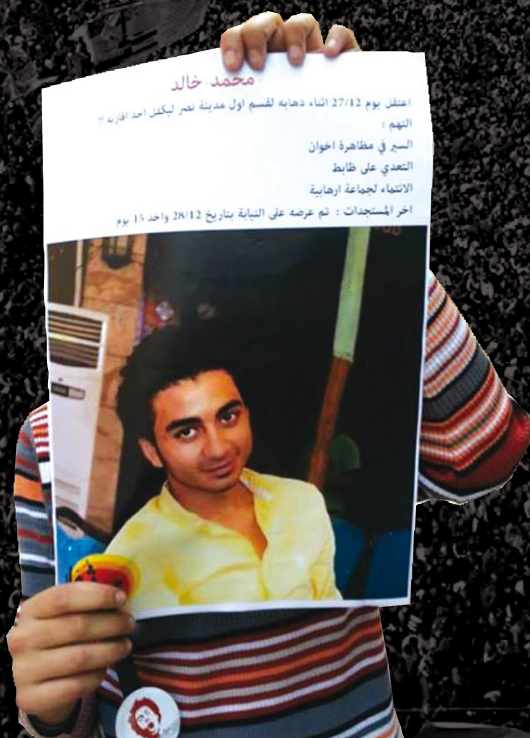


An Egypt Solidarity pamphlet

From revolution to repression

Egyptian universities on the frontline of protest

**A briefing
by Nicola
Pratt**



Woman student holds a poster of Mohamed Khaled, Cairo University student detained in December 2013. Photo: reusoc.me

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Clashes at Cairo University, March 2014 Photo: Mosa'ab Elshamy

Introduction

After the 25 January Revolution in 2011 staff and students managed to expand democracy and independence on many Egyptian university campuses.

However, since the ouster of former president, Mohammed Morsi, in July 2013, many of these gains have been reversed in the name of combating the Muslim Brotherhood.

As this briefing demonstrates, long before the bombings which killed a police officer at Cairo University in April 2014, the Egyptian security forces turned Egyptian campuses into war zones: storming university campuses, arresting hundreds and shooting students dead during protests using birdshot and live bullets.

According to Egyptian and

international human rights organisations, it is the security forces who bear prime responsibility for the violence.

An Amnesty International report released in January 2014 highlighted the crackdown on students as a key example of what the organisation calls “state violence on an unprecedented scale”.

The Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE), an Egyptian NGO has documented almost daily occurrences of violent attacks by the police on students and harsh jail sentences given to student protesters.

This briefing begins with a background of the situation of Egyptian universities before the 25 January Revolution and then goes on to discuss the gains and reverses since 2011.

Egyptian universities before 2011

Under Hosni Mubarak, academic freedoms and freedom of association of students and academics were systematically undermined.

As reported by a Human Rights Watch report in 2005, State Security Forces created a 'climate of fear' on Egyptian university campuses, by selectively monitoring class room discussions, using force against students expressing opinions through speeches or posters and suppressing student protests on campus.

State-appointed deans also monitored class discussions and student activities on campus, intervening to prevent debate of politically-sensitive topics, and prevented leftist and Islamist students from running for student union elections.¹

State security interference on campuses reached a high in the fall of 2010, when the government was preparing to rig national elections.²

Students were prevented from sitting their exams for hanging up posters and individuals were prevented from standing in staff club elections.³

In addition, university professors were prosecuted and/or attacked in the press on charges related to their opinions, research or teaching. Not all of these violations were perpetrated by the state.

Following a court case brought by an

Islamist lawyer, Cairo University professor Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd was declared an apostate for his research on the Quran and obliged to leave Egypt.

American University in Cairo (AUC) professor Samia Mehrez was attacked in the press and in parliament because one of the books on her reading list was considered to be too sexually explicit.

Another AUC professor, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, was tried for espionage in what was considered a politically-motivated case to punish him for writing about the 'inheritance of the presidency'.⁴

In 2004, university academics formed the March 9 Movement for the Independence of Universities.

Key facts

- 18 state-run universities
- 17 private universities
- 2.4 million students
- One in three leavers of secondary education go into higher education (30% M, 27% F)
- 66.4% of adults are literate (74.6% M, 57.8% F)
- 84.9% of youth (15-24) are literate (87.9% M, 81.8% F)
- The oldest state-run university in Egypt is the Islamic university Al-Azhar, which was founded in 970. Cairo University, founded in 1908, has a student population of around 155,000

Sources: UNESCO, Loveluck (Chatham House) 2012, Cairo University Faculty of Engineering website

They achieved a great success at the end of 2008 when an Egyptian court ruled that the presence of police on the campus of Cairo University was against the constitution.⁵

However, this ruling, which was upheld against a government appeal in 2010, failed to be implemented in other Egyptian universities until the fall of former president Hosni Mubarak in 2011.⁶

At Ayn Shams University (Cairo), university administration sent thugs to beat up staff participating in a rally highlighting the court ruling and some were referred to disciplinary proceedings.⁷

From 25 January 2011 to 30 June 2013

Following the 25 January Revolution, Egyptian universities made great gains in academic freedom and independence and there were high levels of student activism on campuses.

In the initial period after the fall of Mubarak, a major demand of students and some staff was the resignation of members of the administration associated with the former regime.

This was largely resisted, but a series of demonstrations by staff and students led to the holding of elections for university deans and presidents.

Though many had intended that these elections would lead to the removal of remnants of the Mubarak regime, in many cases, incumbents were elected.⁸

Nevertheless, it is argued that elections created accountability between university administration and their staff, compared to the past when they were appointed by the government.⁹

Another significant gain for the independence of Egyptian universities was the withdrawal of State Security Forces from campuses, in line with the 2008 administrative court ruling.

As a result, many university students and staff enjoyed unprecedented levels of freedom of expression and association on campus.

Case study

Mohamed Reda Cairo University

Shot dead on campus

Mohamed Reda, a 19-year-old first-year student at the Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University was shot dead on campus on 28 November 2013.

Evidence from witnesses and video recordings show riot police firing tear gas and shotguns inside the university, and an investigation by the university administration concluded that it was the riot police who were responsible for Mohamed Reda's death.

Source: Amnesty International, January 2014

Staff were able to organize conferences and invite outside speakers without gaining permission from State Security.

The first free student elections were held for the first time in decades and the National Union of Students, banned since 1979, was resurrected.¹⁰

During the rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF, February 2011–June 2012), students organized anti-SCAF protests and even a student strike in February 2012.¹¹

The 25 January Revolution also seemed to have created a new spirit of freedom on campuses.

In an interview in 2012, Cairo University professor Laila Soueif provided two examples of how the atmosphere on campuses had changed since before the revolution.

First, even though many professors were against the student strike in February 2012, nevertheless they defended the rights of the students to protest.

Second, students responded to an accusation by a journalist that Cairo University Department of English Literature was teaching novels on lesbianism, by defending their right to read what they wanted.¹²

Unfortunately, there was no progress during this period towards enshrining these newly found freedoms in a new university law or new student bylaws.

This was partly a result of changing governments and also divisions amongst staff and students over who should represent them in a body tasked to redraft these laws.

One draft university law put out to

consultation was widely criticized.

In the absence of a new law, amendments to the existing university law were made by parliament in spring 2012 but were then annulled when the Supreme Constitutional Court dissolved the parliament on the grounds that it was elected under an unconstitutional elections law.

In addition, university reforms have not been a priority in the context of a highly tumultuous transition period.¹³

Egyptian universities since July 2013

Egyptian university campuses have faced serious threats to their independence since July 2013 as they have found themselves at the centre of conflicts between supporters of ousted Muslim Brotherhood president Mohammed Morsi and the new military-appointed government.

Egyptian university campuses have witnessed ongoing clashes between students protesting against the removal of Mohammed Morsi and campus security as well as State Security Forces since the beginning of the 2013/14 academic year.

Since July 2013, over 500 students have been arrested and at least six students killed, five of which at Al-Azhar



Case study

Mohamed Abdu Cairo

"You will never see your mother, or the sun again"

Arrested while leafleting in October 2013 near pro-Morsi protests, he was kicked and slapped by military officers then handed to the police.

He was interrogated without the presence of a lawyer and detained in a police station for 15 days on charges of "inciting violence".

His interrogator shouted that he would force Mohamed to reveal the names of those who had given him the leaflets, saying "You will never see your mother, or the sun again. You will be underground for 20 years."

Source: Amnesty International, January 2014

University and one, 19 year-old student Mohamed Reda at Cairo University, who was killed by gun shots that witnesses say came from the security forces.

Until now, no one has been charged for the murder. Security forces have used excessive force – including lethal force – to disperse the protests, and in many cases fired into or entered university grounds.¹⁴

On 12 November 2013, 12 students from Al-Azhar University were sentenced to 17 years in prison and charged LE64,000 for bail for committing 'thuggery' and other violent acts whilst protesting against the military coup and calling for the release of their arrested colleagues.

Egyptian human rights organizations believed the harshness of these sentences to be unlawful.¹⁵

Amnesty International reports that, 'In making its case, the Prosecution relied heavily on the testimony of the head of al-Azhar University Security, while no material evidence was presented.

Other eyewitnesses testified seeing the defendants after they were arrested, but acknowledged not seeing them commit any violent acts'.¹⁶

In March, 16 Al-Azhar students were sentenced to three years in prison and 17 Al-Azhar students were sentenced to 14 years in prison on various charges linked to protests and clashes on campus.¹⁷

The unrest on university campuses has created a justification for the return of State Security Forces.

At the end of 2013, the government gave permission to universities to invite police and state security forces on to





Clashes at Cairo University Photo: Mosa'ab Elshamy

campuses in order to quell student protests. In February, the Court for Urgent Matters overturned the 2010 ruling banning State Security Forces.

Meanwhile, a number of other measures have been rapidly implemented to outlaw student protests.

At the end of December 2013, a court banned student protests on campus unless authorized by university presidents.

On 5 January 2014, the Supreme Council of Universities agreed to a new article giving university presidents the authority to fully suspend students involved in "terrorist and disruptive acts".¹⁸

On February 16, a new law was passed granting university presidents the right to immediately expel students who "practice acts of vandalism that obstruct the teaching process, target university

facilities or exams, assault individuals or public or private property, incite violence among students, or contribute in any of the aforementioned actions."

The expulsion can only be appealed before the Supreme Administrative Court.¹⁹

Twenty-three students were expelled from Cairo University following student protests on 19 March.²⁰

The increasing interventions of State Security on campuses has led to escalating violence, with some students unaffiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood being caught in the middle and suffering the consequences.²¹

A number of students who were not part of anti-coup protests have been victims of security measures.

For example, in November, at Cairo University, security forces fired tear gas

into the campus, causing anxiety and fear amongst students who were there attending class.

In early December, students from different secular-oriented movements at Al-Azhar University, including April 6 and Dustour party, were arrested for discussing politics at a café near their dormitory.

It is not only students who have been targets for authorities.

In September 2013, a list was published of 59 professors from universities across Egypt, all appearing to be Muslim Brotherhood members, and who were detained by authorities.²²

On 5 January, the Minister of Higher Education Dr Hossam Eissa announced that the terrorism law would be applied on campuses against faculty supporting protests.²³

It is not only Muslim Brotherhood supporters who are being targeted by authorities.

An internationally known Egyptian political scientist, Emad Shahin, at AUC, was charged with espionage in January 2014, with co-defendants from the Muslim Brotherhood, including Mohammed Morsi. He has been a critic of the military regime.

The Middle East Studies Association of North America's Academic Freedom Committee wrote to the Egyptian prime minister calling for the charges to be dropped.

The court hearing for this case is, at the time of writing, adjourned and Shahin remains in the US, where he was attending a conference.

Another political scientist, Amr

Hamzawy, was also charged in January with 'insulting the judiciary' for describing a sentence handed down against NGO workers as politically motivated and lacking transparency.²⁴

Such actions create a climate of fear for academics, not only Egyptians but also foreign researchers working on Egypt.²⁵

Case study

Ayat Hamada Al-Azhar University

Arrested for trying to stop police beating students

Arrested on 28 December 2013 when she intervened to help another woman student who was being beaten by the police, 18-year old Commerce student Ayat was an activist in anti-Muslim Brotherhood campaigns Tamarud and Ikhwan Kazeboon.

On the day she was arrested she had come onto campus to check her exam schedule.

She spent months in prison alongside 13 other women and 56 men arrested the same day, despite concerns that she was not receiving proper medical treatment for a heart condition.

She was finally released on 16 February with a LE1000 fine.

Sources: Amnesty International, January 2014, The Cairo Post, 17 February 2014

What you can do: a brief campaign guide

- Pass a resolution through your student union or trade union. Use or adapt the model text on the inside back cover of this pamphlet
- Organise a protest, stall or vigil on campus highlighting the crackdown. Find campaign resources here: <http://egyptsolidarityinitiative.org/academicfreedoms/>
- Organise a speaker meeting – get in touch with us for help and advice
- Order copies of this briefing using this online form: <http://wp.me/P4kK99-3G>
- Put on a film-showing
- Go to www.egyptsolidarityinitiative.org for news and updates from Egypt and campaign resources
- Follow us on Twitter @Egy_Solidarity

Sign our founding statement:

“Egypt Solidarity is an international initiative which endorses freedoms secured since the 25 January Revolution of 2011. We call on all those who agree with our principles and demands to work with us in building global solidarity for Egyptians under threat from the military regime.

We support:

- The right to freedom of expression and of assembly, including public protest
- The right to freedom of association, including the right to form political parties and independent trade unions, and to establish NGOs
- The right to strike
- The right to live without fear of sexual violence
- Freedom from religious or sectarian persecution
- Freedom of the media
- Free elections
- Fair trials

We call for:

- Immediate and unconditional release of those imprisoned for exercising rights to freedom of expression and of assembly

- Repeal of Law 107 of 2013, restricting rights to public assembly
- Independent investigation into state violence and criminality, including assaults on those exercising any of the rights and freedoms above
- An immediate end to trials of civilians in military and State Security courts

We call on our governments to suspend all financial, military or other support to the Egyptian authorities that may be used to violate the rights of Egyptian citizens.

“In particular we demand immediate cessation of all sales and transfers to the Egyptian government of weapons, ammunition, vehicles, cyber-surveillance technology and other materials for use against those who exercise their right to protest.”

To add your name please go to:
<http://wp.me/p4kK99-c>

Founding signatories:

Dr Maha Abdel-Rahman, University of Cambridge, UK • Prof Gilbert, Achcar, School of Oriental and African Studies, UK • Prof. Engin Deniz Akarli, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Brown University & Professor of History, Istanbul Sehir University • Anne Alexander, MENA Solidarity Network, UK • Prof Talal Asad, City University of New York, USA • Hüseyin Aydın, political secretary of Industrial Trade Union of Metal Workers (Germany) • Jim Barbour, Vice President, Fire Brigades Union, UK • Chris Baugh, Assistant General Secretary, Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), UK • Prof Asef Bayat, University of Illinois, USA • Prof Joel Beinin, Stanford University, CA, USA • Olivier Besancenot, former presidential candidate, member of the National Executive of NPA (Nouveau parti anticapitaliste), France • Sue Bond, Vice-President, Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), UK • Prof Bill Bowring, Birkbeck, University of London, (President, European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and Human Rights) • Richard Boyd Barrett, TD, People before Profit, Ireland • Prof Jason, Brownlee, University of Texas at Austin, USA • Christine Buchholz, MP, German parliament • Prof Ray Bush, University of Leeds, UK • Dr John Chalcraft, London School of Economics, UK • Katy Clark, MP, UK • Sarah-Jayne Clifton, Director, Jubilee Debt

Campaign, UK • Mary Compton, Past President, National Union of Teachers (NUT) and editor, Teachersolidarity.com, UK • Petros Constantinou, elected councillor, Municipal Council of Athens, national coordinator of the antifascist movement KEERFA • Bob Crow, General Secretary, Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (RMT), UK • Nick Dearden, Director, World Development Movement • Prof Ellis Goldberg, University of Washington, USA • Dr Adam Hanieh, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, UK • Richard, Harvey, QC, UK • Ian Hodson, National President, Bakers', Food & Allied Workers Union, UK • Inge Höger, MP, German parliament • Sally Hunt, General Secretary, University and College Union (UCU), UK • Panagiotis Kalfayannis, President, POSPERT (Federation of trade unions in the state broadcaster, ERT, Greece) • Prof Erol Katircioglu, Marmara University, Istanbul • Asst. Prof Ebru Kayaalp, Istanbul Sehir University, Turkey • Jimmy Kelly, Regional Secretary, Unite the Union, Ireland • Prof Ferhat Kentel, Istanbul Sehir University, Turkey • Prof Laleh Khalili, School of Oriental and African Studies, UK • Assoc. Prof. Abdülhamit Kirmizi, Istanbul Sehir University, Turkey • Alain Krivine, former member of the European Parliament, member of the National Committee of NPA (Nouveau parti anticapitaliste), France • Dr Elizabeth Lawrence, President-Elect, UCU, UK • Prof Zachary Lockman, New York University, USA • Jane Loftus, President, Communication Workers Union (CWU), UK • Ivesa Lübben, Research fellow, Centre of Near- and Middle East studies, University of Marburg, Germany • Prof Philip Marfleet, University of East London, UK • Eamonn McCann, National Executive Committee, National Union of Journalists (UK & Ireland) • John McDonnell, MP, UK Parliament • Ryan McKinney, Assistant Secretary, Northern Ireland Public Sector Alliance (NIPSA), UK (personal capacity) • Prof Timothy Mitchell, Columbia University, NYC, USA • Prof. Dr. Rachid Ouaisa, Director of Centre of Near- and Middle East studies, University of Marburg, Germany • Prokopis Papastratis, Professor of History, Pandeion University in Athens • Wonsuk Park, Member of the National Assembly for the Justice Party, Korea • Christine Poupin, Porte-voice, NPA (Nouveau parti anticapitaliste), France • Philippe Poutou, former presidential candidate, member of the National Executive of NPA (Nouveau parti anticapitaliste), France • Dr Nicola Pratt, Warwick University, UK • Prof. Dr. Werner Ruf, Professor emeritus for International Relations and Foreign Policy, University of Kassel, Germany • Asst. Prof. Irvin C. Schick, Istanbul Sehir University, Turkey • Seung-chul Shin, President, Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, Korea • Prof Joshua Stacher, Kent State University, USA • Andonis Stamatopoulos, president, SELMA (trade union of Athens Metro workers) • Asst. Prof. Asli Telli Aydemir, Istanbul Sehir University, Turkey • Assoc. Prof. Tolga Tüzün, Bilgi University, Istanbul, Turkey • Ufuk Uras, former MP for Istanbul, Turkey • Roseline Vachetta, former presidential candidate, member of the National Executive of NPA (Nouveau parti anticapitaliste), France

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Model resolution on repression in Egyptian universities

This branch notes:

1. This union notes with grave concern the far-reaching assault on human rights currently underway in Egypt, three years after the uprising which toppled Mubarak. According to Amnesty International the Egyptian military and security forces have killed around 1,400 people and detained thousands since July 2013. University campuses have been repeatedly invaded by riot police, who have shot dead students in an attempt to crush ongoing protests against the military regime. Over 500 students have been arrested since July 2013, and many have received harsh jail terms, some as long as 17 years. Egyptian human rights lawyers told Amnesty that many recent detainees were arrested arbitrarily as they attended university exams or went to collect study papers. Academics have also been targeted: large numbers of alleged supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood have been sacked or arrested.

This branch calls for:

- Immediate and unconditional release of those imprisoned for exercising rights to freedom of expression and of assembly
- Repeal of Law 107 of 2013, restricting rights to public assembly
- Independent investigation into state violence and criminality, including assaults on those exercising any of the rights and freedoms above
- An immediate end to trials of civilians in military and State Security courts.

This branch resolves to :

- Work with campus trade unions and signatories to the Egypt Solidarity statement of 11 February 2014 to establish a broad-based solidarity initiative to defend Egyptians under threat from the military regime by [amend as appropriate for your local circumstances]
- Making a donation of £..... towards solidarity campaign expenses
- Organising a meeting on campus with a speaker from Egypt Solidarity
- Ordering copies of the Egypt Solidarity briefing *From revolution to repression: Egyptian Universities on the frontline of protest*
- Endorsing the Egypt Solidarity statement, circulating information about the campaign to our members and encouraging them to participate in solidarity actions
- Sending this resolution to our national conference, writing to the Egyptian authorities condemning the military repression, writing to the UK government calling for the immediate suspension of all financial, military or other support to the Egyptian authorities which may be used to violate the rights of Egyptian citizens. In particular, we demand immediate cessation of all sales and transfers to the Egyptian government of weapons, ammunition, vehicles, cyber-surveillance technology and other materials for use against those who exercise their right to protest.



About Egypt Solidarity

Egypt Solidarity is an international initiative launched in February 2014 to highlight repression in Egypt and mobilise solidarity for Egyptians under threat from the military regime.

Get involved with our campaigns

find out more at www.egyptsolidarityinitiative.org



This pamphlet has been supported by the University and College Union

UCU branches can order copies of the pamphlet free of charge via our website or from UCU directly.

Funds raised from the sale of this pamphlet will go towards solidarity campaign expenses and future publications.