

Egypt from an insider's perspective: Mounting tensions in Tahrir Square

By Sara ElShafie
TECHNEWS WRITER



This week, we continue to share excerpts from Sara's blog <http://asandstorminbastille.blogspot.com/>, describing her experience amid the recent Egyptian Revolution.

Friday, January 28, 2011
12:00pm

Well, the government is officially panicking, and they are doing everything they can think of to prevent and suppress the demonstrations today. Tahrir Square is closed off completely. **We have no internet. We have no mobile service.** Al-Jazeera live is blocked – the screen literally says “This channel is not running or scrambled” – to try to prevent live coverage of today's events. The government is trying to put us back in the Stone Age. I'm just praying that the land lines don't get cut as well. We should probably start filling bottles of water and get out the flashlights just in case.

I heard a man yelling in the street this morning. He sounded very passionate, even angry. I couldn't tell what he was saying, and I thought perhaps he was calling upon everyone to protest in the street. Then Taunt (aunt) Afaf explained that he was selling oranges.

That's Egypt. A man yelling in the street in Arabic at the top of his lungs, “ORANGES FOR SAAAAAAALE!!!!” is just part of the ambient noise. In the US, anyone doing the same would probably be arrested for disturbing the peace.

1:00pm

Amu (uncle) Ayman just told me that Amr, Osama, Ahmad, Kareem, Mohammad, and Ibrahim (some of my cousins) are all in the street today. I am not surprised. I'm proud. Amu Ayman spoke to Muhammad this morning and advised him not to confront the police directly, of course. I'm praying that they all come back safely. Amu Ayman assures me that there is no way the police can arrest all the protesters in the street. Rabbina ma'ahom. God be with them.

Huzzah for Al-Jazeera!!! Apparently Al-Jazeera released a password on their other channel, the one playing old footage from Tuesday, so that Egyptians can access *Al-Jazeera mubasher*, Al-Jazeera Live, via a different frequency. Al-Jazeera is run by former BBC reporters – they are professionals. I commend them for helping Egyptians fight the good fight. In a few hours it too will probably be blocked, after which they'll switch again to a new frequency.

Interestingly, BBC Arabic has not been blocked. Apparently the Egyptian government won't risk blocking the British, only Al-Jazeera.

I'm now watching live coverage of Tahrir Square. Police are lined up, backed by armored

trucks, blocking the street right next to the Egyptian Museum where I was just days ago with my cousin Lenah. People are watching from 6th October bridge, where I was just yesterday. This is unreal. There must be a couple hundred police. It looks like an invasion. It is an invasion.

This morning I asked Amu Ayman, “*is-Shorta fahlan behib Mubarak walla la?*” “Do the police actually love Mubarak or no?” He explained that the police are completely brainwashed. You would not believe the things they would say. I was wrong – they are not just following orders out of fear. They are actually defending Mubarak. However, Amu Ayman also said that after a few more days of these demonstrations, some of them might come back from the Dark Side. I told Taunt Afaf about the Stanley-Milgram experiments that were conducted following WWII, demonstrating that even average civilians can be pushed to do horrific things under pressure and imposed authority.

2:00pm

Chaos in the streets. People have poured into the streets by the thousands. So far the protests are relatively peaceful. Everyone is shouting, clapping, linking arms, waving signs, running from the police, and burning trash in tires in the street to [prevent] the armored police trucks from reaching the protesters...

I remember the first information meeting we had with the Study Abroad office in Chicago last fall, when they told us that if we happen to see any demonstrations while in Egypt, we should not participate under any circumstances, or even risk taking pictures. When in Egypt, we are under Egypt's jurisdiction, and the American Embassy won't be able to pull us out if we are thrown in jail (and that's under normal circumstances).

I asked Amu Ayman why the Egyptian government let Mohamed ElBaradei back into the country if they knew that he was returning to lead demonstrations. Apparently his prominence as a world peace leader gives him enough clout to protect him from being detained. Lenah said, “If they were to arrest him, the city would be in flames.”

Endless footage of police in Tahrir Square, shooting tear gas canisters at protesters on 6th October bridge. The protesters are throwing the canisters back at the police, as well as rocks. The numbers in the streets seem to be growing. Police are beating everyone with batons. This is a sad day, but an important and exciting day as well.

To be continued...



Sex Tech

THE SEX AND RELATIONSHIP ADVICE COLUMN

Sweet Pseudonym

SEXTECH EDITOR

Q: I think I am attracted to one of my TAs. I have been going to his office hours pretty regularly, even if there isn't a lot of need for help. He is usually very friendly and jokes around a lot, so I suspect he might feel the same about me, but I can't be sure. Would it be wrong to approach him? - Diligent Student

A: Honestly? Yes. But only for right now! I am definitely pro “screw gender norms; if a girl likes a guy, she should approach him”, just not when he's in a position of superiority. I think it's great that you've been going out of your way to hang out with him during office hours (and he probably likes it too), but to say anything to him while he's still your TA would put him into an incredibly awkward position, one that might result in him turning you down, even when he otherwise would never dream of doing so. If I were you, I would continue to go to office hours (but not every time!), and then when the end of semester rolls around, ask him if he wants to get coffee: easy, non-confrontational, and a surefire first date. So, the moral of this story seems to be: no, it's not wrong to approach him, it's just wrong to do it when he's still your TA. But don't worry, waiting until the end of the semester will just make it way more worth it when you finally do ask him out!

Q: I've been seeing this girl for a few weeks now, nothing serious. She got into a really bad car wreck and needs a lot of intense physical therapy, so I've kind of stepped up to nurse her back to health and help out. The problem is that I'm worried that she sees it as a sign that I'm becoming committed to something long term, when I'm really just trying to be a good person. I am seriously at a loss for how to get out of this situation without devastating her. Help? - At A Complete Loss

A: Wow. That is an incredibly difficult situation that you've found your self in. I think it's wonderful that you stepped up to help someone that you obviously at least moderately care about, but because you did that, there's really no way to avoid hurt feelings. First, I guess I would want to know why you think she's so sure that you two are going to be long-term partners now? You never know, she might not be seeing it like that at all, and is simply grateful to you for helping her recover from a bad accident. If she does think that you helping out means something more though, you're going to hurt her regardless of how you decide to clear things up. I think the best idea is just to be upfront: tell her that you helped her recover because you care about her, but that it's not the kind of caring that translates into the formation of a serious, committed relationship. She'll be sad, and if she tells you to leave her alone, then do it. If, on the other hand, she wants you to continue helping her until she's completely recovered, you have a choice: you can either continue to help, but you'll need to distance your self emotionally and romantically, or you can decide to stop. I think that you will be the best judge of which decision will be best for this girl's recovery when the time comes.

Submit your question through
<http://tinyurl.com/sextech2>

What's your angle? An ethical discussion on current topics

By Annie Hutches & Phil Thiesen
TECHNEWS WRITERS

“Hey Mike, I wanted to ask you about something. I read this story about a high school kid who developed an eye infection. Without medication, it would clear up in a few weeks. However, the dilemma is he has to drive his brothers and sisters to school every morning, so his eyes are needed to drive.”

“Well, Rick, if that's the case, he should go ahead and take the medicine.”

“You're right, except this medicine is tested on animals first. This particular test, which is called the Draize test, is used on rabbits to test the side effects. I was just curious what you thought about the use of animals in testing products?”

“I still think he should go ahead and take the medicine. Many products, especially in the medical field, are tested on animals first. If these tests never took place, we may still not have developed antibiotics, vaccines, etc. It has greatly improved human health.”

“What about all the animals that have become sick or even died through these tests? It's not right to make animals suffer. And in some situations, the product isn't even given

to people after the tests. Meaning, the animal suffered for nothing.”

“Are you saying that you would rather have humans tested? The use of animals saves many humans from going through the testing that could be harmful to them. Whereas, if animals are used, researchers can better understand how much of the medication to give a human, so that it won't be harmful.”

“I'm not saying we should sacrifice humans. But how reliable are these tests on animals?”

“Animals are the closest any other organism comes to human beings. They have a very similar anatomy and physiology.”

“Yes, they may be similar, but they are not the same. There are numerous species of animals in the world. And they all live in different environments, eat different foods, and have adapted in their own special way for various reasons. So, their anatomical makeup is closer to ours than, let's say, a plant. However, if given a drug, an animal could have a completely opposite reaction than a human being. We shouldn't sacrifice humans, but how reliable are animal tests?”

What's your angle? Send your thoughts to peds.uit@gmail.com

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