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Public Feminism, Female Shame, and Sexual Violence in Modern Egypt

By Jihan Zakarriya[1]

Abstract

This paper examines the interconnections between public sexual violence, female shame, and public feminism in modern Egypt. It connects aspects of public sexual violence against women generally and politicized sexual violence in 21st-century Egypt in particular, arguing that successive political regimes in Egypt produce and maintain a spatial culture of humiliation and *inferiorization* as a political tool of silencing, and oppressing women and opposition. This culture of humiliation and inferiorization is premised upon media-oriented female shame ideas that relate and condemn female sexuality and public participation, establishing the public space as militarized, dangerous and exclusive. This paper attempts to assess the successes and failures of public feminism in Egypt in addressing such politicized culture of female humiliation and isolation in public spaces, with a particular focus on fighting politicized forms of sexual violence directed against women in post-2011 revolutionary Egypt. It argues further that sexual violence against women and the repression of public feminism in Egypt are parts of the failure of the processes of democratic transition, state formation and of the survival of socio-economic and cultural hierarchy and vulnerability in modern Egypt. The paper maintains that Egyptian women's remarkable and solid public activism during and after 2011-revolution shows them as able to invade the exclusive public spaces and hence are able to create new spaces of female resistance and new forms of public mobilization in the country.

Keywords: Public feminism, Sexual violence, Egypt, Egyptian women, State feminism

Introduction

Public sexual violence, including rape, sexual harassment, and body violations, against women in the post-2011 revolutionary Egypt has been a disturbingly prevailing aspect of political transition in the country. Described as a "political weapon'' (Houge 2015, 83) and "violations of women's humanity'' (Skalli 2014, 245), public sexual violence in Egypt arouses diverse cultural and political inquiries. Sexual violence exposes an inherent, masculinist culture of "female shame and stigmatization'' that blames female victims for their sexual violations (Keeping Women out 2014, 35). It is also a systematic political tool for "intimidating and terrifying women from publicly voicing their opposition by targeting their respectability'' (Tadros 2015, 1349). Shaming Egyptian women who appear in public spaces of dissent in 2011 by targeting their sexuality and bodies, then, is a counter-revolution strategy that purposely utilizes a masculinist culture with the aim of making revolutionary women, their male guardians, and those who identify with them conscious of the limits of accessing public spaces in Egypt. Sexual violence shatters the positive visual and

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mental image of Tahrir Square as a democratic, discursive space of female equality, social heterogeneity, and justice.

In this sense, shame in public spaces has serious political ramifications. It denotes "an unwillingness to recognize the rights and needs of others'' and hence is "normatively unreliable in public life, and so a liberal society has particular reasons to inhabit shame and to protect its citizens from shaming'' (Nussbaum 24). As for women, Kate Millett argues that "shame kept women silent. …A life one is not ashamed of, a life against shame, against even the very idea of it, the crime of it… Heresy, Revolution'' (27). Accordingly, shame can be a repressive social-political crime meant to subordinate and silence both men and women as dependents of prejudicial cultural norms and to securitize public spaces under authoritarian systems. In this case, the meaning of 'shame' exceeds individual experiences of physical and/or psychological humiliation, ignominy or (sexual) violation, and encompasses communal, collective feelings of disgrace, dishonor and anxiety that inevitably lead to what Donald Campbell calls feelings of "hiding.'' Campbell argues that "shame triggers a withdrawal to protect physical and mental attributes. Hiding prevents further exposure of weakness and/or lack of control and restores the self to a safe, private, hidden place where it can be reconstituted'' (77). Sexual violence aims at pushing women and opposition to hide or go underground.

This paper argues that the concepts of shame and hiding with their repressive individual, communal and authority implications are used as a political tool of oppression in modern Egypt. They meant to (re)masculinize and (re)securitize public spaces in order to both control democratic spaces of expression and to hinder progressive aspects of public feminism and women's emancipation in the country. This paper is divided into three parts. The first argues that female activism in 20th-century Egypt is politicized and marginalized as secondary to nationalist causes of independence, fighting terrorism and security. Egyptian women's prevalent image in public and political spaces is restricted by sexual violence, shame, and vulnerability. The second part examines the excessive use of the synchronous narratives of shame about female sexuality and public participation in 21st-century as a means of controlling, silencing and repressing revolutionary, grassroot movements and ideas in the country. It is particularly interested in the complex ways in which female shame knits together issues of gender, politics, and public participation. The final part of this paper examines Egyptian women's persistent and adamant fight against all forms of state-oriented sexual violence as a counter-female shame strategy that reconstitutes the concept of publicness as discursive and impartial.

Concealed Violence and Female Shame in 20th-century Egypt:

The struggle between secret resistance and colonial-patriarchal authorities can be seen as a dominant aspect of liberation efforts in 20th-century Egypt. Under British colonialism and later under despotic national regimes, Egyptian men and women are denied access to public spaces and the majority of the anti-colonial and anti-authoritarian resistance is underground and marginalized, and hence is pre-condemned and endangered as unlawful, chaotic and vulnerable. Once secret or underground resistance shows up, it is hunted and violated on sexual, physical and mental levels. In this sense, public feminism in Egypt is no exception. The history of women's movements in 20th-century Egypt optimizes the failure of democratic transition in the country. The first political public participation of Egyptian women in the modern age is dated back to the 1919 Revolution against the British occupation (Ramdani 39). Leading veiled, long-secluded Egyptian women's anti-British demonstrations, Huda Shaarawi and Safiyya Zaghloul, both of whom are pioneering

political and feminist figures, initiated Egyptian women's emancipation movement by taking off their niqab and later their veil (Ramdani 41). They were not ashamed to show their faces in public. Female protesters, despite police violence, remained immobile for almost three hours in the hot sun. Admirably, the post-1919 female activists and feminist organizations, such as the Egyptian Feminist Union (1923), Egyptian Feminist Party (1942), and The Daughter of the Nile (1948) utilize public and protest spaces to place women's needs within a political agenda for comprehensive change. For example, Huda Shaarawi confirms that the demonstrations seek to "restore [women's] political rights, granted to them by the Sharia and dictated to them by the demands of the present'' (1986, 113). She specifically asks for reforming oppressive personal status laws and for women's equal access to the political domain. In 1951, Doria Shafik, the leader of the Daughter of the Nile and 1500 women storm parliament demanding full political rights, a reform of the Personal Status Law and equal pay for equal work. Shafik condemns state responsibility for women's degraded conditions (Al-Al 2004, 92).

Early 20th-century Egyptian female activists, then, show a great awareness of the detrimental intersection between colonial and native politics of discrimination and hierarchy. They perceive women's personal and public problems of seclusion, marginalization and inequality as the outcomes of political-cultural patriarchy that accentuates that "the politics of space are always sexual" and that "the body has to be understood as a political construct, a product of such systems of representation as media, drawings, photographs, models, film, or television, rather than the means by which we encounter them" (1992, x). For example, within the 1919 context, Egyptian women face the colonial stereotypical idea that "Oriental women, despite the veils everywhere in Cairo, conceal a deep, rich fund of female sexuality…. peculiarly luxuriant and seemingly un-bounded sexuality" (Said, 1979, 188). This sexualization and reduction of Egyptian women into bodies are familiar colonial ways of humiliating and inferiorizing the colonized. However, Egyptian men further repress women when public figures like Talat Harb, Ahmed Shawqi and Ahmed as-Sayyid sexualize and defame women's movements in newspapers, cultural arenas and in public events describing them as "westernized," "sexually promiscuous," and "threatening religious identity and peace of the country" (Al-Ali 34). Islamists like Hassan al-Banna, emphasize that "woman's danger lies particularly in her sexuality […] social order is secured when the woman limits herself to her husband" (Mernissi, 1987, 10). Women activists face deep-rooted normative standards of honour, femininity and masculinity that concur that "violation of women's body is taken as a dishonour of the entire family or community for which women, and not their aggressor(s), are held responsible" (Skalli, 246). To avoid shameful violations, Egyptian women need to hide. Otherwise, they endanger their honour and expose their sexuality being in public spaces and hence they deserve repudiation and violence. Both the perpetrators and the authority that is supposed to protect citizens in public spaces are pre-immuned against punishment or responsibility since women are the ones to be blamed for their shame and violence.

The importance of early 20th-century Egyptian women's protests, therefore, is that they not only turn public spaces into a discursive space where the oppressive aspects of native and colonial powers are challenged by those who have been marginalized in various ways, but also they go beyond protest spaces to mobilize for real change in political-cultural spheres. In this sense, women's spatial freedom proposes new discourses of resistance that forces dominant modes of oppression as well as of opposition to modify and clash, particularly under post-liberation regimes that insist on remarginalizing women. For instance, President Gamal Abdel Nasser's secular, socialist regime does not eliminate patriarchy or transform oppressive cultural norms as it claims. Rather, Nasser burdens women's movements with two intertwined problems that continue till the

present. The first is the institutionalization and nationalization of Egyptian women's rights. In a famous speech in 1960, Nasser describes Muslim Brotherhood as "fascists, deceitful and backward terrorists" whose main concern is to "seize power" and to forcefully "veil women" and "stop women of working" (Nasser). Consequently, Nasser continues, "all people who participated in these secret organizations will be referred to judgment. All dangerous people who we released in 1964 and had basically represented heads or dangerous members in the secret organizations will be [imprisoned]" (Nasser). Nasser insinuates that his violence against his strong political opponent Muslim Brotherhood is a direct defense of the civil freedom of Egyptian people, particularly women.

To protect women's rights, Nasser introduces the concept of state feminism defined as "conservative top-down strategy to women's issues that did not solve the problems of underrepresentation, discrimination, and subordination. These continued under new conditions" (1992, 232). Nasser offers women access to employment, education, health care, but denies them political participation and personal freedom as women are still controlled by outdated and sexist personal status laws. Nasser's political use of women's rights to trigger dividedness on religious, gender and political levels and to exploit the bodies and mentalities of those asking for change and democracy is a worldwide tactic of oppression. In many postcolonial regimes like Iraq, Ghana, Nigeria, and India, state formation and pluralistic rule fail as those who seize power isolate themselves from Western societies and protect their one-party or military rule and mono-economies through creating corrupt security apparatuses. Within the new hierarchical political orders, women, who have been efficient anticolonial activists, are relegated to secondary positions. In Nigeria, for example, as the military rule seizes power, the first lady, Maryam Babangida, declares publicly women's roles are wifehood and motherhood. State feminists support the first lady and women's liberation movements are criticized and repressed (Bauer, Darkwah and Patterson 23). Similarly, in Egypt, President Nasser's wife, Tahia Nasser, disappears from the public scene, impliedly endorsing women's political subordination to men. Egyptian Radio and TV become advantaged means systematically used by state-controlled feminists who uncritically sympathize with Nasser's decisions and rule. Accordingly, freedom of expression is silenced as "press was nationalized, coupled with state subsidizing of media and cultural output, in the 1920s there had been no fewer than ten journals aimed at a primarily female readership. By 1958 Hawwa' was the only remaining periodical aimed primarily at a female readership" (Bier 2014, 19).

The process of monolithic politics and nationalized economy in Egypt aims mainly at preventing the spread of democratic ideas or criticism among Egyptian people, particularly women. That's why women's activism is stereotyped and vandalized as "both Muslim and Coptic women are treated as community property, rather than individuals with personal problems and personal prerogatives" (Hatem 38). Consequently, while liberal and Christian feminists, like democrats, are denigrated of "making Egypt a cultural colony of America and the West" (Younis 2007, 486), Islamic feminists are defamed for supporting "fundamentalism, cultural backwardness and reactionary atavism" (Mahmoud 2005, 5). As for working class-women, who are seen as direct beneficiaries of Nasser's socialist project, they, according to Hanan Hammad, face organized sexual violence: "the harassment of women became familiar in factories, streets, movie theaters, and on public transport. Although there are abundant police reports and court files on such incidents, harassment was not criminalized" and victims were mostly poor working-class women "whom the Egyptian feminist movement, championed by upper-and middle-classes women, overlooked" (63). With the lack of state protection, common Egyptian women are caught between conflicting, class-oriented forms of modernization versus conventions, with working-class women

seen as vulnerable and inferior. Here, different sectors of Egyptian women and people are categorized and divided on religious, sexual, intellectual and class levels. Whether they are modern or conventional, poor or rich, they are all afflicted with shame if they disturb or criticize authority. If this happens, they bring shame on themselves, their families and their nation. Consequently, the fate of the women's movements and social status in Egypt are not only intertwined with the general course of national and class struggles for liberation but become tools of political patriarchy as well. Women's rights are used to fight potential enemies like Muslim Brotherhood and at the same time to stabilize gender/political hierarchy as women are dependent on the governing authority for their safety.

The second problem that faces many women in the post-liberation eras worldwide, including Egyptian women, is the security state. Under the pretext of protecting women's gained rights and national security against Islamists' violence, Israel and foreign interferences, Nasser openly warns opposition of violence, including intimidation, unjustified detentions, torture, shaming narratives and sexual violations against political prisoners of all orientations and genders and against opposition feminists become common (Booth 32). Opposition and emerging workers and trade unions are targeted by security forces. Islamist women activists like Zainab al-Ghazali and Safinaz Kazim as well as radical feminists like Nawal al-Sadaawi and Sanaa' Al-Masry were imprisoned, tortured, sexually violated and defamed as "criminal deviants" and as "social deviants" whose public participation defied "women's respectable identity" (Booth 35). Singling out and shaming oppositional figures, especially women, invoke feelings of fear and cultural stasis in Egypt. In the long run, the security state continues to regularize the relationship between the governing regimes and the civil society, including women's movements, despite of the radical change in economic systems and political leadership. Unlike Nasser, Presidents Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak encourage capitalism and aim to protect their rule through adopting internationally-open diplomacy to form strong relationships with Western countries, particularly the USA. Accordingly, Sadat and Mubarak work adamantly to fabricate a democratic atmosphere and to legalize violence and repression against dissent. Sadat and Mubarak allow Islamists to access the political scenes to weaken democratic opposition and thus "religion substituted nation, history and geography" (Abu-Zeid 2004, 60). Islamists dominate the civil scene and offer social and economic services to help many poor families abandoned by the capitalist and open-policy economy. They propose that Islamic rule is the only solution to the problems of social and economic inequalities, while Islamic feminists seize the chance as well and promote their conservative ideals that "the veil" and women's "seclusion" are moral duties and signs of "respectability" (Abdel-Latif 2008, 15). At the same time, liberal Feminist organizations in 1980s and 1990s such as the New Woman Group (1980) and the Committee for the Defence of Women and Family Rights (1985) are allowed to emerge but their limited financial abilities, compared to the Muslim Brotherhood, reduce their societal influence.

Nevertheless, the civil organization's and the Muslim Brotherhood's bargains with the authority in Egypt neither immune them against the security state nor solidify their political power. Rather, they become easy targets of imprisonment, coercive detention and oppression, especially after the rise of violent Islamists and terrorist attacks in 1980s and 1990s. For instance, in 1981, President Mubarak introduces the emergency law that, under the pretext of fighting terrorism, "heavily polices and intimidates nongovernmental organizations, opposition activists, prominent political figures and parties, homosexuals, artists, and ordinary civilians" and thus creating "an atmosphere of immunity in which the abuses of basic civil rights have been normalized," and encouraging "a public knowledge of public and domestic violence as related to women's feelings

of shame and dishonor" (Smith 1230). As Islamic feminists withdraw from the political scene, implying that politics is men's field, they not only reintroduce the early accusations of liberal feminists as "non-conformists," "westernized," and "lesbians" but also their approval of sexist attitudes such as "men make better political leaders than women do; when jobs are scarce, men should have more to a job than women; a wife must always obey her husband and is acceptable for a man have more than one wife or beat his wife" (Kucinskas, 764) undermine women's public freedom. In the end, the media scene is dominated by state feminists. The first ladies, Jihan Sadat and Susan Mubarak, respectively are propagated nationally and internationally as leading Egyptian women's equality, reducing women's problems in personal status laws.

At the time when Mubarak's regime pretends to support democracy and women's causes, that many western societies complicitly endorse his rule, sexual harassment and violations of human rights are on the rise. Leila Ahmed argues persuasively that the resurgence of the veil and conservative clothes in 1980s and 1990s, despite fulfilling religious dictates, becomes a way "of fending off the unwelcome male gaze and verbal and touch abuses" (2014, 23). To avoid sexual violations and attain a high cultural status, many Egyptian women in 1990s cover their bodies. As for Christian women, many believe that they are harassed on account of their religion as harassers refer to them as "blue boned" (El-Nadeem 23). In 1980s and 1990s, Egypt witnesses the first cases of group rape in public spaces in its modern history which are "Maadi girl" (1985), "Imbaba girl" (1985) and "Al-Ataba girl" (1992). In the first two cases, the raped girls are kidnapped from their male companions, the fiancé of the first and the husband of the second, and group raped at night (Sedeek). In the third case, an unveiled girl is sexually molested and raped by four men on a bus and no one interfered to help the girl. In defending their atrocious act, the rapists in the three cases tell the court that women were "immoral prostitutes" who arouse them "sexually" and blamed these women for making themselves vulnerable by going out at night and/or being unveiled (Sadeek). These rapists echo the dominantly normalized image of women in public space generally and unveiled women in particular as "dishonored," "blue-boned" or "prostitutes" and so "their rape becomes acceptable. They are to bear the shame for their own rape" (Kamp 63). Egyptian state's intentional disregard of its responsibility in protecting women in public spaces under progressive and conservative cultural forms entails that as a guarantor of security, it has the absolute power to establish criteria that must be met for anyone to enter public and political spaces. Part two of the paper argues that 21st-century political and feminist opposition in Egypt offer new perception of public spaces that expand its uses and forms.

Overt Sexual Violence and State Unaccountability in 21st-century Egypt

A dominant aspect of international politics generally and third world politics in the 21st-century can be seen as their exhausted possibilities and measures, particularly in relation to issues of security, women's rights and access to public spaces. Since 9/11/2001, fighting terrorism becomes a worldwide excuse for collective and individual breach of human rights. In Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, scenes of coercive torture and sexual humiliation of male and female prisoners have been systematically used a tactic of oppression and subjugation by American soldiers. Under claims of fighting potential threats, the American administration, with the support of Western democratic countries, launches wars on foreign territories such as Iraq and Afghanistan, during which human and civil rights are violated on daily basis. As American Administration "prioritizes defense and set aside constitutional principles," it sets up "a long, unresolved debate over the balance between government secrecy and transparency" (Bendix and Quirk 400). International war

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on terrorism endorses feelings of revenge and normalizes military interferences on security grounds. Like in the USA, French authorities show intolerance with dissent during the Yellow Vest demonstrations (2018). French security forces arrest protesters and deploy tear gas and water cannon to tackle the anti-government protests. Streets are militarized and President Emmanuel Macron, who ignores protests for weeks, seems to adopt cliché strategy of giving concessions but impliedly denigrating protests by describing them as "unacceptable" and emphasizing that "No anger justifies attacking a policeman or pillaging a public place or shop. When violence breaks out, freedom is lost" (Vandoorne 1). These western violations of human rights and freedom of expression insinuate an alarming humanitarian crisis. They also give green lights to many dictatorial regimes, like in Egypt, to exploit human rights and dissent, particularly women and the marginalized.

In 2000, the National Council for Women (NCW) is founded and Susan Mubarak becomes its president. NCW offers some social and cultural rights for women such as women get the right to divorce under the khul-law in 2000 and in 2004 women are allowed to pass on their nationality to their biological children. Some political parties encourage the formation of women's committees such as The Progressive Women's Union and Women's Secretariat of the Labor Party that focus on empowering women's economic and social status. Nevertheless, facts on the ground indicate that Egyptian women go through tough and impoverishing socio-economic and cultural conditions. For example, between 2004 and 2010, Egypt witnesses exceptional number of public protests and strikes in which middle- and working-class women have been active and vital participants. They protest against "the sell-off of the public sector, privatizing a record 17 enterprises during its first year in office" (justice for all, 23). During the strikes, workers in private and public sectors in the textile and clothing industry, building materials workers, transport workers, the Cairo underground Metro workers, food processing workers, bakers, sanitation workers, oil workers in Suez, and many others occupy public spaces, calling for social justice and freedom. In 2008, women at the Mansura-Espana garment factory occupy the factory for several weeks to stop the factory owner locking them out and selling the land to a property developer. As the female workers organized a sit-in, sleeping between the machines at night, managers encouraged by the silence of the state, "threatened to report the women activists as prostitutes because they were spending the night with male colleagues in the occupation" (El-Enany 1).

Nonetheless, defaming female works at Mansura-Espana garment factory resonates with unmatched, nationwide practices of public sexual and political violence against Egyptian women of all socio-cultural and economic backgrounds who are subjected to daily, many times group, sexual harassment in the streets, public transport, shops, markets, schools, universities, clubs, tourist spots and the workplace. Sexual harassment is usually seen as "a way of passing time, or a way of flouting men's power over women" (Tadros 2013). Harassers and rapists are hardly punished or blamed. Rather, women are advised to stay home to avoid sexual harassment and shame. Gender violence is inseparable from overt public political violence. When independent feminist organizations like The New Woman Research Centre and Daughter of the Land Association openly criticize the Egyptian state for its unaccountability towards gender violence and integrate their efforts with emerging democratic and human rights movements such as Enough and The Egyptian Movement for Change, female activists not only "had their respectability wiped out by sexually assaulting them in public… raping and sexually torturing them in jail" (Tisdall 16), but also faced the baltagiya or thugs who mixed with all anti-Mubarak protests defaming them with "Islamophobic, gendered and working-class phobic metaphors, rendering peaceful political movements with overwhelming public support into hypervisible, but utterly unrecognizable,

mobs"(Amar 328). For example, in 2005, women protestors and a female journalist who gather in front of the Press Syndicate to call for a boycott of the referendum on constitutional reform, they are sexually harassed by baltagiya. These violations are caught on camera and video. These excessive forms of public sexual and political violence show the Egyptian state as obsolete and as losing control and surveillance over public spaces. Mubarak employs traditional security forms of repression and ignores the emergence of online and social media as uncontrolled spaces of mobilization, opposition and suggestions.

Since political authority in the post-2011 revolution Egypt is divided between traditional political powers in the country: the military represented in the Security Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), and General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the Muslim Brotherhood represented in president Mohammed Morsi, violence and traditional ideas of female shame continue and intensify. SCAF, Morsi and al-Sisi target not only feminists and female activists but also thousands, if not millions, of common Egyptian women who are described as "foreign agents," "brainwashed," and "destroyers of the culture and the system of the Egyptian state" (Amar 331). Here, state sexual violence becomes a strategy of reconstituting authoritarian politics in the post-2011 revolution era by adopting what Paul Amar calls "the doctrine of humanized securitization in the Global South.' Amar explains how this doctrine is realized through two processes: "one is the forcible protection and moral rehabilitation of the citizenry, restoring dignity and "humanity" to certain communities; another is the securing and policing of certain forms of space, labor, and heritage seen as anchors for counter-hegemonic development models" (331). Within the post-2011 Egyptian contexts, the military and the Muslim Brotherhood agree to isolate and defame women, minorities, like Christians, and democrats who explore public spaces through organized and planned sexual violence that not only produces "Tahrir as the mosh pit for a hypermasculine mob, a space constantly bursting with predatory sexuality and not disciplined enough to articulate either coherent leadership or policy," but also alerts emergency security measures against foreigners such as 'imperialist [international] journalists who should be challenged and humiliated"(334). From 2011 to 2014, many Arab and western female journalists are sexually attack in Tahrir Square. Similarly, in October 2011, Coptic protesters who peacefully gather in front of Maspero to object on the demolition of a church in Upper Egypt are savagely attacked by the security and military forces. The attacks result in 24 deaths, mostly among the Coptic protestors, and 212 injuries. Throughout modern history, Copts realize that they are vulnerable and that they are easy targets to terrorists. To get state protections, Copts are marginalized and silenced. Once Copts in 2011 show dissent and integrate with revolutionary trends, the state disciplines them.

Here, the SCAF and Morsi reconstitute public spaces as perilous, masculinist and exclusive. Only Islamists and pro-SCAF protesters are protected during protests. Through violence, then, the SCAF and Morsi's party, the Muslim Brotherhood, try to reestablish the pre-2011 political polarization in the country, showing themselves as the only credible political actors in Egypt. They marginalize liberal parties, impose their moralistic protection on Egyptian people and persistently adopt similar media-oriented ideas of female shame, blaming acts of sexual harassment and rape on female protesters. For instance, General el-Sisi defends the virginity tests against female protester in 2011, underpinning "a belief among military officials that women at the demonstrations were already disreputable and likely to not be virgins" (Abdelmonem 2015, 41). The SCAF advises women "not to go to unsafe places to avoid being assaulted" (Keeping Women Out 2014, 25), urging "honorable Egyptians" to oppose "these demonstrations taking place at a critical moment as leading to negative consequences" (Egypt's Supreme Council 2011). Similarly, Islamist supporters of Morsi such as the famous Salafi sheikh Abu Islam states that

"women activists are going to Tahrir Square not to protest but to be sexually abused because they had wanted to be raped" (Keeping Women Out, 25). General Adel El Afifi, a member of the Shura Council Human Rights Committee, echoes Abu Islam that "the girl knows that she is going down amongst thugs, so she has to protect herself before asking the police to protect her, the police can't even protect themselves... in some cases, the girl is a 100% responsible for her rape" (Keeping Women Out, 25).

Mona Eltahawy, an Egyptian-American journalist and activist, describes police sexual violence in the following way: "my body had become Tahrir Square, and it was time for revenge against the revolution that had broken and humiliated Hosni Mubarak's police. And it continues" (2011). Reclaiming power over public space, Egyptian civilians, particularly women, threaten the long-established and immuned security apparatuses in Egypt. Female Islamists, although they participate in the public spaces during the revolution, retreat to a secondary position after Islamist men take political control. As usual, Islamist women fail their liberal and Christian revolution-counterparts. For example, Islamists women abandon and defame protests by liberal and politically-unaffiliated women. This fact is emphasized by the female representative of women's committee of the Brotherhood's political party who says that women should not march or protest because it's more "dignified" to let their husbands' brothers demonstrate for them (Nowaira 2013). Women's calls for a real reform of personal status laws, sexual violence legislations and of the security apparatus are defamed as "destroying family life, the basic building block of society. It is a final step in the intellectual and cultural invasion of Muslim countries" (Nowaira 2013). The Muslim Brotherhood objects to women's freedom and equality concerning issues of the legal age of marriage, marital rape, FGM, domestic violence and abolishing discrimination in marriage, access to divorce, custody of children and inheritance, seeing them as a threat to the integrity of their Islamic state. Muslim Brotherhood's youth publically attack and humiliate famous female figures like Shahanda Maklad and Mervat Moussa who opposed Morsi's rule (Tadros 2013, 2-3). Nevine Ebeid, an activist, explains how "political Islam has meant there is a discourse opposed to women's rights" and so "created a climate that encourages sexual harassment and sexual violence against women in Egypt… that is why else are the attacks concentrated where the liberal demonstrations take place?" (Maqbool 2013). As a regionally empowered movement with support from progressive Turkey and some European countries, the negative attitude of Muslim Brotherhoods, particularly women, towards women's causes undermine their credibility and power of mobilization.

As for Christians in post-2011 Egypt, President Morsi fails to mobilize for democratic change in Egypt as he promises in his pre-election speeches. Coptic Christians, particularly women, are systematically harassed and marginalized as well. Muslim Brotherhood has a TV station and gets support of Qatar's famous TV, al Jazeera. However, they keep delivering negative image about Muslim Brotherhoods as strict and discriminatory group. For example, during Morsi's rule, extreme Islamists, who dominate media, target Christian and non-Muslim women, and ask them to adhere to Islamic codes of dress and public appearance. Copts face calls of proselytizing and the building of new churches is restricted (Sedra 1). The SCAF and Morsi's systematic, state-backed crackdown on women's movements and opposition paves the way for President Al-Sisi to entrench the authoritarian state that so many Egyptians bravely revolted against in 2011. Under the pretext of fighting terrorism and foreign conspiracies, al-Sisi restricts and defames activities and funding of almost 30,000 human rights, civil, feminist and nongovernmental organizations. As many of these organization expand their political activities and start to affect public awareness, they "suddenly classified them as "illegal" on the grounds that they are not officially registered

under Egypt's existing, restrictive NGO law 84/2002. Accordingly, the Ministry of Social Solidarity is "empowered to control the activities, funding, and board membership of NGOs as well as to dissolve NGOs when deemed appropriate." (Brechenmacher 13)

The continual trade-offs between national security and international security on the one side and between civil liberties and human rights on the other lead to difficult results worldwide. For example, Western governments, including USA, do not take serious measures to prevent the SCAF, Morsi or al-Sisi for their palpable crimes and violations against women and dissent. Rather, western complicity towards violations of women's human rights since 2011 to the present resonates with a growing authoritarian turn in international politics and cultures. Obama-Clinton administration shows political-moral inconsistency as they support the military rule (2011-2012) and Mohammed Morsi (2012-2013), regardless of their democratic agenda. In 2013, Samira Ibrahim, a famous Egyptian protester who is the only one out of 17 arrested women to file two suits against the military to hold them accountable for humiliating virginity tests in 2011, is denied the International Women of Courage Award in 2013 due to allegations of her anti-Semitism and anti-American tweets. Ibrahim confesses that she is against some Israeli and American policies and practices in the Middle East, but she does not support violence. Nevertheless, Ibrahim is defamed and denied the chance to express her opinion in a democratic country like USA. The marginalization of Ibrahim can also be seen as a part of "violence against Black and Latino dissenters and a heightened sense of intolerance for the rights of minorities, refugees, women and the LGBT community in nearly every realm of civic life and culture. This authoritarian tendency prepares civil society for the rise of politicians such as Donald Trump, and it empowers his supporters to spit on Latino migrant activists, to assault Black Lives Matter activists" (Gonzales 83). Conceivably, Trump's administration supports al-Sisi's rule despite obvious violence and violations against dissent and women. The final part of this paper argues that Egyptian women's 21st-century activism is part of an international civil efforts against the huge rise of militarism and authoritarian thought.

Anti-Female Shame Strategy and (Inter)national Solidarity

The new forms of online and public media and the scale and methods of public mobilization utilized in the majority of 21st century protests worldwide mark new stage of struggles and resistance to different degrees of political repression and inefficiency. In Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and later in France, unaffiliated, leaderless citizens post their sufferings and suggestions on social networks. Petitions are signed and gradually their exploration of public spaces encourages solidarity, heterogeneity and action. At the centre of these innovative reappropriations of public spaces is women's unique, anti-shame participation, especially in conservative and autocratic countries like Egypt. In May 2017, President El-Sisi's attempts, like the SCAF's and President Morsi's, a final crackdown on dissent through the new NGO law (Law 70) that imposes "unprecedented draconian restrictions" on the public and research activities of these organizations (Gomaa 2017). Almost 50, 000 civil and women's organizations in Egypt are negatively affected by the law that systematically meant, Timo Bahr argues, for their "fragmentation and balkanization" (2012, 8). Yet, Behr continues the solidarity of the civil society in Egypt empowers their political position on the international levels so that the EU acknowledges that "fostering pluralistic and inclusive civil societies is therefore considered to be a central priority for the new ENP" (8-9). Saskia Brechenmacher echoes Behr that el-Sisi's sweeping assault on associational life in Egypt "has forced civil groups to reorient their activities, seek out new funding sources, and

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move toward more resilient organizational models" (2017 1). Many feminist and civil groups are able to cohere and perform economically and socially under great official pressure and unprecedented propaganda that defame them of being having anti-culture and anti-stability agendas.

This paper argues further that women's and civil movements in 21st-century Egypt, particularly after 2011 revolution, exert great effort to deconstruct two intertwined problems which are international isolation and monoculture and monolithic politics in the country through proposing and mobilizing for alternative, pluralistic knowledge. Firstly, contemporary feminist organizations and civil bodies in Egypt succeed in refuting accusations of being agents of Western imperialism and of cutting funds. El-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, Nazra for Feminist Studies, New Women Foundation, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, and the Hisham Mubarak Law Center are highly respectable, reputable and internationally reliable human rights and feminist organizations that systematically document, research and publish on issues of sexual violence and violations of human rights in post-2011 Egypt. The knowledge produced and circulated by these independent organizations, that are based on verified data and statistics, and tested information and reliable accounts, strengthen their "political" resistance against the oppressive, complicit Egyptian state. Nazra for Feminist Studies and the New Women Foundation do a great job, documenting, analyzing and publishing on political, sexual and gender violence in pre- and post- 2011 revolution eras. For instance, Nazra for Feminist Studies monitors and publishes minute details and the Parliamentarian Election in 2010 from a gender perspective. It also documents and publishes research papers and reports on women's social and political rights. Likewise, the New Women Foundation offers research papers and practical events such as workshops and conferences on women's problems such as integrating women within trade unions and fighting women's economic marginalization. El-Nadeem Center publishes on sexual violence against women stating that "publication is a way of showing our solidarity with our daughters and sisters who paid this high price from their mental and physical health. Publication is a way to confront the state with its responsibilities to protect all its citizens [and] the importance of introducing legislation to penalize violence and discriminations against women" (el-Nadeem 4). The online availability of these documentations, researches and publications on women and political struggle in Egypt challenges all traditional forms of repression and silencing used by patriarchal authorities in Egypt.

This documentation of the collective memory and resistance of women and the civil society, who have been at the forefront of the 2011 revolution in Egypt, definitely maintain a political space of resistance that condemns the national regimes' cruelty and western complicity. For instance, under pressure of women, the military council is forced to admit to and abolish "virginity tests" against detained protesters like Samira Ibrahim who, with the support of feminist and civil organizations, sues them (Abdelmonem 2015, 27). The SCAF and Presidents Morsi, and el-Sisi apologize for and promise to fight sexual violence against women, admitting their political responsibility for protecting women; hence denying women responsibility or shame concerning sexual violations (Exposing State Hypocrisy 2014, 25; Kirkpatrick 2014). As for Islamist women, their significant and visible roles in public spheres, particularly after Morsi's downfall in 2013, propose a great shift in their traditional views on women's freedom. Islamist women not only share physical spaces with men and go through sexual violations, torture, and death (Saleh and Finn 2013), but also act independently without men's protection. Liberal civil and feminist organizations in Egypt defend Islamists' right for access to public spaces and condemn state violence against them. As Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists are forced to go underground, a

power-knowledge vacuum is created to be wisely filled by the civil society, including women's movements, that shows political will and intention for change. Despite violence and oppression, Egyptian feminists and activists does not withdraw from the public and media spaces they have gained in 2011.

Secondly, the organizational power of women's movements in post-2011 revolution strengthens their cultural influence. For example, in 2011-2012, despite the widespread of chaos and sexual violence, and the withdrawal of the police from the streets, prominent anti-sexual harassment initiatives emerge, including OpAntish, Tahrir Bodyguard, Anti-Sexual Harassment, I Saw Harassment, and Imprint Movement. One innovative aspect of these initiatives and feminist groups is their informed, unified utilization of diverse public and media spaces with the aim of documenting violations and spreading new knowledge on defense methods and legal procedures to be taken by women against the harassers and rapists. The solidarity of these anti-gender violence movements sustains their efforts in the face of state-sponsored feminists and movements like HarassMap that aim to discredit and divide them (Galan 2016, 71). Through invading public spaces with pamphlets, banners, and posters that condemn the harassers and rapists, not the female victims, these initiatives endorse new social awareness and encourage common women to defend their rights. Women's accounts of their sexual violence "provides new scripts for women's options in responding to violence, mark rape as a visible event, and remind women of their own agency in the face of assault and help women reclaim a sense of agency and reduce shame and self-blame" (Cermele 1162). Consequently, Egyptian women of all socio-cultural backgrounds and political orientations publically reveal their experiences of sexual harassment and rape (Fouda 2011; Saad 2013). Women neither hide nor feel ashamed nor guilty of their sexual violations. Rather, huge anti-sexual violence protests are organized under SCAF and Morsi to openly condemn their unaccountable, complicit silence towards sexual violence (Tadros 2015, 1346).

Because of the pressure of feminists and the civil society, new legislations and laws that curtail public sexual violence are introduced in 2014 and Female Police Department is founded in 2015 to fight public sexual harassment (Youm7 2014). Women's public freedom informs their personal life and attitudes towards their state's inefficiency as well. For instance, Egyptian women explicitly discuss old taboos of sexual relationships between men and women, divorce, domestic violence and sexual orientations in public, in television talk shows, radio programs and blogs. Moreover, with the huge rise of divorce rates in 21st-century Egypt, discussions and criticism of Egyptian sexist personal status laws and procedures dominate media. In 2017, the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMS) reports that the divorce rate stood at 1.2 per 1,000 marriages in the period between 1996-1999, compared to a rate of 2.2 per 1,000 marriages in 2015. CAPMS reveals further that from 2006-2015; women who were 20-34 years old had the highest female divorce rate at 60.7 percent. Although divorced women in Egypt still suffer a negative image in society, the rise in cases of divorce can reveal a growing female awareness against dominant views of women as vulnerable and a rejection of unequal marriage and divorce laws. In a similar way, Coptic women and men openly discuss the limitations of the Coptic Orthodox personal status regulations.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to offer a comprehensive perspective on the development of women's rights in modern Egypt. It particularly focuses on the concepts of gender shame and public violence. It shows that Egyptian women's movements and struggles for equality and freedom are

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directly affected by and closely reflect the failure of political transition to democracy and respect of human rights in the country. I argue that 21st-century Egypt witness the emergence of a new wave of radical public feminist activities that integrate with political opposition against Mubarak's corrupt rule and continue to fight different forms of autocratic rule and unprecedented forms of overt and organized public sexual violence. These new, post-2011 feminist and women movements offer optimistic forms of solidarity and persistence that empower their cultural and political impact. Yet, women's movements should be seen within an international perspective on struggle between growing forces of patriarchy and opposition.

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