

Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square and its Vicinity: A Compendium of Sources 2011 - 2013

Prepared By: El-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture
- Nazra for Feminist Studies - New Woman Foundation

February 2013

Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square and its Vicinity: A Compendium of Sources

FOREWORD 4

INTRODUCTION..... 7

**SEXUAL ASSAULT DURING THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE JANUARY 25
REVOLUTION..... 9**

 1. *Testimony of Survivor - Basma*..... 9

SEXUAL ASSAULT ON JUNE 201210

 2. *Testimony of Survivor – N*.....10

 3. *Testimony of Survivor - C*.....12

 4. *Testimony of Survivor - R*.....15

 5. *Testimony of Sally Zohney*.....16

TESTIMONIES OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RAPE ON NOVEMBER 201219

 6. *Testimony of Mohammed Kheir:*.....19

 7. *Testimony – Y:*.....19

 8. *Testimony of Eyewitness:*.....21

 9. *Testimony of Eyewitness - F.S:*.....22

 10. *Testimony of Eyewitness - M.A:*.....23

 11. *Eyewitness Testimony - M.S:*.....23

 12. *Testimony of Ghada, an inhabitant of Abdeen district, testimony made on the
 telephone to Al-Nahar Channel:*24

 13. *Testimony of Survivor:*.....24

**SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RAPE DURING THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE JANUARY
25 REVOLUTION26**

 14. *Testimony of Survivor - H:*.....26

 15. *Testimony of H’s Husband to Al- Nahar Channel:*.....28

16. *Testimony of Nahla Anany:*28

17. *Testimony of Azza Balbaa:*.....29

18. *Testimony of Aida Abdel Rahman Karasha:*.....30

19. *Testimony of Aida Al-Kashef:*32

20. *Testimony of Salma El-Tarzi:*.....32

21. *Testimony of Survivor:*33

22. *Testimony of Survivor:*34

23. *Testimony of N.F:*.....35

24. *Testimony of Sahar Talaat:*36

25. *Testimony of Mustafa Qandil, volunteer with Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment (OpAntiSH):*.....38

26. *Testimony of a Female Volunteer with OpAntiSH:*.....41

27. *Testimony of a Male Volunteer with OpAntiSH:*.....42

28. *Testimony of Sally Zohney, Volunteer with OpAntiSH:*.....43

29. *Testimony of a journalist in Al-Tahrir Newspaper:*.....44

STATEMENTS ISSUED TO DENOUNCE THE TARGETING OF WOMEN IN TAHRIR SQUARE AND ITS VICINITY45

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND TORTURE AGAINST WOMEN WILL NOT BREAK THEIR STRUGGLE TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH THE REVOLUTION46

IT’S OUR RIGHT... THE STREET IS OURS49

ANALYSIS OF THE SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RAPE PRODUCED BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS50

POSITION PAPER BY NAZRA FOR FEMINIST STUDIES50

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL - SEXUAL ATTACKS ON WOMEN IN EGYPT56

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES59

Foreword

** By Dr. Magda Adly*

We present in this compendium a number of testimonies from survivors of sexual torture in the vicinity of Tahrir Square. The testimonies have been collected from a number of websites, as well as from testimonies collected by human rights organizations that have not been previously published. Those involved in the collection of these testimonies include the New Woman Foundation, Nazra for Feminist Studies and El-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture. Online sources include the 'No to Sexual harassment' website, as well as that of Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment.

The decision to publish these testimonies was met with discrete reactions from friends [of those giving the testimonies] who have not been subjected to attacks. Most of these responses were supportive of publishing the testimonies, while others opposed publication, out of concern that women will refrain from participating in the revolution and practicing their right to expression.

With all due respect to the later viewpoint, which expresses a genuine concern, I am for the idea of exposing crimes committed against women for many reasons. The first pertains to the best interest of the survivors of sexual torture, as an important aspect of recovery for the survivors is to break out of the complexities of the social taboos that blame women for participating in demonstrations, a process that reaches the extent of blaming women for leaving their houses in the first place. Women are also blamed for what they wear, seen as the cause for the attacks committed against them. This belief was reflected in the statements made by female representatives of the Freedom and Justice Party, in the context of debates surrounding anti-sexual harassment legislation, during which they said that women are to blame for violating men's modesty. In the context of a terrible crime of sexual assault committed last November, a testimony of which was published on a social networking website, there were tens of supportive comments and one comment citing a Quranic verse, which states, "And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance." This is the manner by which Quranic verses are used out of context, consequently having the attacked girl blamed without the commenter even knowing her, his eyes shedding no tears in shame of what had happened.

This commonly-held notion of sexual crimes as a source of shame for the victim of the crime, rather than for the perpetrator, places a weight on the soul of the torture victim and heightens their feelings of shame and self-hatred, or as many survivors put it "my body disgusts me" or "how can I raise my head again?"

The second reason that drives me to support the publication of these testimonies is to shame the perpetrators. Like other torture crimes, this crime will only persevere if the perpetrator feels that he is safe from punishment because the torturing is done systematically, as a state policy, and

(5)

because the victim has been psychologically broken and will not go public about the crime in a society that would largely respond by questioning "why would he be tortured if he is not a criminal?"

The matter is not much different in the case of group sexual torture, which started to be used on July 2012, as perpetrators act from a belief that they are safe from accountability; that society itself will blame the victim and let the perpetrator free, that the girl and her family will live in shame and prefer silence.

The organizers of these crimes know that violating women's bodies goes beyond breaking women's will and alienating them from the revolution, to breaking the will of all revolutionaries. For everyone who has seen a girl or woman violated from armed groups and failed to save her will be the victim of feelings of shame and guilt; everyone who came to know of the instance will share the same feelings, for they use it to break the path of the revolution which they tried to go around, then fight it with tear gas and bullets. When the latter tactics of murder and injury did not succeed in terminating the revolution, they resorted to the worst of tactics to break the revolution and vacate its squares. The same tactics used by colonizing armies were used, which violate the women of the colonized state to break the will of its armies; the same tactic was also used by authoritarian regimes to counter its enemies- not only in Libya and Syria during the Arab Spring revolutions, but also in Egypt under Mubarak's rule. No one can forget tragedy of 5/25/2005 when security forces cleared the way for 'thugs' and its men, donning civilian clothes, to violate women in front of Saad Zaghlul's memorial and the Press Syndicate. We cannot forget the words of one policeman to a female protester on that day, explaining the violence used against female protesters, "so you would stop taking part in demonstrations again".

We know the method and have experienced it before, and we know who is behind it. Our certainty that the crime was committed in a systematic manner was evidenced in the decision of the prosecutor general to close the case due to failure in finding the perpetrators. Despite the fact that tens of pictures and videos of the criminals and the cars they used (bearing signs of famous members of the, then ruling, National Democratic Party) were submitted, the case was closed due to insufficient evidence.

Under today's ruling regime, parliament has rejected an anti-sexual harassment law; the regime refused to restructure the interior ministry, although more than one proposal for such a project was submitted by rights organizations and police officers themselves, including the group Zibat Laken Shorafaa "respectable police officers", which has significant implications for the case at hand. We cannot overlook, in this context, the fact that the interior ministry refrained from securing the Square, leaving its safety for the protesters and announcing that it will only protect buildings.

(6)

The third reason behind the publishing of testimonies is to reach the perpetrators. We must analyze the way in which the crime is committed, in the way they teach their police officers. After we heard and read many testimonies, it was revealed that the way in which the crime is committed is the same during the span of the past six months: a group surrounds the victims, the number increases and she is almost suffocated inside the circle, tens of hands pull her in every direction, tens of hands mess with any part of the body under siege, tens of hands strip off the victims (what they fail to remove manually, they use white weapons to remove), those surrounding her have said, according to most testimonies "do not be afraid; I'm protecting you". Meanwhile, his hands are ravaging her body. Another says, "you are like my sister; do not be afraid", for sexual phrases commonly used by perpetrators to kidnap a victim and rape her in an isolated area are usually not used. The tactic used drives the victim into a state of deep confusion... who is protecting? Who is violating? Who might respond to her tears and pleadings? Whose monstrosity increases from every look of the fear in her eyes? The confusion reaches a point where the victim suspects the protection teams sent to rescue her, for the protection teams that say "we are here to protect you" are repeating the very words used by the rapists

The confusion suffered by the victim is a part of a plan that makes it difficult to imagine that the attackers are simply groups of thugs looking for prey to take turns to attack.

The organization of the attacks, division of roles, and the fact that the attacks take place meters away from security forces that are "protecting buildings" are all factors that indicate that the crime is organized and systematic to abort the revolution, break the will of its men, and ostracize its women.

Silence in the face of this crime compounds the problem of the spread of the phenomenon of sexual harassment against women and, if not halted immediately, the barbarity of the phenomenon will increase, and might spread to all areas of Egypt.

Publication of the testimonies is a method of resistance, of shaming the perpetrators and paralyzing their hands from continuing with their heinous crimes. Publication is a way of responding to their message... our will shall not be broken... we will not be ashamed, for shame should only be felt by authoritarian regimes that commit crimes against humanity and challenge the will of nations to create a state built on justice, freedom, dignity, and equality.

Publication is a way of showing our solidarity with our daughters and sisters who paid this high price from their mental and physical health, just as the women and men of this nation have been paying with their lives, sight, and health for a span of two years.

Publication is a way to confront the state with its responsibilities to protect all its citizens and to present the phenomenon with its painfulness, lest a government authority or a parliamentarian understands the importance of introducing legislation to penalize violence and discriminations

(7)

against women, seeing that the Egyptian constitution lacks articles that prohibit against discrimination and violence and establishing equality between men and women in all areas of life.

Before I conclude this introduction, a final word-our campaign against the violations taking place in the vicinity of Tahrir Square does not in any way mean to imply that the crimes taking place in other areas of assembly are less significant. In fact, feminist organizations have worked for years, and are still working, to combat this phenomenon. They presented an anti-sexual harassment project, for example, to the now-dissolved Lower House of parliament that was criticized by a female member of the Freedom and Justice Party. Civilian groups are also working to be present in crowded areas during feast celebrations to detect cases of sexual harassment and offer help. We also ascertain that it is the duty of the police to protect citizens at all times and in all areas of Egypt, whether the crime is committed by groups or individuals; on streets, gardens, or revolution squares. The continuation of its neglect to fulfill its task cannot be accepted after the people's revolution to demand freedom, dignity, and humanity. This report has focused on an aspect of this phenomenon and because there are clear signals that implicate policymakers and those responsible for their execution, which complicates the situation and makes it more perilous.

We promise the women of this nation to continue the struggle for a society that is safe for women and men... a society that will attain freedom

Glory to Egypt and victory to its revolution, and to its martyrs and injured; and shame to the authorities of repression and despotism.

Introduction

Sexual harassment and assault have been staple features of the experience of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in the Egyptian public sphere. WHRDs are women active in the defense of human rights who are targeted for who they are and all those active in the defense of women's rights who are targeted for what they do. The title of "women human rights defender" does not only apply to women who are engaged in the human rights field in their professional capacity, but also women who participate in initiatives or activities related to the defendse of human rights, even if sporadically. WHRDs face, not only the same challenges faced by their male counterparts, such as beatings or imprisonment, but face, in addition, violations that stem from their gender identity. WHRDs thus face violations such as sexuality baiting, sexual harassment, or sexual assault. Such violations are not a novelty, however. Under Mubarak's regime, the events of 25 May 2005, dubbed "Black Wednesday", stands out as an epitome of the violence WHRDs face in their defense of human rights. Such violations have persevered under the rule of the Supreme Council of the

Armed Forces, a period painfully remembered for the notorious virginity tests and the stripping of “Tahrir Girl” in broad day light during the Cabinet of Ministers clashes of December 2011¹.

Under the rule of Mohammed Morsi, the perpetrators of grave, documented, violations against WHRDs have enjoyed complete impunity. Rather than hold leaders of the SCAF accountable for the crimes committed under their rule, Morsi appointed Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, former minister of defense and head of the SCAF, and Lieutenant General Sami Anan, former chief of staff of Egypt's military, as presidential advisors. Morsi also bestowed national medals on Tantawi and Anan due to their “significant services to the country”². It was only expected that given the unwillingness to establish a regime of accountability and rule of law, that violations against WHRDs would continue unabated.

The targeting of WHRDs was documented on December 5, 2012 in the clashes that took place in the vicinity of Itihadeya Palace (the presidential palace), when supporters of Morsi attacked peaceful protesters in the vicinity of the palace. No one has been held accountable for the attacks. To the contrary, in 4 December, Prime Minister Hisham Qandil stated that protesters at Itihadeya Palace are responsible for “protecting themselves”.

The attacks against WHRDs took an unprecedented brutal twist during the second anniversary of the January 25 revolution. 19 cases of rape and sexual assault were documented; the women assaulted included demonstrators, volunteers with anti-sexual harassment teams, or women who happened to pass by Tahrir Square or its vicinity. The testimonies below paint a horrendous picture of a climate rife with extreme sexual violence, refuting claims that the sexual assault and rapes that took place starting on January 25, 2013 cannot be simply explained away by claims that the attackers are “hired thugs”. Rather, a general attitude of sexual entitlement prevails, that is, a belief that the bodies of women present in the context of demonstrations are safe territories for sexual attacks underlies nearly all testimonies. With testimonies that speak of hundreds of hands persistently raping women, with hundreds more watching the brutal attacks, some while even smiling, it becomes clear that we are faced with an overwhelming challenge, namely a state and a society that have internalized sexual violence against women as the law of the land.

The sexual violence against women in streets of protests are backed up by the attitude of an apathetic state. Not only have senior figures in Morsi’s government come out to blatantly state that protestors are responsible for their own safety, in complete disregard of Egypt’s international obligations to guarantee the safety of peaceful protesters, but the state apparatus has also

¹ For more information about violations against women human rights defenders under the rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, refer to One Year of Impunity: : Violations against Women Human Rights Defenders in Egypt from August to December 2011, Nazra for Feminist Studies, 1 September 2012, available at <http://www.nazra.org/en/node/142>

² Decisions of the president of the republic on 12/8/2012, Egypt State Information Service, <http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/Story.aspx?sid=60969> (Translated by Nazra for Feminist Studies).

condoned the brutal attacks. On 11 February 2013, the Human Rights Committee of the Shura Council, *the upper house* of parliament currently imbued with legislative powers, blamed the women attacked, calling on the women to protect themselves before “asking the Ministry of Interior to offer her protection”. One member of the Committee further argued that women “cause rape upon themselves though putting themselves in a position which makes them subject to rape”³. The absence of investigations into the crimes coupled with such horrendous statements are not only indicative of a state that is apathetic to the level complicity into the sexual crimes, but also sends signals that such attacks are acceptable, warning of a foreboding future.

In the background of a setting of extreme sexual violence against women, this report presents a compendium of testimonies of survivors of sexual assault and rape and testimonies of the women and men who have formed volunteer groups to ward off attacks against women, in chronological order. The report also present a snapshot of the news coverage of the sexual attacks, the statements issued to denounce these attacks, and finally, the analysis of some rights organizations of the attacks in an attempt to present a rounded picture of the sexual assaults that have been taking place against women in Tahrir Square and its vicinity.

Sexual Assault During the First Anniversary of the January 25 Revolution

The testimony below documents a case of sexual assault that took place during the first anniversary of the revolution in Tahrir Square and continued to several streets in the vicinity of the Square. It becomes apparent through this testimony that the brutality of the attacks that took place during the second anniversary of the revolution is not a novel phenomenon, but that the patterns of sexual violence have a long, ignored, history.

1. Testimony of Survivor - Basma

The marches were beautiful; we arrived at Tahrir Square at around 5 PM and it was very crowded. We left to have lunch and went back to the Square at 8:00 PM. We were a large group, moving with some difficulty due to the large crowds. Two friends, a girl and a guy, and I decided to break away from the group and meet them again at the Arab Contractors company sign in the middle of the Square. Once we arrived at the sign, I heard a female friend yelling at someone, demanding that he leave her alone. We met a young man I know from work and he took my hand and we walked in the opposite direction, telling me that people are creating an “unstable environment”. I walked, along with my female and male friends, and the young man I know from work, behind each other; behind us were the young men standing near the sign. They started by separating our female friend from us and her position shifted to the end of the line. They started to sexually harass her; others were trying to steal her purse. I tried to hang on to her by holding on to her

³ *Shura Council members blame women for harassment*, Egypt Independent, 11 February 2013, available at <http://www.dailynewsegyp.com/2013/02/11/shura-council-members-blame-women-for-harassment/>

purse so some of them sexually harassed me and stole my purse.

The young man I know from work took my hand and we started running. I noticed a circle forming around the girl behind me and another started to form around me and my friend. The harassment continued, as well as attempts to strip me of my clothes. Their eyes lacked semblance of life; they looked dead to me. My friend tried to scare them away by yelling at them while I tried to beat any hand that approached me. I did not know who was harassing and who was protecting me; my voice would not come out and I made eye contact with many passersby but they did not intervene. I was finally able to scream; the harassers momentarily took a step back then proceeded to encircle me again. The ordeal continued towards Abd el-Moneim Riad Square until the beginning of Mohammed Bassiouni Street. We found a parked microbus and my friend tried to get me to stand with my back to the microbus while he stood in front of me to protect me. They did not even give me the chance to touch the microbus, though. They pushed my friend to the ground then pushed me. Hands which were foreign to me helped me stand back up, while other hands continued to harass me, as yet others pushed me and my friend towards a car. We got into the car and it started to move. The men jumped on top of the car and on the hood, in an attempt to get us out of it. After a while, though, some fell off the car, while others got off.

Sexual Assault on June 2012

The 4 testimonies below are those of survivors of sexual assault that took place on June 8, 2012 during a demonstration denouncing the sexual assault and rape that took place on June 2, 2012. The first 3 testimonies document the attacks of June 2 and the last testimony, that of Sally Zohney, documents the attacks of 8 June. The attacks on the women was calculated and organized so as to scare women away from the public sphere, to punish women for their participation, and to keep them at home to avoid the premeditated attacks against them. The testimonies describe how the women were groped by tens of men all over their bodies, and how the level of sexual assault reached, for some of them, to tearing their clothes. The women agreed to share their stories in hope that this will help in fighting this growing trend, and we thank them for their courage.

Nazra for Feminist Studies is publishing three testimonies of women who were sexually assaulted by a mob on Mohammed Mahmoud Street on Saturday, 2 June. The collective sexual assault and harassment that took place on the vicinity of Tahrir Square on June 2 and 8, 2012 shed light on the gravity of sexual harassment and assault on Egyptian streets. Although the three testimonies do not account for the entirety of the brutality that many women experienced on that Saturday and the Friday after, they are one example that offers a window to the dynamics of mob sexual assault and harassment on those two days, which are not the first of its kind.

2. Testimony of Survivor – N (Documented by Nazra for Feminist Studies)

(11)

I Felt Evil.

Saturday evening I went to Tahrir with no interest in protesting I just went to check things out, I was really frustrated about the fact that the Egyptian people were not united, that everyone was looking for their own interest and not the interest of the country and its people.

There weren't many people at first but then many came and it felt we were coming together. I was so happy. We were 5, 3 girls and 2 guys, and we were walking in the square among the crowd and I thought it would be safe. But it wasn't. Suddenly men started grabbing us away from each other. They started groping me and grabbing my *Hijab* (headscarf) then I lost friends...I was terrified ...some men hid me behind a small kiosk but I kept looking for my friends who I couldn't find. I was able finally to reach one of them and she told me she was safe.

The other friend was hurt very badly, my heart aches for her and I keep playing the whole thing in my head over and over again, she was right there in front of me then someone grabbed my ass so I looked behind then looked back and she was gone, I kept looking for her I couldn't see her anymore, it was as if I was in high sea and all the waves are just tossing me all over the place.

How can people be so evil...why is it that no one is held accountable for what they do? Those men are walking freely on the streets looking for their next victim and there is nothing I can do about it.

I was raised to believe that good people get rewarded and bad people get punished but as I came to be exposed to the world I realized that it's not true. It's the other way around....and I feel betrayed...I feel angry...I feel guilty for not protecting my friend....I wish it was me not her....

Who should I blame for this? Mubarak for destroying my country's education, a system which men who have no respect for women and have become just animals? Our useless police who are incapable of defending us? Our religious leaders who claim that they want what's best but they don't go to these young men and teach them what's right? Our educators who turned into business men?... Our politicians who just want power? Who????!!!!

I don't know who to blame...But I am really angry at many religious leaders who prefer to appear on TV thinking they reach more people while there are masses who don't own a TV...our leaders tweet and do commercials targeting a specific segment of the people leaving the masses who need help....

I am angry at everyone who is merely involved in remote charity rather than getting actively involved in the impoverished communities and trying to help them, they just throw some money thinking they have done their part in helping their society...

I am angry at all the mothers who teach their sons that they superior just because they are men....and tell their daughters that they are inferior just because they are women...

(12)

I am angry because my friends and I were humiliated....

I am angry but I am not broken...

I have seen the best and worst of people that night ...I have faith that Allah will help me through this and will give me the strength to help others...

I know that many will not like that I wrote this about Tahrir square thinking I am trying to vandalize the image of the Egyptian revolution...but this is not my intention, I have participated in almost all the battles and marches since Jan28 2011 but sexual harassment in Egypt is growing, multiplying and we need to address it. We ignored it for too long and it is becoming a monster that is eating us all...I feel hate towards those men who molested us...I can't smile in the face of anyone that I don't know anymore...hell, I can't smile the way I used to....

3. Testimony of Survivor - C

(Documented by Nazra for Feminist Studies)

On 2 June 2012, I was on Tahrir Square as I had been several times before to document the protest that took place and didn't reach the foreign news. I'm not Egyptian but I had been following an Egyptian friend (a woman) through the period before, during and after the first round of election. I had been filming her in several protest and marches and so I was on that day.

We were five people, three women and two men. We felt safe and were crossing the square going to the Mohammed Mahmoud Street corner. Suddenly it got more crowded around us and I noticed a man was following us. He had a phone in his hand and it kept ringing without him answering. I thought it was strange and I told my Egyptian friend, when she turned around he was gone and we decided to get away from the crowded area of the square.

The best way we saw was to go through the metal fence and on to the street walk. On the way I felt a man grabbing my breast. I pushed him away and continued.

During the short time I have spent in Cairo I have experienced sexual harassment many times and I knew that this was a big problem. We continued and suddenly all the men around us started touching us all over the body. It was as if they surrounded us at the same time and separated us from each other. This happened while we were getting through the metal fence on to the street walk. From there I didn't see any of my friends except one of them (Egyptian man) who was trying to get the men away from me as their numbers grew.

Before I knew it, I was thrown up against a wall where a motorcycle was parked. I was standing on top of the bike while my friend and a few other men tried to make a half circle to protect me. But there were more men trying to hurt me than protect me and I was grabbed all over and my pants and shirt were ripped. In that moment it was as if the men got even more crazy. My pants were

(13)

pulled down by the many men and they raped me with their dirty fingers. I managed to pull my pants up again and I could still see the face of my friend still trying with all his power to keep at least some of the men away. I really saw the best and the worst of men. My friend was beaten and putting his life at risk trying to save me while other men were fighting just to get near me with only one intention, to hurt me as much as possible.

The entire time, I tried to protect myself but there were too many hands and too many animals. More and more people came in to join the assault and suddenly I saw another face I knew. It was an American friend and he and my Egyptian friend kept telling me that everything would be alright, that it would soon be over. I didn't believe them and I don't think they did themselves.

I threw my camera to my American friend and told him to run. I knew that he would only get in more trouble staying. He ran off with the camera and in the same moment my Egyptian friend and I decided to try to escape. We counted to 3 and I jumped in his arms and it created a second of confusion for the men who were hurting me. But again they were all over me. I was thrown into the ally and up against a wall.

I didn't know who was trying to help and who wasn't. The only person I trusted was my friend. Others said they were helping but really just trying to get in the first row, getting a piece of the cake. Others were actually helping but it was impossible to know who.

The men were like lions around a dead piece of meat and their hands were all over my body and up under my destroyed clothes. Again my pants and underwear were pulled down violently and several men at the same time raped me with their fingers. I was suddenly on the ground and the men pulled me from my hair, legs, and arms while they continued raping me. Somehow I got up again and the door of a hallway was opened next to me and I was pushed and pulled in there.

In the hallway about 20 men managed to enter before the door was closed again. I didn't see my friend among the men. It was the first time I had a chance to see the men for a few seconds and they were from all ages. The looks in their eyes were really like animals. Not human at all and the way they were throwing me around was as if I was not a human but a piece of garbage.

Again I was surrounded this time from all sides in the middle of the floor. There was even a man lying on the floor being stepped on by the others, forcing his fingers between my legs. That happened from all sides and more fingers at the same time. I was sure that they wouldn't stop before I was lying dead in that hallway. I really tried to fight and protect my body but it was impossible. Every time I tried to kick out more hands were between my legs and every time I tried to hit someone or remove hands, my shirt was even more ripped and my breasts pulled. For one second, I had the chance to hurt one of the men back. I pressed my finger, with all the power I had left, in one of his eyes but he just continued hurting me with his fingers.

Two or three men managed to pull me away from the others and on to a chair in the corner. I know now that they were trying to help me but I didn't know that at the time. I was so afraid and saw no ending to this. Suddenly I could hear a loud sound and I saw an old man with a big wooden stick in his hand. I saw him hitting a young man over the back and I was pulled into a back room while some men were trying to hold back other men. I got a chance to finally pull up my underwear and ripped pants and a man gave me a big Egyptian flag to cover myself with. I was told to go up the back stairs. The old man with the stick was leading and about four or five men followed. Others stayed and were holding back the rest of the men.

Going up the stairs, I had no idea what would happen. I only knew what was down there and that I couldn't go back. I keep falling because I had no energy left. The stairs were never-ending and I kept falling and crying. I didn't trust any man. One man kept saying "everything is okay, Egyptian men are good men." One time I fell and the man walking behind me put his hand on my back trying to help me up. On the way he just touched my breast a last time and when I pushed his hand away and looked back at him he just said sorry like it was an accident. It wasn't and I was disgusted by him and even more scared of what was waiting at the end of the stairs.

But luckily they were helping me and I was so relieved to finally see a woman when we entered the apartment at the end of the stairs. She was the wife of the man leading me up the stairs and they didn't let any of the men into the apartment. The women took me to the bathroom and gave me some of her clothes. When I got to the bathroom I couldn't stand up for another minute. I fell down on the floor just crying and crying. I don't know how long time I sat there but suddenly my Egyptian friend (one of the girls I got separated from when it all started) came in the door. I have never been so happy to see anyone as I was when I saw her. She hugged me and helped me change my clothes and wash most of the dirt off my face, hands, and arms.

We stayed in the apartment with these wonderful people who gave us water and Pepsi to drink. They also gave me a headscarf and some shoes to wear, as I had lost one of my own shoes during the assault. My friend had a phone and was able to communicate with our other friends. After some time I was told that it was safe to leave the apartment but I refused several times before I was talked into it. I was so afraid that the animals were waiting outside.

The old man and his son followed us down to the ally and I was so happy to see our two male friends waiting for us there. We rushed without running through the ally covering my head with the scarf and got to my friend's car that was parked nearby. We drove to the apartment where I lived and met the rest of our friends. During the next few days, my brave friends and other women started talking about the big problem. I kept a low profile and returned to my home country after a week. I'm now getting medical and psychological help to recover after the assault. My identity has to be kept secret for my safety and to be able to return to Cairo some day.

I wish the best for the women of Egypt. Without them, there would not have been a revolution. Assaulting and trying to break them now is just to ruin the strength and resilience of the revolution. I have heard some people telling the women to not tell their stories about the harassment, assaults, and rapes because these stories ruin the image of the revolution. I have only one thing to say to these people: no one but the men doing this to the women is ruining the revolution. What will you have left in the Square without the strong and brave women?

I do believe that the women will not be quiet and they will not break, but it's also important that each and every man in Egypt takes a position in this subject. Say it out loud, write it on a sign, and wear it on a t-shirt. Do what it takes to tell women and the world that not every Egyptian man would beat up, rape, assault, or harass a woman just for walking on the street, take part in a protest, or simply demand her right to be worth the same as a man.

4. Testimony of Survivor - R **(Documented by Nazra for Feminist Studies)**

Yesterday, Saturday 2 June 2012, I went to Tahrir Square with a group of friends. We walked around the Square freely, then suddenly we wanted to get closer to where the Ultras were, near Mohamed Mahmoud Street. We started to walk towards the street cutting through the Square. As we got closer, I felt men getting closer to us; we had two guys with us trying to lead us into the crowd. Suddenly I felt a hand grab my butt, I turned around and saw the young guy and stared him down, a few men saw and tried to push me forward away from him, the young man backed away once he saw I looked directly at him. He cowered away.

My friends keep pushing forward, at this point it was obvious we were not getting through, it was far too crowded. We started trying to get to the sidewalk. Suddenly men were appearing to help us, and they formed a human chain around us, trying to push us forward. We were being pushed and lots of men were pushing towards us, I immediately felt the attack coming, these men were too close, they were pressing their bodies onto mine. I was the last in the group, thus I was being pushed more. Suddenly we were pushed onto the sidewalk, and then the men attacked. At first, they formed a human chain around me trying to protect me but the men were grabbing at every inch of my body through the men, grabbing at everything they could, my breasts, butt, and crotch. I felt dozens of hands all over my body. I was screaming and jumping trying to get the hands off me. Suddenly I had men pulling on me, everything happened so fast; I was split from my friends. The last image I have of my friends is my friend N. trying to grab my hand, and our friend A. [a male friend] pushing the men away screaming *ibn-kalb* [sons of dogs] to them.

Suddenly I was violently grabbed and thrown towards the wall right next to Hardee's. Then a group of older men formed a human chain around me and protected me. I was hysterical, screaming. I couldn't see my friends, I couldn't tell who was trying to help me or who was trying to

sexually assault me. The men turned towards me, all older men in their 50's or so. They were trying to calm me; they keep telling me I was safe, they were protecting me. I then started to panic again, I couldn't see any of my friends, I couldn't get out of the human chain, it was still total chaos there was still men, trying to get to me. I was suddenly terrified, I couldn't see my friends, I couldn't get out. I was stuck, I then tweeted for help.

I could see the mobs of men still attacking C., our friend. I couldn't see her in the crowds. Suddenly, the men moved me to another cordon where there were more women. They were all terrified; there were six of them, all being protected by a human chain. One by one they got us out, I was last. Men had to escort me out of the area. Once I was clear I called my friends, some were waiting near KFC, N. was missing; she was looking for C. That's when I first realized C. was missing; we didn't know what happened to her. I was finally able to walk through the square with no problems once I got out of that area. I found our two other friends and helped them get a taxi, then walked home.

I cannot express how horrible the experience was, I was completely sexually assaulted by groups of men, pulling on me, grabbing every inch of my body. I remember looking at some of them, yelling at them. They all had the same smirk on their faces, they were enjoying attacking me, they were all enjoying it. It was a crazy face, like they had lost all senses; they were acting like complete animals. Animals, that is the best way I can explain their behavior.

What happened to C. was even worse; words cannot express the anger and rage I felt when she told us her story and what had happened to her.

5. Testimony of Sally Zohney

Sally Zohney, 26 years old, from the group that called for a demonstration in Tahrir Square. Before I speak of what happened during the demonstration, many points should be clarified. Since the July 8 sit-in, there was sexual harassment against the women who went to the Square. A group of men surround the women and pull them, touch their private parts and so on. Most of my friends complained of group sexual assaults back then and there were calls on Twitter for popular committees to protect the Square. But I think most girls did not speak up or document what happened to them.

A couple of months later, during the Mohammed Mahmoud events, besides the presence of undercover agents, sexual harassment was becoming increasingly widespread. I personally witnessed a day during which I saw a girl running away, crying, and complaining about men grabbing her intimately; this happened almost every half hour. From the testimonies, it was evident that most of the girls were young and from the middle or upper middle class. There was a call to document the cases of sexual harassment. I worked on an aspect of that project and we tried to encourage the girls to speak up and send pictures of harassers to expose them. The call

did not have much effect and no movement took any action, from my knowledge.

The point of the latter points is to get a point across, namely that the sexual harassment against women, especially in Tahrir Square, is primarily a political message, aiming to scare people and shame the girls that demonstrate, and ostracize the largest number of people possible from the political sphere. This has been the tactic of the regime for a while, even since 2005, then the virginity tests, beating of female protesters and dragging them across the streets. Ever since the sentencing in the case of Hosni Mubarak, a new sit-in commenced in Tahrir Square to oppose the release of all of Habib El-Adly's aids. Ever since that day, several groups of girls started to complain of violent sexual harassment in the Square and some cases were severely beaten, their headscarves pulled, and stripped of their clothes (out of respect to those affected I will not mention any details). This disgraceful situation lasted for days; reports by journalists and eye-witnesses may easily identify the assaulters. Mohammed Mahmoud Street became a "dangerous zone" for any girl on the Square. Better yet, it would allegedly become best to avoid Tahrir Square entirely!

The demonstration, our main area of concern, was to protest this situation; to tell the girls who survived assaults that we are with them, that they must speak up, that they have their rights and that their harasser is a scared animal. Our voice must reach the media and the people on the Square so they would not stand idle in the face of this crime. Sexual harassment is a crime committed not only against these women but against any person who wants to walk safely as well. The demonstration that day was to begin around 6:00-7:30 PM on Mohammed Mahmoud Street, on Friday June 8. I arrived at 6:30 PM with some friends and we started preparing signs. I was surprised to see more than 50 people holding signs in the form of human chains, surrounded by young men wearing fluorescent jackets. The numbers of people watching started to increase, calls against sexual harassment continued, and there was a large number of young men and people recording with their camera, which were among the factors that made me feel safe.

As the night progressed, the number of "spectators" increased. A decision was made to turn the demonstration to a march that would move from Mohammed Mahmoud Square to Talaat Harb, where the surroundings would be calmer and it would be easier to walk. A group of young men circled around the girls to protect them. I was opposed to this idea because it solidifies the notion that women cannot walk alone in the Square without protection, which is unnecessary and untrue. In the dark though, and with the march progressing, there was little time to argue. When we reached Talaat Harb, I heard a girl beating a man because he touched her in the march. The situation progressed and the young men started beating us and pushed us to the side. The men still circled around us and the march continued. The beatings continued, though, and it was difficult to understand who was with us and who was against us. Water and gas were thrown on the march. We then found out that some girls from the march were surrounded in the middle of the beatings. I thought they were just stuck in the middle, which was unfortunately not true- there was a group of men beating up the young men and pulling the women and touching their

intimate areas, stripping them, in actions that nearly reached the stage of rape in the middle of the Square.

Young men who were accompanying us tried to save the girls but there were beatings everywhere, and theft. I tried to stay away but got my share of the pulling, beating, and touching of my body. My focus was on protecting my bag, which had my camera, phone, and all of my money. In the middle of all this, I saw a girl on the floor, almost completely naked, 20 men lying on top of her. God knows what they did. She was breaking down from the screaming and the beatings; there were others who were savagely assaulted. I do not want anyone to use the word 'harassment', an understatement. I was suddenly being shoved and found myself inside a clothing store on Talaat Harb Street. The beatings, at this point, were very random and violent; I thought I heard gunfire. The situation at the store was frightening- I was with around 10 girls in a small space separating the glass door of the store and the exterior metal door of the store. It is a space that can barely fit two persons. People were pushing to get in, the women working in the store pushing from the inside to close the glass door while the owner of the store was pulling the metal door. Meanwhile, I heard the harassers screaming, "Get out! We'll have a party on you," just like the police!

My only wish was for the glass door not to break on top of me and I was shouting at people so they would stop pushing. But I did not know- if I get out, will I be able to run away? I heard a young man's voice and recognized his shirt- he was one of the young men circling around us and I thought he would be able to manage the harassers. He was shouting at the storeowner to open the door so that we can get out. The owner stubbornly only cared about not opening the door, regardless of the fact that there are 10 girls who will die from suffocation and crowding. The young man who had shouting at the store owner kept telling him, "there are no men anymore... I will get these girls out. I would not be a man if I don't". Thankfully, he was able to get us out. The strange thing is that I could see people meters away, watching us while eating Koshary, as if the beatings were taking place on television! I felt extremely revolted and saddened at that point.

Many of the young men had lost their phones. I did not know where my friends were, if the girls were OK or not, if they went back home or not. I saw some of them and, thankfully, they were OK. The incident did not end here, however. Groups of harassers were standing on street corners and assaulted the girls. They had a look of viciousness in their eyes that I will never forget. I moved with some friends to Al-Bustan Street, we were a smaller group by then. Since the beginning of the march, my phone's battery had died and I was worried that people would try to get in touch with me and worry that something might have happened to me. Many were psychologically traumatized from the incident. I hope this incident would be the cause that a stance be made.

I hope that whoever saw anything, would speak up; if anyone was hurt, tell the story. There are a million things to do to help.

I salute every girl that participated, every mother who was with us, every man who defended us and was beaten, and every young man who believed in the cause.

Testimonies of Sexual Assault and Rape on November 2012

Cases of sexual assault and rape were documented on November 2012 during demonstrations that took place in Tahrir Square and its vicinity to protest a constitutional declaration issued by Mohammed Morsi on 22 November 2012, giving Morsi sweeping powers including the immunization of any law or decree issued by the president from any appeal "by any way or to any entity" until the election of a new People's Assembly (lower house of parliament)⁴. The attacks that took place on November were as brutal as those documented two months later, during the second anniversary of the January 25 revolution. An outcry against these attacks did not take place, however, which explains the shock that swept many when the testimonies of the sexual assault and rape that took place starting on 25 January 2013 came to light. Unfortunately, the brutality was not new; only the attention was.

Even though the testimonies present a grim picture of streets rife with sexual attackers, testimonies of eyewitnesses to some of the assault and rape attacks are available. These provide answers to some lingering questions, such as, why do passersby stand idly and allow the attacks to take place? Even though in certain instances, survivors speak of passersby who stand by and watch the attacks, some while even smiling, eye witness testimonies present the explanation of others who simply did not know that rape was being committed meters away and other who simply could not break through the mayhem to reach the survivor.

6. Testimony of Mohammed Kheir:

I received a phone call from my friend ("Y") whose personal information I will not disclose (unless she decides otherwise) where she asked me to make it clear that what the media is calling "harassment cases" have taken place and still take place in the areas surrounding Tahrir Square. "Y" said that these incidents are in fact much worse than mere harassment, and she started telling me over the next few minutes about the painful horrific events she experienced on Friday, November 23, 2012, an experience, she said, other girls had been exposed to in subsequent days. I leave you now with her testimony:

7. Testimony – Y:

'I was with one of my female friends at the corner of Al-Qasr Al-Einy Street and Sheikh Rehan street at six in the evening on Friday, November 23rd during the mass rally rejecting the resident's super constitutional decree the "No to the super constitutional decree" rally, when several tear gas canisters were fired by the security forces on the protesters during clashes at Simon Bolivar street.

⁴ *English text of Morsi's Constitutional Declaration*, Ahram Online, 22 November 2012. available at <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/58947.aspx>

My friend and I started running and we suddenly found ourselves in the middle of the security forces that were continuing their attack and we fell to the ground. Suddenly, a group of young men appeared and started tearing our clothes off. We could see a male friend of ours in the distance running towards us trying to come save us when some of the men grabbed him and started choking him with the scarf he was wearing. In the meantime we were trying to fight off the attackers but their hands had already torn off the shirt I was wearing as well as the bra underneath. They had also stolen our wallets and everything that was in our pockets including our mobile phones. My female friend was lying on the ground as was our male friend who had tried to save us.

The group of attackers ran away when other groups of men started arriving. We started running away from all of them towards Tahrir square, but we suddenly found ourselves in the middle of another group of attackers. By Mohamed Mahmoud Street I got separated from my friend and I could not find her again. The attackers started pushing me forward. I tried to resist but I could not distinguish between who was trying to assault me and who was trying to save me.

Within a few moments, in the hustle, my clothes were completely torn off and the attackers were gripping every part of my body without exception. One man inserted his fingers violently into my rear end and I started screaming and tried to get to the wall on the side of the street. There I could see a group of young men standing on something high, looking on and laughing. I kept on fighting off the attackers and I sat myself down into sewage that was on the ground trying to protect at least some parts of my body. They started dragging me to the ground. One man tried to forcefully stick his tongue into my mouth, I bit him and he beat me.

In the middle of the pushing I found myself completely carried off the ground, above their hands and I was kicking in vain. I was carried into a place with neon lighting which seemed like on one of the shops in the end of Mohamed Mahmoud Street. I no longer knew if the people who put me there were trying to save me or rape me. In reality, they invaded every part of my body with their hands. They started pushing me out into the street again. I fell on the floor and there was a car slowly driving closer in the middle of the crowd. The car was driven so close to me that it drove over my hair, pinning me to the ground before it was driven in reverse. The people in the car tried to force me into the car but they did not succeed other than get my head through the window because of the attackers pulling and pushing. They put me onto the hood of the car.

Four men held me down onto the hood while all of them continued violating me. The car started moving and tried to get out in the middle of the crowd. People were watching, doors were closed, and we passed in front of a small mosque with a closed door. Some people started coming close to see what was happening and the people in the car answered in a peculiar way saying "She has a bomb on her stomach" while they got the people to move away. I understood that they were not trying to save me when I heard one of them say: "We will fuck her in Abdeen". Their terrifying

(21)

words continued until we reached Abdeen.

In Abdeen a woman suddenly appeared with a group of men carrying canes and she tried to get the crowd away from me. They threw a sheet and a *Jilbab* (dress) over me but I couldn't move my body or fight off the men who were still holding me. The woman and the men with her finally managed to get hold of me and they tried to carry me into a small shop with closed doors. They started banging on the door calling the shopkeeper. He finally opened the door and I was finally able to put on the sheet and the *Jilbab* but the attackers continued to surround the shop trying to get hold of me again.

As the woman and those with her finally managed to clear a corridor to her house, we went up to her apartment and sat down. Her husband asked me "What did you do to them?! What do they want from you?!" I started answering him calmly until I exploded again at his question "Are you a Miss or Mrs.?" (Are you a virgin or not?)

The attackers continued standing outside the building but we finally managed to open a corridor to the car of the woman's husband, and we head off in the direction of my home in the Mounira district. The woman's husband kept on asking me questions about the landmarks in the area, as if making sure I was not lying to them! He insisted on following me to the building and up to the door of my apartment. My female friend opened the door and hugged me while she was crying, and the man left.'

8. Testimony of Eyewitness:

Mr. Mohammed, even though we do not know each other, I have been following your news and today, I unfortunately saw the note about the rape of a girl. I was on Tahrir Square that day and this incident happened before my eyes. What happened was that a building was on fire in front of the Lycee French School on Mohammed Mahmoud Street. I headed there with a friend to provide any help but the inhabitants had close the gates and the fire department did not arrive.

When we lost hope and the revolutionaries were angered because of the presence of the military inside the Lycee and started throwing Molotov cocktails at them, my friend and I retreated to the beginning of Mohamed Mahmoud Street, near Hardees. It was at that time that we saw a fight, consisting of a group surrounding a person and beating him with belts. We thought it was a security officer but when we got closer and asked what was going on, we were told that it was a group of young men raping a girl. There was incredible passivity; no one was intervening. My friend and I pushed the people in the circle until we reached the circle directly surrounding the girl. In that moment, I lost my friend and only saw him once during the commotion. The attack was organized: a group of men were beating the girl with the belt so she would not resist and get distracted covering her face to shield herself from the beating, one man is down on the girl's body raping her, while others were beating whoever tries to break into the circle, and they switched

roles.

I am not exaggerating in any way. When I reached the circle surrounding the girl, one man was getting up from on top of the girl and another was getting ready to take his place. I saw the girl on the floor, her clothes pushed above her chest, her pants are unzipped and she was covering her intimate areas and struggling to re-zip her pants. At that time, I threw myself inside the circle and tried to help to stand up. I was beaten severely with belts and kicked in the stomach and fell down. A man with a small lighter suddenly appeared and he ignited the flare to push the crowd back, allowing me and another man to get the girl to stand up and help her fix her clothes. This group of thugs then returned and beat up the man carrying the flare, which accidentally touched my face. I was barely breathing in the midst of the pushing and shoving. I managed to pull the girl, along with the man who was helping us, and ran towards the street after they had succeeded to pull her beyond Hardee's. I kept looking back at the girl while we are running and assured her that I will not leave her alone. She was completely distraught, disheveled as I could hear her assaulters running after us until we reached Hardee's again. At that point, they had caught up with us and they pushed us, causing us to fall on the wet ground.

I swear to you that the number of people helping us throughout this ordeal were not more than 2 individuals. Meanwhile, regular people, onlookers who did not belong to this group of thugs, were also harassing the girl as we were carrying her. By the time I got back up, the girl was about 3 meters away from me. Of course, people had surrounded her again and the beatings with the belts resumed.

At that time, I lost any power I had within me and could not go back to her. I cried hysterically. Please convey my apologies to her. Tell her I am sorry I could not go back to help her. Tell her that there were men trying to protect you; not all of them were trying to eat you alive. Tell her that we believe that she is a respectable woman, that we do not believe the names they were calling her when they held her and beat her up. This girl is not lying. Maybe she is not the one I saw. But I still want to apologize to her on behalf of every man in Egypt. All of what I recounted above lasted for a span of 5 minutes, or maybe less. Tell her to forgive us, that we are sorry, and that we hold her in the highest regards.

9. Testimony of Eyewitness - F.S:

The story you published in the note is true and happened before our eyes. The problem is that people coming from outside have little understanding of what is going on. We saw a car suddenly emerging from an alley of Tahrir Street. It was a white car and we tried to run after it to inquire about what is going on. 2 individuals pushed us and told us 'it's a naked girl that we are trying to cover and get her out of the Square'. The looks of those people did not imply that they are telling the truth. We went to the building the girl was in and people told us that what we saw were indeed attempts' to save her and that she was raped inside the building. The problem lies in the people

surrounding the victim, who usually tell lies to push people away. I hope that when harassment incidents take place, people who cannot endure beatings would get out of the way because the number of people watching was double that of the number harassing the girl. We could have successfully intervened had this filthy bunch not been around. Please tell her we are sorry; we genuinely had no idea what was going on. I promise her that we will never let this happen again.

10. Testimony of Eyewitness - M.A:

I witnessed this incident, Mr. Mohammed, and I swear to you, this girl was a victim and the young men violated her with extreme brutality. Every word she said is 100% true. I was among the people who tried to rescue her and the last place I reached was a side door of a prayer area. Some young men opened the door to hide the girl inside, before she was placed on top of the car, but the people who were pretending to rescue her refused to let her go in because they only wanted to have her.

Tell her that there many men trying to rescue her and many men tried to cover her. There were young men crying from the severity of what happened to her. Everyone who hurt her will, God willing, be severely punished by God.

11. Eyewitness Testimony - M.S:

I witnessed what happened to this girl. I was leaving the street adjacent to McDonald's and saw violent confrontations taking place between the security forces and the protesters. There was excessive use of Molotov cocktails thrown at the school saw the laser light from a weapon carried by an officer on my face, I could not move at that time – there was a crowd at Hardee's, protesters in front of me, rocks and Molotov cocktails thrown around, security forces in front of me inside the school. I said the *shahada* (Islamic declaration to the faith in God, conventionally uttered under discrete occasions, including before death). At that point, a protester lying on the floor, severely beaten, pulled me to the ground. I fell and heard a bullet passing on top of me and settling in the wall of McDonald's.

I got up and tried to leave Mohammed Mahmoud Street and reach Tahrir Square, when I saw a group of men, standing between Pizza Hut and Hardee's, surrounding a person and beating him up. I did not know what was going on and heard a man saying that the group is beating up a man who sexually harassed a girl. Someone was pushing me towards this fight, but God sent me people to save me. 2 men suddenly held me; my feet were not touching the ground. I screamed but they reassured me that they are only trying to get me out of the street. We ran to the other side of the confrontations, near the American University in Cairo building. They put me down and one of them said 'get out of here now.' The other one (around 25 or 27 years old) was crying. I was not concentrating then; my nose was bleeding from the shock, crying, and the tear gas. I wanted to reach a journalist friend on Al-Qasr Al-Einy Street, where the clashes were also severe; I wanted to reach anyone I know. I fell on Rehan Street, at the end of the American University in Cairo fence.

I want this girl to know had I been a man, I would have rather died than leave her with these monsters. I want to tell her that she is a hero. After I learned that a girl was held by these animals, I am afraid to go to Tahrir Square; I think this is a message someone wants to get across to us.

I do not want my name to appear. If I could reach this girl, I will be thankful to you. Her voice must be heard, justice must take place. She must know that there are people who will stand by her and that we are sorry... she is stronger than 100 men.

12. Testimony of Ghada, an inhabitant of Abdeen district, testimony made on the telephone to Al-Nahar Channel:

I heard screams on the street. I ran outside to see what was going on and saw a group of men placing a woman on the hood of a car. They had Swiss army knives and told us to stay away because she had a bomb on her belly. Her clothes were torn off and she smelled like the sewer. Thankfully, she fell from the hood of the car in front of a café. People saw her and beat the men who were sexually harassing her away; one of them was hit with a knife. She was naked and she was trying to put her pants on. She was in a very bad condition; she withstood what no man can. They took her from Tahrir to Abdeen with her clothes torn off. It is good that she is still alive and was able to go down the streets again. I took her to my apartment and my husband and I later drove her home.

13. Testimony of Survivor: (Documented by Nazra for Feminist Studies)

'We Will Take Her and Then One by One, Guys'

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

On Friday 23 November 2012, at 6:30 PM, I went with a friend to express our rejection of the distorted constitution amongst the millions that took to the streets for the same purpose (I don't want to hear any of you say 'Why did you go there') we strolled around the circle in the middle of the Square, reaching the corner of Kasr Al-Ainy and Mohammed Mahmoud streets. The police were throwing tear gas bombs heavily and the running and scrambling started. I held my friend's hand but lost her for moments. The last I heard from her was that she was being sexually harassed in the scramble. When I was able to see clearly again, I could not find my friend, but I ran into

another friend trying to escape the tear gas and told him that my friend is being sexually harassed. We went to rescue her and I found out, at that moment, that I lost my mobile phone. I found my friend surrounded by hundreds of people and my male friend and I tried to save her but they pushed us. We fell on top of each other and they separated us into two circles. I did not understand anything at that moment... I did not comprehend what is happening...who are those people? All that I knew was that there were hundreds of hands stripping me off my clothes and brutally violating my body.

There is no way out, for everyone is saying that they are protecting and saving me, but all I felt from the circles close to me, sticking to my body, was the finger-rape of my body, from the front and back; someone was even trying to kiss me... I was completely naked, pushed by the mass surrounding me to an alley close to Hardee's restaurant... I am in the middle of this tightly knit circle. Every time I tried to scream, to defend myself, to call on a savior, they increased their violence and rape. I fell again in the sewer water in front of Hardee's and I realized, then, that falling amounts to death. I decided to keep my calm, seeing that screaming is followed by more violence. I tried to remain standing, holding onto their hands which are violating me, and their arms. In the alleyway near Hardee's, I fell again in the same sewer, naked. I was able to escape death by stampede and found a building, where the doorman was standing behind the door, refusing to open it. I was stuck in the building's entrance for a long time, bodies scrambling around me, their hands still violating me. I even saw some standing on top of elevated surfaces to be able to watch freely, feeding their sexual frustrations by watching. I felt that I spent a long time in that corner, until someone threw me a pullover, which was impossible to put on, as bodies jammed to me, preventing me from wearing it. I succeeded, in a moment, to put the pullover on, the same moment I heard a group of young men to my left agreeing to take me to another place, according to one of them, 'we will take her and then one by one, guys'.

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

(26)

hospital and surround me again. Someone gave me his pants, another his mobile phone so I can make a call... I started to see my friends trying to infiltrate the human masses surrounding me. It was extremely difficult to get out of the field hospital to reach a friend's house, close to the hospital. When I reached her house, the harassers were still waiting for me downstairs.

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

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

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

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

Sexual Assault and Rape During the Second Anniversary of the January 25 Revolution

The 7 testimonies below are those of the survivors of sexual assault and rape that took place starting on 25 January 2013, during the second anniversary of the January 25 revolution. They are followed by those of volunteers in the various initiatives that were formed to intervene on the ground and try to release the women from their attackers. According to a statement by Zahran, coordinator of Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment, to Al-Tahrir Newspaper, volunteers of Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment tried to intervene in 19 cases of group sexual harassment on that day. Amongst them were cases of rape that required medical and psychological attention. The *Shoft Taharosh* (I Saw Harassment) group detected 5 other cases on that day. Both initiatives confirmed that these crimes were committed through similar tactics and during the same time, which indicates an intention to scare women and exclude them from participating in the revolution, according to the reports issued by both initiatives.

14. Testimony of Survivor - H:

On Friday, 25 January 2013, I went to Tahrir Square to participate in demonstrations at around 5:30 PM. I felt that something was not right on the Square on that day. Confrontations took place in crowded areas, I screamed and shouted, "be careful", but there was a general air of hostility.

I was standing by the metal fence in front of Hardee's; there were young men sitting on the fence who were shouting to make way for the ambulance, so I moved towards the circle in the middle of the Square, where the shoving and pushing started. I shouted again and people pushed me away from the crowds, among them heavy-built men, who started to argue with me. A group of girls quickly surrounded me to protect me, but I do not know how the men pulled me from between them and surrounded me in large numbers. Their hands were on every part of my body; in seconds, they tore my clothes away and I heard their voices- all conveying a message that they are protecting me: "get out of the way", "she is like your sister". They paralyzed me and carried me to the fence in front of Hardee's and people from above the fence lifted me up. I was almost naked and there were hands everywhere again. I was wrapping a shawl around my neck and they pulled it in opposite directions to suffocate me. I remained in this state, naked and up in the air for 10 minutes. When they lowered me, I tried to sit on the ground in the sewers, seeking protection from it. They shouted 'get up!' to gain control over me; they forced me up and I sat down again. People were standing on my legs, someone pinned down my shoulders and was crying, another had his hands on my chest; someone was covering me with a bed sheet. I did not know who was trying to save me and whose hands were inside me; I was screaming and wanted to get dressed. When I was held up in the air, I saw dozens of people watching me, none of whom were trying to intervene.

As they carried me to the ambulance, the person carrying me was violating me with his hands. There was a doctor and a paramedic inside the ambulance. The doctor was crying. Five people got in the ambulance with me, but I was not comfortable with their presence and screamed because they were among the people violating me. Three of them got off and two remained. The ambulance could not reach Dohara Palace Hospital; they were still running behind the ambulance and broke its side mirrors. The ambulance sped to Muneira Hospital.

I was treated terribly at the Muneira Hospital. I went in on my feet and without my pants. When the doctor asked me 'what do you want?' I answered 'I want to get dressed'. They dealt with me as if I was unduly exaggerating my case and the nurses advised me to hide and not humiliate myself. I screamed at them and a doctor came in who wanted to inspect me while 6 nurses stood around. I screamed 'I am not comfortable being naked front of women and men! Don't you understand!' they left and one remained after she put her hands around her waist and scolded me, saying that at least one nurse should be present. The doctor said that no injuries can be detected, failing to notice the contusions and bruises all around my body, bruises which the head of the department documented later.

People started to come and go, two police officers came; one of them played nice and said that he wrote a memo and if I agree to what he wrote, I should sign it. I saw that he wrote the term "An act of indecency" and I of course fought with him. A police officer and Police Officer came later and filed a complaint in Sayeda Zeinab police station and transferred it Qasr El-Neil police station. A case was filed and I went to the Court and Commissioner of the Court treated me well, even

making an empty room available so that not a lot of people would be present while I tell the story. He showed me the two individuals who were in the ambulance. I was not sure of anything but he made an accusation against them which I directed to them.

I was screened by medical examiners, male and female. Someone called my husband and a female friend saying that he found my phone and returned it, even though it was an expensive one. He left his name and telephone number. They took my bag, with all my cards in it.

I have no doubt that this was an organized, or even a rehearsed, attack.

15. Testimony of H's Husband to Al- Nahar Channel:

In the studio are two cases, a two-month span between them and the attack took place in the same manner- circles form, no cursing, to the contrary, they say 'we are protecting you' or 'stay away from her she is like you sister'. The problem is society treats women as if they are weaker beings that must be docile and submissive. The women who met H. told her, in good spirit, that she must not inform her husband and conceal the truth, so they are convinced that they are weak beings.

Last week we did not ask for support from any one, but many stood with us, such as El-Nadim Center, Nazra, the Arab Organization, and the National Council. Girls and women must come and speak about what happened. Our numbers must be large so we can take action and those responsible brought to justice. It is like what we surgeons say- you cannot close the wound on an infection.

16. Testimony of Nahla Anany:

I went to Tahrir Square today with great difficulty as the metro stations were closed and stopped at Sayeda Zeinab station. I met my mother in the Square, specifically in front of KFC, and then we headed to Talaat Harb Square together to participate in a predominantly female demonstration. The demonstration included some Azhar sheiks and women of the likes Azza Balbaa and Nour Al-Huda, calling against President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as some slogans in support of Al-Azhar and the Mufti.

Similar to what usually happens during predominately female demonstrations, there were young men who volunteered to protect us by forming human shields around us. Once we reached the Square crowds started to surround us and I do not know if it was out of curiosity or other reasons relating to the events that took place afterwards. In an instant, the beatings and attacks commenced and the Sheikhs who accompanied us from Talaat Harb were nowhere to be seen.

It is impossible to determine who was sexually harassing us, who was shoving for the sake of it and who was trying to protect us. In a span of seconds, the demonstration was disbanded and I only found my mother and friend near me, while the remaining women disappeared. A young man

to be with the Azhar scholars". Those circling around us said they were just trying to protect us as demonstrators; that they were on our side. As we approached the square more people began to join the group that was circling around us and so the violence began, they divided us and a number of different circles began to group around the divided groups of protestors.

They then began to harass us. They beat up my friend Rawya and there was an attempt to break her arm and some of her other body parts...they choked me, probably trying to terminate my voice...they put their hands in my pockets...another girl they pulled and assaulted over and over horribly.

Some of us managed to run away, but as for me they saw me and dragged me from the middle of the carnage to Talaat Harb. Coincidentally, a woman from my village, Kafr El Dawar, recognized me and said, "You're from the Balbaa' family! I know your family!" She saved me, removed me from the crowd. I was scared the assaulters would bring my life to an end; they were really trying hard to suffocate me. These assaulters acted almost in certainty that they wouldn't get caught or that there wouldn't be any consequences to their actions. They thought they would be protected from any possibility of punishment, as if what they were doing wasn't wrong.

18. Testimony of Aida Abdel Rahman Karasha:

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Aida Abdel Rahman Karasha, I'm also known as Rawya Abdel Rahman. I was born on April 1 1946. I'm a mother of two married daughters and a grandmother to a ten-year-old child. Most importantly, I am an Egyptian citizen troubled with my country's political dilemmas and how that will affect the future of my children and grandchildren.

I went out on 25 January 2013, as did masses of Egyptian citizens, in a demonstration of my anger and frustration at the revolution's failure to meet any of the protestor's demands. I demonstrated to ask where did "Bread, Freedom, Social Justice and Human Dignity" go? Egyptians across the country demonstrated in main squares calling for these demands during the last couple of years, and instead of change the country's situation only became worse, prices rose dramatically. As citizens, over these past couple of years, we've undergone major crises, from the drafting of an unjust constitution that strips us off all our rights and freedoms, to the increasingly lowly tone social discourse has sunk to, with a rise in sectarian sedition, sexism and violence against women.

After Friday prayers, I participated in a march from Mohammed Mahmoud to Tahrir Square. I left the march on the way to Tahrir to join in with a feminist march at Talaat Harb coming from Sayyeda Zeinab. Everyone joined in chanting slogans and conversing among themselves as we march about the country's troubles.

From about five o'clock to around half-past seven in the evening I demonstrated in Tahrir Square with some female friends and colleagues. At half-past seven, a number of us female protestors decided to arrange a sit-in at Talaat Harb, and about ten women took the initiative and began

chanting near the Talaat Harb statue against the current regime, against its tyranny, oppression and the severe backwardness that had taken place in such a short period of time, undermining the role of women and attempts to oppress them.

People began to gather in circles around us until the whole square around the statue was surrounded. A group of Azhar scholars stood with us at the height of the circle right around the statue, an air of happiness about them. One of them made a wonderful sermon about forgiveness in Islam, Islam's acceptance of all religions, about how religious sedition is triggered, women's freedoms in Islam and how it preserves her status and dignity. It was a great sermon, combating the extremist religious discourse that had become so normalized. Many raised their voices and called for the rest of us to head to the square. I'm not certain who came up with that idea, but I'm pretty sure these chants urging us back to Tahrir weren't coming from the women circled around the statue.

Now a large group of men and women, we began to march to Tahrir Square. A few people raised their voices urging for our respectable Sheikhs to march in the front and for the women to come behind them.

A group of middle-class-looking, clean-cut men in their 20s and 30s began to surround the march, their hands intertwined, as demonstrator's voices called for the circling of the march, particularly the women at the forefront. As we got closer to the square I began to sense an unexplained crowdedness; I could barely make out the Azhar Sheikhs who were at this point leading the march. The men circling around us began to tighten their circle, my colleagues and friends were no longer near me and instead the only faces around women were unrecognizable. I found that I had fallen behind to the far left edge of the march when just a while before I had been marching at its center. These human circles around us separated me from the main street, which did not seem crowded.

The circles began to become tighter and tighter until we could no longer breathe, I heard screams, and recognized the voice of artist Azza Balbaa'. I yelled, asking what's going on. Someone from the middle of the fuss yelled back that some of the others wanted to march to Maespero. I immediately answered, while I was almost suffocating from the pressure in the tightening circle around me, that that had nothing to do with us. A series of quick incidents and multiple, loud female shouts followed as the circle around us grew tighter and tighter. Tens of hands from this circle reached out towards my body to touch it, particularly playing around with my legs and buttocks. At the same time I was trying to save myself from these hands a hand tried to rip my clothes off and empty the pockets of the coat I was wearing, whether or not it succeeded I couldn't even notice amidst this mess. Before I could recover, a group of young men tried to drag me in different directions, some dragged me to the front, others dragged me to the back, and some tried to play with my legs. I resisted, I fought back so I wouldn't lose balance and fell to the floor. At the same time all of the lights and electricity in the square went off. I began to run towards a side

greeted as a hero when she goes back home; they will hide what happened to her. Those who know will be concerned about whether she is a virgin or not and how they can 'cover her shame'. The shame is not ours; it is yours. Shame on you who act as revolutionaries calling for freedom, but classify that freedom into first and second classes, into freedoms that are due now, and others that are due later!

Please do not get the impression that I mean to urge you to come down to the Square to protect us. If you do not think that our right to be present is among your priorities, then thank you, we do not need anything from you and we will continue to protect our rights and resist the attempts to ostracize us. While there are many hypocrites, there are also many courageous people who understand that my message is part and parcel of what this revolution is about. The past two months have shown me that man can be indescribably sick and revolting. But they have also shown me that there are respectable men that believe in my right to be present and who defend this right, not because I am a weak woman that needs protection, but because principles are indivisible.

21. Testimony of Survivor:

(Documented by El-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture)

I was in a women's March heading from Talaat Harb Square to Tahrir Square. We joined Al Azhar Sheikh march, they were at the beginning of the march and we were behind them. Several young men gathered around us and formed a cordon, and they told us it is for our safety. I was a little bit worried when I saw them. They kept walking beside us until we reached Tahrir Square, by then, they had us totally separated from Al Azhar men and I didn't know how they did not notice that we were gone. They started separating the women from each other too, they formed a circle around each woman and a large group of men would gather around one woman. I was kidnapped by a group of men. About 20 or 30 men gathered around me, they tore off my top; my bra was torn off too and about a 100 hands ravaging my body. They were pulling my hands from both sides, every group trying to take me to one side. They kept pulling my hair too, trying to drag me on the floor from it; to this day I can't brush my hair due to the excruciating pain I feel in my scalp. I started screaming and begging, "if it was your sister or your daughter, would you let this happen to her!!" but this did not affect them and their brutality increased. Their hands were inside my jeans, I was wearing tight jeans, they could not take it off, but their hands were inside and they were groping every part they can reach. As I have an old knee injury, I fell down and they fell over me. Amidst my fear, I tried to stand up again, they dragged me to Talaat Harb Square again and one of them raised a knife in my face. Another one from behind told me not to scream because that will increase their violence, I didn't know if he was trying to protect me or was with them and did not want anyone to hear me while he attacks me. I was wishing that the knife would kill me... I wanted my life to end. I was so tired from fighting and resisting by then and I couldn't do anything but cry.

We received a call at noon about a case of sexual harassment. While heading to the middle of the Square, a large group of men sexually harassed us by touching us. They tried to separate us and our group dispersed. The girls headed to a nearby KFC, where the group was based. I tried to head there with them, but a complete circle of thugs surrounded me and their numbers increased. They formed more than one circle around me and tried to touch every part of my body, even those who were trying to fool me into thinking that they are protecting me were, in fact, thugs. They tried to push my right hand away, then my left hand, to take my purse away, and they succeeded. A man then held me from the waist to strip me of my pants and he succeeded to remove it down to my thigh. In front of him were two men, each held one of my legs so that the men on my left can tear away my underwear. They managed to do that and they put their fingers inside me. They are interested in making the women non-virgins. They raped me so forcefully with their fingers that I was injured and started to bleed. At the same time, another group of men started to lift my clothes and I was almost completely naked. My screams and pleas had no effect on them. To the contrary, their numbers increased and I felt that I was suffocating due to the lack of oxygen. The men surrounded me in larger numbers when I fell to the ground.

After 20 minutes of agony, I approached the entrance of the building next to KFC, where young men tried to pull me away from the attackers. After the doorman opened the door of the building, I went inside and was completely naked. Two women tried to cover me with a jacket and take me with them to their apartment. They provided first aid in the form of some ointments and disinfectants and gave me underwear. I started to come out of my state of shock, and after 30 minutes, I found shocking injuries throughout my body; my chest and nails were full of wounds and there was extensive bruising throughout my body. Afterwards, I took a taxi with a volunteer from our group to go to the hospital. A general practitioner in the hospital gave me some ointments and painkillers and recommended that I see a gynecologist. But I decided to go back home, and in the next morning, I left Cairo.

24. Testimony of Sahar Talaat:

We were waiting in Sayeda Zeinab Square for the prayers to end and the participants in the demonstrations started to gather and the flags of the various political and revolutionary movements were carried on the shoulders of the young men.

The sound of the demonstrations was very loud, calling for basic demands that matter to every Egyptian. The demonstration moved towards Tahrir Square and included all classes of society, Sheiks, girls, women, children, young men, and housewives. The demonstration reached Talat Harb Square and joined another demonstration that was coming from Talaat Harb Street. I saw many girls and women and mothers holding signs of great women, like Om Kalthoum and Huda Sharawy, among others. Everyone had personal demands. I was doing my job by asking and recording their responses on why they took to the street on 25 January and they were analyzing the situation after 2 years of revolution.

pull my clothes back down in the middle of the assault. The last stage of this ordeal consisted of people trying to get me out. They left me on the floor without touching me and were yelling at me to get up so the harassers would not get hold of me again. I got up and saw a young man from the safety group who was able to reach me. People around us were trying to beat him up, suspicious that he is another harasser. I yelled, 'he is my brother! Leave him!' which reduced the severity of the beating. The young man handed me his eye glasses and tried to beat up the people surrounding us and I did not see him again. After that, a man I did not know was trying to protect me. I do not think all of these events happened over a long span of time. 2 individuals from the confrontation group managed to get to me and to safeguard my way out. During the entire ordeal, my back was covered by a street vendor's car selling tea and sandwiches, forming an L-shape. The presence of this car provided good protection; I was able to rest there until we found a safe way out. We were in the middle of the street at the time and people we knew, located in a certain building, were able to break through the crowd and I moved with 2 young men towards that building. However, the stone blocks blocking most of Downtown's street acted as a hindrance, as it was not safe to climb over it to reach the building. By that time, an ambulance had arrived and I got in along with the 2 men and reached a safe house. This is my testimony about what happened on a certain time of that day, with all its terrible events of assault against many women, some of whom were volunteering with Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment.

27. Testimony of a Male Volunteer with OpAntiSH:

The phenomenon of sexual harassment has been going on in Tahrir Square for a long time. It started out with a few, sporadic cases. With time, however, the phenomenon of sexual harassment became very organized, to the extent that different cases are almost identical in their details. In the beginning, a crowd and a commotion became noticeable. It would initially appear as if a group of men is sexually harassing the girl and the rest are trying to rescue her. The bitter truth, however, is that men who are pretending to rescue the girl are mostly trying to sexually harass her as well. The aim of these groups is to scare girls from ever going to the Square again.

A group composed of different movements and initiatives detected this phenomenon and decided to form Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment. When I first heard about them, I was very interested to join this group and try to do anything to rescue the girls being sexually harassed. I thought, initially, that, as men, we are going down the Square to protect the weak women who were being harassed. Yesterday was my first day as a volunteer with the group. I was in the intervention group, whose task is to reach the girl being assaulted and surround her to enable another group to escort the girl to a safe house. Before heading to the Square, I rehearsed everything that should be done. What I experienced, however, was a form of madness! Screaming and beating from every direction and we could not get to the girl due to the large numbers of people surrounding her; some were watching and others pushing through the crowds, maybe they would get any chance to sexually harass the girl. A small group was trying to help but did not know what to do exactly. They were

crowding the space even further, giving the sexual harassers a better opportunity to get hold of the girl. After significant effort, beating, and yelling, the intervention group was able to reach the girl and surround her in a building entrance, for example, or an enclosed space so that no one would be able to reach her. The stage of negotiation then starts to get the girl out of the place she is in, which often ends by calling for an ambulance to try to get her out in the best condition possible.

After the first sexual harassment incident, while we were getting an assaulted girl inside the ambulance, a great sense of despair overcame me; how can we overtake these people when we are only 10 individuals or so? This thought stayed with me while running after the ambulance car to make sure that it reaches a safe location. I saw the girl again, with 2 of my colleagues who had gotten into the ambulance with her, and she was smiling! I thought that if she was able to smile, then she has successfully defeated all of the sexual harassers on her own. The aim of these criminals is to break women's will so that they never participate in demonstrations again, but she participated and went through that experience, and came out smiling! I felt very small in her presence and in the face of her strong spirit. Her smile and laughter gave me the power to go on and helped me realize that the effort that goes into confronting the masses of harassers is worth it when you see a survivor that can still smile in the face of tragedy.

The bottom line is that we are not a group of courageous men who are volunteering to rescue powerless women! The truth is that we derive our ability to keep going from them. I salute every woman who is able, despite all that has happened or might happen to her, to stand up and say no to sexual harassment. These women prove that manhood is not a biological trait. Without you, we would not have been able to do anything.

28. Testimony of Sally Zohney, Volunteer with OpAntiSH:

I am one of the volunteers in Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment. On the night of January 25th 2013, I arrived at the 'Operations Room' where we prepare first aid bags and take calls. Before 7:00 PM, we received calls asking for us to intervene quickly in a case at the *Mogamma* in Tahrir. I headed there with two other volunteers (a guy and a girl). We were running with the rescue bags, which contain clothes (because the first thing these scums do is to cut the girl's clothes) and first aid. We arrived at the *Mogamma* in Tahrir and didn't see anything. We got news again that we should go to Hardee's because there was a case of sexual harassment happening there. We ran and arrived at a large group; there was a lot of screaming at the street corner, and alarming numbers squeezed near the sidewalk. I was sure the girl was in between these crowds but I didn't see her. I tried to reach the girl being assaulted, along with my female colleague, but I was surprised when men started yelling and telling us "You'll get beaten up, you won't get out of here, get out!" Before I could understand their warnings, a group of men cornered us, our backs facing a *fol* cart. I did not fathom the fact that at least than five pairs of hands were grabbing my breasts and cramming their hands inside the zipper of my pants.

This perspective is based on the division of social roles on a class and gender basis. Political actors, both men and women, do not operate in a vacuum, but in the shadow of a patriarchal, classist social reality that both limits and determines their political actions, and creates opportunities and risks for all actors, not only women. Since the revolution, women have worked tirelessly to break several barriers limiting their ability to participate in the public sphere. They have demonstrated high levels of participation in all the movements and political forums that emerged after the uprising, but they also paid a high price for such participation, specifically when it comes to their freedom of movement and the safety and integrity of their bodies. These heroic acts have endowed women's voices a new, stronger dimension, made our cause visible and tangible, and has made our organization necessary. We reject claims that women's issues are only a concern of a well-off segment of middle-class women. We also reject the rhetoric that women's rights are the monopoly of a specific set of women, whether those working in institutional frameworks (e.g., the National Council for Women) or in rights groups that are active in only some spheres. We also reject claims that women's issues can be reduced to women's representation in parties or political life.

These developments require an honest discussion that among all of us. Such a discussion cannot be limited to a discussion on how the lack of security affects the ability of men and women to act in the public sphere, and how certain actors attempt to terrorize women and break them both psychologically and physically.

II. What happened?

Over the last few months, Tahrir Square and the surrounding areas have been the locus of terrifying rapes of unprecedented violence and brutality. These crimes began to become increasingly violent on the street during the demonstrations in late November 2012. Several confirmed and documented gang rapes took place in the square and streets surrounding it in the period from November 21 to 25, amid very weak condemnations, and the disregard of most official and unofficial parties. As a result of the general state of denial and disagreements, the scope of the crimes expanded during the demonstrations that marked the second anniversary of the revolution, which began on January 25, 2013. Several cases of brutal gang rape were documented, all following a similar pattern and style, and women were targeted regardless of their political affiliations. Most of the women assaulted were demonstrators, volunteers with anti-sexual harassment teams in the square, or women who happened to pass by. Over 19 cases of rape and sexual assault were confirmed. A preliminary assessment of those horrific crimes and the methods employed in them indicates a recurring pattern of assault and suggests that unidentified individuals and groups committing these crimes approach demonstrations and political events as an opportunity to assault women.

Subsequent responsibility entails recognizing that such reprehensible crimes do in fact take place and involves exerting pressure for investigations into these crimes to identify the offenders and hold them accountable and shouldering political responsibility for the security of demonstrations and events sponsored by revolutionary movements and bodies. In addition, subsequent responsibility means addressing the issue of the official media and the shameful way it covers these crimes. The media either ignores those crimes entirely or adopt a sensationalist coverage that does not respect the privacy of those assaulted. Political parties and movements share with us the burden of confronting these unprofessional media practices, which often entails additional violations. This is true not only for women who have been attacked, but for groups that seek to offer aid to them amid difficult conditions, meager resources, and the lack of any support whatsoever from Egyptian parties and movements.

Finally, we cannot ignore the responsibility of the state and its institutions to confront growing sexual violence and guarantee female citizens' safety and freedom of movement. While recognizing that the state apparatus targeted women activists and human rights defenders both before and after the revolution, and that it has taken no just action to prosecute those responsible for these crimes, the state still does have a responsibility to investigate these crimes, identify the perpetrators, and hold them accountable. The rape and abuse of women is an inevitable consequence of the deterioration of the security situation and the security apparatus, and women are paying a much greater social price for this than the rest of society.

V. What we Advocate

The events of the past months require everyone to assume responsibility for thinking about and discussing these issues before matters deteriorate further. What we advocate requires an honest, open discussion of the entire issue of women's participation in public life from a gendered perspective, which must be an item on the agenda of all political forces. The issue must be addressed as part of the basic responsibility of political forces, which cannot simply promote a rhetoric that depends on the strength of women to confront these crimes and places responsibility for overcoming various forms of sexual violence on their shoulders alone. Political forces must take action to create an appropriate environment for women's political participation. Nazra believes that raising the issue of sexual violence should not only recognize its particularity and brutality, but also must be a part of the more general question of women's political participation. It is neither politically nor ethically appropriate that everyone should value women's participation—in political or party work or as candidates on party lists—or view women as an active voting constituency without engaging with issues of violence against women from a feminist perspective.

We stress the need to conduct a serious, honest discussion of what women face in the public sphere, and what can be done to prevent those horrendous crimes. We understand that this discussion depends first and foremost on a brave refusal to bury our heads in the sand and a belief

in the need to stand up to voices insisting that the issue is trivial or those that seek to frighten and intimidate women to curtail their participation. At the same time, this discussion must respect the privacy of those who have been assaulted, focusing instead on the identity of the perpetrators, their objectives, and everyone's responsibility to confront these horrific crimes. We stress the need to confront all attempts to use this discussion as a means to "protect" women that may lead to their exclusion or infringe on their right to demonstrate or take part in various political activities. It is important to conduct the discussion with recognition that Egypt's women have and still do wage daily battles in defense of their space and scope of political action. They also fight constant battles in and out of demonstrations to participate in all spheres of life amid countless daily abuses and in a patriarchal society that still has a long way to go to respect women's right to be present and active in both the public and private spheres. We stress that everyone must assume responsibility for violence that will have an impact on us all, both men and women.

We urge all political and revolutionary forces to realize that women's issues are not a fleeting cause or simply a bargaining chip to be used against religiously-minded political opponents or others. Rather, they are a principal part of the revolution, of the current political ferment, and of the struggle for freedom in which women have played such a vital role and for which they have sacrificed much. Such atrocious crimes of sexual violence cannot be separated from women's declining social status. We must all assume responsibility for this with our words and actions, and we must listen to women rather than disregard them out of political or tactical considerations. If we don't, our struggle for liberty will lose all meaning by losing Egyptian women. Long live Egypt's women!

Amnesty International - Sexual Attacks on Women in Egypt

By Diana El Tahawy, Amnesty International's Egypt researcher

Almost every girl and woman – regardless of age, social status or choice of attire – who has walked the streets or taken public transport in Cairo, has experienced some form of verbal or physical sexual harassment.

This isn't new. For years, Egyptian women's rights activists and others have called on the authorities to recognize the seriousness of the problem.

There needs to be a fundamental shift in institutionalized attitudes that discriminate against women.

The Egyptian authorities must introduce legal reforms, prosecute perpetrators and address root causes, because the plight of women who have experienced sexual violence has been ignored.

Blame is placed on the victims for being dressed "indecently", or for daring to be present in "male" public spaces.

The horrific testimonies emerging following protests commemorating the second anniversary of the "25 January Revolution" have brought to light how violent mob sexual attacks against women have happened, but have rarely been brought to public attention.

Operation Anti Sexual Harassment/Assault (OpAntiSH) is an initiative by a number of Egyptian human rights organizations and individuals set up to combat sexual harassment of women in the vicinity of Tahrir Square. It received reports of 19 cases of violent attacks against women on 25 January 2013.

Activists leading the group "I saw Harassment" told Amnesty International that they managed to intervene in a further five cases before violence escalated. Four women were assaulted inside the Sadat Metro Station and one behind the Omar Maqam Mosque.

Testimonies from victims and those attempting to save them paint a frightening picture: tens if not hundreds of men surrounding the victims with countless hands tearing-off clothes and veils, unzipping trousers and groping breasts, nipples and backsides.

In some cases these attacks meet the definition of rape, including penetration with fingers and sharp objects. Frequently, fights with knives, metal rods and sticks breakout amid scenes of chaos, where the lines between those trying to help and those participating in the violent attack become blurred.

Activists coordinating rescue efforts are often exposed to physical and sexual assaults. One from the "I saw Harassment" initiative told Amnesty International that upon receiving a report of an alleged ongoing attack, she rushed to the scene with another female activist.

She describes what happened: "I ran inside the circle of men to try to save her; the men let me through. Once I was in the middle of the circle, I realized that the person being attacked was my colleague and that the reported attack was a ruse to get us to the scene to intimidate and assault us... Suddenly hands were on my breasts, inside my bra, and squeezing my nipples... I was trying to defend myself and heard my colleague screaming. Her chest was bare and they cut her bra down the middle... In the middle of this, they were insulting us and calling us whores who were asking for this by squeezing ourselves in the middle of men... At some point I could feel 15 hands on me... Someone grabbed me by my clothes and was dragging me on the ground... Another guy put his hand down my trousers."

The incident took place in Tahrir Square at about 8:30pm on 23 November 2012, during protests against President's Mohamed Morsi's Constitutional Declaration.

Fortunately, other protesters managed to get the two to safety in a nearby field hospital. They brought one of the attackers they had caught to a police station and eventually the Qasr al-Nil Public Prosecution office.

The woman activist recounted that police officers and the prosecutor handling the case pressured her to drop her complaint, and only reluctantly agreed to file a report when she insisted with the help of her lawyers.

This type of response is typical and reflects a culture of denial, inaction and in some cases complicity by law enforcement officials who not only fail to protect women from sexual harassment and assaults, but also fail to properly investigate allegations and bring perpetrators to justice. As perpetrators get off scot-free, violent attacks continue as seen on 25 January 2013.

One survivor of a violent assault on 25 January in Tahrir Square, a volunteer with OpAntiSH, broke the wall of silence and shame surrounding such attacks publishing her testimony on Facebook.

Her heart-wrenching account was very similar to the one above.

As she and a female friend rushed to intervene in a reported sexual assault on a woman, they were attacked.

She described numerous hands ripping her clothes, touching her all over her body including her breasts and backside, and reaching inside her trousers. They eventually managed to escape into a restaurant.

What is particularly shocking is that these mob sexual assaults are happening in public spaces, sometimes in broad daylight, with thousands of onlookers who do either do nothing, feel helpless, or try to help – exposing themselves to violence.

I was in the vicinity of Tahrir Square between 6pm and 10pm on 25 January, the time when most of these attacks were happening.

It was a surreal landscape, moving between the strange normality of people drinking tea and joking in cafes around the Square and the field hospital shrouded in a cloud of teargas near the site of violent confrontations behind Omar Maqram Mosque.

One protester called warning me not to approach Talaat Harb Street as he had just witnessed two women being surrounded by a vicious mob. I asked some of the doctors in the Square if they received cases of survivors of sexual assaults. They denied it, such cases claiming the reports were exaggerated.

Women devised different ways to protect themselves from sexual harassment, which they arrived at after many painful experiences with sexual harassment or through online pages that aim to fight sexual harassment, which provide tips on dealing with harassers and forming volunteer groups to organize campaigns and seminars to raise women's awareness. Some find these initiatives a legitimate means of protecting oneself, while others might blame women, who might be driven by the continuous violations, to resort to counter violence. Anti-sexual harassment initiatives, such as Fouada Watch, Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment, and *Kata' idak* (break your hand!), and many others offer tips to women as to ways of protecting themselves and facing harassers. Among these tips is to carry tasers or sprays to fight off harassers, with the likes of the initiative *Imsik Motaharash* (Catch the Harasser) publishing ways to make home-made self-defense sprays: filling an empty container, that can be securely covered with a lid, with a mix consisting of a third of vinegar, a third with alcohol which can be purchased from a pharmacy, a spoon of chili powder, and a spoon of ginger, closing the container, shaking it, then distilling the components so that only the liquid remains.

Volunteer teams that intervene to save the girls and get them out of the harassment circle plays a great role in confronting harassment. They are invisible warriors despite the importance of the role they play and the gravity of the dangers they face, which reach the level of assaulting, beating, or sexually harassing them, regardless of whether they are men or women! Nada Abdel Azim, the head of the awareness unit in the *Shoft Taharosh* (I Saw Harassment) initiative said to Al-Tahrir Newspaper that they are divided into safety, confrontation, and follow-up teams. Coordination among groups takes place through an operation room that receives calls and directs groups to the areas where the harassment is taking place so they can intervene and save the girls. A group encircles the harassers and pushes them away, another creates a safe alley for the girl to pass through, and she is then received by the third group which provides her with clothes and first aid, if needed.