The Message of New Medium: Politics and the Arab Uprisings on Social Media

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Public Sphere in the Arab world has been under rapid and steady transformation with social media becoming an alternative medium of interactive communication. In 2011-12, Facebook had emerged as the main site of these interactions and user-producer convergence that helped the Arab uprisings to be communicated to a wider audience by their actors directly to the people who were equally able to interact with the process. On the other hand, the satellite channels like Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya found themselves challenged by the reach and interactivity of social media and were forced to meet the expectations of an over-ambitious Arab street. Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, Al Sharq Al Awsat, Al Hayat, and many transnational Arab news organizations became active on cyber-sphere, none of them achieved the popularity of social media, nonetheless. The Arabic page of Kulluna Khaled Said, for example, was created in June 2010 in reaction to a local police case became a global news maker when it became the leading media against Hosni Mubarak after the uprisings erupted. This paper discusses the role of social media as a New Medium when most of traditional mediums were trying to censor or remain wary of covering the anti-regime uprisings. The new medium became a new message in itself where new ways of interactions and new discursive traditions started appearing. A case study was conducted on the Facebook campaign of Kulluna Khaled Said along with other pages which were actively engaged in staging anti regime protests. The paper refers Jurgen Habermas' Public sphere as a theoretical point to what the Arab street used to be at the time of the uprising.

Key words: Al Jazeera, Arab Uprising, Facebook, Public Sphere, Social Media

Sosyal Medyada Arap İsyanları: Arap Dünyasında Kamusal Alanın Değiştirilmesi

Özet

Arap dünyasında Kamusal Alan, kritik seslerin giderek daha fazla siyasi ve sosyal tartışmalara katıldığı hızlı ve istikrarlı bir dönüşüm geçirmektedir. Sosyal medya bu süreci yoğunlaştırmış ve bir şekilde bu kadar etkileşimi mevcut yapılarına dâhil edemeyen televizyon ve gazetelerin önüne geçmiştir. Facebook bu süreçte özellikle etkin olmuştur ve şüphesiz Arap ayaklanmaları sosyal medya ağları tarafından daha da güçlendirilmiştir. Öte yandan, El Cezire ve El Arabiya gibi uydu kanallarının etkisi kuruluşlarının ardından ilk kez kabul edilmiştir. Sosyal medya kullanımının yaygınlaşmasıyla birlikte yazılı ve elektronik medya, sosyal medya ağları aracılığıyla bütünleştirilmiş, etkileşim, geri bildirim ve izleyiciler arası iletişim gibi değerler kazandırılmıştır ki bu önceden herhangi bir yazılı ve elektronik medyada mümkün olmayan bir olgudur. *El Cezire, El Arabiya, Şarkul Avsat, El Hayat* ve çok sayıda uluslararası Arap haber kuruluşu da siber-alanda aktif faaliyet göstermiş ancak hiçbiri tartışma, münazara ve siyasi yorumlar açısından bu kadar popülerlik kazanamamıştır. Arapça *"Kulluna Khaled Said"* (Hepimiz Halid Saidiz) sayfası, Hüsnü Mübarek hükümetine, Halid Said'in yasadışı öldürülmesinden sorumlu olan polis personeline karşı eylemde bulunma yönünde baskı yapmak maksadıyla Haziran 2010'da Facebook'ta açılmıştır. Sayfayı açan kişi bu adımı doğrudan devrim yapmak ya da Mübarek rejimini devirmek için atmamıştır. Bir buçuk milyondan fazla Arap genç Facebook grubuna katılmışlar ve Mısır'ın siyasi ve ekonomik sorunları hakkında aktif olarak fikir alışverişinde bulunmuşlardır. Bu makale, Arap dünyasında Kamusal Alanın dönüştürücü faktörlerini ve medyanın rolünü analiz etmek amacıyla Mısır ve diğer Arap başkentlerinde ayaklanmalar zirveye ulaştığında sosyal medyanın rolünü tartışmaktadır. Rejim karşıtı protesto gösterileri düzenleyen diğer sayfalarla birlikte *Kulluna Khaled Said* Facebook hesabı üzerine bir vaka çalışması yapılmıştır. Makale, Arap dünyasındaki kamusal alanın dönüşümünü ve hala geçerli olan yasal oto-sansür mekanizmalarına rağmen nihai demokratikleşmesini ana hatlarıyla ele almaktadır. Zamanla, sosyal medyanın devrim yanlısı gelgitleri İslamcılara karşı dönmüş, sosyal medya kamusal alanın demokratikleşmesine yönelik yeni zorluk ve sorunlarla karşı karşıya kaldığı yeni bir aşamaya girmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: El Cezire, Arap İsyanı, Facebook, Kamusal Alan, Sosyal Medya

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التمردات العربية في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي
تغيير المجال العمومي في العالم العربي

الملخص

إن المجال العام في العالم العربي يعيش تغيرا سريعا ومستقرا مع ازدياد مشاركة الأصوات الحساسة في النقاشات السياسية والاجتماعية. وقد عملت وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على تكثيف هذه المرحلة وحلت محل التلفزيون والصحافة اللذان لم يتمكنا من متابعة هذه التطورات. ولا شكل بأن الفيسبوك كانت له أهمية كبيرة وكانت الثورات العربية في الربيع العربي ذات أهمية كبيرة في تطويره وقد تم قبوله لأول مرة من قبل المؤسسات الإخبارية الاعلامية الكبيرة في العالم العربي مثل الجزيرة والعربية. ومع انتشار استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، اندمج الاعلام المكتوب والالكتروني عبر الشبكات الاجتماعية وتم اكسابها قيم مثل التواصل والتفاعل والرد وغيرها. وكان هذا غير ممكن أبدا في الاعلام المكتوب. وبدأت مؤسسات إعلامية عربية عالمية مثل الجزيرة والعربية والشرق الأوسط والحياة تقدم نشاطا فعالا في الوسط الالكتروني، ولكنها لم تكتسب شهرة لهذه الدرجة في المناظرات السياسية والنقاشات والتحليل السياسي. فتحت صفحة «كلنا خالد سعيد» باللغة العربية في حزيران يونيو عام 0102 وكان الهدف منها ابداء موقف في مواجهة مقتل خالد سعيد على يد الشرطة. لم يكن صاحب الصفحة قد اطلق هذه العبارة من أجل الإطاحة بنظام مبارك وقد شارك في هذه المجموعة اكثر من واحد ونصف مليون شاب عربي وتم فيها نقاش الأوضاع الاقتصادية والسياسية وتبادلوا الأفكار. تعمل هذه المقالة على دراسة دور العوامل المغيرة والاعلام في تغيير المجال العام في العالم العربي ومناقشة دور شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي عند وصول الثورة المصرية لذروتها والثورات الأخرى كذلك. وتم اجراء دراسة على صفحة «كلنا خالد سعيد» والصفحات التي طالبت باسقاط النظام على أنها ظاهرة. تتناول المقالة التحول والتغير في المجال العام العربي، والخطوط العريقة للتحول الديمقراطي وعلى الرغم من آليات الحجب والمنع المستمرة. ومع الزمن تحولت التيارات الثورية في شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي ضد الإسلاميين، وقد دخلت شبكات التواصل الاجتماعية في مرحلة مصاعب ومشاكل جديدة في طريق التحول الديمقراطي في المجال العام العربي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجزيرة، التمرد العربي، فيسبوك، المجال العام، شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي

Introduction

In late December 2010, an email was circulating all over the world carrying a series of images of a hospitalized young roadside vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, from Tunisia who had immolated himself in the Tunisian town Sidi Bouzid on 17 December. This series had included less publicized and least convincing images of Ben Ali who was visiting Bouazizi in the hospital where Bouazizi was being treated.[1] Bouazizi succumbed to death and so too Ben Ali' fall started. The news of death of Bouazizi spread like fire and social media in Tunisia especially Facebook and Youtube were transferring these heart breaking images to angry Tunisians. However neither the death nor the state's cold response was an unusual thing in Tunisia. The unusual thing was that thousands of Tunisians were able to see these images within days of this incident. The self-immolation was more than an act of suicide. Bouazizi became an unforgettable hero with a Facebook page named after him, *lan nansak abadan ya mohammed bouazizi* [we can never forget you Bouazizi[2]]. Many more Facebook pages and groups were made within a few days to express grief and anger on virtual social sites which would not have been available otherwise. A crackdown on social media was immediate and many pages were removed. *Mr. President, Tunisians are setting themselves on fire* was liked by at least 12000 at the time it was shut down by the Ben Ali regime. *Baye yasqut alnizam,* [The vendor topples the regime] was liked by 193,557 people.[3] Use of social media at this scale to register online protests was not the first time in the history of social media. In 2009, it was in Iran when millions of Iranians protested against alleged fraud in Iranian elections. But this protest was heading towards a different direction. It was heading towards a change of the regime. Tunisian protests brought down Ben Ali's three-decade-old dictatorship in a very dramatic manner in which social media played a vital role particularly in disseminating information, organizing protests, educating masses and evolving political discourse. All of these functions were never allowed in Ben Ali's dictatorial rule. Any genuine opposition remained behind the bars or in exile for most of the period of his rule.

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[1] Rania Abouzeid, "Bouazizi: The Man Who Set Himself and Tunisia on Fire" *Times Magazine* (January 21, 2012). Accessed June 25, 2019, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2044723,00.html

[2] FaceBook, http://www.facebook.com/Bouaziz.Mohamed, accessed June 25, 2019.

[3] The paper was accessed on June 25, 2019 http://www.facebook.com/Tunisian.Revolution.2011, other popular Facebook group are Facebook groups المصري الاقتصاد نقوّم عشان النظام وحرامية مبارك عائلة من فلوسنا رجعوا, كلنا, مليون مصري لمحاكمة حبيب العادلي لخيانتة لمصر, حل الحزب الوطني و تحميد ارصدته و منع, my name is wael ghonim انا اسمى وائل غنيم, وائل غنيم 2011, أفوض وائل غنيم للتحدث, مبارك ينتهي في, أنا أصدق وائل غنيم, أعضاءه من ممارسة السياسية لمدة 01 أعوام لدمرهم فى اقساد البلاد

In Egypt, it is called the domino effect when many Egyptians started saying, "if Tunisians could do so why not Egyptians?" An ongoing online campaign *Kulluna Khaled Said* to demand justice for a young man Khaled Said immediately got active. Khaled Said was brutally tortured and killed by Egyptian police on 6th June 2010. The Facebook campaign was only meant to bring responsible policemen to justice. Although the Egyptian political landscape is much more diverse than Tunisia's and many political groups were active in organizing political activities to a limited extent, the successful Tunisian revolution instilled new hope and courage among Egypt's disappointed political parties and leaders who were looking at these events as an opportunity. Most of the parties and leaders threw their support behind social media campaigners. The domino effect of social media continued from Egypt to Libya, to Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, Morocco and elsewhere. Social media became the most important source of information, most used it as a tool for political education, and most importantly as an organizing platform. Places of protests, strategies, slogans and guidelines for processions were being issued on these platforms, which are generally done inside the offices of political parties. Long lists of demands was being issued from organizers of protests, initially demanding resignation of the interior minister of Egypt which ended with a demand for resignation of the president Hosni Mubarak making for a most popular slogan '*Al Sha'ab Ureed Isqat al nizam*' [people want regime change].

Perhaps many media organizations were not able to measure the immediate effects of these social media campaigns. Al Jazeera, for example, was busy in exclusive revelations of Wikileaks documents on Palestine. Military institutions in Egypt could not be imagined to come to social media to publish their important announcement but they announced any resignation of Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Shafeeq on its Facebook page.

As long as Hosni Mubarak was in control of the affairs, Egyptian State media was showing tranquil areas in Cairo calling the protests as chaos. The outraged protesters staged a sit-in at state media headquarters and set afire some of its offices as well. Journalists from across the world poured down into Tahrir Square, many in disguise to avoid arrest by the Egyptian government. Many were arrested, sent back, detained and harassed. Every day as protests intensified, so did attacks on journalists.[4] On 25th January, an Al

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[4] Al Jazeera, "Reporting the Egyptian Revolution", *Al-Jazeera*, February 13, 2011. http://english. aljazeera.net/programmes/listeningpost/2011/02/201121375612184592.html (accessed August 17, 2012)

Jazeera crew was kept under watch and many times their equipment was seized. Many reporters spoke live on Al Jazeera from unidentified locations from Cairo, Suez, Alexandria and other protesting cities. Al Jazeera's initial response started with some skepticism and Al Jazeera appeared not to take much risk. Other Arab channels like Al Arabiya had clearly followed an anti-uprising line supporting Saudi King Abdullah's position statement of *La Musawamah* (No Compromise on Mubarak).[5] In the coming days the announcement of 'The Day of Anger' on Friday was game changing and all media knew that things were not normal and political change was just a few days away. On Saturday Egypt's Middle East News Agency, carried a statement by state owned Egypt TV 'congratulating the Egyptian people for their pure great revolution, led by the best of the Egyptian youth. Egyptian TV will be honest in carrying its message, Egyptian TV is owned by the people of Egypt and will be in their service.'[6] Shahira Amin, a former deputy head of the state-run Nile TV news channel, resigned at the start of the demonstrations. She said, 'I liken it to a carpet that needs to have the dust thoroughly beaten out, not just lightly swept, and unless that happens then nothing can really change.'[7] This was common to other Arab state media like in Saudi Arabia, which considered protests to be chaos. Hafez El-Mirazi a veteran Arab journalist of the Saudi-owned news channel Al Arabiya was fired after he insisted on talking about the impact of Egypt's revolution on Saudi Arabia also during his popular show Studio Cairo. In his last show, he announced, 'If you do not see me next week, farewell to you my dear viewers'.[8] Al Jazeera emerged as most powerful and confident media organization after Al Arabiya was known for its pro-Mubarak reports during the Hafez Al Mirazi episode. Embarrassed Egyptian state media apologized protesters by saying 'We were misinformed', Al Jazeera and other transnational Arab televisions appeared to be right, confident and victorious among Egyptian masses. On 6 February 2011, protesters at Tahrir Square were chanting 'long live Al Jazeera.' For many Arabs it was just a prediction which came true.

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[5] Arab News, "King condemns violence in Egypt" *Arab News*, (January, 29, 2011), http://arabnews.com/saudiarabia/article245718.ece (accessed August, 20, 2012)

[6] Al Jazeera , "Egypt State Media Changes Sides", *Al-Jazeera*, (February 13, 2011), http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/02/201121361556414860.html (accessed August, 23, 2012)

[7] Jack Shenker, "Egypt's Media Undergo their Own Revolution" *The Guardian*, (February 21, 2011), http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/feb/21/egypt-media-revolution, (accessed August 23, 2012)

[8] Hasan Masky, "Saudi News Channel Sacks a Broadcaster for His Commentary on Egyptian Revolution", (2011). http://moroccoboard.com/viewpoint/68-hassan-massiki/5079-saudi-news-channel-sacks-a-broadcaster-for-his-commentary-on-egyptian-revolution, (accessed online 20 Aug. 2012)

From a sociological point of view, there are serious questions about the ability of media to deliver desirable social and political promises for which people were inspired to dream. Contesting relations between media technologies and social change, James Beniger argues that the information revolution came as a response to the crisis of control that resulted from the great flows of material and data that accompanied the industrial revolution. This pressing problem of movement of goods, information, and their processes required new means of control. This is why there are innovations such as the telegraph, telephone, assembly lines, and scientific management.[9] Another group of sociologists led by Marshal McLuhan presses that the means of communication have an impact on the trajectory of social evolution and social change. The debate goes on in the Arab world and many questions of whether Arab media is actually that powerful, whether the mass media can really be considered to be the counterparts of a social movement like political Islam, are not given due attention.[10] Al Jazeera for example has been projected as the icon or brand of social and political change in the Arab world which has rattled authoritarian governments.[11] Can Arab media be a replacement for political parties or social institutions required for facilitating change from within a society? Contesting the simplified projection of the Arab Media's ever increased power, Kai Hafez argues that the media show varying potential to contribute to political change within various types and phases of transformation. However, in all possible situations, the mass media are not primary political actors but rather mediators between the government, the opposition and the people.[12] Five suggested frameworks for media and social changes by Kai Hafez, has a great deal of relevance in theorising Arab media and social and political change particularly after successful Arab uprisings. These are (i) *Slow evolution, (ii) Self-induced regime change, (iii) Regime collapse, (iv) Enforced Regime Change and (v) Negotiated system change*, a kind of reform from below can be seen in the Egyptian case where social groups gathered and pressed for a change and media successfully mediated between the changing factors and players.[13] According to Kai Hafez, a negotiated system chan-

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[9] Mamoun Fandy, "Information Technology, Trust, and Social Change in the Arab World", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 3, *The Information Revolution* Summer, (2011): 379.

[10] Kai Hafez, "The Role of Media in the Arab World's Transformation Process" in Hanelt, Christian-Peter, Almut Möller (eds.) *Bound to Cooperate – Europe and the Middle East II*, Bielefeld: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh (2008): -(321-339).

[11] Mohammed El-Nawawy & Adel Iskandar, *Al-Jazeera: The Story of the Network that is Rattling Governments and Redefining Modern Journalism,* (Cambridge: Westview Press: 2003) 34.

[12] ‚Kai Hafez, "The Role of Media in the Arab World's Transformation Process"

[13] Kai Hafez, "The Role of Media in the Arab World's Transformation Process" , (2007)p. 323

ge is achieved through pressure from strong opposition groups, parties and movements which have the capacity to engage with an authoritarian regime, that establish pacts and alliances within the ranks of the opposition, and that are able to force the regime to introduce political change. Though calling it a revolution necessitates regime collapse, Egyptian revolution originated from united opposition's demands to implement political reforms. As one of the activists on Facebook exclaimed, 'it is unbelievable' some said 'they didn't expect it so soon' the negotiated process has taken away Mubarak's support base within the system and the society.

A huge volume can be found of talk, tweets, discussions and comments on social media with regard to these uprisings. From an initial stage to peak time to the downturn of these events, a huge volume of texts, images, audio and videos had successfully mobilized public opinion and had also constructed certain political and religious discourses. Many conflicting ideologies such as liberals and leftists and Islamists were contributing to the same discourse of changing the regime. This powerful and encompassing use of media technologies created an unprecedented media obsession to the extent that even the ruling class was forced to use the same tactics to win public opinion. This social media activism was instant and unplanned and hence remained largely uncontrolled and unrestricted. For example, the daily tweet volume and mentions of *#sidibouzid* in Tunisia had seen a sharp rise between first January to 26 February which was the main period of protests and change.[14] Similarly in Egypt, until 14 January, tweets remained quiet and calm but on the day of Ben Ali's abdication from power, Tweets went intensive and in the second week of February when Mubarak resigned, Tweets have risen at all time high level. It should also be noted that not all protesters were using social media tools. But many activists had been using social media platforms which were being communicated to less active users. For example, the number of calls for protests and the number of actual total protests happened have a better causal effect in Tunisia (18%), Egypt (5%) and Bahrain (32%). The number of social media users had also increased during this period and continued rising in the aftermath. Total Facebook users in Tunisia increased from 1,820,880 on 5th January 2011 to 1,970,200 on 17 January 2011.[15] Because of social media's ever increasing influence, governments were forced to change their laws and incorporate social media tools with many regulations.

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[14] Arab Social Media Report, "Facebook Usage: Factors and Analysis" *Arab Social Media Report,* January (2011), V 1 No. 1.

[15] Arab Social Media Report, "Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter Facebook Usage", *Arab Social Media Report,* May (2011), V 1 No. 2.

Table 1: Social Media Profile of the Arab Countries

Country	Population	New FB Users Since 5 January 2011	Total FB Users 5 April /2011	Twitter users Between Jan 1st and March 30th 2011	Mobile users per 100	Internet per 100 user
ALGERIA	35,953,989	560,820	1,947,900	13,235	93.79	13.47
BAHRAIN	822,510	25,480	302,940	61,896	177.13	53.00
EGYPT	85,950,300	1,951,690	6,586,260	131,204	66.69	24.26
IRAQ	32,266,577	326,600	723,740	21,625	64.14	1.06
JORDAN	6,598,615	313,640	1,402,440	55,859	95.22	26.00
KUWAIT	3,116,748	165,420	795,100	113,428	129.85	36.85
LEBANON	4,287,610	113,940	1,093,420	79,163	56.59	23.68
LIBYA	6,670,928	-182,300	71,840	63,919	77.94	5.51
MOROCCO	32,770,053	724,500	3,203,440	17,3784	79.11	41.30
OMAN	2,964,059	65,010	277,40	6,679	139.54	51.50
PALESTINE	4,542,824	124,720	595,120	11,369	28.62	32.23
QATAR	1,571,520	-30,780	481,280	133,209	175.40	40.00
SAUDI ARABIA	27,136,979	845,620	4,092,600	115,284	174.43	38.00
SUDAN	44,103,535	101,780	443,623	9,459	36.29	9.19
SYRIA	23,008,268	102,918	356,247	40,020	45.57	20.40
TUNISIA	10,476,355	535,640	2,356,520	35,746	95.38	34.07
UAE	4,811,345	291,480	2,406,120	201,060	232.07	75.00
YEMEN	24,943,950	161,380	340,800	29,422	35.25	9.96

Source: Adapted from Arab Social Media Report V. 1. No. 2. May 2011

The Defining Role of Social Media

The success of social media comes directly from the popular use of information technology and dissemination of communication tools among ordinary citizens. The gap of distribution of communication technology between rich and poor, between the East and the West has also decreased when it comes to internet-based applications. Then the success of the technology-society interface in the Arab world has allowed mobile and computer users to express and articulate their political, social and religious opinions. This may not directly translate into social and political revolutions, but the quality of discourses and the quantity of participants has significantly increased as a result of popularizing mobile telephones and the internet. This is also visible in the nature of the public sphere and its discursive trends which appears more volatile and mobilized by the unrestricted flow of information in the hands of

users. This is so much so that traditional mass media (newspapers and televisions and radio) have completely integrated themselves with social media tools and have also launched special web and mobile applications to increase their popularity among their users. For example, many newspapers in the Arab and other regions as well are showing how many times their stories are being shared on social media. Al-Jazeera's news is immediately linked on its social media platforms and is immediately shared by hundreds of its fans on social media. For example most of Egyptian newspapers and televisions are actively engaged with their fans on social media. The anti-military coup Facebook campaign page RNN is most popular among Egyptians having total fans of 6,205,467 whose majority are from Egypt (4,137,993). The *Egypt News Network* has a total of 5,938,588 fans, *Al Youm Al Sabe* has 5,097,896 and Al-Jazeera Mobasher has 4,950,591 fans.[16] Since the data of interface between two and also many other media is not available and is generally held by users, it is not possible to give a general idea but based on social media's interfacing services for their users, it can be assumed their reach has increased.

Table 2: Popular Facebook Campaign Pages during Arab Uprising

	Name of Facebook Page	Fans/likes/
Bahrain		
	Al Thaurah al Hamra fida laky a Bahrain	6,601
	Al Wifaq National Islamic Society (Arabic)	57,932
	For your Solidarity, o Bahrain (ARABIC)	7,628
	Youth Alliance 14 February Revolution	33,953
	Blood of martyrs unite us (ARABIC)	6,633
	Bahrain Democracy & Human Rights Group	2,866
Egypt		
	Kulluna Khaled Said (Arabic page)	1,565,660
	6 April Movement	269,156
	6 April Movement	250, 250
	Egypt 2020	520,26
	Ana Masri had	102,103
	Go Egypt	442,63
	Intifaza misriya zidda ikhwan wa salfiya	4,489
	Wail Ghonaim	379,044
Libya		

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[16] Data from Socialbakers.com on 31 May 2014

		Wifaq Libya	29,692
		WikiLeaks 17 February disclosures	7,346
		Aijl Libya (Libya Hurry Up!)	25,343
		Libya Day of Anger	17,6068
	Syria		
		Syrian Revoloution Humus	10,806
		The Syrian Revolution 2011	310,779
		Free Syria Girls (A)	13,971
		Syrian Day of Rage Arabic	40,852
		The Syrian Days Of Rage (eng)	23,361
	Tunisia		
		Tunisia	221,078
		Tunisia Scandal (Arabic)	60,775
		Ittihad safhat thaurah	83,967
		Baye yasqut nizam (Arabic)	195,909
		Lan nansak ya bouazizi	72,043
		Tunisians are settingthemselves on fire (Arabic)	12,000
	Yemen		
		Revolution of Yemeni People	2,945
		Revolution of Yemen (Arabic)	665
		Kulluna Taz	1,3982
		Thaura Yemen	10,656
		Second Page for Revolution of Change in Yemen	37,049
		Yemen Revolution Watch Network RASD (Arabic)	31,634
		Official page Taiz Freedom Platform	16,961
		Media Group of Yemeni youths for revolution	21,252
		Second page of Revolution for Change	37,049
	*Collected from Facebook.com in November 2011.		

During the high time of uprisings, the popularity of Facebook pages was at an all time high even more than many media organizations' Facebook pages. If taken into account, there has been 252,000 tweets made every day during the Egyptian uprising which make 175 tweets each minute. Similarly on Facebook, on the day of resignation nearly 100,000 comments and likes were made on *Kulluna Khaled Said* Facebook pages. Earlier Facebook pages were made only for and by celebrities and fans were supposed to wish them like the pages of Saudi King Abdullah, Jordanian King Abdulla and even a

page of Hosni Mubarak was there. But now the picture is rapidly changing. Theoretically there has been questions about arguments made by Clay Shirky who argues that the internet has empowered individuals to organize outside the state and in the case of Egypt, Facebook was crucial for coordinating Egyptian protesters. Marc Lynch has suggested four ways by which the new media can be seen challenging to the Arab states: (1) promoting contentious collective action; (2) limiting or enhancing the mechanisms of state repression; (3) affecting international support for the regime; and (4) affecting the overall control of the public sphere.[17] With these challenges, public sphere in the Arab world is on steady transformation where states ability to control and dictate the public sphere has significantly decreased. Table 2 popular Facebook pages used during Arab Uprising in all countries reveals that size of popularity is in no way small or insignificant. This size of fans of a social cause is larger than most of the sample surveys being conducted in the Arab world like the survey of Zogby International, Pew Forum and surveys of Georgetown University conducted by Shelby Telhamy every year.

The nature of Facebook pages have also transformed over the time as uprising enters in different stages. For example now there are so many uprising-centred Facebook news networks which are reporting all small and big events of their activities on their pages and asking their followers to update them from protest sites. News-based Facebook pages like RNN and SNN were created to resist state sponsored media. RNN Libya - receives another 22,000 members, while SNN was liked by 75190. Libyan protesters have been organizing themselves through a popular website which used to post both English and Arabic contents to reach national and international audiences and of course this has earned enormous international solidarity for Libyan protesters.[18] 'We've received overwhelming support, which has allowed all of the people in the region to come together, and it's not just support from Tunisia and Egypt, it's from the United States and beyond' an activist Omar was quoted by website of Channel 4 News.[19] On the other hand, Facebook was being used as a tool of self-promotion by Arab rulers and many of them have a significant number of followers on their pages. King Abdulla of Jordan has 213,054, Saudi Monarch King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz has 29,245 and

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[17] Lynch, Marc (2011). "After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State" *Reflections* June vol. 9/No 2 (3004) 2011.

[18] http://www.libyafeb17.com/

[19] http://www.channel4.com/news/arab-revolt-social-media-and-the-peoples-revolution, Friday 25 February 2011

many other leaders who have been counted as the most influential leaders of the Muslim World in a 2010 ranking. But when the same social networking websites were used by protesters and anti-government activists, they created a historical popularity of their pages and people's participation in them. In June 2010, the Facebook page *Kulluna Khaled Said* (Arabic) and some month later '*We are all Khaled Said*' (English page) were created to pressure the Hosni Mubarak government to take action against responsible police personnel. Similarly the April 6 Movement urged thousands of Egyptian youths to join it with a trust to bring political change for which a majority of political parties had failed. During the unprecedented protests across Egypt, a number of activists and bloggers were being hunted down and arrested for inciting revolt including Wael Ghonaim, the chief architect of creating the online uprising. He was held for twelve days and interrogated and harassed to shut down his activities. The popularity of uprising pages reached hundreds of thousands. 'We are all Khaled Said', was followed by 135,608, *Kulluna Khaled Said* (Arabic page) gained 1,565,660 likes, *6 April Movement* got 250, 250, *Egypt 2020*, 52,026 likes, *Ana Masri* had 102,103 likes, *Go Egypt* 44,263 likes, *We are all Hamza Khateeb* has 19,406 and many other pages which were created by hundreds of young Egyptians.[20] On the day of Friday 'Day of Anger' there was a possibility that protesters were to be cracked down upon by Egyptian authorities. Facebook pages had carried out detailed protest plans and discipline and instructions to help each other and protect children and old people in case of any emergency, to carry water and to keep on praying to Allah for help. Traditional Arab poetry also found popularity on Facebook and poets were frequently quoted, and shared to support the uprising. Similarly Abdul Rahman Yousuf Al Qardawi's very powerful poem *Tabbat Yada Abi Lahab* was liked by more than 300 thousands in which he equated Hosni Mubarak with Abu Lahab an enemy of Prophet Muhammed who was mentioned in Quran. It says the poem says both hands of Hosni Mubarak will be broken and it is promised in Quran, Abu Lahab's both hands were broken.[21]

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[20]   http://www.facebook.com/shabab6april,   http://twitter.com/april6page,   http://www.facebook.com/elshaheed.co.uk,   http://www.facebook.com/ElShaheed,   http://www.facebook.com/hamza.alshaheeed,

[21] Qaseeda Tabbat Yada Abi Lahab, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5pdqn57mPA

Case Study: Kulluna Khaled Said

The Facebook campaign was initially ignored by the government but it gradually gained popularity and it also successfully managed to stage protests and agitations against the government. So much so that the page became a real site of opposition and thousands of youth, activists joined the website and expressed their opinion. Khaled Said became a symbol of resistance and demand for justice for him turned into a movement for complete political change. Soon after Khaled Said was killed by Egyptian police, agitating youths started a Facebook campaign *Kulluna Khaled Said* (We are all Khaled Said) in June 2010 to pressure the Egyptian government. The group successfully mobilized youths, media persons and religious authorities and political parties in its support. Leaders of political parties including former IAEA chief Muhammed El Baradai visited the victim's home and the issue became the talk of the street. The day when *Yaum al Ghadb* (Day of Anger) was announced at Tahrir Square, the Egyptian revolution formally started to take place. People from all over Egypt started coming to Cairo and satellite images of Cairo show that Cairo was surrounded by hundreds of thousands of protesters along with other 20 million protesters in other cities. One woman called upon youths to choose between Egypt or Martyrdom *Ammaal Nasr Amma-Shahadah*. Soon after 25 January, Facebook activities of *Kulluna Khalid* and We all Are Khaled intensified minute by minute updates from across the country. Within 18 days, millions of people visited the page, liked the status, commented and administrators were updating information second by second and minute by minute. On 25 January, at five in the morning the Group posted a painful and angering picture of a 60 years old man who has cut his hand veins in front of the High Court in Cairo. The man complained in the video that he worked for the government and he earned 67 Egyptian pounds a month (about 12 dollars a month) and he had not been paid by the government for four years!!!.' In the afternoon, the group posted news from Dar El Salam, Alexandria, Bab Al Sheria, Qina, Al Areesh, Sinai, and that people from Almunira, Cairo Univ Bridge & Magra Al Oyon wall Bolaq and Nahya have started marching towards Tahrir Square. By five in the evening there were ten thousand protesters at *Mohandesin* (Gamet el dewal street), the group informed. At the same time, the group found international media showing interest in the mobilization and started giving importance to the political issues. 'World media is starting to wake up', a post appeared, followed by 'just got contacted by the BBC and US Radio for interviews at 05:16

evening. At 07:25 evening, the group announced confirmation that Tahrir Square was completely theirs. The Egyptian Police were only worried about protecting their headquarters and the ministry of interior. The government resisted by pouring huge force against protesters allowing clashes between protesters and police and blocking communication tools, mainly mobile, SMS and internet. We were almost cut off from our Egyptian brothers for almost two days and only proxy accounts were able to post any information. The group said that, 'ISP TEData and Cell phone provider Vodafone have closed twitter on their network, shame on them. A lot of websites are now down in Egypt. What a disgrace of these companies obeying the government? (We are all Khaled Said)

The condemnation prompted Vodafone to clarify the situation that it had not blocked anything. As night started, tension increased and police finally opened fire on some protesters causing many injured. Mobile networks disappeared from Tahrir Square but protesters however managed alternatives. Protesters were short of food and water, local restaurants and shops were reported providing free meals and water to protesters. People from Sinai called their fellows not to come back from Tahrir without freedom with them. Late night one protester was beaten to death by Egyptian police however protesters remained calm and peaceful Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya reported. People around the world were anxiously following the updates, what is happening there. Many had posted prayers, wishes for protesters, many posted guidelines for Islamic ethics for protests and many were just curious to know what was going on.

Table 3: Popular Posts on *Kulluna Khaled Said* Facebook Campaign Page

Date	Popular Posts of Kulluna Khaled Said on 25 January 2011	likes	comments
00:15	This protest will end the regime	1,207	392
00:30	Schedule of protests at 2 pm	306	132
2:00	Video message of Asma Mahfuz	736	239
2:22	Egypt is the hope of all Arabs, if Egypt overcomes it, all Arab can do it.	903	248
2:42 am	Whatever happens, come down on roads	2,094	1,048
5:20	Avoid clash with security forces, maintain calm	400	139
12:13	People of Hizb al watani spreading propaganda and fear	701	303

12:20	Our facebook reached 390000	429	196
12:47	Security forces are not our enemy, they are also victims, don't clash with them	491	174
12:55	Information of places and persons to be contacted in notes	307	135
13:14	Note mobile numbers in case change in venues	308	213
14:00	Motivating verse from Quran	1,182	181
4:02	Protests at Supreme Court, Tahrir Square and other parts of the country	695	372
4:31	Protest at Hizbal Watani HQRS	652	90
16:35	Slogan for life with Freedom, dignity and nationalism at Tahrir square	520	125
16:40	Protest at Kobri	519	180
16:50	Al Jazeera says it is bigger protest than that of 1970s	765	205
16:59	Security has lost its control on the city	1,140	761
19:27	Tahrir is live on Al Jazeera	939	534
21:34	Protesters assembled at police station near CNN Office	700	257
22:07	Long live Egypt	782	374
	30000 at Tahrir, 20000 at Suez, 20000 Alexandria	1,130	401
	Selected posts of Kulluna Khaled Said on 11 February		
3:33	Speeches suggest that resign is imminent	7,319	7,392
4:50	request to all youth to participate in public opinion	15,599	50,840
13:30	I am with revolution, for our rights	6,626	2,547
13:37	I have not requested people to go back to home	6,017	3,093
14:17	I have full faith in Egyptian army	6,573	3,448
14:33	25 January youths for revolution will issue a statement	3,955	3,043
18:18	Message to foreign countries: you are not looking for our interests, you are keen only on your interests	9,191	2,893
18:33	Demands from streets will go higher if not met within time	5,510	5,041
18:47	Tribute to Sadaddin Al Shazili	12,692	7,241
20:32	Congratulations! Egypt! The Criminal left the president palace	15,173	10,833
21:33	Blood of martyrs is victorious	15,437	10,192

Source: *Kulluna Khaled Said* (Arabic Page):

http://www.facebook.com/ElShaheeed accessed on 17 August 2011

11 February 2011 was the climax of the protest when the disgraceful exit of Hosni Mubarak was confirmed. Sensation, emotion, zeal curiosity, courage and tears assembled at Tahrir Square and so were on the Facebook pages. At 1 in the morning, the group reported that there were thousands of protesters surrounding the presidential palace. 'No confirmation if Mubarak is inside or not. There are thousands also surrounding the State TV building & protesters have made roadblocks to prevent anyone from going in or out of the State TV building. It's completely locked down. Friday prayers will start soon and after that we expect millions more to come out all over the country.' Early in the morning the group reported from BBC Arabic that 'Mubarak and his family had left Egypt from Almaza airport today. At 20:04, the group exclaimed, 'MUBARAK RESIGNSssssssssssssssssssssssssss'. Ten minutes later, the group moderator made another emotional post 'I can't believe it ... for 30 years.. 30 years of dictatorship... Mubarak resignsssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssss'. Almost 11 thousand liked the statuses about Mubarak's resignation and 19000 people commented on them thanking Allah and with the support and wishes for the Egyptians' new dawn. At 9 pm the group came to thank all protesters and supporters from across the world.[22]

Thank god. Thanks to all those who died for us to live in freedom. Thanks to all Egyptians who slept rough in Tahrir, Alexandria and everywhere. Thank you all on this page for your support & your amazing greatness & help. Thanks to everyone who called his leader and his representative. Thank you Tunisia!

We are all Egyptians. You are all Egyptians. We are all Khaled Said.

The 'Blood of martyrs won' status was liked by more than 15000 people and around 10000 commented. Similarly the 6 April Movement, another youth group which took help of a social networking website, announced Mubarak's resignation: History is written by those who win... we won and we're writing a whole new history. (See the table of selected post on Facebook pages of 'We are all Khaled' on 25 January and 11 February)[23]

The page *Kulluna khaled Said* was followed by millions, a number that is higher than the audience size of some transnational Arab televisions except Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya. Furthermore, the comparison of Al Jazeera

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[22] "We are All Khaled Said", http://www.facebook.com/elshaheeed.co.uk (accessed online on 17 August 2011).

[23] "We are All Khaled Said", http://www.facebook.com/elshaheeed.co.uk (accessed online on August, 17, 2011).

vs. *Kulluna Khaled Said* Facebook pages reveals that participation was much more impressive and instant at the *Kulluna Khaled Said* page than what was on Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya's Facebook pages. This is more evident during the days of Tahrir Square protests from 25 January to 11 February 2011. The number of likes, shares, and comments is far more than what were on both transnational Arab televisions. Al Jazeera's intense reporting started only after the 25th of January even when there was no report posted on Al Jazeera's Facebook page on 25 January about Egyptian protests. From 26 January onwards, Al Jazeera posted nearly 200 stories, audiotapes, images and video news about protests. On the other hand, *Kulluna Khaled Said* posted more than 50 most alone on 25th January with more numbers of likes and comments than what were done on Al Jazeera's Facebook page.

Political Discourse on Social Media

Given the popularity of *Kulluna Khaled Said* and its English page 'We are All Khaled Said', its political and social discourse should also be taken as a serious phenomenon evolved through public opinion. Like common mistakes in the western media, a recent survey of The Economist projecting Egypt as highest in the rank of Caliphate-demanding countries in the Islamic world has again powerful voices in virtual forums of an Arab uprising where there is no sign of alarm as far as any question of Islamic extremism is concerned[24]. This is grossly against what has been talked about on *Kulluna Khaled Said* Facebook. There has been lot of talk about Islam, United States, Europe and many issues which many of western media tend to highlight as an alarming phenomenon. During the protests at Tahrir Square, neither slogans nor posts at *Kulluna Khaled Said* were representing what western media and survey agencies used to present. America and Israel as well as Europe were not big issues for protesters. Popular slogans at Tahrir Square were not 'Death to America' or 'Death to Israel' or even not a single flag of any western country was burnt. Of Christians and Coptic minorities, protesters' gestures were unprecedented and completely different from Western projection of Egyptian society. Christian and Copt protesters were hand in hand and were lined to protect Muslim protesters during prayers. Slogans of unity such as 'crescent and the cross say no my love / darling', 'The crescent and the cross against murder and torture', were very popular. Unlike Economist's worry,

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[24] "Dreaming of a Caliphate", *The Economist*, August 6, (2011).

there most popular slogans were not even 'Islam is the solution', rather '*Irhal Mubarak Irhal'* [Leave Mubarak Leave], 'I don't want, I don't want, neither his dogs nor his prisons', 'Wake up Egypt and become aware, they had deprived your sons of sleep day after day', 'they sold our blood, they sold our kidneys, and we beg, we and our families' were most popular slogans. This discourse has set the direction of Arab Uprisings in Tunisia and in Egypt particularly towards a moderate secular democracy where Islam and liberal values are respected. Some of the wall posts from administrators of *Kulluna Khaled Said* are presented in the following table:

Subject/ Date/ Time	Posts
Only Egypt 28 January 15:34	Please please! Special request from the great people on this page. Let us just focus on E G Y P T today. If you want to talk about Iran, 911, Israel, etc, please postpone this until those who are about to be killed in Egypt survive. Where I am now, what is my religion and what is my race have nothing to do with anything. This page is Egypt not me. Sorry, but I have to say this to the few who distract us.
Christians/ Copts 30 January 18:38	Urgent situation now: In Tahrir square, there are more than 200 thousand people now including Judges, Al Azhar scholars, Opposition leaders (from all parties) from protesters are made up of women, children, men, young and old, Muslims, Christians & Atheists. Jet Fighter planes are flying low in the square with helicopters as well. I'm really scared a massacre is about to happen
Communal Unity 23 February 21:45	Egyptian Muslims & Christians are much more united now than they were in Mubarak's troubled times. In this video, Egypt's flag was raised between an Egyptian church & a mosque across the street with Egyptians from both faiths happily waving the flag. Once again, justice & freedom bring unity & fights extremism. If you want to end extremism from all backgrounds, end injustice, dictatorships & give people their freedom
9 February 15:17	A tweet by Shamoussa who is in Tahrir square: " @Shamoussa: We're Christian and we're out on the streets protesting! stop bullshitting about Islamists! #Jan25 #Egypt
6 February 17:06	I posted before that today Egyptian Christians did their mass in Tahrir square & Egyptian Muslims were protecting them in case Mubarak thugs attack. This is a photo taken of Father Fawzi Khalil holding the Bible standing by an Imam holding the Quran at Tahrir square today.
6 February 3:26	Egyptian Christians will do their Sunday mass tomorrow at 1 pm in Tahrir square. Egyptian Muslims will surround them to protect them & will protect all entrances to the square in case Mubarak thugs try to attack. Egyptian Christians did the same thing to Egyptian Muslims on Friday during Friday prayers. One country united against a dictatorship.
USA 22 January 19:11	Since start of protests, Ben Ali and his supporters are blaming that youths are financed by external forces. They are agents of America and Israel. They are vested interest people. After the revolution, same people are congratulating.

16 January 12:31	American and Russian presidents decided to visit a restaurant with common people; they ordered some fast food, enjoyed and paid their bills. They forgot for some time their politics because they care for the interests of their people. In our country it is a different story.
28 January 23:38	The State Department has only urged all parties to exercise restraint, and expressed "concern" over the Egyptian government's massive blocking of communications in-country. We ask our government to take a firmer line against the Egyptian government's repression, and in support of the democratic aspirations of its people
27 January 6:49	The United States bluntly urged Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Wednesday to make political reforms in the face of protesters demanding his ouster, in a shift in tone toward an important Arab ally.
Muslim Brotherhood 27 January 17:46	According to the Guardian, Israeli officials are siding with the dictatorship and are saying its either Mubarak or an Islamist takeover (whatever that means)... Just to be clear, these are lies. Many organizers and activists are secular and are not Islamists. We want one free Egypt for All. NO ONE group will take over Egypt & No one will be excluded.
26 January 23:51	The Egyptian government conveyed to the US government that Muslim Brotherhood is behind all protests. Hey liars! This is made of all Egyptians, Christians, Muslims and Copts. Muslim Brotherhood is just one minority of this majority. You are using Muslim Brotherhood's name only to protect yourself and to make the world afraid.
1 February 16:40	This revolution has nothing in common with Iran's. Egypt will never be like Iran. We respect all peace treaties with all countries of the world (Israel treaty). The revolution is by Egyptians from all backgrounds & ages and not by MB. Our members joined protesters as individuals. We are a political non-violent group.
*spelling quoted as posted in the http://www.facebook.com/elshaheeed.co.uk	

Conclusion

This paper gives a picture of volatile social media in the Arab world during the uprisings. The way social media has become an integral part of public sphere, it has become a central component of transforming public sphere. Not only its uncontrollable discursive flows, but also its reach to a wider audience who do not share class many things except their access to the internet. Arab uprisings were motivated by aspirations of ordinary Egyptians and Tunisians for political empowerment and economic prosperity in the world of globalization. One of the major failures of traditional electronic and print media is their limitations to give feedback from their readers and audiences. Social media networks mainly the Facebook has allowed a powerful counter public to emerge on virtual public sphere which is unavoidable. The way Egyptian military came on Facebook to assure Egyptians and then state media came to apologize on social media, was mainly because of tremendous pressure on them made by social media protests. A survey of the *Kulluna Khaled Said* page reveals that members have heavily commented, liked and

shared the news a feature which was not available with traditional orbit and broadcast media. The success of social networking pages in facilitating Arab uprisings and allowing them to reach their logical end has also unveiled future dynamics of civil society which has found a major mobilizing force in social media. In a sense, social media appears primarily a site of larger civil society more than a consumer's personal page. Most of the participants are also willing to join this online civil society by expressing their solidarity and supporting them or sometimes by criticising and expressing differences of opinion.

From discourse perspective, unlike the Iranian revolution in 1979, or other Arab uprisings in 2005, these uprisings remained largely free from rhetoric and were focused on domestic politics. As Marc Lynch points out that these uprisings demonstrate the wisdom of the administration's efforts to downgrade the 'war of ideas' and to deal with the Muslim communities of the world through a lens not defined by terrorism and al-Qaeda. It isn't entirely an accident that al-Qaeda has struggled to find a foothold in the Arab uprisings.[25] On the other hand, the United States' and Europe's domestic politics is fuelling and supporting a clash of civilization by allowing Quran-burning to anti-sharia campaigns (or, offshore, Sarkozy's niqab ban).[26] Popular slogans at Tahrir Square were not 'Death to America' or 'Death to Israel' or even not a single flag of any western country was burnt which has been very common scene in the Arab world since the American alliance had attacked Iraq and Afghanistan. The way that the Arab uprising has been communicated by social networking websites and then by electronic and print media in the region has facilitated commonalities of the Arab Public Sphere and has caused immediate domino effects in the entire region.

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[25] Marc Lynch, "U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Arab Uprisings" *Foreign Policy*, April 13, (2011) accessed online 20 May 2012, URL: http://lynch.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/04/13/us_public_diplomacy_and_the_arab_uprisings

[26] Marc Lynch, "U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Arab Uprisings" *Foreign Policy*, April 13, (2011) accessed online 20 May 2012, URL: http://lynch.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/04/13/us_public_diplomacy_and_the_arab_uprisings

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