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### Interview Transcript

Yara Ibrahim

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## **Transcript Introduction**

Ismail was born in the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1982 in Cairo. He is single living with his family in Nasr City, graduated from the American University in Cairo, Business Administration major. He is working on MBA from the American University in Cairo and works as a senior brand manager in Savola Food Egypt.

I thought Ismail was worth interviewing because he was one of the activists and organizers in the Egyptian revolution and has spent all the days of the revolution in Tahrir Square which made him a very precious source of information in relation to what exactly was going on among the revolts concerning the use of the SMS's and the mobile phones. Also what was exactly the significance and the role of the mobile communications and SMS system in the organizations and managements of the actions and events of the revolution.

**The Mobile Communication and SMS System Role in The Egyptian Revolution of the 25<sup>th</sup>  
of January 2011**

**Interview Transcript**

Interviewer: Yara Mohamed Ibrahim

The Interviewee: Ismail el Khouly

Date: 22/3/2011

Place: Savola Food Company

Collage: The American University in Cairo

Professor: Dr. Kim Fox

**Yara Mohamed Ibrahim**

**Ismail elkhoully Interview**

**22/3/2011**

**Persons Present: Yara Ibrahim**

**Ismail el Khoully**

**Ibrahim:** During the revolution if we can take a snapshot for the Tahrir Square, how would you describe the image there?

**El-Khoully:** The snapshot for the Tahrir square would be a mosaic of all of Egypt, over there you could see normal Egyptians from different spectrums, you could see the Islamists, you could see the secularils, you could see the those who were into politics, you could see government employees, and you can see families and you can see women and you can see doctors and you can see carpenters, I think at a certain point in time in Tahrir you could find every single profession ,every single social class , every single religion, every single gender, so was very representative of the Egyptian population as far as I could see.

**Ibrahim:** To what extent were people depending on the mobile communication and the SMS system for planning and organizing?

**El-Khoully:** well concerning the dependence on the mobile communications and the SMS systems, if we are going to talk about the 25<sup>th</sup> of Jan. where this issue started, at that time there were no problems of communication, so mobiles were very heavily used and SMS's were very heavily used. Actually what happened is that everyone was surprised that it worked, that we managed to

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come up in the streets at that time with a massive demonstrations of like 20 or 30 thousands people and that was huge and never happened as far as I can tell in my whole life time in Egypt. And What happened then is that they started jamming the mobile communication in Tahrir square, so SMS's and mobile were very difficult to use in Tahrir, they were trying to isolate the people from what was happening outside so that they can not communicate to the outside and what's happening, what's really happening and so you can not send for more people to come, which was very feasible on the 25<sup>th</sup>. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, the mobile and SMS'S were completely cut off, completely cut off you can not use them and the mobile kept disconnected as far as I recall very first early days of the revolution, but once they returned I believe SMS's in particular were very important in communicating between people and those who have other mobile phones such as the blackberries, depended heavily on the BBM at a later stage when the internet returned which is a form of a textual SMS system of communication

**Ibrahim:** Can you give me an idea about how an agreement like for example "Gomaet el ghadab" (Angry Friday) which was an agreement that millions of people would go Tahrir at this Friday, how do messages regarding this agreement started and followed up? And was there a standard mechanism that was used by different groups of people?

**El- Khouly:** Mobile communications and SMS systems was very critical because had they not chose a Friday for this day with the cut of the mobile and the internet. it would have been

practically impossible for people to gather at the same time in large numbers because the Friday prayers allowed all people to gather at the same time in large numbers and this combination

**Yara Mohamed Ibrahim**

**Ismail elkhoully Interview**

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between modern and traditional allowed people to do something that was very strange because for those who are looking from far away with no internet and mobile communication it gets extremely impossible for people to gather and communicate with each other on timings and how they are going to go and destinations. Mobile communications gave us exact names for the mosques that demonstrations will go from and it gave us a clear direction. We all moved towards Tahrir from all over Cairo, and that practically moons the revolution.

**Ibrahim:** If we want to rank between mobile and SMS, BBM and Smart phones communications and Facebook, which do you think would be ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, as tools used by people and enhanced the success of the revolution?

**El- Khouly:** Ranking between the facebook, ,mobile and SMS's and BBMs, I think facebook by far was number one and later came the mobiles and SMS's and very finally the BBM and smart phones, it was an internet based communication style and mainly through 2 or 3 main groups where the organizers of this event in the very first beginning were communicating with everyone else and deciding on locations and timings and everything from that sort. The mobile communications and SMS systems I think provided a super way to communicate between tens of thousands of very young educated and angry individuals who wanted to coordinate something and do something on the 25<sup>th</sup>

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**Ibrahim:** When the mobile communication and SMS's were cut down, what was the situation and how do people managed to handle it?

**El- Khoully:** When the mobile and the communications were cut down, I think it was too late for the government because if I were in their place I should have cut it down from the 20<sup>th</sup> of a Jan because it was then by the 20<sup>th</sup> of Jan. it was almost obvious something major was going to happen on the 25<sup>th</sup>, everyone was talking about it over the internet and for the 1<sup>st</sup> time I saw the talks from the internet going to the streets. Actually heard about the 25<sup>th</sup> from a friend of mine I did not hear about it from the internet, I heard about it on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Jan. and during that week I browsed the internet and was amazed at the amounts of anger and coordination that was happening over there . Thank you.

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