

Egypt awakes

Hosni Mubarak has been president of Egypt for 24 years and repressive 'emergency laws' have been in force throughout. Finally, Egyptians have had enough. This is Ahdaf Soueif's diary of a long, hot summer of protest that shows no sign of ending.

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In the run-up to the Egyptian parliamentary elections, which began on November 9, Egypt's president, Hosni Mubarak, and his prime minister, Ahmad Nadhif, confided to the world that Egyptians are not ready for democracy; it can be administered to them only a little at a time.

So it is perhaps to prevent an overdose that the government engineers incidents like the one reported on my mobile on November 10: "Let people know Kamal Khalil [an independent candidate], monitors, reporters all kicked out of Imbaba poll station while votes are counted. We saw district attorney filling cards. Go now for support."

On November 11 the minister of justice appeared on television and hailed the first round of the elections as a "festival of democracy": voting had taken place entirely under the supervision of the judiciary, and there had been a judge in every polling station. The following morning a senior judge - deputy head of the Cassations Court - disclaimed any responsibility for the current electoral process on the part of the judiciary. Eight of the ruling National Democratic Party's big beasts were returned.

Today, there is conflict between people and government in every sector of Egyptian society. The most visible confrontations are in the judiciary, the universities and the professions - each demanding that the regime lift its destructive hand from their affairs -but farmers and industrial workers are protesting as well. The death of a 38-year-old mother of four, Nafisa al-Marakbi, for example, exposed the collusion of the police with powerful landowners seeking to evict tenant farmers from lands they have worked for decades. Egyptian human rights activists have compiled formidable dossiers on torture and humiliation techniques used by the police against farming communities. Likewise industrial workers pay a heavy price for campaigning for safe work practices and against the sale of national industries at joke prices.

Most Egyptians believe the country is being plundered for the enrichment of an elite that owes allegiance to foreign powers. This is not a new state of affairs. There's even (as there would be) an old proverb that says "Masr kheirha legheirha" - Egypt's bounty is for outsiders. But what colours today's scene with tremendous urgency is a fear the ruling regime will attempt to perpetuate itself for another generation, handing power from Mubarak the father to Mubarak the son through the ruling National Democratic Party. Hence there is a perception that if power is not wrested from this regime, then Egyptians can wave goodbye to any hope of reasonable levels of economic prosperity and social justice. Life is

already very hard. If pushed the remaining few centimetres into despair, who knows what forces the country might succumb to? And if Egypt descends into chaos, what will the effect be on the rest of the region? It is the conviction that the country needs to be saved now that is driving the turbulence in universities, courts, unions, and on the streets.

September 27 2005 Downtown Cairo. The wide pavement outside Madbouli's Bookshop in Tal'at Harb Square has become the venue of choice for political protests. Now, at 6pm, it is filling up: the yellow banners of Kefaya (Enough: the Egyptian Movement for Change) flutter side by side with the orange flags of Hizb al-Ghad (the Party of Tomorrow) and the colours of assorted movements and pressure groups that have sprung up over the last year or so, Youth For Change, Artists And Writers For Change, Shayfinko (We See You), Families Of Political Detainees, The Streets Are Ours ... A huge placard demands "TRY THEM" above photographs of the ministers for culture and health and the deeply unpopular minister for the interior.

A hundred or so troops stand around. People watch from balconies.

Earlier today Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's president for the last 24 years, was sworn in for a further six. Cairo traffic came to a standstill for two hours as all routes to the People's Assembly were closed off to the people. Now the protesters are gathering with their banners and a pair of kettledrums: "Dumdu-du-dumdum, Batel, Dum du-du-dum-dum, Batel, Hosni M'barak, Batel ..." Batel means not valid, without legitimacy. Fortuitously, it rhymes with atel, unemployed, and so serves the protesters' preference for chanting in rhyme: "In the name of 12 million atel, Hosni Mubarak's rule is batel." A new poster showing the president's face with the word batel in flowing calligraphy across it has become overnight as iconic as the black on yellow Kefaya logo. "Dum du-dudum- dum ..." They clap and drum and the posters bob up and down. And because the police -tonight - are keeping their presence light, they march.

They march to the beat of their drum through the quarter that 140 years ago Khedive Ismail modelled on Paris in his bid to make Egypt part of the Europe he so loved.

Their numbers swell as they go, and every street name and every building and every statue speaks to the marchers of the history that they are trying, once again, to shape.

Back in 1972, reeling from Nasser's death and Egypt's routing and loss of Sinai in the 1967 Israeli war, students staged protests demanding the retrieval of Egyptian land. In my novel *The Map Of Love*, I wrote about "the night of the Great Stone Cake in '72 when our comrades were arrested in the university and we staged a sit-in in Tahrir Square and all of Cairo came to join us. That too ended in nothing. We were defeated - or diffused ..." But, at dawn, as the protesters were dragged off the streets and into police vans, hundreds of little scraps of paper came fluttering out of the barred van windows, and on each scrap were written the words "WAKE UP, EGYPT".

The dissidents who were best placed to pick up those forlorn scraps were the ones who became known as "al-tayyar al-Islami": the Islamist trend. From the mid-70s until very recently, they have formed the only serious opposition to the governing party. And -contrary to what Arab regimes and western media would have us believe - they are far from being a cohesive whole. The largest grouping within the Islamist trend is Jam'iyyat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin: the Association of Muslim Brothers (and its smaller sibling, the Association of Muslim Sisters). They have been on the political scene in Egypt since the early 20th century when they were part of the national movement against the British occupation. After the 1952 revolution they were against Nasser's socialist policies, the abolition of the monarchy and giving up Egypt's claim to the Sudan. When it was discovered that they were in secret talks with the British, and after an attempt on Nasser's life in 1954, they were outlawed and persecuted.

In the 70s, when President Anwar Sadat decided to adopt capitalism and rapprochement with the west, he identified the Egyptian left as his "enemy within". Thousands of jailed Muslim Brothers were released. They renounced the use of arms; their message would be spread through preaching and social works. They were Sadat's instrument against the left whose turn it was to be persecuted. Then, as disagreement with Sadat's policies grew, and as he had closed down every forum of political opposition except the mosques, new and more radical Islamist groups started to appear. When Sadat was assassinated in 1981, the government, headed now by Mubarak, clamped down hard on all Islamists and declared the emergency laws under which Egyptians - 24 years on - are still living.

Today there are no militant Islamist organizations working in Egypt. The one group from the Islamist trend that remains active is the Association of Muslim Brothers (AMB). Being officially outlawed has not been a real impediment to its programme of clinics, schools and social aid which has won it a big following. The old left has lost credibility for collaborating with, or rather play-acting opposition to, first the Sadat then the Mubarak regime.

The events of this summer mark a new and significant stage in Egyptian dissidence. The grass-roots movements have arrived. They are of the broadest possible ideological spectrum. Some are old activists returning to the fray. A lot are professionals hampered in their work by the corruption or inefficiency of the regime.

Some are young people who've known no life without emergency laws. First the movements demanded a lifting of the emergency laws, reform of the constitution and an end to arbitrary detention. Then, deciding the regime was beyond reform, they started demanding its removal. And none of the government's tried and tested tactics seem to silence them: beatings, closures, arrests, kidnapping, the protesters work through them and come back. They are drawn mostly from among the middle class: academics, physicians, lawyers, journalists. But this is the sector that enjoys a bit of a margin, that can afford to take risks.

At street level the movements are happy to include anyone who is for transparent, democratic government. They acknowledge the common platform

they share with the Islamist trend - the demand for democracy and social justice - and believe the Islamists should have the freedom to form legitimate political parties.

Within the AMB there is again a broad spectrum of views regarding almost everything. They have so far rejected the idea of forming a political party, rather gaining political power by working to control the professional unions. They vary in their attitudes towards working with other groups. They will coordinate with them on specific issues, like the demand for the independence of the judiciary or the universities, but they are unwilling to join forces on a larger scale. They feel they are powerful enough to squeeze some gains from the government; maybe win a good number of seats in parliament, standing as independents.

In the secular groups, no one quite trusts the AMB, but some believe that the ruling regime is so corrupt and so damaging to the country that all "honest" opposition should unite against it; others see in the Islamists themselves the main danger threatening Egypt.

And then there are the Americans. A precipitating factor for protest has been the increasingly flagrant American policy in the region. "How far does American/Israeli desire go?" is the question. Is it going to be enough that we allow their warships through the Suez canal, that we privatise our vital industries, that we torture people at their behest, that we pledge our much-needed gas at rock-bottom rates to Israel, that we function as their policemen at Rafah? Will this kind of servitude be enough or will we, ultimately, have to go the way of Iraq? And wouldn't it be altogether better if we draw the line now and say "Enough"?

There is also a powerful sense among the protesters that they are not alone. They look at the change taking place in South America, they attend developing world meetings, they blog. And although, unlike the 20th century struggle for liberation, this one is taking place against a resurgent and all-encompassing colonial drive rather than an old receding one, they derive hope from the global nature of the threat, sensing that - pace the war on terror - the real war being fought is for the soul of the world and the peoples of the world are all in it together.

September 10 In Washington DC, freshers at Georgetown University ask me about the Egyptian presidential elections: were they rigged? Were they a good thing? Has the American presence in Iraq influenced events in Egypt? Well, the outcome of the elections was never in doubt: Mubarak would win. In the face of Kefaya and other opposition groups' demands for elections rather than the traditional "referendum" on the incumbent president, the regime, last February, deftly agreed to "partial reform", but the conditions placed on who could run for office meant that only two of the nine alternative candidates had names that people recognised - and neither was popular outside their immediate circle of supporters. Under the emergency laws, no organised political activity can take place. The police and State Security have absolute powers of detention - officially for 90 days. Today an estimated 20,000 people (mostly Islamists) are in detention without trial; some have been there for over a decade. Beatings and torture take place in police stations, never mind jails.

The common perception of these elections was that they were being run to satisfy the US administration's need to show the American people that "democratisation" is taking place in the Middle East. The Mubarak campaign style helped this perception: Mubarak - who felt so threatened in the capital that he took up residence in Sharm el-Sheikh - was shown engaging in impromptu walkabouts and chats with people; he discarded formal suits in favour of the "Tony Blair Look": the sky-blue, tie-less, I'm-getting down-to-business shirt.

One of the jokes doing the rounds has a Mubarak aide suggesting, "Mr President, shouldn't we draft a speech for you saying goodbye to the Egyptian people?"

Mubarak: "Why? Are the Egyptian people going somewhere?"

As for Iraq, I tell the Georgetown freshers, yes, the Iraq invasion lent an urgency to the Egyptian protest movement because it proved conclusively that the Arab regimes, for all their internal strongman posturing and for all their slavish toeing of the American line, were ultimately powerless to guarantee even the sovereignty of their lands and the lives of their people.

So Mubarak has won a fifth term. Thirty million out of 70 million Egyptians are eligible to vote (almost 50% of the population is under 18). The government claims that the turnout was 23% of the 30 million and of those 88% voted for Mubarak. The figures coming in from observers and judiciary place the turnout between 10 and 15%. This is not voter apathy but the people refusing to play bit parts in what is essentially a comedy for a foreign audience. Things may be different for the parliamentary elections. They are important because - as matters stand - in the 2011 presidential elections, only parties with more than 5% of parliament's 444 elected seats will be allowed to field a candidate. Meanwhile the protest movement has not let up since the May 25 crackdown.

May 25 Protests have been taking place for weeks. Sometimes they are in response to specific events within Egypt or in Palestine or Iraq. But essentially they are a demand for change, triggered last year, when people realised that the regime of the 77-year-old Hosni Mubarak was preparing to slide his son, Gamal Mubarak, into the presidency.

A few thousand of the paramilitary Central Security Force (CSF) were deployed this afternoon. On the steps of the National Union of Journalists and by the tomb of Sa'd Zaghloul - leader of the 1919 revolution against the British - soldiers in riot gear cornered protesters, broke ranks to allow National Democratic Party thugs through, then closed ranks while the hired hands beat up the trapped activists. The protests were against the referendum through which the NDP intends to legitimise its partial constitutional reform. Kefaya and other groups were on the streets denouncing the tactic when they were attacked by the CSF. Young men were held down and kicked, laptops and cameras were stolen. Women were caught, dragged along the street, stripped and molested. To do this to lawyers and journalists in the heart of Cairo, in the presence of the media, is to send a message about how far the regime is prepared to go to defend itself. As a tactic, though, it will probably backfire; five women have authorised their names and photographs of the attacks on them to be published - and are suing.

May 30 Opposition papers publish photographs of the assaults and demand the resignation of the home secretary, a public inquiry and an apology to the people from the president.

July 2 The Judges' Report into the May 25 referendum estimates participation at between 3 and 4% and details the methods by which the results were fraudulently arrived at.

July 23 Bombs go off in Sharm el-Sheikh. The authorities say 67 people have been killed. Hospital sources say 88. Eleven are British but the majority are Egyptians. The bombers targeted a taxi rank, a market used by locals. Speculation is wide open: is it al-Qaida? Is it the Bedouin of Sinai in revenge for the 2,400 detained and tortured after the Taba bombings? Is it a message to Mubarak that even Sharm isn't safe? Is it significant that today is the anniversary of Nasser's revolution? No one knows. Six "suspects" have so far been shot dead by the authorities.

July 30 The NDP has officially declared Hosni Mubarak its candidate for the presidential elections and Kefaya has duly called for a protest in Tahrir Square at 6pm. The roads into town are jammed solid. Our driver says the government blocks the streets to irritate people and turn them against the demonstrators. This is fairly benign compared with dragging people off the streets into black holes. "Take someone like me," our driver says. "I want to be with you because we really need change. But if Security takes me, who'll feed my children?" This is what every taxi driver, every shopkeeper I speak to tells me. They also say, "If we throw out this lot we may get someone worse - someone who's going to start plundering us from the beginning; at least this lot have to be getting full by now."

My phone rings. My sister's husband, Ahmad Seif, a leading human rights lawyer, says the demo isn't happening: "They've closed the side streets leading into Tahrir. They're trapping people as they approach the square. There's a lot of beating and arrests." We decide to walk through Tahrir as citizens rather than demonstrators. It looks as though a coup is taking place: tens of armoured personnel carriers, CSF positioned at different points around the square in phalanxes of some 400 men, visors down, riot shields up, truncheons in their hands. Striding about with walkie-talkies are the officers, in crisp white uniforms. We stroll through Tahrir and into Falaki square where a group of intellectuals stand outside the Huriyyah CafŽ giving earnest interviews which the media jot down in pencil - the police have confiscated their cameras.

We can hear the chants rolling down Tharwat Street. Five rows of CSF conscripts fence in the National Union of Journalists. On the wide staircase of the building the demonstrators hold up their banners and chant: "Unemployment, no, no. Corruption, no, no. Emergency laws, no, no ..." I walk up to the security cordon. "Salamu aleikum," I say, "could you let us through?" "Aleikum el-salam, make way for the lady -" Five rows of security men courteously shove each other aside and we join the demonstrators on the steps. There are some three or four hundred of them. Behind the security men, traffic passes at a crawl. Pedestrian passersby slow down, too, but it's very rare for someone to push through security to join the demonstration -which is, of course, why the cordon is there. A demo

that was allowed to march through Shubra High Street without security had grown to five-fold by the time it ended. Officers patrol behind their men, keeping an eye on both them and us. On the other side of the road, under the pink chandeliers of the blossoming flame trees, a brace of generals are sitting at makeshift trestles and above the trees rise the pillars of a magnificent neo-classical church bearing a cross and the legend "Cordi Jesu Sacrum". The squawk of walkie-talkies crackles out of parked police cars.

The young woman leading the chants is balancing on the black and white metal barrier that separates demonstrators from security. At the level of her knees the young soldiers of the CSF gaze up at her from under their black helmets and reinforced plastic visors as though they were watching a movie:

Haras, haras, haras leih? Ihna f'segn walla eih? (Guards, guards, guards, why? Is this a jail or an open sky?)

These young men are conscripted from among the poorest of Egypt's poor. They serve three years during which their families suffer hardship to send them food. The punishment they most fear is an extension of their service.

El-askari mazloun fi'l-geish/Yakul ads w'yelbes kheish (A soldier gets a lousy deal/rotten clothes, one lousy meal)

I hear that a few days ago one of these young men refused to hit a protester and four officers beat him to a pulp in the middle of the street. An activist engages a soldier in talk while his officer is at the other end of the line: "We're working for your good and the good of our people ..." "I've got 25 days to end my service," the conscript says, "if they tell me to beat my father I'll do it. I won't stay one day longer."

A woman carrying a baby pauses on the generals' side of the road, she reads the messages on the banners and dandles the child in time to the chants:

Ya Suzanne ooly lel-beih: tabaq el-fool b'etnein geneih (Hey Suzanne [Mrs Mubarak] tell the lord: even beans we can't afford)

On the union steps the banners declare "NO to the Destruction of our Agriculture. NO to the Looting of National Industries. NO to Illegal Detentions". Five of the people detained earlier in the day have been released. They've come straight to the NUJ to report that 22 others are still detained at CSF headquarters. Word goes round that doctor, lawyer and journalist volunteers are needed to go and check on the detainees. Money is collected to buy basic medicines, cigarettes, biscuits. A sit-in is declared on the steps until the detainees are released.

Eventually some 30 people pile into cars and head for CSF headquarters on the perimeter road. Our journey takes us past Abdin palace where in 1881 the nationalist leader, Ahmad Orabi, declared, "We are slaves to no one and we shall not be inherited after today," prompting the Khedive Tewfiq to ask the British for help and the British to start their 70- year occupation of Egypt. We drive past the northern wall of medieval Cairo and the Gate of Victory looms over us in the dark. A street wedding is in full swing and we catch sight of the bride resplendent on a raised dais.

We turn down a wide, but empty street. On both sides there are brick walls topped with battlements. We jump out of the cars. High up above our heads we read the words "Central Security Forces Camp" crowning a great steel gate.

A man in smart civilian casuals comes out to parley. He cannot let us in but he promises to deliver the medicines, cigarettes, etc. Angry voices are raised. Amir Salim, a lawyer, steps forward, introduces himself and asks for the man's name. He says he is "Security". When Salim persists, he points at the words above the gate and says, "Can you read? That's me." There is general laughter and Salim insists on the name so that "when I file charges with the attorney general tomorrow I can name the person who prevented us from seeing the detainees." The officer vanishes inside and comes back to say he can bring two of the detainees out to talk to Salim, but the rest of us must retreat to the other side of the road. We agree, on condition that Aida Seif el-Dawla, physician and head of the Egyptian Society for Resistance to Torture, should remain with Salim.

It is midnight now and the road is deserted except for the odd taxi that slows down in case we are released detainees trying to get home. One of the CSF armoured trucks draws up and a gang of tough guys in civvies troops out. They stare at us before disappearing into the camp.

Someone gets a call on his mobile: the evening news on state TV reports that we injured 15 CSF troops and wrecked several cars. This is greeted with hoots of laughter. Then the lights outside the great gates blaze out. The two men we're waiting for come out. They confer with Salim and Aida, reassuring them that no one's touched them. They write down the names of the detainees for the attorney general and are assured that the sit-in will continue till they're released. They take the cigarettes and biscuits and go back inside. The two are academics who've been arguing with each other on the net for the last few weeks. Tonight, locked in together, they might resolve their differences.

July 31 The detainees are brought before the State Council and sent back to detention. But the officer in charge of their transport tells their lawyer he knows "this whole thing is a load of crap. I'm going to go over there and smoke a cigarette and you use your mobile to let them call their families." The sit-in spreads to the Bar Association next door.

August 1 The detainees are brought before the state prosecutor. He lets them go on a collective bail of 3,500 Egyptian pounds (about £350).

August 13 At my brother's we have dinner on the balcony. Across the road the fruit bats flit among the mangoes ripening on the trees that shade the local State Security premises. All we can see through the leaves is its lights and the barriers across the road. A few plain-clothes men lurk among the parked cars. The mango trees shelter balconies and wave their branches through open windows. People connect their air-conditioning drainage to slim hoses that end where the trunks rise from the earth.

We watch a man on the second floor washing and watering branches with a hose from his bedroom window. The bats take a shower.

My 18-year-old niece is fencing champion of Egypt. Last month she won the Mediterranean title. She shows me an item in al-Ahram: "Egypt will not take part in the Arab Youth Tournament for lack of funds. Egypt is the holder of the title. Egypt will not play in the Africa Cup in spite of holding the title for the last 10 years. Egypt will also not be able to take part in the Mediterranean Championships even though Egyptian Salma Soueif took the gold for young women ..."

August 14 My brother-in-law is in Ismailia. He is part of the defence team for the men accused of the Taba bombs. One accused, on the run, has already been shot dead -together with his wife. Their three-year-old child is in hospital. Today the police are making their case against the remaining two who have, naturally, signed confessions. The young officer making the case faints halfway through the hearing.

The defence believe this is because he was overcome by the enormity of the perjury he was being made to commit. In the street the protesters chant: Ya mabaheth amn el-dawla, fein el-amn w'fein el-dawla? (Hey State Security, investigate: Where's our security? Where's our state?)

August 20 In the heart of Cairo, at the crossroads of 26th July Street, stands the main Emergency Hospital of Cairo. Many years ago my mother rushed here in a taxi when she felt me "coming on" and I popped out on a trolley in the courtyard on the way to reception. Tonight the hospital is on the news. Four workers, sacked by the hospital director, have climbed on to the wireless mast on the roof and are threatening to throw themselves into the street. People are gathering. Other workers in the hospital have declared solidarity and shameful stories are swirling around about the director's methods. Independent TV stations are at the scene.

The four health workers were on temporary contracts. Under a system imported from the west, private businesses hire workers on temporary contracts at low salaries and with no rights: no sick leave, paid holiday, national insurance or pension scheme. They can then be fired - within two years - with no recompense. Now the government is following the same system.

President Mubarak's election manifesto promises 2.5 million new jobs. My taxi driver switches off the radio and explodes: "They've been running the country for 24 years. They think we've come from another planet? Landed by parachute? Who do they think they're kidding?"

August 21 The minister of health has removed the director of the Emergency Hospital.

September 20 The 17th Cairo Festival for Experimental Theatre begins today. Outside the Opera House, dressed in black, 500 members of protest groups hold banners commemorating 48 playwrights, actors, critics and audience members who died in a fire in a theatre in Beni Suef two weeks ago. They demand an inquiry and that the dead should be classed "martyrs" (ie, died on active duty) so their pensions can be released quickly and their families looked after.

Egypt's political ills are not unique - unpopular privatisations, reshaping of the institutions of state to suit the ruling regime, routine links between politicians and big business. The extra problem in Egypt is that the clampdown on personal freedom and political activity gives free rein to inefficiency and corruption. Workers contract cancer in asbestos industries outlawed in Europe. MPs control the markets in essential foodstuffs and building materials. Schools have to accommodate two or three shifts of children. Antiquities go missing from museums. Twelve million Egyptians are unemployed; graduates work as street vendors and car attendants, and have to bribe the local police to let them scratch a living. Families are poisoned by fruit grown using fertilisers imported by the Ministry of Agriculture. Over the last 20 years some £186bn of Egypt's wealth has been stolen and stashed overseas while the country's debt stands at approximately 126% of its GDP.

The protest movements are demanding representative and accountable government. They are demanding that the constitution should limit a president to two terms in office, curb his powers and re-establish the separation between the legislative and executive arms of government. They are demanding changes to the electoral system to ensure fairness and transparency. And they are demanding an immediate end to the 24 years of emergency laws and a demonstrated commitment to human rights. An opinion, strong among professional classes, is that you cannot demand change without a detailed blueprint for that change. Kefaya activists respond that you cannot arrive at a blueprint in a climate of extreme political repression.

It is easy to fall in love with Kefaya. It is diverse, original, creative, optimistic and up to the minute. Each demonstration brings a new delight: a protester in a wheelchair is hoisted up above the crowd and leads the chanting. A circle of young people in jeans and T-shirts forms around the heavily veiled wives of political detainees and a chant goes up to set their husbands free. They call themselves a "horizontal" movement and are inclusive of any political trend that wants change and calls for democratic reforms. But their strengths carry within them the germ of their weakness: their inclusiveness means they cannot have a specific programme; their hospitality means that their shelter can be used by other, less sympathetic, groups; their flamboyance and creativity can get them accused of playing to the media; their relatively comfortable economic status lays them open to charges of not representing "the people". But they march and they sing:

Yalli bi'tu el-gheit w'el-masna'/mahma 'amaltu mish rah nirka' (Fields and factories sold for a token/Do your worst; we won't be broken)

September 26 Doctors in Zagazig General Hospital start a hunger strike in protest at corruption in the hospital administration.

October 2 Thousands of students in universities across Egypt declare their allegiance to the outlawed Association of Muslim Brothers and march under the Kefaya slogan "A free university in a free homeland".

October 12 Demonstrations in all the universities as students discover that State Security has barred hundreds of students from living in the dorms because they

have taken part in protests. At least 50 are honours students and in their final year. A delegation of professors meets with the Cairo University president to demand that State Security refrain from interfering in university affairs.

October 17 "Workers for Change" is established to fight the privatisation "which has seen more than half a million jobs lost over the last 15 years, national industries delivered into private hands in suspect deals, and the wealth from these industries smuggled outside Egypt".

November 24 The parliamentary elections have been marked by extreme thuggery. The police have either helped the NDP thugs or stood by. The judges have demanded the right to call in the military to protect the voting process. Despite this, less than halfway through the elections, AMB candidates have already won 47 seats; twice the number they need to field a presidential candidate in the next elections.

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