



MODERN EGYPT

WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW®

BRUCE K. RUTHERFORD
JEANNIE L. SOWERS

MODERN EGYPT

WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW®

MODERN EGYPT

WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW®

**BRUCE K. RUTHERFORD
JEANNIE L. SOWERS**

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

"What Everyone Needs to Know" is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

© Oxford University Press 2018

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law, by license, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reproduction rights organization. Inquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above.

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Rutherford, Bruce K., author. | Sowers, Jeannie Lynn, 1967– author.

Title: Modern Egypt : what everyone needs to know /
Bruce K. Rutherford, Jeannie L. Sowers.

Other titles: What everyone needs to know.

Description: New York, NY : Oxford University Press, 2019. |

Series: What everyone needs to know

Identifiers: LCCN 2018018996 | ISBN 9780190641146 (hardcover : alk. paper) |

ISBN 9780190641153 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Egypt—History—2011– | Egypt—History. |

Egypt—Geography.= | Egypt—Economic conditions—21st century. |

Egypt—Religion. | Egypt—Foreign relations—21st century.

Classification: LCC DT107.87.R88 2019 | DDC 962.05—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018018996>

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Paperback printed by Sheridan Books, Inc., United States of America
Hardback printed by Bridgeport National Bindery, Inc., United States of America

CONTENTS

PREFACE: WHY STUDY EGYPT?	IX
1 The 2011 Uprising and Its Aftermath	1
<i>What Happened on January 25, 2011?</i>	1
<i>What Factors Triggered the 2011 Uprising?</i>	4
<i>Who Were the Protesters and What Did They Want?</i>	6
<i>Did Large Uprisings Occur before 2011?</i>	9
<i>How Did the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces Govern after the 2011 Uprising?</i>	10
<i>Why Did the Muslim Brotherhood Win Egypt's First Post-Mubarak Elections?</i>	12
<i>Why Were President Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood Forced from Power in 2013?</i>	14
<i>How Did the Muslim Brotherhood Respond to Its Removal from Power?</i>	19
<i>What Are Some Features of President Al-Sisi's Regime?</i>	21
<i>What Economic Challenges Does Al-Sisi's Regime Face and How Has It Responded?</i>	23
2 The Rise of Modern Egypt	27
<i>How Has Geography Shaped Egypt?</i>	27
<i>What Are the Most Important Legacies of the Empires That Ruled Egypt Prior to the Start of the Modern Era in 1805?</i>	29

<i>Who Was Muhammad Ali? What Was His Impact on Egypt?</i>	32
<i>What Was the Impact of the British Occupation on Egypt?</i>	37
<i>What Were the Origins of Egyptian Nationalism?</i>	38
<i>What Was Egypt's "Liberal Experiment" in the 1920s and 1930s?</i>	39
<i>Why Did a Women's Rights Movement Emerge in the Early Twentieth Century?</i>	41
<i>What Was the Islamic Reformist Movement?</i>	42
<i>What Are the Major Strands of Egyptian Identity?</i>	43

3 Building a New Regime: Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak **46**

<i>What Caused the Military Coup in 1952? What Were Its Goals?</i>	46
<i>What Were the Key Institutions of Nasser's Regime?</i>	48
<i>How Did Nasser Alter Egypt's Economy?</i>	51
<i>Why Did Nasser Build the Aswan High Dam? What Were the Effects of the Dam?</i>	52
<i>How Central Was the Military to Nasser's Regime?</i>	54
<i>What Was Arab Nationalism?</i>	55
<i>What Impact Did the 1967 Arab-Israeli War Have on Nasserism?</i>	58
<i>How Did Egyptian Authoritarianism Change under Sadat?</i>	59
<i>How Did Sadat Change Egypt's Economy?</i>	61
<i>How Did Egypt's Political System Change under Mubarak?</i>	64
<i>What Economic Reforms Did Mubarak Adopt?</i>	65
<i>How Did the Military's Role Change under Sadat and Mubarak?</i>	69
<i>Did Egypt Make Progress toward Democracy under Sadat and Mubarak?</i>	73

4 Economic Development and Human Welfare **77**

<i>What Is Egypt's Level of Human Development?</i>	77
<i>How Many Egyptians Are Poor?</i>	78
<i>How Unequal Is Egypt? What Types of Inequality Matter in Egypt?</i>	80
<i>What Explains Egypt's Growing Population?</i>	82

<i>What Additional Factors Affect the Status of Women in Egypt?</i>	87
<i>Are Egyptians Employed?</i>	89
<i>What Economic Challenges Do Young People Face?</i>	90
<i>Is Egypt Urbanizing? Which Cities Are Most Important?</i>	92
<i>Do Egyptians Have Access to Water, Sanitation, and Electricity?</i>	94
<i>Do Egyptians Have Access to Education and Healthcare?</i>	96

5 Environmental Issues, Natural Resources, and Quality of Life **101**

<i>How Do Environmental Problems Affect Egypt?</i>	101
<i>How Has Egypt Tackled Environmental Issues?</i>	104
<i>How Water Scarce Is Egypt?</i>	105
<i>Why Is So Much Water Used in Agriculture?</i>	107
<i>Can Desalination Help Alleviate Water Scarcity?</i>	109
<i>Why Are Old Egyptian Industries Sources of Serious Pollution?</i>	110
<i>Why Is Cairo's Air So Polluted?</i>	111
<i>What Role Do Oil and Natural Gas Play in Egypt's Economy?</i>	113
<i>Is Egypt's Economy Becoming More or Less Dependent on Fossil Fuels?</i>	115
<i>How Vulnerable Is Egypt to Man-Made Climate Change?</i>	117

6 Religion **121**

<i>What Role Do Coptic Christians Play in Egyptian Politics and Society?</i>	121
<i>What Is Establishment Islam? What Are Its Primary Institutions?</i>	125
<i>When and Why Did the Muslim Brotherhood Emerge?</i>	128
<i>Who Are the Salafis? What Is Their Role in Egyptian Politics?</i>	132
<i>What Is Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis (Sinai Province)?</i>	135

7 Foreign Affairs **140**

<i>How Does Geography Shape Egypt's Foreign Policy?</i>	140
<i>How Does Egypt's Economic Situation Constrain Its Foreign Policy?</i>	142

<i>Which Domestic Constituencies Influence Foreign Policy?</i>	144
<i>What Is the Basis for the Egypt-US Relationship?</i>	145
<i>How Has Egypt's Relationship with the United States Developed over the Past 50 Years?</i>	148
<i>Has the United States Tried to Promote Democracy in Egypt?</i>	151
<i>What Is Egypt's Relationship with Israel?</i>	154
<i>What Is Egypt's Relationship with Europe?</i>	159
<i>What Are Egypt's Relations with the Arab Countries of the Persian Gulf?</i>	162
<i>What Is Egypt's Relationship with Iran?</i>	168
8 Prospects and Challenges for the Future	171
<i>Is Egypt Likely to Democratize?</i>	171
<i>What Are the Prospects for Inclusive Economic Development?</i>	174
<i>How Can Egypt Improve the Provision of Public Goods and Services?</i>	177
<i>Is Another Mass Uprising Likely?</i>	181
NOTES	187
INDEX	197

PREFACE: WHY STUDY EGYPT?

The Middle East is in the midst of extraordinary turmoil. In 2011, a wave of popular uprisings threatened authoritarian regimes that had held power for decades. Mass demonstrations in Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen, combined with militaries unwilling or unable to repress them, forced long-standing autocrats from power. Yet subsequent political developments diverged widely in these countries. Only Tunisia emerged with a more open political system, which remains fragile in the face of economic challenges, social polarization, and the war next door in Libya. Egypt, as we explore in this book, developed a deeper authoritarianism with a more central role for the military in politics and the economy. Yemen was caught in a devastating cycle of civil and regional conflict that produced a humanitarian catastrophe. Regimes in Syria, Libya, and Bahrain responded to popular uprisings in their countries with brutal force, which radicalized some of their opponents and invited external interventions. With devastating civil wars and intensified inter-state conflict across much of the region, the heady days of revolutionary protest in 2011 and 2012 seem a distant memory.

As this turmoil unfolded, Egypt's 2011 uprising and its aftermath played an especially important role. Egypt's size and historical importance make it one of the most influential countries in the region. It has the largest population of any Arab country (95 million; the next largest, Sudan, has 40 million) as well

as the Arab world's largest army and third-largest economy. The country commands a strategic location at the geographic heart of the Arab world and controls the Suez Canal, one of the region's most important waterways. Egypt also exerts substantial soft power. Its renowned al-Azhar University is the premier center of Islamic study and teaching in the Sunni world. Egyptian artists and writers shape the culture of the region at all levels, from pop music and soap operas to abstract art. The country also sends many thousands of teachers, engineers, and doctors to work in surrounding states, adding another dimension to its reach and impact. In addition, Egypt has served as a model for political development in other Arab states. Its political and legal institutions have been emulated to varying degrees in Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria.

Studying modern Egypt is thus essential to understanding the region's future. If Egypt can come to grips with its many problems and create a more stable and just order, the prospects for the region are substantially brighter. In contrast, if it goes the way of Libya or Syria, the region will be mired in an ever-deeper cycle of poverty and violence that could last for generations.

The purpose of this book is to introduce nonspecialists to this important and influential country. We have each studied Egypt for more than 20 years and have engaged in extensive language study and field research in the country. We have learned an extraordinary amount from our Egyptian colleagues, many of whom stood on the front lines of the 2011 uprising and have risked their lives in pursuit of a better future. We have also benefited from the many excellent scholarly works in Arabic and English on the country's history, politics, economy, and culture.

However, the remarkable richness of the literature on Egypt is somewhat of a curse for anyone who endeavors to write a short book. In a volume of only 200 pages, we inevitably made

difficult choices about material to leave out. The brevity of our analysis of some topics by no means suggests that they are unimportant. Rather, we have focused our discussion on key events, actors, institutions, and issues that are essential for gaining a basic knowledge of Egypt. We hope to achieve two goals: to leave the reader with a sufficient appreciation of Egypt to understand its current challenges and opportunities, and to spark the reader's interest in this fascinating country. We hope that readers will be inspired to read more of the vibrant scholarship on Egypt that has proven such a valuable resource for us.

We begin the volume by discussing the historic uprising that captured the world's attention in January and February 2011. In order to understand this event, we introduce several important themes—the role of the military and internal security agencies in politics and the economy; the characteristics of Egyptian authoritarianism under Mubarak; the political role of Islam and, particularly, the Muslim Brotherhood; the weakness of Egyptian political parties and civil society groups; and the deep structural problems of the Egyptian economy that have led to extensive poverty and substantial inequality. These themes are then developed in subsequent chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the central features of Egyptian history, with particular attention to the changes undertaken since Gamal Abdel Nasser's rise to power in 1952. Chapter 4 examines several critical issues in human development and welfare including population growth, inequality, unemployment, urbanization, and the status of women. Chapter 5 introduces readers to important environmental and natural resource issues, including pollution, climate change, and fossil fuel dependency. Chapter 6 discusses the major religious communities and actors. Chapter 7 considers Egypt's foreign policy and its position within the regional and international order. Chapter 8 examines the country's current and future challenges and its strategies for addressing them.

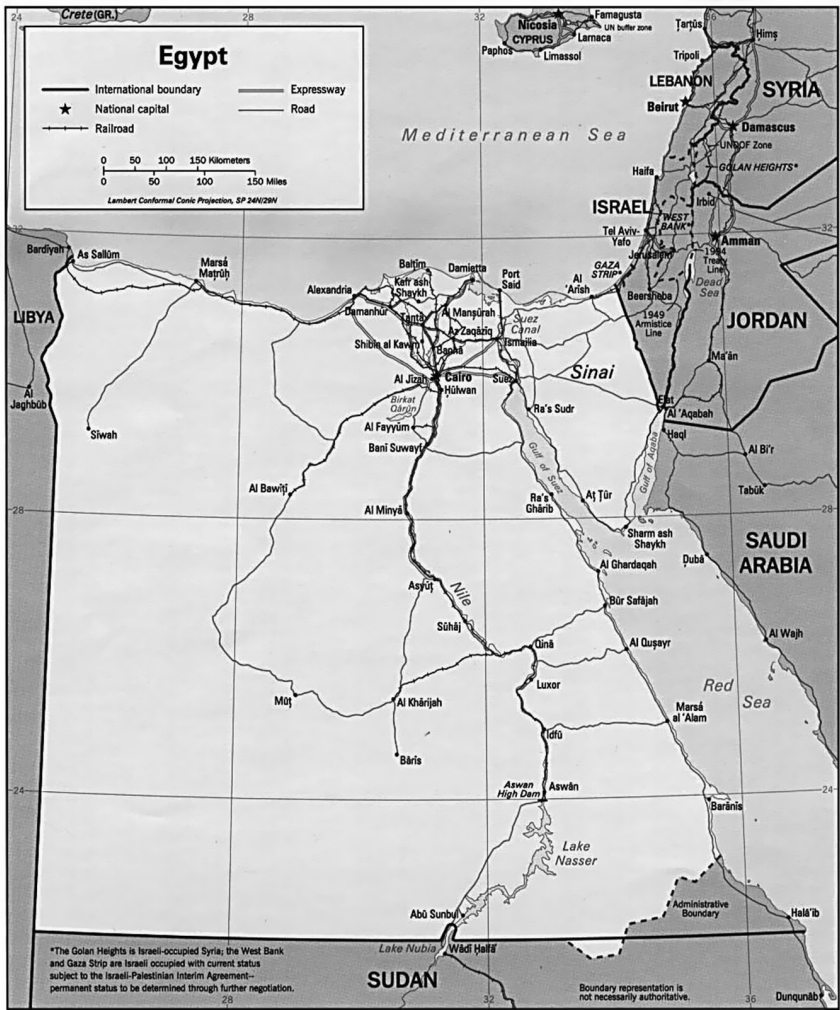
The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for many helpful suggestions and David McBride, our editor at Oxford, for his assistance throughout the process. We are grateful to Michelle Woodward, who found the photographs for the book, and to our respective institutions for their generous support to pay for the photos: the College of Liberal Arts at the University of New Hampshire and The Research Council at Colgate University. We are also grateful to our research assistants: Hayley Lazzari, who did a fine job of reading the entire manuscript and offering suggestions; and Matt Goduto for his research and formatting assistance. Jeannie L. Sowers would like to thank John Waterbury for motivating her to study Egypt in the first place.

Small portions of Chapters 2, 3, 6, and 7 utilize material from Rutherford's *Egypt after Mubarak* (Princeton, 2008) and his "Egypt's New Authoritarianism under al-Sisi" (*Middle East Journal*, Spring 2018). This material is used with permission.

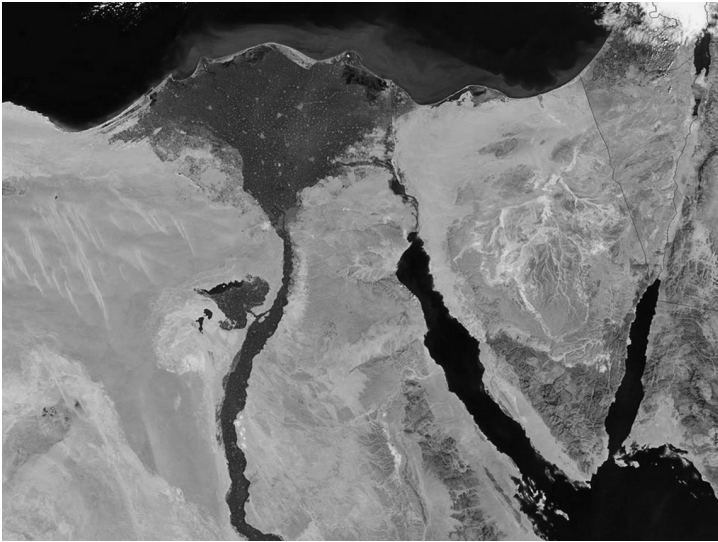
MIDDLE EAST



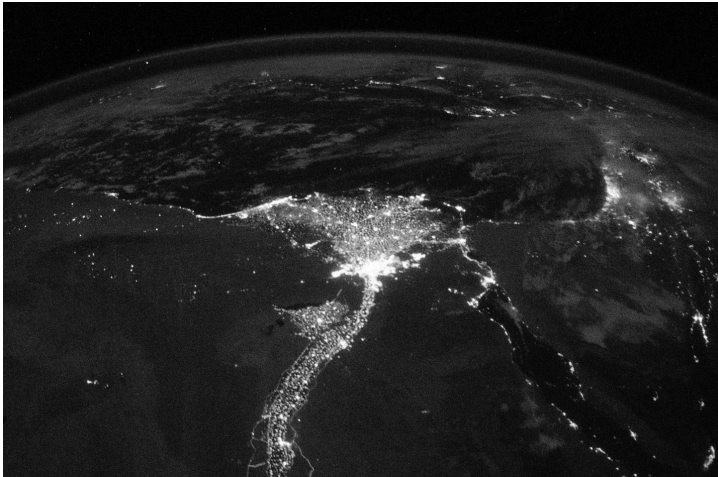
Map 1 The Middle East



Map 2 Egypt



Map 3 NASA satellite image of Egypt, including Nile Delta and Sinai Peninsula



Map 4 NASA satellite image of Egypt at night, showing urbanization, dense settlement pattern, and electrification

MODERN EGYPT

WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW®

1

THE 2011 UPRISING AND ITS AFTERMATH

What Happened on January 25, 2011?

Egyptian activists called for street protests against the long-standing rule of President Hosni Mubarak on January 25, 2011 using a variety of social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. They chose January 25 because it is National Police Day, a countrywide holiday originally established to commemorate the bravery of 50 Egyptian policemen killed in a clash with British troops in January 1952. To the surprise of the organizers, approximately 20,000 people gathered in Tahrir Square in downtown Cairo, marking the largest protest in years. Large street demonstrations also took place in the provincial cities of Alexandria, Mansoura, Sohag, Minya, Suez, El-Arish, Luxor, Aswan, Asyut, Tanta, and others. In Suez, four young men were killed in confrontations between the police and protesters. In response, Suez residents torched the local police station, attacked police vehicles and checkpoints, and marched on the headquarters of President Mubarak's National Democratic Party. With these dramatic events, the "January 25 revolution," as Egyptian activists termed it, was underway.

Over the next 18 days, police, hired thugs, and protesters confronted each other across the country. Internal security forces deployed tear gas, water hoses, batons, and birdshot to disperse the protests. The violent response by security

forces only increased resistance as youth leaders organized another nationwide demonstration on January 28, termed the “Friday of Rage.” Hoping to disrupt the protests, the Mubarak government cut phone and internet connections, but to no avail. In Cairo, demonstrators gathered in several neighborhoods after Friday prayers and then moved toward Tahrir along the city’s major thoroughfares and bridges. Marchers encouraged onlookers to join them through rhymed chants in Egyptian Arabic, such as “Why are you watching from far away? You’re Egyptian, aren’t you?” and “Raise. Raise the voice. He who chants will never die.”¹ People left their homes and workplaces and poured into the streets, or cheered the marchers from their balconies. The Ultras, soccer fans known for their violent confrontations with security forces, joined in, as did the youth wing of the Muslim Brotherhood and Egyptians from all walks of life. On Cairo’s Qasr al-Nil Bridge, thousands of people pushed forward against police lines, water cannon, and tear gas volleys to triumphantly reach Tahrir Square, where an estimated 80,000 people assembled. Volunteers set up tents, makeshift hospitals, and stages for campaigners to make speeches and lead songs, while food and drink vendors circulated among the crowd. Activists set up improvised barricades to protect themselves from the security forces, broke up sidewalks and pavement for projectiles, and established volunteer brigades to vet those entering the sit-in.²

Across the country, protesters clashed with the Central Security Forces (CSF) and police on the Friday of Rage and in the ensuing days. An estimated 84 to 150 police stations were attacked, as well as state security offices, police checkpoints, and police vehicles.³ As the police faltered, the regime increasingly relied on hired thugs and loyalists. In the famous “Battle of the Camel,” on February 2, a group of thugs riding horses and camels attacked the Tahrir sit-in while pro-Mubarak marchers entered the square. Eleven people were killed and 600 wounded, but the anti-Mubarak protesters held Tahrir.

The police and CSF proved incapable of handling what rapidly became a countrywide revolt. Overwhelmed and demoralized, they simply withdrew from the streets. The regime was forced to deploy the military and declare a curfew in Cairo, Suez, and Alexandria. In Tahrir, the protesters threw roses at the tanks that were deployed around the square, chanting “the military and the people are one hand,” trying to ensure that the troops would not fire.

President Mubarak’s televised speeches announcing relatively small concessions were too little and too late. Much of the public viewed his performances as patronizing, out of touch, and dismissive of the mass movement and its martyrs. Strikes and other labor actions by industrial workers, lawyers, doctors, textile workers, and others spread throughout the country, intensifying the pressure on the military leadership to take action.

After 18 days of confrontation and chaos, the military leadership removed Mubarak. They announced that they would rule directly, as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), until parliamentary and presidential elections could be held. In Tahrir and across the country, protesters celebrated. Fireworks, music, and a heady festival atmosphere ensued as Egyptians in the squares and streets enthusiastically debated the contours of a new order long into the night.⁴

The military’s decision to facilitate Mubarak’s removal came as a surprise to many. Like all of Egypt’s presidents, Mubarak hailed from the military. He was the commander of the air force in the early 1970s before Sadat appointed him vice president in 1975. Mubarak was thus well aware of the importance of maintaining strong ties with the military leadership and directly appointed all of the senior officer corps. However, by the time of the 2011 uprising, the generals concluded that he had become a liability. They had reportedly grown disenchanted with Mubarak’s increased reliance on the internal security forces under the Ministry of Interior, which consumed resources that could have gone to the military. They may have

also believed that Mubarak was grooming his son Gamal to succeed him, particularly after Gamal was appointed to one of the highest positions in the regime's ruling National Democratic Party. Gamal was widely viewed as a prominent beneficiary of the extensive corruption that plagued the Mubarak era, using his political status to accrue a large fortune. In addition, the military reportedly feared that Gamal favored economic reforms that might jeopardize their business interests, which include dozens of firms involved in construction, farming, tourism, and other fields.⁵

What Factors Triggered the 2011 Uprising?

Egyptians have suffered from unemployment, poverty, and an abusive security state for decades. However, several factors coalesced in the late 2000s that made them more willing to take to the streets despite the risks. These included escalating police abuse, a rapid rise in prices of food and other necessities, and the stunning example of the successful uprising in Tunisia.

Human rights abuses by Egypt's security forces have been a long-standing problem. These abuses intensified in the 1990s, as the regime engaged in an increasingly brutal clash with Islamist opponents primarily in the southern part of the country. The security forces frequently employed collective punishment, arbitrary detention, sexual humiliation, and torture. In the 2000s, these tactics spread more widely and were adopted by police throughout the country in their daily interactions with citizens. It became increasingly common for average Egyptians from the middle and lower classes to face police abuse, leading to growing public anger.⁶

A particular act of police abuse against Khaled Said, a young businessman, focused this anger and helped bring many ordinary Egyptians into the streets in January 2011. On June 6, 2010, Said died in police custody from a beating he received from two plainclothes policemen in broad daylight outside an internet café in Alexandria. Photos circulated online of his

battered and disfigured body. The attempt by the police to discredit him as an alleged drug dealer further catalyzed public anger. A Facebook page titled “*Kullina Khaled Said*” (“We are all Khaled Said”) quickly attracted 400,000 members. On January 14, 2011, the administrator of the page—Wael Ghonim, a Google executive working in Dubai—invited Egyptians to take to the streets on January 25, 2011. His invitation and the efforts of many other activists helped to produce large crowds in Tahrir Square and elsewhere in Egypt.⁷

Economic hardship also played a role in the uprising. The 2008 global economic crisis effected many Egyptians as prices for virtually all the country’s imports rose dramatically. In particular, Egypt relies on imports of rice and wheat to cover the needs of its population. The prices for these grains rose especially sharply due to crop failures in several major exporting countries including Russia and India. The increasing cost of food and other essentials pushed many Egyptians into poverty. By the time of the uprising in 2011, two-thirds of Egyptians—some 55 million people—were eligible for subsidized food items from the government based on their low incomes. In 2011, over 20 percent of Egyptians lived on 1 US dollar or less per day.

Egypt’s middle class—meaning those with some high school or university education—also faced economic difficulties in the years before the uprising. Their real wages declined even as the country’s overall economic output grew, in part due to rising inflation. Educated graduates faced dwindling job prospects and fading opportunities for a better life. For the vast majority of middle class youth, earning a high school or university degree did not lead to upward mobility or increased income.⁸ The declining fortunes of educated young people helps to explain why so many of them took to the streets in the 2011 uprising.⁹

While police abuse and economic conditions intensified dissatisfaction with Mubarak’s regime, the mass demonstrations in Tunisia against long-standing ruler Zine El Abidine Ben Ali