

The day the graffiti died

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For the Western media once interested in the Cairo of the Arab Spring, there is perhaps nothing more indicative of the short life of the revolution in Egypt than the silence of the city walls.

Two years ago, my city was celebrated for a graffiti boom. Critics, photographers and curators descended on Cairo to document the newly vibrant street-art scene, while foreign graffiti artists arrived to collaborate with locals on innovative and exciting projects. A coffee-table book industry mushroomed, carrying pictures, essays, and interviews with artists, curators and gallery owners. Some of the more iconic images made it onto T-shirts, calendars and greetings cards.

For two years, I proudly packed these souvenirs whenever I travelled to the West—gifts for colleagues in Europe and the USA who had kept faith with our daringly ‘non-violent’ insurrection. But recently I stopped. It was not only, I realised, that Western interest in these revolutionary souvenirs had faded; they had also become something of a political embarrassment—their once inspirational message now ringing as a false and facile optimism; our ‘non-violent’ revolution, militant from the start.

At the beginning of the revolution in January 2011, the first graffiti I noticed consisted of simple slogans calling for bread, freedom and social justice. These were painted with spray cans on the asphalt surfaces of the streets around Tahrir Square, on the limestone walls of police stations and government offices, and, later, on the military tanks and armoured personnel vehicles that came to be stationed on the Square. As the violence increased, there appeared stencilled images of the men and women who had been killed, injured or harassed by

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counter-revolutionary forces. Eventually, the slogans and stencils graduated into stylish and sophisticated murals, painted on the large cement blocks that prevented demonstrators in Tahrir from reaching important security buildings in downtown streets nearby.



Don't look down; freedom is before your eyes
Painted on the asphalt of Tahrir Square during the 18 days of revolt against Mubarak, January–February 2011.



Non-violent
Sprayed on a police car, with the police logo crossed out, Tahrir Square, January–February 2011.



No to Mubarak
Sprayed on a military personnel vehicle, Tahrir Square, January–February 2011.

But where once there was the creative energy of the artist in spray paint, stencil and murals, all we see today is whitewash, whitewash and even more whitewash. If the walls are so dumbstruck, does this mean the revolution is dead?

For the legally inclined, the death of the Egyptian Revolution might suggest that ‘transitional justice’ had failed. But just look at us. We’ve been to the polls ten times, had two transitional periods (each with its own road map to democracy), three constituent assemblies, two constitutional referendums and practically four presidents (two in prison awaiting trial, one interim ex-president about to resume his place on the bench as Chief Justice, and yet another army-general newly inaugurated as President.)

Far from killing the rule of law, has our revolution been too obsessed with transitional justice?

What follows are diary entries written retrospectively on the basis of newspaper articles from the first three weeks after General Sisi was elected president in June 2014. Each entry recollects the past three years or so of our revolution, and shows how it was saturated with the ‘rule of law’ and an obsession with ‘transitional justice’. The entries are interspersed with a selection of Cairo graffiti, much of it whitewashed today. Yet, the whitewashing was often halfhearted; the graffiti, only thinly covered. So just as the rule of law, democracy and transitional justice are not dead but are rather ideas that continue to structure the way we think about present conditions so the graffiti remains and continues to communicate from Cairo’s streets despite its ostensible obliteration. And the anti-army slogans that today denounce Sisi as a criminal and a traitor are the new graffiti—even if they are not artistically compelling enough to catch the Western media’s eye.



Live long and whitewash
 Sprayed on a freshly painted wall with older graffiti underneath.
 Courtesy of Sherief Gaber.



You whitewash; I paint again

Spray-painted text with stencil below calling for mass demonstrations on 25 January 2012, first anniversary of the revolution.



“CC” is a killer

Sprayed on a wall, Nile Corniche, Cairo, December 2013.

1 JUNE: MY NEVER-ENDING ELECTIONS

I can still remember when elections used to make me smile. The first time I voted was on 19 March 2011. After stepping out of the voting booth, I flaunted the pink electoral dye on my index finger at anyone who cared to look. Little was I to know that our revolution was about to unfold as the ultimate constitutional soap opera.

Mubarak had just stepped down, the ‘Supreme Council of the Armed Forces’ (SCAF) had formally taken over, and there was one question on all law professors’ minds: can we vote to amend Sadat’s constitution from 1971? Or did that constitution die the day we revolted? SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) both encouraged us to vote in favour of

amending the 1971 Constitution rather than embarking on a new one before holding public elections. With good reason: SCAF had ruled Egypt in one guise or another since the last military coup of 1952, and it was now all too evidently in government. It wanted to escape open media scrutiny, and it wanted to escape soon. The MB also wanted an early vote, since, after six decades of military rule, they were the only organised party on the ground: they knew they would be voted in before anyone else had the chance to organise.

The first roadmap to democracy was overwhelmingly approved. We were then asked to vote for members of parliament and we delivered a comfortable Islamist majority, which voted for a constitutional assembly that was subsequently struck down by our Supreme Court. The constitutional assembly was later reinstated and drafted an 'Islamist' constitution, which we, once again, overwhelmingly approved. Next, Morsi was voted in, but when he proved disastrous in government, we revolted and had the military remove him. Then we voted once again: first on a new constitution, then on a new president. And it's not over yet. In another month or two, we will hold parliamentary elections again.

If you're lost reading this timeline to democracy, please don't worry. You are not alone.

We've been to the polls nine times so far. That is an average of voting once every three months since we revolted some three years ago. The latest round of elections was supposed to last for two days. But voter turnout was so low on the first day that the government declared the next day a national holiday for all state employees. When voter turnout stayed alarmingly low on the second day, the government decided to extend the elections to a third day. Someone on the National Elections Committee even threatened to bring back some long-forgotten law imposing monetary penalties on absentee voters.

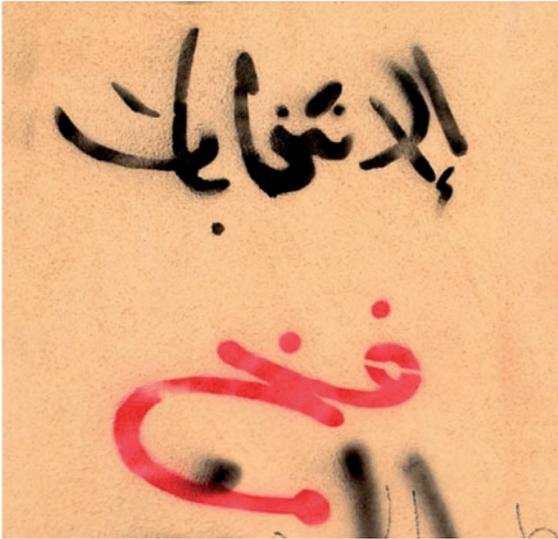
No one cared except Sisi supporters, who knew that we would inevitably compare his voter turnout to past votes: to the last round of presidential elections (when Morsi was voted in); to the second referendum results; to the vote on our second constitutional draft; to the first/second/third parliamentary elections; and to the elections for the Senate.

The point is this: the Western media is watching and the stigma of a general becoming president through a military coup has to be erased. We have to show the world that our revolution is committed to transitional justice and the rule of law. Lady Ashton's EU mission will vouch for it.

Speaking of which: yesterday afternoon, Lady Ashton's EU mission was summarily ejected from a conference organised by the National Council for Women. Tahany Gebaly, a former Supreme Court judge, screamed at the mission in Arabic for producing what, she said, was an overly critical report on the latest elections. Mona Makram Ebeid, scion of a well-known Christian political family, translated Gebaly's screams into English for EU ears. The mission left the conference embarrassed and confused.

On reading the report, my conclusion was that far from being too strong, it was too weak. For my diplomat friends, it was a political embarrassment. Oh, it's elections all right, and Sisi won fair and square.

At the latest round of elections four days ago, I refused to vote. Boycotting for the first time was clearly the right position. The graffiti confirmed it: Elections *are* a trap.



Elections are a trap



#Boycotting [elections]

4 JUNE: GREENHOUSES AND PICKUP TRUCKS

Appearing last night in a televised address of his acceptance speech our president-elect was much more tanned than during his election campaign just a few days before. Theories as to why erupted on Facebook and Twitter. Was it the television cameras, was it the make-up, or had Sisi been relaxing on the beach? An explanation was posted on the Ministry of Interior's Facebook page. Sisi had not been on some frivolous beach holiday, but had rather spent the previous day on a field visit to 'youth projects', walking for three hours in the harsh June sun somewhere in the desert outside Cairo. He had also visited a number of state-funded greenhouses, a desalination plant, a solar energy plant and a fleet of pick-up trucks. Sisi had been quietly working behind the scenes, without media coverage, was the message. But here's the glitch: Sisi's field visit was conducted on the same day the presidential election results were to be declared. So, in what capacity, exactly, was Sisi visiting these greenhouses and fleets of pick-up trucks?

7 JUNE: THE LEGACY OF PETER GRIFFIN

One more day to go: Sisi's formal inauguration is tomorrow. Then we can finally put the charade of presidential-bid-cum-elections behind us.

It's been a mindboggling process. Hassan wasn't even sure that Sisi would run. The new constitution approved in the referendum had protected Sisi and the army from any future scrutiny. The smart thing to do was to stay in office as Minister of Defence and de facto ruler of the Nile Valley. Samia retorted that much too much was invested in the man already. It was the Mubarak state and its cronies, along with the media and the police, that were pushing Sisi to run. Ali agreed, pointing out that nothing had been restructured in any of these institutions in the three years since the revolution began. Mai and I ignored them all, discussing, instead, the persistence of Soviet style in today's Egyptian military garb. Then, barely days before the deadline, Sisi declared his candidacy. That conversation was over.

In the meantime, we have not exactly been on our own. Chief Justice Adly Mansour has been acting as Interim-President since July 2013. The first law he issued increased military pensions by 10 per cent. The last decree he signed today transferred El-Arish port in Sinai to military ownership. In between these two historic acts, the man exhibited a far stronger appetite for legislation than is warranted in a non-elected interim official: everything from the seemingly innocuous regulation of national fisheries to the more controversial regulation of public protests and gatherings; from the

organisation of upcoming parliamentary elections to the banning of strict judicial scrutiny of state contracts.

The Chief Justice is widely loved nonetheless, probably owing to his rotund physique and affable demeanour—like Peter Griffin from ‘Family Guy’. Many are sorry to see him go. Tomorrow he stops acting as Interim-President and returns to the bench, sitting, once again, at the head of Egypt’s Supreme Constitutional Court where he will stay until he retires. This means that for the next two years, the Chief Justice/Ex-President’s Court will be asked to review many of the laws he himself issued. Won’t that be a problem?’ I asked Haitham, an old friend and current judge. ‘What about conflict of interest, separation of powers, and other legal niceties?’ ‘Not to worry’, I was assured, ‘the Chief Justice will recuse himself from reviewing any of the laws he issued as president’.

‘What a relief,’ I mumbled to myself, ‘his rule of law legacy is now preserved’.



Auntie non-violence is dead

8 JUNE: RETURN TO STATE PROTOCOL

Today all eyes are, once again, on the Supreme Constitutional Court. And what an eyesore it is. Housed in a neo-pharaonic structure of spectacular post-modern vulgarity, the building echoes, on the Nile Corniche Cairo, the same architectural style associated with the Luxor Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

A glitzy pastiche of lotus and papyrus columns on the outside, with the promise of multiple slot machines inside, spewing out judgments or plastic chips, depending on your luck.

The Court has been at the centre of our presidential elections for almost two years. Sisi had his swearing-in ceremony there earlier this morning—just as Morsi had in June 2012. But Morsi had originally sworn not to take an oath before the Court. Instead, he wanted the oath-taking to take place before the newly elected parliament, with its staggeringly large Islamist majority. But days before the second round of voting, the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled the latest parliamentary elections unconstitutional. SCAF proceeded to dissolve the lower house of the nation's legislature, and, by the time Morsi was declared winner and arrangements made for his swearing-in ceremony on 30 June 2012, there was no parliament before which to swear.

Instead, and to save face, Morsi proceeded to swear his oath in three stages. First, he went to a packed Tahrir Square and gave an initial symbolic swearing-in. He was sworn-in again the next day in an empty Supreme Court building, with only himself, the Justices, and some TV cameras as witnesses. This was followed by a third and more raucous swearing-in at Cairo University's main conference hall, packed to the gunnels with members of the dissolved parliament, ministers, SCAF generals and public figures.

The bad blood between Morsi and the Supreme Court continued throughout his single year in power. The new constitution, whose drafting he oversaw, radically cut down the number of Justices on the court and was specifically intended as a 'purging' exercise (of unsympathetic judges appointed to the bench by Mubarak during his last years as president). When the purged Court remained hostile, Morsi supporters laid siege to the neo-pharaonic monstrosity whenever a controversial hearing was at hand—the judicial review of the sessions for the second constituent assembly in Autumn 2012 and the election law for the upper house of parliament in Spring 2013. Morsi did not last in office beyond the summer of that year, but the Court remained centre-stage nonetheless: its appointed Chief Justice came to replace the elected Morsi as Interim-President on 3 July 2013.

A caretaker cabinet was soon created with leading liberals and social democrats appointed to key ministries, while Baradei assumed the office of Vice-President for Foreign Affairs. The cabinet and the Vice-President then swore an oath (before the Chief-Justice-cum-Interim-President) to protect and uphold the constitution. But which constitution were they swearing to uphold? The one approved by referendum under Morsi earlier that year had been suspended. By the time the cabinet ministers and the Vice-President were sworn in, there was no constitution. It took another week for a new interim constitution to be issued, by decree, outlining the nation's second roadmap to democracy.

Morsi, too, was sworn in on the basis of an interim constitution—his ultimate powers as president as yet undefined.



No parking except at the country's borders
Stencil of a tank being towed by a civilian truck.

This morning's paper has an interview with the ex-Chief of Protocol at the Presidential Palace, detailing at length what a public relations disaster Morsi had been during his time in office. Morsi had refused to consult with the ex-Chief about anything, committing one diplomatic gaffe after another. This would all change now that Sisi was in power.

And indeed, Sisi's swearing-in ceremony at the Supreme Constitutional Court today was an entirely different affair. A new constitution had been approved by referendum some months prior. The ceremony was run by the newly invigorated Department of Protocol of the Presidential Palace, and this time the Court was packed with officials and public figures. At the ceremony, broadcast live on television an hour ago, the modern Egyptian state with its traditional obsession with protocol was back in action. The ex-Chief of Protocol was now on television commenting on the first public appearance of Sisi's family. Women from the family wore the *hijab*, of course, but a very different scarf from that worn by the Morsi entourage. Gone are the straight-laced folds of Morsi's wife's puritanical headgear, and in its place the more fashionable and lighter 'Ezbanish'—a turbaned foulard in floral and geometric prints tied to one side, exposing the neck with colliers below and bits of earlobes sporting earrings above. His daughters wore trouser-suits, his wife a long skirt; all sat with hands clasped in unison on their laps.

On a television talk show later today, the ex-Chief of Protocol further enlightened us as to the nature of first-lady duties in the modern Egyptian state. He

assured us that there is no legal requirement for the first lady to do anything. She may choose to be shy and retiring, like Nasser's wife, or a leader in social affairs and family law reform, like Sadat's wife (who, by the way, introduced the term 'first lady' in Arabic). Sadat's wife followed the American tradition in state protocol, he told us, after Sadat had ditched Nasser's Soviet ties in the 1970s. And Suzanne Mubarak had followed suit cultivating a reputation for her support of children's book publishing and the establishment of new schools, libraries and parks.

There was no mention, however, of how Mrs Mubarak had illegally diverted millions of state funds into the renovation and furnishing of the family's private palaces—revelations fresh from the documents disclosed in the 'Mubarak Mansions' law-suit.



Down with the Mubarak System
Painted on Tahrir Square during 18 days of revolt against Mubarak, January–February 2011.



Screw both the Military and the Muslim Brotherhood
Courtesy of Sherief Gaber.



Screw you all

12 JUNE: WHITEWASHING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

As Sisi supporters packed Tahrir Square in a night-long celebration of his election victory, amidst the fireworks, the nationalist songs and the flag-waving, there were an undetermined number of sexual attacks against women. I could not bring myself to watch the YouTube video showing one of these attacks but I did watch Sisi two days later on national television visiting one of the victims at her hospital bed (her face blurred to protect her identity). A bouquet of red roses in his hands, Sisi addressed the cameras, apologising on behalf of the nation. 'We are not good', he admonished us, and he 'would not let this pass'. Such 'criminals will be brought to justice' and any sexual harassment of Egyptian women 'would not be allowed' under his presidency.

Truth be told, I was impressed. Neither Mubarak nor Morsi nor Mansour nor indeed any ruler of modern Egypt had gone so far in denouncing the problem of sexual violence against women on our streets. And it was women who had been instrumental in getting Sisi voted in. Sisi subsequently called on 'every Egyptian officer, nay soldier, whether in the army or the police', designating them the 'front line of defence' against such outrages.

But here's a reason for some counter-outrage. The army and the police have been responsible for two of the most well-documented cases of violence

against revolutionary women. Virginity tests were conducted in the military barracks where arrested women protestors were held—ostensibly to avoid any subsequent allegations of rape. Several of the women refused to stay silent and came forward to tell their stories. But has anyone been indicted? Has any court tried any of these army personnel? Another incident of police violence captured on a mobile phone camera concerned the famous ‘blue-bra protestor’: a female protestor, veiled in a black cloak and scarf, who was dragged from the demonstration by the police who then tore her clothes and beat her. Again, has anyone been arrested or indicted or put on trial? In a demonstration against sexual harassment, held earlier today, one woman protestor ended up being harassed by a police officer, while two men with banners declaring the police to be ‘the biggest harassers of all’ were arrested for defaming public officials.

Yet, even if the perpetrators went to court, what would happen? Remember that our Court of Cassation is famous for a decision on the type of ‘harm’ a woman must sustain to justify divorce. In the Court’s opinion—still valid jurisprudence today—the definition of ‘harm’ was a standard, not a rule, and it varied depending on the class, education and urban/rural background of the litigant. So the occasional slap on the face of a farmer’s wife would not entitle the wife to a harm-based divorce but regular obscene insults within the conjugal relations of an urban professional couple would. And let’s not forget that our judiciary is almost exclusively composed of middle-class men. Women gained access to the judiciary only recently and are limited to certain court circuits and in limited numbers. They remain barred from joining the ranks of the State Council (our branch of administrative adjudication). To add insult to injury, the main club for judges located in central Cairo has no women’s WC on its premises. Ghada tells me that when, during the protests over judicial independence in 2005, women camped outside the club, none of them could use the toilets without a male chaperone standing guard outside the door.

Today on the front page of the newspaper was a picture of seven men arrested in connection with the sexual violence three nights ago. They looked like the ‘usual suspects’: young, unshaven and working class. But were those the real perpetrators? Or was it a media stunt to show that the police were taking Sisi’s orders seriously and that the state was cracking down on sexual violence? My scepticism deepened when later today a woman journalist claimed on Facebook that the woman Sisi visited in hospital was not the one in the YouTube video—the age, the injury, the entire context were different. Yet, at least Sisi visited a victim of sexual violence whether of genuine YouTube provenance or not. As for Sisi’s wife, she followed suit, paying a hospital visit to the same woman. State protocol would approve, I am sure.



You can't break me
Stencil image of Samira Ibrahim, outspoken victim of the military's
virginity tests.



Best girl ever
Stencil image of the blue-bra victim wearing an anti-tear-gas mask.

14 JUNE: IF YOU'RE A MARTYR AND YOU KNOW IT CLAP YOUR HANDS

Ally arrived from the USA last night, and the first thing he wanted to do was visit Tahrir Square. I tried to dissuade him, explaining that it no longer resembled the place he had seen on CNN or the BBC three years ago. Still, off to Tahrir we went.

We arrived at the roundabout at the centre of the Square, where the foundation stone for a revolutionary martyrs' memorial was inaugurated on 19 November last year. The date is significant: it was on 19 November three years ago (and, again, a year later) that the army and police killed dozens of protestors on Mohamed Mahmoud Street. It was then too that the Muslim Brotherhood conspicuously failed to show up at the demonstrations and later colluded with the army in covering up the massacres. By 19 November 2013, things had become absurd. The government decided to create a martyrs' memorial, but the inscription on the foundation stone also thanked the police and the army for their efforts in maintaining security—the very same police and army implicated in the massacres commemorated by the memorial itself. Barely hours after the formal ceremony was over, friends, family and supporters of the martyrs destroyed the memorial.

During the first year of the revolution, the term 'martyr' was used to describe only those killed by the army or the police in the early months of 2011. By last summer, the term had expanded to include 'martyrs' from the army and the police who had been killed by 'terrorists'. Today the term applies to everyone. Christians killed by the army at Maspero are certainly martyrs; but, then, so are Muslim Brotherhood supporters killed by the Presidential guard two years later, as are those who were killed at the Rab'a and Nahda sit-ins during August 2013. I explain to Ally as we are leaving that the term 'martyr' is, above all, a legal status, allowing the immediate family to claim financial compensation from a fund created by the government to support the revolution.

The third anniversary of the Mohamed Mahmoud martyrs was last 19 November. What a dispiriting day. Not only was the memorial inaugurated and destroyed the same afternoon but Egypt lost its World Cup qualifier match. And it was Sisi's birthday.



The MB extends thanks both to the revolution martyrs and their assassins . . . WTF Badei? [Name of MB Supreme Guide] Sprayed on a government building in Tahrir Square on the first anniversary of the mass killing of demonstrators by security forces on Mohamed Mahmoud Street, November 2012.



Down with every traitor: Military, Old Regime, and Muslim Brotherhood Sprayed on the Martyrs' Memorial in Tahrir Square hours after its unveiling and instant destruction, November 2013.

16 JUNE: TO TRANSITION IS NOT TO TRANSITION

Sisi's new cabinet is finally announced and those in favour of projects of transitional justice will be relieved to hear that he has retained the Ministry of

Transitional Justice. This was a new Ministry created in post-revolution Egypt following the ousting of Morsi in summer 2013. To date, it has had a very checkered history.

Its birth was accidental—the outcome of bureaucratic squabbling among the Egyptian legal elite. Judge Mahdi, a retired and much respected former member of the State Council had been nominated for the post of Justice Minister. But judges from Egypt’s civil and commercial branches of the judiciary objected to the appointment because Mahdi was an administrative law judge, and the Minister of Justice was not traditionally drawn from those ranks. The new Prime Minister gave in, and appointed the Minister of Justice from the ‘ordinary judiciary’.

But what to do with Judge Mahdi? His name had already been circulated in the media as a potential Minister of Justice. He and the Prime Minister both risked losing face. The solution? The Ministry of Transitional Justice—a last-minute invention, created for the express purpose of finding a seat at the cabinet table for Mahdi. But it also served to send a message to the West that what had happened in July 2013 was not a military coup, but rather a popular uprising against an unpopular (albeit elected) president—an uprising invested in the rule of law and supported by the army as such.

Judge Mahdi, a polite and reticent octogenarian, accepted the post and became Egypt’s founding Minister of Transitional Justice—but with no ministry to occupy. It was six months before the Prime Minister realised that Mahdi had no portfolio. Last January, the Minister finally received his formal mandate, and I called Karim at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights to inquire as to its terms. All I was given was a list of vague and ambiguous tasks that read like a beginner’s guide to revolutionary aims and objectives. When asked about his Ministry in an interview with Egypt’s most popular newspaper, Mahdi replied, with enviable honesty, that ‘now was not the time for transitional justice in Egypt’, that his job was ‘impossible to perform given current conditions in the country’, and that transitional justice ‘had to wait until conditions allowed’.

Mahdi has just been sacked in Sisi’s cabinet reshuffle, announced today. A new minister will replace him. I don’t know who he is but it doesn’t matter anyway. Just as it doesn’t matter that this cabinet reshuffle has abolished (for the first time in Egypt’s sixty years of military rule) the position of ‘Minister of Information’. The post may be gone but the state-controlled radio and television remain with the same sycophantic tone and the same distorted coverage as when the revolution erupted three years ago.

Di Lampedusa would have had a field day with all of this: things must indeed appear as if they have changed so that things can remain exactly the same.



Trash your TV
The arrow points to text that reads: 'Egyptian TV'.



Egyptian TV set donning a military beret.

23 JUNE: JUSTICE BE A LADY TONIGHT

Tri just forwarded me a petition she received herself today, written by a group of concerned academics, asking Sisi to issue a presidential pardon to Al Jazeera journalist Peter Grete, who, along with two other colleagues, had received a harsh prison sentence for defaming Egypt and collaborating with a spy ring. This is not the first petition to circulate, nor is it the most egregious in context. Many more are out there, all outraged at the kangaroo court procedures of Egypt's criminal law judiciary, the worst of which was in April 2014, when some 600 citizens of my country were sentenced to death by a court in the upper Egyptian town of Minya.

My indifferent attitude to this and other similar petitions has surprised friends and colleagues, and even myself. But I have my reasons. To begin with, every lawyer worth her Bar admission will tell you that almost none of the death sentences will be carried out, and that the harsher prison sentences will inevitably be reduced or overturned. Basic procedures were not followed in any of

these cases and standards of proof were not met. When these cases reach the Court of Cassation they will be quashed and sent back for retrial. Secondly, the Egyptian judiciary's record on death sentences is pretty lenient compared with other bloodletting jurisdictions—Texas, for example. Just three days ago, the first three executions under Sisi's presidency were carried out. These were the first executions since the revolution began. I don't know why but in the last three years neither the military nor Morsi nor Mansour permitted the carrying out of the death penalty. Until three days ago, the last execution had occurred on 10 October 2011. I am no apologist for the Egyptian legal profession but let's get the record straight: the Egyptian judiciary has not been a hanging judiciary.

Third, the current outcry strikes me as misplaced if you look at the on-going trials in which Mubarak and his cronies, the police and military personnel are all eventually acquitted at Cassation—and all on procedural or evidentiary grounds that create unfavourable precedents. It is also astounding that the Western media fails to cover the fact that there has not been a single conviction for the murder of any demonstrator since the revolution started, including of those accused of torturing and killing Khalid Said, the icon of 25 January 2011. If Western commentators are so concerned about Al Jazeera journalists or Muslim Brotherhood leaders being handed down harsh sentences, why are they not equally concerned about the slew of not guilty verdicts in favour of Mubarak, the police, et al? Why am I not getting petitions in my inbox about *those*?

A final point: no one knows why judges in the lower courts are issuing such harsh sentences. It may be that they are following orders from the executive to scare the general populace into submission. Or it may be that they know very well that their decisions will be quashed on appeal. Some judges undoubtedly toe a conservative line on the revolution; its criminal justice branch deserves a seat at the table of counter-revolution forces. Others might be deciding cases on the proverbial basis of what they had for breakfast. Whatever their reasons, it is worth remembering that the Egyptian judiciary has issued some incredibly progressive decisions over the past three years. It has annulled contracts relating to corrupt privatisations of state assets and to the sale of public land in dubious real estate developments. It has declared illegal the military virginity tests, dissolved Mubarak's ruling party and returned its property empire to state-ownership, and insisted that veiled women be allowed to appear as TV news-anchors. It has given Egyptians living abroad the right to vote in elections when that was utterly taboo, and it has subjected to judicial scrutiny the president's power to declare a state of emergency. And it has also acquitted many an anti-government protestor.

Why does none of *this* get any media attention?



Justice

Stencil of Lady Justice, dressed in a dissolute belly-dancer's outfit, holding the traditional scales in one hand and an army-issue machine gun in the other, and sporting a military moustache and cap.

26 JUNE: STEALING SUMMER TIME

It's all over now. The last two of our meagre 'revolutionary gains', both lost in a single stroke. The government has decided to repeal an amendment to the law governing national universities. Rectors, deans and department chairs used to be appointed by the Minister of Higher Education after perfunctory consultation with some (similarly appointed) committee of professors. This was changed in Spring 2011 when the so-called 'revolutionary cabinet' of the first post-Mubarak prime minister decided to make all leading university posts the subject of inter-faculty elections, acceding finally to one of the main demands of the 'independence of universities' movement. This was coupled with the banning of state police from entering national campuses—another long-standing demand to rid our universities of the suffocating presence of state security personnel. Both achievements have now been rolled back. The police are now officially back on campus—with the blessing of the government-appointed university rectors, deans and department chairs.

To make matters worse, summertime has just been cancelled. A response to Egypt's acute energy crisis, summertime was declared a month ago, allowing the days to be longer and the sun to set at 8.00 pm. But now that Ramadan is

about to begin and we are preparing for weeks of fasting, the government has decided to revert to wintertime so that the holy exercise of abstention will be easier. With the sun setting at 7.00 pm, our daily fast is reduced by one hour. But once Ramadan is over in early August, summertime is set to return . . . until we hit September . . . when it will be wintertime once more.

The shared dubious ethics of all this are very clear: a government that repeatedly reminds us that we are suffering from a major energy crisis trades in the social and collective imperative of lowering energy consumption for one hour less of fasting, just as it trades in the social and collective imperative of good university governance and inter-faculty elections for state security. We are facing terrorism in Egypt after all.



Murals painted on cement blocks blocking demonstrators' access to the Ministry of Interior headquarters.



My entries for June 2014 will have to stop here. But I will continue to keep copies of Egypt's two leading daily newspapers, and I will continue sending

them to the binder, month in, month out, archiving them in my study and rearranging them by date, publisher and volume size.

Revolution is not over. Graffiti is not dead. And I'll have the newspapers to prove it.