

Five Years After: Lessons of the Egyptian Struggle - A letter from detention

Friday 11 March 2016, by [al-MASRY Mahienour](#) (Date first published: 24 January 2016).

EGYPTIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS expressed their feelings about the fifth anniversary of the Tahrir Square democratic revolution that toppled the Hosni Mubarak regime — now replaced by the even more brutal military-presidentialist dictatorship of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. [1].

Mahienour al-Masry, a member of the Revolutionary Socialists and a feminist activist who's been called an "icon of the revolution," is serving a 30-month prison term for her struggle against the dictatorship. [2]

THIS IS THE fifth year of the Revolution — I almost cannot believe that five years have passed since the chants of "the people want to bring down the system" and "Bread...Freedom...Social Justice...Human Dignity..." Maybe this is because even in my cell I am filled with dreams of freedom and with hope.

Some see after all these years the revolution having been defeated. Others see that there could not have been anything better than what happened. The regime, however, feels that they have won, but is this the correct and decisive answer? Are we defeated and has the revolution ended? Have we always been nothing but victims? Has authoritarianism rooted itself strongly by force and tyranny most of the time, and sweet talk at other times?

Maybe because I am among the believers in the dream, and among those who are convinced that we face not only internal authoritarianisms and tyranny, but also an international system that is inhumane — and to which people mean nothing compared to profits and oil — I therefore see that we are still on the journey to build a humane and just society.

We made mistakes sometimes. We were arrogant sometimes and hopeless at other times, but we are still in the fighting ring. Glorification, however, is the voice of the stupid, and crying over the ruins is the voice of the cowardly and desperate. There are lessons for everyone — lessons we learned by pure blood that has been shed for us.

The first of these lessons is that there is no individual salvation, and that desperation and the attempts to escape to the outside or the inside will not help us make our day better. When we only saw ourselves and started calling for freedom only for those we know, and did not move for freedom for all the people — for example, in prisons there are not only thousands of innocent political prisoners, but also thousands of citizens who have been framed, or fallen into debt or are serving time instead of others, because of the economic system of the state, and many other cases — if we allow the regime to separate us from the street and from our goals, then they have won the last round.

Second: We were overcome when we looked the other way as others were overcome. Revolution is humane by nature and it does not make us accept any injustice that befalls even those who oppose our opinion and even tried to obliterate us. Accepting injustice against one person will make it reach us all.

Third: We are not satisfied with the honor of trying. We should not continue running in circles. We have to formulate the objectives of the revolution into movements and initiatives and begin organizing ourselves. If the interest of the counterrevolution unites them [our enemies — ed.], then the survival instinct should unify us believers in freedom and those who stand against all forms of authoritarianism and backwardness.

Fourth: A scared regime arrests thousands and cancels elections (the student union elections for example). It shakes at the thought of an anniversary, despite the injustice of a whole year. It equates those who demand life with those who demand death.

Oppression never mattered; it deepened the feelings of injustice, which strengthened the resistance. The people who moved for two days on the 18th and 19th of January 1977 [food riots against the regime of Anwar Sadat — ed.] but did not touch the head of the regime learned the lesson and attempted to do away with the head of the regime in 2011, but this has not been completed yet.

Fifth: Revolution is ongoing, as life and dreams are ongoing. It does not stop for a person, and sooner or later, in our lives or in the lives of those who come after us, our revolution will be completed, because people deserve better, and ugliness no matter how much it tries to disguise itself will eventually reveal its real face.

Shaimaa [a dedication to Shaimaa al-Sabbagh, shot to death during a peaceful protest march a year earlier, January 24, 2015 —ed]: On your first anniversary send our greetings to our angels, the martyrs. Tell them that we are still filled with hope, and that their imprisonment and injustices increased nothing but our grip on our dream and our revolution.

Mahienour al-Masry

P.S.

* From Against the Current n° 181, March-April 2016:Retour ligne automatiqueRetour ligne automatique
<http://www.solidarity-us.org/node/4584>

Footnotes

[1] The report is online at
<http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2016/1/25/egypts-political-prisoners-speak-out-ahead-of-revolution-anniversary>

[2] The Arabic text and English translation of her letter from prison is at
<https://www.facebook.com/freemahienour/posts/811860782257732:0>