Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square and its Vicinity: A Compendium of Sources 2011 - 2013

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Foreword

* By Dr. Magda Adly

We present in this compendium a number of testimonies from survivors of sexual torture in the vicinity of Tahrir Square. The testimonies have been collected from a number of websites, as well as from testimonies collected by human rights organizations that have not been previously published. Those involved in the collection of these testimonies include the New Woman Foundation, Nazra for Feminist Studies and El-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture. Online sources include the 'No to Sexual harassment' website, as well as that of Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment.

The decision to publish these testimonies was met with discrete reactions from friends [of those giving the testimonies] who have not been subjected to attacks. Most of these responses were supportive of publishing the testimonies, while others opposed publication, out of concern that women will refrain from participating in the revolution and practicing their right to expression.

With all due respect to the later viewpoint, which expresses a genuine concern, I am for the idea of exposing crimes committed against women for many reasons. The first pertains to the best interest of the survivors of sexual torture, as an important aspect of recovery for the survivors is to break out of the complexities of the social taboos that blame women for participating in demonstrations, a process that reaches the extent of blaming women for leaving their houses in the first place. Women are also blamed for what they wear, seen as the cause for the attacks committed against them. This belief was reflected in the statements made by female representatives of the Freedom and Justice Party, in the context of debates surrounding anti-sexual harassment legislation, during which they said that women are to blame for violating men's modesty. In the context of a terrible crime of sexual assault committed last November, a testimony of which was published on a social networking website, there were tens of supportive comments and one comment citing a Quranic verse, which states, "And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance." This is the manner by which Quranic verses are used out of context, consequently having the attacked girl blamed without the commenter even knowing her, his eyes shedding no tears in shame of what had happened.

This commonly-held notion of sexual crimes as a source of shame for the victim of the crime, rather than for the perpetrator, places a weight on the soul of the torture victim and heightens their feelings of shame and self-hatred, or as many survivors put it "my body disgusts me" or "how can I raise my head again?"

The second reason that drives me to support the publication of these testimonies is to shame the perpetrators. Like other torture crimes, this crime will only persevere if the perpetrator feels that he is safe from punishment because the torturing is done systematically, as a state policy, and

because the victim has been psychologically broken and will not go public about the crime in a society that would largely respond by questioning "why would he be tortured if he is not a criminal?"

The matter is not much different in the case of group sexual torture, which started to be used on July 2012, as perpetrators act from a belief that they are safe from accountability; that society itself will blame the victim and let the perpetrator free, that the girl and her family will live in shame and prefer silence.

The organizers of these crimes know that violating women's bodies goes beyond breaking women's will and alienating them from the revolution, to breaking the will of all revolutionaries. For everyone who has seen a girl or woman violated from armed groups and failed to save her will be the victim of feelings of shame and guilt; everyone who came to know of the instance will share the same feelings, for they use it to break the path of the revolution which they tried to go around, then fight it with tear gas and bullets. When the latter tactics of murder and injury did not succeed in terminating the revolution, they resorted to the worst of tactics to break the revolution and vacate its squares. The same tactics used by colonizing armies were used, which violate the women of the colonized state to break the will of its armies; the same tactic was also used by authoritarian regimes to counter its enemies- not only in Libya and Syria during the Arab Spring revolutions, but also in Egypt under Mubarak's rule. No one can forget tragedy of 5/25/2005 when security forces cleared the way for 'thugs' and its men, donning civilian clothes, to violate women in front of Saad Zaghlul's memorial and the Press Syndicate. We cannot forget the words of one policeman to a female protester on that day, explaining the violence used against female protesters, "so you would stop taking part in demonstrations again".

We know the method and have experienced it before, and we know who is behind it. Our certainty that the crime was committed in a systematic manner was evidenced in the decision of the prosecutor general to close the case due to failure in finding the perpetrators. Despite the fact that tens of pictures and videos of the criminals and the cars they used (bearing signs of famous members of the, then ruling, National Democratic Party) were submitted, the case was closed due to insufficient evidence.

Under today's ruling regime, parliament has rejected an anti-sexual harassment law; the regime refused to restructure the interior ministry, although more than one proposal for such a project was submitted by rights organizations and police officers themselves, including the group Zobat Laken Shorafaa "respectable police officers", which has significant implications for the case at hand. We cannot overlook, in this context, the fact that the interior ministry refrained from securing the Square, leaving its safety for the protesters and announcing that it will only protect buildings.

The third reason behind the publishing of testimonies is to reach the perpetrators. We must analyze the way in which the crime is committed, in the way they tech their police officers. After we heard and read many testimonies, it was revealed that the way in which the crime is committed is the same during the span of the past six months: a group surrounds the victims, the number increases and she is almost suffocated inside the circle, tens of hands pull her in every direction, tens of hands mess with any part of the body under siege, tens of hands strip off the victims (what they fail to remove manually, the use white weapons to remove), those surrounding her have said, according to most testimonies "do not be afraid; I'm protecting you". Meanwhile, his hands are ravaging her body. Another says, "you are like my sister; do not be afraid", for sexual phrases commonly used by perpetrators to kidnap a victim and rape her in an isolated area are usually not used. The tactic used drives the victim into a state of deep confusion... who is protecting? Who is violating? Who might respond to her tears and pleadings? Whose monstrosity increases from every look of the fear in her eyes? The confusion reaches a point where the victim suspects the protection teams sent to rescue her, for the protection teams that say "we are here to protect you" are repeating the very words used by the rapists

The confusion suffered by the victim is a part of a plan that makes it difficult to imagine that the attackers are simply groups of thugs looking for prey to take turns to attack.

The organization of the attacks, division of roles, and the fact that the attacks that place meters away from security forces that are "protecting buildings" are all factors that indicate that the crime is organized and systematic to abort the revolution, break the will of its men, and ostracize its women.

Silence in the face of this crime compounds the problem of the spread of the phenomenon of sexual harassment against women and, if not halted immediately, the barbarity of the phenomenon will increase, and might spread to all areas of Egypt.

Publication of the testimonies is a method of resistance, of shaming the perpetrators and paralyzing their hands from continuing with their heinous crimes. Publication is a way of responding to their message... our will shall not be broken... we will not be ashamed, for shame should only be felt by authoritarian regimes that commit crimes against humanity and challenges the will of nations to create a state built on justice, freedom, dignity, and equality.

Publication is a way of showing our solidarity with our daughters and sisters who paid this high price from their mental and physical health, just as the women and men of this nation have been paying with their lives, sight, and health for a span of two years.

Publication is a way to confront the state with its responsibilities to protect all its citizens and to present the phenomenon with its painfulness, lest a government authority or a parliamentarian understands the importance of introducing legislation to penalize violence and discriminations

against women, seeing that the Egyptian constitution lacks articles that prohibit against discrimination and violence and establishing equality between men and women in all areas of life.

Before I conclude this introduction, a final word-our campaign against the violations taking place in the vicinity of Tahrir Square does not in any way mean to imply that the crimes taking place in other areas of assembly are less significant. In fact, feminist organizations have worked for years, and are still working, to combat this phenomenon. They presented an anti-sexual harassment project, for example, to the now-dissolved Lower House of parliament that was criticized by a female member of the Freedom and Justice Party. Civilian groups are also working to be present in crowded areas during feast celebrations to detect cases of sexual harassment and offer help. We also ascertain that it is the duty of the police to protect citizens at all times and in all areas of Egypt, whether the crime is committed by groups or individuals; on streets, gardens, or revolution squares. The continuation of its neglect to fulfill its task cannot be accepted after the people's revolution to demand freedom, dignity, and humanity. This report has focused on an aspect of this phenomenon and because there are clear signals that implicate policymakers and those responsible for their execution, which complicates the situation and makes it more perilous.

We promise the women of this nation to continue the struggle for a society that is safe for women and men... a society that will attain freedom

Glory to Egypt and victory to its revolution, and to its martyrs and injured; and shame to the authorities of repression and despotism.

Introduction

Sexual harassment and assault have been staple features of the experience of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in the Egyptian public sphere. WHRDs are women active in the defense of human rights who are targeted for who they are and all those active in the defense of women's rights who are targeted for what they do. The title of "women human rights defender" does not only apply to women who are engaged in the human rights field in their professional capacity, but also women who participate in initiatives or activities related to the defendse of human rights, even if sporadically. WHRDs face, not only the same challenges faced by their male counterparts, such as beatings or imprisonment, but face, in addition, violations that stem from their gender identity. WHRDs thus face violations such as sexuality baiting, sexual harassment, or sexual assault. Such violations are not a novelty, however. Under Mubarak's regime, the events of 25 May 2005, dubbed "Black Wednesday", stands out as an epitome of the violence WHRDs face in their defense of human rights. Such violations have persevered under the rule of the Supreme Council of the

Armed Forces, a period painfully remembered for the notorious virginity tests and the stripping of "Tahrir Girl" in broad day light during the Cabinet of Ministers clashes of December 2011¹.

Under the rule of Mohammed Morsi, the perpetrators of grave, documented, violations against WHRDs have enjoyed complete impunity. Rather than hold leaders of the SCAF accountable for the crimes committed under their rule, Morsi appointed Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, former minister of defense and head of the SCAF, and Lieutenant General Sami Anan, former chief of staff of Egypt's military, as presidential advisors. Morsi also bestowed national medals on Tantawi and Anan due to their "significant services to the country"². It was only expected that given the unwillingness to establish a regime of accountability and rule of law, that violations against WHRDs would continue unabated.

The targeting of WHRDs was documented on December 5, 2012 in the clashes that took place in the vicinity of Itihadeya Palace (the presidential palace), when supporters of Morsi attacked peaceful protesters in the vicinity of the palace. No one has been held accountable for the attacks. To the contrary, in 4 December, Prime Minister Hisham Qandil stated that protesters at Itihadeya Palace are responsible for "protecting themselves".

The attacks against WHRDs took an unprecedented brutal twist during the second anniversary of the January 25 revolution. 19 cases of rape and sexual assault were documented; the women assaulted included demonstrators, volunteers with anti-sexual harassment teams, or women who happened to pass by Tahrir Square or its vicinity. The testimonies below paint a horrendous picture of a climate rife with extreme sexual violence, refuting claims that the sexual assault and rapes that took place starting on January 25, 2013 cannot be simply explained away by claims that the attackers are "hired thugs". Rather, a general attitude of sexual entitlement prevails, that is, a belief that the bodies of women present in the context of demonstrations are safe territories for sexual attacks underlies nearly all testimonies. With testimonies that speak of hundreds of hands persistently raping women, with hundreds more watching the brutal attacks, some while even smiling, it becomes clear that we are faced with an overwhelming challenge, namely a state and a society that have internalized sexual violence against women as the law of the land.

The sexual violence against women in streets of protests are backed up by the attitude of an apathetic state. Not only have senior figures in Morsi's government come out to blatantly state that protestors are responsible for their own safety, in complete disregard of Egypt's international obligations to guarantee the safety of peaceful protesters, but the state apparatus has also

¹ For more information about violations against women human rights defenders under the rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, refer to One Year of Impuntiy: : Violations against Women Human Rights Defenders in Egypt from August to December 2011, Nazra for Feminist Studies, 1 September 2012, available at <u>http://www.nazra.org/en/node/142</u>

² Decisions of the president of the republic on 12/8/2012, Egypt State Information Service, <u>http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/Story.aspx?sid=60969</u> (Translated by Nazra for Feminist Studies).

condoned the brutal attacks. On 11 February 2013, the Human Rights Committee of the Shura Council, *the upper house* of parliament currently imbued with legislative powers, blamed the women attacked, calling on the women to protect themselves before "asking the Ministry of Interior to offer her protection". One member of the Committee further argued that women "cause rape upon themselves though putting themselves in a position which makes them subject to rape"³. The absence of investigations into the crimes coupled with such horrendous statements are not only indicative of a state that is apathetic to the level complicity into the sexual crimes, but also sends signals that such attacks are acceptable, warning of a foreboding future.

In the background of a setting of extreme sexual violence against women, this report presents a compendium of testimonies of survivors of sexual assault and rape and testimonies of the women and men who have formed volunteer groups to ward off attacks against women , in chronological order. The report also present a snapshot of the news coverage of the sexual attacks, the statements issued to denounce these attacks, and finally, the analysis of some rights organizations of the attacks in an attempt to present a rounded picture of the sexual assaults that have been taking place against women in Tahrir Square and its vicinity.

Sexual Assault During the First Anniversary of the January 25 Revolution

The testimony below documents a case of sexual assault that took place during the first anniversary of the revolution in Tahrir Square and continued to several streets in the vicinity of the Square. It becomes apparent through this testimony that the brutality of the attacks that took place during the second anniversary of the revolution is not a novel phenomenon, but that the patterns of sexual violence have a long, ignored, history.

1. Testimony of Survivor - Basma

The marches were beautiful; we arrived at Tahrir Square at around 5 PM and it was very crowded. We left to have lunch and went back to the Square at 8:00 PM. We were a large group, moving with some difficulty due to the large crowds. Two friends, a girl and a guy, and I decided to break away from the group and meet them again at the Arab Contractors company sign in the middle of the Square. Once we arrived at the sign, I heard a female friend yelling at someone, demanding that he leave her alone. We met a young man I know from work and he took my hand and we walked in the opposite direction, telling me that people are creating an "unstable environment". I walked, along with my female and male friends, and the young man I know from work, behind each other; behind us were the young men standing near the sign. They started by separating our female friend from us and her position shifted to the end of the line. They started to sexually harass her; others were trying to steal her purse. I tried to hang on to her by holding on to her

³ Shura Council members blame women for harassment, Egypt Independent, 11 February 2013, available at http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/02/11/shura-council-members-blame-women-for-harassment/

purse so some of them sexually harassed me and stole my purse.

The young man I know from work took my hand and we started running. I noticed a circle forming around the girl behind me and another started to form around me and my friend. The harassment continued, as well as attempts to strip me of my clothes. Their eyes lacked semblance of life; they looked dead to me. My friend tried to scare them away by yelling at them while I tried to beat any hand that approached me. I did not know who was harassing and who was protecting me; my voice would not come out and I made eye contact with many passersby but they did not intervene. I was finally able to scream; the harassers momentarily took a step back then proceeded to encircle me again. The ordeal continued towards Abd el-Moneim Riad Square until the beginning of Mohammed Bassiouni Street. We found a parked microbus and my friend tried to get me to stand with my back to the microbus while he stood in front of me to protect me. They did not even give me the chance to touch the microbus, though. They pushed my friend to the ground then pushed me. Hands which were foreign to me helped me stand back up, while other hands continued to harass me, as yet others pushed me and my friend towards a car. We got into the car and it started to move. The men jumped on top of the car and on the hood, in an attempt to get us out of it. After a while, though, some fell off the car, while others got off.

Sexual Assault on June 2012

The 4 testimonies below are those of survivors of sexual assault that took place on June 8, 2012 during a demonstration denouncing the sexual assault and rape that took place on June 2, 2012. The first 3 testimonies document the attacks of June 2 and the last testimony, that of Sally Zohney, documents the attacks of 8 June. The attacks on the women was calculated and organized so as to scare women away from the public sphere, to punish women for their participation, and to keep them at home to avoid the premeditated attacks against them. The testimonies describe how the women were groped by tens of men all over their bodies, and how the level of sexual assault reached, for some of them, to tearing their clothes. The women agreed to share their stories in hope that this will help in fighting this growing trend, and we thank them for their courage.

Nazra for Feminist Studies is publishing three testimonies of women who were sexually assaulted by a mob on Mohammed Mahmoud Street on Saturday, 2 June. The collective sexual assault and harassment that took place on the vicinity of Tahrir Square on June 2 and 8, 2012 shed light on the gravity of sexual harassment and assault on Egyptian streets. Although the three testimonies do not account for the entirety of the brutality that many women experienced on that Saturday and the Friday after, they are one example that offers a window to the dynamics of mob sexual assault and harassment on those two days, which are not the first of its kind.

2. Testimony of Survivor – N (Documented by Nazra for Feminist Studies)

I Felt Evil.

Saturday evening I went to Tahrir with no interest in protesting I just went to check things out, I was really frustrated about the fact that the Egyptian people were not united, that everyone was looking for their own interest and not the interest of the country and its people.

There weren't many people at first but then many came and it felt we were coming together. I was so happy. We were 5, 3 girls and 2 guys, and we were walking in the square among the crowd and I thought it would be safe. But it wasn't. Suddenly men started grabbing us away from each other. They started groping me and grabbing my *Hijab* (headscarf) then I lost friends...I was terrified ...some men hid me behind a small kiosk but I kept looking for my friends who I couldn't find. I was able finally to reach one of them and she told me she was safe.

The other friend was hurt very badly, my heart aches for her and I keep playing the whole thing in my head over and over again, she was right there in front of me then someone grabbed my ass so I looked behind then looked back and she was gone, I kept looking for her I couldn't see her anymore, it was as if I was in high sea and all the waves are just tossing me all over the place.

How can people be so evil...why is it that no one is held accountable for what they do? Those men are walking freely on the streets looking for their next victim and there is nothing I can do about it.

I was raised to believe that good people get rewarded and bad people get punished but as I came to be exposed to the world I realized that it's not true. It's the other way around....and I feel betrayed...I feel angry...I feel guilty for not protecting my friend....I wish it was me not her....

Who should I blame for this? Mubarak for destroying my country's education, a system which men who have no respect for women and have become just animals? Our useless police who are incapable of defending us? Our religious leaders who claim that they want what's best but they don't go to these young men and teach them what's right? Our educators who turned into business men?... Our politicians who just want power? Who???!!!!

I don't know who to blame...But I am really angry at many religious leaders who prefer to appear on TV thinking they reach more people while there are masses who don't own a TV...our leaders tweet and do commercials targeting a specific segment of the people leaving the masses who need help....

I am angry at everyone who is merely involved in remote charity rather than getting actively involved in the impoverished communities and trying to help them, they just throw some money thinking they have done their part in helping their society...

I am angry at all the mothers who teach their sons that they superior just because they are men....and tell their daughters that they are inferior just because they are women...

(12)

I am angry because my friends and I were humiliated....

I am angry but I am not broken...

I have seen the best and worst of people that night ...I have faith that Allah will help me through this and will give me the strength to help others...

I know that many will not like that I wrote this about Tahrir square thinking I am trying to vandalize the image of the Egyptian revolution...but this is not my intention, I have participated in almost all the battles and marches since Jan28 2011 but sexual harassment in Egypt is growing, multiplying and we need to address it. We ignored it for too long and it is becoming a monster that is eating us all...I feel hate towards those men who molested us...I can't smile in the face of anyone that I don't know anymore...hell, I can't smile the way I used to....

3. Testimony of Survivor - C

(Documented by Nazra for Feminist Studies)

On 2 June 2012, I was on Tahrir Square as I had been several times before to document the protest that took place and didn't reach the foreign news. I'm not Egyptian but I had been following an Egyptian friend (a woman) through the period before, during and after the first round of election. I had been filming her in several protest and marches and so I was on that day.

We were five people, three women and two men. We felt safe and were crossing the square going to the Mohammed Mahmoud Street corner. Suddenly it got more crowded around us and I noticed a man was following us. He had a phone in his hand and it kept ringing without him answering. I thought it was strange and I told my Egyptian friend, when she turned around he was gone and we decided to get away from the crowded area of the square.

The best way we saw was to go through the metal fence and on to the street walk. On the way I felt a man grabbing my breast. I pushed him away and continued.

During the short time I have spent I Cairo I have experienced sexual harassment many times and I knew that this was a big problem. We continued and suddenly all the men around us started touching us all over the body. It was as if they surrounded us at the same time and separated us from each other. This happened while we were getting through the met al fence on to the street walk. From there I didn't see any of my friends except one of them (Egyptian man) who was trying to get the men away from me as their numbers grew.

Before I knew it, I was thrown up against a wall where a motorcycle was parked. I was standing on top of the bike while my friend and a few other men tried to make a half circle to protect me. But there were more men trying to hurt me than protect me and I was grabbed all over and my pants and shirt where ripped. In that moment it was as if the men got even more crazy. My pants were pulled down by the many men and they raped me with their dirty fingers. I managed to pull my pants up again and I could still see the face of my friend still trying with all his power to keep at least some of the men away. I really saw the best and the worst of men. My friend was beaten and putting his life at risk trying to save me while other men were fighting just to get near me with only one intention, to hurt me as much as possible.

The entire time, I tried to protect myself but there were too many hands and too many animals. More and more people came in to join the assault and suddenly I saw another face I knew. It was an American friend and he and my Egyptian friend kept telling me that everything would be alright, that it would soon be over. I didn't believe them and I don't think they did themselves.

I threw my camera to my American friend and told him to run. I knew that he would only get in more trouble staying. He ran off with the camera and in the same moment my Egyptian friend and I decided to try to escape. We counted to 3 and I jumped in his arms and it created a second of confusion for the men who were hurting me. But again they were all over me. I was thrown into the ally and up against a wall.

I didn't know who was trying to help and who wasn't. The only person I trusted was my friend. Others said they were helping but really just trying to get in the first row, getting a piece of the cake. Others were actually helping but it was impossible to know who.

The men were like lions around a dead piece of meat and their hands were all over my body and up under my destroyed clothes. Again my pants and underwear where pulled down violently and several men at the same time raped me with their fingers. I was suddenly on the ground and the men pulled me from my hair, legs, and arms while they continued raping me. Somehow I got up again and the door of a hallway was opened next to me and I was pushed and pulled in there.

In the hallway about 20 men managed to enter before the door was closed again. I didn't see my friend among the men. It was the first time I had a chance to see the men for a few seconds and they were from all ages. The looks in their eyes were really like animals. Not human at all and the way they were throwing me around was as if I was a not a human but a piece of garbage.

Again I was surrounded this time from all sides in the middle of the floor. There was even a man lying on the floor being stepped on by the others, forcing his fingers between my legs. That happened from all sides and more fingers at the same time. I was sure that they wouldn't stop before I was lying dead in that hallway. I really tried to fight and protect my body but it was impossible. Every time I tried to kick out more hands were between my legs and every time I tried to hit someone or remove hands, my shirt was even more ripped and my breasts pulled. For one second, I had the chance to hurt one of the men back. I pressed my finger, with all the power I had left, in one of his eyes but he just continued hurting me with his fingers. Two or three men managed to pull me away from the others and on to a chair in the corner. I know now that they were trying to help me but I didn't know that at the time. I was so afraid and saw no ending to this. Suddenly I could hear a loud sound and I saw an old man with a big wooden stick in his hand. I saw him hitting a young man over the back and I was pulled into a back room while some men were trying to hold back other men. I got a chance to finally pull up my underwear and ripped pants and a man gave me a big Egyptian flag to cover myself with. I was told to go up the back stairs. The old man with the stick was leading and about four or five men followed. Others stayed and were holding back the rest of the men.

Going up the stairs, I had no idea what would happen. I only knew what was down there and that I couldn't go back. I keep falling because I had no energy left. The stairs were never-ending and I kept falling and crying. I didn't trust any man. One man kept saying "everything is okay, Egyptian men are good men." One time I fell and the man walking behind me put his hand on my back trying to help me up. On the way he just touched my breast a last time and when I pushed his hand away and looked back at him he just said sorry like it was an accident. It wasn't and I was disgusted by him and even more scared of what was waiting at the end of the stairs.

But luckily they were helping me and I was so relieved to finally see a woman when we entered the apartment at the end of the stairs. She was the wife of the man leading me up the stairs and they didn't let any of the men into the apartment. The women took me to the bathroom and gave me some of her clothes. When I got to the bathroom I couldn't stand up for another minute. I fell down on the floor just crying and crying. I don't know how long time I sat there but suddenly my Egyptian friend (one of the girls I got separated from when it all started) came in the door. I have never been so happy to see anyone as I was when I saw her. She hugged me and helped me change my clothes and wash most of the dirt off my face, hands, and arms.

We stayed in the apartment with these wonderful people who gave us water and Pepsi to drink. They also gave me a headscarf and some shoes to wear, as I had lost one of my own shoes during the assault. My friend had a phone and was able to communicate with our other friends. After some time I was told that it was safe to leave the apartment but I refused several times before I was talked into it. I was so afraid that the animals were waiting outside.

The old man and his son followed us down to the ally and I was so happy to see our two male friends waiting for us there. We rushed without running through the ally covering my head with the scarf and got to my friend's car that was parked nearby. We drove to the apartment where I lived and met the rest of our friends. During the next few days, my brave friends and other women started talking about the big problem. I kept a low profile and returned to my home country after a week. I'm now getting medical and psychological help to recover after the assault. My identity has to be kept secret for my safety and to be able to return to Cairo some day.

I wish the best for the women of Egypt. Without them, there would not have been a revolution. Assaulting and trying to break them now is just to ruin the strength and resilience of the revolution. I have heard some people telling the women to not tell their stories about the harassment, assaults, and rapes because these stories ruin the image of the revolution. I have only one thing to say to these people: no one but the men doing this to the women is ruining the revolution. What will you have left in the Square without the strong and brave women?

I do believe that the women will not be quiet and they will not break, but it's also important that each and every man in Egypt takes a position in this subject. Say it out loud, write it on a sign, and wear it on a t-shirt. Do what it takes to tell women and the world that not every Egyptian man would beat up, rape, assault, or harass a woman just for walking on the street, take part in a protest, or simply demand her right to be worth the same as a man.

4. Testimony of Survivor - R

(Documented by Nazra for Feminist Studies)

Yesterday, Saturday 2 June 2012, I went to Tahrir Square with a group of friends. We walked around the Square freely, then suddenly we wanted to get closer to where the Ultras were, near Mohamed Mahmoud Street. We started to walk towards the street cutting through the Square. As we got closer, I felt men getting closer to us; we had two guys with us trying to lead us into the crowd. Suddenly I felt a hand grab my butt, I turned around and saw the young guy and stared him down, a few men saw and tried to push me forward away from him, the young man backed away once he saw I looked directly at him. He cowered away.

My friends keep pushing forward, at this point it was obvious we were not getting through, it was far too crowded. We started trying to get to the sidewalk. Suddenly men were appearing to help us, and they formed a human chain around us, trying to push us forward. We were being pushed and lots of men were pushing towards us, I immediately felt the attack coming, these men were too close, they were pressing their bodies onto mine. I was the last in the group, thus I was being pushed more. Suddenly we were pushed onto the sidewalk, and then the men attacked. At first, they formed a human chain around me trying to protect me but the men were grabbing at every inch of my body through the men, grabbing at everything they could, my breasts, butt, and crotch. I felt dozens of hands all over my body. I was screaming and jumping trying to get the hands off me. Suddenly I had men pulling on me, everything happened so fast; I was split from my friends. The last image I have of my friends is my friend N. trying to grab my hand, and our friend A. [a male friend] pushing the men away screaming *Ibn-kalb* [sons of dogs] to them.

Suddenly I was violently grabbed and thrown towards the wall right next to Hardee's. Then a group of older men formed a human chain around me and protected me. I was hysterical, screaming. I couldn't see my friends, I couldn't tell who was trying to help me or who was trying to

sexually assault me. The men turned towards me, all older men in their 50's or so. They were trying to calm me; they keep telling me I was safe, they were protecting me. I then started to panic again, I couldn't see any of my friends, I couldn't get out of the human chain, it was still total chaos there was still men, trying to get to me. I was suddenly terrified, I couldn't see my friends, I couldn't get out. I was stuck, I then tweeted for help.

I could see the mobs of men still attacking C., our friend. I couldn't see her in the crowds. Suddenly, the men moved me to another cordon where there were more women. They were all terrified; there were six of them, all being protected by a human chain. One by one they got us out, I was last. Men had to escort me out of the area. Once I was clear I called my friends, some were waiting near KFC, N. was missing; she was looking for C. That's when I first realized C. was missing; we didn't know what happened to her. I was finally able to walk through the square with no problems once I got out of that area. I found our two other friends and helped them get a taxi, then walked home.

I cannot express how horrible the experience was, I was completely sexually assaulted by groups of men, pulling on me, grabbing every inch of my body. I remember looking at some of them, yelling at them. They all had the same smirk on their faces, they were enjoying attacking me, they were all enjoying it. It was a crazy face, like they had lost all senses; they were acting like complete animals. Animals, that is the best way I can explain their behavior.

What happened to C. was even worse; words cannot express the anger and rage I felt when she told us her story and what had happened to her.

5. Testimony of Sally Zohney

Sally Zohney, 26 years old, from the group that called for a demonstration in Tahrir Square. Before I speak of what happened during the demonstration, many points should be clarified. Since the July 8 sit-in, there was sexual harassment against the women who went to the Square. A group of men surround the women and pull them, touch their private parts and so on. Most of my friends complained of group sexual assaults back then and there were calls on Twitter for popular committees to protect the Square. But I think most girls did not speak up or document what happened to them.

A couple of months later, during the Mohammed Mahmoud events, besides the presence of undercover agents, sexual harassment was becoming increasingly widespread. I personally witnessed a day during which I saw a girl running away, crying, and complaining about men grabbing her intimately; this happened almost every half hour. From the testimonies, it was evident that most of the girls were young and from the middle or upper middle class. There was a call to document the cases of sexual harassment. I worked on an aspect of that project and we tried to encourage the girls to speak up and send pictures of harassers to expose them. The call

did not have much effect and no movement took any action, from my knowledge.

The point of the latter points is to get a point across, namely that the sexual harassment against women, especially in Tahrir Square, is primarily a political message, aiming to scare people and shame the girls that demonstrate, and ostracize the largest number of people possible from the political sphere. This has been the tactic of the regime for a while, even since 2005, then the virginity tests, beating of female protesters and dragging them across the streets. Ever since the sentencing in the case of Hosni Mubarak, a new sit-in commenced in Tahrir Square to oppose the release of all of Habib El-Adly's aids. Ever since that day, several groups of girls started to complain of violent sexual harassment in the Square and some cases were severely beaten, their headscarves pulled, and stripped of their clothes (out of respect to those affected I will not mention any details). This disgraceful situation lasted for days; reports by journalists end eye-witnesses may easily identify the assaulters. Mohammed Mahmoud Street became a "dangerous zone" for any girl on the Square. Better yet, it would allegedly become best to avoid Tahrir Square entirely!

The demonstration, our main area of concern, was to protest this situation; to tell the girls who survived assaults that we are with them, that they must speak up, that they have their rights and that their harasser is a scared animal. Our voice must reach the media and the people on the Square so they would not stand idle in the face of this crime. Sexual harassment is a crime committed not only against these women but against any person who wants to walk safely as well. The demonstration that day was to begin around 6:00-7:30 PM on Mohammed Mahmoud Street, on Friday June 8. I arrived at 6:30 PM with some friends and we started preparing signs. I was surprised to see more than 50 people holding signs in the form of human chains, surrounded by young men wearing florescent jackets. The numbers of people watching started to increase, calls against sexual harassment continued, and there was a large number of young men and people recording with their camera, which were among the factors that made me feel safe.

As the night progressed, the number of "spectators" increased. A decision was made to turn the demonstration to a march that would move from Mohammed Mahmoud Square to Talaat Harb, where the surroundings would be calmer and it would be easier to walk. A group of young men circled around the girls to protect them. I was opposed to this idea because it solidifies the notion that women cannot walk alone in the Square without protection, which is unnecessary and untrue. In the dark though, and with the march progressing, there was little time to argue. When we reached Talaat Harb, I heard a girl beating a man because he touched her in the march. The situation progressed and the young men started beating us and pushed us to the side. The men still circled around us and the march continued. The beatings continued, though, and it was difficult to understand who was with us and who was against us. Water and gas were thrown on the march. We then found out that some girls from the march were surrounded in the middle of the beatings. I thought they were just stuck in the middle, which was unfortunately not true- there was a group of men beating up the young men and pulling the women and touching their

intimate areas, stripping them, in actions that nearly reached the stage of rape in the middle of the Square.

Young men who were accompanying us tried to save the girls but there were beatings everywhere, and theft. I tried to stay away but got my share of the pulling, beating, and touching of my body. My focus was on protecting my bag, which had my camera, phone, and all of my money. In the middle of all this, I saw a girl on the floor, almost completely naked, 20 men lying on top of her. God knows what they did. She was breaking down from the screaming and the beatings; there were others who were savagely assaulted. I do not want anyone to use the word 'harassment', an understatement. I was suddenly being shoved and found myself inside a clothing store on Talaat Harb Street. The beatings, at this point, were very random and violent; I thought I heard gunfire. The situation at the store was frightening- I was with around 10 girls in a small space separating the glass door of the store and the exterior metal door of the store. It is a space that can barely fit two persons. People were pushing to get in, the women working in the store pushing from the inside to close the glass door while the owner of the store was pulling the metal door. Meanwhile, I heard the harassers screaming, "Get out! We'll have a party on you," just like the police!

My only wish was for the glass door not to break on top of me and I was shouting at people so they would stop pushing. But I did not know- if I get out, will I be able to run away? I heard a young man's voice and recognized his shirt- he was one of the young men circling around us and I thought he would be able to manage the harassers. He was shouting at the storeowner to open the door so that we can get out. The owner stubbornly only cared about not opening the door, regardless of the fact that there are 10 girls who will die from suffocation and crowding. The young man who had shouting at the store owner kept telling him, "there are no men anymore... I will get these girls out. I would not be a man if I don't". Thankfully, he was able to get us out. The strange thing is that I could see people meters away, watching us while eating Koshary, as if the beatings were taking place on television! I felt extremely revolted and saddened at that point.

Many of the young men had lost their phones. I did not know where my friends were, if the girls were OK or not, if they went back home or not. I saw some of them and, thankfully, they were OK. The incident did not end here, however. Groups of harassers were standing on street corners and assaulted the girls. They had a look of viciousness in their eyes that I will never forget. I moved with some friends to Al-Bustan Street, we were a smaller group by then. Since the beginning of the march, my phone's battery had died and I was worried that people would try to get in touch with me and worry that something might have happened to me. Many were psychologically traumatized from the incident. I hope this incident would be the cause that a stance be made.

I hope that whoever saw anything, would speak up; if anyone was hurt, tell the story. There are a million things to do to help.

I salute every girl that participated, every mother who was with us, every man who defended us and was beaten, and every young man who believed in the cause.

Testimonies of Sexual Assault and Rape on November 2012

Cases of sexual assault and rape were documented on November 2012 during demonstrations that took place in Tahrir Square and its vicinity to protest a constitutional declaration issued by Mohammed Morsi on 22 November 2012, giving Morsi sweeping powers including the immunization of any law or decree issued by the president from any appeal "by any way or to any entity" until the election of a new People's Assembly (lower house of parliament)⁴. The attacks that took place on November were as brutal as those documented two months later, during the second anniversary of the January 25 revolution. An outcry against these attacks did not take place, however, which explains the shock that swept many when the testimonies of the sexual assault and rape that took place starting on 25 January 2013 came to light. Unfortunately, the brutality was not new; only the attention was.

Even though the testimonies present a grim picture of streets rife with sexual attackers, testimonies of eyewitnesses to some of the assault and rape attacks are available. These provide answers to some lingering questions, such as, why do passersby stand idly and allow the attacks to take place? Even though in certain instances, survivors speak of passersby who stand by and watch the attacks, some while even smiling, eye witness testimonies present the explanation of others who simply did not know that rape was being committed meters away and other who simply could not break through the mayhem to reach the survivor.

6. Testimony of Mohammed Kheir:

I received a phone call from my friend ("Y") whose personal information I will not disclose (unless she decides otherwise) where she asked me to make it clear that what the media is calling "harassment cases" have taken place and still take place in the areas surrounding Tahrir Square. "Y" said that these incidents are in fact much worse than mere harassment, and she started telling me over the next few minutes about the painful horrific events she experienced on Friday, November 23, 2012, an experience, she said, other girls had been exposed to in subsequent days. I leave you now with her testimony:

7. Testimony – Y:

'I was with one of my female friends at the corner of Al-Qasr Al-Einy Street and Sheikh Rehan street at six in the evening on Friday, November 23rd during the mass rally rejecting the resident's super constitutional decree the "No to the super constitutional decree" rally, when several tear gas canisters were fired by the security forces on the protesters during clashes at Simon Bolivar street.

⁴ English text of Morsi's Constitutional Declaration, Ahram Online, 22 November 2012. available at <u>http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/58947.aspx</u>

My friend and I started running and we suddenly found ourselves in the middle of the security forces that were continuing their attack and we fell to the gound. Suddenly, a group of young men appeared and started tearing our clothes off. We could see a male friend of ours in the distance running towards us trying to come save us when some of the men grabbed him and started choking him with the scarf he was wearing. In the meantime we were trying to fight off the attackers but their hands had already torn off the shirt I was wearing as well as the bra underneath. They had also stolen our wallets and everything that was in our pockets including our mobile phones. My female friend was lying on the ground as was our male friend who had tried to save us.

The group of attackers ran away when other groups of men started arriving. We started running away from all of them towards Tahrir square, but we suddenly found ourselves in the middle of another group of attackers. By Mohamed Mahmoud Street I got separated from my friend and I could not find her again. The attackers started pushing me forward. I tried to resist but I could not distinguish between who was trying to assault me and who was trying to save me.

Within a few moments, in the hustle, my clothes were completely torn off and the attackers were gripping every part of my body without exception. One man inserted his fingers violently into my rear end and I started screaming and tried to get to the wall on the side of the street. There I could see a group of young men standing on something high, looking on and laughing. I kept on fighting off the attackers and I sat myself down into sewage that was on the ground trying to protect at least some parts of my body. They started dragging me to the ground. One man tried to forcefully stick his tongue into my mouth, I bit him and he beat me.

In the middle of the pushing I found myself completely carried off the ground, above their hands and I was kicking in vain. I was carried into a place with neon lighting which seemed like on one of the shops in the end of Mohamed Mahmoud Street. I no longer knew if the people who put me there were trying to save me or rape me. In reality, they invaded every part of my body with their hands. They started pushing me out into the street again. I fell on the floor and there was a car slowly driving closer in the middle of the crowd. The car was driven so close to me that it drove over my hair, pinning me to the ground before it was driven in reverse. The people in the car tried to force me into the car but they did not succeed other than get my head through the window because of the attackers pulling and pushing. They put me onto the hood of the car.

Four men held me down onto the hood while all of them continued violating me. The car started moving and tried to get out in the middle of the crowd. People were watching, doors were closed, and we passed in front of a small mosque with a closed door. Some people started coming close to see what was happening and the people in the car answered in a peculiar way saying "She has a bomb on her stomach" while they got the people to move away. I understood that they were not trying to save me when I heard one of them say: "We will fuck her in Abdeen". Their terrifying

words continued until we reached Abdeen.

In Abdeen a woman suddenly appeared with a group of men carrying canes and the tried to get the crowd away from me. They threw a sheet and a *Jilbab* (dress) over me but I couldn't move my body or fight off the men who were still holding me. The woman and the men with her finally managed to get hold of me and they tried to carry me into a small shop with closed doors. They started banging on the door calling the shopkeeper. He finally opened the door and I was finally able to put on the sheet and the *Jilbab* but the attackers continued to surround the shop trying to get hold of me again.

As the woman and those with her finally managed to clear a corridor to her house, we went up to her apartment and sat down. Her husband asked me "What did you do to them?! What do they want from you?!"I started answering him calmly until I exploded again at his question "Are you a Miss or Mrs.?" (Are you a virgin or not?)

The attackers continued standing outside the building but we finally managed to open a corridor to the car of the woman's husband, and we head off in the direction of my home in the Mounira district. The woman's husband kept on asking me questions about the landmarks in the area, as if making sure I was not lying to them! He insisted on following me to the building and up to the door of my apartment. My female friend opened the door and hugged me while she was crying, and the man left.'

8. Testimony of Eyewitness:

Mr. Mohammed, even though we do not know each other, I have been following your news and today, I unfortunately saw the note about the rape of a girl. I was on Tahrir Square that day and this incident happened before my eyes. What happened was that a building was on fire in front of the Lycee French School on Mohammed Mahmoud Street. I headed there with a friend to provide any help but the inhabitants had close the gates and the fire department did not arrive.

When we lost hope and the revolutionaries were angered because of the presence of the military inside the Lycee and started throwing Molotov cocktails at them, my friend and I retreated to the beginning of Mohamed Mahmoud Street, near Hardees. It was at that time that we saw a fight, consisting of a group surrounding a person and beating him with belts. We thought it was as security officer but when we got closer and asked what was going on, we were told that it was a group of young men raping a girl. There was incredible passivity; no one was intervening. My friend and I pushed the people in the circle until we reached the circle directly surrounding the girl. In that moment, I lost my friend and only saw him once during the commotion. The attack was organized: a group of men were beating the girl with the belt so she would not resist and get distracted covering her face to shield herself from the beating, one man is down on the girl's body raping her, while others were beating whoever tries to break into the circle, and they switched

roles.

I am not exaggerating in any way. When I reached the circle surrounding the girl, one man was getting up from on top of the girl and another was getting ready to take his place. I saw the girl on the floor, her clothes pushed above her chest, her pants are unzipped and she was covering her intimate areas and struggling to re-zip her pants. At that time, I threw myself inside the circle and tried to help to stand up. I was beaten severely with belts and kicked in the stomach and fell down. A man with a small lighter suddenly appeared and he ignited the flare to push the crowd back, allowing me and another man to get the girl to stand up and help her fix her clothes. This group of thugs then returned and beat up the man carrying the flare, which accidentally touched my face. I was barely breathing in the midst of the pushing and shoving. I managed to pull the girl, along with the man who was helping us, and ran towards the street after they had succeeded to pull her beyond Hardee's. I kept looking back at the girl while we are running and assured her that I will not leave her alone. She was completely distraught, disheveled as I could hear her assaulters running after us until we reached Hardee's again. At that point, they had caught up with us and they pushed us, causing us to fall on the wet ground.

I swear to you that the number of people helping us throughout this ordeal were not more than 2 individuals. Meanwhile, regular people, onlookers who did not belong to this group of thugs, were also harassing the girl as we were carrying her. By the time I got back up, the girl was about 3 meters away from me. Of course, people had surrounded her again and the beatings with the belts resumed.

At that time, I lost any power I had within me and could not go back to her. I cried hysterically. Please convey my apologies to her. Tell her I am sorry I could not go back to help her. Tell her that there were men trying to protect you; not all of them were trying to eat you alive. Tell her that we believe that she is a respectable woman, that we do not believe the names they were calling her when they held her and beat her up. This girl is not lying. Maybe she is not the one I saw. But I still want to apologize to her on behalf of every man in Egypt. All of what I recounted above lasted for a span of 5 minutes, or maybe less. Tell her to forgive us, that we are sorry, and that we hold her in the highest regards.

9. Testimony of Eyewitness - F.S:

The story you published in the note is true and happened before our eyes. The problem is that people coming from outside have little understanding of what is going on. We saw a car suddenly emerging from an alley of Tahrir Street. It was a white car and we tried to run after it to inquire about what is going on. 2 individuals pushed us and told us 'it's a naked girl that we are trying to cover and get her out of the Square'. The looks of those people did not imply that they are telling the truth. We went to the building the girl was in and people told us that what we saw were indeed attempts' to save her and that she was raped inside the building. The problem lies in the people

surrounding the victim, who usually tell lies to push people away. I hope that when harassment incidents take place, people who cannot endure beatings would get out of the way because the number of people watching was double that of the number harassing the girl. We could have successfully intervened had this filthy bunch not been around. Please tell her we are sorry; we genuinely had no idea what was going on. I promise her that we will never let this happen again.

10. Testimony of Eyewitness - M.A:

I witnessed this incident, Mr. Mohammed, and I swear to you, this girl was a victim and the young men violated her with extreme brutality. Every word she said is 100% true. I was among the people who tried to rescue her and the last place I reached was a side door of a prayer area. Some young men opened the door to hide the girl inside, before she was placed on top of the car, but the people who were pretending to rescue her refused to let her go in because they only wanted to have her.

Tell her that there many men trying to rescue her and many men tried to cover her. There were young men crying from the severity of what happened to her. Everyone who hurt her will, God willing, be severely punished by God.

11. Eyewitness Testimony - M.S:

I witnessed what happened to this girl. I was leaving the street adjacent to McDonald's and saw violent confrontations taking place between the security forces and the protesters. There was excessive use of Molotov cocktails thrown at the school saw the laser light from a weapon carried by an officer on my face, I could not move at that time – there was a crowd at Hardee's, protesters in front of me, rocks and Molotov cocktails thrown around, security forces in front of me inside the school. I said the *shahada* (Islamic declaration to the faith in God, conventionally uttered under discrete occasions, including before death). At that point, a protester lying on the floor, severely beaten, pulled me to the ground. I fell and heard a bullet passing on top of me and settling in the wall of McDonald's.

I got up and tried to leave Mohammed Mahmoud Street and reach Tahrir Square, when I saw a group of men, standing between Pizza Hut and Hardee's, surrounding a person and beating him up. I did not know what was going on and heard a man saying that the group is beating up a man who sexually harassed a girl. Someone was pushing me towards this fight, but God sent me people to save me. 2 men suddenly held me; my feet were not touching the ground. I screamed but they reassured me that they are only trying to get me out of the street. We ran to the other side of the confrontations, near the American University in Cairo building. They put me down and one of them said 'get out of here now.' The other one (around 25 or 27 years old) was crying. I was not concentrating then; my nose was bleeding from the shock, crying, and the tear gas. I wanted to reach a journalist friend on Al-Qasr Al-Einy Street, where the clashes were also severe; I wanted to reach anyone I know. I fell on Rehan Street, at the end of the American University in Cairo fence.

I want this girl to know had I been a man, I would have rather died than leave her with these monsters. I want to tell her that she is a hero. After I learned that a girl was held by these animals, I am afraid to go to Tahrir Square; I think this is a message someone wants to get across to us.

I do not want my name to appear. If I could reach this girl, I will be thankful to you. Her voice must be heard, justice must take place. She must know that there are people who will stand by her and that we are sorry... she is stronger than 100 men.

12. Testimony of Ghada, an inhabitant of Abdeen district, testimony made on the telephone to Al-Nahar Channel:

I heard screams on the street. I ran outside to see what was going on and saw a group of men placing a woman on the hood of a car. They had Swiss army knives and told us to stay away because she had a bomb on her belly. Her clothes were torn off and she smelled like the sewer. Thankfully, she fell from the hood of the car in front of a café. People saw her and beat the men who were sexually harassing her away; one of them was hit with a knife. She was naked and she was trying to put her pants on. She was in a very bad condition; she withstood what no man can. They took her from Tahrir to Abdeen with her clothes torn off. It is good that she is still alive and was able to go down the streets again. I took her to my apartment and my husband and I later drove her home.

13. Testimony of Survivor: (Documented by Nazra for Feminist Studies)

'We Will Take Her and Then One by One, Guys'

I will tell my story that bears a lot of resemblance to other stories, your story and mine. We both know how this happened; death was so close but never came. You and I now that we have been violated, we were raped in the middle of Tahrir Square among throngs of Godless people, human wolves that are ravaging us violate all that is private stripping us from our bodies. Violence, lust, and instincts and no one can save us; to face death and rape merely because I am female. In this situation, I am solely a female. The mother, sister, daughter, neighbor, and friend are just females, on the corner of Mohammed Mahmoud street, the martyrs street and the Eyes of Freedom street. They stripped me off my nationality and my sense of belonging to that scene.

On Friday 23 November 2012, at 6:30 PM, I went with a friend to express our rejection of the distorted constitution amongst the millions that took to the streets for the same purpose (I don't want to hear any of you say 'Why did you go there') we strolled around the circle in the middle of the Square, reaching the corner of Kasr Al-Ainy and Mohammed Mahmoud streets. The police were throwing tear gas bombs heavily and the running and scrambling stared. I held my friend's hand but lost her for moments. The last I heard from her was that she was being sexually harassed in the scramble. When I was able to see clearly again, I could not find my friend, but I ran into

another friend trying to escape the tear gas and told him that my friend is being sexually harassed. We went to rescue her and I found out, at that moment, that I lost my mobile phone. I found my friend surrounded by hundreds of people and my male friend and I tried to save her but they pushed us. We fell on top of each other and they separated us into two circles. I did not understand anything at that moment... I did not comprehend what is happening...who are those people? All that I knew was that there were hundreds of hands stripping me off my clothes and brutally violating my body.

There is no way out, for everyone is saying that they are protecting and saving me, but all I felt from the circles close to me, sticking to my body, was the finger-rape of my body, from the front and back; someone was even trying to kiss me... I was completely naked, pushed by the mass surrounding me to an alley close to Hardee's restaurant... I am in the middle of this tightly knit circle. Every time I tried to scream, to defend myself, to call on a savior, they increased their violence and rape. I fell again in the sewer water in front of Hardee's and I realized, then, that falling amounts to death. I decided to keep my calm, seeing that screaming is followed by more violence. I tried to remain standing, holding onto their hands which are violating me, and their arms. In the alleyway near Hardee's, I fell again in the same sewer, naked. I was able to escape death by stampede and found a building, where the doorman was standing behind the door, refusing to open it. I was stuck in the building's entrance for a log time, bodies scrambling around me, their hands still violating me. I even saw some standing on top of elevated surfaces to be able to watch freely, feeding their sexual frustrations by watching. I felt that I spent a long time in that corner, until someone threw me a pullover, which was impossible to put on, as bodies jammed to me, preventing me from wearing it. I succeeded, in a moment, to put the pullover on, the same moment I heard a group of young men to my left agreeing to take me to another place, according to one of them, 'we will take her and then one by one, guys'.

Suddenly, this human mass started to push me again, not in the direction of the field hospital, but in the opposite direction, towards a dark dump. I feared that my end would be in that dump and tried to reach a café on the way but it would not open. The same for an electronics store, which not only did not open its doors, but one of the workers sexually harassed me when I was passed in front of the store. I felt a despair that led me to call into the man in front of me, that I was hiding behind to cover my nakedness, and whose hands were stroking my behind. I implored him, told him that I was a mother-which is true- that he was a brave and valiant man that I chose to protect me. I begged him to make way so that I can escape to the field hospital. I do not really know what drove this harasser to save me after I begged him... and I do not know how he suddenly raised his belt, beating everyone around him, frantically screaming, 'I will protect her... I will protect her'. I do not know how his conscience was awakened, but I found myself crawling to the field hospital. There, I saw two ladies for the first time and felt safe. My lower half was still completely naked so they covered me with blankets, in the midst of attempts by harassers to breakthrough to the field

hospital and surround me again. Someone gave me his pants, another his mobile phone so I can make a call... I started to see my friends trying to infiltrate the human masses surrounding me. It was extremely difficult to get out of the field hospital to reach a friend's house, close to the hospital. When I reached her house, the harassers were still waiting for me downstairs.

I feel as if I did not tell the story as it happened... the description is far less brutal than the reality of what happened to my friend and me. I later came to know that the harassers took my friend to Abdeen neighborhood and that a woman from Abdeen had saved her.

I felt sorrow, sadness, and grief when I heard of similar incidents that took place yesterday, 25 January 2013... so I decided to write my testimony, so that everyone who is burying their heads in the sands will know that what is happening is a terrible crime that may happen to your mother, sister, daughter, friend, or girlfriend.

We will not be frightened; we will not hide in our homes. Sexual harassment is a social disease that has been rampant for years, used by the regime to intimidate girls and women. But we must know that sexual harassment is a social issue, not merely a political one, and what takes place during festivities and crowded places attests to that. I do not know if this testimony will make a difference or change, for the violations are still ongoing... but this is the least I can do.

To the women of this assailed country, you are the greatest.

Sexual Assault and Rape During the Second Anniversary of the January 25 Revolution

The 7 testimonies below are those of the survivors of sexual assault and rape that took place starting on 25 January 2013, during the second anniversary of the January 25 revolution. They are followed by those of volunteers in the various initiatives that were formed to intervene on the ground and try to release the women from their attackers. According to a statement by Zahran, coordinator of Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment, to Al-Tahrir Newspaper, volunteers of Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment tried to intervene in 19 cases of group sexual harassment on that day. Amongst them were cases of rape that required medical and psychological attention. The *Shoft Taharosh* (I Saw Harassment) group detected 5 other cases on that day. Both initiatives confirmed that these crimes were committed through similar tactics and during the same time, which indicates an intention to scare women and exclude them from participating in the revolution, according to the reports issued by both initiatives.

14. Testimony of Survivor - H:

On Friday, 25 January 2013, I went to Tahrir Square to participate in demonstrations at around 5:30 PM. I felt that something was not right on the Square on that day. Confrontations took place in crowded areas, I screamed and shouted, "be careful", but there was a general air of hostility.

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I was standing by the metal fence in front of Hardee's; there were young men sitting on the fence who were shouting to make way for the ambulance, so I moved towards the circle in the middle of the Square, where the shoving and pushing started. I shouted again and people pushed me away from the crowds, among them heavy-built men, who started to argue with me. A group of girls quickly surrounded me to protect me, but I do not know how the men pulled me from between them and surrounded me in large numbers. Their hands were on every part of my body; in seconds, they tore my clothes away and I heard their voices- all conveying a message that they are protecting me: "get out of the way", "she is like your sister". They paralyzed me and carried me to the fence in front of Hardee's and people from above the fence lifted me up. I was almost naked and there were hands everywhere again. I was wrapping a shawl around my neck and they pulled it in opposite directions to suffocate me. I remained in this state, naked and up in the air for 10 minutes. When they lowered me, I tried to sit on the ground in the sewers, seeking protection from it. They shouted 'get up!' to gain control over me; they forced me up and I sat down again. People were standing on my legs, someone pinned down my shoulders and was crying, another had his hands on my chest; someone was covering me with a bed sheet. I did not know who was trying to save me and whose hands were inside me; I was screaming and wanted to get dressed. When I was held up in the air, I saw dozens of people watching me, none of whom were trying to intervene.

As they carried me to the ambulance, the person carrying me was violating me with his hands. There was a doctor and a paramedic inside the ambulance. The doctor was crying. Five people got in the ambulance with me, but I was not comfortable with their presence and screamed because they were among the people violating me. Three of them got off and two remained. The ambulance could not reach Dobara Palace Hospital; they were still running behind the ambulance and broke its side mirrors. The ambulance sped to Muneira Hospital.

I was treated terribly at the Muneira Hospital. I went in on my feet and without my pants. When the doctor asked me 'what do you want?' I answered 'I want to get dressed'. They dealt with me as if I was unduly exaggerating my case and the nurses advised me to hide and not humiliate myself. I screamed at them and a doctor came in who wanted to inspect me while 6 nurses stood around. I screamed 'I am not comfortable being naked front of women and men! Don't you understand!' they left and one remained after she put her hands around her waist and scolded me, saying that at least one nurse should be present. The doctor said that no injuries can be detected, failing to notice the contusions and bruises all around my body, bruises which the head of the department documented later.

People started to come and go, two police officers came; one of them played nice and said that he wrote a memo and if I agree to what he wrote, I should sign it. I saw that he wrote the term "An act of indecency" and I of course fought with him. A police officer and Police Officer came later and filed a complaint in Sayeda Zeinab police station and transferred it Qasr El-Neil police station. A case was filed and I went to the Court and Commissioner of the Court treated me well, even

making an empty room available so that not a lot of people would be present while I tell the story. He showed me the two individuals who were in the ambulance. I was not sure of anything but he made an accusation against them which I directed to them.

I was screened by medical examiners, male and female. Someone called my husband and a female friend saying that he found my phone and returned it, even though it was an expensive one. He left his name and telephone number. They took my bag, with all my cards in it.

I have no doubt that this was an organized, or even a rehearsed, attack.

15. Testimony of H's Husband to Al- Nahar Channel:

In the studio are two cases, a two-month span between them and the attack took place in the same manner- circles form, no cursing, to the contrary, they say 'we are protecting you' or 'stay away from her she is like you sister'. The problem is society treats women as if they are weaker beings that must be docile and submissive. The women who met H. told her, in good spirit, that she must not inform her husband and conceal the truth, so they are convinced that they are weak beings.

Last week we did not ask for support from any one, but many stood with us, such as El-Nadim Center, Nazra, the Arab Organization, and the National Council. Girls and women must come and speak about what happened. Our numbers must be large so we can take action and those responsible brought to justice. It is like what we surgeons say- you cannot close the wound on an infection.

16. Testimony of Nahla Anany:

I went to Tahrir Square today with great difficulty as the metro stations were closed and stopped at Sayeda Zeinab station. I met my mother in the Square, specifically in front of KFC, and then we headed to Talaat Harb Square together to participate in a predominantly female demonstration. The demonstration included some Azhar sheiks and women of the likes Azza Balbaa and Nour Al-Huda, calling against President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as some slogans in support of Al-Azhar and the Mufti.

Similar to what usually happens during predominately female demonstrations, there were young men who volunteered to protect us by forming human shields around us. Once we reached the Square crowds started to surround us and I do not know if it was out of curiosity or other reasons relating to the events that took place afterwards. In an instant, the beatings and attacks commenced and the Sheikhs who accompanied us from Talaat Harb were nowhere to be seen.

It is impossible to determine who was sexually harassing us, who was shoving for the sake of it and who was trying to protect us. In a span of seconds, the demonstration was disbanded and I only found my mother and friend near me, while the remaining women disappeared. A young man

called Bishoy saved us by taking off his belt and threatening any person trying to come near us. A young man from Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment arrived, was wearing a yellow shirt, and asked me to pinpoint the harasser, but I was not in a state that allowed me to speak.

Bishoy and two of his friends accompanied us to protect us to Café Riche in Talaat Harb, where we met most of those who were in the demonstration. All the women, without exception, were sexually harassed. People argued about whether we should publish our testimonies or not until Gameela Ismael arrived and informed us that some girls had indeed published their testimonies on social networking websites.

It is noteworthy that what happened was not the regular sexual harassment that every girl on the street is familiar with; what followed took sexual harassment to a whole new level, there was persistence to strip off the women and girls. And I ascertain that someone was insisting to strip off my pullover.

After 15 minutes, a girl whose name I do not know came towards in a state of complete breakdown. We tried to use first aid methods to calm her down. She said that she was sexually harassed and someone threatened her with a pocket-knife and stole her phone. This was the second case of theft that I heard of.

The sexual harassment that took place today was not a distinct case; that I am sure of. Honestly, I do not know if some participated in the harassment in the spur of the moment, but I am sure that they were not individual cases.

There is a message I want to convey after what happened to me today: the use of sexual harassment or rape to scare the women so they do not participate in demonstrations is a tactic that has existed since the days of Mubarak and during the rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, specifically during the Mohammed Mahmoud clashes.

The attempts to scare women will not work and will not scare them away. If it changes anything, it is only to make us more determined to finish what we started.

17. Testimony of Azza Balbaa:

What happened was not merely sexual harassment; it was an intentional move to scare women from the political life and from Tahrir Square...I met and marched with a group of feminists from Talaat Harb square near Tahrir, we were all of an older group than the general crowd of protestors. As we marched we chanted and I sang a song called "Muslim and intention of faith". Obviously the words of the song really aggravated them. A number of Azhar scholars joined the march and said a few words about Islam's message of respect for women. We chanted in support for their words and then continued marching to Tahrir Square singing the national anthem. A group of people began to circle around us. I was at the beginning of the march and began to say, "Please we want to be with the Azhar scholars". Those circling around us said they were just trying to protect us as demonstrators; that they were on our side. As we approached the square more people began to join the group that was circling around us and so the violence began, they divided us and a number of different circles began to group around the divided groups of protestors.

They then began to harass us. They beat up my friend Rawya and there was an attempt to break her arm and some of her other body parts...they choked me, probably trying to terminate my voice...they put their hands in my pockets...another girl they pulled and assaulted over and over horridly.

Some of us managed to run away, but as for me they saw me and dragged me from the middle of the carnage to Talaat Harb. Coincidentally, a woman from my village, Kafr El Dawar, recognized me and said, "You're from the Balbaa' family! I know your family!" She saved me, removed me from the crowd. I was scared the assaulters would bring my life to an end; they were really trying hard to suffocate me. These assaulters acted almost in certainty that they wouldn't get caught or that there wouldn't be any consequences to their actions. They thought they would be protected from any possibility of punishment, as if what they were doing wasn't wrong.

18. Testimony of Aida Abdel Rahman Karasha:

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Aida Abdel Rahman Karasha, I'm also known as Rawya Abdel Rahman. I was born on April 1 1946. I'm a mother of two married daughters and a grandmother to a ten-year-old child. Most importantly, I am an Egyptian citizen troubled with my country's political dilemmas and how that will affect the future of my children and grandchildren.

I went out on 25 January 2013, as did masses of Egyptian citizens, in a demonstration of my anger and frustration at the revolution's failure to meet any of the protestor's demands. I demonstrated to ask where did "Bread, Freedom, Social Justice and Human Dignity" go? Egyptians across the country demonstrated in main squares calling for these demands during the last couple of years, and instead of change the country's situation only became worse, prices rose dramatically. As citizens, over these past couple of years, we've underwent major crises, from the drafting of an unjust constitution that strips us off all our rights and freedoms, to the increasingly lowly tone social discourse has sunk to, with a rise in sectarian sedition, sexism and violence against women.

After Friday prayers, I participated in a march from Mohammed Mahmoud to Tahrir Square. I left the march on the way to Tahrir to join in with a feminist march at Talaat Harb coming from Sayyeda Zeinab. Everyone joined in chanting slogans and conversing among themselves as we march about the country's troubles.

From about five o'clock to around half-past seven in the evening I demonstrated in Tahrir Square with some female friends and colleagues. At half-past seven, a number of us female protestors decided to arrange a sit-in at Talaat Harb, and about ten women took the initiative and began

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chanting near the Talaat Harb statue against the current regime, against its tyranny, oppression and the severe backwardness that had taken place in such a short period of time, undermining the role of women and attempts to oppress them.

People began to gather in circles around us until the whole square around the statue was surrounded. A group of Azhar scholars stood with us at the height of the circle right around the statue, an air of happiness about them. One of them made a wonderful sermon about forgiveness in Islam, Islam's acceptance of all religions, about how religious sedition is triggered, women's freedoms in Islam and how it preserves her status and dignity. It was a great sermon, combating the extremist religious discourse that had become so normalized. Many raised their voices and called for the rest of us to head to the square. I'm not certain who came up with that idea, but I'm pretty sure these chants urging us back to Tahrir weren't coming from the women circled around the statue.

Now a large group of men and women, we began to march to Tahrir Square. A few people raised their voices urging for our respectable Sheikhs to march in the front and for the women to come behind them.

A group of middle-class-looking, clean-cut men in their 20s and 30s began to surround the march, their hands intertwined, as demonstrator's voices called for the circling of the march, particularly the women at the forefront. As we got closer to the square I began to sense an unexplained crowdedness; I could barely make out the Azhar Sheikhs who were at this point leading the march. The men circling around us began to tighten their circle, my colleagues and friends were no longer near me and instead the only faces around women were unrecognizable. I found that I had fallen behind to the far left edge of the march when just a while before I had been marching at its center. These human circles around us separated me from the main street, which did not seem crowded.

The circles began to become tighter and tighter until we could no longer breathe, I heard screams, and recognized the voice of artist Azza Balbaa'. I yelled, asking what's going on. Someone from the middle of the fuss yelled back that some of the others wanted to march to Maespero. I immediately answered, while I was almost suffocating from the pressure in the tightening circle around me, that that had nothing to do with us. A series of quick incidents and multiple, loud female shouts followed as the circle around us grew tighter and tighter. Tens of hands from this circle reached out towards my body to touch it, particularly playing around with my legs and buttocks. At the same time I was trying to save myself from these hands a hand tried to rip my clothes off and empty the pockets of the coat I was wearing, whether or not it succeeded I couldn't even notice amidst this mess. Before I could recover, a group of young men tried to drag me in different directions, some dragged me to the front, others dragged me to the back, and some tried to play with my legs. I resisted, I fought back so I wouldn't lose balance and fell to the floor. At the same time all of the lights and electricity in the square went off. I began to run towards a side

street, which was also dark. I began to lose all sensation. I felt a bright light shining nearby, which turned out to be a food stand and I threw myself in its direction. I decided to reach with my hands or my head towards the stand's glass windows, and as I got closer to it the hands that had been on me moved away. Suddenly three men appeared before me, one holding a bottle of water to bring me back to consciousness and another man asking me if I needed a ride. I actually became increasingly fearful with their advances and asked them to leave me alone. Although it was dark and I may have not been able to distinguish their features well, in addition to the intense pain I was going through, I was able to identify that my perpetuators were the same men who tried to allegedly save me. One of them, a man with cold eyes in a brown jacket with a nonchalant walk, as if he'd been assigned a mission he had just accomplished, was particularly distinguishable.

As they had tried to rip off my coat at the buttons and at its arms, I tried to fix up my clothes to look neat again. My legs were shaking, barely carrying my body; I got up and walked to a coffee shop at Talaat Harb where I knew my husband was.

19. Testimony of Aida Al-Kashef:

I do not know the pain of a bullet. But I know the pain of a having a million hands inside your pants; of a million hands pulling you in every direction to grab a piece of your body. I know what it means to pray for death because you cannot bear the reality of what is happening any longer, while concentrating on not losing consciousness because you are not sure if anything more might happen to you. I know the fear of no one knowing where you are, and when they do, you watch the crushed look of helplessness on the faces of your friends who see you but have no way of reaching you. I know what it means to feel paralyzed when approaching crowds after surviving the attacks. I know the nightmares that come after you and the helplessness you feel every time you see another girl in the same situation. I know that I would choose the pain of a bullet at any time over the pain of harassment. There were 19 cases of group rapes last Friday, 6 required medical attention. We are at war and everyone is responsible. I cannot forgive anyone who chooses to walk around in Tahrir or sit in a café rather than help rescue the girls. Our numbers are not large, and by the time we reach the girls, they have already been violated. We are hoping that by next Friday, we can reach the girls before the violation has happened.

20. Testimony of Salma El-Tarzi:

I feel absolute disgust and rage towards any person who claims to be a 'revolutionary', but believes that sexual harassment is a trivial topic that is not on the list of his priorities because he has a revolution to get to. Every woman and girl who went to Tahrir Square and was sexually harassed is not any less of a hero than those injured during the revolution, whose pictures you use as profile pictures because you think they are heroes. Any woman who went to the Square and was assaulted risked her life and was targeted simply because she is a woman. No one uses her picture as a profile picture. No one speaks of her pain and her sacrifice. To the contrary, you say 'be quiet, do not ruin the reputation of the revolution!' every woman who has been assaulted would not be

greeted as a hero when she goes back home; they will hide what happened to her. Those who know will be concerned about whether she is a virgin or not and how they can 'cover her shame'. The shame is not ours; it is yours. Shame on you who act as revolutionaries calling for freedom, but classify that freedom into first and second classes, into freedoms that are due now, and others that are due later!

Please do not get the impression that I mean to urge you to come down to the Square to protect us. If you do not think that our right to be present is among your priorities, then thank you, we do not need anything from you and we will continue to protect our rights and resist the attempts to ostracize us. While there are many hypocrites, there are also many courageous people who understand that my message is part and parcel of what this revolution is about. The past two months have shown me that man can be indescribably sick and revolting. But they have also shown me that there are respectable men that believe in my right to be present and who defend this right, not because I am a weak woman that needs protection, but because principles are indivisible.

21. Testimony of Survivor:

(Documented by El-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture)

I was in a women's March heading from Talaat Harb Square to Tahrir Square. We joined Al Azhar Sheikh march, they were at the beginning of the march and we were behind them. Several young men gathered around us and formed a cordon, and they told us it is for our safety. I was a little bit worried when I saw them. The kept walking beside us until we reached Tahrir Square, by then, they had us totally separated from Al Azhar men and I didn't know how they did not notice that we were gone. They started separating the women from each other too, they formed a circle around each woman and a large group of men would gather around one woman. I was kidnapped by a group of men. About 20 or 30 men gathered around me, they tore off my top; my bra was torn off too and about a 100 hands ravaging my body. They were pulling my hands from both sides, every group trying to take me to one side. They kept pulling my hair too, trying to drag me on the floor from it; to this day I can't brush my hair due to the excruciating pain I feel in my scalp. I started screaming and begging, "if it was your sister or your daughter, would you let this happen to her!!" but this did not affect them and their brutality increased. Their hands were inside my jeans, I was wearing tight jeans, they could not take it off, but their hands were inside and they were groping every part they can reach. As I have an old knee injury, I fell down and they fell over me. Amidst my fear, I tried to stand up again, they dragged me to Talaat Harb Square again and one of them raised a knife in my face. Another one from behind told me not to scream because that will increase their violence, I didn't know if he was trying to protect me or was with them and did not want anyone to hear me while he attacks me. I was wishing that the knife would kill me... I wanted my life to end. I was so tired from fighting and resisting by then and I couldn't do anything but cry.

In the middle of the attack they took my phone, I was holding on to it tightly so I could call anyone who could save me. This kept going on for 2 hours, 2 hours of groping and ravaging every part of my body. No one from the people I was with in the march looked for me, although I never go to a march or a protest without those people, I trust them, but they did not look for me. One of them saw me, because they were attacking her at the same time they were attacking me, I later knew she was rescued and she escaped the harassers, but I didn't, she knows people who know her and can save her, but not me, I don't know anyone but them. I don't understand why this is happening, why the brutality and cruelty, I also don't understand why no one was able to save me, I was screaming and there were tens of people around me, how come no one noticed what is happening?

After we reached Talaat Harb, I fell in mud, and tried to lift myself, they were all surrounding me, the space I could cross in seconds, seemed like a year for me. After a few hours, a guy was able to rescue me and put me in a tent. After sometime, 3 girls came to me, one with *niqab* (cloth which covers the face), one with just a headscarf and one with her hair. They gave me clothes to cover me up; they covered every part of me, even my shoes so they would not know me. They gave me a phone to call anyone I know, I called my sister she did not pick up, I called the father of my child and he came and took me at the end. The harassers gathered around the tent, some people protecting the tent kept telling them there is no one inside. Some guy came and asked about me, I think he wanted to rescue me, the harassers figured that out and they hit him with a stick on his head, he fell on the floor and lost conscious. After a while, a man called "R" came inside and told me you are going to come out with me and no one will get near you. I didn't understand how would he protect me? He was very thin and powerless and did not have any weapon with him. The father of my son came and took me to Café Riche so I could calm down and wash my face. He was very angry at them and shocked by their reactions. One of them told me that this is the revolution tax... nothing is for free..., get over it, we don't want problems, another told me they want to break us, they don't mean to harass us, toughen up, it's only because it's your first time, one accused me of not being dressed appropriately! I can't believe they told me that.

When I went home, I couldn't stop crying, my sister asked me what happened but I couldn't tell her, and while she helped me take a bath she saw that every part of my body was bruised, she understood what happened. I can't stop thinking of what happened, the scene keeps coming back to me vividly like a movie. I really want to take revenge, but I don't know from whom or how.

22. Testimony of Survivor:

On 25 January at around 7:30 PM I headed to the metro station from Tahrir Square, at the entrance of Kasr El-Aini Street to go home. I found tghat the metro was not operating so I went back up to find another means of transportation. They grouped around me (cries and does not complete the sentence. In the midst of crying says "I wish they had killed me. How can I live like this? I cannot continue living after what happened."

I took a taxi but it dropped me at the entrance of Tahrir Square at 9 PM and told me that he will not be able to go any further because of the demonstrations. He told me to get off and take the metro. I went to the Sadat metro station near the Mogamma (a government building located in Tahrir Square) but the metro was not working. I went back up and was thinking how to get home. On my way back up, I saw a large crowd. I tried to move from between it and a man behind me said "do not push people!" He shoved me hard towards the people in front of me. I fell on top of someone in front of me and, suddenly, more than 50 men encircled me and started grabbing every part of my body. I was screaming. They started to tear away at my clothes; the topr I was wearing, my shoes, pants, and the shorts underneath the pants. I was left with a top and my underwear. They inserted their fingers inside me, from the front and back, more than once. I fell and stood again, they pulled me and dragged me through the mud and the water on the ground; they pulled me by the hair and grabbed every part of my body for a very long time- 3 or 4 hours.

Two boys were trying to help me but they were beaten; one of them on the head. The latter was bleeding from the head but he would not let go of me. They tried to scare him away with pocket knives. They took me to the circle in the middle of Tahrir Square and took me inside a tent and repeated what they did to me outside. I was screaming and the tent collapsed on us. They pulled me from underneath the tent and took me from the circle in the middle of the Square to the street again. They continued to drag me and then I felt a very strong below with a sharp object from below. It hurt me very much and I started to scream and was bleeding heavily. The two boys who were trying to help me managed to get me out of their hands and took me to a building. The attackers tried to break the door of the building and we went to a woman's apartment and she gave me something to wear.

According to a woman volunteering in the safety teams of anti-sexual harassment initiatives, "they attacked the ambulance to get the girl out. They only left after the paramedic told them that the girl was already dead. We took her to the Kasr El-Aini hospital. The girl was bleeding very heavily. I was shocked by the lack of care at the hospital. The medical team was watching the girl. They did not hang any Intravenous medication or draw any blood to conduct any tests. Some time passed and a surgeon came to see us, saying that a gynecologist will be coming. Time passed and no one came. I was worried about the girl so I decided to transfer her to a private hospital. The ambulance refused to transport her there. I had to take her in my car. She was lying down in the backseat and was not making any sounds. I did not if she fainted or dead or just sleeping from fatigue. But thank god, the private hospital acted responsibly and she went to the operating room quickly.

23. Testimony of N.F:

(Documented by Cairo Center of Development)

My name is N.F., a mother of an 11 year-old boy. I am 31 years old and I'm a designer. I was in Tahrir Square on 25 January. I met a group of girls when I arrived at the Square who offered that I join their 'anti-sexual harassment' group as a volunteer to help the women who are sexually harassed. I joined the safety group, which is tasked with calming down and comforting the survivor.

We received a call at noon about a case of sexual harassment. While heading to the middle of the Square, a large group of men sexually harassed us by touching us. They tried to separate us and our group dispersed. The girls headed to a nearby KFC, where the group was based. I tried to head there with them, but a complete circle of thugs surrounded me and their numbers increased. They formed more than once circle around me and tried to touch every part of my body, even those who were trying to fool me into thinking that they are protecting me were, in fact, thugs. They tried to push my right hand away, then my left hand, to take my purse away, and they succeeded. A man then held me from the waist to strip me of my pants and he succeeded to remove it down to my thigh. In front of him were two men, each held one of my legs so that the men on my left can tear away my underwear. They managed to do that and they put their fingers inside me. They are interested in making the women non-virgins. They raped me so forcefully with their fingers that I was injured and started to bleed. At the same time, another group of men started to lift my clothes and I was almost completely naked. My screams and pleas had no effect on them. To the contrary, their numbers increased and I felt that I was suffocating due to the lack of oxygen. The men surrounded me in larger numbers when I fell to the ground.

After 20 minutes of agony, I approached the entrance of the building next to KFC, where young men tried to pull me away from the attackers. After the doorman opened the door of the building, I went inside and was completely naked. Two women tried to cover me with a jacket and take me with them to their apartment. They provided first aid in the form of some ointments and disinfectants and gave me underwear. I started to come out of my state of shock, and after 30 minutes, I found shocking injuries throughout my body; my chest and nails were full of wounds and there was extensive bruising throughout my body. Afterwards, I took a taxi with a volunteer from our group to go to the hospital. A general practitioner in the hospital gave me some ointments and painkillers and recommended that I see a gynecologist. But I decided to go back home, and in the next morning, I left Cairo.

24. Testimony of Sahar Talaat:

We were waiting in Sayeda Zeinab Square for the prayers to end and the participants in the demonstrations started to gather and the flags of the various political and revolutionary movements were carried on the shoulders of the young men.

The sound of the demonstrations was very loud, calling for basic demands that matter to every Egyptian. The demonstration moved towards Tahrir Square and included all classes of society, Sheiks, girls, women, children, young men, and housewives. The demonstration reached Talat Harb Square and joined another demonstration that was coming from Talaat Harb Street. I saw many girls and women and mothers holding signs of great women, like Om Kalthoum and Huda Sharawy, among others. Everyone had personal demands. I was doing my job by asking and recording their responses on why they took to the street on 25 January and they were analyzing the situation after 2 years of revolution.
I was with my colleagues from the radio station all the time and decided, at around 7 PM, to reenter Tahrir Square, as we wanted to check the information we got that there were clashes in Youssef El-Guindy Street.

We went to Tahrir Square from Talaat Harb with my colleagues, and before reaching the field hospital, at the intersection of Talaat Harb Street with Al-Tahrir Street, there was a group of girls wearing anti-sexual harassment t-shirts so I headed towards them to interview them. I was translating to my female colleague what was being said by the head of that group about the incidents of sexual harassment taking place in the Square and they told me that these attacks were systematically conducted by some people who want to ruin the image of the Square and prevent them from participating in the demonstrations.

A woman approached us to say that her husband was attacked while defending a woman who was harassed by a man wearing a *galabiya*. She said that she was standing with her husband and daughter in the Square, participating in a demonstration, when her husband saw a number of men trying to sexually harass a woman. The husband told his wife and daughter to stand away, while he started to shout at the harasser, who responded that he is not doing anything. Her husband grabbed him and the rest of the harassers ran away when they saw that one of them was captured. Suddenly, the harasser beat her husband, but at that time, volunteers from an anti-sexual harassment initiative had arrived and tried to capture the harasser. I saw the husband in a state of shock and his blood on his shirt; his nose was bleeding and his wife and daughter were standing in shock beside him.

I turned around to speak with the wife, but a large group of people suddenly came in our direction. We were standing in front of an entrance of a building and there was screaming from women and children, and men screaming "open the door!" There were women trying to protect survivors and men from the anti-sexual harassment initiative and many men. I found myself, with my colleagues, pushed inside the building and women who were in a state of shock entered, screaming and crying; along with young men holding their belts which they used to beat the attackers. Two children were there, crying, screaming "where are you, Mom?" Some girls were sitting on the floor and the lights in the building were switched off because it was under a severe attack from harassers.

There were 25 people in the building, girls and women in a psychological meltdown; young men screaming to the harassers that they are animals and criminals. They told everyone at the entrance of the building to go upstairs and a group of women from the anti-sexual harassment initiative took some of the girls upstairs in a place they know to calm them down. Some girls were beaten in the face, others were in a very bad condition, were probably stripped but the initiative provided them with clothes.

I went upstairs with my colleagues without taking the elevator, preferring that the survivors in a bad condition take it. I saw a woman with her daughters going downstairs with the flag of Egypt. I told her to avoid going to the Square because there are severe cases of sexual harassment and the young men are having great difficulty to stop them because their numbers are large and they are trained on how to commit these attacks. The woman and her daughters went back to their apartment.

We went to the roof of the building and I called anti-sexual harassment groups to tell them that we are hiding on the roof and asked them to tell us when it is safe to go out. We waited for two hours until it was safe to go out and they directed us to a safe path.

This is my testimony of what happened on that great day that should have been a celebration of the anniversary of the revolution, but the situation turned into a big question, why are women targeted in this brutal manner? And why on this day that carries great memories of resistance of tyranny? Why have we become a target to kick us out of the Square and impede my work as a journalist? I came out of this bitter experience with many questions, but with a bigger insistence to continue doing my job very seriously. I will not allow fear to prevent me from fulfilling participating in demonstrations, or from my duty to cover the news.

25. Testimony of Mustafa Qandil, volunteer with Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment (OpAntiSH):

(published on the website of OpAntiSh on 28 January 2013)

This is my testimony on an incident of group sexual assault or rape in Tahrir Square on 25 January 2013.

When one is involved in a prolonged event in which significant violence is involved, one cannot recall all the details of the incident, merely scenes. I will retell the scenes I can recall.

I want to state a fact first. I have been involved with an initiative called "Against Sexual Harassment... a Safe Square for All" after the increase in the incidents of sexual harassment. We try to confront any cases of sexual harassment, assault, or rape that take place systematically and with the use of weapons, aiming to prevent and scare women from going to the Square, causing us to lose half of the revolution. Our only concern is to get the girl out and provide her with safety as soon as possible.

The testimony:

We try to get in... shouting and a commotion, someone running towards us and shouting, "There is a sexual harassment incident in front of Safeer". We ran towards Safeer and saw a huge crowd. We were stuck next to the fence and everyone was beating people around with batons and belts.

We tried to cut through the crowd until I was able to reach the girl. I told the girl 3 times, "My name is Mustafa from Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment". She looked my in the eye and said "Please help me!" She held my hand as the crowd continued to push us against the fence. Suddenly, a flare exploded that forced everyone to move back. We took advantage of the situation and tried to move the girl toward a nearby crossroads into Talaat Harb Street, hoping to get her into a building. However the push of the crowd moved us in the opposite direction, back toward Tahrir Square.

A lot of people were pushing; Swiss army knives were being opened, and bit by bit they took the girl's clothes off and I started to lose her in the crowd. She lost her shirt and became topless. I was only hanging on to one of her arms at that point and she was hanging on to my chest. She was being pulled from every direction, every direction... one man was pulling her leg, another was pulling her other leg, and yet other men were pulling her hair. Around 500 people were surrounding us, and in this crowd, I could only spot one or two of my colleagues. The rest were strangers to me. Meanwhile, the beatings are continuing, with belts, batons, Swiss army knives, and with bare hands.

The girl fell to the ground and I lost her. One or two people tried to lie on top of her to protect her. People thought they were trying to sexually harass her and only God knows if they were indeed sexually harassing her or not. The beating was increasing, more belts, more clubs. We managed to lift the girl up again. At that moment, I felt a club hit my head. I lost my balance and was pushed out of the circle surrounding the girl. I did not know what was going on and felt that I would lose consciousness. I put my hand on my head and felt blood. I tried to stay conscious and get back in the circle to the girl. I beat everyone in my way and managed to get to the girl. However, when I got there, a guy holding a kitchen knife forced me and my colleagues to move back, and we lost her again.

I cannot remember how we got back to the girl, but we carried her away from Talaat Harb and toward the Square. Suddenly someone in the crowd started shouting insults in our direction, saying "get back you sons of ******" and threw a Molotov cocktail at us. Yes, a Molotov cocktail. My shoe and pants caught on fire and the girl's pants, which were all that she had left, started to catch fire as well. We were able to extinguish it and headed towards KFC. At one point I felt a hand trying to reach down my pants. I do not know if he thought I was a girl or if he was just sick. I kicked him and managed to get away. We arrived at a fence. I got hit and was pushed over the fence. The girl was still on the other side, sitting on the pavement, and two of my colleagues were standing in front of her. She had lost her pants and many men were surrounding her and I could not get to her. I tried to jump over the fence to try to lift her and get her towards the direction of KFC.

Suddenly a street vendor, who had noticed the logos on our T-shirts, asked my colleagues and I,

"Are you from the anti-sexual harassment group?" We said yes, so he got a gas bottle and a lighter and shot a flame toward the crowd so that they would move away from the girl. Two young people stayed by her- one took off his pants and gave them to her and the other gave her a scarf so she could cover her top half. The fire petered out and the crowd started to reconvene. We were able to lift her over the fence and she crossed over it. We were pushed up against a building just next to Tahrir Square's KFC. Everyone was attacking and I was standing next to the girl. Someone took this opportunity to slip his hand into my pocket and snatch my phone. I hit him with a metal rod and screamed "Thief!" hoping someone would attack him. I looked the girl in the eye and had nothing to say but, "I am against sexual harassment; I will get you out of here; I will, I will, I will..." I was not sure I could keep any of the promises I was making. All I knew was that I would do everything I could to protect her, even though there hundreds of people around us and even though I was powerless.

I suddenly had an idea. I thought to myself, "Why are all these people attacking and assaulting her? It was simply because they saw that she was a girl and she was naked so she drew even more attention." So I took off my sweatshirt and gave it to her. I said, "Put on the hoodie and we'll try to escape by pretending you are a boy". We had so little space around us that we could barely breathe, I managed to get my sweatshirt off within a space of 10 centimeters but somehow, even with everyone pushing, we managed to get the sweatshirt on her. My colleagues kept pushing the crowd back and we managed to slowly move away, and nobody realized that she was the girl they were after. When we arrived at the KFC, we saw that it was closed, so we continued moving down the road. But then a voice in the crowd yelled, "The girl has fled!" and they chased after us again. At that moment, I was near an apartment building but its porter, who was looking towards and fearful of the crowd, began shutting the entrance gates as I yelled at him to urge him not to. The girl fell repeatedly but I got her up each time. The porter let us in, along with 6 or 7 others, and immediately locked the gate behind us. I fell to the ground, breathless and a lady came out of her apartment and offered us some water and tried to calm us down.

The girl was crying, hanging on to my arm, and begging me not to leave her. Outside the building's door, over a thousand men were screaming, brandishing weapons, some yelling that they were her cousins, others that they are her brothers and that we should let them in. The girl was terrified that they might still get her. We sat in the porter's room for a while, trying to calm her down. I called one of my colleagues and asked him to send clothes and an ambulance. However, we realized it would be impossible for us to get her into an ambulance with the crowd still waiting outside. The porter suggested that she go through a backdoor that connected his building to the KFC kitchen. Some of my colleagues, who had arrived with clothes for her, took her through this backdoor and got her to a safe place.

This is my testimony. I have always seen or heard of incidents of sexual harassment, but to be inside the scene, the situation is simply very different. The situation is filthier than you can ever

imagine.

I have one thing to say to the harassed and assaulted girls of Egypt: you are the strongest and the greatest girls in this country. We are hoping we can collect more testimonies to expose your assaulters and encourage more survivors who have went through similar experiences to speak up and document their testimonies, with complete anonymity guaranteed and publishing only the initials of the girl's name. We stress women's and girl's citizenship rights, equality, and the right to safety, dignity, and political participation.

26. Testimony of a Female Volunteer with OpAntiSH:

I volunteered with Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment, the safety group responsible for intervening in cases of violent assault/gang rape taking place in Tahrir Square. We gathered at around 6:40 PM in the beginning of Talaat Harb Street. We learned, that time, that sexual harassment had already started to take place on the scene and that the young men present at the time were able to reach some girls and save them. The atmosphere was already very tense and at around 7:00 or 7:15 PM, our group moved to an agreed upon location, near the metro vent on Talaat Harb Street. At the same time, tear gas was approaching the Square from Al-Qasr Al-Einy Street so people started to push each other towards Talaat Harb Street to escape the gas.

We, the safety and confrontation groups, reached our destination, but the head of the confrontation group had not arrived yet. After 10 minutes, a great deal of shoving was taking place and we saw a crowd near the metro vent. We heard that a girl was being sexually assaulted (I did not see the girl). The confrontation group headed to that direction to save the girl, while the safety group-composed of myself, a woman, and a man-tried to approach the gathering so we can take the girl away after she has been rescued. People started to surround the woman from the safety group and myself and started to sexually harass us. They were telling us 'get out of here, you are girls, you will get into trouble'. In a matter of minutes, we successfully got rid of them and reached our group on the sidewalk beneath the metro vent. Members from the confrontation group were surrounding us, carrying sticks and tasers to ward people off. A second group tried to get us above the metro vent but I saw a girl from our group yelling at some men who were sexually harassing her. Their shoving got us to the top of the vent, but we managed to come down. A second phase of harassment started and many hands were pulling us and I got separated from my group. I learned at that time that more than one girl from our group was being sexually harassed. I cannot remember all the details, other than the fact that there were hands all over my body. All the events that were relayed in other testimonies of group sexual harassment were repeated in my case: from grabbing me in every way possible, the screaming of people cursing the harassers, others yelling at me to get up because my legs sometimes gave way.

I am not sure how long this situation lasted, perhaps for 15 minutes or maybe less. My sweatshirt was pulled up and all the clothes I was wearing underneath were also pulled up, but I managed to

pull my clothes back down in the middle of the assault. The last stage of this ordeal consisted of people trying to get me out. They left me on the floor without touching me and were yelling at me to get up so the harassers would not get hold of me again. I got up and saw a young man from the safety group who was able to reach me. People around us were trying to beat him up, suspicious that he is another harasser. I yelled, 'he is my brother! Leave him!' which reduced the severity of the beating. The young man handed me his eye glasses and tried to beat up the people surrounding us and I did not see him again. After that, a man I did not know was trying to protect me. I do not think all of these events happened over a long span of time. 2 individuals from the confrontation group managed to get to me and to safeguard my way out. During the entire ordeal, my back was covered by a street vendor's car selling tea and sandwiches, forming an Lshape. The presence of this car provided good protection; I was able to rest there until we found a safe way out. We were in the middle of the street at the time and people we knew, located in a certain building, we able to break through the crowd and I moved with 2 young men towards that building. However, the stone blocks blocking most of Downtown's street acted as a hindrance, as it was not safe to climb over it to reach the building. By that time, an ambulance had arrived and I got in along with the 2 men and reached a safe house. This is my testimony about what happened on a certain time of that day, with all its terrible events of assault against many women, some of whom were volunteering with Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment.

27. Testimony of a Male Volunteer with OpAntiSH:

The phenomenon of sexual harassment has been going on in Tahrir Square for a long time. It started out with a few, sporadic cases. With time, however, the phenomenon of sexual harassment became very organized, to the extent that different cases are almost identical in their details. In the beginning, a crowd and a commotion become noticeable. It would initially appear as if a group of men is sexually harassing the girl and the rest are trying to rescue her. The bitter truth, however, is that men who are pretending to rescue the girl are mostly trying to sexually harass her as well. The aim of these groups is it scare girls from ever going to the Square again.

A group composed of different movements and initiatives detected this phenomenon and decided to form Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment. When I first heard about them, I was very interested to join this group and try to do anything to rescue the girls being sexually harassed. I thought, initially, that, as men, we are going down the Square to protect the weak women who were being harassed. Yesterday was my first day as a volunteer with the group. I was in the intervention group, whose task is to reach the girl being assaulted and surround her to enable another group to escort the girl to a safe house. Before heading to the Square, I rehearsed everything that should be done. What I experienced, however, was a form of madness! Screaming and beating from every direction and we could not get to the girl due to the large numbers of people surrounding her; some were watching and others pushing through the crowds, maybe they would get any chance to sexually harass the girl. A small group was trying to help but did not know what to do exactly. They were

crowding the space even further, giving the sexual harassers a better opportunity to get hold of the girl. After significant effort, beating, and yelling, the intervention group was able to reach the girl and surround her in a building entrance, for example, or an enclosed space so that no one would be able to reach her. The stage of negotiation then starts to get the girl out of the place she is in, which often ends by calling for an ambulance card to try to get her out in the best condition possible.

After the first sexual harassment incident, while we were getting an assaulted girl inside the ambulance, a great sense of despair overcame me; how can we overtake these people when we are only 10 individuals or so? This thought stayed with me while running after the ambulance car to make sure that it reaches a safe location. I saw the girl again, with 2 of my colleagues who had gotten into the ambulance with her, and she was smiling! I thought that if she was able to smile, then she has successfully defeated all of the sexual harassers on her own. The aim of these criminals is to break women's will so that they never participate in demonstrations again, but she participated and went through that experience, and came out smiling! I felt very small in her presence and in the face of her strong spirit. Her smile and laughter gave me the power to go on and helped me realize that the effort that goes into confronting the masses of harassers is worth it when you see a survivor that can still smile in the face of tragedy.

The bottom line is that we are not a group of courageous men who are volunteering to rescue powerless women! The truth is that we derive our ability to keep going from them. I salute every woman who is able, despite all that has happened or might happen to her, to stand up and say no to sexual harassment. These women prove that manhood is not a biological trait. Without you, we would not have been able to do anything.

28. Testimony of Sally Zohney, Volunteer with OpAntiSH:

I am one of the volunteers in Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment. On the night of January 25th 2013, I arrived at the 'Operations Room' where we prepare first aid bags and take calls. Before 7:00 PM, we received calls asking for us to intervene quickly in a case at the *Mogamma* in Tahrir. I headed there with two other volunteers (a guy and a girl). We were running with the rescue bags, which contain clothes (because the first thing these scum do is to cut the girl's clothes) and first aid. We arrived at the Mogamma in Tahrir and didn't see anything. We got news again that we should go to Hardee's because there was a case of sexual harassment happening there. We ran and arrived at a large group; there was a lot of screaming at the street corner, and alarming numbers squeezed near the sidewalk. I was sure the girl was in between these crowds but I didn't see her. I tried to reach the girl being assaulted, along with my female colleague, but I was surprised when men started yelling and telling us "You'll get beaten up, you won't get out of here, get out!" Before I could understand their warnings, a group of men cornered us, our backs facing a *fol* cart. I did not fathom the fact that at least than five pairs of hands were grabbing my breasts and cramming their hands inside the zipper of my pants.

I thought, at that time, that my yelling and screaming, "Stop, you animal!" would make a difference. I kept screaming "Stop, you animals!" I continued to scream, like a fool; the idea that making a scene and gathering people around me, which I am used to, was not working. I was hitting and pushing and screaming, but the truth of the matter was that the assaulters were not afraid of a scandal because they were so many, and everyone saw everyone harassing.

My friend and I were squashed between the people and the *foul* (beans) cart and she kept saying to me "we will get out, we will get out, don't worry we are together". I held onto her tightly as I felt the hands touching every part of my body. I suddenly felt a sharp object and was terrified. Someone was carrying a sharp object and was trying to force it inside my pants. I was screaming and crying and did not know what to do... I continued to scream hysterically, "shame on you! Shame on you!" for a very long time. I could not see my friend at all. They were pulling at the scarf I was wearing to choke me and dragged me from the scarf. I could not breathe. I forgot all the tips I learned from the group and saw a young man, younger than 20 years old and very brutal, tearing my sweater and my underwear. Meanwhile, people were violating every part of my body. I was so disgusted and tired. I felt like I was going to pass out and was terrified from the possibility of falling to the ground. The shoving and the hands multiplied, and I suddenly stopped screaming. I could not breathe and was very dizzy, and I was genuinely afraid of falling down. I felt that death was not very far away. One of the men was trying to undo my belt and pull my pants down. He was grabbing me really tightly, putting his arms around me and screaming "Leave her alone you sons of..." pretending to protect me. While he was yelling at the crowd, he was sticking his fingers inside my pants. I was very dizzy and felt like throwing up.

I do not know how much time passed and how people shoved us until we arrived at a corner in the wall next to Pizza Hut. We protected our backs by leaning on the wall, and a man was hitting those around us while yelling, "Shame on you, she's about to die!" He was screaming "She is going to die because of you!" Suddenly flames ignited before me from a hairspray can and the crowd dispersed, like insects. I saw my friend next to me again. I saw flames before me again from another hairspray and suddenly, there was room for us to run inside Pizza Hut. People pushed us inside and the rest of the harassers tried to enter and attack the people who were standing outside. They were screaming and banging on the door. They closed the outer metal door of the shop completely and gave me a sweater. My friend's head was completely covered in blood.

29. Testimony of a journalist in Al-Tahrir Newspaper: (Published on 5 February 2013 in Al-Tahrir Newspaper)

I want to add my testimony of the events of that night. I was with two female colleagues from the newspaper when we read on Facebook, through one of their phones, that there is a march heading to the Shura Council after a while. We decided to head there to cover the march, we were on Talaat Harb Street at the time; it was around 6:30 PM. We decided against entering the Square

from Talaat Harb Street to avoid the crowds heading to Mohammed Mahmoud Street. Instead, we would try to reach the Council through a side street. When we approached the street on which Hardee's is located, we found a female volunteer from Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment asking us not to enter the street because there was an incident of group sexual harassment taking place. We did not enter and asked her about the street that could lead us to the Council. Whenever we entered any side street, we heard women screaming and other women running from the street, speaking of cases of sexual assault. A girl was transferred to an ambulance. We were extremely frightened at that point; all our energy was focused on getting gout safely and going home. We ran between different streets for half an hour, in an attempt to escape this closed circle, as sexual harassment was taking place on every street. We finally reached Talaat Harb Street then headed to the *Isaaf* metro station, which was closed. We each took a different means of transportation to go back home.

Statements Issued to Denounce the Targeting of Women in Tahrir Square and its Vicinity

A number of organizations and political parties participated in the recent "The Street is Ours" march from Sayedda Zeinab mosque to Tahrir Square. The march aimed to respond to the sexual harassment committed against women on the night of January 25 in Tahrir Square and its vicinity, aimed at intimidating women and excluding them from participation in the revolution. A number of rights organizations, political parties, and public figures issued a statement two days ago to denounce sexual violence against women, from cursing and sexual harassment to rapes, gang rapes, mutilation of sexual organs, and attempted murder. These aforementioned practices were described as continuous attempts to break women's perseverance in the struggle to achieve the goals of the revolution "dignity...freedom... social justice" by spreading organized groups among protesters to use sexual violence as a weapon against women.

More than 100 organizations and public figures signed the statement, which stated that those responsible for the notorious crimes are counting on the social stigma that will prevent women from going public about the violations. These assaulters are also counting on the complicity of state authorities and its refrain from carrying out its responsibility to protect protesters. They are also counting on the fear for the "reputation of the revolution", driving politicians to remain silent. The statement also emphasized that "ever since Mubarak's regime started using sexual violence against female protesters in 2005, gang attacks against women have not stopped. The rates of targeting women have increased after Islamists reached the parliament. The vicinity of Tahrir Square witnessed brutal attacks against women in June and July of 2012 in Tahrir Square, as women were beaten with belts, rape, and the use of white weapons in threatening them. The statement concluded by pledging of the signatories to work to combat the current system and the institutions that are backing these practices and those complicit in them, pursuing them through legal channels inside and outside the country.

Sexual Violence and Torture Against Women will Not Break their Struggle to Follow Through with the Revolution

In an attempt to break women's participation in the struggle to achieve the demands of the 25 January Revolution of 'dignity, freedom, and social justice', organized groups began using sexual violence as a weapon against women, from insults and harassment, to rape, gang rape, sexual mutilation and attempted murder.

The bodies of women have always been used during wars and conflicts as a tactic of psychological warfare against nations, aiming to humiliate the enemy and destroy its morals. Humanitarian studies and the United Nations have documented thousands of cases of victims of Sexual violence and torture during World War II. Modern history reminds us of the ways in which sexual violence was used as a weapon on the bodies of women in as a weapon against women in Rwanda, Bosnia, Serbia, Darfur, Iraq, Libya, and Syria.

Those responsible for these dirty crimes are counting on the social stigma that will prevent women from going public about the violations, the complicity of state authorities and its refrain from carrying out its responsibility to protect protesters, and on the fear for the "reputation of the revolution", driving politicians to remain silent. They are also counting on those who believe that women's bodies are *awrah* (something private to be covered) to ignore the attacks because they feed into their perception of women.

Egyptian women decided to speak up, however, to make all those in power live up to their responsibilities in the face of these repressive practices that not only degrade women, but also seek to break the will of the Egyptian people, whose demonstrations before the fall of Mubarak's regime were marked by respect for women. The days of the Egyptian revolution did not witness any case of sexual harassment against women.

Ever since Mubarak's regime started using sexual violence against female protesters in 2005, gang attacks against women have not stopped. Beside harassments that took place during demonstrations Eid festivals, and crowded areas, Egypt witnessed a new attack against women during the celebration of International Women's Day on 8 March 2011. A day had not passed when women participating in a sit-in in Tahrir Square were subjected to virginity tests in military prison. The rates of targeting women have increased after Islamists reached the parliament... the vicinity of Tahrir Square witnessed, on June and July of 2012, a brutal attack on women in Tahrir, accompanied by beating with belts in many cases. The situation escalated during the anniversary of the revolution, during which women were attacked and raped, with weapons used to threaten them. In some cases, women were stabbed with white weapons.

According to more than one survivor, these gangs are very well organized and they do not appear to be thugs who harass women (random harassments), as they are organized and trained in a clear way to accomplish the task assigned to them. An example is the events of Friday, January 25, when a large number of these militias surrounded female protesters in Talaat Harb Square, circled them gradually until they were separated from the Al-Azhar men, who were taking part in the demonstration. In the entrance of Tahrir Square, these militias started to break off into groups that would surround a woman, and push her towards an isolated part of the Square. Tens of hands would start messing with every part of her body. Others were threatened with white weapons, while physical violence is used against others.

Mubarak's regime started using sexual violence against female protesters in 2005... and today, the ruling political system is attempting to use the same tactic, beating the old regime in the ability to use this tactic by using organized and trained groups to perform revolting task. Just as we exposed Mubarak's regime and pursued it inside and outside the country, we will deal with the current system and the institutions that are backing these practices and those complicit in them, pursuing them through legal channels inside and outside the country. More importantly, we will not halt our struggles for the demands of the Egyptian revolution... and the struggle for complete equality between citizens of this country and nondiscrimination of them on the basis of sex, religion, ideologies, class, geography, and all other forms of discrimination.

Signatories:

Organizations: El-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, New Woman Foundation, Women and Memory Forum, Baheya Ya Masr, Center For Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, Sahm Al-Theka Foundation, The Alliance for Arab Women, *The Voice of Egyptian* Women, Egyptian Women for Change, Egyptians Against Religious Discrimination, Appropriate Communications Techniques for Developments (ACT), The Egyptian Observatory for Citizenship, National Egyptian Development Association, The Advisory Council for Coptic Institutions, Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE), Bent El-Ard Association, The Egyptian Feminist Union, Bashayer El Khair Association For Society Development, The Female Parliament, Shoft Taharosh, One World Foundation for Development and Civil Society Care, Fouada Watch, Tawafok Center for Legal Aid and Development, Egyptian Health Improvement Association, Cairo Center for Development and Human Rights, Ro'ya for Development and Media Studies, Revolutionary Socialists, Egyptian Democratic Association, the Egyptian Democratic Association, Fares Association for Social Care, The Egyptian Foundation for Family Development, Egyptian Association for Economic and Social Rights, The Egyptian Female Lawyers Initiative, National Union for the Independence of Lawyers, Enlightened Egypt, The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, the Egyptian Foundation for the Advancement of Childhood Conditions, the Egyptian Coalition for Children's Rights, Habi Center for Environmental Rights, Mideast Freedom Forum, Center for Arab Awareness for Rights and Law, Egyptian Association to Support Democratic Transition, Legal Association to Help the Family and Human Rights, Article 75 Association for the Defense of Human Rights, Al-Fagr Al-Gadeed Association for Human Rights Studies.

Youth movements and initiatives: Egyptian Creativity front, Positive Movement, Youth for Justice and Freedom, Revolutionary Socialists, Lotus Youth, The Free Egyptians National Unity Youth Movement, The Free Egyptian Woman, the National Association for Change

Political Parties: Egyptian Social Democratic Party, Socialist Popular Alliance Party, Egyptian Popular Current, Al Dostour Party, Masr Alhorreya Party, The Free Egyptians Party, Egyptian Socialist Party, The Democrtaic Egyptian Tadamon, Al-Karama Party, Al-Thawra Mostamera.

Individuals: Abdel Galil Moustafa, Abdel Rahman Hamdy, Abir Solaiman, Ahmed Hassan Mahmoud, Ahmed Hussien Abdel Wahab, Ahmed Mamdouh Taweel, Aida Nour El Din, Aly Abdel Tawab Ahmed, Amal Abdel Hady, Amal Awad, Amal Bahgat, Amany El Mofti, Amer Bakr Abdallah, Amira Hussein, Amr Qennawy, Anam Morad, Anisa Essam Hassouna, Arwa Balbae, Ashraf el Bahrawy, Ashraf Samir Gherbal, Azza Balbae, Azza El Sawy, Azza Kamel, Azza Khalil, Azza Saleh, Azza Soleiman, Basem Samir Awad, Botheina El Said, Botheina Kamel, Dai Rahmy, Dalia El Aswad, Ebtesam Hassan Zahran, Emmad Abu Ghazy, Enaam Morad, Entisar Said, Essam Shiha, Fadya Moghith, Farah Shash, Faten Mohammed Aly, Fathy Farid, Fatma Khafagy, Fatma Ramadan, Gawaher El Taher, George Ishaq, Habiba Ibrahim, Hala Abdel Qader, Hala Khalil, Halah Kamel, Hanan Darwish, Hanna Farid, Hannah Abul Ghar, Hannan Mamdouh, Hanya el Shalagamy, Heba Badr, Heba Solaiman, Hebba Adel, Hebba Mostafa, Hemmat Abd Rabboh, Hoda el Sadda, Hossam Issa, Hossam Mo2nes, Ibtesam Taelab, Ibtisam Amr, Iman Ashour, Iman Darwish, Iman Hijjazy, Inas Mikkayw, Inas Soliman, Intesar Said, Ismail Selim, Jalila el Qady, Janet Abdel Alim, Jawaher el Taher, Jihan Abu Zeid, Jihan Abuzeid, Karima El Hefnawy, Khaled Yousef, Laila Amiry, Leila Atteya, Lobna Essam, Loubna Khater, Lymae Lotfy, Maether Qandil, Magda Tadros, Maget Michel, Magi Abdel Fattah, Maha El Gazzar Hussein, Maha Mekkawy, Maha Yousef, Majda Adly, Majda Micheal, Manal Bahgat, Manal El Beily, Manal Fathy Mahmoud, Manar Ibrahim, Marwa Abdel Rahman, Marwa El Sawy, Marwa El Seedy, Mary Adel, Mawaheb El Molyhy, May El Shalagamy, May Mansour, Micheal Fares, Micheal Raof, Micheal Rezk Allah, Michel Rezkallah, Mohammed Abdel Azziz, Mohammed Monir Mojahed, Mona Abul Ghar, Mona Asad, Mona Ezzat, Mona Hamed, Mona Mina, Mona Monir, Mona Saad, Mona Zhufoqqar, Mostafa Riad, Nadya Abdel Wahhab, Nahed Issa, Nahed Marzouk, Nahla Bakr, Nahla El Sedany, Nahla Ibrahim, Nasry Gerges, Nazly Shaheen, Neveen Ebeid, Nihal Ahmed Hattata, Nihal Nasrallah, Nola Darwish, Nour El Hoda Zakky, Olfat Abd Rabboh, Raghda Sleit, Ragya el Garazawy, Ragya Omran, Ramez Aref, Rawya Abdel Rahman, Rimone Edward, Rober Fares, Sahar Said, Sahar Talaat, Salah El Amrosy, Salma Najy, Salma Shams, Salwa el Antary, Samira El Gazzar, Samya Adly, Samya Ramadan, Sanaa Fouad, Sawsan Samy, Sawsay Noweir, Shadia Mohammed Adly, Shahar El Said, Shahida Mogalled, Sherif Hatata, Sherin Farouk, Shoqeya el Kordy, Soad Sobhy, Taghrid Micheal, Taher Abulnasr, Terese Samir, Tork Yousef, Wahid Abdel Majid, Yousef Zidan, Zeinab Kheir

It's Our Right... the Street is Ours

Faced with the increase in violence and sexual assault against female protesters in Tahrir Square, reaching dangerous levels of physical and psychological damage for the girls and women participating in demonstrations, and which primarily aim at breaking the women and scaring them from continuing to participate politically in the course of the revolution... the revolution that female martyrs and injured participated in so that Egypt would be for every Egyptian.

We all proclaim, through this statement, that Egyptian women will not back down from fulfilling their roles towards the country and will not disappear behind closed doors, and will not give up on being a natural extension for the struggles of Egyptian women in all spheres.

Our march is a new statement from the girls and women of the revolution to emphasize the following:

- 1. Our full solidarity with every girl and women who was victim to the crime of sexual harassment or gang sexual assault. These women make every Egyptian proud.
- 2. The women of Egypt will not give up on their full right to be present in the political sphere and will not be scared off by organized crimes of sexual assault. These are crimes that shame their perpetrators, and will not pass without accountability.
- 3. We will continue our struggle for a state where the rule of law is respected and where accountability is upheld. We will not be silent in the face of crimes of sexual violence against women, and will consider its victims among the injured of the revolution.
- 4. We demand that civilian political groups stand with us and prove their commitment to the cause of women enjoying their full rights and to regard these rights as fundamental rights, where there is no room for compromises or pretense. We demand their involvement in the efforts of keeping the Square a safe space.
- 5. We, the women and men of the revolution, will relentlessly make every effort and sacrifice to reclaim the revolution's Square as a safe space for all, a space for the dreams of Egyptians in the political and social change we seek for Egypt.

Signatories:

Organizations: New Woman Foundation, Appropriate Communications Techniques for Developments (ACT), El-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), Nazra for Feminist Studies, Baheya Ya Masr, Women and Memory Forum, Center For Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, Bent El-Ard Association, Shoft Taharosh Initiative, Ana Mesh Haskot Initiative, Coordinating Mass Action for Women, National

Front for Egyptian Women, Egyptian Women's Union, The Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement, Enlightened Egypt, The Egyptian Foundation for Family Development, Bokra for Media Production Media Studies and Human Rights, The Egyptian Female Lawyers Initiative, Voice of Egyptian Women.

Political Parties: Egyptian Social Democratic Party, Socialist Popular Alliance Party, Al Dostour Party, the Egyptian Socialist Party, Masr Alhorreya Party, The Free Egyptians Party.

Individuals: Dr. Mohammed Abu Al-Gar, Dr. Emad Gad, Ahmed Fawzy, Amr Hamzawy, Dr.Mona Thou Al-Fakar, the artist Basma, Dina Abdel Rahman, Gamila Ismael, Buthayna Kamel, the artist Gihan Fadel, Samya Gaheen, Tamer Al-Mihi, Dr. Magda Adly, Azza Kamel, Rehab Al-Shazly, Shahenda Mekled, Amad Abdel Hadi, Nawla Darwish, Monna Ezat, Inas Mikawy, Raqya Abdel Rahman, Elham Aidaros, Nazly Shaheen, Dr. Afaf Mary, Dr. Magdy Abdel Hamid, Azza Suleiman, Dr. Nadia Abdel Wahab, Dr. Mona Abu Al-Gar, Hana Abu Al-Gar, Hanya Al-Shalkany, Anissa Essam Hassouna, Karima Al-Hefnawy, Aza Balba', Nour AL-Huda Zaky, Karima Al-Hefnawy, Fatheyya AL-Assal, Rahma Diya, Rna Rashed, Dina Rashed, Jannet Abdel Aleem, Fathy Fareed, Gihan Abu Zeid, Salwa Al-Sayyed, Huda Salah, Khaled Abu-Zeid, Sahar Talaat, Mona Muneir, Reem Maurice, Mona Fath Al-Bab, Hind Ibrahim, Shereen Semuael, Salma Sherif, Nagi, Heba Adel, Dina Iskander, Raed Salama, Mawaheb Al-Muelhi, Riham Shebl, Maha Al-Gazar, Nesreed Shararar, Yehia Wagdy, Asmaa Ali, Nadia Al-Gindi, Amr Al-Husseini, Haytham Gabr, Mohammed Nagi, Gawaher Al-Taher.

Analysis of the Sexual Assault and Rape Produced by Non-Governmental Organizations

Position Paper by Nazra for Feminist Studies

I. Introduction

The painful experience of the past few months has highlighted several new facts that we wish to raise, as part of a larger dialogue on these horrendous crimes and what they mean to us as women, human rights defenders, who are also part various revolutionary movements that describe themselves as supportive of women's issues. Nazra has chosen to present these opinions and preliminary recommendations in a position paper that is based on the experience of the Nazra field teams and working groups. This paper adopts a feminist perspective that believes women's issues are, first and foremost, political issues in the broadest sense, which includes, in addition to political institutions, agents, and roles, the general social framework within which political actors operate, and that in turn, sets the boundaries of this framework with their actions.

This perspective is based on the division of social roles on a class and gender basis. Political actors, both men and women, do not operate in a vacuum, but in the shadow of a patriarchal, classist social reality that both limits and determines their political actions, and creates opportunities and risks for all actors, not only women. Since the revolution, women have worked tirelessly to break several barriers limiting their ability to participate in the public sphere. They have demonstrated high levels of participation in all the movements and political forums that emerged after the uprising, but they also paid a high price for such participation, specifically when it comes to their freedom of movement and the safety and integrity of their bodies. These heroic acts have endowed women's voices a new, stronger dimension, made our cause visible and tangible, and has made our organization necessary. We reject claims that women's issues are only a concern of a well-off segment of middle-class women. We also reject the rhetoric that women's rights are the monopoly of a specific set of women, whether those working in institutional frameworks (e.g., the National Council for Women) or in rights groups that are active in only some spheres. We also reject claims that women's representation in parties or political fulfie.

These developments require an honest discussion that among all of us Such a discussion cannot be limited to a discussion on how the lack of security affects the ability of men and women to act in the public sphere , and how certain actors attempt to terrorize women and break them both psychologically and physically.

II. What happened?

Over the last few months, Tahrir Square and the surrounding areas have been the locus of terrifying rapes of unprecedented violence and brutality. These crimes began to become increasingly violent on the street during the demonstrations in late November 2012. Several confirmed and documented gang rapes took place in the square and streets surrounding it in the period from November 21 to 25, amid very weak condemnations, and the disregard of most official and unofficial parties. As a result of the general state of denial and disagreements, the scope of the crimes expanded during the demonstrations that marked the second anniversary of the revolution, which began on January 25, 2013. Several cases of brutal gang rape were documented, all following a similar pattern and style, and women were targeted regardless of their political affiliations. Most of the women assaulted were demonstrators, volunteers with anti-sexual harassment teams in the square, or women who happened to pass by. Over 19 cases of rape and sexual assault were confirmed. A preliminary assessment of those horrific crimes and the methods employed in them indicates a recurring pattern of assault and suggests that unidentified individuals and groups committing these crimes approach demonstrations and political events as an opportunity to assault women.

Assaults became more frequent and expanded to different areas. On the nights of January 27 and 28, 2013, attempts were made to abduct women at the exits to the October Bridge at the heart of Cairo, while a meeting of anti-sexual harassment activists came under assault after one of the participants was harassed, which led to clashes and attempts to storm the office where the meeting took place.

III. A feminist perspective on these crimes and how to confront them

As feminist activists, we approach our cause as it is in reality: a public issue that affects all Egyptian women at, both in the context of their daily movement and bodily freedom, as well as their ability to benefit from their skills and capacities as free citizens in a patriarchal society that limits their roles and contributions.

We view sexual violence as a crime of violence targeting women as women, which we believe cannot be separated from the general societal view of women and their bodies as inferior to men. We also view sexual violence as violent crime first and foremost, directed against women as women. For us, the issue transcends the isolated incident (rape) and the location (Tahrir Square and demonstrations) to comprise sexual violence as a crime faced by women from all wakes of life every day, whether in the street, at work, or in any public capacity.

We believe that this social climate, which has begun to resemble a daily psychological war on women, has directly fostered these crimes and led to their present brutal incarnation. Sexual harassment is a constant in the life of any Egyptian woman regardless of her social status or class. In turn, we cannot view these reprehensible acts separately from the general climate in which women fight daily simply for the right to be present on the street without threats, harassment, or verbal or physical harm.

Women took part in the revolution and were publicly active throughout the past decades, but the price of this participation was continuous attempts to exclude them from the public space by reactionary political movements or social forces. The recent increase in the frequency and vehemence of crimes confirms our view, and threatens the rise of a wave of rampant sexual violence against women in Egypt's streets if the silence and disregard continues.

While we recognize the political nature of the crimes in the Tahrir area, we cannot separate this from the general harassment women face in Egypt in the public sphere. The most recent incidents are simply a repugnant expression of what can happen once women's issues are ignored and not discussed as part of a larger public debate. In our view, those recent events are a brutal escalation of the widespread social pathology that is sexual violence. Disagreements in public discourse concerning sexual harassment and violence has made it easier for these crimes to reach such an extreme, which is now difficult to treat with direct intervention. The discounting of harassment and sexual assault has only encouraged the emergence of brutal gang rape at political events. This

development, then, must be recognized by all, and addressed with the utmost seriousness. Although we realize that the issue of sexual harassment and sexual crimes is complex and requires long-term interventions and solutions, among them changing the patriarchal social culture, we also believe that awareness and recognition of the increasing frequency of these crimes, in and out of the square and in demonstrations and Egyptian streets, should be part of the discourse of any force or group that seeks to confront this phenomenon. No genuine discourse that seeks to effectively intervene can be created without putting the issue of sexual violence in its comprehensive social framework.

From this perspective, we wish to discuss the reactions of all political and revolutionary forces that have engaged with this issue over the past two years. Assaults against women have increased gradually amid the silence and disregard of various movements, forces, and individuals calling for sit-ins and demonstrations. Incidents of sexual harassment long ago began to become more organized and collective, and they have been observed since the fall of Mubarak's regime in February 2011, to the extent that sexual harassment has now become an unfortunate, but expected element at any political event or activity. Now routine, such incidents occasion no more than a brief lament or rote condemnation, unfollowed by any recognition on the part of civil parties, forces, and groups that these incidents have officially become a phenomenon, let alone any serious attempts to address the problem.

While sexual harassment and violence against women has been increasing since February 2011, movements and groups formed in an attempt to address the phenomenon have sought to draw attention to the danger of what is happening and its mounting frequency and ferocity. These groups have made efforts to stage direct interventions to rescue victims and offer material, medical, and psychological support to victims of violent abuses. Yet these serious efforts have been met with either disregard, fleeting interest, or veiled warnings against discussing the issue widely, in fear that some may interpret this as a call for women to withdraw or abstain from demonstrations and political events.

Given our feminist view of the phenomenon, we would like to stress on the fact that we will not allow our efforts to raise this issue to be exploited by any party to that seeks to marginalize women, their role, or their right to be present at any public event. At the same time, we reject any rhetoric of protection that seeks to exclude women. We insist that both women and men must take responsibility for atrocities that will have consequences for everyone and for the future of political life in Egypt.

We believe that two common discourses are simply two sides of the same coin: a discourse of protection that encourages fear among women, and thus indirectly makes them responsible for what happens to them, and a discourse that ignores the truth of what is happening by praising the bravery of women in standing against sexual violence without proposing any collective solutions

that make everyone responsible for what is happening. Though steadfast, Egyptian women will not bear the burden alone, and they will not retreat from the political sphere to appease the desire of some to ignore the entire problem. Nor will they stop talking about their own agonies, and the hardship and pain of being seen as bodies up for grabs in the public sphere or the suffering they experience as a result of crimes against women in the public sphere.

IV. Who is responsible?

Here we must discuss responsibility: who is responsible and what do we think can be done? Given the frequency and brutality of the most recent incidents, no single feminist, advocacy, or political group can confront the problem alone. Such a grave issue requires a serious, collective political debate on how the phenomenon should be faced. This discussion must leave behind the tendency to blame certain parties as everyone, men and women, in political parties and revolutionary movements assumes the burden of both understanding what is happening and, secondly, confronting it from all its different angles. We stress that all political groups and parties have a responsibility to effectively participate, raise these issues, and take necessary action to address this alarming phenomenon and what lies behind it.

Our view of political responsibility includes a reaction that supports the efforts of the intervention groups currently bravely working to confront these incidents despite meager resources and numbers. This support, while important, must be accompanied by strong efforts on the part of political forces concerned with issues of freedom and equality to adopt a pro-woman discourse while discussing ways to confront crimes of sexual violence. We view responsibility here from a feminist perspective that includes two indivisible parts: responsibility prior to the incident and responsibility subsequent to it.

Prior responsibility involves contributing to the evolution of a discourse advanced by all politically and socially relevant parties on women's political participation; and what they face as a result of that participation which goes beyond the dichotomy of protecting women or blaming them for their predicament. This can be done only through developing rhetoric of collective responsibility that recognizes the social and gender dimensions of sexual violence as a tool of political intimidation. Thus far, the discourse of all political and revolutionary forces remains unable to engage with feminist issues, and still refrains from addressing women's issues in all their complexity, though it is a principal role of any revolutionary or political movement to grapple with issues of liberty and equality. Part of prior responsibility means taking action to secure demonstrations, marches, and political events to confront sexual violence. This must be a permanent item on the agenda of political forces and a basic part of the preparations for any demonstration or political event. Subsequent responsibility entails recognizing that such reprehensible crimes do in fact take place and involves exerting pressure for investigations into these crimes to identify the offenders and hold them accountable and shouldering political responsibility for the security of demonstrations and events sponsored by revolutionary movements and bodies. In addition, subsequent responsibility means addressing the issue of the official media and the shameful way it covers these crimes. The media either ignores those crimes entirely or adopt a sensationalist coverage that does not respect the privacy of those assaulted. Political parties and movements share with us the burden of confronting these unprofessional media practices, which often entails additional violations. This is true not only for women who have been attacked, but for groups that seek to offer aid to them amid difficult conditions, meager resources, and the lack of any support whatsoever from Egyptian parties and movements.

Finally, we cannot ignore the responsibility of the state and its institutions to confront growing sexual violence and guarantee female citizens' safety and freedom of movement. While recognizing that the state apparatus targeted women activists and human rights defenders both before and after the revolution, and that it has taken no just action to prosecute those responsible for these crimes, the state still does have a responsibility to investigate these crimes, identify the perpetrators, and hold them accountable. The rape and abuse of women is an inevitable consequence of the deterioration of the security situation and the security apparatus, and women are paying a much greater social price for this than the rest of society.

V. What we Advocate

The events of the past months require everyone to assume responsibility for thinking about and discussing these issues before matters deteriorate further. What we advocate requires an honest, open discussion of the entire issue of women's participation in public life from a gendered perspective, which must be an item on the agenda of all political forces. The issue must be addressed as part of the basic responsibility of political forces, which cannot simply promote a rhetoric that depends on the strength of women to confront these crimes and places responsibility for overcoming various forms of sexual violence on their shoulders alone. Political forces must take action to create an appropriate environment for women's political participation. Nazra believes that raising the issue of sexual violence should not only recognize its particularity and brutality, but also must be a part of the more general question of women's political participation. It is neither politically nor ethically appropriate that everyone should value women's participation—in political or party work or as candidates on party lists—or view women as an active voting constituency without engaging with issues of violence against women from a feminist perspective.

We stress the need to conduct a serious, honest discussion of what women face in the public sphere, and what can be done to prevent those horrendous crimes. We understand that this discussion depends first and foremost on a brave refusal to bury our heads in the sand and a belief

in the need to stand up to voices insisting that the issue is trivial or those that seek to frighten and intimidate women to curtail their participation. At the same time, this discussion must respect the privacy of those who have been assaulted, focusing instead on the identity of the perpetrators, their objectives, and everyone's responsibility to confront these horrific crimes. We stress the need to confront all attempts to use this discussion as a means to "protect" women that may lead to their exclusion or infringe on their right to demonstrate or take part in various political activities. It is important to conduct the discussion with recognition that Egypt's women have and still do wage daily battles in defense of their space and scope of political action. They also fight constant battles in and out of demonstrations to participate in all spheres of life amid countless daily abuses and in a patriarchal society that still has a long way to go to respect women's right to be present and active in both the public and private spheres. We stress that everyone must assume responsibility for violence that will have an impact on us all, both men and women.

We urge all political and revolutionary forces to realize that women's issues are not a fleeting cause or simply a bargaining chip to be used against religiously-minded political opponents or others. Rather, they are a principal part of the revolution, of the current political ferment, and of the struggle for freedom in which women have played such a vital role and for which they have sacrificed much. Such atrocious crimes of sexual violence cannot be separated from women's declining social status. We must all assume responsibility for this with our words and actions, and we must listen to women rather than disregard them out of political or tactical considerations. If we don't, our struggle for liberty will lose all meaning by losing Egyptian women. Long live Egypt's women!

Amnesty International - Sexual Attacks on Women in Egypt

By Diana El Tahawy, Amnesty International's Egypt researcher

Almost every girl and woman – regardless of age, social status or choice of attire – who has walked the streets or taken public transport in Cairo, has experienced some form of verbal or physical sexual harassment.

This isn't new. For years, Egyptian women's rights activists and others have called on the authorities to recognize the seriousness of the problem.

There needs to be a fundamental shift in institutionalized attitudes that discriminate against women.

The Egyptian authorities must introduce legal reforms, prosecute perpetrators and address root causes, because the plight of women who have experienced sexual violence has been ignored.

Blame is placed on the victims for being dressed "indecently", or for daring to be present in "male" public spaces.

The horrific testimonies emerging following protests commemorating the second anniversary of the "25 January Revolution" have brought to light how violent mob sexual attacks against women have happened, but have rarely been brought to public attention.

Operation Anti Sexual Harassment/Assault (OpAntiSH) is an initiative by a number of Egyptian human rights organizations and individuals set up to combat sexual harassment of women in the vicinity of Tahrir Square. It received reports of 19 cases of violent attacks against women on 25 January 2013.

Activists leading the group "I saw Harassment" told Amnesty International that they managed to intervene in a further five cases before violence escalated. Four women were assaulted inside the Sadat Metro Station and one behind the Omar Magram Mosque.

Testimonies from victims and those attempting to save them paint a frightening picture: tens if not hundreds of men surrounding the victims with countless hands tearing-off clothes and veils, unzipping trousers and groping breasts, nipples and backsides.

In some cases these attacks meet the definition of rape, including penetration with fingers and sharp objects. Frequently, fights with knives, metal rods and sticks breakout amid scenes of chaos, where the lines between those trying to help and those participating in the violent attack become blurred.

Activists coordinating rescue efforts are often exposed to physical and sexual assaults. One from the "I saw Harassment" initiative told Amnesty International that upon receiving a report of an alleged ongoing attack, she rushed to the scene with another female activist.

She describes what happened: "I ran inside the circle of men to try to save her; the men let me through. Once I was in the middle of the circle, I realized that the person being attacked was my colleague and that the reported attack was a ruse to get us to the scene to intimidate and assault us... Suddenly hands were on my breasts, inside my bra, and squeezing my nipples... I was trying to defend myself and heard my colleague screaming. Her chest was bare and they cut her bra down the middle... In the middle of this, they were insulting us and calling us whores who were asking for this by squeezing ourselves in the middle of men... At some point I could feel 15 hands on me... Someone grabbed me by my clothes and was dragging me on the ground... Another guy put his hand down my trousers."

The incident took place in Tahrir Square at about 8:30pm on 23 November 2012, during protests against President's Mohamed Morsi's Constitutional Declaration.

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Fortunately, other protesters managed to get the two to safety in a nearby field hospital. They brought one of the attackers they had caught to a police station and eventually the Qasr al-Nil Public Prosecution office.

The woman activist recounted that police officers and the prosecutor handling the case pressured her to drop her complaint, and only reluctantly agreed to file a report when she insisted with the help of her lawyers.

This type of response is typical and reflects a culture of denial, inaction and in some cases complicity by law enforcement officials who not only fail to protect women from sexual harassment and assaults, but also fail to properly investigate allegations and bring perpetrators to justice. As perpetrators get off scot-free, violent attacks continue as seen on 25 January 2013.

One survivor of a violent assault on 25 January in Tahrir Square, a volunteer with OpAntiSH, broke the wall of silence and shame surrounding such attacks publishing her testimony on Facebook.

Her heart-wrenching account was very similar to the one above.

As she and a female friend rushed to intervene in a reported sexual assault on a woman, they were attacked.

She described numerous hands ripping her clothes, touching her all over her body including her breasts and backside, and reaching inside her trousers. They eventually managed to escape into a restaurant.

What is particularly shocking is that these mob sexual assaults are happening in public spaces, sometimes in broad daylight, with thousands of onlookers who do either do nothing, feel helpless, or try to help – exposing themselves to violence.

I was in the vicinity of Tahrir Square between 6pm and 10pm on 25 January, the time when most of these attacks were happening.

It was a surreal landscape, moving between the strange normality of people drinking tea and joking in cafes around the Square and the field hospital shrouded in a cloud of teargas near the site of violent confrontations behind Omar Magram Mosque.

One protester called warning me not to approach Talaat Harb Street as he had just witnessed two women being surrounded by a vicious mob. I asked some of the doctors in the Square if they received cases of survivors of sexual assaults. They denied it, such cases claiming the reports were exaggerated.

Now the tear gas has dissipated and the brave women have spoken out, it is clear that they were wrong.

Activists involved in addressing the phenomenon provide various explanations for its occurrence: a culture of impunity when it comes to violence against women; opportunism by criminal elements in the current climate of political instability; systematic attempts to exclude women from public spaces and deny them their right to participate in the events shaping Egypt's future and the lack of interest of political movements, officials and in the media.

The authorities announced a new sexual-harassment law in October, but never implemented it. It does not seem to have been a priority for the authorities. Instead, a new constitution passed in December referring to women's role as homemakers, and does not explicitly ban discrimination against them.

Despite the violence, Egyptian women resiliently continue in their participation in protests.

Regardless of the reasons, it is high time for the Egyptian authorities address sexual harassment and violence against women as well as the chronic and systematic discrimination women in Egypt face every single day of their lives.

Newspaper Articles

The coverage of some newspaper articles in this section reflects views that are not representative of the views of the organizations which compiled this report. These are views which express the belief that the attacks on women in Tahrir Square and its vicinity were perpetrated by "hired thugs" with the aim of punishing women for their political participation. Seeing that there is no evidence to substantiate the latter claims, and given the atmosphere of sexual violence rife on Egyptian streets, empowered by the apathy of state institutions to investigate the crimes against women, it is difficult to argue legitimately that the complex setting in which women in Egypt operate in can be explained as an artificial one created by "hired thugs".

• "The sexual violence is systematic: Testimonies on sexual harassment", Deutsche Welle, 4 Feruary 2013

Fathi Fareed, coordinator of *Shoft Taharosh* (I Saw Harassment), said to DW, that the events taking place in Tahrir Square are somewhat strange: for while the sexual harassers tried, in the past, to touch some parts of the victim's body, the situation now changed to messing with her body, stripping her, and using sharp objects. According to Fareed, the sexual harassers enter the Square from 6:00 PM to midnight and they chose dark areas in the Square and specific areas to divert people's attention. He added, "It is difficult to get some women to an ambulance because it is difficult to move on foot. In some cases, they continue to chase the victim and assault them, even when they are inside the ambulance". According to Fareed, some private hospitals refuse to admit

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victims that cannot afford the costs of treatment. He indicated that an activist paid all the costs of treatment for a victim, in Al-Qasr Al-Einy Hospital, who was attacked with white weapons.

According to Fareed, he dealt with numerous cases of assault on women in one day, six of which required medical attention. Regarding the way in which the intervention is organized by the antisexual harassment initiatives, he said that "they have hotlines set up for victims to reach them easily". During million-protester marches, 4 hotlines were provided at the same time. He said that their interventions are based on good organization and presence in discrete areas, as there are discrete camps and one concrete vision of saving these girls, to whom the nearest group of volunteers moves within 2 minutes of the harassment taking place.

"Sexual Harassment in Egypt: a Tool of Social and Political Oppression", Deutsche Welle, 4 February 2013⁵

Dr. Azza Heikal, chair of the International Relations Standing Committee of the *National Council* for *Women*, expressed her belief that "what is taking place against women is part of a plan of social and political oppression of Egyptian women". In her interview with DR/Arabic, she expressed her belief that "secret groups and militias are responsible for these attacks, having political goals of degrading women, frightening them, and excluding them from the political scene through the claim that thugs commit these attacks".

Commenting on the statement issued by UN Women denouncing the violence and violations committed against Egyptian women, Dr. Heikal said that "the international community needs the Egyptian civil society to monitor the social life of women and report the results to Egyptian authorities," expressing her regret that "Egypt's revolution constitution did not provide a legal umbrella and legislative protection to Egyptian women". Heikal believes that the government is distant and does not aid rights organizations in their efforts. It also does not disseminate a culture of respect for women's rights." It spreads a culture that humiliates women and perpetuates the belief that women should not leave their homes. According to this notion, in case she leaves her home, she deserves whatever happens to her, concludes Dr. Heikal.

• "Sexual Harassment in the Square: Testimonies of Sexual Attacks on January 25", Al-Tahrir Newspaper, 5 February 2013⁶

Volunteer teams and their invisible heroism in rescuing girls, despite being subjected to violence and sexual harassment

⁵ Sexual Harassment in Egypt: a Tool of Social and Political Oppression, Deutsche Welle, 4 February 2013, *available at* http://m.dw.de/arabic/mobile.A-16572811-13074.html

⁶ Sexual Harassment in the Square: Testimonies of Sexual Attacks on January 25, Al-Tahrir Newspaper, 5 February 2013, available at http://tahrirnews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=05022013&id=e8fc23bb-277e-4758-ae73-a4d07329ceea

Women devised different ways to protect themselves from sexual harassment, which they arrived at after many painful experiences with sexual harassment or through online pages that aim to fight sexual harassment, which provide tips on dealing with harassers and forming volunteer groups to organize campaigns and seminars to raise women's awareness. Some find these initiatives a legitimate means of protecting oneself, while others might blame women, who might be driven by the continuous violations, to resort to counter violence. Anti-sexual harassment initiatives, such as Fouada Watch, Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment, and *Kata' idak* (break your hand!), and many others offer tips to women as to ways of protecting themselves and facing harassers. Among these tips is to carry tasers or sprays to fight off harassers, with the likes of the initiative *Imsik Motaharesh* (Catch the Harasser) publishing ways to make home–made self-defense sprays: filling an empty container, that can be securely covered with a lid, with a mix consisting of a third of vinegar, a third with alcohol which can be purchased from a pharmacy, a spoon of chili powder, and a spoon of ginger, closing the container, shaking it, then distilling the components so that only the liquid remains.

Volunteer teams that intervene to save the girls and get them out of the harassment circle plays a great role in confronting harassment. They are invisible warriors despite the importance of the role they play and the gravity of the dangers they face, which reach the level of assaulting, beating, or sexually harassing them, regardless of whether they are men or women! Nada Abdel Azim, the head of the awareness unit in the *Shoft Taharosh* (I Saw Harassment) initiative said to Al-Tahrir Newspaper that they are divided into safety, confrontation, and follow-up teams. Coordination among groups takes place through an operation room that receives calls and directs groups to the areas where the harassment is taking place so they can intervene and save the girls. A group encircles the harassers and pushes them away, another creates a safe alley for the girl to pass through, and she is then received by the third group which provides her with clothes and first aid, if needed.