

# Civil Society in Egypt: A Critical Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

*Egypt is constitutionally known as a Republic, however, in practice it is an authoritarian state. The President as elected head of the state has absolute power to take decisions with regards to administering and running the state. This extends to undermine the provisions created by the constitution for citizens' rights. As a result, there is little room for any public discourse and civil society activities. This article is an analysis of the civil society growth and prospect under successive regimes in post-colonial Egypt to argue that Egyptian society is largely shaped by the state centric political culture.*

**Keywords:** Governance, Democracy, Civic Rights, Movements, Political Culture.

## Introduction

Civil Society is generally understood as groups of like-minded people coming together to protect the citizens' rights as provisioned in the constitution, especially in a democratic system. Though the term civil society is identified with the emergence of modern nation states propagating the ideas of liberty, fraternity, equality, justice and freedom of expression that foregrounds the functioning of a democratic state system, the existence of such bodies or societies in a non-democratic or authoritarian system cannot be completely ruled out. It would also be wrong to assume that all civil societies are same and are guided by a uniform principle. However, there are certain common principles and rules that guide the founding of civil societies. Conceptually and historically, the idea of civil society refers to a disciplined or 'good or civilized' society that complements governance in a state system. In contemporary times, the meaning and significance of civil societies

have undergone layers of radical changes with associational groups networking for their interests, and seen mostly standing in opposition to or opposite of state to claim rights. Thus, the presence of a robust civil society is seen as a sign of healthy democracy.

This article is an analysis of civil society in Egypt as conceived, understood and practiced in the period since Egypt experienced modernity through Western colonialism. This experience was limited largely to the political dimension and socially impacted only a small section of the Egyptian society. The Egyptian example is for representative conceptual purpose based on qualitative analytical method to reiterate that civil society cannot function in a stateless condition and can be found even in politically hostile atmosphere under specific conditions. This is because civil society require a sense of a structured space and belonging to operate towards a common goal.

### **Civil Society and Social Dimension**

In analyzing the Egyptian civil society, the aspect of ‘social dimension’ is imperative, as representative of peoples’ consciousness and aspirations, as well as for determining the success or failure of it. It is not possible to address the question of governance, even in a well-functioning democracy, in isolation without referring to autonomy, liberty and equality, and this is where the aspects of social dimension in a broader sense become relevant. The inter-relationship between democracy, governance and social dimension is always subject to the state. To understand the social dimension in the context of Egypt, it is necessary to take into account the aspects of Egyptian society, which is complex and has undergone complicated processes of change induced by the emergent nature of politics. Ordinarily, the nature of society determines the political culture and character of a state, whereas in Egypt since its earliest history, it has been the state centred political culture which contributed in a significant way to shape the character of Egyptian society. When one looks at the case of Egypt, a very basic question comes to mind: ‘why civil societies emerge?’ However, in engaging with this question, it also must not be taken for granted that civil societies always reflect and represent the issues and concerns of common citizens. This was particularly the case in Egypt where dominant sections of the society, which can also be considered as the ‘elites’ were behind the development

of organizations that presented themselves as civil society groups to claim stake over state power. In fact, the political turmoil that the country underwent was also due to the tremendous pressure the successive regimes faced from various non-political groups at different levels dominated by affluent class.

Most scholars agree that differing values and beliefs have contributory role to play in shaping the political culture of a society. Moreover, as pointed out by Powell and Strom (2015), the historical experiences and related social factors need to be taken into account while trying to understand the temporality of associational networks. While cultural elements like language, religion-belief system or ethnicity as markers of groups have their part to contribute in this process of associational networking, these are not the only cultural patterns that lead to the development of political cultures. Within such groups may also exist differing sets of ideologies that are more inclined towards creating a civic culture in a larger or universal sense. For civil society to become more wide reaching and influential, such a political culture becomes important and this is where one can see the differing trajectory of civil movements, even in countries like Egypt. Because, as reiterated by scholars like Powell, the 'civic' generally encapsulates the historical, traditional and cultural values of a society, as representative of its world view. Egypt is not a homogenous society and there are minority groups whose voices could not be heard either politically or socially, mainly because of the nature of state politics.

## **Development of Civil Society in Egypt**

Though civil society emerged in Egypt earlier (in 1821) than many developing countries, it could not flourish and reach its full potential and underwent various phases of transition.

### ***First Inception (1821-1881)***

During the period when modernization project was fervently undertaken in the western world, it had bearings on the other societies including the Arab world. Egypt had relatively more advanced society than many other Arab countries which was instrumental in the inception of civil society in early 19th century. M A Faksh (1980) links the spread of

modern education since the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century under Muhamad Ali's rule (1805-1849), consequent of Egypt's exposure to the West via French invasion alongside the rise of elite class, which created a condition for the working class to construct a middle class society of professionals. This section of the society were the ones who articulated their rights for which associations and organisations were formed. However, such initiatives to form associations had no confrontational history rather they worked in complementarity with the state functionaries. In fact, some of the founding members belonged to the status group having been part of state functionaries or connected to the ruling families with privileges and with enough exposure to the western world.

### *The Colonial Phase (1882-1922)*

The colonial period in Egypt was short but like in many other parts of the colonised world including India and Africa, it helped to awaken the nationalist consciousness among the peoples which found expression in mass movements against the British colonial government. These mobilizations were political in nature but provided the ground for activism to protect the interest of the people and were voluntary in nature. As cited by Hassan (2011), these forums and associations in essence propagated the modern concept of activism which paved the way for more organized civil societies like the trade unions (1898), the cooperatives (1908), political parties (1907), chambers of commerce (1910), professional associations (1912) and the feminist movement (1919) in the case of Egypt.

### *The Liberal Phase (1922- 1952)*

The first quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century Egypt was the most liberal in its approach. This may be linked with the experience of freedom movement and the ideology associated with it that was prevalent during the period, including the adoption of a Constitution in 1923 guaranteeing many rights. Basic freedoms like the right to form associations and freedom of expression can be linked to the existing political atmosphere of the time. This constitution, however, faced resistance from the monarchical government of Egypt as it wanted to continue the control over the citizens. This saw civil society of the country coming together to defend their rights given by the newly adopted constitution. Civil society groups

and associations tried to mobilise the citizens against the ruling monarch by using popular media and came out with publications of newspapers and magazines. Hassan (2011) notes that this period saw publication of many daily newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines in Arabic and European languages to demand for transparency and accountability from the government, free elections and the right to form unions by the working class. This phase saw the first revolution in Egypt powerful enough to dethrone the monarch on July 23, 1952 and the Free Officers (by the name of which the revolution was started) ushered in a new period of development in Egypt.

### *The Nasser Phase (1952-1970)*

The dethronement of the monarch led to the forming of a Presidential government under the leadership of a military officer, Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1952 with all powers of the state concentrated in his hands as the head of the state. He also brought the civil society organizations directly under the authority of the state. According to Hassan, his regime promulgated amendments number of times in the constitution by using his presidential power and making himself the supreme authority. Ironically, this period also saw the beginning of a regime that re-imposed many of the ruling principles having monarchical characteristics through these amendments. By superimposing the authority of the state, represented by himself, the role and function of the judiciary and legislature were undermined. He introduced regulations to control and restrict the civil society organizations and restricted working class movement by forming a centralized Federation of Trade Unions. The state interference and control over the civil society was imposed through the enactment of law in 1964 subject to which the administration was empowered to reject proposals for creation of civil society organizations as legal bodies, to dissolve or amalgamate. Thus, for the same actions by the civil society the judiciary became an important and mandatory recourse. Nasser's sudden death in 1970 was followed by certain policy changes in state rule but without much relief for the civil society in general.

### **Rethinking Civil Society Post Nasser**

Post Nasser was a period of open-door policy that was initiated by

Muhammad Anwar Sadat (1970-1981) and continued by Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011). The entry of capitalist market economy as well as a more liberalized political outlook that was to help governance was envisioned by Sadat who recognized the importance of multi-party system. It was a way to respond to the rising demand for a change coming from various civil society groups, though it was very subjective and short lived. There was slow but steady development of civil society organizations during both regimes and were becoming wider in their activities despite the state control and restrictions. Large number of associations expanded considerably in the mid-1970s, but stagnated by middle of 1980s. It was at the time of economic liberalization that the number of registered associations and groups increased by 41 % in 1981, as noted by Al-Sayyid (1993). However, authorities viewed such expansion as politically risky and adopted a brutal policy to control them. According to Al-Sayyid

Egypt's voluntary associations may be classified as class-based associations, professional societies, social care and development organizations, traditional institutions, and political parties. The class-based associations are of two types: those that represent businessmen and those that limit membership to workers. The largest representative bodies of the first type are undoubtedly chambers of commerce and industry, which are divided into functional and provincial chapters grouped together under a General Federation of Chambers of Commerce in Egypt. This category includes also the Federation of Egyptian Industries, which groups managers of industrial firms in both the public and private sectors. (pp. 228-242)

There was wide spread fear and apprehension among the citizens in Egypt of the state apparatus and generally people did not want to interact with the law enforcement agencies like the police. Even for most routine kind of interaction with the police there was reluctance, unlike in other countries where police is an integral part of the larger society in matters related to law and order. People identified police with regimic brutality in Egypt. The basic right which also includes general safety of individuals in public spaces got undermined by the police in violation of the law. Though the constitution clearly lays down the guidelines vis-à-vis the fundamental rights of the citizens,

the state level interference in the everyday life of the people raise pertinent questions as to what it means to be a citizen or what should be the state mechanism to ensure the protection of such rights.

### **Proliferation and Activities of Civil Society in Egypt**

It is interesting to note that Egypt has seen birth of some thirty thousand civil society organizations by the end of 2008 even though only a handful minority have been active in real. But the number of these organizations indicate the growing desperation of people for a change in their lives. Most of these organizations though may have originated with an objective to raise awareness about some specific societal issues, one cannot ignore the larger context in which they are located. Majority of the organizations have religious character with reform oriented agendas but these bodies too have interrelation with the existing socio-political and economic reality. Besides the more social and religious kind of organizations, there have been youth oriented groups and clubs, cooperatives, professional associations, trade and workers' unions to highlight the fact that people were aware of the importance of such organizations. Though there are many legally registered organizations, the numbers are misleading in terms of their real strength as pressure groups, especially when many organizations are present only in paper without any practical involvement.

As mentioned above, civil society in Egypt has a long history and its development goes back to early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many of their early activities were related to major political events relevant for a modern nation and thus, set the tune for future organizations. As per the Egypt Human Development Report (2008), one of the earliest examples may be that of initiated during the time of Mohamed Ali Pasha, 1805-1854, for political, economic and social reforms demanding for modernization as a result Egypt's exposure to the developments taking place in the outside world. Civil society organizations always faced problems from the state. State never allowed those activities which make citizens aware about their rights and raise the issues of lack of governance.

The first formal civil society organization to be founded in Egypt was by a Greek Association, founded in 1821 to promote and serve the interest of the Greek minority in Egypt. Many of the philanthropic

groups and associations, mostly of religious nature, emerged as a counter to the growing evangelical missions of the West, which was significant contributor in the rise of nationalism in Egypt. For instance, the establishment of an Islamic hospital (Al Agouza) in 1878 and the establishment of a school (the Coptic Al Maseel Mashkoura) in 1881, which received financial support from the Wakf (the Muslim Board). The establishment of the Cairo University in 1908 was also a result of such initiatives under one of the Wakfs promoted by the royal family. This perhaps is one reason that led to the advocacy by some organizations for highlighting the issues and problems faced by Egyptian women in the larger society. The foundation of a women's social organization in 1909 by a feminist of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Egypt, Hoda Shaarawi, and later the foundation of the Union of Educated Egyptian Women in 1914 indicates the desire among the general people and particularly the civil society members to address the endemic political and social problems in Egypt.

Slowly people realized the importance of civil society organizations and became part of various civil society organizations. The objective of those people who involved with these organizations was for the welfare of the society. Many sections of the society were deprived from their basic rights. Egyptian women were very much neglected by the society as well as the government. Their participation in political system was almost non-existent. Egypt is a rigid patriarchal society and all the decisions are taken by the male members of the family and the society, and women have very limited or no role in it. In 1923 Shaarawi organization was founded to raise issues related to the women in Egypt. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century development of feminist movements across the world, including Syria and Lebanon, may be paralleled with what was happening in Egypt of that time as associations and syndicates were making appearance.

Compared to the later civil organizations of 21<sup>st</sup> century, the early associations were much more matured in their approach and organizational skill, which had set the ground for revolution in 1952. Under the monarchical constitution, even the middle class in Egypt participated in voluntary activities during this early phase. Many institutionalized bodies of women came out with various issues of



women and represented a variety of political and intellectual movements espousing ideologies like liberal, communist and Islamic ideologies, promoting the many faces of nationalism (Arab, Islamic, and a return to the roots of Ancient Egypt), with debates on the constituents of the Egyptian identity and citizenship, and made the citizens and state realize the importance of women's participation in politics and decision making for the welfare of the society. It may not have been the golden period of civil society organizations in Egypt but certainly in the history of civil society in Egypt, it was the most promising period with over a thousand organizations enabled by the new legislative framework under the civil law. According to the Egypt Human Development Report (2008), among the prominent organizations were the Muslim youth, Muslim Brotherhood, Muslim Sisterhood, Muslim Women's Association, Syndicate of Physicians, Press Syndicate, and Syndicate of Engineers. The development of 1923 Constitution thus saw the phase of growth of the organizations in Egypt, allowing organizations to either reactivate or to be founded within a short span of time. Some of these organizations were, interestingly, funded and supported by several members of the urban and political elites.

### **Civil Society at Crossroads in Egypt**

In Egypt the situation of civil society organizations changed after the 1952 military revolt with the imposition of the dominant political ideology that propounded socialism leading to centralization through bureaucratization of all state functionaries and sectors. Post revolution the state took precautions to repress dissidents by introducing a comprehensive policy to restrict the freedom enjoyed by these organizations. The already mentioned law of 1964 empowered the Ministry of Social Affairs to control the existing organizations and even to dissolve them. Due to the laws amended for restriction of civil society activities some of the smaller organizations disappeared or ceased to exist, decreasing the number of the ones functioning. Government ensured that some of the smaller ones were incorporated into the semi-government organizations to function as grass-root associations representing the welfare state. These newly incorporated organizations worked primarily in the health and education sector at the community level.

A new political atmosphere had developed during 1971 under the regime of Anwar Sadat that initially favoured some degree of political pluralism allowing formation of political parties by interested citizens. He tried to bring about a shift in the socio-political and economic environment by adopting a more liberal policies and promoting an open door policy in economy. This new idea of changing the situation in Egypt was important as it ushered in a new global order in the form of greater interaction between Egyptian and global economy with the technological use in communication. The open door policy adopted during the period of Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011) made foreign investment easier and acceptable as government accommodated these entities for Egypt's welfare. However, liberalization did not mean that Egypt became a free economy as all these transformations were tightly controlled and monitored by the state. There still was no scope for private individual companies to enter into any kind of agreement with foreign organizations. This was why the business associations had to collaborate with the government agencies and they entered into mutually beneficial nexus.

While Egypt was trying to overcome major economic hurdles by becoming a part of the global world during this period, many new policies introduced domestically had contradictory effects and trend. There was increasing pressure from the larger society for greater social and economic reform and freedom internally. The government tried to protect its perceived achievements as a result of liberalization policies from any likely opposition. This is the dilemma faced by most transitioning states. During 1990s when the economy of Egypt was drastically declining, the government realized the important role of the NGOs. To deal with the economic crisis many NGOs became active, reasserting themselves and several self-help organizations were introduced as noted by Hassan (2011). The self-help groups are seen as self-sustaining response to the emergent economic problems. These organizations are particularly important in addressing local and community level concerns, as seen in many developing countries of Africa, South Asia and South East Asia. As private initiatives these organizations are known for working in impoverished and backward areas and are very different from donor driven NGOs that work in partnership with local people. These small self-help type of organizations are much more effective and result oriented focusing on empowering

the local population. Though there are numerous non-government organizations working to empower the poor and ordinary citizens of Egypt, there are certain issues that remain particularly critical for NGOs to address. Among them are:

- Inadequate attention given to the marginalized sections of the society including children, women, cultural minorities and tribes.
- Issues of human rights violation, especially by the state like imprisonments, unexplained arrests, torture, and political persecutions.
- Issues of unemployment, poverty and economic crisis affecting the poor.

Some of the core areas of activity for NGOs in Egypt include fighting against corruption and reform. In their effort to reduce the level of corruption from the society and the system, there have been efforts to generate awareness about the ills of corruption at all levels. Some NGOs have tried to educate the citizens about the implications of corruption, inform and educate them how to fight against it by setting up information centres and building networks. Many of the social and economic policies failed to take off in Egypt due to systemic corruption as most government organs and functionaries are corrupt while the ruling elites and politicians have misused their power for personal gain. Some of the known organizations fighting against corruption are: Egyptians Against Corruption, the Egyptian Transparency Organization and the Egyptian organization for human rights.

Another pressing concern of the civil society organizations is the area of social and political reforms for which they have been urging the citizens to collectively monitor the developments in the state. They call for united fronts of all Egyptians to check corruption, tyranny and rule of law. Also, pressing for citizenship value by demanding promotion of cultural tolerance and secular values.

Civil society organizations are voluntary in nature and their function generally are localized but can have wider reach and influence depending on the nature of issues and subjects they engage with. Hawthorn (2004) thinks that civil society organizations generally are beyond family

affiliations including clan relations, but operate as independent entities separate from the market and the state. They are non-profit organizations and are driven by social cause which necessarily involves political activism. In principle, civil society organizations are expected to be secular and liberal in their ideology. Civil societies have the capacity to bring transformation without any support from the government and even contribute to create a welfare state if the conditions are right. It can help immensely in the process of democratization by becoming intermediary between the state and the larger society or by negotiating with the state. Generally, civil society members are aware, alert, educated and articulate with commitment and ability to mobilize public opinion, however, one also require certain leadership quality.

In the case of Egypt, the constraint has been the long emergency laws imposed by the state on political freedom to curtail any form of political opposition. The emergency laws were born as a result of government fear for oppositional forces undermining its authority and threatening its very existence. It was considered necessary to gain tight state control over these pluralistic associations and gradually transform them to state controlled institutions which is highlighted by Arafat (2009). The government closed down many professional associations that defied its dictates and continued to oppose, especially Mubarak's regime, barring them from participating in social or political activities. There has been systematic control to regulate the financing of the civil organizations and NGOs by foreign and domestic donors, strictly monitoring the financial flow especially from external sources. With the implementation of 1964 amendments in the law, then again in 2002 passing a law in parliament government persistently tried to control and restrict the activities of civil society organization. These new laws gave power to the state to not only disband NGOs but also seize their properties, documents and freeze other forms of assets to prevent them from engaging in activities considered anti-regime. The law permits an array of severe penalties to restrict NGO activities in Egypt and undermine civil society by using captive groups or government NGOs.

One drawback of the civil society in Egypt is that they do not have a clear agenda for democratization on the basis of which to mobilize the citizens. Unlike the Islamic organizations that use religious channels

to mobilize support, pro-democracy groups have largely failed to come up with common ideas and concepts to build network essential for mobilizing the people. Many NGOs have attacked the regime for its systematic abuse of human rights, however, they have not been able to use the issue of human rights violation effectively to gain public support, which could have helped them to consolidate their position. They have not used the most common issue of corruption to press for reform which concerns all Egyptians but again there has been a failure to capitalize on this by NGOs.

### **Limitation and Challenges of Civil Society in Egypt**

The civil society in Egypt is encountered with some of the major hurdles that prevent them from growing into powerful social forces, which maybe understood from the following:

#### **Financial Constraint**

According to the Egypt Human Development Report compiled by UNDP in 2008, the earnings of more than fifteen thousand civil society organizations have been estimated to be LE (Egyptian Pound) 2 billion, which is considered to be a modest figure. The earnings came in the form of membership fees, donations, gifts and subsidies. Out of the thousands of NGO/CSOs, only a very few have been able to acquire foreign donation of substantial amount. With such limited funding and resources, the CSOs in Egypt find it extremely difficult to sustain their activities for very long.

#### **The Political Environment**

In 2000, for the first time Mubarak talked of civil society as a viable partner in the process of development. However, his government failed to translate this desire into reality and it remained a mere political discourse. The biggest difficulty lies in policy making, where civil society never had any influence and therefore, the government missed out on important inputs at the initial stages of planning that could have played an important role in conceiving an effective policy. At the execution level also the CSOs are largely excluded, limiting their role to consultancy alone and it is mainly the bureaucracy which decided

the execution plan. The state limited CSOs to mostly welfare activities like health and education and reserved its opinion in matters related to advocacy for democratic reforms.

### *The Religious Intervention*

It is widely believed that civil society is secular in ideology, civil in behavior, legally recognized, and supportive of democratic values. Egypt saw rise in Islamist organizations and associations that have managed to use the common Islamic religious ideological channel to influence the people. It is estimated by various organizations including the UN that religious organizations constitute more than 35% of all the civil society organizations in Egypt. Though these Islamist organizations engage in welfare activities, their work and focus are biased and even discriminatory, with an objective to promote religious ideas.

### *The Emergency Law*

Since the time Mubarak came to power, the state has taken total control of the society by imposing emergency laws. The government under him ensured that emergency laws are renewed every few years in order to bring the society under its subjugation, which is unthinkable in any democratic state. Ironically, the constitution has no provision to prevent the president from declaring emergency laws as the head of the state. This is primarily due to the absence of an independent judiciary. The regime under Mubarak used the 1992 anti-terror law along with other related military orders to constrain the citizens and restrict their freedom.

The emergency laws have been used to arbitrarily abuse human rights in the name of protecting national security. The permanent nature of the emergency laws have impacted the civilian lives negatively. Egypt has what is called the Association Law, which is a set of regulations that act as and pose administrative barriers for the NGOs putting unreasonable constrain on their operation and reduce their scope for success. It also facilitates arbitrary practice by the state agencies to restrict and control the NGOs. The Association Law of 2002 is one such amendment in the legal book which has tremendously affected the freedom and sustainability of the civil society organizations together

with other laws introduced with similar intentions like the Political Parties Law of 2005 and the Press Law of 2006.

### *Lack of internal democracy of civil society organizations*

One of the major problems that most civil society organizations faced in Egypt included lack of internal democracy. Accountability and transparency have been missing in the functioning of many CSOs. Most leaders were authoritarian in their conduct and oversight mechanisms were a problem. They also failed to give fair representation to marginalized sections within the organization like women and minorities. It maybe argued that NGOs in Egypt like in most Arab countries, suffered from weak organizational structure, poor leadership, administrative inefficiency, failure to audit and regulate misuse of authority within as also highlighted by Hassan (2011).

### *Social and cultural environment*

Civil society thrives where there is the culture of voluntarism and this was missing in Egypt largely. The collective sense of belonging to a society helps in developing affinity which is important for cultivating a generous self. Though this may be present among some older generation people, among the youth it is difficult to inculcate this sense of belonging, which reflects in the low participation by this section of the society in voluntary activities. According to the Egypt Human Development Report (2008)

“Data from the Ministry of Social Solidarity reveals a serious reduction of registered youth organizations. Another deficiency is a poor understanding of the value of collective work. Inter-group ventures are not in great evidence, nor are partnerships sufficiently exploited”. (p. 10)

### *Poor Networking*

The UNDP 2008 report also reveals that the alliances formed between most human rights organizations in Egypt are informal in nature. There is no clear demarcation or guidelines followed while organizations decide to work together as was visible during the 2005 election where several organizations worked with more than one or two umbrella

organizations. This do have certain advantages as it demands for a good coordination between the allied organizations and in the process the members learn the skill of it. Though it was well executed during this election which was also noticed and praised by the media and the public, there is much needed to be achieved in the field of coordination while engaging with other more demanding and serious kind of activities that require good management of resources, including human resource. Moreover, according to the 2008 report, very few organizations in Egypt have global network links even with the Arab world.

## **Conclusion**

The civil society organizations are private organizations and do not generally receive financial support for the activities they undertake. Though they work to fill in the gaps where the government is unable to act or provide public service, ideologically they differ from the central political ideology which run the government. Therefore, the funding for the NGOs and civil organizations have to raise their own funds through donations and gifts received from philanthropic individuals or organizations or through membership fees as already mentioned earlier. However, these associations face restriction in accessing local or foreign financing without government authorization for which the law has been amended. It is only with the approval of the Ministry of Social Solidarity (earlier called Ministry of Social Affairs) that anyone as an individual or as organization wishing to donate for respective NGOs from within Egypt or abroad can do so. This allows the government to scrutinize the activities undertaken by the NGOs but at the same time the entire process can become tedious or even lead to government employees interfering in the functioning of the NGOs.

As has been discussed previously, Egypt has witnessed various types of collective protest movements during Mubarak regime and these protests were spear headed by prominent civil society organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood, women's associations and other liberal associations. The one movement directly connected to the establishment is the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kefaya) at the end of December 2004, which though was not headed by any civil society it was for the first time a mass movement which can be seen as led by people. People of Egypt tolerated the arbitrary rule for many years and they were no more



willing to continue with the existing condition, and this was how the idea of Kefaya movement (Movement for Change) was born. This movement can be linked to the many restrictions imposed on the freedom of civil society that wished to work for Egypt. People wanted change and a movement of the masses like in the form of Kefaya, was never seen in the history of modern Egypt. In that it was a completely new phenomenon. The entire movement was targeted against the ruling family of the President, including his ministers and extended families. Thereafter, the successive movements emerged to highlight the non-performing nature of economy in the country, unemployment that was affecting the living condition of the citizens and the growing privatization.

These were some of the genuine demands of the people of Egypt which successive governments failed to fulfill. The prevailing condition was all the more difficult for the civil society to function as they faced number of regulations and policing. Following the 2011 revolution which led to the expansion of civil society activities, further efforts were made by the state to pass more stringent rules. The growing support these groups received from the masses forced the government to physically restrict and punish them. To quote Mikhail (2014), "In February 2012, several NGOs were raided and later, in highly contested cases, judges convicted forty-three local and international civil society workers to one, two, or five years in prison for operating in Egypt without a license as well as receiving foreign funds". Mikhail further states that though Article 75 of the Constitution mention about citizens' right to form groups, associations and NGOs recognized as legal bodies upon notification, with the state having no role to play in their dissolving and functioning, in practice the government denied the freedom to associate, a right that many NGOs have been struggling to acquire. Civil society in the Republic of Egypt thus remain under the shadow of the state to address even the basic concerns of the citizen.

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