

26 January 2013

## **Testimony from a Survival of Gang Rape on Tahrir Square Vicinity**

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

On Friday 23 November 2012, at 6:30 PM, I went with a friend to express our rejection of the distorted constitution amongst the millions that took to the streets for the same purpose (I don't want to hear any of you say 'Why did you go there') we strolled around the circle in the middle of the Square, reaching the corner of Kasr Al-Ainy and Mohammed Mahmoud streets. The police were throwing tear gas bombs heavily and the running and scrambling started. I held my friend's hand but lost her for moments. The last I heard from her was that she was being sexually harassed in the scramble. When I was able to see clearly again, I could not find my friend, but I ran into another friend trying to escape the tear gas and told him that my friend is being sexually harassed. We went to rescue her and I found out, at that moment, that I lost my mobile phone. I found my friend surrounded by hundreds of people and my male friend and I tried to save her but they pushed us. We fell on top of each other and they separated us into two circles. I did not understand anything at that moment... I did not comprehend what is happening... who are those people? All that I knew was that there were hundreds of hands stripping me of my clothes and brutally violating my body. There is no way out, for everyone is saying that they are protecting and saving me, but all I felt from the circles close to me, sticking to my body, was the finger-rape of my body, from the front and back; someone was even trying to kiss me... I was completely naked, pushed by the mass surrounding me to an alley close to Hardee's restaurant... I am in the middle of this tightly knit circle. Every time I tried to scream, to defend myself, to call on a savior, they increased their violence and rape. I fell again in the sewer water in front of Hardee's and I realized, then, that falling amounts to death. I decided to keep my calm, seeing that screaming is followed by more violence. I tried to remain standing, holding onto their hands which are violating me, and their arms. In the alleyway near Hardee's, I fell again in the same sewer, naked. I was able to escape death by stampede and found a building, where the doorman was standing behind the door, refusing to open it. I was stuck in the building's entrance for a long time, bodies scrambling around me, their hands still violating me. I even saw some standing on top of elevated surfaces to be able to watch freely, feeding his sexual frustrations by watching. I felt that I spent a long time in that corner, until someone threw me a pullover, which was impossible to put on, as bodies stuck to me,

preventing me from wearing it. I succeeded, in a moment, to put the pullover on, the same moment I heard a group of young men to my left agreeing to take me to another place, according to one of them, 'we will take her and then one by one, guys'.

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

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

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

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

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