

## ***Positions of Social Actors in the Egyptian Revolution: A Micro Level Analysis***

### ***Mısır Devrimi'ndeki Sosyal Aktörlerin Pozisyonları: Bir Mikro-Düzey Analiz***

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#### ***Abstract***

*Egyptians witnessed one of the most significant events in the country's historical development, the so called 25 January Revolution. Anti-government protests started on 25 January 2011 and continued until 11 February of the same year, when President Hosni Mubarak announced his resignation. The revolution has opened the floor for sociologists and other revolution theory scholars as the most novel case in its kind which has similarities to, and differences from all other revolutions that happened in the history. Scholars of revolution emphasize that the most important element of a revolution is its actors. For this very reason, this article analyzes the perceptions, positions and philosophies of major actors of the 25 January Egyptian Revolution immediately before and during the revolution. Specifically, it examines the timing, demands, and claims of major opposition groups and challengers that participated in the revolutionary process. It concludes that almost all anti-Mubarak movements participated in the demonstrations and showed a unified stance against the regime. Regardless of their differences in philosophical orientations and social classes, revolutionary protests included Egyptians from socialists to liberals, seculars to Islamists, Muslims to Christians, who gathered in Tahrir Square and elsewhere, to topple Mubarak regime down. This modest work gives a "descriptive picture" of the persons, groups and organizations who made Egyptian revolution possible.*

***Keywords:*** *Revolution, Egypt, 6 April Youth Movement, Muslim Brotherhood, Facebook.*

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## Özet

Mısırlılar ülke tarihinin en önemli olaylarından biri olan 25 Ocak Devrimi'ne şahit oldular. 25 Ocak 2011'de başlayan hükümet karşıtı protestolar aynı yılın 11 Şubat'ında Hüsnü Mübarek'in istifası ile sonuçlanmıştır. Devrim sosyologlar ve diğer 'devrim teorisi' çalışan araştırmacılar için bu anlamdaki, öncekilerle benzerliklerinin yanında farklıklarının da görüldüğü, en güncel örnek olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Devrim kuramcıları için bir devrimin en öncemli unsuru, aktörleridir. Tam da bu nedenle, bu makale 25 Ocak Mısır Devrimi'nin aktörlerinin hemen devrim öncesinde ve devrim sırasındaki felsefelerini, pozisyonlarını ve algılayışlarını analiz etmektedir. Özellikle, devrim sürecinde aktif katılımcı olan ana muhalif grupların argümanlarını, taleplerini ve zamanlamalarını incelemektedir. Çalışma, neredeyse tüm Mübarek karşıtı hareketlerin, ayaklanmalara ve protesto gösterilerine katıldıkları ve rejim karşısında birleşik bir duruş sergiledikleri sonucunu ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Sosyal sınıf veya felsefik arkaplanlarına bakılmaksızın, sosyalistten liberale, sekülerden İslamcı'ya, Müslüman'dan Hristiyan'a tüm Mısırlılar Tahrir Meydanı'nda ve diğer merkezlerde Mübarek'i devirmek amacıyla devrim protestolarına katılmışlardır. Bu mütevazı çalışma Mısır Devrimi'ni mümkün kılan kişilerin, grupların ve kurumların tanımlayıcı bir resmini çizmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Devrim, Mısır, 6 Nisan Gençlik Hareketi, Müslüman Kardeşler, Facebook

2011 will always be remembered as one of the most significant years in not only Egypt's history, but in the whole Arab world. The revolutions of 2011 are just as important historical events as Egyptian revolution of 1952, coup d'état of Iran in 1953, Suez Crisis of 1956, Six Days War of 1963, Yom Kippur War of 1973, and Iranian revolution of 1979. What makes these special revolutions that took place in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya different from other historical events in the Middle East is the significance and importance of them with regards to historical development of their respective countries. Among these one of them is of particular importance and needs to be studied in detail in order to better understand the micro-level dynamics of the revolutions, which is the Egyptian case. This descriptive study is an effort aiming to enhance the bulk of literature that has been produced already on the actors of the revolution in Egypt.

It is important to systematically define these actors of the revolution for three reasons; (1) Each actor played a different role in order to reach one certain aim that was the change of regime. These roles might seem to be less important than actors but without the tangible structure the 'end goal' would not be achieved. Therefore, the actor itself must be explained thoroughly; (2) For many analysts the actors of the revolution are novel and they are sociologically different compared to other revolutions in history, be it contemporary or late modern period. Therefore a sociological analysis of the actors must be conducted in order for us to be able to make a comparison between the modern-age and contemporary revolutions and today's what we may call 'postmodern' revolutions; (3) before reaching the first anniversary of the revolutions it has been repetitively discussed whether the revolutions were successful or not. However, one point that many agreed was the regime changes in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya are one of the most significant event in those country's own historical developments. Therefore, the actors who carried out these events must be explored and uncovered when they are still fresh and alive. In other words, the social actors of the revolution must be researched when the dynamics, motivations and aspirations of the actors are untouched as they were born.

The methodology of this paper is not so complex as one would have expected from a scientific paper. However, since the aim of this research is to define and bring out a certain group of people, or an institution or even a person, it will dig into the Egypt's social structure through reliable

sources available. The paper, so the social actors of the Egyptian revolution, is divided into three major sections, each focused minor groups or topics. At the first level civil society organizations and groups that actively participated in the revolutionary demonstrations will be investigated. This will be followed by a brief account of Islamic movements, namely Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi movement, whose positions were of great importance for the successfully completion of the revolution process. The final section will analyze the stance and policies of religious organizations, groups and prominent persons, in order to show their reaction and reception of the social unrest.

This study is a modest attempt to uncover the actual actors of the revolution in Egypt. It should be noted that this revolution constitutes a unique example of what we may call people's revolution in the Arab world. The West which has been traditionally heavily involved in the politics of the Arab world was caught up unprepared and therefore its influence remained very limited in the pre and post revolutionary developments. Since it's commonly agreed that the revolution in Egypt took place with its exclusive internal dynamics, the importance of understanding the actors becomes more apparent.

## **Civil Society Organizations**

### *6 April Youth Movement<sup>2</sup>*

6 April Youth Movement was one of the most influential actors of the Egyptian revolution. The group has been the leading movement in organizing demonstrations and protests together with other similar organizations such as Kefaya (Enough) Movement, Dignity Party, Al-Wasat Party, 9 March Autonomous University Movement. The primary methods the group used in conducting its revolutionary protests were the social media tools and mobile sms services. The group organized various demonstrations long before the Egyptian revolution, despite its activities were systematically banned or censored by the government. According to official webpage of the 6 April Youth Movement, the main aim of the group was to organize protests in order to bring the Mubarak regime to a halt and to implement political reforms for a more democratic country.

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<sup>2</sup> Some parts of this chapter have been published in the journal *Ortadoğu Analiz*, April 2011 - Issue: 3 - Number: 28, pp. 98-106.

The group has no affiliation with any of the political parties but it cooperates with all kind of oppositional movements, regardless of their ideological standings. The philosophy of the group is to seek change with peaceful means. One of the major contributions of the movement to the Egyptian society is to spread political activism to all levels of the society and to pervade culture of peaceful protests among youth.

Social activists Ahmed Maher and Israa Abdel Fattah discussed about a project, setting up a *facebook* group in order to organize protests and demonstrations against the Mubarak regime, when they met at the gathering of Al-Ghad party volunteers. Even though both of them had the experience of being arrested and questioned by the police forces for their anti-government activities, the two activists decided to go along with this project. They further discussed their idea of *facebook* group with other activists namely Asmaa Mahfuz, Mohamed Adel Amr Ali, Ahmad Salah and Amal Sharaf and guaranteed their support in this project. In one of his interviews Ahmed Maher argued that setting up a *facebook* page is an effective way of creating political opposition and organizing anti-regime demonstrations. “When you have thousands of followers” he says, “you can reach them all at the same time by only sending a message to the group page.”<sup>3</sup>

The 6 April Youth Movement’s *facebook* page was set up on 23 March 2008. Invitations were sent to friend lists on *facebook* pages of the creators and the next morning the numbers of the followers grow to 3.000 and to 40.000 by the end of the month. Followers were above 70.000 when 6 April Youth Movement was organizing its first event in which the group asked the supporters to wear black and boycott their work for one day on 6 April 2008. The aim of this protest was to show support for the labor strike that was already organized by workers’ syndicates in the city of Mahalla-Al Kubra. Demonstrations took place not only in Mahalla Al-Kubra but also in other major cities. Even though it was planned to be only a national boycott the demonstrations turned into anti-Mubarak protests. During the clashes in Mahalla Al-Kubra at least three protesters were killed by the security forces and many members of the 6 April Youth Movement,

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<sup>3</sup> David Wolman, Cairo Activists Use Facebook to Rattle Regime, Wired Magazine, 20 October 2008, [http://www.wired.com/techbiz/startups/magazine/16-11/ff\\_facebookegypt?currentPage=all](http://www.wired.com/techbiz/startups/magazine/16-11/ff_facebookegypt?currentPage=all); “Ahmed Maher: Action for a new Egypt”, Al Ahram Weekly, 3-9 November 2011, Issue No: 1071, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1071/profile.htm>

including the founders Israa Abdal Fattah and Ahmet Maher, were arrested. Both leaders were released some weeks later, following what they call “a difficult period” in Egyptian prisons.

Since its establishment, 6 April Youth Movement has been considered as one of the most active anti-regime groups in Egypt. The movement organized a massive demonstration on 6 April 2009 which was the first anniversary of the organization. The group had two major demands, increasing the minimum wage and establishing a new constitutional committee in order to amend the current constitution. Despite heavy security measures of the Egyptian forces demonstrations took place in various cities including Cairo, Alexandria, Mahalla Al-Kubra and Keft Al-Sheikh. In support of the demonstrations, 100 parliamentarians from Muslim Brotherhood left the session when Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif was giving a speech in the Grand Assembly. In response to protests President Mubarak ordered security forces to intervene in the demonstrations. More than 300 protestors, including university students and Muslim Brotherhood members, were arrested in Cairo and other cities. Another campaign of demonstrations was organized in the second anniversary of the 6 April Youth Movement in 2010. Protestors, including the oppositional figure Ayman Nour, demanded the termination of martial law that has been in place for thirty years in the country.

The events in Tunisia triggered a wave of demonstration spirit among Egyptian youth. They started to organize and held demonstrations throughout the country starting from the early days of 2011. When the fire of Arab awakening actually reached to Egypt, 6 April Youth Movement released a statement calling Egyptian youth for demonstrations in front of the Ministry of Interior against torture and other unlawful practices of police forces on 25 January 2011<sup>4</sup>. The protests became large scale and spread to other cities with the support of other major opposition movements. Since the first day of the uprising 6 April Youth Movement showed full support to the revolution. Major figures of the movement organized youth to come to Tahrir Square in order to keep the revolutionary spirit alive in every stage of the revolution. By communicating through social media tools such as *facebook*, *twitter* and

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<sup>4</sup> Selection of 25 January for demonstrations was not a coincidence. It was the date some decades ago when police forces in the city of Ismailiyye clashed with British forces. British soldiers killed 50 Egyptian security forces and this event led to the 1952 Egyptian revolution.

*blogger* the 6 April Youth took active part in the organization of much of the demonstrations that eventually resulted with toppling President Mubarak down.<sup>5</sup> *Facebook* groups associated with the 6 April Youth Movement sent repetitive invitations for its members to come to Tahrir Square and show resistance in the revolutionary demands. During the protests various members of the 6 April played key roles in establishing the communication among youth. Ahmed Maher, the founding coordinator of the 6 April Youth Movement<sup>6</sup> said that “Our role was to coordinate the protests and create a network of movements and activists across the country to spread the protests. The real credit goes to the young Egyptians who are making change happen.”<sup>7</sup> When the protests intensified on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2011, Mubarak administration restricted internet and mobile phone services, targeting the most crucial tool of the protesting youth, the social media. However, 6 April Youth Movement and other organizations were successful in breaking the cyber-blockade with the help of computer experts among them. The movement also continued to service videos and photos of the Tahrir Square abroad through blogs and international media channels, such as Al-Jazeera.

Following Mubarak’s fall, 6 April and other anti-Mubarak movements continued their demands in order to successfully complete the process of revolution. To this end, in many initiatives, the 6 April Youth called Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) to transfer its powers to a civilian authority as quickly as possible. The group organized a million-man march entitled “Friday for Saving the Revolution” on the May 27<sup>8</sup> in Cairo and in other major cities “to express their opposition to calls for pardon for the former President Hosni Mubarak and other figures from his regime.” Inji Hamdy, spokesperson for the movement, criticized the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), emphasizing that event the possibility of a pardon for Mubarak “neglects the revolution’s demands and makes decisions unilaterally without engaging in dialogue with

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Dreyfuss, Who’s Behind Egypt’s Revolt, *The Nation*, 31 January 2011, <http://www.thenation.com/blog/158159/whos-behind-egypts-revolt>

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey Fleishman, Young Egyptians mount unusual challenge to Mubarak, *Los Angeles Times*, 27 January 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jan/27/world/la-fg-egypt-youth-20110128>

<sup>7</sup> Mohamed Abdel-Baky, Cyber revolution, *Al Ahram Weekly*, 10-16 February 2011, Issue No: 1034, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1034/sc30.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Wael Khalil, Why we are holding Egypt’s second ‘Friday of rage’, *Guardian*, 27 May 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/may/27/egypt-second-friday-of-rage>

political powers.”<sup>9</sup> In support of another big demonstration which was planned on 8 July under the banner of “Revolution First”,<sup>10</sup> the 6 April Youth Movement announced that they will be participating to the event “in order to push for a speedy trial of the Mubaraks, the prosecution of police officers and officials involved in killing protesters and an increase in the minimum wage from LE 700 to LE 1,200.”<sup>11</sup>

Relationship between 6 April Movement and generals has become tense when the SCAF issued a statement on 23 July accusing the group of “attempting to undermine public confidence in the army”. The army further claimed that “the group is in receipt of foreign funds and seeks to drive a wedge between the army and the public.” The movement in response invited prosecutor-general to investigate its activities and sources of funding.<sup>12</sup> Continuation of the accusations by the SCAF on 6 April Youth Movement was criticized by many of the activists and political parties. In a press conference on 19th December the movement released videos showing army soldiers assaulting protesters in the ongoing clashes that erupted on mid-December at the cabinet office after a crackdown on a peaceful sit-in.<sup>13</sup>

### *Kefaya (Enough) – Egyptian Movement for Change*

Kefaya (Enough) is a social movement that was established in 2005 after a conference held on 22nd September, with the participation of 500 activists from different backgrounds and ideologies. Egyptian intellectuals, Dr. Abdel Wahab El Messiri, Magdy Hussein, Amin Iskander, Karima Hafnay, were among the founders of the movement.<sup>14</sup> The group was also named as ‘Movement for Change’ and conducted various peaceful demonstrations protesting against inheritance of power, human rights abuses and lack of democratic practices in the country. The group

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<sup>9</sup> April 6 Youth Movement calls for Friday protests ‘to save revolution’, Al Masry Al Youm, 24 May 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/449586>

<sup>10</sup> Nancy Elshami, SCAF: Above the Constitution, Below the Revolution, Zcommunications, 28 November 2011, <http://www.zcommunications.org/scaf-above-the-constitution-below-the-revolution-by-nancy-elshami>

<sup>11</sup> Mohamed Abdel-Baky, Opposing camps, Al Ahram Weekly, 30 June-6 July, Issue No:1054.

<sup>12</sup> <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1054/eg12.htm>: An Open Sit-In, April 6 Youth Movement, Tahrir Documents, 28 July 2011, <http://www.tahrirdocuments.org/2011/07/an-open-sit-in-april-6-youth-movement/>

<sup>13</sup> Mohamed Abdel-Baky, Army asked for evidence, Al-Ahram Weekly, 4-10 August, Issue No: 1059, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1059/eg6.htm>

<sup>14</sup> “April 6 Movement Hist Back at SCAF”, Jadaliyya, 19 December 2011, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3621/april-6-movement-hits-back-at-scaf>

<sup>15</sup> Kefaya and April 6 Youth Movement: Post-revolution allegations in Egypt, Zeinab Al-Gundy, Al-Ahram Online, 30 July 2011.

distanced itself from foreign aid and declared by a statement in March 2005 that, “the internal political tyranny and the external invasion were two sides of the same coin.”<sup>15</sup> Kefaya has become one of the most visible oppositional organization that held systematic and consistent demonstrations throughout the country during, especially in the last decade of the Mubarak Era. The group, however, could not gather grassroots societal support because of its elitist approach containing members from only intellectuals and political activists. Even though the group could not achieve any of its goals that would help to terminate Mubarak regime, it paved the way for further opposition organizations.<sup>16</sup>

One of the novelties of this social movement is the methods used in its organizational and operational structures. There is almost no hierarchy within the group that is structured around a leadership. Same applies to the ideological philosophy of the group. Its supporters come from diverging backgrounds from socialist to liberals and from seculars to the Islamists. Members of the group are generally volunteers who dedicate themselves to democracy, human rights and freedom of expression.

During the uprising in the beginning of 2011 the group used every opportunity to support Egyptian people’s will and quest for democracy, human rights and more importantly termination of the Mubarak regime. One of leaders of the Kefaya movement, Dr. Yahya Al-Gazzaz, argued that “as Tunisian example showed, civil disobedience and resistance starts with a single demonstration but the number rises every passing day” as was the case in Tunisian revolution.<sup>17</sup> Kefaya movement was among many opposition groups that declared a statement asking “abolition of the Emergency Law, a minimum wage of 1200 L.E, payments for unemployed people, reduction of the prices of basic commodities and education that is able to develop the skills of young men and women. The group also asked for lawyers and other intellectuals to participate in the Day of Rage demonstrations on 25 January 2011.<sup>18</sup> Importance of Kefaya movement was very visible during opposition protests. They were informally

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<sup>15</sup> Mahmoud Al-Wardani, Egyptian revolution book review series: Kefaya - laying the foundations for the 25 January revolution, Al-Ahram Online, 29 March 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Kefaya (The Egyptian Movement for Change), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2010/09/22/the-egyptian-movement-for-change-kifaya>

<sup>17</sup> Politicians: January 25 Demonstration Is not a Prelude to National Uprising, 24 January 2011, Ikhwanweb, [http://www.ikhwanmisr.com/iweb/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=27918:2011-01-24](http://www.ikhwanmisr.com/iweb/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=27918:2011-01-24)

<sup>18</sup> Political Forces in Egypt Preparing for the January 25 Day of Rage Demonstration, 23 January 2011, Ikhwanweb, [www.ikhwanmisr.com/iweb/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=27906:2011-01-23](http://www.ikhwanmisr.com/iweb/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=27906:2011-01-23)

organized by a steering-committee that includes members from different opposition groups. Therefore it was argued that Kefaya was the leading organization, both at the intellectual and social level, which led to regime change in Egypt.<sup>19</sup>

Following completion of the first phase of the revolution, termination of Mubarak regime, the group then continued its pressure, with other opposition movements, on the Supreme Council for Armed Forces to accelerate transitional period to a civilian government. In February one of the coordinators of Kefaya Movement, Abdel Halim Qandil urged SCAF to abolish any institution or system that continues to show Mubarak era reflexes.<sup>20</sup> Another coordinator of the movement Abdel-Gelil Mustafa is among the founders of the Justice Party (Al-Adl Party) together with other activists from 6 April Youth Movement.<sup>21</sup>

### *Revolutionary Socialists*

Unlike many analyses from the Western media and intellectual circles that expressed concern about the Islamist motives behind the Egyptian revolution in January 2011, the scene and actors were different than it was though in the Tahrir Square. Major opposition groups that constituted the crowd in the main square of Cairo were, however, mostly leftist. Among these groups Revolutionary Socialists (RS) was one of the largest and most courageous. The roots of the movement dates back to the 1995, when some Trotskyite student groups decided to establish such a movement which would gather socialist youth under one umbrella.<sup>22</sup> In the later years the RS gained intellectual support from the Socialist Studies Centre headed by Kamal Khalil who founded the centre in 2003.<sup>23</sup> The movement is currently collectively led by the activist Kamal Khalil and Sameh Naguib, a sociologist at American University Cairo.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> A Frightful Democracy The Egyptian revolution's leaders have an illiberal agenda, Stanley Kurtz, National Review, 7 March 2011, [http://www.eppc.org/publications/pubID.4380/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.eppc.org/publications/pubID.4380/pub_detail.asp)

<sup>20</sup> Beltagy: Dismissal of Shafiq's Government Is a Must, 26 February 2011, Ikhwanweb, [http://www.ikhwanmisr.com/iweb/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=28104:2011-02-26&catid=76](http://www.ikhwanmisr.com/iweb/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28104:2011-02-26&catid=76)

<sup>21</sup> Justice Party Holds its First Meeting at Al-Azhar Park, 7 May 2011, Youm Shebab, <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=406772&SecID=97&IssueID=0>; Justice Party, Carnegie Endowment for Peace, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/22/al-adl-justice-party>;

<sup>22</sup> Socialist Popular Alliance, Al Ahram Online, 18 November 2011, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/33/104/26692/Elections-/Political-Parties/Socialist-Popular-Alliance.aspx>

<sup>23</sup> Amira Howeidy, Preempting activism, Al-Ahram Weekly Online, 27 Feb-5 March 2003, Issue No:627, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/627/eg3.htm>

<sup>24</sup> A Partial Guide to the Egyptian Political Parties, 15 November 2011, <http://connectedincairo.com/2011/11/15/a-partial-guide-to-the-egyptian-political-parties/>

Many considered the RS movement as the most ambitious supporter of the revolution. In various interviews, leaders of the movement emphasized the importance of unity in the organization of demonstrations. Therefore, the group sought and received support from other movements such as Kefaya, 6 April Youth Movement, Tagammu (National Progressive Unionist – Registered Socialist Party) Party and Nasserites.<sup>25</sup> In the early days of the revolution the group released a media note arguing that the handover of power to Omer Suleiman and other Mubarak era remnants is not acceptable. For them, the revolution was not an elite project but rather a popular will aiming to end tyranny and dictatorship. In their statement the movement emphasized that “This is not a revolution of the elite, political parties or religious groups. Egypt’s youth, students, workers and the poor are the owners of this revolution. The only symbols are the martyrs of our revolution and our young people who have been steadfast in the field. We will choose to represent ourselves and represent the martyrs who were killed and their blood paid the price for the salvation of the system.”<sup>26</sup>

A member of the Revolutionary Socialists, Hisham Fouad, brings a socio-class analysis to the revolution. He argues that on 25<sup>th</sup> of January the revolution started with huge participation –some 200.000- of the youth from the middle class who had gone to college and has no job at that moment. Following this, the revolutionary demonstrations spread to other cities like Suez and Alexandria, which are industrial cities with large workers population. Sameh Naguib, the co-coordinator of the RS argued that these two industrial cities were at the forefront of the revolution. “Workers in Suez for example poured out of the factories of the city and into the streets” he added.<sup>27</sup> The protests spread to destitute and poor areas of Cairo, dragging more youth to Tahrir Square with the help of social media and Al-Jazeera. On 7<sup>th</sup> February, workers as one large class of Egyptian society joined to demonstrations leading the termination of the Mubarak regime.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Brooks Bayne, The Socialist Roots Of The Egyptian Protests, 29 January 2011, The Graph, <http://thegraph.com/2011/01/the-socialist-roots-of-the-egyptian-protests/>

<sup>26</sup> Statement from the Revolutionary Socialists of Egypt, 6 February 2011, <http://enpassant.com.au/?p=9303>

<sup>27</sup> Conversation with an Egyptian socialist, 23 February 2011, <http://socialistworker.org/2011/02/23/interview-with-egyptian-socialist>

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Hisham Fouad from Revolutionary Socialists of Egypt, 27 May 2011, <http://www.swp.ie/reviews/interview-hisham-fouad-revolutionary-socialists-egypt/4487>

After the January 25 Revolution many argued that organization of a united left was difficult task to achieve. Hashem Fouad of the RS argued that the number of the membership in leftist parties are not enough to form a formal political party, however, there is a huge political opportunity on the ground and the socialists, with real organization, will be a true force with deep grassroots movement.<sup>29</sup> Following months long efforts to create a socialist bloc, the Revolutionary Socialists, together with other four socialists parties (Social Party of Egypt, the Democratic Labour Party, the Popular Socialist Coalition Party, Egypt Communist Party), formed a new political organization, Socialist Popular Alliance Party, in order to create a more influential political actor in the post-Mubarak era Egypt.<sup>30</sup> In late September the party has handed its application for gained official status, following meeting the criteria of 5,000 notarized memberships (some 6,000 signatures from 26 governorates), being the first leftist party that is established since the 25 January Revolution.<sup>31</sup> In October, the party gained official status after its approval by the Parties' Affairs Commission and currently a member of the 'Completing the Revolution' alliance.<sup>32</sup>

For the Revolutionary Socialists the revolution has not been completed until the end of Mubarak Era. They systematically continued their protests in excluding the remnants of the Mubarak regime from the new political scene. They further sought for justice for those who were killed by the security forces during the revolutionary demonstrations in the beginning of 2011. In a statement the RS released on 20 May 2011, they urged SCAF to hand over its powers to a civilian rule as quickly as possible.<sup>33</sup> During the last days of December some accusations were directed to revolutionary socialists. It was argued by the spokesman for the Salafist Nour Party, Mohamed Nour, that the RS was actively promoting anarchy and instability. He also accused the group of receiving funds from US

<sup>29</sup> Dina Samak, Egypt's leftist front, will it survive?, Al Ahram Online, 12 May 2011,

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/11968/Egypt/Politics-/Egypys-leftist-front-will-it-survive.aspx>

<sup>30</sup> Mohamed Al-Hebeishy, Five socialist parties unite to impact Egyptian politics, 11 May 2011, Al-Ahram Online,

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/11855/Egypt/Politics-/Five-socialist-parties-unite-to-impact-Egyptian-po.aspx>

<sup>31</sup> Ekram Ibrahim, Egyptian Left rising: first post-revolution leftist party marches to legality, 28 September 2011, Al Ahram Online, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/22776/Egypt/Politics-/Egyptian-Left-rising-first-postrevolution-leftist-.aspx>

<sup>32</sup> Socialist Popular Alliance Party, Guide to Egypt's Transition, Carnegie Endowment for Peace,

<http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/10/19/socialist-popular-alliance-party-al-tahaluf-al-sha%E2%80%99abi-al-ishtiraki>

<sup>33</sup> Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists statement, 21 November 2011, Socialist Workers Party,

<http://www.swp.ie/reviews/egyptian-revolutionary-socialists-statement/5012>

intelligence agencies. Another campaign against the revolutionary socialists was initiated by the newspaper El Youm Al Sabea. In a video that was screened in the webpage of the paper the RS leader Sameh Naguib was blasting SCAF for defending the former regime. Naguib in response argued that the media and the SCAF together aimed to “discredit revolutionaries” through fear-mongering campaigns and talk of hidden anarchist agendas.<sup>34</sup>

### *National Association for Change*

Following termination of his job as President of the International Atomic Energy Association Mohammed Al Baradei decided to return to Egypt in February 2010, in order to “challenge” President Mubarak. He was one of the most prominent Egyptian intellectuals with an international career as well as a Nobel Peace Prize in 2005. Soon after his return to Egypt he started an opposition campaign by which he wanted to bring Mubarak Era to an end. National Association for Change (NAC) would not function as a political party, since the formation of parties is tightly controlled, but rather an organization in which all anti-Mubarak groups and parties could join. In the late 2010 the group even planned to set up an alternative parliament to that of the Mubarak regime’s, with the support of its 120 members who belonged to other major oppositional groups in the country, including the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>35</sup> Despite the fact that the campaign received support from many opposition groups, some argued that Al-Baradei has lived abroad so long that he is not anymore familiar with political affairs in Egypt.<sup>36</sup> He, however, sought for more cooperation with all opposition movements including the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood was a member of the NAC from the beginning, but it was only in July 2011 that it put forth an effort to join the signature campaign (for becoming a formal member of the movement), which the coalition hoped will garner one million endorsements, that is the required number for the movement to be considered as official political organization.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Political forces condemn SCAF violence, rally behind Revolutionary Socialists, Al Ahram Online, 22 December 2011, <http://english.ahram.org/NewsContent/1/64/29994/Egypt/Politics-/Political-forces-condemn-SCAF-violence,-rally-behi.aspx>

<sup>35</sup> Mahmoud Gaweesh, National Association for Change to form shadow parliament, Al Masry Al Youm, 16 December 2010, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/273297>

<sup>36</sup> ElBaradei to form 'national association for change', BBC, 24 February 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8534365.stm>

<sup>37</sup> Kristen Chick, Muslim Brotherhood supports ElBaradei, Washington Times, 1 August 2010, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/aug/1/muslim-brotherhood-supports-elbaradei>

Just before 25 January 2011, youth committee of the NAC started a campaign aiming to send one million letters to Egyptians in an effort to explain the NAC's platform and objectives to the general public.<sup>38</sup> Days after this campaign, revolutionary demonstrations started in Egypt and National Association for Change was one of the first movements that showed full support to the protesters. Leaders of the movement made statements encouraging young Egyptians in their quest for regime change and more democratic governance. The general coordinator of the National Association for Change, Abdel Gelil Mostafa, in one of his press statements called on President Hosni Mubarak "to announce that he will not be running in the upcoming presidential elections neither will his son Gamal Mubarak."<sup>39</sup>

Following termination of Mubarak regime, the NAC continued to organize various demonstrations in order to support revolutionary youth and keep anti-Mubarak and anti-SCAF groups united under a united front. In early May, the group together with 6 April Youth Movement organized a rally in the Imbaba neighborhood, for national unity in the wake of sectarian attacks against Coptic churches. The march was supported by activists and many intellectual figures such as Hamdy Qandil, Wael Ghoenim and Abdel Gelil Mostafa.<sup>40</sup> The NAC also made it clear that the group supports the continuation of secular characteristic of the country arguing that "Egypt should not be a theocratic state similar to that of Saudi Arabia or Iran". In a meeting with Muslim Brotherhood representatives, the NAC urged that the MB should guarantee the preservation of the secular nature of the state in case of a victory in the coming elections.<sup>41</sup> During early days of the revolution the NAC made a similar statement calling for the formation of a democratic and secular government in Egypt and criticized attempts of combining religion with politics. The statement called in a strong reference to the mobilization of Salafist groups, who called on citizens to vote 'yes' during a national referendum on March 19, implying that anyone who voted 'no' was not a

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<sup>38</sup> Mahmoud Gaweesh, NAC to launch mass-mailing campaign, mulls proposal for 'shadow parliament', 14 January 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/295220>

<sup>39</sup> Safaa Abdoun, Opposition forces call for thousands to join Friday demos, Daily News Egypt, 28 January 2011, <http://thedailynewsegypt.com/egypt/opposition-forces-call-for-thousands-to-join-friday-demos.html>

<sup>40</sup> Lina Al-Wardani, National unity march in Imbaba, Al Ahran Online, 9 May 2011, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/11768/Egypt/Politics-/National-unity-march-in-Imbaba-.aspx>

<sup>41</sup> NAC asks Muslim Brotherhood to guarantee secular state, Al Masry Al Youm, 11 June 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/466888>

good Muslim. The NAC also denounced the use of religious slogans in political campaigns.<sup>42</sup>

The NAC, in order to keep SCAF's power limited and apply democratic practices more quickly, urged military council to move faster in restoring the order in the country and transfer its powers to a civilian government. In early November general coordinator of the NAC, Abdel Gelil Mostafa said that "SCAF's policies are spreading tension and take the political process to a deadlock." Mostafa also indicated that there was urgent need to hand over power to an elected civilian authority."<sup>43</sup> In another statement the NAC reiterated its core demands from the military council:

- A guarantee that Egypt become a modern civil state that respects the principle of equal citizenship
- The announcement of a timetable for the transfer of power to an elected, civil authority;
- The cancelation of the emergency law;
- The abolition of military trials for civilians
- Purge of state institutions - especially security agencies, universities and the media - of all members of the former Mubarak regime
- Five-year ban on political participation by all former members of the now-defunct National Democratic Party.<sup>44</sup>

In late October the NAC launched an initiative to ease the handover of power to a civil authority under the slogan "An Army that Protect Us, Not Govern Us". The initiative offered 11 steps, starting with the armed forces immediately handing over power to a temporary "rescue" government with presidential powers, while the military manages the nation's external affairs, defense and national security until a new parliament is elected. The transitional government would be tasked with cleansing the Interior Ministry before the parliamentary and presidential elections, and preparing a short-term plan to improve the economy and reduce

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<sup>42</sup> "Egypt's NAC rejects mixing religion with politics", *Bikya Masr*, 30 March 2011, <http://bikyamasr.com/31578/egypts-nac-rejects-mixing-religion-with-politics/>

<sup>43</sup> Voice of dissent, *Al Ahram Weekly Online*, 3-9 November 2011, Issue No:1071, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1071/eg11.htm>

<sup>44</sup> National Association for Change also rejects recent deal with military council, *Al Ahram Online*, 3 October 2011, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/23246/Egypt/Politics-/National-Association-for-Change-also-rejects-recen.aspx>

unemployment. It is also suggested that a founding committee would be chosen in order to define the new constitution. The initiative recommended amendments to the law on political parties, the law on parliamentary elections, and anti-revolutionary laws, such as the law criminalizing strikes.<sup>45</sup>

## **Islamic Movements**

### *Muslim Brotherhood*

When thinking about political opposition in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood comes to mind first. Almost since its establishment the group has been heavily involved in political life in Egypt. It was however, for much part, at the opposition side and was subjected to pressure and restrictions with regards to political participation. Established by a school teacher, Hasan Al-Banna, in Ismailiyya, for spreading Islamic teachings within Egyptian society and as an alternative political actor to secular nationalist parties that failed to secure Egypt's freedom from British colonialism after World War I<sup>46</sup>, the Brotherhood soon became a political and social phenomenon in the country. A decade later of its establishment the group opened branches in every Egyptian province and started to play an important role at both social and political level. Three major causes were important in the development of the group to such level; (1) battling British colonialism, (2) resistance to a new Jewish state and (3) fighting corruption in Egypt.<sup>47</sup> The group took side in the Arab-Israeli war and sent volunteers in order to fight against the Israelis. They heavily criticized the stance of the Egyptian government at that time. On December 1948, Prime Minister Mahmoud El-Noqrashi Pasha issued a military decree dissolving Muslim Brotherhood. It was three weeks later since this decision; a young Brotherhood member assassinated Noqrashi Pasha inside the Interior Ministry building. Hasan Al-Banna quickly reacted and announced that the assassination was not in line with the teachings of Islam. He declared that those who had carried out the assassination were "neither brothers nor Muslims". The government's

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<sup>45</sup> Mahmoud Gaweesh, National Association for Change suggests 11 steps to power handover , Al Masry Al Youm, 19 October 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/506785>

<sup>46</sup> Bruce Riedel, Don't Fear Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, 28 January 2011, Brookings Institute, [http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0128\\_egypt\\_riedel.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0128_egypt_riedel.aspx)

<sup>47</sup> Fawaz Gerges, Muslim Brotherhood's key role in Egypt, 14 February 2011, CNN, [http://articles.cnn.com/2011-02-14/opinion/gerges.muslim.brotherhood\\_1\\_muslim-brotherhood-qaeda-opposition?\\_s=PM:OPINION](http://articles.cnn.com/2011-02-14/opinion/gerges.muslim.brotherhood_1_muslim-brotherhood-qaeda-opposition?_s=PM:OPINION)

pressure on Muslim Brotherhood intensified and the founder Hasan Al-Banna was killed at the age of 43, probably by government agents on February 12, 1949.<sup>48</sup> Even though the group continued to exist and expand its activities and spread within the Egyptian society, it was almost always prohibited from getting involved in the political life. Therefore, the group rather lagged behind in operational capacity with respect to politics.

Even though the Muslim Brotherhood was officially banned, in practice, it has been tolerated within the Egyptian political and social structure. For a long time its candidates were allowed to stand in elections as independents. For instance, in the general election of 2005, independent candidates of Muslim Brotherhood won 88 seats, constituting one fifth of the parliament, the number which is the highest of the group in its history. The Islamists, in turn, have used the repressive policies of the government to promote themselves as the only legitimate oppositional voice. This was crucial for Egyptian government, which had needed not just a police state but also a viable Islamist opposition to keep secular radicals in check.<sup>49</sup> When the number of independent parliamentarians of the movement rose to a considerable level, President Mubarak took a firm stance against the group and they could only win one seat in the parliamentary election of 2010. This was the result of government's restrictive policies against the movement. Just before the elections, many independent candidates of Muslim Brotherhood were arrested, their election candidacies were confiscated and they were not allowed to conduct electoral campaign. The government further restricted the movement from participating in political process.

The 25 January Revolution came when the pressure on the group was at its highest level. Despite that, the group has reinforced a centrist position by recognizing the important role of young activists in unifying the oppositional groups under one umbrella by which Mubarak's departure was made easier.<sup>50</sup> The Brotherhood was aware of the fact that any involvement in the revolution process could arouse suspicion toward them in the Western capitals, leading them to question their own support

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<sup>48</sup> Ami Isseroff, Encyclopedia of the Middle East: Hassan al-Banna, [http://www.mideastweb.org/Middle-East-Encyclopedia/hassan\\_al-banna.htm](http://www.mideastweb.org/Middle-East-Encyclopedia/hassan_al-banna.htm)

<sup>49</sup> Kenan Malik, The Muslim Brotherhood may gain power in Egypt by default, 31 January 2011, The Guardian, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2011/jan/31/egypt-secular-protests>

<sup>50</sup> Fawaz Gerges, Muslim Brotherhood's key role in Egypt, 14 February 2011, CNN, [http://articles.cnn.com/2011-02-14/opinion/gerges.muslim.brotherhood\\_1\\_muslim-brotherhood-qaeda-opposition?\\_s=PM:OPINION](http://articles.cnn.com/2011-02-14/opinion/gerges.muslim.brotherhood_1_muslim-brotherhood-qaeda-opposition?_s=PM:OPINION)

for the revolution. During the early days of revolution many commentators and analysts argued that the regime change could lead to a more oppressive Islamist regime because the Muslim Brotherhood was the only organized opposition that could garner more than %30 of the popular vote in a free election. These arguments were contradicted by the movement and various Islamic movements' scholars. It was argued that the political philosophy and ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood is no longer extreme and exclusionist. As political scientist Fawas Gerges argued that "over the past decade is that the movement has matured and learned from its mistakes. The Muslim Brothers are traveling a similar journey to that of their Turkish co-religionists, but they still have a long way to go to fully embrace democracy."<sup>51</sup>

In the early days of revolution one senior figure from the movement, Mohammed Al-Beltagui said that "The Brotherhood realizes the sensitivities, especially in the west, towards the Islamists, and we're not keen to be a t the forefront." Media coordinator of the movement, Waleed Shalabi, emphasized that 'We are not for governing; we have no ambitions in this area'.<sup>52</sup> Another statement came from one of the deputies of the movement, Mahmoud Izzat who argued that "We are part of the people. The people are demanding the basics - mainly the necessities of life - and they have the right to do so. The people also demand their freedom and the dissolution of the fake parliament."<sup>53</sup> Many statements as such clearly indicated the reasons behind the Brotherhood's passive stance during the revolution.

Even though the Brotherhood did not formally participate in the demonstrations, many of its members attended as regular 'Egyptians'. There was however some kind of informal cooperation between Muslim Brotherhood and other more liberal and secular youth movements such as Revolutionary Socialists and National Association for Change. The revolution has brought the Brotherhood into much closer contact with other secular protest groups with whom they're working now on a regular basis. The elder leadership respects those new links, because they have

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<sup>51</sup> Fawaz Gerges, Muslim Brotherhood's key role in Egypt, 14 February 2011, CNN.

<sup>52</sup> Jack Shenker, "Egypt Protesters Play Down Islamist Party's Role", 31 January 2011, Guardian, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/31/egypt-protesters-islamists-muslim-brotherhood>

<sup>53</sup> "Profile: Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood", 9 February 2011, BBC, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12313405)

12313405

to,” argued a 35-year-old Brotherhood member Mohamed Al-Assas.<sup>54</sup> Another argument raised was the hidden support of the Brotherhood in the demonstrations in Tahrir Square. Political analyst Barry Rubin argued that the movements send its youth cadres to Tahrir Square to support the demonstrations but keep their political affiliation unknown. He also argued that the official cadre of the Brotherhood was aware of the plans of the revolutionary oppositional groups but had three reasons for declining to support them openly such that; (1) the protests weren’t discredited internationally as an Islamist-directed; (2) the inevitable government crackdown on the Brotherhood remained limited; and (3) they would see the anti-Mubarak campaign taking off.<sup>55</sup>

By officially remaining neutral the Brotherhood tried to get along with all the parties involved during the revolution process including revolutionary youth groups, the military and even the Mubaraks. Otherwise the group believed, would not be able to achieve its initial goals. These were according to Samuel Tagros, (1) Recognition by the regime, meaning that the Brotherhood demanded to be treated as equal partner as other parties in the political landscape (2) Permission to form a political party, and (3) reassurance that it would not be excluded from politics in the future. It therefore focused its efforts on changing the constitutional clauses dealing with presidential nominations.<sup>56</sup> Mubarak’s ouster as the visible outcome of the revolution has no doubt satisfied the Brotherhood in many aspects. As it was known, following the Gamal Abdel Nasser (1954-1970) and Anwar Sadat (1970-1981) regimes, the Mubarak regime has continuously imprisoned and tortured the Brotherhood’s cadres for decades. The movement’s attempts to officially participate in political process were confronted with restrictions of all kinds. The firm stance of the movement against Israeli policies toward Arabs and its direct support in the Palestinian cause has been questioned by both Mubarak regime and major western powers.

In the aftermath of the revolution in Egypt the Brotherhood decided to took steps in order to establish its official political organization. In a press

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<sup>54</sup> Jack Shenker, “Egypt Protesters Play Down Islamist Party’s Role”, 31 January 2011, Guardian.

<sup>55</sup> Barry Rubin, The Muslim Brotherhood and The Egyptian Revolution, E-International Relations, 16 July 2011, <http://www.e-ir.info/2011/07/16/the-muslim-brotherhood-and-the-egyptian-revolution/>

<sup>56</sup> Samuel Tadros, Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood After the Revolution, Current Trends in Islamist Ideology, Hudson Institute, 18 October 2011, Volume 12, <http://www.currenttrends.org/research/detail/egypts-muslim-brotherhood-after-the-revolution>

statement the secretary general of the movement, Mohammed Hussein said that “the movement’s consultative council decided at a meeting to adopt a decision to form the new Freedom and Justice Party.” He further indicated that “We have adopted the measures taken by the guidance council regarding the Freedom and Justice Party and adopted its program”.<sup>57</sup> The Justice and Development Party have gained official status on 6 June 2011 and as the leader of the party Mohamed Morsi was elected. In its official program, the party stated that it aims at achieving freedoms and justice, especially social justice. The program also calls an Islamic economic system and full democratic regime based on Islamic laws.<sup>58</sup>

The party’s stance against the SCAF was also complicated. The revolutionary youth were not satisfied with the SCAF’s takeover of the power and demanded for quick handover to a civilian rule. The Brotherhood however, in many instances, was on the side of the SCAF arguing that without military-led transition there would be chaos. Starting from the early days of the post-revolution period, the Brotherhood stated that Egyptians should back the SCAF rule until a free and fair election is held.<sup>59</sup> This SCAF-friendly policies of the movement caused dissatisfaction among its young members. The disagreement led to splits within the party structure and Egyptian Current Party was created as a more liberal and young wing of the Muslim Brotherhood. Mohamed Affan, the co-founder of the new party stated that “The feuds between the youth and the group’s leadership have almost reached a deadlock. Now we are thinking of creating some independent entity of our own.” Unlike most other Islamist parties the new party program does not refer to Islamic sharia as its major reference but Arab Islamic civilization. Another co-founder Mohamed Shams said at a press conference that “We cannot refer to the Islamic sharia because this is not an Islamist party, and it is not a party for the Muslim Brotherhood youth,” emphasizing that the party is open to all revolutionary youth.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Egypt’s Islamists announce own political party, AFP (also Dawn.com), 30 April 2011, <http://www.dawn.com/2011/04/30/egypts-islamists-announce-own-political-party.html>

<sup>58</sup> Said Shehata, Profiles of Egypt’s political parties, 25 November 2011, BBC, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15899548>

<sup>59</sup> Joseph Daher, Egypt’s revolution and the Muslim Brotherhood, Counterfire, 28 July 2011, <http://www.counterfire.org/index.php/articles/51-analysis/14425-egypts-revolution-and-the-muslim-brotherhood>

<sup>60</sup> Noha El-Hennawy, Defying leadership, Brotherhood youth form new party, 21 June 2011, Al-Masry Al Youm, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/node/470366>

First post-Mubarak elections in Egypt took place in two stages. The initial round completed in November and the second in January. Muslim Brotherhood was the winner party of the elections with more than %35 of the popular vote, constituting more than %40 of the seats in the parliament.<sup>61</sup> When the first round's results of the elections became clear the Muslim Brotherhood announced that the SCAF must be quick in handing over the power to the elected representatives of the Egyptians. Major party figures made statements urging the military to establish an easy hand over and respect the people's and revolution's spirit.<sup>62</sup> What should be said as for the political environment in Egypt with regards to Muslim Brotherhood is that the party will remain as an important political actor and both internal and international actors should keep this fact in mind and re-evaluate their political positions accordingly, rather than re-generating threat-based perceptions about the Brotherhood.

### *Salafi Movement*

Historically speaking, Salafis constitute one of the most prominent communities in Egyptian society. As its name reads Salafism requires strict adherence to the Prophet and its initial three generations of followers. The unique characteristic of the group comes from their ideological difference from other social movements in Egypt. Even though the group's ideology is found very much in line with Muslim Brotherhood, the distinguishing elements in the movement's philosophy make them unique in many ways. Rather than looking similarities between the two movements, indicating fundamental differences would be much easier to show how Salafism differs from Muslim Brotherhood. The primary difference between Salafis and Muslim Brotherhood lies in their methods and strategies by which they conduct activities. Whereas the Brotherhood make heavy uses of the four schools of Islamic law that have been debated and developed by scholars over the centuries, Salafis generally believe that the Qur'an, read literally, provides sufficient guidance for contemporary situations. Another difference of Salafis from the Brotherhood is the stance towards the West. Salafi ideology is hostile

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<sup>61</sup> Jasime Coleman, Egypt election results show firm win for Islamists, Guardian, 21 January 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jan/21/egypt-election-clear-islamist-victory> ; Egypt's Islamist parties win elections to parliament, BBC, 21 January 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16665748>

<sup>62</sup> Jack Shenker, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood says end to military rule is 'top priority', Guardian, 1 December 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/01/egypt-muslim-brotherhood-military-rule>

to the West and most of its agents and policies while Brotherhood's stance remains milder in this regard.<sup>63</sup>

The Salafis has not been an influential political actor in Egypt making the group's activities very limited during the Mubarak Era. Before the revolution the group usually remained apolitical. According to political scientist Ashraf El-Sherif, Salafis' main mission was doctrinal: "to safeguard the orthodox status of literalist religious interpretations (particularly on issues of faith and jurisprudence) by spreading their message through mosques, media outlets, and other venues".<sup>64</sup> The 25 January Revolution was, however, the turning point for Salafis by which they found the available space for being introduced at the political scene of the country even though they criticized for being not-so-active when most of the Egyptian opposition movements were conducting demonstrations.<sup>65</sup> The criticisms towards the positions of Salafi groups came on two related dimensions. Firstly, when the major demonstrations started in Cairo and other big cities, Salafi groups made statements calling protestors to stop demonstrations, labeling those who riot against its own government, the Mubarak regime, as 'sinners'. Secondly, Salafis were criticized for taking advantage of revolution for imposing their own ideology by stepping into the political landscape after years of systematic opposition to the involvement into the politics.<sup>66</sup> It is argued that the ultimate goal of the Salafis, though, is cultural, not political. They aim to make Salafi ideology the dominant faith practice in Egypt ultimately to the exclusion of other Islamic practices, not to mention Christianity. To this end, groups of Salafis engage in public protest, distribute pamphlets, and commit acts of violence and other activities that help to attract attention to them and their ideas.<sup>67</sup>

In the last days of July, many Islamist groups joined to thousands of Salafis who travelled to the capital across the country in order to show a

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<sup>63</sup> Nathan Field and Ahmed Hamam, Salafi Satellite TV in Egypt, Arab Media & Society, Issue 8, Spring 2009, <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=712>

<sup>64</sup> Ashraf El-Sherif, What do Salafis really want?, Egypt Independent, 29 March 2011, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/node/379522>

<sup>65</sup> Owen Bennett Jones, Salafist groups find footing in Egypt after revolution, BBC, 6 April 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12985619>

<sup>66</sup> Khaled Hamza, Actions by Salafi Groups Threaten the Revolution's Greatest Achievements, Ikhwan Web, 4 April 2011, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=28334>

<sup>67</sup> Just How Significant are the Salafis in Egypt?, 1 April 2011, <http://connectedincairo.com/2011/04/01/just-how-significant-are-the-salafis-in-egypt/>

unified stance against liberals and socialists of Egypt. It was one of the biggest demonstrations that gathered quite a high number of Islamists and caused concern by other groups as well as most Western countries. The Salafis enjoyed the majority in the field and was satisfied with the crowd they achieved to gather in major squares.<sup>68</sup> This was an important scene for the Egyptian political and social landscape. As was stated earlier, the Salafis distanced themselves from politics for many years and they even criticized the Muslim Brotherhood for being ‘too much’ involved in politics. Since the successful completion of the revolution, however, the group itself has got involved in politics and seemed to remain. The Salafis believe they have enough number of supporters in political race with other opposition groups like Muslim Brotherhood, liberals, seculars and socialists. The argument many Salafis claim is that the Egyptian society is more close to them than that of the liberals and seculars. The Salafi Sheikh Hassan Abu Alashbal argues that “If you only watch television, you’d think they’re everywhere, but if you go to villages and among the true Egyptian people...you will find they’ll only take Sharia.”<sup>69</sup>

## **Religious Institutions and Personalities**

### *Al-Azhar*

As one of the most prestigious and prominent educational institutions of the Sunni world Al- Azhar has always been under the influence of Egyptian government. This stance of the institution was largely criticized by the intellectuals of the Arab and Islamic world. This situation continued also during the Mubarak era, and the institution was not considered as an independent body, leading many scholars in the Islamic world to question its legitimacy concerning religious fatwas and decisions.

This government affiliated stance of the institution reflected on its position during the Egyptian revolution of 2011. Al-Azhar’s policy of backing Mubarak regime while most of the Egyptians were trying to topple him, further damaged the institution’s already dwindling credibility. In his

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<sup>68</sup> Lauren Bohn, Inside Egypt’s Salafis, Foreign Policy, 2 August 2011, [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/08/02/inside\\_egypts\\_salafis](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/08/02/inside_egypts_salafis)

<sup>69</sup> Lauren Bohn, Inside Egypt’s Salafis, Foreign Policy, 2 August 2011, [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/08/02/inside\\_egypts\\_salafis](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/08/02/inside_egypts_salafis)

statement Sheikh of Al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayeb called for calm and demonstrators to stop unrest.<sup>70</sup> In another statement Sheikh Said Amer, the head of the Fatwa committee of Al-Azhar said that “the protests were not a religiously acceptable means of expression” and argued that they were ‘haram’ (religiously forbidden).<sup>71</sup> For the French educated sheikh the institution must have been neutral toward the both sides, the regime and the revolutionary youth. When asked about his distance from the protesters Al-Tayeb stated that Al-Azhar had “supported the demands of the young people from day one of the demonstrations, but it kept a distance from both sides fearing more bloodshed or the disintegration of the country.” Al-Azhar had condemned the killing of protesters and had described those killed as “martyrs” rather than “victims”, he added.<sup>72</sup> It should also be mentioned however that the many academics and members of the Al-Azhar also participated in the demonstrations together with the Egyptians. One example to this was the spokesperson of the Al-Azhar University, Muhammed Rifaa Tahtawi, who announced that he had resigned from his post and joined to the demonstrators demanding the departure of Hosni Mubarak in Tahrir Square.<sup>73</sup>

Soon after the termination of Mubarak regime, Al-Azhar high level officials realized that the institution could now express its policies without any pressure from the government. It was not only the head of the institution but also academics and students who were aware of the fact that they would be an important institution in building new Egypt after Mubarak. Grand sheikh Ahmed Al Tayeb greeted visitors who never would have met under the old regime, including Muslim Brotherhood leaders and Hamas leader, Khalid Mishal.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, about 15,000 imams and preachers of Al-Azhar held demonstrations demanding the independency of the institution, and the grand sheikhs are elected not appointed.<sup>75</sup> It was argued that the stance of Al-Azhar members toward the revolution was also supportive but official policy of the institution was

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<sup>70</sup> “Ways forward for Al-Azhar”, Al-Ahram Weekly, 3-9 March 2011, Issue:1037, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1037/sc80.htm>

<sup>71</sup> Manar Ammar, “Al-Azhar sheikh says protesting forbidden in Islam”, Bikya Masr, 31 January 2011, <http://bikyamasr.com/25081/al-azhar-sheikh-says-protesting-forbidden-in-islam/>

<sup>72</sup> Ways forward for Al-Azhar, Al-Ahram Weekly, 3-9 March 2011, Issue:1037, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1037/sc80.htm>

<sup>73</sup> Al-Azhar spokesman resigns and joins Tahrir protesters, Al Masry Al Youm, 4 February 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/308783>

<sup>74</sup> Nathan J. Brown, Post-Revolutionary Al-Azhar, The Carnegie Papers, September 2011.

<sup>75</sup> Ahmed El-Beheri, Imams protest to demand independence of Al-Azhar, Al Masry Al Youm, 26 April 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/414347>

in line with the Mubarak regime. As Professor Abdulrahman Al-Bar stated that it was “Al-Azhar” as an institution who was showing limited support to the revolution but at the individual level most members of the Al-Azhar were in favor of the revolution and participated in the demonstrations at Tahrir Square.<sup>76</sup>

### *Yusuf Al-Qaradawi*

Yusuf al-Qaradawi is Egyptian-born and Qatari citizen Sunni Muslim scholar who has been one of the most influential religious figures in the Arab world. He graduated from Al-Azhar University in Cairo and serves as the director of Seerah and Sunnah Center at Qatar University. Al-Qaradawi is known with his moderate and relatively liberal interpretation of Islamic issues in the contemporary times. He answers questions and issues fatwas in the [www.islamonline.net](http://www.islamonline.net) web page which is commonly known by the Arabic and other Muslim audience. More importantly, his TV program ‘Al Sharia ve’l Hayat’ (Religion and Life) is screened on Al-Jazeera (Arabic) and is being watched by more than 60 millions in the Arab world.<sup>77</sup> Qaradawi is known for his firm stance against violence, extremism and using terrorist tactics in pursuing an ideology. He both condemned the 9/11 attacks and Bali bombings of civilians.<sup>78</sup> Other than Muslim-Christian relations, he has expressed views on different Islamic groups particularly between Shia and Sunni relations. In his fatwas he strongly advised genuine dialogue and deep understanding among Muslims.<sup>79</sup>

The attitude of Qaradawi during the Egyptian revolution was of particular importance for young activists in the streets. Given his close relationship with Muslim Brotherhood Qaradawi’s support was important in helping to legitimize revolution at the social level. He has shown full support of the revolutionary movement and made public statements praising the success of the revolution and cursing the Mubarak regime. During the initial stages of the events in Cairo Qaradawi gave an Arabic

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<sup>76</sup> Waleed Abdul Rahman, Al-Azhar In Post-Revolution Egypt, Asharq Al-Awsat, 14 March 2011, <http://asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=3&id=24506>

<sup>77</sup> Jeffrey Halverson, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Oxford Bibliographies Online, <http://oxfordbibliographiesonline.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0098.xml>

<sup>78</sup> Clinton Bennett, Muslims and Modernity: An Introduction to the Issues and Debates, London: Continuum International Publishing, (2005) pp.223-224.

<sup>79</sup> Yoginder Sikand, in (ed. Hamid Naseem Rafiabadi)Challenges to Religions and Islam: A Study of Muslim Movements, Personalities, Issues and Trends, New Delhi: Sarup & Sons (2007), p.145.

interview on Al-Jazeera urging Hosni Mubarak to step down: “I advise President Mubarak to leave Egypt as there is no other solution to the current problems except for him to leave”. He further advised Egyptian youth to continue their protests but in a peaceful manner. He argued that transgression against state institutions is prohibited by Islam and all protests and demonstrations must focus on pushing Mubarak to step down and leave the country.<sup>80</sup>

Qaradawi led Friday Prayer at the Tahrir Square on 18 February 2011, for the first time since 1981. Before the prayer he made a speech to the thousands of crowd (sources report the number as high as a million<sup>81</sup>) sending messages to all actors about how should they form their policies after the revolution. First of all, he advised Egyptians to continue to live in harmony and suggested for Muslims and Coptic Christians to establish good relations between each other. Qaradawi’s second warning was to the military that had captured the power after the fall of Mubarak. He stated that the military rulers must quickly restore civilian rule and hand their power over the elected representatives of the people. Qaradawi also demanded for the immediate release of political prisoners in Egypt’s jails and an end to the economic blockade on the Gaza Strip.<sup>82</sup>

Qaradawi was not only sided with the popular will of the Egyptian people but also with the Tunisian and the Libyans. In a Friday preach in Qatar, Qaradawi stated that “the revolution in Tunisia is a popular revolution against injustice”.<sup>83</sup> In his interview on As-Harq Al-Awsat the Tunisian leader Rachid Gannushi emphasized his appreciation for Qaradawi’s support during the Tunisian revolution and also in other people’s uprising in the Arab world. He argued that Qaradawi do not hold any political ambitions but rather he is fighting against tyranny and oppression through teachings of Islam.<sup>84</sup> Qaradawi also gave a controversial fatwa for killing of Gaddafi by Libyan soldiers. He told on

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<sup>80</sup> Qaradawi urges Mubarak to Leave Egypt, Al Islam Today, 29 January 2011, <http://www.islamtoday.net/albasheer/artshow-12-145339.htm>; As It Happen: Egypt Unrest Day Five, BBC, 29 January 2011, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/9380534.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/9380534.stm)

<sup>81</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, After Long Exile, Sunni Cleric Takes Role in Egypt, New York Times, 18 February 2011.

<sup>82</sup> Dan Murphy, Egypt Revolution Unfinished, Qaradawi Tells Tahrir Masses, Christian Science Monitor, 18 February 2011.

<sup>83</sup> Unstable Tunisia troubles Arab world, between Islam and democracy, 19 January 2011, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Unstable-Tunisia-troubles-Arab-world,-between-Islam-and-democracy-20546.html>

<sup>84</sup> Nadia al-Turki, A talk with the Ennahda Movement’s Rachid Ghannouchi, 26 December 2011, <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=3&id=27849>

Al-Jazeera that “whoever in the Libyan Army is able to shoot a bullet at Gaddafi should do so” and that ‘Libyan soldiers should not obey orders to strike at their own people’.<sup>85</sup> As for the Syrian events Qaradawi also showed its support for the demands of freedom by the Syrian people. International Union of Muslim Scholars, which is headed by Qaradawi, made a statement condemning policies of Assad regime that turned into a ‘killing machine’ which is executing its own people. The statement read that the Syrian regime must urgently stop killings and should allow the Syrian people to express their aspirations for freedom, democracy, justice and dignity.<sup>86</sup>

### *Coptic Church*

Coptic Christians constitute approximately %10 of the 80 million of Egyptian population. Even though Egypt has quite a good record of co-existence of Muslims and Christians, for many years Copts have been subjected to discrimination and exclusion. Mubarak’s secular policies, however, were mostly welcomed by the Coptic Orthodox Church. These policies were excluding Muslim Brotherhood and other more religious groups from political scene, which was the method of how Coptic support was given to Mubarak in return. Even though the tension between Copts and Muslims was limited at the political level, nonetheless Copts were occasionally attacked. In order to secure their ‘safe’ position the Coptic Church traditionally supported Mubarak regime, a policy that was heavily criticized by most of the Coptic believers and Coptic Diaspora worldwide.<sup>87</sup>

When demonstrations and protests started around Tahrir Square, the leader of the Coptic Church in Egypt, Pope Shenouda III, expressed its support for Mubarak regime and asked protesters to end their activities.<sup>88</sup> In an interview on the Egyptian state TV, he said “he called President Mubarak and told him that the Coptic Church is backing the regime, the

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<sup>85</sup> Egyptian cleric: Kill Gaddafi, Press TV, 22 February 2011, <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/166411.html>

<sup>86</sup> Statement By the Int'l Union of Muslim Scholars Concerning Events in Syria, Ikhwan Web, 9 June 2011, [http://www.ikhwanweb.com/iweb/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=28697:2011-06-09&catid=68](http://www.ikhwanweb.com/iweb/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28697:2011-06-09&catid=68)

<sup>87</sup> Pope Shenouda, Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/resources/people/pope-shenouda-iii>

<sup>88</sup> Pope Shenouda III supports Mubarak, Egyptian state TV, Al Ahram Online, 6 February 2011, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/5097/Egypt/Politics-/Pope-Shenouda-III-supports-Mubarak,-Egyptian-state.aspx>

people are with you”.<sup>89</sup> Although the protests throughout the country were non-sectarian, the Pope was worried about the future without Mubarak. Later developments showed that the grounds for Pope’s worries were exaggerated. The protests were carried out by both Muslims and Coptic youth, and post-revolutionary sectarian tensions were at minimum level. Just after the revolution Pope Shenouda III released a statement which read that the Church praised Egypt’s brave Army and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces for their statements aimed at protecting Egypt both domestically and internationally. “We support its position in dissolving parliament and the Shura council and in seeking to restore order.”<sup>90</sup> The statement indicated. In his April interview on Channel One of Egypt the Pope praised the revolution and expressed his gratitude to the Armed Forces “for taking swift action to rectify the damage done by sectarian clashes, calling on all Egyptians to adopt the values and unity championed in the revolution”. He further thanked to the armed forces for re-construction of the Two Martyrs Church in Atfeeh, which was reportedly set fire by a Muslim mob on 4 March.<sup>91</sup>

## Conclusion

Revolution in Egypt has revealed many new dynamics that challenge previously upheld definitions and conceptualizations. Young revolutionaries in Tahrir Square came from diverging social backgrounds unlike previous revolutions where people in the street usually belonged to same social class. Therefore, focusing on the new insights and actors of the revolution this study analyzes the events as they unfold. To this end, this research, first of all, seeks to spread the dynamics of the revolution to a larger audience by exploring its determinants as well as new actors. Understanding the actors of the revolution in Egypt is of crucial importance to better analyze the historical events in the country. This study has tried to bring a basic account on the actors and factors in the making of the revolution such as the 6 April Movement, Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi groups, Revolutionary socialists and religious

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<sup>89</sup> Marc Champion, Coptic Christians Worry About Future Without Mubarak , Wall Street Journal, 1 February 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703439504576116222399438428.html>

<sup>90</sup> Moses Samaan, Statement of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III on the Egyptian Revolution, 15 February 2011, <http://www.lacopts.org/news/statement-of-his-holiness-pope-shenouda-iii-the-egyptian-revolution>

<sup>91</sup> Pope Shenouda III praises revolution, thanks armed forces, Al Ahram Online, 24 April 2011, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/10689/Egypt/Politics-/Pope-Shenouda-III-praises-revolution,-thanks-armed.aspx>

organizations. A more detailed investigation however is needed by using the methods of face to face interviews with civil society organizations, revolutionary activists, political parties and representatives of religious groups and also field research. By interviewing these diverging groups of actors, this study will explore and reveal the roles, motivations, aims and goals, the visions that the actors had by succeeding the revolution and whether they achieved their pre-defined (or not defined) goals with regards to regime changes. This would also lead to better analyze the motivations behind the revolution.

The 'Arab street' witnessed historical events in 2011. For the first time in their history, public uprising was successful in changing regimes of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. These changes were made possible mainly by the youth. Understanding the actor's world and their roles in these revolutions necessitates analyzing such unique events to locate them not only in Arab history but also in the 'revolution theory'. The present work hopes to serve a first step in understanding some of the influential actors of the Egyptian revolution. Meticulous research is needed on the Egyptian, Tunisian and Libyan revolutions for advancing general sociological theories on revolution.

