

*Noor Ayman's Political Profile and Views on the Egyptian Revolution*

**Interview Transcript**

**Interviewer:** Yassmeen Malash

**Interviewee:** Noor Ayman

**Dates:** 26/09/11

**Place:** Studio.  
American University in Cairo  
5<sup>th</sup> Settlement, Cairo.

**College:** American University in Cairo

**Prof.:** Dr. Kim Fox

**Date completed:** 28<sup>th</sup> Sept. 11

26 September 2011

Persons present: Yassmeen Malash  
Noor Ayman

Yassmeen: I'm Yassmeen Malash and today I'll be interviewing Noor Ayman, about his political involvement and the events of January 25<sup>th</sup> and before. Noor, hello.

Noor: Hi Yassmeen.

Yassmeen: Hello, hi, you're an AUC graduate, you have a degree in Political Science, you're currently enrolled in Cairo University studying law. You're very known amongst students and young adults for your activism and political involvement. I mean - How did it all start? What was the first step?

Noor: The first step was actually family reasons, uhmm I grew up in a very political family where my father was a member of parliament for ten years, and then, he ran against Mubarak in Egypt's first ever elections in 2005.

Yassmeen: Aha.

Noor: And he was later sentenced five years imprisonment for his very strong stance against Mubarak. Because it happened at such an early age for me; I was about 14 or 15, that was the kick start to my activism where I was campaigning for the release of my father. And that eventually ended up to me getting involved in many different campaigns and being activist working for political riots, economic riots and things of this sort.

Yassmeen: So it was basically personal reasons like your parents...

Noor: It was personal reasons that kick started it, but I was never really asked by my parents to do any of this, if anything, my parents would ask me to "please Noor..."

Yassmeen: Do the opposite...

Noor: "...calm things down we've already paid enough of a price, you don't need to pay it as well"

Yassmeen: Yea, umm do you think if it wasn't for what happened back in 2005 and with your father being detained, like going to sentenced to jail and stuff would you still be in this, like, career, or..?

Noor: It's not really a career; it's just a part of your life that is dedicated for the well being of Egypt. Ummm, whether or not my father was sentenced to prison, I'm not really sure if would have really made a difference because I was brought up in such a way where you would say no to any form of injustice or

any form of corruption regardless of whether it exists, and regardless of whether it has affected you personally. And I guess my father, he is now out of prison, if anything, things are starting to look a lot better for him because Mubarak is behind bars however I'm still more, I'm even more active than I was before.

Yassmeen: Okay, um, like throughout your -lets say- years, I mean I would say you started ever since 2005, it's not, it hasn't been official I assume, right? Like, just, you would join in, like if there were riots, or... not riots, but...

Noor: Demonstrations...

Yassmeen: Yeah demonstrations, etc, but, like throughout the entire time over the past few years have u ever been injured or detained or etc as a result of your activism?

Noor: I've been detained, about 4 times, most of them were very very brief, uhhm, and most of them before being detained I would be beaten (chuckle).eh, at, either at the hands of the Egyptian police; the civilian police, or the military police.

Yassmeen: Ummm, okay well...

Noor: And, sorry, if I might also add, the worst beating I had ever gotten in my entire life was seven months after the revolution. It was in the middle of Ramadan while I was standing in a peaceful demonstration in front of the military prosecutor's office. Standing, you know, by my friends who were being put on military trials inside.

Yassmeen: So, I mean seeing as this happens -sort of-, not obviously on a regular basis, but it has happened several times to you, would you say that, you know, going into this, like heavy political involvement and activism, would you say it's a negative choice? That like, do you regret it at some point? Or have you ever regretted it?

Noor: There were times when I guess, not, me personally but when I'd see the people around me being hurt as a result of political involvement or human rights involvement, eh, there are moments, just fe...certain...(short pause) minute feelings of regret (laughter) tiny feelings of regret but they never last because in the end you know it's a cause, you know you're working for a cause, and you know you're working for... a better Egypt, and I don't have any country, you know, this is my one and only country. Hence, there will be sacrifices...

Yassmeen: So u find it worth it.

Noor: Of course it's worth it, you know, any stand you take against a corrupt dictatorship, you will have to be prepared to face any, uhhm, or, make any sacrifices in doing so.

Yassmeen: Uhhm, I remember back in the first 18 days of the revolution, there was a recording from uh, one of The Guardian reporters; his name was Jack Shanker? Skanker, if I'm not mistaken.. yeah, and you were actually detained in one of the ehh, the cars, the police cars that you were supposed to be take away, to a far away sight, what happened there? How were you feeling at the time? How was that?

Noor: It was actually the first day of the Egyptian revolution, on January 25<sup>th</sup> around 12:30, ah after midnight, after they chased us all out with, with tear gas, and rubber bullets, uhhhm one of, a group of demonstrators, in reaction to what they had just seen in the square, in reaction to what had just happened to them, attacked a police car.

Yassmeen: Were you one of them?

Noor: I was not one of them, however I had a camera and I was telling them to stop while I was filming it. And I think that was actually the first police car to be set aflame in the entire revolution. I was telling them "No guys, peaceful peaceful, Selmeya, Slemeya" but I was filming it, and,

Yassmeen: You were taken away as a result of what was, like you were taken away as one of the demonstrators that were on the scene.

Noor: I was taken away as many many people, many many people were rounded up from the area by policeman, we were beaten up uhh we were beaten up severally, we were arrested, we were arrested and placed in the state, in the central security forces truck and sent out to the dessert. It was actually quite funny because in this police truck, it was me and 45 other people...

Yassmeen: In one police truck?

Noor: In one police truck, 45 other people, there were people who were completely unconscious, there were people with eye...with their eyes uhm, with their eyes damaged (stutter) as a result of, you know, of bullets, and there were people who were literally old men who were just picked up from the street, and had nothing to do with anything, so it was quite an in...and of course there was Jack Shanker the guardian producer,

Yassmeen: Yeah, who happened to have a recorder at the time...

Noor: Who happened to have an audio recorder with him, and managed to record this historical piece.

Yassmeen: Ok so, about January 25<sup>th</sup> I mean, now that the revolution has happened, do you think it was the right time or would it have been better at a different time? I mean sooner or later? Because I mean right now, all problems are surfacing all at once. I mean, yes of course corruption is supposedly removed from power, but look at how Egypt is right now. Economically, education system is almost falling apart, I mean, what, what do you think? It would have been better before? Later?

Noor: Of course, the longer you keep a corrupt dictatorship or an oppressive dictatorship in power, the more problems that will surface later on when they are removed from power, so of course if it was up to us, we would have had this revolution happen long ago. Uhm however, we can't control really when a revolution happens..

Yassmeen: Yeah...

Noor: And, it's happened however, the revolution is actually still on going, I consider the 1<sup>st</sup> 18 days as merely an uprising. The revolution, in the sense of changing Egypt's policies, improving Egypt's policies and everything of this sort, this is yet to happen. And it's one of the reasons why we're still on the street at the moment. You mentioned, the economic problems, and the educational system that seems to be falling apart, all of these things are lit...have reached, the state that they are in now simply because...

Yassmeen: The breaking point...

Noor: They were neglected for so many decades by these corrupted slefis (mispronunciation), selfish regimes. Hence, the revolution still ongoing in order to spread into all, every single house, every single factory, every single school, or university in Egypt.

Yassmeen: But... I mean, that's completely a valid point, however we don't have -at the moment- a solid alternative or a solid solution that should rectify the system, so..?

Noor: I completely disagree, because every single leader in, or every single faction in the society have proposed certain demands or certain solutions, or certain plans to the current Supreme Council of Armed Forces into how they can improve their personal sector. And yet these things are not being taken into consideration simply because we are still dealing with a dictatorship that is based on army principle, because let's not forget armed forces, the Armed Forces, they're based on this, not a mentality of dialogue and negotiation but no, it is... certain demands that come from a superior and they're supposed to be executed by someone whose inferior, and yet we're still after the revolution we are being treated as inferiors by the supreme council of armed forces.

Yassmeen: Ok, umm ok, moving on, do you, like, how do you think the political climate has changed ever since the revolution, I mean have you felt any change? Has

it become easier to protest? Do you feel like your voice is being heard more? Or do you feel like you're being neglected? What is the change?

Noor: If anything I'd say very little has changed. Simply because as I said earlier the most I've gotten beaten up in my entire life was after Mubarak stepped down, it was actually two months ago. The first time I'd ever spent a night in the hospital, was because of a rock I'd received to the head by the Egyptian police in Tahrir Square on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June. Hence, all these things remind me personally that very little has changed, the fact that I know for sure my phone is still tapped, I know from my friends in the military that there are videos being taken of me in certain demonstrations, all of these things remind you that *very little* has changed. However, one thing that has changed is there are more people with you on the streets during demonstrations, you are no longer alone.

Yassmeen: Yea, I feel a lot of people would actually say that they feel that, you know right now you can speak up, I mean you can see the proof is that so many people are rising and they're saying their opinion about their problems, I mean like the strikes that are happening, the protests on the street, with the education and the health system, etc... Ok would you like to add anything else?

Noor: Just, all we need is for the political system to be cleaned up, and the media to be cleaned up because the media definitely dictates public opinion, and public opinion dictates policy, so when we fix the media, we'll be able –hopefully- to fix the policies.

Yassmeen: Ok, thank you, thank you very much.

Noor: Thank you very much Yassmeen.