

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE

Panel 3

Introduction: You're listening to the Middle East Institute's podcast series. To support MEI's programs and podcasts, please donate at www.MEI.edu. Thank you for your support.

Kate Seelye: Good afternoon, everybody. If everybody could please take their seats, I would appreciate it. I'm Kate Seelye, Senior Vice President of the Middle East Institute and welcome to the second session of our conference today, Securing Egypt's Future. For those of you who might have missed some of our tables out front, please note we're selling the Middle East Journal, one of the only peer reviewed academic journals on the Middle East out there. So pick up a copy. We've got a lot of interesting issues, many of them on Egypt. We also have a membership table. So please stop by there during the next break after this panel. For those of you just joining us this afternoon, we've had two fascinating panels. The first examined the sort of political path forward for Egypt. The second panel examined the challenges of overcoming the extreme polarization and division in Egypt today. It was entitled, Working Toward National Reconciliation. This panel is going to look at the factors that really triggered the first revolution in 2011 and also led to the second in 2013 and examine how these basic demands that Egyptians have had for bred freedom indignity are going to be met or can be met in this next phase of Egypt's political development. We have an amazing group of panelists with us today, several from Egypt who are going to be examining this topic. I'm going to introduce them very, very briefly. Longer bios are in their pro, in your program books. So, check them out. Hossam Bahgat to Robin's left is the co-founder and chair person of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, a very important and independent human rights organization in Cairo. Mirette Mabrouk, who's just recently moved from Cairo to Washington, is the Deputy Director for Regional Programs at the Rafik Hariri Center, the Atlantic Council and she's had a long history of journalism in Egypt. Jawad Nabulsi is an entrepreneur and a community organizer and co-founder of the Nebny Foundation, which organizes and promotes social and economic development and we have Diane Singerman, an associate professor of government at the American University, where she's currently leading a project about urban governance and social justice called Tadamun and I hope you all can check that out online. Leading this discussion is the amazing Robin Wright, who's now with the Wilson Center and USIP and before entering the think tank world, she was a journalist who reported for more than 140 countries for the *Washington Post* and *The New Yorker*. She's also known for her excellent books on the Middle East, including her most recent, *Rock the Casbah Rage and Rebellion Across the Islamic World*, in which she examined the hopes and the turmoil of the revolution of 2011. So, I can't think of anybody more ideal to moderate this panel. So thank you all. It's quite an honor and privilege to have you here and now, Robin, I'd like to turn it over to you.

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Robin Wright: Thank you, Kate. I'm delighted to participate with this panel on what I think is arguably the most important subject facing Egypt today. We spent the morning looking at the politics, particularly the military and the Muslim Brotherhood. But the real issue and the most exciting, dynamic, important development over the past 30 months is the emergence in Egypt of this extraordinary group of activists, people who are taking their fate into their own hands and doing something about it. We can't forget that all of this started in Tunisia and in Egypt, courtesy of economic issues, not politics. A young street vendor in Tunisia and in Egypt, a young blogger businessman exposing corruption issues. So, I want to do a couple of things on this panel. I want first of all to have each one of them give us a status report on the critical issues that came from that original slogan, "Bread, Freedom and Social Justice," and how the situation differs from 30 years ago on the eve of the uprising and I'll begin with that and we'll then get into a bit of a debate and hopefully before we open it up to your questions, deal with the tangible realistic policy recommendations they can make for Egyptians, for the region and then for those of us in the outside world. So, let me begin with Hossam. If you could take us through whether take one slice or all of the big issues that have triggered the passions of the Egyptians and motivated them to act, what are the things that have changed? How much better off; how much worse off are Egyptians today and what will that mean for what happens next?

[laughter]

Hossam Bahgat: So the short answer to this is that institutions, policies and in most respects, people in charge of implementing the policies or leading the institutions, have not changed from a human rights perspective, at least. They are still the same people. The people have changed, I um, I agree. And so there was, of course, the slogan you mentioned, "Bread, Freedom, Social Justice," but there was the even more popular slogan during the 18 days, which is, "The people want the fall of the regime." That hasn't happened. The regime managed to stay intact and, of course, in analyzing this, I don't want to belabor many of the themes that were covered in the first two panels, but of course, politics had everything to do with it. So following the overthrow of Mubarak, there was a coalition of convenience between the military and the Islamists and I promise not to spend our time talking about Islamists. But, but of course, the military wanted the space to preserve the status quo, to preserve the regime while the Islamists contained the street, contained the squares and led the political, the new political regime as the leading political party with a weak or marginalized opposition. The people disrupted the coalition of convenience, of course, but it did give the chance 18 months to the military council and to forces of elite state rebuild and reassemble and to preserve the, the, the state that we fought when Mubarak was overthrown. Of course, we all woke up on February 12th knowing there was going to be a lot of hard work ahead and that this is the beginning, not the end. But we felt that, you know, we can take on the work, that we are, you know, we

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cannot be defeated. We overthrew a dictator after 30 years in power with 18 days of mostly peaceful revolt, you know, what can defeat us? And of course, it... then we spent a few months also in the honeymoon thinking, "Okay, so there's been a revolution. The regime has fell, you know, what are we doing to do? Are we going to have a memorial here instead of the NDP in Tahir Square? What are we going to do in terms of museum, victim museums like Eastern Europe? What, how are we going to organize the trials like they did in Latin America? But we realized today, to go back to your question, that 30 months later, after this arrangement fell and the new arrangement that is now in place, in terms of accountability for crimes of the past, we have nothing. The same economic and social policies are still the same. The same unreformed abusive security forces are still in power and are still firm forming the backbone of all these regimes with a scant Mubarak staff, Morsi, of course, and now the new regime. Absolutely no interest in reforming or holding accountable these security forces and we have, we are still trying to fight, to keep the small democratic sphere, the public and political sphere that we have that is still controlled by Mubarak Arab laws, the NGO law, the labor unions law, the draconian provisions of the penal code. We are still fighting to keep the rights that we established during the last few years of Mubarak and the 18 days, because none of the laws that regulate these rights have changed.

So if you look at this institutional framework, the legal framework, the constitutional and the policy and the people of the old regime that are still in power, of course that hasn't changed, but the people are not going to be silenced. I think it's that, that people that move against Mubarak and then turned from complete support of the military to demanding an end to military rule and demanding elections amongst civilian candidates and then the people that filled Tahir Square on the very first day of Morsi in office and then filled Tahir Square in unprecedented numbers demanding Morsi's return, these are the same people that are not going to be sidelined despite the ongoing propaganda war and the complete control of public and private media and the xenophobia and the hatred of, you know, the other and the human rights organizations and the absolute lack of tolerance to any questions, even not so much descent. That is not going to last. We learned that this is... You can enjoy your honeymoon right now. At some point, people are going to be asking you serious questions and you're going to have to answer about your own conduct in governance.

Robin Wright: Mirette, let me turn to you and you take whichever slice of this issue, economic, gender, justice.

Mirette Mabrouk: Okay. On the economic side, people tend to toss numbers about. The thing about numbers is that while they can be indicative, they will often, um, it's like not seeing the wood for the trees. I mean, it's easy to see further and say, for example, before the January 2011 revolution, Egypt had about 34 billion in reserves

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and then it slid to about 13 billion before the gulf countries pledged another 14 billion to pull us out of hot water. But the thing is, even though it had those reserves, even though the country was growing, you know, a prime rate at about 5.6% in growth, there was a great deal of poverty and if the country had been doing better economically, we might not have had the January 2011 revolution and if Morsi's government had done, had been able to get a better handle on the economic problems, the fact that they really didn't have very much time to handle them, but if they had done a better job, then there might have been fewer people out on the street on the thirtieth. As it stands, the poverty level has risen. We are now at about 25%... It's over 25%. It's about 25.5% and that's for the whole country. In rural areas, it's almost 70%. It's a lot...

Female: (inaudible)

Female: Yes. That's in rural areas. That's a lot of poor people and tourism is down. I mean, blessedly, the Suez Canal reserves are... and remittances oddly enough are still up. I mean are still sending money home, but, you know, the unemployment level has shot up and where it was at 9%, it's now at 13% or more. That means is you have a lot more discontented people willing to ask questions and less willing... But you have two sides of the problem. You have more discontented people demanding their rights, but you also have a great many discontented people who have had enough frankly and, therefore, will put up with things that they might not have put up with. It's, it's... I don't think it's a coincidence that the current xenophobia and lack of tolerance that Hossam was referring to, it's no coincidence. People have had enough and really just want the boat to stop rocking long enough for them to be able to feed their children and their families. It's an uncomfortable situation, but... and the answers really are not, not difficult. Everyone knows what needs to be done. You know that you need to straighten out investments. You know that you need to have stable policies, not ones that are changed as they were under Morsi's law, Morsi's time undenied overnight. You know that you need to put food on the table for families. You know that you need to have those factories up and running again. It's just that you cannot do that without political stability and we haven't had political stability in a time and at the moment we have an interim government and no matter how hard it tries, at the moment they are a group of firefighters. They, they don't really have mandate yet. So it's a tricky time and economically speaking, I think things are going to get a little, little worse before they, they get better and for every day that they spend tired and hungry and disenfranchised, I think Egyptians are going to get angrier by the day. So, whatever honeymoon period we have at the moment, that, that's not going to last either.

Robin Wright: Jawad does such extraordinary work. For those of you who don't know his story, he's done amazing work in the slums of Cairo trying to develop alternative social alternatives, educational alternatives in very imaginative ways. So,

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perhaps you can share with us some of the, some of your own experiences in understanding what's changed in the last 30 months. How much, ah, what is it the people want, what are their problems and what do you think is most important to them now?

Jawad Nabulsi: So, ah... I apologize. My language won't be so sophisticated like rest of the panelists and what I see is, I mean, people maybe the background is that we are a group of revolutionaries who actually decided to stay away from poverties and first we started through treating the injured. Most of us were injured during the revolution and then we moved to where is like trying to work with the people that we called and formed the first place. So, what we did is we went to one of the largest slum areas in Egypt, Mansheit Nasser, and we took a street and we wanted to make a model street in terms of indication, house, environment and creating jobs and we were really stunned by the reality on the ground and how bad it is and what we are facing and throughout... And actually, I did actually get an apartment there and I spent like two or three days in Mansheit Nasser.

Robin Wright: That's every week?

Jawad Nabulsi: That's every week.

Robin Wright: Yea.

Jawad Nabulsi: And actually it gave us a completely, it gave myself a completely different perspective on what's actually happened. We all come and talk about, I mean we used to talk about presenting the people, the Egyptian people, the Egyptian people, the Egyptian people, but actually the reality on the ground is completely different and you see one side on TV of what people want, but actually people on the ground want something totally different. Actually what's different like this time coming to the States and actually sitting with the panelists is that actually most people do know what the problems are. I mean, if I... I'm listening to different panelists. I mean actually their answers are on the (inaudible) is perfect. I mean, the government, of security, economy, solving the politics is happening, but I think that the issue that remains and actually remains since Mubarak is how, is how are you going to make the normal Egyptian citizen feel the change in his sphere, in his daily life and this is the answer and this is the heart core of the issue. Every political party that you see and everyone on the ground right now does not have an answer on how exactly with a very complete plan how we're going to change the daily life of the Egyptian citizen. I've been through, I mean the SCAF has been through Muslim Brotherhood and now we are seeing it right now and nobody knows exactly how we're going to do it. People might have some ideas. I mean, they talk about (inaudible) on another project and I was very critical of what happened before the revolution and that's recorded on video. So I'm not using C Span to bash the Muslim

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Brotherhood. But to give you very concrete points on what the problems are and what we're facing, or what I was facing, we are simply trying to do like development work and some charity work with normal Egyptians so they see, that was our idea, that the Egyptian revolution did something good. That was our first intention. It's like, "You know what? The revolutionaries are not that bad. Yes? Look, they changed my life to a better life."

So we face two kinds of wars, real war. One is a very vicious war that is much vicious than anything else and the other war has been not so vicious, but is there. The first war we faced as an NGO, I was trying to do development work, is the war of interests. So there are financial interests to people wanting the system to remain that way. So, for example, the garbage. So my apartment looks on a mountain of garbage that is 30 meters. I don't know how many feet that is; that's like 100 feet? What? Yea? Okay. So I don't know. Thirty meters, so that's a lot. And what happened is the government, the garbage company, they don't throw in the main dump. They come and say throw it in our area, in front of that house. So, when we tried to solve that and talk to the company, I talked to the government, we discovered that there is someone, the local council, the local municipality, they take money, they take £10 from the car, from every, from each car that goes in and dumps the garbage in that place. So no matter what we try to do, okay, the local government will not push pressure the company that go to throw the garbage in the dump. Another problem, for example, and people don't know, I find police reports being filed against me and I find that a court order and I have no idea and then I go ask, "What..." Like what a ridiculous accusations and usually...

Robin Wright: Such as?

Jawad Nabulsi: For example, I was... Someone said that I insulted I don't what and beat someone up and the police asked me to come and it's like, "Who's this person? I never even saw them and I don't know anything about it." After awhile, I discovered who was doing this against me. That was the teachers. Teachers in the area. What we did is we built a school, okay, in the area and the teachers, they charge around £100 for the students to do private lessons. So we did the lessons for like £10 for the students. So who actually were really, the ones that were really hit and who were really fighting against and trying to really to kick us out was the teachers in the area and first of course, I was the revolution and no. I'm not going to pay, you know, I'll not give in. But then I discovered that actually if you want to get things done you have to do some kind of concessions.

[Laughter]

Robin Wright: Corruption?

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[laughter]

Jawad Nabulsi: No. So what we did is we actually... no. Of course, I won't give a bribe. But uh...

Male: We won't call it a bribe.

Jawad Nabulsi: No, but what I did, we ended up doing is so we told the student, we told the teachers, "So we will pay you," okay, "£500, but you sit with the students everyday for two months," okay, "after class and I will only give you the money when the kid starts, is able to read and write." So by the way, 70% of the kids in school in our area cannot read and write and anyone in Egypt will not be surprised by knowing this. If people are surprised, this is like very normal. So what we did is like we want to sit, children can read and write. So we give them, we said, "Okay. We're going to give you £500 and I will test the students before and after and once he or she pass the exam, I will give you the money." So then I finished the war with the teachers and now actually and now we are very good with the government and everything is fine.

[laughter]

Jawad Nabulsi: There was a medical center that we wanted to open that was closed in the area. There's no medical center in that area and the medical center would have served 100, a half a million people very year and it only cost around a million dollars to open and actually not having this medical center open, you lose around 4%. Four percent of the people die, so that's like 20,000 people every year die because there is no medical center. So we said, "You know what? Why don't we... There's a government medical center. Why don't we, you know, do it? Like open?" You know, that's was in the beginning. We had very clear intentions, a medical center; we have the money and open it and it works. Where's the problem? General Electric at that time said they were going to pay for it. "No problem." It's been two years now. [Laughter] Two years now and the medical center has not been opened, but we reached an agreement. Okay? The government is going to take six rooms, okay, from the medical center. Okay? And we will take the rest and we'll have it open. So that's something that we... So that's the war and I can tell you all kind of stories about the war and we can discuss so many details on and that's what I want to get into actually, you know, eventually in our talk. If I'm in government, what do I do now that is going to make the people live a better...

Robin Wright: Save that.

Jawad Nabulsi: Right. Yea.

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Robin Wright. Save that.

Jawad Nabulsi: I'll save that. The second war that actually had, you know, that I went on public with is the political war, is branding. Every group wanted to brand our work. Everyone. They want to come up with a sign. So they told me, "The medical center, no problem. Just logo. Yea?" It's on my dead body, I won't do it. And this is what actually made us and this what I believed was one of the big things the Muslim Brotherhood did that was really disastrous and I was here and (inaudible) the Rebel is here and several people were here and I publicly said that and that ends the time the (inaudible). I told them, I'm being asked. I'm being asked, okay, someone who stood against the old regime and we were fighting, now you are telling me to give a political concession to put your brand? No, you are definitely going the wrong way and I don't see this type of change in times of political branding. Everyone wants to make sure what's my opinion and what's going on. For myself, as I run an NGO and it's possible for people, I cannot bear the risk of being branded politically. I'm apolitical. An NGO is apolitical. I shouldn't get into politics. People are, "No. We need to know. Before we let things go. We need to know where do you stand. Are you this side or that side?" And what happened, to be fair, a lot of the NGOs, the Muslim Brotherhood of NGOs that were working in the area stopped and this had created a burden and actually big NGOs like (inaudible), for example, that has like a million volunteers and they do amazing work, to be honest. I know (inaudible) Razeem. I know the CEO. Had a head-on campaign against their work and this is directly affecting the (inaudible) government, even I know, even of the Muslim Brotherhood. But the end of the day, they are helping. They are filling a gap that normal Egyptian, okay, who can't eat or can't find their education or can't fulfill their medical needs, they are fulfilling this gap. They're closing this gap. So this is another issue that needs to be solved, that needs the government to be aware of. Put NGOs aside, try to facilitate. I am going to discuss about...

Robin Wright: And we'll get into that in a minute.

Jawad Nabulsi: Yea.

Robin Wright: What I should tell you is, Jawad never will, is that he was such an activist is that he lost his sight in one eye from a birdshot, I believe, and I said to him, "How are you doing," and he said, "I'm doing fine. I'm lucky. A lot of people lost both eyes." So, Diane, I'll let you be the pinch hitter and kind of give us an overview of where you think Egypt is today versus 30 months ago when this all started. Is the average Egyptian worse off, better off and in what ways?

Diane Singerman: I want to follow up from your comments and I think one of the things to think about in terms of where normal Egyptians are is that in some sense if you happened to be born in Mansheit Nasser or Esbet Chaerallah or one of the other

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informal areas, you are born into a position of being illegal just because you happened to be born into a certain residential area. So for the last 30 years and since the revolution, citizens are not equal in Egypt. How are public resources, like education, like healthcare, like transportation, is there a fair distribution of public resources? No. The Egyptian government relies on NGOs and others to perform basic social services, which are supposed to be what a government does in the public interest for its citizens. Eight-five percent of all of Cairo is informal housing areas of all new construction. A lot of the wealthy and middle class areas are also built informally. So if you are a child in one of these areas, in a place like Esbet Chaerallah, 650,000 people, one elementary school. One elementary school for all of those people. No healthcare; no libraries, etc. So, on the opposite side of things, I think one thing we have to remember and that everybody here knows a lot better than I do, is that there was tremendous activism about issues of social justice. The master frames in Tahir were not about a new constitution. They were not about elections and they were not about religion. They were about social justice, dignity and the fall of the regime and I agree completely with Hossam that the regime has not fallen, but one of the things that I think is really important is that activists, the Egyptian people and young people, my fellow political scientists, many of them would say, "Oh, durable authoritarianism. This is going to last for a long time," but they surprised them and young people came out and they've come out repeatedly and they've been joined by a whole cross-section of people. But I think what needs to happen is that the demand has to be placed not on the Muslim Brothers, but on the state. Right? And so all of the kind of problems that you are talking about that people are, Egyptians are very aware of, I think what has to happen is activism has to be much more targeted to make demands for a new school, to make demands for clean water. In the Egyptian Constitution of 2012, Article 68 says that every Egyptian has the right to shelter, healthy food and housing. No. Shelter, healthy food and water, I think it is. That's Article 68. Is the Egyptian government going to... You know, constitutions are a beautiful thing. We have many constitutions. The last 1970 constitution wasn't so bad. Does the Egyptian government respect, protect and fulfill those rights? And so what I would say is that there is tremendous mobilization going on in lots of neighborhoods. Many of the local popular committees are still working and they're doing a lot of good work, but I think that the activism has to demand representation. It's very interesting in the new constitution in 2012, the people are afraid of local democracy. Seventy-five percent of the population of the world has elected mayors. Egypt is one of the very few countries throughout the world that has appointed mayors and appointed governors. There is no local government in Egypt; there is local administration in Egypt. You have places that hundreds of thousands and millions of people that live in them that have absolutely no representation. All right? Why don't we have municipal elections in Egypt? Right? We have local people's councils. Actually, the local people's councils were disbanded in 2011 and now you have local government and the executive councils that are running things with absolutely no representation. You have local popular committees that are still

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active in many places, but actually they're not representative and they actually don't have a legal way to sustain themselves financially. So I think one of the things that people, you know, especially in elections, when you have national elections, as we say in the United States and lots of other places, "All politics is local." But in Egypt for decades, politics has been kind of criminalized at the local level and/or monopolized by the NDP and local government. So the question is, how do you get, how do you allow all of this incredible activism and this energy and how do you try to institutionalize it so people don't have to go Tahir Square to solve their problems? Right? So the garbage can be taken care of. It's just a very normal thing that people should have ways of representing their interests and negotiating their interests in a collective fashion.

Robin Wright: I have a question that I'm curious about and I don't know if anybody can answer it. What percentage of the general kind of public services, education, healthcare, are provided by the government? What by NGOs and what percentage by Islamists? Just generally, does anybody have any idea?

Mirette Mabrouk: (inaudible)

Robin Wright: Is her mike on? Can you hear her?

Audience: No.

Robin Wright: I don't think this mike...

Mirette Mabrouk: No. It's on. It's me. The problem isn't the mike. It's me. Now, for example, healthcare. Now, as an Egyptian citizen, you are entitled to healthcare and it should be free. Just because you are entitled to it, doesn't mean that you're going to get it. That's why the Muslim Brotherhood did so well. They provided those basic services that the government failed to provide. So, there really isn't a way of being able to say this percentages is provided by NGOs and this percentage is provided by the government. There really isn't a way to do pull that down. You can say that the government keeps slipping up and that the NGOs keep picking up the slack and it's been that way for as long as anyone can remember.

Robin Wright: So do we know even the majority? The minority? I mean...

Diane Singerman: I mean, I think education, for example, has been completely privatized, right?

Mirette Mabrouk: Yea.

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Diane Singerman: So you have public education, but everyone spends all of their lessons on private lessons, even if they are going to college. But I think it's also really important this is a policy of the Egyptian government. Right? To reduce, you know, this sort of policies of the Egypt government has been to cut back on services for the last 30 years and cut back on education and cut back on public services and to privatize healthcare. So it's not just a surprise that there are very poor public services in Egypt now. But I don't have those numbers and they're very hard to come by, I think.

Robin Wright: I want to get to this issue that has been alluded to and that's the issue of concessions or corruption and how, all of this system, getting anything done involves so much corruption. Is that worse today than it was 30 months ago? How difficult does it make life? How much does the average person have to pay off? I mean, how does it affect life, incomes, ability to get things done, to be eligible or to get basic services? How much justice? I mean, on the issue of human rights, do you have to buy human rights in Egypt?

Hossam Bahgat: Many would have attempted it, but again, I agree that it is not a coincidence. We had an opportunity in January of 2011 to have a discontinuation, to have a cutoff point to say this was the past, let's rebuild new institutions. Let's have transparent and accountable government and let's have a vetting process of at least the senior level of administration to really see who needs to be transferred, who needs to be retrained and who needs to be prosecuted or at least relieved from duty. There was even an attempt by the very first cabinet that came, that was appointed after Mubarak's oust, the first of Essam Sharaf cabinet, there was an attempt to have laws that would not have criminalized, would not have ushered in prosecutions for past corruption, but aimed, that sought to prevent future corruption, to really address the root causes of corruption, like conflict of interest laws, like public disclosure of assets, like more transparent budgeting and you know, publically accessible budget making process and final outcome. And the military council that was in power that came after Mubarak had a vested interest in maintaining the Mubarak state and that's why we did not see a coherent prosecution strategy for past corruption and they refused to pass any of the corruption prevention laws that incidentally were drafted by Ziad Bahaa El-Din, the current Deputy Prime Minister, at the request of the government at the same time. The Supreme Military Council did not want to pass it. When Morsi came and, you know, we all felt that finally someone with at least a democratic mandate to introduce these changes, it was very quickly that Morsi and the Brotherhood and the FGP revealed their true intention, which was not to reform the state, but to take over the state. You know, how do we utilize these structures, whether it's the corrupt and abusive police force or the corrupt bureaucracy? How do we make sure that it continues to work while preserving the privileges and the current balance of power, but under our leadership and for our benefit? And that's, of course, you know, backfired in their face, because the bureaucracy went on strike.

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Ultimately they refused to work for the new government and there was no attempt to reform this bureaucracy that we could have supported, that other sectors of society could have supported the Brothers in the face of this strike of the bureaucracy. Right now we are exactly in the same position. It's exactly the same secretive theoretically anticorruption bodies that are still working in exactly the same manner. The administrative control authority that, you know, was for Mubarak's last 10 years under a leadership that was facing very, very serious corruption charges, the head of that authority was selected on July 1st by the interim president as the new head of the General Intelligence Service. So someone who was facing corruption charges for 10 years under Mubarak and for the past two years, including under SCAF in 2001 is suddenly the replacement of Omar Suleiman as the Director of General Intelligence. That gives you an idea about the direction that the state is wanting to take right now and in terms of laws being passed, I mean even in the constitution that the Brothers passed, there was an idea at least of setting up an anticorruption commission, maybe as an attempt to be an umbrella body of all of the desperate and different bodies fighting corruptions to bring them together and give them some tooth, some teeth to fight corruption. That idea is now being scrapped off of the constitution, so that we keep the current anticorruption structure as ineffective as it is. And, of course, the budget making process is still exactly the same. In fact, we are writing into the constitution now provisions that will ensure even more secrecy in the future, codified in the constitution, especially for the military budget, that will have to be entered as one figure in the new constitution. None of these, I mean, I agree completely with Jawad and Diane that culture is a big and important factor of it. We can't do human rights work, to answer your question, without really paying the court official to photocopy a file of a client that I am representing with power of attorney. I still have to pay to photocopy this file. So I understand that it's endemic, that it has reached a cultural level, but that is, I think, a result of institutional make up that encourages corruption.

Robin Wright: And the fee that you pay goes in his pocket rather than in the government revenue?

Hossam Bahgat: Yes, but the government understand that this is part of his salary, because he is not paid minimum wage. So, of course, part of the salary is calculated as, you know, that direct out-of-pocket fees, if you want, that we pay.

Robin Wright: The tips?

Hossam Bahgat: No. It really is seen as part of his salary. It is seen by the government and you know, I'm sure people here that worked for the government would support me in this.

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Robin Wright: The (inaudible) economy. Jawad, you deal with this issue on the ground, with people. How much tolerance is there? I mean, you mentioned the word strikes. It's really interesting to see not only in Egypt, but in Tunisia and elsewhere, as people become feeling a little more empowered, they are striking over not being paid or low salaries or people getting fired, in much more vibrant ways. I remember right after the revolution, there were a spade of strikes. Everybody was going on strike. And you have to wonder if things aren't getting any better if this endemic corruption is getting worse in part because the economy is imploding, at what point do you see, how much tolerance is there? What I'm trying to get at is, what's next? Where should we look and how much appetite? Again, we get to this issue of stability versus freedom and/or rights, be they economic or political.

Jawad Nabulsi: I try to imagine actually and see how long the Egyptian can tolerate, two months, three months, four, five. I think, I mean, this is my own assumption. I think that actually it's not getting better. So, the things are not getting better. The executions are the same. It's not getting worse. The curfew has been really hard on people, because up in my area, a lot of people, most of them are drivers so actually the curfew is kind of a disaster. But what I see, average tolerance in my area, I can't speak also like for all Egyptians. I can't say all Egyptians are. I'm just saying my area is around 200,000. It represents a lot of the areas and as you said, 85% of Cairo are informal areas. That's a really good... people included in this number, 85% of Cairo, okay, are informal areas, are not planned. And so...

Robin Wright: And so they're not legal. They are not represented?

Jawad Nabulsi: Yea, 85%. So the majority of Cairo, for example, and there are many other areas are not planned and when we are talking about planned, that means government. So if government wants to advocate budgets, they can, because they really don't know and this is according to the journals, by the way. So the reference is the Jiazed. There is a Jiazed Report that made a map of Cairo and I read the report.

Robin Wright: Eight-five percent of new housing?

Jawad Nabulsi: Yea.

Robin Wright: Sixty-five percent of Cairo.

Jawad Nabulsi: Sixty-five?

Robin Wright: Something like that.

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Jawad Nabulsi: I read 80% of the... So I think the tolerance level is one year. I think Egyptians can really, from my view, is one year of giving all of the benefits, all the doubt, all of the whatever the government's need to do, and I think that people start to move. That's my feel.

Robin Wright: You can, but I just want to press you on that. What do you mean when you say, "start to move?"

Jawad Nabulsi: So the majority of Egyptians... Okay, during the revolution, I'm talking about the 25th and 28th, the majority of the people in the streets, most people don't know that, were not people like us. The majority of the people that went, we were not the majority of the people. We were not people who are like, you know. We were not the majority. The majority of the people that were in the streets were people who were in a low income family and people who had their own personal issue with the police. They had their own personal dissatisfaction that gave them a strong right to go on the streets. I think what I am talking about, maybe I'm talking about the same thing, protests. I'm talking about like I'll be honest, during the (inaudible), the people went and on the oldest drove road, they went down and they closed it and this is the type of disobedience that I am talking about. People trying to... I think mainly the closed streets strike, but not revolutions like going down like the 30th. No, I think it's going to be very disruptive. Every area will use their own way of trying to disrupt or make a sound, make a noise. Okay? So the government, the media will come. The government will listen, because this is the only way the government is going to act and it's going to continue with just fire fighting. So that's what I mean by move. I'm not talking about another wave of, you know, millions of people going into the street.

Robin Wright: Yea, absolutely.

Hossam Bahgat: It is important to note that while, of course, the country is completely consumed now in this fight waiting for the street battles to end between Islamists and the new regime, that protests did not stop, even though the entire country is in this Egypt fights terrorism mode, which is a banner you see on all TVs permanently 24 hours and the entire talk is about defending the Egyptian state in the face of this terrorist threat. The protests did not stop and this month we had labor strikes starting again in August actually in Suez and in Mahalia and exactly the same spots, because the root causes of the problems were never addressed. So it is no wonder that exactly the same places where the workers used to strike against Mubarak and against the SCAF and against Morsi are striking again now and what's really remarkable is that their response is the same. Is that, again, the military tanks moved on Mahalia and the military went and arrested people from the steel factory in Suez. They were put to a military trial, so of course their colleagues went on strike and prolonged their strike until their colleagues are released and then the military, of

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course, would force the owners of the factories to give some concessions to the workers so that the end of strikes and in a few months, you are going to have labor strikes in Mahalia and in Suez again and because...

Robin Wright: And what are the issues?

Hossam Bahgat: Because there is no, first of all, there has never been a fundamental revision of where we went wrong. I mean, I believe...

Robin Wright: What are the issues for the workers? What are they going through?

Hossam Bahgat: There are not political issues, necessarily, but of course, once you have the textile workers in Mahalla where all of the movement against Mubarak is said to have started in 2008, once they start a strike, and suddenly they find military tanks surrounding the factories, of course it turns political. Of course it becomes about military authoritarianism restarting in Egypt and the older panelists today were saying you know, "The Brothers and the Islamists should really start to look, you know, where did we go wrong," and I completely applaud that. But the people that were part of the old regime and now are defending the old regime, should do exactly the same. I mean, how come we never really had a process where we looked at the economic and social policies of the Nazif cabinets, at least the last ten years and how the underlying root causes of the problems that we have right now. So we don't understand them and, therefore, of course we are still applying the exactly the same measures, exactly the same responses that will continue this problem. What governments do is exactly what the Brothers do is instead of doing this, they think, "Hmm. Labor strikes. How do we control that? Let's pass a new law against demonstrations to make it difficult to demonstrate and let's impose new restrictions on independent labor unions so that we can control the labor unions." SCAF did it; Mubarak did it; Morsi did it and all the people that say you know, "Why didn't you wait for three more years for Morsi even though there were problems?" And occasionally you read any newspaper herein America, they say, you know, they have the same background paragraph almost where they say, "Freedom and Justice Party and the Muslim Brothers failed to be inclusive and were showing authoritative tendencies." These are the two cases that are always made against the Brothers and we always say, "No. It was much worse than this." I mean, Morsi and his people, they incited the killing of protestors. They praised the police publicly for killing protestors. They ordered mass arrests and torture and sexual assault of political protestors and by last April, when it was just before (inaudible) had started collecting the petitions, their Islamists majority (inaudible) counsel was discussing a law against the NGOs, a law against the judiciary, a law against demonstrations and a law for labor unions. There was a clear attempt not just to rewrite the rules of the game, but to control the public sphere. My fear is that right now, this war on terror discourse and framework is being used exactly to justify and to legitimize exactly the

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same restrictions of, you know, how do we close this revolutionary season that started two years ago, end it now, and return to the talk of reform and I think that the words of Karim Haggag on the first (inaudible) were identical to the words we used to hear in 2007 by the Progressive Elite within the ruling party of Mubarak. Egyptians do not revolt. The history of the Egypt state is against the revolution. It's about evolution. Let's forget about this revolution and start introducing reform. So, now it's another "R" replacing the revolutionary "R" and I'm sorry, but these people are going to be up for exactly the same surprise that quote them unprepared in January of 2011. Because you can't... this state that we have right now is not going to be reformed. You know, so you really have two scenarios now. One scenario is there is going to be a political deal cut with the Islamists that are going to be reintegrated into the political process and that's exactly when people are going to say, "What about this power outage? What about my minimum wage? What about democracy, etc.?" They're going to ask questions because the war on terror would have ended. The other scenario is that the new authorities will win. The security crackdown will continue. The Brothers and the Islamists are going to be completely defeated and, again, that is when people are going to start asking the serious and the hard questions. The next one, I am worried, is going to be a real revolution this time, because people are going to realize it's not about the faces or the names of those in power. It's about really the structure of this state that is mediocre, that is literally and morally bankrupt, that is inefficient and that is really repressing us and right now they may want this big daddy state to protect them, but ultimately they're either going to, you know, grow tired of this war on terror discourse or the war on terror is going to actually come to an end and the people are going to realize that the big daddy is the problem, not the protection.

Robin Wright: Mirette, I wanted to...

[applause]

Robin Wright: I want to follow up on that eloquent point. Is the use of these anti-terrorism laws or the terrorism boogie man going to make it almost impossible for the kind of people power we saw in Uprising 101 and 102 more difficult and that then makes, if they are using anti-terrorism laws basically to round up labor union strikers, does that make for the process that that makes the next round bloodier or more difficult or more traumatic?

Mirette Mabrouk: ... the January...

Robin Wright: Speak into the mike.

Mirette Mabrouk: Sorry. We had those laws before the January 2011. I mean...

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Robin Wright: I don't think they can hear you.

Mirette Mabrouk: Can everybody hear me?

Male: Maybe hold the mike.

Audience: No.

Mirette Mabrouk: Okay. Those laws aren't new. I mean, they are being cloaked in a different way now. Now it's the war on terrorism. Before, there was always a war on something else. It was always a need for the state to protect itself. This, look. When we were talking about corruption earlier, corruption is endemic to every part of our life in Egypt and it starts at the top, keeps shunting its way down and the further down you go, the more morally defensible it is actually simply because, I mean the teachers that Jawad had difficulty with, they're making lousy salaries. They have children of their own. Where do you expect them to bring their money from? And these laws that you're discussing now set up by the state, I think the hope is that they will appeal to certain, ah... Egyptians tend to be patriotic. The only, during this whole mess, the only numbers really that have been rising have been the numbers on remittances, because people keep sending money back. Because they think we're in trouble, we need the money, they send money back. Egyptians are patriotic. There's going to come a point when they are going to say, "You know what? Enough." And for the state, I think if the state thinks that people are just going to keep swallowing this hook, line and sinker, I think we're in for a nasty shock, because the door that was open in January 2011, you cannot close that. You cannot close that in the same way that after January 2011, I mean everyone who got a salary thought they were entitled to more and therefore, everyone went to strike and in Egypt, you know what happens if you go to strike. Either you're going to get fired or you're going to get arrested or worse and people still do it. People are not going to stop. When this dies down at the moment, and it will die down and I think it's possible actually the current government is sort of aware of that, because the interim government is currently desperately spending about 22 billion Egyptian pounds, which is just over \$3 billion, which is about a quarter of what the Gulf Arabs just gave us on infrastructure, because that's really where it is at the moment. People don't have water; they don't have gas; they can't get to their works and hospitals, because they don't have roads. We desperately need the infrastructure. That money is going straight to infrastructure, even though this new government doesn't really have that much of a mandate from their firefighters, that's where the money is going. So if the state thinks that people are just going to sit down and go away, I don't think so.

Robin Wright: I want to ask Diane one question. I just looked at my watch. It's going so fast. It's so interesting. So I want to open it up to your questions, but let me ask one more of Diane. We've seen all of this money pouring in from the Gulf - \$12

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billion from Saudi and the UAE. How much of a solution is that? How long will it last? How vulnerable does that make the state in the long term and at one point during the Brotherhood there when Gata was giving all the money, the joke was, "Well, is Little Doha trying to buy big Egypt?" What are the interests of the Gulf in all of this as well in affecting political life?

Diane Singerman: I'm going to... So the first part of your question is more I can speak to better. I think it's really interesting. Hazem Beblawi is somebody I teach. He writes about rentier economies and how terrible rentier economies are for any country and so now we have billions of dollars pouring in from the Gulf and a lot of that is going to not necessarily go to infrastructure. A lot of it is going to go to buy petrol and wheat and provide food. But that's not obviously going to solve any of the problems, any of the endemic problems, because the problems are also structural. And I think one of the things that's really interesting to point out about the continuity about the Mubarak regime and the Morsi regime is that it is a very neoliberal framework. You would have expected a sort of different policy. There was an opportunity there for innovation. There was an opportunity there for a new direction. So, the Muslim Brothers, the FJP, is still building affordable housing in the desert. They're still talking about building cities in the desert and they're ignoring the assets and the capabilities and what you can do in informal areas. And so it's the old kind of we need foreign investment. It's the neoliberal policies and that hasn't changed and they're in such economic predicaments now that they are going to be using this rentier money for basic needs and it's not going to change the situation. But I would want to sort of go back to something that Hossam said and push him a little bit, because we can all analyze how really tremendous challenges Egypt has. But the question I have is sort of why haven't political parties in Egypt done a better job of trying to channel and lead local efforts and trying to change the demand side of things? Like why should we expect economic elites to change their policy? Why should we expect the military to change their policy, unless they are forced to at some level? And so the question becomes in Brazil and in Argentina and in South Africa, how have people been able to hold their governments accountable? And I think there's been a failure of political parties, but there's also an opportunity to go local. There's an opportunity to work with NGOs; to demand elected governors; to demand elected governors; to demand elections and municipal elections quickly and not to think these things are unimportant. Because again, if political parties can operate nationally and in throughout all areas in Cairo, that's a tremendous opportunity there. And so, the young activists, I think, it's not just political parties. The young activists and the innovators, they really have to target the state. They have to demand new policies. They have to demand new services and they have to target those things in very tangible sort of material ways that matter so much to people and Egyptians and all over, they know the solutions to these problems. They know how their government works or doesn't work and how to get things done and it's a tremendous loss that that knowledge and those citizens are not valued as

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democratic actors, that they can't participate. And so I think any new government has to reach out. It has to create many, many more spaces not to retrench as it is. Not to talk about terrorism all of the time, but talk about inclusion and the rights of people to participate.

Robin Wright: That's probably a lot easier to say than to do. We're talking about the real world, not the ideal world unfortunately. All right. Let me open it up to your questions. I'm hoping there's a female right here. I don't think we've had a female question all day.

Female: I have two questions.

Robin Wright: Could you identify yourself and your organization, please?

Female: Do I need to stand up? Okay. My name is (inaudible). We've been amazed at the ability of Egyptians to organize, mobilize, clean up streets, get people together, demand, have a whole entire campaign, that I tell you when it began in 2011, people all over, and I work with the non-violent movement herein the United States. People were sending experts to go to Egypt and learn about their methods because it was massive. How they were able to organize, mobilize and stay committed to one kind of vision.

Robin Wright: So what's your question?

Female: Why has not followed through? Was it the fact that once Mubarak was gone somehow people just retreated and said, "Okay. Someone else can take the stand." I mean, that is one fundamental question that I just can't imagine. With that kind of abilities, what happened that it doesn't follow through?

Robin Wright: Thank you.

Female: Why wasn't there a vision afterwards?

Robin Wright: Thank you. Jawad, why don't you take that?

Jawad Nabulsi: So, it's been three years, right? A lot of the way you see the media is not a lot of this that's happening on the ground is not being on the media, because a lot of it, once we go on the media, we are really negatively attacked. So a lot of us decided to be a little bit low profile. But, one of the things that we learned is that anyone that is going to be solo is going to be eaten out and for me to kind of bring an organization or bring some kind of a real power, I need to have two things. One, is to have real grassroots support. Right? So for me to actually say, "I represent the people," I need to actually win the people and really understand what the people

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need. Right? So, the first thing we did, and I'm not the only one, a group of us, moved with the people and tried to understand where the people are. Number two, if are really sincere about our revolution and of our love to our country, it's not about me becoming a minister or president, it's about us knowing exactly how we're going to take Egypt from Point A to Point B and if I don't have that answer, then I'm not ready to stand up on stage and we're in that process. And any politician and anyone who would accept a position and appear on stage and does not have an answer on how you're going to take Egypt from Point A to Point B is unethical. So for us, we know exactly what we're doing and what happened and we're just trying to take our time to understand the problems, gain public support and find real solutions. So when we're on stage and by the way, we're all young, so the age factor, we're winning the age... we're losing almost every war, but we're kind of winning the age war. So when we're really on time, we know exactly how we can solve the rearview problems and now we can say, "Yes, the revolution succeeded and it was succeeded."

Robin Wright: Thank you. Marina?

Marina: Marina Ottaway, Wilson Center. Both Jawad then Hossam talked about the discontinuum, dissatisfaction, the fact that protest continues and I think the expectation for both of you is that it's going to blow up again in the foreseeable future. Now my question is, what is going to be the outcome this time? Because one thing, it's very easy to forget that both things in January 2011 and the summer, this popular agitation in the end was resulted in the military intervening. In other words, it was the military that brought down Mubarak. It was the military that brought down Morsi. So next time around, what is the military going to do? If I can use an analogy, you know you have in certain situations the small dog that yaps, yaps and the big dog comes around the corner and, you know, really takes care of things and that big dog is the military. What is that dog going to do this time? Is it going to turn against the protestors rather than against the government?

Robin Wright: Thank you. Want to take that?

Hossam Bahgat: Sure. I'll have to resist the urge to engage the metaphor for obvious reasons.

[laughter]

Hossam Bahgat: I think your question is related to Diane's question of why are political parties not organizing and to the question about what happened to the grassroots movement. Okay, it's complicated in that when Mubarak was overthrown, we did not have a roundtable national process to agree to rules of the game. Right? We had big daddy or big... We had the military in place and the military decided that

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the generals were going to write the rules of the game. We're going to consult. We might even call a public referendum. Millions will come, but then we're going to write what's actually going to go into the constitution declaration and the framework of the transition and then they singled out the Muslim Brothers and said, "And I pick him." Right? So they were part of the committee that could draft the rules, the proposed amendments to the constitution, etc., and that started a race of basically who gets the ear of Tuntawi and Anan and the generals of SCAF, because it was not a matter of who organizes faster, who goes out and builds a movement. It became a matter of who really influences the decisions of the generals and that was really what killed the post-Mubarak political parties in that on the one hand, it was a competition for who gets to sit in the lap of the generals and then on the other hand, they could not trust that if they go and spend the next four years building a movement and bypass this next election and, you know, concede that they are not going to win it, that in four years time when they come back, the rules of the game will allow them to actually complete because it was a foundational moment and it was being written in the most untransparent, undemocratic ways and of course, that was a huge distraction away. That what happened to the grassroots was similar to this. You know, when Mubarak was ousted, we had a few months where we could travel everywhere we wanted in the country as a human rights organization that we used to run away from state security. It used to be impossible for us to go to a village in the aftermath of a sectarian violent assault, for instance, and not be picked up and thrown out of the village by the state security officer. We had the entire country open to us. We would go and enter, you know, the Ministry of Culture, Culture and Palaces, the youth centers in villages. We went to (inaudible) to speak in, you know, community centers that entire country was open to us. That's early 2011. By the Summer of 2011, all the government media and government officials and ministers at the time started saying January 25th was a conspiracy. It was funded by the West. We are going to start an investigation into who funded this conspiracy and who undermined the Mubarak regime and you know, the cabinet on which Hazem Beblawi was a minister at the time, started this investigation and assigned the Minister of Justice to do the fact finding and suddenly the media is saying, "April 6th, kafala, the human rights community, these are all part of the conspiracy." You know, they were flown to the west and they were told how to destabilize the situation and then the Brotherhood and Hamas and Hezbollah and Iran and Israel and you know, (inaudible) and all of these people attacked the state and brought down Mubarak in one conspiracy. And, of course, that was effective and that with a refusal to change the NGO laws, to change the funding rules to really open up the state and with being completely shut out of the policy level, the policy circles, had a big impact on the ability of this grassroots movement to continue and Morsi's rule did not change that very much. So I don't know what's going to happen. Yes, I think we had, I agree with the analysis that there's been three waves. There's been a wave against Gamal Mubarak and those that actually wanted to hand us over as a nation to the son and then there's been another wave that forced the military to actually concede and to

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give powers to a civilian president after elections amongst civilian candidates. There's been a third wave against the religious right that was going to destroy this recent democratic process. There were different actors, of course, in every wave of them and I think there will be another wave, a fourth one, and it's going to come soon. Unless people in power right now realize that, you know, this Nasser state that was born in '52 has really become a dead body that we've been carrying and trying to pretend really is alive for a few years now. It's time to say that, you know, this nation state project has failed. We need a new republic and the new republic must be based on these new values for it to be acceptable and to have, to not suffer the same crisis of legitimacy and the same crisis of delivery that really brought down all of these presidents. Until we get to that point, what I see right now is going to be a political sphere that is heavily controlled by the military with some political parties competing in a formal political process that is probably going to yield results. Just like the Haya (inaudible) political party that the results in the end, you know, they had a constitution; they had a referendum; they had election, etc., but the entire process collapsed and my worry is that the current path that we are seeing is not a path towards democratic transition. It's really going to meet the time posts and probably the road map is going to be stuck, too, but whatever comes out it is not going to have the legitimacy or the acceptance to make it an enduring political system.

Robin Wright: We only have four minutes left, so I want to get to the last bit of business that we have and that is the policy group prescription, the recommendations. You kind of addressed that already. If the other three of you would want to wrap up with giving briefly your thoughts on what Egyptian people, their heir of brethren, or the outside world, to be tangible, realistic, not dreamy. Mirette?

Mirette Mabrouk: I don't really think it's a big secret. What I do think is there's a resistance to how it's going to be done. I think there will be no economic success without a political consensus and I think there will be no political consensus without accepting all parts of Egyptian society. What we have at the moment is not feasible. What we have at the moment is a small group of people making decisions for a very large group of people and the large group of people have said they will not do it.

Robin Wright: All right. We know what doesn't work. What will?

Mirette Mabrouk: I think you need political consensus. I think you need to open up the...

Robin Wright: But how do you do that? This is where I want to get not dreamy eyed and not in terms of principles. Tangibles. Specifics. What is it that, you know, particularly the people who brought us the revolution in the first place, can do now?

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Mirette Mabrouk: (inaudible)

Robin Wright: Okay. Jawad?

Jawad Nabulsi: So that's the place I like to be. So, let's say we have 300 people, right? I mean our work has affected around 100,000 people in the past two and a half years. So let's say if you have...

Robin Wright: No. Three hundred of you.

Jawad Nabulsi: No. No. I'm saying so our NGO, according to the Ministry of Social Affairs, we affected around 100,000 people within the past two years. So if you go through NGOs and there are like 300 people and everyone average reaching out to like 50,000 people, so you're talking about maybe 15 million people and you're supporting first two things. One, easy access to funding. Okay? Number two, easy access to implementing the projects. So ah...

Robin Wright: I said no dreamy.

[laughter]

Jawad Nabulsi: Oh. I mean, I did that proposal called the Citizenship Development Fund that did exactly on what projects the government needs to do in terms of healthcare starting with the medical centers; in terms of the youth centers, up in the youth centers, in terms of unemployment and xx. So I have a detailed plan on what a government can do right now. But in terms of policy, I think the fastest thing they should do, and I'm trying, I'm kind of being hopeful, is that providing NGOs very quick accessibility for implementing the project. So if I'm taking a lot of time and effort in actually raising the funds and gathering the people and doing the work, I shouldn't be stuck with government approvals. So the government should have some kind of a committee that actually fosters or makes easier access for NGOs, that are the only ones and the quickest who can actually touch the citizen and make his life better. As simple as that. So that's my recommendation to (inaudible). The NGO is going to be the number one savior for whatever government is going to come. I really don't care what government comes, as long as you let me help and you help the people that we are calling for, then you're good to stay. So that's my, you know, and if there is any government official, anyone who wants to, that the proposal is very detailed and I'm happy to share it and you know, push for it and to make the life of Egyptians better.

Robin Wright: Thank you, Jawad. Once again, the pitch hitter.

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Diane Singerman: I think that some of these things that need to happen are not ideals. I think that there's tremendous activism and that activists need to be much more specific in their targets. So, for example, again, there needs to be a democratization of local government. There needs to be in the constitution elected mayors, elected governors. There needs to be targeted reforms of local government, of local administration, to make it more representative, to make it more effective. I think one of the things that I would really push for, and I know the human rights community has for a long time, without a right to information law, it's extremely difficult to know anything about what the local government is doing. There needs to be a right to information law so that local people can ask their governments what's happening and this has been tremendously effective in India. It took about 10 years of activism, but the right to information law in India led to social audits all over the country, Freedom of Information Act, so people could figure out what their communities needed. I also think that we need to... there needs to be from below, I'm not imagining that the government is going to have a change of heart. I think activism needs to think about social justice and the built environment. It needs to think about housing policies. It needs to think about the fair distribution of public resources. I mean, Egypt is a very strange place. The military people talk about the... the military also owns a lot of land in Egypt; the state doesn't. The military does. So we have to think about the price of land and who gets the land and etc. So, again, I think what needs to happen is local activism demanding the transformation of the state and state policies and particular policies which people find very innervating.

Robin Wright: You know, I get the last word on this and I'll use it. You know, those are all great ideas but when you're just trying to get the garbage cleared from your area or maintain a job when you're a driver in the middle of a curfew, this is where I worry, that we outside can talk about lots of great ideas. These ideas have been out there in forms in dealing with developing countries for a long term and it's how do you get from Point A to B. I remember Tom Freedman in the panel this morning, said he was I guess guardedly optimistic. I guess I'd call myself guardedly pessimistic, because I think there's such a gap between the really tough realities that Egyptians are living through and how much flexibility there is within the political system that is increasingly intolerant and willing to use whatever tactics it needs to create the stability that a lot of Egyptians do want. I mean, Egyptians are torn, I think and my fear is that we do, because there isn't that kind of flexibility or organic movement that we do get into something that gets brittle and confrontational and eventually bloody, which concerns me a great deal. But please join me in thanking an extraordinary panel. Diane and Jawad, Mirette and Hossam, thank you very much.

[applause]

Panel ends