

EGYPT'S MEDIA IN THE MIDST OF REVOLUTION

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More than three years after the January 25 revolution toppled then Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, Egypt continues to struggle with an authoritarian media sector and constraints on freedom of expression. Postrevolution regimes have not capitalized on opportunities to reform state and private media, and critical voices have been harassed and marginalized by state and nonstate actors. As long as Egypt continues to be governed by rulers who believe controlling the media is in their best interest, reform will only come about through the few dissident voices in the media backed up by support from civil society and the masses.

Egyptian Media Since the January 25 Revolution

- Successive Egyptian regimes following the revolution have taken steps to limit freedom of expression and control the narrative in Egyptian media coverage.
- Hopes for a more professional media sector have been dashed by a state media apparatus that has for all intents and purposes supported whatever regime is in power, private media outlets influenced by wealthy owners with ties to the Mubarak regime, and severe polarization between Islamist and non-Islamist media outlets.
- Social media played a key role in the January 25 revolution, and this platform has provided new avenues for expressing critical views, challenging established media entities, and organizing against the government.

The Future of Egyptian Media

Finding a place for critical voices in established media outlets has become increasingly difficult. Much of Egypt's media has strongly supported the regime's narrative since the Muslim Brotherhood-backed president, Mohamed Morsi, was ousted from power in July 2013. Dissenting voices are almost absent from newspapers and television shows, and Islamist-affiliated outlets have been shut down by the government.

Social media outlets continue to offer a platform for otherwise marginalized views. Though also polarized, social media platforms provide one of the few forums in which activists pursuing the middle ground can voice their opinions and document human rights violations.

Reform of state media is needed more than ever before, but political will is lacking. The current regime, led by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, has so far shown little interest in making state media more open and democratic. For now, these outlets remain in the service of the regime, not the people.

Many hope that the current regime will reduce repression of the media, but early signs have not been encouraging. These include the termination of popular political satire show *Al Bernameg* and a request for proposals from the Ministry of Interior for software to monitor online social networks.

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