



DAILY NEWS

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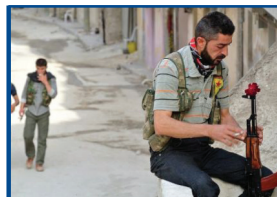
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EGYPT

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UNWAVERING STANCE

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed its policy towards the Syrian crisis

2



LEGAL HOME FOR ILLEGAL VENDORS

The Cairo Chamber of Commerce rejects a governorate's decision to provide places for 2,000 unlicensed street vendors

6



GUITAR HERO

Adel Sakr is one of Cairo's few guitar doctors, fixing broken instruments diagnosed with a variety of maladies

8

Presidential advisor in Sinai to negotiate soldiers' release

PROTESTING BORDER GUARDS REFUSE TO OPEN RAFAH BORDER CROSSING UNTIL COLLEAGUES ARE RELEASED



Egyptian police are seen climbing on the gates at the main Egyptian crossing point into the Gaza Strip which was closed for the second day in a row

By Nouran El-Behairy

President Mohamed Morsi's Advisor for Social Dialogue Emad Abdel Ghafour arrived in Sinai late on Friday in an attempt to solve the abducted security personnel crisis.

Abdel Ghafour met with tribal leaders and mediators to discuss possible solutions.

Unidentified gunmen kidnapped seven off-duty Egyptian security personnel on Thursday; six of them belong to different sections of the Ministry of Interior and one of the detainees belongs to the military.

Bedouin sources said the security personnel are being held to secure the release of certain prisoners.

A group of border guards closed down the Rafah Border Crossing on Friday in protest over the abduction of seven security personnel; four of them belong to the border guards.

About 500 Palestinians were delayed in Arish, Rafah and Sheikh Zewaid as the protesting guards refused to negotiate with Abdel Fattah Harb, head of the Border Guards Department of the Interior

Ministry.

The guards demanded the release of their colleagues prior to any negotiations.

North Sinai Governor Sayed Abdel Fattah Harhour held a meeting with Hamas leaders as well as North Sinai Director of Security Sameh Ahmed Beshady to discuss the implications of closing down the border crossing.

Harhour said that he received a phone call from President Morsi on Saturday to follow up on the issue. Morsi held a meeting on Thursday with the interior and defence min-

isters on the abduction.

"Negotiations have been ongoing for the past 48 hours between security officials and tribal leaders as well as leaders of moderate jihadist groups to bring about the release of the abducted personnel," said military spokesperson Colonel Ahmed Aly.

Media reports stated that joint forces from the Interior Ministry and the military were preparing for a large-scale security operation in Sinai within the next 48 hours.

Continued on page 3

Four protesters charged with attempted murder following clashes

Police arrest 13 young protesters following clashes in Downtown Cairo after the day's planned marches to Tahrir Square

By Ahmed Aboul Enein

Qasr Al-Nil prosecution charged four protesters with attempted murder after a police officer recognised them and accused them of trying to kill him.

Police arrested 13 people on Friday night following clashes between young protesters and Central Security Forces (CSF) at the Qasr Al-Nil Bridge and near the American and British embassies.

A group of young men and boys clashed with policemen by the



Protesters march towards Tahrir Square during a demonstration against President Mohamed Morsi on Friday

Semiramis Hotel, exchanging Molotov cocktails and teargas canisters following marches to Tahrir Square to promote the Tamarod campaign and demand early presidential elections.

Over 100 people gathered by the Kamal Al-Din Salah tunnel near the bridge and threw rocks at police officers, a security official told state-owned news agency MENA. One CSF conscript was injured, he added.

Continued on page 3

Egyptian foreign debt increases by \$8bn

By Nada Badawi

Egypt's foreign debt has increased by \$8bn, reaching \$42bn as of last April compared to \$34.4 last year, a Finance Ministry official stated. Egypt's rate of external debt recorded right after former president Hosni Mubarak was ousted was around \$33bn.

The debt increase has led global finance rating company Standard & Poor's to lower the credit ratings of local banks National Bank of Egypt, National Societe General Bank (NSGB), Banque Misr and Commercial Inter-

national Bank (CIB) to CCC+.

Internal debts hit an alarming EGP 1.4tn, equivalent to about \$200bn.

This rise in debt is also expected to halt the country's ability to receive more loans.

Egypt has already received loans from several neighboring countries, including ones from Qatar and Libya.

Qatar has so far provided \$8bn, Libya on the other hand has sent \$2bn without interest for five years and a grace period of three years.

Continued on page 7

NSF accuses Brotherhood of attempting to repress civil society through NGO law

Opposition front claims Muslim Brotherhood is attempting to prevent investigations into human rights abuses committed under Morsi's presidency

By Joel Gulhane

The National Salvation Front (NSF) has accused the Muslim Brotherhood of attempting to push through the draft law governing civil society organisations, in an attempt to prevent organisations from investigating human rights abuses under President Mohamed Morsi.

In a statement published on Saturday, the NSF stressed its outright rejection of the current draft of the NGO law, which has been criticised both domestically and internationally.

The front said the Brotherhood has been trying to push the law through and that the "main goal [of the law] is to stop human rights organisations from pursuing officials for human rights abuses under President Morsi and his security apparatuses".

The NSF believes that the draft law is an "attempt to silence any free voice opposing policies that aimed at the impoverishment of society and the denial of rights". The front said the law is "concurrent with attacks on journalists and media professionals... and

activists and opponents of President Morsi's policies".

Mokhtar Al-Ashri, head of the legal committee for the Brotherhood's political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party, said: "The NSF does not understand the law and didn't read it." He described the NSF statement as "intentional systematic lying". Al-Ashri said that compared to the old NGO law, the new law "frees them (NGOs) of restrictions".

The NGO law has been criticised by the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights as well as a number of international organisations including Freedom House, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, Amnesty International and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. All believe that the law will restrict the activities of civil society organizations in Egypt.

Ahmed Fahmy, speaker of the Shura Council, said earlier in May that the fears surrounding the law are unfounded and the law will not threaten Egyptian organisations.

Syrian and Palestinian refugees brave the storm in Egypt



A group of Palestinian-Syrians gather in Cairo to protest their treatment as refugees

By Hend El-behary and Luiz Sanchez

Refugees leave their homes for fear of death, often with little more than the clothes on their backs and their hands in their pockets. Escaping the horrors of a civil war that has engulfed their country for two years, thousands of Syrians have made the journey by land, sea and air to find themselves in Egypt; a nation which despite its own extreme economic malaise has

opened the gates to provide them with a safe haven in which they can endure the storm.

This is not the case, however, for the Palestinian-Syrian refugees who have also come seeking refuge from the storm, only to find themselves in a barn without a roof.

Daily News Egypt investigates how Syrian refugees survive in Egypt, and how Palestinians are all but forgotten.

Feature on page 4

Currencies	Buy	Sell
CHF	7.1094	7.6475
USD	6.9759	7.006
EUR	8.9238	9.5269
GBP	10.5298	11.2696
SAR	1.853	1.9247

Egyptian Stock Exchange		
	Closing	Weekly Change
EGX 30	5,427.97	0.44%
EGX 70	451.75	-0.93%
EGX 100	760.72	-0.39%
EGX 20	6,250.48	0.75%

Commentary

Dr Mohamed Fouad writes:

The writing is on the wall with regards to this steady decline with evidence showing that Egypt is going deeper into the dreaded failed zone

Page 5

أسود أصفر أحمر أزرق



Tamarod clarifies Shafiq endorsement

ANTI-MORSI CAMPAIGN RETRACTS STATEMENT DENOUNCING FORMER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AHMED SHAFIQ’S ENDORSEMENT

By Luiz Sanchez

Organisers of the Tamarod petition campaign against President Mohamed Morsi reversed a statement made by the administrator of their official page which refused the endorsement of former prime minister and presidential candidate Ahmed Shafiq. The announcement was made Friday evening, stressing the campaign is aimed at representing all Egyptians.

On Thursday a statement was released on Tamarod’s official page denouncing the endorsement by Shafiq. The founder of the Arab Centre for Research and Studies, Abdul Rahim Ali, called on Tamarod and the Shafiq camp to set aside their differences to face the “fascist regime” in the upcoming parliamentary elections. In response Tamarod issued a statement saying the views expressed earlier on their page was that of one individual and does not reflect the position of the



An Egyptian man distributes a sheet for the Tamarod (rebellion) campaign trying to collect signatures to demand the ouster of President Mohamed Morsi and for early presidential elections in Cairo. The campaign has claimed it has gathered more than two million signatures so far

movement as a whole, which aims to serve all Egyptians regardless of their political affiliation.

In a separate statement, Tamarod said it is the only campaign that has managed to “stir the stagnant water” in Egypt’s political scene by reviving the spirit of the opposition. It continued by saying everyone must leave their personal and ideological differences aside and consider only the interest of the nation. “Everyone knows that 30 June is perhaps the last chance to oust the tyrant Morsi,” it said, referring to his one year anniversary in office.

In Greater Cairo on Saturday Tamarod ran at least five signature campaigns.

Tamarod is currently running several campaigns around the world to collect signatures from Egyptians abroad in time for Morsi’s one year anniversary as president. Tamarod operates in the United States, Canada and Mexico under the Tamarod North America umbrella, as well as

similar campaigns in Europe, the Arab world and the Gulf.

Last Wednesday, a report was filed to the Supreme State Security Prosecution accusing the campaign of attempting to overthrow the regime. The report was filed by lawyer Ashraf Nagui targeting prominent campaign members and several political figures that have vocally supported the campaign, including the Al-Tayar Al-Sha’aby (Popular Current) founder Hamdeen Sabahy, Al-Dostour Party Chairman Mohamed ElBaradei, 6 April Youth Movement cofounder Ahmed Maher and “all other opposition leaders who support the campaign and publicise it”.

Tamarod claims it has managed to secure over two million signatures for its campaign to call for early presidential elections. The movement has focused on collecting signatures in city centres through a wide network of grassroots activism.

Salma Sabahy released from detention

By Basil El-Dabbh

Salma Sabahy, daughter of opposition leader and Al-Tayar Al-Sha’aby (Popular Current) head Hamdeen Sabahy, was released from detention on Sunday per decision by the prosecutor general.

During a press conference by leaders of the National Salvation Front on Sunday morning, Sabahy downplayed charges against his daughter, expressing confidence that she was innocent of the charges she faced. He added he had not intervened in the situation based on this confidence.

Salma Sabahy was arrested on

Thursday for a second time on charges of internet marketing fraud. She faces over 40 complaints submitted by various people for the same charge, according to Aswat Masriya. She was released on EGP 30,000 bail at the end of her first stint of detention pending investigation.

Sabahy had turned herself in to the Agouza public prosecution following a warrant issued for her arrest.

Her second arrest was based on a different complaint on the same charges, which prompted the prosecutor general to order her release and combine all complaints with the same charges in the same case.

Hassan Mustafa appeal verdict set for 15 June

By Ahmed About Enein

Al-Manshiya Appeals Court set a verdict session for 15 June in political activist Hassan Mustafa’s appeal of a two-year prison sentence.

Mustafa was arrested in January and sentenced to two years in prison in March on charges of assaulting a prosecutor, which the activist’s lawyers appealed in April.

Protesters gathered by the Alexandria Criminal Court building on Saturday in support of Mustafa.

The official prosecution report accused Mustafa of “causing a prosecutor’s cheek to turn red” by slapping him, according to the official case report.

Mustafa allegedly slapped the prosecutor as he accompanied human rights lawyers and other activists to Al-Manshiya Court Complex on 21 January to check on detained protesters arrested after clashes that followed the trial of police officers accused of killing protesters on 25 January.

The prosecutor Mustafa allegedly assaulted, Ahmed Darwish, is a member of the Manshiya prosecution, the same prosecution office that investigated Mustafa. His lawyers claim this is illegal and a conflict of interest.

Article 46 of the Investigation Law states that if an individual prosecutor or the prosecution office is part of case, whether as the plaintiff or defendant, an independent judge should conduct the investigation.

No judges were summoned from the Ministry of Justice for Mustafa’s case and the prosecution conducted the investigation, which Mostafa’s lawyer, Mohamed Abdel Aziz, said was a clear conflict of interest.

All the witnesses who testified that Mustafa slapped the prosecutor in the initial investigation by the prosecution reversed their testimony in the Saturday session, saying that Mustafa did not slap him.

Witnesses included a prosecution clerk, two prosecution office employees and a police officer. All of them reversed their earlier testimony.

Amnesty International previously expressed concerns that Mustafa is facing trumped up charges and called on the Egyptian government to grant him a fair trial.

“Should Hassan Mustafa be imprisoned solely for his peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression or other human rights, Amnesty International would consider him to be a prisoner of conscience, and call for his immediate and unconditional release,” the statement added.

Hassan Mustafa is a prominent Al-Exandrian activist most famous for helping to shed light on the Khaled Said murder case back in 2010. He has entered into a hunger strike twice since his imprisonment.

Illegal workers storm Egypt’s consulate in Jeddah

Threatened by punishments, workers attempt to legalise their work status

By Fady Salah

Thousands of illegal Egyptian workers in Saudi Arabia broke into the Egyptian consulate in Jeddah, in an attempt to pressure the consulate to legalise their work status, reported state-run Al-Ahram.

The Saudi Ministry of Interior previously gave illegal workers a three-month deadline to legalise their status or leave the country. The ministry asserted that legal punishments would be applied on illegal workers after the deadline,

ending on 3 July.

The workers broke into the consulate and clashed with Egyptians receiving consular services in the building. Consular staff tried to control the situation, and asserted they are doing everything possible to end the problems of the illegal workers, coordinating with the Saudi authorities, according to Al-Ahram.

Reacting to the incident, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement mentioning that the Egyptian consulate in Jeddah assisted 31 of Egyptians with illegal

residence status in Saudi Arabia to return to Egypt without being detained by Saudi authorities. This came after the consulate staff coordinated with Saudi companies and business owners to solve the problem and grant workers documents enabling them to return home, according to the statement.

Notably, the Egyptian Embassy in Riyadh witnessed protests by illegal workers two week ago. The workers stormed the Embassy, and were returned to Egypt after coordinating with Saudi authorities, reported Al-Ahram.

Foreign Ministry clarifies stance on Syria

Syria stance not changed, Al-Assad has no place in Syria’s future says Foreign Ministry



A Free Syrian Army soldier from a Kurdish brigade with a flower at the end of his AK-47 in Aleppo

By Joel Gulhane

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamed Kamel Amr has “expressed surprise” in response to media reports that the Egyptian stance on Syria had changed.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a statement on Friday clearly outlining the Egyptian position on the Syrian crisis, stressing that Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and his inner circle have no place in the future of Syria.

The statement asserted that Egypt has stood with the Syrian people since the start of the revolution and called for a response to “the legitimate aspirations for change and democracy through a political process leading to the transfer of power”. The ministry also pointed out that President Mohamed Morsi has repeatedly expressed his support for the Syrian people, most

recently on a visit to Brazil.

The ministry’s statement said that Egypt has repeatedly expressed its support for Arab League efforts to pursue negotiations between the opposition and “representatives of the regime who have not stained their hands with the blood of the Syrian people”.

The statement also pointed out that Egypt has “actively participated” in international and regional meetings and initiatives to find a solution to the crisis, the most recent being Amr’s participation in a meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Abu Dhabi last Monday. The ministry stressed that Egypt has “communicated intensively with all spectrums of the Syrian opposition, urging them to unite their vision and agree on a common negotiating position”. Egypt will intensify these efforts further in the coming

days, said the ministry.

The ministry also highlighted that Egypt has proposed an initiative itself to help solve the crisis. Morsi proposed the formation of a quartet comprising of Egypt, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia in August 2012. In the last few weeks Morsi’s assistant on foreign relations and international cooperation Essam El-Haddad has travelled to both Iran and Turkey to discuss the initiative. El-Haddad said at the beginning of May that there would be a ministerial quartet meeting “soon”.

The statement from the ministry comes before a Friends of Syria meeting, which will be held in Amman on 22 May. Amr will participate in the meeting along with his counterparts from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Italy.

DAILY NEWS

EGYPT

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POLITICS

SUNDAY, MAY 19, 2013 DAILY NEWS EGYPT 3

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Sectarian clashes in Alexandria leave one dead

SECURITY OFFICIAL SAYS POLICE MANAGED TO PREVENT AN ATTACK ON A CHURCH ON FRIDAY NIGHT

By Basil El-Dabh

A fight between two families took a sectarian turn on Friday night, resulting in one dead and dozens injured in Alexandria. A feud between a Muslim and Copt in the neighbourhood of Dakhila in western Alexandria escalated into clashes on Al-Gaish Street, according to state-owned Al-Ahram.

The altercation reportedly started between a Christian and Muslim man when the Copt allegedly sexually harassed the Muslim's sister. As relatives

and friends of each of the men got involved in the fight, Molotov cocktails and automatic weapons were used.

The one fatality in the clashes, according to Chief of Investigation in Alexandria Major General Nasser Al-Abd, was Sherif Sedqi Saad who died of a heart attack. The security authority also stated that police managed to prevent attempts to break into the Church of the Virgin Mary in the neighbourhood, saying that security forces managed to protect the church and prevent any damage from being

inflicted on it.

Dozens were injured in the fighting, and the Ministry of Interior arrested eight people according to Reuters.

The clashes come more than a month after sectarian violence killed seven in Al-Khasous, a town in Al-Qaliubiya.

In January sectarian violence flared up in the Qena village of Al-Marshada after a Coptic shop owner was accused of molesting a young Muslim girl. Christian-owned stores and the village's church were attacked.

Health Ministry: Al-Azhar food poisoning caused by Salmonella

The Ministry of Health and Populations says workers in the food industry must be mindful of their personal hygiene

By Luiz Sanchez

The Ministry of Health and Population determined on Friday evening the cause of the second Al-Azhar food poisoning scandal was the Salmonella bacteria. Health Minister Mohamed Moustafa Hamed made the announcement in a press statement Friday, state owned Al-Ahram reported.

The investigation was launched after 180 students from Al-Azhar fell ill in April, the second incident of its kind in as many weeks. The students became sick after eating in the dormitory cafeteria.

The first incident resulted in 500 students falling ill to food poisoning, sparking protests calling for investigations and accountability for negligence and deteriorating conditions in the dormitories.

The committee tasked with investigating the incidents was initiated by Prime Minister Hesham Qandil, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayeb and several student representatives.

Salmonella is a bacterium that thrives in uncooked food. Usually found in eggs, Salmonella can also grow in meat. The bacteria cannot be killed by freezing; instead it must be heated for prolonged periods of time

at temperatures exceeding 55C.

The health minister said it was extremely important for food handlers to ensure their personal hygiene is maintained in order to avoid cross-contamination of food.

Several Al-Azhar officials were detained pending investigations into the food poisoning incidents, and the Supreme Council of Al-Azhar has promised to replace the head of the university.

The university has also been under fire for the death of an engineering student, Ahmed El-Baz, after he was reportedly misdiagnosed by the university medical staff.

Presidential advisor in Sinai to negotiate soldiers' release

Continued from page 1

The rumoured operation will target militants in Sinai and attempt to force the release of the kidnapped personnel.

Colonel Aly, however, refuted this claim. "We didn't announce any security operation, we're dealing cautiously with the situation in Sinai. However, all options are open," he said.

The Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights released a statement on Thursday calling for the arrest of the kidnappers; it described the incident as an act of terrorism.

Additional reporting by Naser Al-Azzazy



Palestinians sit with their luggage at the Rafah crossing with Egypt in the southern Gaza Strip on Friday. Egyptian police closed the Rafah border crossing with Gaza in protest at the kidnapping of colleagues in the Sinai peninsula, a security source and witnesses said

Misr Al-Qawia members accused of 'stirring trouble' in Alexandria

Members were trying to help victims of a collapsed house

By Nourhan Dakrouy

Two members of the Misr Al-Qawia Party were released from prosecution on Saturday after being accused of "stirring trouble" in a neighbourhood in Alexandria, according to Ingy Al-Manshy, member of the party in Alexandria.

In their statement, the party accused the police of being an obstacle in the party's way and preventing them from fulfilling their duties of serving the community.

Party member Youssef Al-Qadi said that the incident began when he went to Al-Attareen neighbourhood on Friday after he had heard about the collapse of a building there. After the collapse, authorities ordered the evacuation of five other buildings in the area, since they thought that there was a chance that they would collapse as well, according to Al-Qadi.

"We found the people living on the street with their belongings and furniture, since the state failed to provide them with care," Al-Qadi said. The residents asked the Misr Al-Qawia Party member to bring an

engineering consultant to examine the evacuated buildings.

Mahmoud Al-Touny, another party member, came accordingly to the neighbourhood to examine the buildings, concluding that he cannot determine whether the building should be evacuated yet, since he needs to further examine them, according to Al-Qadi.

When Al-Touny expressed his opinion to police officers in the neighbourhood, both members were taken to the police station, accused of "stirring trouble".

In the Misr Al-Qawia Party's statement, Al-Touny ridiculed the accusation, asking what "stirring trouble" is supposed to mean. The party also demanded institutions do their jobs and address the needs of the people of the neighbourhood who lost their homes in the collapse.

The party also demanded the removal of the governor of Alexandria, his deputy and everyone who was involved in the detention of its party members, according to the statement.

Officials from the Alexandria governorate said they were unaware of what happened to the party members.

Survey results highlight negative outlook

By Fady Salah

Only 30% of Egyptians believe that Egypt is headed in the right direction, according to a new report issued by Pew Research Centre, which stated that Egyptians are increasingly dissatisfied with the current democratic transition period.

The report, titled "Egyptians Increasingly Glum", conducted a survey based on national samples and published a report announcing its results.

The report stated that 39% of Egyptians believe that things are better off now since Mubarak's departure. Additionally, 53% of Egyptians have a favourable view on President Mohamed Morsi, while 43% see him negatively, according to the report. Opinion varied with regards to the other prominent political leaders, where 48% had a favourable view on

Hamdeen Sabahi, 45% on Ahmed Shafiq, and 40% on Mohamed ElBaradei.

As 75% of Egyptians believe that the economic conditions of Egypt are in a bad shape, 83% perceive improving those conditions as 'very important', stated the report.

73% of the interviewed sample believes the army is having a good influence on Egypt, while the percentage decreased to 35% when asking about the influence of the police.

The report noted the rising ideological divisions in Egypt. It stated that the results of face-to-face interviews conducted with 1,000 adults revealed that supporters of the National Salvation Front (NSF) have a different perception on the current state of Egypt than the supporters of Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), and Al-Nour Party.

On the influence of religion, the report mentioned that 58% of Egyptians believe that laws should adhere strictly to teachings of Quran, while 28% believe that laws should follow Islamic principles but not strictly implement laws from the Quran. According to the report, only 11% believe that religion should have no influence over Egypt's laws.

Controversy over the constitution persisted in the report, as 49% favoured it and 45% opposed it.

At least in six-in-ten Egyptians still prefer democracy to any other form of government, while most of them express a desire for certain democratic rights that were perceived as more important. Those rights included free media, fair elections, and fair judicial system, according to the report.

Regarding religious minorities, 38%

said the government is exerting enough efforts to ensure that religious minorities can practice their religions freely, while 39% said it is not doing enough.

The report showed that Egyptians still have negative views toward the US and Israel. It stated that 16% have a favourable view of the US, 24% perceived having good relations with it as important, while 69% did not see it as important.

Additionally, only 3% perceived having a strong relationship between Egypt and Israel as important, while 63% expressed their refusal to accept the 1979 peace treaty between the two states.

The report was released on 16 May, and is divided into 5 chapters: 'National Conditions', 'Key Leaders, Groups and Institutions', 'Attitudes toward Democracy', 'Islam and Politics', and 'Views of U.S. and Israel'.

Tunisia boosts security as Salafis vow to defy ban

AFP - Tunisian security forces deployed in strength on Saturday after Salafi movement Ansar al-Sharia called on its hardline Islamist supporters to defy a government ban on its annual congress.

There was a heavy police presence at tollbooths along the main highway from the capital to the central city of Kairouan where the Salafis have vowed to hold Sunday's gathering. AFP correspondents reported.

Police were singling out for checks the private minibuses that ply between Tunisian towns.

Ansar al-Sharia had urged its supporters to travel to the venue in groups in a bid to get past police.

"We advise our brothers coming to Kairouan to travel in groups and not to be separated because the agents of the tyrant are blocking most intersections and provoking our brothers by showing their weapons," it said on its Facebook page.

In Tunis itself, large numbers of police vans and army trucks were visible both in the city centre and in neighbourhoods regarded as Salafi strongholds.

As tensions mounted, a US embassy travel advisory warned Americans against travelling to Kairouan, saying "large rallies and demonstrations are possible" if the congress goes ahead.



The spokesman of Tunisia's hard-line Salafi group Ansar al-Sharia holds a news conference on Thursday in Tunis

"There is the potential for disruption to traffic in the area of Kairouan and possible confrontations with security forces. The embassy recommends against all travel to Kairouan during this period."

The Salafis have been blamed for a wave of violence across Tunisia, including an attack on the US embassy in September that left four assailants dead.

Ansar al-Sharia is considered the most radical of the extremist groups that emerged after the 2011 revolution that ousted veteran strongman Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

The group's fugitive leader, Saif Allah Bin Hussein, a former Al-Qaeda fighter in Afghanistan, warned last week he would

wage war against the government led by moderate Islamist group Ennahda, accusing it of policies in breach of Islam.

The interior ministry on Friday said Ansar al-Sharia posed a threat to public order as it confirmed the ban on the planned congress.

"We have decided to prohibit this gathering, which would be in violation of the law and because of the threat it represents to public order," it announced.

Ahead of the ministry's announcement, Ansar al-Sharia, which does not recognise the authority of the state, warned that it would hold the government responsible for any violence.

"We are not asking permission from the government to preach the

word of God and we warn against any police intervention to prevent the congress from taking place," spokesman Seifeddine Rais said.

Rais said more than 40,000 people were expected to attend, adding: "The government will be responsible for any drop of blood spilt."

The interior ministry retorted that "all those who defy the authority of the state and its institutions, who try to sow chaos, who incite violence and hatred will bear all the responsibility".

It promised a tough response to "anyone who tries to attack the forces of order" and said the police and army are on "high alert to protect the security of citizens and their property".

Radical Islamist group Hizb ut Tahrir condemned the interior ministry ban but also appealed to Ansar al-Sharia to postpone the congress to avoid bloodshed.

"We say to Ansar al-Sharia that we consider it wise and a priority to announce the postponement of the congress, placing the whole responsibility for it on the government," the group said in a statement.

Otherwise, "Sunday will be a day of bloody confrontation."

The Salafis, who advocate an ultra-conservative brand of Sunni Islam, have been blamed for a spate of attacks on police in recent months.



Protesters march towards Tahrir Square during a demonstration against President Mohamed Morsi on Friday

Continued from page 1

The report submitted by the police to the prosecution accuses the detainees, several of whom are minors, of assaulting policemen, vandalising public property and disrupting traffic.

The prosecution opened an investigation into the detainees; four of them are likely to be transferred to juvenile detention facilities due to being underage. Three detainees were found to have previous criminal records.

The detainees were accused of being new members of the Black Bloc group. They were not wearing masks.

The police report claimed the protesters triggered the clashes and that two police officers were injured due to being shot at with birdshot. Arresting minors following clashes, however, has been an upward trend.

Police arrested children and accused them of vandalism and attacking personnel last week, twice in March, and in February.

Opposition groups had organised three marches to Tahrir Square from Shubra, Mohandiseen and Sayeda Zeinab on Friday to promote Tamarod, a petition movement aiming to gain 15 million signatures calling on President Mohamed Morsi to call for early presidential elections.



Syrian and Palestinian refugees brave the storm in Egypt

By Hend El-Behary
and Luiz Sanchez

In the wake of the Syrian civil war that broke out in 2011 against President Bashar Al-Assad's regime, thousands of refugees from the worn-torn country have flocked to Egypt.

More than 80,000 have died in Syria as a result of the on-going civil war, leaving more than one million Syrians externally displaced according to the United Nations. Those fleeing the violence in Syria have found themselves seeking refuge in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Turkey and Egypt.

As of March 2013 Egypt accommodates 140,000 Syrian refugees, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with only 47,927 actually registered.

According to the UNHCR report, most of the refugees reside in Greater Cairo, specifically in 6th of October City.

Some Syrian refugees are also residing in the outskirts of Giza, in cities like Obour, Nasr, and Rehab. Others are scattered around several governorates, including Alexandria, Luxor, Beni Suef, Sohag and Minya.

"In November 2012, UNHCR worked with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to conduct a survey to determine how many Syrians are employed, but unfortunately the results were not very encouraging," said Ahmed Abu Ghazala, public information officer at UNHCR.

Abu Ghazala said UNHCR is currently trying to plan and implement projects in order to help the Syrian refugees in Egypt in this regard.

No Work, High Rental Fees

Two major problems face Syrian families once they step onto Egyptian soil: scarce housing and unemployment. "I came last February, we didn't have any other choice," said Om Basheer, a Syrian refugee who prepares and delivers Syrian food.

Om Basheer is a newly married, young Syrian woman from the Syrian capital Damascus. She lives with her husband, who is unemployed, and children in a small rented house in 6th of October City.

In Syria, Om Basheer was a science teacher, but she wasn't able to find a teaching job in Egypt. Instead, she decided to launch a small project which has become her family's only income.

"I was earning about EGP 6,000 monthly from my work in Syria, I had a car, a big house, was living a good life, but now everything is gone," said Om Basheer.

"I will make traditional Syrian food like Qeba. My project is going to target middle class Syrian refugees in Egypt."

While she also had a Saudi Arabian visa, Om Basheer said Egypt is the most comfortable place for her and her family. "The most valuable thing close to a human being's heart is having their own home and now my home is gone, I hope if I go back Syria I can find it," said Om basheer.

Exhibitions of Syrian-made products

Mohamed Saeed is a Syrian refugee in his thirties who sells Syrian-made products like clothes, food, textiles in a neighbourhood in Giza. "I came directly after the Syrian revolution," he said.

Saeed rents a shop in Nasr City where runs a wholesale business selling Syrian-made at local arts, crafts, and handmade items exhibitions. He said he can barely afford the monthly rent of his shop which is roughly EGP 6,000.

"Joining an exhibition is not that difficult; we talk to the owner of the exhibition and ask him about renting a small space to sell my products. I pay EGP 1,000 per square metre," said Saeed.

"Profits from exhibitions are not much; they barely cover our rental expenditures," he said. "These exhibitions can last for two weeks, one month or even one year."

Saeed said his products are completely made in Syria by a company called "G2". While his products are imported, there are a number of factories employing Syrians in 6th of October and 10th of Ramadan cities which also produce similar products.

"I was working in Syria, living a good life with my family, but now we're separated and I'm worried about them," said Saeed.

"I'm happy here, but Egypt is like any other country with both good and bad aspects. A specific problem has been Egypt's economic situation; less people come to buy Syrian-made products from these exhibitions," Saeed said.

Officials Ignore

Saeed, Om Basheer, Nour and several other Syrian refugees emphasised that neither Egyptian authorities nor the Syrian embassy in Cairo support them.

"No one help us, but I don't need any help from anyone anyway. I took the risk to start my own new business. I trust God and I will do it, I will succeed," said Om Basheer.

"Syrian investments vary between cafes, restaurants and joining selling Syrian-made crafts and products," said Essam El-Qorashy, deputy head of the Treasury for Social Development.

"I don't think the Egyptian government has a role to support Syrian small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Egypt," said El-Qorashy.

El-Qorashy said that Syrian exhibitions in Egypt are a great way to start a small business. These exhibitions are established through the Expo and Convention Authority. The authority contracts with a Syrian or Egyptian company with products or services to sell, and an exhibition organising company is the middleman between both.

According to legislation, non-Egyptians cannot completely own a small business in Egypt, though they can own a portion of a business. El-Qorashy said that Egypt is too busy with its own problems to consider starting a dialogue about this problem.



An exhibition market place in Dokki sells Syrian-made textiles and clothes



Syrian refugees receive supplies from a UNHCR truck in Tripoli, Lebanon

"We have strong strategic bilateral relations between Egypt and Syria," he said. "We usually encourage foreign businessmen to pump new investments into the Egyptian market, but we have a lot of problems to address in addition to encouraging Syrian investment; we are spread very thin."

NGOS

On 8 May, UNHCR threw a fundraising concert to support Syrian refugees in Egypt. The concert was organised with support from the British embassy in Egypt and the Arab League.

"Before the crisis, Syrians entered Egypt without a visa, and this has continued. President Morsi decreed in September 2012 that Syrians could access public schools and health facilities. They are also offered regular three-month extensions for their residential visas," said Mohamed Dayri, UNHCR regional representative.

"For all those reasons, we have to sincerely and warmly show our appreciation to the Egyptian people for their support through the concert," said Dyari.

While some provisions are being extended to the growing Syrian

population in Egypt, aid is particularly few and far between for the Palestinians that were already refugees in Syria before the civil strife.

Palestinians; the forgotten people

The United Nations as an international body exerts various efforts as mentioned earlier to accommodate for refugees, despite the frequent shortcomings of donor nations in providing the needed financial support to accommodate the needs of UN missions. One group that has been all but neglected in Egypt, however, are Palestinians who fled to Syria during the 1948 and the subsequent 1967 war with Israel.

For many Palestinians, 15 March marks the day in which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians became displaced and stateless. Those fleeing from the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict turned to neighbouring Arab states such as Jordan, Egypt and Syria for refuge.

Palestinians were given a safe haven of sorts in the Arab world, quickly recognised as refugees by the UN and Arab states, who also recognise their "right of return". This right of return meant Palestinian refugees

and their descendants had the right to return to what is known as modern day Israel, a claim which the state of Israel rejects entirely.

"Some scholars and politicians, especially in Israel, have maintained that the Palestinian refugee issue would gradually be eliminated, if it had not already been resolved, in Arab host countries," Palestinian historian and former diplomat Abbas Shibliak said in an article published in the Journal of Palestinian Studies in 1996. He argued there were two main assumptions surrounding this belief.

First, there was an assumption that "Palestinian refugees would melt readily into the surrounding Arab societies by virtue of their shared language, history, culture, and, for the most part, religion", Shibliak explained. The second assumption is that the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) would be able to integrate the refugees into neighbouring countries through economic assistance to provide a long-term and durable solution "even if political integration into the country of asylum cannot be achieved".

Shibliak argued the past five decades have proven these assumptions wrong. "The Palestinian refugees have increased in number and seem to have become even more alienated and marginalised than before."

Limited assistance

The UNRWA was established shortly after the 1948 war, known to Palestinians as the Nakba, to deal specifically with the diaspora. Over one million Palestinians were displaced as a result of the 1948 and 1967 wars with Israel and an estimated five million people form the total number of Palestinian refugees and their descendants today. Of these, UNRWA estimates 485,000 lived in Syria as of January 2012.

Since the outbreak of the war in Syria, these Palestinians once again fled to neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt seeking shelter alongside more than one million Syrians.

The UNRWA however cannot operate in Egypt as it does not classify Palestinians as refugees. As

a result these Palestinians, some of which are facing their second exodus, are not entitled to any form of refugee assistance from the government or the UN.

Another consequence of the government stance is that there are no official statistics regarding the number of Palestinian-Syrians that are currently in Egypt.

The Palestinian embassy, serving the Palestinian Authority government in the West Bank, has said an estimated 8,000-9,000 are believed to be in the country at the moment, although they say many have failed to register with the embassy. Palestinian activists such as Hanine Hassan, working with the refugees, estimate there are more than 12,000 and more arriving daily.

These refugees are not given access to the same aid being provided to their Syrian counterparts by the UNHCR, which includes education, healthcare, housing and financial support. Instead most are forced to rely on the dwindling stocks of money they had managed to bring with them; those fortunate enough say family members from other countries are sometimes able to send them small amounts irregularly.

Many refugees do not want to be named, often because they fear for the safety of family members that stayed behind but more often because they fear being targeted by Egyptian authorities.

Last month Palestinian-Syrians held a protest in front of the Palestinian embassy to demand recognition and aid. The protesters said they faced threats and discrimination from the embassy staff and the police who told them "thugs" from the neighbourhood might disrupt the protest if it continued overnight.

Threats and discrimination from Egyptian authorities are nothing new to these refugees. Upon their arrival the Palestinians are usually granted a visa which lasts for no more than one year, after which they are often told to return to where they came from.

With no assistance from the government or the UN, Palestinian-Syrians are forced to look for jobs without any legal guarantees of their rights. Working illegally, these refugees say they are often faced with extreme prejudice by the Egyptian community.

The UNHCR says it cannot help displaced Palestinians in Egypt because of the government's stance. The same has been said by several NGOs working with African refugees.

Earlier in May, the Palestinian embassy said it was exerting all possible efforts to accommodate the refugees. A staff member at the embassy said they were in communication with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in an attempt to pressure the Egyptian government to change its stance. For now, however, Palestinian-Syrians remain in a perpetual state of statelessness.



Syrian refugees work in the kitchen of a restaurant in 6th of October City



Palestinian refugee document issued in Syria

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

COMMENTARY

SUNDAY, MAY 19, 2013 DAILY NEWS EGYPT 5

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Egypt: Re-thinking political parties

There are specific signs that differentiate political revolutions from social ones. Both types and patterns of revolution do entail a series of changes and transformations although on different levels. Social revolutions change property relations and redistribute wealth. There is an obvious and tangible class-based empowerment within social revolutions. The pace of change in social revolutions is rapid and the tools of that change involve radical readjustments and reformations. Fortunately or unfortunately (it remains to be seen), the pattern of our revolution in January 2011 was a political one.

Political revolutions are concerned primarily with democracy, especially the question of who is on top of the power hierarchy and how they got there. Radical enforcement of social justice is usually absent in political revolutions. Elections and political parties are the main tools political revolutions use. Revolutionary models like the ones in Eastern Europe in the 1980s and 1990s and the recent revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt demonstrate how central party politics and elections relate to the process of change. However, in Egypt we fell into a common trap that occurs in transformation, electoralism.

Commonly developing democracies are set back by the misconception of the roles of political parties and elections. In other words, we thought that the mere presence of political parties and the regular holding of elections are both sufficient for achieving democracy and citizen representation. Holding regular elections becomes meaningless as soon as these elections start to lack transparency, and party politics will not be a sufficient tool for achieving democracy in a non-supportive political landscape. Regardless of the numerous challenges political parties in Egypt face internally and externally, they are all working under the same stagnant political conditions.

Party politics in Egypt today have no clear political fault lines. Religious parties are developing into a liberal-conservative political force, liberal parties are developing social democratic platforms, and leftist parties are fighting a battle of survival. Another problem with Egyptian party politics is the presence of weak civil society organisations that are regularly fragmented and divided. Therefore, the amount of challenges political parties in Egypt face doesn't only make them an obsolete tool of political change, but also a very insufficient one.

Political parties in Egypt are becoming an obsolete tool of change due to several factors. First, all parties in Egypt face a similar problem, which is the lack of people's confidence in the party as an entity and the fact that political parties remain largely disconnected from the daily lives of ordinary citizens. After all, political parties in Egypt are still facing the results of years of depoliticisation of the public sphere and the negative reputation of legitimising participation in forged elections under Mubarak. Winning citizens' trust is an important challenge facing Egyptian political parties, but it is not the only one. Weak organisational capacities, the absence of a clear party message and the lack of grassroots constituencies are all examples of structural challenges Egyptian political parties are facing.

Where political parties are at right now raises two important questions; first, what do political parties need to do to face the



ZIAD AKL

regularly increasing challenges and second, what can citizens do to influence public policy and have their voices heard despite the relatively weak party politics situation?

Political parties in Egypt need to seriously consider coalitions and re-coalitions. Perhaps a proper beginning for that process is a single cross-country list for the upcoming Parliamentary elections including all parties in the National Salvation Front. It is very common for political parties in emerging democracies to merge in a few stable parties. The platforms of most liberal political parties resemble those of social democracy. Therefore, it is very possible for the Egyptian Social Democratic Party to merge with the Free Egyptians Party and the Freedom Egypt Party to merge with Al-Doustour Party. Mergers and re-coalitions will help further consolidate political parties and create a solid institutional as well as financial base.

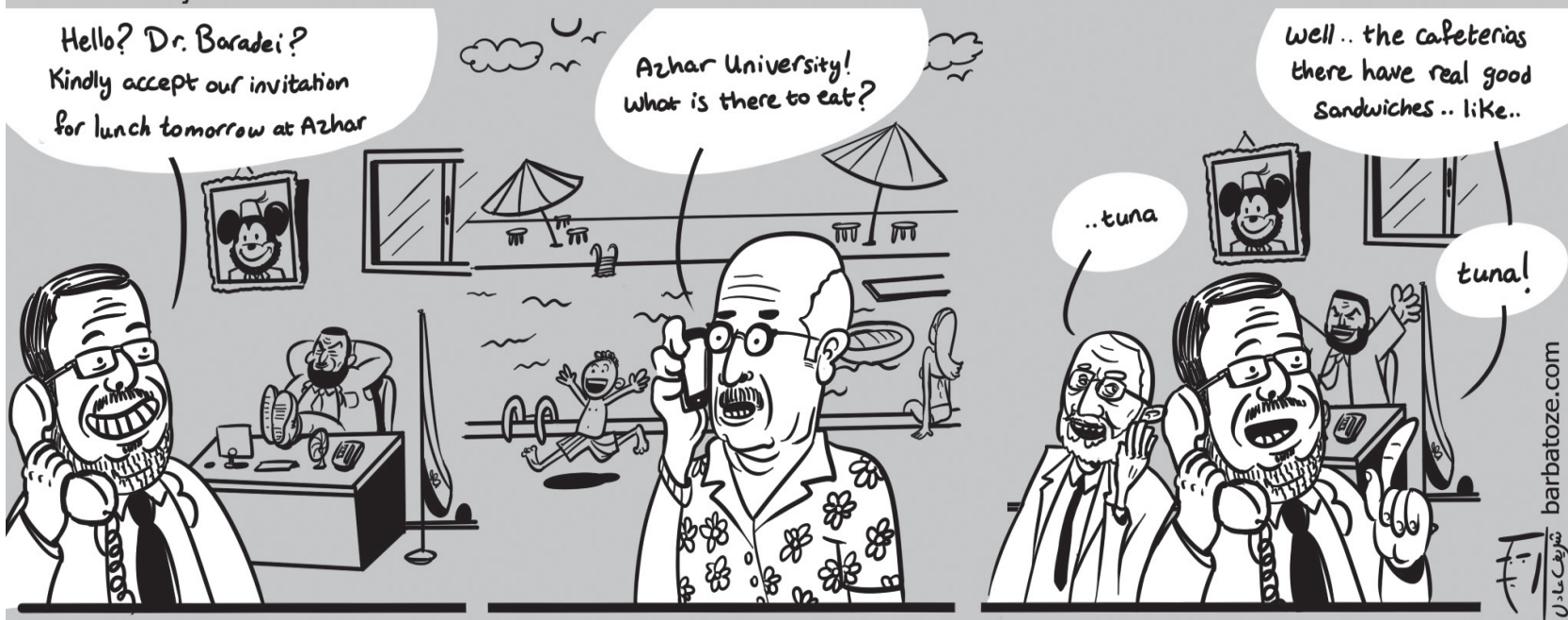
On the other hand, what are the other possible alternatives to political parties? Perhaps it is not a matter of looking for an alternative for political parties as much as it is a matter of finding additional tools that could help in realising democracy. Interest associations are a crucial tool in this sense, since they already exist, enjoy a high degree of politicisation and sometimes are capable of mobilising their members as means of political pressure to achieve their goals. Second, Egypt has known very successful experiences of social movements. In fact, the social movements that actually attempted to transform themselves into political parties like the 6 April Democratic Front have not been able so far to achieve political success on an institutional level similar to the success they achieved as social movements on a collective level. Despite political parties being the only means of channelling mass support for the revolution into an institutional political consensus, interest associations and social movements remain the primary expressions of civil society.

Political parties in Egypt need to be re-considered first as political entities and second as tools of political change. Political parties must coordinate with trade unions and different social movements and initiatives. Party politics are indeed a major tool of democratic change, but relying on political parties without complementary alternatives undermines the extent of influence political parties could have.

The battle for democracy in Egypt requires re-alignment of political parties and solid cooperation between all means of citizen representation.

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Barbatoze Weekly



Egypt: Too big to bail!

An interesting assumption is continuously being adopted by many of Egypt's intelligentsia as well as political analysts: "Egypt is too big to fail!" Several people have weaved their own theories touting Egypt's strategic position and weight in the region which will make it unwise for the "powers that be" to allow it to descend into chaos or fail. A much bigger problem is that the Egyptian leaders and policymakers seem to operate on the premise that the country is indeed too big to fail.

Now, how accurate are those assumptions? For starters, Egypt has been descending into chaos for the past two years and is as close to failure as it gets. In order to put these assumptions in perspective, the question becomes a matter of mere perception as to what we define failure to be. So let us attempt to reshape our definition of "failure".

The term "failed state" is often used to depict a state seen as having failed at some of the basic conditions and responsibilities of a sovereign government. United States think tank the Fund for Peace characterises

failed nations by social, political, and economic failure. The Fund for Peace also publishes its annual Failed States Index in which Egypt has deteriorated from the 45th position in 2011 to the 32nd position in 2012 placing it alongside the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone.

Some of the typical characteristics of failure as denoted by The Fund for Peace include a central government which is weak or ineffective that it has little realistic control over much of its territory, deteriorating public services, widespread corruption and criminal activities, and steep economic decline. Sounds like home?

The writing is on the wall with regards to this steady decline with evidence showing that Egypt is going deeper into the dreaded failed zone. Last week, Standard & Poor's (S&P) further cut Egypt's sovereign debt rating deeper into junk territory citing unrelenting concerns about the fiscal health of the Arab world's most populous nation. The agency has lowered Egypt's short-term rating from B to C and long-term credit rating from B- to CCC+ amidst worries

about the country's inability meet its financial obligations. S&P noted: "We expect financing pressures to remain elevated and comprehensive donor support, including support from the International Monetary Fund, to remain elusive."

A few hours later, The International Monetary Fund (IMF) echoed similar concerns by saying that Egypt's financial situation is deteriorating and that IMF will not proceed with the \$4.8bn loan until receiving updated economic information and reform plans from Egypt's government. With an anaemic growth rate of 2% and unemployment rate amongst the younger population reaching 30%, the reality is grim.

To keep the ship afloat, Egypt requires outside help in the tune of \$25bn per year. Who is going to fund this? So far, the total aid package coming from the US, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Libya and from elsewhere in the world did not surpass the \$12bn mark. There is also considerable doubt that anyone is able or willing to bankroll this steady and unyielding decay.

Without a plan nor the will to deliver one, the fact that Egypt is



DR MOHAMED FOUAD

the region's peace keeper or most strategically placed nation will not be enough to rescue the situation in Egypt. In the absence of such a plan, the country might just become one of the most remarkable cases of a politically induced economic failure seen in recent history. The numbers indeed suggest that while some might think that Egypt is "too big to fail", it might just be "too big to bail".

Mohamed A. Fouad is a global expert on service quality as well as a political and social activist

Muslim Brotherhood decay: the logic of imperative Laxity

On 10 May 2011, I interviewed Khairat El-Shater, the Muslim Brotherhood's third man at the time, and asked about the rumors around Mohamed Habib's, the MB's second man at the time, expected resignation. His immediate response was: "impossible!" He then took it further into explaining the logic of the MB's solidarity which assures that even major conflicts would never turn into resignations.

On 16 May 2011, Habib resigned and El-Shater replaced him as the Brotherhood's second man. A few days later a flow of resignations began. It seemed at the time that the "Brotherhood's leadership lost control" if I may borrow George Ishak's wording. The Muslim Brotherhood had to find a way to unite under the umbrella of the Guidance Office before they face serious disintegration. This was one of the reasons Shater/Morsi had to run for the presidency.

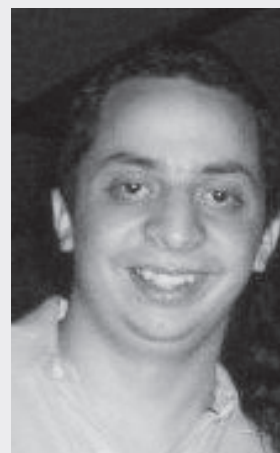
The unification plan succeeded; the spirit within the Brotherhood boomed, potential dissidents retreated, and some formerly resigned individuals retracted. Having a common goal always keeps groups together, and makes the price-tag of dissent unbearable on the dissident. "As long as the goal remains common, clear and attainable" as Stephen Covey puts it in his book Principle-Based Leadership.

Now that the common, clear, attainable goal: "winning the elections" was accomplished, the Brotherhood is back to the tough struggle for keeping the organisation cohesive. Internal challenges that the Brotherhood

faces after taking office will sooner or later start a new trend of instability. Moderation Crises

While Salafis were out of the political scene, the MB monopolised Islamic grassroots. Simultaneously, it appealed to the secular opposition as the "civil way out" from the authoritarian rule. This balance guaranteed the MB's position as the centre of the opposition. Even after the authoritarian regime failure the MB retained its central position, which was clearly displayed in the Freedom and Justice Alliance and in Morsi's famous "Fairmount" meeting. The outcome of the meeting between Morsi, MB leaders and representatives of secular political powers was the "Fairmount Document" in which the secular leaders agreed to support Morsi against Shafiq in the secondary round of the presidential elections.

Retaining the centre in political discourse is an easy task, but the difficulties increase when it comes to the application of this stance. It is easy to raise general slogans that would appeal to all sides of the isle. Take for instance "Renaissance." The dilemma only begins as the policymaker becomes enforced to make decisions/choices such as "what are the priorities of the renaissance (academia, welfare, culture, economy, etc.)?" Since any side taken by the policymaker would mean choosing a side over another, the total political-credit loss is guaranteed. Throughout this process the MB will suffer popularity crises, which will force it to make choices in favor of the "outsiders" over the "insiders," which automati-



HESHAM SHAFICK

cally raises the probability of despair within the MB members.

The stated versus the hidden gap
It is hard to believe that an organisation that was initially based on anti-Zionism would accept the president's letter to the Israeli president signed "your loyal friend." Also, it is impossible to believe that the MB's Egyptian state would stand at the same distance between Fatah and the MB's branch in Palestine, namely Hamas. Taking it to the local level, the MB's actions are more "off pattern." For instance the President's decree to renew the Cabarets contracts and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) plan as two simple examples. All those acts hold messages for the international public opinion that the MB leadership views as necessary. However, it is unwise to expect that the middle and youth leadership of the Brotherhood would appreciate their necessity in the long-term.

The leaders versus the grassroots gap

Grassroots and the leaders' "expectations" from the office-term are different. The MB's traditional voter is a middle-lower class citizen, while its leadership belongs mainly to the A and A+ classes. Probably the leaders have the luxury to think strategic (if not to think of personal economic gains), while the grassroots remain less complications-sensitive. The main target of the MB leaders is saving the economy in the long-term and staying in power. The priorities on the grassroots level are either applying Sharia'a or having better welfare and public services. The two goals contradict perfectly in the current situation. Take the IMF as an example. The MB leadership finds the urge to acquire IMF trust higher than increasing social services and welfare (which is not accepted by the IMF because it raises public debts). Also, applying Sharia'a contradicts with the leadership goal of staying in power as it may raise MB's public and international alienation. The grassroots trust in their leadership will severely decline as time passes without seeing their demands met.

It is hard to predict when the laxity of the Muslim Brotherhood will happen. It can manage for generations, and it can happen immediately. Never forget El-Shater's "impossible!" that did not survive for 6 days.

Hesham Shafick is the Executive Manager of Moselemany's Development Foundation, and the Research Leader of the Muslim Brotherhood Unit in Cairo Centre for Political and Strategic Studies.

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Cairo Chamber of Commerce rejects governorate's decision to provide places for 2,000 unlicensed street vendors

By Anyam Al-Adawi

A recent announcement by the Cairo governorate to construct new market places to accommodate the city's unlicensed street vendors was met with shock and concern by businessmen and store owners. The new plan is estimated to accommodate only 10% of the city's unlicensed street vendors, and would take nearly one year to implement.

Businesses throughout Cairo first demanded that the governorate cooperate with other government institutions to address prolonged security lapses and use all means at their disposal to put an end to the perceived crisis of unlicensed street vendors. They claimed that the surge in these unlicensed traders seen since the 2011 revolution threatened the viability of legitimate businesses.

Businessmen in the city pledged their support for the governorate's plan on the condition of improvements in the security situation, particularly in Downtown districts such as Talaat Harb, Al-Tawfikia, Al-Azbakiya and Ramses. There were also calls for vendors travelling from other regions, particularly in Upper Egypt, be forced to return to their home provinces. Muhammad Gharib, deputy presi-



Street vendors occupy designated stall positions near Talaat Harb Street in Downtown Cairo in August 2012

dent of the Cairo Chamber of Commerce (CCC), said that vendors will not willingly leave their current locations unless provided with viable alternatives from where they can continue to trade. He also said that any areas created by officials that do not address the needs of vendors will be quickly abandoned.

Salih Al-Abd, a member of the Board of Directors for the CCC,

welcomed the financial contributions of local businessmen to help establish licensed market areas, ensuring that unlicensed vendors would not be allowed to return to their previous locations. He further acknowledged that many vendors rent their locations from other store or property owners, sometimes at a rate of EGP 300,000 per year.

Atif Al-Ashmuni, secretary at the

CCC, said that statistics produced by the Cairo governorate about the number of street vendors operating throughout the city, estimated at 20,000, were inaccurate. He said that in reality the numbers were closer to 200,000. Al-Ashmuni also alleged that some vendors brought weapons with them in order to ensure that store owners allow them to operate freely.

Al-Ashmuni expressed his frustration over the short-sighted nature of the plan, in addition to the fact that implementation will take between 10 to 12 months, saying: "There should not be a two month discrepancy as to when the plan will be implemented, especially considering the fact that such a plan only addresses the needs of 2,000 of the city's unlicensed vendors."

Al-Ashmuni discussed the need to exploit land resources that are currently under-utilised, citing Taha Qandil Street in Al-Matariyyah neighbourhood where a market was recently constructed using EGP 100m in funding from the Ministry of Endowments. All storefronts in this new marketplace are state-owned he added.

Desouky Sayid Desouky, president of the Spare Parts Division of the CCC, said that none of the city's unlicensed vendors pay taxes or utility bills in the areas where they operate. He said this reality will have to be taken into account when attempting to provide successful alternatives.

Ahmed Yahiya, president of the Food Resources Division in the CCC, said that a study should be conducted looking into the demands of street vendors before any attempts to construct alternative markets are undertaken.

Abdel Aziz Al-Sayyid, president of the Poultry Division at the CCC, said that the governorate's current plan only provides accommodation for 10% of the city's 20,000 unlicensed vendors. He said that any plan hoping to address the full extent of the situation should accommodate at least 40% to 50% of the city's unlicensed vendors.

Reda Hosni, an official working with the Cairo governorate, said that the limited number of places provided for by the plan was due to a shortage of funding. She added that the governorate hoped to cooperate with the CCC and other governing institutions in order to better address the needs of all of the city's unlicensed vendors.

Hosni added that suggestions made by businessmen and store owners would soon be brought before the governorate, highlighting the financial contributions made by the businessmen to help fund the project which would, as she described, help restore Egypt back to its former glory. Hosni went on to say that the governorate had already begun to create a strategy for unlicensed traders before the 2011 revolution, but that problems had become worse with the subsequent breakdown in policing.

Dearth of consumer confidence in first quarter

Experts attribute lack of confidence to insecurity, expensive living and political uncertainty

By Hend El-Behary

In a survey of 58 countries in the first quarter of the fiscal year (FY) 2013-2014, consumer confidence in Egypt declined 20 index points to reach a score of 74 when compared to the last quarter of 2012-2013, according to Nielsen Global Survey of Consumer Confidence (NGSCC).

Egypt's decline in consumer confidence comes as no surprise as the country's unsettled political conditions and civil unrest continues," said Rannohan Rao, managing director of NGSCC Egypt.

Rao continued: "Labour strikes in Egypt are increasing since the revolution and several factories were forced to shut down due to protests."

He added that tourism and foreign investment have also been negatively affected, altogether causing a fall in Egypt's foreign reserves which are down nearly two-thirds of levels before the 2011 revolution.

"Egyptian is forced to implement further belt-tightening measures in 2013," Rao said.

In the Middle East, another double digit consumer confidence decline was reported in Saudi Arabia, where it fell by 16 index points.

The survey reported that consumer confidence in the United Arab Emirates dropped five index points to 108, but still remained the highest index score reported in the region.

Israel's indexes rose one point to a score of 91.

In the Middle East and Africa, 67% of respondents were not confident they will be able to increase spending over the year.

A quarter of respondents in the region said they had no expendable income left after paying living expenses. Cash-strapped respondents planned to cut back on out-of-home entertainment and new technology purchases.

Indonesia reported the highest consumer index at 122 after a five

point increase, while Hong Kong reported the biggest quarterly index increase of 23 points to 108. Portugal reported the lowest index at 33, a five-point decline since the figures for the last quarter of FY 2012-2013.

The NGSCC investigation into spending intentions was conducted between 18 February and 8 March. Researchers polled more than 29,000 online consumers in 58 countries throughout Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and North America.

The sample group for each country based was weighted to be representative of internet consumers.

According to the findings, the overall global consumer confidence index stood at 93 in Q1 2013, a two-point increase from the previous quarter.

The increase was driven by the positive performance of self-reported key economic indicators, including job prospects, personal finances, and



Consumer confidence in Egypt declined 20 index points to reach a score of 74 in the first quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2013-2014 when compared to last quarter of FY 2012-2013, according to Nielsen Global Survey of Consumer Confidence

ability to spend, in the United States and across key Asian export markets.

Talking about Egypt, economic expert Karim Helal said: "It was no surprise, there are few factors to inspire consumer confidence, everything now happening in the country is unclear."

"Prices are high and getting higher and production is stalling," Helal said. Helal added that the main reasons are the lack of security, lack of a consis-

tent approach by the government, and uncertainty over the price of the US dollar compared to the Egyptian pound.

"This lack of confidence is going to influence the negotiations of loans, especially the IMF loan," Helal said.

However Abdel-Hafez El-Sawy, a member of the economic committee of Egypt's ruling Freedom and Justice Party, instead told state-owned Ahram online that: "A number of surveys and indices have exaggerated Egypt's

bad image, they are based on a small group of people who don't represent the entire country."

El-Sawy added: "I'm not saying the situation in Egypt is perfect, we need to re-establish security to encourage the return of investors, but the country also has some positive indicators."

When contacted for comment on the latest NGSCC survey, El-Sawy said "I have no idea about this survey, it's the first time I hear about it."

Last week's EGX30 index performance

Company Name	Reuters Code	Sector	Last Price	Close Price	Returns			Week Performance		Turn Over (EGP Mill.)	Volume Trade	Market Cap. (EGP Mill.)
					1-Week	YTD	12-Mths.	Max. Price	Min. Price			
Commercial Bank	COMI	Banks	34.49	34.34	3.03%	-0.67%	32.64%	34.53	33.16	34.71	1,010,860	20,423.53
NSGB	NSGB	Banks	27.80	27.96	-2.00%	-20.59%	-6.89%	28.12	27.58	0.696	24,900	12,392.39
Ezz Steel	ESRS	Basic Resources	10.19	10.08	4.67%	1.51%	43.39%	10.20	9.54	16.01	1,588,403	5,448.95
ELSWEDY ELECTRIC	SWDY	Industrial Goods and Services and Automobiles	19.60	20.01	-0.10%	-12.66%	-16.14%	20.50	19.60	0.456	22,809	4,468.36
MRRDIVE	MOIL	Industrial Goods and Services and Automobiles	1.07	1.07	-3.60%	-7.76%	-10.08%	1.09	1.05	2.55	343,344	390.66
AIC Contracting	AIND	Financial Services excluding Banks	0.46	0.46	-2.13%	-2.13%	-16.36%	0.47	0.46	0.147	316,898	251.27
Amer Group Holding	AMER	Financial Services excluding Banks	0.57	0.56	-3.45%	-12.50%	-17.65%	0.57	0.55	0.58	1,039,860	1,702.23
EK Holding	EKHO	Financial Services excluding Banks	1.07	1.09	-6.84%	-14.84%	0.93%	1.15	1.06	27.411	3,629,232	965.19
EGF-Hermes	HRHO	Financial Services excluding Banks	9.68	9.76	-2.01%	-11.35%	-19.27%	10.92	9.39	45.57	4,670,133	4,749.47
Pioneers Holding	PIOH	Financial Services excluding Banks	4.12	4.08	-2.63%	-16.05%	1.24%	4.12	4.04	4.962	1,215,613	2,070.00
Citadel Capital	CCAP	Financial Services excluding Banks	3.51	3.54	-2.21%	-6.35%	15.31%	3.61	3.47	9.08	2,563,779	2,346.85
Raya Holding	RAYA	Technology	5.45	5.46	0.37%	-3.53%	3.02%	5.48	5.38	0.348	63,781	351.30
Telecom Egypt	ETEL	Telecommunications	13.69	13.61	3.03%	-3.82%	5.50%	13.74	13.17	13.54	994,691	23,199.10
Orascom Telecom Media And Technology	OTMT	Telecommunications	0.50	0.50	0.00%	-9.09%	30.40%	0.50	0.49	1.719	3,446,742	2,622.85
Orascom Telecom	ORTE	Telecommunications	4.73	4.70	0.43%	18.39%	44.62%	4.74	4.64	11.54	2,455,628	24,707.20
Sidi Kerir Petrochemicals	SKPC	Chemicals	12.94	12.79	1.99%	-3.47%	0.71%	12.94	12.52	6.975	545,288	6,688.50
Egyptian Financial and Industrial	EFIC	Chemicals	9.44	9.47	2.60%	-4.54%	-10.15%	9.57	9.10	4.59	484,143	663.22
AMOC	AMOC	Oil and Gas	68.00	67.53	-1.50%	-7.73%	-20.55%	68.01	66.75	2.378	35,206	5,789.36
Juhayna Food Industries	JUFO	Food and Beverage	9.4	9.26	1.87%	20.42%	112.39%	9.40	9.08	0.84	90,264	6,636.91
Orascom Construction Industries (OCI)	OCIC	Construction and Materials	240.00	239.76	-0.22%	-4.99%	-12.40%	241.00	239.00	11.210	46,755	50,395.95
Delta Construction & Rebuilding	DCRC	Construction and Materials	5.86	5.89	-2.16%	-5.61%	4.25%	5.98	5.84	0.31	52,888	138.17
Modern Co. For Water Proofing	WATP	Construction and Materials	1.72	1.72	-2.82%	-3.91%	-41.30%	1.73	1.70	1.030	599,548	176.46
Palm Hills	PHDC	Real Estate	2.36	2.34	3.08%	-4.10%	23.16%	2.37	2.19	36.13	15,417,679	2,484.52
TMGH Holding	TMGH	Real Estate	4.16	4.15	0.97%	-6.32%	-1.19%	4.19	3.97	25.833	6,229,625	8,543.15
National Real Estate Bank	NRPD	Real Estate	18.6	18.12	3.13%	-9.13%	-6.11%	18.76	17.07	6.32	348,710	68.53
Six of October	OCDI	Real Estate	20.70	20.91	1.36%	2.85%	23.44%	21.05	20.27	4.217	201,651	1,905.11
El Kahera Housing & Development	ELKA	Real Estate	6.32	6.33	0.00%	-3.65%	41.61%	6.38	6.26	0.90	141,974	599.06
Arab Cotton Ginning	ACGC	Personal and Household Products	3.63	3.63	-0.82%	-17.50%	37.50%	3.65	3.52	3.787	1,044,223	966.58
Oriental Weavers	ORWE	Personal and Household Products	22	21.95	2.76%	-5.79%	21.94%	22.00	20.83	0.07	3,335	1,949.40
Egyptian Tourism Resorts	EGTS	Travel & Leisure	0.95	0.94	-4.08%	-10.48%	-14.55%	0.95	0.93	1.208	1,284,710	1,008.00

Trading value and volume during the week

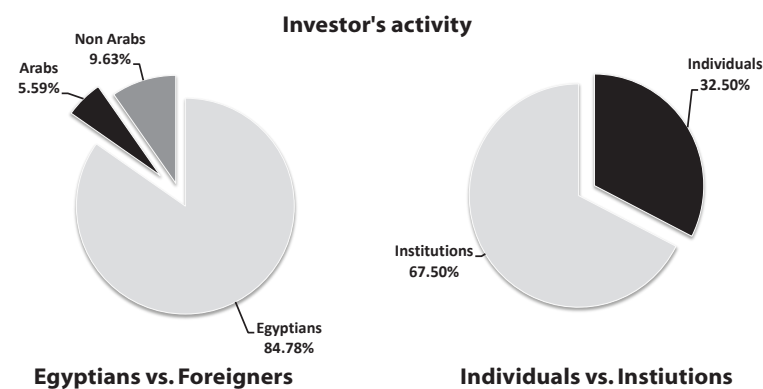
Markets	Trading Value	Trading Volume	# of Trades
	(EGP Mill.)	(EGP Mill.)	
Main Market	3,131.243	369.765	74,726
Bonds	1,532.04	1.506	—
Nilex	3.990	1.586	616
OTC	76.64	4.885	373
Total	4,743.909	377.742	75,715

Market indices performance

Index	Value	1-Week Ch.	YTD Ch.
EGX 30	5,427.97	0.44%	-0.63%
EGX 70	451.75	-0.93%	-5.31%
EGX 100	760.72	-0.39%	-4.95%
EGX 20 Capped	6,250.48	0.75%	-1.45%

Market capitalization in LE Billion

Markets	Close	Open	Change
Total Listed Stocks	364.841	364.212	0.17%
EGX 30	179.328	178.285	0.59%
EGX 70	73.251	73.747	-0.67%
EGX 100	252.579	252.031	0.22%
NILEX	0.991	0.992	-0.10%





BUSINESS

Finance Ministry official resigns over dispute with Brotherhood

ADVISOR SAMI KHALLAF ACCUSES MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD OF INTERFERING IN HIS WORK AND MARGINALISING HIM

By Nada Badawi

Senior Finance Ministry advisor Sami Khallaf announced his resignation on Wednesday due to claimed disputes with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Khallaf told the press that following the recent cabinet reshuffle, newly appointed officials affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood were interfering in his work.

"They try to disrupt my work and interfere in it as well as marginalise me. There is no link between my ideas and theirs," Khallaf said to Reuters, referring to the newly appointed officials.

Fayad Abdel Moniem was appointed the new finance minister in the

cabinet reshuffle; however it is believed he has no affiliations with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Opposition groups have repeatedly accused the Brotherhood of taking over the state's institutions.

"This is yet another resignation we know nothing of," said Karim Shehab, media spokesperson at the Ministry of Finance.

This is the second resignation announced after Deputy Finance Minister Hany Kadry called it quits less than a month ago, but retracted his resignation a few days later.

At the time of Kadry's announcement, Shehab said: "It is likely that working in a challenging time like this has been difficult for everyone, and not just for Kadry."

Shehab added that cases of resignations in the ministry are usually "case-sensitive" and are often spoken about very vaguely, even within the ministry.

"Unlike last time, Hany Kadry informed us of his will to resign in December, but in the case of Khallaf it happened abruptly," he said.

Khallaf was also head of the ministry's public debt unit and supervisor of the Qatari-Egyptian aid file. Like Kadry, he was also a keynote negotiator with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over the controversial \$4.8bn loan package.

Experts believe that the continuous resignations could hurt Egypt's chances of securing the IMF loan.

Economy expert Sherif El-Khereiby said that the resignation is not the only thing that will affect the IMF deal. "The resignation will affect the IMF deal for sure, but the deal has been stalled for so long now," he said. "I don't think the resignation is the only issue here."

Egypt has been in negotiations with the IMF for over two years now, believing that the loan will help salvage Egypt's economy.

Negotiations with the global lender have been postponed more than once due to political unrest in the country and conditions not met by the Egyptian government, including severe austerity measures to increase sales taxes and curb energy subsidies.

Digitised database will exclude 1.5 million from receiving subsidies: Ouda

Minister of Supply and Internal Trade expects 1.5 million citizens to be excluded from receiving subsidies after overhaul of statistics database system

Minister of Supply and Domestic Trade Bassem Ouda said that he expects the overhaul and digitisation of the country's database system, which allows Egyptians to register their names and that of their children to receive government subsidies, to exclude 1.5 million qualifying citizens seeking aid.

During the meeting the four discussed the need to work towards modernising the country's statistics database, concentrating on the system that registers those qualifying for subsidies

This is bound to occur, he said, as certain names will be repeated more than once, while the names of others who have either died or left the country may remain included on the list, denying opportunities to others seeking to apply. The minister's statements were made during a recent meeting between Ouda, Minister of Communications and Information Technology Atef Helmy, Minister of State for Administrative Development Ahmed Samir, and Wahid Bakri, the general administrative agent for the Civil State Organisation within the Ministry of Interior.

During the meeting the four discussed the need to work towards modernising the country's statistics database, concentrating on the system that registers those qualifying for subsidies. Ouda said the project would require cooperation between the three ministries in addition to that of the Civil State Organisation within the Ministry of Interior.

Samir pledged to provide all necessary information to overhaul the database system, while Helmy pledged to provide all technical support needed for the project. He expressed hope that digitising the country's subsidies database system would eventually allow citizens to use and receive all forms of government aid via a single smart card.

Morsi: No more wheat imports within four years

By Hend El-Behary

Egypt will stop all wheat imports within the next four years, depending only on domestic production, President Mohamed Morsi said in a speech last Wednesday delivered from a wheat field near Alexandria.

"The current [production] rates are excellent and I think by the end of the week we will reach 2 million tonnes, which is around half of what we are seeking this year," he said.

"Wheat production is expected to surge by 30% to reach roughly 9.5 million tonnes in 2013, compared to previous years, where production was estimated at seven million tonnes," Morsi added.

The president emphasised that Egypt is looking to achieve 12 million tonnes in two years, which is more than 80% of the nation's domestic need for wheat.

Morsi pointed that the primary goal is to stop importing wheat in four years.

However some experts disagree with the president's optimism. Sherief El-Kherby, an economy expert, said that this speech is not scientific. Former minister of Supply and Interior Trade Gouda Abdel Khalek concurred with El-Kherby on a TV show on Tahrir satellite channel, saying that



President Mohamed Morsi made the announcement about achieving self sufficiency in wheat production within four years during a visit to a wheat farm near Alexandria

although "we are going to be happy if Egypt achieved self-sufficiency, but experts realise that this is not going to happen".

Economy expert Abdel Khalek explained that "the land allocated for agriculture is limited, so increasing production will be limited as well".

Egypt is currently importing 10 million tonnes annually, but plans are

in place buy five million tonnes from abroad this year.

Minister of Supply and Domestic Trade Bassem Ouda has said he expects a harvest of 9.5 million tonnes of domestic wheat this season, which runs from April until early June.

About half of the harvest ends up in government-owned flour mills, with the rest being sold on the market.

Egyptian foreign debt increases by \$8bn

Continued from page 1

President Mohamed Morsi also made an unexpected loan request from Russia worth \$2bn, which Russian President Vladimir Putin rejected.

Turkey was also among the countries that provided financial support, lending Egypt \$1bn toward the end of

2012. Saudi Arabia also loaned Egypt \$4bn, including \$1.5bn in the form of non-refundable grants.

Qatar's share alone of Egypt's official foreign debt, which currently stands at \$38.8bn, has risen to more than 16%. The country's share of Egypt's debt is expected to reach \$41.8bn once the new loans are added.

Egypt is currently in the middle of talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over the proposed \$4.8bn loan package.

Morsi had once said in a televised interview that the IMF loan is "recognition of the international confidence in Egypt's economy, which will foreign investments in the country".

Egypt: International banks eyeing long-term growth

A large, underbanked market makes Egypt an appealing prospect for financial institutions looking for long-term growth, although the effects of ongoing economic and political uncertainty are weighing on some lenders.

On 1 April the international press reported that Barclays, the UK's second-biggest bank by assets, planned to increase its presence in Egypt by boosting the number of its branches by 10% and entering the Islamic finance segment.

"For us, Egypt is a very important economy," said Omar Baig, consumer banking director at Barclays Bank Egypt, in an interview. "Our view about Egypt in the long term still remains that it's a place where we want to be and we want to be a significant player." Baig added that Barclays could look into acquiring another bank in Egypt if the opportunity arises.

Egypt's market is also attracting attention from Gulf banks. In

December, Qatar National Bank (QNB) agreed to purchase French lender Société Générale's 77% stake in Egypt's National Société Générale Bank (NSGB) in a deal worth \$1.97bn. The same month, Dubai's Emirates NBD confirmed it would be buying the Egyptian subsidiary of BNP Paribas, another French bank, for \$500m.

The Gulf banks and Barclays have shown themselves content to look past Egypt's instability and lower GDP growth of the past 18 months to the banking market's more promising medium- and long-term potential.

QNB and Emirates NBD in particular are both considering an expansion into emerging markets to diversify their portfolios and tap into high growth. "Egypt is very much a growth market and this bank has been growing at an average of 15% in the last few years," Kevin Flannery, Emirates NBD's international general manager, said

at the time of the purchase. "That growth statistic will continue, if not rise, as things settle in Egypt."

The QNB and Emirates NBD deals were confirmed two months after HSBC, Europe's biggest bank, announced that it was looking to expand its consumer lending and wealth management business in Egypt.

Egypt holds many attractions for international banks, led by its long-term growth trend. Prior to the domestic revolution and international financial crisis, the economy was achieving growth of around 7% per year.

Banks will also be eyeing the large and growing population of 85 million, which includes a sizeable middle class and significant young segment. Other attractions include opportunities to finance the sectors expected to drive growth once greater stability returns, together with an expanding interest among Egyptians in sharia'a compliant products.



Egypt: Growing call for higher education reforms

The large and comparatively diverse higher education sector is expected to see an encouraging increase in demand in the years to come, but a mismatch between the courses chosen by Egypt's university students and the market's requirements has highlighted the need for wide-ranging reforms across the university system.

About 55% of Egypt's population, which numbers over 82 million, is aged under 25. However, despite young Egyptians graduating in the hundreds of thousands every year, data from the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows the country had 600,000 unfilled job vacancies in 2012.

This is not a situation unique to Egypt: Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia are all facing similar problems as labour force growth outpaces employment growth. Nor does it look as though the supply-side pressure will change significantly any time soon, with the International Labour Organisation predicting an additional 10 million youth will have entered the region's workforce from 2010 to 2020.

The challenges are further complicated by the limited range of employment opportunities currently available, with a report by the AfDB in conjunction with a 2010 Gallup poll having indicated that less than one-fifth of young men in North Africa are in full-time wage employment. A large informal sector and a prevalence of part-time and underemployment also deepens the challenge.

While formal job creation is crucial to overcoming these hurdles, there is also a marked push by education sector representatives and leaders to improve youth prospects for employment, urging Egypt's universities to upgrade, modernise and find ways of meeting the labour market's needs.

Writing in the local press in early April, Anthony J Perzigian, an advisor to the Future University in Egypt (FUE) and Provost of the University of Cincinnati in the US, set out a number of ideas for enhancing higher education, while warning that the country's economic future hung in the balance.

Perzigian said reform should encompass the curriculum, methods of instruction and a restructuring of the system itself. His suggestions for changing the university curriculum included the need to steer more students toward science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine, which he said could help equip Egyptians with the skills required for the high-tech industries the country was keen to nurture.

Other suggestions included promoting foreign language learning,

which Perzigian said would improve students' ability to interact on an international level, and fostering entrepreneurship, known to be an area of weakness in Egypt, through the curriculum. The need to make greater use of ICT in education was also highlighted, although the government's broadband rollout strategy, which gives schools and hospitals a priority, should help address this issue.

Perzigian called for "democratising and liberating Egypt's higher education system", saying that government control of the current system, which he described as "too centralised", made it difficult for institutions to change curricula in response to market demands.

The last major changes introduced in the higher education system date back to 1996, when a presidential decree making the 1992 Private Universities Act law paved the way for the opening of the first Egyptian private universities to run alongside international private institutions, such as the American University in Cairo (AUC). Since then, over 20 private universities have opened their doors, adding breadth and competition to what was previously a state-dominated market.

However, Sherif Kamel, dean of the School of Business at the AUC, told OBG that some public schools, including the state-owned Mansoura University in the Nile Delta and Assiut University in Upper Egypt, were already making an important contribution to the education sector.

Even with the influx of new institutions, and the resultant expansion and diversification of course offerings and curriculum, over-enrolment, limited extracurricular activities, and scarce resources are also weighing on their performance.

Kamel believes both public and private universities could improve the sector by rolling out initiatives such as student exchange programmes, which he said would help promote research and encourage alternative sources of funding. Endowments, partnerships with business and sponsorships are still rare in much of the sector, and government resources and public income remain limited.

With its large population, sizeable middle class and interest in education, Egypt makes an attractive prospect for a broad range of private education providers. Liberalisation and modernisation of the higher-education segment should also bring additional benefits to Egypt's wider investment community, with ICT companies interested in equipping institutions and businesses looking to form partnerships among those who stand to gain.



ART & CULTURE

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

EVENTS

MUSIC

The Riff Band

Enjoy a night of Jazz Cabaret as Ahmed Harfoush and band mates croon the best of jazz and some of the oldest and loveliest tunes.

Cairo Jazz Club
197 26 of July Street
Agouza, Cairo
Tel: (02) 3345 9939
19 May 10pm

FILM

After Lucia

The Mexican film After Lucia is about teenager Alejandra, who moves to a new town with her dad and their struggles to find their bearings.

Dina's Hostel
42 Abdel Khaleq Tharwat Street
Downtown, Cairo
Tel: 010 0302 5346
19 May 7pm

Je Crois Que Je l'Aime (Could this be love ?)

The French film follows the love story of Elsa and Lucas, and their struggle to make their relationship work.

French Cultural Institute
I Madrasset El Huquq El Frenseyya
Mounira, Cairo
Tel: (02) 2791 5800
19 May 7.30pm

EXHIBITION

Hybrid


Artist Shaimaa Sobhy mixes humans with animals to create some innovative creatures in her new collection at Gallery Misr.
Gallery Misr
4 A Ibn Zenki Street
Zamalek, Cairo
Tel: (02) 2735 0604
19 May 11am

Women and Dervishes/Tannoura

Al Kahila Art Gallery is housing two exhibitions, Women and Dervishes by Ali Azzam and Tannoura by Taher Adel Azzem.
Al Kahila Art Gallery
15 El Batal Ahmed Abdel Aziz Street
Mohandessin, Giza
Tel: (02) 3304 0791
19 May 11am

Covering One's Back

A collection of photographs from professional photographers form Switzerland and the Arab world.
Gezira Art Centre
I El Masrafy Street
Zamalek, Cairo
Tel: (02) 2737 3298
19 May 10am

Weather 	
Sunday, 19 May	
Alexandria	32°C / 21°C
Aswan	44°C / 28°C
Cairo	38°C / 28°C
Hurghada	41°C / 28°C
Luxor	44°C / 28°C
Sharm El-Sheikh	42°C / 27°C
Suez	34°C / 19°C

Cairo's Guitar Hero



Guitar repairs vary from small wiring jobs on pick ups to more serious damage, such as this Gibson ES-333 that has a broken headstock

By Omar El Adl

A lively argument is heard coming from inside; Adel Sakr against his three daughters. The daughters make a good case and eventually the father gives in. Sakr may be a legendary luthier in the city's music scene but he is a family man first and foremost. "You can never win with them," he says smiling.

Perhaps not, but according to Sakr, with a good work ethic you can win other battles. Sakr's musical vocation began when he was a child. "These things are always noticeable. I was just drawn to it." Sakr's inclination toward music was so strong that he created an improvised instrument by pulling strings from different fishing rods over wood. "I had no idea what the different notes were but I experimented with different lengths and thicknesses to produce different sounds."

Sakr tells how music requires sacrifices. "Many think of a bohemian life when a musician comes to mind but nothing could be further away from the truth. You were either studying

music theory during the day or you were out performing and practising at other times," he said.

These sacrifices were what ultimately led to Sakr's withdrawal from a musical career. When he left for Germany in 1987, it was partially a decision to leave music behind. "A lifestyle in music is not satisfying, partly because of how it is perceived in Egypt. In Germany I quickly assimilated to the culture. I learned different skills and experimented with different fields, including carpentry, high capacity electricity and photography."

Sakr marvelled at German efficiency and wanted to apply the same methods to his work. "The German post system ran incredibly well and I started to think that this perfectionism, this dedication to one's job is what I admired. It is something that I think is rare in Egypt," he said.

No matter how much he enjoyed living in Germany, eventually he left because: "An Egyptian always comes home," he said. "I tried to read Al-Fatiha [the opening verses of the Quran] and the words did

not come easily. I knew it was time."

Despite a flourishing career in microphotography, Sakr chose to continue his career by fixing guitars when he returned to Egypt. "You can only perfect one thing," he said.

Sakr said his success comes from his dedication and the lack of competition. "In Germany, I am one of many, but here few take this job seriously and this is partly how I have built up my reputation. It does not matter what you do, if you are a dedicated plumber you will have more clients than you can handle. Perfectionism is everything," he said.

Holding up a guitar in a sad state with loose wires hanging out, he demonstrates his point: "This guitar has already been fixed by someone else and this is what it looks like. Besides having dedication and a good work ethic, maybe I am considered the best because this is the competition."

The guitarists of Cairo seems to think he is being far too modest in his explanation for his success and many will only use Sakr's highly praised skills when their instruments need repairs.

Desire, Deceit, and Difficult Deliveries

Ovid's Metamorphoses tells the tale of creation. Like The Odyssey, The Iliad and Aeneid, it is an epic poem, which means it is a very long narrative that contains heroes, drama and terrible deeds. Ovid's Metamorphoses is a series of transformations, with myths like Echo and Narcissus, The Fountain of Salmacis, Byblis and Caunus and Myrrha. Those four tales are the ones that artist Doa Aly chose to focus on in her exhibition "Desire, Deceit, and Difficult Deliveries" at the Townhouse Gallery in Downtown Cairo.

Echo and Narcissus tells the tale of the nymph Echo, who was cursed by Hera to repeat the last word she hears. Echo meets Narcissus and falls in love with him, but he rejects her. She dies of grief and all that remains is her echo. When Narcissus looked in the river he saw himself, but did not recognise it was his own reflection staring back at him. The reflection echoed his expressions and moves and so he fell in love with it. He becomes mesmerised by his own visage and refuses to move away from the river, and so he also dies.

The Fountain of Salmacis tells the tale of the nymph Salmacis and mortal Hermaphroditus, who was himself the offspring of Aphrodite and Hermes. When he travelled to the pool of Salmacis, the nymph was overcome by his beauty and tried to seduce him, but Hermaphroditus rejected her. After he thought the nymph had left, Hermaphroditus undressed and went swimming. The nymph then tried to force herself upon him and while doing so she prayed that they would never part. Listening in, the capricious gods granted her wish and blended them both into a two-sexed creature.

Byblis and Caunus were twins, and in the myth Byblis falls in love with Caunus. She realises that it is inappro-

priate, but she still pursues him. Byblis writes Caunus a love letter, but he is disgusted with her and he flees. Byblis follows, but after another rejection she becomes mad. She travels through Greece and Asia Minor pursuing him, crying so profusely all the way that she eventually transforms into a spring.

Myrrha tells the tale of a girl who is attracted to her father. She struggles with the thought and tries to commit suicide, but her nurse interrupts the attempt. Myrrha confides in her nurse, who promises to help her get into her father's bed if she stops trying to kill herself. The nurse tricks the father into thinking that Myrrha was not his daughter. When the father discovers the ruse, he tries to kill Myrrha, but she escapes. Already pregnant and wandering the earth alone, she prays to the gods and they transform her into a myrrh tree. After a while the tree gives birth to Adonis.

The exhibition is supposed to focus on those four tales through the video installations and the sketches. However, I failed to see the connection. The four video installations were of people wearing leotards, doing what is known in the ballet world as Tendu. The sketches were more incoherent doodles that anything related to Ovid's myths, which are so elaborate and detailed. The "geometric structure immediately disturbs the viewer's navigation of space, a sculpture that is based on the paths walked by the performers in the Metamorphoses series," was a large piece of patterned wood.

As twisted and bizarre as the tales of Ovid's Metamorphoses are, they deserved better.

The one thing I felt as I exited the exhibition was anger. I was angry that I fought through Cairo's traffic, even getting a bit lost on the way, only to waste my time on this inchoate exhibition.

Ten Cities Project breathes new life into Cairo electronic music scene



Ten Cities Musicians with Mahmoud Refaat during the concert

By Fanny Ohier

Two nationalities, seven musicians and a shared passion for electronic music came together for a concert that produced a small musical earthquake at the Rawabet Theatre in Downtown Cairo.

On the Thursday 16 May the Egyptian groups Bikya and Wetrobots joined two electronic music musicians from Berlin, Alva Noto and Byetone (Diamond Version project), in a one-off jam concert organised under the aegis of the Ten Cities Project. Backed by the Goethe-Institute Cairo and 100COPIES, the event gathered a diverse audience that filled up the Rawabet Theater, a small concert hall reopened especially for the occasion.

The Ten Cities Project aims to reveal the importance electronic culture has these days in Berlin, Bristol, Johannesburg, Cairo, Kiev, Lagos, Lisbon, Luanda, Nairobi and Naples. The project is a collaboration between the Goethe-Institutes in sub-Saharan Africa, the Berlin collective Adaptr.org and the Centre for Postcolonial Studies at the University of Naples, and brings musicians from Eu-

In Search of Oil and Sand reminds viewers of a forgotten era

By Thoraia Abou Bakr

On Tuesday 14 May, the British Council in Agouza screened the documentary In Search of Oil and Sand, which follows the path of Mahmoud Sabit as he uncovers his family's past. His father, Adel Sabit, was former Egyptian king Farouk's second cousin. The film revolves around an old movie that Adel Sabit and Bulent Raouf, Princess Faiza's husband, made several months before the 1952 coup d'état. The movie was called Oil and Sand, and has been in storage in Sabit's family home in Garden City for more than 60 years.

The silent movie is about the search for oil by an American representative and the struggle between the Bedouins and the Americans to get hold of the oil. In the plot of the old 8mm film an American girl gets kidnapped. The girl was played by Princess Nevin Abbas Halim, and during the filming of the documentary she was interviewed as the last surviving member of the film's cast.

The documentary also gives insight into the last days leading up to the 1952 coup d'état. At the time, the film's cast was in Alexandria on a fishing trip. They were unaware of what was happening until they saw bombers flying above the Montazah Palace.

In the documentary, Sabit interviewed Princess Nevin, who still lives in Alexandria. She discusses the movie and also the coup d'état. She comments on the state of the country two years afterwards and how the country went from an economically-booming state to being in debt. "The people who came to power had no idea how to run Egypt," said Princess Nevin. When asked if she was sad about what happened she responded

that she was not. She explained that one should not live in sadness and that what happened is in the past.

Mahmoud Sabit also commented on that period, saying that he lived in an era that does not exist anymore. The time of the royal family was under great scrutiny and it is believed that accounts of it have been greatly distorted. One of the viewers asked Sabit about how royalty are believed to have been disconnected from the public, he replied: "To suggest that they were only fun-loving...no, that is not true."

In the documentary Sabit also relies on his mother's memoirs to tell the story of the silent film. His mother was Frances Ramsden, an American actress. She wrote her memoirs in 1966 and tried to get them published but was ultimately unsuccessful.

The documentary can be considered a time capsule and a view of a time that is no longer officially acknowledged. It is timely because in the present day there are people who are longing for the "good days" of the Egyptian royalty. Consequently the auditorium of the British Council was filled to the maximum with viewers longing for a glimpse of the past.

However, the film lacks focus and would have benefited from better editing and inclusion of more details about the 1952 film and the people in it. Sabit commented that there were many items stored in his family home and it was difficult going through all of them. He expects that there will be further editing of the film in the future.

The documentary will participate in the Ismailia Film Festival, after which the makers hope to sell it to television channels.

Nadia Mounier