

# Mnemotechnics

## *Digital Epistemologies and the Techno-Politics of Archiving a Revolution*

Anthony Downey

*We were, then we were defeated, and meaning was defeated with us. But we have not perished yet, and meaning has not been killed.*

– Alaa Abd El-Fattah<sup>1</sup>

In the lead-up to and aftermath of the revolution in Egypt in 2011, cultural practitioners produced, archived, and disseminated information relating to political protests unfolding across the country. Often working from the front lines of conflict and unrest, they established alliances with lawyers, political activists, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), digital technologists, programmers, and humanitarian workers. These collaborations yielded expanded forms of multidisciplinary practice that encompassed fields as varied as data visualization, digital verification, social and networked media analysis, surveillance technologies, evidence gathering, and human rights legislation. Through these activities, frequently described as cultural activism, archives of images, text, and data were produced and stored on popular social networking websites (such as Facebook), microblogging and networking services (including but not limited to Twitter), and video-sharing platforms (in particular, YouTube). As digitized responses to the events of 2011 developed, these archival processes formulated, crucially in retrospect, critical frames of reference for questioning the function and functioning of online social media platforms – specifically the lat-

---

<sup>1</sup> Alaa Abd el-Fattah, “A Portrait of an Activist Outside His Prison,” in *You Have Not Yet Been Defeated* (Fitzcarraldo Editions: London, 2021), pp. 305–309 (309); emphasis in original. This article was written from Torah Prison in Cairo, and first published in *Mada Masr* on March 27, 2017.

ter's proficiency, if not reliability – as viable repositories of memory and information.<sup>2</sup> In the relative absence of more traditional forms of mainstream media (and in direct defiance of state-sanctioned accounts), these activities were also *de facto* acts of witnessing that have since become indispensable to how we understand and interpret the events of the Egyptian revolution.

Foregrounding the evidentiary potential of digital archives, the indiscriminate expurgation of online material, the relationship between social media networks, censorship, and state surveillance, and the algorithmic rationalizations of “news,” these practices effectively foreshadowed numerous debates that have since become ubiquitous in critiques of information and communication technologies (see Chapters 14, 26, 43).<sup>3</sup> To add to these increasingly prevalent reservations, in 2011 the social media platforms used by cultural activists – that is, individuals and collectives who adopted and adapted creative practices to question the prevailing, invariably state-sanctioned, interpretation of events – to archive data were developed and underwritten, then as now, by the motivations of venture-capital and privately owned companies. These corporations routinely operate from within opaque mandates that include the indiscriminate harvesting of data (regularly achieved through covert means), the extraction of metadata (to predict future user/consumer behavior), and the obdurate pursuit of market growth (often at the expense of user privacy).<sup>4</sup> These activities are often in conflict with the emphasis placed on independent forms of witnessing and archiving undertaken by cultural and political activists alike. While these conflicts of interest and corporate intentions were evident in 2011, it has become all the more obvious that the unbound freedom to communicate, share, and “like” information – be it in the form of personal updates, informal messages, pronouncements, photographs, or snippets of video – came with a significant downside inasmuch as it provided, as we now know, the data for an unaccountable social media apparatus to mine, propagate, and thereafter substantiate itself globally. To these already significant qualms, we should likewise observe how these privately owned systems have, as a by-product of an operative logic that is founded on data extraction, effectively normalized the dissemination of disinformation (or “fake news”); galvanized the deployment of online surveillance (both corporate and state-sanctioned); contributed to ever-increasing levels of social and political anxiety (the often polarized debates around the COVID-19 pandemic would be one obvious recent example); undermined public trust in governments and elections (not to mention the judiciary

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of contemporary cultural critiques of the function of the archive, see Anthony Downey, “Contingency, Dissonance and Performativity: Critical Archives and Knowledge Production in Contemporary Art,” in *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East*, edited by Anthony Downey (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), pp.13–42.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of concerns relating to algorithms and news data, see Anthony Downey, “The Future of Protest in a Post-Digital Age,” in *The Protest and the Recuperation*, edited by Betti-Sue Hertz and Sreshta Rit Premnath (Eds.). (Columbia University, 2021), pp. 31–48.

<sup>4</sup> See Bruce Schneier's *Data and Goliath: The Hidden Battles to Collect Your Data and Control Your World* (Norton, 2015).

and legislative bodies more broadly); and institutionalized global forms of digital authoritarianism (in countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, and Russia).

To the degree that information was harvested, scraped, stored, applied, and monetized by social media platforms in 2011, the viability of the online archives produced by cultural activists throughout that period and thereafter – specifically, the epistemological “value” of the information that was extruded, if not corrupted, through such systems – remains a source of considerable apprehension today. Although predisposed to removing material without prior warning or indeed explanation, social media and video-sharing platforms are nonetheless routinely unresponsive to what are considered to be gross breaches of their terms and conditions. They are equally reluctant to address, in the name of market expansion, the consistent abuse of their platforms by political agents, so-called “bad actors,” and autocratic governments.<sup>5</sup> Such inaction undermines the long-term sustainability of social media platforms as a provisional means to effectively archive material, be it evidentiary or otherwise. These misgivings are further compounded if we draw attention to how online archives, in the lead-up to 2011 and beyond, were regularly documenting and verifying witness statements, social unrest, violence against protestors, widespread torture, human rights abuses, state-sanctioned methods of quashing protests, and government-dictated narratives of the Egyptian revolution.<sup>6</sup> Such processes, to take but one example, were core to the work of the collective Mosireen who, in 2011, released an edited video on YouTube of the notorious Maspero massacre. This video included footage from the event in question and its aftermath (shot by participants in the peaceful march that precipitated the massacre), interviews with various protestors, and a compiled list of all those who died, mostly Egyptian Copts, as a result of a state-sanctioned massacre of over two dozen people and over 200 injuries.<sup>7</sup> In 2014, Mosireen collectively began a process of considering what to do with the footage they had collated of the Egyptian revolution, which involved exploring how to future-proof it in terms of archival access. The result of those deliberations was “858: An Archive of Resistance” which is housed on the

<sup>5</sup> See Jason Burke, “Facebook ‘Lacks Willpower’ to Tackle Misinformation in Africa,” *The Guardian*, April 18, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/18/facebook-accused-of-lacking-willpower-to-tackle-misinformation-in-africa> [Accessed April 20, 2022]; Sophie Bushwick, “Russia’s Information War Is Being Waged on Social Media Platforms,” *Scientific American*, March 8, 2022. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/russia-is-having-less-success-at-spreading-social-media-disinformation/> [Accessed March 10, 2022].

<sup>6</sup> In the context of Egypt, I would note here the work of Misr Digital (Egyptian Awareness), an online site administered by Wael Abbas. A member of Kefaya, established in 2004 and also known as Egypt’s National Association for Change, Abbas was a leading proponent, alongside the 6 April Youth Movement, in calls for protest in the country in 2010 and 2011. From 2005 until 2008, Misr Digital published torture documents, images and videos that were regularly received from anonymous sources. See, Linda Herrera, *Revolution in the Age of Social Media: The Egyptian Popular Insurrection and the Internet* (Verso: London, 2014), pp. 19–23.

<sup>7</sup> See Omar Robert Hamilton, “Six Moments from a Revolution: A Mosireen Video Timeline,” *Ibraaz*, July 4, 2017. See: <https://www.ibraaz.org/channel/169> [Accessed January 13, 2021]

open-source tool Pandora, the latter having been designed to support access to archives that are mostly composed of text-annotated video material.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the fact that such digital records could be potentially used to prosecute human rights abuses or other injustices, the undoubted importance of such records and accounts is rendered moot when companies, acting unilaterally and often without warning, censor or expunge online material.<sup>9</sup> Privately owned concerns such as Facebook, based on often subjective if not idiosyncratic interpretations of ever-evolving terms and conditions, can also, more bluntly, block user access to their site's pages and content. In the lead-up to the Egyptian revolution – to take but a single, admittedly high-profile, example – the company suspended administrative access to the “We Are All Khaled Said (Kullena Khaled Said)” webpage, the latter site having been viewed by many as a key factor in bolstering support for the January 2011 protests.<sup>10</sup> In light of these by no means exhaustive reservations about social media platforms and their impact on protests and conflict in general, we need to more fully understand how such events are recorded and disseminated in the first place and to what ends. We need to ask how we now understand – against the backdrop of the multiple and multiplying concerns raised about social media platforms – the online archives that were produced both during and in the wake of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Given that cultural activists produced knowledge from within the context of opaque apparatuses, whose procedures and methods both facilitate the dissemination of information, for the most part, and simultaneously undermine the stability (if not epistemological veracity) of online archives, how, in short, do we access and interpret digitized information associated with events in Egypt in 2011?

To more fully explore this question, throughout this essay I will discuss Heba Y. Amin's *Project Speak2Tweet* (2011–ongoing) and how it assumed – through the archiving of a selection of voices first recorded as part of the Speak2Tweet initiative launched on January 31, 2011 – responsibility for digitally preserving and representing

<sup>8</sup> See, <https://858.ma>. See also, Mosireen, “Revolution Triptych,” in *Uncommon Grounds: New Media and Critical Practices in North Africa and the Middle East*, ed. Anthony Downey (I.B. Tauris: London, 2014), pp. 47–52 (51).

<sup>9</sup> See, “‘Video Unavailable’: Social Media Platforms Remove Evidence of War Crimes,” Human Rights Watch Report, September, 2020. Available here: [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media\\_2020/09/crisis\\_conflict0920\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2020/09/crisis_conflict0920_web_0.pdf) [Accessed July 7, 2021]. See also, Avi Asher-Schapiro, “YouTube and Facebook Are Removing Evidence of Atrocities, Jeopardizing Cases Against War Criminals,” *The Intercept*, November 2, 2017. Available here: <https://theintercept.com/2017/11/02/war-crimes-youtube-facebook-syria-rohingya/> [Accessed April 20, 2020]. See also, Sarah El Deeb, “History of Syria’s War at Risk as YouTube Reins in Content,” AP News, September 13, 2017, <https://apnews.com/d9f1c4f1bf20445ab06cbdf566a2b70> [Accessed April 21, 2021].

<sup>10</sup> Administered by Wael Ghonim, who was at the time employed as the head of marketing for Google Middle East and North Africa, and the Egyptian political activist Abdul Rahman Mansour, the “We Are All Khaled Said” Facebook page was widely credited with mobilizing significant elements of the protests that led to the downfall of Mubarak. It is notable that it regularly showed images and video clips of torture, some of which were sourced from Misr Digital. See, Wael Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0* (Harper Collins, 2012), pp. 63–64.



**Figure 30.1** Project Speak2Tweet, 2011–ongoing. *Source:* Installation at The Mosaic Rooms, London, 2020/21. Photo: Andy Staggs.

revolutionary voices.<sup>11</sup> Throughout the shutdown and thereafter, the original Speak2Tweet initiative, the creation of a collective of programmers, allowed Egyptians with access to landline communications – that is, the majority of citizens – to post links on its Twitter page. Thereafter, anyone could click on the link in the Twitter feed to access the sound file and hear the voice message in full.<sup>12</sup> Incorporating a small selection of these voices into a multichannel video installation, Amin’s *Project Speak2Tweet* (figure 30.1) was initiated with the intention of sustaining the original archive and ensuring access to it in the future. In doing so, *Project Speak2Tweet*, a platform that is both intimately connected and yet independent of the Speak2Tweet initiative, is not solely an

<sup>11</sup> Born in Egypt, Heba Y. Amin is a multimedia artist based in Berlin. Throughout her work she focuses on politics, technology, and architecture. In the interests of transparency, I curated Amin’s first UK solo show (“When I See the Future, I Close My Eyes”) at the Mosaic Rooms in London in 2020. I am particularly grateful to Amin for numerous conversations related to her work in general, which took place from 2019 onwards, and for her subsequent fact-checking of this essay. See also, *Heba Y. Amin: The General’s Stork*, ed. Anthony Downey (Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> The original project emerged from a start-up called SayNow, an online service co-founded by Ujjwal Singh that enabled fans to share voice messages with their celebrity idols. Google bought the start-up a week before it announced the launch of Speak2Tweet on their blog on January 31, 2011. See also, Heba Y. Amin “Voices From The Revolution: A Speak2tweet Project,” 2012. Available here: [http://www.hebaamin.com/documents/Amin\\_VoicesfromtheRevolution.pdf](http://www.hebaamin.com/documents/Amin_VoicesfromtheRevolution.pdf) [Accessed February 24, 2020]. See also: “Egypt’s 2011 Internet Shutdown: Digital Dissent and the Future of Public Memory: Heba Y. Amin, Anthony Downey, Abdelkarim Mardini, and Adel Iskandar in Conversation,” *Camera Austria*, 153, 43–54 (2021): <https://camera-austria.at/en/zeitschrift/153-2021/> [Accessed February 24, 2020], and Heba Y. Amin (2011): <https://www.hebaamin.com/works/project-speak2tweet/>. For a broader discussion of the Speak2Tweet platform, see Anat Ben-David, “Speak2Tweet,” in *Encyclopedia of Social Media and Politics* (vol. 1), ed. by Kerrie Harvey. Sage, 2014, pp. 1195–1196 (1196).



archive as such; it is, rather, a mnemotechnical device – a technology of recall in its own right – that questions how memory is digitized, archived, retrieved and, thereafter, subjected to a digital apparatus that ultimately determines (and undermines) how we come to garner historical knowledge through online platforms.<sup>13</sup> In what follows, I will ask whether the digital methodologies that evolve out of such practices can question the substance of an online social media archive – in its compromised capacity as a “container” of meaning – while also productively extending its potential as an effective means to address past events in the present. This will involve recalling the events of January 2011 in more detail and observing the degree to which Amin’s intervention augured many of the issues outlined here, including the ascendancy of digital authoritarianism and the degree to which the Egyptian state now functions on the basis of widespread, prevalent, and insidious networks of online surveillance.

### **Many Unhappy Returns: The Egyptian Internet Shutdown and Digital Counter-Practices**

To the extent that debates about the role of social media in the revolutionary events of 2011 continue to this day, having taken their cue from the unsubstantiated assumptions embedded in terms such as “Facebook Revolution” and “Twitter Revolution,” it is important to observe that throughout the first week of the revolution – that is, from January 25 until February 2, 2011 – Egyptians’ everyday access to the internet was essentially disrupted and for the most part nonexistent.<sup>14</sup> Following instructions from the government of Hosni Mubarak, issued in response to nationwide protests, the Egyptian State Security Investigations Service (Amn El Dawla) shut down the internet through the deployment of a so-called “kill switch.”<sup>15</sup> Corresponding as it did with the momentous event of a full-scale revolution that was rapidly spreading across the squares and streets of Egypt (and involving the de facto suspension of all access to online networks and, for a time, cell phone service in a country with over 80 million people), the magnitude

<sup>13</sup> Amin has noted how Project Speak2Tweet “explores the emergence of the imagined city from internal monologues and investigates historical narratives via glitches in digital memory.” See <https://www.hebaamin.com/works/project-speak2tweet/> [Accessed April, 18, 2020].

<sup>14</sup> For critical overviews of social media and protests across the Middle East from 2010 onwards, see Paolo Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism* (Pluto Press, 2012); Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussein, *Democracy’s Fourth Wave: Digital Media and the Arab Spring* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Linda Herrera, *Revolution in the Age of Social Media: The Egyptian Popular Insurrection and the Internet* (Verso, 2014), and Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest* (Yale University Press, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Matt Richtel, “Egypt Cuts Off Most Internet and Cell Service,” *New York Times*, Jan 28, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/29/technology/internet/29cutoff.html> [Accessed June 21, 2020]

of this shutdown was unprecedented.<sup>16</sup> Although rapid in its execution, the process was somewhat uneven in its application: access to Twitter, for example, was blocked on January 25. On the same day, network coverage for Tahrir Square was suspended alongside mobile access for activists in the vicinity.<sup>17</sup> The only exception to this shutdown rule was Noor, an ISP with a reported 8% share of the online communications market in Egypt. Reserved for government use and to continue access for privately owned businesses with connections to the regime, industrious protestors would later use it to transmit footage from Tahrir Square before it was terminated on January 31.<sup>18</sup> Following this unrivaled countrywide shutdown, full access to internet services was not resumed until 12:30 p.m. local time on February 2, 2011, with SMS services returning at 12:35 p.m. on February 5, 2011. For over a week, access to the internet, SMS services, and, for the whole of January 28, mobile networks were essentially proscribed, leaving the entire country – which was in the midst of the most significant historical events to have taken place in a generation – cut off, nationally and internationally, from the digital sphere of information and communication technologies.

The decision to shut down the internet and mobile network services – to dissuade dissent mutating from on- to off-line venues – would appear to produce, based on similar attempts to quash dissent in Tunisia the previous year, precisely the opposite effect. Popular protests against internet shutdowns and the suspension of online access tend, in the first instance, to encourage more support for already existing protest campaigns.<sup>19</sup> For those already protesting, internet shutdowns seem to merely serve to steel their resolve and provoke ever more direct confrontation with the state apparatus. In Egypt, following the shutdown, digital activists and programmers immediately effected avenues of online communication that facilitated the spread of information and data transmission. In the aftermath of the January 25 disruption of services, citizens from across a broad sphere – including those from the field of cultural, legal, and human rights activism – physically mobilized in Tahrir Square to maintain a digital hub and transmit video and image-based material. For the activist Wael Ghonim, the shutdown of the internet meant that every citizen who had not heard of the uprising “now realized that a major challenge to the regime must be underway. Huge numbers of people decided to take to

<sup>16</sup> For a comprehensive report on the global impact of subsequent internet shutdowns on freedom of speech, journalism, and the rights of refugees and others, see Hernandez et al. (2021): <https://www.accessnow.org/who-is-shutting-down-the-internet-in-2021/> [Accessed November 30, 2021]

<sup>17</sup> A complete timeline relating the various suspensions of service is adapted here from an informative and useful graphic compiled by Ramy Raoof. The original document was produced on June 8, 2011, and can be accessed here: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt\\_timeline\\_of\\_communication\\_shutdown\\_during\\_jan25revolution.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt_timeline_of_communication_shutdown_during_jan25revolution.jpg) [Accessed June 21, 2020].

<sup>18</sup> See Juillian C York, “Arab Spring,” in *Encyclopedia of Social Media and Politics*, op cit., pp.72–76 (73).

<sup>19</sup> In October 2019, popular protests in Lebanon erupted when the government announced a tax on WhatsApp services. In Sudan, more recently, an internet shutdown following the coup by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan on October 25, 2021, provoked further protests and a number of court orders demanding the countrywide resumption of online access.

the streets, some for no other reason than to just find out what was happening.”<sup>20</sup> For some observers, however, the scope and sheer scale of the Egyptian internet shutdown heralded nothing short of an existential crisis, with Jim Cowie, the chief technology officer of Renesys (a company that tracks internet traffic), suggesting that in “a fundamental sense, it’s as if you rewrote the map and they [Egyptians] are no longer a country.”<sup>21</sup> Putting to one side the hyperbole at work here (Egypt as an entity obviously did continue to exist, as did the Egyptian people), the termination of internet access, mobile phones, and all SMS services in the lead-up to the “Day of Rage” on January 27, 2011, was profound in its impact. This exceptional shutdown also offers, in the context of the questions raised in my introductory comments, a singular template for understanding what, if any, communications continued to exist under such conditions and how information – in the form of digital images, videos, recordings, and other media – was successfully produced, archived, and disseminated despite the ongoing circumstances. From there, we can build a picture of how digital frames of reference and epistemological systems – specifically, the methods, validity, and scope of the online information being produced – were evolving and how, from the vantage point of today, we endeavor to access and interpret such information in factual and evidentiary terms.

Announced through Google’s official blog on January 31, that is, six days after the shutdown of the micro-blogging site, the launch of Speak2Tweet ensured that callers to a designated landline number could automatically post a message to a Twitter account that could be then accessed by users of the latter platform to listen to the original voice recording.<sup>22</sup> The #Speak2Tweet hashtag did not have a large following at the time and, in the days following its launch, the account posted voice-tweets from Egypt at a rate of just over 100 a day.<sup>23</sup> Although a small number of these recordings defended Mubarak, the overwhelming majority sought to make sense of the events unfolding and, in turn, articulate their support for the protestors who had taken to the streets across Egypt. Interestingly, as we will see, how the Speak2Tweet platform was used at the time and was thereafter largely forgotten is, in part, precisely what attracted Amin to the substance of this precarious archive. Supporting the posting of thousands of phone messages from Egyptian civilians, the resourcefulness of Speak2Tweet’s programmers not only facilitated the articulation of hopes, condemnations, and fears to the outside world, it captured a unique archive of a collective psyche at a pivotal juncture in Egyptian, if not world, history.

Developed coextensively with Speak2Tweet, Amin’s *Project Speak2Tweet* is a multi-channel video installation that continues to evolve. Substantial elements, in the form of the original voice recordings from the Speak2Tweet library, have since been adopted into Amin’s project, so much so that she has assumed a significant, if not vital, responsibility for its preservation. Through its display and other means, Amin’s project also

<sup>20</sup> See Ghonim, op cit., p. 212.

<sup>21</sup> Jim Cowie, quoted in Matt Richtel, op cit. [Accessed June 21, 2020].

<sup>22</sup> The announcement of the launch was posted by Abdelkarim Mardini, the Middle East and North African product manager for Google, and Ujjwal Singh, the cofounder of SayNow. For fuller details, see “Egypt’s 2011 Internet Shutdown” op cit. [Accessed February 24, 2020].

<sup>23</sup> Anat Ben-David, op cit., p. 1195.



draws attention to the original initiative, further engaging audiences with the on-the-ground realities of the Egyptian internet shutdown in 2011. In drawing our attention to this oral archive, and thereafter maintaining access to the diversity of dissenting voices, Amin also uses other discursive means, such as talks, lectures, workshops, and performances, to present aspects of the Speak2Tweet archive that have not become formal elements in *Project Speak2Tweet* overall. The fact that the calls to the original Speak2Tweet platform were made from a domestic rather than a public space introduces a notable distinction in the historical record of the Egyptian revolution that involved, for the most part, the live and recorded relay of digitized images from public spaces such as squares and streets but not, notably, interior or residential settings. The footage that has since become largely associated with the 18 momentous days of protest in Egypt, broadly speaking, tends to depict the spectacle of revolution that was transmitted through global media outlets at the time. Those same outlets had and continue to have editorial priorities largely disposed toward more easily consumable and image-led narratives. Any coverage within Egypt, which was highly censored by state media, did not dwell on dissent during this period, be it voiced from a domestic setting or otherwise. As an audio initiative collating voices from landlines which, we can speculate, were usually located within homes but not entirely, the voices we hear in *Project Speak2Tweet* are therefore notable for their restraint and contemplative tone.

Stripped of the spectacle we associate with, say, news images from Tahrir Square in 2011, *Project Speak2Tweet* captures an interiorized, highly personal if not domestic dimension to the Egyptian revolution. Including as they did calls for the overthrow of the government that echoed and reflected off-line protests, the messages recorded in the original Speak2Tweet initiative encompass accusations of systemic corruption, details of rampant injustices, complaints about the absence of due legal process, the ongoing fact of endemic unemployment, precarious forms of labor, and how entrenched forms of inequality undermine the Egyptian state and diminish, if not immiserate, its citizens. These voices clearly and unequivocally articulate the foundational reasons for the revolution that was then taking place in the country. In one recording, a woman's voice implores, "What would have happened, Mubarak, if you had invested in your children . . . in your youth . . . if you were compassionate with your men . . . if one day you had thought about your grave."<sup>24</sup> The tone of often passionate proclamations in these recordings range from singing and the recitation of poetry to forthright expressions of hopefulness and heartfelt concerns for the future. First recorded on February 8, 2011, a man's voice communicates a series of conflicting emotions (figure 30.2), claiming as it does that the speaker's "love for you Egypt, increases by the day . . . You know that I live and die for you . . . , so be happy and proud of your children and martyrs. . . . Be happy, because the next regime that will rule over you will be worthy of that responsibility." Another voice, recorded on February 5, 2011, is of a man who, having been incarcerated in Natrun Prison in 1994, claims to have been "the youngest ideological prisoner" ever

<sup>24</sup> All transcripts are courtesy of the original Speak2Tweet archive and Heba Y. Amin's *Project Speak2Tweet*.



**Figure 30.2** My Love for You, Egypt, Increases by the Day, 2011. Source: Voice recording: February 8, 2011. Video (b/w, sound), 6'18''. Courtesy of Heba Y. Amin.

held in Egypt.<sup>25</sup> Given the anonymity of most but not all of the voices (some callers to the platform gave their full names and locations), there is no way to fully verify his claims, but there is equally no reason to doubt them.

The one-time prisoner of Natrun goes on to dedicate his words to the “heroes of Tahrir Square” and movingly recites a poem he had chanted when imprisoned. Recounting how he was held in 10 different prison complexes and regularly saw others being tortured, he says his wounds are passing, his trauma healing, but, as he witnesses events in Tahrir Square, he feels his energy return and is moved to assert his allegiance to its motivations and goals (figures 30.2, 30.3): “I am the son of the Nile – listen to my reciting and hymns. . . . Crying from the ruins of our glory – with bitter tears deeply saddening me. . . . I wonder if the past will come back for my singing and music.” This plaintive question becomes a motif of sorts for Amin’s project: To what extent does the past of these voices, recorded in 2011, return to question if not usurp any prescriptive assumptions about the causes and aftermath of the revolution in Egypt? To this, a further question needs to be asked: Do we have a responsibility – in our roles as researchers, activists, cultural practitioners, observers – to therefore preserve these voices for future generations?

Developed from within the context of creative interventions, and on the invariably problematic foundations of social media platforms, how can digital methodologies safeguard these voices for future generations? How can we, from the present-day context of rampant online misinformation, understand such voices as a potential means to more fully appreciate the historical moment of revolution? The revenant-like return of almost forgotten declarations and pronouncements, in the context of *Project Speak2Tweet*,

<sup>25</sup> An Egyptian prison complex located in the Beheira Governorate, north of Cairo, the Wadi el-Natrun Prison was developed in 2021 to house over 25% of Egypt’s prison population in one place.



**Figure 30.3** I'm the Son of the Nile, 2013. Source: Voice recording: February 5, 2011. Video (b/w, sound), 2'43''. Courtesy of Heba Y. Amin.

summons forth a series of anxieties about responsibility and responsiveness that is not so much concerned with the past *per se* as it is with the future viability of an online archive. In this context, and to return to my earlier point, as a platform that is independent of and yet intimately connected to the Speak2Tweet initiative, Amin's *Project Speak2Tweet* is not *just* an archive; rather, it is a mnemotechnical device that critically questions how forms of digitized memory are consumed by time and rendered technologically obsolete in the name of progress.

### Momentous Ruins and Spatialized Memories

The term used earlier by the one-time inmate of Natrun prison complex – namely “ruins of our glory” – offers a counterpart of sorts to the visual components of *Project Speak2Tweet*. Across multiple monitors, which vary in number according to the installation, we can see the ruined facades of buildings long forgotten and abandoned. This onscreen footage, taken by the artist over a period of time in the lead-up to 2011, reveals dilapidated edifices that seem to speak – in their modernist guise – of a past that once existed as a potential vision of the future. Shot in black-and-white Super-8 analog film, there is a sense of stoic resolve to these remnants, as if they have physically endured their own misplaced hopes and unfulfilled promises. Juxtaposing these highly personal, reflective, and affective accounts of the growing protests – which gives further visual, if not emotive, resonance to the voices we encounter – with footage of abandoned structures, *Project Speak2Tweet* discloses a historical fact: rather than being abandoned as such, these buildings were never actually sustainable or, indeed, habitable. Stymied by the corruptions of a bureaucratic system based on nepotism and bribes, and often developed by corrupt agents as a means to launder money, they were destined to ruination from their inception. Revealing as they do an architecture that bespeaks of abandonment

and ruination, these fragments of another time haunt the present moment of both 2011, when the recorded voices were first enunciated, and, as we will see, the present-day moment of viewing the *Project Speak2Tweet* installation and, indeed, its future iterations in time and space.

Implying as it does the root causes behind the revolution, the visual components of *Project Speak2Tweet* affords a frame of reference for reading voices that were first recorded in 2011, not least the profound impact of corruption and how it metastasized across an entire social and political landscape. It was base corruption, on behalf of interests aligned with the Egyptian state and the National Democratic Party (the ruling political party in Egypt from 1978 to 2011), in conjunction with widespread economic hardship, the absence of due legal process, and prevailing disillusion, that provoked and consolidated dissent in the lead-up to 2011 revolution. It was precisely systemic corruption, economic stagnation, and scandalous levels of nepotism, set against historical concerns about freedom of the judiciary and petitions for suffrage, that had fueled both the off- and online activities of the April 6 Youth Movement (Haraket Shabab 6 April) in 2008, which many consider the historical precursor to the events of 2011.<sup>26</sup> The visualization of deep-rooted political corruption and social malaise, as opposed to, say, a factual and historical account of it, provides a means to more fully understand the historic anxieties impacting the psyche of the Egyptian people in the decade or so leading up to 2011. Surrounded by failure, personified in the constant reminder of the forsaken hope once (mistakenly) placed in these now derelict buildings, it seems that large parts of the population readily, if not understandably, had succumbed to despair. For Amin, writing in 2012, there was something shameful about the presence of these buildings and their continued blighting of the landscape, nowhere more so than when we consider, from the vantage point of the present, how they historically impacted upon the ecology of the social environment. “My fascination with these structures lies not necessarily in their particular history but in the reality they represent in the present time. The deterioration and, in some cases, the complete collapse of the urban environment attests to the failure of the political system.”<sup>27</sup> Reflecting upon the aggregate impact of corruption and authoritarianism, in combination with the undermining of the social, political, and civil institutions that eroded human rights, justice and claims to equality, the visual evidence of decay becomes, in short, emblematic of a failed state and the death of hope.

Recorded on January 31, 2011, in the aftermath of the “Day of Rage,” one of the recorded voices in *Project Speak2Tweet* laments how the Egyptian government has disconnected him from “all forms of communication,” including telephone, internet, and social media services. The voice summarily announces that he is going to Tahrir Square and “because I don’t know what could happen,” this is possibly his final farewell. We do not know what happened to this person: Did they go to Tahrir Square and, if so, were

<sup>26</sup> One of the founders of the April 6 Youth Movement, the activist Asmaa Mahfouz, has been regularly cited as being fundamental in provoking support, through a video blog posted one week before the start of the 2011 protests, for the Egyptian revolution. See Mona El-Neggar (2011): <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/02/world/middleeast/02iht-letter02.html> [Accessed December 2, 2021]

<sup>27</sup> Heba Y. Amin, “Voices from the Revolution,” *op cit.*, p.7. [Accessed May 22, 2020]

they arrested; were they injured, jailed, tortured, killed, or did they survive to recount the experience of revolution and its aftermath? Moreover, if they did endure, has their testimony been preserved? Although we know, through Amin's footage, what happened to the ruined buildings we see on the monitors, we are nevertheless left listening to voices with a suspended sense of unease as to what happened to these almost, but not entirely, forsaken articulations of hopefulness and despair. Given how many voices across Egypt have been occluded, silenced, and marginalized since 2011, to raise this concern here is to inquire into what happened to these people post-revolution. This is, of course, a conditional if not existential question: for the most part, we simply do not know.<sup>28</sup> However, this is also a question concerning technology inasmuch as it implicates the digitization and online archiving of memory as an evolving, if not oscillating, process of contiguous recuperation and loss. We return here to the mnemotechnical functioning of *Project Speak2Tweet* and how it highlights the erosion of digitized archives over time (through digital obsolescence, for example), while simultaneously reifying the reality of voices and experiences that would have been otherwise lost were it not for the technologies of recall repurposed here to conserve them. How, thereafter, do we engage with these voices through the technologies at our disposal today, and to what ends? To this, we must ask what forms of digital obsolescence threaten the very existence of these voices in the future. In their current incarnations as digital revenants subject to various terms and conditions – not least those of the Twitter platform upon which they still reside – and the material compression of data for the purpose of transmission, this raises concerns about methodology: What digital methods, in qualitative and quantitative terms, can cultural practices extend to the field of social media archives – containing as they do the latent potential of unheard voices – to not only make them more accessible to a broad audience but to also understand the coextensive mediation and annihilation of memory through such apparatuses?

Whereas the *Speak2Tweet* platform was facilitative, Amin's adoption of it produced a framing device – through archiving, preservation, and re-presentation – to interpret the historical, political, social, and cultural circumstances through the critical contexts and digital methodologies of creative practice. This involved thinking from *within* the apparatus of sense-making produced by online archives. To this end, *Project Speak2Tweet* proposes a creative methodology that explores the historical and digital substance of an online platform (*Speak2Tweet*), while also raising a further series of enquiries about how the digitization of historical data recalibrates our understanding of the past and, just as importantly, our ability to imagine the future. The act and event of archiving, I would argue, is never just an attempt to fasten the past to the political exigencies of the present (and thus render the past amenable, if not reducible, to the demands of the here and now); it is, more accurately, a chronic enterprise – located in the intersections between power and control – that remains focused on and preoccupied with the

<sup>28</sup> In 2019, Human Rights Watch estimated that at least 60,000 people were incarcerated on political grounds. This includes writers, journalists, artists, and political and human rights defenders jailed for their peaceful criticism of the government. See Human Rights Watch (2019): <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/07/egypt-little-truth-al-sisis-60-minutes-responses> [Accessed April, 12, 2021].



future.<sup>29</sup> Through Project Speak2Tweet, alongside other creative and critical interventions, we can analyze how digital methodologies and counter-practices propose interrogative methods to define the epistemological impact of digital technologies on the production of historical meaning under conditions of conflict. All of which leaves us with an admittedly broad question that has less to do with how online archiving – be it on social media or more generally – impacts on our present-day understanding of historical events and more to do with how we will, if at all, come to understand and access, through the digital apparatuses in use today, the realities of the present in the future.

Listening to these voices in 2021, as I and others did on the 10th anniversary of the Egyptian Revolution, was a very different experience than the reality of hearing them for the first time.<sup>30</sup> The passage of time, a decade or so in total, and the authoritarian realities of modern-day Egypt lend a poignancy to these voices as we consider the fate of what remains, in theory if not practice, an unfinished revolution that, despite its original propitiousness, has seen a form of repression emerge in Egypt that surpasses the totalitarianism associated with Mubarak's regime.<sup>31</sup> Through listening today, we experience an admonition from the past: made available and yet encased within an online apparatus, the otherworldliness of these voices augurs a reckoning of sorts with the legacy of Mubarak's ouster and the aftermath of the Egyptian Revolution. To the extent that our attention is focused on the original context within which these voices were recorded and archived – that is, the domestic, relatively private spaces from whence they originated – their replay in the present brings to the fore a series of comparisons. These reckonings, however, are not only concerned with comparing the circumstances of then and now, but the extent to which digital platforms – through their technologies of monitoring and surveillance – have provided the very tools needed for the retrenchment of authoritarian control and further intrusion into the personal lives of Egyptians.<sup>32</sup> The relative optimism of the one-time inmate of the Natrun prison complex, whose voice we encountered earlier, eventually gives way to a sense of cathartic “bloodletting” and the potential of retribution being visited upon “Mubarak and his dogs.” Such sentiments would have no doubt registered differently in 2011 than they do today, nowhere more so than when we consider the contemporary landscape of oppression, persecution, and attacks on

<sup>29</sup> For a fuller discussion of the future-oriented priorities of an archive, see Anthony Downey, “Contingency, Dissonance and Performativity: Critical Archives and Knowledge Production in Contemporary Art,” *op cit.*, pp.13–42.

<sup>30</sup> I am drawing here on the comments made by panelists and Amin herself as part of panel held in March 2020. See “Egypt’s 2011 Internet Shutdown,” *op cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>31</sup> See Human Rights Watch (2020): <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/egypt> [Accessed April, 12, 2021]. See also Madeline Roache (2021). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/16/abuse-and-torture-in-egyptian-prisons-fuels-isis-recruitment> [Accessed April, 12, 2021].

<sup>32</sup> Hossam el-Hamalawy (2019), “Egypt’s Dirty War (Part II): Surveillance for all”; <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/Comment/2019/2/1/Egypt-s-dirty-war-part-II-Surveillance-for-all> [Accessed April 21, 2020]

freedom of speech that mark sociopolitical discourse in Egypt, not to mention the use of torture and incarceration to quell dissent, be it on- or off-line, and protest in the country.<sup>33</sup>

## The Future of (Online) Memory

A decade or so after the uprising, and in light of escalating digital surveillance and censorship, *Project Speak2Tweet* underscores the extent to which the utopian promise of democratic expression often disguises totalitarian advances in communication technologies. As the artist notes in conversation, listening to voices recorded in 2011 continues to inform our sense of the historical events in question and draws attention to our present realities. “The [*Project Speak2Tweet*] installation takes us back to that moment in time – that snapshot of the emotional psyche represented within a city falling apart – as a spatial experience. Today, it raises important questions about accountability and democratic expression: Who has the power to eliminate voices of dissent, and what consequences ensue as a result?” Sadly, as Amin further observes, “we’ve discovered that under their current frameworks, digital tools of expression in a global context are neither democratic nor safe.”<sup>34</sup> The promise of online platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, to effect political change, evidenced throughout by a significant amount of commentary on revolutions in the Middle East, has long since dissipated and been replaced, in some circles, by a profound questioning of these apparatuses and their impact upon societal and political orders. Given how the Egyptian government attempted to quell dissent by shutting down the internet before relenting, we are left, for one, with an inquiry into the actual efficacy of an internet blackout (Mubarak was eventually ousted 10 days after online services were resumed).<sup>35</sup> From there, we can enquire into what function internet and digital communications ultimately, as opposed to theoretically, performed in 2011 and beyond.

For Alaa Abd el-Fattah, the Egyptian blogger, software developer, technologist, and political activist, whose writing provides the epigraph to this essay, these questions are far from abstract, encapsulating as they do the potential fate of those in Egypt who seek to form an oppositional political imaginary. Incarcerated since May 2006, el-Fattah has been subject to arbitrary and highly punitive parole periods, and, more recently, torture

<sup>33</sup> See Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) (2019). Available here: [https://cihrs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Final\\_UPR\\_On-torture.pdf](https://cihrs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Final_UPR_On-torture.pdf) [Accessed November 10, 2021]. See also Amnesty International (2021): <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/01/egypt-abused-and-denied-health-care-prisoners-lives-at-risk/> [Accessed November 10, 2021].

<sup>34</sup> Heba Y. Amin and Anthony Downey, “Contesting Post-Digital Futures: Drone Warfare and the Geo-Politics of Aerial Surveillance in the Middle East,” *Digital War*, 1, 65–73 (2020), p.71. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s42984-020-00021-y> [Accessed December 8, 2021]

<sup>35</sup> For some commentators, the use of Facebook and Twitter in these revolutionary events was negligible. See Chonghyun Christie Byun and Ethan J. Hollander, “Explaining the Intensity of the Arab Spring,” in *DOMES (Digest of Middle East Studies)* 24, 1, Spring 2015, pp. 26–46.

at the hands of the Egyptian state security services.<sup>36</sup> El-Fattah's experience is far from unique, insofar as countless others have suffered similar fates, including his one-time lawyer Mohamed el-Baqer and his sister Sanaa Seif. His fate, however, appears enduring under the current political climate in Egypt where the harassment, imprisonments, and maltreatment of prisoners, despite an international outcry, continues with impunity.<sup>37</sup>

In a prescient keynote speech, delivered in 2011 to the RightsCon conference in Silicon Valley, el-Fattah acknowledged that he did not expect Twitter or Facebook – or mobile technologies more broadly – to change their business models, based as they are on the monetization of our online transactions and the extraction of private data. As a result of this obduracy, el-Fattah proposed that a number of points need to be taken into consideration: “When you design products that help me to assert my agency, but then interfere in how I get to assert my identity, then you are denying me something very important. . . . This is about who I am. This is about how I express myself. This is about how I communicate with the world.”<sup>38</sup> Implicit within el-Fattah's plea we find a number of fundamental points relating to both 2011 and, just as crucially, our present day: drawing attention to the social,

<sup>36</sup> In December, 2021, Fattah was sentenced to five years in prison, according to his sister and a judicial source, after being tried on charges of purportedly spreading fake news. His codefendants, the blogger Mohamed “Oxygen” Ibrahim and Fattah's one-time lawyer Mohamed El-Baqer, who both faced the same charges, were sentenced to four years each. See *Al Jazeera* (2021): <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/20/egypt-jails-leading-activist-alaa-abdel-fattah-for-five-years> [Accessed December 21, 2021]. The historical details leading up to his most recent trial can be found here: “Alaa Abd El Fattah and his lawyer recount humiliation and beatings in maximum-security prison,” *Mada Masr* (2019) <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2019/10/10/news/u/ala-aabd-el-fattah-and-his-lawyer-recount-humiliation-and-beatings-in-maximum-security-prison/> [Accessed November 23, 2021]. According to a recent report, his original arrest on other charges in September 2019 was part of a wider campaign which “has seen over 4,400 people detained or disappeared since 20 September [2019] following demonstrations calling for President al-Sisi to step down.” See: <https://euromedrights.org/human-rights-behind-bars-in-egypt/> [Accessed November 23, 2021]. See also Office for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2019): <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25164&LangID=E> [Accessed November 23, 2021]. For a comprehensive list of recent activists currently imprisoned in Egypt, including details of Mohamed el-Baqer and Fattah's sister Sanaa Seif, see “The Situation of Human Rights Defenders And Activists In Egypt: 24 October – 29 November 2021,” *EuroMed Rights* (2021): <https://euromedrights.org/human-rights-behind-bars-in-egypt/> [Accessed December 9, 2021].

<sup>37</sup> On 19 November 2020, as reported by Amnesty, the Cairo Criminal Court added Fattah and others to a “terrorist list” for five years without any due process. This was a precursor to the 2021 court judgement which led to his current five-year sentence for spreading “fake news.” See Amnesty International (2021a). Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/10/egypt-stop-trials-by-emergency-courts/> [Accessed November 23, 2021]. On 2 April 2022, Fattah began a hunger strike—in protest at, amongst other things, his continued solitary confinement—and, at the time of writing (September 2022), it has been reported that the hunger strike is continuing and he is convinced that he will not leave his Egyptian jail alive. See Trew (2022). <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/celebrities-liz-truss-briton-egypt-jail-b2101579.html?amp> [Accessed September 6, 2022].

<sup>38</sup> El-Fattah, *ibid.*, p. 80.

political, and historical impact of the online communications technologies that were operating (and not operating) in 2011, he effectively highlights the degree to which these platforms were steadily, if not stealthily, eroding his political agency and ability to narrate the realities of his personal experience in both the present and, indeed, future.

While profoundly and solely his own, el-Fattah's experiences reflect the historical realities of countless Egyptians as they strove to overturn an authoritarian system of government and instigate political, social, and historical agency. That such agency was, in part, prefigured and declared through the affordances of social media lends further purchase, if not urgency, to el-Fattah's lament about the impact of social media networks on how his identity and ability to connect with the world were compromised, if not usurped, by the commercial exigencies driving privately owned social media companies. To this already substantial concern, we must further consider how models of digital authoritarianism were stimulated, if not sustained, through the initial and subsequent surveillance of online users' activity on various social media platforms. All of which raises further pressing questions about the efficacy and pitfalls inherent in such networks when it comes to future political and social assertions of individual and collective agency in countries such as Egypt.<sup>39</sup>

To the extent that social media undoubtedly played a part in the logistical support of protests, the anxieties raised in 2011 have become all the more urgent when we consider how the archiving of revolutionary protests and political opposition on online platforms went hand in hand with the harvesting of data for commercial gain, the insidious assimilation of online surveillance, the deployment of global forms of digital authoritarianism, and the spread of targeted disinformation.<sup>40</sup> In light of the uncertainties that followed the 2011 revolution, we need to repeatedly ask, as *Project Speak2Tweet* demonstrates, how we can develop methods and practices that operate beyond the prescriptiveness of online networks and, going forward, critically engage with the ascendancy of online censorship and digital authoritarianism in contemporary Egypt, if not globally.

## References

- Abd el-Fattah, Alaa. 2021. *You Have Not Yet Been Defeated*. London: Fitzcarraldo.
- Amin, Heba. 2011. Project Speak2Tweet. Retrieved from <https://www.hebaamin.com/works/project-speak2tweet/>
- Amin, Heba Y. 2012. "Voices From The Revolution: A Speak2tweet Project," Retrieved from here: [http://www.hebaamin.com/documents/Amin\\_VoicesfromtheRevolution.pdf](http://www.hebaamin.com/documents/Amin_VoicesfromtheRevolution.pdf)
- Amin, H. Y. and Downey, A. 2020. "Contesting Post-Digital Futures: Drone Warfare and the Geo-Politics of Aerial Surveillance in the Middle East." *Digital War*, 1: 65–73.
- Amin, H. Y., Downey, A., Mardini, A., and Iskandar A. 2020. "Egypt's 2011 Internet Shutdown: Digital Dissent and the Future of Public Memory." *Camera Austria*, 153: 43–54.

<sup>39</sup> Adrian Shahbaz and Allie Funk, "The Global Drive to Control Big Tech", *Freedom on the Net* 2021, Freedom House, September 22, 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2021/global-drive-control-big-tech> [Accessed September 25, 2022].

<sup>40</sup> See: Freedom House (2021). <https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-net/2021> [Accessed: 12 November 2021].

- Amnesty International. 2021a. "Egypt: Stop Trials by Emergency Courts." October 31. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/10/egypt-stop-trials-by-emergency-courts/>
- Amnesty International. 2021. "Egypt: Abused and Denied Health Care, Prisoners' Lives at Risk." January 25. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/01/egypt-abused-and-denied-health-care-prisoners-lives-at-risk/>
- Al Jazeera. 2021. "Egypt Jails Leading Activist Alaa Abdel Fattah for Five Years." December 20. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/20/egypt-jails-leading-activist-alaa-abdel-fattah-for-five-years>
- Asher-Schapiro, Avi. 2017. "YouTube and Facebook Are Removing Evidence of Atrocities, Jeopardizing Cases Against War Criminals." *The Intercept*. Retrieved from <https://theintercept.com/2017/11/02/war-crimes-youtube-facebook-syria-rohingya/>
- Ben-David, Anat. 2014. "Speak2Tweet." In Kerrie Harvey (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Social Media and Politics* (vol. 1) (pp. 1195–1196). London: SAGE.
- Burke, Jason. 2022. "Facebook 'Lacks Willpower' to Tackle Misinformation in Africa." *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/18/facebook-accused-of-lacking-willpower-to-tackle-misinformation-in-africa>
- Bushwick, Sophie. 2022. "Russia's Information War Is Being Waged on Social Media Platforms." *Scientific American*. Retrieved from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/russia-is-having-less-success-at-spreading-social-media-disinformation/>
- Byun, Chonghyun, Christie and Hollander, Ethan J. 2015. "Explaining the Intensity of the Arab Spring." *DOMES* 24, 1: 26–46.
- Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS). 2019. "The Universal Periodic Review of the Arab Republic of Egypt – 3rd Cycle: Joint-submission on the Right to Be Free from Torture and Ill-treatments." Retrieved from [https://cihrs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Final\\_UPR\\_On-torture.pdf](https://cihrs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Final_UPR_On-torture.pdf)
- Downey, Anthony. 2015. "Contingency, Dissonance and Performativity: Critical Archives and Knowledge Production in Contemporary Art." In Anthony Downey (ed.) *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Downey, Anthony (Ed.). 2020. *Heba Y. Amin: The General's Stork*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.
- Downey, Anthony. 2021. "The Future of Protest in a Post-Digital Age." In Betti-Sue Hertz and Sreshta Rit Premnath (Eds.), *The Protest and the Recuperation* (pp. 30–49). New York: Columbia University Press.
- El Deeb, Sarah. 2017. "History of Syria's War at Risk as YouTube Reins in Content." *AP News*. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/d9f1c4f1bf20445ab06cbdf566a2b70>
- El-Hamalawy, Hossam. 2019. "Egypt's Dirty War (Part II): Surveillance for All." *Al Araby*. Retrieved from <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/Comment/2019/2/1/Egypt-s-dirty-war-part-II-Surveillance-for-all>
- El-Neggar, Mona. 2011. "Equal Rights Takes to the Barricades." *New York Times*. February 1. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/02/world/middleeast/02iht-letter02.html>
- EuroMed Rights. 2021. "Human Rights Behind Bars in Egypt: Human Rights Defenders and Activists at Risk." November. Retrieved from <https://euromedrights.org/human-rights-behind-bars-in-egypt/>
- Freedom House. 2021. "Freedom on the Net: Egypt." Retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-net/2021>
- Gerbaudo, Paolo. 2012. *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Ghonim, Wael. 2012. *Revolution 2.0*. New York: Harper Collins.



- Hernández, M. D., Nunes, R., Anthonio, F., and Cheng, S. 2021. “#KeepItOn update: who is shutting down the internet in 2021?” *AccessNow*. June 7. Retrieved from <https://www.accessnow.org/who-is-shutting-down-the-internet-in-2021/>
- Herrera, Linda. 2014. *Revolution in the Age of Social Media: The Egyptian Popular Insurrection and the Internet*. London: Verso.
- Howard, Philip N. and Hussein, Muzammil M. 2013. *Democracy's Fourth Wave: Digital Media and the Arab Spring*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Human Rights Watch. 2019. “Egypt: Little Truth in Al-Sisi's ‘60 Minutes’ Responses.” January 7. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/07/egypt-little-truth-al-sisis-60-minutes-responses>
- Human Rights Watch. 2020. “Egypt: Events of 2020.” Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/egypt>
- Mada Masr. 2019. “Alaa Abd El Fattah and His Lawyer Recount Humiliation and Beatings in Maximum-security Prison.” October 10. Retrieved from <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2019/10/10/news/u/ala-a-bd-el-fattah-and-his-lawyer-recount-humiliation-and-beatings-in-maximum-security-prison/>
- Mosireen. “Revolution Triptych.” In Anthony Downey (Ed.), *Uncommon Grounds: New Media and Critical Practices in North Africa and the Middle East* (pp. 47–52). London: I.B. Tauris.
- Office for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2019. “Press Briefing Note on Egypt”. October 18. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2019/10/press-briefing-note-egypt?LangID=E&NewsID=25164>
- Raoff, Ramy. 2011. “Egypt Timeline of Communication Shutdown During jan25revolution.jpg” Uploaded to Wikipedia, June 9, 2011. Retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt\\_timeline\\_of\\_communication\\_shutdown\\_during\\_jan25revolution.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt_timeline_of_communication_shutdown_during_jan25revolution.jpg)
- Richtel, Matt. 2011. “Egypt Cuts Off Most Internet and Cell Service.” *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/29/technology/internet/29cutoff.html>
- Roache, Madeline. 2021. “Abuse and Torture in Egyptian Prisons Fuel ISIL Recruitment.” *Al Jazeera*. July 16. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/16/abuse-and-torture-in-egyptian-prisons-fuels-isis-recruitment>
- Robert Hamilton, Omar. 2017. “Six Moments from a Revolution: A Mosireen Video Timeline,” *Ibraaz*. Retrieved from <https://www.ibraaz.org/channel/169>
- Schneier, Bruce. 2015. *Data and Goliath: The Hidden Battles to Collect Your Data and Control Your World*. New York: Norton.
- Shahbaz, Adrian and Funk, Allie. 2021. “The Global Drive to Control Big Tech.” *Freedom on the Net 2021*, Freedom House. September 22. Retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2021/global-drive-control-big-tech>
- Trew, Bel. 2022. “The Hunger Strike May Be His Last Act: Celebrities Urge Liz Truss to Secure Release of Briton in Egypt Jail.” June 15. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/celebrities-liz-truss-briton-egypt-jail-b2101579.html?amp>
- Tufekci, Zeynep. 2017. *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. London: Yale University Press.
- “‘Video Unavailable’: Social Media Platforms Remove Evidence of War Crimes.” Human Rights Watch Report, September 2020. Available here: [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media\\_2020/09/crisis\\_conflict0920\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2020/09/crisis_conflict0920_web_0.pdf)
- York, Juillian C. 2014. “Arab Spring.” In Kerrie Harvey (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Social Media and Politics* (pp. 70–76). London: Sage.