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Egypt: Review of Key Revolts of the Egyptian People

Asmaa Shokr

Undoubtedly, revolt against dictatorial regimes and corruption is an inherent right of peoples, especially when violation of rights and dignity reaches a point that cannot be tolerated, where then, peoples have the right to revolt and rise up in the face of the oppression and enslavement of regimes. It has been known from eternity that wherever there is social or political injustice, uprisings against this injustice are almost inevitable.

Throughout Egypt's long history, the Egyptian people have not stopped revolting against injustice and protesting against it, to this day, contrary to what some claims that the Egyptian people do not revolt.

In fact, the Egyptian people suffered a lot both before and after the January 25 revolution, on which many Egyptians counted on for moving the country to the list of countries that enjoy freedom, democracy and justice. Therefore, the Egyptian people also has the right to revolt against the current regime that imposes its tight security grip on all institutions within the Egyptian state.

History of revolutions in Egypt

Since the Pharaonic era, the Egyptian history is replete with uprisings and revolutions against injustice and oppression of rulers; accordingly, it is natural for the Egyptians nowadays to revolt against those who seize their food and steal their dreams.

Egyptian revolutions in the pharaonic era

The 1st. social revolution

The [ancient Egyptian society](#) witnessed what could be called a violent social revolution or uprising, at the end of the old state and the beginning of the first era of decay in the twenty-second century BC (between the end of the Sixth Dynasty and the beginning of the Seventh Dynasty). This revolution was a direct result of the deteriorating conditions that prevailed during the reign of the Sixth Dynasty, whether at the political, economic, or even the religious level, specifically during the reign of Pepi II Neferkare, who ruled Egypt for more than ninety years.

The struggle against the Hyksos

Although the [Hyksos](#) were impressed by Egyptian civilization, used Egyptian titles, wore Egyptian clothes, and spoke the ancient Egyptian language, the Egyptians did not rest assured and were determined to expel them from the country, so the princes of Thebes (who founded the Seventeenth Dynasty) decided to lead the struggle against the Hyksos.

Religious revolutions during the reign of Akhenaten

The Egyptians experienced [polytheism](#) for a long time. However, the god 'Amun' was the most popular, and the wealth of the priests of Amun temple exceeded the wealth of the ruling dynasty. Therefore, kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty decided to reduce the popularity of Amun and limit the authority of the priests of Amun Temple by boosting the worship of the god Ra in the north. After the division of gods between the north and the south, the country was divided politically as well, and the only beneficiaries of these divisions were the temple priests, whose wealth greatly increased.

Akhenaten tried to unite the gods of ancient Egypt, including Amun and Ra in the form of the one god, Aten. However, these decisions did not please the clergy (priests), so they revolted against Akhenaten and his monotheistic ideas, and terminated the rule of Akhenaten after seventeen years in office, where the country returned to polytheism, worshipping various gods, including the popular god Amun.

Economic revolutions during the reign of Ramses III

In the twenty-ninth year of the reign of Pharaoh [Ramses III](#) (Twentieth Dynasty 1182-1152 BC), the Egyptians got mad at the high prices, the deteriorating economic situation in the country, and the delay in payment of wages of artisans of the Royal Necropolis at Deir el-Medina, Thebes. Accordingly, they organized an uprising and took to the street in large numbers.

The protesters complained to the vizier, who at the time lived in the Ramesseum Temple, but to no avail. Then the protesters attacked the major temples, such as the Ramesseum Temple, the Ramses II Temple and others. They also attacked the stores of grain, supplies and money, while shouting: 'We are hungry'.. 'We are hungry'. In the end, the Vizier was prompted to intervene and solve the problem.

Thebes' revolt against Takelot II

In the 11th. year of [Takelot II](#)'s reign, a rebellion erupted under Pedupast I, whose supporters challenged the king's authority at Thebes. In response, Takelot II commissioned his son, Osorkon B., to suppress the rebellion, which he did. However, four years later, a major rebellion broke out, but this time Osorkon B's forces were expelled from Thebes by Pedubast I.

Revolt against Waheibre 'Apries'

Although [King Apries](#) relied heavily in forming his army on foreigners, the head of the army, called Amasis, was one of the public and was able to end the rule of Apries and made himself king of the country, where he continued in office for 44 years.

Revolt against the Persians:

The great historian [Herodotus](#) states that during the fifth century BC, Egypt was experiencing faltering moments in its history, where the Persians easily entered it through the eastern desert on the advice of one of the mercenary officers who defected from the Egyptian army. Accordingly, the commander of the Persian armies Cambyses overcame the Egyptian army, where most of the personnel were Greek mercenaries. After the failure of many attempts to revolt against the Persians and try to expel them from the country, the Egyptians finally helped Alexander to enter Egypt, defeat the Persians, and expel them from the country.

Alexander was fascinated by the Egyptian civilization and was friendly with Egyptians in attempt to please them. He respected their gods and traveled to almost all parts of Egypt that he was given the title of 'Amun Son'. He ordered the construction of the city of Alexandria to be seat of his government. After organizing the affairs of the Egyptian state, he chased the fleeing Persians until he reached India.

Egyptian revolutions in the Greek era

The first revolution: It was during the reign Ptolemy IV Philopator, in 207-206 BC, in the sixteenth year of the reign of King Hazaia.

The second revolution: It was during the reign of Ptolemy V Epiphanes

The third revolution: It was during the reign of Ptolemy VI Philomater, in 195-194 BC.

The fourth Revolution: It was during the reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes in 131 BC.

The fifth Revolution: It was during the reign of Ptolemy IX Soter in 90 BC, which was the twenty-fourth year of the reign of King Hazaa.

Egyptian revolutions in modern history

Cairo Revolution in March 1800

In March 1800, the Egyptians took advantage of the French forces' preoccupation with the conflict with the Ottoman Empire and revolted against them, but the revolution was quickly put down.

The Urabi Revolt in 1881

During the period from 1879-1882, the army commander Ahmed Urabi led a rebellion against Khedive Tawfiq and the Europeans, that was called the "Urabi Revolt" at that time; Where the revolution, that also included civilians from all classes of people, erupted on September 9, 1881, as a result of bad economic conditions, foreign interference in Egypt's affairs, and Riyad Pasha's harsh treatment of Egyptians.

Urabi announced the people's demands to Khedive Tawfiq, such as: increasing the number of army soldiers to 18,000, forming the Shura Council of Representatives (parliament) according to the European model, and dismissing the government of Riyad Pasha. The Khedive responded to the demands of the nation, and dismissed the government of Riyad Pasha from the presidency of the ministry, and commissioned Sharif Pasha to form the new government, where he completed on September 14, 1881.

Saad Zaghloul revolt in 1919

Saad Zaghloul led the Egyptian national movement, and Saad Zaghloul's revolt came as a result of the harsh treatment of Egyptians by the leaders of the British occupation, the martial law, in addition to the Egyptians' desire for independence. The revolution broke out after Saad Zaghloul and others were exiled to Malta; where masses of the Egyptian people participated, including women for the first time, led by Safiya Zaghloul. The British authorities were prompted to submit to the popular demand and released Saad Zaghloul.

The July 23 Revolt in 1952

The 23 July revolution (1952) was primarily a military coup carried out by Egyptian army officers against the monarchy, where they succeeded in controlling the country's vital facilities, with the support of the Egyptian masses to get rid of the injustice, where the king was forced to abdicate and leave the country on July 26, 1952.

The 1977 uprising

This uprising broke out during the era of the late President Anwar Sadat on January 18-19, 1977, in protest against the increase in the prices of bread, sugar, tea, cigarettes and gasoline, where the government was forced to cancel its decision to increase prices.

The January 25 revolution in 2011

The January 25 Revolution included a host of social and political popular movements, which was launched on Tuesday, January 25, 2011.

January 25 was chosen by the Egyptian opposition and independents to coincide with the Police Day, in revolt against the Hosni Mubarak regime, and in protest against the poor political, economic, and living conditions, as well as corruption of the regime. The January revolution forced Mubarak to step down on February 11, 2011.

Years after the January revolution, most of the icons of the January 25 revolution are unfortunately either in graves, prisons, or exile, particularly in the aftermath of the military coup led by Abdel Fattah al-Sisi against the first democratically elected Egyptian president in Egypt's history.

Conclusion

A revolution means a radical change of all political, economic, social and cultural structures, that is dismantling the old formations altogether, then re-installing new structures that would guarantee the transfer of power and the redistribution of wealth.

A revolution does not mean merely the overthrow of a ruler or a regime, unless new forces emerge bearing revolutionary principles to replace the old ones, and to rebuild a structure that would achieve the goals of the revolution.

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Nevertheless, the Egyptian elites must stop lashing out at the Egyptian people, assuming that they have been content with the current regime for fear of its authoritarian oppression. Ancient and modern Egyptian history confirms that the Egyptian people do not succumb to an oppressor or accept tyranny, no matter what it costs. We cannot forget the role of the Egyptian people after the revolution in choosing an elected president, the upper and lower chambers of parliament, and the issuance of a new constitution for the country.

Since the outbreak of the January revolution until now, there has been an absence of a unified popular leadership, which would change the whole scene, if any. In the past, the Egyptians faced the French campaign with two major uprisings, due to the popular leadership led by Omar Makram, and the popular leadership also played a major role in consolidating the pillars of Muhammad Ali Pasha's rule in Egypt.

