

IPI Report ²⁰¹³

Documenting Change:
Reflections on the Arab Spring



International
Press
Institute

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Missouri School of
JOURNALISM

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IPI Report

Documenting
Change: Reflections
on the Arab Spring

This special report is a partnership between the International Press Institute and the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

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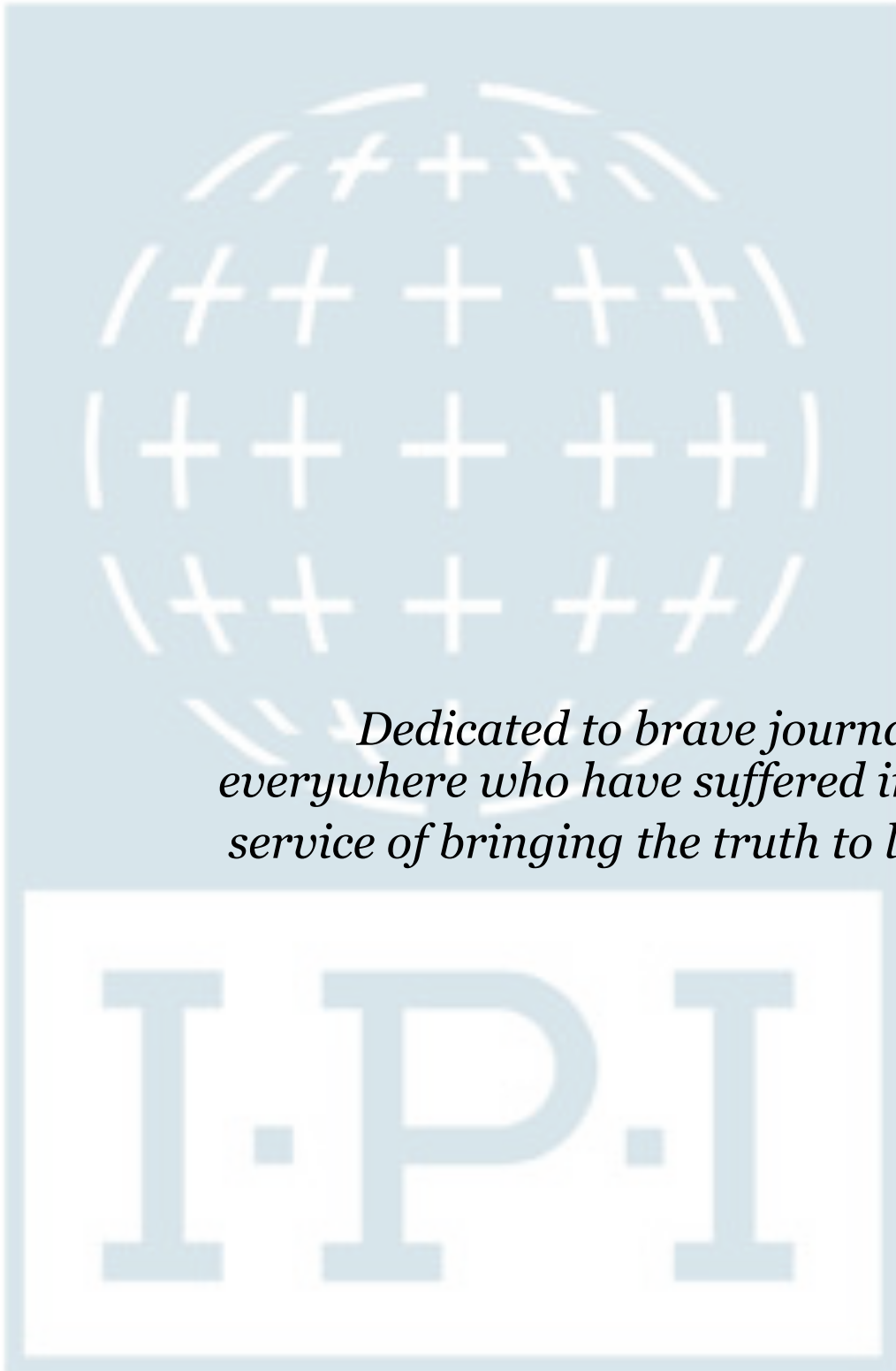
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*Dedicated to brave journalists
everywhere who have suffered in the
service of bringing the truth to light.*

First Word: **Feeling the winds of democratic change**



ROYAL NORWEGIAN EMBASSY



**By Petter Ølberg,
Norwegian
Ambassador
to Jordan and Iraq**

Freedom of expression is an essential ingredient of any democratic society. Without free press and open public debate there will be no legitimate and free elections and no real democracy.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right that is essential for the realization and protection of other fundamental rights and freedoms.

Freedom of expression does not only allow people to express themselves freely – it is also essential for fostering mutual understanding and tolerance, democratic processes, good governance and conflict resolution, as well as economic development.

Regrettably, every day people are being denied this fundamental right and many writers around the world do not have the security that should be taken for granted. Authors, writers, reporters and journalists are subjected to pressure and threats, imprisonment and torture.

However, this conference focuses on all these voices to make them even mightier. These writers have the power to challenge powerful people and totalitarian ideologies around the world.

The International Press Institute is a central organization in promoting and protecting the freedom of press. The yearly international congress is an important contributor to the debate of issues concerning free media and is thereby playing a vital role in safeguarding democratic change – in this region and all over the world.

During the Arab Spring we all watched people across the Middle East and North Africa take to the streets in protest, demanding freedom and dignity. In fact, people all over the world are now calling, more strongly than ever, for the right to share their thought without fear.

However, powerful people all over the world continue to try to prevent the media from working freely and there remain severe constraints on press freedom. The title of this year's IPI World Congress, "Documenting Change/ Empowering Media" will bring up many essential issues that will be important in the continued struggle for freedom of expression and democracy.

For many years, Norway has devoted considerable resources, both nationally and internationally, to the protection and promotion of human rights and the freedom of expression. Norway is therefore a proud sponsor of the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) which is organizing the conference in cooperation with IPI in addition to being a sponsor for the IPI World Congress.

The IPI and CDFJ, together with other organizations, are a key component in order to protect freedom of expression and secure the wind of democratic change.



No End to Uprisings: New challenges emerge for press freedom



**Alison Bethel
McKenzie and
Anthony Mills,
International Press
Institute**

VIENNA, May 2013 - For the International Press Institute, the Arab Spring – as was the case for many journalists and organizations that deal with journalists – had a profound impact on how we view the gathering and dissemination of news.

From the safe harbour of Vienna, we watched in awe as our colleagues, IPI members and friends battled to get the news out under repressive regimes and government-instituted mandates that did not allow some of them into the country to report.

Then something amazing happened. Normal citizens stepped up and into the role of the press.

Through the eyes of normal citizens, journalists were able to report what was happening on the ground and the International Press Institute (IPI) was able to have a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing journalists in the region, particularly for those who worked for state-owned media.

The Arab Spring forced us to look at the wider question of who should be protected as a journalist during times of conflict. I must say that I am not sure we have been able to effectively answer the question. But what we do know is that freedom of expression and freedom of the press faced great challenges during the uprisings and that on-the-ground,

first-hand reporting can sometimes be done by those not trained in the profession and with no special propensity to practice journalism otherwise.

Syria has emerged since the start of the uprising two years ago as the world's most dangerous country for journalists – a staggering total of 39 were killed there in 2012 alone, according to IPI's Death Watch statistics. What began as a protest has emerged into a full-blown civil war, and as it continues to rage, the threats are growing, not diminishing. They include, in addition to the danger of being killed, the possibility of kidnapping. A number of journalists, both foreign and local, are currently being held incommunicado in Syria after having been abducted.

A total of five journalists had been killed in Syria by May 3, 2013 -- World Press Freedom Day.

In monitoring the press freedom aspect of the ongoing violence in

Because of the difficulty involved in accessing information... it can be very challenging to verify reports regarding press freedom transgressions.

Syria, the IPI is faced with a number of challenges.

Foremost among them, as mentioned, is (in light of the fact that IPI is a press freedom organisation that keeps a tab on violations against the rights of journalists) defining who is a journalist. In the case of Syria, and indeed elsewhere, this is not always easy or possible. That's why IPI has also been keeping track of the number of citizen reporters killed in Syria.



Egyptian journalists surround Alaeddin Boroujerdi, chairman for Iran's Committee for Foreign Policy and National Security on August 11, 2011. **The Associated Press.**

Because of the difficulty involved in accessing information, not just for journalists but also for press freedom non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like IPI, it can be very challenging to verify reports regarding press freedom transgressions. The fact that the situation is highly politicised compounds the problem. Propaganda is being promoted by both sides to the conflict. Separating fact from fiction is not an easy process. And of course, returning to the 'Who is a journalist?' question, Syria is full of so-called media activists 'documenting' alleged transgressions of various forms.

Because of the lack of access and the dangers, traditional news outlets are caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, if they send their own reporters in – especially if this involves sneaking in illegally from Turkey, e.g. – the risks can be enormous. Being caught by the authorities without a valid visa can be hugely problematic.

If the news outlets, in the face of these dangers, choose to report from afar, they find it difficult to tell the full story, and increasingly rely on

information provided by citizens, media activists, NGOs, etc. Even though the caveat that "this information cannot be independently verified" is often added, the unverified information is still consumed by an eager public, who may or may not notice the caveat. And there is a danger in this. Journalists must be responsible enough to verify information coming from citizens on the ground; journalistic Codes of Ethics still apply.

Staying Out of the Political Fray

IPI seeks to ensure that it stays out of the political fray. For example, in the case of the alleged threat made against at least one Al Jazeera reporter in Syria recently, IPI condemned that alleged threat without getting involved in the political to-and-fro about Al Jazeera's reporting.

Transgressions against press freedom must be condemned wherever they occur and whenever they occur. Journalists reporting for state television also have a right to work in safety,

and free from the threat of physical attack, kidnapping or murder.

The regional threats to journalists are, of course, not limited to Syria, despite its status as the world's most dangerous country for reporters. Across the Middle East, in countries that have seen uprisings, journalists are being targeted.

In Egypt, journalists continue to be arrested, and physically targeted by protestors and security forces alike. This includes assaults by mobs that in a number of instances have targeted female reporters for sexual assault.

From Libya to Tunisia, journalists continue to be targeted, roughed up, arrested, threatened and intimidated in a variety of ways.

Major toll on local journalists

It's also worth noting that of the 39 journalists killed in Syria in 2012, and the five killed there so far this year, the vast majority have been local journalists. Unlike the prominent names of Western correspondents killed in the country (who were of course equally courageous and devoted to their profession), their names will never be known to the wider world. And yet their sacrifice is just as noble.

In fact, it's a dynamic in focus around the world. Globally, of the journalists killed in any given year, the vast majority are local journalists reporting on local issues.

We are of course heartened by the fact that, despite the challenges in verifying information that is transmitted by bloggers and citizen reporters, the information is at least being transmitted, so it was not possible for many of the Arab Spring regimes to create a complete information blackout.

The regimes engaged in a game of cat and mouse with those using social media platforms but ultimately information seeped out. This stands in stark contrast to the uprising in Syria in the early 1980s when a Muslim Brotherhood revolt was brutally crushed in the northern city of Hama: it was weeks, or even months before any information at all began trickling out about the story.

Online activists for the Syrian regime have been fighting back online. They have notably hacked

into the social media accounts of a number of renowned media outlets, including the BBC, the *Guardian* and The Associated Press, the latter of which saw a fake Twitter posting that there had been a bomb attack on the White House and that President Obama had been injured.

Within minutes, millions of dollars were wiped



There have been allegations that the Facebook and other social media accounts of journalists critical of the regime have been hacked, or that fake accounts have been set up in cases of identity theft.

off the New York Stock Exchange, starkly indicating the power of unverified – even false – information in an age of virtually instantaneous information transmission.

In other instances, there have been allegations that the Facebook and other social media accounts of journalists critical of the regime have been hacked, or that fake accounts have been set up in cases of identity theft.

These various allegations of malicious hacking and social media manipulation have raised major questions about online security, and have even led Twitter to offer to work together with news organisations to bolster security with a variety of identity verification techniques.

All in all, then, the extraordinary advances in information transmission, particularly involving online mediums, have been extremely helpful to getting the story out. But they have thrown up a series of major challenges, most notably that of verifying information in an age when the race to break the story first has never been more competitive.



The Other Revolution: Media in Yemen is now everyone's tool



By Nadia Al-Sakkaf

It's April 2011, and the coordinating committee of the youth revolution at Sana'a's Change Square is having one of its regular meetings to decide on their advocacy/protest plan for the week.

The coordinating committee is made up of the various political directions in the square along with independents. They decide on the protests, statements, tactics, next course of action and responsibility allocations.

The meeting also includes representatives of the women coalition of the committee. The instructions are given, next day there will be a million protestor march gathering on the edge of the Change Square adjacent to the 60 Meters Road. They are to carry out the first morning march in the vicinity of change square, as most of the marches used to happen afternoon.

The Facebook guy hurries from the meeting, creates a logo for the event and posts information on the coordinating committee's Facebook page, asking others to spread the news. While he is working, the heads of mobile communication teams in both the women and the men's units send a SMS alert to the heads of groups in the tents and elsewhere.

The heads of units announce the event on microphones to the crowds and urge others to spread the news.

The media person captures the news, runs to his computer, drafts the breaking news and sends it off by email using an internet modem connected to his laptop in his tent to all media outlets.

The event happens next day, confirmations take place from the tents, to the heads of units, to the Facebook groups and everyone assembles at the given time at the given place. TV crews and journalists are also there on standby recording every minute of the protest.

The march takes place and is termed a success. People go back to their original locations, and the top members of the coordinating committee assemble again the next day to evaluate the situation. Media coverage is also reviewed so are the Facebook comments and reports from the tents.

For the first time ever, such a mix of communication tools and an amazing synergy between different media is created.

The real revolution in Yemen is not a political one, but a techno-cultural one in terms of new media. Modern communication merges with the traditional in order to serve popular movements. This new trend is not limited to the politically active organizers of youth protests. But it has gradually found its place among the rest of the population, or rather those with access to internet and mobile technology.

Before 2011, parents in traditional homes feared something called the internet. They thought of it as a bad influence on their children, especially the girls, ethics. Lots of university students, both males and females complained that they would use the internet in stealth behind their parents' knowledge.

After 2011, many young Yemeni men and women exclaimed that now their parents are asking them to log into

Nadia Al-Sakkaf has been the editor in chief of Yemen Times Establishment since 2005. The establishment includes Yemen Times Newspaper, Radio Yemen Times and Yemen 21 Century Forum. She also is an active member of the Presidential National Dialogue Preparatory Committee in Yemen.

Facebook or go online to see the latest developments.

Information dissemination has never been like what it is in Yemen today. Crossing through social, generational, geographical and even gender barriers. For the first time ever, Yemeni women feel they have a neutral platform to express themselves online and through mobile technology today without being afraid of being misjudged by the community.

Free mobile communication applications such as Whatsup, Viber and Tango meant access to people not only within the local community, but the entire world for free. They only had to have a phone that supported these applications and know where to find free wireless internet.

Cafes and some civil society organizations offered this for free for visitors. Many youth would go hang out in these places just for the internet, although seeing others especially from the opposite gender would be an additional advantage in Yemen's gender segregated community.

One might argue this is an urban phenomena, which is true to a large extent. However, political parties in order to increase their masses in the city squares had to bring in people from the rural areas. The cost for this was minimum especially since they would sleep in tents and eat from the food being distributed at the squares.

Exposed to new ways to communicate

However, Yemenis from the suburbs were exposed to new forms of communication and they saw how easy and effective it was. Many returned home with this newly acquired knowledge and tried to use it and even disseminate it in their villages.

With the support of civil society organizations such as Resonate Yemen, which is largely funded by international organizations such as USAID, the aspiring youth in the villages were given tools and access to the technology they saw in the cities.

The idea is since the first exposure took place, the momentum should not be lost, and new youth empowerment organizations were created in rural areas aiming at teaching the youth there about new communication technology.

The impact of Yemen's version of the Arab Spring went beyond regime change. It has made politics everyone's business in the country. Political jargons and those relating to international values such as democracy and equal citizenship were

becoming increasingly common among the public of all levels. For example, street cleaners used these in their strikes in 2012 against Sana'a municipality. For the first time ever, street cleaners in the capital city took a united front, went on strike holding banners demanding to have equal pay and wore red ribbons on their sleeves. All through the years in the past they understood that they were discriminated against in terms of a hard and unfair working environment, after 2011 they understood what to call it, and the alternative terms for what they want and they learned the peaceful protest mechanisms to make their voice heard.

During their strike of two weeks, the city rotted in garbage, but eventually the street cleaners got what they wanted. In their end-of strike-speech (they created a press release for this event), they said that this was a result of the "revolution."

A new trend of community jokes based on the revolution also had risen. Words such as "Irhal" (get out) were very common on jokes about domestic or marital problems. In fact, political leaders involved in the peace transfer and transition were used in the jokes and local sayings. Even little children used these jargons in their playtime games.

Political debates also took place in families where members supported different political groups. Sometimes to the extent that the rival family members would not even have a meal together. A university student said that in her house her father's room was Saleh zone, while her and her sisters room was pro revolution and the TV room was neutral grounds.

The impact of the Yemen's spring even reached social relations and friendships. New relations were created and others were broken. The language used in conversations describing the "traitors" or the "outcasts" was mostly derived from newspaper columns by either side.

The fact is that another real revolution took place in Yemen that is beyond politics. The communication culture has dramatically changed and there is no turning back. New communication tools have been discovered and used, and new jargons and language has become familiar with all groups of the society, especially since more private TV stations and new community radios have been created.

There is no turning back; media in Yemen has become everyone's tool because politics has become everyone's business.

Change Unfolding: **One act ignites anger and fuels a continuous revolution**



By **Massoud Akko**

When Muhammad Bouazizi first set himself on fire, he had no idea that his death would be the spark that would launch a series of revolutions across the Arab world, seeking to topple and bring an end to dictatorship.

Perhaps his only concern was that which had to do with his own life, and the vegetables he sold that provided him and his family with life and sustenance.

However a mere slap from a female police officer was enough to ignite his anger, causing him to set himself ablaze, consumed by feelings of weakness, neglect and the sense that his life had become hopeless. A youth during the prime of his life, his time at university having come to an end, he could find no job or profession to provide livelihood to himself and his family, and so he took to selling vegetables in the state of Sidi Bouzid. His situation was like that of millions of others living throughout the Arab world, unemployed and searching for work.

The former Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled Tunisia not long after protests began to spread throughout his country. He left behind him power, but stole the country's money, taking millions from the Tunisian people, eventually choosing Saudi Arabia as his place of refuge. He relinquished power after feeling that his time as leader of Tunisia had come to an end, and that

the people had chosen to do away with a regime that stole and ruled over them in darkness for so long. Hundreds of thousands of citizens came out and demonstrated against Ali's rule, sending a clear message that his time serving in Tunisian politics was over. However Bin Ali was also the wisest of the Arab rulers, fleeing along with his family, carrying with him enough money to last a lifetime.

Ben Ali was smart, unlike the Libyan Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi, who at first dealt with the uprising against his rule with an air of sarcasm and mockery.

It wasn't long however before this uprising became military in nature, with Qadhafi himself being killed at the hands of the country's revolutionaries, finally leaving power to the people, but only after his family plundered and stole the country's riches. One family, lording over a country possessing remarkable reserves both in money and oil.

Qadhafi's rule ended with a technical knockout, allowing Libyans to finally form their new institutions, and elect those who they see as best fit to represent them, as opposed to those assigned to them, as was the case during Qadhafi's reign.

The revolution in Yemen meanwhile, was and still falls short, as the sons and supporters of former President Ali Abdullah Salih remain in power, controlling a number of important state institutions including the army.

The political settlement that eventually ousted President Salih, that was forced onto the Yemeni people, did not live up to the demands of the country's youth movement that sought to defend their right to live a life of honor, in a state run not by tribes but by civil institutions, where power was not concentrated in the hands of a family.

Massoud Akko is a Syrian Kurdish journalist and human rights defender from al-Qamishli who now lives in Norway.

The decision to not try former President Salih, but instead grant him immunity for the crimes he committed in the name of the Yemeni people, served almost as the final death blow to the Yemeni Spring, with criminals given reign to run free. The Yemeni regime has undergone nothing more than mere cosmetic changes, with the previous regime still in place, unaltered deep down.

Egypt has perhaps been most successful of all the Arab spring revolutions, and if the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to power – the party of President Muhammad Morsy – upsets the

Egyptian people, or causes the country’s revolutionaries and the youth of Tahrir Square to feel that their revolution has been hijacked and stolen, then the Egyptian people can march forward to defend and protect their achievements. There will never exist another Hosni Mubarak to mute the mouths of Egyptians, as the people that rose up to overthrow him will not hesitate to take to the streets again if need be.

The Mass Grave of Syria

However it appears that the throes of the Syrian spring remain tiresome and intractable. Syria, a beautiful country with a long history of civilization, has been destroyed and come to resemble a mass grave. Syria, all of whose cities have been at least nearly half way destroyed, has lost more than 100,000 of its sons in the pursuit of freedom, and the reclaiming of that honor which was stolen from them nearly 50 years ago.

The Assad family has remained in power for over four decades, turning Syria into their own personal farm, dividing the country’s riches amongst themselves and plundering the people’s money. This is to say nothing of the repression of political, cultural and media freedoms throughout the country.

In the 1950s, Syria was a proud, shining example of freedom in the Arab world, however the Ba’ath party quickly turned Syria into a burial ground for politicians and opposition members, committing massacres and waging war against all elements of the people, in



Fadi Abu Hassan is a young Syrian cartoonist in exile in another Arab country. He fled Syria with his wife and daughter when the government "goons" started looking for him in Damascus after his very powerful anti-Assad cartoons were published.



Fadi Abou Hassan

addition to repressing the culture and literature of the Kurds. A quarter million Kurds have been stripped of their Syrian citizenship, with dozens killed in 2004 under the auspices of a football (soccer) game, in addition to the orchestration of dozens of other politically charged assassinations. A litany of crimes has been committed in the name of the Syrian people, with power concentrated in the hands of one family, who views the country as their property, and its citizens as their slaves.

The Syrian revolution that began in the Spring of 2011, like all other Arab revolutions began with the demand for change, real political reform, and an increase in the amount of available freedoms. However as is the habit with most of the world's repressive regimes, government forces took to attacking peaceful protesters, firing rockets on cities without seeking to distinguish between opposition fighters and unarmed civilians.

The regime committed massacres against civilians in a number of cities, using all forms of weaponry at their disposal, from dropping barrels of exploding oil onto civilians, launching scud missiles and firing heavy artillery.

According to the country's opposition, over a quarter million Syrians have been arrested, including a number of politicians, journalists, artists and ordinary citizens, many of whom have died in prison as a result of torture.

Mazan Darwish, President of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, in addition to his colleagues Hani al-Ziltani and Hussein al-Gharir, still remain in custody in the Adra prison just outside Damascus.

All have been charged in Syria's Terrorism Court with high crimes that may result in their execution, merely as a result of journalists documenting crimes committed by the regime against unarmed citizens.

Regime forces have killed more than 150 journalists and media activists since the revolution began two years ago. The Syrian Commission for Press Freedoms has recently taken to documenting all human rights violations committed against journalists and media personalities since the beginning of the revolution.



Fadi Abou Hassan

The campaign, which began as a project by the Syrian Journalists Union back in February 2012, sought to breathe life back into Syria's unions, after the Ba'ath party's takeover of government institutions so many years ago.

However the Syrian government has since sought to paralyze all civil institutions operating within the country, with the nation's unions serving as a wing of the country's security forces, arresting and turning over their members to the secret police, in order to investigate and throw them in prison.

The weakness of the Arab, international and Islamic communities with regards to the Syrian revolution, and their failure to act to stop the flow of Syrian blood, has allowed Bashar al-Assad to continue killing, as if for entertainment, and engage in campaigns of mass arrest as revenge against those who dared to stand against him.

The international community has failed completely to live up to its duty to protect the Syrian people from the daily killing machine that has terrorized their lives. On the contrary, there are in fact countries who seek outright to support Bashar al-Assad in his campaign to slaughter the Syrian people, providing him with cover on the world

This manifests itself primarily in the form of China and Russia exercising their veto power in the UN Security Council to block any measure that seeks to condemn the Syrian regime for committing massacres against its people. Added to the fray are Iran and Hezbollah, the Lebanese militia, both of whom fight alongside Bashar al-Assad on Syrian ground and against its people.

The Syrian people will continue in their revolution until they achieve all of what they seek in the way of honor, freedom and the right to live comfortably and in peace. The Damascus Spring will eventually find its way, even if it is perhaps stained red with the blood of Syrian martyrs. However in every spot stained with blood will grow a crimson rose and a beautiful Damascus jasmine.

Each Syrian martyr will become a star in the night sky, with the Syrian spring becoming the most beautiful of all. The spring will continue throughout the Arab world, perhaps even spreading to neighboring countries; however it surely will never come to an end.



Arab Media Regulations: Campaigning for the next wave of change



By Daoud Kuttab

The protests that have engulfed the Arab region have produced historic results. Dictators and autocratic leaders who have ruled with an iron hand for years have fallen as a result. The right to expression and assembly denied for years to millions of citizens has been extracted by the will of the protestors.

Despite these amazing results, one system has survived the protests of millions: The media regulatory systems and cultures.

In the Middle East and north African region, media has been, and continues to be, the exclusively controlled by governments. National radio and television is owned and administered by ruling powers. In most of the Arab countries, the king or president appoints directors of these national media outlets. With some variations, these media are nothing more than mouthpieces of the ruling powers. Leaders unashamedly note the existence of other media (often broadcasting from outside) as proof that they need their own media to present “the government’s point of view.”

Newspapers are also controlled by governments although to a lesser degree.

In many countries the government owns different percentages of the stock of the leading newspapers. Public servants who are a large

number subscribe to these government newspapers ensuring that the cycle of information is guaranteed in favor of the ruling powers. Journalist syndicates are still Soviet-like closed shops, and are very restrictive in allowing new members (especially from non-print media.)

At the same time, these syndicates maintain and fight against changes or additions that would allow anyone to break up their monopolies. Although unenforced, most Arab countries only recognize members of these exclusive unions as journalists and thereby anyone else working in journalism is considered “imposters.”

Satellites and the internet changed some of that before, during and after the Arab revolutions. Beaming from outside, local powers had little power to change or alter their messages. When things got bad the government would restrict the movements of this or that satellite news station or even close its offices but after a while they discovered that this made things worse. Initially, governments were able to absorb these newcomers by focusing their terrestrial broadcasts to the people who couldn’t afford the dish but with time every household owned a satellite and the local broadcasting was itself forced to go on satellite.

The internet was also initially a luxury. Penetration was sparse in many countries and it was easy to dismiss what was on the internet using the government media to discredit it. Eventually this too became more and more available. A look at the record numbers of individuals who have joined facebook in the Arab region shows that the government policy in this regard has not worked.

But as powerful and influential that satellites and the internet have proved to be, they were beyond the reach of governments. The desire to join globalization meant that they could not be interested in the flow of

Daoud Kuttab is an IPI press freedom hero. He is director general of Community Media Network a Amman-based media NGO that works in the Arab world to advance freedom of expression. His personal homepage is www.daoudkuttab.com

goods and services but oppose the flow of information. Some countries have attempted to curtail the internet with different degrees of success. Saudi Arab and a number of Arab gulf countries have instituted a sophisticated filtering program to keep pornography away, but this filtering system also included blocking unfriendly political sites. Jordan has attempted to muzzle the ever expanding news websites but they have been unable to implement these restrictions though it has had a chilling effect on some websites.

Perhaps the one media sector that has remained shut to the public has been radio. Governments since the 1950s have had a monopoly on all radio licensing keeping local broadcasting in the hands of the national radio and tv authority which in turn has been allowed a limited number of relicensing schemes (mostly for international broadcasters like BBC, DW and MonteCarlo for a high fee).

The opportunities that the Arab Spring brought spawned individuals with courage and creativity.

Local independent broadcasters have been for the most part been shut out. When the US changed its Voice of America broadcasting to Sawa and provided high quality Arabic language and western music, Arab leaders quickly discovered the power of radio and started giving licenses to businessmen in bed with the government with clear instructions to broadcast music, but not news or politics. In some cases, as in Jordan, radio licensing was open to the public but with high fees and even extra fees for broadcasting news and politics. The latter was cancelled last year.

Even in revolutionary countries such as Egypt, Yemen and Tunisia, the general system has remained with a few minor changes. Tunis has allowed independent radio, but with fees as high as \$60,000 a year. thus ensuring that most stations would be predominantly music and entertainment, in order to bring in enough advertising revenue to cover the high fees.

But the opportunities that the Arab Spring brought created individuals with courage and creativity. In Tunis, a group that has created an audio visual syndicate during the Ben Ali regime decided to set up a station outside the broadcasting fee structure. Radio6 began broadcasting shortly after the revolution using

equipment that international friends smuggled into the country. In Yemen, the Yemen Times owners also defied the legal structure to begin broadcasting without license. A few months later, the reformist minister of information succeeded in giving them legal cover and the government has vowed to pass a more open audio visual law. In Libya local government officials gave approval to radio entrepreneurs without going back to the central government. In one case a radio station AWAL Fm was established in the ethnic Berger community broadcasting in Arabic and the once banned Imazery language.

In Egypt, Internet radio has flourished as the population has been searching for radio outlets in this country of 83 million but deprived of independent or community radio. The government of Mubarak had given one license for a commercial license in Cairo which was renewed during the reign of the military. No other independent terrestrial radio exists in Egypt.

Over 100 broadcast activists and other media professionals met in Cairo in late February 2013 and exchanged ideas and tactics as to how to break up the regulatory monopoly in the Arab region. Organised by the Amman-based Community Media Network and the UK-based Community Media Solutions with representatives from UNESCO and other international bodies, the group reviewed legal restrictions and debated advocacy strategies as well as learned basic technical skills aimed at breaking up government broadcast monopolies in the region.

With funding from a Swedish development agency and a British foreign commonwealth office, these young radio activists set to open up airwaves in the Middle East and North Africa. The Cairo Declaration issued at the end of this important meeting vowed to work on translating Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into a campaign that will lead to new channels for the voices of the people in the region.

The downfall of Arab dictators has succeeded in changing political systems in many countries but the media landscape, especially in independent broadcasting, remains closed to local communities. Peoples of the region are hoping that with courage and creativity this last stronghold of government owned and run media regulatory systems will also fall, allowing people to own and run their own broadcasting outlets.



Sinai Peninsula: Reporting will bring light and change to an underreported region



By Mohannad Sabry

Mohannad Sabry is an Egyptian journalist based in Cairo, returning to Egypt in 2001. His writings and photography have been published by The Philadelphia Inquirer, GlobalPost, Al-Monitor and the Miami Herald. He was a finalist for the 2011 Livingston Award for Young Journalists, nominated for coverage of military trials of Egyptian civilians. Sabry has been traveling and extensively covering the Sinai Peninsula since Egypt's uprising in January 2011. Fluent in the Bedouin dialect, Sabry is researching a book about the current affairs of Sinai, and the new phase of relations between Egypt, Israel and the Gaza Strip.

CAIRO - On January 28, 2011, known as the Friday of Anger, hundreds of long-oppressed Sinai natives spilled their fury over the main boulevard slicing through the border town of Rafah. Dozens of RPG shells whistled their way to the State Security building that hosted a dungeon where hundreds of Bedouin tribesmen and women were tortured, sodomized, and sometimes killed.

Angry Bedouin assembled some landmines and attached them to the chain-locked main gate; the explosion shattered the gate and its surrounding walls while the torture factory went ablaze.

The main target of the attack is, until now, considered the most prominent and brutal State Security officer in North Sinai in the last decade—whose name cannot be mentioned for security reasons—and is believed to have paid 1.5 million Egyptian pounds (\$228,000) to two outlaws who drove him out of the peninsula in the trunk of their vehicle.

There were no cameras, no television crews, and no pens or pads to document the attacks that destroyed the Rafah State Security Department, the Passport Department, the Rafah Police Station, elementary school, and the police station of El-Sheikh Zwayyed, 35 kilometers west of Rafah. Most

importantly, there wasn't much research of the long list of reasons behind such a sudden, unprecedented rise of an armed population outside of the larger narrative of the Egyptian uprising.

A few local media reporters tried desperately to reach their editors who were too occupied with the capital Cairo, where dozens of protesters were shot dead in and around the epicenter of the 18 day uprising, Tahrir Square, and other parts of the volatile nation where several jails were broken open and thousands of sentenced criminals, political prisoners and emergency law inmates were suddenly released, among them was Egypt's first freely elected president, Mohamed Morsi.

The RPGs, high-caliber machine guns, killings, and the poorly-secured border between Egypt, Israel and the Gaza Strip weren't enough to grab the local or international media's attention. Everyone remained too occupied to check any correspondence from the politically, culturally and above all, socially far-flung Sinai Peninsula.

It wasn't until February 5, 2011, when the first explosion ripped through the natural gas pipeline stretching to Israel and Jordan that some local and international news reporters rushed to North Sinai's main port city of El-Arish.

Despite how violent and bloody both days were, the contrast between the media coverage of the Friday of Anger, and the gas-pipeline bombing wasn't surprising. It served as a practical demonstration of how oblivious local and international governments, the media and people and continue to be of Sinai, the mountainous peninsula that witnessed years of active war, the Camp David Peace Treaty, decades of oppression and unspeakable human rights violations.

For those same reasons, it has turned into a haven for radical



U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel after laying a wreath during his visit to the tomb of former Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat at Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers. Hagel's visit coincided with commemoration of Sinai Liberation Day in Cairo on April 24, 2013. **The Associated Press.**

ideologies and one of the most active yet clandestine arms smuggling and human trafficking routes connecting Africa and Asia. It was a reflection of how the Sinai Peninsula, in our minds, souls, newspapers and books, has gradually turned into an island.

The iron-fisted regime of ousted Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak profited significantly from the lack of media coverage of the peninsula for more than three decades. Since former U.S. president Jimmy Carter witnessed the 1979 signing of the Camp David Peace Treaty by Egypt's Anwar Sadat and Israel's Menachem Begin, the full Israeli withdrawal in 1982, and the return of the border town of Taba to Egypt in 1989, Sinai has seldom reached the front page.

Only if a tourist resort was bombed, an attack on the border military patrols took place, or when the tunnels smuggling goods and weaponry into the Gaza Strip became almost impossible to ignore, did the world and journalists take notice.

Imposing a no-coverage policy on the Sinai was Mubarak's first step in isolating the peninsula and its population. In just a few years, his dictatorship turned the imagery of Sinai into a southern beach liberated enough to host international nudists, or a

The iron-fisted regime of ousted President Hosni Mubarak profited significantly from the lack of media coverage of the peninsula for three decades.

1973 victory cliché that millions of Egyptians only remember on October 6th of every year, or mountainous terrain patrolled by armed bandits. It became normal, yet very pathetic, to hear a random Cairo or Tel Aviv resident, who's never been to Sinai, thoroughly describe how a ruthless Bedouin wouldn't blink as he cut off your arm to steal your watch.

The pathos, impoverishment, illiteracy, unemployment, non-existent development and infrastructure, and the brutality Sinai

natives have endured at the hands of an unchecked security apparatus weren't welcome at Mubarak's tightly gripped, state-owned media. Local independent media outlets were not much different; they either overlooked the whole matter, or refrained from approaching it, fearing government retaliation.

The January 25 uprising that ousted Mubarak's regime was Sinai's hope for a new era of freedom and long-awaited prosperity.

But their hopes were short-lived. Once again, Sinai's tribesmen found themselves only visited by the media to scout a bomb site, or take photos of weapons, but rarely approached decades of history and indigenous culture behind the unfortunate, chaotic present. Their civilization, nationalism, intellect and squandered fortunes continue to seek a genuine, truly reflective spot in the world's media, and in the minds of local and international communities.

Anger Toward Journalists

On April 5, 2013, a massive tribal leaders' summit was held in Firan Valley, 15 miles from St. Catherine's Monastery. The event, announced two weeks earlier, was largely ignored by government members, security officials, NGOs, political activists and hundreds of local and international media outlets that have been actively operating in Egypt and the Middle East since the uprisings kicked off in 2011.

The media personnel that covered the summit were two French freelance reporters, two Egyptian freelance reporters working for foreign media outlets, and one American freelance photographer.

"What are journalists going to do for us? They come here to take our words, write them under their names and get paid for it," yelled one of the tribal leaders who attended the summit.

His loud, hostile words, yelled in his own tribal stronghold while flanked by his fed-up, sun burnt, turban-wearing cousins, were a powerful, straight-forward wakeup call. I realized that out of around 200

stories I wrote or co-wrote since Egypt's January 2011 uprising, no more than 15 were about the Sinai Peninsula, the majority of those 15 were, in my current assessment, shallow, superficial security dispatches that lack a bigger context, and a deeper understanding of a tribal community long ignored, yet very vital to the civilized, liberated world we claim to seek.

Driving to the summit's tent erected in front of the ancient Seven Girls Monastery, I saw empty cooking gas tanks carried by women and children from villages and houses flung as far as five miles into the mountainous terrain.

Left on the asphalt with some money tied to metal handle, the families hoped the distribution truck of the state-owned gas company would replace their tanks before nightfall, if not, dinner will be cooked on wood fire or there will be no dinner at all. At the summit tent, there was no source of potable water, similar to the rest of Sinai; two water tanks were bought for around \$100 to cover the needs of the attendees.

"I am sorry I screamed at you and your colleagues, please convey my apologies to them, and try to understand where I come from, put yourself in my shoes," said the tribesmen, who crossed the massive tent to shake my hand before I left.



Virtual Election? **Jordanian youth ‘fly’ by creating a Facebook Parliament**



By Yasmine El Gharabeh

Yasmine El Gharabeh is a 24-year-old freelance journalist, writing for local publications in Arabic and English. With a degree in Industrial Engineering, she is a senior research analyst at a leading local strategic research company. Ms. El Gharabeh is a participant of the Digital Journalism Boot Camp, a training programme developed and implemented by Amman-based AWAN, Arab Media Consultants and supported by a grant from the International Press Institute (IPI).

Two years after of member of the Jordanian parliament Al Khalaileh described youth under the age of 30 as “incapable birds”, in reference to the Jordanian proverb that describes birds left in the nest and unable to fly, youth respond. His words are far from being forgiven or forgotten.

Refusal to reduce the age of candidacy for the Jordanian Parliament is one of the reasons that 74 percent of Jordan’s population represented in youth feels marginalized and became the impetus to form their own parliament -- on Facebook!

Unprecedented in Jordanian history, the first youth parliament was elected through virtual voting on Facebook. Originally developed to raise political awareness during the last parliamentary elections, the “Red Indians” Facebook page sparked the idea of virtual youth parliamentary elections. Soon, ten other national lists were created, most with sarcastic names such as “The Gas Cylinder” and “Jordanian Refugees in Jordan”. The elections harvested 2,561 votes.

The “incapable birds” utilized the virtual world to elect 27 representatives from all governorates and political parties. The parliament includes leftists,

liberals, Islamists and those who choose to stand at the same distance from all political parties and ideologies.

Journalist Mousa Abu Qaoud is one of the parliament members who met in a café in Amman to swear fidelity for the “country and the people.” As a representative of “National Bankruptcy” (national list), he views the political scene in Jordan as painful. He insists that it does not meet the aspirations of youth, as candidates faces are repeated every election with slogans no more than advertising clichés and most electoral programs inapplicable and “dreamy.”

In Abu Qaoud’s opinion, youth are treated unjustly and their role in the decision-making process is being marginalized. “Although most candidates depend on youth to manage their election campaigns, yet the law – which does not seem to be based on scientific measures – dictates that the age of the candidate should be no less than thirty-years old, thereby labeling those who are below that age as politically illiterate.”

He added that the youth parliament represents the democratic state that the society is trying to reach. It is represented in a seats closed on the lists, no independent candidates, and “fair competition” as it is almost impossible to buy votes electronically.

In this context, Basma Nabulsi, a representative of the “Red Indians” and one of five young women in the parliament, clarified that the youth initiative aims to pressure government to establish laws and other solutions for problems plaguing youth.

Nabulsi argues that the youth parliament also aims to simplify legal aspects of laws that might be difficult for youth to understand.



As for Abdulrazaq Awad, the Member of Parliament elected to represent “The Dire Situation” national party, the parliament is a “unique opportunity for youth to gain some experience in political work.”

This “shadow” parliament emerges at a time when many view the government’s methods of encouraging youth political participation as no more than prestige or façade empty of serious intention to include them in the decision-making process. Despite holding several seminars and forming many youth committees, no clear impact for youth was seen in solving their problems or encouraging their participation in setting political programs that would accommodate their needs. Most young Jordanian men and women are still strongly hesitant in joining political parties.

Nabulsi describes the parliament as “one of the ways through which the Jordanian youth was able to absorb the political congestion following the Arab spring, as youth demonstrated their ability to become a part of the decision process and solutions.”

Awad agrees with Nabulsi. He sees that the youth parliament is an opportunity to express objection on election laws “in a constructive way” instead of what he described as a “passive HIRAK [movement]” represented in “demonstrations that bring more harm than benefit,” as he puts it.

For Nabulsi, the youth parliament differs from the real parliament in many aspects. The youth parliament does not have a “female quota” or “minority seats” because “youth believe that qualifications should be the only criteria for

having a seat in the parliament,” and that women are capable of competing in the elections based on a thorough reform vision they represent to the public. A member of the youth parliament hopes that her participation will encourage girls and women to become more involved in politics.

As for Awad, what distinguishes the youth parliament is the “harmony” with which representatives from different political ideologies work, something that is “rarely found in the real parliaments.”

The youth parliament hopes to pass a message to members of the official parliament, by setting the procedures of the parliament and postponing the election of the house speaker. The youth insist on not accepting funding for the parliament in order “to protect the idea” and in fear of having “particular thought dictated on the initiative”.

However, they plan on partnering with civil society organizations to implement initiatives springing from their electoral programs. They look forward to approve laws, and send copies of which to the house speaker, ministers and decisionmakers.

It is worth mentioning that youth parliament elections are the only ones in Jordan to go without *manasef*, a traditional food served by election campaigns to woo voters, or an expensive fireworks show. Certainly the new “parliament members” will not be receiving comfortable wages or cars as those received by members of the official Jordanian Parliament.



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Point of View: Arab Spring runs deep underground



By Hussein Sarayrah, Digital Journalism Boot Camp

AMMAN -- Since late 2010 until now, nearly every Arab country has witnessed protests in its streets and public squares by masses of people demanding rights that had been harshly repressed by their regimes. The ability of Arab regimes to keep people out of the national decision-making process had become undone in the wake of shrinking budgets and rising deficits as a result of the global financial crisis.

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This feeling of marginalization and uselessness in the daily lives of Arabs pushed Mohammad Bouzizi, a 27-year old Tunisian street vendor to set himself on fire after being prevented from selling vegetables on a moving cart. This sparked a massive protest among mainly Tunisian youth, which quickly intensified and expanded throughout the country.

This singular act grew into the “Jasmine Revolution”. The regime, controlled by Zein El Abidin Bin Ali, who ruled by an absolute one-party system, was unable to come to terms with the Tunisian people and their demands. Later he attempted to claim that he “understood” the people’s grievances. That confession came too late.

Protests spread from Tunisia to Egypt, followed by Libya and Yemen, and reached Syria. Arab

youth asserted images of solidarity in order to achieve freedom that has been sought after for years, absent in their generation and their predecessors.

But once the dictators were gone, the “revolution” began to reveal the faults and fissures of the governed communities rather than the governing authorities.

Perpetual protests became fashionable and somehow a new way of life. This has deepened the rifts with society, rather than promote dialogue. Public discourse became slogans and demands. And if these demands were not met, then protest continues until *we* get what *we* want. Sometimes, the demands are not even fair or feasible or even clear.

Arab spring bloomed. The street became flooded with opinions and catchphrases, but it did not enhance the public debate because it did not allow room for voices of different opinions.

It might be argued that this indicates that the Arab citizen is not ready yet to accept partnership in decision-making on a national level. Once the citizen gets the opportunity to practice this power, then he and she (although the latter is much less likely) will grab it and keep it away from everyone, as in the regimes they brought down.

In nearly all Arab Spring countries, the outcome has been far from the initial expectations. Instead of freedom, crime spread in the absence of security in places where the revolution succeeded and regimes were toppled. The aim of the Arab Spring was only to break the silence barrier and take revenge on those who used to scare them. It did not aim to provide security.

“The regime is toppled!” These words scared people who were out in the streets. Tear gas burned their eyes and clubs bruised their limbs, but what comes next? Is it possible



Tunisians are silhouetted behind a poster showing victims' portraits of the Revolution, in Tunis, Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013 as the country prepares to celebrate the second anniversary of the Revolution. Two years after the revolution that overthrew an authoritarian president and started the Arab Spring, Tunisia is struggling with high unemployment and rising violence in its politics. **The Associated Press/Amine Landoulsi**

that the country remains without a regime? Certainly such questions were on the mind of each participant in this season.

No program and no leader. Frustration ignited these street protests. The issue was not fully studied until some sectors, who became professional politicians, hastened to grab the power by capitalizing on the need of communities for leadership.

Is every Arab ready for real change?

The role of these opportunists, as many political analysts refer to them, will be in the corridors of power that will be more authoritarian and oppressive. This is due to one simple fact: If anyone would venture to question their negligence, that person would certainly be accused of being pro-regime or part of a puppet opposition vying for power.

According to researchers, the social fallout of the Arab Spring was harder and rougher than the political impact. People lost the sense of having an authority that would

maintain the situation, and this frightened most of the people from expressing their opinions or practicing their normal social life.

After the spring test, it became apparent that there are wide segments of the Arab population who are not ready for real change.

It seems, for now, we have to wait until societies develop their public discourse, which would first mean realizing the huge mistakes made in this round of revolutions, and only then, will we witness a real Arab Spring.



Journalist Safety: Violent crowds create more hazards for journalists



By Aisha Sidahmed

When the Doha Center for Media Freedom (DCMF) sent me on an assignment to cover elections in post-revolution Egypt, I was aware of the challenging mission at hand because at the center we had been closely monitoring the violations and abuses suffered by journalists and revolutionaries in the course of the revolution.

For the first time, professional snipers targeted the eyes of journalists and photographers. Female journalists were sexually harassed while they covered the unfolding events in Egypt. These new kinds of aggressions, unseen before the outbreak of the Arab Spring, saw journalists targeted not only by their traditional foe – the police -- but also by groups of civilians mobilized against media workers.

Undeterred by these challenges, I was excited to take up the assignment and to see first-hand the situation on the ground and how far the country has been changed by the events of the Arab Spring.

A Hostile Environment

Within an hour of my arrival at Cairo, I was in Tahrir Square, a short walk from the Ramsis Hotel where I stayed. I was planning to conduct interviews for a poll on Egyptians' trust in local media and their views about international media's coverage of the revolution. I was carrying a camera and audio recorder.

It was before sunset and the square was not crowded with people at that time of the day. After a while, I started to feel that the atmosphere around me was becoming unfriendly as a group of people began to flood me with questions.

Some of them were very critical of media, accusing journalists of inciting people to take to the streets and even making stories. Someone asked me to show my ID and my press card while another one protested that foreign media misrepresented the situation to serve foreign agendas. I had to sneak my way out of the square quietly without anyone noticing.

Understanding How to be Safe

I went through a similar experience when I tried to interview the shopkeepers around Tahrir Square whose warm welcome turned to complaints and accusations as soon as I revealed my job and started asking questions. They blamed journalists for the state of chaos in the country and for the economic losses they incurred along with large swathes of Egyptian people.

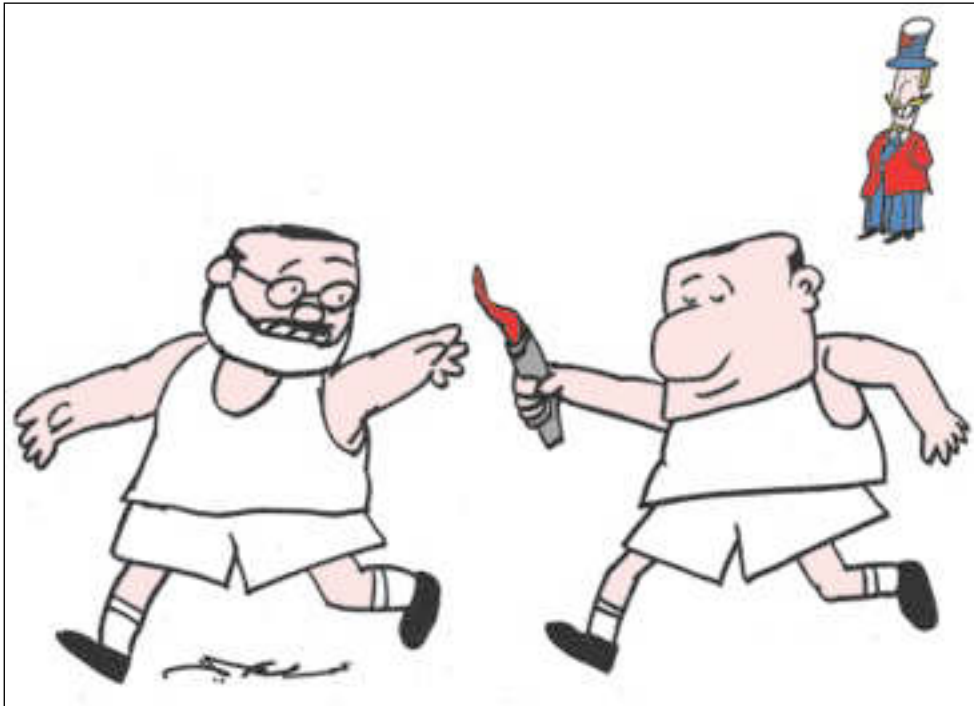
Later, Abdul Fattah Faed, Head of Al Jazeera's bureau in Cairo advised me against carrying my camera in the streets and conducting interviews in public places. "It is not safe to do so" He told me.

A day later, a hotel manager interrogated me over an interview that I made at the hotel café with Syrian journalists who had defected from the regime and had to flee the country for their life and are currently living in Egypt.

I was worried following the interrogation since I entered Egypt on a tourist visa instead of a journalistic one, which was difficult to get back then because of tensions between Doha and Cairo.

What happened to me was not incidental or isolated but was the expression of a very dangerous phenomenon that first came about during the revolution and escalated

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Amro Selim

Cairo-born cartoonist Amro Selim has been chronicling his country's political scene his editorial cartoons since 1988.

and deepened in the transition period that followed. There were some people who had vested interests in holding journalists responsible for the instability gripping the country. "High-ranking members of the military council and the regime of former president made public statements accusing media of endangering security and dividing the country to have exciting stories to report." Abeer Al-Saadi, deputy of the Egyptian Journalist Syndicate told me.

These statements were part of a methodic campaign designed to incite public opinion against journalists and to create hatred among ordinary Egyptians, especially those worst affected by the revolution, people who work in tourism and agriculture for instance.

Journalists working in state media were also hard hit by the aftermath of the revolution as public trust in them plummeted especially among supporters of the revolution. There were several cases in which journalists from state TV were verbally and physically abused and expelled from places like Tahrir Square.

It became clear that the fall of Mubarak did not lead to large sweeping changes in the country even though it was seen as a victory for the revolution. The unrest continued and was faced with relentless oppression as the demands of the revolution shifted from calling for the

overthrow of the head of the regime to all its leading figures.

The withdrawal of police from the streets plunged the country in a state of insecurity and mayhem, provoking people's resentment against the revolution which they saw to be behind lack of security, basic services and the decline of both tourism and agriculture.

The military council was accused of masterminding these problems in an attempt to undermine the security and the economy and prompt people to oppose the revolution.

The military council was accused of masterminding these problems in an attempt to undermine the security and the economy and prompt people to oppose the revolution. "There is a plan to create a state of insecurity which will cause people to hate the revolution and allow a comeback of the former regime," said Karima Hanfawi, member of Kifaya movement.

"The military council used different tactics that involved scaring people by talking about the collapse of the economy and spreading news of accumulation of internal debt and a price spike. The aim was to pressure Egyptians into hating anything that has to do with the revolution,"



Amro Selim

according to a report published by Qatar-based Al Arab newspaper.

In this context, it became very common to see ordinary citizens who act like policemen and who believe they are responsible for ensuring security inside the country. There were many cases in which citizens assaulted and detained journalists before handing them over to police. The charge had always to do with suspecting journalists to be behind instability in the country.

There were other cases in which journalists from official media were assaulted and expelled from Tahrir Square. A state TV crew was prevented from filming by groups of activists who think that they serve the interests of the regime and its allies.

"Around 40% of the journalists I met were assaulted by ordinary citizens instead of police or the security forces. In

some cases, the aggressors hand journalists over to police which is always around watching the protests," affirms Egyptian journalist and activist Rasha Azeb.

A study conducted by Al Masry Studies and Information Center (ASIC) about violations against journalists during the revolution and transformation period revealed that 81% of respondents said they were targeted because they were journalists.

Some of the journalists I met gave me accounts similar to Rasha Azeb's statement. Eight of these journalists were assaulted in the Abbassyah bloody events in which at least thirty journalists were aggressed. Salah Saeed, Amr Mustafa and Mohamed Zaki told me they were targeted because they were journalists, affirming that going forward they will keep their identity secret in order to avoid detention and abuse.

Targeting the eyes of journalists was yet another tactic that became widely practiced during the Arab Spring. Six journalists and photographers lost their eyes in Egypt in less than a month in 2011. Similar tactics were registered in Syria when a journalist was kidnapped and had his eyes plucked before he was killed and his body thrown on the street.

Sexual harassment against female journalists was another new phenomenon that emerged during the revolution in Egypt. In 2012, police beat and sexually harassed Muna Tahawi, writer, journalist and blogger after she was arrested in Tahrir Square and taken to the ministry of interior. Correspondent of France 3, Caroline Sinze, was subjected to a similar assault by a group of men in plainclothes near Tahrir Square. And Lara Logan of the CBS network was victim of a similar incident in Tahrir Square that same month.

According to ASIC's violations against journalists study, 11% of the respondents have suffered sexual harassment. "At least 20 female journalists were sexually harassed since the beginning of the revolution. Some of the respondents covered by our study said these were methodic acts of sexual harassment committed by the regime before the revolution. They also said that the situation has not changed after the revolution and that the victims do not report their experiences out of fear of social stigma," contends Fatma Zahra, Director of ASIC in an interview with Doha Centre for Media Freedom.

Testimonies by Muna and her colleagues raised many concerns among media people. Reporters Without Borders issued a statement, calling upon media institutions to refrain from sending female journalists to cover events in Egypt. The organization backed down under pressure from female journalists and rights groups who considered the statement discriminatory against women.

Human Rights Watch condemned in a statement the assaults against the three female journalists and the women who took part in protests in Tahrir Square. The statement said that Egyptian authorities did not open an investigation in the incidents and that the security forces failed to undertake any disciplinary measures against the assailants.



A supporter of President Hosni Mubarak, on camel, fights with anti-Mubarak protesters in Cairo, Egypt on Feb. 2, 2011.
The Associated Press/Mohammed Abou Zaid.

The political transformation taking place in Egypt has been in tandem with a similar change in the media scene. More and more private TV stations were established and their viewers on the increase as more people turn away from official media.

Even though these TV networks are a good sign about the healthy state of freedom of media and freedom of expression, their being tied to private agendas and affiliated to their financiers and political parties can jeopardize their credibility and independence.

Egyptian journalist and media expert Yasser Abdel Aziz, believes that media networks have spun out of control and that most of them do no heed ethics of professionalism.



The Liberated Arab Popular Vote: **Witnessing an emerging democracy in its infancy**



By Dr. May Chidiac

In the past few years the Arab world has witnessed a revolution brought from within. People who have long been oppressed by brutal regimes finally seized the opportunity to revolt and demand their rights from their rulers.

While the world collectivizes all the uprisings in the Arab Spring into one, each country and each population had its own different set of circumstances that culminated into the overthrow of their respective governments. It was a wave that arguably had its seeds sown in Lebanon's 2005 peaceful and successful "Cedar Revolution" against the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. Then a few years later sweeping the Middle East beginning in Tunisia and ending in Syria.

Despite the violence brought on from some of these revolts, such as in Libya and Syria, there is a general consensus that these are signs of better things to come. However, one cannot deny that there have been mistakes made along the way, and that these uprisings have paved a path for more extremist elements to reach power.

Liberal thought leaders, civil society activists, bloggers, artists, and intellectuals who were at the forefront steering these revolutions sought dignity and respect, freedom to choose their own path, and democracy to govern their lives. These revolutions should be an unceasing journey that is born of those peoples'

calls for freedom, democracy, and dignity and against the spread of extremism and the boost of intolerance. This has been detected by looking at the continuous remonstrations in countries such as in Egypt and Tunisia, where activists are still re-mobilizing movements to get the train back on track, producing what might be called "Revolution against the Revolution".

Besides, as uprisings were spreading across the Arab countries, social media has come to the fore as an important and fast means of information dissemination and civic engagement. These interactive technologies have played a meaningful role in helping to build and accelerate movements, and in enriching the information environment by making people more aware of the current events happening.

Months before the actual start of the revolutions, pages like "We are all Khaled Said" in Egypt, created to commemorate the murder of the

Interactive technologies have played a meaningful role in helping to build and accelerate movements, and in enriching the information environment by making people more aware of current events.

young Egyptian blogger who died at the hands of police, played a vital role in shaping political debates, nurturing online activism, and fostering virtual grassroots movements.

In Tunisia, thousands of tweets and videos tagging Sidi Bouzid arose after the protests began in December 2010 with street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in despair at unemployment. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were extensively used to schedule protests,

Dr. May Chidiac is a former television journalist at the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation and one of the station's main television anchors until an assassination attempt on her life. She has been named a Press Freedom

disseminate information, call for demonstrations, and mobilize citizens. However, the mass of demonstrators was predominantly composed of people who have never created a Facebook page, seen a YouTube video, or sent out a tweet in their lives.

According to the 2013 Arab Social Media Report, Youth between the ages of 15 and 29 continue to make up around 70% of Facebook users in the Arab region. Subsequently, these tools were evidently not the cause, yet served well as a catalyst. A noteworthy point was the shutdown of the Internet in these countries throughout the uprisings, which may actually have prompted more people to protest. This reveals the significance of social media and its ability to influence collective thinking as well as spur free public debates.

Nonetheless, with some, freedom comes with the lack of true social and moral responsibility that is justified by manipulating religious texts and beliefs. While social media activists were planning and coordinating through their respective platforms, a different plan was being forged by those off the internet grid.

The essence of the revolutions

Those civil society and human rights activists who were the essence of the revolutions sensed deception by realizing that other organized groups have succeeded under the democratic elections' label to steal their achievements and deflect the revolution's original intentions.

Particular groups' cultivation of the poorer classes, and mainly the faithful, was commencing as a means to an end with the extremist elements and soon to be political parties. Looking back at how events unfolded it seems that they are able to use the power of the "one-man one-vote" principle as a means to get into power, and establish their pseudo-democratic marginally theocratic form of authoritarianism.

Arguably this transformation is not the wished-for change. The revolutionary uprisings that have engulfed multiple Arab countries were driven by a revolt against tyranny, persecution, human rights violations, lack of freedom and democratic



Two Lebanese election workers empty a ballot box after the closer of their polling station at the end of the election day in Tripoli, Lebanon Sunday, June 7, 2009. **The Associated Press/Nasser Nasser**

participation, and lack of economic opportunity.

Nevertheless, these movements that commenced to challenge the rooted autocratic regimes ended up giving a chance to other forms of autocracies. The ultimate aim hasn't been accomplished by simply saying that the long-standing Arab dictatorships have toppled. What seemed to be an Arab awakening gained later another nature, and the aspirations that these revolutions would bring something different were dashed hopes.

These uprisings have left numerous newly formed Arab governments open to infiltration and influence by religious conservatives and Islamic extremists. The Muslim Brotherhood has seized power in Egypt, and instead of

accepting other segments of society and respecting plurality. As soon as they gained power, they misused it to control the country by implementing laws that would serve their aspirations. Populations that understand democracy believe in the difference of opinion.

In Tunisia, the Islamist Party, *Ennahda* took over the power, resulting in major transformation in the Tunisian secular state model. Though Zein El Abidin Ben Ali's regime suffered from corruption and lack of freedom of expression, it succeeded to a certain extent in sustaining a liberal ruling model originally established by the Founder and the first President of the Republic of Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba. This was exemplary in respecting the principles of secular laws and regulations, and provided women with significant rights. Practices of the current ruling party reflected violence of radical Muslims and the establishment of a religiously extremist conservative state.

In February 2013, the opposition leader of the Unified Democratic Nationalist party, Chokri Belaid, was shot dead following his severe criticism of the Islamist-led government. In Libya, terrorist acts targeted western delegations of some of the NATO countries that interfered to back revolutionists against Muammar Gaddafi's regime.

The Attack on Benghazi

In September 2012, an attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya, led to the death of the U.S. ambassador Chris Stevens and three other personnel. Furthermore, after two years of bloody conflict, the extremism wave has reached Syria, too. Al-Nusra Front, one of the most prominent extremist organizations, is calling to bring about an Islamic state in Syria.

This group is not only acting inside Syria but also spreading threats to neighboring countries such as Lebanon. A warning has been issued to Lebanese people that "Beirut will be burned" as a response on the Shiite group Hezbollah's involvement in the ongoing violence in Syria. Gaps left by the fallen regime were filled by an Islamist organization that has, more often

than not, been extremist in nature. To the average citizen his vote to these parties meant being able to put food on the table when he otherwise could not by voting for the other less organized movements.

The difference that one notices between the secular or moderate and more pluralistic elements in the Arab Spring and

The Arab Spring is no doubt a historic event that will remain a source of heated debates whose outcome can only be judged by history.

those of the extreme Islamist elements is organization and action. Lack of organization comes from the lack of experience of leaders within the secular and moderate elements. They do not have the organizational background that the extremist elements do. They neither have the pre-established networks that organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood have cultivated for years in Egypt even under the Mubarak regime.

This lack of organization is has resulted in the absence of true action on the part of secular and moderate elements. As a part of the revolution, their wings have been clipped by internal power struggles and lack of funding. All the while, extremists are able to provide basic services to a poverty-ridden population, which is funded by unscrupulous external sources.

The Arab Spring is no doubt a historic event that will remain a source of heated debates whose outcome can only be judged by history. It is a movement that has restructured the geopolitical landscape in the Arab world and has generated vast implications regionally and internationally. Still, there remains outstanding issues surrounding countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and others, and their success in making the effective transition to a true, just, and lawful democracy.



No One Likes Journalists: Chasing the Arab Lights is a dangerous business



By Abeer Saady

No one likes journalists, except their mothers... This is a statement that I always shock my young enthusiastic media students or participants to my workshops with.

They used to argue with me, explaining the role of media within the society. Now, after the Arab Spring, they never argue. It is no more about an unpopular profession, but about killing, injuring, harassing, detaining and hurting those practicing this profession. Participants to my hostile environment training and other areas of Media trainings comes from many countries, including Egypt, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Tunisia, Palestine, Morocco and Jordan.

Butterflies are killed when they seek and chase the light. This is the same case for journalists trying to find versions of the truth. In the foggy climate of the Arab Spring, no one knows exactly where the truth is.

The revolutions -- the ones that turned into wars and those that led to chaos -- revealed decades of dictatorships and corruptions. The new rulers and the people of these societies hated themselves when they looked at the mirror. Transition periods are ugly. You can't break the mirror, just because you are ugly. Go change

yourself. But it is easier to get rid of whoever revealed you.

Since day one of the revolutions tracking journalists became an equivalent action to the violence. Journalists working in traditional media were targeted first. Their identity and professional equipment were obvious to those who commit violence. Ahmed Mahmoud, an Egyptian young journalist, was shot by a police sniper during the revolution, at the balcony of his office, just because he dared to take a photo of him. The last photo, our colleague took was the photo of his own killer, yet the Ministry of Interior still denies it.

Many attacks targeting journalists happened. Journalists stopped reporting violations like preventing them from coverage, because it is nothing compared to targeting them by rubber and cartouche and live bullets during clashes. They had to face these specific attacks mixed with the normal threats of the street wars, where you can't predict where the danger will come from. Many photojournalists lost their eyes, because the snipers were so accurate.

In wartime, as in Syria, it is easier for both sides to execute any journalist immediately in the street claiming that he or she is a spy. It is nearly impossible to report independently in this country without protection of one side or accusation of another.

Between standards and ethics of our profession and your own safety, many journalists were lost. I was one of them. My case was less tensioned when I covered the war in Libya. Things got worse.

Presenting civilian journalists in front of military courts was one of the violations during the ruling of

Abeer Saady, is a journalist, trainer and vice chair of the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate. She has been working for more than 20 years and covered many conflicts.

the Egyptian Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).

When the first elected president after the Egyptian revolution, Dr Mohamed Morsy, came to power, the violations continued. The Ruling Freedom and Justice Party, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood group, and the President who belongs to the same group, mixes on how the toppled President Husni Mubarak regime treated them.

They deliberately forgot how many opposition and private media stood by their sides and paid the price in difficult times. Under false calls of cleaning the media sector, they led their wars against their oppositions.

The president, who has to be a fair judge between powers, imposed himself directly raising some court cases against journalists. Yes, he retreated back after a few months, but the harm had already been done. His action encouraged many who belong to the ruling party and others belonging to religious parties to do the same.

The legal battle continued by issuing the constitutional declaration last winter, that targeted, among others, groups of journalists. According to this declaration, any journalist could have been detained and presented to the court and sentenced for allegation that he is an enemy of the revolution.

Do assumed names help protect us?

When the constitution was drafted they neglected the Journalists' Syndicate demands to protect journalists from being imprisoned for what they publish, an important issue in a country full of corruption that needs many serious investigative reporting efforts. The constitution allows reproducing the system under new names. The streets continue to be unsafe and journalists was targeted everywhere.

Everyone was there last month in front of the presidential palace to celebrate a special birthday of Al Hussieny Abo Dief. He was not there. Last December, he received the death bullet that came straight from a sniper. Yes, the young journalist Al Hussieny was armed -- but only with his professional camera. He was assassinated.

Some people would think that I am stubborn when I say that," on my dead body to allow journalists in street wars of the Arab Spring countries to wear Press vests."

Actually, you do send them to their deaths if you did so without any serious guarantees from every power that goes to the street in

In safety courses, we can give our journalists many tips and practical exercises, but can anyone tell us -- how to avoid a sniper bullet that is targeting you?

addition to impunity. No one who killed or injured any journalist was presented to court. This encourages others to continue the attacks.

In safety courses, we can give our journalists many tips and practical exercises, but can anyone tell us; how to avoid a sniper bullet that is targeting you?

I just want you to imagine a young enthusiastic journalist who goes to cover the clashes, sometimes without any protective equipment because his media house has neglected to provide it. He has to protect himself and his equipment, putting into consideration that all insurance companies decided not to insure anyone whose papers mention that he is a journalist. That decision came after the Arab Spring.

The risk assessment is that our profession is too risky. What will you say to a young field reporter? Risks are there in every profession, but to die on the street without even the sympathy of the passerby citizens, who were affected by the provocation and hate speech coming from officials and religious figures and heads of the ruling party, is without conscience.

"What did my son do to deserve a bullet in his head?," a question that I couldn't answer. The mother of Abo Dief collapsed when we carried his body from Cairo for 800 kilometers to bury him at his village of Tima in the Sohag governorate. He left his village after graduating to live at the capital because he believed in the role of the journalist. He was happy when the revolution happened to

help his country through his profession. But he never predicted how people may hate this profession.

Like any community, we the journalists, have our wrongs. We know that we have to self-regulate our profession. In Egypt, we have started an effort, but surprisingly found the Ministry of Information establishing a parallel effort inviting one of the leaders who prides himself to be the enemy of media and seized the media production quarters several times.

Violence in the streets is the main threat, yet the polarization of journalists among political powers is another threat. When our photojournalist colleague Ibrahim Al Masry, was shot by a 6mm bullet last month by an opposition group called the Black Block, the opposition privately owned media didn't highlight the news. This double standards makes us lose credibility. We should all stand against violence.

Someone asked me about what I feel about the Arab spring now. I am asking you to close your eyes and imagine that you are at a tunnel between two worlds. You have to walk through this dangerous, dark, fragile tunnel, spending the best years of your life there hoping that your kids would enjoy a better future.

This is the Arab Spring. There is no turning back, but you have to be cautious not to step into the wrong track to military states turning to religious states and vice versa in circles. The bad news is that we won't eat the fruits of this long spring that have no catalogue, but the good news is that many nations survived that. The strong spring does matter.

One last word to my colleagues in the media sector, Yes, it is true that no one likes us, but we have to give our society a reason to protect us. Thank God, we are not celebrities that need their love.

We need their respect, understanding, and support. Engage yourself with your society, because this is the protection that you will get in the streets of our region. Be a real mirror and no one will dare to break all the mirrors.





Yemeni girls appear through holes in giant flag as pro-democracy protestors march in the colors of the national flag during a parade marking the second anniversary of the revolution in Sanaa on Feb. 11, 2013. **The Associated Press**

Coming of age in Yemen: As Arab Spring blossomed, so did journalist's career

**By Adam Michael
Baron**

Adam Baron is a freelance journalist based in Sanaa, Yemen who reports regularly for the Economist, McClatchy Newspapers and the Christian Science Monitor. Born and raised in Baltimore, he graduated from Williams College with a dual degree in Arab Studies and Religion. He has lived in Sanaa since January 2011.

A decent amount of ink has been spilled on the subject of young, ambitious freelance journalists who jumpstarted their career by covering the Arab Spring.

As much as I balk at being lumped in with demographic that's often viewed in a negative light, I'd be lying to myself if I denied it included me.

Roughly six months out of college, I came to Sanaa in January 2011 on a whim. My post-graduate life felt deeply unfulfilling. Job duties felt perfunctory; my social life felt like a less enjoyable extension of undergraduate immaturity. It wasn't

about a craving for excitement as much it was about increasing anxiety that I was wasting a freedom to take chances that would disappear in a few years.

A friend from my college Arabic classes suggested that I join him in Yemen and, to his surprise, I actually followed through with it. My initial set-up, teaching English and studying Arabic on the side, was neither well paid nor thrilling. But I figured it would work for the time being. Something more interesting, I figured, would eventually come about; an opportunity, I imagined, was bound to present itself.

Fall of Tunisia

Tunisia's Ben Ali fell a few weeks after I got here and protests in Sanaa began almost immediately. Fascinated by everything that was going on around me and sensing a rare opening, I knew I had to take advantage.

"There's basically two options," I wrote in an email to a friend that

February. “I’ll either end up covering these protests or regret it for the rest of my life.”

There were plenty of false starts and missed chances, but a steady stream of unsolicited emails eventually bore fruit and by early spring, a major outlet was publishing my writing. I was jaded enough to realize that the start of my journalistic career had little to do with me and nearly everything to do with a numbers game—there were barely any journalists in Yemen, events were developing constantly, and the government wasn’t letting new people in. Still, while the opportunity may have landed in my lap, I knew that it was up to me to make something out of it.

Time of Stress, but Excitement

It was a time of great stress and incredible excitement. A country that I was just getting to know was changing before my eyes. A generation may have been finding its voice, but that was only part of the story: there were scores of players to familiarize myself with, a century of history to understand and a slew of factional dynamics to digest. It was the start of a fascinating process that I’m still consumed with to this day. Everything felt so tentative that “success,” ultimately meant little more than getting another article out.

Psychologically, if not financially, I was living article to article, enslaved by nagging doubts and some quest towards some imagined level of “legitimacy.” Events hit a summer-long stalemate in June as former president Ali Abdullah Saleh traveled to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment for injuries he suffered in a still unresolved assassination attempt. But my fears that my days covering Yemen would end up amounting to little more than an interesting youthful diversion, have mounted.

Still, looking back, it’s hard to miss some mental detachment, hard not to sense some misplaced priorities. In mid-September, events here managed to jolt my mind into order.

On the afternoon of September 18th, pro-government troops opened fire on a crowd of unarmed demonstrators, leaving dozens dead. It was far from the first violent crackdown in Sana’a, but it was the first



The author, Adam Michael Baron, on assignment in Yemen.

after a long lull. Rushing to the mosque-turned clinic where the wounded were being treated and the bodies of the dead were kept, I struggled to maintain a front of composure. But the unmitigated horror of the scene pushed latent questions to the forefront of my mind, awaking fears that I

Laying in bed that night, struggling to go to sleep as the city around me devolved into chaos, I was stuck on the same question that I’d been stuck on so many times before: what am I doing here? What is my purpose?

was ultimately little more than a selfish voyeur, capitalizing on the suffering of the Yemeni people for my own benefit.

Interviewing some activists that evening, I finally unraveled, collapsing into an incoherent mess of tears and profanities for a solid five minutes. Somehow, I managed to pull myself together and file an article on the day’s events, barely getting it in before deadline.

Laying in bed that night, struggling to go to sleep as the city around me devolved into chaos, I was stuck on the same question that I’d been stuck on so many times before: what am I doing here? What is my purpose?

As my mother noted in a concerned email, if it was just a matter of amassing some bylines, collecting some interesting experiences and getting a point on my resume, my mission was accomplished. This seemed as good a time as any to hop on a plane and head home.

Paging through my notebooks in search of something that would point me in the right



‘Why did you come to Yemen?’ one asked, posing the inevitable question. ‘Why are you here?’

direction, I came some quick notes regarding a conversation I’d had earlier that year, which I’d summarized under the sarcastic heading of “Sheikh from Hamdan me the task of fixing Yemen-US relations.”

I was walking through Change Square, Sanaa’s sprawling anti-government encampment, when some guys in one tent, noticing a foreigner, enthusiastically waved me in. There were about 50 Yemenis—all members of a tribe based outside of Sanaa—crammed in that space, chewing khat and, as usual, talking politics.

My presence managed to shift the subject of the conversation elsewhere. “Why did you come to Yemen?” one asked, posing the inevitable question. “Why are you here?”

My response, truthful as it was, failed to satisfy most of them; they seemed pretty reluctant to believe that youthful indecision could drive an American to travel half-way around the world to a place like Yemen. A mid-level sheikh, silencing some murmurings, addressed me directly.

A More Important Reason

“You do realize how strange this is—an American sitting surrounded by 50 Yemeni tribesmen. I’m more than twice your age and I’ve never seen anything like it in my life. Its impossible that you weren’t brought here for a more important reason.” As he took a brief pause, I shook with fear that I was about to be accused me of being a spy.

“My son, you’ve been granted a unique opportunity to help our people and your people; to explain the truth about what’s

happening here and to build friendship and understanding between Yemenis and Americans,” he remarked, as I nodded in silent agreement.

“It’s an opportunity for you, but also a duty,” the sheikh concluded. “If you don’t do a good job, you’ll be failing all of us. Never forget that.”

I’m far from the first person to fall into journalism. It may have been—hell, it obviously was—a lucky break. But possibilities of self-advancement, ultimately, paled in importance to what had virtually landed in my lap. I was granted an opportunity to spread understanding of a deeply misunderstood place; an opportunity to tell stories that otherwise wouldn’t be told.

Pouring over my scribbled notes that night by flashlight in a blackout-darkened Sanaa, attempting to reckon with my place as a privileged outsider in a city descending into tragedy and turmoil, I belatedly realized that was all that mattered. Writing articles for publication was just the tool; those things were the goal.

The fulfillment of aspirations for “legitimacy” would come when I deserved it; feeling self-conscious or insecure would achieve nothing. My overarching purpose here was to do everything humanly possible to comprehend and contextualize what was taking place around me. My task would end when I ran out of worthwhile stories to tackle to pass on that understanding to readers abroad.

More than a year later, I’m still overwhelmed by a myriad of issues shaping Yemen, a country that’s long come to feel like a second home. In the end, I’ve yet to truly do them justice. Thus, regardless of whatever else I’ve achieved, my work continues. My mission remains unaccomplished.



Documenting Progress: Change takes time and real sacrifice



By Rana Sabbagh

Two years after the toppling of Tunisia's sclerotic dictator triggered sweeping political change across much of the autocratic region, people are asking if the so-called "Arab Spring" has been worth it.

Tunisia and Egypt have changed pro-Western leaders -- who allowed citizens to go about their business in relative peace and security as long as they did not get involved in politics -- with Islamists bent on imposing their conservative dictates on society.

Libya is in chaos with no effective government or police. Syria has plunged into a bloody civil war, and ultra-Orthodox Salafis and Jihadists are exploiting rifts within the armed opposition to infiltrate the country.

Yemen is trying to achieve national reconciliation. Bahrain's rulers continue to deal with unrest and religious strife.

And citizens in Jordan and Morocco are waiting to see if "top-to-bottom" measures imposed by their monarchs over the past two years are laying the ground for meaningful political change, beyond "crisis management" and cosmetics to appease the West.

The picture all around, then, is depressing and grim, to say the least, more so in the case of Egypt and Tunisia, where the new rulers have moved from the ranks of the oppressed to oppressors while economic indicators are moving from bad to worse.

But this is not surprising given the heightened expectations generated by all the media hype and public euphoria unmatched for 50 years or so in societies where poverty and unemployment among the majority restive youth has reached dangerous levels.

History over the past three centuries has shown that democracy development has been slow, violent and marked by frequent reversals. However, the outcome may be consolidated, as it was for example in the United

Change is not a free ride. It will take time and sacrifice.

Kingdom, or a democracy may face frequent reversals as it has faced in Argentina. Change is not a free ride. It will take time and sacrifice.

Democracy itself is influenced by various factors, including economic development, history, civil society and media, social equality, the presence of a sustainable middle class and human development indicators such as poverty, illiteracy and female empowerment.

These factors present the largest threat to consolidating transition in the Arab region after decades of authoritarian rule that crushed all progressive political movements, leaving citizens with two regressive choices: the Muslim Brotherhood or the

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Ruling Party. There is no third way out, at least for now.

Unlike in other regions, Arab revolutions were leaderless. New centrist and liberal political parties in the making have to put aside personal rivalries and develop platforms that appease the younger generation's demand for more accountable governance, equality and freedom. It is not a zero-sum game.

The largely state-run media in countries in transition are facing equally daunting challenges as most journalists grapple with turning into society's "watchdogs" from being officials' "lapdogs".

This is not unexpected, for Media and its practitioners are reflections of their overall society. They are facing painful teething problems.

In a changing region, officials and citizens are blaming the media for all the ills of the transition. The new rulers want to control the flow of information to win over the hearts and minds of the public. The men of the ancient regime are setting up newspapers, radio and television stations, to discredit the new presidents in an ugly media tug of war.

In all countries in transition, there have been increasing attacks on journalists despite greater media freedom. In most cases, assailants have gone unpunished.

The Middle East has shown ambiguous results in the 2013 Freedom House annual report. As the year 2012 drew to a close, events in the region dramatized two competing trends: demands for change pushed forward by popular democratic movements and an authoritarian response that combines intransigence and strategic adaptability, said the report.

Egypt's new president Mohammad Morsi, has gone back on his presidential election promise to guarantee media freedom and not to prevent "anyone from writing".

Complaints increase over 'insults'

There have been four times more complaints for "insults against the president" in the first 200 days of Morsi's administration than in all

the 30 years of Hosni Mubarak's rule. The most celebrated case is that of wildly popular Bassem Youssef, whose weekly political satire programme Al-Bernameg (The Show) has spared few public figures of merciless critique.

Youssef is currently on bail pending investigation into charges of insulting Morsi and Islam. The president has said complaints against Youssef have come from "citizens" who find his humour objectionable, and not from his office.

A few brave journalists seeking to make use of the recent changes complain they have to cut through a host of legal, societal, professional and political challenges before they can play the role of the "Fourth Estate" and start holding governments accountable. Though they have been aided strongly by forces

The Arab society has not reached a level yet where it is willing to submit to such painful forensic examinations of its failings, maybe because it lacks the much needed confidence and maturity due to the region's patriarchal structures of power and conservative population.

of globalization – by growing cell-phone use, Internet access, and open-borders – allowing journalists to network and collaborate locally and internationally as never before, the legal environment remains hostile.

It will take time before journalists can engage in tough reporting for the public interest, taking on corrupt politicians, organized crime, consumer fraud and corporate abuse.

The region still lacks a tradition of lively and competitive press – with a diversity of owners – and adequate public support for bold journalists willing to break social, political and religious taboos.

Arab states, with the exception of Jordan, Tunisia and Yemen, have not enacted laws guaranteeing the right to access public information (FoI). Even in Jordan, the first Arab country to issue an FoI law in 2007, journalists still complain the legislation has too

many snags that are being used by government bureaucrats to block information.

The Arab society has not reached a level yet where it is willing to submit to such painful forensic examinations of its failings, maybe because it lacks the much needed confidence and maturity due to the region's patriarchal structures of power and conservative population.

Education is another challenge. Those who want to become professional journalists, often start on the wrong foot. Arab media students graduate with little practical experience. They join existing outlets where most editors-in-chief do not believe in the value of professional training, and where an older generation of editors does not believe in passing on whatever expertise they have.

Part of the problem is that few editors-in-chief are career journalists. Rather, they are "state appointees" or "functionaries" that are parachuted into these institutions with the backing of the intelligence department and the government and a clear mission; loyal gate-keepers there to control the flow of information.

Most private and state-controlled media pay low salaries. This forces good reporters to look for jobs abroad or to work for a number of other employers to make ends meet. In the process, they lose focus and steam, producing more quantity than quality reports that often do not pass through a rigid built-in editorial system of fact-checking.

So, given all these challenges, has the so-called Arab Spring been worth it for those who have managed to force their kings into starting political change or have overthrow their dictators and are now in the throes of chaos and violence or are living the shadow of ultra-Orthodox Islamists? Is it worth for the Syrians who are paying with their lives in droves to free their country from the grip of the sectarian regime of Basher Al Assad?

The answer is: Yes. The process of change takes time. And the price will be high. For transition to stabilize, governments need to create national consensus, a vibrant economy that can put food on the table, engineer incremental social change, ensure rule of law, and a free and independent media.

But one thing is clear. The genie of fear is out of the Arab bottle. What Arabs accepted in the past is no longer possible or permissible. There is no way back to the past.



Last Word: **Warmed by fire of innovation and change**



By Marty Steffens

In 2004, I got the call from a former colleague who was an official in the US Embassy in Bahrain. The nation was about to embark on democratic elections. Would I come to train journalists in their role in covering the a fair electoral process?

That led to more grants from the Middle East Partnership Initiative, and training sessions in Kuwait and Qatar. Those sessions also led to other opportunities in countries that were not in the electoral process. I was able to train Jordanian journalists, as well as those from Iraq. I taught investigate reporting and feature writing. The thirst for training was clearly there.

In 2011, I was honored to be the first American woman to train Saudi women journalists in Jeddah. And in 2008, I mentored journalists from the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate in creating a first-ever Code of Ethics for that nation's journalists. And last month, I trained journalists and students from the Gaza Strip via videoconference.

In all those sessions, there was a palpable feeling among the journalists that they were a part of their country's destiny.

As journalists prepared to cover their country's elections, I listened to their problems and questions. I felt their excitement; I understood their nervousness. They had questions about fairness, ethics, dealing with rampant rumors and about exposure to libel.

The journalists wondered about being fair when their own publisher wanted them to "slant" the news in favor of one particular political party or politician.

And, of course, the journalists wanted to push issues of inequity that had festered in their nation for decades, such as rights for stateless people in Kuwait. But they also had questions about the role of women in covering the news.

One troubling aspect of journalism in the region is that many journalists are not citizens and ineligible to take part in the democratic process. Journalists throughout the region are imported workers from Lebanon, Tunis, India and Pakistan.

Consider for a moment: You have lived and worked as a journalist in your adopted land for a decade. Your children have not known any other home, even though they go "visit" your homeland once a year. You are on a visa, and will never be a citizen. So, what gives you, as the expatriate journalist, the independence to cover a potentially explosive situation as an election?

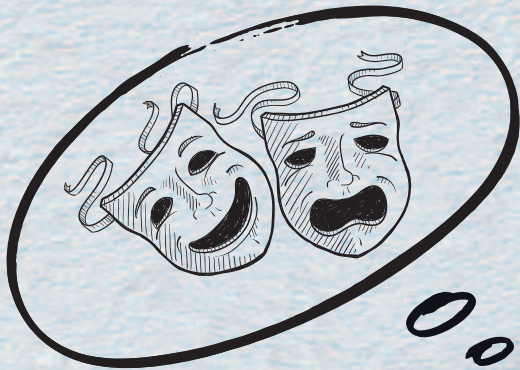
Of course, you'll not want to put your job and family at risk. An angry government could yank your visa as retribution.

I'm excited to return to Jordan for a third time and see the changes in the region. The journalists in these countries have been enlivened by change and emboldened by the speed of technology like Twitter and Facebook.

Americans can learn much by the evolution of journalism in these countries. The fire of change forges new ways of doing journalism. I look forward to feeling the inherent warmth of innovation and change.



Marty Steffens is a professor and endowed chair at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. She is leading a workshop on social media at the IPI World Congress in Amman. She has lectured in more than 25 countries and was a visiting professor at Moscow State University in Russia.



Mario, 30
engineer



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