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Title: Mapping the Coptic Movements: Coptic Activism in a Revolutionary Setting

Author: Jayson Casper

Introduction Cornelis Hulsman:

Jayson Casper's report reflects research conducted during the fall of 2012. Because we have gone through a change of office management starting in the fall of 2012 and only recently ended with the appointment of new office manager Adel Rizkallah my editing of several articles and reports were delayed, including this one. Since these Coptic movements and their membership are fluid, this report may no longer accurately describe all movements in all current details. Yet, it remains an important piece of work. As we should not generalize Muslims because of the great diversity in opinions so this report shows that we also should not generalize all Copts and also need to recognize the differences between different activists and activist movements. Jayson Casper's report is in fact a follow-up of earlier work I have done for *Arab-West Report* on Coptic activists. Most importantly I would like to refer to "Different Middle Eastern Christian responses to living in a Muslim environment," in which I described the different positions towards Muslim-Christian relations one finds within the Egyptian Coptic community.¹ The reflections of the great changes since the revolution one finds in Jayson's report for *Arab-West Report*.

Text

One of the distinguishing sub-themes of the Egyptian revolution which began on January 25, 2011, has been the proliferation of Coptic movements. Largely, though not entirely, contained in the church during the Mubarak era, Christian Egyptians joined their Muslim counterparts as 'one hand' to challenge the authority for the sake of 'freedom, bread, and social justice'. After successfully deposing the President, many of these Christian Egyptians continued their revolutionary posture.

For years Copts presented their demands to the state primarily through the person of Pope Shenouda. When pressed to demonstrate for their demands, either by events or by clergy, they did so mostly within the confines of church walls.² The revolution changed this equation, however, and the unity expressed in overthrowing Mubarak gave Copts a new sense of participation in rebuilding Egypt.

Some Christian participation remained along the lines of revolutionary values, enveloped fully in the youth movements that populated Tahrir Square. Others began sensing a threat to their full participation from the emergence and ascendancy of Islamists groups, and rallied behind a liberal and civil cause.

Still others took the opportunities of the revolution to organize and demonstrate for particular Coptic issues. Though there is significant overlap between Coptic demands and those for a civil state, these movements are characterized by Coptic peculiarity, even though many boast the participation of

¹ Cornelis Hulsman, "Different Middle Eastern Christian responses to living in a Muslim environment, *Arab-West Report*, Week 49, Art 3, December 5, 2006, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2006/week-49/3-different-middle-eastern-christian-responses-living-muslim-environment>.

² There are a few exceptions, for one example see the AWR biography of Bishop Butrus: Mia Ulvgraven and Cornelis Hulsman, "Bishop Butrus," *Arab-West Report*, October 2006, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/butrus>.

Muslims, who tend to be liberal in outlook. This category is shaped by a desire for Copts to assert their rights as Copts, leaving the church to take to the street and integrate with society.

Yet as they do so they highlight the tensions of religious identity. Insisting upon their right as citizens to demonstrate, they move beyond citizenship and appear to many as sectarian. Conscious to defeat this charge, Coptic movements stress their belonging to Egypt, and their work on its behalf. The question is fair if they do more harm than good, but this question may miss the point if indeed, as they claim, it is equality they seek. When pursuing that which is right, popular reception is a secondary concern.

This paper seeks to analyze in particular the Coptic movements which adopt Coptic issues. It will discuss the pre-revolutionary history of Coptic activism, trace its development after the fall of Mubarak, and continue to the present with the current attempt to gather these movements together in what is called the Coptic Consultative Council.

The paper will then provide a map of these movements along with the names of key participants to the extent that current research allows. Then it will profile a limited number of these groups, describing their leadership structure and spheres of activity. Finally, it will examine the questions of foreign funding and interference.

This research has been conducted through interviews with several figures deeply involved in these movements. They include Jamīl ‘Ubayd of the Coptic Consultative Council, Mina Majdī of the Maspero Youth Union, Hānī Jazīrī of the Million Center for Human Rights, Sāmih Sa’d of Copts for Egypt, Mamdūh Nakhlah of the Kalimah Center for Human Rights and a legal advisor to the Christian Brotherhood, Marry Daniel of the Mina Daniel Movement, and Ihāb ‘Azīz of the Coptic American Friendship Association.

Throughout the text many names and organizations will be presented without sufficient definition. This is done for the sake of documentation; further research will be required to properly identify each one.

History

Fitting with Egyptian history as an autocratic centralized state, amplified by centuries of subservience to Muslim rule, the Copts in Egypt do not have a long history of activism. This quiescence with the status quo was shaken during the revolt against British colonialism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries under the leadership of Sa’d Zaghlūl, among others. Makram ‘Ubayd was a key Coptic partner in the struggle, guiding the nationalist Wafd Party as secretary-general from 1936-1942. Muslims and Christians traded pulpits in mosque and church, lecturing on the necessity of nationalism. This cooperation characterized the liberal era of Egyptian politics, which lasted until the 1952 revolution of the Free Officers, led by Jamāl ‘Abd al-Nāsir.

The early years of Nāsir’s presidency witnessed another episode of Coptic activism, this time, however, directed entirely within the Coptic Orthodox Church. It also was also affected by the liberal era as the laity increased in education and was affected by Protestant missions. Seeking to demand a greater role in church affairs, the ‘Coptic Nation’ was formed in 1952, and in 1954 they kidnapped Coptic Orthodox Pope Yousab II.³ Though he was freed by police the reformist element of Coptic society slowly gained ascendancy, triumphing in the election and long tenure of Pope Shenouda III.

³ Author not mentioned, “Confrontation with the man who deposed the pope 50 years ago,” *Al-Muṣawwar*, July 4, 2003, in *Arab-West Report*, Week 27, Art 26, <http://arabwestreport.info/year-2003/week-27/26-confrontation->

The well-known liberal Muslim author Tarek Heggy stated that Pope Shenouda started as an activist pope,⁴ challenging the presidency of Anwar Sadat over the increasing sectarian makeup of the state. But following his four year banishment from the papal throne (1981-1985), instigated by Sadat before his assassination, Shenouda acquiesced to the status quo presided over by President Mubarak. Shenouda became the one figure to represent Coptic issues before the state, while Coptic citizens, like Egyptian citizens as a whole, had little to no real political participation.⁵

In the early to mid-2000s some Egyptian activism began to sprout. Kifāyah was a national movement against the authority of President Mubarak, and was co-led by a Coptic Catholic, George Ishāq, who befriended both Coptic and Muslim secularists. Kifāyah proved the training ground for one who would become an early leader in Coptic activism, Hānī Jazīrī.

To be sure, there were many Copts, in particular lawyers such as Naguib Jibra'īl and Mamdūh Nakhlah, who defended various Coptic causes through legal and media channels. There was also agitation for Coptic issues from Copts living abroad, particularly in the United States and Europe. Yet Jazīrī wanted to imitate the work of Kifāyah and create a broad based movement to encourage all youth, not just Coptic, to join political parties. A full time activist since 2003, he created the Million Movement in 2005 to achieve this end, and registered it as an NGO and human rights center in 2006. Eager to promote political participation among all, he involved many Muslims in his work. Prominent early Coptic activists with him, however, included Rāmī Kāmil, Mina Majdī, and Tharwat Kamāl. Mamdūh Nakhlah served on the board of directors.

The number of Coptic activists in these days was small, and there was much cross-pollination. In 2009 Jazīrī started the Copts for Egypt Movement, which included Nevine Jirjis, Milād Hanna, Mina Majdī, Majdī Sulīmān, Tharwat Kamāl, Rāmī Kāmil, and Rumānī Samīr. On February 14, 2010 his center led what he claims is the first Coptic protest outside the walls of the church, going even to Tahrir Square to protest the Coptic Christmas killings in Naga' Hamādī, January 7.

man-who-deposed-pope-50-years-ago: summary translation of an interview with Ibrahim Fahmi Helal, the leader of the Coptic Nation Party [Umma al-Qibtiya] in the 1950ties.

⁴ Tarek Heggy said in an interview with AWR that Pope Shenouda's activism started in the days he was a layman and nominated himself as papal candidate after the death of Pope Yousab. "Father Antonius, now Pope Shenouda, tried to become pope after only two years within the monastic life. He became a monk in 1954, and in 1956, Yūsāb died. On paper, Antonius was allowed to nominate himself. So, they introduced the requirement of living only 15 years as a monk before one could nominate oneself for the papacy, which also excluded two other young monks. A good friend of mine, Father Rafael, who was the personal secretary of Kyrillos, told me that Pope Kyrillos said that they changed the election law in 1957, in order to stop Shenouda from becoming the successor of Pope Yūsāb. Rafael told me that Kyrillos knew that the idea of being the pope had always been in Shenouda's mind. There is a famous story where the stick of Kyrillos, which is the symbol of the pope, fell on the ground and Shenouda went to bring it back to him. Kyrillos said to him, 'Do not hurry, you will have it'." Christian Fastenrath, "Interview with Tarek Heggy at CIDT [1], March 21," *Arab-West Report*, Week 21, Art. 2, 2007, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2007/week-21/2-interview-tarek-heggy-cidt-1>.

⁵ See, for example Fiona McCallum, "Christian Religious Leadership in the Middle East: The Political Role of the Patriarch," Edwin Mellen Press, 2010, http://www.academia.edu/329298/Christian_Religious_Leadership_in_the_Middle_East_The_Political_Role_of_the_Patriarch.

Yet some of these same names are repeated by Sāmih Sa'd as participants with him in the early Coptic Youth Front, formed after the clashes in the neighborhood of 'Umrāniyyah, in the Giza governorate in November 2010. Coptic youth gathered at the site of a church building project halted by police. They threw rocks at the security and in the exchange two youths were shot and killed.⁶ Sa'd lists Rāmī Kāmil, Bishoy Tamrī, Sa'īd Fā'iz, Mina Majdī, Yūsuf Ramsīs, and Mina Daniel as leading activists from this group. He described them as the core activists which would eventually become the Maspero Youth Union, one of the most prominent Coptic movements after the revolution.

The revolution, however, was preceded by a horrific bombing of a church in Alexandria, on January 1, 2011.⁷ Several activists went from Cairo to protest, including Rāmī Kāmil. Some of these protests turned violent, but all of them were outside of the church. It was as if a genie was slowly coming out of its bottle.

Jazīrī, meanwhile, through the Million Center and Copts for Egypt was involved in protest demonstrations in Cairo, in the heavily Christian neighborhood of Shubra. Every day thereafter they marched in the streets, concluding with a demonstration in front of the Sa'd Zaghlūl Shrine in downtown Cairo on Coptic Christmas, January 7. This was organized in conjunction with the broad based activist group Egyptians against Discrimination, and attended by luminaries such as Hamdīn Sabbāhī, later to run for president, and Munīr Fakhri 'Abd al-Nūr, the Coptic minister of tourism.

Jazīrī believes these events planted seeds which sprouted in the January 25 revolution. Certainly they played a major role in preparing Coptic participation. 'Muslim, Christian – One hand!' was a defining chant in Tahrir Square in January and February 2011, and often asserted thereafter as well. By the fall of Mubarak many Copts eventually embraced it as well, though they began very wary of the revolution. Pope Shenouda, in fact, forbade Copts from joining.

After the Revolution

Join they did, however. Afterwards, the activists continued. Jazīrī himself was wary of the revolution, and as early as February 2011 he was with Copts for Egypt at Maspero chanting for a civil, and non-Islamic, state. This location of State TV was chosen as near to but separate from Tahrir, because Jazīrī felt the call for a civil state would be drowned out among the larger masses in the square. But it was not until the attack on a church in 'Atfīh,⁸ south of Cairo, in March 2011 that Coptic activism in particular received a push.

Spontaneously, states Jazīrī, the Coptic masses flooded to Maspero and began a sit-in. Activists came as well, and many Copts for the first time developed a taste for activism, rubbing shoulders with those

⁶ Jayson Casper, "'Umrāniyyah Through the Eyes of the Church," *Arab-West Report*, Week 52, Art. 82, December 30, 2010, <http://arabwestreport.info/year-2010/week-52/82-umraniyyah-through-eyes-church>.

⁷ Cornelis Hulsman, "The context of the brutal attack on a Coptic Orthodox Church in Alexandria on January 1, 2011; Analysis based on 15 years of research in Muslim-Christian relations in Egypt," *Arab-West Papers* No. 28, *Arab-West Report*, February 10, 2011, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/context-brutal-attack-coptic-orthodox-church-alexandria-january-1-2011-analysis-based-15-years>.

⁸ Cornelis Hulsman, "The History of Tensions in Sūl, 'Ātfīh," *Arab-West Report*, Week 44, Art. 27, November 1, 2011, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2011/week-44/27-history-tensions-sul-atfih>.

accustomed to leading protests. But it was the second sit-in at Maspero, in May 2011 following of the burning of a church in Imbābah,⁹ Cairo, which sparked the expansion of the Coptic activist movement.

Again, the Coptic masses went spontaneously to Maspero. This time, however, activists organized. Bringing together many of those who had been active before the revolution, the Maspero Youth Union was announced in May, 2011. The principle players were mentioned above, and a full description of the group will follow below. Noteworthy, however, is that it excluded Copts for Egypt and laid claim to represent the protest in its entirety, according to Jazīrī.

At the time it appeared to do just that. Maspero Youth Union statements filled the press, attracted additionally by the presence of two priests. Fr. Mityās was a longtime behind the scenes activist, involved with the production of the Theban Legion,¹⁰ a Coptic newspaper distributed only in churches which chronicled incidents suffered by the community throughout Egypt. A controversial figure, Jazīrī stated Mityās had been disciplined several times by the church, but continued all the same. Jazīrī had been involved in the Theban Legion as well.

The second priest was Fr. Philopater, who was younger but also prominent in the Theban Legion. He had been disciplined once for an article he wrote against Mubarak, but was less well known. Increasingly, however, Philopater became the public face of the Maspero Youth Union, and was prominently involved in negotiating with the government to end the second sit-in of Maspero, which was eventually forcefully dispersed.

Over the following months the opinion of the Maspero Youth Union was sought on every Coptic issue, alongside voices from the established church. Meanwhile, though their activists gave lectures and gathered support among the youth, especially through Facebook, there was little public presence. This changed by October, when construction of a church in Marināb, Aswan, was halted by Muslim villagers amid negligence from the governor.¹¹

Jazīrī believed this was a minor incident not necessitating another sit-in, and clashed with the Maspero Youth Union leadership even as they cooperated. These leaders called for a sit-in, and people came, though not nearly as spontaneously as before. The smaller numbers allowed for easy dispersal by security forces, done violently on October 4, with the image of a youth named Rā'if beaten severely circulating on several Coptic and other television channels.

Jazīrī's own television station of which he is the Cairo office manager – Hope TV – was accused of playing the video of Rā'if's beating over and over again to impact Coptic public opinion, and Jazīrī admits that Copts at time exaggerate events to win attention to their cause. Yet he speaks negatively about the efforts of Philopater to conduct another sit-in in protest, even though they were in agreement the severity of the beating demanded a response.

⁹ Jayson Casper, "Attack on Coptic Sit-In Protest at Maspero," *Arab-West Report*, Week 20, Art. 16, May 16, 2011, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2011/week-44/27-history-tensions-sul-atfih>.

¹⁰ See Cornelis Hulsman and Elizabeth Yell, "Appendix 4: Al-Katība al-Tībīya (The Theban Legion)" in "Polemics Discussion Paper," *Arab-West Report*, Week 17, Art. 56, April 25, 2006, <http://arabwestreport.info/year-2006/week-17/56-polemics-discussion-paper>, There are more articles about Al-Katība al-Tībīya, The Theban Legion.

¹¹ Lamīs Yahyá, "What Happened in Mārīnāb Village?," Arab West Papers No. 33, *Arab-West Report*, October 12, 2011, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/what-happened-marinab-village>.

The compromise was set for October 9, what would prove to be a fateful day for the Egyptian revolution as a whole and the Coptic movement in particular. Copts for Egypt would have a protest at the Maspero grounds, while the Youth Union would lead a march from Shubra to join them. Philopater argued for a sit-in and may have announced it upon arrival, but the official announcement was that all would leave at 8pm. Jazīrī told this personally to General Hamdī Badīn, head of the military police stationed on the Nile Cornish road opposite Maspero.

They did not have an opportunity to disagree further. As soon as the march arrived at Maspero stationed riot police began beating those assembled with canes and firing in the air. Shortly afterwards army APC vehicles drove through the crowd crushing demonstrators. In the ensuing chaos twenty-three people were killed. Other protestors were killed by live gunfire, though video evidence is unable to conclusively tie this to military police or riot police. In the eyes of many activists, however, this incident represented the first time the army opened fire on Egyptian citizens, violating their promise from the revolution never to do so.¹²

These events have been chronicled in detail elsewhere. The effect on Coptic activism, however, was to fracture the Maspero Youth Union, according to Jazīrī. Twenty to thirty groups then proliferated including Coalition for Egypt's Copts, the Martyr's Blood Movement, and the October 9 Movement, among others. One of those killed on October 9 was Mina Daniel, which resulted in the non-Coptic Mina Daniel Movement, as he was beloved by all revolutionaries active in Tahrir Square, according to his sister Marry.

Also created was the Union of Families of Maspero Martyrs, which Jazīrī said was necessary as there were question marks concerning the financial donations given them through the Maspero Youth Union, both from within Egypt and abroad. Jazīrī also noted that some foreign Copts like Michael Munīr and Madhat Qilādah were associated with the Union, though when Munīr was charged for inciting the riot Jazīrī wondered why stating he had nothing to do with it. Jazīrī himself was charged, along with Philopater and Mityās, Rāmī Kāmil, Mina Daniel, Fr. Antonious the defrocked monk, Joseph Tharwat from al-Tarīq TV channel, Ibrām Louis, Sharīf Ramzī, and two Muslims, Alaā' 'Abd al-Fattāh and Bahaā' Sāber. When public pressure moved their trial from military to civilian jurisdiction they were all released.¹³

Over the eleven months since the Maspero massacre on October 9, 2011, the Coptic movements have been largely silent. Activists are still quoted in the media, though now representing many different organizations. The perpetuation of this situation has finally led some of the leaders to address it. Islamist victories in the political sphere have convinced them of the need for a united front.

Uniting this front, however, is no easy task. According to Jamīl 'Ubayd, one of the principle problems plaguing the Copts is competition over media access and community support. Nevertheless, 'Ubayd is one of the principle organizers of a new effort to bring the diverse Coptic movements under one

¹² Jayson Casper, "Analyzing Video Evidence from Maspero: Bloody Confrontations following the Coptic Protest of October 9, 2011," Arab West Paper No. 34, *Arab-West Report*, October 26, 2011, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/analyzing-video-evidence-maspero-bloody-confrontations-following-coptic-protest-october-9-2011>.

¹³ Heba Afifi, "Released Maspero suspects demand prosecution of the military," *Egypt Independent*, Dec. 27, 2011, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/released-maspero-suspects-demand-prosecution-military>.

umbrella, along with other important figures from the community. The entity, called the Coptic Community Council was inaugurated on August 13, 2012, in order to present a united Coptic front to the state and the church. It will be described further below.

Jazīrī is hopeful, but he acknowledges that many people are criticizing. The main reason announced, he says, is that the council falsely claims to represent all Copts. It does not, he freely admits, but says those criticizing are spotlight seekers or desire complete independence.

Ihāb ‘Azīz of the Coptic American Friendship Association agrees. He finds there are too many ‘shady’ characters involved, and even among those of good character less than 10% can be counted upon to get a job done correctly. He thinks it is a great idea in theory but finds it a redundant effort that has been tried before and failed. The Egyptian disease, shared by Copts, he says, is that people are driven by ego and cannot work with those they disagree with.

Mīna Majdī of the Maspero Youth Union identifies the same disease. He believes the idea of the council is a good one, even though his organization only reluctantly joined. They were fearful their independence would be suffocated. Once learning each group has the freedom of operation, Majdī believes it is worthwhile and wants to play as a team, not seeking leadership. Still, he admits that many people say it will fail, though he puts the odds at 50-50.

Each of the above was asked to specify which parties hindered the operation of the council or its unity, but none chose to mention names or organizations.

The Coptic Community Council

‘Ubayd states the Coptic Community Council is a collection of all organizations and coalitions to unite them in one track and coordinate between them to support each other and the Coptic cause. Nakhlah agrees, stating it will increase Coptic power in front of the government, rather than each organization representing itself, though the individual organizations will not dissolve into one but maintain its own direction and policy.

The Coptic Community Council also represents the best starting point to provide a map of the diverse Coptic movements. At the time of this writing it included thirty-five organizations and associations, twelve businessmen, and many individual VIPs from Coptic community leadership.

One entity it does not include, however, is the church. ‘Ubayd says they refuse all ecclesiastic participation in order to put a firm wall between political and spiritual activity. The council aims to represent the voice of the Coptic community before both the government and the church, as a fully civil institution. Nakhlah states the council may and likely will seek the advice of the church on matters that pertain to it, but without its interference.

‘Ubayd agrees, and says the initiative has the blessing of the church, communicated directly from acting patriarch Bishop Pachomious, as well as Bishops Marcus, Būla, and Mūsá. These latter three are important figures in church hierarchy, representing church activity in communication, family affairs, and youth, respectively.

The following membership information was supplied by Jamīl ‘Ubayd.

Among the most prominent member organizations are:

- Maspero Youth Union (Mina Majdī)
- Copts for Egypt (Tharwat Bakhīt)
- Coalition of Egypt's Copts (Fādī Yūsuf)
- Million Center for Human Rights (Hānī Jazīrī)
- Copts without Restrictions
- Coptic Solidarity (foreign based organization seeking activity in Egypt)

Prominent groups that are not participating currently include:

- The Christian Brotherhood (Michele Fahmī)
- The League of Victims of Forced Disappearance (Ibrām Louis)

Prominent individual businessmen include:

- Mamdūh Kastour
- Nabīh Zākī
- Yusuf Ramsīs 'Attīyah
- Makram Mahinnī

Individual Coptic VIPs include:

- Samīr Marcos (former assistant president in Morsi administration)
- 'Imād Jād (elected member of 2011 parliament with the Social Democratic Party)
- Sāmih Makram 'Ubayd (elected member of 2011 parliament as an independent in the Egyptian Bloc)
- Marjarīt 'Azir (member of constituent assembly)
- Georgette Qillīnī (appointed member of 2010 parliament)
- Yūsuf Sidhum (editor-in-chief of Coptic newspaper *Watanī*)
- Kamāl Zākhir (prominent secularist and critic of Pope Shenouda in the Group of Coptic Intellectuals)
- 'Adel Iskander
- 'Adel Adīb
- George Fahmī
- Louis Lutfī
- Mouna Munīr
- Maryam Halīm

The structure of the Coptic Consultative Council is yet to be determined, but in these initial stages it is being led by a thirteen member executive board. These are unelected currently, self-selected by virtue of their leading role in bringing the council together. Members include:

- Jamīl 'Ubayd
- 'Adel Adīb
- Hānī Jazīrī

- Nabīl ‘Azmī
- Kamāl Sulīmān
- Kamāl Zākhir
- Māhir ‘Azīz
- ‘Imād Jād
- Marjarīt ‘Azir
- Tharwat Bakhīt
- Ihīb Anīs

Without detailed conversation with all Coptic movements, it is difficult to place them along a spectrum. A few observations are possible, however, as those interviewed were asked which other groups resembled or differed from their own line of thought. Few instances of difference were provided, but it is useful to note which activists took the opportunity to praise their respective colleagues.

One note of similarity heard consistently was that nearly all Coptic activists strenuously oppose the Muslim Brotherhood. The Maspero Youth Union, for example, even maintains a bylaw forbidding any of its members from cooperating with them politically. Nakhlah stated that he would personally refuse any offer of cooperation extended by the Muslim Brotherhood, though he can accept if others do so, like Samīr Marcos. Still, he finds any participation to be fruitless and used only to make the Brotherhood appear open minded.

Sa’d repeated the same opinion, likening Marcos to a flower placed in a suit jacket pocket. ‘Azīz found Marcus’ appointment as an ‘assistant’ president rather than as the promised vice-president to be proof the Brotherhood deals with Copts as second class citizens. He predicted they would indirectly work to undermine the Coptic Consultative Council, as they do not wish to see a united Coptic community.

Others, meanwhile, rejected the Muslim Brotherhood not from its nature but from its conduct so far in running the state. Marry Daniel found they were operating as a one party system, failing to release all political prisoners,¹⁴ and thus rejected them for the perpetuation of oppression. Jazīrī spoke similarly; the Brotherhood now heads the government and our movement challenges the government. Both spoke that the occupant of government being the Brotherhood meant nothing to them.

Still, Jazīrī remarked the Muslim Brothers were ‘liars’, dating back to his experiences in Kifāyah. Nearly all complained of their use of religion in maintaining power. The only one to identify a single activist willing to dialogue or cooperate with the Brotherhood was Jazīrī, who believed Kamāl Zākhir was open to this.

Like-minded Colleagues

Jazīrī also presented a list of other groups he believed were doing good work. It was not clear if all of these were in the Coptic Consultative Council, but he approved of their activity. They included:

¹⁴ Daniel stated many of those released under Mursī’s amnesty were convicted under crimes, albeit under military trial. Many activists remained imprisoned, though she was not familiar with the figure of how many. See MENA, “Protesters demand release of military detainees,” *Egypt Independent*, August 31, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/protesters-demand-release-military-detainees>.

- The Coptic Alliance – a group of lawyers who defend the accused in Coptic cases. They include Tharwat Bakhīt, Ihāb Ramzī, and Hānī Binha
- The Coalition for Egypt’s Copts – conducts seminars and lectures, headed by Fādī Yūsuf
- The Women for Egypt Movement – involved in development and social issues, led by Mary Rā’ūf and Tharwat Fawzī
- The Defending the Egyptian Woman Movement – speaks against violence against women and children, led by Amanda Stephanos
- The Union of Families of Maspero Martyrs – composed of the 23 families who truly have martyrs, led by Wā’il Sābir, Jihān Fikrī, and George Mussad
- The Kalimah Center of Mamdūh Nakhlah
- The Free Maspero Movement
- The October 9 Movement

Mina Majdī also provided a list of those groups he found to be similar to his organization, the Maspero Youth Union. They included:

- Copts for Egypt
- The Theban Legion (Al-Katībah al-Tībīyah)¹⁵
- Copts without Restrictions
- League of Victims of Forced Disappearance
- The Coptic Union

These were mentioned in the context of other groups which also completely reject working with the Muslim Brotherhood. Majdī stated he neither accepts nor rejects the Christian Brotherhood (described below), but had question marks about the Coalition for Egypt’s Copts. This was because their leader, Fādī Yūsuf, is a newer revolutionary whereas many activists knew each other from before. He also finds it strange they supported Hamdīn Sabbāhī for president while most other Coptic activists supported Ahmad Shafīq. Finally, the fact that his coalition appointed a Muslim, Mustafa Marāghī, as president made the Maspero Youth Union less certain about him.

Mamdūh Nakhlah named the following organizations which he believed were doing similar work as himself:

- The Million Center for Human Rights
- The Egyptian Union
- The Free Copts

He also mentioned positively that Mina Thābit and Hānī Ramsīs are members of his Kalimah Center, and that the center’s branch office in Minya lent space to Michael Munīr’s Hayat Party. He did note, however, that Munīr’s party was very weak and he was unsure of the motivations behind it beyond trying to find a role for Munīr in the political scene.

As stated above, Ihāb ‘Azīz did not find any of the current Coptic movements to be of sufficient maturity to justify working together in the Coptic Consultative Council. He found it encouraging the foreign based

¹⁵ Spelled as Al-Katība al-Tībīya in Cornelis Hulsman and Elizabeth Yell, “Polemics Discussion Paper”, *Arab-West Report*.

Coptic Solidarity group was being included, and was hopeful that the Maspero Youth Union had the potential to become a significant movement though it was currently in need of regrouping.

Finally, Marry Daniel confessed to not keeping track of the different Coptic movements too closely, as she was more involved in the broader revolutionary movement. She did praise Hānī Jazīrī as one who participated extensively outside of Coptic circles. Conversely, she found the Maspero Youth Union to be too 'Coptic' for her liking, though she commended Mina Majdī as an activist who was similar to her brother in his openness to all.

Movement Profiles

This section of the paper will describe primarily the internal function and key members of the organizations and movements interviewed.

Maspero Youth Union

The Maspero Youth Union is technically headed by its general coordinator, Andrawus Iwaydah, but in reality is guided by its political office. Iwaydah is responsible to hold the different committees of the union on the same page, and implements the decisions following a vote of the political office, whose members, besides himself, include:

- Mina Majdī
- Rāmī Kāmil
- Bishoy Tamrī
- Hānī Ramsīs
- Antoine 'Adel
- Nādir Shukrī

Below this level the Maspero Youth Union is run through committees of varying responsibilities.

- Political communication – to coordinate with organizations and movements concerning joint statements, demonstrations, and negotiations with government. Headed by Majdī and Kāmil
- Finance – headed by Jihān 'Atta
- Security – to keep order during demonstrations. Headed by Wā'il Subhī and Armia William
- Media – to issue statements, produce video, and interact with the press. Headed by Nādir Shukrī, a journalist with Watani, and assisted by Hānī Abu Layla, Mina Thābit, Yvonne Mossad, and Hānī 'Abd Allah. Within this group Antoine 'Adel is the official spokesman and Majdī is designated to speak with the foreign press
- Membership – to enlist and track new members through Facebook and written applications, including satellite locations in Alexandria, Suez, Beni Suef, Minya, and Asyut. Headed by Lubna Saber
- Education and Training – to conduct lectures and seminars, both internally and for the community. Headed by Marianne Nājī and Bishoy Tamrī
- Legal – to follow Coptic issues in the news and represent the group or its members if detained, arrested, or slandered. Headed by Ibrahim Edward and Hani Ramsīs, with outside assistance from Tharwat Bakhīt

Fr. Philopater maintained a strong public role in the Maspero Youth Union as described above, but is now in the United States due to pressures suffered in Egypt, which Majdī did not explain further. Fr. Mityās maintains a close advisory role but outside of the political office. Judge Amīr Ramzī also advises the union but from more of a distance and is not a member.

There are no fees to join the Maspero Youth Union, but the political office is considering implementing a small membership fee in order to have an operating base beyond the level of donations. They are also considering a training course to initiate new members into the philosophy of the group. Majdī states membership used to be over 15,000, but several have distanced themselves and there is now no clear figure on total membership.

The current political office was voted into their leadership role in April 2011, though the positions of general coordinator and assistant general coordinator were by appointment from within the voted group. Antoine 'Adil was appointed to the political office at a later date as he represented a sizeable constituency of supporters, and Nādir Shukrī was appointed due to his experience in media and involvement in Coptic issues. No new elections are currently scheduled, but Majdī believes the term in office should be roughly 2-3 years. They are also considering expanding the political office by 1-2 members in the near future.

The Million Center for Human Rights

Unlike the well-defined Maspero Youth Union, the Million Center for Human Rights appeared more amorphous in its organization, though it is officially registered under the law as a civil company (*tawsīyah basītah*). Hānī Jazīrī is the president and Tharwat Kamāl is the general coordinator. There is an executive committee headed by Nevine Jirjis, a journalist with the Theban Legion publication, which also has two secretaries.

The strength of the Million Center consists in the network enjoyed by Jazīrī, manifested in his board of directors. This board is mostly consultative, and is officially chosen by the executive committee. It is a mixed religious group and consists of:

- Alaā' al-Aswānī, a well-known author and activist
- Mustafa al-Barāwī, who works with Dr. Sa'd al-Dīn Ibrahīm
- Ashraf Rādī, correspondent with Reuters
- Kamāl Farīd
- Mamdūh Nakhlah

The main goal of the Million Center is to encourage political participation within a party structure. Jazīrī believes that activism must move beyond the street and congeal into a political party – any party. In the past he has worked with the Tajammu' Party, the Nasserite Party, the Ghad Party, the Democratic Front Party, the National Party, the Liberal Party, and the Karāmah Party. Within these and others he also advocates for the adoption of Coptic issues, and has succeeded in convincing many to advocate.

Jazīrī states the Million Center has about 1000 members, of who 100-120 are active, and of these 25-30 are Muslims. Many members are journalists and are the medium through which the center works to affect public opinion.

These members are engaged in many activities, though it is not proper to call them committees. A media group compares notes for articles, and a research group studies issues to help inform the center on what stands it should take. There is a general philosophy group, and the headquarters in Shubra hosts regular lectures that are open to the public.

The primary campaign in these lectures has been called 'Be Positive and Participate Politically'. Speakers invited have included:

- Muhammad Tālib from the Tajammu' Party
- Salāh 'Abd Allah from the National Party
- Peter Najjār for legal issues
- Marjarīt 'Azir the Coptic member of the constituent assembly
- Salāh Anton from the Democratic Front Party
- Muhammad Sharaf of the Nasserite Party

The Million Center has also worked closely with lawyers Ihāb Ramzī and 'Asim Qandīl, as well as public figures 'Abd al-Halīm Qandīl and Mahmūd Afīfī. Salāh Muhammad al-Zayn, head of the Liberal Party, is honorary president.

Copts for Egypt

Hānī Jazīrī is also the organizing force behind Copts for Egypt, which shares an office with the Million Center. Not a registered organization, he characterizes it as a popular Coptic movement. This also distinguishes it from the Million Center, which is more purposefully non-sectarian.

As insistent as Jazīrī is about Copts participating within the broader political and revolutionary structures, he insists also on the right of Copts to speak independently. They should not simply put their goals in the context of Egyptian issues and find a Muslim to advocate for them. Rather, they call out 'this is my problem, who will stand with me', as a national citizen in every sense of the word.

Straddling the two worlds, Jazīrī absolutely forbids Copts in his organization from demonstrating within church walls. This has been a subject of controversy, and cost him support among many Coptic activists.

The Copts for Movement online presence was stolen, Jazīrī stated, but recalled it had up to 3,000 members. The core group, however, is the same 100 or so activists in the Million Center, though some prefer one association over the other.

Jazīrī is currently the official spokesman, though he will soon withdraw to turn leadership completely over to the youth. It will be headed by Tharwat Kamāl, with Milād Hanna, a young activist, as the general secretary. Sāmih Sa'd will also play a key role to be determined.

The Kalimah Center for Human Rights

The Kalimah Center¹⁶ was founded as an NGO by Mamdūh Nakhlah in 1996, under the authority of the Ministry for Social Solidarity, representing one of the first Coptic initiatives on human rights. According to AWR Editor-in-Chief Cornelis Hulsman he began as an assistant to Maurice Sādiq but later broke with his former mentor. Nakhlah stated the reason was he desired to operate independently and open his own center.

Nakhlah has been a lawyer for 27 years, working with the Council of State and Court of Cassation. He states all his work on Coptic issues is *pro bono*, funded through his pocket by what he earns.

Over the years he has been involved in the issues of closed churches, returnees to Christianity and the restoration of the religion category on their ID cards, making Coptic Christmas a national holiday, lifting entry fees for tourists from historic churches, restoration of the Sultan Monastery to the Copts from the Ethiopians in Jerusalem (who took it over in 1977), and supporting converts to Christianity like Muhammad Hijāzī and Kamāl Juhārī.

Within his legal office he has seven additional lawyers, one of whom is a Muslim. They are paid \$100 US per month in addition to what they earn through their casework. Four of these (not the Muslim) are also involved in human rights issues through the Kalimah Center, and is not *pro bono* but compensated by the center.

Nakhlah states the Kalimah Center has 1500 members, two-third of which are Christian and one-third Muslim. It also includes Shī'ah and Bahā'ī representation. His membership is large because he has been active a long time, when there were few other Coptic lawyers devoted to these issues. It includes several Muslims because he is also involved in rights issues on their behalf. 20% of his *pro bono* work involves Muslims, largely in women's issues through the National Council of Women or concerning wrongful or political imprisonment. In 1996 he was involved in the case of Muslim Brotherhood member Salāh 'Abd al-Maqsūd, later Minister of Information in Morsi's cabinet.

These 1,500 members are invited to a yearly meeting to set the agenda for the center and to elect its administrative council. The council consists of fifteen members, of whom currently eight are Christian and seven Muslim. Nakhlah states he encourages keeping the Muslim membership high for better representation, lest the great Coptic majority take all the seats for itself.

The Kalimah Center is legally bound to enact the decisions taken by the administrative council, as it is registered as an NGO and supervised by the Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs. Noteworthy members of the center include:

- Dr. Milād Hanna, an elderly Coptic activist, now 85
- Kamāl Farīd, a professor in the Coptic Orthodox seminary
- Morsi Shaqlab
- Bishop Butrus, one of the papal secretaries during the last years of Pope Shenouda
- Fr. Philimon of Asyut
- Also includes seven Protestant clergy

¹⁶ Also profiled, together with non-Coptic human rights associations, in Jonas Rye Nielsen and Sandy Neubert, "Human Rights Organizations in Egypt," Arab West Paper No. 20, *Arab-West Report*, May 2009, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/human-rights-organizations-egypt>.

The Christian Brotherhood

The Christian Brotherhood is also the product of Mamdūh Nakhlah, who first had the idea after the parliamentary elections of 2005 when the Muslim Brotherhood captured around 20% of the seats. He is currently the legal consultant to the group. Michele Fahmī is the president; a Muslim, former army general Hassan Tawfīq, is vice president. Amīr ‘Ayād of the Maspero Youth Union is also an active member.

The Christian Brotherhood was established in September/October 2012 and is seeking legal registration under the Ministry of Social Affairs as an NGO. Nakhlah states he has received 10,000 registered members, 10% of whom are Muslims.

The fact of Muslim membership is only odd until Nakhlah describes the main reason for choosing the name was to attract attention to the idea. He aims to imitate the pyramid structure of the Muslim Brotherhood, but beyond this the comparison stops. His idea is not at all religious, as he puts it. He aims politically to use the Christian Brotherhood to promote a civil, liberal, secular idea, perhaps eventually to become a political party akin to the Christian but non-religious parties of Europe.

Nakhlah states there is no financial component to registration, and that intellectual Copts have been confused. Many critics have said the idea legitimates the Muslim Brotherhood. Simpler people, however, have taken to the idea, though Nakhlah states they do not fully understand that idea behind it.

Perhaps one aspect of Nakhlah’s thought is to draw the comparison to the Muslim Brotherhood, in terms of legitimacy. In seeking registration of his group, he highlights the Muslim Brotherhood is not registered. As he accepts financial oversight through the ministry, he highlights this does not exist for the Muslim Brotherhood. If the government accepts his effort, it must equate the Muslim effort on similar footing, and if it shuts him down, it must shut them down as well.

The Christian Brotherhood has not as of yet joined the Coptic Consultative Council, but Nakhlah states his current role is only as an advisor, and that others will make this decision for the group.

The Mina Daniel Movement

As mentioned above Mina Daniel was a Coptic revolutionary beloved by all in Tahrir Square. After he was killed – assassinated, some say – at Maspero on October 9, 2011, his core group of friends and his sister Marry inaugurated the Mina Daniel Movement in his honor. These twenty-one friends were mainly Muslim and included:

- Hussain al-Badrī
- Tālib Muawwad
- Mu’ammār Hassan
- Naha Karīm
- Māhir ‘Abd al-Fattāh
- Ali Māzin
- Michael Yūsuf
- Michael Karārah

- Rāmī Subhī, who can be designated the leader as he writes the group statements and takes decisions about participation in demonstrations
- Marry Daniel is the official spokesman

Daniel states that it is not proper to call this initiative a Coptic movement, as her brother was much more than this. Though fully invested in the Coptic cause he believed their issues would not be solved except in the context of general societal issues. Mina, she stated, worked for the issues of humanity, helping the simple, the poor, and the oppressed without reference to religion or anything else. This movement is meant to continue his example.

Daniel stated the group has 7,000 friends on Facebook, with 1,400 actively using the page. But it is a loose social movement and has no defined goals except to work for the good of Egypt. Their framework is leftist, they aim for freedom, but it is difficult to quantify their presence. Similarly there is no estimate for the percentage of members who are Coptic, but Daniel states the main Coptic issue is that the community is cocooned around itself. She has been criticized, she states, for her association with Muslims.

The Coptic-American Friendship Association

The Coptic-American Friendship Association is led by Ihāb ‘Azīz and is not a Coptic movement. Rather, it is a registered NGO in the state of Virginia, USA, which seeks to work with decision makers in both countries to support the rights of the Copts. In this regard, ‘Azīz states, it is better to understand his association as a think tank or a political lobby group.

‘Azīz related the association began meeting in 1992 and was incorporated in 1995 as the 3rd Coptic association behind the Canadian Coptic Association and the American Coptic Association. Today more than fifty such associations have registered, but many are small and only circulate the work of others. His goal, meanwhile, is to meet with senators, congressmen, the International Commission on Religious Freedom, and other groups like International Christian Concern.

He states he chooses to keep a low profile, has a board of directors who work as volunteers and are self-funded, and is not a member-based organization.

As the Mubarak administration did not reciprocate his desire to work with leaders in both associations, he found himself dealing with the opposition instead. He was able to have some contact with the Sharaf and Janzūrī governments, but is still trying to determine who is in charge of the Morsi administration. In any event, he does not expect to find much traction with Muslim Brotherhood rule, so has invested himself so far in groups like the Egyptian Bloc, the Third Way, and the Maspero Youth Union.

Foreign Relations

Discussing the Coptic-American Friendship Association is the best avenue to begin investigation into the involvement of foreign Copts with domestic Coptic movements. While other activists have a larger profile, such as Michael Munīr, Madhat Qilādah, and Majdī Khalīl, ‘Azīz’s interview provides a window into the functioning of a foreign Coptic body.

As described above, ‘Azīz considers his main work is to represent Coptic interests in Washington, DC. Jazīrī confirms this stating ‘Azīz asked him to help write reports about the situation in Egypt for him to

relay to America. Jazīrī considers this a good intention and respects ‘Azīz, but not America, and will not cooperate. If the United States came to him asking for his assessment of local affairs he would provide it. But to go after American support is not fitting, says Jazīrī. Egyptian problems need Egyptian solutions.

‘Azīz would agree with this assessment, which is why he has engaged in two other types of activity within Egypt. He has helped establish or co-establish some of the existing Coptic movements, hoping to get them going and then leave them to work on their own. Afterwards he coordinates with them, helping them set realistic goals, work outside the church, use the media, be courageous, and stay within shared Christian values. He did not provide details as to which movements he interacted with, nor if any support is financial.

‘Azīz’s other involvement is to work with Coptic lawyers on certain cases that interest the community. Some of these are well-known, he states, while others are not. At times the lawyers need to be retained. Among those he has worked with he mentioned Najīb Jibrā’īl, Mamdūh Nakhlah, and Mamdūh Ramzy of the Reform and Development Party. Contacted later, Nakhlah reiterated he had never taken money from abroad, and from ‘Azīz in particular, who nevertheless has sought his expertise in the past.

Mina Majdī commented specifically on Ihāb ‘Azīz. ‘Azīz hosted a conference concerning the Coptic Union, an initiative he later grew frustrated with and resigned from officially. Majdī attended this conference, but states ‘Azīz has given them no training, information, money, or links from abroad.

The Maspero Youth Union would desire such links, Majdī said, because the United States and its political parties need to hear directly from Copts about their situation on the ground. The Muslim Brotherhood is in communication with Washington, so they should have no qualms about it either. But Majdī was clear they had no relationships up until now with the Republican Party or any other foreign entity.

Of similar rejection was the use of foreign funds. Majdī pointed to the headquarters of the Maspero Youth Union, recently moved from downtown Cairo to Shubra in an effort to save money. All of their activities are self-funded and they reject foreign money. They do not want to appear in the category of Michael Munīr and his Hayat Party, so as to avoid the accusation of profiting from foreign Copts.

Mamdūh Nakhlah was not specifically posed the question about Ihāb ‘Azīz, having preceded him in the interview. He did comment on Michael Munīr, and it is earlier described how he helped his Hayat Party by sharing an office in Minya. Nakhlah is aware that many activists suspect Munīr of working for an American agenda, but assures this is not true, though due to his presence in both Egypt and the United States, he has probably utilized money from abroad.

Nakhlah stated he has not witnessed foreign influence in the Coptic movements, but that if it was there it would be a positive development. He would like to see greater contact with the Republican Party in the United States, for example, that they might pressure Washington to pressure Cairo on behalf of the Copts.

Nakhlah blames the Egyptian media for saying Coptic movements benefit from foreign finance. But having known foreign Copts for over twenty years, he states he has never taken a single cent from

them.¹⁷ He is not aware of any Coptic movement, in fact, that has benefitted morally or financially from those abroad. When foreign Copts give to Egypt, they give to the church, not to activists.

Sāmih Sa'd stated that Copts for Egypt would be happy to receive moral support from abroad, but concerning financial support he redirected the conversation towards the Muslim Brotherhood. Certainly they appear to have great financial backing – who funded their parliamentary and presidential campaigns across the country? Their headquarters, meanwhile, was a small run-down office in Shubra without air conditioning. Who deserves this question demanded of them?

This is the same office shared with Hānī Jazīrī, whose opinions are offered below. He did provide insight, however, into some of the moral support his organization has received. Before the revolution the Million Center organized a general 'Coptic strike'. This was supported in principle from foreign Copts Madhat Qilādah and Kamāl Abdel Nour, leaders in the European Coptic community, though Jazīrī insisted the initiative was entirely domestic.

Jazīrī stated that sometimes he agrees with Michael Munīr, sometimes he doesn't. He noted his political party was weak, and wondered who it was that helped him to register it. It was the same with Ihāb 'Azīz, though he confessed that he was not sure he knew what 'Azīz wants. Egypt has too many problems right now to bother with America, though he supported Nakhlah's proposed legal efforts to raise Coptic issues at the United Nations. He also mentioned the reporting work of Majdī Khalīl and the Middle East Forum whose information he believed to be accurate, though the two had never cooperated.

Finally, Marry Daniel stated that she did not have any idea if the Coptic movements benefitted from foreign support or not. But if this support came for the interests of America it must be rejected, while if it was truly for the good of Egypt she would welcome it. Still, she mentioned that her brother Mina had been asked at times to support foreign interference in Egypt. His answer was that he did not want anyone to rule him from outside, even if of the same faith.

Conclusion

While certainly not sufficient to convey the full complexity of the Coptic movement, this report was able to interview key members who have been prominent from its early days. Hānī Jazīrī is uniquely placed to provide its history, even as it would be valuable to have an opposing voice for some of his commentary about the Maspero Youth Union. Still, his Million Center and Copts for Egypt played a central role in the development of that organization and of many activists beside.

Similarly, Mamdūh Nakhlah is a veteran voice able to speak both in terms of the past and the present. His Kalimah Center was an early effort to promote Coptic interests, even as his Christian Brotherhood appears at present to be a fringe idea to the movement.

¹⁷ Nakhla has allegedly benefitted from 'limited finances...to continue activities,' stated in the context of relationships with the Paris-based International Federal Organization, Amnesty International, and Reporters without Frontiers. See Hamdi al-Husayni, "Questioned under Investigation!" *Rose al-Yūsuf*, May 26 – June 1, 2001, as summary translated in *Arab-West Report*, 2001, Week 21, Art. 23, <http://arabwestreport.info/year-2001/week-21/23-questioned-under-investigation>.

More central are the comments of Jamīl ‘Ubayd concerning the membership and aim of the Coptic Consultative Council. Further interviews with him would be desired to learn more about the various groups and personalities involved – how they agree and differ with one another.

Outside of this effort lies Marry Daniel, who though a Copt prefers to remain in the broader revolutionary movement than the particular Coptic, no matter how inclusive it might wish to be. Useful outside perspective is also provided by Ihāb ‘Azīz. Though devoted near-exclusively to the Coptic cause, he represents it from abroad and is able to describe at least his own efforts to support it.

One loose observation taken from the community, fitting with activists throughout Egypt, is that there is a Cairo-centricity to much of the activity. Here, an interconnected group of at least moderately educated activists represents a core of a few hundred people. This observation must be moderated by the statements concerning representation outside of Cairo, as well as the desire to provide education and training to group members. And while the core group is limited, the large crowds and signature-only members indicate a strong level of popular support for their activities.

Besides the areas for future research listed above, particularly helpful would be interviews with Michael Munīr and Rāmī Kāmīl, both of whom have been involved with the Coptic movement for some time, from differing angles. Also useful would be follow-up interviews with Majdī and Jazīrī, to further define the sources of their funding. How much do they receive in donations, do they track out of pocket expenses, and what oversight is practiced for financial transparency? Unfortunately, the political climate in Egypt makes it very difficult to be transparent about external funding, with media accusations of foreign interference leveled against any who suffer even its appearance.

In closing, two remarks from the interviewees are useful. Sāmih Sa’d stated the normal person works to earn a living and then goes home to enjoy his family and rest. The activist, meanwhile, sacrifices from his personal life in order to achieve success in a larger cause.

Similarly, Ihāb ‘Azīz stated that no one will give you your rights while you are sitting on the couch. You have to work hard to achieve them.

While many questions circulate around the Coptic movements – from finances, to cooperation, to the wisdom of separating from the larger Egyptian cause – the above observations must be remembered. They are balanced by the remark of Jazīrī that they also have a tendency to exaggerate their issues.¹⁸

In all these matters Coptic activists resemble activists around the world, exhibiting significant sacrifice and dedication in pursuit of their goals, understood to be righteous. Yet besides pressuring the government to fulfill their rights, they face also the challenge of awakening a religious community long accustomed to acquiescence to the status quo.

Further research is necessary to better understand their reality, their excesses, and their triumphs. But in the above description they must be commended. Their existence represents one of the many successes of the revolution.

¹⁸ An example of such an exaggeration can be found in Jaco Stoop, “Coptic migration figures of EUHRO disputed,” *Arab-West Report*, Week 26, Art. 40, June 28, 2012, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/sites/default/files/pdfs/y12w26art40.pdf>.