

# **Department of Journalism and Mass communication Story Corp Project I**

## **Interview Transcript**

**Interviewer:** Sadiq Salawudeen

**Interviewee:** Mira Shoeir

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**Place of recording:** The Radio Lab, Department of Journalism and Mass communication

**Institution:** The American University in Cairo

**Professor:** Kim Fox

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### **Mira Shoeir**

Ms. Mira Shoeir is an AUC undergraduate student studying Business Administration, she is a sophomore. She was born on June 12, 1992, and not married.

Her connection with this interview is mainly because she is an Egyptian youth that took part in the revolution that occurred in Egypt dated 25, January 2011.

Mira is worth interviewing because she often discussed issues concerning economics and business in the Middle East, and most importantly had a keen interest in the recent development of her country during the revolution.

Interest that touched the narrator:

1. Coptic Christian rights.

2. Secularism
3. Free of expression and political activism
4. Freedom for political prisoners
5. National security and counteracting terrorism.

## Glossary

*Habil el Adl:* El-Adly graduated from the police academy in 1961. After working at various investigation departments, he was employed at the Foreign Ministry from 1982 to 1984. He then investigated state security matters, and became assistant interior minister in 1993. He replaced General Hassan al-Alfi as interior minister after the [November 1997 Luxor massacre](#). He was replaced by [Mahmoud Wagdy](#) on January 31, 2011, as part of a cabinet reshuffle aimed at appeasing the mass protests during [2011 Egyptian revolution](#).

During the uprising, the Egyptian Attorney General announced el-Adly had been given a travel ban. Following Hosni Mubarak's resignation, el-Adly and two other former ministers were arrested on corruption charges. He is reported to be facing charges of fraud, money laundering and for ordering that security forces fire on demonstrators during the early days of the protests. Additionally, el-Adly's assets were ordered frozen by a court order. El-Adly is estimated to have amassed a fortune of 1.2 billion US dollars. He pleaded not guilty to corruption charges on 5 March 2011, answering questions by the judge on whether he had illegally profited from his government position or laundered money by saying "that did not happen."

(Wikipedia.org)

7 March, 2011.

Persons present:

1. Sadiq Salawudeen
2. Mira Shoeir (AUC student)

Salawudeen: Egypt has had its revolution were thousands of protesters that had gotten involved in it. What are the reasons for the revolution, and how does this shape the future of the country?

My name is Sadiq Salawudeen and I will be interviewing Ms. Mira Shoeir who was part of the revolution that took place on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2011. Afternoon Mira.

Shoeir: Hi how are you?

Salawudeen: Fine. Okay Mira let us get straight to the point. Former president Hosni Mubarak has handed power to the military forces after the success of the revolution, can you explain the most probable reason for the success of this revolution?

Shoeir: Well I think that part of it obviously was what happened in Tunisia, the fear barrier was broken and people thought that if the Tunisians can do it then why couldn't we? But obviously that is not the only reason, that is not the main reason. I think you have to look way more, that were so many social pressures on people. People were unable to provide food for their family, schooling for their children, basic health care— people getting thrown out of hospitals, who were bleeding because they didn't have insurance, and I think the social pressure got too much and it was really at boiling point. And then the Tunisian revolution happened and that really was what gave it the final push.

Salawudeen: From your comments, like one can say you were with people. So during the protest in Tahrir square, people often chanted slogans of anger but demonstrated peacefully. Is there anything particularly demanded during the protest which the previous regime failed to offer that lead you to take a stand with the people? What were they?

Shoeir: Well I think the things they demanded ranged from economic request to improve, to have more money to be able to provide basic necessities. To not having people arrested arbitrarily under the emergency law, to stop torturing (in) police station. So one of the things that was being chanted was “eshabui mohak tisarha” which means the people want to try the murderer, the killer. And that was because, partly because of what happened in Tahrir, and probably because of what has being happening in Egypt during the emergency law these years. People were chanting “adlemosawa” that means they wanted equality, more equable division of wealth. Also another thing would probably be just anger at seeing all the country’s wealth just go to a concentrated number of people who were almost above the law. And so it wasn’t being applied equally, it was rule of man really, not rule of law. And— well obviously you have other things such as political pressures from what’s happening in Palestine and Iraq which upset people and were also forced to keep that bottled up inside for many, many years as well. So all that came to the surface during the last event.

Salawudeen: Talking about opposition. Do you believe opposition movement like the Muslim brotherhood for example, do you think their impact had so much strength in the revolution? And

does this have a changing role between Egypt and the West, since America for example supported President Mubarak's regime, previously before the overthrow?

Shoeir: I really don't think that this had anything to do with opposition forces, this was mainly a movement for the people. It was triggered by the youths of Egypt and then it became a whole nation rising up against the regime. The Muslim brotherhood of course has its supporters and its all large base, but in a country where you have 22 million Copts and (that) has being secular for thousands and thousands of years, their really not going have that much poll in determining—you know, who (goes) comes to power in Egypt. Even though they were probably a very popular form of resistance during the Mubarak regime, but that's because they were almost the only form of resistance, the only form of opposition who were able to actually do something even if that something was a little bit.

Salawudeen: Okay, back to my previous question. Do you think the way Egypt will maintain its relation with the West, do you think it's going to improve or will it become more anti-western, since the West, I mean the United States supported the Mubarak regime previously?

Shoeir: Well I don't think it was any secret that the West was always pro-(\*\*inaudible\*\*), dictators in the past, and still continues to do so in order to maintain its own strategic purposes in the region. However, I don't think that is going to make us necessarily anti-western or necessarily violate any treaties we have with them, but it might lead to more—probably dignity

is what I will use in dealing with western regimes and maybe the U.S and Israel. We would still be in close contact with them obviously, but maybe not as—“spineless” in dealing with them.

Salawudeen: That’s interesting to know. Although the big revolution, I mean the standing down of Former president Mubarak had taken place, people are still demonstrating on Tahrir square, even going into the interior ministry and making sure that all the remains of the last regime is completely gone. What do you want as an Egyptian, speaking for the Egyptian people from the new government that comes into power?

Shoeir: Well we want democracy, we want to be able to choose our leaders. We want the emergency law to be lifted, we want political prisoners to be released immediately. We would like to see, those who were corrupt and part of the former regime tried. We would like to see our money come back to the country and be reinvested in the country. We would like there to be more equity in society, and more rights. We would like to see rule of man, and I personally I know this is controversial at the moment, I personally would like to see state security being restructured. Not necessarily eliminated, but just restructured to focus more on fighting terrorism rather than pursuing Egyptians.

Salawudeen: On my next point, there are mixed feelings among those that supported the Mubarak regime, and those who disapproved of it. Mubarak and his associates claimed the state needed their governance to prevent religious extremism and violence. Are there any security concerns on you as a citizen that Egypt needs critical policing for the safety of its people?

Shoeir: I will be very weary in saying that certain Egyptian people were worried about that. I think that was something the previous regime used to justify itself internally and in the eyes of the west. But again like I said, you have 22 million Copts living in Egypt, you have 85 million Egyptians in total and I really don't know if maybe a million or two million support the Muslim brotherhood whether this would be justified in increasing security. Egypt has always being and would always be a secular state. The Muslim brother has been active here for almost a hundred years now almost, and we have not turned into Iran. I think that's not likely going to happen in the future.

Salawudeen: Okay, talking on state security. The security building was invaded by protestors some few days back, documents were destroyed to avoid prosecution of political officials and the armed forces have requested the retrieval of stolen documents from the office—the interior ministry. Do you believe these documents need to be handed to security officials, or do you think otherwise? I mean do you the Egyptians have a right to know what's in those documents which could lead to state insecurity or the prosecution of political office holders?

Shoeir: I think to answer that question you have to look at why the national security headquarters in many places were actually stormed, and that's because the citizens wanted to protect those documents. It wasn't about protecting state security; it was because what happened there. People were taken there and tortured, there were killed, dozens and dozens of them, thousands over the past few years. We have more than 14,000 thousand political prisoners in Egypt. And all these is recorded in national security records. And I think the people wanted to protect these records in

order to ensure that these people died in there get a fair trial. That the people who were still imprisoned, who were tortured have some evidence, some documentation for this so that the police officers who did this, or the person in charge whether its *Habil el Adly*, or his advisors *Ismaili Eshr* or whoever it was gets put on trial for this and their rights just don't go away you know.

Salawudeen: (Cuts in) So you believe it was to protect the people from prosecution of government. So it's in the people's interest and ...

Shoeir: Exactly, yes they do want to want a trial for these people. They do want to make sure their rights are restored, that whoever was responsible for the massacres that happened everyday that were documented by some many human rights organizations, and such as Amnesty for example, that these people are brought to justice. So it wasn't really about protecting security because you know (*laughs out*) national security—ironically despite its name has never being preoccupied with that. It's always preoccupied with Journalist who air their opinion, people who—opinion leaders who (*smiles a bit*) transgressed to share their opinion.

Salawudeen: Are you saying—would these recent development in Egypt, freer press is something we should be expecting? Talking about countries like the United States for example, even some countries in Africa, West Africa for example. There is freedom to openly criticize the government without the fear of prosecution. Are you saying we should expect this in the future in this country?

Shoeir: Well certainly restructuring the purpose of national security would do that but the main thing that would propel this is cancelling the emergency law. If there are no arbitrary arrests then people know that their right for freedom of speech would be protected under law because then you go back to rule of law versus arbitrary rule of man.

Salawudeen: Okay, on a final note. Talking about the Coptic Christians, I know to build a church in Egypt means you have to have an approval from the government which of course deters the process. Do you believe, taking into account the purpose of this revolution—will the rights of the minorities in Egypt, will it be protected if the government becomes more democratic?

Shoeir: I think the issue here is two-faced. You are talking about bureaucracy, about people having to go through multitudes and multitudes of paper just to get a church set up. And that doesn't only apply to churches, it applies to opening of business, to getting a building permit to do anything in Egypt you have to cut up through miles and miles of red tape and you have to, you know bribe as many people as you can who are necessary to be able to obtain these documents. I think if you, if you have a democratic system this would be much easier and the other thing is that it's not just Copts who did not really get their rights. I believe the rights of all Egyptians were really squandered. Nobody was getting them. Nobody had rights whether it was Muslim or Christian.

Salawudeen: Okay its nice talking to you Mira and I really appreciate your interview. I hope to see you next time.

Shoeir: Bye

Salawudeen: Bye...

Shoeir: Bye then.

Salawudeen: And that's my interview with Mira Shoeir. Mira is an AUC student studying business administration in the American University in Cairo. She is a youth of about the age of 20. It's great for me having this interview, and thank you for listening.