

No change seven years after Egypt uprisings

By [Niamh Carroll](#)

Thursday 8 March 2018



Image: Jonathan Rashad

One of the most famous singers in Egypt, Sherine Abdel Wa-hab, was this week sentenced to six months in prison. Her crime: making a joke about the River Nile. Sherine is well-renowned in the country and is a judge of the Egyptian version of *The Voice*. She was convicted of spreading “false news” and of defaming national pride by a Cairo court, after she joked that the iconic River Nile contained para-sites and advised a fan to “drink Evian instead”. Communities in Egypt were once plagued by issues related to drinking Nile water; however, in recent years fears over parasites in the river have been allayed by health programmes improving water quality. Another less well-known pop star, Laila Amer, was also sentenced this week, for a music video which an Egyptian court claimed incited “debauchery and immorality”; for this crime Ms. Amer received two years in prison.

The cases of the two pop stars demonstrates the overt and deep-rooted social conservatism of Egypt. Court cases of this kind are not entirely out of the ordinary. In September last year, seven people were arrested after they waved a rainbow flag at a pop concert for “promoting sexual deviancy”. Freedom of speech is virtually non-existent, and any expression deemed to fall outside of national values is repressed. In many nation states, the oppression of culture and of politics often go hand in hand with each other. In Egypt, this certainly seems the case as expressions of all kinds are highly restricted.

In 2011, during the height of the Arab Spring, things looked very different for Egypt. Prior to 2011, the country was ruled by Hosni Mubarak, who was President for almost thirty years. Following a wave of similar uprisings across the Middle East, the Egyptian people also took to the streets demanding radical change in a country which had been dominated by one ruler for so long. Tahrir Square in down-town Cairo became an epicentre of the movement demanding political change. When President Mubarak eventually stepped down, the protestors in Tahrir Square were widely praised as demonstrating how real change in striving towards democracy and freedom could be achieved. Even former US President Barack Obama declared: “the word Tahrir means liberation.”

The hope for change that was sparked after Mubarak stepped down seems to have been extinguished as quickly as it began. Now, the BBC reports, Tahrir Square appears to be like any other public space in Cairo, as though the authorities wish to forget what happened there. After the elected President Mohammed Morsi began to lose public confidence in 2013, the military ousted him. Then followed a brutal crackdown on Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood Party, including mass trials which saw 683 men sentenced to

death in a single ruling in 2014. Current President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is a former military field marshal elected in 2014. He was elected by a landslide; however, poor turnout undermined the legitimacy of the victory. International commentators have said that Egypt under its current regime marks no progression from the time of Mubarak. There is widespread persecution of people deemed to have defied the government's conception of what Egypt ought to be like, from political activists to pop stars. Human rights agencies have reported the frequency of press persecution, forced disappearances and arbitrary detention in the country.

Media sites considered subversive in Egypt are blocked, including The Huffington Post's Arabic language website, and Qatar based news site, Al Jazeera. As a result, access to content critical of the government is scarce in the country.

Presidential elections are taking place in Egypt at the end of the month, and this will surely only intensify the crackdown on political and cultural activities deemed subversive. Foreign Policy have commented on the upcoming election, stating that "the March vote will in no way confirm President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's popularity among the Egyptian people... it has nothing to do with democratic mechanisms worthy of the name". Even if President Sisi is re-elected by a landslide, his victory cannot be recognised given the lack of political freedom in Egypt.

While the prosecution of a popular singer over a joke may seem to have little to do with political oppression in Egypt, it is demonstrative of a state wishing to stamp out anything which deviates from their own values. The spirit of the Tahrir Square protests was that of change; yet seven years on the Egyptian people have somehow once again ended up with a political elite that will go to any lengths to preserve their own rule.



15 comments

Azza Radwan Sedky

8 Mar '18 at 3:54 pm

You want perennial protestors? Well, you won't get them especially since Egypt is fighting a war against terrorists who want to level it down similar to Libya and Syria. Believe me it is not the time to have the security apparatus direct its attention elsewhere. Let's focus on the war at hand.

Simultaneously, what you neglect to mention is the effort made to improve and develop the country. See "What the world refuses to see." It appeared in Ahram Online.

<http://azzasedky.typepad.com/egypt/2017/12/egypt-what-the-world-refuses-to-see-opinion-ahram-online.html>

Report

Gump

27 Mar '18 at 5:00 am

And I thought I was the sensible one. Thanks for setting me stithgra.

Report

Jhett

27 Mar '18 at 3:11 am

I can already tell that's gonna be super heupllf.

Report

Jody

5 Sep '18 at 10:07 am

[auto acceptance insurance Rockwall TX](#)

 Report

Sailor

12 Sep '18 at 11:49 am

[auto insurance Augusta GA](#)

 Report

Rosa

12 Sep '18 at 11:56 am

[auto acceptance insurance Tacoma WA](#)

 Report

Andralyn

15 Sep '18 at 11:51 am

<http://www.tortgarcia.com/günstige-kredite.html>

 Report

Johannah

18 Sep '18 at 2:54 am

Superb [inormfation](#) here, ol'e chap; keep burning the midnight oil.

 Report

Coltin

18 Sep '18 at 5:07 am

<http://immobilienkredit.club/>

 Report

Maralynn

4 Oct '18 at 8:10 am

<http://autokreditnet.club/>

 Report

Jhett

10 Oct '18 at 1:42 pm

<http://immobilienkredit.club/immobilienkredit-vergleich.html>

 Report

Melissa

11 Oct '18 at 4:11 am

<http://www.kfzversicherungvergleichde.info/>

 Report

Peerless

12 Oct '18 at 12:25 pm

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Adelaide

5 Nov '18 at 6:21 am

Good to find an expert who knows what he's [tailnkg](#) about!

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Parmelia

13 Nov '18 at 3:55 pm

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