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Opposition rejects new decree

NATIONAL SALVATION FRONT OPPOSES REFERENDUM AND CALLS FOR MORE PROTESTS

By Ahmed Aboul Enein

Egypt's largest opposition group has rejected President Mohamed Morsy's latest decree and the 15 December constitutional referendum. It called for mass mobilisation against the referendum on Tuesday.

The National Salvation Front (NSF) called for large protests and rallies in Tahrir Square and "other squares in the capital and governorates" in response to Morsy's "indifference towards their legitimate demands."

In a statement released Sunday night, the front, which is led by Al-Doustour Party Chairman Mohamed ElBaradei, Popular Current leader Hamdeen Sabahy and former Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa, rejected the referendum and said it would "only lead to further sedition and division."

The statement also warned against holding a referendum amid troubling security conditions that feature "threats by the Muslim Brotherhood's militias and terrorist gangs levelled against protesters and demonstrators."

This is a "reflection of recklessness and blatant irresponsibility on the part of a regime that ventures to push the country to the verge of violent confrontations, risking its na-

tional security," read the statement.

The statement went on to say that the Ministry of Interior is being blackmailed into using "old methods" to

quell dissent and opposition protests.

The NSF said the constitution being put to referendum negates political and social rights and entrenches

presidential authoritarianism. They added that Morsy was being authoritarian and coercive and that his group, the Muslim Brotherhood, was "hijack-

ing the state."

Finally the front said it salutes and respects the stance of "Egypt's esteemed judges" in their refusal to

provide judicial oversight for the referendum and their decision to put the country's courts on strike "in defence of justice and the rule of law."

Despite the front's decision to boycott the referendum, several opposition groups and parties have opted to instead campaign for a "No" vote, including some that are members of the NSF.

The Egyptian Social Democratic Party, a founding party of the NSF, will make a decision regarding boycott depending on the stance of Egypt's judges. Nonetheless, the party has already started campaigning against the draft constitution, said foreign relations committee chairman Hussein Gohar.

Jermeen Nasr, founding member of ElBaradei's Al-Doustour Party, said the youth of the party would campaign for a "No" vote, despite the official position of the party to boycott.

Former presidential candidate Abdel Moniem Aboul Fotouh's Strong Egypt Party released a statement saying it "appreciated the president's response in repealing his decree."

The party "does not appreciate the way the constitution was passed through the Constituent Assembly" but will nonetheless participate in the referendum, voting against the constitution because it does not "meet the demands of the Egyptian people."



Members of the National Salvation Front give a press conference at the Wafd party headquarters in Cairo

Morsy freezes tax hikes

Government retains the right to demand taxes



The proposed tax rises targeted many foodstuffs as well as cigarettes, alcoholic drinks, fertilisers and construction materials

By Hend Kortam

A surprise statement was released by President Mohamed Morsy early on Monday suspending proposed tax hikes just hours after they were posted in the official gazette.

"The president realises the extent of the burdens that the Egyptian citizen has during this rough economic stage... he does not accept that the citizen bears any additional burdens, except through their own free will so he has decided to suspend the deci-

sions..." the statement read. It added that the president has tasked the government with holding public discussions on the matter.

The tax rise included increasing sales taxes on cigarettes, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beer, wine, fizzy drinks, non-subsidised vegetable oil, fertilisers and construction materials such as steel and cement. It also raised taxes on services such as national and international calls made from mobile phones and air conditioned transport, for example

buses and trains.

The tax hikes were posted in the state's official gazette. The decision to halt the hikes, however, was not. Mohamed Fadel, a lawyer from the Egyptian Centre for Social and Economic Rights (ECSER) said, "this means that the government has the right to ask people for the taxes. The decision must be suspended through a similar way in which the original one was carried out."

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Judges groups split on referendum

By Rana Muhammad Taha

The State Council Judges' Club (SCJC) announced on Monday its intention to supervise the referendum on the draft constitution, provided that a number of conditions are met.

The SCJC (not to be confused with the Judges Club) had announced a boycott of the referendum process last week; a response to President Mohamed Morsy's constitutional declaration released on 21 November. President Morsy replaced the declaration with another decree on Saturday.

"The State Council has decided to side with the peoples' freedom and preserve the validity of the referendum vote by supervising the referendum," Hamdy Yassin, the head of the SCJC, said during a press conference.

The main condition necessary for the SCJC to supervise the referendum is resolving any blockades on state institutions, especially the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC). The SCC has suspended its work for eight days, due to the presence of pro-Morsy demonstrators in front of the court. The sit-in began last Sunday; when the SCC was scheduled to look into a case that could have potentially dissolved the Constituent Assembly.

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Army officers can temporarily arrest civilians

By Connor Molloy

Egyptian army officers will be allowed to arrest civilians starting Monday. Their powers will remain intact until the result of the constitutional referendum is announced.

The power was granted to the military to ensure "the protection of vital installations in the country" and it comes during a week when many street protests have already been scheduled.

Mohamed Lotfy from Amnesty International in Egypt said the above law, number 107, needs to be read in conjunction with the power granted to the general prosecutor, which according to Lotfy allows detainees to be held for six months in an effort

to "protect the revolution". Lotfy said these crimes are broadly defined and therefore threaten the freedom of the media, the freedom to assemble, and the freedom of workers to strike. "Along with the new law for the military," said Lotfy, "it is a dangerous combination."

Under Law 107 military officers will be given the right to arrest and detain civilians. Then, they would be forced to refer the arrestees to the civic judicial system, unless they are able to define the crimes as falling under military jurisdiction. Lotfy said, "the justice code does provide for a very open interpretation of what falls under military jurisdiction."

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Cairo's Downtown coffeehouses



Om Kalthoum in Orabi Street is a typical baladi coffeehouse but with an extra pedigree of history to its name

Downtown Cairo is Egypt's heart of cultural and political dynamism and coffeehouses have long been a contributing force in that momentum. Some of them belong to the past but still serve the present.

Daily News Egypt visits Cairo's historical coffeehouses and examines their impact on politics and culture.

Feature on page 7

Currencies	Buy	Sell
CHF	6.4537	6.7651
USD	6.134	6.164
EUR	7.7954	8.1715
GBP	9.6871	10.1545
SAR	1.627	1.647

Egyptian Stock Exchange		
	Closing	Daily Change
EGX 30	4,976.22	-1.50%
EGX 70	436.23	-0.54%
EGX 100	734.44	-0.83%
EGX 20	5,697.24	-1.34%

Commentary

Mahmoud Salem writes:

Imagine that the secular side is the majority for the first time, with people in the streets all over Egypt viewing this as a referendum on the Muslim Brotherhood and Morsy and want to vote No on both and teach them a lesson

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أسود أصفر أحمر أزرق



Tuesday demonstrations by rival groups

ISLAMIST AND OPPOSITION FORCES WILL DEMONSTRATE ON THE SAME DAY

By Basil El-Dabbh

For the second week running, opposing demonstrations are planned on the same day in Cairo, both supporting and opposing President Mohamed Morsy. After its press conference on Sunday night, the National Salvation Front (NSF) called for mass protests on Tuesday in protest against the constitutional referendum scheduled to take place on 15 December. "The NSF calls upon our great people to pursue peaceful mobilisation in all liberation squares in the capital and nationwide on [11] December 2012, in rejection of the indifference of the president towards their legitimate demands, and in rejection of the referendum on the constitution that discards rights and freedoms," said the group's statement. The Muslim Brotherhood, along with a list of other Islamist groups and parties, has dubbed their demonstrations "yes to legitimacy" in support of the president and his new constitutional declaration which it claims was

issued to "defuse the [political] crisis, which has worsened lately." "Thus, the coalition of Islamic forces calls on all Egyptians to participate in the national duty of voting in favour of this consensual constitution, which represents the entire spectrum of Egyptian society," read a statement issued by the Brotherhood on Monday. Islamist groups will assemble at Rabaa Al-Adawiya Mosque and Rashdan Mosque, both located in Nasr City. "The two million-man marches will meet in one location to be determined depending on certain circumstances," said the statement. The initial announcement stated that the Islamic Legitimate Body for Rights and Reformation, the Salafi Calling, Jamaa Islameya, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Association for Sunni Scholars, the Board of Trustees of the Revolution, the Salafi Front, Al-Nour Party, the Freedom and Justice Party, the Construction and Development Party, the Asala Party and the Islah Party would all participate in the pro-Morsy Tuesday demonstrations.



Egyptian army soldiers stand on tanks outside the presidential palace as opposition protesters wave flags. Both Islamist and opposition groups have called for demonstrations on Tuesday

However, on Monday, state-owned MENA reported that the influential Salafi political group Al-Nour Party said it would not participate in the Tuesday demonstrations, electing to focus its efforts on campaigning in support of the draft constitution leading up to Saturday. Rabaa Al-Adawiya and Rashdan mosques are near the Presidential Palace, where opposition groups are expected to gather on Tuesday as part of their mass demonstrations. The Muslim Brotherhood called for demonstrations last Wednesday at the Presidential Palace, the same time and location as a sit-in by opposition-led groups. The decision led to clashes between the two sides that lasted late into Wednesday night, resulting in seven deaths, according to the Ministry of Health. Non-Islamist forces have participated in series of escalated demonstrations against the Constituent Assembly and its draft constitution and decisions that they claim give Morsy the powers of a "dictator."

Morsy freezes tax hikes

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He added that the suspension and calls for discussion could just be a way to calm the public down. "But the truth is, that this is an absurd stance and no one can understand it," Fadel said regarding the turnover of the decision. Malek Adly, another lawyer at the ECSER, said that this is not the first time the president has made a decision and then revoked it. "The dialogue should come before the decision, not after," he said. Adly also believes this is an indicator that the president makes decisions which are not well calculated and provoke the people. Malak Reda, an economist in the Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies, said that Egypt's budget deficit exceeds 10 per cent and the president needs to raise revenue to be able to pay wages and subsidies. Reda states that the taxes are among the main sources of income for the country and raising taxes on goods that are luxurious or harmful such as cigarettes, could be one way of increasing revenue.

"However, raising taxes on construction and agricultural materials, this is where we enter a dangerous area and this could be the reason why the decision was frozen," she said. She feels that the hikes should affect people who trade in real estate and have vacant property, yet unless the government couples the taxes together with a programme that provides affordable housing for the average person, ordinary citizens will not be able to afford building housing of their own. Adly said, "these decisions burden the average citizen... it affects the citizens' daily lives and it will not reduce the budget deficit." Adly stated that taxing all these goods and services combined will not make up for the losses made by Maspero, which from the number from the closing balance for this year, made a shortfall of more than EGP three billion and three hundred million. Maspero hosts Egypt's state-run television and headquarters the Egyptian Radio and Television Union. "You can see the huge losses made by one body... reducing the deficit shouldn't happen by taking from the average citizen's pocket," he said.

Adly believes that what really needs to be done is for the government to fight corruption and review the budget of the Ministry of Defence, which is not disclosed to the public or Ministry of Interior, which Adly avers, "can reduce the deficit of two countries, not one." He added that the tax hike is related to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan Egypt has applied for and that the revenues from tax hikes will be used to pay the interests of the loan. Egypt has signed a preliminary agreement with the IMF for a \$ 4.8 billion loan, which the IMF board will review on 19 December. The ECSER has filed a law suit demanding the government to publicise the full conditions of the loan. Reda said, "put the loan aside we are in a bad place, economically... the next few months will decide." She said that austerity will come whether we take the loan or not, but if we take it, it has to be used on services, like schools and hospitals and production. Otherwise, she added, if it is used on subsidies and wages, the budget deficit will become worse.

Army officers can arrest civilians

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"We have concerns about the military handling detainees in general," said Lotfy. "In our past experience of military rule, we saw how the military formerly handled detainees. How they treated them in detention and put them on military trial, which basically doesn't guarantee the right of a free trial." In an Amnesty International report published in October titled Brutality Unpunished and Unchecked the rights group outlined abuses under the military that occurred last time they held judicial powers. The report states the military "arbitrarily detained and tortured thou-

sands of protesters, including women, many of whom then faced grossly unfair trials before military courts. Between January and August 2011, over 12,000 civilians were unfairly tried before such tribunals." The report also supported Lotfy's concern about pre-trial treatment of detainees, reading, "Activists and pro-

testers detained by military forces during the 16 months of SCAF's rule continued to face almost routine torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence and other gender-based violence." "The tactic was used all the time when SCAF was in power," said Lotfy, "because they saw themselves as having jurisdiction over the whole country, the whole territory of Egypt was seen as a military zone." Now that the mandate is directed to "maintain security, and the protection of vital installations in the country" the military will not have to search far for authority in a week when the anger and desperation of millions is coming to a climax.

Itihadiya sit-in still ongoing

By Fady Salah

On Monday, hundreds of protesters continued their sit-in against President Morsy, held in the area surrounding the Presidential Palace. The sit-in continued despite Morsy's decision to cancel his controversial constitutional declaration issued on 21 November and issue a new constitutional declaration on 8 December. Protesters and opposition groups criticised the new declaration and draft constitution and asserted their demands to form a new Constituent Assembly that represents different sectors of Egyptians. Republican guards built cement barricades in the entrances leading to the palace and checked IDs of protesters entering the sit-in. On Monday, the East Cairo prosecution office renewed the imprisonment of four supporters of Morsy for a further 15 days. Investigations indicate that the four supporters attacked protesters opposing Morsy with knives and wooden sticks and detained them for 17 hours, before they were handed over to the police. Mohamed Assi, doctor and revolutionary socialist, asserted that the military and republican guard forces are employing stricter security procedures. He added that they built iron and cement blockades to close some streets leading to the palace. "The Salah Salem entrance is fully blocked, Merghany and Ahram streets' entrances are now narrowed by the blocks," he said.



Egyptian protesters drink tea outside their tents after spending the night outside the presidential palace in Cairo

Assi affirmed there are almost 30 tents in the area surrounding the Presidential Palace, explaining that the decrease in numbers of protesters is due to the fact they are preparing for Tuesday's mass rallies called for by the National Salvation Front. The NSF announced its rejection of Morsy's new declaration and called for mass rallies against the declaration and constitution referendum. Mohamed Kamel, member of Al-Dostour Party, said the republican guards and Central Security Forces (CSF) are currently securing the area surrounding the palace, adding that they promised to protect protesters from any attacks by the Muslim Brotherhood or the Islamist forces supporting Morsy's decisions. However, he said he does not trust CSF or military personnel anymore, claiming

they killed hundreds of Egyptians over the past two years. Samira Ibrahim, female revolutionary activist, claimed that republican guards prevented protesters from entering the sit-in area, after they built the cement barriers. Protesters formed an area that they called "The revolution museum", where they hung pictures and slogans citing different incidents that took place after the 25 January 2011 revolution. Ahmed El-Dosouky, student at Ain Shams University, criticised the National Salvation Front saying that because of their unclear decisions, protesters are not able to decide whether they would boycott the constitutional referendum or participate and vote no. The referendum on the new draft constitution will take place on 15 December.

DN EGYPT

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

The Cabinet Office case files

What happened a year ago outside the Cabinet Office?

On 16 December, it will be a year since soldiers tried to forcibly disperse a three-week-old peaceful sit-in outside the Cabinet Office in central Cairo. Five days of clashes followed, during which 17 protesters were killed and nearly 1,000 injured. Each day this week we bring you the story of one of the victims and a recommendation to the authorities.

Case # 3 - violence against women

The world was shocked by footage taken on 17 December, the second day of the crackdown on the Cabinet Offices protest. It showed a woman protester being beaten on the ground by soldiers, tearing her abaya and revealing her bra. Azza Hilal Ahmed Suleiman, aged 49, known as the red-hooded woman on the video, tried to pull the woman away from the scene.

But then the troops attacked her: 'They pushed me to the floor and kicked me with their boots and batons', she later told an Amnesty-researcher, 'that is how they broke my skull twice and injured my face, ear and other parts of my body.'

The soldiers kept on kicking her, even when Azza Suleiman fell unconscious. She survived, but today she suffers from memory problems.

Azza Hilal Ahmad Suliman submitted a complaint to the South Cairo Public Prosecution Office. To date no one has been held to account for the abuses she suffered and it is unknown whether any members of the army forces were investigated.

Sign Amnesty's petition for Azza Suleiman: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/appeals-for-action/LWM-Egypt>

Amnesty International's recommendation # 3:

In order to deal with this legacy of human rights abuses, the Egyptian authorities should, among other things:

- Provide all victims of human rights violations with compensation and other forms of reparation that are appropriate and proportional to the gravity of the violation, the harm suffered and the circumstances of their case, including the coverage of full medical costs to those injured during demonstrations as a result of excessive force or other abuses by members of the army and appropriate medical and other support to those subjected to sexual and gender-based violence.
- Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 3 million supporters, members and activists in over 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.



POLITICS

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Judges groups split on referendum



Demonstrators remain camped outside the Supreme Constitutional Court

Court strike continues

Another general meeting of the Judges' Club is required for suspension to be lifted

By Rana Muhammad Taha

The suspension of several Egyptian courts goes on despite the decision of a number of judicial bodies to supervise the referendum on the constitution, due to be held on 15 December.

The Judges' Club announced the suspension of its general assembly, due in two weeks time, as a response to the constitutional declaration released by President Mohamed Morsy on 21 November. The declaration was seen by the Judges' Club as a transgression against the judiciary. The club also threatened any judges who do not abide by its decision with suspension.

The Judges' Club confirmed that a new general assembly is needed in order to revoke the suspension decision. The Judges' Club is scheduled to hold a press conference Tuesday announcing whether or not it will supervise the referendum.

Deputy Minister of Justice, Zaghloul Al-Belshy, called on all judges to lift their strike and return to courts, reported state-owned news agency MENA. Al-Belshy, in a statement released Monday, also called on judges to "answer the nation's call" by supervising the referendum.

"When the 21 November constitutional declaration was issued, all of us, angered, took a stand in support of the judiciary's independence," Al-Belshy said, "your stand has been fruitful and the declaration has been revoked. There is, therefore, no justification for the continuation of suspending courts."

Al-Belshy also stated that any

stance towards the draft constitution is a political matter that doesn't concern the judges. He added that it is prohibited for judges to state an opinion regarding the draft constitution, according to article 73 of law 46 for the Judiciary.

The declaration was seen by the Judges' Club as a transgression against the judiciary

Judicial bodies have gone strike to an unprecedented level during the past two weeks. The Cassation Court, the Appeals Court and most primary courts in Cairo are still suspending work. The Cassation Court, which sits atop of the judicial hierarchy, held a general assembly meeting late November and voted 270 to 19 to suspend work until Morsy rescinds his declaration.

The 21 November declaration allowed Morsy to dismiss former Prosecutor General Abdel Meguid Mahmoud and replace him with Tala'at Abdallah, who Morsy chose unilaterally. Judges saw the decree as an attack on the independence of the judiciary but the president insisted it was necessary in order to protect the revolution from corrupt individuals.

Though the declaration has been revoked, all actions taken based on it remain valid, including the appointment of Abdallah.

Additional reporting by Ahmed Aboul Enein

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Other conditions put forward by Yassin include: securing the Supreme Referendum Committee, a committee tasked with managing the process of the referendum, as well securing all citizens voting in the referendum, the polling stations and the judges supervising the referendum. Yassin also demanded the prevention of any campaigning outside of the polling stations.

"We also demand that all State Council judges are allowed to exercise their role in supervising the referendum," Yassin said, "they should also be allowed to withdraw from the polling stations should anybody inhibit their independence or offend their dignity."

A committee presided over by the

head of the SCJC is to be formed in order to make sure that the conditions listed are fulfilled.

"Our decision doesn't prevent any State Council judge from independently boycotting the supervision of the referendum," Yassin stressed.

Judges from the Independent Judiciary Movement (IJM) also announced on Monday their intention to supervise the referendum. The IJM had earlier declared a boycott.

"We should be intent on serving the interests of the country and not our own interests," movement leader Ahmed Soliman said in a press conference. He said that Egypt has been passing through a turbulent era since the January 2011 revolution, adding that if such an era persists, "the state of Egypt shall soon diminish."

Deputy Head of the Cassation Court Mohamed Nagui Derbala said that the IJM represents their fellow judges from across all Egypt "who shall honour the referendum with their supervision of its process."

Derbala, reading out a prepared statement to the press, said that the unity of the judiciary is only achieved through respecting its values and traditions and steering clear of any political affiliations.

"We stress that we shall supervise the referendum," Derbala said, calling on all other judges to follow in their footsteps and praising the State Council Judges' Club's decision to also supervise the referendum. The State Council announced on Monday their intention to supervise the referendum, on certain conditions.

The IJM's decision reportedly was not welcomed by those who attended the press conference. Over 30 judges withdrew from the conference amid chants against the proposed constitution and accusations of negligence, state-owned Al-Ahram reported.

The referendum is due to be held on 15 December. Several political movements are calling for its postponement until a more "harmonious" draft of the constitution is reached.

Marches have been taking to the streets for the past two weeks demanding the cancellation of the referendum. Pro-Morsy demonstrators have also organised marches voicing their full support of all Morsy's decisions, including his decision to put the draft constitution to referendum.

Referendum to decide Shura power

Shura Council ready to assume legislative authority

By Basil El-Dabbh

The Shura Council will take on legislative powers if the constitution is approved in Saturday's referendum. The transitional development was highlighted by Shura Council Chairman Ahmed Fahmy during Monday's session, saying that the body would step into legislative control "during this critical period of Egypt's history," according to state-owned Al-Ahram.

Fahmy said the council would reconvene at a date to be determined later, after a decision was made by President Mohamed Morsy.

"It will not be for a long period," he added. "If the constitution wins the

approval of the Egyptian people, we will have a large legislative mandate."

The transfer of power is detailed in the draft constitution's transitional provisions. Article 230 states that the Shura Council will assume full legislative authority until the lower house is elected and officially formed.

Following the installment of a new House of Representatives, Egypt would elect an entirely new Shura Council within six months.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) acquired the legislative powers from the People's Assembly when it was dissolved by the Supreme Constitutional Court in June.

Newly-elected Morsy then ac-

quired legislative powers through his 12 August constitutional declaration.

The Shura Council, whose legitimacy was challenged in the Supreme Constitutional Court, was protected by Morsy's constitutional declaration on 22 November. However, Morsy's second declaration, made this week, rescinded the article protecting the legislative body.

The Supreme Constitutional Court has not announced a date to continue hearings that could result in the dissolution of the upper legislative body, as it has suspended all work until further notice.

The Shura Council is dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups.

Europe reacts to upheaval in Egypt

Ashton calls for inclusive policies



EU foreign affairs representative Catherine Ashton is quoted by MENA as saying the Egyptian people have to go through a long process in order to reach democracy

By Hend Kortam

The head of European Union foreign affairs has called on the Egyptian government to be inclusive.

Catherine Ashton, the high representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy, said on Monday that the Egyptian people have to go through a long process in order to reach democracy, according to MENA.

Ashton had talks with Egypt's President Mohamed Morsy and some members of Egypt's opposition during her visit to Egypt, two weeks ago, as well as talks with Egypt's Foreign

Minister, Mohamed Kamal Amr, over the phone.

She said at a meeting of European foreign ministers that Egypt has to figure out a solution to its crisis and that it is necessary for Egyptian officials to hold inclusive dialogue and to communicate with civil society.

At the meeting, Giulio Terzi, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, said that even though the situation is complex and the transitional phase is tough, he hopes that a constitution that meets the expectations of all Egyptians is adopted.

Egypt is holding a referendum on a draft constitution on 15 December.

Terzi called on Egyptian officials to show moderation and commitment to pluralism.

The political impasse in Egypt has dragged on ever since Morsy announced the 21 November constitutional declaration. It reached its peak last week when Morsy's opponents were attacked by supporters outside the presidential palace, leaving eight dead.

Despite Morsy replacing the 21 November declaration with a new declaration on 8 December, most of Egypt's opposition are against the second declaration the 15 December referendum.



Arab Peace Initiative meeting in Doha

MEETINGS ON PALESTINIAN UNITY TO TAKE PLACE IN CAIRO

By Joel Gulhane

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamed Amr announced on Sunday that meetings will take place in Cairo in order to work towards achieving Palestinian unity.

Following a meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Amr wrote on his official Facebook page, "Palestinian national reconciliation is an urgent need, without it pursuing the Palestinian project will continue to be

a deficient movement." He added, "we are determined to achieve this reconciliation and are committed to the people and leadership. We will hold a meeting in Cairo soon to achieve this goal."

Hamas and Fatah, which rule the Gaza strip and the West Bank respectively, have a turbulent relationship. The two sides have fought each other since 2006 after Hamas won legislative elections in Gaza. The chief of Hamas' political bureau, Khaled Meshaal recently made

a call for Palestinian unity after a ceasefire was reached between Israel and Hamas, after eight days of the two sides exchanging fire.

Amr and Abbas met on the side of the ministerial meeting of the Arab Peace Initiative in Doha that took place on Sunday.

The ministers released a joint statement outlining the decisions made during their meeting. It outlined the ongoing support for the Palestinian cause and welcomed the decision of the United Nations general assembly

to grant Palestine non-member observer status.

The ministers also announced the creation of a \$100 million per month "safety net" to meet the needs of the Palestinian people.

The ministers "urge[d] the security council to accelerate the decision on the application for full Palestinian membership in the UN." They also called "upon states that have not yet recognised the state of Palestine to do so as soon as possible."

The statement condemned the

Israeli settlements in the West Bank describing them as "a flagrant violation of international law and the fourth Geneva convention." It added, "the Israeli government's implementation of its statements about the new projects in occupied East Jerusalem and beyond amounts to war crimes."

Amr commented, "The Arab Peace Initiative provides a historic opportunity for Israel to live in peace, not only with its neighbours, but with the Muslim world without exception." He

added, "it seems that the desire for expansion and arrogance of power is Israel's priority."

The Arab Peace Initiative was first proposed at the 2002 Arab League summit in Beirut and was re-endorsed at the 2007 summit in Riyadh. The initiative seeks to bring an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories including East Jerusalem and fair settlement of the Palestinian refugee issue.

Hundreds of Sudanese in protest call for 'revolution'

Khartoum (AFP) - Hundreds of Sudanese called for a "revolution" on Monday, the second day of protests in support of four dead students originally from the conflict-plagued Darfur region.

Their deaths, following a crackdown on a tuition protest at Gezira University south of Khartoum, have sparked the largest outpouring of Arab Spring-style discontent since anti-regime protests in June and July.

A crowd of about 700 people came out of Nilien University shouting "Revolution until victory" and "Killing students is the killing of the nation!" an AFP reporter witnessed.

Police responded with tear gas and some protesters were beaten with batons, he said.

Some scattered into the city's main bus terminal nearby, where several truckloads of riot police were already on standby.

An AFP reporter also observed pickup trucks with plainclothes security agents in the area, the scene of violent clashes on Sunday.

The main road through the bus terminal was charred from a fire which burned during Sunday's unrest when, an AFP reporter said, six people were injured, a bus was torched and police fired tear gas.

Official radio said 47 people were detained on Sunday when hundreds also protested.

In June and July demonstrations began at the University of Khartoum over high inflation and then spread to involve scattered protests throughout the country, calling for the fall of the 23-year regime of President Omar Al-Bashir.

They petered out following a security clampdown.

In 1964, the death of student activist Ahmed Al-Qureshi sparked the "October Revolution" which ended the military regime then in power after tens of thousands protested.

Jihadists seize key north Syria army base



A member of the Free Syria Army walks past a destroyed Syrian forces tank in the town Atareb in northern Aleppo province (File photo)

Damascus (AFP) - Jihadists led by the radical Al-Nusra Front seized a strategic army base in the northern Syrian province of Aleppo on Monday after weeks of fierce fighting, a watchdog said.

The violence came after UN-Arab League envoy Lakhdar Brahimi reported that he held "constructive" talks in Geneva at the weekend with senior Russian and US officials, and ahead of a Friends of Syria meeting in Morocco.

The capture of the base at Sheikh Suleiman dealt a blow to President Bashar Al-Assad's regime in the region as it had been the last major military base west of Aleppo city still under army control.

It also undercut the military influence of the mainstream rebel Free Syrian Army, which was not involved in the takeover, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The army used warplanes and tanks, meanwhile, to bombard rebel positions in the Damascus province, where the regime is desperate to suppress an insurgency that is inching ever closer to the capital, the monitoring group said.

"Al-Nusra Front, alongside several Islamist rebel battalions linked to it, have seized control of the army base headquarters at Sheikh Suleiman,"

Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP.

Base 111, with its headquarters in the village of Sheikh Suleiman, sprawls over nearly 200 hectares of rocky hills, about 25 kilometres from Aleppo, Syria's second city.

"It is a significant win for the rebels. It proves the army is still suffering major military losses," said Abdel Rahman, adding that the rebels seized up to 10 military vehicles and at least one tank.

Other rebel groups also claimed to have captured the base, but Abdel Rahman insisted Al-Nusra and its allies were responsible for its fall.

An AFP journalist who covered the clashes around Sheikh Suleiman said many of the fighters were from other Arab countries and Central Asia.

Elsewhere, the army carried out air strikes on suburbs of the capital, amid fierce clashes in the Damascus province, said the Observatory.

"A fighter bomber carried out a raid on Daraya as rebels and soldiers fought on the ground, while artillery bombed Moadamiyet al-Sham," said the Britain-based watchdog, referring to two towns south of Damascus.

Al-Watan newspaper, close to the government, said the army on Sunday

"dealt heavy blows to Al-Nusra Front gunmen linked to the Al-Qaeda network in several regions of Damascus province and Aleppo".

Soldiers also attacked gunmen in the Tadamun and Hajar Aswad districts of southern Damascus, "killing or wounding dozens of them," it said.

Al-Watan said government forces had killed more than 5,000 rebels in Aleppo in the past month.

Ninety-four people, mostly civilians, were killed on Sunday across Syria, within the Damascus area accounting for 37 of the deaths, said the Observatory, which relies on activists and medics for its information.

Brahimi, the Algerian trouble-shooter, described as "constructive" a meeting on Sunday with Russian and US representatives who stressed "a political process to end the crisis in Syria was necessary and still possible".

The latest violence comes two days ahead of a Friends of Syria nations meeting in Marrakesh, which will bring together countries that support the anti-Assad revolt.

Arab and Western states will consider two key issues concerning the 21-month conflict, the political transition in the event of Assad's fall and mobilising vital humanitarian aid as winter sets in.

Bahrain sentences activist's daughter to jail

Dubai (AFP) - A Bahraini court on Monday sentenced the daughter of prominent opposition activist Hadi Al-Khawaja to one month in jail for taking part in an unauthorised demonstration, her lawyer said.

Zainab Al-Khawaja, the eldest of the Shi'a rights activist's daughters, was found guilty of entering the "prohibited area" of Pearl Square, the main symbol of 2011 protests crushed by security forces, on February 12, the lawyer said.

She also was fined 100 dinars (\$258).

Her lawyers disputed the charges, saying there was "no formal decision declaring that Pearl Square is a forbidden area."

Zainab Al-Khawaja, whose father is serving a life sentence for plotting against the state, has faced justice on several occasions already this year.

In October, she was freed after serving a two-month jail term for destroying government property.

The judiciary accused her of tearing apart a portrait of King Hamad during detention, according to Amnesty International.



Bahraini Shia Muslims take part in a demonstration in solidarity with jailed Bahraini human rights and political activists in the village of Sitra (File photo)

In May, she served a one-month prison sentence for assaulting a police officer.

Bahrain came under strong criticism from international human rights organisations over last year's deadly crackdown on the protests, led by

the majority Shi'a in the Sunni-ruled kingdom.

An international panel commissioned by King Hamad to probe the government's crackdown found that excessive force and torture had been used against protesters and detainees.

Nobel winners say Syria is 'stain' on world conscience

Oslo (AFP) - The European Union, winner of this year's Nobel Peace Prize, said at the award ceremony Monday that the conflict in Syria was "a stain" on the world's conscience.

"Let me say it from here today," said European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, "the current situation in Syria is a stain on the world's conscience and the international community has a moral duty to address it."

Barroso said that on international human rights day, the thoughts of the 27-nation bloc were with those "all over the world who put their lives at risk to defend the values that we cherish."

At talks in Brussels on Monday, EU foreign ministers were discussing the situation in Syria, where heavy fighting was continuing in a 21 month conflict against the regime President Bashar Al-Assad.

More than 42,000 people have been killed in the violence, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.



(left to right) Norwegian Nobel Committee chairman Thorbjørn Jagland applauds European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, European Parliament President Martin Schulz during the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony at the City Hall in Oslo

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BUSINESS

CBE: Liquidity rises to EGP 1.12 trillion

DOMESTIC LIQUIDITY ROSE BY EGP 29.9 BILLION AT THE END SEPTEMBER

The Central Bank of Egypt's latest report indicated that the amount of liquidity in the Egyptian local market has reached EGP 1.12 trillion, rising by EGP 29.9 billion at a rate of 2.7 per cent during the July-September period.

The report (a copy of which was obtained by the Middle East News Agency,) stated that a rise in local liquidity reflected a rise in the amount of available liquidity in the Egyptian economy by EGP 8.3 billion at a rate of 3 per cent, and quasi-money by EGP 21.6 at a rate of 2.6 per cent.

The report stated that a rise in the amount of available liquidity came as a result of the rise of money traded outside the Egyptian banking sector by EGP 4 billion at a rate of 2.1 per cent, and a rise in current deposits made in local currency by EGP 4.3 billion at a rate of 3.1 per cent.

As for the increase in quasi-money, this came as a result of a rise in non-current deposits made in local



CBE report indicates rise in domestic liquidity by EGP 29.9 billion

Hassan Ibrahim

currency in the amount of EGP 19.5 billion, at a rate of 3.1 per cent, and deposits made in foreign currency by EGP 2.1 billion at a rate of 1.1 per cent.

The recent increase in local liquidity came as a result of the growth of local Egyptian net assets by EGP 37.6 billion at a rate of 4 per cent, throughout the July-September period. This increase in net domestic assets came on the one hand as a result of an increase in net domestic credit by EGP 59.8 billion at a rate of 5.6 per cent, and on the other hand from an increase in the negative balance of net budget items to EGP 22.2 billion at a rate of 16.4 per cent.

The report noted that the increase in local credit came as a result of the increase in the government's net liabilities by EGP 55.4 billion, that of the household sector to EGP 3.1 billion, and that of the public business sector to EGP 1.3 billion. Increases in private sector liabilities on the other hand were minor.

US Dollar breaks EGP 6.15 level

By Mohamed SalahEldin

For the first time in eight years, the US dollar exchange rate exceeded the level of EGP 6.15 in a number of banks, following the political and social unrest.

The Central Bank of Egypt has stated that the average interbank rate for USD is EGP 6.13; however the three top banks in Egypt, The National Bank of Egypt, Banque Misr and the Commercial International Bank (CIB) said they are selling dollars at EGP 6.15.

"The raise was mainly due to political tensions and that there were no signs of a breakthrough in the political crisis. The exchange rate will continue to increase as long as the tension persists," said the Treasury and International Markets Manager at Industrial Development Bank, Haytham Abdel Fattah. He explained that in a net importing country, the fluctuating exchange rate could have a huge impact on inflation levels. "We import the majority of nutritional items, such a lift will negatively affect the prices," added the banker.

As regards whether the increase in US dollar price is a result of policies dictated by International Monetary

Fund (IMF), Abdel Fattah stated that nothing was announced which could confirm this.

The CBE has defended the exchange rate in the post revolution period, a policy that cost \$20 billion of foreign reserves in 22 months. With the reserves reaching \$15 billion at the end of November, the bank's ability to preserve the pound's value has significantly weakened.

The preliminary agreement signed with the IMF last month stipulates that the bank has to adopt a monetary policy that permits the promotion of foreign trade and investment, which may imply allowing the EGP to fall in value.

"Fluctuations of exchange rates are a matter of market forces, it's all about supply and demand and apparently there is high demand on the US dollar," said Treasurer of the National Bank of Egypt, Zainab Hashem. The increase in demand could be justified by political tensions, but, according to Hashem, the affect is not certain according to her. She didn't exclude the possibility of the IMF influence, adding "the market is very volatile, and that it is very difficult to predict."

Developer sues Industrial Development Authority

Industrial Development Group claims that the authority has imposed unjustified fines

By Abdelkader Ramadan

The Industrial Development Group (IDG) has taken the Industrial Development Authority to court at the Cairo Regional Centre for Commercial Arbitration over what the IDG considered intransigence, by imposing fines without justification.

This has been the largest dispute between the two parties since construction of IDGs projects began in 6th of October city.

The authority has claimed that all fines imposed were a result of irregularities found in a number of the company's factories, and the IDG's failure to construct buildings based on contractual terms.

They accused the IDG of selling land to investors at inflated prices, and demanded that a share of these revenues, EGP 9.5 million, be paid to the authority as compensation for violating the contract. The authority went on to claim that there was a discrepancy between the agreed amount of land the IDG was permitted to build on. The authority claimed that the IDG was never granted permission to undergo construction in a region known as Area 3 (the first region of

the city to undergo construction), the surface area of which totalled 1 million square metres.

Despite the dispute, the IDG paid the EGP 9.5 million in fees in order to avoid stalling the implementation of several projects

A source close to the authority claimed that the IDG was repeatedly warned about selling land to investors and that doing so would be considered a violation of the contract. They further claimed that the price at which land was to be sold would be fixed, and did not include the cost of the services offered by developers and the outer wall. Additional fines were imposed for the IDG's failure to construct enough green lands, as agreed upon in the contract.

"The authority's claims regarding Area 3 did not materialise until after the IDG began complaining about the imposition of unjustified fines and

began to seek legal arbitration," said the Managing Director of IDG, Samih Attैया. He added that "contracts drawn up between the IDG and the authority did in fact include the cost of submitted services and outer wall, and that the authority does not have the right to change the wording of the contract after the fact."

Despite the dispute, the IDG paid EGP 9.5 million in fees in order to avoid stalling the implementation of several projects. Attैया claimed that the authority's decision to not grant building licenses to investors seeking to undergo development projects in the city would have a negative effect on the city's infrastructure and the companies who had already purchased land. He asked the court to re-assess the value of these fines and authorise all contracts with investors.

Attैया pointed to an agreement between the company and the General Authority for Investment, licensing one million new metres, known as Area 4, as an investment zone, and that it would recognise all contracts with investors. Fifty five projects in Area 3 are considered to be under threat, including 55 factories and 20 projects still under construction.

November inflation rate lowest for seven years

November's inflation rate was the lowest for seven years according to the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS), which has announced annual inflation of 4.1 per cent in November.

The monthly inflation rate inched down 1.5 per cent month-on-month to 126.6 points, the lowest since March 2006.

Inflation was 4.3 per cent in urban areas, down 1.3 percent from October, reaching 125.6 points. In rural areas inflation was 4.0 per cent, 1.7 per cent lower than October, reaching 127.9 points.

"Inflation shrank after four consecutive months of increasing due to economic slowdown and weakened purchase power," said CAPMAS Chairman,

Abu Bakr Al-Gindy. He added that vegetable prices dropped 2.12 per cent and the price of gas went down 2.12 per cent thanks to a production increase. Other price decreases included eggs (2.5 per cent), fish (2.2 per cent) and poultry (5.1 per cent). Overall food and beverages prices dipped 2.7 per cent in November compared to the previous month, to reach 138.8 points driven by the decrease in vegetables prices.

Of goods whose prices increased, CAPMAS listed ready-to-wear clothes which rose by 3.2 per cent, and lemons and bananas which increased by 46 per cent and 4.1 per cent respectively.

The culture and entertainment category saw a price increase of 5.6 percent

explained by a 7.19 per cent increase in organised tours prices. The furniture, home appliances and entertainment category increased by 6.3 per cent, pushed by a 2.5 per cent increase in textile prices.

Hotels and food prices increased by 4.3 per cent, driven by fast food prices which saw a 3.3 per cent increase. Health care increased 3 per cent after a 7.1 per cent hike in medical services prices.

Transportation prices rose by 7.1 per cent in November compared to the same month last year, due to a 3.2 per cent increase in transportation services prices, the miscellaneous goods and services basket witnessed an increase of 6 per cent due to a 9.1 per cent increase in gold prices.

Xpress Money offers free remittances to Palestine from Middle East countries in the wake of Gaza strife

Xpress Money, one of the most dependable global money transfer brands, today announced a free remittance drive to Palestine from the Middle East, expressing its solidarity with the people of Palestine suffering from the Gaza strife.

In a statement, Xpress Money said that the free remittance drive will help members of the Palestinian diaspora spread across the region, and well wishers transfer funds to kith and kin in Palestine free of cost for a month starting from November

24th 2012 till December 25 2012.

"There will be no charges or commissions at the send and receive end of the money transfer chain," said Mr. Sudhesh Giriyan – Vice President & Business Head, Xpress Money, adding that "the gesture has been conceived in the wake of the untold sufferings faced by innocent Palestinians in the current scenario of aggression."

"As a community-focused entity, our corporate philosophy is to extend a helping hand wherever we

can to ensure the social and financial security of millions of people including families and children. The free remittance drive to Palestine has been conceived in this spirit," he said.

Xpress Money has 34 agent locations in Palestine, a prominent receive market, which allows easy access for Palestinians to claim funds sent by their breadwinners abroad. Across the Middle East and North Africa, Xpress Money has an agent network of close to 6700 locations.

Daily EGX30 index performance

Company Name	Reuters Code	Sector	Last Price	Close Price	Returns			Daily Performance		Turn Over (EGP Mill.)	Volume Trade	Market Cap. (EGP Mill.)
					Daily	YTD	12-Mths.	Max. Price	Min. Price			
Commercial Bank	COMI	Banks	33.7	33.52	-2.70%	79.25%	49.91%	34.10	33.06	56.50	1,685,418	20,574.49
NSGB	NSGB	Banks	37.20	36.88	0.22%	81.59%	57.27%	37.40	36.02	4.106	111,344	16,322.12
Ezz Steel	ESRS	Basic Resources	8.5	8.43	-1.06%	126.01%	70.99%	8.61	8.23	12.50	1,482,735	4,628.62
ELSWEDY ELECTRIC	SWDY	Industrial Goods and Services and Automobiles	21.00	20.90	1.85%	0.77%	-6.53%	21.01	20.52	0.528	25,284	4,584.54
MRRIDIVE	MOIL	Industrial Goods and Services and Automobiles	1.01	1.00	-0.99%	-17.26%	-27.08%	1.02	0.99	0.17	28,223	361.98
Aif Contracting	AIND	Financial Services excluding Banks	0.44	0.44	-2.22%	-15.38%	-21.43%	0.45	0.44	2.491	5,659,435	240.58
Amer Group Holding	AMER	Financial Services excluding Banks	0.69	0.69	-1.43%	25.45%	2.99%	0.70	0.68	3.39	4,891,617	2,127.79
EK Holding	EKHO	Financial Services excluding Banks	1.07	1.08	0.00%	10.20%	0.00%	1.09	1.07	1.247	188,995	906.44
EGF-Hermes	HRHO	Financial Services excluding Banks	10.1	10.09	-0.79%	0.80%	-6.66%	10.17	10.03	7.97	789,950	4,864.26
Pioneers Holding	PIOH	Financial Services excluding Banks	3.76	3.79	-1.81%	70.72%	38.32%	3.86	3.73	3.279	865,792	1,930.00
Citadel Capital	CCAP	Financial Services excluding Banks	3.11	3.11	-1.58%	21.96%	5.78%	3.14	3.07	5.70	1,832,530	2,065.75
Raya Holding	RAYA	Technology	4.62	4.60	-0.43%	32.18%	18.86%	4.65	4.53	1.050	228,448	296.71
Telecom Egypt	ETEL	Telecommunications	12.3	12.38	-2.44%	-6.28%	-10.35%	12.75	12.27	4.82	388,989	21,662.74
Orascom Telecom Media And Technology	OTMT	Telecommunications	0.51	0.51	-1.92%	47.71%	47.71%	0.53	0.51	5.109	10,009,163	2,727.76
Orascom Telecom	ORTE	Telecommunications	3.53	3.54	-0.84%	104.81%	104.81%	3.58	3.52	7.53	2,125,827	18,727.12
Sidi Kerir Petrochemicals	SKPC	Chemicals	12.25	12.19	-1.38%	2.35%	-1.77%	12.28	12.15	0.693	56,851	6,489.00
Egyptian Financial and Industrial	EFIC	Chemicals	8.9	8.85	-1.34%	-0.67%	-12.38%	8.96	8.76	0.94	106,579	621.64
AMOC	AMOC	Oil and Gas	72.50	72.50	-1.57%	8.31%	8.55%	73.15	71.00	1.182	16,302	6,342.13
Juhayna Food Industries	JUFO	Food and Beverage	6.25	6.29	-0.94%	61.28%	50.12%	6.37	6.16	12.37	1,967,352	4,483.44
Orascom Construction Industries (OCI)	OCIC	Construction and Materials	232.20	231.45	-1.52%	15.06%	10.62%	233.80	229.01	16.485	71,223	49,106.80
Delta Construction & Rebuilding	DCRC	Construction and Materials	5.72	5.64	-1.23%	-26.66%	-34.11%	5.73	5.57	0.32	56,918	131.94
Modern Co. For Water Proofing	WATP	Construction and Materials	1.60	1.60	-1.23%	-30.43%	-32.77%	1.61	1.57	0.498	312,358	165.24
Palm Hills	PHDC	Real Estate	2.01	2.00	-1.48%	83.49%	56.25%	2.02	1.96	16.56	8,291,301	2,128.09
TMGH Holding	TMGH	Real Estate	3.91	3.90	-1.76%	31.76%	8.33%	3.93	3.87	9.323	2,389,612	8,192.34
National Real Estate Bank	NRPD	Real Estate	17.31	17.27	-1.14%	-11.98%	-25.85%	17.49	17.05	1.16	66,908	68.18
Six of October	OCDI	Real Estate	17.41	17.45	-1.19%	118.95%	65.25%	17.73	17.01	2.519	144,359	1,601.34
El Kahera Housing & Development	ELKA	Real Estate	5.33	5.35	-0.19%	37.89%	21.32%	5.43	5.25	1.46	272,713	502.50
Arab Cotton Ginning	ACGC	Personal and Household Products	3.25	3.23	-1.52%	53.08%	27.67%	3.28	3.17	2.579	798,637	868.60
Oriental Weavers	ORWE	Personal and Household Products	22.5	22.21	0.32%	-19.83%	-21.84%	22.50	22.00	1.31	58,857	1,992.60
Egyptian Tourism Resorts	EGTS	Travel & Leisure	0.91	0.91	-1.09%	8.33%	-4.21%	0.92	0.90	0.200	218,874	966.00

Market indices performance

Index	Value	Daily Ch.	YTD Ch.
EGX 30	4,976.22	-1.50%	37.38%
EGX 70	436.23	-0.54%	4.97%
EGX 100	734.44	-0.83%	14.21%
EGX 20 Capped	5,697.24	-1.34%	45.13%

Market Brief

Markets	No.	Volume	Value(LE)	Trades
Listed	158	71,878,868	284,475,431	14,409
Stocks	158	71,878,868	284,475,431	14,409
PDBonds	0	0	0	0
Bonds	0	0	0	0
Nilex	6	136,765	835,873	162
OTC	9	658,991	1,350,150	107
Deals	5	182,026	1,008,385	12
Orders	4	476,965	341,765	95
Total	173	72,674,624	286,661,454	14,678
Total Market Cap		347,524,749,822		

Direction	No.	Volume (000's)	Value (LE 000's)	No. of Trades
Listed stocks	157	59,379	234,475	14,306
Gainers	28	1,449	17,976	1,320
Decliners	98	55,253	212,078	12,484
Unchanged	31	2,677	4,421	502



COMMENTARY

Disclaimer: Commentaries published by Daily News Egypt do not reflect the position of the paper, but the independent opinions of their authors.

Columnists condemn presidential manoeuvres

Ibrahim Eissa
Tahrir Newspaper
It is not a state



Eissa examines the policy “blunders” the president and his group have made. He states that such mistakes have made opposition to such policies inevitable, and wonders what circumstances are preventing the president from seeing the extent to which Egypt has become a de-facto failed state. To Eissa, in a political entity defined by the term “state”, the president cannot hide from demonstrators in front of his palace and then complain when the driver of his armoured car was injured.

The security apparatus cannot hibernate while Islamists encircle the Supreme Constitutional Court and the Media Production City, and revolutionaries fill Tahrir in response. He wonders how in a “state”, Muslim Brotherhood militias can protect the Presidential Palace from dissident demonstrators, while the country is

Amid Morsy’s recent decisions, columnists criticise how the president blindly follows instructions from his Islamist group. Although the results of the national dialogue meeting were deemed successful by many, some columnists argue it rather marked a new presidential failure.

being run by the supreme guide of an illegal society and his deputy. Eissa says that a state whose president accuses a group of people of being thugs, and of receiving foreign money to incite violence, before being acquitted by the prosecution, is not a state. Eissa concludes by stating that the state whose president regards himself as a Friday preacher and his citizens as worshippers is not a state; and that opposition is a natural response.

Magdy Al-Gallad
Al-Watan Newspaper
To those demanding my head



Addressing the supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, Dr Mohamed Badie, his deputy Khairat El-Shater, and President Morsy, Al-Gallad says

he is unafraid of the death threats he has received, and which were publicly expressed by pro-Morsy demonstrators at their demonstration at Cairo University. He reminds them that their supporters displayed his photograph, alongside several of his journalist colleagues, next to insults printed in large font, while bombarding the pictures with their shoes. Al-Gallad expresses his readiness to pay whatever price for free speech, even if that includes his own life, and he recounts examples of others who bravely paid their lives in defence of free press.

It is no wonder to him that the supporters of Hazem Abou-Ismael included him on their black list. While stating that the blood of a Muslim is sacrosanct, he does not demand protection from the Muslim Brotherhood leaders, out of his belief that such notions are divergent with their core beliefs. He wishes to be buried in his home village in Sharqiya province, where his cohorts will visit his grave, pray peacefully as they would have always done, in what Al-Gallad sees as the original form of Egyptian Islam, which does not utilise religious passions to jump to power and worldly control.

A very bad joke

We wake up to Al Mahalla announcing its independence and while we laugh our heads off at this ridiculous piece of news, foreign media reporters run to discover where and what Al Mahalla is, its population size and structure. We cover this piece of news because it is in fact news, even if we know it is ridiculous, like the espionage cases against opposition figures. They are funny actions that are neither backed by law nor evidence nor power to implement. The Egyptian army never even bothered to respond to Al Mahalla’s independence. Everything in this country runs according to who is in power and who is strong, nothing is based on the rule of law.

In reality, here in Egypt, the independence of Al Mahalla is only a punch line.

The truth of the matter is that the Egyptian political scene is a bad joke. And this has been the case for the past two years. There are a thousand revolutionary fronts and political groups, all of them hating each other; lying and scheming, with only a handful of people who can be called respectable. And who can tell the difference between them?

Take, for example, Khairy Ramadan, is he a revolutionary media professional? There is nothing revolutionary about Mr Ramadan. But he had a moment, on air, in a show of protest. Has being revolutionary become some sort of fad? Fashion? Or is the movement gaining ground and becoming increasingly more powerful in the country?

With the judges leading this newly loved position, I suppose everyone

will follow suit. And why not, if one of the most corrupt institutions is assuming the role of integrity and rubbing shoulders with the revolutionaries, then it has become a free for all. We have not had a just judiciary system for decades, and recent talk of the integrity of this institution is yet another farce. These judges are the same ones who monitored the 2010 parliamentary elections with an astonishing display of dishonesty. Look at them now, acting all revolutionary!

And all the while, on the streets, people protest the first decree, the constitution and the referendum.

There is no such thing as a clean institution in this country. Not the judges, not the army, not the cabinet, and of course not the police (they could give workshops on corruption). Now they are protesting and striking, El Zend and Abdel Meguid Mahmoud have become protest leaders and spokespeople of a just and fair judiciary system. And Khairy Ramadan has become the model for respectable media.

To complete this chaotic scene, we have a president who issues decrees that will affect the daily life of his people by raising taxes to unseen levels in the country. Only to cancel the decree the next morning, as we were told via Facebook. And by midday, we realised that he only postponed it until a ‘dialogue’ can take place.

To the foreign media, it seems as though there are only feloul and Islamists fighting. When a bunch of Islamists and Morsy supporters an-



RANA ALLAM

swer the president’s call for a dialogue on his decree and constitution, foreign media and monitoring groups assume that these are the opposition powers. And why would they think otherwise? They are not subjected to the same suffering we are, watching these people day in day out on TV channels campaigning for Morsy’s decisions, before he even takes them.

To the media outlets we, the people, don’t exist. They still do not realise who leads here. We led the revolution and when it seemed to become successful, the Islamists joined and together with us, they won. Now we are leading the revolution AGAIN and the feloul are joining in. We are the majority. Not the feloul, nor the Islamists. If only the world would understand this, if only WE would understand this, things would be so much simpler.

To the foreign media, Egypt must look like Monty Python’s Grumpy People’s Front of Judea scene.

And it would be funny, if it were not so sad.

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Follow @Run_Rana

In the lap of the gods

The hounds have the fox in their sights. Unleashed, the dogged gird for affray. Morsy is forced to flee his palatial, besieged lair. Across town the Muslim Brotherhood HQ is embattled. The overseer of the referendum calls it quits.

Shakespeare: We would not seek a battle, as we are, yet as we are, we say we will not shun it – Henry V.

Mysterious and malefic is how we are governed. All great truths begin as blasphemies – George Bernard Shaw.

A fistful of constitution articles makes the point. If one who has borrowed from the Jews dies before the loan is repaid the debt shall not bear interest while the heir is under age. After her husband’s death a widow may remain in his house for 40 days. Merchants may tarry safely at home and abroad on land or sea, so long as they’re buying and selling.

This is the constitution governing my life, the much-trumpeted Magna Carta, forced into law in 1215, scuttled after three months, resurrected by the nine-year-old successor of King John.

Knocked about a bit through the centuries, you’ll find kids in English classrooms being taught it’s the greatest guarantee of freedom ever penned.

Revered law lords such as Denning and Woolf extolled its laying the foundation of freedom and liberty the world over. You could say the gobbledygook was ever present to warm the cockles of tyrants’ hearts languishing in the British Empire.

Offer any man on the Clapham omnibus a free ride to recite one line from the English constitution and your six-penneth will be as safe as houses. Nobody can.

That’s the truth of constitutions. They stir up passions and sectarian strife and cause civil wars when they’re parsed or edited. Yet the newspapers reporting every dot and comma of the mayhem are fish and chip wrappers the day after.

People voting one way or another on Egypt’s constitution are wasting the bus fare if they think it’s the anchor of democracy. They’re passing a referendum on Morsy’s mandate. Like King John, he’s got uppity and like John he’ll rue the day he razed the people. Hoodies don’t take kindly to being hoodwinked.

The Muslim Brotherhood can bus in a herd of willie nillies to make a haphazard judgment. But ask them to recite any one of the 199 Articles and they’re tongue-tied. I asked 25 people, all Muslims, for their opinions. Only nine said they’d be voting, three for and six against.

What does the constitution say about Shari’a, I asked? Eighteen said it introduced Shari’a as the rule of law in Egypt. What Article 2 actually says is principles of Islamic Shari’a are the principal source of legislation.

Magna Carta was written at a time of enormous strife over the power of the religious over the state. Article 63 stated the English Church to be free, adding in the same sentence, men have and hold all liberties, rights, and concessions peaceably, freely and quietly.

So what’s all the fuss about in Egypt?

Morsy’s reign has been clumsily feckless. Morsy couldn’t resist cavalier opportunism. Grabbing omnipotent power was ill conceived. Tampering with judges’ power guaranteed a firestorm. Recognising religion in the constitution brought down the wrath of Hell.

Is Article 3 objectionable? Here’s the text. The canon principles of Egyptian Christians and Jews are the main source of legislation for their personal status laws, religious affairs, and the selection of their spiritual leaders.

It seems a straightforward reassurance to them that the state shouldn’t get involved in their marital arrangements, divorces or appointing bishops and clergy.



PHILIP WHITFIELD

That’s as it is in the Church of England. The laity and clergy have been engaged in an enthralling debate choosing a new Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the worldwide communion of 60 million Anglicans.

The arguments created a schism between gays and straight, feminists and misogynists. The prime minister was given the name of a neophyte bishop, once an oil baron, and he passed it to the Queen who gave it the nod.

All without a whimper of rancour outside the chambers and studios of debate.

The Egyptian constitution’s phrase about Shari’a is ambiguous. It sparked the opposition. Mohamed ElBaradei’s sleeper in Tahrir Square rekindled hope that an alternative to Morsy’s monarchy is arising.

Morsy has lost the battle for the hearts and minds. Tahrir tumbrels trump tepid television turnouts with Fidel Castro-length lectures. Morsy’s media team should leave it to flacks who can make lemonade out of lemons.

The president is culpable of theft of democracy and justice. Hangdog obfuscation won’t get him off.

Egyptians can choose between freedom and autocracy, between the ancients: Heka the god of all power and Ma’at the goddess of truth and harmony.

Philip Whitfield is a Cairo commentator.

Imagine

Imagine sitting at a friend’s house, watching the president address the nation after a week long crisis, with his supporters just the night before opening fire on civilian protesters in Heliopolis in horrifying clashes that spanned the whole day. Imagine finding out that he issued the illegal constitutional declaration that enflamed and divided the entire country, because- and I quote- one of the suspects in the Camel incidents, who was declared innocent by the courts, had a meeting with 3 other unnamed people in his office. The president that has under him state security, general intelligence, military intelligence, the Ministry of Justice, the police and the general prosecutor’s office declaring that he had no choice but to issue this declaration because four people had a meeting. And then, as he swipes the page of his speech on his iPad, he instinctively licks his finger first as if he is turning a paper page. Imagine.

Imagine that this president saw that the situation was so urgent, he called for a national dialogue meeting with the opposition in two days to resolve the crisis, one that all of his allies and none of the opposition attend, and he walks in, talks for 5 minutes, then leaves the dialogue he called for immediately, telling people to talk to his VP and that he is leaving to guarantee the “neutrality of the dialogue”. Imagine that his group’s uber-intellectual, Fahmy Howeid, shortly after also leaves because he had another important meeting to attend, and that this group of clowns come with a solution after midnight that isn’t a solution, drafted by ex-presidential candidate Selim Al-Aawa, who wrote the Sudanese constitution that eventually led to Sudan getting divided into two countries. They fronted that guy. Just Imagine.

Imagine that the next day, you are no longer greeted with the president’s face, but with those of the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, and his second man Khairat El-Shater, who both hold press conferences defending the president in hiding, while the army builds walls around the Presidential Palace. Imagine watching the Supreme Guide claiming that all who died in the clashes are Muslim Brotherhood, despite there being dead Christians in the clashes, and El-Shater talking about how hard it is to get investment into this country and blaming the whole crisis on the Christians and the Church. Imagine knowing that those are the people who run the Order that is running your country at the moment. Imagine.

Imagine knowing that your president, the first civilian democratically elected post-revolution president is a puppet for that group, and his puppeteer is the second man in this order, and not even the first. Imagine that this group has its people, for two weeks, wondering openly on TV talk shows about why the people, after a revolution, cannot tolerate having a temporary dictatorship for a few months, since they endured it under Mubarak for 30 years. Imagine them being unable to comprehend that because you simply won an election by 1 per cent, you can’t just do anything you damn please in the name of democracy because you are the majority. Imagine them openly stating that this constitution, since it supports Shari’a, will have 90 per cent support in terms of votes and that the opposition are all Christians and agents and no more than 40,000 in the entire country and want to repeat the constitution writing process to allow gay marriage. Imagine.

Imagine that this group is still pushing for a referendum over a con-



MAHMOUD SALEM

stitutional draft that is created by an illegal Constituent Assembly that a third of its members withdrew, while an entire country goes in flames over it, with hundreds of thousands of Egyptians in the governorates who are protesting and clashing with this group’s supporters. Imagine that with this referendum being 4 days away, and the presidency has no judges to supervise it, doesn’t have the schools to host it, did not open the door for journalists or observers to go in and observe the process, and gave no way for the voters to find out where they are supposed to vote. Your country’s constitution. Imagine.

Imagine that the secular side is the majority for the first time, with people in the streets all over Egypt viewing this as a referendum on the Muslim Brotherhood and Morsy and want to vote No on both and teach them a lesson. Imagine them finally rallying behind a unified opposition front, called the National Salvation council, who just yesterday issued that they will boycott the first referendum they actually have a great shot of winning, because they think it’s an illegitimate referendum and we shouldn’t dignify it with our votes, despite it being the country’s constitution and everything.

Just freakin’ Imagine.

Mahmoud Salem is a political activist, writer, and social media consultant. www.sandmonkey.org

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IN-FOCUS

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Cairo's Downtown coffeehouses



Hassan Ibrahim

Pedestrians pass by the alluring exterior of Cafe Riche

By Sarah El Masry

In his autobiography *The Days*, the dean of Arabic literature Taha Hussein described a scene he encountered daily as a young man back in 1902. The sounds and smells impressed themselves on his memory. "Passing through the door, he [Hussein] felt some mild heat on the right side of his face, light smoke entering his nostrils and an intriguing bizarre sound... going in and out of Al-Azhar; he understood that it was the gurgling sound of hookahs prepared by the coffeehouse for merchants to smoke." Later on in the book, he depicted the dynamism that coffeehouse produced in the neighbourhood, the interactions and activities of the patrons and the waiters' rituals for serving drinks, igniting charcoal for hookahs and sprinkling water in front of the coffeehouse to keep the heat and dust at bay.

Coffeehouses became a subject of fascination for orientalists and European travellers under the reign of the Ottoman Empire. The picture Hussein drew was an archetype of the coffeehouses scattered throughout the alleyways of Cairo at that time. Other writers such as Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel laureate for literature and the author of *The Cairo Trilogy*, depicted coffeehouses in his novels to emphasise their role in the Egyptian public space.

In Cairo's cosmopolitan Downtown, coffeehouses (ahawi), blend with old European style cafes. Ahawi have existed for centuries. They are places where commoners (particularly men) meet to spend their leisure time after a long day. Men at the ahawi would listen to a singer, play backgammon and dominos, and discuss life. They are known to be cheap (a cup of tea or coffee goes for as little as a pound), provide open air seating and give a taste of the authentic Egyptian spirit. In short, they were the place to go to socialise and relax.

European style cafes opened under 1863-1879, and they were linked to the Greek population then living in Cairo. They attracted a different audience from another social class; effendis (young professional Egyptians) and people who had been exposed to western ideas. As well as being venues for passing the time, these cafes sought to recreate a European atmosphere, offering a stage for entertainment and a space for cultural salons.

Strolling around Talaat Harb Square can make one nostalgic; it is where the past meets the present. French colonial buildings line the streets branching out from the square. The European style patisserie and tearoom Groppi, with its exquisite architecture, stands on the main corner surrounded by bookstores and shops. Although the scene may bring back bitter memories of the colonial era for some, it also commemorates what Egyptians call el-zaman el gameel, the good old days. Walking from Groppi towards Tahrir Square, another relic of the past is still buzzing and overcrowded with customers, especially at night.

Established in 1908, Cafe Riche restaurant and bar has been witness to much of Egypt's modern history. The windows of the wood panelled exterior reveal a unique interior. Wooden tables dressed in striped red and white tablecloths and chairs emblazoned with the cafe's name are spaced within the restaurant to offer a sense of privacy to customers. Ve-neered pillars separated by glass panes covered with white curtains make one of the outside walls. The other bears display cases featuring faded black and white pictures alongside contemporary photographs of Mina Danial and Sheikh Emad Effat (two martyrs of the 25 January revolution). The alluring entrance gives pause to many passersby, who stop to peer through the glass facade to figure out what this place is about.

Inside, a bar sits to the right of the entrance. Liquor is served and the smell of beer mixes with the aroma of coffee. Beside the bar, a cast staircase descends to the basement. The cafe cellar holds a story of its own. Before the 1919 revolution, Cafe Riche's Greek owner helped Egyptian students to print political pamphlets against the British occupation. The basement had a hidden door leading into a neighbouring alley and students used it to escape police raids. The printer the students used is still preserved in the cellar. The late Egyptian historian Yonan Labib noted that at different times in history, demonstrations used to congregate and depart from the cafe, especially when the student movement became active. After the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, some opposition figures were arrested in the cafe.

Am Fefel has served at Cafe Riche since 1943. He migrated from Nubia and started working the cafe aged 13. A repository of oral history, if prompted Am Fefel will reminisce about the political activism he has witnessed at the cafe. "everyone used to sit here and especially communists whom people used to fear," he says in a quavering voice. "Then when communism retreated, other currents emerged. Under Nasser, people used to say the walls have ears, so they wouldn't talk explicitly about politics, but when Sadat came, people talked politics more than before and the same happened with Mubarak in the beginning."

"When Egypt signed Camp David, a demonstration burst out of Cafe Riche," he remembers.

Over time Cafe Riche became a beacon for prominent Egyptian and foreign thinkers, politicians, artists, journalists and writers. Through its cultural salon, located far from the bar next to the guest area, the cafe hosted many discussions. More than just a cafe, restaurant or bar, it connected politics to literature and art. In the past, Cafe Riche was larger than it is today; it owned a stage that extended to the corner of Talaat Harb Square. Om Kalthoum was among several singers who sang there.

But perhaps the largest contribution to Cafe Riche's reputation was Naguib Mahfouz's visits. He never took a day off from the cafe. Am Fefel used to serve plain coffee to Mahfouz. He says, "Mahfouz used to walk from home to here. He bought his newspapers and read them here. He used to be a humble man who to talked to everyone and stands when greeting everyone."



Sarah El Masry

Cafes around el-Borsa host young people for drinks, shisha and conversation



Hassan Ibrahim

Zahret el-Bostan is a sanctuary for intellectuals, writers and artists

According to Am Fefel, the revolution made the cafe popular among youth who did not previously know about it. He watches the youth meet with the elders who have been coming the cafe faithfully for years.

"I don't consider myself working," Am Fefel concludes. "I'm a partner in Cafe Riche, it's like home for me."

Leaving the cafe and heading right, another historical coffeehouse stands nearby. Though much less sophisticated than the French style cafe, Zahret el-Bostan has also stood the test of time and is believed 80 years old. Underneath its blue illuminated sign reads "the concourse of literati and artists." Also a venue for intellectuals, el-Bostan has none of the snobbery of Cafe Riche.

Ateef, a waiter who has been working at el-Bostan for 28 years, says, "el-Bostan has been considered a forum for all intellectuals. I hear people reciting poetry, playing Oud, talking about painting and art."

El-Bostan's oldest customers sit in front of the kitchen, while newcomers are relegated to the alleyway behind Cafe Riche. The discrepancy in appearance between Cafe Riche and el-Bostan seems intentional. The latter is open to the street; no roof, no walls no doors. With plastic tables and chairs, the setting is informal and people can hold loud discussions without restraint.

A professor at the faculty of fine arts of Helwan University Ahlam Fekry says, "sitting in this coffeehouse in the street, signifies our liberty. Our people love freedom and coffeehouses give them that. This is where you meet the other and people from across the class spectrum."

Although el-Bostan is in most ways a typical coffeehouse, it is also unique in that its clientele has expanded to include women. Baladi (common) coffeehouses are strictly reserved for men and women can expect to be excluded, criticised or harassed if they sit in such an establishment.

However, el-Bostan and a few similar coffeehouses provide a sanctuary for women as well. Professional women come to mingle with their male counterparts and hold discussions of their own. Housewives accompanying their families also come to el-Bostan for an outing.

"El-Bostan safeguards women in that



Hassan Ibrahim

Among many clients el-Borsa hosts activists, NGO workers and youth

sense," Fekry says. "We are able to come here and contribute to the intellectual momentum that is born here daily."

Medhat Taha, a writer and a regular customer at el-Bostan, says, "my generation of the 1970s started coming to el-Bostan after we stopped going to Riche. We did not like the selectivity and the elitist nature Riche began to acquire."

Taha admires the easy accessibility the commoners have to el-Bostan. He says, "we sit around and people approach us to ask about politics and other things. We have no problem talking to them because where from them. This kind of interaction is what makes this place so great."

Some of the old customers of el-Bostan are reminiscent of the time when Cafe Riche was the focal point for political and cultural activity. It still preserves its significance, but its lives off its history to a great extent.

Abdo Ghobair, a novelist, believes that the 1970s generation chose el-Bostan because it was within "the strategic depth" of Riche which they wished had conserved its political and cultural activism.

Though el-Bostan is usually overcrowded, it empties out on days of "million man" marches to Tahrir, illustrating its popularity with revolutionary youth. Ghobair comments on the revolutionaries at el-Bostan, saying "here is like a rest house for the revolutionaries. They come here refresh themselves, rest for a while then go back to their battles in the square."

"Coffeehouses couldn't play a bigger role," he says.

Leaving el-Bostan, on the way to Mohamed Naguib Metro station on Mohamed Sabry Street lie a handful of coffeehouses known as el-Borsa. The area around the stock exchange is congested cafes and restaurants making a congested, but lively scene. Alleys are filled with colour coded plastic chairs and tables to demarcate territories and customers.

As a Cairo coffeehouse, el-Borsa stands out. "It is political, cultural and romantic," says Am Ahmed, one of the staff.

He is right, in the afternoon schoolgirls sit with their boyfriends and college students chuckle over the coffees. However, the scene changes in the evening, when activists and NGO workers congregate for a drink and food from a nearby outlet.

Samer Elshehawi, 24, a master's student involved with human rights organisations, started going to el-Borsa during the 18 days of the uprising. He would go there to recharge with friends. He says, "later, I started going there again with new colleagues I knew from a human rights course at the Cairo Institute for Human Right Studies and I got used to Borsa and its atmosphere that encompasses cultural tolerance and gender equality."

He adds, "like other coffeehouses, Borsa is cheap but not exclusive to one social class. You can meet people from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds."

Jaida Gamal, 20, is a finance major at the American University in Cairo. Though she comes from a well-off family, she started going to Borsa through a political campaign she was

involved in before the revolution. She says, "we used to hold all our meetings there. After the revolution when we wanted to rest after protests we went there for a drink."

She playfully adds, "the best thing about Borsa is that for each customer, there is probably five secret government agents to report on them."

For her, Borsa captures the true Egyptian spirit. "The people who sit there are nowhere else. Even the waiters yell that they are coming with a certain melody that draws a smile on your face."

El-Bostan is a bastion for intellectual exchanges and Borsa is for youthful gatherings and political activism, but not everyone wants to indulge in intellectual or political discussion. Walking away from Borsa up Orabi Street, Om Kalthoum's coffeehouse chose to be apolitical and focused instead on playing all of Om Kalthoum's back catalogue. However, that failed miserably every time someone stirred a political discussion, especially after the revolution.

Haj Hussien, the current owner of the coffeehouse says, "before the revolution all discussions were about football. Now that's changed and people talk politics."

Om Kalthoum is a typical baladi ahawa established in 1936. Originally named el-Tawfik, the coffeehouse changed its name when the composer Mohamed Abdel Wahab began hosting the Star of the East (Kalthoum's honorific) in the building next door.

The owner at that time played Om Kalthoum records without permission, which caused legal issues for the coffeehouse. Haj Hussien says, "they asked her permission to play her songs and proved that they first played the songs with good intentions and not for commercial reasons. So that problem was solved. The name changed after that incident."

Surprisingly, nearby there is another Om Kalthoum coffee shop with similar claims to being the authentic one. It has a marble plaque at the entrance with an inscription announcing "established in 1948." However, the consensus seems to be that the one on Orabi Street is the authentic one.

Am Gameel, an old shop owner by the ersatz coffeehouse used to go to the authentic one with a friend. He says, "we used to find everyone singing with Om Kalthoum. It used to be emotional, but soothing."

Coffeehouses like el-Bostan, el-Borsa and their ilk have accepted women in their realm. Other baladi coffeehouses like Om Kalthoum remained traditional, retaining a male only clientele. Historical coffeehouses like Cafe Riche are reminiscent of the past, but continue to claim their significance up to the present. Today, like in the past, coffeehouses are not merely recreational spaces; they are an arena for challenging authoritarianism and establishing a platform for art and literature, and political and cultural activism.

No matter how diverse coffeehouses become, their place and function in the public sphere are indispensable.



ART & CULTURE

Art should make a statement and Culture is what surrounds us.

EVENTS

MUSIC

Shady Ahmed and the Downtown Meltdown

Shady Ahmed and band are about to go on tour to promote their new album Life is Hard for Those who Dream. This is your chance to see them right here in Cairo. Tickets are EGP 25 for non-members and EGP 20 for members.

El Sawy Culture Wheel
Wisdom Hall
End of 26th of July Street
Zamalek, Cairo
Tel: (02) 2736 6178
11 December 8.30pm

Sheila Scribner and Buzz

Sheila Scribner starts off the evening with her semi acoustic songs after which Buzz will take over the stage with their versions of classic hits. Reservations are recommended.

Cairo Jazz Club
197, 26 of July Street
Zamalek, Cairo
Tel: (02) 3345 9939
11 December 10pm

EXHIBITION

Asa7by

Enjoy Hany Rashed's take on post-revolution internet comics and memes where he uses the same techniques that have become common on the internet today to produce something truly fresh.

Mashrabia Gallery
8 Champollion Street
Downtown, Cairo
Tel: 010 0170 4554
11 December 10am

PhotoCairo 5

Part of an impressive line-up of events that cover seven different venues in Cairo and span everything from screenings to symposiums, this exhibition at Townhouse is about the response art provokes in people and its effect. Attendance is free and the exhibition is bilingual in Arabic and English.

Contemporary Image Collective
22 Abdel Khalak Tharwat, 4th Floor
Downtown, Cairo
Tel: (02) 279 240 80
11 December noon

On Photography

Studio Viennoise's exquisite exhibition covers everything photography related in Egypt, from the early days of expat-owned studios to bringing back the tradition of dressing up to have your picture taken. We have been there and we highly recommend you check it out, either to have your picture taken or merely for a nostalgic trip. Be sure to call ahead for an appointment if you plan on taking a picture.

Studio Viennoise,
7, Champollion Street, 3rd floor
Downtown, Cairo
Tel: 0102 0364646
11 December 11am

Liminal State

The latest exhibition by Townhouse resident artists Kaya Behkalam, Jane Jin Kaisen and Soren Thilo Funder featuring all video works including one, 'excursions in the dark', that was filmed during the period of military curfew in Cairo. Entrance is free.

The Townhouse Gallery Factory
Space
Hussein El Me'mar Pasha Street
Downtown, Cairo
Tel: (02) 2576 8086
11 December 10am

Weather



Tuesday, December 11

Alexandria	19°C / 10°C
Aswan	23°C / 12°C
Cairo	21°C / 11°C
Hurghada	23°C / 14°C
Luxor	22°C / 12°C
Sharm El-Sheikh	25°C / 15°C
Suez	17°C / 7°C

The mysteries of Qarun Lake

By Abdel-Rahman Sherief

Qarun Lake, southeast of Cairo, is a huge lake that brings life to the timeless knolls and dunes of Egypt's Western Desert. Throughout Egypt's history colourful myths and stories have been associated with this big body of water.

The lake is located in the Fayoum Governorate, an agricultural area 80 km from Cairo. Fayoum is treasured by many Cairenes as a place to find rest, peace and pleasure due to its breathtaking landscapes, in addition to its monuments and unique cultural sites.

"Fayoum Governorate is nothing but the lake", said Ahmed Abd-El'all, director of the Fayoum Monumental Region. The word Fayoum is derived from the ancient Egyptian name Bay-oum, or 'the lake'.

In ancient times, the lake was far larger and encompassed the whole current area of Fayoum's governorate. Today the remaining waters spread out over 53,000 acres and are known as Qarun Lake.

Many believe that the name Qarun can be attributed to the protagonist of a story in the Quran. The Qarun of the story was an opulent man, a contemporary of Moses, who is believed to have lived in Egypt, and had all his mansions and possessions flooded as a punishment for his sins.



The ancient Qasr Qarun

Abdel-Rahman Sherief

Fishermen and many others who live by the lake believe that Qarun's treasures lurk beneath the surface of the present day lake, and that they are guarded by a fairy or a mermaid. Over the years stories have been told of people diving for the treasures but so far all attempts at recovery have been in vain. Among the fishermen, fables are told of people who claim to have witnessed the mermaid and were mesmerised by her charm and magic.

In the 1980s rumours swept through Fayoum that the treasures of Lake Qarun would only be revealed after 200 children were be slaughtered as a sacrifice. Widespread panic ensued and people kept their children from going to schools lest they would be kidnapped by archaeologists or treasure hunters. "In those days the governorate authority asked us to make appearances on all domestic media channels to assure the population that none of these rumours were true," Abd-El'all remembered.

Near the lake, an ancient building called Qasr Qarun, or Qarun's Mansion, is believed to be the house that Qarun lived in as described in the Quran. Underneath the building some ancient tunnels have been found that lead to the adjacent village. Residents believe there are other tunnels that reach all the way to Alexandria and maybe even Memphis, the ancient

Egyptian capital. Historians have indicated that the building is an ancient temple of the Dionysius, the Greek god of joy and pleasure, and has nothing to do with the historical Qarun. Nor is there anything that proves that present day Qarun Lake was the location where Qarun lived.

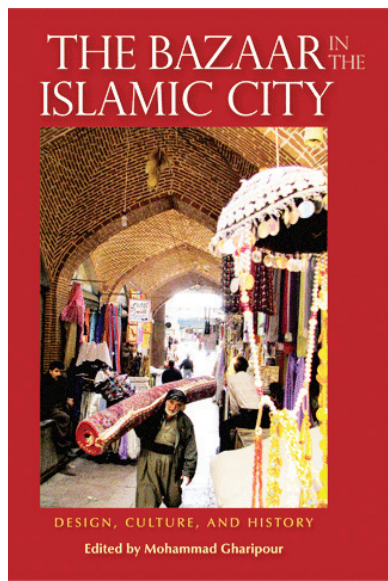
Some researchers claim that Moses and his people crossed Qarun Lake at the time of the Exodus, while others claimed that Fayoum was the birthplace of the prophet Joseph, or Yusuf. The latter claim is supposedly supported by the name of the main canal that passes through Fayoum, but none of these claims have been proven. Abdel'all said the canal was named Yusuf after Saladin Yusuf Ibn Ayyub, and the canal was dug under his commandment.

Throughout history Fayoum has been significant due to its central location on the trade route between Memphis and the Western Desert oases, as it represented a good shelter for trade caravans.

The many myths, even if they are fictitious, definitely add extra glamour to area. The local inhabitants take the preservation of the myths they inherited from their forefathers seriously, even if they probably doubt their veracity. The stories and myths have become as much part of the fabric of their society as fishing in Qarun Lake.

New arrivals on the shelves

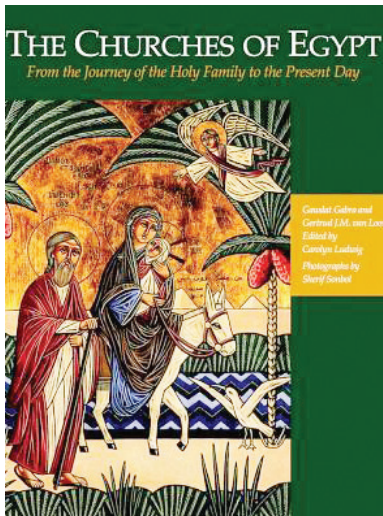
Design, Culture, and History
Edited by Mohammad Gharipour



Bazaars are an integral part of Islamic cities all over the Middle East. This book delves into the history of markets all over the region and highlights the importance of the role they play in the culture of the people that they service.

The book is a compilation of studies of the markets in Cairo, Nablus, Aleppo, Damascus, Bursa, Kabul, Tehran, Istanbul, Yazd and Sana'a and explores their importance, their evolution and cultural significance, and traditions that are still alive today.

The Churches of Egypt
From the Journey of the Holy Family to the Present Day
Gawdat Gabra and Gertrud J.M. van Loon
Edited by Carolyn Ludwig, photographs by Sherif Sonbol

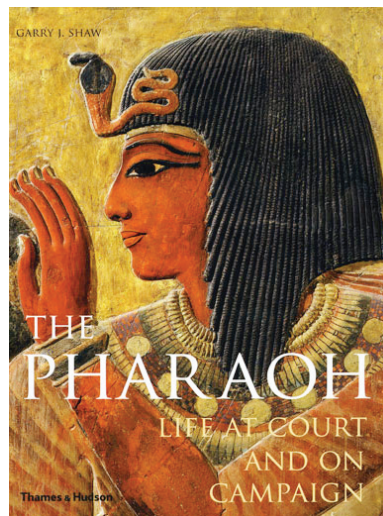


Over 300 full colour images illustrate this comprehensive compilation of Coptic sites and other churches all over Egypt, from the ancient churches of Old Cairo to the monasteries in Upper Egypt and the Red Sea, and the places of worship of other faiths are also featured.

To enhance understanding of the rich artistic and architectural legacy that Christianity has left Egypt, the book includes chapters on the overall history of Christianity in the country

and the different forms of its architecture and Coptic frescoes.

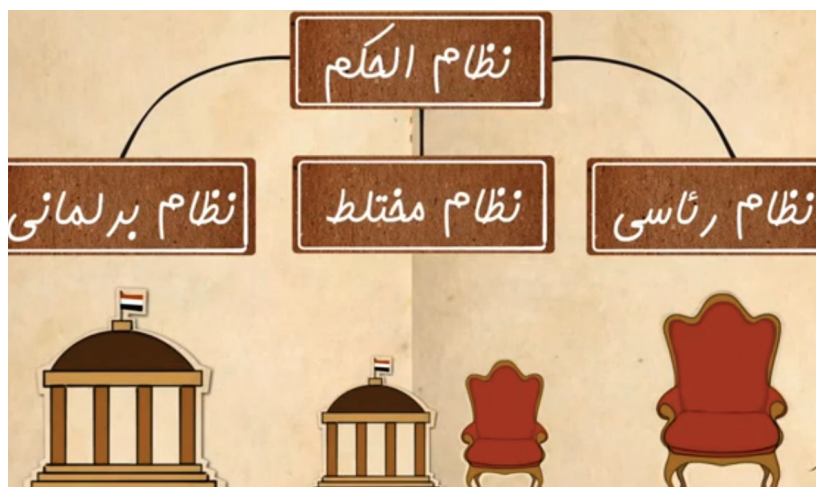
The Pharaoh
Life at Court and on Campaign
By Garry J. Shaw



If you have ever wondered what it was like to be a pharaoh, this book will give you the answers. All aspects of an ancient ruler's day-to-day-life are discussed, from the mundane realities of waking up to the pomp and circumstance of official court occasions and everything in between.

A plethora of images and small features adorn the text and inform the reader of everything from pets to decorations. All major pharaohs are listed with accompanying mini biographies.

Empowerment online



Screengrab from one of Qabila's videos, explaining the types of government

Qabila video

By Fady Salah

Since the uprising of 25 January, the main topic of conversation on the Egyptian streets has changed from football to politics. Objective information is hard to come by, since most TV channels and media outlets are affiliated with one political party or another. This creates confusion and a fertile ground for rumour and assumption. With the changing political structure, a whole new set of words and concepts, like constitution, referendum and democracy have been introduced to the language of the street, only adding to the overall confusion.

The internet, which was one of the catalysts of the January uprising, is playing a significant role in increasing social and political awareness. There are several online initiatives that have started producing informative and educational videos to explain the new concepts and situations Egyptians are faced with today. Straightforward, simple videos tackle a variety of subjects and aim to offer information to the significant amount of people that have had no proper education.

Qabila Media Productions is a prominent example of one such initiative. Qabila, which was founded before the revolution in 2010, was originally intended to provide Egyptians with a parallel media outlet and after the uprising its popularity soared.

Qabila creates animated videos that aim to raise political awareness. They have produced episodes that explain basic political terminologies such as types of governments, functions of parliament and the structure of a civil state. Lately, they have produced a new series called Daleel Al-Muwatin Lifahm Al-Dostour (the citizen's guide to

understanding the constitution), which consists of 14 videos that explain the constitution's function, history, and structure.

Qabila does not limit its production to only political awareness videos; they have also created live-footage featuring Islamic culture. Their official YouTube channel has 34,000 subscribers and their Facebook page has garnered 143,000 likes.

Noreed.com, a website created in November 2011, is an initiative that aims to strengthen citizen journalism in Egypt. Noreed produced a series of animated videos called Hafez and Fahem, (the one that memorises and the one that understands) that explain political concepts such as the right to peaceful protest, independence of the judiciary and women's rights.

The website has a monthly competition that encourages Egyptians to turn into active citizen journalists and offers prizes such as laptops, cameras and smart phones to the winners. There are five main areas to compete in; opinion articles, caricatures, photography, news reporting and video reporting.

Fahemny is another new initiative that produces videos that simplify legal and political terms. The initiative has produced six videos so far and their topics are chosen based on what is currently happening in the country. The first video was produced in September and explained the term 'liberalism' while their latest video, broadcast on 9 December, explained the term 'general strike'.

With more internet-based educational activism initiatives starting every day, the days that the net was mostly used to check Facebook have long gone and the function of the internet has undergone its own revolution in Egypt.



Egyptians visit the exhibition at the Presidential Palace

Mohamed Omar

A photo exhibition has been erected at the Presidential Palace that documents the protests and brutality of those in power against the

people of Egypt.

From the early days of the revolution to the massacre as Maspero and the violent clashes last week at

the palace, gripping and brutal images bear silent witness to those wounded and killed in the struggle for freedom and justice.

