accessed March 17, 2011.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Bayat, Asef. March 03, 2011. “Paradoxes of Arab Revo-lutions”. <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/786/paradoxes-of-arab-refo-lutions>, accessed March 30, 2011.

abolition of regime-sponsored 'local councils'. Youth groups organize to clean up slum areas, engage in civil works and reclaim their civil pride. Students pour into the streets to demand the Ministry of Education to revise the curricula.³⁹

A study conducted two years before the revolution by the Ministry of State for Administrative Development revealed a high sense of injustice felt among Egyptians. However, the Egyptian government did not give it any sort of attention. Almost half of the participants of the study felt injustice due to the poor quality of life, low wages, and a sense of worthlessness (Zayed 2009:8). The survey found that a great number of the participants believed the state was unjust, firstly as serving only a certain layer of society; and secondly, by not give sufficient services for the poor; and lastly, through not implementing the law (Zayed 2009:9). The sample in the study believed that the state's injustice was revealed in the granting of rights to some groups more than they deserve. These groups are businessmen in the first place, governmental officials in the second place, and the police in the third place (Zayed 2009:9).

According to Ismail, a police government controlling many areas of social life was instituted to suppress resistance to the economic and social policies.⁴⁰She explains that their roles went beyond maintaining "security" and "public order", intruding upon the life of ordinary citizens by exercising jurisdiction on top of open markets, the use of public facilities, and enforcing compliance with public building rules. Ismail also states that the arbitrary powers of the emergency law allowed the police to engage in extortion and use violence to suppress any who might question their powers. Ismail recounts how security checks and roadblocks were a "daily reality" for the citizens of Egypt, whereby "drivers and pedestrians were randomly stopped, arrested, and subjected to arbitrary investigation." Ismail notes that these practices

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ismail, Salwa. February 2011. "Egypt's Dignity Revolution". <http://www.tni.org/article/egypt%E2%80%99s-dignity-revolution>, accessed March 22, 2011.

targeted those who were “feared by the regime for their potential for activism and resistance.” She also notes that the humiliating treatment they received from the police “fuelled the youth’s opposition and rejection of the regime and its coercive arm, the police.”⁴¹ Based on participants’ accounts in Al-Rehab during the ‘6th of April day 2010’ and the Egyptian revolution, it is apparent that these events are widely reported by some of the privatized Egyptian and international media, such as Al-Jazeera channels that were blocked for sometime by the regime, however, they could not block the other channels, which the reality was still covered by them. This media coverage and the human rights violations of the police using the emergency law contributes in intensifying the mood of moral panic and urban risk among the potential and the current residents of Al-Rehab gated community.

In Al-Rehab, the Echo of a Revolution?

At around 4pm on January 28, 2011, all sign of police disappeared from Cairo’s streets.⁴² Some members of the police force—its thugs—worked to create a state of lawlessness. Those whom I interviewed rightly perceived this as an attempt to create *gaw min alkhof* (this literally means an atmosphere of fear which can be described anthropologically and sociologically as a ‘culture of fear’) among the Egyptian people. It can also be described as a sort of short-term incarnation of the years-long attempts to instill upon the population a culture of fear. These thugs’ aim was to use that lawlessness as part of their strategy to distract the people from the main national event. They tried to distract the people away from protesting, and instead to focus on protecting their houses, their families, businesses, and other assets. However, the tactic of lawlessness contributed instead to the creation of an innovative institution, one which tried as

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Abou Taleb, Hassan. March 11, 2011. The Egyptian Army and the Revolution. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/4/7418/Opinion/The-Egyptian-army-and-the-revolution.aspx>, accessed March 17, 2011.

much as possible to maintain law and order in Cairo's streets, and did so effectively. I coin the action of these committees 'nationalizing law and order,' showing a great solidarity among a majority of the Egyptian population.

The sense of moral panic intensified among participants in Al-Rehab. This was especially so after the sudden and mysterious withdrawal of the public police force from Cairo and Egypt in general.⁴³ Yara, in her mid-forties, is a resident in Al-Rehab. I met her in the *souk* (the commercial area) of Al-Rehab, where she told me that she had noticed the absence of police from Al-Rehab's police station. Wishing that they carried guns, Yara was afraid because Al-Rehab's the unequipped private security guards would be unable to protect the community, in her opinion. Afraid that thugs will come from their '*ishash* (literally means nests, referring to slums), Yara was also afraid of the criminals who escaped from prisons⁴⁴ during the early days of the revolution. Another participant, Fady, in his early-thirties, was also afraid during those days. Fady said: "I am extremely afraid that the thugs from '*izab*⁴⁵ (villages of very rundown slums) will come, as they are armed with weapons and might kill or rob us... I brought a *shoma* (metal bat) and some huge knives to join the neighborhood committee to help in protecting our residential area... Yet these tools do not help much as thugs are armed with guns."

⁴³ Hendawi, Hamza. Feb17, 2011. Security Remains Shaky in Egypt after Revolt. http://www.denverpost.com/ci_17411810, accessed Feb 25, 2011.

⁴⁴ AFP, February 2011 "Egypt: Hundreds Escape Cairo Prison During Riots" <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/5453/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-Hundreds-escape-Cairo-prison-during-riots.aspx>, accessed March 29, 2011. And, Zayed, Dina and Sherine El Madany. January 29, 2011. "Egypt Vigilantes Defend Homes as Police Disappear". <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/29/us-egypt-vigilante-idUSTRE70S3AQ20110129>, accessed March 30, 2011.

⁴⁵ According to Abaza, citing Mohammed Riad, "*izbas* [plural of '*izba*] are conglomerations of peasant's huts, originally made of mud brick." Abaza adds, "*Izabas* and '*izba* systems are also the old "haciendas" which were owned by larger landowners and which have been today dismantled after the successive agrarian reform... '*izba* thus carries two meanings... One related to the affluence, the owner of an '*izba* is a large owner who was in the past called '*ayaan* and thus did not really worked since he lived from his land. Today it connotes utmost destitution if one today live in an '*izba* in the region of Greater Cairo" (2006:242).

The commercial area of Al-Rehab was crowded, as the people hurried to buy tools which could be used as weapons for self-defense. They bought metal bats and wooden bats. The grocery stores were filled with people buying great amounts of food to store, apparently worried that there would be a shortage of food during this uncertain time. Maybe they also thought it would become too dangerous to go out to the stores.

Residents of Al-Rehab set up neighborhood protection committees. Some of them were armed with their own licensed guns. They taught the unfamiliar residents in the committee how to use these guns, as they handed the guns over to them for the next shift. Other men armed themselves with knives, garden hedge-trimmers, and other tools that could be used as weapons and created checkpoints. They stopped everyone in cars, delivery motorbikes and bicycles also walking people in order to check people's identification cards and asked them about their destination. Residents who own watchdogs brought the animals to the committees too for protection. I joined one of these committees. All of its members were men. Women prepared tea and coffee along with light snacks all through the night. The women arranged to separate themselves into two shifts. One shift was at night and the other was during the day. Chats about the moment of uncertainty, about the future of Egypt, consumed most of their conversations, while the people/women/men and women built fires to warm them from the cold night weather. [introduce idea of the troops arriving first:] Through the course of two days, January 29 and 30, 2011, army troop transports began patrolling the streets of Al-Rehab. This came after media reports of people's calls, asking for protection from thugs, on programs, such as *Al-Ashara Masa'an* on Egypt's Dream satellite channel,⁴⁶ reporting frightening incidents of violence and thuggery targeting rich areas like Al-Rehab. Through interviews and observation it was apparent

⁴⁶ Mona El Shazly, host of Al-Ashera Masa'an on Dream channel. The channel is owned by Egyptian businessman Ahmed Bahgat. He also owns Dream Land gated community in 6th of October city.

that the people began to feel safer once the army troops surrounded Al-Rehab. Thus, when the military tanks and armored vehicles crossed the streets of Al-Rehab, the residents' fears were alleviate



Figure 1: Four pictures showing weapons, different types of tools, and a watch-dog in one of Al-Rehab's neighborhood protection committees

In Al-Rehab, the gates and the fences were patrolled by the committees, comprised of Al-Rehab's own resident, along with many private security guards. Some of the guards were provided with guns by the residents. And from the time that the army was deployed to the streets of Cairo they were surrounding and protecting these rich communities. The rich neighborhoods were protected first, as they were the target of the thugs. There were some intrusions in Al-Rehab by thugs wearing army uniforms. According to three participants, they learned from others at different neighborhood committees in Al-Rehab that these thugs were eventually apprehended by the neighborhood committee members while walking in the streets of Al-Rehab. They were then handed over to the army. Afterward, talk about how the thugs were able to obtain army uniforms was a central topic of discussion among a neighborhood committee that I joined. Almost all of the members believed that the thugs were given the uniforms by some corrupted members of the public police. The distrust in public police intensified. The residents soon demanded qualified private security guards, equipped with guns. This topic then consumed their conversations. And they were all willing to pay additional fees to achieve this. The mood of moral panic, and the distrust in private security, remained in the community during the days of this national event. There was a mood of distrusting the private security guards before the revolution as I explored due to the residents point of view that they maybe collaborate in criminal acts out of greed since these guards are coming from poor areas. Thus, the private security guards are stigmatized by poverty and criminality by the residents, who I interviewed in the community. During the Egyptian revolution, the residents showed that their trust in the guards was only due to the presence of the army, as the security guards would not dare to do any criminal activity while knowing that they would be handed over immediately to the army. This demonstrated that the state of moral panic toward 'the other' within their own community still existed among my

participants, but in this moment the presence of the army, and not the public police, helped in alleviating their fears.

Conclusion

In the beginning of the revolution, none of my participants showed interest in joining the peaceful protests. On February 10, 2011, after the last speech of President Hosni Mubarak,⁴⁷ one of my participants who served during the night shift with a committee, tried to persuade/encourage the other members that they should now join the protests. Only a small number eventually joined the protests, and almost all were men. Some sons had participated from the start of the protests, but their families were afraid for their safety. They were extremely worried that the public police would harm them. I did not learn of any women or girls from Al-Rehab joining the protests.

Neoliberal segregation plays a role in detaching many, but not all, of the residents of Al-Rehab. For, as I learned, a few of Al-Rehab's youth are active agents in this revolution. The young residents of Al-Rehab are the ones participating most in the political sphere. Optimistically, this tells us that some of the youth of Al-Rehab want to be part of the world outside their gated community. I learnt this information by the end of the revolution because it was difficult for me during the early days of the revolution to interview more residents due to the lack of security. In the early days of the revolution, residents were more concerned about securing themselves and their families, and had no interest in being interviewed.

⁴⁷ The speech shows: "How stubborn Mubarak remained. He announced he would transfer at least some powers to his vice president". Yet, people were demanding him to resign. Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (I): Egypt Victorious? Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa. 24 February 2011. Report Number 101. Page: 13.

Similar to the “euphoria that swept the crowd gathered in Tahrir Square”⁴⁸ after the announcement of President Hosni Mubarak’s resignation on February 11, 2011,⁴⁹ Al-Rehab’s residents went to celebrate in the streets of their community. Like a massive, ecstatic festival, young parents carried their infants to have photographs with the soldiers there in Al-Rehab’s streets. Colorful fireworks decorated Al-Rehab’s sky. Loud music, patriotic national Egyptian songs could be heard from car stereos. Children and their parents carried the Egyptian flag (the flags they have used at international football games). Here and there the people, whether walking or in cars, stopped and cheered the soldiers. Youth danced in groups in the streets, while others carried banners with slogans against the Mubarak regime. Young boys and girls cheered loudly for the martyrs killed by the police: “The blood of the Martyrs was not in vain!”

“[The]Mubarak era will be remembered as nothing but the consolidation of crony capitalism and monopoly of wealth in a handful of families.” [Abaza 2006:159]



Figure 2: Celebrations in front the food-court area in Al-Rehab City

⁴⁸ Mahmood , Saba. February 14, 2011. “The Architects of the Egyptian Revolution”. <http://www.thenation.com/article/158581/architects-egyptian-revolution>, accessed April 17, 2011.

⁴⁹ “At 18:00 on 11 February, Omar Suleiman issued a brief statement that Mubarak had given up his post and transferred his powers to the military.” Ecstatic celebrations took place in and “around Tahrir Square”. Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (I): Egypt Victorious? Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa. 24 February 2011. Report Number 101. Page: 14



Figure 3: Celebrators of Al-Rehab carry banners stating: “The Nation liberated Egypt”, while another says “Goodbye” in several languages.



Figure 4: Residents of Al-Rehab and their children have their pictures taken with the army

Work Cited

Abaza, Mona

2006 *The Changing Consumer Cultures of Modern Egypt: Cairo Urban Reshaping*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Cohen, Stanley.

2002. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. London: Routledge.

Denis, Eric.

2006. *Cairo as Neo-Liberal Capital? From Walled City to Gated Communities*. In *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space: in the New Globalized Middle East*. Diane Singerman and Paul Amar eds. Pp.47-72. Cairo: The American University Press.

Harvey, David.

2006. *Neo-liberalism as Creative Destruction*. *Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography* Pp.145-158. *Geogr. Ann.*, 88 B (2): 145–158.

Harvey, David.

2007. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Ibrahim, Saad Eddin.

2004. *Egypt, Islam and Democracy: Critical Essays*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Ismail, Salwa.

2006. *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters: Encountering the Everyday State*. U.S.A: University of Minnesota Press.

Khamissi, Khaled.

2008. *Taxi*. Egypt: Dar El Shrouk

Sims, David.

2010. *Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City of Control*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Singerman, Diane.

2009. Introduction. In *Cairo Contested: Governance Urban Space and Global Modernity*. Diane Singerman ed. Pp 3- 38. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Singerman, Diane and Paul Amar.

2006. Introduction: Contesting Myth, Critiquing cosmopolitanism, and Creating the New Cairo: Cairo School of Urban Studies. *In* Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space: In the New Globalized Middle East. Diane Singerman and Paul Amar eds. Pp.3-43. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Zayed, Ahmed.

2009. "A Study of Egyptians' Behaviors, and their Choices concerning the Transparency and Corruption" [الأطر الثقافية الحاكمة لسلوك المصريين و اختياراتهم دراسة لقيم النزاهة و الشفافية و الفساد].

Ministry of State for Administrative Development. <http://www.ad.gov.eg/IMG1.PDF>, accessed April 1, 2011.