

SCRIPT: “Whatever Happened to Hope? Egyptian Youth Post-Revolution”

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This audio documentary is an attempt to shed light on the sentiments of Egyptian youth after the 25th of January revolution. The youth talk about their fears, aspirations, and doubts about the current state of Egypt in addition to their reminiscences about the revolution.

IBRAHIM AHMED (IA): “When I remember my, some of my friends who got killed in the revolution, this is the only times I wish the revolution did not happen.” (:9)

MUSIC: FADE IN: “Inni Meneih” by Mashrou’ Leila

Isn’t it unusual that a youth would reach a stage where he sometimes wishes that the supposedly glorious 25th of January revolution did not happen? That was Ibrahim Ahmed, one of the youth who participated in the revolution.

MUSIC: FADE IN: “Inni Meneih” by Mashrou’ Leila (00:21-00:23 seconds)

The Egyptian youth were the main catalysts for the revolution and the ones who had the desire to change and reform, but things have apparently changed. Sarah Kadry, a politically active youth, does not seem to hold the same sentiment about the revolution anymore.

SARAH KADRY (SK): “When I hear like, revolution, like I have this bad feeling, this, the remorse of like, many people died out of nothing, and we waste a lot of effort, a lot of hope, and then like, nothing happened.” (:13)

You weren’t like that before. You were filled with energy and...

SK: “Hope.” (:2)

Yes, hope exactly! Where did that go? Maybe if we go back in time a bit we would have some answers to this question.

MUSIC: FADE OUT: “Inni Meneih” by Mashrou’ Leila

NAT SOUND: FADE IN: People chanting during the protests of 25 January revolution (00:00-00:04 seconds)

This is where it all happened four years ago. Tahrir Square, 25 January 2011. The Egyptian people from different social classes and political backgrounds united under one common slogan.

IA: "Bread, freedom, social justice." (:3)

The masses in the streets then seemed invincible. Especially for the youth, it was a defining moment. They were fueled with utmost passion and will to topple the corrupt regime of Mubarak.

OMNIA FARRAG (OF): "There was that spirit of we all want to die or to sacrifice anything in order to have this revolution accomplished and in order to break the humiliation and the circle of police humiliation, police brutality, and oppression." (:17)

That was how Omnia Farrag felt during the revolution. Omnia has always been a politically active youth during and after the revolution.

OF: "All of us were sincere. All of us were true to ourselves." (:5)

Despite their seemingly unstoppable energy, Egyptian youth faced many hardships during the time of the revolution that shook them to the core.

IA: "I can remember in the 25th Jan. I was calling my friend Ramy."

SFX: Telephone dialing and ringing sound

IA: "And I was telling him some instructions about the, about the streets, so he told me at this exact point, now there is a security guy pointing a gun to me. For God blessings, the security guy did not shoot at him. I knew that my friend could have gone forever."

"How did that make you feel?"

IA: "I was jumping crazy, I was like screaming "go away", "hide from him", "run away." I am sure I'll always remember such a moment." (:37)

NAT SOUND: FADE IN: "Now according to the Health Ministry, at least 33 people have been killed and more than 1500 people have been injured." (:9)

That was according to Russia Today news then. It was indeed fortunate that Ibrahim's friend was not one of them. What happened next was history.

NAT SOUND: FADE OUT: People chanting during the protests of 25 January revolution

SFX: Omar Suleiman, the late Director of the General Intelligence Directorate, announces Hosni Mubarak's resignation. (:15)

That was Omar Suleiman, the late Director of the General Intelligence Directorate, announcing former president Hosni Mubarak's resignation on February 11, 2011, due to the unstable conditions that Egypt was going through.

MUSIC: FADE IN: "Inni Meneih" by Mashrou' Leila (00:11-00:15 seconds)

One might think that with Mubarak stepping down, conditions would start to get slightly better in Egypt. That people would start to see the change they always dreamt about. But apparently, plenty of serious problems remain to deal with.

OF: "Nowadays we see a lot of violations of human rights" (:3)

IA: "The poor people are getting more poor, and the rich people are getting more rich" (:6)

SK: "There is no freedom of expression, there's no freedom of speech. You're not allowed to say anything." (:5)

MARWAN KAMEL (MK): "everyone decided to look for his/her benefit without recognizing the situation of the country." (:9)

Omnia, Ibrahim, Sarah, along with Marwan Kamel, a Mechanical Engineering senior at AUC, seem to have quite significant concerns about aspects of the country's well being. But

everything was going on the right track: all people were united and wanted to change the situation. What went wrong then?

MK: "cause all our problems now are results of what Mubarak and his regime implemented in us." (:8)

Almost 40% of university graduates are not able to find jobs in Egypt, according to an article for World Education News & Reviews.

MK: "A corrupted government, corrupted people actually. Corruption starts from the citizens themselves and not the government actually." (:10)

Egypt rates 37 out of 100 on the Corruption Perceptions Index.

IA: "I guess that many youth who did the revolution were not educated enough, or they did not know what to do next, they only protested, they only wanted the regime to leave, and to get toppled, but they did not know how to rule a country, how to run a state like Egypt." (:19)

So there was also a problem of political illiteracy among the youth, in addition to disunion within the forefronts and people not agreeing anymore on the common goals of the revolution.

MUSIC: FADE OUT: "Inni Meneih" by Mashrou' Leila

MUSIC: FADE IN: "A Thousand Years" by "The Piano Guys (00:59-01:02 seconds)

Okay, the situation does not look particularly promising so far for Egypt. Even the youth are not as optimistic and enthusiastic as they used to be.

"Given all these circumstances and the negativity all around us, do you ever like wish that the revolution should not have happened?" (8)

MK: "Never, never, never" (3)

SK: "I don't think I have reached this point" (4)

It seems they have not completely lost hope on possible change in Egypt. But how and why? What was so remarkable about the revolution to the youth that they still cherish its memory so fondly?

IA: "It made me more active in the community. It made me believe change can come." (:7)

Or in other words,

MK: "In my character I think it changed a lot. It changed how I look at the country, how I feel responsible towards the country." (:8)

Nobody could deny that the 25th of January revolution was an eye-opener for many people.

SK: "It started the feeling that we need to be more aware of what is happening around us politically in our country and in every place" (:6)

It made youth believe that they can take matters into their own hands and that change can come eventually.

IA: "What we experienced in the first 18 days...That is like glorious moments that we will never forget. Even now if things got deteriorated, but we'll always remember the days that we toppled a regime like Mubarak's. So we changed something at least." (:17)

Whatever happened to hope then? It is still deep down in the hearts of the ever zealous and ambitious Egyptian youth. It exists within the realms of their diverse body of opinions. It perpetuates itself as the spark that constantly reminds them of what ought to be.

MK: "The reality is that without hope, we will not achieve anything." (:5)

This audio documentary was produced by Shaza Walid for the audio production course at the American University in Cairo, taught by Professor Kim Fox in Fall 2015. Special thanks to Ibrahim Ahmed, Sarah Kadry, Omnia Farrag, and Marwan Kamel for their interviews. Credits for music in order of appearance go, "Inni Meneih" by Mashrou' Leila and "A

Thousand Years” by the Piano Guys. Credits for nat sound go to sound of chants in protests, Omar Suleiman’s announcement, news bulletin, from YouTube. Sound of telephone ringing from Pro Sound Effects.