

The Strongest Protests in Egypt since 1977

Friday 28 January 2011, by [EL-HAMALAWY Hossam](#), [GOODMAN Amy](#) (Date first published: 26 January 2011).

Interview with Hossam el-Hamalawy by Amy Goodman. Listen to the full interview with Hossam el-Hamalawy:

Hossam el-Hamalawy: Egypt yesterday witnessed its strongest protests in probably four decades, since 1977: tens of thousands have taken to the streets in virtually all the cities of our country, chanting against Mubarak, chanting against the U.S., which is backing Mubarak, calling for internal reforms and for democracy. Others were chanting for a revolution and saluting the Tunisian people.

The police have responded with iron-fist tactics we're used to — although they showed some self-restraint in the first few hours — by using rubber bullets and tear gas and mass arrests against the protesters both in Cairo and in other provinces. As I am talking to you now, there are at least 200 political detainees locked up in the notorious state security facility in Nasr City. The government has blocked Twitter and has blocked, just in less than an hour ago, Facebook, and has blocked yesterday also Bambuser, which is an online live-streaming video platform on the internet.

These protests, more or less, have settled down after midnight. But today, more protests took place around the Press Syndicate and the Lawyers' Syndicate in downtown Cairo. And we're receiving reports that the secretary-general of the syndicate, of the Press Syndicate, Galal Aref, has been detained. There are also waves of arrests for activists in the Nile Delta, both in Tanta and in Mahalla [1]. The government, fearing similar unrest to what happened in April 2008 in Mahalla, had actually given the Mahalla workers, yesterday, a vacation, a holiday. And today they've let them leave work pretty early. But the situation is still tense. Those demonstrations were spontaneous, and we expect that they will be resumed soon, because the reasons for which those protests have broken out are still there. . . .

Revolutions spread by the domino effect. And the Tunisian revolution against Ben Ali proved to be a major source of inspiration to the Egyptian people, in the same way that Egyptian dissent over the past five years has proven also to be a catalyst for other Arab people to step up their fight against their dictators and also in the same fashion that the Palestinian intifada in 2000 steered the Arab street into action. We are living in the age of satellite TV stations and the age of social media. Whenever dissent explodes in one area, the imagery can be transmitted to other areas. And people here in Egypt can draw parallels between Ben Ali and Mubarak. We don't have only one Ben Ali in the Arab world; we have 22 Ben Alis, and they all need to go. And the chants yesterday that the people were chanting in Cairo and in the provinces were very similar to the chants that our Tunisian brothers and sisters have been chanting over the past few weeks in their uprising. We salute their struggle, and we hope that we can pay them back by overthrowing our dictator.

P.S.

* From MRZine:

<http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2011/hamalawy260111.html>

* Hossam el-Hamalawy is an Egyptian socialist, journalist, and photographer. Visit his blog: <www.arabawy.org> . This interview was broadcast by Democracy Now! on 26 January 2011 under a Creative Commons license. The text above is an edited partial transcript of the interview.

Footnotes

[1] See [Resistance in Egypt](#)