

I Wish Something Happens and he goes...

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*MUSIC: FADE IN: HALPVER - FJELL*

*NAT SOUND: Nasser beginning speech*

SANA HAFEZ (SH): *"the guy was very charismatic, he was charming"*

That was my great aunt, Sana Hafez, a student at Cairo University during the Nasserite era. She remembers her only encounter with one of Egypt's most popular presidents to ever take office, Gamal Abdelnasser.

*SH: I remember at one time; he was passing in in an open car and we were coming out of university And I saw him He had a piercing look that you remember it, it kind of, you know, goes in you good."*

It was customary that Nasser's convoys would have immense popular presence, everyone wanted to see Gamal Abdelnasser but Sana was not like everyone else.

*SH: "I just, I just wish that something happens, and Nasser goes."*

Sana is the daughter of Soliman Hafez. My great-grandfather, a lawmaker and legislator who worked with the Revolutionary Command Council after the 1952 revolution.

*MUSIC FADE OUT: HALPVER - FJELL*

*MUSIC FADE IN: GRA HOVEDVEI - FJELL*

*SH: "he was one of the people who assisted with the revolution in many, many ways really. He was one of them, but then Nasser started to take control and my father resigned went back to his original career as a lawyer. But then he was always an honest man, you ask him, and he says what he believes. Nasser was a bit cautious of everybody around that were not in agreement with his politics. So, my father was affected... He was imprisoned a couple of times."*

My great-grandfather's many imprisonments began in november of 1956, it was not something unusual. Professor of History at the American University in Cairo, Dr. Abdelaziz EzzelArab contextualizes the political dynamic during that era.

*NAT SND: Conversing with EZZELARAB*

*ABDELAZIZ EZZELARAB (AE): "you can't talk about political conflicts or struggles, the system as structured was not a system that allows political differences, political disagreements, political adversaries and the system itself was very clear about this approach."*

*SH: "I remember they used to come and take my father very late at night. I remember that my mother had a suitcase only anytime she had his suitcase ready for my dad in case they come and take him anytime, he was old. And I remember the police would come and my father would greet them very nicely bring them in and asked my mother to make them tea and see what they want to drink or eat and they were very embarrassed. My mother didn't like them at all. She you know, curse inside but he was gentle and nice and this happened many, many times."*

despite the 'social setting' she was not allowed to know where they kept her father.

*MUSIC FADE IN: AN UNKNOWN VISITOR - COLD CASE*

*SH: "I remember we didn't know where they kept him. But somehow my brother in law, found out where my father was detained and we were not allowed to go inside and meet him but I remember this I was young, but I remember this very, very much there was a plant fence with a hole in it, they dug a hole, whoever did to allow us to talk to my father and hand him medicine and stuff from that was we used to go and he was in great spirits."*

This ordeal was not limited to political arenas family members of my great grandfather were getting affected in their own personal life.

*SH: " I was going into university the guards at the gate, held me. They said: wait there. And, and it happened for two consecutive days. You know, I think it was meant to scare me and of course I was very frightened more for my father than for anything else."*

As much as she feared for her father, she is thankful he was one of the lucky ones.

SH: *"he was treated very, very decent here at they never mistreated my father with the exception of detaining him and not telling us where he is"*

Others were not that privileged.

SH: *"my colleagues at university were more involved in politics, one of them wanted me to join but I refused to join any, any groups and any of these activities. This particular guy, I remember his name was Wael, sort of disappeared at that time the University Guards came and took him from the lecture and then he never came back and then his mother used to Call us his colleagues and ask What happened? Where is he for several years? We don't know."*

My aunt says she never saw her colleague again and until today doesn't know what happened to him. Many activists during the Nasserite era were subject to this disappearing and detention in addition to physical and psychological torture. People who would disappear were described as "ra7o wara el shams" meaning they've been past the sun.

AE: *"Its undoubtful, this was one of the darkest characteristics of Nasserite regime, even if it is possible to justify detainments at certain point of time, the torture can never be justified, it can never be justified. And I do not accept the claim that Nasser did not know the details, he was responsible whether he did know or he didn't know, he made himself responsible, there is no question about its credibility and there is no question whether it could be forgiven or not."*

This audio feature was produced by Mohamed Youssef for the Audio production course at the American University in Cario taught by professor Kim Fox in the fall semester of 2019, special thanks to my aunt Sanaa Hafez, and Dr. Abdelaziz EzzelArab for their insightful interviews. The Music was provided by Blue Dot and Nat sounds by Youtube Channel Samir Abbas.