



MARGINALISING EGYPTIAN WOMEN

The restriction of women's rights under the
Muslim Brotherhood

By Emily Dyer

Foreword by Fatema Khafagy Ph.D

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The image on the cover of this report shows post-revolutionary street art in Cairo by artist Alaa Awad. The mural depicts Pharaonic female figures representing women who led movements for social change throughout Egyptian history.

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Marginalising Egyptian Women
By Emily Dyer
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FOREWORD

Following the 2011 Revolution and presidential elections in 2012, President Mohamed Morsi brought hope to millions in promising to improve women's rights. Yet, what followed was contrary to his promises. Gender equality was treated as an attack on Egyptian culture and a foreign agenda imposed by the West, rather than a fundamental human right; and, the space for women to participate as equals in society was relentlessly narrowed.

However, despite the best efforts of the previous government, Egyptian civil society has not been silenced on the issue of women's rights. The National Council for Women, together with other women's rights NGOs, have worked tirelessly to protect the legal rights of women as well as their space in the public sphere. We have seen established organisations unite with younger volunteer-led initiatives in campaigning for fundamental change. Most important of all is a new constitution tailored to the freedom of its citizens as both equals and individuals, rather than the prescribed identity of a select few.

Egypt is now at a crossroads. The second wave of the Revolution on 30 June 2013 has created a new transitional period, opening up opportunity for real and immediate change to occur for women's rights. Egypt is far more open now in aiming at empowering women so that they can participate effectively in implementing the road map the government has adopted. Feminist organisations are trying their best to forcefully put forward their demands for gender equality.

This report therefore comes at a crucial and important time, and provides the kind of analysis and insight needed upon which to build real and meaningful changes for women. Emily Dyer's brilliant critique of the state's role in reversing women's rights provides much-needed understanding from a Western perspective, and will be of great value to both those within the Egyptian women's rights movement and wider audiences.



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October 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marginalising Egyptian Women finds that Egypt's first democratically elected government following the 2011 revolution – the Muslim Brotherhood's political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) – played an instrumental role in reversing women's rights and restricting their roles in society. Many of the issues facing women in Egypt existed long before former President Mohamed Morsi. However, this report shows that his government failed to provide the change that had been promised and, in many cases, made the problems worse than ever before.

This report's findings are based on first-hand interviews with leading figures of the women's rights movement in Egypt, as well as FJP representatives, from both before and after the FJP's ousting in early July 2013. The first section of the report examines the FJP's sexual control of women in Egyptian society, through issues such as sexual harassment; sexual segregation and female genital mutilation (FGM). The second section looks at the state's attempt to further restrict women's ability to create political change, from protests to parliament.

SEXUAL CONTROL OF WOMEN IN EGYPT'S PUBLIC SPACE

Sexual harassment, torture, and rape

President Morsi's government (between June 2012 and July 2013) helped to create a culture of acceptability surrounding sexual violence against women. The FJP played a large role in creating a blame culture against female victims of sexual harassment in both public and private spaces.

The Muslim Brotherhood is widely believed to have been directly behind the mob attacks (including gang rapes) that took place in large-scale protests following the FJP's electoral victory.

The FJP used sexual violence as a political tool. The group used violence against women to weaken its political opposition by de-

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terrifying women from attending protests and blaming anti-Morsi protesters for the sexual attacks, in attempt to portray them as thugs and therefore discredit their cause.

The FJP failed to strengthen law enforcement against perpetrators of sexual violence against women. The process of reporting sexual harassment and/or rape is extremely difficult and carries many risks, including harassment from police officers themselves.

President Morsi did not amend the legal definition of rape, despite this being one of the main demands of women's rights groups. The current technical definition serves as a loophole for some of the most serious and brutal forms of rape and sexual torture.

Sexual segregation

The FJP began the implementation of sexual segregation in public spaces, including hotels, schools and political protests.

The FJP promoted segregation as a deterrent against sexual harassment. In doing so, the state attempted enforced gender divides in society, therefore enforcing one of the main barriers to improving gender relations.

In using segregation to protect men from sexual temptation, the state played a role in the sexualisation of women.

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

The FJP promoted FGM as a religious obligation, despite Egypt's highest religious and legal authorities calling it an un-Islamic practise. The FJP often portrayed FGM as being an integral component of religious and national identity.

The FJP attempted to medicalise FGM, through actively portraying it as a safe and medically necessary practice – despite the

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World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations (UN)'s assurances that it a dangerous and unnecessary practice. The FJP and is thought to have helped advertise the practice in more rural parts of Egypt.

President Morsi's government failed in its legal responsibility, under the Egyptian Penal Code, to protect the rights of women and girls. In attempting to justify, legalise and even promote FGM, the state failed to take all necessary measures in abolishing FGM, and instead played a key role in exposing girls and women to one of the most serious forms of violence against women.

The FJP attempted to control the bodies and sexual freedom of women and girls. By using FGM as a way of protecting the family unit, through restricting sexual temptation and desires, the FJP furthered the state's ownership of girls and women's bodies and sexual freedoms.

THE MARGINALISATION OF WOMEN IN EGYPTIAN POLITICS

Women and grassroots change

The FJP undermined women's role in the 2011 revolution, by portraying them as purely there to support male revolutionaries, rather than acting as political agents themselves.

During its time in power, the FJP blamed female anti-Morsi demonstrators for exposing themselves to sexual attacks by standing among men at protests. The state therefore undermined the ability of women to exercise their rights to public protest.

Women and top-down change

Under President Morsi's government, women were dramatically underrepresented in Parliament and the Constituent Assembly. Female parliamentary representation sank from 10% under Mubarak to 3% under Morsi.

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President Morsi broadly excluded women from high-level positions within the FJP. Women within the party were given largely supportive or administrative roles and were denied decision-making positions of influence.

The FJP failed to represent women's issues in its appointment of women. The women who were given high-level positions were largely unrepresentative of wider society, tending to instead represent the conservative Islamist position on women's issues.

The FJP refused to address gender inequality for women in government. Despite the severe structural gender inequality, the FJP refused to implement a quota (as requested by women's rights groups) or take other practical measures to help alleviate such inequality. Therefore, despite a political appetite and ability among the female constituency, they were denied access to equal opportunities in top-level politics.

Women and civil society

President Morsi's government divided its treatment of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) on the basis of their compatibility with the state's Islamist ideology and political agenda. Women's rights NGOs – particularly those with left-wing secular identity – who exposed human rights violations by the state were severely marginalised.

The FJP attacked the existence, freedoms and activities of women's rights NGOs deemed to be a threat to the state. Many women's rights NGOs faced persecution and financial restrictions under President Morsi, severely limiting their ability to operate effectively.

Women's rights NGOs were heavily stigmatised as having a 'Western' agenda and were therefore portrayed as a threat to Egyptian national and religious identity and values.

The FJP restricted the influence of women's rights and

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human-rights NGOs. The state attempted to limit the political influence of the highest representative body for Egyptian women and NGOs – the National Council for Women (NCW). This denied NGOs and the NCW from having a truly representative voice in government.

Marginalising Egyptian Women concludes that Egypt's first democratically elected government tightened its grip on what it perceived to be a significant threat to its political survival: women's sexual and political freedom within the public sphere. Policies and rhetoric regarding women's rights and their roles in society were heavily restricted by the narrow ideological framework central to the Muslim Brotherhood and its political wing, the FJP. In studying the space denied to women in Egyptian society, the report identifies the current weaknesses that need to be addressed by the country's next government.

INTRODUCTION

On June 30th 2013, the second wave of the Egyptian revolution pushed opportunity for real change to the surface of society. Now, presidential elections beckon in early 2014, along with the prospect of an amended constitution and a newly elected parliament. This is a crucial moment for women in Egypt who, having faced years of discrimination and oppression under former President Hosni Mubarak's autocratic rule, were further marginalised under Egypt's first democratically elected President, Mohamed Morsi, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP).

Women were one of the greatest forces within the 2011 revolution, yet proved to be the cheapest bargaining chip during the Muslim Brotherhood's year in power (from June 2012 to July 2013). Many of the long-standing issues facing women became worse, and women's rights and roles in society were undermined by the state in the name of reclaiming Islamic identity against the West and the *filul* (the former regime).

During my time spent in Cairo throughout June 2013, almost everyone I met told me that 'democracy is more than just a ballot box'. What followed was one of the largest protests in world history: more than 33 million Egyptian people (over a quarter of the country's entire population) came out onto the streets to demonstrate their refusal in accepting anything less than what was fought for in the revolution - a government which upholds respect to the rights and freedoms that come with democracy.

The 2011 revolution against 30 years of oppression under Mubarak's regime profoundly altered the fabric of Egyptian society. Many issues facing women, that had previously gone undiscussed and ignored, were brought out onto the street and spoken about in public space. Egypt is now a fundamentally revolutionary place, with weekly protests and paintings of the hundreds who lost their lives during the revolution lining the streets of Cairo. However, the significance of these arguably irreversible changes to society was hugely taken for granted by the Muslim Brotherhood, which proceeded to attack the very electoral promises and democratic freedoms it had used to win office.

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The Muslim Brotherhood and its political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), have had an extraordinary journey since the 2011 revolution. Having stood side-by-side with the Egyptian people in overthrowing Hosni Mubarak's regime, the FJP narrowly won the presidential election which followed, having promised to honour the fundamental aims of the revolution: 'bread, freedom and social justice'. Yet, within a year, it had been ousted from power and banned as a political group. The military's recent crackdown has left the group marginalised, headless and firmly outside of the political transition.

The Brotherhood - as well as the majority of Western commentary and analysis - focused on whether or not this had been the result of a military 'coup'. What was lost, however, was an appreciation of the deeper social conditions of Egyptian society, and the reasons behind why and how Egypt's first democratically elected government was declared illegitimate in the eyes of its people.

Despite the Brotherhood's demise, the future of women's rights now faces a potentially fiercer opponent: Salafist political parties. Having proved to be the more conservative side of the same coin on issues such as sexual harassment, female genital mutilation (FGM), and political representation – they are ready and poised to fill the vacuum of parliamentary power left behind by the FJP.

Marginalising Egyptian Women explores the extent to which the Muslim Brotherhood's political model played a role in the deterioration in the rights and freedoms of women following its electoral victory, with a view to shedding light on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for women living in a new Egypt.

METHODOLOGY

Structure

Marginalising Egyptian Women focuses on the Egyptian government's role in the decline in sexual freedom and political representation of women in the public, rather than private, sphere. As a result, other important issues facing women (such as domestic abuse, harassment in the work place, forced marriages, and 'honour'-based violence) have not been included as a focus of study.

The report has been divided into two main sections, exploring the further limitations put on women's sexual freedom in society – including sexual harassment, rape, segregation, and female genital mutilation (FGM) – and the space which women were given as agents of change in society (from the grassroots, to top-level decision-making). While the focus is kept on changes that took place under Muslim Brotherhood rule (June 2012 – June 2013), events that took place beforehand (under Hosni Mubarak's regime) and after (during the interim government under Adly Mansour) are often taken into account too.

Research

A large proportion of the initial research was conducted in Cairo, between June and August 2013, through interviews with leading policy-makers and a wide range of women's rights activists (including directors of NGOs, founders of youth-led initiatives, protesters, and academics).

Many of the report's findings are based on first-hand interviews with leading figures of the women's rights movement in Egypt, as well as FJP representatives, including:

Dr Maya Morsy – a Regional Gender Practice Team Leader for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the former Country Coordinator Egypt at UN Women.

Dr Nawla Darwiche – Director at the *New Woman Foundation*, an NGO in Cairo which works towards the elimination of discrimination throughout Egyptian society.

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Dr Magda Adly and **Farah Shash** – workers at the *El-Nadeem Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence*, an independent Egyptian NGO that provides psychological rehabilitation and social support to victims of torture. It also campaigns on particular torture cases and on torture in general.

Rebecca Chiao – the Co-Founder and Director at *HarassMap*. *HarassMap* is an independent, volunteer-based initiative launched in 2010 to help combat sexual harassment and assault in Egypt. It combines online and mobile technology; communications; and mass media campaigns, in order to support a huge on-the-ground mobilisation effort in 15 governorates across Egypt.

Reda el-Hefnawy – a former representative of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) on the *Shura* Council (the upper house of the Egyptian parliament). El-Hefnawy also sat on the Human Rights Council at the time of interview (June 2013).

Mozn Hassan – an Egyptian feminist and the Director of *Nazra for Feminist Studies*, a Cairo-based NGO focusing on training and research.

Fatma Emam – a Nubian-Egyptian Islamic feminist and a researcher at *Nazra for Feminist Studies*.

Dr Hania Sholkamy – an Egyptian anthropologist and an Associate Research Professor at the Social Research Center of The American University in Cairo. She is also a member of the Egyptian Social Democratic Party.

Mona Eltahawy – a freelance Egyptian-American writer and activist on Arab and Muslim issues. She writes op-eds and essays for worldwide publications on Egypt, including women's issues and Muslim political and social affairs.

Dalia Abd el-Hameed – the Gender and Women's Rights Officer at the *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights* (EIPR), an independent NGO in Cairo. The EIPR is committed to protecting and strengthening basic rights and freedoms in Egypt, through advocacy; litigation; and research in the fields of civil liberties, social and economic justice, political and democratic rights, and criminal justice.

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Representative from Operation Anti Sexual Harassment, a group of volunteers based in Cairo working for rapid intervention to stop sexual harassment and assault in mass demonstrations and sit-ins.

TERMINOLOGY

The report refers to both the ‘Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)’ and the ‘Muslim Brotherhood’, depending on the subject. The former is used when referring to the political wing of the Brotherhood, whereas the latter denotes the wider social movement in Egypt. However, there are frequent overlaps between the two (for example, the ideology of the group and social movement); in these cases, either name (or just ‘Muslim Brotherhood’, in the wider sense) has been used.

As the FJP was founded following the 2011 revolution, any Muslim Brotherhood MPs (Members of Parliament) involved in events that took place before January/February 2011 are referred to as such: ‘Muslim Brotherhood MPs’. ‘Freedom and Justice Party’ is used to refer to the Brotherhood’s political wing, following its formation.

ARABIC TERMS USED¹

The following terms have been italicised throughout the report:

Filul/Fuloul [*Slang/Revolutionary term*]: remnants of a previous regime. In Egypt, the term is used to refer to Hosni Mubarak regime.

Hadith: reported speech of the Prophet

Halal: lawful in the *Shariah*

Haram: unlawful in the *Shariah*

¹ Unless stated otherwise, all terms are taken from: Bewley, A., *Glossary of Islamic Terms* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1998).

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Hijab: a head covering worn in public by some Muslim women²

Hitk ird: assault against morality;³ breach of modesty⁴

Khul' / Khula: a form of divorce initiated by the wife from her husband by giving him a certain compensation, or by returning back the *mahr* (dower given by a husband to his wife)

Niqab: veil which covers the entire face, including the eyes

Shariah: literally translates as 'road'; the Muslim Religious code of conduct; a range of diverse traditions and interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence, from strict rules to broad principles and objectives

Shura Council: '*Shura*' designates a council of state, or advisers to the sovereign, a parliament (in modern times) and sometimes a court of law. In Egypt, the *Shura* Council is the Upper House of Parliament.

Sunnah: the customary practice of a person or a group of people; has come to refer almost exclusively to the practice of Muhammad and to the first generation of Muslims.

2 Definition taken from 'Definition of hijab in English', *Oxford Dictionaries*, available at: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/hijab>.

3 Definition taken from: El Wardany, S. and Marroushi, N., 'Raped Egypt Women Wish Death Over Life as Crimes Ignored', *Bloomberg*, 7 March 2013, available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-03-07/raped-egypt-women-wish-death-over-life-as-crimes-ignored.html>.

4 Definition taken from: Dupret, B., *Standing Trial: Law and the Person in the Modern Middle East* (I.B. Tauris, 2004).

GLOSSARY

The Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women	ADEW
Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	CEDAW
Convention on the Rights of the Child	CRC
Egyptian Center for Housing Rights	ECHR
Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights	ECWR
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights	EIPR
Female Genital Mutilation	FGM
Freedom and Justice Party	FJP
Hisham Mubarak Law Center	HMLC
International Criminal Court	ICC
International Islamic Committee for Woman and Child	IICWC
National Council for Human Rights	NCHR
National Council for Women	NCW
Non-Governmental Organisation	NGO
New Woman Foundation	NWF
Operation Anti Sexual Harassment	OpAntiSH
School of Oriental and African Studies	SOAS
Supreme Constitutional Court	SCC
Supreme Council of the Armed Forces	SCAF
United Nations Development Programme	UNDP
World Health Organisation	WHO

BACKGROUND

The rhetoric and policies of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) were often deeply rooted within the Islamist ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood's founder, Hassan al-Banna, and other key Islamist thinkers – including Sayyid Qutb and Abul A'la Maududi. In the FJP's electoral programme, the Party claimed that '[t]he basic principle of Islamic law is equality between women and men in rights and duties',⁵ and FJP representative Reda el-Hefnawy added that 'we are equal in front of the law; the law doesn't take any side of men or women.'⁶ However, while Islamist theory teaches that the different roles between men and women are 'complementary' and with equal importance, the prioritisation of the family unit and divided gender roles in society have served as a barrier for women in achieving the female empowerment towards which FJP promised to work.

The basis of Islamist ideological thinking is the Islamisation (or re-Islamisation) of societies, in order to expand the *Ummah* (Islamic community) – of which, the family unit is seen as the nucleus: enabling the growth and development of new generations into Islamic society. Women (whose principle role is to raise children 'in the Islamic call')⁷ are seen as the 'culture-bearers' of Islam, and – therefore – the first line of defence against the threat of foreign infiltration from non-Muslim countries.

Islamist theory also characterises women as the weaker sex in their emotional and physical vulnerability, while men are defined by their independence; rationality; logic; and physical strength.⁸ It is because of this – according to Hassan al-Banna's successor, Hasan Ismail al-Hudaybi – that 'the woman's natural place is the home'.⁹ These biological and psychological differences are therefore used to support the different, yet 'complementary',¹⁰ roles

5 'Election Program: The Freedom and Justice Party', The Freedom and Justice Party, 2011, available at: <http://www.fjponline.com/view.php?pid=80>.

6 Interview with Reda el-Hefnawy, The Freedom and Justice Party, 6 June 2013.

7 Cited in: Ahmed, L., *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (Connecticut: Yale University, 1992), p. 199.

8 Zuhur, S., *Revealing Reveiling: Islamist Gender Ideology in Contemporary Egypt* (SUNY Press, 1992) pp. 88-89.

9 Shehadeh, L. R., *The Idea of Women Under Fundamentalist Islam* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), p. 18.

10 Freedland, K. A., 'Maulana Maudodi on Quaranic Interpretation', *The Muslim World*, 3 April 2007, available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1478-1913.1958.tb02560.x/pdf>.

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designed to preserve Islamic society. Accordingly, during the post-Mubarak elections, the FJP declared its intention to help women prepare for their prescribed role ‘as wives, mothers and makers of men’;¹¹ the Party promised to review labour laws ‘so as not to limit [women] in raising and upbringing their young’ or supporting their husbands.¹²

During my interview with the FJP representative on the Human Rights Council, Reda el-Hefnawy, he acknowledged that it was mostly the wives who do the housework (citing the fact that the majority of men cannot afford to have servants); however, he emphasised that this was a role which the woman chose – rather being forced – to accept.¹³ Women were – and are – therefore confined to the home, while men ‘launch forth together like fearless heroes’ as leaders of society.¹⁴

This dynamic between the state and women in the public sphere extends to, and resembles Islamist teachings on, power relations between men and women in the home. For example, Osama Yehia Abu Salama, a Muslim Brotherhood ‘Family Expert’, taught at one of his marriage-counsellor-training sessions that husbands must control their wives due to it being in their nature to ‘overstep the required framework if she is given the space and the freedom, like children’.¹⁵ He then voiced his support for a Muslim Brotherhood teaching that men and husbands must be compassionate, as women need to be obedient, implying that women earn compassion only through obedience to men.¹⁶

These distinctions between the genders naturally provided the theoretical groundwork for FJP policies restricting women to the home, with their

11 ‘Election Program: The Freedom and Justice Party’, The Freedom and Justice Party, 2011, available at: <http://www.fjponline.com/view.php?pid=80>.

12 Ibid.

13 Interview with Reda el-Hefnawy, The Freedom and Justice Party, 6 June 2013.

14 ‘Election Program: The Freedom and Justice Party’, The Freedom and Justice Party, 2011, available at: <http://www.fjponline.com/view.php?pid=80>.

15 El Sheikh, M. and Kirkpatrick, D. D., ‘Muslim Brotherhood’s Statement on Women Stirs Liberals’ Fears’, *The New York Times*, 14 March 2013, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/15/world/middleeast/muslim-brotherhoods-words-on-women-stir-liberal-fears.html?_r=2&.

16 Ibid.

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role limited to that of a mother and wife.¹⁷ Similarly, social behaviour that threatened the divide between male and female roles was treated as an enemy of Islam, and ruled against under the law. For example, the FJP attempted to stymie women's independence in society, through ridding personal-status laws 'of materials destructive to the family, and endeavouring to make personal status [sic] laws comply with Islamic law'.¹⁸ Furthermore, while the FJP claimed to be working towards empowering women through political participation, women's representation fell to an all-time low (see Chapter 2). In its electoral programme, the FJP championed women taking part in politics, as long as it did not undermine her ability to perform her primary role of mother and wife.¹⁹ This line of thinking is deeply rooted within the Muslim Brotherhood's ideological framework. Zaynab al-Ghazali – Islamist ideologue, founder of the *Muslim Women's Association*, and close associate of the Muslim Brotherhood – claimed in an interview that,

*Islam does not forbid women to actively participate in public life. It does not prevent her from working, from entering politics, and expressing her opinion, or from being anything, as long as that does not interfere with her first duty as a mother, the one who first trains her children in the Islamic call.*²⁰

Muslim Brotherhood teachings on sex also played a direct role in the FJP's somewhat successful attempt at limiting women's participation as political agents in the public sphere. The Islamist ideologue, Abul A'la Maududi, taught that, as humans have no control over their sexual desire, it must be controlled by the law in order to protect men from the seduction of women (thereby protecting against the potential destruction of the family unit). For example, the movement's founder, Hassan al-Banna, called for the

17 Shehadeh, L. R., *The Idea of Women Under Fundamentalist Islam* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), p. 19.11

18 'Election Program: The Freedom and Justice Party', The Freedom and Justice Party, 2011, available at: <http://www.fjponline.com/view.php?pid=80>.

19 Ibid.

20 Cited in: Ahmed, L., *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (Connecticut: Yale University, 1992), p. 199.

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‘segregation of male and female students’,²¹ and for ‘private meetings between men and women’ – except for family members – ‘to be counted as a crime’.²² According to al-Banna, women should only be present in the public sphere if they apply all Islamic regulations in dress and behaviour – i.e. when women go out of their homes, they should cover up their bodies, refrain from eye contact with men, stand behind them in mosques, and use separate entrances and exits.²³

It is upon this theoretical assumption that the FJP and other Islamist political groups have worked, implementing various measures – such as gender segregation and the wearing of the veil – in the interest of safeguarding morality and preventing adultery (and therefore protecting the family unit). Al-Banna’s belief that schools should be segregated, with new curricula devised for girls, was put into practice under Muslim Brotherhood rule in Egypt (for more on sexual segregation under the FJP, see Chapter 1).²⁴ Moreover, the Islamist teaching that women’s bodies and sexuality should be controlled opened the door for the state’s attempt to legitimise dangerous practices against women, such as female genital mutilation (FGM) (see Chapter 1).

The Islamist call to protect men from the temptation of the female body and her sexuality comes in to direct response to the Islamist view of Western society, in which sexuality is free to attack the structure of the family. Western influences on Egyptian society are therefore considered, by Islamist ideologues, to be a threat to its cultural identity and survival. Unfavourable portrayals of the West were used by the Muslim Brotherhood as an instrument by, and against, which Egyptians were encouraged to reassert their ‘authentic identity’. For example, the Brotherhood’s hatred of the West was articulated by Sayyid Qutb – who wrote that ‘the soul has no value to Americans’.²⁵ Following a visit to the United States, Qutb described his perception of the sexuality of an American woman, who:

21 Al-Banna, H., *Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna (1906-1949): A selection from the Majmuat resail al-Imam al-shahid Hasan al-Hanna*; v. 20, (California: University of California Press, 1978).

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Khaled, A., ‘University gender segregation move sparks controversy’, *University World News*, 21 September 2012, available at: <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20120921112831333>.

25 Wright, L., *The Looming Tower; Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2006), p. 27.

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*knows full well the beauties of her body, her face, her exciting eyes, her full lips, her bulging breasts, her full buttocks and her smooth legs. She wears bright colours that awaken the primitive sexual instincts, hiding nothing, but adding to that the thrilling laugh and the bold look.*²⁶

He then expressed his disgust at her sexual promiscuity:

*a girl looks at you, appearing as if she were an enchanting nymph or an escaped mermaid, but as she approaches, you sense only the screaming instinct inside her, and you can smell her burning body, but not the scent of perfume, but flesh, only flesh. Tasty flesh, truly, but flesh nonetheless.*²⁷

Fundamentalist Islamic ideologues therefore claim that a legal framework – *Shariah* law – is needed to prevent temptation and adultery. Qutb warned that, in Western society, ‘every time a husband or wife notices a new sparkling personality, they lunge for it as if it were a new fashion in the world of desires’.²⁸ Islamisation of society is therefore seen as essential in preventing the modernisation of Westernisation from destroying the Muslim community.²⁹

Those campaigning for women’s rights in Egypt – given their perceived desire to import ‘modern’ or ‘Western’ ideals to Egypt – are subsequently prone to accusations of ‘collaborating with Imperialists’ and ‘betraying Arabic culture’, by conservative Islamists. The anti-Western agenda of these Islamists encompasses the portrayal of ‘loose Western women’, as well as ‘man-hating feminists’, which, in turn, sanctions the ‘prescribing of moral codes’ concerning the roles and status of women in Egypt.³⁰ In *Secularism, Gender & the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women’s Movement*, Nadje Al-Ali, Professor of Gender Studies at the School of

26 Wright, L., *The Looming Tower; Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2006), p. 18.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

29 Shehadeh, L. R., *The Idea of Women Under Fundamentalist Islam* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), p. 5.

30 Al-Ali, N., *Secularism, Gender and the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women’s Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

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Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, described how Muslim feminists were pigeonholed, by the Muslim Brotherhood, as ‘agents of Western colonialism or imperialism’. The charge of emulating ‘Western thought’ (and thereby betraying ‘authentic culture’) has proved an unceasing challenge to women’s movements in the Arab world, and women’s rights groups in Egypt (see Chapter 2).

Professor Al-Ali ascribes the ‘rising tide of Islamism’ to Islamists portraying themselves as ‘the only alternative to increasing Western encroachment’. She notes that ‘nationalist movements often homogenize and isolate their own and other populations, and celebrate their “authentic” identity in the name of nationalism’, and that ‘blaming the West for most evils in the world is generally paralleled by a passionate and uncritical embracing of one’s own primordial group without paying too much attention to the social, cultural, economic and political realities inside one’s own nation’.³¹

The FJP often implied it represented the Islamic vote as a political party in Egypt. However, many argue that Islam is far more accepting of women’s participation in the public sphere than Islamist theory is, and that, therefore, the FJP’s adoption of Islamist ideas in its implementation of measures to control women was fundamentally un-Islamic. The Quranic scholar, Hasan al-Turabi, wrote that ‘the prophet himself used to visit women, not men, for counselling and advice. They would lead prayer. Even in his battles, they are there!’³² Maya Morsy, from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supported this argument: ‘these conservative people do not understand Islam. They unfortunately do not understand the right practice of Islam because, if we take Islam back, it was women who were given all the rights.’³³ For example, the dangerous practice of FGM was argued by the FJP to be an Islamic practice; yet, this claim was countered by the key religious authorities in Egypt (see Chapter 2).

31 Al-Ali, N., *Secularism, Gender and the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women’s Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

32 Wright, L., *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2006), p. 188.

33 Interview with Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 17 July 2013.

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The central basis for Islamist politics – Islamist ideology – creates a framework which is largely incompatible with the principle of equality between men and women. As a result of this fundamental tension between Islamism; religious authenticity; and women’s rights, the majority of Egyptian feminists tend to reject any attempt to redefine equality to fit within an Islamist framework, instead focusing on securing ‘basic human rights as citizens’.³⁴ Egypt is therefore ‘either a democracy or [is] applying *Shariah* law’,³⁵ which suggests that the reason behind the failure of the Muslim Brotherhood was its attempt to combine the two.

34 Interview with Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 17 July 2013.

35 Ibid.

CHAPTER ONE

SEXUAL CONTROL OF WOMEN IN EGYPT'S PUBLIC SPACE

Under Muslim Brotherhood rule, Egyptian society began to move further down the trajectory towards male control over women's bodies and actions in both public and private spaces. Mohamed Morsi's government dismissed calls to grant girls full sexual freedom, labelling it a 'decadence' which, if implemented in Egypt, 'would lead to [the] complete disintegration of society'.³⁶ Instead, his party helped to create a social environment within which women's sexuality was treated as the main source of chaos, and a threat to its survival at a time of civil unrest and political instability. The government acted as if the only way to contain this perceived source of chaos was to punish and subjugate women, and restrict *them* – rather than those unable to control their desires – from public spaces. Whether introducing sexual segregation to public areas; creating a blame culture against victims of sexual harassment and rape; or legitimising the practise of female genital mutilation (FGM), Morsi showed a desire to exercise state control over women's bodies and sexual freedom in public spaces.

1A) Sexual harassment, torture, and rape

The long-standing problem of sexual harassment and rape in Egypt became worse under Muslim Brotherhood rule.³⁷ While this can be put down, in part, to the intense level of civil unrest (and, therefore, to street violence and harassment), the government did very little to address the issue. The roots of the problem have been identified, by women's rights activists in Egypt, as being a lack of understanding within society; a lack of women's

36 'Muslim Brotherhood Statement Denouncing UN Women Declaration for Violating Sharia Principles', *IkhwanWeb*, 14 March 2013, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30731&ref=search.php>.

37 99.3% of women in Egypt have experienced some form of sexual harassment, according to the most recent statistics published by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The report revealed that 96.5% of the women who had reported cases had been physically harassed through touching, the most common form of harassment. See 'Sexual Harassment in Egypt... The Causes and Confrontation Methods', UN Women, April 2013, available at: <http://www.un.org/Publications.aspx?pageID=43>

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rights; and an increasing level of acceptability surrounding the harassment and sexual torture of women. These were made worse – not better – by the government, and it can therefore be argued that its actions and inactions (intentionally or unintentionally) led to an increase in attacks.

Under Muslim Brotherhood rule, sexual attacks against women became more frequent and more severe, with a sharp increase in gang rapes during large-scale protests.³⁸ It is difficult to determine exactly how many women were (and are) raped each year due to the fact that ‘[m]ost people won’t come out and say it happened because culturally it is not accepted.’³⁹ However, reports of *hitk ird* (indecent assault) increased to 349 in 2012, from 330 in 2011, and reported rapes rose from 119 to 129, according to the Interior Ministry.⁴⁰

- *Creating a culture of acceptability*

President Morsi’s government can be held partly responsible, on several counts, for the marked rise in reported sexual attacks. First, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) did very little to change the growing acceptability of widespread sexual harassment in society. In fact, they were largely responsible for creating a blame culture whereby women are seen as responsible for the attack: in public statements, high-level Brotherhood and FJP representatives repeatedly denounced the victims of sexual harassment. Reda el-Hefnawy, former FJP representative at the UN Human Rights Council, responded to a question about whose duty it was to protect women from sexual harassment, by saying,

*Women should not mingle with men during protests [...] How can the Ministry of Interior be tasked with protecting a lady who stands among a group of men?*⁴¹

38 Interview with Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, 5 June 2013.

39 ‘EGYPT: Are attitudes to rape beginning to change?’, *IRIN*, 19 February 2008, available at: <http://www.irin-news.org/report/76827/egypt-are-attitudes-to-rape-beginning-to-change>.

40 El Wardany, S. and Marroushi, N., ‘Raped Egypt Women Wish Death Over Life as Crimes Ignored’, *Bloomberg*, 7 March 2013, available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-03-07/raped-egypt-women-wish-death-over-life-as-crimes-ignored.html>.

41 Taha, R. M., ‘Shura Council members blame women for harassment’, *Daily News Egypt*, 11 February 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegyp.com/2013/02/11/shura-council-members-blame-women-for-harassment/>.

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Morsi's government saw not only the presence of women at protests, but the way in which they presented themselves physically in public, as an invitation for sexual harassment. While the FJP was still in power, el-Hefnawy claimed there were 'so many reasons' for his view that the victim was more responsible than the attacker, including the time and place of the attack, as well as what the woman was wearing.⁴² However, contrary to the FJP's claim, women's clothing is not a major factor in causing sexual attacks to take place. According to a study conducted by the *Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR)*, the proportion of harassment victims who were wearing either the hair-covering *hijab* or the face-covering *niqab* (72%) was 'about the same as the percentage of total women wearing the *hijab* and *niqab* in Egyptian society'.⁴³ In fact, some veiled women are targeted due to the perception, among attackers, that they would be less likely to report the offence to the authorities (due to a fear of bringing shame on herself or her family).⁴⁴

This culture of blame is not limited, within political groups, to the Muslim Brotherhood, but also exists within Egypt's wider conservative Islamist political parties and movements. Salah Abdel Salam (a member of the most prominent Salafist party, al-Nour) indirectly excused the perpetrators of sexual harassment and rape at protests, by blaming the female victim: 'the woman bears the offence when she chooses to protest in places filled with thugs'.⁴⁵ Adel Afifi (a prominent board member of another Salafist party, al-Asala) echoed el-Hefnawy's rhetoric, shifting the responsibility of the state and the attacker to the victim: 'a woman who joins protests among thugs and street inhabitants should protect herself before asking the Ministry of Interior to offer her protection'. He went on to blame victims of rape, by claiming that women 'sometimes cause rape upon themselves through putting themselves in a position which makes them subject to rape'.⁴⁶ In making this argument, Afifi; el-Hefnawy; Salam; and many other Islamist politicians relieve rapists and sexual harassers of blame, and

42 Interview with Reda el-Hefnawy, The Freedom and Justice Party, 6 June 2013.

43 'Clouds in Egypt's Sky; Sexual Harassment: from Verbal Harassment to Rape', 2010, available at: <http://egypt.unfpa.org/english/publication/6eeeb05a-3040-42d2-9e1c-2bd2e1ac8cac>

44 Interview with Rebecca Chiao, Director and Co-Founder of *HarassMap*, 3 June 2013.

45 Taha, R. M., 'Shura Council members blame women for harassment', *Daily News Egypt*, 11 February 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/02/11/shura-council-members-blame-women-for-harassment/>.

46 Ibid.

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imply that rape and other sexual violence in public space is accepted, while women are not.

The Muslim Brotherhood's placing of blame on the victim of sexual harassment rather than the attacker is echoed in its position on abuse within the home. Osama Yehia Abu Salama, a Muslim Brotherhood 'Family Expert', once taught female trainee marriage counsellors to show a beaten wife 'how she had a role in what happened to her'. His conclusion was: 'If he is to blame [...] she shares 30 per cent or 40 per cent of the fault'.⁴⁷ Therefore, according to the Muslim Brotherhood, attackers are excused from the majority of the blame for their actions, regardless of whether the abuse takes place in public or private; and, that women's sexuality is to blame for providing the temptation rather than the man's inability to control his desires.

Second, Islamists in Egypt have helped to create an environment whereby speaking up about sexual harassment is considered shameful. Islamists allied to the Muslim Brotherhood condemn women for speaking about their experience of sexual harassment and rape. 'You see those women speaking like ogres, without shame, politeness, fear or even femininity', Salafi preacher Ahmed Abdullah (known as Sheikh Abu Islam) has said, adding that such a woman is 'like a demon'. He went as far as saying that rape is 'halal'⁴⁸ (permissible) and has even suggested that women attending protests were doing so in order to get raped, and that, because of this, they should be shown no sympathy.⁴⁹ This view - that it is men who should be protected from the sexual powers of women, and that women are active in seeking out temptation and adultery - is deeply rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamist ideology (see Background section).

This attempt to blame; shame; and silence victims of harassment and rape was adopted within Morsi's government, when the *Shura* Council (the

47 El Sheikh, M. and Kirkpatrick, D. D., 'Muslim Brotherhood's Statement on Women Stirs Liberals' Fears', *The New York Times*, 14 March 2013, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/15/world/middleeast/muslim-brotherhoods-words-on-women-stir-liberal-fears.html?_r=2&.

48 'Detained: Egyptian sheikh who said it is 'halal' to rape female protesters', *Al Arabiya News*, 17 February 2013, available at: <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2013/02/17/266857.html>.

49 El Sheikh, M. and Kirkpatrick, D. D., 'Rise in Sexual Assaults in Egypt Sets Off Clash Over Blame', *The New York Times*, 25 March 2013, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/26/world/middleeast/egyptian-women-blamed-for-sexual-assaults.html?pagewanted=all&_r=3&.

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upper house of the Egyptian parliament) pushed for victims of sexual assaults during protests to be convicted – a suggestion that was described by the National Council for Women as a serious ‘setback in women’s rights’.⁵⁰ Instead of taking steps to protect women in public spaces, Morsi’s government enabled the social acceptability surrounding sexual harassment and rape to grow, rather than diminish; it therefore played an active role in making public – and private – space a more dangerous place for women.

In order address this problem, Dalia Abd el-Hameed – of the *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights* (EIPR) – suggests that the new government can and should play a key role in changing the social acceptability of sexual harassment, through adopting ‘a multi-sectoral role’ within society.⁵¹ Rather than criticising victims for entering into public space, the government could attempt to reverse the culture of acceptability and blame through launching:

*a public campaign with huge billboards about people’s rights [...] to bodily integrity, to walk safely and freely in the streets[;... about] the right of women to practice their political rights, their civil rights, to go to work safely, to go to a protest safely, to go to an election safely.*⁵²

This would at least provide the first step in shifting the blame away from the victim and back to the attacker, and would allow women to feel more secure about safely exercising their rights in public spaces.

- ***Using sexual violence as a political tool***

The Muslim Brotherhood used – both directly and indirectly - sexual violence as a tool to gaining political power. While worsening the problem of sexual harassment on the one hand, it blamed its political opponents for the attacks and claimed to be attempting to tackle the issue, on the

50 Dakrouy, N., ‘Women’s group denounces Brotherhood’, *Daily News Egypt*, 28 July 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/07/28/womens-group-denounces-brotherhood/>.

51 Interview with Dalia Abd el-Hameed, Gender and Women’s Rights Officer at the *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights*, 4 June 2013.

52 Ibid.

other. Despite its dismissive position on sexual harassment, Mohamed Morsi's government seemed to acknowledge both the public demand for change following the 2011 revolution, and the resulting political gains and legitimacy that would come with appearing to be the party that listened and responded to these demands. Though Morsi's government looked like it was addressing the issue of sexual harassment, this proved to be merely decorative.

For example, the FJP gave the appearance that it was behind the work of *HarassMap*, Rebecca Chiao's volunteer-led initiative set up to help prevent sexual harassment in Egypt. According to Chiao, the FJP 'took [our] campaign and put their logo on it.'⁵³ Additionally, following the numerous sexual harassments of women in Tahrir Square in early 2013 (a large proportion of which, many claim, were funded by the Muslim Brotherhood), the FJP asked to meet with the founders of *Operation Anti Sexual Harassment (OpAntiSH)* – a request that was later refused, given the party's treatment of women, and its suspected links to the sexual attacks (See page 34). The government also held several conferences on women's rights and sexual harassment (see pages 50 - 51) – yet these were dismissed by women's rights groups as 'empty and flimsy'⁵⁴ and purely an attempt to make headlines rather than tackle the issue.⁵⁵

Furthermore, despite its attempt to appear to be tackling the issue, the state showed reluctance to acknowledge the extent of the problem of sexual violence. When asked whether the country had a problem with sexual harassment, the Human Rights Council's Reda el-Hefnawy said 'no', despite having been presented with a number of personal accounts and the UN's latest statistics claiming that 99.3% of women in Egypt have experienced some form of sexual harassment.⁵⁶ Instead, el-Hefnawy questioned the reliability of the data and stated that, as 'there are no facts' regarding the numbers of women being harassed, he could not consider it to be a prob-

53 Interview with Rebecca Chiao, Director and Co-Founder of *HarassMap*, 3 June 2013.

54 Taha, R. M., 'Morsi's women initiative criticised', *Daily News Egypt*, 26 March 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/03/26/morsis-women-initiative-criticised/>.

55 Interview with Rebecca Chiao, Director and Co-Founder of *HarassMap*, 3 June 2013.

56 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women report on sexual harassment in Egypt, 2013, cited in: El-Dabh, B., '99.3% of Egyptian women experienced sexual harassment: report', *Daily News Egypt*, 28 April 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/04/28/99-3-of-egyptian-women-experienced-sexual-harassment-report/>.

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lem.⁵⁷ By refusing to take the first step in acknowledging the problem, the FJP therefore played an active role in allowing it to worsen and preventing progress from being made.

In fact, the Muslim Brotherhood is suspected to have been behind many of the mob attacks at large-scale protests during the FJP's time in power, as a way of deterring women from attending protests, and discrediting its political opposition by portraying the anti-Muslim Brotherhood protesters as thugs and rapists.⁵⁸ Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, when asked whether she thought the Brotherhood were responsible for this violence, replied, 'Yes, of course'.⁵⁹ Dr Magda Adly – Director of the *El-Nadeem Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence* – was equally adamant that the Muslim Brotherhood had arranged for the attacks to take place: 'I believe thugs are being paid money to do this'.⁶⁰

These claims are based on a number of factors. First, the style of attacks against opposition protestors in Cairo's Tahrir Square – where the majority of demonstrations took place – was largely distinct from ordinary harassment cases. The attackers at these protests often worked in gangs of around ten men, using knives and other sharp objects to penetrate the victim's genitals.⁶¹ A report by *Human Rights Watch* described these typical mob attacks as following a similar pattern:

*a handful of young men at demonstrations single out a woman and encircle her, separating her from her friends. During the attacks – which have lasted from a few minutes to more than an hour – the number of attackers increases and they grope the woman's body and try to remove her clothing. The attackers often drag the woman to a different location while continuing to attack her.*⁶²

57 Interview with Reda el-Hefnawy, The Freedom and Justice Party, 6 June 2013.

58 Interview with Mona Eltahawy, 4 June 2013.

59 Interview with Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, 5 June 2013.

60 Whitehead, R. 'Muslim Brotherhood 'paying gangs to go out and rape women and beat men protesting in Egypt' as thousands of demonstrators pour on to the streets', *Daily Mail*, 1 December 2012, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2241374/muslim-brotherhood-paying-gangs-rape-women-beat-men-protesting-egypt-thousands-demonstrators-pour-streets.html>.

61 Interview with representative from *Operation Anti Sexual Harassment*.

62 'Egypt: Epidemic of Sexual Violence', *Human Rights Watch*, 3 July 2013, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/03/egypt-epidemic-sexual-violence>.

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OpAntiSH (an initiative that sends teams of rescue workers into large protests in order to help save victims of harassment) made the point that, unlike a usual sexual harassment or rape case, the use of knives suggests motives other than sexual gratification. Moreover, according to Dr Darwiche, the mobs were noticeably different in appearance to that of typical street thugs:

*We had a meeting [...] with all the women who were sexually harassed, and they said [that the attackers] seemed to be very clean gentlemen with no expression in their eyes. They are not thugs; they are militias.*⁶³

These factors, added to reports of large gangs entering Tahrir Square; carrying out the attacks; before immediately fleeing, suggests firstly that the mobs attended the protests purely to carry out an attack – rather than it taking place spontaneously – and, secondly that they were instructed (and most likely paid) to do so.⁶⁴

Another factor suggesting Muslim Brotherhood involvement in mob attacks is the unique political gains for the FJP in blaming the political opposition for these incidents. By accusing both the old regime and the opposition protest movement –⁶⁵ its two main political rivals – of orchestrating the attacks, the Brotherhood sought to damage their reputations and discredit their causes in order to weaken the threat to its own political survival. The fact that sexual harassment and violence affect not only the female victims, but the men close to them as well means that the sexual harassment cases are likely to have affected not just the female victims but the wider protest movement. As Dr Hania Sholkamy explained, ‘it is a burden on men as well, not just because they also get harassed, but because it casts a dark shadow on gender relations; and on families; and on insecurities.’⁶⁶ She placed particular emphasis on collective sexual harassment, saying that ‘this kind of sexual violence is a way to break the resist-

63 Interview with Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, 5 June 2013.

64 Interview with representative from *Operation Anti Sexual Harassment*.

65 ‘Katatni: Assaulting and Terrorizing Girls at FJP HQ is Disgraceful, Cowardly Criminal Act’, *IkhwanWeb*, 24 March 2013, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30765>.

66 Interview with Dr Hania Sholkamy, 6 June 2013.

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ance [...] of both women and men who are close to [the female protestors]’.⁶⁷

Moreover, the fact that there have been no reported cases of similar attacks taking place at Muslim Brotherhood protests could mean one of two things: that opposition protestors were attacking fellow opposition protestors, or that mobs were being sent to attack opposition protestors. All but one of this study’s interviewees believed the former to be true, rather than the latter. If this was indeed the case, it provides a clear example of the Muslim Brotherhood using sexual harassment and rape as both a way of frightening women out of Egypt’s public space (to make them, in the words of Dr Darwiche, ‘withdraw from the demonstrations’) and as a political weapon against those it blamed for the attacks. Sexual violence was therefore used as a tool of political and sexual repression, not only against women protestors, but against the wider opposition.

- ***Failing in strengthen law enforcement against perpetrators***

Weak law enforcement is widely considered to be one of the reasons for the widespread sexual harassment and violence taking place in Egypt. The ‘[a]bsence of police officers specifically responsible for protecting the public’ has enabled the streets and other public places to become increasingly dangerous places for women.⁶⁸ Moreover, under both Hosni Mubarak’s regime and Mohamed Morsi’s government, the process of bringing attackers to justice has proved to be an extremely difficult and often frightening process for victims.

Firstly, reporting a sexual attack is often a humiliating and dangerous experience for women, and, given the current laws (see pages 38 - 39), carries little hope of resulting in justice. The victim of harassment or rape is unable to file a police report without having her attacker, his ID card, and witnesses all present at the police station.⁶⁹ This – for obvious reasons – is an extremely difficult, unlikely, and dangerous task to manage success-

67 Interview with Dr Hania Sholkamy, 6 June 2013.

68 ‘Stop Sexual Harassment in Egypt’, *Egyptian Initiatives*, available at: <http://egyptianinitiatives.com/stopsexualharassment.html>.

69 Interview with Rebecca Chiao, Director and Co-Founder of *HarassMap*, 3 June 2013.

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fully. Oftentimes, the victim has been so badly hurt that she is unable to reach the police station, and/or would be putting her own safety at further risk by attempting to do so with her attacker. It also means that the victim has only one chance to bring the attacker to court as, without definitive proof, she is not allowed to report the incident.

Since (and under) both Mubarak's and Morsi's rule, the police have been part of the problem – rather than the solution – in the social acceptability of attacks. Even if the victim manages to safely catch her attacker and take him to a police station with the necessary identification (as required under the law), the likelihood of successfully bringing him to justice largely depends on which policeman she reports to. It is even often the case that police officers and security personnel become attackers rather than protectors: committing acts ranging from verbally abusing the victim, to engaging in gang rape and sexual torture. Members of the police or military who have been responsible for attacking victims have not been held accountable,⁷⁰ which enforces the culture of harassment within those services. Furthermore, the police have often shown reluctance in filing the victim's report, and (according to *HarassMap's* Rebecca Chiao) women regularly 'have to fight with the police to actually make the report – [both] in the street, and at the police station'.⁷¹

This culture of harassment and acceptability of harassment within the police force is offset by the same lack of understanding that exists in wider society. Chiao explains that 'if individual police don't believe that [sexual harassment] is a problem' and that the criminal should be punished (or if they think that the victim is at fault, rather than the attacker), 'then they are not going to be enthusiastic about making the police report, or helping [the victim]'.⁷² This indicates that the presence of gender stereotypes and a lack of understanding within the police force largely inhibit the prospect of successfully charging the attacker. It is this lack of law enforcement that plays a large part in causing women's 'negative perceptions of safety', such as their reluctance to report assaults.⁷³ Therefore, until police break

70 'Stop Sexual Violence in Egypt', *Amnesty International*, available at: <http://www.amnesty.ca/get-involved/take-action-now/stop-sexual-violence-in-egypt>.

71 Interview with Rebecca Chiao, Director and Co-Founder of *HarassMap*, 3 June 2013.

72 Ibid.

73 Caspani, M., 'Egyptian police blamed for inaction in wave of sexual attacks', *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, 30 April 2013, available at: <http://www.trust.org/item/20130430160937-qvfue>.

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these stereotypes against the victims of sexual attacks, the wider culture of acceptability is unlikely to change.⁷⁴

- *Failing to amend the legal definition of rape*

One of the fundamental barriers to bringing sexual predators to justice – under Mubarak and Morsi rule – was (and is) the limited definition of what constitutes rape and sexual harassment under Egyptian law. Firstly, sexual harassment itself is not specifically defined within the Egyptian Penal Code, which makes it difficult to take a sexual harasser to court after filing a report.⁷⁵ Secondly, the closest the Penal Code comes to defining rape is: ‘any person who copulates with a female without her consent’. Such a vague and generalised definition fails to address whether domestic rape; anal rape; gang rape; or rape by fingers or instruments fall under the term ‘copulate’ (as it stands, ‘copulation’ is defined as sexual intercourse),⁷⁶ and also fails to articulate the meaning and circumstances surrounding the word ‘consent’.⁷⁷

Moreover, while references made elsewhere in Egyptian law could cover, for example, sexual attacks with knives, the language is again too broad. For instance, Article 279 states that ‘whoever perpetrates with a woman an immoral act, even not publicly, shall be punished’,⁷⁸ however, exactly what constitutes an ‘immoral act’ is left undefined. Therefore, the legal definition of rape is currently so narrow that it serves as a loophole for many of the most serious and brutal forms of rape and sexual torture.

The definition therefore requires a widening of terms in order to legally protect, rather than exclude, male and female victims of gang rape; anal rape; and rape with foreign objects or instruments. The definition provided by the International Criminal Court (ICC) does just this, in firstly defining

74 Interview with Rebecca Chiao, Director and Co-Founder of *HarassMap*, 3 June 2013.

75 ‘Laws against sexual harassment in Egypt’, *HarassMap*, available at: <http://harassmap.org/en/resource-center/laws-against-sexual-harassment-in-egypt/>.

76 ‘Copulate; Dictionary’, *Merriam Webster*, available at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/copulate>

77 Ibid.

78 ‘Law No. 58 01 The Year 1937 Promulgating The Penal Code’, available at: <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:aYqhuZXAMQ0J:track.unodc.org/LegalLibrary/LegalResources/Egypt/Laws/Egypt%2520The%2520Penal%2520Code%2520Law%25201937.pdf+&cd=6&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk>.

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what rape is:

*conduct resulting in penetration, however slight, of any part of the body of the victim or of the perpetrator with a sexual organ, or of the anal or genital opening of the victim with any object or any other part of the body.*⁷⁹

And, secondly specifying where, how and to whom it takes place:

*The invasion was committed by force, or by threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power, against such person or another person, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment, or the invasion was committed against a person incapable of giving genuine consent.*⁸⁰

Top-down legal change could also occur through including references to sexual violence in the suspended constitution that was written under President Morsi's government and is currently being amended. While Article 10 guaranteed a number of women's social rights,⁸¹ it failed to address the question of violence against women. A clause stating the criminalisation of all forms of violence against women, and another specifying the state's duty to ensure the protection of women from all kinds of violence, would allow for stronger and more robust law enforcement against sexual attackers.

The new government could therefore play a direct and meaningful role in creating top-down change in the culture of acceptability surrounding sexual harassment and rape, both in the police force and in wider society.

79 'Elements of Crimes' International Criminal Court, 2011, available at: <http://www.icc-cpi.int/nr/rdonlyres/336923d8-a6ad-40ec-ad7b-45bf9de73d56/0/elementsofcrimeseng.pdf>.

80 Ibid.

81 Article 10 of the suspended constitution states the following: 'The State shall ensure maternal and child health services free of charge, and enable the reconciliation between the duties of a woman toward her family and her work. The State shall provide special care and protection to female breadwinners, divorced women and widows', cited in: Youssef, N., 'Egypt's draft constitution translated', *Egypt Independent*, 2 December 2012, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egypt-s-draft-constitution-translated>.

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Adding into the constitution an amendment addressing sexual violence would allow further changes to take place within the state, the police force, and the country as a whole. Then, defining sexual harassment and widening the definition of rape within the law would enable and strengthen the justice system's ability to protect from sexual violence both existing victims and those among wider Egyptian society.

These changes would help to eradicate the social acceptability of sexual violence, by turning the direction of blame back towards the attacker and away from the victim (that is to say, it would help to weaken the ability of perpetrators to make excuses for their actions). Change at legal and police levels would therefore improve gender relations in both public and private spheres of society, helping to encourage a greater social responsibility to make similar changes to the way the public regards the roles of – and relations between – men and women.

1B) Sexual segregation

During its time in power, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) pursued the enforcement of sexual segregation in public places throughout Egypt. While some forms of sexual segregation existed in Egypt long before the 2011 revolution, Morsi's government took further steps towards segregating public spaces across gender lines. Arguments made by the Muslim Brotherhood, and other groups in favour of sexual segregation, are deeply rooted in Islamist ideology and teachings (see 'Background' section).

- ***Implementing segregation in public spaces***

In February 2013, segregated train carriages were introduced on several popular transport routes between Cairo and Alexandria,⁸² and women-only transport was put on trial in Nasr City, Cairo.⁸³ This was followed by the introduction of sexual segregation in the Red Sea resort of Les Rois, in Hurghada, which included men-only hotel floors and the rooftop swim-

82 'Separate cars for women on trains starting Wednesday', *Egypt Independent*, 5 February 2013, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/separate-cars-women-trains-starting-wednesday>.

83 Helmy, H., 'Will Woman-Only Transport Solve Egypt's Sexual Harassment Problem?', *Worldcrunch*, 4 February 2013, available at: <http://www.worldcrunch.com/source-partner/culture-society/will-woman-only-transport-solve-egypt-039-s-sexual-harassment-problem-/egypt-women-transport-gender-cairo/c3s11316/>.

ming pool becoming women-only (a policy enforced by female security guards).⁸⁴ Furthermore, still in February 2013, the *Shura* Council's Human Rights Committee called for women-only areas within protests.⁸⁵

- ***Promoting segregation as a deterrent against sexual harassment***

Those responsible for segregating public space in Egypt often claimed to be doing so on behalf of women's safety and security. While students at a medical school in Mansoura were 'surprised' at the introduction of segregation in September 2012, the principle justified the decision by claiming that he was responding to the needs of the female students.⁸⁶

It is certainly true that sexual harassment in Egypt is at a level whereby travelling on public transport is often a terrifying and dangerous experience for women (see Chapter 1A). Azza Lotfy, a first-year college student, claims that being between two men can be particularly difficult and that women-only minibuses 'are far more comfortable and safer than mixed minibuses'.⁸⁷ As a result, many men; women; and women's rights organisations argue that sexual segregation solves the problem of sexual harassment by physically preventing men from attacking women in public places.⁸⁸

On the other hand, there is a strong argument that segregation is in fact one of the reasons behind the phenomenon of harassment, and is therefore 'detrimental to the recent progress Egyptian women have been striving to achieve'.⁸⁹ In some quarters, it can be seen as another example of the state

84 'It's a lads' holiday... just not as we know it! Egyptian hotel goes alcohol-free and creates men-only floors in bid to attract conservative Muslim customers', *Daily Mail*, 4 May 2013, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2319344/Les-Rois-Egyptian-hotel-goes-alcohol-free-creates-men-floors-bid-attract-conservative-Muslim-customers.html>.

85 Taha, R. M., 'Shura Council members blame women for harassment', *Daily News Egypt*, 11 February 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/02/11/shura-council-members-blame-women-for-harassment/>.

86 Khaled, A., 'University gender segregation move sparks controversy', *University World News*, 21 September 2012, available at: <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20120921112831333>.

87 Helmy, H., 'Will Woman-Only Transport Solve Egypt's Sexual Harassment Problem?', *Worldcrunch*, 4 February 2013, available at: <http://www.worldcrunch.com/source-partner/culture-society/will-woman-only-transport-solve-egypt-039-s-sexual-harassment-problem-/egypt-women-transport-gender-cairo/c3s11316/>.

88 Interview with Rebecca Chiao, Director and Co-Founder of *HarassMap*, 3 June 2013.

89 Helmy, H., 'Will Woman-Only Transport Solve Egypt's Sexual Harassment Problem?', *Worldcrunch*, 4 February 2013, available at: <http://www.worldcrunch.com/source-partner/culture-society/will-woman-only-transport-solve-egypt-039-s-sexual-harassment-problem-/egypt-women-transport-gender-cairo/c3s11316/>.

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enforcing further control and restrictions over women's bodies and movements in public space. Nehad Aboul Komsan, head of the *Egyptian Center for Women's Rights* (ECWR), describes the segregated minibuses as 'moving cages for women': denying them the status of, and right to be, equals sharing public space alongside men.⁹⁰

- *Sexualisation through segregation*

Isolating women from the rest of society in an increasing number of public places risks widening the gap in communication and understanding between the sexes. Hamdi Abdul Azim, an economist, argues that this can lead to further sexualisation; misunderstanding; and abuse of women:

*Economic conditions and culture don't allow people to satisfy their sexual needs in a legitimate manner and by mutual consent. Therefore, [men] sexually harass women in the street because this is where their only interaction with women takes place.*⁹¹

By cutting levels of contact between both genders in the public space, segregation helps to sexualise and, to a degree, de-humanise women in society. As a result, they cease to be human beings, and instead become objects of sexual gratification – made all the more desirable by being removed from public life and (by extension) forbidden. Combined with the systemic prejudices against victims of sexual violence, it becomes implied that the urge to act upon sexual desires in a violent manner is natural and – therefore – socially acceptable. Dr Hania Sholkamy summed up the state's support for segregation, and its reluctance to address the problem of sexualisation stemming from isolation, thus:

*Some of these people who are in power compare women to raw meat; so, if raw meat is thrown in the streets, the cat will inevitably come and eat it [...] But, if you cover it, the cat can't smell it.*⁹²

90 Helmy, H., 'Will Woman-Only Transport Solve Egypt's Sexual Harassment Problem?', *Worldcrunch*, 4 February 2013, available at: <http://www.worldcrunch.com/source-partner/culture-society/will-woman-only-transport-solve-egypt-039-s-sexual-harassment-problem-/egypt-women-transport-gender-cairo/c3s11316/>.

91 Diab, O., 'Egypt: we don't need no segregation', *The Guardian*, 19 April 2010, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/apr/19/egypt-sexual-harassment-segregation>.

92 Interview with Dr Hania Sholkamy, 6 June 2013.

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It is argued that the isolation of women from society ‘paves the way’ for their marginalisation⁹³ - in that segregation creates a barrier to women being treated as equals in society and having their voices heard on issues facing them. Therefore, in the long term, those fighting for women’s rights are likely to find it harder and harder to create change in a society that is increasingly divided by sex.

Dr Hania Sholkamy explained that the state-led segregation of women ‘casts a very dark shadow over gender relations in general [and] pervades every aspect of people’s lives’ – in that the state’s control of women’s bodies is likely to lead to similar power dynamics between men and women in the private domain, leading to ‘domestic-violence transgressions’.⁹⁴ Therefore, while providing an instant and short-term solution to treating the symptoms of harassment, segregation does not cure the societal disease itself; it worsens it. As a result, Egypt’s new government should target the root causes of sexual harassment, and undo previous steps towards public gendered segregation.

1C) Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

The Muslim Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) defended and, in some cases, promoted what is considered to be one of the most serious forms of violence against women: female genital mutilation (FGM). FGM is widely regarded to be a cultural practise whereby the external female genitalia are partially or totally removed ‘for non-medical reasons’,⁹⁵ as a way of ‘de-sexualising women, and repressing sexual desire’.⁹⁶ Women and girls who experience FGM are put at serious risk of infection and death throughout and following the procedure, and are often left with life-long pain and suffering as a result of the physical and emotional damage inflicted.⁹⁷

93 Helmy, H., ‘Will Woman-Only Transport Solve Egypt’s Sexual Harassment Problem?’, *Worldcrunch*, 4 February 2013, available at: <http://www.worldcrunch.com/source-partner/culture-society/will-woman-only-transport-solve-egypt-039-s-sexual-harassment-problem-/egypt-women-transport-gender-cairo/c3s11316/>.

95 ‘Definition of Female Genital Mutilation – Female Genital Mutilation Legal Guidance’, The Crown Prosecution Service, available at: http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/d_to_g/female_genital_mutilation/#definition.

96 Ibid.

97 ‘How does FGM/FGC affect women's health? – Promoting Gender Equality’, United Nations Population Fund, available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/gender/practices2.htm#15>.

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FGM in Egypt was officially made illegal in 2008, by Hosni Mubarak's former Minister of Health and Population: Ismail Sallam. The new law (No. 126, Article 242) – which states that making any cut to the female reproductive system is punishable by a fine of up to E£5,000 (around £469) or imprisonment for up to two years – remained throughout the rule of President Morsi.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the practice remains widespread, reaching 91% of females by 2008.⁹⁹ Despite the absence of recent statistics, the rate of operations being carried out during President Morsi's time in power is thought – by women's rights activists – to have increased, and that the Brotherhood played a direct role in this.¹⁰⁰

- *Attempting to justify and promote FGM as a religious obligation*

The Muslim Brotherhood and the FJP have often portrayed FGM as a religious necessity. For example, FJP representative Omaina Kamel, a member of both the Constituent Assembly and Mohamed Morsi's Advisory Board for Women's Affairs, reportedly claimed that 'a woman who is not circumcised is not a true believer'.¹⁰¹ However, the justification and promotion of FGM through religious rhetoric extended beyond the Muslim Brotherhood, to Egypt's wider conservative Islamist movement. MP Nasser al-Shaker, of the Salafist al-Nour Party, publically cited notable Islamic scholars – former Egyptian Mufti Nasr Farid Wasel, former Grand Imam Abdel Halim Mahmoud, Imam Mohamed Sayed Tantawi, and former Islamic Research Academy member Sheikh Attiya Saqr – as religious figures who had authorised FGM, in an attempt to justify the procedure as part of the 'prophetic' *Sunnah* (the customary practise of a person or a group of people; has come to refer almost exclusively to the practise of Muhammad and to the first generation of Muslims).¹⁰²

98 'Law No. 126 of 2008 Amending the Law on Children (No. 12 of 1996)', The UN Secretary-General's database on violence against women, 21 July 2009, available at: <http://sgdatabase.unwomen.org/searchDetail.action?measureId=25149&baseHREF=country&baseHREFId=465>.

99 'Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A statistical overview and exploration of the dynamics of change', UNICEF (2012), available at: http://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGCM_Lo_res.pdf.

100 Khojji, Z., 'A Crime Against Women', *The Majalla*, 16 July 2013, available at: <http://www.majalla.com/eng/2013/07/article55243392>.

101 Kamel has since denied making such a statement, instead claiming to acknowledge that the practice is a problem in Egypt. See: 'Morsy adviser denies statements on FGM', *Egypt Independent*, 5 September 2012, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/morsy-adviser-denies-statements-fgm>.

102 Bewley, A. *Glossary of Islamic Terms* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1998)

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Islamist politicians used rhetoric stating the religious permissibility and obligation of FGM under *Shariah* (religious principles), in their attempt to block the law banning the practice.¹⁰³ The Muslim Brotherhood MP, Sayed Askar, described the criminalisation of FGM as ‘tantamount to promoting vice’,¹⁰⁴ while Independent/Islamist-leaning MP Mohamed al-Omda opposed banning what he described as an Islamic custom that ‘has been performed for over 1,400 years’, adding that ‘it is against the Sunna [...] to outlaw it’.¹⁰⁵ In protest against the ban, al-Omda led his three daughters to the floor of the People’s Assembly, with one carrying a sign declaring: ‘No to any attempt to forbid what is divinely allowed. No to any attempt to allow what is divinely forbidden’.¹⁰⁶ Dr Manal Abul Hassan – Muslim Brotherhood MP, and the FJP Women’s Committee Chairwoman – opposed a *complete* ban on FGM, noting that, while the practice was ‘not halal (permissible)’, ‘it’s not haram (forbidden)’ either.¹⁰⁷ These examples show a clear attempt within the Islamist wing of Egyptian politics to create and support a culture of religious obligation surrounding FGM in Egypt, one based upon adhering to a state-prescribed model of an ‘Islamic’ identity.

By including FGM as an integral part of Egyptian women’s Islamic identity, Islamist politicians often portray internal and international condemnation of the practice as an attack on Egyptian and Islamic values. Prominent Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist politicians have presented the criminalisation of FGM as being the result of the Mubarak regime bowing to international organisations and Egyptian NGOs attempting to

103 El-Din, G. E., ‘Children accorded greater rights’, *Al-Ahram Weekly On-line*, 12-18 June 2008, available at: <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/901/eg4.htm>.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 Mayton, J., ‘EGYPT: Egypt Wrestles With “Female Genital Mutilation”’, *The Female Genital Cutting Education and Networking Project*, 20 April 2009, available at: <http://www.fgmnetwork.org/gonews.php?subaction=showfull&id=1240247808&ucat=1&>.

107 Mayton, J., ‘EGYPT: Egypt Wrestles With “Female Genital Mutilation”’, *The Female Genital Cutting Education and Networking Project*, 20 April 2009, available at: <http://www.fgmnetwork.org/gonews.php?subaction=showfull&id=1240247808&ucat=1&>.

promote a Western agenda in Egypt.^{108 109} FGM was therefore portrayed as an expression of defiance and independence against foreign infiltration, namely from ‘the West’.

However, the inclusion of FGM within senior political figures’ construction of an Islamic identity has been rejected by Egypt’s most senior religious and legal authorities: one, Dar al-Ifta al-Misriyyah, released a statement saying that ‘female circumcision is a cultural practice and not a religious rite’.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, Egypt’s highest religious authority, the al-Azhar Supreme Council of Islamic Research, declared FGM to be harmful and not based in Islamic law.¹¹¹ Therefore, the fact that these claims made by Islamist politicians carry no actual weight suggests that the use of religious rhetoric was an attempt to gain legitimacy and justification for a practice that, in fact, belongs outside the religious and legal framework of *Shariah*.

• *Attempting to medicalise FGM*

Prior to and during the Muslim Brotherhood’s time in power, the group attempted to bypass the criminalisation of FGM by drawing a line of legitimacy between medical and non-medical contexts. FJP and Muslim Brotherhood leaders attempted to legitimise FGM in a medical setting, portraying it as a necessary and safe solution to a medical problem.¹¹² For example, prominent FJP member Dr Sabbah el-Sakkary claimed that ‘only

108 MP al-Shaker, of the Salafist al-Nour Party, referred to the criminalisation of FGM as a Western-aligned agenda of the Mubarak regime. See: ‘Salafi MP advocates female circumcision, says Suzanne Mubarak banned it’, *Egypt Independent*, 14 May 2012, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/salafi-mp-advocates-female-circumcision-says-suzanne-mubarak-banned-it-news-1>.

109 Manal Abul Hassan – a Muslim Brotherhood MP, and the FJP Women’s Committee Chairwoman – claimed that the UN’s description of FGM as a ‘human rights [sic] violation’ was a mischaracterisation of the practice, and that the ban was an NGO ploy to promote a Western agenda. See: Sharma, B., ‘For Young Women, a Horrifying Consequence of Mubarak’s Overthrow’, *New Republic*, 29 October 2011, available at: <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/world/96555/egypt-genital-mutilation-fgm-muslim-brotherhood>.

110 ‘Statement issued by Dar al-Ifta al-Misriya on Female Circumcision’, *Dar al-Ifta al-Misriyyah*, 4 February 2009, available at: <http://www.dar-alifta.org/viewStatement.aspx?ID=112&text=circumcision>.

111 ‘Statement issued by Dar al-Ifta al-Misriya on Female Circumcision’, *Dar al-Ifta al-Misriyyah*, 4 February 2009, available at: <http://www.dar-alifta.org/viewStatement.aspx?ID=112&text=circumcision>.

112 Interview with Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 17 July 2013.

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a doctor can decide whether or not a girl is in need of the surgery.¹¹³ Similarly, FJP parliamentarian Azza el-Garf attempted to legitimise FGM by describing it as a type of ‘plastic surgery’ and ‘beautification’ which women can opt for in a medical setting.¹¹⁴

The Muslim Brotherhood is widely believed to have taken an active role, in April 2012, in promoting FGM, through advertising the procedure at reduced rates in rural parts of Egypt. The FJP was even reported, by UN watchers and local residents, to be travelling through Abou Aziz, Minya, in ‘mobile health clinics’, offering ‘medical’ procedures – including circumcision for women and girls.¹¹⁵ According to Maya Morsy, from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), when the UN watchers based in Minya became aware of the Muslim Brotherhood’s activities, they ‘called the hotlines and reported’ them to the local police.¹¹⁶



Leaflet, with an FJP logo, advertising a range of ‘medical’ procedures, including FGM. The final couple of lines offer male and female circumcision procedures for 30 Egyptian pounds, with bookings to be made from 18 March 2012 until 19 March 2012.

113 Amin, S., ‘The battle against female genital mutilation’, *Daily News Egypt*, 15 November 2012, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2012/11/15/the-battle-against-female-genital-mutilation/>.

114 Allam, A., ‘Egypt: A toxic mix of tradition and religion’, *The Financial Times*, 7 July 2012, available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8185dd5c-c5c0-11e1-a5d5-00144feabdc0.html>.

115 Tadros, M., ‘Mutilating bodies: the Muslim Brotherhood’s gift to Egyptian women’, *Open Democracy*, 24 May 2012, available at: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/mariz-tadros/mutilating-bodies-muslim-brotherhood%E2%80%99s-gift-to-egyptian-women>. See also: Interview with Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, 5 June 2013. See also: Interview with Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 17 July 2013.

116 Interview with Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 17 July 2013.

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The above leaflet, advertising FGM, has the FJP logo printed in the top right-hand corner, strongly suggesting that the FJP was actively involved in promoting FGM. However, the FJP have strongly denied sponsoring ‘any such campaigns’.¹¹⁷

The basis for the Muslim Brotherhood’s and FJP’s portrayal and promotion of FGM as a medical procedure has been strongly rejected by medical experts (who view FGM as fundamentally dangerous, regardless of where it takes place). Not only is there no description of a surgery resembling FGM in any UN medical guidelines or curricula, but international medical organisations (such as the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics) regard physicians who perform the procedure as irrevocably violating the medical profession’s ethical code. The World Health Organisation (WHO) describes the procedure as a practice carried out for entirely ‘non-medical reasons’,¹¹⁸ providing ‘no health benefits for girls and women’,¹¹⁹ and performed in order to ‘intentionally alter or cause injury’ to the recipient.¹²⁰ Moreover, doctors and hospitals are not even able to adequately look after those who have already had FGM. According to Dalia Abd el-Hameed, from the *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights* (EIPR), clinics are not ‘prepared at all to deal with victims of sexual violence and FGM. There are no protocols for dealing with them [and] the victims are not being provided with tests for STIs and HIV’.¹²¹

Furthermore, FGM is prohibited in Egypt’s legal and medical frameworks. The Ministerial Decree 271 of 2007 prohibits nursing staff, doctors, or others:

117 ‘Salafi MP advocates female circumcision, says Suzanne Mubarak banned it’, *Egypt Independent*, 14 May 2012, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/salafi-mp-advocates-female-circumcision-says-suzanne-mubarak-banned-it-news-1>.

118 ‘Female genital mutilation: Fact sheet N°241’, World Health Organisation, February 2013, available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>. The British Crown Prosecution Service echoes this claim. See: ‘Definition of Female Genital Mutilation – Female Genital Mutilation Legal Guidance’, The Crown Prosecution Service, available at: http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/d_to_g/female_genital_mutilation/#definition.

119 ‘Female genital mutilation: Fact sheet N°241’, World Health Organisation, February 2013, available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>.

120 Ibid.

121 Interview with Dalia Abd el-Hameed, Gender and Women’s Rights Officer at the *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights*, 4 June 2013.

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*from cutting or shaving or modifying any natural part of the female reproductive system [...], whether in government or non-governmental hospitals organizations or other locations. Any one [sic] performing FGM violates the laws and regulations governing the medical profession.*¹²²

As a result, medical professionals are prohibited from carrying out FGM under Egyptian law. This makes Maya Morsy's accusation, that the FJP and their mobile clinics 'were actually committing [...] FGM, in certain areas in Egypt, with their doctors',¹²³ all the more serious. It should also be noted that Egyptian Law requires at least one of four conditions for surgical intervention: to discover a disease, to cure a disease, to prevent expected complications, and to alleviate existing pain. FGM, however, does not fall under any of those four requisites for surgery.¹²⁴ Consequently, a physician who performs female circumcision is both directly violating the Ministerial Decree and breaching the legal requirements and regulations of the medical profession.¹²⁵ Therefore, contrary to the Muslim Brotherhood's and FJP's claims, there is no legal or medical basis upon which FGM is either necessary or justified.

- ***Failing to protect the rights of women and girls***

During its time in power, the FJP claimed that it was 'working on [...] promulgating a law criminalizing all forms of violence against women and girls'.¹²⁶ However, despite often claiming to oppose FGM, the FJP attempted to lift state control over the practice by portraying FGM as a pri-

122 'Criminalizing FGM...Why?', The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (November 2011), available http://www.intact-network.net/intact/cp/files/1290936607_Criminalizing%20%20FGM%E2%80%A6%20%20Why.pdf.

123 Interview with Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 17 July 2013.

124 'Criminalizing FGM...Why?', The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, November 2011, available at: http://www.intact-network.net/intact/cp/files/1290936607_Criminalizing%20%20FGM%E2%80%A6%20%20Why.pdf.

125 Ibid.

126 'Statement by H.E. Dr. Pakinam Al Sharkawi, Deputy Prime Minister & Special Assistant of the President for Political Affairs, Arab Republic of Egypt, Before the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women', The Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations New York, March 2013, available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/generaldiscussion/memberstates/egypt.pdf>.

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vate family issue. Muslim Brotherhood MP Sayed Askar argued against the criminalisation of FGM, on the basis that it should be left optional ‘for parents to decide’, with the implication that the state has no place in restricting the practice.¹²⁷ Furthermore, Mohamed Morsi stated that FGM is a private issue between mothers and daughters, adding that families – not the state – should decide on whether to carry out the ritual.¹²⁸ However, the decision to undergo FGM is rarely one that the daughter is capable of making or consenting to, due to her young age (The majority of whom are under 17 years old, according to El-Zanaty, F.; Way, A. 'Egypt: Demographic and Health Survey, 2008', EDHS, March 2009, available at: <http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR220/FR220.pdf>); rather, it is solely decided upon by the mother or guardian of the child. Therefore, the FJP’s attempt to portray FGM as a choice is both false and misleading.

By promoting and/or failing to prevent FGM, the FJP breached its legal obligation to protect the rights of women and, even more seriously, girls. Firstly, FGM must be treated as child abuse, due to its ability to harm one’s health and infringe upon one’s physical; mental; spiritual; and social growth.¹²⁹ Secondly, UNICEF’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – ratified by Egypt – states in Article 19 that children have the right of protection from all forms of mental and physical violence.¹³⁰ The Article also indicates that the role of the government is to ‘ensure that children are properly cared for and protect[ed...] from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them’.¹³¹

Moreover, the fact that FGM may lead to death through blood loss and/or disease, means that the practice directly threatens the right of women and girls to live, as well as the right to a body free of disease or mutilation. Therefore, despite promising to criminalise all forms of violence against

127 El-Din, G. E., ‘Children accorded greater rights’, *Al-Ahram Weekly On-line*, 12-18 June 2008, available at: <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/901/eg4.htm>.

128 Allam, A., ‘Egypt: A toxic mix of tradition and religion’, *The Financial Times*, 7 July 2012, available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8185dd5c-c5c0-11e1-a5d5-00144feabdc0.html>.

129 ‘Promoting Gender Equality’, United Nations Population Fund, available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/gender/practices2.htm>.

130 ‘FACT SHEET: A summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child’, UNICEF, available at: http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/crc/Rights_overview.pdf.

131 Ibid.

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women, the FJP – through its opposition to, and in some cases promotion of, FGM – stood in direct violation of its legal obligation to ‘take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.’¹³² In this case, the ‘traditional practice’ is arguably the most serious form of violence against women.

- *Attempting to control the bodies and sexual freedom of women and girls*

The FJP, the Muslim Brotherhood, and other leading strands of Egypt’s Islamist movement have repeatedly attempted to justify and legitimise FGM through various religious; medical; and legal channels. However, FGM is a fundamentally dangerous; un-Islamic; and criminal practice, designed to de-sexualise women and to repress sexual desire.¹³³ During FGM, the child’s clitoris is removed, and often the vaginal opening is sewn up – to be cut open on the wedding night. FGM is therefore used as a way of repressing women’s sexual desire, and often ensuring that the woman’s virginity stays intact prior to marriage. As a result, the sexual pleasure and equality within a relationship belongs to the man alone, whereas the woman is forced to endure crippling pain; infection; and depression (to name a few of the consequences of FGM) throughout her entire adult life. FGM is (and was) therefore used by the state, to control what it regarded as its biggest threat: women’s bodies and sexual freedom.¹³⁴

132 ‘Convention on the Rights of the Child’, United Nations Human Rights, *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*, available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.

133 ‘Definition of Female Genital Mutilation – Female Genital Mutilation Legal Guidance’, The Crown Prosecution Service, available at: http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/d_to_g/female_genital_mutilation/#definition.

134 Interview with Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, 5 June 2013.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MARGINALISATION OF WOMEN FROM EGYPTIAN POLITICS

The Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) made frequent attempts to show that empowering women was a top priority and that this was achievable within *Shariah* law. However, under Egypt's first democratically elected government, an energised and politically active female constituency was pushed out of all spheres of political influence.

President Mohamed Morsi's administration portrayed the 'Egyptian woman' as empowered within the new political arena, empowered through 'effectively contributing to the democratization process': from participating in 'the establishment of political parties', to 'running for major posts'.¹³⁵ Morsi himself promised to continue 'the efforts of empowering women and preventing all forms of discrimination against them',¹³⁶ and held several high-profile events on women's rights in Egypt. For example, a conference entitled 'Initiative for Supporting the Rights and Freedoms of Egyptian Women', held in March 2013, was claimed by the FJP to demonstrate 'the great attention given by the Egyptian state to the advancement of women as an integral part of the state's plan for the advancement of the Egyptian society as a whole'.¹³⁷

However, the motivation and substance behind the FJP's efforts were challenged widely among groups and individuals in the women's rights movement. Many who had attended the conference in March dismissed it as being nothing more than an effort to gain publicity and political legitimacy. The *Fouada Watch* initiative called it 'empty and flimsy',¹³⁸ while Dalia

135 'Statement by H.E. Dr. Pakinam Al Sharkawi, Deputy Prime Minister & Special Assistant of the President for Political Affairs, Arab Republic of Egypt, Before the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women', The Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations New York, March 2013, available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/generaldiscussion/memberstates/egypt.pdf>.

136 'Selected Excerpts of Morsi's Speech', *The New York Times*, 30 August 2012, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/31/world/middleeast/selected-excerpts-of-president-mohamed-morsi-speech.html?page-wanted=all&_r=0.

137 Taha, R. M., 'Morsi's women initiative criticised', *Daily News Egypt*, 26 March 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/03/26/morsis-women-initiative-criticised/>.

138 *Ibid.*

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Abd el-Hameed – from the *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights* (EIPR) – said that the summit had been ‘not serious at all’,¹³⁹ and that ‘it would take so much more to be serious about tackling women’s rights’.¹⁴⁰ The conference was therefore regarded, among the women’s rights community, as an example of the government responding to public outcry without any commitment to achieving deep impact. Rebecca Chiao (Director and Co-Founder of *HarassMap*) said that the FJP, despite its carefully crafted public events and statements regarding women’s rights, was ‘more interested in headlines than actually tackling the problem’.¹⁴¹ Therefore, despite the FJP’s best efforts, it failed to convince women’s rights groups that it was taking women’s rights seriously.

Having won the presidential elections in June 2012, the FJP was faced with an invigorated, post-revolutionary public – many of whom had suffered the loss of loved ones in their struggle for a representative democracy. Women, who make up just under half of the country’s population,¹⁴² had played an integral role in both the revolution and the surge of political appetite and activity in the following months. Despite this, their representation sank lower under President Morsi than it had been under Hosni Mubarak’s regime. This chapter looks at how Egypt’s first democratically elected government dealt with having to balance the need for political legitimacy, with its deeply engrained position on women’s role in society, examining its relationship with women as agents of change – from high-level decision-makers, to activists on the street.

2A) Women and grassroots change

The Morsi administration attempted – and, to some extent, succeeded – in pushing women off the streets and, therefore, Egypt’s main platform for grassroots political change.

139 Interview with Dalia Abd el-Hameed, Gender and Women’s Rights Officer at the *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, 4 June 2013.

140 Ibid.

141 Interview with Rebecca Chiao, Director and Co-Founder of *HarassMap*, 3 June 2013.

142 ‘World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision’, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, Population Estimates and Projections Section, 13 June 2013, available at: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>.

• *Undermining women's role in the 2011 revolution*

Firstly, the Brotherhood created an image suggesting that women had played a supportive and, what is considered to be a more 'feminine', role in the 2011 revolution, in contrast to the one that many had actually assumed. They were now referred to as 'the daughters, mothers, sisters and wives', rather than independent political agents themselves, and their contribution to the uprising was described as 'unconditionally supporting their other halves' in ousting Hosni Mubarak.¹⁴³ Many Egyptian women felt as though they were being portrayed as 'the sandwich-makers and the Florence Nightingales of the revolution; by which, all we did was we went and gave food to the male revolutionists and stitched them up when they were hurt'.¹⁴⁴ In some cases, the Brotherhood attempted to discourage women from taking part in protests all together, claiming that it is 'more dignified for women to stay at home and let their brothers and fathers protest for them'.¹⁴⁵

In contrast with Brotherhood rhetoric, the more supportive roles were shared between men *and* women. In fact, women played a central role in all aspects of the revolution: working in field hospitals and checkpoints in Tahrir Square.¹⁴⁶ Women 'were everywhere': from looking after injured demonstrators, to standing 'on the frontline' of the protests,¹⁴⁷ 'throwing stones with the men'.¹⁴⁸ In fact, they were forced to pay the highest price for taking part in the revolution: 'we got broken, we got sexually assaulted'.¹⁴⁹ The Brotherhood's 'revisionist version' of women having a purely supportive,¹⁵⁰ more 'feminine', role in creating revolutionary change suggests an attempt to deny their political agency in creating social change.

143 'MB female activists [sic] demonstrate what won't kill you will make you stronger', *IkhwanWeb*, 4 April 2011, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=28338>.

144 Interview with Mona Eltahawy, 4 June 2013.

145 Ibid.

146 Interview with Mona Eltahawy, 4 June 2013. See also: Interview with Dalia Abd el-Hameed, Gender and Women's Rights Officer at the *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights*, 4 June 2013.

147 Ibid. (both sources).

148 Interview with Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, 5 June 2013.

149 Interview with Mona Eltahawy, 4 June 2013.

150 Ibid.

- *Stigmatising female demonstrators*

The reconstruction of gender roles in the public sphere continued under the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)'s rule, leading to the stigmatisation and abuse of those who stepped outside of these new prescriptions. For example, it was those women who had fallen victim to the widespread sexual harassment and rape at large-scale protests, rather than the attackers themselves, who were criticised by the government. The FJP attempted to excuse the assaults, by citing the fact that the women had been standing among large groups of men (see Chapter 1).¹⁵¹ Furthermore, the state's refusal to both protect victims and blame their attackers made it partly responsible for the proliferation of, as well as the worsening climate of acceptability surrounding, sexual predation. Consequently, many women were forced to stay at home by their families, out of concern for their safety and, in many cases, the family reputation. Others chose not to attend demonstrations, in order to avoid having to resort to the 'really humiliating' experience of seeking protection from male friends and relatives whilst there.¹⁵²

These factors led to the denunciation of women who, by continuing to attend the protests, chose to exercise their right to express themselves as political agents in the public sphere. Instead, 'good' Egyptian women were expected to stay at home, while the 'bad women' went out to demonstrate.¹⁵³ Some state representatives even suggested that, as a result of continuing to attend protests, women invited – and, in some cases, even *desired* – men to attack them. Therefore, while many women remained defiant and continued to fight for the physical space denied to them by the state, many of their fellow female revolutionaries either chose or were forced by concerned family members to stay at home.¹⁵⁴

151 Interview with Reda el-Hefnawy, The Freedom and Justice Party, 6 June 2013.

152 Interview with Mona Eltahawy, 4 June 2013.

153 Ibid.

154 Ibid.

The Muslim Brotherhood's gender divides provided the basis for the FJP's attempts to exclude women from the political sphere on a grassroots level. Rather than being recognised as political agents, female demonstrators were portrayed as having had a supportive, more 'feminine' role – if any at all. The state helped to create a culture whereby women were stigmatised and punished (through being treated as sex objects) for entering what it saw as a place for Egyptian men only.

2B) Women and top-down change

Egyptian women have long been excluded from the top levels of political power and influence. While the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) claimed to be working hard to consolidate 'the right of women to [...] representation in important positions in the state',¹⁵⁵ it was actually heavily marginalising them from government institutions – including the lower and upper houses of parliament - the House of Representatives (formerly known as the People's Assembly) and *Shura* Council respectively – and, the Constituent Assembly (the committee responsible for amending the constitution). In fact, female representation in high-level positions was lower under Egypt's first elected government than under the previous regime, despite women showing an increased appetite for political participation following the 2011 revolution.¹⁵⁶

- ***Lowering female political representation***

Only three women were chosen for Morsi's 21-strong team of advisers and aides¹⁵⁷ - two of whom were Islamists.¹⁵⁸

155 'Dr. Omaima Kamel: New Constitution Will Safeguard Women's Rights in Full', *IkhwanWeb*, 27 July 2012, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30211>.

156 El-Naggar, T., 'TNS: 43% of Women Believe their Situation has Become Worse', *Zawya*, 26 March 2013, available at: http://www.zawya.com/story/TNS_43_of_Women_Believe_their_Situation_has_Become_Worse-ZAWYA20130326101923/.

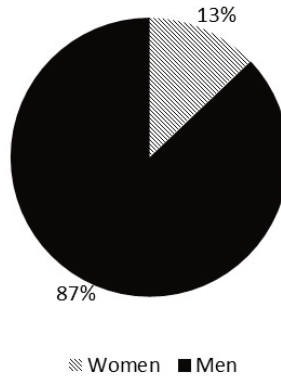
157 'Egyptian Sisters of the Muslim Brotherhood rise with conservative vision', *Haaretz*, 10 November 2012, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/egyptian-sisters-of-the-muslim-brotherhood-rise-with-conservative-vision-1.476484?trailingPath=2.169%2C2.216%2C2.295%2C>.

158 'Egyptian Sisters of the Muslim Brotherhood rise with conservative vision', *Haaretz*, 10 November 2012, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/egyptian-sisters-of-the-muslim-brotherhood-rise-with-conservative-vision-1.476484?trailingPath=2.169%2C2.216%2C2.295%2C>.

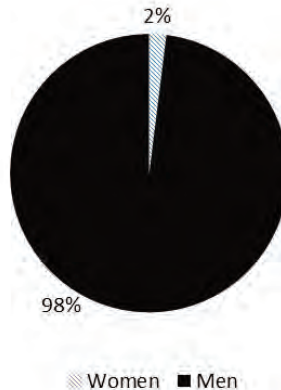
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Under Hosni Mubarak's rule in 2010, 67 out of the 518 (13%) seats in the lower house of parliament were given to women.¹⁵⁹ However, this already low level of representation fell further still under Mohamed Morsi's government to 2%¹⁶⁰ – even further below the world average of 22% (in lower or single house female representation).¹⁶¹

Parliamentary Representation - Lower House, June 2010



Parliamentary Representation - Lower House, June 2012



159 '2010 Human Rights Report: Egypt', U.S. Department of State, 8 April 2011, available at: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/nea/154460.htm>

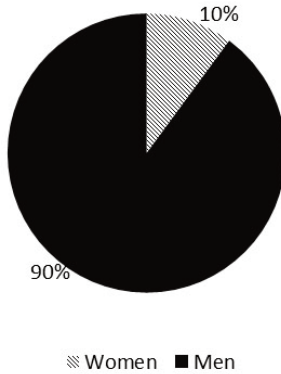
160 'Women in Politics, 2012', *IPU & UN Women*, 2012, available at: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/ccc?key=0AonYZs4MzlZbdGVQc1o1NG1KZWWhud19HS2pURzJ1b1E#gid=5>

161 'Women in National Parliaments; Situation as of 1st September 2013', Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2013, available at: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.

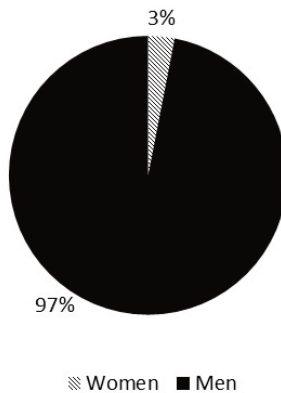
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Overall, female parliamentary representation sank from 10% under Hosni Mubarak to 3% under President Morsi's government.

Parliamentary Representation - Upper and Lower Houses, June 2010



Parliamentary Representation - Upper and Lower Houses, June 2012



All six¹⁶² of the women who were appointed to sit on President Morsi's 100-member Constituent Assembly resigned due to his government's attempt to rush the constitution through parliament.¹⁶³ This lack of female representation within government was not – as the FJP claimed¹⁶⁴ – due to a shortage of suitable female candidates. Despite the fact that the National Council for Women presented the Constituent Assembly with a list of nominees, including 'a lot of qualified and experienced women',¹⁶⁵ none were chosen.

The FJP claimed that 'the current representation of women in the [Constituent Assembly] is very balanced, comprising women from the full ideological, political and social spectra in Egypt'.¹⁶⁶ In actual fact, half of the women in the Constituent Assembly were Muslim Brotherhood members.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, the National Council for Women argued that the government's appointment of a disproportionate percentage of Islamist women to the Constituent Assembly meant that their participation in the committee was illegal, highlighting the 'obvious intention for only one faction to monopolise the formation of the constitution'.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, the few who made it into high-level state positions were broadly unrepresentative of women and women's issues in wider Egyptian society.

- *Marginalising women from high level positions*

Within the FJP, women were largely given supportive, lower-level roles. According to Dr Hania Sholkamy, female members of the FJP were 'there

162 'Egypt, Annual Report 2013', *Amnesty International*, 2013, available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/egypt/report-2013>.

163 Gray, J., 'Women Still Scarce in Egypt's Constitution Process', *Women's eNews*, 19 September 2013, available at: http://womensenews.org/story/equalitywomen%E2%80%99s-rights/130918/women-still-scarce-in-egypts-constitution-process#.UkKwLYaTg_Y.

164 'Azza Al-Garf: Freedom and Justice Party Prepares Women for Forthcoming Parliamentary Poll', *IkhwanWeb*, 9 January 2013, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30545>.

165 Dakroury, N., 'Women's group denounces Brotherhood', *Daily News Egypt*, 28 July 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/07/28/womens-group-denounces-brotherhood/>.

166 'Huda Ghaniya: New Constitution Will Make Women Worthy First-Class Citizens', *IkhwanWeb*, 1 August 2012, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30218>.

167 Ibid.

168 Dakroury, N., 'Women's group denounces Brotherhood', *Daily News Egypt*, 28 July 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/07/28/womens-group-denounces-brotherhood/>.

as logistics, as support, as recruitment',¹⁶⁹ rather than as high-level decision-makers – therefore undermining their ability to influence policies, including those regarding women's issues. This was despite the fact that female members of the FJP were 'all highly educated [and] committed to the Muslim Brotherhood',¹⁷⁰ they were largely restricted to remaining 'excellent rank-and-file foot soldiers',¹⁷¹ rather than encouraged to become leaders. As a result, very few women were given the ability to have a positive influence over the direction of the movement¹⁷² and the few who made it into high-level state positions were broadly unrepresentative of women and women's issues in wider Egyptian society. This, in turn, limited the potential for key issues facing them and others of their sex – such as sexual harassment, rape, and female genital mutilation (FGM) – to be addressed by the Egyptian state.

- *Failing to represent women's issues*

Women's issues were largely ignored within President Morsi's government due in part to the fact that the females in his administration were given 'token' roles because of their gender alone. According to Dr Sholkamy, only a bare-minimum number of women were given positions, so as to lend the regime the appearance of inclusivity. She described a 'cavalier' attitude to their appointment into government, saying that it was 'as though you only [had] to be a woman [in order to be able] to represent women'.¹⁷³ She went on to claim that those who had been appointed did not behave as though they had a 'constituency' of women to represent. In fact, female FJP representatives were often used to present defensive counter-arguments to controversial women's issues, such as sexual harassment (see Chapter 1).

169 Interview with Dr Hania Sholkamy, 6 June 2013. See also: 'Azza Al-Garf: Freedom and Justice Party Prepares Women for Forthcoming Parliamentary Poll', *IkhwanWeb*, 9 January 2013, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30545>.

170 Interview with Dr Hania Sholkamy, 6 June 2013.

171 Ibid.

172 Ibid.

173 Ibid.

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This approach meant that those women most suitable for the job were often overlooked, and that, from both Islamist and secular sides, ‘there were some really important, active, and dynamic women in the reserves’ who were not appointed.¹⁷⁴ As a result, the government, while claiming to represent Egypt’s female population and their gender-specific issues, in fact only represented a select few. Added to the supportive – rather than active – nature of female roles within government, women consequently had little influence or ‘voice’ in the party.¹⁷⁵ Such was the extent that, under Muslim Brotherhood rule, 85% of women claimed that their views and opinions were not represented by any political group.¹⁷⁶

- *Failing to implement measures to combat gender inequality*

The structural inequality within President Morsi’s government was largely due to the Brotherhood’s reluctance to implement a quota for a minimum proportion of women within various state institutions. The Mubarak regime decreed that 12% of seats would be open to women alone in the 2010 parliamentary elections. This stipulation was removed following the 2011 revolution.¹⁷⁷ However, the FJP dismissed the need for a quota,¹⁷⁸ on the basis that ‘societal culture and women’s endeavors are the main factors that should impact women’s presence on the political scene.’¹⁷⁹ FJP representative Azza el-Garf further implied that women had not yet proven themselves competent enough to be appointed, claiming that they ‘*will* convince the people and win their confidence through hard work, societal service and great efficiency’ (my emphasis);¹⁸⁰ she even claimed that introducing gender allocations would be ‘a form of discrimination’ against

174 Interview with Dr Hania Sholkamy, 6 June 2013.

175 Ibid.

176 El-Naggar, T., ‘TNS: 43% of Women Believe their Situation has Become Worse’, *Zawya*, 26 March 2013, available at: http://www.zawya.com/story/TNS_43_of_Women_Believe_their_Situation_has_Become_Worse-ZAWYA20130326101923/.

177 ‘Egyptian state-run women’s council calls for quota of women MPs’, *Ahram Online*, 16 September 2013, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentPrint/1/0/81757/Egypt/0/Egyptian-staterun-womens-council-calls-for-quota-o.aspx>.

178 ‘Huda Ghaniya: New Constitution Will Make Women Worthy First-Class Citizens’, *IkhwanWeb*, 1 August 2012, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30218>.

179 Ibid.

180 ‘Azza Al-Garf: Freedom and Justice Party Prepares Women for Forthcoming Parliamentary Poll’, *IkhwanWeb*, 9 January 2013, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30545>.

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men.¹⁸¹ However, women's rights activists argued at the time that the structural inequality was at such a level that, without a temporary quota in place, reaching high-level positions would be a near impossibility for females. Quotas are therefore needed in order to '[give] women a chance to prove themselves' as political representatives and decision makers.¹⁸²

Fairer representation could be made possible if an article were to be written into the constitution stipulating the need for the implementation of a quota in order for a minimum number of women in high level government positions, in order for it to later be defined by electoral law.¹⁸³ This has perhaps been recognised by the post-Morsi Constituent Assembly, as it appears to be moving towards the implementation of gender allocations. It announced, in late September 2013, that 25% of available seats are to be reserved for women in the forthcoming 2014 municipal elections.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, the National Council for Women (whose head, Mervat el-Tellawi, is one of the new Assembly's 50 members) has resolved to call upon the government to introduce a quota system for women, both in local councils and for two sessions of parliament.¹⁸⁵ However, at the time of writing, it has not yet been confirmed whether this proposal will be accepted in time for the parliamentary elections in 2014.

Though the Muslim Brotherhood – who brought female representation to an all-time low – has been banned, the problem of excluding women from power remains a problem faced by women. According to Maya Morsy of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the issue of cross-party and cross-political representation is often overlooked by the public:

181 'Azza Al-Garf: Freedom and Justice Party Prepares Women for Forthcoming Parliamentary Poll', *Ikhwan-Web*, 9 January 2013, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30545>.

182 Interview with Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 17 July 2013.

183 Interview with Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 17 July 2013

184 Coleman, I., 'Quotas and Women in Egyptian Politics', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 4 October 2013, available at: <http://blogs.cfr.org/coleman/2013/10/04/quotas-and-women-in-egyptian-politics/>.

185 'The NCW discusses its vision on the new Constitution and calls for provisions on the adoption of the quota system for women, criminalization of violence against women and the abolition of parties established on religious basis', The National Council for Women, 17 September 2013, available at: <http://www.ncwegypt.com/index.php/en/media-centre/ncw-news/147-ncw-s-stand-with-regards-to-the-current-events-and-issues/1013-the-ncw-discusses-its-vision-on-the-new-constitution-and-calls-for-provisions-on-the-adoption-of-the-quota-system-for-women-criminalization-of-violence-against-women-and-the-abolition-of-parties-established-on-religious-basis>.

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*We keep on blaming the conservatives [but] what is the percentage of women representation [among] actual candidates in the liberal parties? Hardly will you find women heading the party lists in the liberal parties.*¹⁸⁶

In fact, the interim government under President Adly Mansour has appointed only five women to sit on the 50-member Constituent Assembly which - despite marking an increased proportion of women from the year before - shows a mere nod to greater female representation.¹⁸⁷ The existing structural inequality within government highlights the need for a quota to be implemented until women have access to the same opportunities as men, based on merit and hard work alone. Fairer representation could be made possible if an article, stipulating the need for a minimum number of women in high-level government positions, is written into the constitution.¹⁸⁸

2C) Women and civil society

- *Attacking the existence, activities and freedoms of women's rights NGOs*

Egyptian human-rights NGOs faced persecution and restrictions under both the Mubarak and Morsi regimes. Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, explained that women's rights NGOs have 'always been under the microscope of either the previous regime [Mubarak's] or this one [Morsi's] because of our beliefs'.¹⁸⁹ Indeed, Mozn Hassan (Director and Co-Founder of *Nazra for Feminist Studies*, a leading women's rights think-tank) related how, prior to the 2011 revolution, her organisation's grants took nearly a year to be approved, while, following it, they were stopped altogether.¹⁹⁰ She went on to recall that the think-tank's registration was officially rejected in November 2007 – under the Mubarak regime – despite 'dealing with the Ministry of Social Solidarity for a year and a half before'.¹⁹¹

186 Interview with Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 17 July 2013.

187 Ibid,

188 Ibid.

189 Interview with Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, 5 June 2013.

190 Interview with Mozn Hassan, Director and Co-Founder of *Nazra for Feminist Studies*, 5 June 2013.

191 Ibid.

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However, this social space in which NGOs tried to create change for women faced further, new, and increasingly harsh limitations under the rule of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). The government-led crackdown on civil society targeted NGOs, foundations, and associations – as well as youth-led initiatives – with many of those affected having just been set up after the 2011 revolution. Shortly before being ousted from power, the FJP proposed a draft law imposing additional cuts to funding for NGOs (as well as a reduction on their activities, and limits to their ability to work on improving women’s rights).¹⁹² At the time, *HarassMap* co-founder Rebecca Chiao expressed concern that the draft law would make the requirements for registering and getting approval for funding more difficult.¹⁹³ Indeed, Mozn Hassan’s think-tank is unable to exist as an NGO, and has now been listed to a civil company – subjected to yet more restrictions.¹⁹⁴ Even the *New Woman Foundation* faced increasingly tight constraints, to the extent that – at one point – their employees were being forced to work ‘on a half-time basis, with half-salaries’.¹⁹⁵ The only major exception to these new controls and hindrances has been the Muslim Brotherhood, which applied to become an NGO in March 2013. Its registration was completed and announced within two days,¹⁹⁶ while other organisations have – notoriously – had to wait a year (sometimes even two and a half) for similar results.¹⁹⁷

NGO workers in Egypt believe that Morsi’s government came down upon human-rights NGOs in particular for various reasons: first, because they were viewed as ‘political fighters from the Left’,¹⁹⁸ refusing to embrace the Brotherhood’s Islamist ideology; second, because they were seen as one of the biggest threats to state stability (due to their ‘scandalising and exposing torture incidents [and] violations of human rights’ being carried

192 Interview with Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, 5 June 2013.

193 Interview with Rebecca Chiao, Director and Co-Founder of *HarassMap*, 3 June 2013.

194 Interview with Mozn Hassan, Director and Co-Founder of *Nazra for Feminist Studies*, 5 June 2013.

195 Interview with Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, 5 June 2013.

196 ‘Muslim Brotherhood officially registered as NGO’, *Ahram Online*, 21 March 2013, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/0/67392/Egypt/0/Muslim-Brotherhood-officially-registered-as-NGO.aspx>.

197 Interview with Rebecca Chiao, Director and Co-Founder of *HarassMap*, 3 June 2013.

198 Interview with Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, 5 June 2013.

out by the state).¹⁹⁹ ²⁰⁰ Dr Nawla Darwiche spoke of the ‘very important role’ that NGOs play ‘in preparing for revolution’ – specifically by creating a narrative that was used within ‘most of the slogans adopted by the Revolution’.²⁰¹ Mozn Hassan shared a similar view, claiming that NGOs ‘created the space to talk about change, and [the Muslim Brotherhood] are really afraid of this continuing’.²⁰²

- ***Restricting the influence of women’s rights and human rights NGOs***

Besides attempting to clamp down on the freedoms and activities of NGOs, the FJP also largely ignored their demands regarding women’s rights. Firstly, the National Council for Women (NCW) – which acted as the ‘middle man’ between women’s rights NGOs and the government, thereby allowing NGOs to have greater influence in state policy – was consistently ignored and undermined under Morsi’s government. For example, while then-Prime Minister Hesham Qandil asked the NCW, in March 2013, to submit a draft law on violence against women, President Morsi’s *Shura* Council never discussed the legislation that was then sent on to them.²⁰³ Moreover, despite being the highest-level governmental body to stand for women’s issues, the NCW was not represented in the Constituent Assembly. Instead, it reported to President Morsi’s advisor on women’s matters, something which, according to Maya Morsy, ‘downgraded the council’. Such a demotion is perhaps unsurprising, given the FJP’s belief that the NCW was at the root of women’s rights campaigning in Egypt. In the words of Dr Hania Sholkamy, as late as June 2013, the Party still felt that ‘if the National Council of Women goes away, all the issues to do with women’s rights or women’s problems will go away too’.²⁰⁴

199 Interview with Dalia Abd el-Hameed, Gender and Women’s Rights Officer at the *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights*, 4 June 2013.

200 Interview with Dr Nawla Darwiche, Director of the *New Woman Foundation*, 5 June 2013.

201 Ibid.

202 Interview with Mozn Hassan, Director and Co-Founder of *Nazra for Feminist Studies*, 5 June 2013.

203 Dakrouy, N., ‘Shura Council criticises the National Council for Women’, *Daily News Egypt*, 11 June 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/06/11/shura-council-criticises-the-national-council-for-women/>.

204 Interview with Dr Hania Sholkamy, 6 June 2013.

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Therefore, because women's rights NGOs still needed a 'national machinery' in order for civil society to have a voice in government,²⁰⁵ they found it 'difficult to communicate directly to the state' during the Muslim Brotherhood's rule. NGOs would have more influence in state policy if the NCW was able to report directly to the President, or if it became a ministry itself (thus allowing an NCW representative to sit on the cabinet).

- *Dividing treatment of NGOs on the basis of their compatibility with the state's Islamist ideology and political agenda*

The FJP divided its treatment of NGOs between those it considered as belonging to the 'good' and those which it considered as belonging to the 'bad' side of civil society.²⁰⁶ Dr Hania Sholkamy described the draft law on NGOs as being a divisive element: acting as a 'wedge' and a 'partition' between NGOs, based solely on the government's criteria of what makes them 'good' or 'bad'.²⁰⁷ She went on to say that the law 'cements the rights of NGOs that conform to what the state thinks NGOs should be doing,' creating a 'hallowed circle of "good" NGOs' which are given the freedom to continue their activities.²⁰⁸

On the other hand, those 'bad' NGOs and the NCW were often portrayed as attacking Egypt's national and religious identity, as well as the family values which Islamist politicians saw as underpinning Egyptian society. For example, Independent MP Mohamed al-Omda justified his proposal to abrogate *khula* law – a woman's right to divorce – by declaring *Shariah* to be 'under siege' as long as the legislation stood. He blamed women's organisations and the NCW for following their 'individualistic will without the slightest regard for family or society'.²⁰⁹ His words echoed FJP senti-

205 Interview with Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 17 July 2013.

206 Interview with Dr Hania Sholkamy, 6 June 2013. See also: Interview with Dalia Abd el-Hameed, Gender and Women's Rights Officer at the *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights*, 4 June 2013.

207 Interview with Dr Hania Sholkamy, 6 June 2013.

208 Ibid.

209 'Independent MP proposes draft law to limit women's right to divorce', *Egypt Independent*, 17 March 2012, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/independent-mp-proposes-daft-law-limit-women%E2%80%99s-right-divorce>.

ments. In its 2011 election programme, the Party proposed the ‘[a]bolition of the National Council for Women’,²¹⁰ calling on those who were ‘proud of their identity and religion’ for support.²¹¹ In its place, it suggested ‘a national council for the family’, which would provide ‘a healthy climate for making good balanced families and [take] into account family affairs and security’,²¹² unlike the NCW (which the FJP accused of being ‘the intelligence arm of the international players in Egypt’).²¹³

Similarly, human-rights organisations were often heavily stigmatised by the Muslim Brotherhood as being ‘lackeys of the West’,²¹⁴ due to their work in international forums.²¹⁵ Likewise, groups supportive of international conventions were labelled as being part of an ‘international agenda’ (and, therefore, unrepresentative of ‘the inherent pure values of the Egyptian people’).²¹⁶ The Muslim Brotherhood and the FJP also criticised the NCW for working with foreign organisations: accusing it of aligning itself too closely with the West, on the basis that this directly contradicts the ‘Islamic identity’ of the Egyptian woman. For instance, the NCW’s position regarding the UN declaration on the status of women was censured by Essam al-Erian, head of the FJP’s parliamentary committee.²¹⁷

One of the key cornerstones of the Muslim Brotherhood’s rhetoric is its opposition to what it regarded as foreign interference. Both the FJP and the Muslim Brotherhood fiercely opposed the work of the UN and the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Egypt, on the grounds that they violated the principles of *Shariah*. In March 2013, the Muslim Brotherhood denounced the draft UN declaration on violence against women, describing it as deceptive;

210 ‘Election Program: The Freedom and Justice Party’, The Freedom and Justice Party, 2011, available at: <http://www.fjponline.com/view.php?pid=80>.

211 Ibid.

212 Ibid.

213 Ibid.

214 Interview with Dr Hania Sholkamy, 6 June 2013.

215 Interview with Dalia Abd el-Hameed, Gender and Women’s Rights Officer at the *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights*, 4 June 2013.

216 ‘Election Program: The Freedom and Justice Party’, The Freedom and Justice Party, 2011, available at: <http://www.fjponline.com/view.php?pid=80>.

217 Dakrouy, N., ‘Shura Council criticises the National Council for Women’, *Daily News Egypt*, 11 June 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/06/11/shura-council-criticises-the-national-council-for-women/>.

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misleading; and damaging for the fabric of Egyptian society.²¹⁸ The group released an official statement on its website, explaining its opposition to the declaration:

The document includes articles that contradict established principles of Islam, undermine Islamic ethics and destroy the family, the basic building block of society [...]

This declaration, if ratified, would lead to complete disintegration of society, and would certainly be the final step in the intellectual and cultural invasion of Muslim countries, eliminating the moral specificity that helps preserve cohesion of Islamic societies. [...]

These are destructive tools meant to undermine the family as an important institution; they would subvert the entire society, and drag it to pre-Islamic ignorance.²¹⁹

It also highlighted ‘what decadence awaits our world, if we sign this document’:

1. *Granting girls full sexual freedom, as well as the freedom to decide their own gender and the gender of their partners (ie, choose to have normal or homo- sexual [sic] relationships), while raising the age of marriage.*
2. *Providing contraceptives for adolescent girls and training them to use those, while legalizing abortion to get rid of unwanted pregnancies, in the name of sexual and reproductive rights.*
3. *Granting equal rights to adulterous wives and illegitimate sons resulting from adulterous relationships.*
4. *Granting equal rights to homosexuals, and providing protection and respect for prostitutes.*

218 ‘Muslim Brotherhood Statement Denouncing UN Women Declaration for Violating Sharia Principles’, *Ikhwan-Web*, 14 March 2013, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30731>.

219 Cited in: ‘Muslim Brotherhood Statement Denouncing UN Women Declaration for Violating Sharia Principles’, *IkhwanWeb*, 14 March 2013, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30731>.

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5. *Giving wives full rights to file legal complaints against husbands accusing them of rape or sexual harassment, obliging competent authorities to deal husbands punishments similar to those prescribed for raping or sexually harassing a stranger.*
6. *Equal inheritance (between men and women).*
7. *Replacing guardianship with partnership, and full sharing of roles within the family between men and women such as: spending, child care [sic] and home chores.*
8. *Full equality in marriage legislation such as: allowing Muslim women to marry non-Muslim men, and abolition of polygamy, dowry, men taking charge of family spending, etc.*
9. *Removing the authority of divorce from husbands and placing it in the hands of judges, and sharing all property after divorce.*
10. *Cancelling the need for a husband's consent in matters like: travel, work, or use of contraception.*²²⁰

The Muslim Brotherhood referred to the proposed ratification of articles in the declaration as the ‘intellectual and cultural invasion of Muslim countries’,²²¹ and urged ‘the leaders of Muslim countries and their UN representatives to reject and condemn’ the document.²²² It also called upon al-Azhar (‘the highest seat of learning for Muslims’)²²³ and all Islamic associations and groups ‘to take the lead [...and] condemn this declaration’.²²⁴ These remarks followed the FJP’s calls for Egypt to re-evaluate its support for CEDAW, and re-consider whether the terms of the convention were suitable ‘to our culture, traditions and [...] established values’.²²⁵

In taking these actions, the Muslim Brotherhood and the FJP drew a clear distinction between the values of ‘Egypt as a Muslim country’ and those of international organisations, regarding women. This rhetoric has played a key role in stigmatising Egyptian NGOs whose work and principles overlap with those of international organisations, international conven-

220 Cited in: ‘Muslim Brotherhood Statement Denouncing UN Women Declaration for Violating Sharia Principles’, *IkhwanWeb*, 14 March 2013, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30731>.

221 ‘Muslim Brotherhood Statement Denouncing UN Women Declaration for Violating Sharia Principles’, *IkhwanWeb*, 14 March 2013, available at: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30731&ref=search.php>.

222 Ibid.

223 Ibid.

224 Ibid.

225 ‘Election Program: The Freedom and Justice Party’, The Freedom and Justice Party, 2011, available at: <http://www.fjponline.com/view.php?pid=80>.

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tions, and international norms. As a result, their ability to function in Egyptian society has been severely damaged, to the extent that it is ‘not easy to even tell a taxi driver that you work for a human-rights organisation’.²²⁶

Nevertheless, Egyptian women’s rights activists have challenged the Brotherhood’s distinction between Egyptian and international norms. Maya Morsy argued that, if CEDAW was indeed against Islam (as the Brotherhood claimed), ‘why have major Islamic nations signed it?’²²⁷ She said that the same argument applies to the Brotherhood’s rejection of the UN and its perceived Western agenda, adding, ‘The UN is not an alien body to the Egyptians; Egypt is a member of the UN’.²²⁸

While Egyptian women showed an increased appetite to play a role in creating social change and to participate in politics, this was both ignored and denied by the Muslim Brotherhood (in an attempt ‘to push women away from the political arena’ during its time in power).²²⁹ Despite the sharp increase in female political participation, Mohamed Morsi’s government attempted to restrict the role of women on both a state and grassroots level, relegating them to secondary and supportive positions like wives and daughters.

226 Interview with Dalia Abd el-Hameed, Gender and Women’s Rights Officer at the *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights*, 4 June 2013.

227 Interview with Maya Morsy, Regional Gender Practice Team Leader with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 17 July 2013.

228 Ibid.

229 ‘Transcript: Women and Power in the Middle East – Social Justice, Democracy and Gender Equality’, *Chatham House*, April 2013, available at: <http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Meetings/Meeting%20Transcripts/30042013panel1.pdf>.

CONCLUSION

The political and ideological framework of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) played a fundamental role in deepening many of the longstanding problems faced by Egyptian women, from sexual violence to political marginalisation and discrimination. Islamist ideology therefore proved to work against the principle of equality between men and women in Egyptian society.

As months went by under Muslim Brotherhood rule, it became clear that those who had initially voiced scepticism had been right to do so, and that the FJP's claim to be taking women's rights seriously was based on nothing more than political ambition. The Brotherhood's main reason for presenting such a façade was likely to have been driven by a recognition of the need for political legitimacy; since 2011, this was dependent on showing the public that the Party had the fundamental aims of the revolution – 'bread, freedom, and social justice' – at heart.

Despite claiming to support gender equality and female empowerment, the FJP prioritised the protection of traditional gender roles in order to maintain the family unit, which had the effect of keeping women from participating as equals in the public sphere, if at all. The FJP's attempt to legitimise and legalise Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is just one example of the state using violence against women in order to take ownership of their sexuality. The state's attempts to justify sexual harassment and rape against female protestors is another.

The ousting of the FJP, and the subsequent demise of the Muslim Brotherhood, was fundamentally due to its attempts to survive as a legitimate leading democratic party whilst imposing an Islamist ideology upon the Egyptian people. Despite minor improvements under the rule of Adly Mansour's interim government, women's rights groups have so far been left disappointed yet again.

While it remains to be seen what will come of the planned parliamentary and presidential elections of early 2014, it is likely that – without fundamental and immediate changes – the plight of women in Egypt will continue. Yet through civil resistance, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen have overthrown those responsible for decades of oppression and, as Egypt and Tunisia have shown, are unlikely to allow forces of oppression masquerading as democratic leaders stay in power for very long.

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