

SCRIPT: The New Generation Phase

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This audio documentary aims to show the phenomenal increase of women who stopped wearing the veil despite the consequences they might face from the Egyptian society. Join to listen to the experience of three university women who lifted their veils off from different backgrounds.

Music (FADE IN) Istanbul dervish café music - Tagirov

Anchor:

(:01) Egypt has been recently facing a new phenomenon... a phenomenon that you can look at it as a trend; because in fact it has been changing the society's culture.

(:07) Music (FADE OUT) Istanbul dervish café music - Tagirov

(:08) SFX (FADE IN): Call to Prayer from the Prophet's Mosque - Ejaz215

(:22) Music (FADE IN): Nothing too Fancy - Umphrey's Mcgee

(:22) SFX (FADE OUT): Call to Prayer from the Prophet's Mosque - Ejaz215

Anchor:

(:23) Many female figures that are from various ages chose to stop wearing the veil. Some have been considering it, but they fear to take the step. Women in the state of Egypt have always been divided into two sects: the majority, which is women who are covered, and the minority who aren't covered.

(:41) Music (FADE OUT): Nothing too Fancy - Umphrey's Mcgee

Anchor:

But now many Muslim women are deciding to challenge what most Islamic experts call for its obligation in Islam.

(0:46) Nazek: It was like, on and off, like for example, two weeks I had the thought, every, every single day and then I get busy with something and not think about it. And then I try to convince myself with it, and then I can't convince myself with it, so around three to four months.

(1:04) Dena: We used to live in the States and we use to go back and forth between Egypt and the States. And when I was there, I was surrounded by the Muslim community and there was a lot of girls that were veiled there and like I just thought that it was really fascinating the fact that like their different and unique, you know, like they stood out.

(1:21) Jeje: The right time to wear it is when I'm reading to wear the hijab and to wear the right clothes with the hijab. Because, for me wearing a hijab is a responsibility. People should respect it, so if I'm going to do that then I need to do that in a right way. And I'm not sure I can do that right now.

(1:29) Music (FADE IN) Nothing too Fancy - Umphrey's Mcgee

Anchor:

(1:32) Nazek Magdy, Dena Elshabba, and Jihad Rajab are students studying at AUC, the American University in Cairo. Each one of these women comes from a different background with different reasons of why they broke their lifetime promises to permanently wear their hijabs.

(1:44) Music (FADE OUT) Nothing too Fancy - Umphrey's Mcgee

Anchor:

(1:46) Nazek Magdy lived all her life in a humble governorate in Cairo called Al-Qalyoubaya, where the social norm for women is to cover their hair. Four years ago, she moved to Al-Haram Street, located in Giza, when she entered AUC with a scholarship to study Middle Eastern Studies. In her senior year, the 21 year old woman chose to unveil after wearing it ever since she was 13 years old.

(1:54) Music (FADE IN) Piano Improve – Soundathon

(2:06) Music (FADE OUT) Piano Improve - Soundathon

(2:08) Nazek: You know when you have this thought in your mind, and it's completely controlling your life. I wanna take it off, I wanna take it off. I can't put my concentration on anything rather than take it off. And I was thinking to myself wow I'm a weak person. I don't wanna take it off only because the society will judge me, and I have had this ideas for a month, you know, you are keeping, telling yourself you're not out your expectations. You cannot face the society, so it was the moment that I said "well I'm not a weak person. (umm) I can do whatever I want and if people will not like it then they will not like "A'dy, fakes" (its okay). Do whatever you want.

Anchor:

(2:42) When Nazek was asked, how she has been feeling since she stopped wearing the veil? She replied that she respects the veil but she feels much better and free.

(2:50) Nazek: "I expected to feel not normal. I expected to not feel comfortable. I expected to feel like I wanna have a scarf on, but it was not actually like that at all. I felt... People would say amazing, people would say great, but I felt normal, you see. It's like when you're at home and you don't have the veil on. I felt like, I'm walking

just as any person that would walk with her hair or would walk with his hair. It's not something I should cover. It's something that is part of me. So it's normally good.

Anchor:

(3:19) Dena Elshabba, a 20 year old senior Film student, wore the veil twice. The first time she wore the hijab was in the 8th grade. Actually she wore it twice that year; each time was for a couple of months, but she considers herself to be veiled once that year.

(3:19) Music (FADE IN) Nothing too Fancy - Umphrey's Mcgee

(3:24) Music (FADE OUT) Nothing too Fancy - Umphrey's Mcgee

Anchor:

The first time she took off the veil, people were okay, because they looked at her as a young girl trying to get closer to God and trying to figure out things; so people were understandable.

(3:32) Music (FADE IN) Piano Improve – Soundathon

(3:40) Music (FADE OUT) Piano Improve – Soundathon

(3:41) *Dena: But then the second time, I remember like some people were laughing and they would be like okay Dena, so what? Are you going to take it off next week? I got really confused faces looking at me like I remember one girl, I was passing by, and she was like "eh da?!" (What is this?!) Because you know like I wore it, and then I took it off, and then I wore it again in the same year, and then I took it off eventually in summer. But people were just like what the hell is going on with this girl?*

Anchor:

(4:04) And the last time she wore it was recently in her sophomore year in college.

(4:08) Dena: Everyone was like so happy for me. People were like hugging me in college. It was like a really nice celebrity week. Dude, I got like 250 likes on Facebook or something.

Anchor:

(4:19) But when she took it off, everyone was shocked.

(4:20) Dena: I just realized that I don't believe that it's necessary to wear it, like it's not necessarily mandatory. That's the part that bothered people. I don't understand why, like that's just my opinion and just because like the majority says something that means that it is always right because it's been something that has been implanted in our culture for such a long time. So my other friend was like you're just making excuses; you're just saying it's not mandatory because you want to take it off. And I was like no. Actually, I could have taken it off and still said that I think it is mandatory. It has nothing to do with the fact that I wanna take it off.

Anchor:

(4:51) Jehad Rajab, a multimedia journalism student who likes to be called Jeje is from almenya, that's the capital of Menya Governorate in Upper Egypt. She used to live there at a very young age for around 5 years. So she wasn't really affected by the traditions and culture of its society.

(4:51) Music (FADE IN) Piano Improve – Soundathon

(4:59) Music (FADE OUT) Piano Improve – Soundathon

(5:07) Jeje: When I go to Menya, because like, my family live in a small town and traditions there are really different then here. When, I go there I wear it, but when I'm here or anywhere else, I don't.

Anchor:

(5:17) Does your family in Menya know that you took off the veil?

(15:20) Jeje: I think yea. I was surprised that someone said like you look much better now, you look cute, and others like no why would you do that?

Anchor:

(5:29) Most Menya citizens are usually really strict when it comes to the issue of wearing the hijab that an uncovered woman there would be thought to be from a different religion.

(5:37) Jeje: Their explanation is that it has nothing to do with morals or like how I interact people or how my actions will be is like I'm not gonna be a bad girl in the eyes of society, so for them the accepted it. And others, most of the people that disagreed it's not because of a religion point of view. It was like from the society; how people will interact with that.

(5:50) Music (FADE IN) Nothing too Fancy - Umphrey's Mcgee

Anchor:

(5:56) Jeje really never chose to wear the veil when she was nine years old. She had entered a school in the United Arab Emirates;

(6:01) Music (FADE OUT) Nothing too Fancy - Umphrey's Mcgee

Anchor:

a school that put a lot of effort to create a religious and respectable identity for its female students... The school did not allow the girls to enter without wearing the hijab... For the first couple of months, Jeje worn it only when she went to school, but then her parents realized that she was already wearing it for most of the day, so they convinced her to wear it forever, and she did. Jeje took it off when she did a study abroad in the States, when she was entering her senior year, but she had taken the decision of taking it off since before she traveled. So she says the States didn't affect her decision.

(6:22) Nazek: My mom told me this sentence "What would the society say about you?"

Anchor:

(6:26) And what did you answer?

(6:27) Nazek: I told her I don't care about the society. Why would I care about the society? Why would the society judge me if I take off the veil?

Anchor:

(6:33) Nazek faced many harsh judgments since she's stopped wearing the veil. One of them was that she took off the veil to attract guys, and another one was that she became an atheist... Many people that don't even know her had approached her and asked if she took this step because of any psychological issues or out of depression.

(6:49) Nazek: It was not I wanna wear the hijab; it was society' pressure towards the hijab. From exactly around seven years, my friends in the school were wearing the hijab, a lot of them were wearing it. My family was like you don't have to wear it now, one year you will wear it. In one year, "tyb ma khalas" (it's okay then) I can

wear it now. It's out of, okay my friends are doing something. I can do it. I know that later on my family will later on force me to do it.

Anchor:

(7:18) There is this Harvard Magazine article I once read, called The Veil's Revival. It's about the problems, covered women in the United States face. It stated the whole issue of women in Egypt who lifted the veil, started around the beginning of the twentieth century, when British occupiers wished to liberate women from what they knew to be Islamic oppression. However, that was not the true reason for the local women of that era to stop wearing the headscarf.

Would you consider the regime of Former President Mohamed Morsy to affect your decision to take off the veil?

(7:46) Nazek: I don't think this is the relation at all. People would think it is because you know when you try to force something people would do the exact opposite thing, but I don't think this is the case and for example the period after Mohamed Morsy was not a period of secularism. It's not. Still we have the same cultural settings, the same cultural values.

(8:07) Dena: I don't know. I think this phenomenon has been going on for a while for like the past 10 years, but like kept increasing. I've seen a lot of girls taking it off in the recent years but I dunno if it's directly related but maybe it was like a form of rebellion because a lot of people started you know like feeling like they're fed up with this version of Islam you know the version that was kind of like forced on us or we would be afraid that it would be forced on us like the brotherhood took over. So maybe yea, maybe girls felt more encouraged because I remember when Morsy got

into power people would say things like ohh are we gonna be like someone gonna harm me because I'm not veiled. So maybe it moved them.

(8:47) Jeje: My personal opinion about that is different that if something like that made someone take the veil off, I dunno, I wouldn't respect that because I know this is a big decision that a girl takes off the veil. The thing is you have to have something that you believe in or like something you're convinced with. But I can't judge an entire religion with the actions of some. I wouldn't ever take the veil off if it was because of that. Ever.

Anchor:

(9:10) Dena's family never wanted her to get veiled from the beginning. That's why they supported her each time she stopped wearing the hijjab. On the other hand, Jeje and Nazek's parents completely opposed the idea. The idea of "the society is going to judge my daughter" took over the minds of these parents more than it took over from a religious point of view. None of these women regrets taking off the veil. They say they might wear it again in the future, but in the right time with the right reasons.

(9:12) Music (FADE IN) Nothing too Fancy - Umphrey's Mcgee

(9:30) Music (FADE OUT) Nothing too Fancy - Umphrey's Mcgee

(9:35) This documentary was produced by Sarah Hassan about "A New Generation Phase". A special thanks to Nazek Magdy, Dena Elshabba, and Jihad Rajab for the interviews. Music Credits: Istanbul dervish café music by Tagirov, Call to Prayer from the Prophet's Mosque by Ejaz215, Nothing too Fancy by Umphrey's Mcgee, and Piano Improve by Soundathon; collected from Freesound.org.

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