

Military Resistance 9B6



An Egyptian anti-dictatorship protester rests on the track wheels of an Egyptian army tank near Tahrir Square, Cairo. 6 February 2011 Guardian News and Media:
Photograph: Hannibal Hanschke/dpa

**In Their Own Words:
Messages To The World Written By
Egyptians Who Will Not Be Silenced:
“These, Near Randomly Garnered From
Friends And Contacts In Egypt, Late
Yesterday And Early Today, Are An
Example Of The Passion, Defiance,
Courage, Hope”**

Power can no longer mask reality. No spin can obscure message deluge, traversing the globe, by the second.

Just few of these, near randomly garnered from friends and contacts in Egypt, late yesterday and early today, are an example of the passion, defiance, courage, hope – some will say naivety – in eloquent brevity.

They are written as sent:

February 4th, 2011 by Felicity Arbuthnot, Dissident Voice

Felicity Arbuthnot is a journalist with special knowledge of Iraq. Author, with Nikki van der Gaag, of Baghdad in the Great City series for World Almanac books, she has also been Senior Researcher for two Award winning documentaries on Iraq, John Pilger's: Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq, and Denis Halliday Returns, for RTE (Ireland.)

Civil disobedience is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity, and war, and cruelty.

— Howard Zinn (1922-2010)

Arguably never has a momentous event, its triumphs and blood soaked tragedies, been so instantly transmitted across the globe, panicking governments, bent on quelling it, inspiring millions with similar aspirations to Egypt's populus, into "can do" and unstinting support mode, with, literally, a vengeance.

The first act of Egypt's regime was to put an end to this extraordinary avalanche of people to people's freedom of information – and pull the plug.

It failed.

The internet generation is a young people's domain.

Like wildfire, instructions instantly flew around the net, informing those with contacts in Egypt, the prefixes which would circumvent the cut off.

"Anonymous", a "hacktivist" group, promptly brought down systems still working in Egypt – those of government offices.

Al Jazeera also reported: "After internet services were disconnected in Egypt, protesters were prevented from speaking to the world. But thanks to John Scott Railton, a Los Angeles based student, who took upon himself the task of uploading messages on micro blogging site twitter (information is still making its way online.) He started making calls and posting messages on a twitter account he created for the Egyptian protests."

Vodafone was reportedly pressured by the Egyptian government to send pro-Mubrak texts to all its subscribers in the country. Gathering by the global net traffic about this, it may well cost the company dearly.

The immediacy of information, and the reason for governmental panic (surely mirrored, especially in those great democratic bastions, Washington and Whitehall, already mooted limiting the internet – or worse – and the delusionally self- styled “only democracy in the Middle East”, Israel) can be seen by trawling the messages.

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Just few of these, near randomly garnered from friends and contacts in Egypt, late yesterday and early today, are an example of the passion, defiance, courage, hope – some will say naivety – in eloquent brevity.

They are written as sent:

“CAIRO Right now its all calm and the crowd is holding the square chanting WE WILL NOT LEAVE ... tomorrow is The Friday of Departure !!”

”We are not leaving – we are ready to die here – Please tell the world to pray for us.”

“We do not want help from obama or any one we will take our freedom by our self.”

“heavy gunfire heard in Tahrir Square.”

“Friend’s neighbor’s family just received corpse of their son, arrested a few days ago.”

“Israel has offered to place ‘all its capabilities” at the hands of General Omar Suleiman, the recently appointed Vice President of Egypt, for the ‘protection of the regime of Egypt.’ Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu suggested intelligence personnel undertaking specialist operations to bring an end to demonstrations.”

“Man with a camera wearing a blue “Press” vest, being beaten on the street. The army stepped in and fire shots in air to disperse the crowd, the man was led away.”

“Two Al Jazeera reporters have just been attacked on their way from airport to central Cairo – more updates soon.”

“Shahira Amin resigned from Nile TV because of their coverage of the protests – she spoke live to Al Jazeera. She was the deputy head of the station.”

“Come what may, I am here with the people.... I am not scared.” Shahira Amin (Egyptian TV reporter)–Deputy head of NILE TV station resigned in protest of the biased pro-govt reporting. She is now in Tahrir square. She said: “I refuse to be part of the propaganda machine.”

"... a British freelance journalist in Cairo, says foreigners have had to go into hiding: 'Anyone who is a journalist has been attacked, and if you're a foreigner the same problem is happening. I have now had to move into hiding, keeping away from windows, keeping away from any of the action and reducing my visibility online.'"

"From Jack (who is cautious reporter): 'Al Arabiya reporting from Cairo that a foreign journalist has been beaten to death. I am not going out there to confirm it.'"

"this is people's power. This democracy from below. This is the most beautiful thing i have ever seen in my life."

"there is now replacement for the front teams that finished defending the frontline."

"the injured treated here by volunteering doctors. We took 6 oct bridge too. Thugs retreating .."

"... at Abdel Moneim Riyadh sq. This is the frontline now. A mini clinic set up by the Barricades."

"Protesters and army watched as a man stood on the bridge, got paid, got out rifle, shot a protester in the head and walked away."

"Urgent, urgent, urgent. Democracy activists need medicines, first aid, water, food, direct access to media, please advertise and demand action, not empty words. Thank you." By-pass numbers for circumventing the block were posted back again, instantly.

"Please spare a thought for the people of Gaza. The border has been closed now for five days."

"Tomorrow's demonstrations against the Israeli Separation Wall in the occupied West Bank villages of Bil'in, Ni'lin, Nabi Saleh and Al-Ma'sara will be in solidarity with the Egyptian people. Those demonstrations usually take place after Friday prayers."

"Mubarak armed goons have kidnapped Aljazeera's producer, Mysa khalaf al-tawil (daughter of dear friend Kamal). Mysa just arrived in Cairo two days ago to help in the coverage for the channel. I urge all of you if you can help to obtain her release or to provide information that could help in locating her. Please spread the message and inform me if you learn anything. Add this to the list of crimes for the Mubarak regime. It is personal now."

"By the way the energetic and hard-working Aljazeera's producer, Mysa Khalaf Al-Tawil is an American citizen. Will the US government work hard to obtain her release? If she was kidnapped by Revolutionary Guards in Iran, the US government would have ordered a bombing campaign against Iran by now." 1

"Christians protecting Muslims in prayer during protests."

"Gunfire in Tahrir Square."

"Many Judges involved in demonstration .."

“Of the charge by arms wielding “opposition” (later found to have police identity cards on them) who streamed through the Square on horses and camels:”

“Those horse and camel cavalry will never stop the power of the people. Sound of the people is God sound.”

“I swear to God there are more than twenty people dead.”

Tweeted: “soldier ostensibly crying, being comforted by a demonstrator who has a stethoscope round his neck.” There are several, so far, non-verifiable reports, that this is the young soldier so conflicted between loyalty to the people and his profession that he sat atop his tank and put his gun in his mouth, but was persuaded to instead, jump down.

“URGENT, EGYPT: URGENT help needed for a 1st aid station by Tahrir Square-pass to anyone you know in Cairo who can help-Mohamed Mahmod at Bab El Louq near Tahrir is in URGENT need of Alcohol, Betadine (antiseptic), Water (mineral), Plastic gloves, garbage gloves, plastic dishes, cotton, any old tshirts, anti-biotics, painkillers, Shaash (gauze). If you have contacts please call or text +2 012-240-6441”

“Mubarak supporters are storming Cairo hotels looking for journalists.”

“Between 8 and 12 human rights lawyers arrested at Hisham Mubarak Law Centre.”

“Sandmonkey” is possibly Egypt’s most famous blogger : “Breaking news: @Sandmonkey arrested by state security. They called his father & claimed he has revolution leaflets #Egypt.”

“want to see ‘the land of the free and the home of the brave’? Go to Egypt. 2 million already at Tahrir Square – knowing that what happened yesterday (of knives and bullets ...) can happen again”

“Imam talked about Christ and Mohammed, their teachings and relating it to oppression. I came across two nuns.”

“Eslam Bakir born March 1, 1989 degree: BA of Arts in European Culture, 2010 killed January 25, 2011 while demonstrating for his people’s freedom Rest in peace, brave young man.”

(25th January was Day One of the extraordinary, spontaneous, resistance.)

“Message to PJ Crowley: . @PJCrowley US can prevent a massacre by egyptian army which depends solely on US for funds – pull funding now or US will be responsible.” (PJ Crowley: Assistant Secretary, US Bureau of Public Affairs.)

“Rabbi Michael Lerner: ‘We hope that Egyptians will hear the news that they have strong support from many in the Jewish world. We are not waffling like Obama – we want the overthrow of Mubarak, the freeing of all political prisoners, the redistribution of wealth in a fair way, trials for those who perpetrated torture and other forms of injustice, and the democratisation of all aspects of Egyptian life.’”

Early Friday, the: “Day of Departure”: “Tahrir Square has free food and drinks, a bandstand with live music, dedicated medical staff and a sense of community which Mubarak’s opponents say makes them proud of their country for the first time in decades.”

“Actually one of the mothers just kicked the ass of one of the guys of tried to stop us from joining the protests!!”

” ‘The US won’t dictate a foreign country’s policy.’ Damn, don’t let the people of Iraq, Afghanistan & Pakistan hear that #Egypt.”

On Thursday, that canny, journalistic, Middle East political barometer, Robert Fisk, referred to Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak not as President, but “President.” The writing, seemingly, is at least visible on Cairo’s walls, ancient and modern.

The man he dubbed Lord Blair of Kut Al Amara (site of the spectacular British defeat in Iraq in 1916) lurking as “Middle East Peace Envoy”, in Jerusalem, has not failed in his seemingly, near medically delusional assessments, now of Egypt’s murderous leader. He is, declared Blair: “Immensely courageous and a force for good.”

“An American correspondent: ‘While Egypt burns, our “president” makes us “proud” This morning on air talking about prayer and the nature of Christianity – all while anxiously awaiting the arrival of Jennifer Lopez and hubbie to watch the Super Bowl with him. Words fail.’ ”

One can only echo Fisk, again, who watching the “pro-Mubarak demonstrators”, one with bright red eyes and all seemingly motivated by something more than fresh air: “What are they on?”

MORE:

**Eyewitness Report From Tahrir Square:
“After Two Days Of Systematic Violence Against The Anti-Mubarak Protestors, People Turned Out In The Hundreds Of Thousands Today, And It Turned The Balance Back Again In The Favor Of The Demonstrators”**

“A Movement That Has Emerged In A Most Explosive Fashion And Is Present In Every Egyptian Town And City”

One last story from today: When Mubarak spoke on television on Tuesday night and said that he wouldn't run for re-election, he vowed that he was going to die on Egypt's soil.

One Socialist Worker reporter quipped at the time, "We should tell him that the soil is ready for him."

I translated that today at Tahrir Square, and I can report that it was greeted with wild applause and cheers--it's another part of the ongoing Egyptian revolution.

February 4, 2011 By Ahmed Shawki, Editor, International Socialist Review.
Transcription for Socialist Worker newspaper by Matthew Beamesderfer.

ANTI-MUBARAK demonstrators gathered in the hundreds of thousands on Friday, in Cairo's Tahrir Square, in Alexandria and in cities and towns across the country for a new day of mass protest against the regime.

In my estimation, the Tahrir Square demonstration was even bigger today than it was last Tuesday, when across Egypt, between 6 million and 8 million people protested, according to estimates.

As the hour for curfew came and went tonight, thousands of people were still arriving to demonstrate.

In Alexandria, an estimated 1 million people also turned out.

Everywhere, people were united around the slogan that Mubarak must go now.

In Tahrir Square, there was an echo of the old civil rights slogan in the U.S. "We shall not be moved"--hundreds of thousands of people were chanting, "He should go! We will not move."

Then there was my favorite slogan of the day: "Ya Mubarak, sahi el noum, inaharda akher youm!" It sounds better in Arabic because it rhymes, but it translates roughly into English as: "Wakey, wakey, Mubarak, today is the last day!"

To understand the importance of today's massive turnout, you only have to remember what happened on Wednesday and Thursday, which can only be described as the unleashing of the hounds of hell--thugs of the regime sent out in a coordinated assault on the demonstrators at Tahrir Square and the whole of the pro-democracy movement.

The scale of violence was seen by millions of people around the world. They threw rocks and Molotov cocktails, and they wielded knives and all kinds of other weapons in an attempt to intimidate, injure and drive out the demonstrators from Tahrir Square.

They also made a particular point to beat up journalists and drive them out of the square, and they raided hotels where news organizations like Al Jazeera and CNN were headquartered, trashing their operations. They also attempted to incite fear against foreigners--anything that would drive a wedge among the demonstrators and that would intimidate people from coming out on Friday.

The violence was so bad that Omar Suleiman--the newly appointed vice president, whose previous position was head of the army intelligence services, someone who must have overseen the arrest and torture of thousands in that post--came on television last night to deny any involvement on the part of the National Democratic Party, Mubarak's ruling party.

Suleiman claimed that no one had any idea who organized the onslaught--despite the fact that several of the thugs were captured, and their police or government employment IDs were shown in the media. So the hollowness of his claims weren't lost on the Egyptian people.

There was even a moment of bizarre other-worldliness when Suleiman--this organizer of repression and torture--appealed for prisoners, who according to many reports had been released from jail by the regime's thugs to help in the violence, to show up at the prisons again and turn themselves in.

That's the context of today's demonstrations--after two days of systematic violence against the anti-Mubarak protestors, people turned out in the hundreds of thousands today, and it turned the balance back again in the favor of the demonstrators.

AS IN every revolutionary situation, there has been a dramatic ebb and flow to the events in Egypt.

The demonstrations began on January 25--ironically, on "Police Day," which was previously a celebration of the regime's strength. On that first day, the movement broke through a kind of psychological barrier by moving into the streets in huge numbers, something that didn't happen under the Egyptian police state.

The demonstrations continued through last Friday, when there were huge battles with the police that pushed the security forces off the streets.

The government's response was to deploy the army, which is seen as "above politics"--but to allow Cairo to descend into a kind of chaos, with gangs of thugs roaming through neighborhoods, many of them organized by the regime.

The mass of Egyptians responded to this by organizing neighborhood defense committees to protect the people.

Last Tuesday, the demonstrations were the biggest yet. Mubarak spoke on television that night, declaring that he wouldn't run for re-election, but had no intention of stepping down.

The thugs were unleashed the next day to show what Mubarak had in mind as a transition.

But Friday represents a new stage following the two days of violence that came before it.

In the preceding two days, not only was the anti-Mubarak demonstration in Tahrir maintained--that is, the heart of the uprising and its best-known expression was defended from forces determined to drive the protesters out--but the manner of its defense produced a response in support of it that could be seen throughout the day today.

Early on Friday morning, there were literally thousands of people lined up to go into the square.

The army had taken up positions after the two days of sustained violence, not wanting to appear helpless, but what was phenomenal was that it wasn't the army guarding the entrances, but lines and lines of stewards from the demonstration.

They searched people as they came in, making sure no one had the kind of weapons that the pro-government gangs had used against them.

I've never been frisked so often, and with as many apologies for being frisked.

The army is continuing to maintain its role as a force supposedly above politics. Unlike the last two days of uncontrolled violence against the protesters, which the army didn't intervene decisively to stop, today, it helped create a buffer zone around Tahrir Square. So once the attack on Tahrir Square failed, there was barbed wire and tanks in all the pivotal positions around Cairo.

I got to Tahrir in the morning, before the end of prayers, when even larger numbers came to the demonstration.

But already, the crowd numbered half a million, if not more, by my estimate.

Once inside Tahrir, you could see a level of organization and solidarity unlike anything I've seen before.

The first thing that struck me was the makeshift clinics set up all over the place, with dozens and dozens of nurses and doctors--many of whom said they were unemployed--stitching up people's legs or arms or faces. These injuries were the result of the pro-government thugs--there were dozens of people walking around who had been patched up.

In addition to that, people had brought medical supplies with them. Others were circulating through the square with bags of bread, with water, with candy.

One of the aims of the pro-Mubarak forces had been to drive out all journalists--they focused in particular on foreign journalists to try to raise anger at a supposed foreign plot against Egypt. So it was good to see that journalists were operating freely and quite welcome in the crowd.

Probably the most significant sign of the health of the protest was the continued political discussion and debate within the square.

I also saw dozens and dozens of people who were calling friends and relatives, and encouraging them to come to the square--trying to convince them of the fallacy of the government's claims about chaos and violence.

ACCORDING TO press reports, the U.S. government is lobbying hard to get officials around Mubarak to pressure him to step down.

The U.S. maneuvers around this question must, as always, be taken with a grain of salt. No one will say it in the mainstream media, but Obama could have held a press conference in which he simply declared that aid to Egypt is cut off, that this kind of violence will not be tolerated, and that the U.S. now stands squarely with the protesters.

But of course, he won't say that because that's not how diplomacy works. And the reason it doesn't work that way is you can't send that signal about a dictator the U.S. has been supporting for 30 years.

Not because Mubarak isn't finished, but because of how his downfall on those terms would affect other relationships and the whole Middle East.

So the U.S. is scrambling to find an alternative, and there are plenty of options.

Amr Moussa, the head of the Arab League, showed up to the demonstration today to be among the protesters. He's clearly thrown his hat in the ring to be the next president. There's also Mohamed ElBaradai. There's the Muslim Brotherhood. Even the current defense minister, Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, made the rounds through Tahrir Square today, under protection of soldiers, without much opposition to him.

But there are still plenty of difficulties and contradictions for the U.S. and for the rulers in Egypt, because there are significant problems from trying to gently step back from a military dictatorship.

Egypt is still that, in many respects.

I should add that a couple offices of human rights and labor organizations were raided yesterday and closed down. It's still very gingerly that people produce any public literature that's against the regime.

So it was quite an exercise, for example, to get leaflets into Tahrir Square today.

One problem for the U.S. is that Omar Suleiman figures prominently in their plans for a post-Mubarak transition. Many of the demonstrators were dismayed by Suleiman's speech last night.

But of course, most know the history of the man--that he was involved integrally in the repression that took place under Mubarak's regime.

In general, most demonstrators still agree that their central demand is for the removal of Mubarak. That's not to say that the rest of the regime should get off scot-free. But Mubarak's downfall is what the movement has focused on so far, and when that's accomplished, that significant victory will then open the process.

My own view is that it's virtually impossible to imagine the departure of Mubarak without the cabinet and the government he's put into place then becoming the central question for the movement. That's the underlying dynamic.

Mubarak is the lightning rod that has brought all the forces together. Those forces don't necessarily agree on the same outcome, but they're at least agreed on the central necessity of seeing him go, and that will become the practical measure of what's been accomplished.

ONE OF the most interesting conversations I heard was one man trying to explain on the phone to someone the profoundly democratic thrust of the protests.

He said to the person he was talking to that people see demonstrators chanting "Allah Akbar," and they conclude these protests must be organized by the Muslim Brotherhood. Then they see many famous actors and musicians showing up to Tahrir Square today, and they think it's just a middle-class protest of the intelligentsia.

But it's not the Muslim Brotherhood behind all this. It's not the middle class. It's not, as this man went on to say, only socialists and Marxists talking about workers' rights, and it's not people talking about just women's rights.

This is really a protest of all Egypt united in a profound movement for democracy.

I think that's the first thing that has to be grasped about the uprising--that this is a movement that seeks fundamental democratic rights. As a friend of mine put it a few days ago, it's the 1789 of Egypt--similar to the opening of the French Revolution in that way.

I think the second aspect that became certain today is that this is no longer the Egypt that existed prior to January 25--and there's no turning back, however much violence the regime tries to organize.

A tipping point has been reached in terms of the willingness of masses of people to put themselves on the line and defy the existing order, and that's a genie that will be very difficult to put back in the bottle.

The third aspect apparent today was, as I described earlier, the enormous self-organization of the movement in the face of horrendous violence and repression--most especially, the attacks that took place over the past few days.

The fourth point is broader--about what happens next.

You now have a movement that has emerged in a most explosive fashion and is present in every Egyptian town and city, which is the product of many, many years of injustice, including around economic questions of unemployment and dispossession.

But it's also an expression of the rise of a number of social struggles in Egypt, including the strikes of the last few years and the riots over rising food prices.

Right now, the movement is united around the political aim of getting rid of Hosni Mubarak.

But hopefully, once Mubarak is unseated, the political questions will then mesh with social questions that still remain unresolved.

If that happens, there will be a really explosive mix of political and social issues that represents the possibility of political and social revolution.

I think that's the key to understanding why Mubarak hasn't left yet.

It's not just a question of his own stubbornness, but how the regime can continue and the status quo can be maintained, not just for the Egyptian elite, but for Israel, the U.S., its European allies and so on.

Their interest is in preventing this process from triggering an even greater change.

That's what these demonstrations are heralding, and we hope it's a process that will continue.

One last story from today: When Mubarak spoke on television on Tuesday night and said that he wouldn't run for re-election, he vowed that he was going to die on Egypt's soil.

One Socialist Worker reporter quipped at the time, "We should tell him that the soil is ready for him."

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MORE:

Egypt Christians, Muslims Unite For Revolution In Tahrir Square:

“Christians Started Their Sunday Mass In Cairo’s Tahrir Square As Muslim Protesters Formed A Ring Around Them To Protect Them During The Service”

“Photos Taken During The Prayers Showed Christians Forming A Ring Around Their Fellow Muslims To Protect Them During Prayers”



Egyptian Muslims kneel to pray in Tahrir Square, While Christians link arms to protect them.

[Thanks to Felicity Arbuthnot, and Mark Shapiro, Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in.]

06 February 2011 OnIslam & News Agencies [Excerpts]

CAIRO – Joining hands against the regime of Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak, Egyptian Muslim and Christian protestors shared funeral prayers in Tahrir square on Sunday, February 6, for the victims of brutal security crackdowns on demonstrations.

“Nothing can describe our feelings,” Michael Muneer, a Christian activist and chairman of the civil organization “Hand In hand for Egypt”, told Aljazeera satellite channel.

“Christians pray and Muslims defend them. It is a touching scene.”

In the course of what Egyptian protestors called the “Week of Resistance,” protestors took to the streets for a “million march” in the 13th day called “Sunday of Martyrs” as ripples of normalcy slowly swept across Egypt.

Protestors gathered for afternoon prayer after which they prayed funeral prayers in absentia for those killed during the protests, estimated by more than 300.

By one o’clock PM (CLT), Christians started their Sunday Mass in Cairo’s Tahrir Square as Muslim protestors formed a ring around them to protect them during the service.

Chanting “one hand,” they appeared holding the Holy Quran and the Cross as Christians and Muslims crossed their hands.

Since the eruption of the protests, no single attack was reported on any church in Egypt, though all police forces withdrew from their locations in front of churches.

Last Friday, more than a million Muslims gathered for Friday Prayer in Tahrir Square in a day dubbed as the “Friday of Departure.”

Photos taken during the prayers showed Christians forming a ring around their fellow Muslims to protect them during prayers.

Stressing their unity with Muslims against Mubarak’s regime, Christians vowed that they will not leave Tahrir square until the aging leader quits.

“Today there is no distinctions between Muslims and Christians,” Muneer told Al-Jazeera.

“We have forgotten everything and look for a brighter future for Egypt.”

Muneer accused Mubarak’s regime of oppressing Christians.

“It was Mubarak’s regime that invented sectarianism,” Muneer added.

“Christians are not against Muslims, they are against the regime.”

According to the CIA World Fact Book, Muslims make up 90 percent of the country’s 80 million people, Copts 9 and other Christians 1 percent.

“We will continue our sit-in in Tahrir square till this tyrannical regime collapses,” said Father Fawzy Khalil of the Orthodox Church, who led the Mass.

“We will be patient waiting for the shining of the sun of the freedom.”



Protesters against the Mubarak regime hold a Christian coptic cross and copies of the Muslim Qur'an together as they take part in 'Sunday of the martyrs' in Cairo, Egypt. 6 February 2011 Guardian News and Media: Photograph: Amel Pain/EPA

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Afghanistan, Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the wars, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 888.711.2550

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

“Clamor For Political Change Across The Arab World Has Reached Iraq” “Protests Against Poor Government Services Have Broken Out” “Officials Decided To Slash Their Pay After Protests In The Capital And The Provinces Against Poor Services And Corruption”

February 6, 2011 By Salar Jaff and Raheem Salman, Los Angeles Times [Excerpts]

Reporting from Baghdad — Clamor for political change across the Arab world has reached Iraq, where protests against poor government services have broken out in the capital and other cities.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Nouri Maliki vowed not to run for a third term, a day after he announced that he would cut his pay in half. Other officials agreed to decrease their salaries in a bid to stave off the kind of unrest erupting elsewhere in the region.

Some Iraqi officials earn tens of thousands of dollars a month and receive generous perks.

One former official estimated that the president, prime minister and speaker of parliament earn between \$500,000 and \$700,000 a year. In comparison, President Obama’s salary is \$400,000.

On Friday, Maliki ordered the prime minister’s salary to be decreased by 50% and the difference returned to the Iraqi state budget starting this month.

A day later, he announced that he would not run for a third term even though he is not barred from doing so by law.

Salaries of elected officials eat up as much as 20% of the Iraqi budget’s operational expenses.

An official inside the Iraqi parliament, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said officials decided to slash their pay after protests in the capital and the provinces against poor services and corruption.

Iraqis have also launched a campaign on Facebook and Twitter calling for cutting salaries.

Some said the moves so far were little more than a publicity stunt.

"The problem is not with their salaries," said Sabah Saadi, former chief of parliament's integrity commission. "The problem is with the social welfare and the additional allowances they are getting."

He said that salary reductions were a superficial attempt to placate Iraqis without addressing public concerns.

"We saw the demonstrations in some cities in Iraq yesterday," he said. "Nobody mentioned the problem of salaries."

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Family Gathers In San Antonio To Mourn GI



Spc. Omar Soltero: "He wanted to fight the bad guys," his father said. Photo: Courtesy Photo

February 2, 2011 By John W. Gonzalez, Express-News

A San Antonio family is mourning the loss of a son who was killed in combat in Afghanistan.

Relatives of Army Spc. Omar Soltero, 28, were coping Tuesday with the notification that Soltero died Monday from wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit with a roadside bomb in Wardak province in central Afghanistan.

The 10th Mountain Division soldier, based at Fort Polk, La., was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team.

“From when he was a little kid, he said when he turned 18 he wanted to join. He wanted to fight the bad guys,” said his father, Gustavo Soltero.

He said his son, one of four children, enlisted about 10 years ago and the family relocated here from California eight years ago.

The family’s notification of the death “was like in the movies,” Soltero said. “When they arrived to tell us, all you have to do is look at them and you know.”

“He loved his country. That’s about all there is to say,” the father said as relatives from Texas, California and Mexico began gathering at the family’s Northeast Side home.

He added that his son was in a relationship with a female soldier and they had two children.

His son sometimes mentioned the dangers he faced in Afghanistan, “but he still wanted to be there,” Soltero said.

“I never imagined this,” the father said.

Omar Soltero was the 18th casualty in Afghanistan — and the first in 2011 — to call San Antonio home.

Soldier From 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment Killed In Nad-E Ali

5 Feb 11 Ministry of Defence

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must announce that a soldier from 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment was killed in Afghanistan on Saturday 5th February 2011.

Spokesman for Task Force Helmand, Lieutenant Colonel David Eastman, said:

"Unfortunately I must announce the sad loss of a soldier from 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment this morning. The soldier was part of on-going operations to secure an area in the north of Nad-e Ali when he was hit by an improvised explosive device.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

“If Mubarak Is Cut Off From Reality, Binyamin Netanyahu Is No Less”

“How I Would Feel If I Were A 15 Year-Old Boy In Alexandria, Amman Or Aleppo, Seeing My Leaders Behave Like Abject Slaves Of The Americans And The Israelis, While Oppressing And Despoiling Their Own Subjects”

“At That Age, I Myself Joined A Terrorist Organization”

“Why Would An Arab Boy Be Different?”

05/02/11 Uri Avnery's Column, Gush Shalom

WE ARE in the middle of a geological event. An earthquake of epoch-making dimensions is changing the landscape of our region. Mountains turn into valleys, islands emerge from the sea, volcanoes cover the land with lava.

People are afraid of change. When it happens, they tend to deny, ignore, pretend that nothing really important is happening.

Israelis are no exception.

While in neighboring Egypt earth-shattering events were taking place, Israel was absorbed with a scandal in the army high command. The Minister of Defense abhors the incumbent Chief of Staff and makes no secret of it. The presumptive new chief was exposed as a liar and his appointment canceled. These were the headlines.

But what is happening now in Egypt will change our lives.

AS USUAL, nobody foresaw it.

The much-feted Mossad was taken by surprise, as was the CIA and all the other celebrated services of this kind.

Yet there should have been no surprise at all - except about the incredible force of the eruption.

In the last few years, we have mentioned many times in this column that all over the Arab world, multitudes of young people are growing up with a profound contempt for their leaders, and that sooner or later this will lead to an uprising. These were not prophesies, but rather a sober analysis of probabilities.

The turmoil in Egypt was caused by economic factors: the rising cost of living, the poverty, the unemployment, the hopelessness of the educated young.

But let there be no mistake: the underlying causes are far more profound. They can be summed up in one word: Palestine.

In Arab culture, nothing is more important than honor. People can suffer deprivation, but they will not stand humiliation.

Yet what every young Arab from Morocco to Oman saw daily was his leaders humiliating themselves, forsaking their Palestinian brothers in order to gain favor and money from America, collaborating with the Israeli occupation, cringing before the new colonizers.

This was deeply humiliating for young people brought up on the achievements of Arab culture in times gone by and the glories of the early Caliphs.

Nowhere was this loss of honor more obvious than in Egypt, which openly collaborated with the Israeli leadership in imposing the shameful blockade on the Gaza Strip, condemning 1.5 million Arabs to malnutrition and worse. It was never just an Israeli blockade, but an Israeli-Egyptian one, lubricated by 1.5 billion US dollars every year.

I have reflected many times – out loud – how I would feel if I were a 15 year-old boy in Alexandria, Amman or Aleppo, seeing my leaders behave like abject slaves of the Americans and the Israelis, while oppressing and despoiling their own subjects.

At that age, I myself joined a terrorist organization.

Why would an Arab boy be different?

A dictator may be tolerated when he reflects national dignity. But a dictator who expresses national shame is a tree without roots – any strong wind can blow him over.

For me, the only question was where in the Arab world it would start. Egypt – like Tunisia – was low on my list.

Yet here it is – the great Arab revolution taking place in Egypt.

THIS IS a wonder in itself. If Tunisia was a small wonder, this is a huge one.

I love the Egyptian people. True, one cannot really like 88 million individuals, but one can certainly like one people more than another. In this respect, one is allowed to generalize.

The Egyptians you meet in the streets, in the homes of the intellectual elite and in the alleys of the poorest of the poor, are an incredibly patient lot. They are endowed with an irrepressible sense of humor. They are also immensely proud of the country and its 8000 years of history.

For an Israeli, used to his aggressive compatriots, the almost complete lack of aggressiveness of the Egyptians is astonishing. I vividly remember one particular scene: I was in a taxi in Cairo when it collided with another. Both drivers leapt out and started to curse each other in blood-curling terms. And then quite suddenly, both of them stopped shouting and burst into laughter.

A Westerner coming to Egypt either loves it or hates it. The moment you set your foot on Egyptian soil, time loses its tyranny. Everything becomes less urgent, everything is muddled, yet in a miraculous way things sort themselves out. Patience seems boundless.

This may mislead a dictator. Because patience can end suddenly.

It's like a faulty dam on a river. The water rises behind the dam, imperceptibly slowly and silently – but if it reaches a critical level, the dam will burst, sweeping everything before it.

MY OWN first meeting with Egypt was intoxicating. After Anwar Sadat's unprecedented visit to Jerusalem, I rushed to Cairo. I had no visa. I shall never forget the moment I presented my Israeli passport to the stout official at the airport. He leafed through it, becoming more and more bewildered – and then he raised his head with a wide smile and said "marhaba", welcome. At the time we were the only three Israelis in the huge city, and we were feted like kings, almost expecting at any moment to be lifted onto people's shoulders. Peace was in the air, and the masses of Egypt loved it.

It took no more than a few months for this to change profoundly. Sadat hoped – sincerely, I believe – that he was also bringing deliverance to the Palestinians. Under intense pressure from Menachem Begin and Jimmy Carter, he agreed to a vague wording.

Soon enough he learned that Begin did not dream of fulfilling this obligation. For Begin, the peace agreement with Egypt was a separate peace to enable him to intensify the war against the Palestinians.

The Egyptians – starting with the cultural elite and filtering down to the masses – never forgave this. They felt deceived.

There may not be much love for the Palestinians – but betraying a poor relative is shameful in Arab tradition.

Seeing Hosni Mubarak collaborating with this betrayal led many Egyptians to despise him.

This contempt lies beneath everything that happened this week. Consciously or unconsciously, the millions who are shouting “Mubarak Go Away” echo this contempt.

IN EVERY revolution there is the “Yeltsin Moment”.

The columns of tanks are sent into the capital to reinstate the dictatorship.

At the critical moment, the masses confront the soldiers. If the soldiers refuse to shoot, the game is over.

Yeltsin climbed on the tank, EIBaradei addressed the masses in al Tahrir Square. That is the moment a prudent dictator flees abroad, as did the Shah and now the Tunisian boss.

Then there is the “Berlin Moment”, when a regime crumbles and nobody in power knows what to do, and only the anonymous masses seem to know exactly what they want: they wanted the Wall to fall.

And there is the “Ceausescu moment”. The dictator stands on the balcony addressing the crowd, when suddenly from below a chorus of “Down With The Tyrant!” swells up.

For a moment, the dictator is speechless, moving his lips noiselessly, then he disappears. This, in a way, happened to Mubarak, making a ridiculous speech and trying in vain to stem the tide.

IF MUBARAK is cut off from reality, Binyamin Netanyahu is no less.

He and his colleagues seem unable to grasp the fateful meaning of these events for Israel.

When Egypt moves, the Arab world follows.

Whatever transpires in the immediate future in Egypt – democracy or an army dictatorship - It is only a matter of (a short) time before the dictators fall all over the Arab world, and the masses will shape a new reality, without the generals.

Everything the Israeli leadership has done in the last 44 years of occupation or 63 years of its existence is becoming obsolete.

We are facing a new reality. We can ignore it – insisting that we are “a villa in the jungle”, as Ehud Barak famously put it – or find our proper place in the new reality.

Peace with the Palestinians is no longer a luxury. It is an absolute necessity. Peace now, peace quickly.

Peace with the Palestinians, and then peace with the democratic masses all over the Arab world, peace with the reasonable Islamic forces (like Hamas and the Muslim Brothers, who are quite different from al Qaeda), peace with the leaders who are about to emerge in Egypt and everywhere.

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."]

Troops Invited:

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DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**Awal Gul, Afghan Citizen And
Guantanamo Detainee, A Father
Of 18 Children, Dead At 48:
Never Tried Or Charged With
Anything, He Was Kept In A Cage
By U.S. Imperial Regime Torturers
For More Than 9 Years:
"The U.S. Government's Detention
Policy Amounts To Imposing Life
Sentences On People Without**

Bothering To Prove They Did Anything Wrong” “Had Gul Survived, The Obama Administration Would Have Sought To Keep Him Imprisoned Indefinitely Without Any Pretense Of Charging Him With A Crime”

All of this finds a nice symbolic parallel in the Obama administration's apparent efforts to install Omar Suleiman as interim Egyptian leader; Suleiman is not only steadfastly pro-American and pro-Israeli, but was long the U.S.'s point man for renditions and the severe torture which accompanied it.

Feb 4, 2011 By Glenn Greenwald, Salon.com

A 48-year-old Afghan citizen and Guantanamo detainee, Awal Gul, died on Tuesday of an apparent heart attack. Gul, a father of 18 children, had been kept in a cage by the U.S. for more than 9 years -- since late 2001 when he was abducted in Afghanistan -- without ever having been charged with a crime.

While the U.S. claims he was a Taliban commander, Gul has long insisted that he quit the Taliban a year before the 9/11 attack because, as his lawyer put it, "he was disgusted by the Taliban's growing penchant for corruption and abuse."

His death means those conflicting claims will never be resolved; said his lawyer: "it is shame that the government will finally fly him home not in handcuffs and a hood, but in a casket."

This episode illustrates that the U.S. Government's detention policy -- still -- amounts to imposing life sentences on people without bothering to prove they did anything wrong.

This episode also demonstrates the absurdity of those who claim that President Obama has been oh-so-eagerly trying to close Guantanamo only to be thwarted by a recalcitrant Congress.

The Obama administration has sought to "close" the camp only in the most meaningless sense of that word: by moving its defining injustice -- indefinite, due-process-free detention -- a few thousand miles north onto U.S. soil.

But the crux of the Guantanamo travesty -- indefinite detention -- is something the Obama administration has long planned to preserve, and that has nothing to do with what Congress has or has not done.

Indeed, Gul was one of the 50 detainees designated by Obama for that repressive measure.

Thus, had Gul survived, the Obama administration would have sought to keep him imprisoned indefinitely without any pretense of charging him with a crime -- neither in a military commission nor a real court.

Instead, they would have simply continued the Bush/Cheney policy of imprisoning him indefinitely without any charges.

There's one other aspect of this episode that warrants attention.

In its 2008 *Boumediene* decision, the Supreme Court struck down the provision of the Military Commissions Act which denied habeas corpus review to all detainees, and ruled that Guantanamo detainees at least have the right to a one-time review by a federal court as to whether there is credible evidence to justify their detention (a far less rigorous standard than the one that applies if they're charged with a crime and the state has to prove their guilt beyond a reasonable doubt).

Gul had filed a habeas petition and it was fully argued before a federal court back in March -- 11 months ago.

The federal judge never got around to issuing a ruling.

This happens quite frequently in our court system: judges simply fail to act within anything resembling a reasonable period of time.

Gul was imprisoned for 8 years without a shred of due process (outside of internal Bush Pentagon "administrative reviews") and finally had his Constitutional right to obtain habeas review affirmed by the Supreme Court in 2008.

His habeas petition was fully submitted and orally argued almost a full year ago, yet even in the face of his prolonged, due-process-free imprisonment, the federal judge presiding over the case just never bothered to rule on his claims. There's a well-known legal maxim that "justice delayed is justice denied," but this goes well beyond merely violating that.

Taking almost a full year -- at least -- to decide a habeas petition for someone who is languishing in indefinite detention for their ninth year is simply inexcusable.

Gul's death -- and what turned out to be his due-process-free life sentence -- is an important reminder of the heinous detention policies of the U.S.: not as a matter of the Bush/Cheney past, but very much the current U.S. posture as well.

The only difference is that there is no more partisan gain to be squeezed from the controversy, so it has blissfully disappeared into the harmonious dead zone of bipartisan consensus.

All of this finds a nice symbolic parallel in the Obama administration's apparent efforts to install Omar Suleiman as interim Egyptian leader; Suleiman is not only

steadfastly pro-American and pro-Israeli, but was long the U.S.'s point man for renditions and the severe torture which accompanied it.

This is what is meant when we hear repeatedly about what a stalwart "ally" the Mubarak government been in the "War on Terror": they've dutifully detained and brutalized anyone we wanted.

**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WARS**

**“Calling For ‘All Sides’ To Act With
Moderation, Maintaining Supposed
‘Neutrality’ Between Unarmed Peaceful
Protesters And A Regime Using U.S.-
Supplied Materiel To Threaten And
Attack Its People Is Understood Across
The Region As Choosing The Side Of
Mubarak”**



[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in.]

February 4, 2011 by Asli Bali and Aziz Rana, Foreign Policy in Focus [Excerpts]

Asli Bâli is acting professor of law at UCLA School of Law and an editor at Middle East Report and Aziz Rana is assistant professor of law at Cornell Law and author of The Two Faces of American Freedom out now from Harvard University Press.

Although both Mubarak and Obama have framed the issue as chaos versus order, the protesters in Egypt have shown the falseness of this dichotomy by being peaceful, nonviolent, and orderly, even to the point of organizing spontaneous neighborhood watches to secure their homes and national treasures like the Egyptian museum.

They have acted in line with the basic political commitments purportedly favored by the West: freedom, human rights, and democracy.

By contrast, the regime that Western leaders have lauded for decades as a beacon of moderation has unleashed its salaried, plainclothes security personnel to loot its own cities, set fire to its streets, and attack unarmed protesters with Molotov cocktails, knives, U.S.-supplied tear gas canisters, and live ammunition.

The new Vice President Suleiman now promises to employ the same security services to arrest those the regime chooses to blame for the disorder and violence it has wrought.

Providing Mubarak, or his regime, with an additional eight months to crush domestic opponents, hand-select a successor that will hew to existing policies -- in line with Western preferences -- and orchestrate another round of Egypt's notorious elections is no formula for peace or stability.

Such a U.S. strategy, in coordination with the Egyptian regime, would be a renewed license for Mubarak (or his vice president) to sow the very forms of violence and repression with which the regime has long been identified.

Calling for "all sides" to act with moderation, maintaining supposed "neutrality" between unarmed peaceful protesters and a regime using U.S.-supplied materiel to threaten and attack its people is understood across the region as choosing the side of Mubarak.

Nor is the belated request that the regime desist from violence sufficient, absent a clear and unequivocal expression of support for the core demands of the protesters: an immediate end to the Mubarak regime (not limited to the departure of Mubarak), constitutional reform, and the convening of free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections.

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