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The American University in Cairo

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CYBERACTIVISM IN EGYPT: A NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT

A Thesis Submitted to the

Department of Law

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in International Human Rights Law**

By

Sherif Albert Azer Sewiha

May 2009

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Dean of HUSS
Date _____

DEDICATION

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This paper is dedicated to Professor Ali El Hadi, Vice-Provost of the American University in Cairo. I am grateful for his overwhelming support during my MA program at the AUC. Without his help, I would probably never have been able to graduate.

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CYBERACTIVISM IN EGYPT: A NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Sherif Albert Azer Sewiha

Supervised by Professor Elna Sondergaard

ABSTRACT

The emergence of cyberactivists in Egypt gave rise to a new form of activism. Experiencing and admiring these activists made me wonder how this group which was empowered with only a simple weapon – their keyboards – could cause such a stir in the public opinion and effectively put pressure on the Egyptian government. While moving away from their computers and into the streets of Cairo, Egyptian cyberactivists began to search and monitor "every corner" of the Egyptian society, and they began to call for fundamental changes to the society. Although coming from various backgrounds, their common goal united them, and Egyptian cyberactivists began to create a new social movement, unprecedented in the history of Egypt. This movement refused to accept unjust political and social conditions in the society. Their opinions challenged many taboos of the society, and they exposed many forms of corruption inherent in the current regime. In light of the power and potential of the movement, as well as its key characteristics, the movement of Egyptian cyberactivists arguably constitutes a new social movement as defined by various scholars of sociology. Understanding the movement of Egyptian cyberactivist as a new social movement will likely open the door to further studies of this movement. Such studies will hopefully address some of the questions which will remain unanswered by this paper.

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Introduction

" What the bloggers did in one year is more than what we did in 20 years" [1]

Hisham Kassem, Egyptian Human Rights Activist

Over last seven years, Egypt has witnessed the rise of a new group of activists which could be called "Cyberactivists" because they generally use the internet and various tools available on the internet such as blogging, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as means to raise awareness about various political issues in Egypt . The role of cyberactivists has increased with time. According to a report issued by the Information and Decision Support Center, which is a governmental body under the Council of Ministers, the number of bloggers in Egypt has reached 160,000 bloggers in 2008. [2] Most of those bloggers are active in expressing their views on their blogs which often contain opinions on the most sensitive issues in Egyptian society. Their aim is to promote social changes and to challenge negative aspects in the society, whether political, social or even personal. These issues included for example torture in police stations, police violence during demonstrations, criticism of President Mubarak, questioning the religious authorities, sexual harassment and many other issues which are considered taboo subjects in today's Egypt.

Egyptian cyberactivists quickly became very active in organizing various protests against the authorities and generally in mobilizing the public. Blogging has therefore slowly developed into an important alternative to the traditional media, mainly TV and newspaper, and to the traditional means of expressing critical political

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[1] Interview by Sarah Carr with Hisham Kassem, Egyptian human rights activist, in Cairo, Egypt. (May 2, 2008)

[2] INFORMATION AND DECISION SUPPORT CENTER, THE EGYPTIAN COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, EGYPTIAN BLOGS: A NEW SOCIAL SPHERE (2008), http://www.idsc.gov.eg/Upload/Publications/blogs%20final-2.pdf.

opinions, e.g., through political parties, labor movements, and various human rights organizations.

Bloggers is not the only means of cyberactivism, and cyberactivists in Egypt use many online tools such as "Facebook", "Twitter" and "Youtube". In the year of 2007 and the first half of 2008, facebook became a strong tool in the Egyptian political arena. This is an experiment unique to Egypt compared to other Arab countries in the region. Cyberactivists have found in facebook a strong tool that can be used in secret networking, which proved successful in organizing the well-known nationwide strike on 6th April 2008, which was initiated by facebook activists.[3]

In light of the growing importance and ongoing consolidation of some cyberactivists around various key political and social issues- as illustrated, for example, during the latest elections in 2005 and 2006, and also during the recent referendum concerning certain controversial constitutional amendments in 2005. I will argue that it has become relevant to examine their activities from the perspective of a social movement advocating for specific social changes. Based on an empirical research[4], as well as my own experience as a human rights activist who has worked closely with many bloggers in Egypt, this study will therefore try to answer the question: could the new cyberactivist movement be considered a new social movement in Egypt?

In order to answer this question I will first briefly discuss various theoretical definitions of "social movements". This first chapter will also be presenting the main

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[3] The government reacted very harshly to this incident by arresting some of the organizers, however the use of facebook has proven itself to be so effective that it has reached those who do even use the internet.

[4] I will use personal interviews conducted with some of the most prominent bloggers in Egypt during which they expressed their ideas concerning the current situation in Egypt. They also discuss the role which they play in society, and to what extent they perceive themselves taking part in a social movement.

criteria, characteristics and aspects of social movements, in addition to providing some examples from history. The second part of the first chapter will include a discussion of the notion of a "New Social Movement", and how this concept has its own distinct characteristics. I will use these characteristics as the backbone of my argument to prove that the Egyptian cyberactivism movement meets the criteria of a New Social Movement.

In Chapter II, I will be presenting the Egyptian case concerning social movements. The first section will be a brief outline of the history of social movements in Egypt through different periods of modern history. I will also give a brief background about the most recent movement in Egypt, which is the "Kefaya" movement, including its achievements and its impact on the social life in Egypt. The next section will be dedicated to the history of the civil society movement in Egypt and how it has affected the Egyptian society and public opinion. It is also important to introduce the human rights movement in Egypt as an example of a civil society movement in Egypt and address the importance of human rights organizations and the role they play in defending the rights of the citizens. The role of the human rights organizations will also briefly be compared to the role cyberactivists play in order to make a few remarks about the future of cyberactivism in Egypt.

In Chapter III, I will present first "Cyberactivism" in general as a global phenomenon, and how it has affected the global media. Then I will move to the Egyptian experience and trace the rise of cyberactivism in Egypt and how it has gained such importance in such a short period. The next section will include different cases to demonstrate how cyberactivists in Egypt have played a crucial role in raising awareness of various political and social issues, and more importantly how they have exposed malpractice and human rights violations by the executive authority. Some of

the cases that I will present represent my own personal experience through my work in the field. Then I will move to another issue which is how the Egyptian authorities have reacted to this new phenomenon of bloggers openly criticizing their policies. This section will include a presentation of the case of the first blogger to be prosecuted before Egyptian courts. In the last section of this chapter, I will compare and discuss the relationship between Egyptian cyberactivists and human rights organizations,.

The final chapter contains my analysis of whether the cyberactivists movement in Egypt, in the light of what I discussed in Chapter III, constitute a so-called New Social Movement (NSM)[5], as defined and illustrated in Chapter I. My argument will be mainly about proving that the Egyptian cyberactivists movement is a new social movement through analyzing each of the main criteria of NSMs laid down by sociologists. Studying each of the NSMs characteristics separately will be the backbone of my argument, as I will observe to what extent each criteria of NSMs apply to the Egyptian cyberactivists movement. In the course of this analysis, I will be using personal interviews conducted with some of the most prominent bloggers in Egypt during which they expressed their personal ideas and inspirations concerning the current situation, and their self-perception of the role they play in society, and to what extent they perceive themselves as a new social movement.

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[5] ENRIQUE LARANA ET AL., NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS : FROM IDEOLOGY TO IDENTITY 6 (Temple University Press, 1994).

Chapter I: Social Movements in Theory

"Social movements are at once the symptoms and the instruments of progress. Ignore them and statesmanship is irrelevant; fail to use them and it is weak." [6]

Walter Lippmann

"The great thing about social movements is everybody gets to be a part of them." [7]

Jim Wallis

A. Introduction

Any kind of movement or social phenomenon is a result of certain factors and circumstances that are taking place in a specific time of history of a country. These circumstances are most likely to be unpleasant to the subjects that fall under them. Consequently, those subjects rise in one way or another seeking change. The change of these unpleasant or unsuitable circumstances becomes the main aim of the suffering subjects, as they go out seeking more preferable situation. These unpleasant of unprofitable conditions are mostly imposed on the subjects by a higher authority, and failing to change these conditions mostly lead to some kind of action. Occasionally, those concerned with the issue seek a kind of collective action to benefit from a larger category rather than just benefiting from those who are around them. [8] What distinguishes the collective action from a purely individual action are not just the goals, personality, motivations or thoughts, actually it is " the public, nonroutine dimension of collective action, its challenge and threat to established groups, and its potential for being an agent of social change."[9] When this collective action takes place, it starts to challenge the higher suppressive authority that is resisting the change in a form of a popular movement, and eventually it could lead to the overthrowing of the authority by this movement, like what happened with King George III when his administration was overthrown by the American colonists. [10]

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[6] Walter Lippmann – Quotes, Brainyquotes,
http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/w/walterlipp402010.html.
[7] Jim Wallis – Quotes, Brainyquotes http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/j/jim_wallis.html.
[8] ANTHONY OBERSCHALL, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS 1 (Transaction Publishers 1993).
[9] *Id*.
[10] *Id*.

B. **Social Movement: Definitions and Characteristics**

Concerning the history of social movements, Professor Charles Tilly argues that the "social movement" was "invented in England and North America during the first decades of the nineteenth century and has since then spread across the globe." [11] Tilly attributed the early growth of social movements "to broad economic and political changes including parliamentarization, market capitalization, and proletarianization."[12]

Social movements in their development and nature in terms of aims and work are a kind of container that collects social and professional groups in addition to interest groups. [13] In trying to understand the classic social movements, scholars have agreed on some main characteristics such as an informal interaction network, shared beliefs and solidarity, collective action focusing on conflicts, and finally the use of protest as a means of demonstrating action. [14]

As social movements are a kind of collective action or group action, it is important first to discuss what we understand by "collective behavior." According to Sociologist Anthony Oberschall, collective behavior "refers to the spectrum of crowd behavior from strikers manning a picket line, demonstrators attending a rally at the steps of state capitol, and other collective manifestations of citizens exercising their constitutional rights peacefully to assemble and petition the government."[15] From Oberschall's definition we can see that collective behavior is mostly associated with protest actions that is characterized by being carried out by a group of people, but in the same time it still didn't mount to an organized movement.

An understanding of the concept of collective behavior takes us to the next step, which is explaining the concept of "social movements" which is more than simply a "collective behavior". Oberschall explains a social movement as a "large-scale, collective effort to bring about or resist changes that bear on the lives of

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[11] CHARLES TILLY, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, 1768–2004 262 (Paradigm Publishers 2004).
[12] *Id.*
[13] Ibrahim Gharaiba, *What Social Movements can Offer?* Al Asr Online Magazine, May 16 2006, http://www.alasr.ws/index.cfm?method=home.con&contentID=7785 (Last visited May 20, 2009).
[14] DONATELLA DELLA PORTO AND MARIO DIANI, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AN INTRODUCTION 14 (Blackwell Publishers Ltd 1999).
[15] OBERSCHALL, *supra* note 8, at 1.

many"[16] such as the anti-Vietnam War movement during the 1960's in USA[17], or the Orabi movement in Egypt during the 1880's. [18]

Other sociologists have also attempted to define social movements. In his book *Ideology and the New Social Movements*, Alan Scott stressed the aspect of "identity" of the individual in a social movement. Scott suggested a definition of social movements saying that:" A social Movement is a collective actor constituted by individuals who understand themselves to have common interest and, for at least some significant part of their social existence, a common identity." [19] Other scholars stressed the aspect of "collective claims", such as Charles Tilly who defines social movements as "a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people made collective claims on others." [20] Other scholars widened the scope of social movements to include even violent and illegal groups, such as Paul Wilkinson who defines social movement as" a deliberate collective endeavour to promote change in any direction and by any means, not excluding violence, illegality, revolution or withdrawal into 'utopian' community." [21] While other sociologists argued that any social movement is a form of political participation, such as Dong McAdam who believes that social movements are "those organized efforts, on the part of excluded groups, to promote or resist changes in the structure of society that involve recourse to non institutional forms of political participation."[22] Definition of social movements also found in encyclopedias, such as Encyclopedia Britannica Online which defines social movements in the frame of a collective aspect even if a social movement could be seen as a " loosely organized but sustained campaign in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society's structure or values. Although social movements differ in size, they are all essentially collective." [23]

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[16] *Id.*

[17] *Id.*

[18] AZZA KHALIL ET AL., SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE ARAB WORLD 146, (Madbouli Publishing House 2006).

[19] ALAN SCOTT, IDEOLOGY AND THE NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS 6 (Unwin Hyman Ltd 1990).

[20] TILLY, *supra* note, 11.

[21] IGNOU, DEFINITION AND COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL MOVEMNETS, Feb 25, 2008, http://www.shvoong.com/social-sciences/political-science/1772603-definition-components-social-movements/ (Last visited May 18, 2009).

[22] *Id.*

[23] Encyclopedia Britannica Online - Social Movements, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/551335/social-movement (last visited Nov. 18, 2008).

Such a movement could be seen as a kind of response to a sense of injustice which thus ultimately provided the spark for mobilization.[24] In the book *Social Movements: an Introduction* by Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, they brought the factor of "deprivation" as one of the main aspects of a social movement, so they can see social movements as a "manifestation of feelings of deprivation experienced by actors in relation to other social subjects, and of feelings of aggression resulting from a wide range of frustrated expectations." [25] Porta and Mario gave examples of social movements such as Nazism and American Civil War, which fits more the "aggressive" aspect of the definition. [26]

From the previous definitions we can see that most of the scholars agree on "change" as the main aspect of the rise of a social movement, whether this movement wants to make a change or to resist a change that took place. Sociologists even argued that social movements may use violence or illegal means to make that change, and they are still considered social movements. Also most of scholars believed in the aspect of the "political participation" as one of the main characteristics of social movements, while arguing that this political participation mostly will not take a form of an institution, and may use "protest" more often. Another common feature that was stressed by all scholars is the "collective" aspect of the social movement, including collective action, collective claim or collective interest. However, scholars such as Alan Scott, stressed the aspect of "individual identity" as a prerequisite to a collective identity, meaning that individuals first have to recognize a self-identity in order to develop a common identity.

One important aspect of social movement theory is that it explains how frustration can rise from the micro to the macro level. As argued by James Colman, the level of frustration and deprivation can automatically give a result to a kind of a revolt that over time undermines the behavior of the individual on the (micro) level and gives rise to the (macro level) which takes the form of social movements. [27]

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[24] LARANA *supra* note 5, at 3.

[25] PORTO, *supra* note 14, at 4.

[26] I will argue later in this chapter that the Egyptian cyberactivist movement fits more the concept of New Social Movements due to the lack of the aggressive aspect in the New Social Movements characteristics.

[27] PORTO *supra* note 14, at 5.

desires and frustration, and finally how such movement flourished in this specific period. [28] In the coming chapters, I will address such questions in order to see to what extent Egyptian cyberactivists can constitute a social movement.

C. New Social Movements: Definitions and Characteristics

The period between the 1970's and 1990's witnessed the emergence of new forms of collective action especially in advanced industrial societies. This stimulated an innovative "reconceptualization" of the meaning of social movements.[29] In light of the previous statement, we can see that cyberactivism is the result of what was termed "advanced industrial societies." The classic view of social movements is that they are always formed by political parties or labor unions. This is now becoming very vague in the spectrum of NSMs, as the idea of "labor movements and the rise of new political parties [being] the ideal-typical images of social movements and mobilization"[30] is now coming to an end. However, the study of NSMs can be "advanced by cross-cultural research and by contrasting them with movements of the past that originated in class conflict,"[31] as we will see later when discussing the history of social movements in Egypt. Buechler argues that "there is in fact no single new social movement theory, but a set of new social movement theories, each a variant on general approach to 'something called new social movement,'which he cautiously defines as a "diverse array of collective actions that has presumably displaced the old social movement of proletarian revolution."[32]

As for the history of the rise of NSMs, there are many theories. Samir Amin argues that "[t]he new social movements have emerged in the 1990s as a defensive reaction to the attack of neoliberalism against the rights of peoples, particularly the attack on the welfare state in the West and on state protection in the South, etc." [33]

On the other side,, Handley Cantril believes that in order to explain social movements we need to focus on the patterns of norms that surround those who form the movement, such as their psychological or physical environment surrounding them, their worries,

[28] HADLEY CANTRIL, THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIAL MOVMENTS 5 (Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., Inc. 1975)(1941).

[29] LARANA *supra* note 5, at 3.

[30] *Id.* at 4.

[31] *Id.* at 7.

[32] STEVEN M. BUECGLER, SOCIAL MOVEMENST IN ADVANCED CAPITALISM 45 (Oxford University Press, 2000).

[33] Fabio Petito, *Samir Amin - the New Social Movements: Building Convergency within Diversity*, RE-PUBLIC, http://www.re-public.gr/en/?p=28 (last visited May 17, 2009).

in the 1960's such as black civil rights, women's liberation and American students' movement of the 1960's as new social movements. [34]

Egyptian sociologist Farid Zahran tried to deduce a reason why NSMs went out of the frame of the classic social movements. He concluded that NSMs actually represent people who do not belong to any of the classical categories of social movements, such as labor workers, or they represent people who do not belong to a specific social, economic or cultural class or group. [35] Zahran argues that NSMs represents two groups of workers, in the first group those whom their jobs existed before but with less role to play in the arena or social movements, while in second group those who are completely new to the labor market, such as software programmers, online journalists etc. [36] What is common between those groups is that they don't gather in a physical place, compared to the classic image of factory labor. [37] Due to the givens of this new globalizing world, social movements don't have to be related to a specific place, and sometimes they are "increasingly conditioned by social actions in very distant places."[38]

It is important to identify what makes a movement fall under the category of a "new social movement" in order to be able to view the cyberactivism movement in Egypt from the perspective of such a modern term. Not all current movements share the same characteristics as NSMs, nor can we call all current movements NSMs.[39] Sociologists Hank Johnston, Joseph R. Gusfield and Enrique Larana laid down the main characteristics of a NSM, which are also shared by other scholars. Each characteristic constitutes one point of discussion and analysis in order to connect Egyptian bloggers to NSMs.

The fist characteristic is that NSMs don't establish this strong relation to the structural roles of the participants as "the background of participants find their most frequent structural roots in rather diffuse social statuses such as youth, gender, sexual orientation, or professions that do not correspond with structural explanations."[40] While Alan Scott traces NSMs to an older era, as he referred to movements emerging

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[34] SCOTT *supra* note 19, at 13.

[35] Farid Zahran, New Social Movements 15 (Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies 2007).

[36] *Id*. at 18.

[37] *Id*.

[38] HANSPETER KRIESI ET AL., SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD 3 (Macmillan Press 1999).

[39] LARANA *supra* note 5, at 6.

[40] *Id*.

different social categories, without restrictions on a specific age, gender or social standard.

The second characteristic of NSMs, which is the main difference between classic social movements and NSMs, is the ideological aspect. Scholars believe that NSMs "stand in sharp contrast to the working class movement and to the Marxist concept of ideology as a unifying and totalizing element for collective action." [41] NSMs are always associated with some set of elements such as symbols, beliefs and values that give them this feeling of belonging to a distinguished group associated with a self-image,[42] such as the Kefaya Movement and the human rights movement in Egypt as we will discuss later. In tackling NSMs, its important to understand that the emphasis on elements such as "ideology, commitment, and partisanship led to the dominance of ideas as ideologies in understanding the emergence of social movements and collective activity."[43]

One other characteristic of NSMs is that initially they start as an individual action which is then later translated into or takes the form of a collective movement. We can see that "the relation between the individual and the collective is blurred. Closely related to the above point many contemporary movements are acted out in individual actions rather than through or among mobilized groups."[44] Also NSMs are more concerned with "personal and intimate aspects of human life"[45] in stead of revolving around public interest and global issues. [46] As an example of how a social movement can be initiated by an individual, the Brights Movement in USA, which was initiated by Paul Geisert in 2003 based on his rejection of the term "godless". [47]

Another characteristic of NSMs is the element of decentralization as a source of power for the movement, as NSMs "tend to be segmented, diffused, and decentralized. […] This has been called the "self-referential element" of the new movements, and it constitutes another sharp distinction with the hierarchical, centralized organization of the working-class movements and the role of the party organization in the Leninist model."[48] So for a movement to be considered a NSM, it should be comprised of a wide range of

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[41] *Id*. at 7.
[42] *Id*.
[43] *Id*. at 4.
[44] *Id*.
[45] *Id*. at 8.
[46] As we will see later how blogging started as a kind of personal diary that by time evolved and was reshaped to take that special for that we are about to study.
[47] *See* The Brights Movement, http://www.the-brights.net/action/documentation/press_kit.html.
[48] LARANA, *supra* note 5, at 9.

Scholars also found that NSMs employ a new pattern of mobilization which is characterized by civil disobedience and nonviolence activities.[49] Some scholars see that NSMs are symptoms of crises within the social system.[50] The motivation of the movement is a crises, and in Egypt there are different kinds of crises that motivated Egyptian cyberactivists to form such movements, such as spread of torture by police authority, sexual harassment and other issues.

Some scholars also tried to place NSMs within the existing social movements. As argued by Alan Scott, those "modern social movements are primarily social and not directly political in character. Their aim is the mobilization of civil society, not seizure of power."[51] Scott goes further and puts some general guidelines of a new social movement, stating that these movements should be located within civil society [52]. Its interesting to try to compare the role of the civil society in Egypt and the role played by the Egyptian cyberactivists trying to understand the relation between them and whether it will be an integration relation or a kind of a replacement.

Scott Also argued that NSMs should "bring about change through changing values and developing alternative life-style"[53] rather than controversial political issues.[54] While it's argued that the concept of new social movements is a "double-edged sword. On one side, it has contributed to the knowledge of contemporary movements by focusing attention to the meaning of morphological changes in their structure and action and by relating those changes with structural transformation in society as a whole. These changes are the source of these movement "novelty"."[55]

One important aspect that was laid down by Alain Touraine is that NSMs are an offspring of the transitional phase between industrial and post-industrial society. [56]

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[49] *Id*. We will see later how Egyptian bloggers were able to stand against the regime's tyranny without adopting any violent or terrorist acts, and surprisingly, they left a greater impact on the society and a stronger capacity of mobilization.
[50] SCOTT *supra* note 19, at 8.
[51] *Id*. at 16.
[52] *Id*. at 17.
[53] *Id*.
[54] *Id*. at 14.
[55] LARANA, *supra* note 5, at 6.
[56] SCOTT, *supra* note 19, at 15.

technology, which are feature of the technology that characterizes this transitional era,[57] which Egypt is now witnessing.

This conclusion explains how cyberactivists could be integrated in the scope of NSMs, as the main tool of the cyberactivists movement is the internet and information

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[57] Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias, Industrial Society
http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/166811 (citing L GRININ, PERIODIZATION OF HISTORY: A THEORETIC-MATHEMATICAL ANALYSIS 10-38 (KomKniga/URSS 2007).

Chapter II: Social Movements; Political Activism; and Human Rights Activism in Egypt

A. Rise of Social Movements in the Arab World

Following a brief introduction to social movements in the Arab world, this chapter will focus on various social movements in Egypt, including political and human rights activism, as well as the labor movement, civil society movements and even religious movements.

Social movements have been present in the Arab world since the period of the Ottoman Empire. [58] They have grown with the rise of modern states, and today constitute a wide spread phenomenon which is steadily growing in most of Arab countries. [59] On of the earliest forms of social movements were developed in Lebanon. The General Workers Union was founded in 1919, participated in demonstrations for independence, and continued its activities until 1948. [60] The student movement in Lebanon was crystallized in the early fifties in the course of the expression of political views in support or rejection of specific actions. Women's organizations date back to the early twentieth century. [61] The first association in Lebanon was founded in 1924 under the name Women's Association. [62] The Council of the Women's Association had 160 members of different backgrounds, color and beliefs, but most focused on the work on amending the Lebanese law to be compatible with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. [63]

Human rights associations started working in Lebanon in 1966 under the name of the University for Peace in the World, and the first Lebanese human rights association was founded in 1985, followed by dozens of associations, in addition to a number of organizations working in the field of human rights. [64]

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[58] GHARAIBA, *supra* note 13.
[59] *Id.*
[60] KHALIL, *supra* note 18, at 146.
[61] *Id.* at 147.
[62] *Id.*
[63] *Id.* at 148.
[64] *Id.* at 167.

organizations such as the Human Rights Association (not-licensed) and the Committee on the Families of the Detainees.[65]

We can't undermine also the role Arab intellectuals in shaping modern social movemnets. In most of Arab countries, the period of the sixties and seventies witnessed intense activities in cultural centers of the writes and authors, which was considered an extension of the cultural movement of national liberation movements, and the beginnings of intellectual movements outside the formal framework. Then came the idea of public associations of writers and artists, which would serve communities - if given the opportunity - for the development of public life in the Arab States.[66]

B. History of Social Movements in Egypt

Some scholars trace the history of social movements in Egypt between 1798 and 1800 when the first and the second Cairo Revolts took place against the French occupation. [67] Other scholars trace social movements in Egypt three years earlier, to 1795 which marked the demonstrations of farmers against heavy taxes imposed by the Ottoman Emperor. [68] During the twentieth century, Egypt witnessed the rise of many forms social movements such as labor movements, civil or religious. In the coming section I will give some examples of social movements from the history of Egypt. These examples will give an idea about the socio-political circumstances in Egypt that became a fertile soil for social movements to dwell and develop.

1. Labor Movement in Egypt

Some Arab countries started their activities in the field of human rights very recently compared with other countries such as Syrian where the human rights movements started operating in 2000 in the framework of opposition rallies and political reform, in addition to other

The history of the labor movement in Egypt, which is considered a social movement according to the classic view illustrated in Chapter 3, is rich with events, names and places that were closely connected to the important turning points in the history of Egypt. The labor movement in Egypt started to take shape when Mohamed Ali introduced modern industries in 1818 and established about 29 factories with a

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[65] *Id*. at 193.
[66] GHARBIA, *supra* note 13.
[67] KHALIL, *supra* note 18, at 323.
[68] AHMED SAYED HUSSAIN, KEFAYA MOVEMENT 34 (Alameyia Publishing House 2009).

capacity of 30,000 workers. [69] One of the main manifestations of the labor movement in Egypt was during the Revolution of 1919, where workers of some sectors played an important role during the revolution, such as the metro workers, Governmental Print house workers and customs workers. [70] Some scholars believe that the real birth of the labor movements in Egypt was in 1968 when workers in the industrial city of Helwan refused the fake justifications announced by the government about the defeat in the war. The violent reaction of government against the demonstrating workers lead to widespread demonstrations all over Egypt from different sectors, announcing the real birth of the labor movement in Egypt. [71]

The history of the labor strikes in Egypt dates back to 1899 when the workers went on strike in the cigarette industry. Egypt also witnessed major strikes such as in 1984 in Kafr Al-Dawar factories, and 1986 and 1989 with railway workers and steel factories, where at some point the police used live bullets against the demonstrators.[72] The labor strike reached its peak on 6 April 2008, where the workers of Mahalla Textile Factory organized a strike asking for their financial rights, with the solidarity of different sectors of the society.[73] Surprisingly, this strike escalated to take form of a nation-wide strike, something Egypt never witnessed before. Unfortunately, this pattern didn't continue, due to the infiltration of state security bodies, where most of the organizers of the strike were arrested. [74] However, this incident resulted in a different kind of social movement, the "6 April Movement."

2. Religious Movements

Labor movement wasn't the only form of movements Egypt witnessed, also religious movements played a crucial role, due to the religious and conservative nature of the Egyptian society, which has more tendency to religious movements compared to other movements. In recent years, Egypt has witnessed shifts in its political climate, as protest movements increased, with the increase criticism of the

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[69] KHALIL, *supra* note 18, at 324.
[70] *Id*. at 326.
[71] *Id*. at 332.
[72] Kareem Yehia, *labor strikes to where?* , AL WAQT, Dec 14 2007, http://www.katib.org/node/3707 (Last visited May 18, 2009).
[73] ELHAMI MARGHANI, WHAT HAPPENED ON 6 APRIL 9 (Hisham Mubarak Law Center 2008).
[74] *Id*. at 112.

government, and the government failed to meet the needs of the people. Although the resulting protest groups have been vague and didn't take the form of an organized entity. At the same time, however, these changes spread a sense of the possibility of a climate of change, prompting opposition groups to raise their voices and gain some tools of expression, which were previously prohibited. However, the period also witnessed the emergence of a strong competitor from outside the ruling elite, which is the Muslim Brotherhood which had the ability to beat their rivals from the National Democratic Party by relatively large seats in parliament in the recent parliamentary elections.[75] The reason for this is that political parties in Egypt, which supposedly should be the legitimate opposition in any political system are mostly paralyzed due to many reasons including the limits imposed on them by the Egyptian Political Parties Law. [76]

The Muslim Brotherhood movement was established in 1928 by Hasan el Banna in Egypt and soon found its way to different Islamic countries. [77] After their attempt to assassinate President Nasser in 1954, the security bodies cracked down on the group and arrested most of its leaders. [78] The Brotherhood was revived again during the era of president Sadat, who used them to counterbalance Nasserite and Socialist currents in Egypt, until finally, Brotherhood ideologies inspired the assassination of Sadat in 1981.[79] The Muslim Brotherhood is one of the biggest movements in the history of Egypt, as they operate in the social and economic spheres as well as the political domain. When it comes to social movements, the Muslim Brotherhood would be considered a perfect example of religious social movements in Egypt, as other religious movements were not that significant, or didn't have an impact on the society, or they were just armed groups operating against the government which appeared during the 1990's.

After they won 88 seats in the parliamentary elections of 2005, the Brotherhood established political reform policies to face the challenges, whether

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[75] Hossam Tammam, *the Muslim Brotherhood and the Crises of the New Social Movements*, ISLAMYOON, May 25, 2008, http://islamyoon.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1209357626615&pagename=Islamyoun/IYALayout&ref=body (Last visited May 20, 2009)

[76] THE EGYPTIAN ORGANIZATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, A NATIONAL VIEW OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES LAW, EOHR, (2007), http://www.eohr.org/ar/montda/pr0614-2.shtml.

[77] ABDUL RAHIM ALI, THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD 26 (Al Mahrosa 2007).

[78] *Id*. at 159.

[79] MOHAMED HASSANAIN HAIKAL, AUTUMN OF FURY 411 (Al Ahram Center for Publishing 1988).

political, social or economic.[80] Despite the fact that they constitute almost 20 percent of the parliament, the Egyptian government doesn't recognize them as a legitimate group and refers to them as the banned group. [81]

C. Public Movements and New Social Movements in Egypt

In order to understand the extent and nature of the social movements which have exist in Egypt in recent years, it is necessary to monitor and analyze some forms of diversity in these different movements. Some of these movements include :
The Egyptian Movement for Change (Kefaya), People's Campaign for Change - March 20 Movement for Change, Change for the Literati, Youth for Change, Women for Change, the Street for Us, Shaifenkom and finally the 6 of April Movement. The experiences of trade union movements can also be included such as Democratic Lawyers Movement, the Democratic Engineers Movements, the March 9 Movement of the members of the faculty, University Student Movement, strikes of professionals such as civilian pilots, and the doctors at Ahmed Maher Hospital. There were also unions and farmers protests such as by workers at Asbestos - Easko / Qalyoub Textile, Telemasr, Mahalla Textile, Cadbury, and finally peasants protests such as Sarando and Bahot protests.[82]

The rise of such new types of social movements can be traced back to 2000 during the expression of solidarity by Egyptians with the Second Intifada in Palestine. [83] These movements initially focused on regional and Arab issues such as Palestine and Iraq and against the expansion of the American influence in the region,

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[80] Rafik Habib, *Muslim Brotherhood and National Alliances*, ISLAMONLINE, Mar. 15, 2009, http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1236508859828&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout.

[81] Gamal Sultan, *the Banned Group Profile*, AL ASR, Nov. 30, 2005, http://www.alasr.ws/index.cfm?method=home.con&contentID=7250. The reality now is that the Muslim Brotherhood has imposed itself as a political power. It is now therefore necessary for the political system to consider visions and mechanisms to deal with these new realities. The problem is that the regime is still living in a state of ignorance towards the Brotherhood, and continues to label it a banned group despite its existence and impact on society.

[82] ARAB AFRICAN RESEARCH CENTER, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROTEST IN EGYPT, www.aarcegypt.org/Admin/upload/DOCs/EL%20HARKAT%20ALAGTMAYA.doc . Some scholars believe that the rise of these new social movements is a direct result of the decline of the role formerly played by political parties due to the increase in the political tyranny that reached its peak during the seventies and early eighties leaving the political arena to the Islamic movements.

[83] ZAHRAN, *supra* note 36, at 31.

but later on these movements turned to national issues such as demonstrating against emergency law, low salaries, workers rights and other local issues. [84] Even the biggest movement, Kefaya, also had this attitude towards regional issues but persistent local problems finally prevailed. [85] The demonstrations in Tahrir Square during the Second Indifada in solidarity with Palestine, demonstrators held banners bearing a variety of slogans other than related to Palestine, such as calling for the abolition of the emergency law, socialist slogans and liberal slogans, which proves that society was ready to explode with political and social activism that was waiting for the right or the most convenient moment. [86]

1. People's Committee to Support the Uprising of the Palestinian People

One of the earliest examples of the new social movements studied by Egyptian sociologists[87] was the People's Committee to Support the Uprising of the Palestinian People which started after the second intifada in 2000, and coincided with the sentiments of solidarity and alert against the threat of external dangers. The movement has demanded that President Hosni Mubarak break off relations with Israel, and direct a letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations demanding international protection for Palestinians and the right of return of refugees. It has also collected donations of food such as margarine, rice, sugar and flour, which were sent to refugees in Palestine as relief.[88] However, the movement has faced problems and difficulties, such as clashing with security and police in the street, shortcoming in the Committee's administration, and its domination by certain groups. It has become obvious that the committee turned into a tool in the hands of some businessmen to attack their competitors in the market by calling for boycotts of some commodities claiming that they are American and Israeli products, while they are purely Egyptian commodities.[89]

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[84] *Id.* at 31.
[85] *Id.* at 32.
[86] This is based on my personal experience.
[87] ZAHRAN, *supra* note 36, at 33.
[88] *Id.*
[89] Ishak Ibrahim, *Kefaya Movement*, Copts United, http://www.copts-united.com/08_copts-united_08/read.php/2008/01/03/400.html.

2. Kefaya Movement: An Egyptian New Social Movement

The Egyptian Movement for Change (Kefaya) [90] or (Enough) was established in September 2004 as a reaction to the American plans of what were known as the Greater Middle East.[91] It is a form of a new social movement as argued by Egyptian sociologists such as Farid Zahran and Ahmed Sayed Hussain. The Word "Kefaya" or "Enough" came as protest against speculation that President Mubarak was planning to pass his position to his son, Gamal Mubarak. [92] The initial call for the movement was addressed to about 300 persons belonging to most of the political currents in Egypt. The movement was also associated with some of the political parties existing in Egypt, such as the Middle Party, Labor Party and Karama Party, in addition to independent members from a socialist background such as George Ishak, Hani Anan and Ahmed Bahaa. [93]

The Kefaya Movement is significant for several reasons; firstly, it tackles local issues with a concentration on political tyranny as the cause of all problems, whether regional or local. Secondly, it openly addressed the issue of the National Democratic Party's monopoly on power and the legitimacy of the rule of President Mubarak - previously considered a taboo subject. Kefaya was not just against the continuous rule of Mubarak for more than 25 years, it was also saying enough to Gamal's inheriting power, enough to emergency law, enough to corruption, enough to torture in police stations and many other issues that the Egyptians have suffered from for a long time.[94] It was because Kefaya Movement was established for a specific reason, which reached its peak in 2005 during the presidential elections, that it has faded away. Its decline was also due to internal conflicts and organizational issues.[95] People are currently speculating on the future of Kefaya and whether it will rise again nearing the next elections in 2011, or simply disappear leaving the floor to new movements. Farid Zahran, researcher and activist, believes that the future of these movements is connected to development of political and professional movements in Egypt, as these movements would also fuel the political activism, or the other way around, the

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[90] *See* Kefaya Movement website http://www.harakamasria.org/.
[91] ZAHRAN, *supra* note 36, at 45.
[92] HUSSAIN, *supra* note 68, at 150.
[93] ZAHRAN, *supra* note 36, at 49.
[94] *Id*. at 51.
[95] *Id*. at 53.

political stir and progress would give birth to more mature, coherent and stronger social movements. [96]

D. Civil Society Movement in Egypt

The civil society movement in Egypt is one of the most important movements that Egypt has witnessed in the last few year, due to the role it plays in whether in increasing the awareness and offering direct services to people, or for confronting the government in public issues related to democracy, human rights and good governance. The civil society movement is different from the previous movements in many aspects, for example the use of legal advocacy as an approach, the use of international law as a reference and its not a public movement rather than intellectual and institutional. So we can say that civil society movement is not a public movement compared with the movements we mentioned before. For example when there is demonstration in the streets of Cairo, most of civil society organizations participate as monitories rather than being actively involved in the action.   While the concept of civil society emerged at the end of the seventeenth century, the real rise of the civil society movement according to its modern definition began after the fall of the communism in the 1990's and the rise of liberal movements. [97] "As in the rest of the world, civil society activities in Egypt expanded dramatically in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, particularly around the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994."[98] Civil society can be defined as: "that arena where numerous social movements (including community associations, women's groups, religious bodies, and intellectual currents) and civic organizations (of lawyers, journalists, trade unions, entrepreneurs and so on) strive to constitute themselves into an ensemble of arrangements to express themselves and advance their interests." [99]

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[96] *Id*. at 64.
[97] ALI ABDUL SADEK, THE CONCEPT OF CIVIL SOCIETY 10 (Al Mahrosa Publishing House 2004.
[98] HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, EGYPT: MARGINS OF REPRESSION, (2005), http://www.hrw.org/en/node/11675/section/5#_ftn22.
[99] JEFF HAYNES, DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE THIRD WORLD 16 (Polity Press 1997).

There are currently in Egypt about 30,000 organizations which can be considered part of the civil society movement. [100] These organizations belong to various categories: political parties, professional syndicates, human rights organizations and law firms. Even Islamic groups are considered part of civil society.[101] The work of the civil society in Egypt is not easy, as there are many restrictions on the associations work and activities. According to researchers Lester M. Salamon and others:

> Civil society in Egypt is governed by the provisions of the Law on Non-Governmental Societies and Organizations (No. 84 of 2002**)** and the Executive Statute on Law 84 of 2002 (Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs Decree No. 178 of 2002), which implements and clarifies the provisions of the parliamentary law. Despite the highly restrictive nature of its civil society laws, Egypt has one of the largest and most vibrant civil society sectors in the entire developing world. A 1999 survey undertaken by the Arab NGO Network for Development found that Egypt civil society sector employed the equivalent of 629,223 full-time workers, accounting for $1.5 billion in expenditures (approximately 2 percent of Egypt's GDP) and this survey did not take into account the substantial impact of religious-based groups.[102]

At the political level, civil society continues to play a more efficient role than political parties, and plays an extremely important role at the level of political action in Egypt, namely, the activity or role on the process of political and social upbringing, which is the heart of political life and community in any country. In this context we note that in spite of all the organs of the State dominated by the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the efforts by the security to control these groups, there nonetheless exists a high rate of participation in politics and in social work and voluntary work with the civil society greater than even those associated with the NDP in Egypt. [103]

One of the main reasons behind the rise of the role of civil society is the deterioration of the role of official state institutions, which leads to obstruction of the performance of political and social roles assigned to it, such as social welfare, political and cultural upbringing. As a result, civil society institutions have emerged as an alternative to state institutions. It is enough to point out that NGOs in Egypt take

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[100] Ikhwan Online, Civil Society in Egypt, Jun. 19, 2005, http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=12683&SecID=304 (Last visited May 10, 2009).
[101] HAYNES, *supra* note 99, at 48.
[102] KAREEM ELBAYAR, NGO LAWS IN SELECTED ARAB STATES, ICNL, http://www.icnl.org/KNOWLEDGE/IJNL/vol7iss4/special_1.htm, (citing LESTER M. SALAMON, ET. AL*.,* GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY: DIMENSIONS OF THE NONPROFIT SECTOR 217 Vol. 2 (Kumarian Press 2004).
[103] IKHWAN ONLINE, *supra* note 100.

care of some 2 million children, both orphaned or abandoned, and a similar numbers of disabled people, widows and the elderly and other tasks. In addition, the spread of poverty has strengthened the need for civil social working groups including voluntary work, a task that should have been carried out by the state and its institutions. [104]

1. Human Rights Movement in Egypt: history, outcomes and impact

Human rights organizations are considered part of the civil society movement and played a crucial role in defending the right of other associations in other fields to be established and to operate without the interference of the government. In the 1980's and 1990's Egypt witnessed an evolution in the field of human rights. New terms started to emerge such as "civil and political rights" and "civil society" and became part of the daily language. In 1983 the first human rights organization, the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR) was established in Egypt, followed by the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) which was established in 1985 but only registered in 2003 after a long struggle with the authorities.[105] The role of human rights organizations increased with the increase of the political awareness of the people from one side, and the increase of human rights violations perpetrated by security bodies from the other side. A report issued by the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights states that "in the last few years NGOs have started to become a partner to the government in development. This partnership became clear during the UN conferences of the 1990s, which reflected the importance of the civil sector's role in society and generated numerous studies on the development of Civil Laws in the 1990s, corresponding with the growth of civil work"[106]

According to government report, there are now 16,680 private societies subsidize by the Society Subsidizing Fund of the Ministry of Social Affairs with LE 67.8 million in 2003.[107] The number of organizations working in the field of human

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[104] *Id*.

[105] KHALIL, *supra* note 18, at 501. However, the official site of the Egyptian Government states that the "The first human rights organization in Egypt was established in the late 1920s and early 1930s. It was established to defend political freedoms after the 1919 Revolution against the alliance of the ruler with the British occupation in violating these freedoms, and against rigging elections. *See* http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Pub/human/110600000000000002.htm.

[106] THE EGYPTIAN ORGANIZATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, THE CONFISCATION OF CIVIL WORK IN EGYPT (2002), http://www.eohr.org/ar/report/2002/newlaw1.htm.

[107] Egypt State Information Service, Human Rights, http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Pub/human/110600000000000002.htm (Last visited May 18, 2009).

rights and registered in the National Council for Human Rights is 135. [108] According to the same report, human rights organizations in Egypt can be divided into the following categories:

- Organizations specialized in academic and research fields such as The Human Rights Studies Center at Cairo University, or civil organizations such as The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. [109]

- Organizations specialized in the political field, such as the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, The Arab Program for Human Rights Activists and The Center for Trade Union and Workers Services. [110]

- Finally there are also branches or local offices of international organizations in Egypt specialized in human rights, such as The Arab Organization for Human Rights, The International Federation for Human Rights, and the Cultural Affairs Institute for the Middle East and North Africa. [111]

Despite the fact that the Egyptian Constitution provides for the right to establish NGOs, difficulties and tensions continue to exist between governmental authorities and NGOs, which is also in conflict with international human rights instruments. The refusal of the registration of new NGOs is the norm; approving applications is the exception. One of the main obstacles is Law 84/2002[112] (Executive Regulations on NGOs) which is in itself a violation of the right to association.

In addition to the restrictions imposed by the law on human rights organizations, there are also other reasons which explain the deterioration of these organizations compared to street activism and cyberactivism. Some human rights organizations, for example, have prioritized some issues while undermining the more persisting human rights violations. For example, the Palestinian issue has been on the top of the agendas of many human rights activists for many years while there are more human rights violations that concern the Egyptians more.

It's important to see how the human rights movement developed and where it stands now, because when we see how cyberactivists played a more effective role concerning the issues of human rights, we will realize that there is a deficiency in the work of human rights organizations. The relation between Egyptian cyberactivists and

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[108] *Id.*
[109] *Id.*
[110] *Id.*
[111] *Id.*
[112] Law no. 84 of 2002.

human rights organization, sometimes it takes the form of integration, other times it take the form or rivalry. This issue will be elaborated more in Chapter IV.

Chapter III: Cyberactivism in Egypt

A. Cyberactivism as a Global Phenomenon

Some studies trace the start cyberactivism back to 1990 with the *Lotus MarketPlace: Household* case.[113] Thousands of protests were sent to Lotus Software after it released a CD containing a huge database of names and addresses of theirs users. [114] Before we move to the case of Egypt concerning cyberactivism, first we need to understand the concept behind this modern form of activism and how its different from the classis idea we have about activism.

Cyberactivism is characterized by the use of different internet tools such as email, blogs and social networks. Cyberactivism is defined by scholars from University of Southern California as "a means by which advanced information and communication technologies, e.g. e-mail, list-serv, and the www of the Internet, are used by individuals and groups to communicate with large audiences, galvanizing individuals around a specific issue or set of issues in an attempt to build solidarity towards meaningful collective actions."[115] On the other hand, Mccaughey and Ayers refus to define cyberactivism at all so they don't have to determine what is legitimate online activism or not. They don't want to narrow the definition and at the same time they believe that defining cyberactivism is as dificult as defining activism itself. [116] Some scholars tried to study this new kind of activism and to put it in a more familiar frame. For example, Sandor Vegh categorizes Cyberactivism into three main categories: 1) Awareness/advocacy, 2) organization/mobilization, and 3) action/reaction. [117]

B. Blogging

One aspect of cyberactivism, which is one of the main concerns of this chapter, is blogging. Its important in understanding the history and the development of

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[113] MARTHA MCCAUGHEY & MICHAEL D. AYERS, CYBERACTIVISM: ONLINE ACTIVISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE 26 (Routledge 2003).
[114] *Id*.
[115] Networked Public, About Cyberactivism (2006), http://networkedpublics.org/cyberactivism/about_cyberactivism (Last visited 18 May 2009).
[116] MCCAUGHEY, *supra* note 113, at 14.
[117] *Id*. at 72.

blogging in the world and how it evolved to be an important tool of cyberactivism. Mark Tremayne traces the term "blog" to the late 1990s.[118] The word itself evolved from "web journal" to "web log" to "weblogs" to "wee blogs" to finally "blogs."[119] Blogs are explained as "frequently modified webpages containing dated entries listed in reverse chronological sequence"[120] with a "dominant use of first person"[121] in the writing style. Its' possible that the first time the term "blog" is used by Peter Merholz, who wrote on the home page of his weblog, Peterme.com, "For What It's Worth: I've decided to pronounce the word "weblog" as wee'- blog. Or "blog" for short."[122] Justin Hall is considered one of the earliest bloggers in the world, as he started blogging in 1994 while he was a student at Swarthmore College. [123]

The term blogger refers only to those who write blogs, and it does not include those who read the blogs. Blogs have some distinguishing characteristics, such as providing links to other blogs and web pages and the use of links in the text. The posts are individual posts by the blogger him or herself, and are "usually time stamped, analogous to stories in a newspaper."[124] Jeff Jarvis, who is a blogger, and director of the interactive journalism program at the City University of New York's Graduate School of Journalism believes that blogging is "the easiest, cheapest, fastest publishing tool ever invented,"[125] and that with blogging "the people have a voice they didn't have before."[126] It's also important to refer to the term "blogosphere" which covers all blogs and links which connect them together.[127]

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[118] MARK TREMAYNE, BLOGGING, CITIZENSHIP AND THE FUTURE OF MEDIA vii (Routledge 2007).

[119] *Id*.

[120] *Id*. at 3.

[121] *Id*. at vii.

[122] Peter Merholz, *Peter Me*, Oct. 12, 1999, http://web.archive.org/web/19991013021124/http://peterme.com/index.html (Last visited May 18, 2009)

[123] Reyhan Harmanci*, Time to get a life -- pioneer blogger Justin Hall bows out at 31*, san Francisco chronicle, Feb. 20, 2005, http://www.sfgate.com/cgibin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2005/02/20/MNGBKBEJO01.DTL.

[124] TREMAYNE, *supra* note 118, at vii.

[125] Jenna Wortham, *After 10 Years of Blogs, the Future's Brighter Than Ever,* WIRED, Dec. 17, 2007, http://www.wired.com/entertainment/theweb/news/2007/12/blog_anniversary.

[126] *Id*.

[127] TREMAYNE, *supra* note 118, at vii.

networks evolved, as blogosphere has proven itself to be one of the fastest evolving networks which emphasizes its importance and impact. [128]

      Its' interesting to see how a minor online application such as blogging became a tool for political activism. Bloggers interred the political field mostly in the USA in 2004, where they were involved in political campaigns, when presidential candidate Howard Dean used blogs to reach his supporters. [129] However, bloggers were involved in the journalism business earlier than 2004, precisely after the 9/11 2001 attacks in the USA. Around that time, many blogs started to cover the events and the consequent war on terrorism, such as Vodkapundit.com and Dailykos.com. [130] Robbie Allen believes that "Bloggers outnumber journalists by a large number and are not constrained by deadlines, editors, or fact-checking. As more stories are scooped by bloggers and as more topics are covered than traditional media outlets can get to, the line between journalism and blogging begins to blur." [131] The lack of these constrains on bloggers that exist in the normal journalism qualified bloggers to fall under the category of independent journalism compared to printed press and other forms of institutional journalism. This fact opens the door to questions of the future of the known journalism and how bloggers can play a bigger role in the field of media and journalism in the future.

C. Cyberactivism in Egypt

Blogosphere is mainly characterized by three main aspects. First, all information transferred is in text form, while the appearance has become. Second, the blogger posts link to other blogs while the level of very personal issues important. Third, the spread wide which the public issues on all levels, whether locally, nationally or internationally. The whole point of the internet is about networking, we are not talking only about wires and cables networking, but also about networking people. Networking people is also the main factor of organizing a collective activity or a protest based on a common interest. [132]

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[128] *Id*. at xi.
[129] Robbie Allen, *the Impact of Blogging*, ROBBIE ALLEN, Dec. 20, 2005, http://rallenhome.com/essays/essay5.html (Last visited May 18, 2009).
[130] TREMAYNE, *supra* note 118, at xiii.
[131] ALLEN, *supra* note 129.
[132] MCCAUGHEY, *supra* note, 113, at 25.

The Internet has presented itself as a companion to political life in the world generally, as the use of the internet is now expanded to, for example, elections campaigning, political participation, expressing political opinions and many forms of political activities. In Egypt the internet has started to play a political role since the legislative elections of 2005. The increased attention by Egyptians, and gradually the reputation of bloggers flourished. Everyone learned what a "blogger" is, which was translated into Arabic as *modawen,* i.e., someone who writes down daily events. The increase in numbers of political blogs coincided with the emergence of an unusual political movement in Egypt by the end of 2004 - at the end of the fourth mandate of President Mubarak - the birth of the "Kefaya" movement. Many of the young activists involved in this political movement were also engaged in blogging on the Internet.

In 2006, a blogger (Kareem Amer) was for the first time sentenced to prison for publishing critical political opinions on his blog. It is well known that now bloggers or cyberactivists are been detained for publishing political messages across the network without a court decision, as most of them have been arrested under the law of emergency [133] which was enacted in Egypt in 1981. According to the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, the pace of repression against Internet users has risen since 2007 to reach dangerous levels.[134]

In an official report issued by the Egyptian Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC), the number of internet users in the 22 Arab countries constituted only 1.4 % of the world users, which reached 950 million users in 2005. [135] According to the same report, Egypt took the first rank in the number of internet users in 2005, reaching 4.4 million users, followed by Saudi Arabia with 2.5 million users. [136] In a more recent update, Tarek Kamel, the Egyptian Minister of Communication, in a press statement stated that in 2009, the number of internet users in Egypt had reached 13 million users. [137]

Using the internet as a tool of protest and activism is one example of what the internet can offer. Cyberactivists in Egypt have moved outside the cyber realm to the streets, organizing protests and mobilizing the public on different issues

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[133] Law no. 162 of 1958.

[134] ARABIC NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS INFORMATION, 2007 REPORT, ANHRI (2008), http://openarab.net/node/273.

[135] INFORMATION AND DECISION SUPPORT CENTER, INFLUENCE OF INTERNET ON YOUTH, IDSC, (2005), http://www.idsc.gov.eg/Upload/Documents/103/Influence_Youth_Egyp_Arab%20World.pdf.

[136] *Id.*

[137] Shorouk News, *Number of Internet Users in Egypt 13 Millions*, SHOROUKNEWS, Apr. 7, 2009, http://www.shorouknews.com/ContentData.aspx?id=23592.

level. The percentage of active blogs in Egypt is 48.3%, and the estimated number of Egyptian bloggers more than 160,000.[138]

The report also revealed that 79.2% of the Egyptian blogs post from inside Egypt, compared to 20.8% who post from other countries. Most bloggers, 82.1%, are located in Cairo by. The estimated number of Arabic blogs is about 490,000, which does not exceed 0.7% of all blogs worldwide.[139] The report pointed out that there are five types of blogs, 30.7% interested in a variety of areas, 18.9% are of a political nature, 15.5% of the blogs concern personal affairs, 14.4% are interested in arts and culture, 7% are of a religious nature, and 4.8% on social issues, while blogs focused on technology don't exceed 4% of the total Egyptian blogs.[140]

Among these blogs, there are some well-known blogs that are known to both intellectual internet users as well as common citizens interested in political activism in Egypt. Among the most active blogs are, for example, "Manal and Alaa,"[141] Sharkawy,[142] Malek X,[143] and Misr Digital.[144] These blogs are important sources for following up on what is happening in the political arena. They are able to circumvent the restrictions and censorship of the media and benefit from the freedom offered by the virtual space. Thus, blogs have appeared as alternative platforms to the press and the state media, who completely ignore news of demonstrations and political events organized by opposition forces.[145]

The effort made to investigate the numbers and conditions of Egyptian bloggers on the Internet shows the growing influence of this segment on the political life in Egypt. However, despite the importance of this matter, the report made by IDSC is not a summary of that effort, but is more like an indirect call to control the phenomenon.

In the coming section we will discuss some of the main cases where Egyptian bloggers have played a significant role in reshaping their attitude toward certain issues and the public opinion in Egypt. A number of these cases indicate that there are about 600,000 blogs in April 2008, which constituted 0.7% of Arab blogs, and 0.2% of the total blogs watched by the global

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[138] IDSC, *supra* note 2.

[139] *Id.*

[140] *Id.*

[141] *See* Manal and Alaa Blog, http://manalaa.net.

[142] *See* Sharkawy Blog, http://sharkawy.wordpress.com.

[143] *See* Malcom X Blog, http://malek-x.net.

[144] *See* Misr Digital Blog, http://misrdigital.blogspirit.com.

[145] Muaaz Mahmoud, *Bloggers the Fifth Authority*, LE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE, Feb. 2009, http://www.mondiploar.com/article2448.html?PHPSESSID=a5f60c349ed7ee59ab9781433f4dc606.

media and press, both locally and internationally. I will also present different tools of cyberactivism that Egyptian activists used such as blogs, Facebook and twitter.

D. Cases covered by bloggers which changed public opinion

1. Torture Cases on Blogs

With the expansion and spread of the phenomenon of torture and humiliation at the hands of police officers, blogs play an important role in detecting and exposing such police abuses. The number of bloggers publishing cases of torture occurring in the district police stations has increased dramatically. Wael Abbas, one of the most prominent bloggers in Egypt who is well-known for publishing on his blog Misr Digital[146] torture incidents perpetrated by the Egyptian police. In November 2006, MisrDigital blog published a video clip taken with a mobile phone showing a man subjected to sexual harassment by what appeared to be police officers. The person was later identified as a microbus driver called Imad Al Kabir. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, Al-Kabir stated that "two plainclothes officers detained him on January 18, 2006, after he intervened in an altercation between the officers and his cousin. He said that the officers took him to Bulaq al-Dakrur police station, where they beat him, tied him by his wrists and ankles, and raped him with a stick while one of the officers made a video of the torture with his mobile phone. The video shows al-Kabir screaming and begging for mercy while being raped." [147] MisrDigital wasn't the only blog to publish this video, also blogger Mohamed Khaled published it at earlier time. [148] The video was picked up by many other blogs, and later posted on Youtube,[149] reaching many people and influencing public opinion and lead to the establishment of support groups about the case, until it was picked up by a journalist at El Fagr newspaper who managed to identify the victim. [150] Lawyer Nasser Amin, who is a human rights activist too, took the case to court, and in December 2006, the

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[146] *See* Misr Digital Blog, http://misrdigital.blogspirit.com.
[147] HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, EGYPT: BUS DRIVER RAPED BY POLICE FACES NEW RISK OF TORTURE, HRW, (2007), http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2007/01/12/egypt-bus-driver-raped-police-faces-new-risk-torture.
[148] *See* Demagh Mak Blog, http://demaghmak.blogspot.com/2006_11_01_archive.html.
[149] It is a website specialized in posting videos that is famous worldwide (www.youtube.com)
[150] The Hub, *Egyptian Internet Torture Video Shakes Police Sense of Impunity*, THE HUB, Nov. 7, 2007, http://hub.witness.org/en/node/2340.

perpetrators, two police officers, were arrested and faced charges of torture and sexual harassment. [151] Finally, in November 2007, the two police officers received a prison sentence of three years thanks to the Egyptian bloggers who initiated the case. Finally a human rights violation victim had his right restored in what was considered by national and international media as a landmark torture case in Egypt. [152] This case also led to more cyberactivism on the issue of torture in detention centers, which was manifested in the establishment of an online-movement called "Egyptians Against Torture." [153]

Another torture case that was reported by blogger Hossam Hamalawy "Arabist" [154] is called "Al Adly Videogate."[155] Also in this case a young man was videoed by a mobile camera while he was being beaten on the back of his neck. The video was posted by Hossam and other bloggers. The case was also picked up by a local newspaper, influencing public opinion, until the prosecution office ordered an investigation to the case. [156] The video was picked up by the lawyers of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR), and a complaint was filed against the perpetrators. [157] I took part personally in this case through my work at EOHR, I attended the Prosecution Office interrogations with the torture victim. Hossam and other bloggers followed with me the updates of the interrogations, which lasted for around 7 hours, and finished around 2:00 in the morning. The bloggers followed the case, creating public support for the victim and transforming the case to a major issue. Finally the court sentenced the perpetrators to one year of in prison. [158]

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[151] *Id*.

[152] Ellen Knickmeyer, *Egyptian Police Sentenced in Landmark Torture Case*, THE WASHINGTON POST, Nov. 6, 2007, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/05/AR2007110501673.html.

[153] Alexandra Sandels, *Torture, Police brutality Addressed in Landmark Legal Cases but Practice Remains an Endemic*, THE DAILY NEWS EGYPT, Dec. 30, 2007, http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=11058.

[154] *See* 3rabawy Blog, http://arabist.net/.

[155] *See* 3arabawy Blog, http://arabist.net/arabawy/2007/02/02/el-adly-video-gate-imbaba-updates.

[156] Ali Zalat, *Prosecutor General Orders an Investigation in the Back Neck Clip,* AL MASRY AL YOUM, Feb. 3, 2007, http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=46809.

[157] THE EGYPTIAN ORGANIZATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, EOHR DEMANDS AMENDING THE LAW IN ARTICLES RELATED OF TORTURE (2007), http://www.eohr.org/ar/press/2007/pr0206.shtml.

[158] THE EGYPTIAN ORGANIZATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, A POLICE CORPORAL SENTENCED (2007), http://www.eohr.org/ar/press/2007/pr0228.shtml.

In another case of torture reported by a blogger, in which I also had personal experience in, was the case of the video of a girl hanging by her hands in a police station and confessing to murder. This case was reported by Wael Abbas also in January 2007, and later was picked up by *Al Masry Al Youm* newspaper. [159] In the video, the girl was tied by the feet and legs to a stick installed over two chairs and her body swung in the air. She was talking to a person and calling him "Basha" - the title used for addressing police officers in Egypt - and requesting him to have mercy on her, saying "I killed him, I killed him Basha."[160] The case was also picked up by human rights organizations. The victim was identified and a case filed, which is still pending investigations. [161]

2. Sexual Harassment incidents on blogs

One other well-known incident which was raised by a group of bloggers, including Wael Abbas, Malek Mustafa [162] and others, was the issue of sexual harassment in the streets of Cairo. [163] Wael and his fellow bloggers brought attention to the sexual harassment incident that took place during the Fitr Feast in Downtown Cairo in 2006. Despite the authorities denying this incident, the photos and description posted by the bloggers were picked up by both local and international press and caused huge controversy. [164]

Mustafa's testimony that was published on his blog "Malcolm X" under the title of *Sexual Eye* the police officers didn't confront the incident was the spark that provoked how the influence of bloggers visible blogs comments such incidents The issue of sexual harassment sex became the central issue on many blogs.[165] Many girls spoke of harassment they were subjected to, or they had witnessed in the earlier

159 al Masry al Youm, *A New Torture Clip*, AL MASRY AL YOUM, JAN. 7, 2007, http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=43709.
160 *See* Misr Digital Blog, http://misrdigital.blogspirit.com/archive/2007/01/index.html.
161 I participated personally in finding the girl in a team of lawyers from the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights and also journalists from Al Masry Al Youm. We had a meeting with her step-father, and at the beginning they were afraid to file the case.
162 *See* Malcom X Blog, http://malek-x.net/.
163 *See* Malcom X Blog http://malek-x.net/node/268 and Misr Digital Blog, http://misrdigital.blogspirit.com/archive/2006/11/index.html.
164 Heba Saleh, *Egypt Bloggers Fear State Curbs*, BBC News, Feb. 22, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6386613.stm.
165 Abdul Rahman Mostafa, *Youth Expose Sexual Harassment on the Internet*, ELAPH, Nov. 2, 2006, http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/ElaphGuys/2006/11/187900.htm?sectionarchive=ElaphGuys. (Last visited May 18, 2009)

periods. Some young people wrote their comments and gave testimony on the issue of sexual harassment, especially on the video of that incident taken by Wael and Mustafa. [166]

The story did not stop at this point, but moved quickly to electronic forums, where there was a strong reaction. Some visitors to the forums were not sufficiently aware of blogs and their owners, but they were still engaged in the action. For example, in one of these forums, a young journalist, Hossam Diab, prepared a report containing the testimony of owners of shops which were close to the location of such incidents. Hossam said "When I read the blog of Malcolm X about what happened downtown, I got shocked and confusion, such as those who have followed me the facts of the matter, and immediately before I loss enthusiasm, I took my recorder, notebook and pen and went to the incident area, to meet witnesses of yesterday's events." [167] Hossam mentioned in his report that the shop owners told him of violations and harassment of some girls that took place. [168]

Those incidents had a "ripple effect"; the stories quickly spread to hundreds of other blogs on the Internet and eventually moved to another internet tool, which is forums, as well as traditional media. Bloggers including some activists decided to establish a campaign entitled "Speak out to break down the barrier of silence" to compile testimonies of sexual harassment. [169]

What started as just the monitoring of an incident later escalated to a huge campaign adopted by many other bloggers. From what we can see on one of the prominent blogs in Egypt by Shahinaz Abdul Salam,[170] this campaign included organizing demonstrations in the streets demanding the government to adopt a legislation against sexual harassment. [171] These demonstrations continued and spread covering all cases of sexual harassment taking place, including a very recent case of TV director Noha Roushdy. [172]

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[166] *Id.*

[167] Hossam Diab, *Live Testimonies of Sexual Harassments Downtown Cairo*, KHAYAL, http://www.khayalworld.com/viewtopic.php?p=20473#20473 (Last visited Mar. 28, 2009).

[168] *Id.*

[169] MOSTAFA, *supra* note, at 165.

[170] *See* Wa7da Masrya Blog, http://wa7damasrya.blogspot.com.

[171] *Id.*

[172] Nora Fakhry, *"No to Sexual Harassment" a Call by Egyptian Women*, YOUM 7, Apr. 18, 2009, http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=90558&.

campaign organized by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, which organized a wide campaign to support a proposed draft law to control sexual harassment in Egypt.

The respond wasn't from the civil society only, the Egyptian parliament is now considering passing a new law to control sexual harassment crimes. This law is expected to pass soon as it is supported by both members of the National Democratic Party and from the Muslim Brotherhood members of parliament. [173]

3. Bloggers and Elections

Blogs also played an important role during the legislative elections in Egypt in late 2005 and early 2006, which covered the course of the electoral process and revealed many of the abuses and practices of "bullying" through blog posts, photos and video clips. For example, blogger Wael Abbas published many of the pictures of "*Baltageyia*," gangsters and bullies in Egyptian dialect, smashing advertising cars of the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood in a constituency in northern Egypt. Wael also published other images showing security forces firing rubber bullets and tear gas bombs to prevent voters from entering polling stations. [174] The role of blogs wasn't restricted to only covering events. They contributed to the organization and publicizing of various political events, and sometimes they provided detailed coverage of the demonstrations live from the field, especially on blogs such as *MisrDigital* and Manal and Alaa. [175] Also some blogs offered logistical information on elections, such as the distribution of constituencies, voting procedures and other services. [176]

4. 6 April 2008: A nationwide strike sparked on Facebook

Its interesting that the efforts of bloggers were not in vain. At 6 April 2008 is huge campaign marked by the blogers and cyber Egyptists, because society considered the rights organizations strikes in the modern history of Egypt. We have to return back a little to understand what happened on 6 April 2008. Egypt has suffered a lot in 2008 wave of the increase in food prices in world markets, and

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[173] Joseph Maiton, *Egypt: a New Law on Sexual Harassments*, WEN, Feb. 6, 2009, http://www.awomensenews.org/article.cfm?aid=3328&context=archive. (Last visited May 18, 2009).

[174] *See* Misr Digital Blog, http://misrdigital.blogspirit.com/archive/2005/11/index.html.

[175] *See* Misr Digital Blog, http://misrdigital.blogspirit.com/archive/2005/11/index.html.

[176] *See* Manal and Alaa Blog, http://www.manalaa.net/voters_database#comment.

reflected a significant increase in food commodity prices. These crises spread to the rest of the sectors, increasing the prices of almost all goods. This situation led to the launch of an appeal calling for the increase of salaries. Labor movement has escalated dramatically in 2008, which saw a record number of strikes and protests in all parts of Egypt. [177]

The center of this call was one of the largest factories of the remaining factories of the public sector, which is the Mahalla Textile Factory in the Delta of Egypt, which includes about 27,000 workers. It was not their first. The Mahalla workers have carried out many of the great strikes since 2007, which has been publicized widely. After that, the leaders of the labor movement in the factory called for a strike on 6 April 2008. [178]

In a very short period, Internet activists took this call and turned into a general strike in Egypt, against both corruption and price rises. They organized an electronic campaign, calling on people to stay indoors and refrain from going to their work premises on that day or go to the sites of public protest. Well-known blogs that I have already mentioned adopted this call to strike, but this time a new electronic tool was used: "Facebook."[179] Several groups were established for the strike on Facebook such as the "April 6, a general strike for the people of Egypt," which later became the 6 April Movement with currently 73,000 members. [180] Facebook activists sent thousands of invitations to other Egyptian users urging them to stay at home on "the general strike" day. One of these young activists was Israa Abdul-Fattah. [181]

The Egyptian security system overwhelmed with such a call, which put it in a state of confusion and uncertainty because it fell outside the usual political rules of the protest. The security system found itself dealing with a call for civil disobedience with a social agenda, from the grassroots level which cyberactivists advocate for, away from the traditional political opposition. Except for the "Kefaya" movement, and some other political forces such as the frozen Labour Party, a lot of opposition parties

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[177] Joel Benin, *Egypt's Empty Stomachs,* Le Monde Dilomatique, May 2008, http://www.mondiploar.com/article.php3?id_article=2026 (Last visited May 18, 2009).
[178] MARGHANI, supra note 73, at 10.
[179] Facebook is a social networking website found at (www.facebook.com)
[180] *See* 6 April Movement Group on Facebook, http://www.facebook.com/s.php?ref=search&init=q&q=6+April+&sid=48529bffe2667f94305790170dee5fe4#/group.php?sid=48529bffe2667f94305790170dee5fe4&gid=9973986703&ref=search (Last visited Apr. 28, 2009).
[181] Mohamed Azzam, *Israa the Facebook Girl Who Led the Strike*, AL MASRY AL YOUM, Apr. 9, 2008, http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=100602 (Last visited May 18, 2009).

did not participate in calling for the strike. [182] At the beginning, the government tried to ignore such a call, even the official media did not touch it, either closely or from afar. It was left to the independent newspapers such as *Al Masry Al Youm* and *Al Dostour* and the private satellite channels, which set aside large areas of coverage and analysis of the call. [183] Increasingly concerned, the Ministry of Interior launched on the eve of the strike warning to citizens through the official media, calling upon citizens not to participate in any demonstration or rally, or they would be arrested under the emergency law. The security forces prepared for the event moving into the major areas in Cairo and some other provinces, to control any movement before it started. [184]

On the day of the strike, the situation was relatively calm in the capital, with only some of the demonstrations in the center of the country have been dispersed and the participants were arrested. However, the usual crowds of Cairo significantly diminished suggesting a significant response to the call of citizens to strike. According to my own personal experience, the city of Mahalla, north of Cairo, witnessed violent clashes between the security forces of one side and the Mahalla factory workers and their supporter, resulting in a number of dead and wounded. [185] After containing the riots, security turned to the organizers of the strike and those who promoted it. The police arrested several cyberactivists, include the most well-known Israa Abdel Fattah, who was held approximately two weeks in prison waiting for the decision of the Minister of the Interior to be released. [186]

5. Twitter Activists during the Mahalla Siege

The whole city of Mahalla was put under police force siege for many days after the 6 of April. One week after the incidents, a group of bloggers and activists made an attempt to enter Mahalla. At same time there was a convoy of cars carrying aid and supplies to the besieged inhabitants of the city. The convoy was organized by a group of activists, university professors, bloggers and common citizens. Our attempt to enter Mahalla succeeded, while on the other side the police stopped the other

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[182] MARGHANI, *supra* note 73, at 41.
[183] MAHMOUD, *supra* note 145.
[184] *Id*.
[185] Personal experience. *See* MARGHANI, *supra* note 73, at 14 .
[186] Sami Abdul Radi, *Israa speaks to al Masry al Youm*, AL MASRY AL YOUM, Apr. 25, 2008, http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=102685 (Last visited May 19, 2009).

convoy before it reached the city and arrested the organizers. The events of this day were fully documented by one of the bloggers, Mina Zekri, on his blog Egyptian Watchman. [187] According to Mina,

> On Friday, April 11, 2008 we were on a visit help lifting the siege on the beleaguered city of Mahalla since April 6.[…] The group that I had was Sherif Azer, Wael Abbas, Sarah Carr and Noov Senari, we went alone before the other group by about an hour ... being alone was the reason that we succeeded to enter Mahalla - by luck we passed the checkpoints at the entrance to Mahalla. The other group, who were also visiting with, about thirty eight persons, from University professors, rights activists, journalists and bloggers were arrested at the checkpoint at the entrance to the first area and detained for five hours after confiscating their identity cards and the keys of their cars. [188]

From the first moment of leaving for Mahalla, all activists and bloggers were using "Twitter", which is a "is a free social messaging utility for staying connected in real-time." [189] During these events, there was an American student and blogger, James Buck, who was arrested and kept inside Mahalla police station. Egyptian bloggers, who were arrested used Twitter to update all the other activists in the region and Cairo, while the blogger twittered from inside his detention with updates, until he was released at the end of the day. According to a CNN story about this incident, "On his way to the police station, Buck took out his cell phone and sent a message to his friends and contacts using the micro-blogging site Twitter. The message only had one word. 'Arrested.' Within seconds, colleagues in the United States and his blogger-friends in Egypt -- the same ones who had taught him the tool only a week earlier -- were alerted that he was being held." [190] The alert sent by Buck was picked up by Egyptian bloggers, such as Hamalawy, who disseminated every single update that Buck sent from his detention. [191]

In a more recent case, twitter was also used to communicate between bloggers when someone is in need, when Wael Abbas was at the police station after he was assaulted by a police officer. According to personal experience with the case, and according to a BBC story: "In about 40 tweets, Wael Abbas managed to inform his

[187] Mina Zekri, *A Visit to Mahalla*, EGYPT WATCHMAN, Apr. 13, 2008, http://egyptwatchman.blogspot.com/2008_04_01_archive.html (Last visited May 19, 2009).
[188] *Id*.
[189] *See* Twitter, www.twitter.com.
[190] Mallory Simon, *Student 'Twitters' his Way Out of Egyptian Jail*, CNN, Apr. 25, 2008, http://edition.cnn.com/2008/TECH/04/25/twitter.buck/ (Last visited May 18, 2009).
[191] *See* 3arabawy post, http://arabist.net/arabawy/2008/04/11/mubaraks-pigs-crackdown-on-mahalla-solidarity-trip/.

readers of his day-long experience in a Cairo city centre police station, where he had gone to complain about an alleged assault by two men, one of them a police officer, but ended up being arrested himself. " [192] What Wael did attracted the attention of the media and also human rights organizations and fellow blogger, who all followed the case until Wael left the police station. [193] Wael told BBC that "The number of his page followers increased dramatically during the day (11 April), adding around 300 new followers, as his friends re-tweeted his messages, spreading them around to reach more readers." [194] One of Wael messages that showed how twitter could be used as a networking and activism tool stated: "Fellow bloggers, activists and lawyers are following us in their cars to the police station." [195]

6. Bloggers and Mahalla Trials

In the aftermath of the Mahalla incidents, the security forces arrested about 49 persons they believed were involved in inciting rebellious acts. The forty-nine persons were arrested in the period between 13 to 18 April 2008 are currently facing trial. Following the arrest, they were blindfolded for up to nine days. Allegedly, many of them had been subjected to beatings and electric shocks and threatened with sexual abuse of female family members, during their detention at the outset by the State Security Interrogation (SSI) Office in Mahalla and then at the headquarters of SSI in Lazoghly Square, Cairo. [196] Many of the Egyptian bloggers took upon themselves the task of following up with all the updates of these trials. These bloggers included Hossam Hamalawy, who is specialized in blogging on labour rights,[197] Inanities, [198] who is blogging in English, [199] Ensaa [200] and many others. [201] Among the detainees

[192] Anees al-Qudaihi, *Detained in Egypt, But Still Tweeting*, BBC, Apr. 24, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8012268.stm (Last visited May 19, 2009).

[193] Safaa Abdoun, *Blogger Wael Abbas Says Assaulted at Home*, DNE, Apr. 9, 2009. www.thedailynewsegypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=20981 (Last visited May 19, 2009).

[194] AL-QUDAIHI, *supra* note 192.

[195] *Id*.

[196] AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, EGYPT: NO JUSTICE FOR 49 FACING TRIAL BEFORE EMERGENCY COURT (2008), http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/egypt-no-justice-49-facing-trial-emergency-court-20080905 (Last visited May 18, 2009).

[197] *See* 3arabawy Blog, http://arabist.net/arabawy/2008/08/10/trip-to-tanta-the-mahalla-49-trial/

[198] *See* Inanities Blog, http://allthegoodnameshadgone.blogspot.com

[199] *See* Inanities Blog, http://allthegoodnameshadgone.blogspot.com/2008/11/tanta-french-style.html

[200] *See* Ensaa Blog, http://ensaa.blogspot.com

[201] *See* Ensaa Blog, http://ensaa.blogspot.com/2008/04/blog-post_8321.html

were bloggers active in Mahalla such as blogger Kareem el-Beheiri and an activist from the Textile Workers, and his colleage Kamal el Fayoumi. [202]

7. Other Issues Covered by Bloggers

Blogs are not restricted to what is happening on the domestic political arena only, but extended to other important incidents that have not received adequate coverage in traditional media. The blog Jar el Kamar [203] provided detailed coverage of the sectarian violence that erupted in the city of Alexandria in 2006 between Muslims and Copts, including live testimonies. [204] The blogger explained what was happening from both sides, and his response was faster than all other media as he lived in the region, and was easy for him to mingle with public without arousing attention.[205] Many of the Arab and foreign media depended on this blog in covering the Alexandria events. [206]

The impact of blogs was not on politics only. Blogs have opened the door to many topics that were considered taboos in Egyptian society, such as religion and gender relations and spinsterhood among others. [207] An example of such social blogs is Want to get married [208] by Ghada Abdel Aal. It dares to criticize the traditional view of marriage in Egypt and the pressure exerted on girls, and fear of spinsterhood, community and religion.[209] All this was expressed by Ghada in a new spirit and simplified language. Ghada's posts were noted by one of the most prominent publishing houses in Egypt, *Al Shourouq*, which decided to publish Ghada's writings with the same title of the blog "want to get married." This proved that blogs can emerge from the virtual space to the world of published books. [210] The success of the blog encouraged Ghada to expand her blog with the establishment of two similar blogs about experiences in engagement and marriage. [211]

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[202] Alexandra Sandels, *22 Convicted for Food Rioting in Egypt's 'Mahalla 49' Case,* MENASSAT, Dec. 17, 2008, http://www.menassat.com/?q=en/news-articles/5454-22-convicted-food-rioting-egypt-s-mahalla-49-case (Last visited Apr. 18, 2009).
[203] *See* Jar el Kamar Blog, http://jarelkamar.manalaa.net.
[204] *See* Jar el Kamar Blog, http://jarelkamar.manalaa.net/node/278.
[205] *Id*.
[206] MAHMOUD, *supra* note 145.
[207] *Id*.
[208] *See* 3ayza Atgawez Blog, http://wanna-b-a-bride.blogspot.com/.
[209] *Id*.
[210] MAHMOUD, *supra* note 145.
[211] *See* http://home-of-the-bridez.blogspot.com/

E. The Egyptian Authorities and Bloggers: A Violent Encounter

Egyptian cyberactivists have succeeded in crossing many red lines, causing major embarrassment for the State and laid bare the behavior and practices of police including killings and torture, playing a key role in organizing protest, demonstrations, and other events, which embarrassed the ruling regime. In the face of this online activism, the reaction by the ruling regime as represented by the Egyptian security apparatus ranged from a violence, stalking, blocking access, reaching direct arrest and judicial prosecution. It's becoming obvious that the Egyptian regime has decided to crackdown on cyberactivists, as it realized the importance this group constitutes and how they affect public opinion on issues that were once considered taboos, and how they expose cases related to human rights that are sensitive to the regime. According to Gamal Eid, director of the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information: " Egyptian government will never forgive bloggers for continuing to expose many severe violations of law and human rights, as well as their role as part of the pro-democracy movement in Egypt" [212] Bloggers in Egypt are subjected to all kinds of intimidations, ranging from verbal threats of closing the blog, to reaching the level of judicial sentences of imprisonment. According to a report by The Committee to Protect Journalists, "authorities regularly detain critical bloggers for open-ended periods. Local press freedom groups documented the detention of more than 100 bloggers in 2008 alone. Although most bloggers were released after short periods, some were held for months and many were kept without judicial order. Most detained bloggers report mistreatment, and a number have been tortured." [213]

Blogger Mohamed Adel Meit Blog "Dead"[214] was arrested in November 2008 after the police searched his house confiscated some CDs, after he announced on his blog his support for the Palestinian Hamas movement and openly criticized President Hosni Mubarak, and accusing him of being interested in the security of Israel than the Palestinian people. [215] In a statement by Adel to Al Jazeera, Adel stated his opinion

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[212] KATIB, THE EGYPTIAN SECURITY WAGES WAR ON BLOGGERS, (2008), http://www.katib.org/node/6851 (Last visited Mar. 15, 2009).
[213] COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS, 10 WORST COUNTRIES TO BE A BLOGGER, CPJ, (2009), http://www.cpj.org/reports/2009/04/10-worst-countries-to-be-a-blogger.php (Last visited May 10, 2009).
[214] *See* Meit Blog, *http://www.43arb.info/meit/.*
[215] REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS, AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE MORE TRANSPARENT, RSF, (2008), http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=29756 (Last visited Apr. 30, 2009).

about the attitude of the government towards bloggers saying that:" The Egyptian regime is now moving to fight bloggers, after dealing with opposition and independent journalists by arresting them." [216] Adel added: "The Egyptian regime is now cracking down heavily on bloggers, as the regime claims that the work of blogger worsen the image of Egypt, while what they do is to expose the truth and reality to public opinion and the world." [217]

The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights monitored about 20 main violations against cyberactivists in 2008 alone. [218] In one of those cases, blogger and novelist Mosaad Abu Fagr Wedna Ne3eesh Blog[219], Mosaad was arrested in 2007 because of his writings on his blog which tackled the issue of the rights of the Bedouins in the Sinai peninsula in Egypt, which is considered a sensitive case for the regime. [220] Mohamed Sharkawy, his blog is "Moaten Masry" [221], was arrested one day before the 6 April 2008 strike, and faced charges of distributing materials calling for public disobedience. [222] In another case, police forces arrested a number of bloggers, Mohamed Khairi, Belal Alaa and Hossam Yehia, for participating in one of the convoys, which was organized by Egyptian political forces, working on lifting the siege on the Gaza Strip.[223] EOHR report mentioned many cases of arresting bloggers in 2008, such as Mohamed Baiumi, Khalifa Oubaid, Hani Nazir, and Abdul Tawab Mohamed. [224]

1. Kareem Amer: the first blogger to be imprisoned for blogging on religion and the president

The case of Kareem Amer is well-known because he is the first blogger to be prosecuted because of his post on his blog. Kareem Amer was an active blogger *Kareem Amer Blog* [225] who was studying law at Al Azhar University. Kareem

[216] Abdul Rahman Monsour, *the Egyptian Regime Blocks Blogs,* AL JAZEERA TALK, Oct. 13, 2007, http://www.aljazeeratalk.net/forum/showthread.php?t=77131 (Last visited, May 18, 2009).
[217] *Id*.
[218] THE EGYPTIAN ORGANIZATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, ANNUAL REPORT 2008 251-259 (EOHR 2009).
[219] *See* Wedna Ne3ish Blog, http://wednane3ish.katib.org/.
[220] EOHR, *supra* note 218, at 252.
[221] *See* http://moa6n.blogspot.com/.
[222] EOHR, *supra* note 218, at 253.
[223] AHMED RAGHEB, CROSSROADS: EGYPT 2008 201 (Hisham Mubarak Law Center 2009).
[224] EOHR, *supra* note 218, at 258-259.
[225] See Kareem Amer's Blog, http://karam903.blogspot.com/ .

introduces himself on his blog as "I am a down to earth Law student; I look forward to helping humanity against all form of discrimination. I am currently studying Law at Al Azhar University. I am looking forward to opening up my own human rights Law firm, which will include other lawyers who share the same views. Our main goal is to defend the rights of Muslim and Arab women against all form of discrimination and to stop violent crimes committed on a daily basis in these countries ." [226]

Kareem was arrested in November 2006 after a report was sent by his university to the prosecution office on background of his posts on the blog, accusing him of the following: spreading rumors that cause public disturbance, insulting the president of the republic, incitement of hatred against the ruling regime, incitement against Islam and finally harming the reputation of Egypt. [227] These charges are according to Article 98 of the Egyptian Penal Code. [228] The other charge concerned with insulting the president, states that:" Whoever affronts the president of the Republic by means of any of the foregoing methods shall be penalized by Confinement." [229]

On 22 February 2007, Kareem received sentence of 4 years, 3 for "incitement against Islam" and one for "insult the president of the republic." This is considered the first court decision with imprisonment against a blogger on the basis of his writings on the blog. [230] Its obvious from the court's memo that the main reason behind this harsh sentence was that Kareem insisted on what he wrote on his blog, and when the court tried to persuade him to review what he wrote, he insisted and confirmed that these were his opinions about religion, and about the president. [231]

Human rights organizations in Egypt believe that the charges given to Kareem Amer, incitement against religions and insulting the President of the Republic, are vague charges that are unprecedented in modern democracies that respect the rule of law, because Amer was imprisoned based on an official judicial decision and not just

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[226] *Id*.
[227] THE ARABIC NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS INFORMATION, ANNUAL REPORT 2007 80 (ANHRI 2008).
[228] Egyptian Penal Code no. 58 of 1937, translation in the defence memo, *See* http://www.openarab.net/en/node/271. Article 98(f) states that "Confinement for a period of not less than six months and not exceeding five years, or a fine of not less than five hundred pounds and not exceeding one thousands pounds shall be the penalty inflicted on whoever make use of religion in propagating, either by words, in writing, or in any other means, extreme ideas for the purpose of inciting strife, ridiculing or insulting a heavenly religion or a sect following it, or damaging national unity."
[229] *Id*.
[230] ANHRI, *supra* note 227, at 80.
[231] *See* Kareem Amer's case, Qadaya, http://qadaya.net/node/228.

a temporary arrest. [232] These charges conflict with the freedom of opinion and expression, in clear contravention of the provisions of Articles 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. [233] The sentence against blogger Kareem Amer was viewed by human rights organization as a warning for bloggers in Egypt whose views caused the regime a great deal of embarrassment in previous years, as they were very critical of the organs of executive power in the State in detection of crimes of torture against citizens in police stations and security violations practiced by the police against activists and change movements. [234] In a statement to BBC, Hafez Abu Seada, secretary general of the Egyptian Human Rights Organization called that sentence "a strong message to all bloggers who are put under strong surveillance." [235]

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[232] The Arabic Network For Human Rights Information , *Amer Receives 4 Years Of Imprisonment*, ANHRI, Feb. 22, 2007, http://www.anhri.net/egypt/cpe/2007/pr0222.shtml.

[233] *Id*. Articles 19 of ICCPR states:" 1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. 2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice."

[234] ANHRI, supra note 233.

[235] BBC News, *Egypt Blogger Jailed For 'Insult'*, BBC, Feb. 22, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6385849.stm.

Chapter IV: Cyberactivism as a New Social Movement in Egypt

"In order to express your opinion and anger against occupation and the ruling regime ..you have to have blog, a stone and a shoe"

Ahmed El Sabbagh, blogger[236]

A. Egyptian Cyberactivists: A social phenomenon

Egyptian blogs in general are not limited to political issues, but cover a wide range of issues such as various fundamental social, cultural and religious issues, as well as many other more specific topics (for example related to information technology). However, in the previous sections, I have tried to describe the emergence of a specific group of bloggers who express clear political views about the need for democratic reforms and respect for human rights. The rise of this group – i.e., the cyberactivism movement - coincided with the rise of various political protest movements from different backgrounds, such as Kefaya, advocating for similar ideas.

Despite the existence of a number of political organizations with various organizational capacity and influence, many young people were attracted to the blogs where they more freely could express their deep discontent with the regime. The advantages of blogging for young dynamic people are numerous and include for example: creation of a blog is free of charge; a blog offers a spontaneous but effective means of expression; blogging fosters the idea of developing a virtual character that the blogger can create according to his own ideologies and attitudes, This gives the blogger the chance to interact within the specific framework he/she has created for him or herself. Blogging also promotes networking without having to go to public meeting places or street activities, which also encouraged a lot of young people to immerse in cyberactivism while achieving full self-satisfaction.

Now we can realize that any social movement or organization on the ground might make use of a counterpart social movement in the virtual realm of cyberspace. There are now more young people mobilizing masses and establishing links between blogs, raising different slogans that represent different ideologies, taking the

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[236] Ahmed el Sabbagh's, *Intro Page*, Ahmed El Sabbagh Blog, (2009), http://ahmedelsabbagh.blogspot.com/2009/01/blog-post_21.html

maximum advantage of the cyber world. Then came the Facebook in the midst of social and economic crisis, and in the light of the increase of movements of protest, to be the birthplace of protest and solidarity, making the largest number of young people engaged in the public action.

If we believed that humans are social by nature, so we can say that the feeling of self-satisfaction is one of the main features of humans, with the relative variation from one person to another. In order for human to reach this feeling of self-satisfaction, man started to express feelings and opinions in different shapes, starting from carving caves walls, and reaching electronic blogging. [237] So the phenomenon of the digital blogging is only a natural extension for all types of personal diaries. Therefore, it is useful to analyze the phenomenon of blogging, in the Arab world and Egypt on the social foundations in the light of its substantive content. [238]

It seems that there is a world consensus that blogging is a social phenomenon. According to a report by one of the biggest IT and software company, Microsoft, blogging is viewed as a widely spread social phenomenon, that is now covering all aspects of social life. [239] Even Arab researchers, thinkers and human rights activists, always referred to cyberactivism and blogging as a social phenomenon. [240]

B. Egyptian Cyberactivists as a New Social Movement (NSMs)

It is quite convincing how the Internet became the virtual gathering place of such new movements, and by time Internet became a fertile soil where NSMs can dwell. There are many characteristics that qualified the Internet to play this vital role to NSMs. The Internet allows NSMs to communicate and generate and distribute information in a very cheap and effective way, in addition to allowing receiving reactions, responses and feedbacks, also its decentralized structure and its textual nature in communication system. [241] According to Lee Salter, these characteristics of the Internet are in accordance with "the requisite features of NSMs: nonhierarchical,

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[237] Talal Nazem Al Zouhairy, *The Phenomenon Of Blogging*, AZUHAIRI Blog, *http://azuhairi.jeeran.com/files/85946.doc* .

[238] *Id*.

[239] *See* Microsoft Report on Bloggers, http://download.microsoft.com/download/d/3/b/d3b7d5c9-6005-434c-8e71822678b15eac/pr_271106.doc (Last visited May 10, 2009)

[240] *See* Article on Diwan Al Arab, http://www.diwanalarab.com/spip.php?article14286, *See* ANHRI story, http://anhri.net/hotcase/2006/0603.shtml.

[241] MCCAUGHEY, *supra* note 113, at 129.

open protocol; open communication; and self-generating information and identities." [242] So we can deduce from the previous statement that its more likely to find a NSM that is initiated on the Internet, therefore it is convenient to study the Egyptian cyberactivists movement as a new social movement. In order to do this, we will discuss the main aspects of NSMs and how Egyptian cyberactivists meet such criteria.

1. In a transitional phase between industrial and post-industrial society

As argued by Alain Tourine, one of the main aspects of NSMs is that it's the offspring of the transitional phase between industrial and post-industrial era[243], which is mainly characterized with high advanced technology. The main feature of this technology was manifested in the field of communication and Information technology, mostly through the uses of the Internet. As we have seen before, Egyptian cyberactivists were able to use most of the technological tools available on the Internet to propagate for their ideas, or to organize activities and campaigns. These tools included blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and many other tools and websites. All these application that are mostly used by cyberactivists are put under a general term "Web 2.0". [244] What made these applications put under a special term is because they share common features that could be summarized in keywords such as " democratic; respect for users; user-orientated; community building; collaborative; interaction; participative; sharing; social networking" [245] These recently developed applications are seen by researchers as "a significant phase in a social movement for advancing the increasing ability of individuals and groups to exercise their right to communicate." [246]

Some of the Egyptian bloggers took the idea of Web 2.0 to the level of ideology, such as Hossam Hamalawy, who devoted a whole new blog [247]

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[242] *Id*.

[243] SCOTT, *supra* note 19, at 15.

[244] Tim O'reilly, *What Is Web 2.0*, O'Reilly, Sep. 30, 2005, http://www.oreilly.de/artikel/web20.html.

[245] William F. Birdsall, *Web 2.0 as a social movement*, WEBOLOGY, Feb. 6, 2007, http://www.webology.ir/2007/v4n2/a40.html (Last visited May 10, 2009).

[246] *Id*.

[247] *See* Leno Sphere IT Blog, http://lenosphere.org/

to use these technological applications, including links to practical tutorials. [248] Moreover, many Egyptian cyberactivists associated themselves with these IT tools and considered it a social movement. For example, blogger Sarah Carr believes that cyberactivists in Egypt became a collective movement through the use of " blogging (and other forms of web 2.0 media such as Twitter, Jaiku)"[249], while she considers herself part of Hamalawy's Web 2.0 movement. [250]

2. Diffused Social Statuses

As we explained in Chapter I, NSMs is not based on a solid social structure of the members of the movement, which means that NSMs are mostly based on rather diffused social structure that included a wide range of categories related to social standard, gender or profession. [251] In the case of Egyptian Cyberactivists, we have seen how the bloggers' backgrounds differed from one to another. The movement wasn't restricted to rich people who have access to high technologies, but it also included activists who belong to middle class and even lower class. While some bloggers believe that blogging requires a high social standard for the blogger to be able to afford the costs of the hardware and the high speed connection of the internet[252], other studies believed that the rise of the cyberactivists came from the middle and low class, which suffer the most from the suppression of the regime and needed a way to express their needs and thoughts. [253] The diffusion of social structure of NSMs sometimes reached the level of denouncing the terminologies related to social standards laid down by the classic schools. For example, prominent blogger Wael Abbas, who belongs to the Egyptian middle class, stated openly his refusal to all these terms of social divisions such as upper class, middle class etc. [254]

Despite that male bloggers constitute about 75% of the total bloggers in Egypt, [255]however, female bloggers played a great role in the movement, especially to the extent for these applications. This blog contained detailed information to cyberactivists how

[248] *See* Revolution 2.0 Blog, http://groups.diigo.com/groups/revolution-20.

[249] Interview with Sarah Carr, blogger and journalist, Cairo (Apr. 13, 2009).

[250] *Id*.

[251] LARANA, *supra* note 5, at 6.

[252] *See* http://elshare3.blogspot.com/2007/01/blog-post_116972161107923677.html

[253] KATIB, EGYPT: DETERIORATION OF SOCIAL STANDARDS, KATIB, http://www.katib.org/node/5645.

[254] *See* Bloggers Times Blog, http://bloggers-times.blogspot.com/2008_03_01_archive.html.

[255] Ghada Hamdi, *When Blogs Talk*, AL MASRY AL YOUM, Mar. 8, 2009, http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=201888 (Last visited May 12, 2009).

of winning international awards for blogging, such as Nora Younis who won the Human Rights First Award in 2008 for here efforts in exposing "violations in Egypt, including the raid of a Sudanese refugee sit-in in Cairo by Egyptian police in 2005 and the sexual assaults on women in a Cairo demonstration the same year by plainclothes security officers." [256] Taking into consideration the conservative culture in Egypt and the position of women in the society, however, we can see that Egyptian girls joined the cyberactivists movement actively. Many female activists in Egypt found it a good opportunity to use blogs to express their ideas and opinions. Naira El Shaikh, a blogger, stated that blogging gave her freedom to write her personal opinion on many issues and to be published on the internet for people to read. [257] In conclusion, Egyptian cyberactivists movement proved to be able to represent a wider range of social categories, and carried the needs and demands of many different social classes, which is one core aspect of NSMs.

3. Ideology

As argued by some scholars, one of the main characteristics of NSMs is that the element of ideology is completely different from the classic frame or the Marxist perspective. [258] NSMs don't require a unifying ideology like the classic social movements, however NSMs are still associated with some aspects that could play this role such as a symbol or a value. In the case of Egyptian cyberactivists, we can see this aspect obvious, as the activists don't belong to a specific ideological background. Some of them have a socialist background, such as Hossam Hamalawy, Nora Younis and others,[259] while there are others who come from an Islamic background such as Abdul Monem Mahmoud "Ana Ikhwan Blog" [260]. Other prominent bloggers have some liberalist tendencies such Wael Abbas. [261] Therefore, the element of a unifying ideology doesn't exist among Egyptian cyberactivists, which puts them more in the frame of NSMs.

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[256] *See* Menassat story, http://news.antville.org/stories/1854267/.
[257] HAMDI, *supra* note 255.
[258] LARANA, *supra* note 5, at 7.
[259] Iman Abdul Monaem, *Egyptian Blogs Suspended In Ramadan*, ISLAM ONLINE, Sep. 22, 2007, http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1189959336098&pagename=Zone-Arabic-News/NWALayout (Last visited May 18, 2009).
[260] *See* Ana Ikhwan Blog, http://ana-ikhwan.blogspot.com/.
[261] *See* Bloggers Times Blog, http://bloggers-times.blogspot.com/2008_03_01_archive.html.

Scholars also argued that members of NSMs should have some ideas or aspirations in common that stands as a symbol or a value of there activism. In the case of Egypt, we can argue that what is common between different bloggers, such as common demands or common motives that mounted to be a common feature or a symbol of the movement. Hossam Hamalawy believes that despite Egyptian bloggers have many differences, but most of them share two fundamental demands, first; Mubarak regime has to end, second; torture should end in Egyptian police stations. [262] Blogger Sarah Carr supports Hamalawy's view and sees that bloggers such as herself, Hamalawy, Wael Abbas, Moftasa and others share common features which are opposition to the ruling regime, exposing abuses, corruption, mismanagement and other violations. [263] Shahinaz Abdul Salam "Wahda Masreyia Blog", also believes that the common feature between Egyptian cyberactivists is defending freedom of expression and human rights. [264] While blogger Wael Eskanda, owner of blog " Notes From The Underground" [265] stated that "the most common feature about Egyptian bloggers is the absence of fear. Most bloggers express themselves freely. If you talk to the older generations they're full of fear because of history, Egyptian bloggers express the truth according to themselves" [266]

From what we have seen from the previous chapter, its clear that the goals and objectives of bloggers rotated around opposition to the regime, such as Kareem Amer's case, or exposing the police malpractices, such as in the cases of Wael Abbas and Hossam Hamalawy. From this we can see the point that different backgrounds and ideologies of cyberactivists dissolved and faded away to pave the way of common goals and objectives to dominate. According to the article by Daniel Williams, sometimes bloggers represented rival groups such as "Mustafa Naggar, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Mohammed Sherif, a self-styled revolutionary socialist"[267] can be united together on a common goal, which is challenging the regime of President Mubarak.

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[262] Interview with Hossam Hamalawy, blogger, Cairo (Apr. 15, 2009).
[263] CARR, *supra* note 249.
[264] Interview with Shahinaz Abdul Salam, blogger, Cairo (Apr. 10, 2009)
[265] *See* Notes from the Underground Blog, http://4amterrors.blogspot.com/.
[266] Interview with Wael Eskandar, blogger, Cairo (Apr. 13, 2009)
[267] Daniel Williams, *Rivals Unite To Challenge Mubarak*, NYT, Apr. 14, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/15/world/middleeast/15iht-lett.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2&ref=world (Last visited May 18, 2009).

4. Individualism leading to a collective action

One of the distinctive characteristics of NSMs is the importance of individualism as a source of a later collective action. As NSMs scholars argued, NSMs is characterized by a blurry relation between the individual and the collective action, as many NSMs were initiated through an individualistic attitude that was transferred to group action or movement. [268] Sassoon explains that NSMs tend to "accomplish the task of letting individuals re-define symbolic relations between them, with society, with nature, creating other relation networks which radically oppose the 'mass'". [269] This statement summarize the attitude of Egyptian cyberactivists, and as we have seen, blogging started as personal and intimate practice, that in the course of time and different circumstances turned to a movement with common goals and actions. Some researchers tried to answer the question how this happened, how come a very individualistic practice by default transformed to group action? It is interesting that the basic motive for a person to start blogging was to fulfill his individualism, however what happened is that this determined individualism lead to a collective movement. [270] Blogger Sarah Carr believes that blogging begins as an individual initiative but political bloggers at least are drawn into a bigger collective. [271] This is particularly the case in Egypt where the political blogging community is relatively small, and where blogging (and other forms of web 2.0 media such as Twitter, Jaiku) are used as activism tools. [272] Blogger Shahinaz Abdul Salam supports Sarah's saying that blogging in Egypt started as an individual initiative that lead to a collective action, which is helping in make people united for a cause and cooperate for it. [273] Blogger Wael Eskandar believes that its "for certain starting a blog and writing a blog is very individualistic since not all blogs are the same and tackle different issues, but the reason that makes blogging powerful is the collective interest of bloggers and readers in one another". [274]

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[268] LARANA, *supra* note 5, at 7.
[269] SCOTT, *supra* note 19, at 17.
[270] *See* Nethar Blog, http://azza-moghazy.blogspot.com/2009/03/blog-post_20.html.
[271] CARR, *supra* note 249.
[272] *Id*.
[273] ABDUL SALAM, *supra* note 264.
[274] ESKANDAR, *supra* note 266.

Some people started blogging because they found in it a way to fulfill themselves, regardless of focusing on a public goal, however, by practicing blogging they found themselves in midst of a movement. Blogger Amr Gharbeia when asked what provoked him to start blogging, he answered:" Because I can, and because it is a process I control completely, which make it much less hassle compared to writing an opinion piece in the papers."[275] Even in the case of bloggers who officially belong to a specific ideology, such as those who belong to the Muslim Brotherhood, they stated clearly that blogging for them is an individual practice not motivated by the ideology, even though later it was used as a tool to propagate for common interests. [276]

5. Symptoms of Crises

One of the distinctive characteristics of NSMs is that they are mostly motivated by a crisis – thus, NSMs are seen by scholars as symptoms of a crises. [277] In the previous chapters we have seen how some public crisis became the main motive of young people to start blogging or active online. For example there was the issue of inheriting the presidency to Mubarak the son, torture in police stations, labors rights, sexual harassments, failure of media to represent the true needs of people, failure of political parties to become an effective political player, and many other issues that encouraged bloggers to write and share these worries with other fellow bloggers. Hossam Hamalawy stated that what motivated him to be a blogger was the crackdown on the 2006 Cairo spring, that include the sexual abuse of blogger Mohamed el-Sharqawi in custody, and the frustration at the traditional media outlet failing to spread the news about the crackdown. [278] While blogger Nora Younis stated that the bloody encounters between the police and the Sudanese refugees in Mustafa Mahmoud Square in 2005, which demonstrated the brutality of the Egyptian security forces, something that provoked Nora to start blogging. [279]

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[275] Interview with Amr Gharbeia, blogger, Cairo (Apr. 13, 2009).
[276] Elsayyed Zayed, *Brotherhood Blogs, Islam Online*, Sep. 16, 2008, http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1221461458857&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout (Last visited May 18, 2009).
[277] SCOTT, *supra* note 19, at 8.
[278] Interview with Hossam Hamalawy, blogger, Cairo (Apr. 15, 2009).
[279] Al Masry al Youm, Younis: *My Blog Started with the Refugees Strike*, Al Masry al Youm, Nov. 4, 2006, http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=35732&IssueID=476.

Mahalla strike give birth many different kinds of cyberactivism. For example Facebook played a role in calling for the strike, blogging worked on covering the events of the day, while Twitter played a role in instant reporting of violations against activists who went for solidarity with the Mahalla workers. These events and crisis proved they played a crucial role in the rise of cyberactivism in Egypt, which is in consistency with the NSMs theories.

Also political analysts argued that the crisis resulted by the absence of political pluralism and the prevalence of a climate of oppression and restriction of freedoms and blocking free political activity, resulted to the emergence of blogging as a platform for opposition to exercise their freedom to criticize the policies of regimes. [280]

6. Diffused and decentralized

Another characteristic of NSM applicable to the Egyptian cyberactivists is their tendency to be diffused and decentralized. The idea of to institutionalize the cyberactivists movement was discussed many times, and even there were attempts to establish something like a syndicate for bloggers. [281] However, this idea was opposed by most of bloggers, as they didn't want it to take the form of the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate, which many activists and journalists have reservations on its efficiency. [282] Also there was an attempt to establish what was called the Egyptian Bloggers Union, and it also failed because most of bloggers didn't believe in it. [283]As we discussed earlier, most of bloggers were provoked to start blogging because of the failure of the already-established institutions, such as syndicates and political parties, therefore the idea of establishing a union or a syndicate is against the basic purpose of blogging. Blogger Shahinaz Abdul Salam believes that bloggers should be decentralized and be like bubbles, when one go or get arrested, there are many to continue and write, and this how blogging gain its power. [284] Blogger Wael Abbas supports the same idea and says that: "We are not of one profession to be limited to a union, because the process

Also as we have seen how the Mahalla crises triggered a wave of online activism. The dramatic events of

[280] Ayman Hammad, *Blogging And Freedom Of Expression On The Internet,* AL Gomhuria, Mar 21, 2009, http://www.gom.com.eg/goml/drasat.shtml (Last visited May 18, 2009).
[281] *See* Justice for Everyone Blog, http://justice4every1.blogspot.com/2005/04/blog-post_08.html.
[282] *See* Gharbeia Blog, http://gharbeia.net/node/170.
[283] *See* Egyptians Bloggers Union Blog, http://www.blogger.com/profile/02467330006594845159.
[284] ABDUL SALAM, *supra* note 264.

of blogging is about expressing what is in the mind of every person of us in whatever form, even if some people saw a it deviation from the norms, I am with absolute freedom." [285] Wael added:" bloggers sometime use anonymous names to keep their identities secret to avoid clashing with the security, and by having a syndicate for bloggers, they will have to reveal their real identities." [286] As stated by bloggers, they confirmed their tendency to be diffused and decentralized as a source of their power, which confirms that cyberactivists in Egypt enjoy one the main characteristics of NSMs.

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[285] Sherif El Dawakhly, *Bloggers Syndicate,* 20AT, Feb. 19, 2008, http://www.20at.com/t7kyk/8264.html (Last visited May 18, 2009).
[286] *Id*.

Conclusion

We have concluded that the movement of Egyptian cyberactivists fits into the theory of a New Social Movement which has been developed by various sociologists. Understanding the movement by Egyptian cyberactivists within this specific theoretical framework will enable researchers to study them more accurately; to understand the reasons behind the rise of such an interesting phenomenon; and to utilize the capacities and potentials of this movement for the interest of the public. Using the theory of NSMs to understand the Egyptian cyberactivists movement is a first step forward towards revealing all the mystery surrounding this movement. Attempts by other researchers to analyze the Egyptian cyberactivists movement on the basis of other theories left them, in my view, with more questions than answers.[287] Within the framework of NSMs, we can now understand that the rise of a movement such as the Egyptian cyberactivists was a normal and natural process under the current economic, social and political circumstances in Egypt. The NSM came to fill the vacancy left by the absence of effective political parties, syndicates and trade unions.[288] The NSM was clearly a crises-promoted phenomenon, but it quickly became an important alternative to a weak media that lacks independency. The NSM is also surely a general expression of frustration from the public who are now suffering during the oppressive period that the country is now witnessing. From a personal perspective, I believe that movement of Egyptian cyberactivists which is the most recent new social movement in Egypt was stimulated by all these various factors.

Finally, understanding Egyptian cyberactivists movement from the perspective of a new social movement raises the question: What future role could these activists play in promoting social changes in Egypt? First, it is hard to underestimate the role Egyptian cyberactivists play in the field of human rights. Second, we discussed how blogs contributed more effectively to raise awareness of various issues in the media than traditional media actors, such as the independent newspapers in Egypt. Cyberactivism might therefore challenge these two well-established institutions (i.e.,

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[287] *See* Open Arab Initiative, http://www.openarab.net/ar/node/896
[288] ZAHRAN, *supra* note 36, at 25.

the civil society movement and the independent media) more openly and strongly in the future. Some would go further and argue that cyberactivists are taking over the roles which the "disabled" political parties used to play, and that cyberactivists are now engaged in most of the classic activities of political parties, such as political awareness, mobilization, organizing demonstrations and campaigning. [289] We have seen in the previous chapters how other social movements failed to meet the needs of the public, such as the civil society movement, and for many reasons. Some people think that the work of a NSM such as cyberactivists in Egypt could be integrated in the work of the civil society to strengthen it and to support human rights demands, while others see that the cyberactivists are completely new movement that will take over the role played by civil society. Blogger Amr Gharbeia believes that the "Egyptian blogosphere has very good dynamics with both the privately owned media and the independent traditional civil society, and it is itself a part of civil society and independent media, it is symbiosis rather than an a replacement." [290] While blogger Mostafa Hussain says that: "You can't say that bloggers will replace a full time paid staff in any field. But they are bound to widen the scope of coverage of certain topics". [291] Sarah Carr believes that cyberactivists don't perform the advocacy functions as human rights organizations strictly speaking, but do publicize abuses in the same way. So they're not really an alternative so much as complementary. [292] Wael Eskandar also supports the idea that cyberactivists are not an alternative to civil society, however he can see them as an alternative to independent media which failing to communicate with the public because of the many forms of restrictions. [293] However, bloggers also may not constitute an alternative to journalists in Egypt, as one main aspect that made them different is the freedom they enjoy away from the restrictions imposed on printed journalism.

Despite all the challenges standing against the cyberactivism movement in Egypt, including a harsh intimidation campaign from the government, however, the numbers of the participants in the movement is increasing everyday, and the movement is taking a more solid form that is making a real impact on the society. The

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[289] Farouk Al Gamal, *Bloggers Syndicate Threatenth The Future Of Political Parties In Egypt*, AL MASRY AL YOUM, Jun. 17 2007, http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=64940.
[290] GHARBEIA, *supra* note 275.
[291] Interview with Mustafa Hussain, blogger, Cairo (Apr. 24, 2009).
[292] CARR, *supra* note 249.
[293] ESKANDAR, *supra* note 266.

government is trying its best to control this movement, whether through direct encounter with activists, or through legal ways. This harsh campaign is not stopping cyberactivists from doing what they believe in, whether individually or collectively, proving to the society that they exist and that their movement can be the spark of the change and a dawn of a new era, lead by the children of the 21st century, the cyberactivists.