

## Egyptian protester: 'Since we were born, everything had paused'

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy | Feb. 4, 2011



A supporter of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak is detained by anti-government demonstrators during clashes at Tahrir Square in Cairo Feb. 3. (CNS photo/Amr Abdallah Dalsh, Reuters)

Moroug Badawy, a 24-year old graduate student of engineering, lives in the Egyptian city of Alexandria with her husband, six-month-old son, and their extended family.

*NCR* spoke with her Wednesday, shortly after the mostly peaceful demonstrations across Egypt devolved into violence.

Following is that conversation, edited for clarity.

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***NCR:* Can you talk about the demonstrations of the past few days? How did these mass demonstrations come about?**

*Badawy:* Most Egyptians are 25 or 24 years old, according to statistics. Since we were born, the president hasn't ever changed. We felt like the economy, everything [in Egypt] had paused. Some of us thought we could change something and we started using Facebook [to organize].

On the 25th of January, people started to protest. But the Muslim Brothers and other groups -- these were old people -- they saw the chance for change so they started to join the demonstrations.

**What were the youth asking for?**

A change of the system, changes in the Constitution [term limits for the presidency], a repeat of the November 2010 parliamentary elections because they were not fair. Cheating occurred on the government's side.

When the president talked [Tuesday] night, he said he was willing to have elections in September and we thought that is very good for us because we needed time to prepare for the elections and reform the system.

Then today we went to protest -- we were okay with what the president said -- but from out of nowhere

[Mubarak supporters] appeared and said, 'Oh president, we love you. You are like our father and the father must be mad at his children. Please forgive us' and everything like that which is not true. But we are [willing] to wait for the change in September.

**You have riots going on in the streets of Cairo and Alexandria right now. So what happens next?**

According to his speech yesterday, [Mubarak] said that he is the president. So when he woke up today [Wednesday], he should act like a president. I think if today passed and he did nothing and he didn't speak for us [the Egyptians], I think even those protestors who were supporting him, they won't support him tomorrow.

How could he be silent, facing all this chaos now?

**Talk about that 'chaos.'**

The National Democratic Party [Mubarak's party], started the chaos. They started supporting Mubarak so when September comes, he will ensure their re-election. They have been offered money to show up the protests and cheer for him. They [Mubarak] supporters have paid thugs to make this chaos because they are afraid of losing power. I think that is [why you saw] the camels and horses in Tahir Square. Those people were paid.

**How do Egyptians view the US in this situation?**

I was watching on CNN what Obama said. What he said is right, Mubarak should leave soon. But we don't want the U.S. to take action for what is happening in Egypt. Now it is citizens against president, or citizens against citizens, so it is not a U.S. problem. We don't want the U.S. to come and fight for us.

But we need advice, advice from a country of power for our president. The White House has influence on Mubarak. We think Obama can use his influence to make Mubarak step down and hear what we are asking for. That's it.

**I hear your baby son in the background. What do you hope for your child with regard to Egypt's political future?**

We grew up with just one president, Hosni Mubarak. Still, we felt safe. We didn't have wars. But we had economic problems, we had political problems. We didn't have democracy. I am looking for my child to have safety and democracy.

Before the demonstrations, we had big problems like police brutality, corruption of all government agencies, rigged elections, and very high unemployment for years, not just this year.

**The demands of the youth were to change this?**

Yes. Hopefully, the new government will make the police treat the people differently.



NCR contributor Claire Schaeffer-Duffy is conducting interviews with people connected to the unrest in Egypt this week. For her previous interviews, see:

- [Egyptian uprising 'far beyond what people expected'](#) [1], a conversation with Egyptian expert John Esposito
- [In Egypt, most powerful example of 'people power' in history](#) [2], a conversation with Gene Sharp, a renowned scholar of nonviolent struggle
- [Violence on Cairo streets, Egyptian demonstrators say 'will not be silenced'](#) [3], a conversation with says Philip Rizk, an Egyptian filmmaker and activist
- [Egyptian protester: 'Since we were born, everything had paused'](#) [4], a conversation with Moroug Badawy, a 24-year old Egyptian graduate student

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