



REFLECTIONS ON CITIZEN REVOLT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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WELCOME/MODERATOR:

Marwan Muasher
Vice President for Studies
Carnegie Endowment

SPEAKERS:

Rami Khouri
Director,
Issam Fares Institute of Public Policy and International Affairs

Karim Makdisi
Assistant Professor of Political Studies,
American University of Beirut

Rami Zurayk
Professor of Land and Water Resources,
American University of Beirut

Rima Afifi
Professor and Associate Dean, Department of Health Promotion and Community Health,
American University of Beirut

Peter Dorman
President,
American University of Beirut

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MARWAN MUASHER: We thank you for coming, especially on a rainy day like today. I'm Marwan Muasher. I'm the vice-president of studies at Carnegie in charge of the Middle East Program.

This is another one in a series of events that we have been conducting on the Arab uprisings. And what we have tried to do often is bring people from the region to talk to us about what is happening from a bird's eye point of view. And today we're doing just that. We have with us a distinguished panel of scholars from American University of Beirut in Lebanon.

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And what we will do today, actually, is a bit different from what we've done in the past in that we will hear not just a political or economic perspective, but a perspective that also spans other areas of interest relating to water, health issues, youth issues from scholars who have been researching and working on these issues for a very long time.

We have five speakers today, more than our usual number of speakers, but this is so that we do get a full picture of what is going on. What I would ask each speaker to do is to open up with a short presentation, just to whet our appetite and get us going, and then hopefully leave the bulk of the time to discussions.

I think you all have the papers, but let me briefly introduce each of the speakers. To my immediate left is President Peter Dorman. President Dorman is the president of the American University of Beirut. He is the great-great-grandson of Daniel Bliss, the founder of AUB, and a professor previously of Egyptology at the University of Chicago.

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Next to President Dorman is Rami Khouri, who, many of you also know, Rami is the director the Issam Fares Institute of Public Policy at AUB. He is also a non-resident senior fellow at the Kennedy School of Harvard and other universities.

And then next to Rami is Professor Karim Makdisi, who is also an associate editor at the Issam Fares Institute of Public Policy and a professor of political studies at AUB.

Next to Karim is Rami Zurayk, who is a professor of land and water resources at AUB who will also bring a different perspective that we have not heard much from before on these very important issues in the region.

And last but not least is Rima Afifi, who is a professor in the Department of Health Promotion and Community Health at AUB and associate dean of the Graduate Public Health Program at the university.

So with that, let me turn the floor to President Dorman for his opening remarks.

PETER DORMAN: Thank you very much. I'd like to begin by thanking our good friend Marwan Muasher and the Carnegie Endowment for giving us a platform on which we can make a

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few remarks regarding the events that have been happening in the Arab world in the last four or five months.

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I'd actually like to begin with some remarks regarding what's been happening in the last 10 years for those of us in higher education. It has been a very interesting phenomenon – surprising phenomenon for us to see the enormous rise of American higher education campuses and programs throughout the Gulf and in Saudi Arabia as well.

Considering the, I would say, perhaps unilateral interventions of the United States in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, the corresponding huge interest in American higher education is a very interesting contrast. In terms of its foreign policy, the United States has suffered a great deal in the eyes of the Arab world, and yet again, in the last 10 years, American higher education has been embraced wholeheartedly as the gold standard for educating young people.

These are all new campuses in the Gulf. They are often branded with prestigious institutions here in the United States. We represent an institution actually that has a much longer pedigree, and there are a small handful of institutions that join us in that respect. AUB was founded in 1866, the American University in Cairo in 1919, and in 1950, the Lebanese American University began handing out four-year college degrees.

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There is a difference between these older institutions and the newer ones. They have been around long enough that the populations of those countries – Lebanon and Egypt – consider them actually to be very much indigenous to their own populations at this point. Our faculty and our student bodies represent a significant part of the local population, whereas newer campuses tend to bring professors and students from all over the world and especially from their home campuses to teach programs that culminate in degrees that are equivalent to the home campus. AUB, AUC and the Lebanese American University, in fact, simply award their own degrees.

But it's fascinating to us because, of course, as institutions of liberal arts education, our programs would look at home in any U.S. institution. We encourage broad mastery of topics from across all fields. We embrace a respect for diversity of all kinds. We focus on critical thinking and critical writing, all aspects that are very important in the present political climate where societies and political systems are undergoing such a mammoth change.

And keeping in mind Marwan's admonition to be brief, I think I will end there, and then we can always return to some of these issues.

MR. MUASHER: All right. These are very important issues relating to the quality of education in the Arab world, and I'm sure we will have a lot of interest among the audience.

Rami?

RAMI KHOURI: Thank you, Marwan. Thank you for having us. It's great to be here.

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I'll make very quick comments about what I feel are the main issues really at hand in the Arab world now as we go through this process of extraordinary, spontaneous citizen revolt all across the region. I believe we are witnessing nothing less important than the first process of an Arab attempt to have the principle of the consent of the governed applied in practice, and to have a process of national self-determination implemented by the citizens of the Arab world.

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This has never happened before. These processes normally happen when countries are born. Our countries in the Arab world, most of them were born in peculiar post-colonial distress conditions with the retreating European colonial powers leaving behind a collection of fascinating, but ultimately unstable and unsatisfying Arab states in the eyes of their own citizens. And the citizens are now basically saying: We want to reconfigure the constitutional mechanisms of governance, and we want to reassert the principles of the consent of the governed, participatory governance, accountability, and most of all, of just basic human decency, that we want governments that reflect the goodness of our societies, our culture, our religions, and our human legacy.

It took a long time for this to happen. And the word they use now, the Arab Spring, is actually interesting because it brings to mind the Prague Spring. And those of you old enough to remember the Prague Spring of 1968, you also remember that that was part of a series of attempts, starting with the Hungarian Revolt in the '50s, the Prague Spring in the '60s, the Russian dissidents in the '70s and '80s, Lech Walesa and Solidarity in the '80s, and finally the collapse of the Soviet Union 10 years later. It took about 40 years for citizens asserting their rights to citizenship and humanity and dignity to actually succeed.

And I think the Arab Spring is a similar process; it's a linear, but historical process which will take time. And some Arab countries will achieve a change of governance, and have more democratic and transparent systems, and others will not. As we know, some countries are being subjected to severe pushback by their governments, using severe, strong military means. And so some Arab countries will break through, others will stall, but the historical process that has been unleashed, I believe, is unstoppable. The indomitable will of ordinary human beings to live in freedom and dignity and basic human decency is the most powerful force on earth, and it cannot be stopped once it has been unleashed, and I think this is what we're seeing.

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It's interesting that all of the revolts in the Arab world have started with a very clear call for constitutional reform. Not for revenge, not for wealth, not for power, but constitutional reform. And this is what people are asking for, and that should be the bottom-line focus of everybody's attempts to create constitutional systems of governance in which the rights of the citizen are identified, the limits of power are agreed, and mechanisms to make sure that both of those things have been – are instituted.

The two words, I think, that are most important in this process across the region – and every country is slightly different, but there are some common issues – I think the two most common, most important words are humiliation and legitimacy – that there's a sense of humiliation among many people, vulnerability, marginalization, pauperization, subjugation, all kinds of things, but

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humiliation captures them all. And what the people want to do is to make that journey from humiliation to legitimacy. They want to relegitimize their governance systems, and they want to activate, for the first time, their rights as citizens.

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Arab individuals found themselves subjects of centralized security states, and they then, in the '80s and '90s, found themselves consumers who could consume and buy anything they want, but they had no other real rights. And now they want to make the final step to citizenship.

And it starts with individual people. I think the interesting thing here is how this process started. There's two people I would mention, Mohamed Bouazizi and Khaled Said in Tunisia and Egypt. And it's important to go back just a bit and remember: What was that all about? And I think we have to make analogies, here, too. I would say, Mohamed Bouazizi and Khaled Said were the Rosa Parks of the Arab Spring, that these were individuals who, like Rosa Parks in Montgomery, refused to acquiesce in the perpetual dehumanization of themselves and millions of their fellow citizens, and they stood their ground and demanded change. And they just demanded their citizenship rights.

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And it's important to remember that these are real human beings. This here is Mohamed Bouazizi and Khaled Said, this is a picture of them. I think people should remember and keep in their minds that these are individual human beings. Like Rosa Parks, like Steve Biko, like Lech Walesa, these are individuals who took a spontaneous action. Both of them paid for it with their lives, but that spontaneous action reflected the common sentiments of tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of fellow Arabs, and that's why these movements took off.

I think the interesting point that we have to keep in mind, also, is that these transformations from centrally-controlled security states to more constitutionally-grounded republics – or even if they're monarchies, as constitutional monarchies – where citizenship rights are clear – it will take a long time. The time scale we're talking about has to be realistic. It took the American Republic, which started out as a democracy of middle-aged landowning slave-owning white men, and nobody else had any real rights, and it took 200 years and a civil war to then give women the vote, and then it took another 50 years to give blacks the vote and to end racism. So these are processes that take a long time. And I think we have to keep that in mind. The transitions that we're looking at will take, I think, several decades at least.

But in the final analysis, individuals can make a difference, as we saw with Mohamed Bouazizi and Khaled Said, and the constitutional changes that we're talking about will require a complete reconfiguration and relegitimization of entire power structures. This is a process that is prevalent across the board, I think, all across the Arab world, but manifested in very different ways. In Saudi Arabia, in Kuwait, in Oman, in Morocco, in Jordan, in Yemen, each one is different.

And I think we should understand this as a historical process that has now been launched and will achieve its goals. And all of us here in the United States and Europe and the Arab world should examine what is the most useful thing that we can do to promote and keep going a process

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that has finally been launched and is defined and is safeguarded by Arabs who are paying for it, in many cases, with their lives.

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Thank you very much.

MR. MUASHER: Thank you, Rami. Professor Makdisi?

KARIM MAKDISI: Thank you. And I thank you for inviting me, and I very much look forward to the discussions.

So I just want to make a few points, that basically there have been two features, I would say, that have long set the Arab world apart from the rest of the contemporary political universe. The first is the unique longevity and intensity of the Western grip in the region over the past century. And the second one is the longevity and intensity of the sorts of regimes that have largely controlled the region in the postcolonial period, both whether kingdoms or supposedly republics. And until recently, of course, the Arab region has escaped the democratization waves that have otherwise swept areas in South America and Asia and other parts of the world in the past.

In this regard, I would say the Arab uprisings are indeed seminal, in particular in addressing the second feature, meaning, obviously, deposing the regimes that are currently in place. And here there have been at least two broad phases. The first phase in Tunisia and Egypt, in which we could say there was this grand triumph, there was a lot of euphoria, many of us felt euphoria, it seemed to be fairly black and white, the removal of tyrants from undemocratic regimes, the will of the people, slogans such as social justice were bandied about, and there was a sense that this really indeed was the beginning of a new era.

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The second phase of the uprisings, of course, with Libya and Bahrain, more recently in Yemen, and now Syria and other countries, the situation, of course, has gotten a little bit more complicated. There are some civil wars, it's become a lot more bloody, and there are many questions that, I'm sure, we'll be addressing in the Q&A here. And yet, for the first time, in many of these cases, the people, nonetheless, have become important players in their own self-determination. And this significance cannot be overestimated.

As for the first feature, meaning the intensity of the Western grip over the past hundred years or so in the Arab region, only time will tell whether this will also be loosened as a result of these uprisings. It is important to assert that the calls for democracy by Arabs are indeed indigenous, despite attempts by regimes currently in place to say that it is all foreign intervention. In fact, there's genuine democratic calls from within the Arab world.

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And this, in fact, has forced the international community to react. The intervention or reaction from the international community, I would say, has so far been very much inconsistent, and largely to preserve some sense of regional stability and to restore some sense of order. The United

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Nations did not intervene in any meaningful sense in the Arab world or the Arab uprisings until it passed U.N. resolution 1970 on the 26th of February, and then later Resolution 1973 setting up a no-fly zone in Libya on the 17th of March.

Just – it's interesting to note that, while the first vote, which was just a general vote, was 15 to zero, it was unanimous, the second vote was 10 for, zero against, but five abstentions. And this – and that's because it was – it authorized some kind of military intervention, and of course, as we all know, the military intervention aspect is something which, especially post-Iraq, poses a huge amount of questions and problems in the Arab world.

Just let me put this in some context. The voting record shows in the events so far that in 2011, eight out of the nine U.N. resolutions were passed unanimously; in 2010, 51 out of 57 total resolutions were passed unanimously, five others had either one vote against or an abstention, and only one resolution passed with a 12-to-one vote, and that dealt with the Iran sanctions, in which Lebanon, in fact, cast the one abstention vote. The point being that the U.N. Resolution 1973, which authorized military intervention in Libya, was highly contentious, and as we can see, its aims have not been achieved, and we're heading – we are in the midst of some kind of civil war, and so the international intervention remains unresolved, let's put it this way.

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Meanwhile, it's very clear that in other parts of the Arab region, there has been little to no outside intervention. In the midst of the Arab uprisings, the United States, for instance, vetoed a United Nations Security Council resolution dealing with the settlements inside Israel. This, of course, came and was very much in stark contrast to the kinds of statements that have been said in other parts of the Arab world. There's been no intervention in countries like Bahrain, despite the fact that Saudi Arabia has intervened militarily without U.N. authorization. There's been no intervention in countries like Syria recently as well, despite many calls for some kind of intervention or some kind of resolution of some kind dealing with Syria.

So the double standards, in terms of the way the international intervention continues in the Arab world – and this, I think, has not yet been addressed. I would say that the struggle within the Arab uprisings, as we're saying, while on the one hand, did remove – it is removing many of the Arab regimes that are in place, and I think it's only time before many of the other Arab regimes that are still in place will continue to fall.

But it's also, I think – and this is important and has been neglected, I think, in some of the discussions – the uprisings are giving meaning to the Arab peoples' desires, even in the international stage, to try to redress the balance between outside intervention and local action. And this is going to be a very important struggle.

The key challenge, I think, for Western countries and in particular the United States is whether they will align themselves with these new movements within the Arab uprisings, within the new social movements, new social forces, political movements that are growing inside the Arab world, that are calling for social justice, that are calling for social equality, that are calling for a realignment of the relationship between the Arab world and Israel, that are calling for the just settlement of the question of Palestine. These are consequences of a genuine democratization in the Arab world, and issues that the West and the U.S. in particular are going to have to confront sooner

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or later. And I know that President Obama is giving a speech sometime soon dealing with this issue, and I hope that this issue will be addressed in a serious way.

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I would just finish by saying that I think the question of Palestine is a key litmus test for the relations – with these hopefully changed relations between the Western interventions, the United States in particular, and the Arab world. And I would hope that this realignment, in which the Arab uprisings have now claimed self-confidently to – pushing for their own self-determination, will push the United States to change its position over the past 20 or 30 years. Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: Thank you, Karim. Professor Zurayk?

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RAMI ZURAYK: Thank you very much. My name is Rami Zurayk, as Dr. Muasher introduced me.

And I'm an agriculturalist. I'm a farmer as well as a professor of agriculture. And I also work in social movements and within civil society movements in Lebanon and outside Lebanon, because we're part of a bigger network that brings together people who are interested in food security and food sovereignty and poverty and poverty alleviation. And therefore, we have seen the spring come, in a sense, much earlier than many of the people who were sitting on the margins and observing this.

And I come today, of course, as an academic, which I am, but also as a member of civil society, working for the past 25 years from within the framework of AUB, because AUB has a big program of outreach within the rural areas of Lebanon, but also of Yemen and of Syria and of Jordan, and in collaboration with people in Egypt.

Why this long introduction? This long introduction is because what I want to do is frame a little bit conceptually a couple of issues, but also give you the feedback from the grassroots, not only from academics who are in their rightful place, which is universities and academic centers.

And just before I move any forward, I think that one of the most important things that the latest Arab uprisings – revolutions, spring, whatever you want to call them – have brought to us, is that they have revived the existence of the Arab identity, not only in the Arab world, but also in the rest of the world, specifically here and in the West in general.

We talk today about the Arab people. We talk about the Arab Spring. We assume, when we say this, that there is a commonality, while for the past 30 years, the common paradigm was: Arabs don't exist; there are countries, nation, there is the Syrian, the Lebanese, the Iraqi, the Yemeni, et cetera. And this relationship of Arabism that links people, this Arab identity, had all but disappeared.

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And so what has happened is that this has been brought back, not only in the minds of the Arab people, where, incidentally, it never disappeared, but also in the press and the media here. In a sense, the Arab uprisings have replaced the Arab League, and that is no great loss, as a porte-parole of the Arab people, of course.

MR. MUASHER: You better watch it with Professor Maksoud here. (Laughter.)

MR. ZURAYK: I welcome any comment from Professor Maksoud. I'm only repeating what he writes regularly. (Laughter.)

What I want to talk about today is what I call the “what now?” issue, which academics call the transitions. The “what now?” issue is: OK, you know, we have done it, in Tunisia and then Egypt, we have been able to remove dictators, symbols of the regime, so what do we do with it now? Where do we go from there?

And I will address it, of course. I can't address it from every single angle, but this means that we have to make choices when it comes to policies – to politics, of course, but also to policies, to policies of development.

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For people like me who are interested in food and farming, let me frame this very, very simply: In Egypt, for example, you have at least 35 (million) to 40 million people who live at the brink of poverty, and who are involved in agriculture, in farming, in food production. And the fact that they live in poverty is very closely related to the fact that they work in agriculture.

And that issue is extremely important, because if you Google today “food” and “Arab uprising,” you'll find millions of links, articles, papers attributing the Arab uprising to the increase in food prices. Of course, I mean, I find this extremely simplistic, but the fact that this is being brought up all the time is in itself an indication that there is something in there.

Why is there something? Well, you see, one has to really try to understand, what is the situation of food in the Arab world? I mean, food, you know, the stuff that you have to buy every day, and the only stuff you have to consume every day, and the stuff that most poor families spend 50 or 60 percent of their income on. And the Arab world, as a region, is the largest food importer in the world, which means it is at the mercy of not only the vagaries of markets, but also of powerful corporate control. Not wanting to go into conspiracy theories, but “food power” has been deployed several times. It has been deployed since time immemorial, since the Romans, but it is deployed today every day with the siege in Gaza, for example.

So the issue of “food power” and the fact that this whole Arab world is excessively dependent on food imports is extremely important. Egypt, for example, Egypt, with all the Nile and the millions of hectares – of acres – that are planted is the largest single wheat importer in the world. Do you know what this means in terms of the, you know, the ability of moving people when bread is removed from the market? Do we fully realize what this means if the trade in wheat is stopped, and speculations can easily do that, in order to increase prices and profit in a world economic system that is driven by profit rather than by people? So these issues of food have to be often present in

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our mind in the same way as they are present when we talk about going to lunch every day or to dinner.

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The questions about transitions are very pertinent because today, in Egypt, which – I was just there last week, talking to people from the revolutionary youth, but also attending the launch of the latest World Development Report of the World Bank which is called “Conflict, Security and Development,” very appropriately for what is going on, and I’d like to report a little bit on the discussions that have gone on around this issue – which are very pertinent, because people are asking today, in Egypt, on the ground: What kind of economic system are we going to have?

Fine, dignity, democracy, you know, all of these are important, but people on the ground realize that this big name of democracy doesn’t mean very, very much to them. If the democracy stops being popular and becomes representative in a world in which they cannot be truly represented, the shift from Tahrir Square democracy to representative democracy corporatizes the democratic process, the outcome of it is not necessarily what people have fought for. And therefore, the policies that are associated with it are not necessarily what people have fought for.

I was in a meeting with the minister of social affairs in Egypt, Gouda Abdel-Khalek, a very, very interesting man. And he was saying that we’re coming to elections, and I am worried that these elections will come – after these elections, we will end up with a parliament that looks exactly like the one that we had during the Mubarak era. Because the forces that can influence the democratic – fully democratic and transparent process are still acting, and they do not represent the people who were in Tahrir Square and who made the Arab Spring bloom.

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It’s a very interesting issue that we need to think a lot about.

I never tire from a quote by the great revolutionary – African revolutionary, Amilcar Cabral. I will read it to you and it says, “Every practice produces a theory, and that if it is true that a revolution can fail even though it be based on perfectly conceived theories, nobody has yet made a successful revolution without a revolutionary theory.” And I can assure you that in the Arab Spring there is very little revolutionary theory underlying what has gone on.

We need at this time theories, ideas, but also actions to make these ideas happen. And that forces us to pose the questions that after smelling the bloom of the Arab Spring, what kind of regime is coming to the Arab Spring area?

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During the launch of that World Bank report, the same minister of social affairs in Egypt – just to tell you how much things have changed – held a discourse that was exactly the one I heard that same night in the demonstration on Tahrir Square, which I went to join, and to talk to the people who were there. He said, there are three words that explain why there were so many people in Tahrir Square. There are three words that can capture exactly why we were in this square. And

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they are “free market economy,” and I am quoting. I happen to agree, but I am quoting here – the minister.

He, of course, severely chastised the World Bank for the actions and when we talk about this, we’re not referring to the World Bank as an institution. We’re referring to it as a concept of economics, as an economic policy that is forced and imposed through relationships with the regimes, those same regimes we are so happy today to have gotten rid of.

The independent unions, labor unions, which have just been created in Egypt – because there were no independent labor unions, there were only state labor unions – had exactly the same discourse. The people in the street had exactly the same discourse. Their point is the following: Free market economy, as it was brought to us – in this big package that was so hailed by everybody who spoke English and who came to visit us with the consultants – this has caused us tremendous pain. It has caused millions of unemployed people to be in the street in Tahrir Square. It has caused a lot of hardship; it has also been associated with a lot of corruption which is what we’re fighting against today. It has brought forth regimes, dictators, using their power in order to facilitate the work of financial procurers. The French term by the way is *proxénète*, which is much more powerful.

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I wrap up by saying the following: In Egypt today, something is happening. The government has agreed to a new set of subsidies for cotton and for wheat to increasing the planted area and to improve the technology that is used for that.

I have my questions about this, and I argue that this is not the appropriate way. And one could call this a wrong step in the right direction, and during the question-and-answer session, I’d be very happy to cover this more.

MR. MUASHER: Thank you very much.

Professor Afifi.

RIMA AFIFI: Good morning and thank you for coming; I know it’s early. I’m also going to talk a little bit differently about this, and what I’m going to be talking about is youth and dignity and voice and health, and I’ll try to link all those together for you.

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To start off with youth, by all estimates, we have the largest generation of youth in the Arab world in history. The Arab world has the largest youth population in the world. And in terms of percentages, overall in the Arab world, youth – which are people that are between 15 and 24 – take up about 25 percent of the population.

Now, often these young people are referred to as youth bulge, and the youth bulge is characterized very often in a negative light. So many of us adults are worried and scared about youth: they’re rebellious, they want to do things that we don’t want them to do, they don’t listen to

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us adults, et cetera. So a lot of times youth are portrayed very negatively, and their disenfranchisement is sort of linked to political disenfranchisements and even quote-unquote “terrorism.”

What I want to bring to the table is a little bit of a different look at youth in terms of their potential. So I think youth have an amazing untapped potential that if we can work with them on – so, partner with youth – can be used very positively to change their communities, and I think it’s been very evident in the Arab Spring as well as before – that youth have been powerful catalysts in change that has happened in the Arab world.

Now, my background is health and you might say, what does this have to do with health? What it has to do with health is that the more we understand health, the more we realize that in fact health has a little bit to do with genetics, a little bit to do with health services; but that health is in fact a social, economic, political construct. That it is very much influenced by politics, social issues and economic issues. And so therefore the more that we’ve thought about health and understood health, we’ve come to an understanding of the social determinants of health. And the social determinants of health are things like education, income, poverty, discrimination of any kind, gender issues. All of those things are very important to health, and that’s why we in health are interested in politics and economics, et cetera.

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Now if we think about social determinants of health, we’ve had a lot of information in the sort of preceding time of the Arab Spring about these issues. So if we think about income, the percent of persons – not just young people, but all persons – living below the poverty lines in countries of the Arab region, where we have data, range from 7 to 60 percent. That’s a huge range. So the region, again, is not a homogenous region as it is often portrayed.

There’s also vast differences in access to education between countries of the region. So illiteracy for 15- to 24-year-olds, for youth, ranges from less than 1 percent in some countries to 50 percent in other countries of the region. And another indicator is the ratio of literacy between girls and boys. So the ratio of literacy between women and men aged 15 to 24, which is an indicator of gender equality, ranges from .34 to 1.08 which is, again, a huge gap.

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Youth unemployment is the second highest in our region and stands at about 25 percent. And the links between unemployment-education are clear, and there’s a lot of discussion in the literature about how the educational system in the Arab world doesn’t prepare young people for the jobs that are available to them. And I think across the Arab region this is a problem. In Lebanon it’s a huge problem, for example; we have a lot of migration of our young people to the Gulf or other places.

I think this comparison between countries is important, but I think perhaps what is more important in terms of what’s currently happening in the Arab world and has been happening for a while is actually the comparisons within country. So the vast differences and the gap between rich

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and poor people in countries of the region is getting much bigger and that creates a sense of injustice.

So when there – I mean, misery is bad – none of us wants to be in miserable conditions – but when we're all at the same level of misery, that sort of gives us a solidarity in misery, and we sort of function together. But when we look around us and find that some of us have misery, and other people are doing very well, that creates a sense of injustice when it's not related to anything I've done specifically as a person, ok? So that sense of social injustice, I think, is a very important component of what's happening in the Arab world, and I think most of the speakers have talked about it.

And it gets us to the third concept, which I want to talk about, which is the concept of dignity. And I think this concept of dignity is, again, an important concept to think about and has been talked about by almost all the panelists. And it's a hard concept to capture. It's actually easier to capture by the lack of dignity or what's – and this concept I think has two components: One is an individual component – so my sense of lack of dignity. But I think in our region, there is also a social component or a component that is a group component. So there's also a feeling of lack of Arab dignity. How we have been portrayed by various media as a group of Arabs.

So both the individual and the collective sense of lack of dignity, I think, has important implications in terms of what's been going on because people are trying to get their dignity back – a lot of what's going on is individuals in the Arab world trying to get their dignity back.

[00:41:12]

So sort of tying all this together and thinking about youth, I think the issue is that youth, the young people in the Arab world, have used their voice very effectively and have used their social networks very effectively – and we can talk a little more about the role of social networks and cell phones, for example, in the current uprising among youths – but they've used their voice very effectively to make statements about what they see as a future for them, what their needs are, and in our work with youth in Lebanon, whether it's with Palestinian refugees, Iraqi refugee youth or Lebanese young people all over Lebanon in rural and urban areas – we've actually been very humbled by their energy and potential.

They have incredible energy; they care; they want to make change. And in fact, all of us have been young, at one point in our lives, and many of us are still young. But as we grow up, we seem to lose some of that wanting to change the world, and young people still have that. They have all this hope and energy and enthusiasm to change the world, and they believe that it can happen. Some of us get a little jaded. We sort of have that energy, but we're not quite sure it's actually going to happen. Young people really believe they can – they have what it takes to make these changes happen.

[00:42:25]

So I think that the resilience and the resourcefulness of youth presents important opportunities for changing the status quo, but I think that making the most of these opportunities requires us to answer some very difficult questions.

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For example, how can we distribute money and power equitably? How do we provide opportunity for voice and shed the history of authoritarianism? What kind of society actually can deliver human dignity? I don't know that there is one anywhere in the world, but what kind of society is that? How do we shake people free from their hopelessness so that all of us or more of us join as change agents? How can youth move forward to remain healthy and productive members of society? And how can we create venues and opportunities for youth to express themselves?

And really that's all they want; they want space to be able to express themselves and have us as adults listen to them without judgment.

And I think answers to these questions are very complex, and we have to do it in a different way. It challenges a business-as-usual approach. So I think Arab youth have an opportunity to shape health, and dignity and voice in the region and they're going to do it not only for themselves, but for others. So they are doing it for themselves, but they are also doing it for Arabs as a group, as a population group. They see themselves as agents of change in this way. But in order to do that we need to be thinking in a little bit of a different way. Thank you.

[00:43:47]

MR. MUASHER: Thank you very much, Rima. If I am to maybe try to find a common thread among all the presentations, I think what the different speakers have attempted to do is give us maybe a flavor of some of the questions and issues that Arab countries will have to deal with as they go through this transition. We've heard questions related to what kind of political systems will be adopted, what kind of economic models will be adopted, what kind of educational systems and as well as social models that need to be adopted too.

We also heard something about the Arab-Israeli conflict, and how are the Arab uprisings going to affect the Arab-Israeli conflict? Is it going to affect it and in which way, positive or negative? All issues that I hope will be addressed by the speakers as we move along.

[00:44:47]

I don't want to monopolize the discussion, so what I will do is ask people to ask questions. Please identify yourself, where you are from, and please keep it short and keep it to a question, so we have a chance to have as many people participate as possible. Let's take maybe questions in groups of three and four, and then allow the – you know, we don't have to have every time all the speakers answer, but if you can also direct your question to a particular speaker, please do so.

[00:45:34]

Q: Thank you, Dr. Muasher. My name is Said Arikat from Al-Quds daily newspaper. I have two quick questions. To Mr. Dorman, as I travel the region, the impression was that while AUB and AUC are beacons of intellectual engagement, the proliferation of new American universities in places like the Gulf are no more than a business scheme. So could you explain that? And my question to Mr. Rami Khouri is, on the issue of geography, could the dysfunction of the current Arab regime be a result of a dysfunctional geography that was basically cut and pasted by a colonial project? Thank you.

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MR. MUASHER: OK. Please.

Q: Steve Collinson with AFP news agency. Going back to the president's speech on Thursday, could you talk about whether there is any anticipation in the Arab world of what Obama is going to say and – as compared to his speech in Cairo in 2009 – and whether what he's going to say is even relevant to what is unfolding there? And, given what you said about the democratic uprisings being indigenous, has Obama been smart to avoid inserting the U.S. as a player in this, even though it has brought him some domestic political criticism?

MR. MUASHER: Yes, Marina.

Q: Thank you. Marina Ottaway with the Carnegie Endowment. My question is specifically for Karim Makdisi and to some extent for Rami Khouri.

You have mentioned the, you know, the role of the West and the forthcoming speech of President Obama. In other words, the reaction of the West is going to be important, you talked about the issue of the World Bank and the policies of the World Bank and how they have contributed to creating certain situations and so on.

[00:47:42]

But it seems to me that if you look at what's happening now, the big external player in most of these countries are not the Western countries, it's not the World Bank, it's the GCC countries. And that is I think where we are seeing really the resistance to the change coming, and in a sense you see a greater degree of determination on the part of Saudi Arabia and the UAE in particular because it really relates to the survival of those regimes as well, and I'd like you to comment on it.

MR. MUASHER: Ok, one more question. Yes, please.

Q: Hi, my name is Rhonda Yasir (ph); I'm from Lebanon; I'm a journalist and social activist in many NGOs in Lebanon, so I really want to agree on the idea of working with youth a lot because the investment in youth will give us this ability to change in our country, in Lebanon, and other Arab countries. So when I want a mix between the youth that I work with as an activist and with journalism, then I believe that we should start working on their freedom of expression. With their freedom of expression, it will be a very good project that would be implemented. So I want you more please to speak about this. Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: OK. Let's give a chance to the speakers.

[00:49:17]

MR. KHOURI: To Said's question about the geography, we inherited a very bizarre system, but it can be improved by our own work in the Arab world and I think this is exactly what we're seeing now.

I think you have to give some credit to the Arab states from the 1930s to the 1970s. They were involved in quite an impressive process of state-building, and that's why the region was quite

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docile, because people's lives were improving. They were getting schools and jobs and telephones, and there was a sense of state-building that was taking place. Of course it happened in the context of the Cold War also, which kept lids on the region.

But I think in the last 25, 30 years, the state-building process kind of stabilized, and then you started getting corruption and huge disparities and abuse of power and foreign armies and Israeli colonization and all of these things together. So we've had a regression in the last 20 and 30 years, and now we see the response to this, which is this mass citizen revolt.

So I think we can – we inherited a strange political geography, but I think this is exactly what people are trying to do now, to fix it. And we should anticipate in terms of what comes next that like the fall of the Soviet Union resulted in reconfiguration of borders and some countries like – Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia split up into the smaller countries; other countries become independent; some countries joined Europe. There will be a reconfiguration of statehood, I think, and if it's done according to the consent of the governed, we should welcome it, basically.

[00:50:55]

The question about the speech – the Obama speech – I think you have to listen to Obama because he is such a powerful person and because what he represents personally is in a way the ideal of the Arab Spring: A black man becoming president – it's a very powerful symbol.

But I think there is speech fatigue in the Arab world and people are not listening as intently as they would have listened a couple of years ago, though I would say that I would give the U.S. reasonably – I would give them a B+ in terms of how they've handled the Arab Spring. They've stayed out of it, made some statements, but it's been hesitant and it's been erratic – and then as Karim said, inconsistent. But the Arabs have been inconsistent as well.

If you look at – you have three GCC countries now – Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar – moving their troops around. This is an unprecedented situation: to have GCC countries moving troops and getting into active situations of conflict, even on a small scale. This is a sign that the Arabs generally, I believe, have essentially given up on relying on the U.S. as a reliable partner, and the Palestinians in particular have completely given up on the U.S. as a fair mediator.

And therefore the United States finds itself in a very peculiar situation of its own making where it has very, very little impact anymore. It has very little respect, very little credibility; it inspires neither fear nor respect in most of the Arab world, and in Israel and in Iran and Turkey.

The United States has marginalized itself in the entire Middle East because of its own inadequate policies. I think Obama understood that, and what he's involved in is a process of relegitimizing the American role in the Middle East just as the Arab people are trying to relegitimize their own governing systems. So this is an opportunity for everybody to have a fresh start, and let's see what he says.

[00:52:57]

I hope he doesn't come and tell us about the glories of Islam or Iran's wonderful history or the benefits of democracy. We don't need to – we know all that. (Laughter.) What we want from

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the United States is – what we want is an unequivocal, emphatic clear statement that the United States actually really supports the indivisible rights of all human beings to equality and freedom. All human beings.

And this is something that we're waiting to hear from the American president: that the U.S. will support every person, whether they're Arab or Bosnian or Burmese or whoever they may be; every person who fights for freedom and democracy will be supported unequivocally by the United States, and this is something that would be very powerful. So let's hope that he comes out in that direction.

I think one last point, it's unfortunate – if he links this to the killing of Osama bin Laden, that this will be a mistake of herculean magnitude. I mean, this would be the stupidest thing that he could possibly do – is to say that I'm talking to you after we killed bin Laden. I hope he just ignores the issue of terrorism and bin Laden, and just gets straight to the point about consistency in American support for democratic principles.

MR. MUASHER: Ok.

MR. MAKDISI: Ok, briefly, just to pick up on what Rami was saying – I agree almost entirely with what Rami is saying. I think in terms of Obama's speech – I think the point I was trying to make is that it's now less relevant than it was when he gave the speech in Cairo. People were wanting to hear good things in Cairo; it was a good speech in some regards. But of course, at that point, people were waiting to see what would happen. And as we saw and as Rami said very eloquently, very little has happened, and the litmus test, as I said, is the question of Palestine. We come back to the question of Palestine all the time, and that will become the litmus test.

And not to – as Rami said – sort of restart with a bunch of new words about how we have to reenergize the peace process and, you know, how great Islam is – again, we've heard these before. The question comes, what's going to actually happen concretely, what's going to be done on the question of Palestine.

[00:55:00]

The point that today the Arab uprisings have given in a sense some kind of agency to the Arab people so that what the U.S. foreign-policy-making machine is doing or not doing is less relevant than before. It has been proven to be ineffective over the last few years. Nobody can quite figure out what U.S. policy is in the region, frankly. From the regional perspective, it's very difficult to understand beyond support for Israel and support for certain regimes, in the past, anyway. There's very little understanding of what the U.S. stands for.

I think this is a great opportunity for Obama to correct this and, as Rami says, I do hope as well that he does not link it with the question of bin Laden and the question of terrorism, so that there's always this business of, well now that we – you know, now that you're no longer terrorists, we can – (laughter) – there has to be some different change of tone, but more importantly, actual concrete steps towards resolving the issues at hand.

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In terms of Marina's question about the GCC, I agree wholeheartedly. I think, you know, we've seen – and perhaps Dr. Muasher can talk about the expansion of the GCC to include possibly Jordan and Morocco and there are other countries that have – perhaps are going to be expanding into this larger, conservative monarchies of the Arab region. Clearly it's a conservative step to try to preserve the monarchies in the region, but I don't think the GCC itself would be alive without outside support.

[00:56:27]

I mean the link between U.S. policy, U.S. support, Western support and the GCC – they're interlinked. It's very difficult to disconnect these two from each other even it's a matter of survival. There are two movements: one is the GCC expansion and attempts to try to stabilize the region in a way to preserve order, as I said, and there's another one, which is embodied in what Rami and others are saying about the question of the people rising and trying to change the reality on the ground, both in terms of pride and dignity and social justice and new economic policies, but also the way in which the region itself interacts and intersects with the outside world in a more dignified foreign policy as well.

MR. ZURAYK: I wanted to say something about the World Bank issue and the fact – because I think you meant to address it to me as well as to Karim rather than to Rami Khouri. This is Rami Zurayk and that's Rami Khouri there. (Laughter.)

Thanks, Marina. The issue of the World Bank – and maybe I haven't made myself clear enough – is symbolic. You know, I'm not putting the World Bank in the crosshairs and saying, you know, these are the bad guys. It is symbolic of an economic model. I don't have time nor the willingness – I think everybody knows what economic model I'm talking about. So we don't need to get into that.

But, if I'm a small farmer in El-Faiyum in Egypt or Hasaka in Syria or even in Jordan – if I'm a Bedouin in Jordan—my question is going to be, am I – the only thing I know how to do is to farm. Am I going to have access to land when the rent of land has been liberalized through pressure with economic reform packages, and now the rent of land is 10 times higher than what it used to be and I cannot afford to work the land and produce at a price that is competitive with highly subsidized food imports coming from your own economy here?

[00:58:50]

That is essentially an argument that is often forgotten. But the Arab Spring is not happening alone. It is not delinked from policies – not only policies of foreign policies, but also economic policies and decisions that are taken in this country here and in Europe and others. So this is the thing that I was referring to. As Karim just said, the GCC is part of this big economic model, and the GCC itself, yes, is interested in controlling the Arab world, you know, in order to preserve its own regime, so that the wind of freedom does not move into this country – do you think generally that without U.S. support, the regimes of the Gulf – Saudi Arabia in particular – will be able to stand? Do you think they will? I disagree. Nobody in the whole Arab world believes they will. Nobody. There is very strong support from the biggest military power in the world, and there are big interests. And we have to link what is going on in this area, in our region, with these big

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interests – political and economic as well as open markets. These are important issues. Control over resources, oil, phosphorus – all of these are part of the core global economic processes.

[01:00:25]

Just one final word about youth. And I know you posed the question to Rima, so I'll pass it to her. But the issue of limiting the work with youth to freedom of expression, I don't think captures enough the importance of youth, because if you have nothing to say, then freedom of expression is not much use. We have to build also on knowledge, awareness, education, and that is precisely why we've been unable to come up with a solid alternative from the youth upwards to what is being imposed on us.

Just freedom of expression is extremely important, absolutely, but I am extremely worried that no real change will take place, that people will be made to feel good about themselves because of the uprising, but that no real change will actually take place, that the divide between the rich and poor will remain, that we can repackage the uprising to present it as being – feeling good about it, but without real change. I call this “Prozac politics” – repackaging it so that you feel good about it, while actually, nothing has changed.

MS. AFIFI: Thanks. I just want to say, for one second, about Obama's speech – and I think of course, the speech is important, but I think the actions that follow the speech and the consistency between the speech and the actions are what's more important. From the perspective of youth, I think that's very important, because any of you that have teenagers or that have had teenagers know that they don't let anything go by. And they'll call their parents on double standards or words and actions that don't go together. And so from a youth perspective, they see those inconsistencies very clearly. And I think it's very important that whatever is said is followed through. I think that's the most important part of the speech.

In terms of young people, I do want to say that, I'm speaking about young people, I'm not speaking for them, because I think that they're fully capable of speaking for themselves. And I think we need to be careful about that. So when we work with young people, the intent is to facilitate a process, to advocate, but to allow them and their voice to be heard. This means that they need to perceive us as individuals that are willing to listen, and willing to follow through with them on their hopes and desires and visions for the future.

[01:03:01]

Now, in our dialogue with youth all over, when we've established relationships – and relationships take time to establish, so I think the minute that we partner, whether it's with communities like Rami's been speaking about, or with young people like I've been speaking about, that's a process. It's a process that's long-term. We cannot, as academics, go into communities, work with people and expect that they're going to trust us in a week. These relationships take years to build. And they're based on the assumption that the intent is to listen to them, the intent is to promote their agenda, not our own. And if they're – if people, communities and people, don't perceive that intent, we're not going anywhere and they won't speak to us.

Our experience with young people is when they do perceive that intent, they will talk about everything and anything. They have ideas, they have aspirations, they can analyze the situation now.

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I think what Rami is pointing to is very important, which is how critical is their analysis? And if in an educational or political system that they've been living in has not allowed them to be critical, then we also need to work with them to build those skills, so that they can be critical and have the theory of revolution to go along with their passion about change.

So I think young people will speak. They'll speak very openly. They have no problem speaking. But they will speak to people who they perceive want to listen, have the intent to move with them in their agendas, and don't continuously judge them and criticize them as being young people who don't know anything, which a lot of adults will do.

[01:04:34]

MR. DORMAN: And perhaps I can quickly just address the issue of the branch campuses, the new universities set up in the Gulf. They are indeed, to a very large extent, business enterprises. In fact, the branch campuses, the universities here in the States that have established programs there have been offered financial inducements and settlements to create campuses.

I don't want to belittle that at all. Even AUB has a business model. But there are some interesting dynamics. For example, in Doha, the six campuses that form Education City were selected as powerful programs offered by different universities on the hope that the interaction among these different campuses would create certain synergies; it would be more than the sum of the parts. So that – there was kind of a – it was an idea based very much on a business park model located in separate campuses.

And yet there is enormous support by the local countries. For example, the new campus of New York University in Abu Dhabi just opened with its first freshman class. Only 6 percent of that freshman class are native Emiratis. The rest have been recruited from all over the world: Europe, the U.S., Africa, China. All the students are on full scholarships. That's not the kind of effort that, for example, AUB could support.

But it is, in many ways, a very admirable effort to try to bring not only just the advantages of higher education to the native population, but to grant them a much greater sense of diversity than they would otherwise have.

[01:06:14]

MR. MUASHER: I think – let me just say, going to the World Bank question again: It's important to know that the new Egyptian government, one of the first acts that they did is come to the World Bank and seek and get a \$2.2 billion loan. So I think the question of outside assistance is still very much a question that, you know, needs to be answered. I don't think that the Arab countries are going to just say: Well, we don't want outside assistance. That's not going to be possible now.

Under what conditions is a different matter. That's something that is going to be an extremely important factor as we go further: What kind of economic reform and economic models is the Arab world going to adopt? In Eastern Europe, it was clear. They were moving away from a Communist system and towards a market-oriented system. In the Arab world, if anything, the trend looks to be the opposite.

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So, anyway: Questions? Makram?

Q: Good morning. Makram Rabah. I'm a Ph.D. student at Georgetown and a proud graduate of AUB.

My question is: Where does Lebanon and AUB stand on this Arab Spring? And my question is to President Dorman. Whereas Howard Bliss was an outspoken supporter of Arab nationalism, and he spoke out in 1919 in the Paris Peace Conference, AUB has shied away recently from taking any active part in what's happening in the region, be it in Syria or in Egypt, and we have remained within the framework of academia and scholarship.

[01:07:56]

In addition, what's happening in Lebanon has been affecting AUB in more than one way. I might have been an outside observer for the last two years, but this so-called democracy in the Arab world has not been reflected well on AUB campuses, be it in some certain areas, or some witch hunts, or some sort of – anything that doesn't follow what's happening in the area should not be spoken about on campus, although this is not the case, and AUB has always harbored this so-called freedom of expression, and the AUB student body has always been diversified, and we are one of the few campuses that have fair student elections.

Don't you think, President Dorman, that you should continue within the legacy of your family by being an outspoken supporter of this rather than trying to build a business model for AUB to take it into the next century and just try to fundraise and to come and to enhance and to enlarge our medical school and our medical facilities? Thank you very much.

MR. MUASHER: OK. Gentleman all in the back?

Q: Thank you. Thank you. George Miller (sp), class of 1982, AUB, and ACS, 1977.

[01:09:16]

You know, we all know that democracy is messy – it's unpredictable. In many ways, it's really unstable, as we witnessed with the Palestinian democratic experiment when Hamas was elected into power and was completely ostracized by the West and caused a split with the Palestinian Liberation Organization and with Hamas.

By the way, I'd like Mr. Khouri to respond to this specifically, because you were talking earlier about U.S. support of individual rights. Well, my question really is: How can we reconcile total U.S. support for individual rights if this Arab Spring blossoms into a nightmare, an Arab nightmare – especially, you know, when the Muslim majority, in the name of misguided democracy and the rule of the majority, tyrannizes the Christian and Jewish minority? How can we support that scenario?

MR. MUASHER: Thank you. Other question? Yes, the woman there in the back.

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Q: Thanks. Thank you. Hi, my name is Sarah Johnson. I'm also a graduate of AUB and a former student of Professor Makdisi's, so I'll point my question to him. Some of the presidential hopefuls in Egypt have at least been paying lip service to the Palestine issue and to what's going on in Gaza and discussing changing the policy. Do you think there are going to actually be any changes in Egypt? Will it be significantly different from Mubarak's?

MR. MUASHER: OK, let's take one more.

[01:11:07]

Q: Sehir Marshal (ph). I really have just a very short comment and I'd like some response from somebody afterwards.

I agree with Rami, actually, very much, that this process is going to take a long time and we have to start somewhere, and it's not going to be completely easy, but we have to start somewhere. I agree with your comment that what we expect – we in the Arab world always expect something from the U.S. administration. We want the U.S. administration to be just, to take a just side, and to – we always ask things of – and we want them not to apply double standards, to support human rights everywhere, and to be with freedom fighters, so I agree with that.

But I'm going to be somewhat critical that we, in the Arab world – and I'm going to include everybody here, I'm not pointing fingers at anybody – have also used double standards for a long time, so that – you know, we are against the killing of Palestinian children, for example, but we have – some of us have condoned the killing of Israeli children, and that's wrong. And nobody has spoken about that. And I think if we want to take a moral standard, we should apply it to everyone.

[01:12:32]

The same thing is true in the Arab world with what is happening right now. Some of us are supporting the fall of dictatorships in Egypt and Tunisia, because it really agrees with our points of view. But what's happening in Syria, nobody's talking about it. And I really don't know what is happening in Syria. How would you describe it? Because we really have not seen it, even in the steadier regimes, where a regime would send tanks to the streets to shoot people, and this is – nobody will film this.

In Egypt, you had CNN, you had FOX, you have everywhere filming what's happening in Tahrir Square. Nobody is allowed to film what's going on in Syria, but we have a regime that is killing its own people. And many of us, because this regime, for example, says that it's against Israel – only by words, only by words – that we – some of us are willing to turn the other side, and it's really sad.

MR. MUASHER: Ok. Who wants to take the first one?

MR. ZURAYK: I can do that if you want, because I think that's really interesting. And let me just say outright that I'm in full support of the Palestinian resistance and the forms of resistance to any dictatorial regime – and that includes the Syrian regime that is an autocratic dictatorship – and that I shame, as you do, those who talk about Egypt but not about Syria, as I shame those who talk about Syria but not about Bahrain, which you failed to mention, and I think is extremely important

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and I think should always be up there, because there you have a majority that is being tainted with sectarianism and being attributed conspiracy Iranian links, while what's been happening in Bahrain has been brewing for the longest time.

We have a total stifling of freedom of expression, people who are being taken, jailed, and not allowed to express, and who are just simple bloggers are asking for Bahrain unity. So I think that is extremely important, and as much as we talk about Syria, we talk also about Bahrain and we do not remove it because it is convenient, because it is in one place and not in another. We have to have equal standards, not double ones, on everything that is going on in the Arab world.

[01:15:12]

The second thing has to do with the issue of Palestine. We do not like the killing of Palestinian children but we – I don't think that the Palestinian issue can be simplified to the point where we're counting how many children are dead on either side. I mean, I don't agree with that approach. I think there is no moral equivalence between the Zionist colonial project and the Palestinians. And I think we should condone the death, the killing of any person and to my mind, any human being, certainly civilians. But do the math, do the math, look at the power balance between the two. I think that is sufficient as an answer to your intervention.

MR. KHOURI: Also, I would add to that: One of the problems we have in the Arab world is – and I would start by saying I agree completely with you that any civilian deaths are unacceptable, blanket, no questions, no exceptions, Israeli, Arab, Chinese, Canadian, any civilian killed is unacceptable. But the problem we have – and this brings us back to the Palestine issue, to Bahrain, to Syria – is that: Why are Arabs subjected to international sanctions and being sent to the International Criminal Court? Now the Libyans are being charged in the ICC, Sudan's president was charged, but there are never similar actions against Israel. Not even a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning settlements is accepted by the United States.

So there is this massive double standard in terms of accountability, which creates these terrible political imbalances which reflect a very powerful morality which goes back to the founding fathers of the United States, that in fact, all human beings are endowed by the creator with inalienable rights, all human beings: not just Israelis, not just white people, not just males, not just landowning aristocrats, but all human beings: Muslims, Christians, Chinese, everybody.

[01:17:32]

And this is what Rima was talking about. This powerful sense of revulsion at inconsistency, at hypocrisy, has reached the point where people will no longer put up with it. They put up with it for three generations, but they won't put up with it anymore. They demand a consistent standard of political action which reflects a universal standard of moral values which we share.

In fact, we invented it in the Middle East, the Abrahamic traditions. We invented these things. We invented constitutional government. We invented codes of morality, the first use of the word "freedom" was in second-millennium Mesopotamia and recorded – this is the first time the word "freedom" was used; it was in a Middle Eastern context. So we know about these things and we want to see them applied. And that's why people are so angry about these things.

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So the challenge is to translate that moral anger into a political consistency. And this, again, comes back to the issue of how the United States behaves, how the Europeans, how the Russians behave, and how the Arabs behave. And there were three red lines in this region, historically, in my lifetime, in the last 40, 50 years. There's been three red lines in this region. The modern Arab state, they were untouchable, the modern Arab political order; Israel, the security of Israel; and oil, access to oil.

The first of those three has now been shattered by the Arab people themselves – that the modern Arab security state is no longer sacred, that it can be revised by its own people. Oil and Israel remain red lines, and that's why we see these inconsistencies, where Bahrain is treated differently than Libya, where Israel is treated differently – human rights violations on a massive scale are treated differently than, say, Libya or Syria.

[01:19:22]

The situation in Syria is extraordinarily interesting. Syria is the equivalent of the bank that's too big to fail in the eyes of most of the world. They see Syria as such a – if Syria collapses, and the government is forced to flee and change, many peoples are afraid of the consequences, that the spillover with Hezbollah, with Israel, with Iran, with Jordan, with Palestine, with Hamas, with Turkey, with Iraq – I mean, the spillover effect would be massive.

So most people say: We don't want to take that chance; let's just get them to tone down their heavy-handed response and, as Hillary Clinton and others keep saying, we think that we can still deal with them, but they should just be a little bit less brutal. But that's not acceptable to most people in the Arab world. I think most people in the Arab world want a consistent standard of political morality applied first of all to the Arab people.

The fascinating thing about this revolt is that it is spontaneous and it is indigenous and inwardly directed. The foreign policy issues will come. Already we are seeing a bit on Palestine from Egypt. And the foreign policy issues will come. The U.S., Europe, Russia, et cetera, China, Iran – they'll come later. But initially, this is looking at people's rights as human beings and as citizens, and directed inwardly. The criticisms of foreign governments will come, but at the same time, I think what the message we're hearing from many people in the Arab world is: We want to hold our own governments accountable to these same standards.

So I'm hoping that this is a beginning of a process in which these hypocrisies and inconsistencies by the West, by the Israelis and by the Arabs all will be addressed simultaneously at the same time, and that is the meaning of a democratic revolution. There can be nothing more hopeful than something like that.

[01:21:15]

But remember, it took you, in the West, you know, hundreds of years. It took you 500 years from the Magna Carta to the French Revolution, another 2 or 300 hundred years to give women and blacks the vote. So these processes take time. But I think the fact that it started is the important thing. And once started, it's unstoppable.

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MR. MAKDISI: Just a response to that, the question about Egyptian foreign policy towards Palestine in particular: Yes, I think it's very clear that there has been a clear change already. One of the first things that happened, when the attempt to put in Omar Suleiman in place of Hosni Mubarak, is as soon as he had to go, the process to ensure reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas and the Palestinians happened very, very quickly after that. And it was very clear that the Egyptian regime was behind ensuring that this reconciliation was not going to happen during the Mubarak and Omar Suleiman regime. So that was a very immediate and measurable impact. The Gaza border has been changed. I mean, the policy towards ensuring that the Gaza border on behalf of Israeli and other interests would be closed permanently – that has changed as well.

[01:22:21]

So the realignment of Egypt's foreign policy is under way. It may not be as radical as some people might want, but there's certainly a change. And I think the period from Camp David onwards is coming to an end in terms of Egypt being removed from the Arab-Israeli conflict, from being removed from playing its proper diplomatic role within the Arab world and within especially the Arab-Israeli conflict.

That's gone. And this is a direct result of these uprisings that are – while I agree that it's the – clearly, the uprisings were not primarily about foreign policy issues – I don't think there's a disconnect between having dignity and freedom inside, but also having a sort of dignified foreign policy in which the Arab themselves are able to understand and process their own interests and their own desires of their own people in terms of what they want and what their role is regionally and towards big issues like global security and the Arab-Israeli conflict. So I think that's a big change.

[01:23:17]

MS. AFIFI: I want to talk a little bit about the gap, because I think the gap between rich and poor makes things complex. And I think that we all need to admit in this room that we have layers of privilege that are immense, and that that allows us to perhaps look at things differently than we would look at it if we didn't have those layers of perhaps economic privilege.

I'm not intending at all to say that those with less economic privilege are unprivileged, because I think they have privileges sometimes that we don't have. So each particular community has a sense of pride in their own community; their social networks are often much stronger than those of us that have more economic power.

I say this because we seem – it's easy to take a bird's eye view of issues and make statements about what we think ought to happen from that view, but I think a grassroots view is as important. And we need to be going down into those communities, each and every one of us. And I would – I encourage each of you to go into your communities, in your countries, wherever those countries are – for us it's in the Arab world, for some of you it might be the United States – find those communities that have less economic privilege. Find those populations whose voices aren't heard and start to talk to them and listen to them, because that is the only way that we can sort of reconcile what we understand from our position of particular privileges with experience of other people with different types of privileges.

[01:24:52]

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And I'll give an example. We were working in Bourj el-Barajneh, a Palestinian refugee camp, with young people, 11, 12, 13, 14, that age group, in 2008-2009. We were working on a social skills-building intervention intended to promote mental health generally. And by mental health, I don't mean at all mental illness. I mean: How do we get up in the morning and feel like we want to go to school, feel like we can deal with our days? And as you all know, Palestinian refugees in many countries of the region, but particularly in Lebanon, have no human rights whatsoever, and yet are incredibly hopeful. It's an amazing thing.

So we're working with these young people, engaging young people themselves, talking about problem-solving, and conflict resolution, and when you have problems, you need to talk to each other. And Gaza happens in December 2008. Now, all of you will remember that. I want you to think about why a young person that's 11 should listen to me, who is telling him or her that, if they are – if I'm fighting with Rami, I need to use my words, when every single powerful person in the world is using violence to solve their problems. Why is it that they should listen to me and not look around and go, well, that's working much better? And those are the types of issues that make it very complex. And that's why we need to be listening to the grassroots as well as thinking more from a bird's eye view, I think. Thanks.

MR. DORMAN: Yes, I'd like to just answer Makram's question regarding public statements or stances taken by AUB. I think we do have to admit that 2011 is a bit different than 1919, 1920, when Howard Bliss, in fact, took a very proactive role in speaking on behalf of the Arabs and Arab nationalism. During the League of Nations, he was a close friend of Woodrow Wilson. I think, in that place and time, the Arab nations needed some credible voice to speak for them. I think that's no longer the case.

Certainly, what we have been hearing in the Arab world through the many movements, the many people who have been involved, that these voices are far more eloquent than AUB can be in speaking on their behalf.

[01:27:09]

On the other hand, I think panels like this also give you a form of reply, in that it's hugely complex, hugely complicated and partly contradictory things that are happening in the Arab world. AUB is a place where such issues can be examined from multiple points of view. And it is through panels like this that AUB can inform the public in a far more useful way than simply an issuance of a statement.

And as for the witch hunts, I have no idea what you're talking about, but I'd be happy to talk with you afterwards.

[01:27:42]

MR. MUASHER: Let's go through one last round of questions and – please.

Q: My name is Victor Shalhoub, Al-Bayan newspaper. I have a question for all of you, since you, professors, are there on the ground on a daily life. Why the Arab Spring hasn't arrived to our shore? We used to be in Lebanon, the first in line to reject, to demonstrate, and to go up front. We

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have a cancer called the sectarian regime. Isn't it an occasion, an opportunity to say something about it? Why do you think Lebanon is getting too stagnate politically and in terms of movement and rejection of this regime? Is it because this split, it's so deep? Or why is it exactly that spring hasn't come up to our country? Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: Ok. Yes, the woman in the back.

Q: Elizabeth Thompson. I'm a historian at the University of Virginia. I study the history of political movements in the Middle East. I have a comment and a question. The comment might maybe provoke an answer or two.

One is: in my view and study of efforts at political change over the last hundred years in the Middle East, a big dilemma has been that of foreign intervention – not creating the space, the tripwire that brings in foreign intervention to shut down politics. And I'd like a comment, perhaps, from Professor Makdisi on what happens if Egypt tripwires the world's attention – and what anxieties about Israel – what happens to the internal, the need for space to sort out internal divisions, interests, conflicts, within Egypt.

Will we see another shutdown?

The primary question I have is to follow up on Rami Zurayk's attention to the very real economic issues, the issues of distribution, of wealth, in the region and if any of you could identify real groups, parties, movements, that represent any kind of real constituency for that. You know, we're in the post-Cold War world where communist parties no longer have that kind of clout, right? What are we looking at and what chance do they have to actually gain any political ascendancy and enact those real reforms? Thanks.

[01:31:02]

MR. MUASHER: Yes, please.

Q: Thank you for giving me a second chance, but actually I have thing related to the sectarian system we have in Lebanon. I have a question directly regarding how do you panelists see the U.S. policy regarding our sectarian system in Lebanon? We are like the only country where we still have this deep understanding of having at least – I think I've spoke with like 27 representatives of different political parties. In Lebanon each one have a different point of view; we have the 18 religion sects in Lebanon and the policy that the U.S. is using with us, it's not like one policy, as it chooses it with other countries. We always have two kinds of policies related to us.

One is related maybe for Hezbollah, one is related to Tayyar Mustaqbal, one is related to the government, and every policy is just different from the other one. And I just heard about some threats related to the budget and the funds that will be arriving from the U.S. departments to Lebanon whenever we have a government that is not the model that is acceptable for the U.S.

So, please, let me understand more – how will I be able to figure out when the U.S. will look to Lebanon? And, if this is true, is the U.S. supporting keeping the sectarian system in Lebanon or maybe a social activist one day whenever we start moving really in a hard way to remove this system from our politics, they will be with us? Thank you.

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[01:32:49]

MR. MUASHER: Ok, I think we just have time for answers, so –

Q: There's one more question.

MR. MUASHER: Sorry, one more, Ok, please.

Q: My name is Bushra Jabbra (ph); I am a UAB graduate. The regimes in the Arab world have used the threat of extremism and Islamic fundamentalism as an excuse to enforce the heavy-handedness that we've seen, and the Arab Spring so far has proved to us, happily, that really it's not a real force, so far. I would like to know your projection of will the extreme forces, you know, take over in the Arab world? Is there any indication of this? Because, in the American press, this has always being presented as an alternative. Thank you.

MR. KHOURI: The question of Lebanon is fascinating. The reason that Lebanon hasn't experienced the same kind of popular uprising is, I believe, is that the dynamics of the uprisings across the Arab world are based on human realities, political realities, that are 100 percent opposite of what is the case in Lebanon.

[01:34:29]

I mean the people in rural and poor areas in the Arab world who've started this revolt felt that they were marginalized, subjugated, humiliated, and taken advantage of and neglected by a strong central government with a small elite like the Mubaraks and the Ben Alis – a small group in the capital that dominated the system and became very rich, concentrated power in their hands, and essentially subjugated and marginalized all the other people, and therefore, they revolted against it. And they wanted to change the central power so that they could be empowered.

In Lebanon it's exactly the opposite. In Lebanon you have a weak central government where power is formally apportioned among these 18 different groups which provide every Lebanese, through their sectarian or ethnic group, with access to the resources of the state. If you need a job or a scholarship, you can go through your local za'im who gets to the top leader who has an MP or one of the three presidents or a cabinet minister, and they take care of their communities.

[01:34:42]

It hasn't been a perfect system, but it's been a system that the Lebanese have used for decades and decades and it's a system that in fact empowers all Lebanese in a strange way. It gives them access to the resources of the state and therefore they're not rebelling against an autocratic security central state as they are in other countries. The complaints in Lebanon are different. People complain about too much sectarianism, people complain about corruption – inefficiency, income maldistribution, uneven geographical development. There's serious complaints, but they are not the same complaints as the other people.

And I will just make one final point, Mohamed Bouazizi needs to be understood as a symbol of everything that's happened. And what did he do? He was selling vegetables and a police lady and

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her lieutenants overturned his cart and refused to let him sell fruits and vegetables, saying he didn't have a license. And that's not why he revolted, and it's not because he was poor he revolted.

He revolted because the next day he went to the local governor's office in his rural city in Tunisia, to ask for a redress of grievance, and he got nothing. Nobody would talk to him; they sent him away. So within a few hours, two representatives of the central government humiliated him and essentially told him, you don't count, you don't have a voice, it doesn't matter what you think, it doesn't matter what you say; and we're not going to let you earn your living unless you give us a bribe.

So this cumulative humiliation that he felt is what finally drove him to set himself on fire. It wasn't his poverty alone, it wasn't just one aspect of neglect by the central power, but this cumulative process and this is the critical element of humiliation that I think we need to understand. It's the combination of material deprivation and intangible political alienation. When those two come together, people explode. Poverty itself doesn't do it. Unemployment by itself doesn't do it.

[01:37:44]

Spain has 21 percent unemployment, but they're not revolting because the mechanisms give you this intangible elements of empowerment. You have a system, you have a legal system, political system. When we have intangible indignation and lack of power and material deprivation, whether no job or low income or no water or no food – that combination is what is volatile and that combination is what has come together across most of the Arab world.

MR. MAKDISI: Just a couple of words about Lebanon. I think Rami has already mentioned – talked about this – the sectarian system and why Lebanon hasn't been part in many ways of these Arab uprisings.

Just add to this – you know, of course, that there's a movement that is sort of antisectarian movement which has, you know, been reenergized; it's still quite small. But one of the main problems as I see it that they're unable to expand beyond a small minority at this point is that just saying that, you know, we're against the sectarian system itself is not enough. There has to be a definition and understanding of what are we for rather than simply be against the sectarian system.

You can remove the sectarian system but you can keep the social injustices, you can keep the corruption, you can keep all the other things that go on even if you remove the sectarian system. So the sectarian system is not itself the bad thing. There are all sorts of other things that are taking place that need to be addressed. And this kind of civil society movement that's growing has to become more mature and expand, and hopefully will be doing so in the future.

But meanwhile the sectarian system operates by decentralizing and ensuring that no national social movement can rise. This is the main problem that we have in Lebanon with this environmental movement or any other movement, the sectarian system can adapt and disperse it so that it immediately becomes a problem whether it's sectarian or class or regional in nature. And it's been quite effective in that.

[01:39:32]

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On the question by Elizabeth, I didn't hear you fully, so I hope I understood the question. But I mean – if I understood it correctly, it's an excellent question. In terms of the tripwire, you said, whether or not the realignment of Egyptian foreign policy will somehow take away the space for internal change. Yeah, I think that's the key question. I think the point I was trying to make is that it's inevitable as Egypt realigns itself even nationally and internally, it's going to have an external dimension – a foreign policy dimension – because it goes hand in hand.

Yes, it could be a tripwire and, yes, there's going to be a lot of problems insofar as Egyptians more and more start to articulate a more coherent foreign policy that reflects the will of the people, particularly towards the Palestinian issue but towards larger Arab issues as well and Arab identity and, you know, the reassertion of the Arab world again in international politics. There's going to be a massive countermovement against this.

The discussion – the GCC is already there, you know, the U.S. – other forces are – we're waiting to see; that's why President Obama does have a great opportunity to not join those forces that are going to use this as a tripwire to prevent internal changes and social changes that need to be done. And that these are two processes that are going to be – this is the struggle, this is the great struggles that are going to take place, and I have no particular answer except to say that things will change, certainly.

[01:41:02]

MR. ZURAYK: Thanks. You know, Rami just listed this as a prerequisite for an Arab Spring in a country marginalized, subjugated, humiliated by dominant centralized forces and security apparatuses, and he said, you don't have this in Lebanon and therefore there is no Arab Spring in Lebanon. But that is exactly the description of the people who live in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Marginalized, subjugated, humiliated on a daily basis by a system that includes of course the Israeli project, but also the Arab regimes that facilitates this daily humiliation.

And that's why the Arab Spring came to Lebanon. It came last Sunday during the march of return when tens of thousands of Palestinians and Lebanese organized a peaceful march to the Lebanese borders and, at the same time, there was a similar march in Jordan and one in Egypt that was prevented. And this peaceful march was directed towards where people feel the power that is oppressing them and causing this humiliation to them is present, which is Israel. And the agenda was to just shout. Say, we have the right to return. And they were met by bullets, and I think that if you heard the news you know what I'm talking about.

[01:42:54]

So while the Lebanese have themselves not engaged into their spring for the reasons that Rami very eloquently put forward, and I may anecdotally but very sadly say to you that if you look at what happens in Lebanon, the only force that is capable of bringing millions of people into Martyrs' Square are sectarian forces, while it is the opposite in all the other Arab countries.

We go in Lebanon by the millions to the squares to ask for power to be passed from father to son and for power to remain within the sectarian system. (Laughter.) We vote to demand it! While they go in Egypt to say no to Gamal Mubarak taking after him. So that is the situation that we are living on both sides of the swamp – no, the marsh – the marsh divides – (laughter) – on both

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sides. That is the reality, but that does not mean that there is not in Lebanon people who are subjugated and humiliated and et cetera.

[01:44:04]

I – Elizabeth - a quick answer to your question. The answer is no. For the very, very, very longest time, during the Cold War, unfortunately the U.S. and the West have acted deliberately to destroy the “leftists,” quote-unquote, you know, leftist parties and groups who could actually come forward with a secular, nonreligious, equalitarian, just agenda. These were broken and replaced by religious groups. We know who they’re affiliated with; we know who supports them; we know who made all of these people come to life. We know how they’re supported, and we don’t support them. Some people here do – not in this room – (laughter) – in this city. Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: Ok, on this note, thank you very much for coming.

(Applause.)

(END)