



EGYPT

	2012	2013
INTERNET FREEDOM STATUS	PARTLY FREE	PARTLY FREE
Obstacles to Access (0-25)	14	15
Limits on Content (0-35)	12	12
Violations of User Rights (0-40)	33	33
Total (0-100)	59	60

POPULATION: 82.3 million
INTERNET PENETRATION 2012: 44 percent
SOCIAL MEDIA/ICT APPS BLOCKED: No
POLITICAL/SOCIAL CONTENT BLOCKED: No
BLOGGERS/ICT USERS ARRESTED: Yes
PRESS FREEDOM 2013 STATUS: Not Free

* 0=most free, 100=least free

KEY DEVELOPMENTS: MAY 2012 – APRIL 2013

- Authorities repeatedly throttled mobile internet service in the areas around political protests, preventing activists from communicating through social networks and VoIP services (see **OBSTACLES TO ACCESS**).
- Courts ordered the temporary blocking of YouTube and permanent blocking of pornography sites, though the decisions have not been implemented (see **LIMITS ON CONTENT**).
- An unprecedented number of liberal bloggers and online activists have been prosecuted by special courts for insulting the president. Several users were also charged for insulting religion over social networks (see **VIOLATIONS OF USER RIGHTS**).
- Administrators of antigovernment and anti-Muslim Brotherhood Facebook groups were targeted in cases of extralegal abductions and killings (see **VIOLATIONS OF USER RIGHTS**).
- Senior Muslim Brotherhood officials working in the office of President Morsi reportedly met with an Iranian spy chief in December 2012 to seek assistance in the development of new surveillance capabilities outside of the traditional military-controlled structure (see **VIOLATIONS OF USER RIGHTS**).

EDITOR'S NOTE ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

This report covers events between May 1, 2012 and April 30, 2013. On July 3, 2013, President Mohamed Morsi was removed from power by General Abdul Fatah al-Sisi, the Defense Minister and head of the armed forces. Millions of Egyptians had taken to the streets since June 30 in a protest coordinated by a grassroots campaign known as Tamarod, the Arabic word for “rebel.” Tamarod, which is supported by the Egyptian Movement for Change, threatened widespread civil disobedience if Morsi did not resign by July 2. More significantly, the army issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the country’s political groups to “meet the demands of the people” and threatened to intervene if the political crisis was not solved. When Morsi refused to back down, the army took him under detention and appointed the head of Egypt’s highest court, Adly Mansour, as interim president. Together with religious and secular opposition leaders, General al-Sisi set out a roadmap for the drafting of a new constitution as well as the holding of parliamentary and presidential elections. Supporters of Morsi remained camped out in two large protest sites until August 14, when security forces raided the camps, killing hundreds in the process. Senior Muslim Brotherhood figures were taken under arrest and a temporary state of emergency was declared.

INTRODUCTION

Since the internet was introduced in the country in 1993, the Egyptian government has invested in information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure as part of its strategy to boost the economy and create jobs. Until 2008, authorities showed a relaxed attitude toward internet use and did not censor websites or use high-end technologies to monitor discussions. However, with the rise of online campaigns to expose government fraud, document acts of police brutality, and call for large-scale protests, the government began to change its stance. Between 2008 and 2011, state police admitted to engaging in surveillance, online censorship, and cyberattacks – especially against sites related to the Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition movements.¹

The significant role of ICTs in the 2011 protests that toppled the 30-year regime of President Hosni Mubarak led some to label the event as the Facebook² or Twitter revolution.³ After the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) took control of the government, the military administration maintained many of its predecessor’s tactics by keeping mobile phones, social media, and opposition activists under vigorous surveillance. Even as several activists and bloggers were intimidated, beaten, or tried in military courts for “insulting the military power” or “disturbing social peace,” social networks continued to grow as a democratizing tool. Online, Egyptians launched debates about the fate of their emerging democracy and exerted pressure on SCAF to end

¹ Galal Amin, *Whatever happened to the Egyptian Revolution*, Cairo: Al Shorook, 2013.

² Abigail Hauslohner, “Is Egypt About to Have a Facebook Revolution,” *Time*, January 24, 2011, <http://www.nbcnews.com/technology/jon-stewart-questions-egypts-twitter-revolution-125446>.

³ Helen A.S. Popkin, “Jon Stewart questions Egypt’s ‘Twitter revolution,’” *NBC News*, January 28, 2011, <http://www.nbcnews.com/technology/jon-stewart-questions-egypts-twitter-revolution-125446>.

decades under emergency rule. On May 31, 2012, the state of emergency was finally lifted⁴ and one month later, power was officially handed over to a civilian government in a controversial election that pitted a former Mubarak official with an Islamist candidate.⁵

After the election of President Mohammed Morsi, a candidate from the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, Egypt has failed to make any gains in internet freedom. The passage of a new constitution did not allay concerns over threats to free speech and a record number of citizens were prosecuted for insulting the president. The rise of Islamist forces has also contributed to an increase in online blasphemy cases being tried in Egyptian courts, resulting in several users receiving jail sentences. Countless other web activists and social media users have been harassed and detained. Police authorities and Muslim Brotherhood thugs engaged in extralegal violence against liberal activists and revolutionary youths who voice dissent online. Finally, distrust between the military and the Muslim Brotherhood led the latter to seek Iranian assistance in the development of parallel security and intelligence arms outside of the existing military-controlled structure. Despite these obstacles, online journalists and commentators have continued their dynamic role, pushing the boundaries of free speech and protesting against the undemocratic actions of the civilian president.

OBSTACLES TO ACCESS

The development of Egypt's ICT sector has been a strategic priority since 1999, when former president Mubarak created the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) to lead Egypt's transition into the information age.⁶ Since then, ICT use has increased rapidly, with internet penetration growing from 16 percent in 2007 to 44.1 percent in 2012.⁷ Mobile internet, either using smartphones or USB modems, accounts for roughly 44 percent of all internet use, with ADSL use at around 38 percent. Egypt's mobile phone penetration rate was 113.2 percent in the first quarter of 2013, amounting to over 94 million mobile subscriptions.⁸

Although these figures are promising, there are a number of obstacles hindering access to ICTs, including an adult literacy rate of only 72 percent,⁹ poor telecommunications infrastructure in rural areas and urban slums, and flagging economic conditions. Moreover, ICTs and online culture are often viewed with suspicion and women's access to technology has become a growing concern after

⁴ "Egypt state of emergency lifted after 31 years," BBC News, May 31 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18283635>.

⁵ Osman El Sharnoubi, "Egypt's President Morsi in power: A timeline (Part I)," AhramOnline, June 28 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/74427.aspx>.

⁶ "Historical Perspective," Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, Accessed April 16, 2013, http://www.mcit.gov.eg/TeleCommunications/Historical_Perspective.

⁷ "Percentage of Individuals Using the Internet" and "Mobile-cellular subscriptions," International Telecommunications Union, accessed July 23 2013, <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>.

⁸ Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, "Information and Communications Technology Indicators" March 2013, available at <http://mcit.gov.eg/Indicators/indicators.aspx>, accessed July 23 2013.

⁹ United Nations Development Program, "Egypt, Country Profile: Human Development Indicators," accessed July 23, 2013, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/EGY.html>.

the revolution.¹⁰ In some cases, marginal religious figures have issued ‘fatwas’ against women using the internet without the presence of a male chaperone.¹¹

Broadband prices in Egypt are relatively cheap if compared to neighboring Arab Countries. However, with more than 25 percent of the Egyptian population living under the national poverty line, internet access is not universally affordable.¹² As an indication of what prices are like, a 2 Mbps connection costs \$11 per month for a download limit of 4 GB, whereas an unlimited plan costs \$30 per month.¹³ In an index that compares ICT prices to gross national income (GNI) per capita, Egypt ranks 77th out of 161 countries.¹⁴

Recent investment in telecommunications infrastructure has been limited since the revolution. The country’s economic crisis halted plans for a fourth mobile operator license and many foreign investment projects have ceased due to the increase in violence and political instability. Moreover, several training programs and collaborations with international and private entities were halted.¹⁵ Many cybercafés and ISPs have closed down upon increased threats to their operations and continued pressure from the government and non-state actors.¹⁶ Frequent electricity blackouts also disrupted internet access in major cities.

Documents recovered from the Ministry of Interior after the fall of the Mubarak regime revealed how the Egyptian government centralized internet infrastructure and fiber-optic cables into highly-controllable “chokepoints.”¹⁷ In addition, virtually all of Egypt’s telecommunications infrastructure is owned by Telecom Egypt, a state-owned company. Egypt’s five main ISPs lease lines from Telecom Egypt and resell bandwidth to over 200 smaller ISPs. The arrangement makes it easy to suspend internet access or decrease speeds, as was the case during the 2011 revolution. From January 27 to February 2, 2011,¹⁸ authorities disabled the country’s Border Gateway Protocol Routes, shutting down all internet traffic in less than one hour.¹⁹ Telecommunications companies were then ordered to cut mobile internet and text-messaging service under the terms of strict agreements they had signed with regulators. At the time, state intelligence agencies claimed that

¹⁰ Ahmed El Gody, 2008, “New Media New Audience New Topics and New forms of Censorship in the Middle East” in Philip Seib *New Media New Middle East* New York: Palgrave

¹¹ Sanaa Al Tawila, 2013, The most vocal Women Fatwas <http://bit.ly/19MveMJ>, accessed June 11, 2013

¹² World Bank, “Data—Indicators: Poverty Headcount Ratio at \$2 a Day,” <http://data.worldbank.org/country/egypt-arab-republic?display=default>, accessed June 13, 2013

¹³ “Home ADSL Price List,” TE Data, accessed July 24, 2013, <http://www.tedata.net/eg/en/Home-ADSL/Home-ADSL-Prices-List>.

¹⁴ “Measuring the Information Society,” International Telecommunication Union, 2012, http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/mis2012/MIS2012_without_Annex_4.pdf.

¹⁵ B. O. Adegbenmi Onakoya, A. Sherifdeen Tellaand M. Adenike Osoba Investment in Telecommunications Infrastructure and Economic Growth *British Journal of Economics, Management & Trade* 2(4): 309-326, 2012 www.sciencedomain.org/download.php?f=1354167302.pdf.

¹⁶ Asma Alsharif and David Stamp, “Egyptian reassurance may fail to woo investment dollars,” CNBC, March 21, 2013, <http://www.cnbc.com/id/100578204>.

¹⁷ James Glanz and John Markoff, “Egypt Leaders Found ‘Off’ Switch for Internet,” *The New York Times*, February 15, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/16/technology/16internet.html?_r=2&pagewanted=all&.

¹⁸ Erica Chenoweth, “Backfire in the Arab Spring,” *Middle East Institute*, September 1, 2011, <http://www.mei.edu/content/backfire-arab-spring>.

¹⁹ Iljitsch van Beijnum, “How Egypt did (and your government could) shut down the internet,” *Ars Technica*, January 30, 2011, <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2011/01/how-egypt-or-how-your-government-could-shut-down-the-internet/>.

“foreign intelligence [was] using communication technologies to plan terrorist actions.”²⁰ Steps to limit bandwidth and temporarily cut off service in targeted areas were also taken by the interim SCAF administration and, more recently, under President Morsi.

Mobile users and activists have complained of throttled internet speeds in areas of protests, most likely due to government efforts to limit their ability to organize and document police brutality.²¹ In November and December 2012, during demonstrations outside the president’s office and clashes on Mohamed Mahmoud Street, users reported the temporary cutting off of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) applications and mobile internet access more generally. A more widespread disruption to connectivity occurred in March 2013 during heightened protests against President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. However, Egypt’s National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority clarified that the disruption was due to a cut in an undersea cable that also affected internet speeds across the region.²² The poor legal and regulatory environment has led to several campaigns calling for a boycott of government-linked ISPs²³ and for the establishment of an independent entity to monitor the ICT sector.²⁴

Mobile service providers and ISPs are regulated by the National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA) and governed by the 2003 Telecommunication Regulation Law. The NTRA’s board is chaired by the ICT minister and includes representatives from the defense, finance, and interior ministries; the state security council; the presidency; workers’ unions; as well as public figures, experts, and other military figures.²⁵ Officially, the NTRA is responsible for regulating the telecommunications industry²⁶ and furthering ICT development through projects like the “eMisr” National Broadband Plan outlined in late 2011.²⁷ The NTRA also conducts analysis of the telecommunication market and publishes research to encourage investment. However, there have been some reports revealing the NTRA’s ties to online control and surveillance activities. Through its control of the mobile subscriber database, it has been accused of monitoring mobile and social media applications, such as WhatsApp.²⁸

²⁰ Ameera Fouad, “Saying no to mobile phones,” Al-Ahram Weekly Online, Issue No. 1083, February 2-8, 2012, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2012/1083/eg402.htm>.

²¹ Al Wafd, “Cairo Police Chief: No power cutoff in Tahrir Square” 24 November 2012 <http://www.alwafd.org/أخبار-التحرير-عن-الاتصالات-قطع-ينفي-القاهرة-مدير-امن-311559-محلية-10-وتقارير>.

²² Ahmed El Bermawy “Urgent: Internet Cable major cutoff” Al Tahrir newspaper 22 March 2013 <http://tahrirnews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=22032013&id=d0e2c3c4-cdf4-4d9b-a444-d438f00dcac8>

²³ Campaign for Fair Internet Use <http://www.almstba.com/vb/t12717.html>.

²⁴ The People demand Fair Internet <https://www.facebook.com/KefayaSer2a>.

²⁵ “About Us: NTRA Board: Board Members,” National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority, accessed April 16, 2013, http://www.tra.gov.eg/english/DPages_DPagesDetails.asp?ID=175&Menu=5.

²⁶ “About Us: NTRA Board: NTRA Function & Role,” National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority, accessed April 16, 2013, http://www.tra.gov.eg/english/DPages_DPagesDetails.asp?ID=176&Menu=5.

²⁷ “eMisr National Broadband Plan,” National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority, http://www.tra.gov.eg/emisr/Presentations/Plan_En.pdf.

²⁸ Ahmed El Bermawy “NTRA deny monitoring social media and sms” Masress, January 20, 2013, <http://masress.com/dostor/65762>.

LIMITS ON CONTENT

While the Egyptian government does not block unfavorable or controversial websites, it does manage to place significant limits on online content through more nuanced means. There have also been contentious court decisions to block YouTube and pornography, though so far the MCIT has refused to implement these on the grounds that they are unfeasible. In the country's highly-polarized environment, Egypt's political parties and social movements vie for online supremacy. The heads of state media companies were replaced with sympathizers of the Muslim Brotherhood, who have also built their own formidable online media apparatuses to spread propaganda and rally supporters. Nonetheless, citizen journalism and social media activism have retained their importance in the country, where official statements by the presidency, the opposition, and the military are often made on Facebook before they are presented on traditional sources.

Web 2.0 tools such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and international blog-hosting services are freely available. VoIP services are largely available, even if it is technically illegal to make international calls from mobile networks under Article 72 of the Telecommunications Law, which forbids the "by-passing [of] international telephone calls by any means whatsoever."²⁹ Thus, VoIP calls through services such as Skype and Viber can only officially be placed over fixed-line or Wi-Fi networks, not through 3G.³⁰ However, as mentioned above, VoIP tools are often temporarily blocked or rendered inaccessible through the throttling of bandwidth.

Egypt's courts have made a number of high-profile rulings to block online content. In late 2012, Egypt's prosecutor-general ordered government ministries to implement a 2009 ban on pornographic websites. While no action has yet been taken, its feasibility was reportedly debated at the MCIT. The cost of implementing such a ban is estimated at around EGP 25 million (\$4 million), a hefty figure when considering the country's economic woes.³¹ Several civil society organizations have criticized the court decision, stating that the banning of content for cultural or religious grounds could eventually lead to increased censorship. Nevertheless, several ISPs have already implemented the court decision on a voluntarily basis, offering a "safe internet service" to subscribers.

Another controversial court decision involved the banning of YouTube for a month in retaliation to the site hosting the offensive "Innocence of Muslims" video clip.³² The February 9, 2013 order was not implemented by the MCIT, which claimed the block would be too expensive and did not fall under the ministry's legal authority. Appeals were filed by both the ministry and the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression in Egypt, a local rights group.³³

²⁹ "Telecommunication Regulation Law, Law No. 10 of 2003," February 2003, Arab Republic of Egypt.

³⁰ "Egypt bans VoIP services from operators such as Skype," BBC News, March 24, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/8585998.stm>.

³¹ Ingy Hassieb, "Egypt moves to block access to pornography," LA Times, April 4, 2013, <http://www.latimes.com/news/world/worldnow/la-fg-wn-egypt-access-pornography-20130404,0,1516553.story>.

³² Al Balad "Banning YOUTUBE for 30 days" <http://albaladoman.com/?p=8446>.

³³ "Egypt telecoms authority says can't block YouTube," The Daily Star (Lebanon), February 16, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1bXbFaA>.

While the courts have yet to force the blocking or deletion of these sites, users have taken up more informal tactics to force the deletion of social media accounts or groups that express views to which they are opposed. Facebook groups like “Ana Asf ya Rayes” have had their accounts suspended by Facebook users sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood, citing fabricated copyright or terms of use violations.³⁴ The group had also received threats after calling for protests against the Brotherhood’s acquisition of power.³⁵

In a separate tactic, online posts and comments are also censored by webmasters and page moderators. The editors of state media websites deliberately delete posts that are critical toward the government and actively drum up support for state policies. This echoes the degree of self-censorship exercised in traditional media, where journalists employ a sense of caution when tackling subjects such as the presidency, the military, and Muslim-Christian relations. Nonetheless, the generation of online activists and bloggers that has grown from the January 25 revolution has become increasingly vociferous in their coverage of sensitive subjects.

As social media has exploded, so too have attempts by political parties, the military, and the government to communicate and often spread propaganda on their official Facebook and Twitter accounts. All emerging political parties, social movements, government offices, and military bodies have started to actively participate in online discussions on the state of the country.³⁶ The popularity of social media has also galvanized the spread of gossip and rumors, further polarizing the country’s politics.

More unofficially, armies of micro-bloggers writing in English and Arabic have steered online discussions in favor of the Morsi government,³⁷ reportedly with control and even payment from the Muslim Brotherhood.³⁸ Several pro-Muslim Brotherhood figures have been installed into leadership positions within the media and telecommunication industries, including Salah Abdel Maksoud, the former director of Morsi’s presidential campaign who was later appointed Information Minister. Online media outlets have hinted at the mounting pressure they receive from the government,³⁹ the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists, and their sympathetic groups to regulate content.⁴⁰ In addition, Islamists have created a “Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice,” modeled after their counterparts in Saudi Arabia, to monitor access to ICTs and ensure “moral” use of the internet, particularly at cybercafés.⁴¹ A Facebook page linked to the

³⁴ El Fagr “The suspension of Ana Asf ya Rays and the Brotherhood”

<http://new.elfagr.org/Detail.aspx?newsId=301412&secid=1&vid=2>.

³⁵ Mohamed ashour “Our page is closed, we got threats of beat and dragging in the streets from the Brotherhood” 14 March 2013 Al Watan news <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/146611>.

³⁶ “Internet in Egypt: from an Opposition avenue to a political playground,” DW.de, March 21, 2012, <http://dw.de/p/14N4s>.

³⁷ See for example: “Twitter Discussions & Trends,” Isqat Al-Nizam, last modified March 5, 2012, accessed June 30, 2012, http://wiki.aucegypt.edu/isqatalnizam/index.php/Twitter_Discussion_%26_Trends.

³⁸ Nady Atef “Youth of Egypt create their own website to Defend the brotherhood,” El Gomaa, December 12, 2012, <http://www.elgomaa.com/article.php?id=82640>, and Sshar Khamis et al. “Beyond Egypt’s ‘Facebook Revolution’ and Syria’s ‘YouTube Uprising’: Comparing Political Contexts, Actors and Communication Strategies,” *Arab Media and Society* http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20120407120519_khamis_gold_vaughn.pdf, accessed 12 June 2013.

³⁹ Revolution Youth “It is not safe to work as a journalist in Egypt under Brotherhood rule” <http://bit.ly/GzrozK>.

⁴⁰ Dina Rashwan “Journalism is in real threat” <http://www.copts-united.com/article.php?l=410&A=88186>, and “National Movement warns from journalism siege”, Masrawy, <http://bit.ly/1fDhUmA>.

⁴¹ Katerina Nikolas, “Egypt unleashes Islamic morality police force,” Digital Journal, March 3, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1fX6NCu>.

committee was closed in July 2012 after its members claimed responsibility for the killing of a student in Suez.⁴²

The Muslim Brotherhood's online strength was clear during the May-June 2012 presidential election. Users linked to the Brotherhood's Rassd News Network (RNN) provided live updates and published a Google spreadsheet of the election results before all ballots were counted.⁴³ Several entities accused the Muslim Brotherhood and Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) micro-bloggers of manipulating the election by pushing voters towards an acceptance of Morsi as the new president.⁴⁴

After the elections, the FJP continued to invest in digital strategies to manipulate popular opinion.⁴⁵ RNN has grown from a Facebook page⁴⁶ to become one of the main online news portals in post-Mubarak Egypt.⁴⁷ In addition, a leaked document from the office of the president revealed a policy in which news was first circulated to media outlets sympathetic to the Brotherhood.⁴⁸ Similar techniques were used by Morsi's predecessors.

Online news websites have begun to replace traditional news sources due to their immediate and interactive nature, and because they allow for audience participation and cover topics not tackled by the traditional media. Regionally, Egyptian online news outlets are some of the most visited websites in the Middle East, representing 45 percent of online news content from the Arab world.⁴⁹ Through state media and independent news outlets, Egyptians can access a variety of viewpoints from the different political and social groups of society.

Content from citizen journalism and blogs have even become the raw material for private and independent media. Egyptian bloggers collect and disseminate information about the arrests of activists and acts of torture by the government or non-state actors.⁵⁰ Bloggers such as Alaa Abdel Fattah, Wael Abbas, Ahmed Doma, and Asmaa Mahfouz have become media celebrities in recognition of their work. Numerous well-known figures who write under their real names continue to push the limits of freedom of expression online, even at great risk to their personal safety.⁵¹

⁴² "Facebook group shut down after members claim responsibility for Suez death," Egypt Independent, July 5, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/facebook-group-shut-down-after-members-claim-responsibility-suez-death>.

⁴³ Anadol "Egypt cancels all Google services within days" <http://www.aa.com.tr/ar/rss/132539>

⁴⁴ Omar Aysha "How Egypt is Discussing the Presidential Elections on Facebook and Twitter," Wamda, June 17, 2012, <http://www.wamda.com/2012/06/how-egypt-is-discussing-the-presidential-elections-on-facebook-and-twitter>.

⁴⁵ See video "Amr Adibb exposes the network of electronic monitoring and committees of the Brotherhood," uploaded by user "benetton zamalek," July 12, 2012, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjmxPNeV6xU>.

⁴⁶ The English language page for RNN can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/RNN.World>.

⁴⁷ See <http://www.rassd.com>.

⁴⁸ AlWatan "Mistaken message reveals that the president prefers Youm 7 and Al Shurook over the rest of the newspapers" <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/148174>.

⁴⁹ Ahmed El Gody, *Journalism in a Network: The Role of ICTs in Egyptian Newsrooms* (Örebro: Örebro University Press, 2012).

⁵⁰ Osama Diab, "New Egypt, new media," The Guardian, March 10, 2011,

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/mar/10/egypt-media-newspapers-mubarak-propaganda>.

⁵¹ Khan, A. A (2012). "The Role Social of Media and Modern Technology in Arabs Spring". *Far East Journal Of Psychology & Business* http://econpapers.repec.org/article/fejarticl/v_3a7a_3ay_3a2012_3ai_3a4_3ap_3a56-63.htm.

Egyptian human rights groups and civil society organizations make extensive use of social media and blogs in order to document human rights violations and expose government hypocrisy. With over 11 million accounts,⁵² Egyptians represent a quarter of all Facebook users in the Arab world.⁵³ Furthermore, groups like “The Egyptian Movement for Change” (*Kefaya*), the 6th of April Movement, and *Shayfenkom* (“We Can See You”) have been successful in rallying for political causes through the use of social-networking sites.⁵⁴ The “No Military Trials for Civilians” campaign has been successful in garnering support, using Google Spreadsheets to chronicle hundreds of instances of arbitrary detention in military courts since the revolution.⁵⁵ Finally, the “Morsi Meter” website gained notoriety as it evaluated the first 100 days of President’s Morsi’s term of office and his lack of success in meeting a number of promises he made upon being elected.⁵⁶

VIOLATIONS OF USER RIGHTS

Violations against users continued to grow between May 2012 and April 2013, with several bloggers and activists threatened, beaten, harassed, and killed. The government prosecutes and intimidates users through the continued use of Mubarak-era laws to silence dissent.⁵⁷ The number of lawsuits related to insulting the office of the president skyrocketed in the first six months of President Morsi’s term, eclipsing the total number of citizens that were convicted during former president Mubarak’s entire 30 years in office.⁵⁸ In another trend, blasphemy charges continue to pose a threat in the post-Mubarak period, with several users arrested and charged for insulting religion. Most worryingly, the period from May 2012 through April 2013 has seen an increase in extralegal abductions and targeted killings, with several administrators of Facebook groups reportedly singled out and shot by snipers during protests. These actions are reflective overall of the deteriorating environment in Egypt, in which documented attacks on journalists have gone up tremendously since the January 2011 revolution, including three deaths and 42 cases of temporary detentions.⁵⁹ In line with some observers’ perceptions that the Muslim Brotherhood sought to transform existing state structures in an attempt to remain in power, senior officials in the office of President Morsi staged a high-profile meeting with Iran’s spy chief, in which they reportedly sought Iranian assistance in developing new security and intelligence arms. The move was interpreted by some as an attempt to build surveillance capabilities directly under control of the president, thereby reducing institutional reliance on the military.

⁵² “Study: Egypt ranks 19th in Facebook users,” July 31, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/study-egypt-ranks-19th-facebook-users>.

⁵³ “Egypt, the Biggest Facebook User Population in the Region,” MCIT, November 28, 2012, http://www.mcit.gov.eg/Media_Center/Latest_News/News/2491.

⁵⁴ Naayem Saad Zaghoul, *Electronic Mass Communication in Egypt: Reality and Challenges* (Cairo: Egyptian Cabinet, Information and Decision Support Center, February 2010), 38.

⁵⁵ See “No to Military Trials for Civilians,” <http://en.nomiltrials.com/p/detainees-list.html>.

⁵⁶ “Morsi Meter!” <http://www.morsimeter.com/en>.

⁵⁷ Hannah Grigg, 2013, “Freedom to Criticize Under Attack in the Middle East and North Africa” *Atlantic Council* <http://www.acus.org/viewpoint/freedom-criticize-under-attack-middle-east-and-north-africa>.

⁵⁸ Nick Gjørvad, “The ‘insult’ of political criticism,” *Daily News Egypt*, February 20, 2013, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/02/20/the-insult-of-political-criticism/>.

⁵⁹ “Hundreds of journalists attacked in Egypt since revolution, study finds,” *FoxNews.com*, May 30, 2013, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/05/30/hundreds-journalists-attacked-in-egypt-since-revolution-study-finds/>.

Although President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood-led government pay tribute to concepts such as free speech and freedom of the press in their rhetoric, the reality has proven otherwise. While freedom of expression and religion are guaranteed by the Egyptian constitution, it is forbidden to insult religion or religious prophets. Similarly, media freedom is guaranteed, though the press must respect individuals' privacy, the essential elements of state and society, and the requirements of national security. Censorship is officially forbidden except for times of war or "public mobilization." The constitution also grants the right to privacy and states that no telecommunications activity can be intercepted or inspected without a court order.⁶⁰

Local civil rights advocates have argued that any new constitutional rights are inexistent in practice, due to the continued presence of restrictive laws such as the Press Law, the Law on the Protection of the Nation and Citizens, the Law on Security of National Unity, the Publications Laws, the Telecommunications Law, and the Emergency Law. While the emergency law was not renewed on May 31, 2012, the president retains broad powers to confiscate, suspend or shutdown all means of communication during emergencies.

A series of actions by President Morsi have weakened the independence of the judiciary, leading to the harsh application of existing laws against political opponents of Morsi.⁶¹ In November 2012, President Morsi established a special court and prosecution office for crimes such as insulting state authorities, destroying public property, blocking transportation flows, as well as "press crimes, intimidation and terrorizing."⁶² At the same time, Morsi published a constitutional declaration which prohibited the judiciary from challenging his authority or appealing his decrees. Morsi also contravened existing laws by dismissing the public prosecutor before his term had ended.⁶³

The new prosecutor has been blasted by local civil society organizations for consistently and disproportionately targeting liberal activists, members of Egypt's independent media, and online users who criticize the president.⁶⁴ A case was launched against video blogger Ahmed Anwar in March 2013 over a satirical video he uploaded one year previously, in which he made fun of the police.⁶⁵ He was charged with insulting the Ministry of Interior, "abuse of the internet," and provocation, liable to a fine ranging from 20,000 to 100,000 Egyptian pounds (\$2,900 to \$14,000)

⁶⁰ "The 2012 Constitution of Egypt, Translated by Nivien Saleh, with Index," Nivien Saleh, Accessed April 17, 2013, <http://niviensaleh.info/constitution-egypt-2012-translation/>.

⁶¹ David D. Kirkpatrick, "Block to Transition as Court Dissolves Egypt's Parliament," *New York Times*, June 14, 2012, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/15/world/middleeast/new-political-showdown-in-egypt-as-court-invalidates-parliament.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁶² "Egypt: Morsy Decree Undermines Rules of Law," Human Rights Watch, November 26, 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/11/26/egypt-morsy-decree-undermines-rule-law>.

⁶³ "Egypt's judges call for national strike over Mursi decree," BBC News, November 24, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20476693>.

⁶⁴ "Egypt's top judicial body urges prosecutor to quit," Reuters, April 7, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/07/us-egypt-prosecutor-idUSBRE93605S20130407>.

⁶⁵ Brian Dooley, "Dancing Cops' Video Blogger Says Freedom of Expression Under Attack in Egypt," Huffington Post, May 15, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brian-dooley/dancing-cops-video-blogger_b_3280569.html.

and possible imprisonment.⁶⁶ Local rights groups highlighted the case as yet another example of the government's attempts to silence its critics.⁶⁷

In total, 24 cases and complaints of “insulting the president” have been filed in the first 6 months of Morsi's time in office, compared to only 4 cases during former president Mubarak's 30 years in power. Three of these cases were filed directly by the office of the Egyptian president. Bloggers, human rights defenders, members of civil society organizations, and journalists have been summoned by the public prosecutor and investigated under special courts of the state security apparatus, rather than the normal judiciary,⁶⁸ in contravention of Article 198 of the new constitution.⁶⁹

As mentioned previously, several of Egypt's high-profile political activists also maintain a social media presence to interact with followers, document human rights violations, and mobilize protests. In many cases, their online activities have been key in building a local following and, conversely, in bringing unwanted attention from the police and security forces. Among many examples, veteran blogger and human rights activist Alaa Abd al-Fattah was arrested in March 2013 on charges of “provoking violence,” related to clashes between government protestors and Muslim Brotherhood supporters outside the organization's headquarters in Moqattam.⁷⁰ It was reported by several outlets that Abd El Fattah was detained over a Twitter post by a user under the name “Princess Joumana” in which he was mentioned, sparking concerns from the government that the blogger was collaborating with Gulf Arab monarchs against the Brotherhood.⁷¹ In July 2013, he was acquitted of all charges.⁷²

On April 30, 2013, state prosecutors in the northern city of Tanta detained popular blogger and activist Ahmed Douma on charges of insulting the president and disseminating false news.⁷³ One month later, he was sentenced to six months in prison for calling President Morsi a murderer and a criminal.⁷⁴ He was eventually released on July 6, though he remains on trial for inciting violence during the March 2013 protests outside of the Muslim Brotherhood's headquarters.⁷⁵

⁶⁶ Ahmed Aboul Enein, “Blogger faces trial for mocking interior ministry,” Daily News Egypt, April 7, 2013, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/04/07/blogger-faces-trial-for-mocking-interior-ministry/>.

⁶⁷ “Joint Statement Blogger Ahmed Anwar to be tried for insulting Minister of Interior New evidence of government's hostility towards freedom of expression,” The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, April 7, 2013, <http://www.anhri.net/en/?p=12131>.

⁶⁸ “Increasing crackdown on fundamental freedoms,” International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), April 3, 2013, <http://www.fidh.org/Increasing-crackdown-on-fundamental-freedoms-13119>.

⁶⁹ “The 2012 Constitution of Egypt, Translated by Nivien Saleh, with Index,” Nivien Saleh, Accessed April 17, 2013, <http://niviensaleh.info/constitution-egypt-2012-translation/#art-198>.

⁷⁰ Aswat Masrya “Update: Egypt prosecutor orders activists arrested,” Aswat Masrya, 25 March 2013 <http://en.aswatmasrya.com/news/view.aspx?id=b6f07087-3b9f-4e8b-8fe8-20e5378e329d>.

⁷¹ Jillian C. York, “Egypt's Key Bloggers Face Absurd Legal Charges, Harassment,” Electronic Frontier Foundation, April 2, 2013, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2013/04/egypt-blogger-crackdown>.

⁷² “Court acquits 12 activists in march violence at Brotherhood HQ,” Egypt Independent, July 7, 2013, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/breaking-prosecutor-orders-release-activist-alaabdel-fattah>.

⁷³ “Egyptian activist Ahmed Douma detained for insulting president,” Ahram Online, April 30, 2013, <http://bit.ly/11BZEOU>.

⁷⁴ “Activist Douma gets 6 months in prison for ‘insulting president’,” Ahram Online, June 3, 2013, <http://bit.ly/18MCzjM>.

⁷⁵ “Prominent Egyptian blogger released from jail, remains on trial,” Reuters, July 6, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/06/us-egypt-blogger-idUSBRE96506A20130706>.

The fall of the Mubarak regime has also resulted in a greater openness to prosecute citizens for religious-based offenses, particularly as Islamist parties have gained in popularity and prominence amid the state apparatus. In July 2012, Beshoy Kamel was sentenced to six years in jail for allegedly insulting religion, President Morsi, and a Salafist man's family over Facebook.⁷⁶ Kamel, a Christian teacher in the central Egyptian city of Sohag, had previously posted a warning on his Facebook page that his account had been hacked. Nonetheless, Mostafa Safwat, a local Salafist, filed a complaint after receiving a private message from Kamel's account in which his family was allegedly insulted. Kamel's conviction was upheld in September 2012.⁷⁷

Ahmed Saber, a computer science graduate and online activist, was sentenced to three years imprisonment for "defamation of religion" on December 12, 2012.⁷⁸ Saber was arrested on September 13 after an angry mob had showed up at his house and accused him of posting the "Innocence of Muslims" video which mocks the Prophet Mohammed. After Saber alerted the police to protect him, he was instead detained and had his personal belongings confiscated without a warrant.⁷⁹ While investigators found no evidence that he had posted the video, he was prosecuted for a video found at his home in which he is seen questioning the value of organized religion.⁸⁰ Prosecutors also charged Saber, an atheist who comes from a Christian family, with fomenting religious discord through the publication of writings, images, and videos to social networks, such as his Facebook page "Egyptian Atheists."⁸¹

In a largely symbolic gesture, seven Egyptian citizens of the Coptic faith were sentenced to death in absentia for their role in the making of the "Innocence of Muslims" video. The sentence was passed on November 28, 2012, two months after massive protests outside of the American Embassy. Thousands of Egyptians had marched on the embassy in Cairo in anger over the short, offensive video, climbing the walls and replacing the American flag with a black flag containing the words, "There is only one God but God and Mohammed is His messenger."⁸² All seven of those convicted were living outside of the country.⁸³

In addition, Gamal Abdou Massoud remains in jail after being sentenced in April 2012 to three years in jail for posting cartoons to his Facebook page that allegedly insulted Islam and the Prophet Mohammed. Massoud, a Coptic Christian from the central city of Assiut, was 17 years old at the

⁷⁶ Ben Hubbard and Mayy El Sheikh, "Islamists Press Blasphemy Cases in a New Egypt," *The New York Times*, June 18, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/19/world/middleeast/islamists-press-blasphemy-cases-in-a-new-egypt.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁷⁷ Kristen Chick, "Egypt pursues blasphemy cases as Morsi defends ban at UN," *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 27, 2012, <http://bit.ly/TlvcU5>.

⁷⁸ "Egypt: 'Outrages' guilty verdict in blasphemy case an assault on free expression," *Amnesty International*, December 12, 2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/egypt-outrageous-guilty-verdict-blasphemy-case-assault-free-expression-2012-12-12>.

⁷⁹ Kristen Chick, "'Insulting religion': Blasphemy sentence in Egypt sends a chill," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 12, 2012, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/1212/Insulting-religion-Blasphemy-sentence-in-Egypt-sends-a-chill>.

⁸⁰ Kristen Chick, "Egypt pursues blasphemy cases as Morsi defends ban at UN," *The Christian Science Monitor*.

⁸¹ "Blogger put on trial for insulting religion," *Egypt Independent*, September 24, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/blogger-put-trial-insulting-religion>.

⁸² "US envoy dies in Benghazi consulate attack," *Al Jazeera English*, September 12, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/09/20129112108737726.html>.

⁸³ Jackey Fortin, "Egypt Sentences Christians to Death for Insulting Islam, Charges US Pastor Terry Jones," *International Business Times*, November 28, 2012, <http://bit.ly/V1cS5b>.

time. The posting of the cartoons led to attacks by groups of Muslims against Christians, who also saw their homes torched.⁸⁴

There were also numerous cases in which prominent activists, well-known for their online activities, were detained for suspicious or weak charges related to their offline activities. Human rights defender Hassan Mustafa was sentenced to two years imprisonment in March 2013 on charges of allegedly assaulting a member of the Alexandria Prosecution Office.⁸⁵ Mustafa is an activist and campaigner who was heavily involved in the rights movement “Hashd” and the online campaign “We Are All Khaled Said.” Later in March, Mahinour al-Masry and 12 other activists were arrested on charges related to the storming of the Raml Police Station in Alexandria. Mahinour al-Masry is a well-known human rights defender and a contributor to the news website Ahram Online. Clashes had broken out earlier between activists from the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and the *al-Dostour* (Constitutional) party, after an FJP member objected to being filmed by activists from the latter party. That same day, photographer Sameh Mashali, a youth activist known for documenting protests, was arrested. Protestors at the scene claimed that Brotherhood members had captured Mashali and beaten him before handing him over to the police.⁸⁶

Extralegal violence by police authorities in Egypt has become commonplace, with reports of officers using excessive force against demonstrators and seeking vigilante justice for attacks on their colleagues with no respect for the rule of law.⁸⁷ In the first six months of President Morsi’s term, there have been 11 documented cases of targeted abductions and instances of torture reported by the Al-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims and Violence.⁸⁸ Rights groups have complained that public prosecutors refuse to investigate these abductions and arbitrary detentions.⁸⁹ Countless activists have also been targeted and tortured by thugs affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood or its political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP).⁹⁰ Reports indicate the Brotherhood has created its own parallel security apparatuses to monitor online dissidents, target specific activists at protests, and attempt to force confessions from individuals held captive in their hidden torture chambers.⁹¹ Several key figures in the FJP stated that they hold “recordings” of opposition figures and have “records” of online dissidents.

⁸⁴ Ahmed Tolba and Mohamed Abdellah, “Egypt jails Christian student to three years in jail for insulting Islam,” Reuters, April 4, 2012, <http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2012/04/04/egypt-jails-christian-student-to-three-years-in-jail-for-insulting-islam/>.

⁸⁵ El Nadeem, 2013, Egypt: Human rights defender Mr Hassan Mustafa sentenced to two years imprisonment March 14, 2013 <https://www.facebook.com/notes/el-nadeem/egypt-human-rights-defender-mr-hassan-mustafa-sentenced-to-two-years-imprisonmen/10151564974389365>.

⁸⁶ Sara Abou Bakr, “Targeting Activists in the Ikhawni state,” Daily News Egypt, March 30, 2013, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/03/30/targeting-activists-in-the-ikhawni-state/>.

⁸⁷ “State crimes remained unpunished: the Interior Ministry is above the law and the Prosecution is missing in action,” Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, January 22, 2013, <http://eipr.org/en/report/2013/01/22/1602>.

⁸⁸ Mai Shams El-Din, “Violence against activists becomes more systematic, observers say,” Egypt Independent, March 11, 2013, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/violence-against-activists-becomes-more-systematic-observers-say>.

⁸⁹ Mai Shams El-Din, “No to Military Trials slams state thuggery,” August 7, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/no-military-trials-slams-state-thuggery>.

⁹⁰ Mohamed El-Garhi, “Al-Masry Al-Youm goes inside the Brotherhood torture chambers,” December 7, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/al-masry-al-youm-goes-inside-brotherhood-s-torture-chambers>.

⁹¹ Yasser Abdel Aziz “Muslim Brotherhood seeks to Control Egyptian Media” <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/iw/contents/articles/politics/2012/11/muslim-brotherhood-dream-tv.html>.

Gaber Salah, known as “Jika,” was shot dead by police during demonstrations on Mohamed Mahmoud Street in November 2012.⁹² Salah, a 17-year-old online activist and member of the 6th of April Movement,⁹³ was the administrator of a Facebook group called, “Together Against the Brotherhood.” Similarly, Mohamed Hussein Korani (“Christie”), the administrator of the “Ikhwan are liars” page on Facebook, was assassinated in demonstrations in front of the Presidential palace in February 2013.⁹⁴ Several activists claimed that Christie was targeted by pro-government militias who posted on their Facebook status that they will take revenge against liberals calling for a change in the new government. Mohamed al-Gendy, an activist from the Popular Current movement that also administered an anti-Brotherhood Facebook group, was killed on February 4th, 2013. It is widely rumored that al-Gendy died in prison after being tortured by state authorities.⁹⁵

In Mahalla, a city in the northern Gharbiya Governorate, Mohamed al-Masry reported that he was kidnapped, beaten, and stabbed by six perpetrators in early March 2013 during an ordeal that lasted one day. Al-Masry is the administrator of the Facebook page “Generation of Change.” Mohamed Hassanein, the administrator of “The official page of the union of revolutionary groups” on Facebook, was abducted and beaten by unidentified assailants that month as well. The body of activist Sherif El Serafy was found dead on the Cairo Ismailia highway after being kidnapped on his way to Tahrir square.⁹⁶ El Serafy belonged to a youth group calling itself Black Bloc Egypt, which was highly active online in criticizing the Muslim Brotherhood and staging protests.⁹⁷ Eight members were detained for 45 days in April 2013 for “spreading terrorism and banned ideas online, possessing firearms, using violence against public servants, and burning down Muslim Brotherhood buildings.”⁹⁸ Human rights lawyers and researchers have claimed that these low-profile activists were targeted by police as part of a wider campaign to intimidate youth activists while avoiding high-profile news coverage.⁹⁹

Numerous other activists and citizen journalists have been beaten or killed while participating in or filming demonstrations. Photographer Mohamed Nabil suffered a broken leg for documenting a protest outside the Muslim Brotherhood headquarters.¹⁰⁰ A video of a veiled woman being slapped to the ground during the protest went viral on YouTube and led to widespread news coverage.¹⁰¹

⁹² Middle East News Agency “More protestors in Gika’s funeral” <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/1268581>.

⁹³ Sara Abou Bakr, “Jika pronounced dead,” Daily News Egypt, November 26, 2012, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2012/11/26/jika-pronounced-dead/>.

⁹⁴ Heba Abdel Sattar “The assassination of Kristi is intentional and authorities are covering the reasons” 7 February 2013 <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/305728.aspx>.

⁹⁵ “Popular Current member dies in hospital after being ‘tortured’,” Egypt Independent, February 4, 2013, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/popular-current-member-dies-hospital-after-being-tortured>.

⁹⁶ H Yalla Share “Activist Sherif El Serafy body was found dead” Yalla Share <http://www.yallahshare.com/politicals/2011-11-30-12-03-33/12091----q-q----.html>.

⁹⁷ Jared Malsin, “Egypt’s Black Bloc – an exclusive interview,” Vice, February 2013, <http://www.vice.com/read/we-met-some-members-of-egypts-black-bloc>.

⁹⁸ Zeinab El Guindy, “Meet the Black Bloc: Egypt’s most talked about radical opposition group,” Ahram Online, June 13, 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/151/73889/Egypt/Features/Meet-the-Black-Bloc-Egypt-s-most-talked-about-radical.aspx>.

⁹⁹ Mai Shams El-Din, “Violence against activists becomes more systematic, observers say,” Egypt Independent, March 11, 2013, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/violence-against-activists-becomes-more-systematic-observers-say>.

¹⁰⁰ Mohamad Adam, “Brotherhood headquarters proves to be dangerous territory for protestors,” Egypt Independent, March 21, 2013, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/brotherhood-headquarters-proves-be-dangerous-territory-protesters>.

¹⁰¹ A version of the video can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-SRrP-x5LA>.

The woman, Mervat Moussa, is a member of former presidential candidate Hamdeen Sabbahi's Popular Current movement.¹⁰²

Restrictions on anonymity and the use of encryption devices make it easier for these activists to be monitored and singled out by the authorities. Under Article 64 of the 2003 Telecommunications Law, the use of encryption devices is prohibited without the written consent of the NTRA, the military, and national security authorities.¹⁰³ In addition, cybercafé customers must provide their names, e-mail addresses, and mobile numbers to receive a personal identification number (PIN) to access the internet. Further, the Telecommunications Law allows the offices of the Presidency, Security, Intelligence, and the Administrative Control Authority to obtain citizens' online information without prior consent for cases that concern national security. In 2013, disputes between the military and the presidency, controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood, led to a politicization of intelligence sharing.

In December 2013, high-level intelligence officials from Egypt and Iran reportedly met in Cairo to discuss the development of new Egyptian surveillance and security capabilities similar to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).¹⁰⁴ The meeting took place between Essam al-Haddad, an advisor to President Morsi, and Qassem Soleimani, Commander of the IRGC Quds Force responsible for external clandestine operations. Observers noted that Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood may have been looking to the IRGC as an example to follow; the IRGC was created in the wake of the 1979 Islamic Revolution as a counterweight to the power of Iran's traditional military, which the late Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini saw as a threat to his power.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the creation of separate security and intelligence structures, independent from the Egyptian military and under the direct control of the president, would be an important victory in the ongoing power struggle between the military – Egypt's strongest institution – and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Regarding cooperation between state security structures and the private sector, ISPs and mobile operators are obliged to maintain a database of their customers and to allow the government to access their databases. After the ending of a grace period issued by the MCIT, customers who do not have their National ID numbers registered with their phone companies will have their phone lines cut. The NTRA suggested that it would suspend additional phone numbers for mobile operators who fail to abide by the new rules.¹⁰⁶ In the past, details emerged that mobile operators Vodafone, Mobinil, and Etisalat had to sign terms of agreement that bound them to cooperate with government officials when requested to tap any conversation or monitor any discussion. In an

¹⁰² Activist slapped outside Brotherhood office speaks out," Egypt Independent, March 18, 2013,

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/activist-slapped-outside-brotherhood-office-speaks-out>.

¹⁰³ "Telecommunication Regulation Law, Law No. 10 of 2003," February 2003, Arab Republic of Egypt.

¹⁰⁴ Hugh Tomlinson, "Iranian spy chief's visit to Cairo was meant to 'send a message to America'," *The Times*, January 8, 2013,

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/middleeast/article3650461.ece>.

¹⁰⁵ Greg Bruno, Jayshree Bajoria, Jonathan Masters, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards," Council of Foreign Relations, June 14, 2013,

<http://www.cfr.org/iran/irans-revolutionary-guards/p14324>.

¹⁰⁶ "Mobile operators forced to register customer data," Egypt Independent April 1, 2010,

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/mobile-operators-forced-register-customer-data>.

interview, Mobinil founder Naguib Sawiris stated that under the company's terms of agreement, the government had the right to cancel any or all mobile services in the absence of cooperation.¹⁰⁷

Documents also revealed that the Egyptian government signed agreements with Canadian, German, British, and American software companies that allow close monitoring and hacking into activists' online information. For example, GAMMA and the Boeing/Narus Company supplied the Egyptian government with software equipment to hack dissidents' computers, e-mail, and social media accounts.¹⁰⁸ Egyptian security reportedly used software programs like FinFisher to hack computer systems and perform real-time decryption of social media activities and VoIP communications.¹⁰⁹ As an indication of the government's capabilities, news reports speculated that the authorities only decided to unblock internet access during the revolution in order to make it easy to monitor dissidents' discussions and plans of action online.

Cyberattacks are a widespread concern in Egypt. Several independent outlets, including Youm7 and El Badil, as well as social media pages have accused the authorities of hacking into their sites during times of political unrest, especially during the May-June 2012 presidential election and the March 2013 demonstrations against President Morsi.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, in March 2013, a report came out indicating that a Pakistani hacker attacked over 200 Egyptian websites, including the site of a government agency and a university.¹¹¹ The international hacktivist group "Anonymous" also launched distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks against 30 high-profile Egyptian government websites in December 2012 in protest of the policies of President Morsi.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Stephanie Baker and Mahmood Kassem, "Billionaire Facing Death Threats Says Egypt Risks Becoming Iran," Bloomberg, October 26, 2011, <http://bloom.bg/rXPGQE>.

¹⁰⁸ Evgeny Morozov, "Political Repression 2.0," September 1, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/02/opinion/political-repression-2-0.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Parker Higgins, "Elusive FinFisher Spyware Identified and Analyzed," Electronic Frontier Foundation, July 25, 2012, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2012/07/elusive-finfisher-spyware-identified-and-analyzed>.

¹¹⁰ Ahmed El Gody Online Journalism, Citizen Participation and Engagement in Online Journalism in Africa: Trends, Practices and Emerging Cultures (Routledge Advances in Internationalizing Media Studies). Eds. Mabweazara, Hayes, Okoth Mawindi, Jason Whittaker London:Routledge

¹¹¹ Sabari Selvan, "Egypt Government, University and 180+ other sites hacked by P@KhTuN," E Hacking News, March 10, 2013, <http://www.ehackingnews.com/2013/03/egypt-government-university-sites-hacked.html>.

¹¹² Mohit Kumar, "Anonymous hit Egyptian Government Websites as #OpEgypt," The Hackers News, December 9, 2012, <http://www.ehackingnews.com/2013/03/egypt-government-university-sites-hacked.html>.