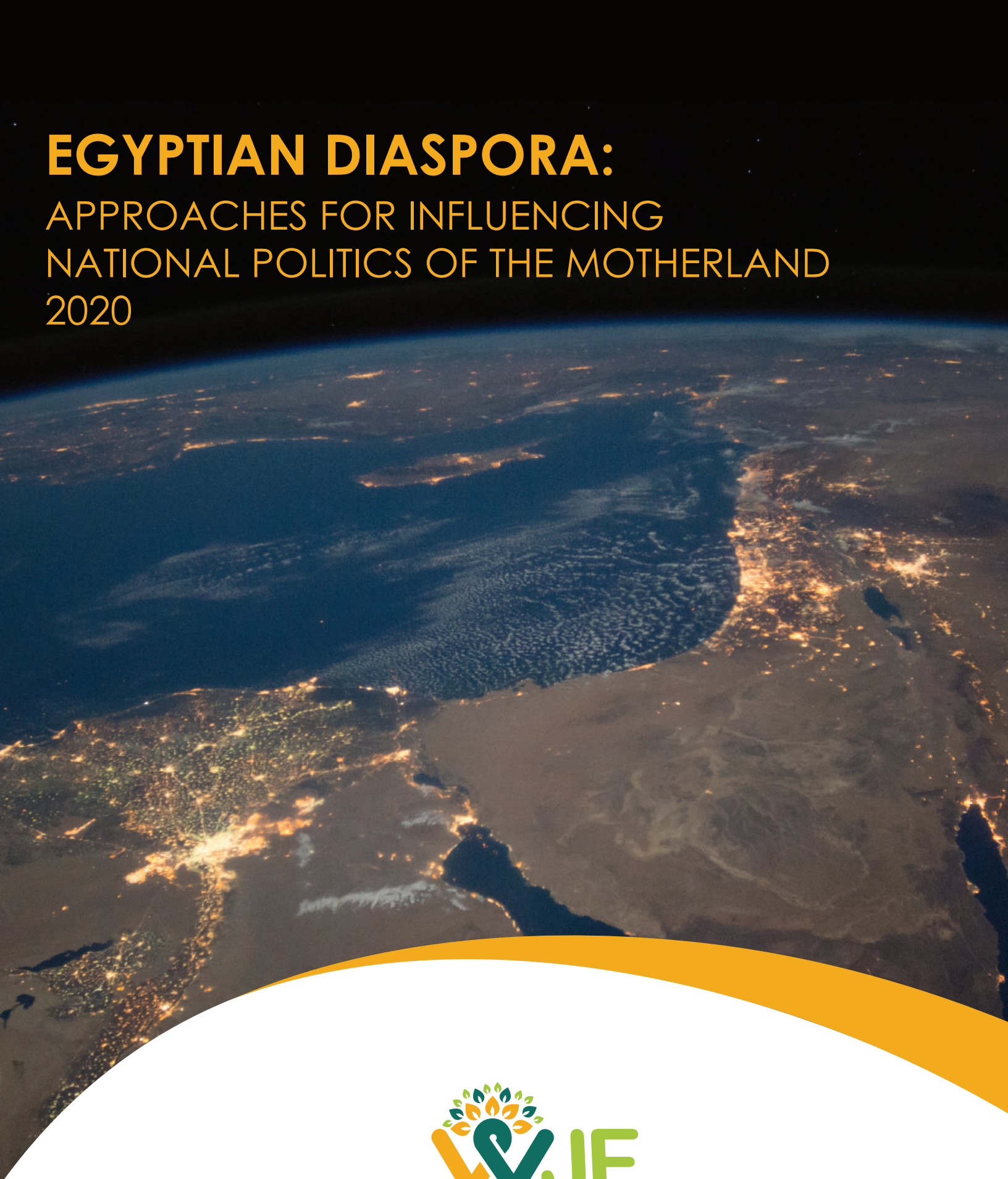
EGYPTIAN DIASPORA:

APPROACHES FOR INFLUENCING NATIONAL POLITICS OF THE MOTHERLAND 2020



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Cover Photo: Nighttime view of northern Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula
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Edited by
Kawther Alkholy

WOMEN FOR JUSTICE FOUNDATION
نساء من أجل العدالة

Egyptian Diaspora
Approaches for Influencing National Politics of the Motherland
2020

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1. Introduction and Methodology

On a gloomy London day in April 2019, members of the politically active Egyptian diaspora in the UK, after rounds of communication and coordination, failed to agree on a unified protest the constitutional amendments that were put to the ballot the same month (Nada, UK). The result was two parallel events in the same day protesting the amendments, one for the Muslim Brotherhood (Hereinafter: MB) and its Islamist allies and the other for secular activists or more generally non-Islamists. This was by no means an isolated incident, but an indicator of the divisiveness of the Egyptian diaspora in 2019 along the same political/ ideological lines that divided Egyptian political powers since 2011.

Against this background, Women for Justice Foundation conducted this assessment of the potential impact of Egyptian diaspora on homeland politics as part of a larger project that aims at enhancing diaspora's contribution towards opening-up the currently confiscated public sphere in Egypt. In light of the continued interest and engagement of post-2011 exiles with Egypt's political developments, this assessment tries to map various politically active circles of the Egyptian diaspora in order to identify entry points through which they can influence homeland politics towards enhancing democratization peace. With the normative aim of empowering Egyptian diaspora in enhancing Egypt's democratization and civil peace, the study investigates past diaspora's engagement with homeland developments since 2013, particularly those who qualify for being '*transnational entrepreneurs*', i.e., members of the diaspora community who mobilize for homeland issues or engage to homeland developments.

In fact, different diasporas over the years have proved pivotal in their countries' politics in various ways, ranging from economic engagement via remittances and direct investment, through mobilizing for voting and other non-electoral events, lobbying foreign policies of their host countries in support of their preferred political stances towards the homeland, whether that be support or opposition of the ruling regime, to publicly advocating for political change in international media and human rights organizations, promulgating a counter narrative to that of the homeland regime, and trying to sway international public opinion.

To reach its aim, the paper starts off by delving into the rich literature on diasporas and their interactions with and influence on homeland developments. Then the second section investigates the history and formation of Egyptian diaspora over the years, as well as the more recent emigration wave out of Egypt since 2011.

This section highlights the regional distinctions between 'emigrants' to the west on one hand, and 'exiles' in Qatar and Turkey on the other, with regards to their modes of engagement with the developments in Egypt.

The third section of the paper tries to develop a collaborative assessment of Egypt's situation through personal **interviews** with 15 members of the professional Egyptian Diaspora, taking into consideration fair representation of the considerable socio, economic, political, disparities among different groups of the Egyptian diaspora, as well as of the four key destinations of Egypt's post-2011 migration wave, that is Turkey, Qatar, Europe, and North America. In doing so, the paper aims to gain a hold of the diasporic perspective about Egypt's situation in terms of democracy and civil peace. The interviewees are chosen via **snowball sampling approach**, that launches through contacts within the activist and Egyptian networks, including people we already know through our previous work in Egypt on themes of conflict resolution democratization. The study also draws on **participant observation in online spaces** such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, where the interactions and conversations between activists can be observed.

The final part of the paper sums up the key recommendations of the interviewees about the appropriate modes of engagement for Egyptian diaspora that will help in enhancing Egypt's democracy and maintaining its civil peace.

Last but not least, referrals to the interviewees' responses throughout the paper use pseudonyms. Nonetheless, each respondent will be identified by country of residence, years abroad, and political affiliation, so that their responses are understood in their proper context and are used as rough indicators of the diaspora community in their host country.

2. Diaspora Studies: Literature Review

I. Origins and definition of Diaspora

With the immense increases in international migration and refugees' flows, especially after the Arab Spring in 2011, the idea of diaspora has gained much traction in many spheres of knowledge and social life. As the Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies (Cohen & Fischer, 2018) reveals, the word 'diaspora' is no longer confined to the dispersion of Jews, Greeks, Armenians and Africans away from their ancestral homelands; its span currently encompasses the cases of many other ethnic groups, nationalities and religions.

Early definitions of diaspora asserted separation from homeland, dispersion among other nations and preservation of the '*national culture*' as constitutive elements of any diaspora (Dubnow 1931). The word soon became the description of different groups living far from their home countries (Toynbee 1961), and with globalization and the corollary erosion of national boundaries by the end of the twentieth century, diasporas had become '*the exemplary communities of the transnational moment*'. Diaspora scholars underline '*orientation towards the homeland as an essential feature of diasporic identity*" (Tölölyan 2019).

In fact, definitions of diaspora vary extensively and historically. Currently, diaspora is an encompassing feature of transnational politics that goes to challenge traditional conceptions of national politics, democracy, nation-states, borders, and sovereignty. As we have seen, different definitions of diasporas stressed different aspects including, but not limited to, preserving national culture, association with homeland, engagement with homeland politics and developments (Dubnow 1931; Tölölyan 2019; Underhill 2016; Tölölyan 2019).

For the purpose of this assessment, our conception of diaspora stresses orientation towards and engagement with homeland politics (Lyons and Mandaville 2010). Therefore, Egyptian Diaspora, in this article, refers specifically to '*Egyptians living abroad, whether temporarily or permanently, who have been or continue to be mobilized and actively engaged in transnational politics related to social and political change in Egypt.*' This doesn't however deny the diasporic identity of other groups who are less

engaged with social and political change in Egypt.

Last but not least, while the word diaspora does invoke notions of home, physical migration from one place to another, national consciousness, collective identity, shared solidarity and orientation towards the homeland, (Kaldor-Robinson 2002; Sheffer 1986), people within diasporas take on many identities, that are usually affiliated with homeland identities and sometimes with new identities formed in diaspora (Hall 1990). Diasporas in the globalization era form and reform within the dynamic global context (Cohen 2009; underhill 2015); the play politics on transnational level and engage with key international actors.

II. Theories on Diaspora

Different theories on diaspora tried identifying the constitutive elements of a diaspora. In fact, forced or traumatic dispersion and orientation towards homeland have consistently been asserted as constitutive elements of diasporas, particularly the politically engaged ones (Brubaker 2005; Bruneau 2010; Cohen 1997; Safran 1991; Tölölyan 1996). As a corollary, the coercively displaced people are naturally inclined to involve in homeland politics since the majority of them still arguably considers their natal homeland as their true and ideal home. Recently, however, scholars of diaspora have underlined a new constitutive element for becoming a diaspora, that is, the strategic mobilization of constituencies around a homeland political issue on the basis of shared ideas and collective identities. In fact, discourses on shared identity are central to catalyzing or hindering mobilization and, at the same time, are also products of the mobilization process (Amarasingam 2015; Quinsaat, 2019).

One of the protestors waving the Egyptian Flag during the protests in Tahrir Square, Cairo - Photo by: Jonathan Rashad - 2011

In the vast literature on diasporas, one can spot two dominant approaches: the first looks at diasporas as actors of transnational processes, and the second treats diasporas more like social movements on a transnational level. The two approaches agree on the *political transnationalism* of diasporas and migrant communities. They differ, however, on the constitutive elements of becoming a diaspora. While the first underlines the forced and/or traumatic nature of leaving the homeland and orientation towards that home country, the latter highlights the importance of shared ideas and collective identities that catalyzes mobilization around a homeland political issue. This difference resonates across how the two approaches study diasporas, and what aspects each focuses on.

a. *Diasporas as actors of transnational processes*

Looking at diasporas as actors of transnational processes dominated Diaspora Studies for a long time. In this perspective, various roles of diasporas were investigated and assessed, whether as financial donors of armed groups; neutral third parties in the prevention and resolution of violent conflicts; or agents of democratization and development in their homeland (Baser 2016; Byman et al. 2001; DeWind and Segura 2014; Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008; Lyons and Mandaville 2012; Sheffer 2003; Smith and Stares).

This approach focuses almost solely on the roles played by diasporas in influencing politics of their homeland. It pays no attention, however, to the formation process and basis of mobilization upon which a diaspora rests. As a result of the dominance of that approach, a plethora of studies covered numerous roles that diasporas played in influencing politics of their home country.

Scholars distinguished between two key forms of transnational political engagement of diasporas: **(1) electoral participation**, which involves the common activities of representative democratic politics including membership in political parties, financial support to and participation in campaigns and rallies; and **(2) non-electoral political participation**, which involves membership in home-town associations, financing projects in the home country and membership in charity organizations active in the home country (Goldring 2002; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Østergaard- Nielsen 2003; Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008).

Comparative studies of transnational political participation by migrants, however, reveal that it is rather limited, whether in electoral or non-electoral forms; and that its sphere is dominated mainly by males with relatively high levels of education. Of course, variations exist among different diasporas. (Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008)

Critiques argue that this approach failed to account for the *human agency* in migrants' intentions and that any explanation for the formation of diasporas must include a subjective interpretation (Sökefeld 2006). Quinsaat (2019) asserts that although this approach has contributed to theory development on the roles of diasporas in international relations, they have largely understated the social construction of a transnational 'imagined community' that is central to the formation of diasporas.

b. Diasporas as Social Movements

Against the prevailing logic of looking at diasporas as actors of transnational processes, some scholars have used and advocated the use of *social movement theory* to explain the formation of diasporas through *political and social mobilization*. This necessitates examining the interaction and combined influence of the shifting political environment, networks of actors and organizations, and the construction of *a diasporic consciousness*. This way, this approach recasts the research question on *why and how discourses that become the foundation of a diasporic identity arise among a certain group of people across time and space* (Quinsaat, 2019).

In this view, the social construction of *a transnational 'imagined community'* (Anderson 1991), albeit understated in diaspora literature, is central to the formation of a diaspora. In fact, boundary crossing and dispersal of migrants, whether politically motivated or not, cannot fully account for the politicization of identity categories rooted in the homeland (Sökefeld 2006). Constructivists argue that exiles and migrants form diasporas primarily through the role of *political entrepreneurs* in instigating *discursive and framing processes*, (Adamson 2012; Faist 2010; Koinova 2013; Quinsaat 2019). In this context, the role of '*transnational entrepreneurs*' is of vital importance. They are the spearhead of diasporas' struggle for recognition and influence on politics of their home countries; and they form coalitions, mobilize for rallies, organize events, community and backroom meetings serving that end.

The analogy between the formation of diasporas and the emergence and development of social movements was stressed by a considerable, albeit not dominant, branch in diaspora literature. As with the development of social movements that, according to political process theory (Goodwin and Jasper 1999), depends on external as well as internal variables, the development of a diaspora is contingent on a key external variable, that is the **transnational opportunity structures**, and a key internal variable, that is **the formation of a collective identity** (Quinsaat 2019).

i. Transnational opportunity structures

In order for groups and individuals to advance particular claims, mobilize resources and shape outcomes, their endeavors are largely contingent on the political environment in which mobilization unfolds (Kriesi 2004; McAdam 1999; Meyer 2004). For diasporas involved in homeland politics, i.e. transnational activism, the analysis must consider both **political opportunity structures in the homeland and host country** and **how the two interact**. If we are going to assume any agency for diasporas, Bauböck (2010: 316) argues that the analysis requires *'examining not only the group's elites and their projects, but also their opportunity structures shaped by other agents, including governments in the country of settlement and the external homeland'*. The importance of considering the political environment in both homeland and destination country stems from their potential influence on the possibility, nature and trajectory of transnational activism (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004). For example, the nature of regimes is crucial in the analysis of diaspora mobilization, since, as Quinsaat (2019) asserts, *'incentives and constraints originate from the polity in their host country, often democratic, but the target of their actions is their homeland government, most likely authoritarian.'*

In the case of an authoritarian regime in the homeland, where the principles and institutions of democracy have been subverted by the government through corruption, fraudulent elections and violations of human rights, diaspora groups may resort to funding alternative political parties; supporting armed revolutionary groups, conspiring for coup d'état; or lobbying other states to withdraw support for the regime (Bolzman 2011; Byman et al. 2001; Fair 2005). In transition contexts or post-conflict situations, diasporas often mobilize to rebuild democratic institutions, strengthen civil society and

promote justice and reconciliation (Bercovitch 2007; Quinsaat 2019).

The nature of the relationships and linkages between the host country and homeland regime naturally affects the transnational opportunity structure for diasporas. Having an established link with the elite allies in the host country or an open access to the institutionalized political system definitely enhance the opportunities for diaspora mobilization (Quinsaat, 2019).

ii. The formation of a collective identity

For any social movement to develop, it needs to be built on linkages between groups and individuals, material resources and larger societal support (Gamson 1975; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Piven and Cloward 1979). Similarly, the making of a diaspora depends on the ability of **political entrepreneurs** to draw on resources and galvanize existing networks of migrants and refugees in response to opportunities and challenges. The social construction of a collective identity of a diaspora therefore demands a careful examination of **leadership and brokerage** (Adamson 2004; Quinsaat, 2019).

Leaders of diaspora groups, i.e. **political entrepreneurs**, work to construct or deploy ideologies and categories that can be used in their pursuit to create new political groups, oriented towards the homeland, out of the existing social networks among migrants and refugees. It is up to the political entrepreneurs to frame the experiences of those who have subjectively experienced dislocation and marginalization (Adamson 2004), so that their new identities that are recreated in the new context of the host country remains attached to the home country (Quinsaat, 2019).

Diaspora leaders have to deal with rivalry among different groups within the same diaspora. This stems from the resonation of the homeland political divisions and competition among migrants. The absence of a unified agenda for any diaspora, due in large part to alliances with different homeland political parties and ideologies, compels diaspora leaders to carefully select mobilizing issues and formulate them in a language that appeals to most migrants, regardless of their different ideological affiliations (Quinsaat, 2019).

For members of any group to engage in political contention, an oppositional consciousness must develop (Morris and Braine 2001). This is particularly relevant to social movement organizations among migrants, whose identities were

politicized through the experiences of relocation and settlement (Wald 2008; Quinsaat 2019).

To conclude, this theory considers diaspora mobilization a transnational political project that stems from the interplay of opportunities and threats, resources in the community, and strategic deployment of ideologies and identities. For a diaspora to mobilize, it entails traversing two distinct cultural, economic, political and social systems, with different constructions of State-society relationships. By using social movement theory, the analysis of diaspora mobilization has to explain the dynamic interaction of political opportunities and threats in both sending and receiving states; the relocation and reproduction of cultural, political and social resources from the homeland to the host society, as well as their maintenance, and the discursive construction of loyalty to the homeland as a foundation of collective identity.

III. Modes of Engagement

Diaspora literature explored various roles and modes of engagement with homeland politics that diasporas have adopted in different cases. Adamson (2012) asserts that diasporas participation in homeland politics manifests in many ways from many locations. For a long time, studies of diaspora and migration have been dominated by analyses of the economic relationship between migration and development rather than analyses of their important political and social contribution. Nonetheless, diasporas' contribution to their homeland development vastly surpasses just economic support. Diasporas have been important actors in contemporary wars (Kaldor-Robinson 2002) and engage in many ways with domestic and transnational struggles for social and political change (Lyons and Mandaville 2012; Holman 2016), thus influencing politics in both host- and home-lands (Sheffer 2003; Underhill 2015). Members of diasporas also offer *financial and political support* to fund struggles in the homeland (Adamson 2005). We can, therefore, consider diasporas a representation of a globalized context where actors with varying histories and identities participate in diverse processes of social change, locally and globally (Underhill, 2016).

a. Democratization Support

In the Dominican Republic and El Salvador for example, Itzigsohn and Villacrés (2008) asserts migrant political transnationalism, albeit its limitations, as a positive force for the strengthening of the formal

democratic rules of organizing political competition in their home countries. In fact, democratic openings in many Latin American countries reidentified the boundaries of political communities and enabled migrants to become new political actors. The question remains, however, on whether and how migrant political participation affects the way democratic practices are institutionalized; and whether migrant political transnationalism contributes to making the procedures of democracy more accountable, transparent and open to larger segments of the population.

In countries still in transition and those that are conflict-riven, politically-motivated diasporas engage in **an awareness-raising role** by foregrounding the complexities of the local economic, political, and social dynamics of the homeland. Diaspora members pursue a number of strategies that target host country policymakers and public opinion. For example, conflict-driven and politically motivated migrants residing in European and North American capitals usually testify before host country government agencies, as well as before United Nations bodies, such as the Human Rights Council. Civil society activists, scholars, and former politicians hold formal and informal meetings with diplomats and high-level international civil servants, such as the U.N. special rapporteurs. Diaspora members also produce research at national and international research institutions and think tanks. Development of an intellectual network among diaspora members makes them easily accessible to international policymakers. (Aboueldahab, 2019).

b. Influencing the foreign policies of host- and home-lands

Diasporas may influence the foreign policies of their host countries. This is especially true of diasporas integrated into democratic societies, where they often organize as interest groups that influence the foreign policy of their host government. In addition, diasporas may actively influence foreign policies of their homelands; when they achieve transnational economic or political clout (or both), diasporas can, and do, directly affect identities and homeland policies (Shain, 2002).

If the opportunity structures in the host country enable diasporas to lobby the host governments, become visible in the public sphere to make their voice heard or form interest groups; then diasporas are more likely to have a say in policies and politics that determine their agenda. If the host

countries are closed for diasporic influences, diaspora mobilization may still happen but it will not be as impactful as in other cases where diaspora voices are present in politics.

It is worth mentioning that members of diaspora communities sometimes mobilize behind issues of the host country and form alliances with activists of that country, i.e. diaspora activists joining the recent anti-racism demonstrations in Europe, United States and Canada. This participation in politics of the host country can engender new networks with the host country's activists and politicians, who can in turn join the transnational causes of diaspora activists in influencing their homeland.

c. *Diasporas and conflict*

For a long time, researchers approached diasporas as victims of conflicts and/or as passive recipients of the politics of both homeland and host country, however in contemporary literature they are considered as important non-state actors with impact and agency (Cohen, 1996).

This reality is being increasingly recognized by academics, as well as NGOs and key political actors in both the home and host countries. (Baser and Halperin, 2019)

In fact, a considerable part of Diaspora literature focuses on the roles played by diasporas in conflict resolution and development in their homelands (Geukjian, 2014).

Many authors focus on their roles as contributors to (and spoilers of) peace processes (Baser 2017), as agents of post-conflict development (Lonescu, 2016 & Pande, 2014), and as bridges between third parties and homeland political actors (Baser&Swain, 2008 & Moyo 2007)

In ongoing conflict contexts that result in massive influxes of refugees to neighboring countries and countries of the North, diaspora groups are naturally part of any conflict resolution attempts either directly or indirectly. The Yemeni professional diaspora, for example, plays an especially important role in informing western media and policy makers on the developments on the ground, especially in light of the inaccessibility of significant parts of Yemen to those media producers and policy makers. This way, the Yemeni professional diaspora is trying to influence, challenge, and shape policies addressing their country's political crises (Aboueldahab, 2019).

Civil conflicts, that reflect deep polarizations, resonate across different diaspora groups that fled the conflict-

riven country. Nonetheless, even in the most polarizing conflicts, scholars have spotted some level of agreement among diaspora community on policy approaches to alleviate, or even end, the conflict.

Normative positions of scholars' assessment of the potential role for a diaspora in conflict resolution ranges from the extreme case of considering policy recommendations of diaspora members, that is also informed by locally-based nationals, at the center of conflict resolution (Aboueldahab, 2019), through a moderate appreciation of their role in informing peace-talks and resolution efforts, and finally to a minimizing account of their mobilization to send humanitarian aid to their home country and the challenges it faces due to realities of poor mobilization and coordination (or even lack thereof) (Moss, 2017).

Some conflict-driven diasporas succeed in soliciting the host countries' support to either the opposition or the ruling regime. For example, pro-Assad Syrians in Argentina and Brazil have, to a certain extent, succeeded in soliciting support from Brazilian and Argentinian government officials for the Syrian regime (Baeza&Pinto 2016).

Professional diasporas from conflict-riven countries manage to take part in dialogues on the margins of high-level political negotiations.

d. Engaging the media in issue-framing and Agenda Setting

Diasporas that hail from countries with highly internationalized conflict or transition process can inform policymakers and public opinion in their host countries by providing firsthand knowledge and in-depth research on a broad spectrum of issues in their home country.

Through sharing information via social media and facilitating access to homeland for international journalists and scholars, the politically engaged 'professional' diaspora seeks to educate international actors about their homeland by providing policymakers and the media with insights "from the ground," thereby countering dire misinformation at the international level about homeland developments and local political dynamics (Aboueldahab, 2019).

This way media-engagement can play an important role in countering the mainstream media narrative that usually oversimplifies conflicts and developments back home through a binary lense: Houthis and Government in Yemen; Muslim Brotherhoods and Government in Egypt…etc.

e. *Assistance of Development efforts*

Financial remittances of migrants to the source country generally serves two purposes: (1) to cover the needs of the expatriate's family back home, or (2) to be invested in different saving schemes or assets in source country. Importance of these remittances extensively increases when they are employed in socio-economic projects that creates more jobs. For this result to take effect, it requires highly capable investment mechanisms that attract such remittances alongside the accompanying scientific and technical expertise to establish projects in the source country (Moursi).

Given that most long-time migrants and expatriates spend long time in destination countries where politics, science and technology are more advanced, they can contribute their expertise towards political and economic development efforts of the homeland. This role is, of course, reserved to migrants who left the country in pursuit of better economic opportunities and who established themselves in their host countries for long enough time to amass savings that could be invested back home. It goes without saying that politically motivated migrants and refugees are incapable of playing this role at least on the short- and medium-terms, since their relations with their home country are stranded and their journey back home is risky so long as the ruling regime that they oppose is in power.

f. *Challenges of political engagement with home countries*

1. *Homeland Repression*

"Homeland repression" often extends across borders in the form of global surveillance and threats, pushing diaspora members to refrain from engaging in any kind of mobilization or political activity, at least publicly (Jörum, 2015). Authoritarian states extend the reach of their repressive practices to their "subjects abroad" transnationally, as a way for governments to assert authority as if the subjects were still on their territory. (Glasius, 2018, 187).

As a consequence, diaspora members wishing to influence policies affecting their home countries must first weigh the consequences of doing so, particularly if the homeland regime engages in this sort of transnational repression. This increasing use of threats, global surveillance, and illicit intelligence gathering to monitor the activities of diaspora members restricts the ability of these individuals to fully engage in political mobilization, no matter how peaceful. Attempts to coordinate and influence policies that affect their home countries thus

become exceedingly difficult. In addition, Homeland regimes' repressive measures extend to threaten the lives and/or freedom of relatives of diaspora members in the home country (Jörum, 2015).

Such global surveillance creates a climate of fear, pushing some diaspora members to retreat from activism in order to avoid violent repercussions for themselves and/or their family members that still reside in the homeland. The result is self-censorship that restricts diaspora members' ability to practice the constitutional rights afforded to them by their host countries (Aboueldahab, 2019).

2. Intra-diaspora distrust and polarization

Distrust and polarization among members of the diaspora reflect the contentious politics back home. Syrian diasporas for example are largely categorized as either Pro-Assad Regime or Against Assad Regime. Both subgroups target different outcomes naturally.

Divisions within diasporas emerge on different social and political levels; they can shift depending on the length of time individuals within the diaspora have resided outside their home countries, as well as on the strength of their relationships with host country governments (Aboueldahab, 2019).

In severely polarized context, Personal accusations are often borne of political differences among diaspora members, that reflect different political positions back home. This polarization, that is reflected in personal accusations and mistrust, most likely impedes any kind of effective diaspora mobilization (Aboueldahab, 2019).


Egyptian Revolution - Photo by: Floris Van Cauwelaert - 2011

3. Egyptian Diaspora: History, Mapping, Formation, and potential influence

Standing atop all other Arab countries with a population of 100+ millions, Egypt is considered the largest source country for immigration in the MENA region. Some estimates put the number of Egyptian emigrants living in the MENA region as of 2016 at more than 6 million, residing primarily in *Saudi Arabia*, *Jordan* and the *United Arab Emirates*. Outside the MENA region, it is estimated that another 3 million Egyptian citizens and their descendants currently reside in *Europe*, *North America*, and *Australia*, where they have formed vibrant diaspora communities (Tsourapas, 2018).

1. Egypt's Emigration history and Developments

Since the 1960s, Egypt grew heavily reliant on *economically-driven regional labor migration*. Egypt has historically been a source of regional emigration within the broader Arab region. The regional emigration history of Egypt is generally divided into **two phases**:

(1) Emigration of high-skilled workers throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries,

(2) primarily low- and medium-skilled influxes into Libya, Iraq, and the oil-rich gulf countries starting in the early 1970s (Tsourapas, 2018).

Labor emigration to Arab countries is, however, different from its counterpart to the West, mainly Europe and North America. Whereas the first is usually temporary and for work purposes to save money to return home afterwards, the latter is most often permanent, and driven by a desire to seek a better quality of life for oneself and one's offspring. Gaining the destination country's nationality and passing it to one's descendants is also a distinctive feature of Egyptian expatriates in the west. This distinction stands out in any attempt to assess the potential political influence of different Egyptian diaspora communities on homeland politics. To put it differently, long-term emigrants to the west usually have enough time and capabilities to build some sort of political clout on their host governments, especially since they often acquire the host land's nationality and are there to stay. Short-term labor emigrants in the MENA region, however, usually tend to focus, first and foremost, on compiling as much savings as possible so that they can end their expatriation and finally go back home, and are also constrained in their political activities

by the restraining laws in their host country, especially the infamous sponsorship system in the oil-rich Arab countries in the Gulf area.

Although the early waves of Egyptian emigration started in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it only expanded with the easing and/or lifting of the Nasser-era obstacles to emigration. Emigration waves to the west, that started in the 1960s and 1970s, comprised of small groups of Egyptian students on state-sponsored scholarships, mid-career professionals with post-graduate degrees who sought better employment in the west, and/or political dissidents, mainly Islamists, seeking to escape persecution. When mobility restrictions were relaxed under Sadat rule, hundreds of thousands gradually relocated to the west. Another major component of the Egyptian migrants to the west was the Copts who feared the resurgence of political Islam in Egypt from the early 1970s onwards. Egyptian Copts over the years built vocal diaspora communities, especially in North America, where they raised the issues and interests of Christians in Egypt (Tsourapas, 2018).

It is worth mentioning that decision makers in Egypt have always seen and treated Egyptians residing in other Arab countries different from those residing in the west. Whereas the former is invariably considered "temporary workers," even when they have lived there for decades, the latter is viewed as "permanent migrants," regardless of time spent in their host countries. In the same vein, Egyptian authorities consider permanent migrants as well-off, educated, and successful, and have over the years developed policies to harness their potential, regardless of the success or failure of those policies.

Egyptian Revolution - Photo by: Essam Sharaf - 2011

An important development for Egyptian diaspora communities came in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution, when the new constitution of 2012 granted expatriates the right to vote from abroad in both parliamentary and presidential elections. The turnout of Egyptian diaspora communities, however, remains at its minimum compared to the numbers of Egyptians residing abroad. This is in part due to technical complications of prior registrations in order for the expatriate to be able to cast his/her vote in his/her country of residence.

Political engagement of some members of Egyptian diaspora communities, mainly in western countries, has led to a tense relationship with the Egyptian governments over the years. Egyptian communities abroad usually organize protests against government policies, a phenomenon that started during the Sadat years and continued during Mubarak era, but skyrocketed with the mass exodus of political dissidents after mid-2013. During Mubarak years, the Egyptian diaspora's divisions along many lines (social class, political, ideological, religious) and the willingness of migrants to be able to return to Egypt without fear of arrest or reprisal generally prevented mass mobilization attempts (Tsourapas, 2018). This impediment lingered and even intensified under El-Sissi rule, where political dissidents abroad are being followed, spied on, and harassed by government agents.

In fact, Egyptian diaspora groups played a very important role in the build-up towards the 2011 revolution, particularly with the decision of Nobel laureate and former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency Mohamed ElBaradei to enter Egyptian politics in the side of opposition to Mubarak regime in 2010. Diaspora groups rallied in support of ElBaradei and the long-standing issue of expatriates' voting. Shortly afterwards, with the disposal of Mubarak Regime in February 2011, diaspora organizations multiplied and held vocal protests across the west, in an attempt to have a voice in Egypt's short experiment with democratization between 2011 and Mid-2013 (Tsourapas, 2018).

2. the Current wave of Egyptian Migration in Context

Unlike previous waves of migration, where Egyptians have expatriated primarily to work abroad and enhance their living conditions, since 2011 thousands of Egyptians have fled the country mainly for political reasons. Leaving the country this time was triggered by multiple reasons ranging from a general sense of insecurity in

the new political climate; to fears of convictions, job losses, targeting by the media, security persecution, and/or direct physical threats (Dunne and Hamzawy, 2019).

Despite the lack of specific quantitative data about the current migration wave out of Egypt, anecdotal evidence reveals three overlapping waves of Egyptian exiles since 2011 (Dunne and Hamzawy, 2019):

- **Beginning in 2011:** Small numbers of pro-regime business people alongside some high-ranking officials, as well as larger numbers of Christians left the country;
- **Since mid-2013:** Large numbers of Muslim Brothers and other Islamists began leaving as the security crackdown on Islamists heightened;
- **From 2014 onward:** With the escalation of the crackdown against secular intellectuals and activists, some started leaving the country in fear of prosecution.

a. Who left, when and why?

In contrast to previous waves of politically-motivated emigration into exile in the 1950s-1970s, current Egyptian exiles have highly diverse identities, motives, destinations, and experiences in exile. This diversity is ascribed to the fact that far more groups in Egypt are currently at serious risk than in the past, when fewer groups faced political and social persecution at any given time. The persecuted groups now are so large and diverse that they encompass Christians as well as Islamists, liberals as well as leftists, business people as well as artists, prominent intellectuals as well as unorganized activists, and also ordinary non-politicized citizens. Additionally, post-2011 Egyptian exiles generally appear to be more numerous, younger, and better-educated than those of the past.

It should be noted however that any serious attempt to objectively map Egyptians currently in political exile faces many challenges: First, Exile's fear for their safety and that of their family members pushes them to lay low and do not stand up for counting; secondly, the Egyptian government is normally not enthusiastic about acknowledging the large numbers of Egyptians fleeing the country in fear of political persecution; and thirdly, the lack of quantitative data about the exiles phenomena in general. Nonetheless, and by general sense, one can say that currently thousands of Egyptians have fled the country and sought residence in various quarters of the world; some of their activities, particularly in mass media and human

rights advocacy, put them in confrontation with the Egyptian government due to their potential impact on domestic public opinion as well as international views.

The First Wave 2011- 2013: Copts and Mubarak entourage

After ousting former president Hosni Mubarak on Feb.11, 2011, Ministers and officials from his regime as well as some of his business people entourage fled the country either to the west or to Gulf countries that rejected Mubarak's fall. Their departure was motivated either by fear of restrictions on their freedom of movement or even fear of legal prosecution as well as political instability in general. (Dunne and Hamzawy, 2019)

In addition, with the apparent rise of political Islam in the aftermath of the revolution and the overwhelming electoral victories Islamists secured in the ensuing transitional period, increasing numbers of middle- and upper-class Egyptian Coptic Christians sought ways to emigrate to the west fearing the negative consequences from an Islamist political rule.

Migrants of this wave however remain highly apolitical, especially with the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood regime and the election of President ElSissi into office in mid-2014, and the ensuing severe crackdown on Islamists and the encompassing conciliation with Mubarak Regime entourage and their restoration to official political institutions, such as the parliament. They are not only apolitical but some of them are vocal supporters of the current regime, which they deem as anti-Islamist and anti-revolutionary. Their influence on national politics, however, remains at its minimum.

The Second Wave mid-2013-now: lower- and mid-ranking Islamists

The violent return of the military to politics with the ousting and imprisonment of President Morsi and Brotherhood members amid popular demonstrations against the MB regime in the summer of 2013 added new groups and new destinations to this politically-motivated migration wave. The military's take over was soon followed by a bloody dispersal of various Islamists' sit-ins protesting the military intervention and insisting on the restoration of the president to power, most notably in Rabaa square in Cairo.

The security crackdown that started with the dispersal of the sit-in and further developed into a witch hunt for Brotherhood leading figures and Islamist supporters of the MB left hundreds dead and thousands imprisoned (NCHR, 2014). Soon afterwards, specifically with the declaration of the Brotherhood a

terrorist organization in December 2013, the majority of Brotherhood members and supporters found themselves under constant threat of arrest, imprisonment, and assets confiscation.

This was accompanied by a large-scale media campaign demonizing the Brotherhood and their Islamist allies, portraying them as terrorists and dangerous citizens who should be reported to the authorities. This atmosphere of polarization, fear and hate resulted in shoals of lower-ranking Brotherhood members and supporters fleeing the country by all means possible. This group is by no means homogeneous, they hailed from various economic and social backgrounds as well as age groups, and they ended up in different destinations. Their Islamist ideological or political affiliation managed for some time to bypass their highly diverse socio-economic backgrounds, but soon divisions surfaced.

This Islamist migration wave included only a few prominent members of the Brotherhood, it's political arm the freedom and Justice Party, or the Morsi administration, while the majority of the group top echelon ended up in prison alongside larger numbers of middle- and lower-ranking members, supporters and even sympathizers (Dotmasr, 2017). Turkey and Qatar represented the two most destinations for the MB members and supporters due to their evident and harsh rejection and opposition of the ousting of MB regime in July 3rd as well as their prior embracement of the Political Islam project in the MENA region. The safe refuge the MB members found in both Turkey and Qatar enabled them to resume their opposition to El-Sissi regime from abroad using the political cover and the supporting funds that governments of both countries offered. This however didn't protect the Brotherhood from the severe divisions that would plague the group in exile.

The security crackdown that started with the MB members and other supporting Islamists from Mid-2013 onwards soon escalated and extended to other circles of Secular activists, both leftists and liberals, as well as Human rights defenders, intellectuals, artists and any kind of vocal opposition to El-Sissi regime. This soon led to the start of the third wave of politically-motivated migration post-2011.

The Third Wave 2014 onward: Secular activists and upper-class members

Harassment of young secular activists started as early as 2014. In its moment of triumph over the Brotherhood and its Islamist allies,

Egypt's new political regime, led by then-General Abdelfattah ElSissi, cracked down on democracy advocates, human rights defenders, journalists, and everyone who opposed the military intervention in 2013 and the ensuing violence against the Islamists. They were subjected to harsh new laws and faced fabricated lawsuits and/or other measures such as travel bans and property confiscation. With time, the regime turned on his secular allies who initially supported and even championed the military's takeover of power in 2013 but later became critical of the spreading repression (Dunne and Hamzawy, 2019).

With the shrinking public sphere and the confiscation of political life altogether, new groups joined the post-2013 wave of politically motivated emigration. This wave, composed mainly of young secular activists, writers, intellectuals, artists, and journalists, didn't head towards Turkey and Qatar, rather they sought exile mostly in European capitals, U.S. and Canada. The escalation of the government crackdown on civil society organizations, particularly human rights groups, led some of them to relocate their programs to other countries in the MENA region, examples include the *Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies* which relocated to Tunis in Dec. 2014 and the *Arab Forum for Alternative* which relocated to Beirut.[1]

Next to secular political activists who fled the country in fear for their lives and freedom, other members of the wealthy and educated classes, while not subject to direct repression, joined this wave of emigration due to the uncongenial nature of the post-2013 atmosphere and in pursuit of better opportunities to study and/or work in North America and/or Europe.

b. Characteristics of Post-2013 Egyptian Diaspora

Egyptian diaspora, both old and new, suffers from the polarization that is prevalent in national politics of Egypt. The politically-active amongst them continue to be harassed by government agents in various forms. They include both prominent figures as well as ordinary citizens who fled possible persecution.

(1) Severe Polarization among various sub-groups

During the tumult of Egypt's brief political opening from 2011 to 2013, those opposing the rising prominence of Islamists were told that if they did not

[1] https://cihrs.org/المركز-ينقل-برامجه-الإقليمية-والدولي/

like it, they should go to Canada or the United States; and then after the military coup in mid-2013, Islamists were told that if they did not like it, they should go to Qatar or Turkey (Dunne and Hamzawy, 2019). Few years afterwards, these calls were translated into actions, with Islamists fleeing predominantly to Qatar and Turkey, and their secular counterparts who opposed El-Sissi regime fleeing primarily to Europe and North America.

In fact, the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood from office intensified the already growing political polarization in the country, and it has been mirrored abroad, as Egyptian diaspora communities continue to be divided on the legitimacy of the military intervention (Tsourapas, 2018). Nonetheless, most interviewees of this study assert that it's a watered-down version of the extreme polarization that was persistent between 2011-2014.

Some scholars identify three dominant perspectives among Egyptian diaspora groups: the nationalist/security, Islamist and secular agendas (Dunne 2015, Grand 2014). These labels, however, are not so clear-cut, that is, under the defined groups there exist significant areas of tension that warn against homogenizing or simplifying accounts of a highly complex context. Though problematic, these labels at least afford some scope of delineation within a brief analysis. That's why when these labels are used, they reflect general leanings and shouldn't be regarded as definitive (underhill, 2015).

Some partly ascribe the polarization among diaspora sub-groups to the new conflicts that unfolded among competing powers abroad, conflicts that are related to stability, economic situation, and seeking a safe refuge (Nada, Independent, UK). The prevalence of certain currents in certain destinations also intensifies the polarization, i.e. Islamist, most particularly Muslim Brotherhood, have the upper hand in communicating with authorities in both Qatar and Turkey, and therefore other political currents don't have enough room for activism. The contrary applies to the west, where the civil/secular currents hold sway and organize more events, but don't allow Islamists to participate. As a result of the divisions that haunt diaspora communities, the collective identity, that is much needed for any mobilization effort, is very much divided or even absent.

Lastly, we can say that although all political entities and activists that operate in the diaspora agree on the authoritarian nature of the current regime, there remains a large gap in the structure of joint work and/or coordination among various powers,

though the room for consensus among them is considerably large (Mahmoud, MB, Qatar).

(2) Continued government harassment

Some Arab governments resort to outright violence and kidnappings against abroad opposition activists (*Ex. The Murder of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Arabian Consulate in Istanbul*). Others who cannot get away with these blunt forms of persecution, tend to a more lenient bureaucratic persecution with insatiable vindictiveness, like refusing to renew the passports of exiles, or confiscating their property and assets back home. Far worse, abusive governments now frequently target family members of political exiles in a form of state hostage-taking.

Therefore, Egypt is not an exception in its wider region. For example, Egypt detained the cousins and uncles of US citizen and former political prisoner in Egypt, *Mohammed Soltan*, after he brought a lawsuit in a federal district court against former Prime Minister Hazem Beblawy, who is accused of overseeing the massacre of protesters in Rabaa Square in August 2013. In the same vein, the Egyptian authorities file requests for apprehension of prominent vocal opposition figures abroad to the Interpol. Currently, this the Egyptian regime's strategy to deter diaspora activists from their activism by their family members being punished. (Tsourapas, 2018)

(3) Prominent figures as well as ordinary low-profile activists

The post-2013 exiles are not a homogeneous group as mentioned before. They include low-profile activists who prefer to work behind closed doors and away from media coverage, but there are also prominent figures who seek the spotlight of media coverage and prefer public initiatives and engagement.

Among the high-profile figures who continued their activism abroad are the prominent liberal politician *Ayman Nour*, former Brotherhood-era ministers *Amr Darrag* and *Yehia Hamed*, as well as former members of parliament such as *Gamal Heshmat*. There are also prominent intellectuals and well-known writers such as novelist Ezzedine Choukry Fishere, writer and novelist Alaa Al-Aswany, Screenwriter Belal Fadl, Political Science professors Heba Raouf Ezzat and Seif-Eldin Abdelfattah, and Historian Khaled Fahmy. This category also includes famous actors Khaled Abol Naga and Amr Waked; Broadcast Journalists such as Yosri Foda, Azza Al-Hennawy, and Wael Qandil; and of course human rights defenders such as Bahey Eddin Hassan

(Chairperson of *Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies*), Nancy Okail (Currently presiding over *Tahrir Institute for Middle East policy* in Washington D.C.), and Ahmed Samih, (founder and executive director of Andalus institute for tolerance and anti-violence studies as well as Online Radio Horytna).

It is worth mentioning that some of the interviewees blamed the prominent fame-seeking activists and politicians in diaspora for sabotaging their attempts at launching dialogues or initiatives that aim at influencing homeland politics or at the least building bridges of trust among conflicting political entities that are currently active in diaspora.

3. Regional distinctions: Migrants to the west vs. Exiles in Qatar and Turkey.

It goes without saying that Egyptians in Saudi Arabia are very different from Egyptians in the UK and France and those are also very different from Egyptians in the United States. Qatar, Turkey, Europe and North America represented the often-destinations of political exiles post-2013 for obvious reasons.

Qatar and turkey are the two most-headed destinations for Islamists because of their support and embracement of Egypt's persecuted Islamists, as well as their outright opposition to the July 3rd coup in Egypt. Europe and the North America are favored by liberals, leftists, or civil-state advocates, also referred to as seculars. This does not mean, however, that these destinations are mutually exclusive for the Egyptian exiles based on their ideological or political backgrounds, but these represent the most cases.

Key Destinations of the post-2013 Egyptian exiles differ also as to the modes of engagement for the diasporas living in each. Qatar and turkey Egyptian diasporas tend to engage in outside opposition media. On the other hand, most political migrants in western Europe and the north America are either people who feared soon incarceration with the rising security crackdown on all forms of opposition, or who are seeking better future and opportunities and who couldn't deal with the shrinking public sphere in Egypt. A lot of post-2013 emigrants in North-America and western Europe are scholars or academics who decided to enhance their capabilities by pursuing a post-graduate degree or holding a teaching or research position in a western higher education institute. Some of them has cut-off all ties with Egypt and settled in his/her new life while others still visit home yearly or

every two years. That's why the publicity of the diaspora activists in western countries is far lower than their counterparts in Qatar and Turkey.

A. Migrants to the West

As mentioned above, Egyptians' long-term emigration has usually been towards North America and to a lesser extent Europe. In these diaspora communities, generational distinctions exist between first- and second-generation emigrants, and between recent and old emigrants, where the more recent ones are still psychologically attached and oriented towards the homeland, especially if their exodus was politically motivated.

The first generation of Egyptian-Americans (those who emigrated in the 1960s and 1970s) for example is wealthier, economically stable, and highly educated because they actually had to come with their degrees. Yet, their attachment and orientation towards the homeland is nearly absent, and consequently the concept of political engagement with homeland politics in not present. Individually, however, Egyptian-Americans historically are very successful, they might even donate to campaigns, but as a collective they didn't develop themselves as a strong organizational force the same way for example Jewish-Americans or Porto Rican-Americans did (Dareen, American-Egyptian). Over the years, they might have become politically active in American Politics, but this activism never targeted Egypt. What applies to the U.S. applies to a similar degree to Canada and Europe as well.

Comparatively speaking, although the more recent emigrants to the west are not as successful and established as their older counterparts, they are be more active for diaspora issues because their immigration is much more recent, and their arrival in the U.S. might revive transnational activism in older migrants. The promise of the first-generation migrants is that they are now politically influential in their host countries Politics (they donate to campaigns, have established relations with their representatives in parliaments), but the question is how can they leverage that influence to affect homeland politics?

In Germany as well, some of the Egyptian migrants are characterized by a high level of academic achievement and occupational status, occupying positions in the middle or upper classes. They are awarded more status than other communities, characterized by a higher rate of integration and many of them marry Germans. The first generation of the Egyptian migrants in

Germany is an excellent model for Egyptian migration. Most of them have a high occupational status and are present in each big German city. Some of them run big companies and have established an association of businessmen in Germany which aims to strengthen commercial and economic relations between German businessmen and businessmen of Egyptian origin. (Moursi 2012).

- **Absence of connections and associations**

Organization, or lack thereof, of Egyptian Diaspora in the west represents the most difficult impediment against fulfilling their potential in influencing homeland developments. Members of the Egyptian diaspora in western countries are, to a large extent, scattered individuals who have no entity or organization of any sort to represent them whether in national politics of their host land or to mobilize them on national politics of the homeland. In Some countries there are some limited connections or associations between the Egyptian expatriates and their fellow Egyptians in their home country on the occupational/professional level. In other countries, however, there are no organizations or associations whatsoever. Most of the links and associations of Egyptian expatriates are characterized by weakness and inactivity. A general framework of norms and principals is needed to organize and encourage them (Moursi 2012).

- **Participation in Homeland development projects**

This mode of engagement is mostly reserved for long-term migrants who have integrated in their new societies, achieved success in their occupations, and amassed enough wealth to invest back in Egypt. It is however a forbidden field for the politically-active members of diaspora communities who always fear the confiscation of their assets and property in Egypt.

A good example for this form of engagement with homeland is the German-Egyptian engineer, *Ibrahim Samak* from Luxor, who lived in Germany for around 30 years. Mr. Samak preserves his ties to his homeland, and the fact that he has enormous projects in Germany didn't lead him to forget about Egypt altogether. For example, he established the first village in Egypt dependent on solar energy for its light, appliances, and irrigation systems, *Awlad Al-Sheikh* in *Wadi Natroun*. There are many other Germans of Egyptian origin like Ibrahim Samak who participate in Egpytian development efforts (Moursi 2012).

- **Lobbying for Change**

In the US, lobbying congress persons and senators was really high right after Raba'a sit-in dispersal in August 2013, when there were some Americans and some family members of Americans killed or arrested in the dispersal process. At that time, Egyptian-Americans who have relatives among the deceased or the arrested heavily addressed their congress persons and senators for intervention.

These lobbying efforts, with maybe one or two exceptions, remain highly unorganized, that is they are done on individual basis. In 2019, however, there was an organized lobbying endeavor, orchestrated by Egyptian Human rights activists and organizations in the U.S. It included an organized congressional hearing session where actors Khaled Aboulnaga and Amr Waked testified on the worsening human rights situation in Egypt. During that week there were constituents from all over the country going to their congress persons' office in an organized manner, highlighting these issues. One can say that Lobbying efforts by Egyptians in the U.S has become more organized in the past couple of years among.

The question however is why all these lobbying efforts yield not enough results, in terms of pressuring the Egyptian regime to improve the human rights situation in Egypt. The answer is that the nature of the administration matters in lobbying in the U.S, that is, Democrats and Republicans are very different on how they look at human rights violations. The Obama administration, for example, was very keen on always documenting and highlighting certain aspects of human rights violations. The Trump administration and President Trump himself embraces dictators all over the world, so Human rights is not high in his agenda. So, a change of the current administration would allow for more hope for the human rights activists in the U.S. to push for more American pressure on Egyptian policy makers to improve the human rights situation in the country.

In the absence of clear indicators or measures of success of various lobbying endeavors in the U.S. or elsewhere in the west, one cannot tell for sure how they affect homeland politics. This, however, does not mean that it shouldn't be done. Lobbying always yields some results, either in the form of a congressional question, report, enquiry, or at least a statement, and there is a value in that, even if it's not a direct impact.

- **Op-eds and Media Engagement**

Another venue that is open for Activists in the west, primarily in the U.S., is writing to international newspapers and appearing in English-broadcasting satellite channels and mass media that address international audiences. Few Egyptians in the U.S. played that role where they wrote op-eds for the Washington post, New York Times…etc; and appeared on English speaking Satellite channels in slots dedicated to coverage of Egypt and the MENA region.

Although there are no clear indicators or measures of the impact of this endeavor, but this doesn't also mean that it shouldn't be done. At least it informs the world and can change the international views on the situation in Egypt. It also provides a counter-narrative to the one promulgated by the regime, that is the war on terrorism.

B. Exiles in Qatar and Turkey

Egyptian diasporas in Qatar and turkey tend to engage in outside opposition media, either affiliated with the *Anti-Coup Alliance*, also known as '*Alliance supporting Legitimacy*', like El-Sharq, Watan and Mekamleen Satellite channels, or with the Qatari-owned Jazeera network. Since most of them don't have the option of going back, either due to fear for personal safety and freedom or because of certain imprisonment upon arrival due to harsh sentences in absentia, they are vocal on social media platforms and on ordinary media outlets. Although the viewership percentages of the abroad opposition satellite channels increased in the last years, according to Mahmoud (MB, Qatar):

> *"they still are considered 'polarizing media', such as their regime-affiliated counterparts inside Egypt. They don't work to address national issues, enlighten the people, or increase the national unity and diminish polarization and disagreements. Nonetheless, outside Egyptian opposition media outlets maintains a good level of coverage of the developments in Egypt, but they need more efforts to carry out their message."*

It is worth mentioning that all Egyptian Media professionals working in Channels or stations in turkey have some sort of communication via the "*Association of Egyptian Media professionals*". This association provides training and capacity building for Egyptian media professionals in the country.

Communication with and reaching out to host governments in both Qatar and Turkey is a common thing among Egyptian diaspora communities in both countries. This communication is mostly about the legal status of Egyptians in their new host country especially since a lot of Egyptians in both Qatar and Turkey are denied the renewal of their passports and legal documents by the respective Egyptian embassy.

4. Past Dialogue initiatives

Mahmoud (MB, Qatar) considers all dialogue initiatives that he has witnessed as one and the same. *"They all address the possibility of joint work and/or coordination…They all fail because they don't engage with the key dilemmas, that is, they all escape addressing the reasons for the division among political powers since 2011…No dialogue initiative dared to open past wounds; on the contrary they try to jump to future and that's where they hit the reality and go back to square zero"*

Dialogue has always been present among engaged Egyptians in diaspora, for example more than one interviewee refers to *Whatsapp groups* or *closed facebook groups* for Egyptian activists or journalists in Diaspora, where they share news updates, establish personal relations, and/or coordinate some campaigns …etc. Nada (Independent, UK) also asserts the spread of dialogue among all political powers and activists in diaspora since the coup in 2013; she speaks of multiple dialogues among all powers, Islamists, civil-state advocates, Human rights defenders, but also asserts that they all ended up with nothing.

With regards to the reasons that impede the success of any dialogue initiative, respondents offered numerous answers including:

(1) The high price that individuals incur from joining such dialogues, represented in arresting family members of the participants, or refusing to renew their passports and legal documents.
(2) The rashness of most dialogue initiatives to address the future before reaching a diagnosis of the present or an understanding of the past.
(3) The rashness of dialogue participants to publicize the dialogue initiative which seriously jeopardize the dialogue, as well as its participants.
(4) The lack of trust among most political currents impedes the success of most dialogue initiatives, and this lack of trust is intensified by the fact that each current works independently from others.

With regards to topics, themes, and formulas that are appropriate for a dialogue platform among diaspora activists, suggestions include:

(1) Professional dialogue among different occupations on what might be called '*international normative standards*' in that occupation or profession, and their implications and potential application on Egypt.

(2) Sectoral Dialogue among politically-active diaspora members to coordinate their activism and avoid duplication. An example of such coordination is what Egyptian human rights defenders and organizations abroad are doing to maximize their influence, and avoid accusations of treason by issuing joint statements and collaborating in advocacy efforts.

Itihadeya Protest - Photo by: Omar Kamel - 2012

4. Diasporic perspective on Egypt's Situation.

As clarified before, the Egyptian government's oppression after 2013 hounded thousands of politically active Egyptians out of their homeland, separated them from their families and communities, and left them with trauma and emotional pain too deep to endure. In this section, the views of a sample of the Egyptian diaspora will be reviewed to look for their assessment of the situation in Egypt and their recommendations for opening-up the public sphere in Egypt through diaspora activism.

To begin with, most of the interviewees of this study are convinced of the very unlikely possibility of any opening on the short-run with regards to the situation in Egypt; some have contemplated the possibility of an opening on the medium-run, or the possibility of a black swan on the short-run, while the majority thinks change is only possible on the long-run. This common understanding is particularly good for setting the expectations and agenda of any transnational activism in light of the uncongenial political opportunity structure.

The interviewees assessment of the situation in Egypt reflected a particularly good understanding of the high level of control at the hands of the Egyptian regime at the moment, and the very unlikely possibility of a soon breakthrough towards democracy. Some, however, have seen a positive correlation between the level of regime oppression and the possibility of soon change, that is the more oppressive measures the regime applies, the sooner it is end. (Mahmoud, Qatar, 6 years, MB).

Celebrations in Tahrir Square after Omar Soliman's statement that concerns Mubarak's resignation. - Photo by: Jonathan Rashad - 2011

The majority of the interviewees ascribed the setbacks in the democratization struggle in Egypt not only to the oppressive regime and the deep state but also to the incapable political currents that were not in a position to form true opposition to the regime and the deep state (Essam, UK, 1 year & Nada, UK, 1 year; Sara, American/Egyptian; Rania, Canada, 4 years).

In fact, there was a general consensus about the part played by the political elites in the deterioration of the democratization process post-2011. Although everyone acknowledges the role of the army leadership in instigating the coup, but they also refer to the supporting role of the political elites, whose intense polarization led to the moment of July 3, 2013. There was also an agreement on the lack of experience that characterizes all political parties and groups in the post-2011 period, and their naivety that eased the road for the restoration of the military to power only one year after the election of the first civilian president in Egypt's modern history. Mahmoud (MB, Qatar, 7 years) asserts that the Islamists' attempts at domination and control alongside the alliance of other political powers with the military were the key factors that facilitated the task of the military in ousting former president Morsi.

Dareen (American/ Egyptian) characterized the status quo in Egypt as *institutional de-democratization*, where all the short-lived achievements of the revolution, whether in social justice, political pluralism, or freedom of expression are being consistently rolled back. She asserts that "*What was very quickly moving in the road to transition to democracy with all of its challenges and instability is now de-democratization.*"

She goes on pointing out that "*a large segment of the parliament today has to be unaffiliated or appointed…. The judiciary is not independent…. The executive is emerging as a supreme executive… The system of check and balances in Egypt is skewing towards authoritarianism and not so much towards democratization.*" Currently, independent media is almost absent; freedom of expression is consistently curtailed; suppression of voice is unprecedented; any expression of opposition is deemed terrorism or speaking against the state; and civil society is severely besieged by assets confiscation, travel bans, and prosecution.

In the same vein, the absence of a truly capable '*intellectual class*' makes any democratization struggle even more difficult. This is in large part ascribed to the huge '*brain drain*' that deprived Egypt of its most promising

minds since 1950s and 60s. The absence of such an intellectual class led in turn to the inability to develop the necessary level of '*political sophistication*' that is required for any kind of partisan politics (Sara, American/Egyptian). Therefore, the Egyptian experiment with democracy was doomed to fail from the very beginning.

On the economic level, "*between the floating of the currency, the increasing IMF loans, we have seen Egypt's external and internal debts tribble in the past three years…. development enterprises do not actually trickle down to the average citizen*". Statistically, about 60% of Egyptians today live on less than 2$ and this is worse than pre-revolution; two-thirds of the population is under the age of 29; unemployment is officially at 33% but other estimates put the number much higher (Dareen, American/Egyptian).

Currently, the government is no longer able to provide enough jobs to match population growth. Egypt is currently witnessing not the shrinking of middleclass but the erosion thereof. "*Now you have the poor, the poorer and the extreme wealth. You no longer have the middle class that is actually necessary for democracy.*".

"*In terms of education, the country that really was the place where everyone in the Middle East was going to be educated, today is not able to give its own population quality education that will lift society into that level where we talk about democracy, democratic transition, and the indicators necessary to move forward into that situation.*"(Dareen, American/Egyptian). So politically, socially, economically Egypt fares worse on all indexes than it did a couple of decades ago.

Acknowledging the non-generalizable nature of the above assessment, retrieved from the interviews of the study, it is still indicative of what can be called a diasporic perspective of the situation in Egypt.

5. Recommendations for diasporic engagement with Egypt's transition and development

Considering the diminishing public sphere and the rising security state in Egypt, many interviewees suggested fields of engagement with homeland developments that can be safe and where things can actually happen. Engagement doesn't necessarily have to be political or with democratization or human rights, because that's where the gates are closed. Apolitical engagement with homeland developments serves as a gateway for enhancing the lived experiences of Egyptians today in various fields. Among the recommendations received:

First: Political Recommendations

a. The persistent need to form a new coalition or a front that gathers new faces of Egyptian opposition abroad and inside Egypt, or developing new political elites/groups altogether to replace the old ones.
b. The persistent need to deal with the extreme polarization among pro-democracy political groups, which is intensified by the regime policies, practices, and discourses, where societal division is currently being portrayed not as between Islamists and Non-Islamists, but between patriots and traitors.
c. The need to change the basis of this polarization from categories of 'patriot' vs.. 'traitor'; 'supporting the army' vs. 'against the army' to more accommodating categories that don't include dehumanizing the other.
d. The necessity of developing clear criteria for peaceful coexistence and healthy political competition that will help political entities steer clear of the polarization that haunted the first transitional period after 2011 and ultimately led to the Coup in July 2013.
e. Some called for The Muslim Brotherhood to abandon politics altogether for the greater public good, not only because they bear a big part of the blame for what has occurred so far, but because their continued existence will perpetuate the zero-sum game between the Islamists and the Military, and it's a game no one is benefitting from.
f. The need to build networks among Egyptian activists both in diaspora and back home so as to build on the possibilities both can offer,

where activists abroad have more room for movement and activism, while activist in Egypt have direct contact with the situation on the ground.

g. Democratization is not possible without a scheme of transitional justice, and some level of political pluralism. Therefore, these are the elements that political powers, both in home and abroad, need to think about.
h. Organizing protests and sit-ins in front of Egyptian embassies abroad, especially during official visits to the host countries, in order to embarrass the regime and its allies and uncover the violations that it commits.
i. Reaching out to foreign officials in order to spread the counter-narrative to *'the war on terror'* narrative that is promulgated by the regime.
j. Trying to open bridges of communication and coordination among diaspora activists from different backgrounds and affiliation to coordinate about the future.

Second: General/Non-political recommendations

a. A considerable majority of the interviewees agreed that the fight ahead is a fight for **raising awareness of the Egyptian people**, since the lack thereof was the reason for the people to call for the return of the military to power in mid-2013, and diaspora could help in that regard.
b. The need to address the skyrocketing level of ***verbal violence*** that is currently prevailing in Egyptian daily life and all kinds of political discourse, and here diaspora can also help.
c. The importance of preparing for the future on the individual level for diaspora activists and political exiles in general. That is, they need to work on developing themselves by obtaining proper education and training in politics, law, media…etc, so that when an opening happens, they are ready for it.
d. Providing expertise and knowledge and may be joint projects about education sector reform; health care reform
e. pushing for Institutional reform
f. Passing experience and training in different fields to their counterparts in Egypt: Ex. *Egyptian American Rule of Law Association,* that aimed at training Egyptian lawyers and judges in 2011-2012.
g. Fostering deeper relationships institutionally between different professions in the west and their counterparts in Egypt.

These suggestions come as a way with which diaspora Egyptians can call for the betterment of various sectors, as a gateway towards changing everyday lived experience of Egyptians. Engaging with and investing in these fields can be a tie with which those that benefited the most from Egypt's golden age (first generation migrants) return to influence and help those sectors. As Dareen (Egyptian American) asserts: "*there have to be avenues where the great brains that are in the west, that were trained by Egyptian educational institutions, especially in the health sciences, can make partnership to bring home all of the benefits that they have been able to reap. This shouldn't be seen as at the expense of Egypt, but rather for the betterment of Egypt.*"

Police in riot gear on 28th of January - Photo By: Mariam Soliman - 2011

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مراجع عربية

ملف تفاعلي| ملاجئ الإخوان حول العالم.. خريطة هروب قيادات الجماعة والدول الحاضنة لهم، دوت مصر، 13 أغسطس 2017، متاح على: https://bit.ly/2UGPYGC

i. Annex 1: Interviews Structure

"Semi-Structured Interviews"

All interviews targeted assessing the situation of Egyptian diaspora and their ability to have an impact on homeland developments. That's why interviews were all semi-structured, that is they didn't strictly follow a formalized list of questions. Instead, they all depended on more open-ended questions, allowing for a discussion with the interviewee rather than a straightforward question and answer format. Nonetheless, based on the profile of the interviewee and his/her profession, a preliminary list of question is adjusted for each interview. The key questions that were part of all interviews included:

1. Interviewee's assessment of the Situation in Egypt and possibility of change.
2. Ideological mapping of Egyptian Diaspora in Interviewee's host country, and the nature of Polarization amongst them.
3. Available fields of engagement with the situation in Egypt.
4. Possible initiatives and recommendations for impacting homeland developments.
5. Relationship between diaspora community and host country government.
6. Assessment of past dialogues among Egyptian diaspora subgroups?

Based on the profile, profession, political affiliation and destination of the interviewee, other questions were added to the interview.

- Average Interview Time: 1 Hour

ii. Annex 2: Characteristics of the Interviewees Sample

Interviewees are chosen via **snowball sampling approach,** that launches through contacts within the activist and Egyptian networks, including people we already know through our previous work in Egypt on themes of conflict resolution and democratization.

Reaching out to potential interviewees occurred over a process:

1. Mapping potential interviewees by consulting network of the Center in Diaspora.
2. Setting a preliminary list of 25 potential interviewee, taking into consideration the following criteria:
    a. Four Key regions: North America, Europe, Turkey, and Qatar.
    b. At least 75 % of interviewees are less than 40 Years old.
    c. Fair representation of males and females.
    d. Key Four Professions: (1) Academics and Researchers; (2) Civil society and human rights; (3) Media and Journalism; (4) Business people.
    e. Impact: Interviewees should have a reasonable level of impact on or engagement with Homeland developments. Impact is to be determined by the following indicators:
        f. Working through an institution not independently;
        g. Taking part in initiative or networks in the diaspora that addresses homeland's issues.
    h. Economic Stability: interviewees are supposed to have settled in their destination countries with jobs to sustain themselves.
3. Introductory Emails to potential interviewees about the Study and Its Purpose and a request for Interview.
4. Follow-up email with preliminary questions of the Interview for those who agree.
5. Bluejeans, Zoom, or Live Interviews based on the Interviewee destination.

iii. Annex 3: Initiatives and Entities Mapping

Mapping **different diaspora organizations, initiatives, and networks** that engages with homeland developments was an integral part of the study to explore different modes of engagement and their material manifestations. The mapping depended on (1) online observation of new diasporic organizations and their activism, as well as (2) the responses of the interviewees about networks, or initiatives they participated in or heard of. Therefore, this is by no means an exhaustive list of all diasporic initiatives and organizations.

With regards to Islamists, that is MB and their allies, they have entirely moved their activism abroad, most notably in *Turkey*. That activism unfolds in several formats including the '*National Alliance Supporting Legitimacy*', a coalition made up of approximately 40 Islamist parties and groups, as well as the "*Egyptian Revolutionary Council*", an umbrella organization of opposition figures and entities abroad, that includes other political affiliations next to the Muslim Brotherhood and its Islamist allies. There is also the "Egyptian Parliament abroad", which includes MB members of the 2012 parliament who managed to escape the country after 2013, and several other political formulas to express and try to lead diaspora opposition activism.

Aside from outright diaspora political opposition entities and coalitions, another field in diaspora activism has been increasingly building momentum and developing structures, that is human rights activism. In fact, any attempt at exploring the scene of Egyptian HR activism abroad can spot the numerous new organizations that currently operate from abroad, for obvious reasons, and also cooperate amongst themselves and with International human rights organizations like Freedom House and Human Rights watch, and others. The list lincludes:

1. Andalus Institute for Tolerance & Anti-violence Studies "AITAS", that relocated to Estonia with the emigration of its chairperson, Ahmed Samih, after a security raid on the center in April 2015;
2. Elshehab Center for Human Rights, that also relocated to London with the security crackdown on HR organizations;
3. The Egyptian coordination for Rights and Freedoms, that operated in Egypt till the arrest of its chairperson, Ezzat Ghoniem, and then relocated to Turkey;
4. Beladi Center for Rights and Freedoms, operating from Washignton D.C;
5. Committee for Justice, operating from Switzerland and heavily engaging UN Human rights bodies;
6. The Egyptian Front for Human Rights, operating from the Czech Republic;
7. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, that relocated to Tunisia in 2014;
8. And lastly The Egyptian Human Rights Forum, that represents a forum for coordination among Egyptian Human Rights defenders currently residing in Europe and the United States.
9. We Record
10. Humena for Human Rights and Civic Engagement

This plethora of organizations specialize in different fields of advocacy, documenting, reporting, lobbying governments and the UN Human Rights Bodies. They produce joint and separate statements in multiple languages about the HR situation in Egypt and coordinate with their regional and international counterparts in the field of Human Rights. They also coordinate with their counterparts inside Egypt for information gathering and joint statements. Although it is difficult to assess the direct impact of this concerted effort on the HR situation in Egypt, but this doesn't mean that it has no influence, or that it shouldn't be done.

Outside human rights field, there exist other think-tanks, civil society organizations including:

- Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy: Washigton DC, US.
- Egyptian Institute for Studies: Turkey.

There are also News websites operating from Diaspora:

- Noon Post
- Arabi 21
- Radio Horytna
- Fekr Online

There are also some examples of voluntary associations, including:

- Association for Egyptian Media professionals in Turkey;
- The Egyptian Community in Turkey;
- The Association of Egyptian Scientists Abroad: in US;
- The Association of the Egyptian Community in the United Kingdom;
- The Association of Egyptian Scientists in Switzerland;
- The Egyptian Science Association: Germany;
- The Egyptian Club in Glasgow;
- The Canadian-Egyptian Association for Scientific Progress;
- Federation of Egyptian Clubs: Germany- Dusseldorf.

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