



"I'm Coming Back for You... I Want to Kill You"

One Year of Impunity

Violations against Women Human Rights Defenders in Egypt from August to December 2011



| About Nazra for Feminist Studies

Nazra for Feminist Studies is a group that aims to build an Egyptian feminist movement, believing that feminism and gender are political and social issues affecting freedom and development in all societies. Nazra aims to mainstream these values in both public and private spheres.

| About Women Human Rights Defenders Program

The Women Human Rights Defenders Program (WHRDP) is an initiative established by Nazra for Feminist Studies in July 2011 as a reaction to the urgent need that arose since the revolution of 25 January 2011. The Program produce knowledge, monitor and document WHRDs situation and offers to WHRDs legal, psychological and medical support. For more information:

<http://nazra.org/en/programs/women-human-rights-defenders-program>

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| Disclaimer

This report contains words may be seen by some as inappropriate, therefore it must be noted that these words are extracted from testimonies documented by Nazra for Feminist Studies, and we are publishing quotes from these testimonies as they are without any interference from the team.

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Introduction

After toppling Hosny Mubarak on 11 February 2011, Egyptians believed that a brighter future lays ahead, one in which they will be free from the injustices of the “past”, a freedom they believed they well deserved. The latter dreams were only consolidated when Major General Mohsen El-Fangary, in the third statement issued by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), acknowledged the sacrifice of the martyrs with an iconic military salute.¹ Unfortunately, the hopes that the SCAF would “protect” the revolution and facilitate the meeting of its demands did not materialize. More than a year after Mubarak stepped down, the repressive practices of his regime still persevere under the rule of the SCAF. This report aims to illustrate the ways in which the repressive policies of the past, especially those geared towards women human rights defenders (WHRDs) are still with us. Not only does this report illustrate the ways in which violations against WHRDs persist, but it also underlines the fact that the repressive practices undertaken by the state against WHRDs are escalating.

While human rights defenders confront numerous repressive tactics in their attempts to challenge the repressive policies of the state, WHRDs face, not only the same challenges faced by their male counterparts, such as beatings or imprisonment, but also face unique violations that stem from their gender identity. WHRDs thus face violations such as sexuality baiting, sexual harassment, or sexual assault. And while such violations are not a novelty, but have been a staple feature of dealing with women in the public sphere since Mubarak’s regime, this report aims to illustrate the ways in which such violations have not only persevered but are “flourishing”, if such a term can be used. Faced with a female populace that refuses to “go home”, the security forces have been implementing new ways of “scaring them home”. While such tactics were glaringly visible in the notorious “virginity tests” of March 2011, the violations against WHRDs have escalated from there, reaching an alarming point last December with the new, notorious case of “Tahrir Girl”,² who was stripped to her bra on the streets of Cairo by military soldiers on the day of dispersing the Cabinet sit-in.

The violations included in this report also indicate that, not only have the policies of conventional state actors, such as the police, persevered, but they also witnessed new, “innovative” techniques. One illustration of the latter claim is the new practice of signaling the beginning of violations by using a “secret word”, as noticed by one defender, namely “do not touch her”. The report thus not only makes the point that violations are continuing, but to further argue that, in an environment of impunity that lacks the political will to genuinely reform institutions such as that of the police, not only will reappear, but they will do so with a new brutal twist. In Nazra for Feminist Studies (Nazra)’s first report on WHRDs³, the grave violation of the “virginity tests” epitomized the violations against WHRDs committed by the military. This report similarly highlights the brutality faced by “Tahrir Girl”, not only in an attempt to illustrate that the army’s brutal violations against WHRDs, but also because the latter violations epitomize the atrocious conditions and challenges that face WHRDs under militarization; at heart, violations that are concerned with the female body as the site of the ultimate contesting power. Such violations not only aim to “break” the woman involved, to push her perpetually into the private sphere, but to signal, to an entire population, to beware the viciousness that can unfold, a message that will hopefully push everyone out of the public sphere for good.

The violations that took place against WHRDs under the rule of the SCAF cannot be analyzed without considering the context of militarization in mind. Militarization is the process whereby military values,

¹Clip of the Statement read by El-Fangary available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uavsdB0aGyI> (Translated by Nazra for Feminist studies).

² Girl in the blue bra is symbol of Egypt’s ongoing struggle, December 20, 2011, THE WEEK, available at <http://www.theweek.co.uk/middle-east/arab-spring/43784/girl-blue-bra-symbol-egypts-ongoing-struggle#ixzz1vP8G9mZH>

³ “A Continuation of Violations: Military Policy against Women Human Rights Defenders”, published by Nazra for Feminist Studies, available at <http://nazra.org/sites/nazra/files/attachments/militarypolicytowardswhrdsen2011.pdf>, 11 December, 2011.

institutions and patterns of behavior have an increasingly dominant influence over society. Militarization is accompanied by the increased justification and normalization of the use of violence and of the presence of the military in civilian life and the decision-making structures.⁴ Militarization is also often accompanied by “emergency situations” that are used as a justification for the suspension of civil and political rights. The usage of the rationalization of “emergency situations” is not novel to the rule of the SCAF, however, as Egypt has been ruled under emergency law during the entirety of Mubarak’s reign. “. Although emergency law was officially lifted on 25 January, 2012, Egypt’s military ruler at the time, Field Marshall Hussein Tantawy, limited the application of the Emergency Law to cases of “thuggery,” without a clear explanation of what the term refers to. The meaningless of the claim that the Emergency Law has been lifted is clear, for example, in laws that curb freedom of assembly, such as law 34/2011⁵, issued by the SCAF on 12 April 2011, under the pretext that they are necessary for law and order and to assure that the economy does not come to a grinding halt as a result of what has been termed “partisan demands.

Although laws that curb civil and political rights do not overtly target women, the latter are uniquely susceptible to the application of such laws, as authorities utilize patriarchal attitudes towards the presence of WHRDs in the public sphere to specifically target women through the law. In the case of the “virginity tests”, for example, Samira Ibrahim⁶ was arrested on account of multiple charges, including the vandalism of public facilities. Although law 34/2011 does not prescribe the use of “virginity tests” for women arrested, the notorious tests were nonetheless administered, the justification being that the tests are a protective measure so that the women involved do not claim that the army raped or harassed them; an army official claimed that “we wanted to show that they were not virgins in the first place”.⁷ Cultural norms that hail virginity to be the measure of “respectability” and “purity” were thus used by the SCAF to violate WHRDs, even though the law does not proscribe such measures. It is thus not a coincidence that the “virginity tests” and the “Tahrir Girl” have come to serve as symbols of the cruelty of military rule.

Methodology

The conscious decision to base this report on the testimonies of WHRDs aims at placing the human story of these defenders at center stage, illustrating the challenges they face on the basis of these testimonies. The testimonies collected by Nazra’s Women Human Rights Defenders Program team, 39 in total, form the heart of this report. The program’s team interviewed those defenders who were directly implicated in the violations recounted, helping them share their experiences to a wider audience and enabling the team to understand the complexity of the current environment, marked by increasing militarization, and to formulate practical recommendations to the Egyptian authorities. The interviews were conducted with WHRDs in private, in Arabic and they were fully informed on how the information they provided will be used. In cases in which a defender understandably requested that her name do not appear in the report, we substituted it through the use of an alias or her initials, depending on every individual request. All

⁴ A Guidebook for Human Rights Defenders, May 2010, People’s Watch, *available at* <http://www.peopleswatch.org/dm-documents/HRD/HRD%20Guidebook%20nd%20Edition.pdf>

⁵ The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, decree Law 34 of 2011 provides for imprisonment and/or a fine for whomever, “during a state of emergency, stages a sit-in or takes action that prevents or delays or obstructs from *working any state institution or public authority or a public or private workplace. It stipulates a prison sentence and a fine of up to 50,000 Egyptian Pounds (about US\$8,400) for anyone who takes part in or encourages others to join a sit-in or any other activity that prevents, delays or disrupts the work of public institutions or public authorities. If there is any violence or if protests damage public and private property, or lead to the destruction of means of production or cause harm to “national unity and public security and order”, the fine rises to 500,000 Egyptian Pounds (about US\$84,000) with at least a year’s imprisonment. Broken Promises: Egypt’s Military Rulers Erode Human Rights, Amnesty International, 2011.*

⁶ Samira Ibrahim, a female 25-year-old director of a marketing department in a private company, was arrested on 9 March 2011 and subjected to “virginity tests”. She was the only woman, among the other 6 who were arrested and subjected to the “test”, to pursue legal action against the SCAF. On 27 December 2011, the Court of Administrative Justice issued a landmark ruling in Ibrahim’s favor, outlawing the use of “virginity tests” On 11 March 2012, the military court acquitted Dr. Ahmed Adel El-Mogy, the only person accused of conducting the “tests”, in “‘Virginity tests’ doctor acquitted”, AL-AHRAM, 11 March 2012, *available at* <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/36484/Egypt/Politics-/Virginity-tests-doctor-acquitted.aspx>

⁷ Samiha Shafy, *Horribly Humiliating: Egyptian Woman Tells of Virginity Tests*, SPIEGEL ONLINE, 6 November 2011, *available at* <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/horribly-humiliating-egyptian-woman-tells-of-virginity-tests-a-767365.html>

testimonies were collected by Nazra's researchers, except for those of Vivian Magdy, Dr. Halah Zein Al-Abdein, Sanaa Youssef, and Dr. Ghada Kamal.

Interviewing those directly involved in violations is not the only form of evidence used by Nazra, as we also relied on credible media reports, international human rights treaties and conventions, and reports issued by other civil society actors, national and international. While it is impossible to determine the exact number of WHRDs who have faced violations, the report points to indications of the policies of the Egyptian authorities with regards to WHRDs and their response, seeing that the obligation to provide an effective remedy applies to every case of violation.

August: A Rise in Hostility

On 1 August 2011, the military police and the Central Security Forces (CSF) violently dispersed a sit-in in Tahrir Square staged by hundreds of the family members of those killed during the January 25 revolution and several others who are independent and from various political groups. The sit-in dates back to 8 July instigated by the demand that those responsible for killing the protestors during the January 25 revolution be brought to justice and called for the fulfillment of the "revolution's" unmet demands. After 26 political groups decided on 30 July, to halt their participation in the sit-in during Ramadan, a couple hundred sit-inners remained in the Square to be forcibly dispersed on 1 August.⁸

The dispersal of sit-inners commenced at 3PM. According to Nesreen, who was at the Square at the time, the military police proceeded to beat the sit-inners and arrested many; Nesreen saw many men being taken to the army's armored vehicles. Nesreen was detained in the Square herself and asked to show her national identification card. When she responded that she does not have it at the moment, she was taken to General Hamdy Badeen, Chief of the Military Police, and eventually released. After her release, Nesreen joined a march that headed to Talaat Harb Square, Downtown, to protest the violent dispersal of the sit-in. There, she was warned by a police officer that she better leave since General Magdy Abou El-Magd, from the military police, is watching her closely and intends on arresting her, the warning that prompted Nesreen to leave the Square and head home. According to Zeinab, who was accompanying a friend to the metro on the next day, August 2, she saw an elderly woman sitting on the sidewalk protesting the dispersal of the sit-in and approached her to help her up. She was seen by a general from the Special Thunderbolt forces (*Al-Sa'ka*), thus commissioned as an officer in the military. The general ordered the soldiers to take her friend, Dalia, away and when Zeinab protested the arrest of Dalia, the same general ordered her arrest as well, while another general proceeded to curse at Zeinab, using words that "tarnished" her "reputation," which she did not specify. While being taken away, soldiers lifted her blouse and beat her on her back and waist-area with batons.

The testimonies of Nesreen and Zeinab point to a trend of increasing violence by military personnel. For while in Nesreen's case, she was not subjected to any form of physical violence, the resort, instead, being in threats of arrest from an officer in the military police, threats that prompted her to leave the march and head home. The tactics used against female protesters witnessed a profound shift only one day later, as soldiers started to target females who are merely present in the Square, as in the case of Zeinab, who was not a protestor but a passerby who decided to help an elderly lady. The mere presence of females, then, started to be met with increased violence in which the first hints of violations that are of a sexual nature started to surface in the case of Zeinab who was not merely beaten, but her blouse was lifted in order to beat her on her back.

⁸ Salma Shukrallah, *Egypt military and police forcefully end Tahrir sit-in, leaving injured*, AL-AHRAM, 1 August, 2011, available at <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/17889.aspx>

On 5 August, 300 individuals gathered in the garden of Omar Makram mosque for *iftar*⁹ and were surrounded by forces from the military police and the CSF to clear the gathering. According to Nesreen, while leaving at 8:10 PM, the group was surprised to see security forces jumping the fence of the mosque and attacking the crowd with batons. Zeinab was beaten with a thick stick on her head, resulting in an open wound that needed four stitches. Zeinab believes that she was specifically targeted with beatings, believing that General Magdy Abou El-Magd, whom she was warned was “out to get here” by a police officer four days earlier, instructed the soldiers to “finish her”. Zeinab’s experience in the clashes that took place in August is telling, not only of the change in the army’s policies against protestors in general, but against the female protestors specifically. For while the testimonies of 1 August indicated that the security forces only targeted sit-inners with beatings and arrests, only one day later, passers-by, such as Zeinab, were beaten while her blouse was lifted. On 5 August, security forces did not attack sit-inners or demonstrators gathering on the streets or Tahrir Square, but attacked peaceful individuals gathered for Iftar. The accounts collected by Nazra indicate that the security forces jumped the fence of Omar Makram mosque to attack individuals inside with sticks indicates that the SCAF’s “patience” for gatherings generally had started to wane.

As to the alteration in the targeting of female protesters, the testimonies collected by Nazra point towards an increase in the level of hostility. For while Zeinab was only warned of the threat of arrest on 1 August, she was, if her interpretation of the events is in fact accurate, targeted with beatings to punish her for her renewed presence. According to Maie, who was with Nesreen:

They [from her description of their uniform, it appears that the attackers were members of the special Thunderbolt forces] surrounded us at the subway exit close to the Omar Makram mosque. They were 3 or 4 and one of them beat me with a stick, breaking my watch and bending my bracelets. The severity of the blows led me to believe that my ribs were broken. I later found out they were severe bruises.

The soldiers then led Maie and others away, but were instructed to let them go by a high-ranking officer. According to Hadeel Gamal who was also present near the premises of Omar Makram mosque, she was ordered, along with others, to sit on the ladder of the subway and she, along with others, watched as a female running away from the security forces tripped and was beaten for five minutes by soldiers as they led her outside the square. She was then ordered, along with others, to leave by beating them on their legs with batons.

Although the clashes that took place in August are not marked by an explicit targeting of women, in hindsight, they are an ominous foreboding of the more severe gendered violations that were to come. Although most of the testimonies collected by Nazra suggest that the women involved received almost the same treatment as their male counterparts, the beating of Zeinab while exposing her body, for example, was a dangerous precedent that would later emerge as the unified policy of dealing with WHRDs, a policy that would culminate in the December clashes that brought about the infamous case of ‘Tahrir Girl,’ to be brought up in a later section of this report. The violent response to a peaceful gathering for *iftar* pointed towards a rising trend of hostility. It is this rising trend that would lead to the targeting of WHRDs; the increase in hostilities corresponding to an increase in, what is believed to be, an effective remedy to curb the presence of WHRDs, namely targeting them with gender-based violations.

The SCAF’s vow, made earlier during the year, to guarantee the process of democratization, has started to ring hollow.¹⁰

⁹ Iftar is the evening meal that marks the breaking of the fast during Ramadan

¹⁰ Amira Howeidya, *Unfinished Business: Timeline of a Revolutionary Year*, AL-AHRAM, available at

October: Various Dimensions of Violence against WHRDs

*The "Maspero Massacre"*¹¹

Several incidents of grave violations took place on October, starting with what came to be dubbed as the "Maspero massacre" on 9 October. The demonstration started with a peaceful march from Shubra at around 4 PM, reaching the state television building, commonly called "Maspero". The demonstrators were protesting the demolition of the Church of St. George in the village of Al-Marinab in Edfu, Aswan (a governorate in the south of Egypt), and the complicity of the Governor of Aswan and security forces which failed to prosecute the attack on the church. The Church of St. George, which had been operating for the past eighty years, was attacked by Muslim fanatics on the false pretext that it was operating without a license. Rather than punishing the perpetrators of the attack, the authorities resorted to the methods of the ousted Mubarak regime, namely holding reconciliation meetings between the extremist Muslim group and the representative of the church.¹² Through these meetings, a "compromise" was arrived at, namely that the reconstruction of the church can proceed only if it does not use bells, does not mount crucifixes outside the church, and refrain from using loudspeakers; the church accepted these demands. On 30 September, however, after Friday prayers, nearly 3,000 Muslims left surrounding mosques and headed towards the church to tear it down. The mob scaled the church to remove the dome and burnt the church's library, the flames spreading to the homes of three Coptic families living nearby and burning them down.

Enraged Copts threatened an open strike in front of the Maspero building if the following demands are not met, namely the resignation of the Governor of Aswan; prosecution of the perpetrators and instigators of the events at El-Marinab; rebuilding the Mar Girgis Church at El-Marinab; and the passage of unified laws pertaining to the building of houses of worship and the criminalization of religious discrimination.¹³ As the state authorities failed to meet the latter demands, thousands of Copts and Muslims decided to take to the streets in protest. Unprecedented violence was used by the military police and the CSF to disperse protesters, using live ammunition and military vehicles to run over protesters. The violence resulted in the death of at least 25 protesters and the injury of another 300.¹⁴

State media played an undeniable role in the violence that accompanied the march. At 9 PM, individuals in civilian clothes joined the army in attacking protesters. A direct linkage has been drawn between the participation of civilians in attacking protesters and the call, broadcasted on official state television, to protect the army from the 'attacks by Coptic demonstrators.' The inflammatory claim was indeed believed, as is obvious from Kholoud Abdou testimony. According to Kholoud, when she asked one of the protesters as to the reason behind the clashes taking place in front of Maspero, one answered that the "damned Copts are attacking the army." Dalia Zachary's testimony reinforces Kholoud's testimony, as the former overheard some of those in civilian clothes claiming "we heard that the Copts are attacking the army so we came to protect the army".

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2012/1082/sc24.htm>

¹¹ The Violations that took place at Maspero at the hands of the SCAF were dubbed a "massacre", in sources such as AL-AHRAM newspaper: Wael Eskandar, *SCAF: A brief history of injustice*, 10 November, 2011, available at <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/26220/Egypt/Politics-/SCAF-A-brief-history-of-injustice.aspx>

¹² Yassin Gaber, *Reconstructing Maspero's Bloody Sunday: An Ahram Online investigation*, AL-AHRAM (1 November, 2011), available at <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/25521/Egypt/Politics-/Reconstructing-Masperos-Bloody-Sunday-Ahram-Online.aspx>

¹³ Sherry El-Gergawi, *Trigger for Copts' anger: El-Marinab Church as a Model*, AHRAM ONLINE, 11 October 2011, available at <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/23839/Egypt/Politics-/Trigger-for-Copts-anger-Chronicles-of-a-church-bur.aspx>

¹⁴ Maspero: State Incitement of Sectarian Violence and Policy of Extrajudicial Killings, 16 October 2011, Nazra for Feminist Studies, available at <http://nazra.org/en/2011/10/maspero-state-incitement-sectarian-violence-and-policy-extrajudicial-killings>

Kholoud's testimony paints a very bleak image of an extremely sectarian environment in which fanatics walked the streets looking for Copts to attack. Kholoud was approached by a bearded man in civilian clothes who asked her, and two of her male friends, if they are "Muslims or Copts". Another bearded man arrived later and beat Kholoud and cursed at her, pulling her headscarf while asking her whether she was a Muslim or a Copt. State media is thus directly implicated in promoting religious discrimination that is likely to incite violence, given the context. By making the ludicrous claims that the army was being "attacked" by Copts, and that the march was a "Coptic" one because the demands stemmed from outrage over a church, state media was not-so-subtly invoking popular violence against protestors, pitting them against an institution, "the army", which many Egyptians regard as a patriotic one that merits their protection.

Targeting Women Human Rights Defenders

The Maspero clashes present an example of a situation in which WHRDs are targeted due to the intersection of more than one identity. In this case, women were not only targeted because they were women, but also because of the belief, by violators that the women belonged to a religious minority, namely Christians. Patriarchy thus intersects with other sites of oppression, compounding the discrimination faced by WHRDs. The multifaceted nature of the violations faced by WHRDs in Maspero is apparent in Dalia Zakhary's and M.'s¹⁵ testimonies. According to Dalia, they started running when she saw security forces, some donning army uniforms, running towards them. Dalia and M. were kicked by soldiers who called them "whores" and "bitches" while beating them. According to Dalia:

A higher-ranking officer instructed the soldiers to leave us, telling them "we do not kill women," to which a soldier responded "but they are whores and Christians".

Dalia and M. were let go, the higher-ranking officer instructing them to run away, as he will not be able to provide "further protection".

Dalia's testimony is telling for several reasons. Firstly, it exposes, for the first time, an attitude shared by soldiers that would, in future events be a staple, namely justifying the targeting of WHRDs based on moral grounds, namely them being "whores". Secondly, the order Dalia and M. received from the high-ranking officer who stopped the attacks, one that bears semblance with that which Nesreen received in August from an officer who advised her to leave since a general from the military police intends on arresting her. Similarly, Dalia and M. received an order to run away because the officer would not be able to provide any future "protection." While in Nesreen's case, in August, the warning she received might seem conceivable, as a police officer cannot command a general from the military police, in the case of Dalia and M., it is implausible that an officer cannot order the soldiers under his command to obey him. It can be deduced from the order they received to run away from the scene of the clashes that such an order might be a new tactic to intimidate WHRDs, namely to sway them into believing they are involved in a chaotic scene denominated by out of control soldiers who would not hesitate to commit the worst violations, seeing that even the higher-ranking officer can no longer get them to obey their orders. Even though neither Dalia nor M. was sexually harassed by the soldiers, the order given to them by the high-ranking officer might suggest that there is worse to come if they chose to stay. The officer's explicit statement that he will not be able to protect them again "in the future", suggests that such future protection might be necessary. In such an environment of impending chaos, the question arises, what else could happen? And would it be "worse" than beatings? The latter insinuations create an environment that is conducive for women to evacuate the public scene.

It would be inaccurate to claim that the violations faced by WHRDs during the Maspero clashes only took place at the hands of state authorities. This is as non-state actors also participated in the commission of

¹⁵ Only the first initial of M.'s name is used at her request.

violations, a fact that is especially apparent in M.'s testimony. According to the latter, after the beatings they faced from the soldiers, M., an unveiled woman, was thus assumed to be a Christian, as she heard a man in civilian clothing instructing another to get "those women (herself and Dalia) with the hair". M. and Dalia pointed out that while being beaten by the soldiers, they fell on lime-covered ground and so their clothes were covered in white lime. The lime served as an indicator, to civilians, that they had an "encounter" with security forces, and so are some of the "angry Copts" attacking the army, as per the assertion of state television. Their lime-covered clothes thus attracted curses from civilians and calls to "get them". Meanwhile, according to Kholoud Abdou:

A thug dragged me to a nearby café and beat me while asking, "What are you doing here? It is inappropriate for a female to be standing amongst males".

The ferocity of the attacks faced by WHRDs at the Maspero clashes and the pronounced role played by civilians might be explained by the fact that the attacks took place in the context of the intersection of multiple sites of oppression, a patriarchal culture that does not welcome the presence of women in the public sphere, coupled with a deeply embedded and easily enticed sense of religious discrimination.

A shocking aspect of the Maspero clashes was the running over of protesters by armored vehicles. According to Vivian Magdy, whose fiancé, Michael Mosaad, was run over by an armored vehicle, they tried to leave the scene when they saw the arbitrary movement of an armored vehicle, zigzagging its way amidst protesters. Vivian was pushed to the side and, looking behind her, saw Michael "dragged" by the vehicle, his body thrust to a sidewalk. Michael was unconscious and Vivian was shocked when soldiers surrounded Michael and beat him severely, resorting to lying on top of him to protect him from the blows. Vivian was beaten with batons on her back, one of the soldiers cursed at her, using "profane" words, according to her, asking "what brought you her, *kafra* (nonbeliever)?" Unlike Dalia and M.'s case, in which an officer helped them escape the soldiers bent on beating them, Vivian was not as "fortunate", recounting:

I pleaded with them [the officers]: "an ambulance, someone call an ambulance. He [one of the officers] responded, "You came here so you should figure out a way to leave". Meanwhile, soldiers were beating me and Michael's limp body. The beating stopped only when a soldier instructed his colleagues to stop, "He's already dead, let her take him away". The soldier called on four men to carry Michael's body to a truck to take him to a nearby hospital. [Vivian asked them]: "why are you holding his leg? Let it go". They wrapped his leg in the pants he was wearing so it would not fall off. At the hospital, the doctors tried to insert their inspection tools but he was bleeding and they could not stop it.. they told me he is dead.¹⁶

The violence ensued with the decision to raid the headquarters of the 'January 25' and al-Hurra television channels. The 'January 25' channel, which was broadcasting live footage of the violence used against protesters, was raided by military personnel and CSF forces, yelling at everyone present to get on the floor. According to Hossam Hadad, a news presenter in the channel, the security forces that stormed their offices were 'hysterical', searching frantically for tapes and 'subversive' individuals they assumed were hiding at the channel's office. Seeing that the channel was broadcasting live, Hossam notes, the soldiers failed to register that there are no tapes with pre-existing footage to confiscate, another indication of the hysterical state the security forces were in. The insanity culminated in a bizarre scene described by Hossam in which a soldier from the military police declared that "my colleague died and I must avenge his death from you," a declaration after which he demanded to examine the national ID cards of all those present. When the soldier learned, from his ID card, that one of the cameramen is Christian, he was kicked in the face by the soldier.

¹⁶ "Manshet: Vivan Magdy...Michael Mosaad and Maspero's Martyrs", 11 October 2011, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OxEMEp1LQA> (Translated by Nazra for Feminist Studies).

Hossam's testimony elucidates an important aspect that might shed light as to the explanation of the level of violence that accompanied the Maspero demonstration, namely that the soldiers themselves believed, or were led to believe that Christians are truly attacking the army, causing chaos that must be quelled. Even though it was later found that, contrary to the assertions of state television, no soldiers were killed,¹⁷ it appears that the soldiers themselves believed the fallacies spread by state television.

On 27 December, almost three months after the Maspero events, the Supreme Military Tribunal commenced the proceedings for three soldiers charged with the 'manslaughter' of 14 of the protestors of what came to be dubbed as the "Maspero Massacre". According to the charge sheet obtained by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), the case (no. 5441 of 2011, Military Felonies-East district) is considered a misdemeanor under Article 238 (paragraph 3) of the Penal Code, which metes out a punishment, in case of conviction, of imprisonment that does not exceed seven years. The charges issued by the military prosecutor indicate that the action of running over protestors was not intentional, but rather a result of negligence, stating that "[the soldiers' error led to the death of fourteen people [...] this was caused by their neglect and lack of precaution".¹⁸ Mysteriously, the military prosecutor failed to acknowledge the fact that some protestors were shot to death, choosing to only prosecute the cases of the "accidental" running over of protestors.

University Protests: Women Human Rights Defenders Make an Appearance

2011 was not only a year of protests in Tahrir Square, protests were spreading to university campuses as well. According to Fatma Serag, lawyer of the Academic Freedom Program at the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE),¹⁹ the demands of university students shared many similarities. These included the demand to remove university presidents appointed during the Mubarak regime and elect their replacements instead; protest the presence of state security inside university campuses; and the dissolution of student unions, the elections of took place during the Mubarak regime and were marred with violations, among other demands. According to Fatma, female university students commenced their participation in university demonstrations only after the start of the revolution in 25 January 2011; the first time that AFTE files a claim for a female student was only after the latter events that led to the toppling of former president Hosny Mubarak.

Female students played an important role in the Akhbar El-Youm Academy protests that started on 15 October, and lasted for two weeks, to protest the appointment of Ahmed Zaky Badr, former education minister during Mubarak's regime, as the Academy's president. According to Fatma, students camped in front of Badr's office, which drove him to file a complaint against 10 students, accusing them of "unlawfully holding him inside the building of the academy" and "attacking him while performing his job",²⁰ four of them females. In addition, Badr also decided to suspend the 10 students for two years, claiming that he would annul this decision and withdraw his complaint against them if the students officially apologize to him in media outlets. According to Fatma, the female protesters played an important role in the Akhbar El-Youm Academy protests, mobilizing students to participate. Given their role, Fatma says it was not a surprise when the only two students who refused to apologize to Badr were females, namely Farah Ehab

¹⁷ State television news anchor Rasha Magdy announced at 8:25 PM: "Three martyrs have fallen, as well as 20 injured, all are army soldiers. And by who? Not by Israelis, or an enemy [to the country] but by the very hands of a certain class of this nation's citizens. Moments later, Magdy announced that "three soldiers have been martyred and 30 injured thus far as a result of being shot at by Coptic Christian protesters," Yassin Gaber, *Supra* note 12.

¹⁸ Three Soldiers to Be Tried for 'Manslaughter' in the Maspero Military Attacks, 26 December 2011, The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, available at <http://eipr.org/en/pressrelease/2011/12/26/1337>

¹⁹ The website of the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) can be accessed at www.aftegypt.org

²⁰ Prosecutors Investigates Students and Staff in Akhbar El-Youm Academy Accused of Attacking Zaky Badr, 26 October 2011, AFTE, available at http://www.aftegypt.org/breaking_news/2011/10/26/429-aftegypt.html (Translated by Nazra for Feminist Studies).

and Ghadeer Gamal, even though the former eventually apologized as her suspension was creating extreme psychological distress for her mother.

Given the role of female protesters in the Academy's protests, Fatma noted an interesting tendency that arose amidst the male protestors. For in order to explain away their readiness to apologize to Zaky Badr, the male protestors often told their female counterparts that they have to apologize due to pragmatic considerations, such as the fact that they still have to fulfill their mandatory military service after graduation, thus having "real-life" responsibilities to attend to. Farah Ehab was told by a male student who decided to apologize that "girls" can afford to refuse Badr's offer, because they do not have any "real responsibilities" and that they wanted to nurture a false image that they are "brave revolutionaries". In dealing with the protests against him, Badr also resorted to claims, according to Farah, that the participating females breached traditions regarding "appropriate behavior", claiming, on a television program,²¹ disbelievingly that he does not understand how it is that "respectable girls" can remain outside their homes until after midnight, protesting in inappropriately loud voices.

After Farah issued her apology, Hadeer Gamal remained the only students who refused to apologize to Badr, seeing that she believed that she was practicing her right to peaceful protest, a right that she was not going to apologize for practicing. Hadeer resorted to filing an appeal (no. 9287/66) through AFTE, in front of the Court of Administrative Justice, contesting Badr's decision to suspend her from the Academy for two years.²² And even though the Court ruled in Hadeer's favor, in January 2012, thus annulling Badr's decision to suspend her, she is still, until the day in which her testimony was taken on 12 March, 2012, facing difficulties with the Academy's administration, specifically from Zaky Badr, who seems to be punishing her for her role in the protests and her refusal to issue a formal apology. For in the process of issuing a lawsuit to contest her suspension and awaiting the Court's decision, over a duration of 3 months, Hadeer missed three tests. When she petitioned the administration to allow her to retake the tests, Badr refused, informing her that he will await the result of the claim he filed against the ten students accusing them of unlawfully holding him inside the building of the academy and attacking him while performing his job. Seeing that she was the only student who did not apologize, he did not drop the charges against her. In addition, Hadeer and Farah, although the latter apologized, are being terrorized by Badr himself, both confident that he is spying on their personal accounts on Facebook and Twitter. They both became aware of this "fact", as they claim, during Hadeer's meeting with Badr, after her reinstatement in accordance with the verdict of the Court of Administrative Justice, to request that she be given the permission to take the three examinations she missed, a meeting that Hadeer's friend, Farah Ehab, accompanied her to. During the meeting, both were explicitly asked by Badr as to the reason that drives them to curse him on their personal accounts on Facebook and Twitter. And when they both clarified that they are only attacking the Academy's policies and asked him to point to examples of "cursing" he evaded the question. In addition, Badr claimed that their writings on their personal accounts in the aforementioned websites amount to "obscenities" that "respectable girls" should not author, evading clarification again when Ghadeer and Farah asked him as to what he is referring to.

In the protests that took place at Cairo University, which started on March, 2011, in which the main demands of the students were the replacement of the president of the university and the deans of the colleges of mass communication and commerce, female students took part in the demonstrations alongside their male counterparts. As the day progressed and it appeared that the female students intended on taking part in the sit-in, which involved spending the night camped out in a tent on campus,

²¹ Farah asserted that the claims made by Zaky Badr were made on the talk-show program, "Al-Ashera Mas'an". Nazra's researchers could not successfully track footage of this episode.

²² The Series of Repression is Still Ongoing in Universities: Proceedings Before the Administrative Court Against the Academy in Protest Over the Suspension of a Student, 29 November, 2011 AFTE, available at http://www.aftegypt.org/academic_freedom/2011/11/29/457-aftegypt.html (Translated by Nazra for Feminist Studies).

Fatma Serag noted that their male colleagues initially disapproved. Met with the female students' insistence to participate in the sit-in, Fatma noted that the disapproval started to diminish. The experience of Kholoud Saber, a lecturer at Cairo University, sheds light on the societal restrictions women human rights defenders face, their mere presence considered a challenge to well-established social norms about their "appropriate" role in society. Both Kholoud Saber and Kholoud Abdu, who was present at the Maspiro clashes, for example, were told that their presence among men is inappropriate, a view shared by university students, and in case of Kholoud Abdu, by a "thug" who tried to hammer in the idea that she was being "indecent" by beating her up in a nearby café. And even though Kholoud Abdu might have had a tougher experience, seeing that she was beaten for her presence, Kholoud Saber's presence faced more stringent resistance as she insisted on spending the night on campus, thus challenging a societal belief that it is inappropriate for a decent woman to spend the night outside her home, and to make matters worse, in a space in which males would also be spending the night. When the attempt to convince the women that their presence is "inappropriate" failed, the argument was made that the presence of females is draining, seeing that, in case of a crackdown by security forces, it would be the responsibility of the male students to protect them, a responsibility they did not want to worry about. Kholoud Saber notes that she found herself, along with the other girls, in a situation in which they did not only have to defend their right to participate in the sit-in, but one in which they also had to assert that they did not protection from anyone, that their presence is not "draining" seeing that they are very capable of taking care of themselves should any harmful situation arise.

Given the restrictions they face in their insistent to be present in the public sphere, women human rights defenders may resort to different tactics to challenge societal norms that do not welcome their presence. While Kholoud Saber chose to insist that it is her prerogative to be present, seeing that the demands made interest her as much as they interest the male demonstrators, other female students took a different route, namely staying together in one area to read from the Quran. Kholoud Saber explains the latter tactic through the background of the students who implemented it, assuring the women human rights defenders team that the latter students belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood, their mode of resistance thus colored by their religious affiliation. While Kholoud Saber opted to hold discussions with students who refused female presence at the sit-in, the female students affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood decided to challenge the stereotype of the woman who sleeps outside her home by associating it with engaging in a religious activity, making it harder to argue that the women participating in the sit-in are "indecent".

University demonstrations did not only showcase the difficulties WHRDs face in the public sphere, but also demonstrated the fact that WHRDs operate in different worlds, even if they inhabit the same country. For while female students in Cairo University were eventually able to participate in the sit-in, their counterparts at the University of Mansoura were not as successful. For the female students who participated in the demonstrations at the University of Mansoura, which started on April 2011 and lasted for 6 months, for example, the option of extending their participation to the sit-ins was not even debated, Fatma Serag noting that all the female students left the university campus at 5 PM. The variations in the experiences of female students at the universities of Cairo and Mansoura underline the fact that the experiences of WHRDs does not simply consist of attempts to challenge universal patriarchal norms, but are complicated by the fact that they challenge patriarchal norms that vary in their "intensity". The experiences of WHRDs cannot neatly be sorted out merely according to their geographic remoteness from the capital, however, as their experiences vary in Cairo as well. An illustration of the latter feature is the protests that took place at Al-Azhar University in 23 October . The experience of WHRDs at the latter university might have been colored by the conservative Islamic nature of the university. Located in Cairo, Al-Azhar is known as the center of Islamic learning in the region. And although it offers degrees in modern sciences, it is characterized by its religious nature, illustrations of which include the fact that only Muslims can gain admission to the university and there are separate faculties for female and male students.

The protests at Al-Azhar University, which started on 23 October, voiced the students' demand that the president of the university and the deans who were appointed during Mubarak's regime be ousted. On 24 October, the protests turned into a sit-in, students deciding to camp on campus until their demands are met. According to Sarah Marzouk, a student at Al-Azhar, female students did not participate in the sit-in, promptly leaving campus at 2 or 3 PM. On 31 October, female students held a demonstration inside the administration building, where male students had been holding a sit-in. Once inside the building, the female protesters were beaten by the building's security guards, prompting the male students to intervene and fight with the guards. The experience of WHRDs at Al-Azhar illustrates the complexities in the experiences of WHRDs as a whole, illustrating that the challenges they face are not merely tempered by whether or not they are located in one of the more "conservative" governorates, but also by the institutions through which they try to make a presence. In the case of university students, it can be argued that the females of the universities of Mansoura and Al-Azhar shared the similar experience of not having the issue of whether they can participate in the sit-in as one that is open to debate at all, unlike their counterparts at Cairo University. The issue of facing deeply entrenched patriarchal values is thus not one that WHRDs have to face in "conservative" governorates only, the traditions commonly thought to be thriving in the "remote" areas of the country thus alive and well at the heart of the capital, in this case participating in a sit-in, which invariably involves spending the night outside one's home, a practice that is far from ideal for a "respectable" woman to undertake.

State Responsibility for Acts of Non-State Actors

The protests at the University of Mansoura also raised issues regarding state responsibility for the violations committed by non-state actors. According to Z.²³, a student in the College of Veterinary Medicine, the protests, which started on 15 October, was driven by a belief shared by students that Mohammed Ghoneim, dean of the Faculty of Arts, and El Saeed El Sherbiniy, dean of the faculty of Veterinary Medicine, would be voting for El Sayeed Abd El Khaleek for the post of the university's president, a candidate widely associated with the Mubarak regime. On 15 October, the students surrounded the car the two deans were riding and, faced with the large number of students, Z. says that the secretary of the dean of the faculty of science kicked the students participating in the protest, while two other men beat the male protesters. Z. fainted from the beating she received at the hands of the secretary of the dean of the faculty of science and says that military personnel were present when the beatings were taking place and did not intervene. The most striking aspect of the protest at Mansoura University, however, was the recurrence of the tactic of running over protesters, first witnessed at the Maspero demonstrations. According to H.²⁴, a student at the faculty of Veterinary Medicine, students surrounded the car transporting the deans on 15 October and, at 1:30 PM, they heard a voice from inside the car instructing the driver to run the students over. The driver complied with the instructions, proceeding to drive the car among the students. Fortunately, unlike the Maspero events, no deaths occurred as a result, although many students fainted. According to S.²⁵, a student who was participating in the protest, a group of students headed to the military personnel present on campus to report the incident, the latter responding that the "driver is responsible".

In the case of the Mansoura University protests, even though the driver of the car that transported the two deans is not a state-actor, the Egyptian authorities are obliged, to protect citizens against violations committed by private actors. Not only was this obligation flouted, but the students who headed to the police station to report the violation were subject to violations themselves, this time from the police. Fatma Ramadan, a student at Mansoura University, was one of the students who headed to the police station and was asked by an officer about the reason that brought her to the Kesm Awal police station in Mansoura. When she told him that she is there to report the violations that took place in the university at the hands of

²³ Name withheld at the request of the activist.

²⁴ Name withheld at the request of the activist.

²⁵ Name withheld at the request of the activist.

individuals who are loyal to the once-ruling National Democratic Party, he told her that she is one of those who are “ruining the country” and instructed her to leave. When she refused, he told her that he is not open to argumentation, as she is a “girl.” According to Fatma,:

Upon my continued refusal to leave, the officer pushed me, grabbed my breast and pulled my veil, trying to drag me outside the station, calling me a “whore”. The attack took place inside a police station and in front of other police officers who did not try to intervene to stop their colleague

Fatma filed a complaint, Number 4135/2011 against the officer, Sergeant Ashraf Al-Komy.

The month of October thus witnessed an escalation on the severity of attacks targeting women human rights defenders. For only did it witness the greater role of private actors in the perpetuation of violations, which was especially the case in the Maspero clashes, in which the public participated in the targeting of what they perceived to be “Christian women,” but the month of October also marked an increased sense of hostility in dealing with protesters. This is not only apparent in the abhorrent tactic of running over protesters in Maspero using armed vehicles, and in Mansoura University where students were also run over by a car transporting two deans, but the increased severity of attacks is also apparent in the attack against Fatma Ramadan. For not only was Fatma beaten and sexually harassed by a police officer, but the attack took place inside a police station. The officer, it seems, was not worried about the supposed ramifications of sexual harassment and beating *inside* a police station; a nonchalance that might indicate that a policy of harassing and beating women exists, in effect, in an institutionalized manner. The officer also openly declaring that Fatma is one of those individuals trying to “ruin the country,” a vague accusation that will come to be heavily used to justify violations against human rights defenders in general.

November: Overt Targeting of Women Human Rights Defenders

Police forces broke up a sit-in of the injured of the revolution and their families, and a group of people who were standing in solidarity with them in Tahrir Square, sparking clashes between the Central Security Forces and protesters starting from 19 November that lasted for days. The clashes resulted in a number of deaths and injuries due to the gross violations that took place, including the use of rubber bullets, live ammunition, and tear gas. This use of excessive force resulted in a flow of large numbers of protestors to the square.

At 5 PM on 20 November, the military police fired bullets into the air and destroyed the tents of those camped out in Tahrir Square,²⁶ clearing out the Square in 15 minutes, after which they withdrew. The violence used resulted in the death of 40 protesters and the injuring of more than 2000.²⁷ The videos of the dispersal of the sit-in showed an alarming level of violence, one video even showing army soldiers dispensing of the body of a protester in a nearby dumpster. The office of the prime minister issued a press release declaring its support for the interior ministry, claiming, despite contrary evidence, that it was trying to combat violence, thanking police officers for “self-control” in dealing with protesters.²⁸ On 21 November, allegations that the tear gas being used on protesters is a unique kind that has never been used before started to surface. In a press conference held on 15 December, Tahrir Doctors Association announced that the tear gas caused cases of convulsions and panic, symptoms that normally do not accompany the inhalation of tear gas.²⁹ Nawara Belal’s experience confirms the latter claims. According to Nawara, after

²⁶ After Three Days of Brutal Violence Against Demonstrators: Egyptian Rights Organizations Demand Indictment of Leading Security Officers, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, 22 November 2011, *available at* <http://eipr.org/en/pressrelease/2011/11/22/1288>

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ The Cabinet held an urgent meeting today headed by Dr. Essam to discuss the unfortunate events witnessed in Tahrir square yesterday, 20 November 2011, The Cabinet of Ministers website, <http://www.egyptiancabinet.gov.eg/Media/NewsDetails.aspx?id=2770> (AR/EN)

²⁹ Video..Tahrir Doctors: Gas Currently Used is Stronger ... and Cases Shot with Live Bullets and Pellets, 21 November, 2011, Al-Ahram, *available at* <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/139823.aspx> (Translated by Nazra for Feminist Studies).

inhaling the tear gas, she experienced seizure-like symptoms, her arms and legs in spasm, and she had to be hospitalized.³⁰ When she headed to her friend's house to spend the night, it suddenly dawned upon her that her friend will try to hurt her, after which there were sporadic moments when she did not recognize her friend or her surroundings. Nawara's testimony and the announcements made by the Tahrir Doctors Association also coincide with the testimony given by Dr. Halah Zein Al-Abdein, a doctor serving in the field hospital in the premises of Mohammed Mahmoud Street, who stated, on the talk-show Akher Kalam on ONTV station, that the tear gas used is markedly different than the one used during the January 25 events, causing new symptoms such as muscle cramps, severe headaches, and chest pains.

The November clashes did not only serve as a continuation of the presence of WHRDs in the public sphere, but it also marked the instance in which the presence of women, overnight, in the "conflict zones" started to be a noticeable trend. This was especially the case of female doctors. According to Dr. Halah Zein Al-Abdein, many of the doctors serving in the make-shift clinics to provide first aid to injured protesters were women, stressing the fact that many of them stay overnight. According to the testimony of Dr. Karima Abd El-Aziz, the doctor responsible for the field hospital in Omar Makram mosque, female doctors and pharmacists who were originally from outside Cairo stayed overnight, while "some" of those who lived in Cairo returned home at night. While women have been present in demonstrations from the outset, the issue of spending nights on the streets has always presented a challenge. In the case of university students of the previous month, for example, students faced difficulties when they decided to join sit-ins. It would be far-fetched to argue that the ability of doctors and pharmacists to stay overnight on the streets in November has been the result of the lifting of taboos surrounding female overnight-presence on the streets. Rather, this ability might have been the result of the view that the presence of doctors and pharmacists is necessary; female practitioners might have, for this reason, faced less challenges in staying overnight on the streets. Where female presence is needed because they present much-needed services, then, their presence faces fewer challenges than in cases in which their presence is deemed "unnecessary", as in the case of their participation in sit-ins, where it is easier to opine that male protesters can easily "replace" them.

Nada Awad Allah's experience during her participation in the November clashes further illustrate that the situation of WHRDs did not witness any improvements in the manner they are treated by the security forces. According to Nada, who was arrested on 20 November on Mohammed Mahmud Street while snapping photos of the clashes, she was placed in a kiosk in Mohammed Mahmoud Street along with others. Meanwhile, a Captain, holding a taser, was present and he proceeded to tase Nada, despite her pleas from him to stop. Her bag was confiscated, and, in a matter of minutes, the kiosk was filled with badly injured men, among which was a 14-year old child. According to Nada:

A police detective, surprised that I'm a girl, instructed me to hide behind his back to protect me. However, there were individuals constantly banging on the kiosk, demanding that the detective surrender me to them so they can fuck me. The sexual harassment continued after I got in the police car; there were hands touching every part of my body.

The car arrived at Abdeen police station in central Cairo, where Nada was met with a police officer, who asked her "who are you, cunt? And what are we going to do with her?" He could see that she was beaten and that her mouth was swollen. Inside the police station, the contents of her purse were emptied and she was laughed at, while police assistants ridiculed her by giving her strange orders, such as "stand over there" and "face the wall."

³⁰ Nawara's friends said that when they brought her to the Coptic Hospital in Ramsis Street the security personal kept insisting to have Nawara's identification card and delayed that the doctor help her till he gets it. Her friends, in fear that the security personal would give Nawara's information to the police, gave him instead information that are not accurate.

Safaa Harak's testimony paints a similarly bleak picture of the attitude of security forces towards WHRDs. Safaa was in the frontlines of the clashes taking place on Mohammed Mahmud Street and tried to escape due to the heavy use of tear gas. She was not able to leave, however, as army officers had surrounded protestors at this point and started beating them. Safaa saw a high-ranking army officer beating protestors around her, while she was being attacked by 3 soldiers, who beat her in the arm, legs, head, and back, kicking her and beating her with their batons. They also grabbed her breasts and kicked it when she fell, as she yelled, "this is not right, I am a woman." a high-ranking army officer tried to help her stand up, but an officer pushed her back to the ground. She was pushed around between army officers until she reached the metro, where she was beaten again, but not with the same, initial, severity. When she went to the metro, Safaa saw a veiled girl whose head was bleeding and her pants were rolled down to her knees. She explained to Safaa, however, that her pants became loose while running.

Women did not only face violations from state authorities, but from private actors as well. According to "the television reporter",³¹ she headed to Mohammed Mahmud Street on 24 November with her sister when they were met by a group of bearded men in civilian clothes who tried to prevent the sisters from entering the street and demanded identification papers. "The television reporter" refused, however, asserting that she is a reporter and they do not have the right to hinder her work. One of the men cursed at the sisters and accused them of being liars and criticized them for being unveiled. Eventually, the sisters managed to get past the men and to arrive at Mohammed Mahmud Street, where "the television reporter" started shooting for her show and interviewing individuals on the street. The attacks started when S. was wrapping up the shooting, when she was surrounded by men who sexually harassed her. According to "the television reporter":

I was violently harassed by some men, while some carried me, lifting me off the floor. Others simultaneously tried to strangle me; I was unable to speak. The harassment reached a state where some of the harassers tried to strip me off my clothes. In the midst of it all, I was surprised to see some men raising sticks and grousers, threatening to beat me if I do not shut up, calling me a prostitute. As my sense of suffocation intensified; I believed I was going to die.

"The television reporter's" sister was undergoing the same ordeal and "the television reporter" made sure to hold on to her sister's jacket so that they do not get separated. The violence lasted for 20 minutes, until the women and the men encircling them came close to the premises of a field hospital by coincidence. There, a doctor recognized "the television reporter" but was not able to free her from the men on his own so he called on other doctors from the field hospital, who were able to free the sisters. Before exiting the hospital, a man who claimed to protect the sisters tried to offer them a drive home, telling them that they "deserved what happened to them for refusing our help". "The television reporter's" sister recognized him as one of those who harassed her and cursed at him. At this point, a male doctor from the field hospital screamed at "the television reporter's" sister, telling her that she should "watch her language" and that she "obviously deserves what happened" to her. The latter doctor even tried to hit "the television reporter's" sister, but was stopped by other doctors. As she was leaving the field hospital with her sister, "the television reporter" heard people on the street saying "can't you see the way they look?"

Private actors played a role in the violations committed against Sanaa Youssef as well.³² According to Sanaa, she had been hiding in the staircase of a shop on Mohammed Mahmud Street, along with three other men, when they were spotted by CSF. While the three men were able to escape, the CSF forces caught Sanaa and handed her to a high-ranking officer who led her to a group of almost 30 men, including CSF soldiers and others she refers to as "thugs". The high-ranking officer instructed the men not to touch

³¹ Name withheld at the request of the reporter.

³² Sanaa's testimony was published by her on her Facebook account, November 27, 2011, available at https://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=10150574921674478 (Translated by Nazra for Feminist Studies).

Sanaa. However, as soon as he uttered the latter piece of instructions, the group started to harass Sanaa in unison, as she was slapped, kicked, and brutally harassed. To make matters worse, the men strangled Sanaa with the scarf around her neck. Sanaa pleaded with the officer who had initially given the order forbidding anyone from “touching Sanaa,” only to have him instruct her to “get up or else we won’t be able to protect you from them.” Sanaa was carried to a police car where she noticed that the driver of the police car and the man sitting in the passenger seat next to him were two of the “thugs” that harassed her. Sanaa’s testimony signaled a trend that will be applied during the December clashes, namely the policy of officers ordering soldiers and “thugs” not to touch a woman as a signal after which beatings and sexual harassment start; a tactic that none of the WHRDs had reported to Nazra’s researchers before the November clashes. November is also marked by the role that men in civilian clothing played along with police officers in the attacks against WHRDs, actors who will not make an appearance during the December clashes. Although men in civilian clothes were present during the Maspero massacre, their presence is not as visible as it is in the November events. Their very visible presence can be explained by identifying the main state actors in the November clashes, namely police forces; this is unlike the December clashes in which the military police were the state actors responsible for dealing with protesters. With the police officer taking the lead in November, however, it is only expected to witness a resurfacing of the tactics they had used during Mubarak’s regime to deal with protesters, namely the use of “thugs”. The use of “thugs” has been a staple police tactic during Mubarak’s regime, from the harassment WHRDs faced at hands of “thugs” in 2005,³³ to the last days of the regime, when men on camels were used in a desperate attempt to force protester out of Tahrir Square on 2 February 2011. Seeing that positive steps toward reforming the Egyptian police have not been taken, it is only expected to see them resort to the same tactics used during Mubarak’s regime in dealing with protesters after the latter’s fall.

The attacks against WHRDs in November marked another trend that would proceed with a brutal twist in December, namely the punishment of WHRDs for their presence in the public sphere. Such attempts at “punishment” are apparent in Nada Awad Allah’s testimony, for example. For not only was she arrested, tased, and sexually harassed for her presence on Mohammed Mahmud Street, but was taken to the Abdeen police station and detained to finally be released a day later. Sexual harassments are not the only attempt at punishing WHRDs, but the leveling of extravagant accusations against them is another. In the case of Amina,³⁴ for example, who was arrested on 19 November, she was accused of throwing Molotov cocktails at security officers, setting a police car on fire, squandering public money, and stirring riots. Amina was detained in the police station and released on the same day. Even though Amina did not face any bodily violations during her arrest and detention, this might have been the case due to her possession of a “foreign” passport. The extravagant accusations she faced might have thus served as a way of intimidating those women who were deemed “too dangerous to touch”. Faced with the insistence of WHRDs to take a full role in the demonstrations, the level of brutality in the targeting of WHRDs witnessed a sharp increase in December.

December: Violence against WHRDs Continues with a Vengeance

The clashes that took place from 16 to 23 December started when military personnel attacked Aboudy, a young man participating in the Cabinet sit-in, beating him severely.³⁵ The sit-in, which dates back to the 25 November, was driven by the decision of the SCAF to appoint Dr. Kamal al-Ganzouri to the post of prime minister, a decision refused by many who saw Ganzouri, who had previously served as prime minister in 1996, as a reminder of Mubarak’s era. Responding to the severe beating that one of the sit-inners

³³ For more information, refer to “A Continuation of Violations: Military Policy Against Women Human Rights Defenders”, 11 December, 2011, Nazra for Feminist Studies, available at <http://nazra.org/sites/nazra/files/attachments/militarypolicytowardswhrdsen2011.pdf>

³⁴ Name changed at the request of the activist.

³⁵ *Aboudi* video testimonie, 16 December 2011, Mosireen Collective, http://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLD6223BC80935B705&v=MChw2kqIRG8&feature=player_detailpage

underwent, the sit-inners promptly responded by hurling rocks at military officers at the Cabinet. On 16 December military forces started to violently disperse the sit-in. Although the use of force against peaceful protesters by military forces is not new, and neither is the targeting of WHRDs, the unique tendency that arose during the December events was the escalation of violence against WHRDs to the point where the observation can be made that, attached to the violence, was a goal of taking retaliatory action against WHRDs.

As previously argued, it was during the November events, dubbed the Mohammed Mahmud events, that the targeting of WHRDs was flagrantly obvious, with shocking testimonies such as those of Nada Awad Allah and Sanaa Yusuf attesting to the sexual and gender-based violations they faced. Sexual and gender-based violations are those that target women because they are women, such as sexuality baiting, in which allegations about a woman's sexuality are used to shame and discredit her work;³⁶ for example, arguing that a WHRD is "promiscuous" or "deviant". However, if the targeting of WHRDs was not a new development in the Cabinet sit-in clashes, the nature of the perpetrators changed, albeit the nature of the violations remained unchanged. For while 'thugs' and non-state actors played pronounced roles in the Mohammed Mahmud events, they disappeared in the Cabinet sit-in clashes, violations solely perpetrated by state agents. It is not argued that state agents had no role to play during the November events, however, but to state that their role underwent a significant change in the span of a mere month.

If we are to undertake a statistical approach to our analysis of the changes that underwent the role of the security forces, it will be noticed that out of the 6 testimonies included in our analysis of the November events, 3 were perpetrated by non-state agents, dubbed '*baltagiya*'. On the other hand, all of the 5 testimonies that will be included in our analysis for this section, reported that the violations were committed by state actors, acting in their official capacity. Seeing that the November testimonies raised suspicions as to whether non-state actors were truly that,³⁷ the December clashes introduced actors who were acting openly in their official capacities. The distinction is important to make, not only because state actors who act in their official capacity invoke the direct and indubitable responsibility of the state,³⁸ but also because such a distinction emphasized the shift in the state policies against WHRDs, which can be marked in the December events by extreme viciousness and blatancy, that is, it seemed that it no longer mattered for security personnel to be seen as publicly orchestrating and carrying out the attacks against WHRDs.

According to Dr. Ghada Kamal,³⁹ the attack on protesters, on December 17, was carried out by:

An entire squad on the other side [of Parliament], two of the officers were completely masked, incredibly built up physically, like soldiers I had never seen before. One of them had no badge or rank; the other had one identifying the Mezalat brigade.

The violations perpetrated against Youmna Radwan are a case in point. Youmna was in Tahrir Square on 17 December and started running towards the 6th of October Bridge after forces from the military police

³⁶ International Consultation on Women Human Rights Defenders, *Defending Women Defending Rights*, 2005, available at <http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/pdf/WHRD-Resource-English-press.pdf>

³⁷ Refer to Sanaa Yusuf's testimony, for example, in which she identified two men in the police car transferring her to a detention facility as two of the "thugs" who beat her earlier.

³⁸ According to Article 4(1) of the Draft Articles on the Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts:

The conduct of any State organ shall be considered an act of that State under international law, whether the organ exercises legislative, executive, judicial, or any other functions, whatever position it holds in the organization of that State, and whatever its character as an organ of the central government or of a territorial unit of the State.

³⁹ *Ghada's Testimony on Being Tortured by the Egyptian Army*, JADALIYYA, 18 December, 2012, available at <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3599/ghadas-testimony-on-being-tortured-by-the-egyptian>

descended on the Square. Youmna fell while running and when one of her male friends tried to help her up, a member of the military police ordered him to run and leave her behind. Youmna was taken by the military police to an officer of higher rank, who ordered him to escort Youmna to General Magdy, ordering them not to touch her. Youmna noted that the later order seems to have served as a code word, for as soon as it was uttered, Youmna suddenly found herself surrounded by 25 soldiers as the sexual harassment commenced, one soldier asking her if she has ever had sexual intercourse. Youmna was taken to the premises of the Egyptian Museum to a General Magdy, and when the latter asked the soldier who escorted Youmna as to why she was brought to him, the soldier responded, "Because she is a whore". After the General left, the sexual harassment continued, soldiers surrounding Youmna again and trying to force their hands down her pants.

The selection of women from among protestors was not unique to the case of Youmna, however, but shares semblance with Dr. Ghada's testimony, where one of the soldiers beating her instructed another to "Get her—that is the one who has been cursing all day. We want her." Dr. Ghada was dragged inside the Parliament, all the while being kicked, beaten with sticks, and cursed at by "around ten soldiers." Inside the Parliament, one of the masked men, who identified himself as Hossam, who had been outside recognized Ghada, saying:

Aren't you the one who was swearing at us? Today I will show you whether or not I am a man. Tonight I will have a party just for you [...] I am a Sa'idi [from Upper Egypt], I will not let you go, you are not getting out of here. Today, that is it, you are mine [...] And indeed, he actually made it a point to everyone else standing around, that I was his.

Sexual violence does not only take the form of sexual threats or physical acts such as sexual harassment, but also takes form in sexuality baiting, namely the strategic manipulation of prejudices about "appropriate" female roles, ascribing a negative connotation of sexuality to WHRDs in order to achieve the end of challenging the credibility of what they do. This is demonstrated in almost every testimony collected from WHRDs in December. Sarah's testimony was replete with such connotations, being told on the street that she is the "daughter of a bitch [...] how can your family leave you on the street like this?" Soldiers who arrested Youmna also told her that she is a "whore and a daughter of a whore". On descending from the bridge, Youmna unrolled her pants to check her knee injury and was shocked when a soldier ordered her not to "entice the soldier with your legs." The statement mortified Youmna, causing her to question whether the soldier genuinely believe that she is a "slut" who would lure the soldier into letting her go.

Hadeer Farouk, arrested on the 17 of December, was also called a "prostitute" by soldiers who arrested her, asking her, "who brought you here, prostitute?" The roots of the vulnerability of WHRDs are fundamentally related to underlying gender and other forms of discrimination. Not only is this apparent through incidents of sexuality baiting, in which gender norms are consciously manipulated, but also in the usual decrying of women's presence in the public sphere, an opposition that is anchored in deeply entrenched gender norms. However, such an opposition was not only expressed by state actors, but also by private citizens. On her way home in a taxi, Youmna was disparaged by the taxi driver, who told her:

If you were a respectable woman and had your parents raised you well, they wouldn't have left you on the street like this. Respect yourself as you are starting to look like a thug.

While being taken away by soldiers, a woman passing by in her car asked Youmna, "are you pleased with your appearance?"

While sexuality baiting is used as a tactic by state and non-state actors to thwart the agendas of, and sometimes inflict harm, on defenders, WHRDs experience these violations in differing ways on the basis of

their class, race, ethnicity and other social positions. Even though both Hadeer and Youmna were called “prostitutes”, the techniques of their baiting diverged in other ways. For while in the case of Youmna, a young 24 year-old, baiting took the form of questioning her “respectability”, with Hadeer, a 31-year old, she was explicitly told by a Lieutenant to “stay at home and take care of your children and God will reveal the truth” after she told him that protesters are not using Molotov cocktails against army officers. The Lieutenant in the case of Hadeer automatically assumed that she must be a mother, although she did not reveal any indication of the kind, which he might have deduced based on her age. In the case of younger Youmna, on the other hand, the assumption was that her parents have not raised her well, leaving her to her whims on the streets.

Women are thus stigmatized, and sexualized, as “deviant” whenever they organize as women, not only by state actors, but by private citizens as well. This is as violations committed by security forces do not take place in a vacuum, but are rather cosseted by a culture that condones the violence committed, embedded with patriarchal norms about the “appropriate” roles for women. Sexuality thus becomes a tool and a weapon used by a range of actors to control women’s bodily integrity, and to hamper women’s political participation, mobility, and freedoms of association and expression.

Explaining “Senseless” Violence

The violations committed in December were not only differentiated from those of the previous month in bringing state actors to the forefront of violations, but also marked the appropriation of the methods of November to the violations at hand. A flagrant example is the signaling of the beginning of sexual harassment by orders given by security officers to refrain from touching women. For while in aforementioned case of Sanaa Youssef, thugs sexually harassed her after an officer gave an order not to “touch her,” in the case of Youmna, the same order was given to uniformed soldiers. In both cases, the order brought about a counterintuitive response, namely the beginning of sexual harassment. Rasha Khalid’s had a similar experience. As an officer escorted her from Qasr El-Ainy Street to the Shura Council building, the order to the soldiers to let her go because “she is a girl” and the sexual harassment at the hands of the soldiers occurred *simultaneously*.

The change in the roles of state actors in the span of one month can be traced to the nature of state actors who took charge to subjugate the protesters involved. November witnessed the comeback of police officers and, with them, their old-school tactic of using thugs as one way of dealing with “threats”;⁴⁰ December witnessed the coming to the fore of military officers in dealing with protests. The discrepancy in the extent of the violence and the actors involved can thus be explained by the different state actors who took charge of dealing with the protestors, each possessing different tools in dealing with protests. However, if the appearance of state-actors in December can be explained by the change in the nature of the actors involved, what explains the brutality involved in December?

While it is not argued that the targeting of WHRDs started in December, it is clearly the case that December marked a new phase of ruthlessness. While in some cases, such as Youmna’s, instructions were distinctly given to males to leave them behind, in others, it appeared that there was an aspect of reprisal action in dealing with WHRDs. Such an attitude is clearly apparent in Sarah’s testimony. Sarah escaped from Tahrir Square, on December 17, to a nearby travel agency, from which she was arrested and taken to the building of the Cabinet of Ministers. There, Sarah was severely beaten by members of the security police who unsuccessfully attempted to pull her pants down. Sarah was beaten until she fainted, after which she was dragged by her headscarf to a nearby room where she saw 7 women suffering from serious injuries. A lieutenant by the name of Ahmed Mansour entered the room and accused Sarah of using Molotov cocktails

⁴⁰ The role of “thugs” has been explored in “The Continuation of Violations: Army Policy against Women Human Rights Defenders”, *Supra* note 31, available at <http://nazra.org/sites/nazra/files/attachments/militarypolicytowardswhrdsen2011.pdf>, Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2011.

and live ammunition against army soldiers. When she denied the charges, Lieutenant Mansour proceeded to beat her with a thick stick on her face and body, electrocuted her throughout her body and genitals, and threatened her that he will have sexual intercourse with her. Lieutenant Mansour also placed a helmet that soldiers wear on Sarah's head then beat her on her head before beating her with a sharp protrusion on the helmet on her head, after which he exclaimed, "I don't know what to do with you! I want to kill you!"

Sarah's testimony reflects the extent of the animosity the security forces held against WHRDs. For not only was Sarah severely beaten, but her testimony further reflects a harrowing account of the seemingly inexplicable rage shared by security officers:

Another soldier entered the room and Lieutenant Mansour shared with him his intent to result in a permanent disability in my face, asking him "Should I just go ahead and gouge one of her eyes?" The soldier replied that he should tie me with a rope and using another rope to lash me with.

It was at this point that another Lieutenant named Ahmed called on Lieutenant Mansour, informing him that he is needed outside, to which Lieutenant Mansour replied "wait, pasha". The former called on Lieutenant Mansour again, shouting this time, "Ahmed, someone wants to speak with you outside!" the latter replied "wait!" the former called on him again, "Ahmed! Get out! Now!" Before he left, Lieutenant Mansour told me to "wait, I'll be back for you, I haven't satisfied my rage with you yet".

After Lieutenant Mansour left the room, a Major Hossam entered and promised the 7 women that he has given his orders that the beatings stop. Lieutenant Mansour reentered the room and Major Hossam instructed him not to enter the room again, and neither should any soldier. Lieutenant Mansour was extremely aggravated upon receiving the latter instructions, to the point of violently flinging his helmet and wallet to the ground before exiting the room.

The brutality of sexual violence is derived from the fact that it has been considered as a means of asserting dominance over the enemy – as an 'act of aggression against a nation or a community'.⁴¹ Although none of the women that Nazra's researchers interviewed were raped in the strict sense of the word, the latter hypothesis that brutal sexual violence derives from the aim to humiliate has been confirmed by rape studies which unanimously come to the conclusion that rape is not a sexual, but an aggressive act.⁴² What gives the perpetrator satisfaction is not the fulfillment of sexual functions, but rather the degradation and abasement of his victim and his sense of power over him or her. Brutal sexual violence and its extension, namely psychological terrorization, are thus pseudo-sexual acts that have nothing to do with sexuality, but with the exertion of sexual violence against women.

Faced with women who do not conform to the typical stereotypes of "decency" and "complacency", the urge to subjugate such women is magnified. This is apparent in the case of Dr. Ghada, in which the masked officer's main beef with her was the fact that she swore at them outside the gates of Parliament, and as a man from a conservative society of Upper Egypt, that simply cannot be tolerated. His revenge is a sexual one, promising to show Ghada that he is a "real man" through a "party" he will hold for her later in the night. Perpetrators do not solely find recourse in physical violence, but also in psychological harassment. The latter tactic aims to strike fear at the hearts of WHRDs, making them feel vulnerable and powerless, and is an especially potent form of abuse, seeing that it is steeped in cultural norms in which women who are raped or sexually assaulted are "dishonored" by the violations committed against them. The potency of psychological harassment is evident in Ghada's testimony, according to which:

He slapped me across the face. Ongoing insults and threats. Threats, I mean, of a sexual nature. I would

⁴¹ Byrne, S., Gender, Conflict and Development, BRIDGE Briefings on Development and Gender, (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Netherlands, 1996), p. 16, cited in Lindsey, Women Facing War, p. 52.

⁴² *Id.*, at 146

*have no problem with threats of execution [...] but for me as a girl, sexual assault, I mean, that is the last thing, the absolute last thing a girl can take.*⁴³

In analyzing massive assaults on women during times of conflict, a research project that investigated the role of women in wars arrived at the conclusion that sexual violence against women aims at “destroying a nation’s culture”.⁴⁴ As women are perceived as the members of the community that hold it together through maintaining families, their physical and emotional destruction aims to destroy social stability. In addition, the psychological effects of sexual violence on a community can lead to the dissolution of the entire group. The destruction of women has thus been a tactic used to affect overall cultural cohesion. Another aspect of this destruction of culture is derived from the symbolic construction of the female body. That is, in many cultures, the female body embodies the nation as a whole, which was depicted in the graffiti of the “Tahrir Girl”, one of which depicted her shrouded in the Egyptian flag, embodying Egypt itself.⁴⁵ This is indicative of the attitude, shared by perpetrators and the community at large that violence against women is directed against the physical and personal integrity of the group. Seeing that individual identity is closely linked to sexual identity in the Egyptian context, sexual violence is also an assault on the core of the person’s self.

The “senselessness” of the sexual and physical violence that are reflected in the testimonies raise a simple question, that Sarah asked her tormenter, “What have I done to deserve this?” An important characteristic of torture, namely its conversion of the victim’s suffering into a display of power to the torturer and the regime he represents, can offer an answer to the latter question. The victim of torture experiences a reduction of her body to pain, an annihilating negation of the self; it is that pain that represents power to the torturer, promoting his self-extension. As the victim’s world is reduced to a small bundle of pain, it is this juxtaposition that makes his world bigger. The targeting of WHRDs in December and the use of unprecedented violence are by no means just acts of senseless brutality, but are acts committed for strategic political reasons as far as the gender arrangement is concerned, namely the disciplining of the national female body.

The violence was thus not “senseless” or “arbitrary” but a calculated technique to punish, not only women, but, in theory, a nation. Testimonies reflect the fact that the violence was not arbitrarily committed by a raging officer acting in solitude. According to Ghada, for example, after she was told by “Hossam” that she will not be leaving before he shows her that he is a man:

A respectable general came in, dressed in a suit [...] He said, “People, do not worry, do not be afraid ... anyone who does not need stitches or treatment, will be released” [...] I said to him, “General, sir, I am telling you, you need to personally see to it that I get out of here.” The masked soldier suddenly took the general aside and spoke to him privately. After they spoke, the general completely ignored me, and the soldier returned to threatening me—“Don’t stand in front of me, go to the back,” he said.

In the testimony of Rasha Khalid, Lieutenant Ahmed Mansour, who is responsible for the violations committed against Sarah makes a reappearance, punching her in both eyes for refusing to be interviewed by state television. As in the case of Sarah, Lieutenant Hossam is described as “kind”, assuring the apprehended women that they will soon be released. Far from senseless, arbitrary violence, the testimonies draw a picture of similar violations and actors who act with the same viciousness, in the case of Ahmed Mansour; or kindness, in the case of Lieutenant Hossam; and who ignore pleas from women that warn against threats to come, as in the case of Ghada Kamal.

⁴³ Ghada’s Testimony on Being Tortured by the Egyptian Army, *Supra* note 39.

⁴⁴ International Consultation on Women Human Rights Defenders, *Supra* note 36, at 150

⁴⁵ http://www.onislam.net/arabic/oimedia/onislammar/images/mainimages/18-12-11_h-1.jpg

The confrontations of December 2011 witnessed a renewal of violence against protesters and WHRDs, even though the renewal of the violence came with an unprecedented degree of viciousness. For in addition to the harrowing accounts of violence mentioned above, December also witnessed the infamous case of the woman who came to be dubbed “Tahrir Girl.” The violence committed against “Tahrir Girl” was caught on tape, the video of soldiers kicking and dragging her along the street until they stripped her of her clothes, revealing her blue bra went viral on social networking websites. Meanwhile, General Abdel Moneim Kato justified the attack by claiming that Tahrir Girl “had been insulting the army through a megaphone” before she was attacked by soldiers.⁴⁶ The incident served as an impetus for a number of women’s rights marches in the country and came to symbolize the epitome of military aggression against women.

As is the case with defenders analyzed in previous sections, the challenge to “Tahrir Girl” came, not only from those who directly attacked and stripped her, but from the community at large. For in tandem with the anger that accompanied the incident came a critique and an accusation that “Tahrir Girl” was being provocative for not wearing more clothes under her *abaya*.

The charges detracted from the obscenity of the attack, dragging the discourse into an absurd discussion of whether women protesters should don respectable clothes under an item of clothing that is universally considered very “respectable”, namely the *abaya*. At the core of this debate, even if inadvertently so, is the idea that rights imply, and require, bodies. Essential to all the freedoms that human beings enjoy is the right to bodily integrity, a freedom to inhabit and control one’s body, to claim an experience of it immune to the instructions of the state or other institutions. Without such a concept at its center, human rights become the domain of ghosts.

Conclusion

Subjection to stigma and unequal treatment flouts a plethora of the rights of women defenders. Protections against discrimination and the right to equality are at the core of human rights and animate international covenants. An entire international treaty, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), is dedicated to the eradication of “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field”.⁴⁷ CEDAW defends women against discrimination across a range of activities and spheres, affirming their right to participate in public life, including the right to “participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country”⁴⁸. CEDAW further mandates that states “modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women”⁴⁹.

The issues raised by the attacks on WHRDs are significant. What is telling, however, is the way that sexuality becomes the preferred field to play out political rights that are deemed controversial and thorny by the Egyptian authorities. Issues of sexuality and female bodily integrity are pitted against political rights, so that the insistence on the practice of the latter automatically detracts from the former. At heart, attacks on women’s sexuality are methods of control meant to have a material effect, namely keeping women from

⁴⁶ *SCAF Adviser Claims Military Entitled to Fire on Protesters*, EGYPT INDEPENDENT, 22 December, 2011, available at <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/scaf-adviser-claims-military-entitled-fire-protesters>

⁴⁷ Art. 1, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) .

⁴⁸ Art. 7(c).

⁴⁹ Art 5(a).

organizing to occupy a place and presence in the public sphere and punishing women for transgressing set boundaries of acceptable behavior. Targeting of WHRDs further constitute an invasion of the privacies of women, not only their intimate lives but the spaces in which they may meet and gather, creating an image of women whose aspirations to enjoy their rights are not political claims but unnatural acts, whose assertions are transgressions, and whose violations of norms are violations of the national boundaries.

Among the most basic human rights principles are freedom from discrimination, the rights to dignity and equality, including freedom from violence and repression, dignity of autonomy over one's life, and equal treatment before the law. These principles presume that people have a legitimate interest in their bodies. Addressing the human rights of women thus involved the principle that women have a legitimate interest in their own bodies, an interest that is superior to the interest the state or the wider cultural setting may take in those bodies. Although the latter statement is straightforward in the framework of human rights, it remains immensely controversial, its application to women evoking outrage and offense. The outrage partially stems from the fact that inhabiting one's body securely is involves claiming the right to enjoy it. The concept of sexual autonomy thus grows naturally from that of bodily integrity, and seeing that women's sexuality is an object of exceptionally acute anxiety, the idea of women claiming that they have a legitimate interest in their bodies, which makes political and cultural transgressions into these bodies violations, the concept has become particularly charged.

Depending on the actors and circumstances involved, the distinctions and slippages between baiting, psychological threats, and physical assault can be oblique. The UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on the situation of human rights defenders (now the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders) reports "worldwide, women human rights defenders are paying a heavy toll for their work in protecting and promoting the human rights of others."⁵⁰ As the cases discussed above illustrate, women who address human rights issues generally, and not specifically through a lens of sexuality or reproduction, are at risk precisely because of threatening the gender order. Women who dare to challenge social conventions, whether it is by their mere presence on the streets to chants against military rule; swearing at military officers; or spending the night on the square, as in the case of Sarah, women are subject to sexual violence, threats, and derogatory public accusations aimed at discrediting their character.⁵¹

Violations committed against WHRDs further challenge the classic dichotomy between sex and gender. For while sex is perceived to be the domain of biology and "neutral, scientific" differences between men and women, gender, on the other hand, has been conceptualized as a socialized identity that transcribes "appropriate" social roles to men and women. The idea that biology is non-social, pre-social has been critiques, however, as it came to be increasingly seen as a cultural category which has marked and distorted the perception and relation of the sexes. It is deeply intertwined with gender violations against WHRDs, which, at heart, are based on biology, whether it is the idea that women are weaker than men and so, do not belong in the public sphere; that the "purity" of their bodies, through biological "virginites" must be in check; or the association of biology with areas of women's lives deemed less valuable than male areas and activities, such as child-rearing and housework. Biology here is a metaphor for the lack of value, for inferiority, physical differences justifying social and political inequality and even transgressions such as those faced by WHRDs. Women such as Hadeer for example, are lectured about their "proper" roles as mothers and caretakers, while Youmna is accused of seducing a soldier by checking her wounded knee. Physical differences also deem that women and men are not equals in verbal freedom. Ghada Kamal, thus, was punished for swearing at a man from Upper Egypt. It appears from the cases covered in this section of

⁵⁰ U.N. Economic and Social Council. Commission on Human Rights, 58th Session. Promotion and Protection of Human Rights: Human Rights Defenders. Report submitted by Ms. Hina Jilani, Special Representative of Secretary-General on the situation of human rights defenders (E/CN.4/2002/106). 27 February 2002, p. 20

⁵¹ Amnesty International, "Essential Actors of Our Time: Human Rights Defenders in the Americas," November 2003, p. 37.

the report, then, that it is not anatomy that bring inferior rewards' to those women, but rather culture *in the form* of biology.

Whether the attacks are verbal or physical, the targeting of women's bodies and minds remains a tactic used with varying degrees of success. Women are told they are threatening "the community," breaking up "the family". Implicit in these critiques, although sometimes overtly stated, are charges that women defenders are "loose," uncontrollable, promiscuous women. The effects of the violations of rights are often deeply personal, causing psychological scars that can reverberate long after the actual violation. Hadeer wrote in a blog post almost one month after the violations perpetrated against her that she is:

Struggling to get out of bed everyday knowing that it's pointless [sic.]; I don't have one good reason to go out there but I did anyway. My attempts to have my "normal" life back or at least those parts of me I left behind, failed miserably [...] I never asked for all this drama in fact I hate how I have become , but its more than my brain and body could understand.⁵²

Despite the fact that they face unique violations, it is vital not to simply treat WHRDs as a separate category, but to rather consider gender as a concern that cuts across the different categories of defenders. Not employing gender as a crosscutting analytical lens could lead to reification of the category of "women", which on the one hand could point to the need for women-specific interventions, but on the other hand, reinforces the "ghettoization" of their rights. As a result, the development of responses appropriate to the specificities of the experiences of WHRDs continues to be non-existent. One of the major reasons for the introduction of the word 'gender' in this broader sense is the insistence that the 'woman question' cannot be reduced solely to sex in the sense of sexuality, but must embrace all areas of society including the structures of that society. "Gender," in this context, is an intellectual construct, and a way of perceiving the world that challenges the sex-blindness of traditional human rights defense.

Recommendations to the Egyptian Authorities:

- 1- Publicly acknowledge the significant role played by WHRDs in the advancement of human rights as a first step to halting the risks they face in accordance with the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. (A/HRC/13/22, para. 114 a)
- 2- Take positive steps to reform the police force. As the use of excessive force by the police continues, steps must be taken to reform the police force so that their personnel abide by international human rights standards that bind the Egyptian government. One step that can be taken is amending Article 102 of the 1971 Police Law No. 109 to limit the use of lethal force to cases of self-defense or the defense of others against the imminent threat of death or grave injury.
- 3- Adopt the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders as part of domestic legislation and establish focal points for human rights defenders within the office of the Head of State or Government, or other relevant ministries.⁵³
- 4- Halt the smearing campaigns carried out against WHRDs. Rather than excusing the violations committed, the focus should be on bringing the perpetrators of violations to justice and admitting that no circumstances can validate attacks of WHRDs.

⁵² "What the revolution killed within us", January 15, 2011, available at <http://ghadeel.tumblr.com/post/15907628980/what-the-revolution-killed-within-us>

⁵³ Human Rights Council, 13th Session, Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya, (A/HRC/13/22), para. 114(a), 30 December 2009, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/defenders/docs/A.HRC.13.22.pdf>

- 5- Bring to an immediate halt the policy of targeting WHRDs with gendered violations in an attempt to push them out of the public sphere and investigate and prosecute instances of such violence against WHRDs, especially those that take place during demonstrations and sit-ins as a matter of priority.
- 6- Ensure a conducive environment for student protests, a social investment, as protests constitute the first experiences of public participation and human rights defense, and is also a legal obligation.⁵⁴ An environment that allows young adults to associate and express views on matters affecting them is far from the case in Egypt, in which students are beaten and, in some cases, like that of of Mansoura University, students were run over by a car transporting two deans.
- 7- Grant the media access to cover demonstrations, as it provides a crucial way to bring the grievances of demonstrators to the public. The Special Representative on the situation of human rights defenders recommends that the media report on the human rights aspects of protests and seek the collaboration of human rights defenders for this purpose.⁵⁵ Egypt should immediately halt the practice of forcing protesters, who are illegally detained, to appear on state television interviews against their will. Such was the case during the December clashes, during which one detained protester, Sarah, was punched in both eyes, by Lieutenant Ahmed Mansour, for refusing to be interviewed by state television.⁵⁶
- 8- Protect the right to access to effective remedy in the event of violations. Egypt should ensure prompt and independent investigations of all violations of the rights of WHRDs and the prosecution of the perpetrators regardless of their status or rank. The state should also provide victims of violations with access to justice and just and effective remedies, including appropriate compensation.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ U.N. General Assembly, 62nd Session, "Human Rights Defenders" (A/62/225), para.101 (b), 13 August 2007, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4732dbaf2.pdf>.

⁵⁵ *Id.*, at 101 (e) (ii)

⁵⁶ The hostile stance taken by state media with regards to human rights defenders in Egypt was pointed out in the communication by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders addressed to Egypt on November 2011, reporting that Egyptian State-owned media have "increasingly been used to put pressure on civil society organizations by branding them as foreign agents due to foreign funding that some of them allegedly receive", Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, AL Assembly & Association (2010-1) G/SO 214 (107-9) EGY 12/2011, 17 November 2011, available at https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/19th/AL_Egypt_17.11.11_%2812.2011%29.pdf

⁵⁷ U.N. General Assembly, 62nd Session, "Human Rights Defenders" (A/62/225), para.66, 13 August 2007, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4732dbaf2.pdf>.