The Screams of The Butterfly
An Ethnography of Exiled Egyptian Political Activists in Berlin

By

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For those who dream in undreamy times,
who started to dream less after dreaming high.

Abstract

My research concerns the experience of exile after the 2011 revolutionary uprising in Egypt. Based on ethnographic engagement with a group of exiled Egyptian political activists who chose Berlin as their destination, I analyze their subjectivity formation and social becoming in exile. Through ethnographic findings, each chapter discusses one dimension of the complex process of becoming an exile. My main argument is two-fold: firstly, I argue that the socio-political phenomenon of exile is at the heart of Egyptian post-2013 politics and Egypt's counter-revolutionary aftermath. The exiles, who are the families and friends of the political prisoners in Egypt and the revolutionaries of the 2011 uprising are inseparable to the emergence of the post-2013 military-backed regime. Thus, studying the causes of the exiles closely is a way of articulating types of marginalization in contemporary Egypt. Secondly, the exiles are dysphoric subjects, who are shattered between the realities of exile, and their lived pasts and longing for return. I attempt to understand how the exiles feel their losses and experience their (suspended) relations with Egypt in exile. I focus on their emotions, dreams and narratives of their time in exile, to argue that the exiles are dysphoric subjects who are in a state of unease, uncertainty and in-betweenness due to their multiple losses. The dysphoric subjectivity I show is a painful process of becoming an exile. The exiles try to enliven and emplace the conditions of exile. As they are in transition, dysphoric subjects are also in dynamic, changing states of self-discovery and becoming. I contend that marginality, exile, could be a way of shaping types of political subjectivities that go beyond the national boundaries.

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1 Introduction: Stitching Life Otherwise

> I love you country of mud and others love you,
> and something will come out of this feeling
> Today is distance, escape […] and patience
> Being Argentinian is being sad,
> Being Argentinian is being far away
>
> Julio Cortázar, an exiled Argentinian poet and novelist in Paris

It is a matter of coincidence to write my thesis while I find myself stuck in Brussels because of COVID19 and its historical consequences on Europe. Julio Cortázar, the Brussels-born poet whose memorial is two-minute walking from where I stay in Ixelles, knew it well: Being Argentinian is being sad and far away. While everyone is compelled to 'stay at home,' I wonder where and whose 'home' I should stay at? During the quarantine days, walking by the house in which Cortázar was born reminds me that political dictatorships and genocidal regimes that I see in the current Middle East are to end one day, including al-Sisi's military-dominated regime in Egypt. I walk to Cortázar's memorial to remind myself of the reconfigurations of humans' history in fighting against repression. I share with the exiled poet the feeling of dispossession when a "house [is] taken over" and his feeling that "something will come out of this feeling" (Cortázar 2016). It is with a broken heart to say that 'being Egyptian' for thousands of people came to mean being far away, sad, and with their home country is taken over. This thesis, however, is about being far away and sad, but not yet taken over.

I became interested in researching Egyptian post-2013 exiles because I cannot return to my native Egypt. I am afraid of being like Patrick Zaki, the 28-year-old gender studies student at the University of Bologna and human rights researcher who was arrested upon arrival at Cairo International Airport in February 7, 2020. I am afraid of having the destiny of dying alone in a filthy prison cell, like Shady Habash, the 22-year-old photographer and filmmaker who died on May 2, 2020 because he directed a video-clip which insults al-Sisi. I also care not to die alone in

exile like Mohamed Hassan, the 20-year-old Egyptian who died on May13, 2020 by the COVID 19 in New York. Hassan was forced to leave Egypt at the age of 14 after he was detained three times and was sentenced 14 years in prison in absentia. His father is still in prison, while his family is locked inside Egypt. In addition to my fears to return, for moral reasons, I refuse to be conscripted in the Egyptian military, at this critical moment of Egyptian modern history, which forced me to leave Egypt initially. Back then, I did not realize that my very personal decision was a way of navigating the hegemonic militarized politics which was intensified since 2013, with the mandatory conscription as one of its chief manifestations (A. M. Bakr 2019). I chose a 'humane punishment,' as one interlocutor pointed it: exile.

During the 18 days of the 2011 revolutionary uprising in Tahrir Square, Louis Saint-Just's famous quote, "those who make half a revolution only dig their own graves," was reiterated. Banners that read "Half a revolution equals the destruction of a nation," "People who make a half revolution will be screwed," "Half-revolutions, Shrouds of the revolutionaries" and "Honor the regime by burying it" were all around the square. My thesis concerns the other half of the revolution, the one that the Egyptians failed to make, by studying a group of the survivors of their own graves: the Egyptian political exiles in Berlin. When the collective revolutionary music is over by counter-revolutionary forces, it is not a time for turning out the lights. It is, rather, the time for hearing "the scream of the butterfly"[1].

Highlighting the screams of the revolutionary butterflies is a way of re-articulating the 2011 uprising and unpacking its present legacy. I believe that researching exile or political imprisonment, for example, in contemporary Egypt pieces together the scattered traces and

[1] Paraphrasing Jim Morrison, *When The Music's Over.*

residues of the 2011 uprising and its revolutionaries, despite their ideological differences and the differential exclusion they are exposed to. Exile, as *a* counter-revolutionary phenomenon and mind-split, embodied experience, came to unite, somehow, the political opposition in Egypt and the young revolutionaries of 2011. Without exaggeration, if they are not killed or imprisoned yet, the revolutionaries are either living in hiding to avoid imprisonment, forced disappearance or extrajudicial killing (Chapter 1), or exiled (Chapters 2 and 3). Hence, exile engenders a new life that would be otherwise taken, whether "taken" means military conscription, compromise, complicity, imprisonment, or death. The political exiles, the heroes of this thesis, take of their exile an opportunity to stitch a life otherwise.

The overarching question of my thesis is: *what does it mean to become an exile?* I investigate this question by showing processes of subject formation endangered by exile. Each chapter discusses one dimension of the complex process of becoming an exile. I explore subjectivity as a historically situated positioning in broader power structures. I focus more on my interlocutors' relations and affections towards Egypt than towards Berlin. During my fieldwork engagement with my interlocutors, Egypt was the dominant theme. It was more convenient for me to focus on their struggles and attempts in stitching a life beyond Egypt than talking about the kind of life they have in Berlin. I am aware that the boundaries between both processes are intersected and in flux. As their narrations of exile focused primarily on their losses and dispossessions, I believe that focusing on their lives in Berlin and their engagement in the new community, without starting by exploring what led them to end up in Berlin and how they proceed with their lives, might conceal their pasts and journeys, which are worth rescue and documenting. Additionally, it might invisibilize their ongoing inner fights, screams and unsettlements in Berlin, while imagining a life away from their home country. Hence, I explore the political and social processes concerning

the formations of these unsettled selves, situating them in the Egyptian counter-revolutionary context. The thesis, as a result, aims to show a fraction of the Egyptian exiles' lives in Berlin, as a part of their becoming as exiles.

1.1 The red-liners: exiled Egyptians in Berlin

Contemporary Egypt is a window into how an authoritarian regime has been fiercely re-consolidated after a social uprising that aimed to fragment its power. Al-Sisi's Egypt does not put multiple options for the political critics. This started by the violent dispersals of anti-coup sit-ins at the al-Nahda and Rabaa al-Adawiya squares, which claimed the lives of over 1000 protestors in few hours in August 2013 (Human Rights Watch 2014). When al-Sisi officially came to power, Egypt witnessed unprecedented levels of violence. He himself has threatened before the 2018 presidential 'elections' that he better dies before anyone thinks about "disrupting the security of Egypt". He added that "what happened seven or eight years ago, will never happen again in Egypt," in reference to the 2011 uprising (Egyptian Streets 2018). This was proved true when the security forces arbitrary arrested more than 4000 people in response to a rare outbreak of protests in September 2019, closed the main squares of the capital cities and randomly stopped the passers to check their social media content. This was not far when Egypt's Parliament Speaker said that those criticizing the political leadership "have no place *inside* Egypt and should go to another country" (Magdy 2019). He continued that "we are [the Parliament] committed to protect the people. The nation, the political leadership, the military and police are *red-lines*".

My thesis focuses on those exiled activists who were forced to leave Egypt since 2013. It could be said that the exiles represent the 'red-liners' who refused but to cross these red-lines for seeking democratic social change. Hence, they were forced to flee Egypt. Based on ethnographic

engagement, I show how the exiles are at the heart of Egyptian post-2013 politics. Following the Rabha massacre, large numbers of Islamist activists began leaving Egypt, while numbers of secular intellectuals and activists left from 2014 onward as the state's crackdown on civil society started escalating (Grimm 2015; Hamzawy 2017; 2019). Those who left Egypt are not a homogeneous group; far more groups became at serious risk, "Islamists as well as Christians, liberals as well as leftists, artists as well as business people, prominent intellectuals, [students, academics and professionals] as well as scrappy activists" (Michele and Hamzawy 2019, 1). The expatriated are fragmented around Qatar, Turkey, Sudan, North America, Europe, Australia and Asia (A. Bakr and Maclean 2014; Kassab 2016; Michele and Hamzawy 2019, 3). Reasons for leaving Egypt are numerous; while some people left based on a general sense that the political climate had become hazardous for them, others left because of specific fears due to court convictions, fabricated lawsuits, job losses and hostile conditions at work, attacks in the media, assassination attempts, police harassment, or direct physical threats related to their political, journalistic, or civil society activities (Kassab 2016; Michele and Hamzawy 2019).

Similarly, the exiles I met in Berlin were from diverse backgrounds, including liberals, leftists, human rights advocates, Islamists, academics, journalists, artists and students. Some of them cannot return because they have imprisonment sentences in Egypt, while others are afraid to return due to the oppressive political situation in Egypt. I chose to call them 'exiles' for a variety of reasons. Obviously, they are not (economic) migrants, as they did not choose to migrate initially and all of them yearn for regaining the option of returning. Not all of them are (legally) refugees. Out of the 25 individuals I met, five of them held either refugee or international protection statuses. The rest held student and work residencies in Germany. However, all of them are in refugee-like conditions. Regardless of their plurality and their differences, I believe that the experience of exile

they share unites them; however their conditions of exile are different due to their educational statuses, professional careers and their time *in* exile. Additionally, the majority of them define themselves as living in exile. My definition of exile is open: anyone who has been politically active in the broader sense and was forced or pressured to leave Egypt *and* cannot return is an exile. This includes those who participated in the uprising or the events after, members of social movements and human rights advocates. Boundaries between the so-called 'self-imposed' exiles and forced exiles are blurred. Most of my interlocutors were imprisoned or harassed by the security forces in Egypt, then left Egypt through the airports. Few others fled irregularly through the southern borders with Sudan. Some interlocutors were already living in Germany, and then they realized that they cannot return due to their activism in the diaspora.

In Egypt's counterrevolutionary aftermath, I believe, forms of exilement are proliferated and multiplied since 2013. Exilement is the practices and forces that lead to the production of individual exiles. I am aware that I cannot reduce 'the exiles' only to the individuals who were forced to leave to avoid political persecution and unable to return. After the revolution, with the unfolding social conflicts and the rapid increase of political violence against masses since 2013, many decided to leave the country for multiple reasons *in addition to* individualized fears of persecution. I believe that political disappointment, military draft evasion, the hazardous political scene, the securitization of the urban landscape, the neoliberal restructuring of urban spaces and increasing economic inequalities are reconfigurations of exilement and among the factors from which displacement emerge in contemporary Egypt (see, e.g., Çaglar and Glick Schiller 2018; Miraftab 2014; Abdelrahman 2017; Malmström 2019). However, I delineate the interest of this thesis by focusing on Egyptian exiled individuals who fled the country due to specific fears (Chapter 1) *and/or* unable to return (Chapter 2) since 2013.

In 2018, Germany received 6,210 persons from Egypt seeking protection status because they have been persecuted on political grounds (Central Register of Foreigners in Germany 2018). This number is not accurate as not all the displaced Egyptians in Germany are registered, and the activists have a variety of legal statuses in Germany. However, Germany considers Egypt as a 'safe country of origin,' which makes the recognition of asylum applications from Egypt difficult. Since Germany's relation to Egypt is considered of 'strategic interest,' the country has provided political, financial and security support to al-Sisi's regime in order to maintain 'long term stability' (Federal Foreign Office 2019). Egypt is one of the largest arms buyers from Germany in the recent years.

The Egyptian diasporic community in Berlin, on the other side, was one of the most active diasporic communities during and after the 2011 uprising in Europe. Berlin provides a peculiar setting for exile communities to raise and sustain. Berlin became the capital of the Arab exiles in Europe in the aftermath of the Arab revolutions. A new forcibly displaced Syrian community emerged along with the Palestinian and Lebanese communities in Berlin (Ali 2019). The emerging Arab exile community in Berlin is beyond any unified culture, religion, nationality and social class, consisting of overlapping backgrounds and political experiences born out of the 'failed' Arab uprisings (2019).

1.2 Methodology:

This thesis is based on interviews with 25 individuals I met during my fieldwork in Berlin in September-November 2019. Twenty of them are exiles and the other five go back and forth between Egypt and Germany. Interviewing non-exiles with whom the exiles share social grounds in Berlin helped me conceptualize the affect of terror I discuss in Chapter 2. I conducted three

interviews through skype with exiled Egyptians who are outside Berlin, to ask them about their experiences with the Egyptian embassy in Berlin. Most of the interviews were recorded then transcribed. However, some interviewees refused to be recorded, hence I depended on my notes while analyzing them. I changed all the names of my interlocutors to protect their identities. I follow most of my interlocutors on social media, which kept me updated with the news they share.

The interviews were semi-structured with life-history insights, in which I asked about the political trajectories of the exiles and what led them into exile. Life-history inspired approaches are situated in exile studies, in terms of the intimacy of exile experience and the process of exile (McKeever 2019, 2). In my research, adopting a life-history guided approach means to comprehend how my participants experience the phenomenon of exile, and it opens rooms for emergence, discovery and exploration (Cornejo 2008, 337). In the interviews, each ranged between 2 to 3 hours, my questions focused on the personal and emotional impacts of the experience of exile on my interviewees and their political views in exile. I used to start with a general question and leave the interview to take its way. However, I was keen not to allow the interview to go in a traumatizing way. I diversified my follow-up questions between the personal and the social, the private and the public, not to make a theme dominate the discussion. I was careful of my interlocutors' reactions and voice tones. I ended a couple of interviews because I sensed that my interlocutor did not want to talk more or wanted to escape and avoid the topics.

The interviews were held in coffee shops, my interlocutors' houses or while walking. I used a snowball approach to reach my interviewees, often relying on introductions by other friends or informants. My personal networks made it easy for many interlocutors to trust me and be willing to talk. These networks are friends (often introduced through other friends) whom I get to know before going to the fieldwork. In many interviews, my interlocutors decided to talk with me

because I do not go back to Egypt as well or because we shared similar political views, particularly being anti the military rule in Egypt. I learned during other interviews that some interlocutors asked others about me, whether I was trustworthy or not. I loved my interlocutors. I empathized with them and with how courageous they are. I hope this empathy guides my thesis throughout. My fieldwork days were hard on me psychologically. I used to have nightmares every night because of the stories I heard. After some interviews, I was terrified. I remember very well that after some interviews I walked full of fear, looking around the streets of Berlin to see if someone was following me or not. Some of my interlocutors became paranoid once they started to talk about Egypt and this over-cautiousness transmitted to me.

This fear was one of the limitations of my fieldwork. I was cautious before contacting some of my interlocutors. I did not contact other potential interlocutors, fearing that they would be surveilled by Egyptian informants. Another limitation was that most of my interlocutors were men. It was hard to reach exiled females whom I do not know, because of the sensitivity of the topic, the difficulty of approaching them without prior introductions from others and my short-term fieldwork. Six of the interviewees were females. Additionally, one of my interlocutors told me, when I asked him to recommend people to talk to, that it was not about mistrust that people did not want to tell their stories as it was about the general political depression and despair most of Egyptians have.

1.3 Introducing the chapters: becoming exiles

The thesis is an ethnographical attempt to depict what it means to become an exile for the Egyptians I met. I start by interpreting their decision to flee Egypt. Analyzing their time in hiding while escaping police arrest, I render Egypt as a necropolitical space in which they were exposed

to death at any moment. My interlocutors experienced intense feelings of insecurity, fear and worry before leaving the country. Chapter 1 problematizes the rigid understanding of the notions of life and death. Forms of death took different shapes, including living in hiding, losing social connections, being exposed to police arrest, and living with extensive fear and worry. I build on Mbembe's thesis of necropolitics to argue that the exiles' routes to flee the country before being arrested are forms of survival, represented by escape and flight. Escape is understood here as a mode of agency in which the subject avoids the field in which their attackers operate, as a subverting act that challenges the necropolitical regimes of control. The act of escape allows for an existential mobility and for further opportunities in life. Hence, I show how necropolitics might engender alternatives modes of political life, represented here in the attempts of escape.

The next two chapters talk about the kind of 'life' that is established and engendered by this process of escaping, a life that is temporary, fragile, scattered and uncertain. In Chapter 2, I demonstrate that this escape is not absolute. The reconfigurations of necropolitics are seen in the diaspora through the atmospheres of terror. I argue that the dominant culture of fear in Egypt is found and reflected in the diaspora, through multiple state processes of securitizing the diaspora, which include denying the exiles official documents, writing security reports about the exiles in Berlin, cutting state-funded scholarships from the PhD students, harassing the exiles' families in Egypt and denying entry to Egyptians who have second nationality because of their political opinions. State terror is not only a product of these technologies. The circulation of bodies and rumors about state surveillance in the diaspora, news of political violence from Egypt and traumatic memories engender state terror, which in turn performs the subject, leading to insecurities and inconsistences in exiles' lives. The chapter shows the affective dimensions through which the state operates as an "affective state".

Chapter 3 builds on the previous two chapters. I argue that the act of escape (Chapter 1) is not a form of political withdrawal from politics. The exiles are still involved in and attached to Egyptian politics, irrespective of their displacement. However, it is not only terror (Chapter 2) that makes the exiles insecure. Feelings of uncertainty, fragility, inability, strangeness, nostalgia and longing, shame, guilt, loneliness and being 'out of place and time' haunt the exiles every now and then. These feelings cause them a state of unease and dissatisfaction with their current social positionings as exiles. This state can be interpreted as a form of political dysphoria. The dysphoric subjects are in tensions with their exilic conditions, due to the emotions they experience daily and the consequences of their displacement. The subjects are in pain and suffering because of their displacement, which results in a state of being shattered and fragmented between exile and home.

In the last chapter, *Undoing Exile*, I conclude that the exiles might take their exile as a potential for self-growth and development. Exile can be a space for widening their understanding of the political, by initiating multiple solidarities with different groups and engaging with political causes that were not present in their home countries. Additionally, exile might enable the exiles to rethink the terrains of sovereign politics beyond forms and acts of national citizenship. 'Undoing Exile' is an opportunity for studying the exiles' lives *in* Berlin, despite *and* irrespective of the exile conditions. It is a starting point of a new research, as this thesis does not cover it.

2 Being on The Run in Egypt: Surviving Necropolitics Through Escaping

Before I sink into the big sleep
I want to hear
I want to hear
The scream of the butterfly

Jim Morrison, an American song-writer

Oh streets,
Remember me
Remind them of [my] blood

Aly Talibab, an Egyptian underground rapper

One night in 2017, my mother asked me to go out to hand some money to a man who was awaiting me in front of the house and take a bag from him. I went outside in my sleeveless shirt and jean shorts, to see a young man in his thirties standing by his motorcycle. He stared at me for seconds, without moving towards me. I read fear mixed with carefulness in his eyes. We did not talk; he gave me a bag, I handed him the money. I went quickly to ask my mother about the story of this man. I learned that he was *mutarad*, hiding to avoid police arrest because he had a life sentence for "destabilizing the state and joining a banned group". He had to leave his house together with his family: his wife with four young children. His wife, whom my mother knows, started to buy and sell household items, among other activities, to earn a living. Her husband used to deliver the products to 'trusted customers'. He worked at night and stayed at 'home' during the day. His gaze haunted me for months and I kept asking my mother for news about him. In February 2020, my mother texted me that he died due to a heart attack. Days later, she texted me again, saying that the one who had died was a different man, who had been living in hiding as well. The man whom I shortly met was still alive. He still lives in hiding today. His story is the story of thousands of young Egyptians who have been locked inside Egypt. Few others managed to flee Egypt and they become locked outside the country. This chapter is about what led them to flee. It also reflects the struggles of those who are still locked inside like this man.

The 2013 military coup led by the back-then General al-Sisi in Egypt and the social conflicts that followed have displaced thousands of Egyptians both inside and outside Egypt. The military-backed regime's 'war on dissent' forced many political activists who participated in the 2011 revolutionary uprising to leave Egypt, avoiding political imprisonment and torture, arbitrary detention, forced disappearance and extra-judicial killings (el-Hamalawy 2019; Kassab 2016; Pratt and Rezk 2019). The emergency rule, as I show in this chapter, is the dominant paradigm of government in Egypt and Agamben's 'state of exception' is one of the main characteristics of modern Egyptian regimes (Amnesty International 2019a; Ardovini and Mabon 2019). Since 2013, public spaces of opposition were closed or co-opted in the dominant Egyptian militarized politics. The self-proclaimed war on terror by the military-backed regime expanded in scope and reached to obscure any political critics. Political imprisonment is deployed to slowly kill the political dissent. Nine hundred fifty-eight political prisoners have been slowly killed because of the harsh conditions of imprisonment and ill-treatment since 2013 (see, Al-Jazeera Arabic 2020; CFJ 2020).

In Cairo, Alexandria, and other cities in and around main streets and squares, the security forces in uniform or plainclothes arbitrarily check the mobile phones and social media content of the passers-by. Hundreds who have been discovered posting anti-government songs and slogans on their social media accounts or carry them on their phones have been arbitrary arrested (HRW 2019c). A friend of mine was abducted by the police after they have seen a Facebook post calling for freedom to the political prisoners on his phone. He was forcibly disappeared for two weeks, detained for three months and then was released because he has vital connections with the police forces. Forced disappearance is instrumentalized to silence the political opposition (Amnesty International 2019b) and police abduction became known in counter-revolutionary Egypt. Security forces in plainclothes kidnap political critics. They often appear after an unknown period in state

detentions with politically charged convictions and are denied basic legal rights. Dawn raids against political dissidents, mass imprisonment of suspected opposition, torture to elicit confessions, and deaths in custody are accompanied by the expansion of military's jurisdiction for civilians and travel ban for human rights activists and journalists. Extra-judicial killings are justified under the 'war on terror' rhetoric and since 2015, over 460 "suspected militants" have been shot dead (Reuters 2019). This is the new normality for Egypt in recent years (HRW 2016; CIHRS 2019a). In that context, trauma is a social and political experience, that aims at the destruction of collective agency and social becoming (Matthies-Boon 2019).

Building on this situation, I refer to the post-2013 authoritarian renewal in Egypt as a form of counter-revolution, that aims not simply to restore the state of affairs of Mubarak's era but to intensify and consolidate the security state of the 'old regime' (Ismail 2006a). Hence, the 2013 coup is not a rupture, but a continuity on the structures of ruling Egypt. If politics is understood as "a project of 'world making'" (Ahmed 2003, 378), I understand Egypt's counter-revolutionary politics as a form of necropolitics[2], a project of making violent and death worlds (Mbembé 2003; Ahlberg 2014).

Necropolitics is the workings of death. Diverging from Foucault's bio-power, Mbembe understands necropolitics as the sovereign right to subjugate life to the power of death (Mbembé 2003, 39). The exposure of life to the dynamics of death and the destruction of persons are the focus of necropolitics. In the realms of necropolitics, sovereignty is realized in ruling over life and death, which is "to exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality" (Mbembé 2003, 12). Mbembe does not discredit Foucault's bio-power, however, he showed how it is, as a category of

[2] I use 'necropolitics' as a theoretical term and a political structure interchangeably.

analysis, insufficient to account for the production of the death worlds, by letting racialized lives die (Mbembé 2003, 39).

By revisiting Mbembe's thesis of necropolitics, this chapter aims to understand the practice of fleeing Egypt and seeking exile that thousands of young Egyptians have undertaken since 2013. I use ethnographic insights to show what I mean by 'the state of being on the run' in contemporary Egypt. Then I argue that the practices of hiding from the police and fleeing the country form a logic of survival that is integral to the dynamics of necropolitics. This logic of survival is represented here through the lenses of escape and flight. I argue that my interlocutors' escape is a limit to Egyptian state's efforts of creating death-worlds to the dissents, of whom my interlocutors are few examples.

2.1 The state of being on the run: "the stages of horror"

The majority of the exiled political activists were stuck in the country. Many had to live in hiding before managing to flee the country. Their memories of living in hiding were a recurrent topic during our interviews. Being on the run is the state of hiding and/or avoiding the fate of police arrest, forced disappearance, torture and potential death. My interlocutors implemented multiple practices to protect themselves, like constantly moving from place to place, not living in their homes, not talking to their families, sleeping in the desert or the countryside, and living in a constant state of fear and worry. Additionally, the police raided their houses multiple times in their absence. In most of the cases, the police left their houses in a mess. In most of the cases, security agents often broke down front doors, confiscated money and passports of the family of the exiles, forced parents to denounce their sons on the national television, and sometimes detained the exiles' relatives, several of whom have been charged with terrorism and imprisoned (Walsh 2020).

Ehsan, a 22-year old whose father has been in prison since 2015 because he was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, confirmed that “they [the national security police] took the money, laptops and mobile phones while riding my house”. Ehsan was on the travel ban list since 2015. He was arrested for one year and two months in pre-trial detention and was released in March 2016. He finished his high-school exams during his pre-trial detention. He did not join his undergraduate studies because of his fear of the security forces at the Egyptian universities. In May, Ehsan had a 25-year sentence in prison for a military charge. However, he managed to flee illegally to Sudan in November 2016.

On his flight to Sudan, Ehsan was afraid to be shot dead, “like what the police often did in Sinai,” he said referring to the extra-judicial killings the Ministry of Interior or the Egyptian Military spokesperson often announce of ‘suspected terrorists’. Youssef, who decided to flee illegally to Sudan as well, remembered his flight as a “hard journey... Some who took this journey died, some were arrested and had life sentences, some did not arrive, some missed their way for 15 days, and some died out of thirst in the desert” (Youssef 2019). Due to the flight journey, some activists managed to escape while others got caught by the Egyptian border forces or forcibly disappeared. For example, Mostafa al-Nagar, a former member of the parliament, a politician and an icon of the 2011 revolution, went missing during his ‘illegal’ flight to Sudan since September 2018. Al-Nagar wanted to avoid a three-year sentence of imprisonment with the politically-motivated charge of criticizing Egypt's judicial system and police impunity (HRW 2019a; MEE 2018).

While hiding from the police, my interlocutors lost their contacts with their family, relatives, and friends as they were afraid of putting them in danger by contacting them. The time of their hiding lasted for days, months or years. One of my interlocutors said sadly: “I stayed

almost 6 months in the street" referring to his time of hiding. My interlocutors were full of worries and fears during hiding. When I asked Osman about his feelings during that time, he answered:

> I still have anxiety disorder because of these years and experiences, due to the worry and fear. Fear controlled me. You were always waiting, looking at the door, looking at the window which car was parking. You think what would happen in the investigation, how I would answer. You prepare scenarios. What I always thought of was I did not want a death penalty nor forced disappearance. I wanted a simple conviction.

In that quote, Osman revealed the terror and fear he experienced while hiding, which continues with him until now. This terror was a dominant theme on a variety of my interviews. Haytham who was arrested in 2013 and tortured, communicated that he was always on alert, noting "my body trembled while walking... When I passed by any checkpoint, the legal conviction appeared on my ID. I was arrested for four times from checkpoints. I could not work because it appeared on my criminal record. I decided to leave, hoping it is the end of these stages of horror". Salem, who used to be a journalist, said that he refused the idea of leaving the country after being involved in Egyptian politics since 2004. However, after six months of hiding, Salem decided to leave as his "only way out". "It was not a life," he said.

All of my interlocutors were differentially excluded. Some of them decided to leave Egypt before being tracked by the police. For example, after spending behind the bars two months, Tayyeb decided to leave Egypt to avoid any further security problems. In 2017, he learned that he had 10-year prison sentence in absentia. Some of my interlocutors escaped Egypt after being disappointed by the political situation as the country became "an open-air prison for political critics" (Amnesty International 2018) and were afraid of being arrested because of their political past. As Osman indicated, while exile is "a humane punishment," it is still better than being thrown in chains by the Egyptian police or "waiting your turn" to come, meaning that waiting to be arrested.

2.2 Escape as a logic of survival in necropolitics:

I believe that necropolitics deems us to think, first, how death has multiple forms and meanings and, second, what are the potentialities that might be engendered by and within necropolitics. In necropolitics, death is the "space where freedom and negation operate" (Mbembé 2003, 39). One reading of Mbembe can be that his investigations go beyond the idea of death itself as "the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred" in necropolitics (Mbembé 2003, 40; Chakkour 2015, 32). Hence, necropolitics is not only about "the right to kill, to allow to live, or to expose to death" but also how the meaning of death is relational to that of survival, sacrifice and martyrdom (Mbembé 2003, 12; Chakkour 2015, 32). These meanings are realized in specific spaces and might be different in others; for example, martyrdom in the Palestinian territories can be seen a form of agency to escape the state of siege/occupation, whereas elsewhere it can be understood as a form of terror. Hence, in Mbembe's thesis death has a structural nature through which the de-symmetrical layers of power and sovereignty can be revealed (Chakkour 32).

From that perspective, I argue that my interlocutors' attempts to hide from the police then flee Egypt is an act of escape and a practice of survival. Flight from the necropolitical space is a form of survival that is articulated by avoiding the confrontation with the deadly Other. The will to live in spaces of death represents a limit to necropolitics, whose subjects are living dead (Mbembé 2003). The limits of necropolitics are the attempts of limiting the possibility of creating death-worlds. Although necropolitics is "death that lives a human life," (Mbembé 2003, 15) I ask: how might this death engender forms of life within?

Some authors reconceptualized the idea of survival through different lens other than Mbembe. Baishya (2018) explores survival through its connection with "precarity, vulnerability, relationality and non-sovereignty" (Baishya 2018, 31). In his account, survival "implies the performance of power as weakness allied with notions of continuity, surplus and an openness to the aleatory" (Baishya 31). Povinelli (2011) conceptualizes survival as endurance, hardiness and persistence (Povinelli 2011, 32). Similar to this idea of endurance is Hage's notion of "waiting out of the crisis", which is "a mode of confronting the crisis by a celebration of one's capacity to stick it out rather than calling for change" (Hage 2009, 97). These conceptualizations of survival either as continuity, endurance or waiting articulate different meanings of life and death. Building on the case-study of "being on the run", I understand the logic of survival as flight and escape from necropolitics.

The state of being on the run could be seen as a form of death-world. It is a state of siege which my interlocutors perceived as a form of imprisonment. It is, Karim reflects, "a different kind of prison because you are limited. When you are in the street, you are supposed to be free but you are not, so you do not live". In that state, "all streets are traps, and all houses alike," according to him. I see escape here as a subverting act, and escaping is the process of getting out of the state of siege. The logic of survival I aim to pursue is connected to flight and escape which is not about killing the attacker, but about avoiding the field in which the attacker operates. Exile in this incident is a way out, and seeking exile, the escape route, is a potential of breaking the siege of necropolitics. Through flight, regardless of the possible risks that might be encountered through the journey, the subject looks for freedom elsewhere. It is running for life.

Escaping is a social process, in a sense it is not only an event, but a series of experiences through which the subjects manage, eventually, to flee and free themselves from the siege. Escape

as a logic of survival is not limited to seeking exile by fleeing the country, but also by the practices of hiding, moving from one place to another, sleeping in the countryside to avoid falling into the police's hands and not stopping the communication with family and friends. Mostafa al-Naggar knew that he might be arrested during the flight or killed by the border forces. However, the anguish of thinking that he will be arrested sooner or later led him to venture into the dangers of the flight.

Space and time are interrelated and interconnected in the state of being on the run, as it can be conceived as a form of incarceration, confinement and stuckedness (Jefferson, Turner, and Jensen 2019; Ben-Moshe 2013). It is not only that the subjects were not free to move through spaces, but also the temporality they experience was prolonged. Time went slowly for them. It looked like years, not only months and days. "Waiting fixed time" Osman stated. "My mind was thinking about millions of things. It was cut into pieces. I was among my family, but I was not actually. I slept with my clothes, near to the window, in case anyone knocked on the door. Your worry and fear covered any other feeling," he explained. Salem who rendered his six-months in hiding as "not a life" suffers post-traumatic disorders. He stated that he lived in constant pressure that made his months feel like years.

2.3 Conclusion

Escape is a mode of political agency different from endurance, waiting and continuity, in the sense of admitting the inability to change the conditions that lead to escape. This type of agency is far from a romanticized resistance or actively supporting authoritarian rule and the attempts to be part of the Egyptian state as well (Schielke 2017). Escape here is a form of 'existential mobility,' which is "the sense of being able to move forward in one's life" (Schielke 2019, 40). In that form, crossing

borders is not conceived as hinderance and obstacle, but as a guidance and motivation for further opportunities in life.

Escape is a traumatizing experience. It is a form of life exposure to the power of death, like the dynamics of necropolitics. However, my argument is that escape expands our understanding of necropolitics and of the logics of survival it articulates. Moreover, escape challenges and problematizes rigid meanings of life and death. The subjects who are on run are "living dead" (Mbembé 2003, 40) but seeking for life and fighting against death. Through escape, the meaning of death expands to include statuses of being confined but on "the open air". Escaping also shows how "living dead" can engender agentic enactments and alternative modes of living, outside necropolitical fields of power.

Escape here is a way of sovereignty evasion. If, in necropolitics, sovereignty is "to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power" (Mbembe 12), escape here is a path to and a quest for a different life. In that sense, escape limits the creation of death-worlds by necropolitics. That is why I contend that in escape there is a potential for sovereignty evasion which is also a potential for life. Additionally, escape is not simply an escape from the oppressive regime. I understand it as an act of subversion and refusal that was part of the everyday of the exiles (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008, xiii). I see it as a transformative act, as it confronts mechanisms of control and regimes of control responds to the acts of escape accordingly. Hence, "escape is a mode of social change that is simultaneously elusive and forceful enough to challenge the present configuration of control" (2008, xiv).

This escape is not absolute. My interlocutors might be escaping from a necropolitical field to another, moving between differential fields of power, or they might be caught-up into the necropolitical regime that they managed to flee even after their escape. In the following chapter, I

explore the configurations of necropolitics in the Egyptian diaspora in Berlin, through shaping atmospheres of terror between the subjects. The long arm of the Egyptian state manifests through its capacity to spread fear and terror beyond its national territories. I demonstrate systematic practices by the Egyptian state to terrify, then hinder, the opposition from abroad.

3 Affective Atmospheres of Terror among Egyptians in Berlin: Keeping the Diaspora in Check

> I draw the map of my home on my hand,
> On my hand, it won't fade away…
> Imprison me by your [official] papers
> I break your bars by my heart
> Your allegations to harass me is a mere vengeance
> My bare survival is just a sign for others to continue
> When people choose to live,
> The embassy shall give in.[3]
>
> Mazaj Adam, a Syrian underground rapper

In an official visit to Canada, Egypt's minister of immigration and the Egyptian ambassador in Canada gathered with some members of the Egyptian diaspora in Toronto. The minister threatened to behead the Egyptian dissidents abroad if they criticize the Egyptian politics: "Anyone who speaks against Egypt will be sliced," she reiterated while making an execution gesture with her hand. The leaked video of the meeting went viral (Daragahi 2019). This gesture brought to mind Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi Arabian journalist who was strangled then dismembered into pieces in the Saudi Embassy in Istanbul in October 2018. The minister's slip of the tongue in Toronto revealed a systematic approach of retaliation al-Sisi's regime follows with the Egyptian dissidents inside and outside the country. It also resonated with the collective feeling of terror among Egyptians in Berlin.

This chapter is an attempt to explore the affect of terror (the emotion of political fear) among the Egyptians whom I met on my fieldwork and who were reluctant to talk to me, speculating that it might bring harm to them or their families in Egypt. I divided the chapter into sub-sections, illustrating the extra-territorial measures and violations by the Egyptian state to which the exiles in Berlin are exposed, which include, denying them their passports and other official documents, writing security reports about

[3] My translation.

them, cutting the state-funded scholarships of the PhD students, harassing the exiles' families in Egypt and denying entry to Egyptians who have second nationality because of their political opinions. I argue that the culture of fear that is nowadays to be found in Egypt is mirrored in the diaspora due to the transnational authoritarian measures the Egyptian state enacts. I add that although these state processes are systematic, they are inconsistent. Hence, I do not reduce the transmission of fear to state processes. The circulation of bodies and rumors about state surveillance in the diaspora, news of political violence from Egypt, and traumatic experiences and memories political violence that haunt the exiles every now and then shape affective atmospheres of terror among them. The atmospheres of terror are not only reconfigurations of Egypt's necropolitics in the diaspora, but also part of the Egyptian state power which operates through affective circulations of terror as an "affective state".

3.1 The embassy as a long arm of the security state: harassing the critics

Shady, a friend of mine, is a researcher who was invited to a conference in Europe in 2017 to present his work. During his presentation, a conference attendee took photos of him. Before he left, the attendee faced Shady and whispered to him sarcastic compliments about his presentation, saying: "we are waiting for you there" while patting him on the back. Shady did not understand who this man was and what the words meant. By checking the list of names of the attendees and asking the organizers of the event, he learned that this man was from the Egyptian embassy. Shady became paranoid. He canceled his invitation to another meeting with Egyptian researchers and human rights defenders in Rome. Days after this meeting, which he did not attend, different pro-government outlets leaked photos and names of the attendees of this, supposedly secret, meeting, claiming that they were planning to spread chaos and instability in Egypt (Youm7 2017). Upon arrival to Cairo Airport from Rome, Khaled Ali, an Egyptian lawyer who planned to run against al-Sisi in

the presidential elections, was arrested and interrogated about the details of the meeting he attended. Out of fear to be arrested upon arrival, Shady did not return to Cairo since then. He is afraid of even thinking about Cairo Airport, which for him resembles "a cesspool" from which people are arrested then disappeared by the security forces. When Shady learned that I recurrently transfer money to my mother, he asked if I could also transfer money to his mother, with the promise of paying me back. Later, I learned that his mother publicly denounced him, because the national security forces raided their house multiple times looking for him. Afraid to put his mother at risk, I asked my mother to transfer money to his mother multiple times. The Egyptian state watches foreign transactions from outside the country, and 'receiving foreign funding' could result into a legal conviction (TIMEP 2019).

Shady's story echoes stories of many whom I met in Berlin who are *afraid* of returning to Egypt, including myself. All my interlocutors confirmed that the embassy sends informants (security agents) during the cultural events about Egypt to take photos of the Egyptian speakers and discussants. Amro Ali, an Egyptian political sociologist, was a guest in many public talks in Berlin, presenting his article about the Arab exiles in Berlin and the potentiality of forming a political collective body therein (Ali 2019). In our interview, he confirmed that the embassy disrupted two of his events in 2016. A diplomat in suit who identified himself as working at the embassy and a plain-clothed security informant who could be recognized from a mile away skewed the discussions in his talks about Egypt. Upon arrival, Ali was asked about his occupation for the first time in the airport. The threat of the Egyptian security forces taking photos of the Egyptian government's critics in demonstrations and public talks is common in the everyday conversations of the diaspora members. During my fieldwork, in September 2019, I attended two protests in support with the demonstrations in Egypt, one in Hermannplatz and one in front of the Egyptian embassy. In the beginning of the Hermannplatz's protest, the organizers alerted the protesters to report anyone they suspected as coming from the Egyptian embassy to the German police, who were securing the demonstration. The organizers

informed the German police accordingly. For the embassy protest, I asked a friend to bring me sunglasses and facemask to hide myself. In front of the embassy, I found out that many of the protesters were also wearing face masks. They indicated that all the embassy staff were security agents, including the civil servants. During the protest, they often pointed to a window in the big embassy building, from which a woman was taking photos of the protesters (see figure 1). It was significant how they paid a lot of attention to the embassy personnel who took photos of them in an open street, located in a highly securitized neighborhood, full of security cameras.

I was also asked by a 'protester' what I was doing in Berlin. Because I noticed that he was talking with the organizers of the demonstration, I believed he was a trustworthy and he was just checking who was attending the protest, as a matter of securing the crowd. I told him, without thinking, that I was a researcher interested in studying Egyptians abroad. After a long conversation, he took a selfie of me and my friend. I did not react. Thinking about it later kept me paranoid! Since the man told me he had lived in Germany for 20 years, I asked my interviewees if they knew him, or if they used to see him at demonstrations. No one knew him. His face is still engraved in my memory, and his memory still disturbs me.

Figure 1*: One of the Egyptian embassy staff photographs the anti-government demonstrations*
ElSayed ElSehamy, September 28, 2019.

3.1.1 Reporting on individuals

My interlocutors also indicated that the embassy often sends reports on anti-government individuals who are vocal in Berlin, which leads to their arrest upon their return to Egypt. Atef Botros is a vocal Egyptian-German academician and a co-founder of *Mayaden al-Tahrir* (Egyptian Squares) in Berlin, an NGO which hosts lectures, events and exhibitions highlighting Egyptian politics and culture. In January 2016, Botros was denied entry to Egypt and was interrogated in the Cairo International Airport, although he went to Egypt with a German passport. When the German Embassy in Cairo intervened, Botros was deported back to Germany. An official from the German Embassy informed Botros' family that he was in the no-fly list based on a security report by the Egyptian Embassy in Berlin and that he was banned from entering Egypt 'forever' (Mada Masr 2016). Botros' mother died while he was in exile. He was dispossessed of seeing her for the last time. Salem, a friend of mine who also lost his mother while he was in exile, cannot even talk about her. Whenever he remembered her or his native Alexandria, he cried. "These very intimate moments are between al-Sisi and me. They stand against me whenever I think of Egypt," he told me while lighting up a cigarette.

Before Botros, Ismail al-Iskandrani was arrested upon arrival from Berlin in December 2015, on accusations of belonging to a 'terrorist organization' and spreading false news regarding national security in Sinai. Al-Iskandrani, a friend of many of the exiles I met, is a researcher and a multiple-award-winning investigative journalist, specialized in Sini affairs. He is highly critical of the Egyptian military's operations in Sini, arguing that the military by its very operations cultivates terrorism rather than fighting it. After completing a six-month fellowship at the US Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, al-Iskandrani was presenting his work at a Berlin conference organized by the German Council on Foreign Relations, before returning to Egypt to visit his sick mother. In May 2018, after more than two years of illegal, pre-trial detention, Egypt's military court has sentenced him 10-year in prison (MEE 2015; EgyptToday 2018).

It is highly spread among the exiles that the Egyptian embassy filled a report against al-Iskandrani, which lead to his arrest. Although the Egyptian ambassador in Germany denied the claims that the embassy photographs and files reports against the political critics in Berlin (Ramadan 2016), my research confirms that the Egyptian embassy in Berlin works as a long arm of the Egyptian security state. Report writing, *a* form of investigation procedures about 'suspicious persons', is a practice of government and a historical security tradition that has been re-inscribed in the development of the Egyptian security forces since the British colonialism (see, Abozaid 2020; Sirrs 2010; Ismail 2006a). In her ethnography of the everyday state in one of Cairo's popular quarter, Ismail (2006a) argues that practices of discipline and surveillance are widely deployed by the Egyptian security state as a form of policing and governing the population. The target of these practices are young male bodies, who were seen to likely impose a threat on local quarters' authorities (2006a, 146). The "suspicion and investigation," English of *ishtibah wa tahari*, is a practice of government that includes arbitrary stopping, questioning, arresting, investigating, and reporting on individuals (2006a, xiv). The security agents practice their powers through this practice, which allows them to stop and question any person they deem to be a suspect. "Suspicion and investigation" is a practice within a security matrix that involved employing large numbers of watchers, informants and report writers. Ismail argues that constructing normal personas arbitrary as "suspicious," is a mean, among others, of disciplining young men and cultivating a 'culture of fear' that structures state-citizen relations in Egypt (2006a, 149). The Egyptian state, hence, becomes in the eyes of Egyptians everywhere and nowhere simultaneously (2006a, 165).

While I strongly agree with Ismail's situated argumentation, I back the opinion that an imprisoned political activist wrote after his inmate, Shady Habash, who died due to medical ill-treatment inside the harsh conditions of detention:

> The doctrine of the National Security Agency, after its re-establishment following the 2011 Revolution, depends on expanding the base of suspicion to include all Egyptians. Every Egyptian is a potential threat to the regime. This base has expanded further to target all social media users, especially after its important role in toppling Mubarak. Not only did they succeed in crushing the traditional forms of mobilizations in the streets and restricting them to social media, but the regime's repressive machines extended to chase dissent in the cyberspace… We are all suspected of terrorism in Egypt… We are all collateral damage. Taking our ages and lives are seen by the regime as necessary for its survival.[4] (Shawky 2020; see, Taha 2015; Pratt and Rezk 2019; TIMEP 2018a; 2018b)

I believe that the Egyptian diasporas became part of this expanded base of suspicion, especially in capital cities that witnessed wide anti-coup demonstrations. The fear of surveillance from the Egyptian embassies abroad is depicted in, for example, London (McKeever 2019), Paris (Dazey and Zederman 2017), Rome (Okail 2017), Khartoum (MEE 2020) and Istanbul. The practice of suspicion is materialized in multiple, inconsistent activities in diasporas, such as harassment, intimidation and surveillance. It could be said that Egypt controls the 'exit' of political dissent and human rights activists by banning their travel from Egypt and confiscating their passports (HRW 2016; CIHRS 2019b). The military-backed regime also works to silence their 'voice' after their 'exit'.

Authoritarian regimes securitize their emigration polices and diasporas. Their "overseas polices" target their population groups beyond their territorial boundaries (Tsourapas 2020b; 2020a). Egypt adopted numerous overseas polices in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising by intensifying its surveillance and monitoring measures. The aim of these policies is to control the diasporas' expansion or decline in their interaction with homeland politics. Through various "exterritorial authoritarian practices" (Glasius 2018), the authoritarian polices at home could be mirrored in the diasporas, which is known as "transnational authoritarianism" (Tsourapas 2019; Michaelsen 2020). In that perspective, I understand the Egyptian state authoritarian practices in the diaspora, which reflects the current role of the embassy in Berlin.

[4] My translation.

3.1.2 Denying the exiles their passports:

Four of my interlocutors affirmed that the embassy in Berlin refused to renew their passports, because the embassy could not get security approvals for them from the Ministry of Interior. For example, Akram is a young Egyptian in his mid-thirties who lives in Germany since 2000. He works as a cleaner in a nursing home in the quarters of Berlin. With the breakout of the 2011 revolution, he was active in the demonstrations held in Berlin. Akram was one of the protesters who opposed al-Sisi's visit to Berlin in 2015. He went to the embassy to renew his passport and paid the admission fees. After 6 months with no response, he called the embassy. Over the phone, they assigned him a day and asked him to come at 3 pm. (after the workday hours) to retrieve his new passport. When he entered the embassy, he found out that they would not issue him a passport. He narrated his experience inside the embassy: "I found the consul sitting on a table awaiting me. It is not normal to see this table on the middle of the room. He threatened me, saying that as I do not have a passport, they could take me to Egypt and no one will ask about me. I felt I was abducted inside the embassy. When I went out of the building, I took a breath which I could not take inside". Akram has been traumatized since this happened to him. "I was shocked" he said. He sat-in before the Egyptian embassy multiple times, opposing their decision not to grant him his legal right to have a passport. In October 2015, he tried to self-immolate before the Egyptian embassy (see, Badiny 2015). He was taken by the German police to a psychiatric hospital for two weeks, then he was released. In November 2019, Akram burned his passport in a video that went viral. "I am burning my nationality. I am burning my passport which embodies my black history" Akram said in the video, affirming that the embassy treated him inhumanly (see, Hawary 2019).

Hamed, another interlocutor, decided to claim asylum because the embassy refused to issue his passport and a criminal record that he needed for employment. Like Hamed, Osman was worried that the embassy would refuse to issue his passport. He texted me before going to the embassy to ask if the embassy staff had harassed anyone before. I told him about Akram and that the worst they could do was to refuse to

issue him a passport. He asked again if "they interrogated, abducted or tortured someone inside before". I told him that he was not in Istanbul [referring to Khashoggi's case]. He replied that he did not want to be tortured or locked inside a room again, referring to his security interrogation in Egypt. Osman wrote on Facebook before entering the embassy that he held the Egyptian and German authorities accountable for his safety. He received his passport, but his fear did not fade away. By the end of our interview, I asked Osman how he felt, a ritual I did at the end of each interview. He recited me parts of a poem that mourns the 2011 revolution:

> The thousands of crowds
> Become counted on hands
> I still do not know what's wrong…
> Our fear enslaves us,
> Makes us untrustworthy…
> The scene of demonstrations is over
> The scene of punishment, it seems,
> Is just starting
>
> Mostafa Ibrahim, a young Egyptian Poet

3.1.3 Cutting government scholarships from the exiled students:

Two of my interlocutors were PhD candidates in Berlin. They were teaching in Egyptian public universities before leaving for their postgraduate studies, funded by state scholarships. Because they are vocal against the government, their funding was cut. Additionally, they were dismissed from their teaching positions in Egypt. The wife of one of them, who used to teach at a public university as well, was also dismissed from her job similar to her husband.

Taqadum al-Khatib is a recent PhD graduate from FU Berlin and a prominent researcher who denounced al-Sisi's decision to officially cede Egypt's sovereignty over the two Red Sea islands of Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia (see, TIMEP 2017). Al-Khatib showed maps and archives from Freie University library which proved the Egyptian-ness of the two islands. The Egyptian cultural attaché in Berlin asked al-Khatib for a meeting, in which the attaché interrogated him about his political views and requested

to see his social media account. When al-Khatib refused, the attaché filed a security report against him, claiming that al-Khatib constantly attacks the Egyptian State and its symbols and figures via social media. Al-Khatib posted this report on his Facebook account (see Figure 2).

-أن الطالب المذكور دائم توجيه السباب والشتائم لرموز الدولة المصرية والتهكم على موظفي الدولة على وسائل التواصل الإجتماعي بشكل مثير للإشمئزاز و(مرفق) لسيادتكم بعض الأدلة على تطاوله على رموز الدولة في الداخل والخارج .

علماً بأن المكتب قام بإبلاغ الجهات المعنية عن سوء سلوك الدارس وعدم التزامه أدبياً.

الأمر معروض على سيادتكم للنظر والتوجيه واتخاذ اللازم .

ويرى المكتب : هذا الطالب هو مثال سئ للطلبة المصريين وأنه لابد من إتخاذ إجراء قانوني سريع وحاسم تجاهه وفقاً لما ترونه سيادتكم مناسباً علماً بأنه شارف على الإنتهاء من بعثته.

المستشار الثقافي

مدير مكتب البعثة التعليمية ببرلين

(أ.د. أحمد فاروق حامد غنيم)

مرفقات : (٦)

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Figure 2: *A security report signed by the Egyptian cultural attaché in Berlin.*
It reads: "The student is constantly attacking and insulting the Egyptian state symbols and figures located inside and outside the country, via social media in a deplorable manner and I attach some evidences of that. To your knowledge, the office of the cultural Attaché has informed the concerned parties [i.e. the security apparatuses] about his attitudes and immorality. This matter is being presented to you in order take the necessary course of action against this student. ***This student is a bad representative of Egyptian students abroad, and there shall be quick and strict legal measure against him*** *as you might see, bearing in mind that he is a finishing PhD student".* Taqadum al-Khatib, December 14, 2018. Emphasis is mine.

3.2 Affective Atmospheres of terror among Egyptians in Berlin:

Many of the exiles I have met do not have legal convictions or sentences in absentia back in Egypt. However, all of them are *afraid* of returning. The dominant culture of fear inside Egypt due to the securitization of domestic politics (Pratt and Rezk 2019), is mirrored in the diaspora in Berlin. This state of fear keeps the Egyptian exiles and non-exiles in check. Egyptians abroad, including in Berlin, do not trust each other. The first assumption between the exiles when they see an Egyptian is that s/he is an informant, unless s/he proves the opposite. Before meeting each of my

interlocutors, I used to ask a mutual friend to convince the other person to trust me. Some interlocutors refused to meet me due to their fears. Others, some of whom I met, told me that at the beginning they did not trust me. This mistrust, a manifestation of the exiles' fears to trust, is a socially embedded, patterned enacted affect. This mistrust is political.

Governmental technologies and apparatuses generate ways of feeling and sensing the world. Governmentality is not only about disciplining the body of the individual or the population through consent and productive power. The art of governing proposes and supposes affective domains, in which particular emotions are substantialized and cultivated (Ismail 2018; Campbell 2010). I adopt the point of view of the importance of studying the ways in which emotions are at the heart of the everyday experience of authoritarian regimes, either at home or in exile (Bozzini 2015). I also believe that political affects are central in installing authoritarian renewal after social transformative events, like the 2011 revolutionary moment in Egypt.

Affect is one of the strategies that the military-backed regime deploys effectively to instill its rule. The counter-revolutionary regime is keen on spreading fear, defeat, and despair, as parts of its war on the revolutionary spirt. It is argued that in contemporary Egypt, socio-political trauma is a counter-revolutionary strategy of unmaking revolutionary subjectivities, due to its incapacitating, depoliticizing effects (Matthies-Boon 2019; 2018). Through the domestic politics, the government enhances political despair. For example, in June 2019, a group of journalists, human rights lawyers and a former parliamentarian were arrested in what became in the Egyptian media called "the Hope Case/Cell/Coalition". The group engaged in discussions to form a new political alliance meant to stand in 2020 parliamentary elections. They were convicted of collaborating with a banned group and attempts to "destabilize the state," and were added to the

'terrorist list' for five years (Mada Masr 2019; Nwafez 2020). "Arresting Hope in Egypt," one article reads.

The Egyptian state could be best understood as an "affective state" from which the processes in Egypt and in the diaspora emerge. The state operates by cultivating certain affects. Hence, terror is not only a product of the state processes, but also an element through which state power is realized (Laszczkowski and Reeves 2015; see, Asad 2012; Goldberg and Zaki 2012). The dominant public affect in current Egypt is "a complete absence of vitality; instead of intensity, there [is] anxiety, fear, depression, rage, hopelessness, sense of loss, and fatigue in a context that meant a collapse of the everyday economy and continuous political repression" (Malmström 2019, 114).

These depressing affects are common among those whom I have met in Berlin. Although terror is my focus here, I do not isolate it from other dominant affects that strategically meant to cultivate "emotionalities of rule" (Campbell 2010). Terror, the political affect of the emotion of fear, or the 'political fear' was one of the factors which led to the 2011 uprising, in which the discourse of "breaking the fear" was central (Obeid 2015). Terrorizing the population is a pillar and product of the Egyptian state's coercive authority and unrestricted sovereignty (Goldberg and Zaki 2010). It has been argued that terror plays a dominant role in Egypt's authoritarian renewal since 2013, creating a contingent "republic of terror" (Hamzawy 2017; 2019).

The Egyptian regime does not only harass the exiles abroad, but it targets their family at home. HRW has documented 28 cases of Egyptian journalists and political and human rights activists whose families were harassed in Egypt due to their activism in exile (HRW 2019d). The uncle of Hamed, one of my interlocutors, was arrested by the police in February 2020 because of Hamed regular social media posts against the regime. Hamed's mother and sister hid for two

weeks, to avoid arrest like his uncle. Targeting the exiles' families at home led many family members to disown the exiles, by cutting all their relationships with them and denying their connections. A daughter renounced her exiled father and a mother disowned her son, as Shady's story shows. Targeting the families meant to punish the exiles and keep the critics abroad in check as well. These systematic intimidation and surveillance in the diaspora, as an extension of the violations at home, form subject imaginations of and feelings about the state and shape affective atmospheres of terror.

The affective atmosphere is "collectively embodied, spatially extended, material, and culturally inflected" feelings (Riedel 2019, 85). It is a 'collective felt' which exceeds the individual body and "pertains primarily to the overall situation in which bodies are entrenched" (Riedel 2019, 85). Although state processes of punishing the exiles in Berlin have a central role of transmitting terror, however, it is not reduced to them. State terror is not institutionally bounded to the state. It is diffused and disseminated by multiple actors located beyond State agents (Bozzini 2015). I tended to believe that the Egyptian state works to monopolize fake news and rumors' dissemination. However, rumors about imagined total and effective surveillance apparatuses by the embassy are also located in the everyday conversations of the Egyptians I have met. Rumors have material presence and foster atmospheres of terror among Egyptians once discussing Egyptian politics. Rumors in that context "have a particular kind of contagious performativity that conditions affective responses" through intensified feelings of fear and vulnerability" (Luna 2018, 59). In the Egyptian diaspora in London, exiled activists retreated from politics and gave up on activism, fearing surveillance from the embassy as "their previous life experiences have taught them to avoid political contestations" (McKeever 2019, 6). In that context, "rumors about the role

of the Egyptian embassy and about repercussions for family have a direct impact on participation in contentious actions" (2019, 6).

News of political violence in Egypt have a role in terror circulation as well. Exiles political pasts, accompanied by traumatic experiences and violent memories, haunt them every now and then, cultivating their fears. This was clear, for example, in Hamed's story when he wanted to avoid going to the embassy, remembering his imprisonment and torture memories. Akram's 'shock' inside the embassy accompanied him and led him to burn his passport. I myself was interviewed three times during the time of my fieldwork to comment on the political situation in Egypt by journalists, and I used different pseudonyms in order to remain anonymous. Wahd, who is afraid to return, indicated that she is afraid to even come near to the embassy, referring to what happened to Khashoggi. Hager, who returns each summer to Egypt, mentioned that she does not go to the embassy at all, and if she needs an official document, she asks her family to issue it for her from Egypt. This shows that unspoken emotions and memories of violence are governmental, performative and conductive, even if the subject does not recognize them (Ismail 2018).

3.3 Conclusion:

It is not only death that lurks around the corner in Egypt for anti-government critics as I showed in Chapter 1. Fear is part of the embodied package that Egyptians carry in their exile (see Chapter 3). Shaping the atmospheres of terror in the diaspora are reconfigurations of the regime of control, against which acts of escape (in Chapter 1) are enacted. The over-cautiousness and paranoia the Egyptians perform in the diaspora in Berlin is built from years of oppression and self-censorship. State terror is not only a product of the government technologies or the embassy activities in Berlin. The state processes in the diaspora emerge from an "affective state," in which

cultivating certain affects is part of its operationalization. The circulation of bodies and rumors about state surveillance in the diaspora, news of political violence from Egypt and traumatic memories also cultivate state terror, which in turn has a role in shaping subjectivities, leading to insecurities and inconsistences in exiles' lives.

I emphasize the importance of bringing affect in studying (transnational) authoritarianism. Scholarly investigations should concern rationalities *and* emotionalites of rule. In the following chapter, I elaborate more on the embodied package that Egyptians carry in their exile. It is not only fear that make them insecure in Berlin, but also memories, longing, nostalgia and their losses of friends, family and careers. While circumventing the conditions of exile, they are shattered between their realities and their wills and between where they are and where they think they should be. I take from this (in)dependency and in-betweenness my starting point for the next chapter, exploring the emergence of a 'dysphoric subject'.

4 Being in Transition: The Dysphoric Subject in/of Exile

> My Lady, what would I do if my mother visited me in my dreams?
> What would I do if the Jasmines of Damascus called on me,
> And was chided by the apples of the Levant?
> What would I do if I was haunted by the specter of my father,
> And my heart sought the refuge on his blue eyes as a flock of pigeon?
> My Lady… My Lady…
> How to promote liberty if the sun is facing a death sentence?
> How could I eat from the rulers' bread, when my children are starving?
> How would I love you when national security agents arrest dreams,
> And send the people of passion into exile?
> How would I express my predicament?
> How would I express the broken inside myself?

This poem, titled *Writings on the Wall of Exile*, by my favorite Syrian exiled poet Nizar Qabani (1923-1998), is one of the best poems I have read about experiencing exile. The simple question Qabani asked, "what would I do if my mother visited me in my dreams?" sums the unknown and unprecedented feelings the exile found herself dealing with, including feelings of uncertainty, fragility, inability, strangeness, nostalgia and longing, loneliness and being 'out of place and time'. When the mother denounces her son or the son resists himself to communicate with his family to not put them in danger, due to security reasons as I showed in the previous chapter, it is not an end but a start of cluster of currents that depict the life of an exile. The act of a mother denouncing her exiled son which is met by the exile's resistance to take such denouncement for granted is a metaphor of the overall experience of exile in general: the country and the past of the exile is in distance, while the exile is in resistance to that distance.

It is not only fear that the exiles carried on their package from Egypt. Memories and traumatic experiences in Egypt that often haunt them have a role in circulating and engendering that fear in exile. In what follows, I depict other feelings they experience. Some of these feelings are new and unexperienced before. However, other feelings are not only new, but unknown and

could not be easily interpreted by the exiles. ‘They are just there’ I was often told referring to their emotions. I show that these emotions are performative and conductive, similarly to fear, and produce a dysphoric subject, who is confused, uncertain, between and betwixt, (in)dependent and multi-positioned here and there. Before exploring dysphoric subjectivity, I briefly show how subjectivity formation was theorized and conceived in the Egyptian context before and during the 2011 revolution, claiming that such theorizations do not include forms of subjectivity emerging in exile.

4.1 The reality otherwise: dreams and nightmares

I dream of my mother at least once per week. The details of each dream differ, based on how my days are going. During my fieldwork, because of the recurrent stories I heard, then embodied, I dreamt about her almost every night. Egypt was present, even when I resisted its presence. I once dreamt that I was arrested in front of my mother while we were taking the train going home. Another night, I dreamt that she was arrested, in an attempt to put me under pressure and hand myself in to the police. Other times, I dreamt that I was crying constantly, waiting my mother to arrive from outside.

My interlocutors experienced similar dreams. Hatem dreamt that he woke up because police forces was raiding his house, asking him to accompany them in silence, which actually had happened to him once before in Egypt. Haytham dreamt that he was stopped at a checkpoint and taken to the police station, which happened recurrently while he was on the run. Osman told me that he used to dream every week that he was running in a demonstration from a military tank or police forces. He continued that “I usually use anti-depressants and sleep medications to overcome my nightmares. When I stop them, nightmares come back. My girlfriend is accustomed to this. My

nightmares are real situations I lived before and are chasing me, like many of my experiences in Egypt".

Ahlam often dreams of her native city, Alexandria. She dreamt that there was a revolution and she returned, with her exiled friends. After she participated in the demonstrations, the dream went on, she was "suffocated" in Egypt as everything had changed. When she tried to travel, the airport was closed and she was locked inside the country. She said that she always dreams of the revolution and demonstrations because she has been involved in the political scene in Egypt. Salem affirmed that he frequently dreams of his mother. Because he could not see her before she died, the memory of his mother and her death are among the most difficult realities that he has to deal with. Additionally, Salem, as being involved in the Egyptian politics since 2004, has a lot of his friends who are currently in prison. He often dreams of his imprisoned friends as well.

I believe that these dreams are politically charged and could reflect how the exiles embody the conditions of their displacement. The dream becomes a distinct layer of the self that embodies historical tensions and political realities. These dream-stories in "undreamy times" are not only "affected by political conditions but are also themselves of political relevance in that they affect how people live in the world and how they relate to others" (Mittermaier 2010, 4). Hence, it can be argued that these dreams matter in their way of shaping the landscapes of the exiles' imaginations about their home and their positionings in relation to what they yearn for otherwise. These dreams are examples of their fragmented realities and shattered worlds that I tackle in this chapter.

4.2 "The Egyptian museum in Berlin": creating a small Egypt

I used to follow Salem on Facebook before I went to the fieldwork. I heard a lot about him and his arrest stories. I first saw him in the demonstration in Hemannplatz, holding a banner that read a list of al-Sisi's violations of human rights since 2013. From faraway, the passer would know that Salem is an Egyptian: his brown skin, sharp black eyes and a necklace with a pharaonic symbol. After the demonstration was done, I asked him to meet. He hardly replied me, with a crack on his voice, to meet after a few days to have a chance to reclaim his voice. Authentically chanting for freedom for the political prisoners and down the military rule caused him hoarse voice. It was an evidence for me to see that being involved in Egyptian politics is not only politically draining, but

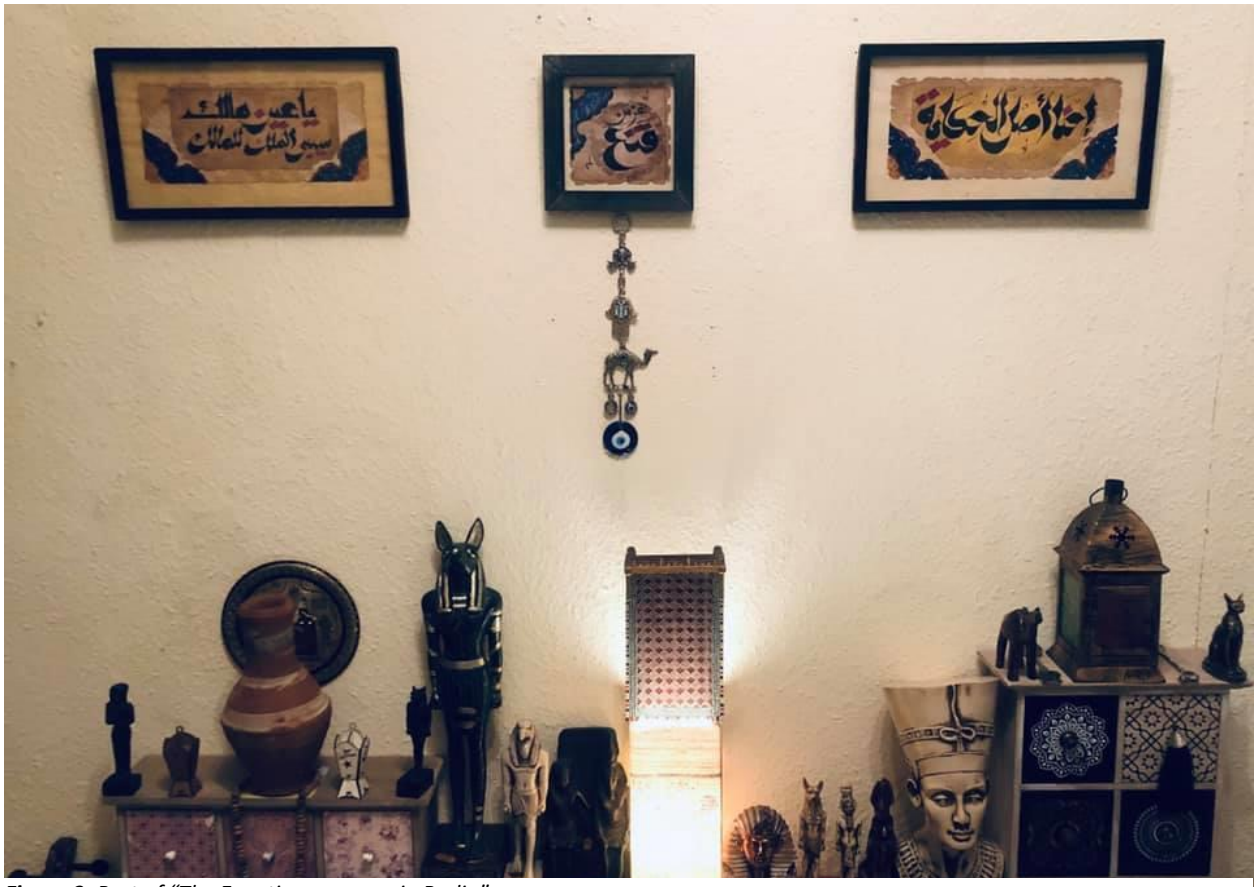

Figure 3: *Part of "The Egyptian museum in Berlin"*
Taken by Salem

bodily and physically experienced as well. For Salem, the protest was a chance to uncover his anger and unravel his loss.

After we met at one Berliner coffee shop that he likes because its terrace reminds him of a similar coffee shop in his native Alexandria, he invited me to come to his room. While going up, he showed me the bar of his Greek neighbor, who asked him recently about Mahienour El-Masry. Mahi, as he calls her, is a dear friend of him who is an Alexandrian human rights lawyer and political activist since mid-2000. Mahienour is considered to be one of the icons of the 2011 uprising. She visited him in Berlin and met his Greek neighbor. She used to send Salem gifts from Egypt. Mahienour was arrested on September 22 in Egypt, on the day of the Hermanplantz protest. During the protest, we knew that Mahi was abducted by three plainclothes police officers and put into a microbus, in front of the Supreme State Security Prosecution headquarters, where she was following the investigations, as a lawyer, of the mass arrest since September 20.

Figure 4: *Banners carry symbols of ancient Egyptian pharos on Salem's room*
Another part of "the Egyptian museum in Berlin". Taken by Salem.

Mahienour appeared then before the same Prosecution authority and has been held in endless

circles of remand detention since then with of charges of spreading false news and joining a terrorist group (El-Mahdawy 2020).

When I went up to his small room, Salem described the antiquities he started to collect once he came to Berlin (see figure 1 and 2). Symbols of ancient Egyptian pharos and Roman Alexandria are all around his room. Even the carpet on the floor has a story related to Egypt. He is creating “a small Egypt” in his room, calling it “the Egyptian museum in Berlin”. He added: “being surrounded by this atmosphere makes me comfortable and homey. Exile made me appreciate things I took for granted. I live by my experiences and my memories in Egypt. This is what keeps me alive now”. On the right side of this self-proclaimed museum, there is ‘an Alexandrian Corner’, in which Salem puts everything that he has from Alexandria. Reproductions of antiquities of famous landmarks of his native city are arranged on that corner, like the Lighthouse of Alexandria and the Citadel of Qaitbay. When I noticed an ashtray and an empty bottle of water on that corner, I asked for an explanation. He did not respond to my question, saying that “two things I cannot talk about. Whenever I talk about, I cannot help it but cry: my mother and Alexandria”. I learned that that ashtray is from an Alexandrian friend who currently is in prison.

Salem’s story is a prototype of the stories I often heard, of being in Berlin while thinking and worrying about Egypt. He claims that although he lives in Berlin, his mind and soul are in Egypt. He resists the fact that he left Egypt and he might not come back soon. This claim was made by multiple interviewees. Hamed explained that he asks himself often, “what I am doing here?” And his place should not be here in Berlin, but there in Egypt. Hamed added that he still cannot figure out how to deal with his life, although he has been in Berlin since 2015. When I asked Osman about his life in Berlin he answered that “before the revolution was the time when I

was dreaming to live. During the time of the revolution, I was living. After it, now, I am just living. The days are similar, and I just try to live them". The above-mentioned anecdotes illustrate that the lives of my interlocutors are fragmented, because of the fact that they are forcibly displaced. They partially live out of place, in Berlin but in Egypt, and out of time, by centralizing their lives on their lived pasts in Egypt. In what follows, I emphasize the fragmentation of their lives and the feelings they experience in exile.

4.3 "If you leave Egypt, it does not leave you": dealing with unknown feelings

Osman continued that his life in Egypt hunts him in his exile by many ways. He tried to take the two first years of his exile "to reconcile," by disconnecting with Egyptian friends and taking a distance from everything that reminded him of Egypt as he said. However, he failed. He explained:

> When I talk with a foreigner, I know that I am different. They cannot understand what a demonstration means in Egypt, or running from a tank or being chased by the police. I cannot go out of Egypt. I hope to face myself that this is my reality and Egypt is not part of this reality. To a large extent, it will not be part of my life for a while. However, I could not do this. I have my family in Egypt. My father has cancer and I always wonder if I will be able to be with him before he dies or not. I have the Egyptian channels on my TV here in Berlin. I have to say that I am still imprisoned in Egypt. If you leave Egypt, it does not leave you.

Osman was not alone on this. Karim indicated that whenever he sees a policeman, he reminds him of the Egyptian police. He used to hate policemen for their abuse of power. When he came to Germany, he was cautious whenever a policeman comes closer. This was not only about the police, but also about the civil servants in governmental institutions. "My Egyptian imagination of the order of things is tracing me here. I cannot get done with it easily," he added while explaining the difficulty of changing his attitude while dealing with the world around. Karim also indicated that the gap between the German society and the Egyptian society is quite big, especially in terms of the 'romantic' relationships. What he called "the culture of boyfriend and girlfriend" was new to

him and he struggled to find someone to be with in a relationship, which made him lonely and alienated.

A majority of my interlocutors experienced constant insecurity, distress and anxiety regarding establishing their lives in exile. Salem describes the financial difficulties he often goes through due to the loss of his career. He used to work as a journalist and a writer in Arabic. However, while he is in Germany, he faces many difficulties starting his life anew: “I am starting a new life at the age of 40. It is literally a life from the scratch. I learn a new language. Life is tough and no one helps you. It is impossible to be a journalist here. I am outside the system of the society,” he explained before asking me if we can stop the interview and continue later. Tayyeb, who is an engineering graduate, affirmed these struggles. He works as freelancing “anything” as he put it. He has multiple part-time jobs, including cooking, helping students with their graduation projects, babysitting and furnishing apartments. He added that, “generally, people travel to realize their dreams. My travel killed my dreams. This was of a high cost and my alienation is not only because I left everything that I feel comfortable close-by, but also I started to not know what exactly I am trying to achieve and what I want to do in my life” (Tayyeb 2019).

The feeling of loneliness was omni-present during almost all the interviews. Salem complained how he cannot find someone to be close to, giving the system of social relationships is different between Egypt and Germany. Ehsan indicated that whenever he sees families together, he remembers how lonely he is. Ehsan’s father is still in prison in Egypt and his family is suffering economically because of this. Ehsan cannot help them, and he feels helplessness whenever he calls his mother. “I want my friends to bury me when I die. I do not want to die alone here away of everything. I do not want strangers to bury me,” he added. Shady mentioned that he started to feel “like an uprooted tree” whenever he thinks of his daughter, whom he did not see since three years.

Like loneliness, the feeling of survivor's guilt accompanied many whom I talked to. Salem and Ehsan, for example, are not in peace with themselves because they left close friends and family members in prison and they left Egypt. Whad said that whenever she thinks of Egypt, she thinks about the thousands of political prisoners. Additionally, a potential interviewee even asked me to postpone our interview as she could not "reconcile with her decision to leave Egypt yet". The feeling of shame was also pointed out. Ahlam did not like to talk about the refugee status she has. She emphasized multiple times that she does not take social aids from the government and pays taxes like any citizens. Distancing from the label of the refugee like Ahlam (Suerbaum 2017), Haytham did his best to leave the refugee camp and come to Berlin. He also refused the governmental social aids. Additionally, Salem saves his expired Egyptian passport. When I asked about the reason, he said he does now know why he keeps it. However, one of the reasons might be that the passport tells his story and a symbol of his past.

Nostalgia and longing for return were central notions in all the interviews. Also, missing family members, especially the mother or father, has made the exiles weak and vulnerable. Ehsan did not see his mother for two years. He convinced her to meet in Saudi Arabia while doing the Umrah, the practice of Islamic pilgrimage in Mecca. However, his friends warned him against going to Saudi Arabia or any other Arab country, as his name is on the terrorist list of the al-Sisi's regime and he might be illegally deported as it happened with Egyptians in Sudan, Kuwait and Bahrain (see, MEE 2020; HRW 2019; Reporters 2019). Haytham met his sister and mother in Kenya in 2019. He indicated that, "they are my home and where I should be".

4.4 Dysphoria as a process of political becoming: the dysphoric political subject

> To whoever ask who we are:
> We are young Egyptians

We are exiled from our country
We are imprisoned in our country
We are the families of the prisoners
We are the disappeared
We are the youth of the Revolution
We say it from Berlin:
We do not forget January 25
We are the ghosts of January 25

These phrases were part of the chants by the Egyptian protesters in Hermannplatz and in front of the Egyptian Embassy in Berlin. The repeated phrase of "we are…" is a sign of their constant affirmation of parts of who they are, as exiled Egyptians. All my interlocutors follow the Egyptian news daily and closely. Most of them are my friends on Facebook and they are usually active on commenting on the socio-political status quo in Egypt. For most of them, not a single day passes without thinking about Egypt.

Studies on political subjectivity formation in the Egyptian context used to take the Egyptian nation-state as the main reference point (see, Al-Samragy 2017; Ismail 2006b). Ismail (2012) shows that Egyptian political subjects are formed and performed in dialogical ways in interactions with the security forces. Practices of discipline and punishment "aim to turn 'rebellious' subjects into docile ones" (2012, 442). According to Ismail, Egyptians' encounters with the police which take place in outdoor markets, on roads and highways, in public transport, in alley ways, and in the private affairs involve violence and humiliation (2012, 437). Such encounters are part of disciplining and governmental practices which are embodied and extended to the expression of the self and its appearance, leading to undermining the sense of self-respect and personal dignity by individual subjects (2012, 443–44).

The intimate connection between state practices of government and forming 'docile' subjectivities was relatively ruptured by the 2011 uprising through the interplay between the self and the revolutionary political collectivity (Ismail, 2011, p. 990). The 2011 uprising in Egypt has

its constitutive entanglements in political subjectivity formation (Al-Samragy, 2017; Diana, 2019; Finn & Momani, 2017; Hanafi, 2012). It broke out of the humiliation structures which were developed across decades and it brought to life "the collective subject of the revolution," which was translated into oppositional, rebellious and revolutionary subjectivities that occupy antagonistic positions in the everyday interactions with the police (Ismail 2012, 458). Hanafi (2012) argues that the Arab revolutions ushered a "new political subjectivity" represented in a form of 'reflexive individualism,' which "involves the constant negotiation of an actor with the existing social structure in order to realize a (partial) emancipation from it" (2012, 203).

As individuals are subjects of contingent historical relations and social systems of meaning-making (Foucault, 1982), the exiles' political subjectivities are significantly different from these theorizations. The exiles are not anymore "subjects of the revolution," as the phenomenon of exile crystalizes the defeat of the revolution and Egypt's counter-revolutionary aftermath. The exiles are different from the "transnational Arab subjects" who were politically active during the time of the revolution and its aftermath in the Arab diasporas. Finn and Momani (2017) argue that collaboration, solidarity and mutual aid between transnational Arab activists abroad during the Arab uprisings instantiate their political subjectivity. They show how Arab activists abroad act as revolutionary bridges and remitters of political ideas that deploy progressive political change in the country of origin (2017, 38).

The conditions of exile play a part in shaping the identity of the exiles in different ways (Cornejo 2008). Experiences of displacement and escape, memories of the revolution, narrations of the exile, cyberspace activism and the unprecedented feelings the exiles experience are constitutive elements of exiles' dysphoric subjectivities. Dysphoria is a state of general unease and dissatisfaction with life. It is often used in terms of the gender dysphoria, which is the state of

mismatching between subject's gender orientation and the assigned sexual organs at birth. Subjects with gender dysphoria are transgender, as their gender preferences mismatch with their sexual organs. Transitioning is the process of changing one's gender affiliation and sexual characteristics to suit with their own gender preference. I believe that the state of (gender) dysphoria, as a metaphor, can best express the statues of the Egyptian exiles whom I met.

The dysphoric subject is in a state of mismatching between her political affiliations and preferences and the surrounding community where she is, due to the experience of displacement. This dysphoric subject is a subject in tensions, shattered between here and there, and between where they are and where they think they *should* be. This subject has a broken trajectory and is caught-up between the possibility and impossibility of fixing and handling this break. The dysphoric subject is located in-between the past and the present, negotiating their fragmented life-worlds in exile by her lived memories in her home country and the current experiences and emotions that accompany exile. Hence, the dysphoric subject is a concentration of forces and accumulation of memories and experiences that bring the subject into life.

This dysphoric subject is in a state of uncertainty and in aporia. It is a matter of fact that no discussion about the Egyptian exiles can be without opening up the question of the tens of thousands of political prisoners in Egypt and the hundreds of the disappeared. The dysphoric subjects live between their (beloved's) stories which are worthy of rescue and retelling, and the current realities of dealing with their losses, nostalgia and difficulties of the new environment in exile. That's why the dysphoric subjects are at a constant state of unease. Although the dysphoric subject is located in a "transnational field of relations" and is multi-located due to his subject positioning in differential structures of power in exile and at home (Çaglar and Glick Schiller

2018), this mode of subjectivity is still suffering the consequences of displacement and the emergent life in exile. The dysphoric subject is a subject in pain.

This subject is liminal, as she is in a liminal period "between and betwixt". However, there is no standard passage or rituals through which the subject transitions into another status or social position (V. Turner 1967). The dysphoric subject is in transition, although the aftermath of this transition is unknown, not standard and dynamic. She is different from Simmel's notion of 'the stranger,' who is permanently anchored in a tense relation of distance and nearness with her new urban metropolitan society. The dysphoric subject is forced to be in this violent tense relation, and she is not in peace with where she is. Also, and most importantly, what is crucial about the dysphoric subjectivity is the political and social disembeddedness and unease which emerge along with it, not mainly, as in Simmel's thesis, the transition into the modern city and urban metropolitan life. The dysphoric subject is also different from Robert Park's 'marginal man,' who is unable to return to his original culture and is caught in a structure of double ambivalence between the new culture and the original one (Weisberger 1992). Although the exile is in a state of double ambivalence, dysphoria is a state, not a fate, in a cluster of currents that can be overcome and challenged as I show in the next chapter.

Analyzing Palestinians' narrations of the events of 1948, which marks *al-Nakba* and the Palestinian great exodus, Saloul (2012) argues that current narratives and stories of *al-Nakba* (English of catastrophe) should be read in relation to the current everyday realties of exiled Palestinians, not as narration of the historical event itself. Hence, *al-Nakba* becomes not a historical past that underscores the Palestinian experience, but the daily exile of its "catastrophed subject" (Saloul 2012, 176). The catastrophed subject (*al-mankoub*) is a current reenactment of *al-Nakba* in exile and an ongoing product of the catastrophic loss of homeland, up-rootedness and

refugeehood. It might be useful to juxtapose the dysphoric subject with the catastrophed subject, to argue that these subjects, although they index different histories of dispossessions, still embody and live the catastrophes of the 'past' in their exile.

4.5 Conclusion:

I conceptualize dysphoria here as a process of becoming exile, which is situational and historically located. This process is marked by particular characteristics such as uncertainty, dissatisfaction and vulnerability. I started this chapter by illustrating how exile and displacement felt for the Egyptian exiled political activists in Berlin. Feelings of loneliness, nostalgia, shame, helplessness and anxiety were common on their narrations of the experience of exile. These feelings are not just there. They constitute, among other elements, the dysphoric subject, who is in a state of unease and dissatisfaction with her exile's conditions. The act of escape, the affect of terror and in-betweenness are constitutive of this subject. The exiles are living partially out of place and time, which intensifies their experience of exile.

In the next chapter, I show that the dysphoric subject is in self-discovery and in an unfinished process of becoming. Through Yassin al-Haj Saleh's notion of 'exilification', turning the exile into home, I argue that the exile can unmake their exilic conditions by enlivening such conditions and taking from them changes of self-development and growth, in an attempt to exile the exile. By this I aim to argue that marginality engenders ways of potentiality through widening the exiles' understanding of the political.

5 Conclusion: Undoing Exile?

> Oh God, forgive me,
> Forgive my screams. Dry my tears
> Forgive my deep darkness and heavy long nights
> Grant me your light to revive my light
> Direct my steps,
> Direct my steps on the right path to cross my exile[5]
>
> Samīh al-Qāsim, Palestinian poet

Throughout the thesis, I tried to provide an ethnography of the exiled Egyptian political activists who were forced to leave Egypt since the 2013 military coup in Egypt. In Chapter 1, I started by showing what led them to leave and undertake their journeys into exile, through the act of escape. In a necropolitical space like Egypt, political violence is a modality of government. The majority of the exiled activists were detained more than one time in Egypt. I illustrated how they were living in hiding to avoid police arrest, by 'being on the run'. During this state, the exiles experienced constant fear, worry and insecurity. Some exiles fled Egypt legally, through the airport, while few others went through the southern borders with Sudan. I argued that in necropolitics, escape could be envisioned as a mode of political agency which is not about killing the attacker as in Mbembe's thesis, but about avoiding the field in which the attacker operates. The state of 'being on the run' problematizes notions of life, death and survival as rigid categories. Escape in this incident is a way out, and seeking exile, the escape route, is a potential of breaking the siege of necropolitics. Moreover, I argued that escape is not a form of political withdrawal but represents an act of transgressing the necropolitical regimes of control.

In exile, the reconfigurations of the necropolitical regimes of control are present through the Egyptian state ways of securitizing the diaspora, shaping "atmospheres of terror". In Chapter

[5] My translation.

2, I argued that through the affect of terror, these reconfigurations could be depicted and understood. I illustrated the extra-territorial measures and violations by the Egyptian state to which the exiles in Berlin are exposed which includes, denying them their passports and other official documents, writing security reports about the exiles in Berlin, cutting state-funded scholarships from the PhD students, harassing the exiles' families in Egypt and denying entry to Egyptians who have second nationality because of their political opinions. The culture of fear that is in Egypt nowadays is found, and mirrored, in the diaspora due to these state processes. The affect of terror cannot be exclusively reduced to state processes, but the circulation of bodies, news and rumors about state surveillance in the diaspora has a role in engendering that terror as well. I concluded by showing the importance of bringing affect in studying (transnational) authoritarianism, by studying rationalities *and* emotionalites of rule. The atmospheres of terror show that authoritarian regimes do not only transmit terror for ruling, but terror is operationalized and instrumentalized for fostering their modes of ruling.

In Chapter 3, I focus on the exiles themselves and how they experience, feel and embody the conditions of exile. I showed that the exiles experience unknow and unprecedented feelings while navigating their life-worlds in exile, which include feelings of uncertainty, fragility, inability, strangeness, nostalgia and longing, guilt, shame, loneliness and being 'out of place and time'. These feelings are experienced in their everyday life and their dreams. I argued that due to the conditions of displacement, the exiles are partially in Egypt and Berlin simultaneously, which has a role in shaping dysphoric subjectivies in exile. The dysphoric subjects are in a state of mismatching between where they are and where they think they should be. Dysphoria, a state of unease and dissatisfaction, is a product of concentration of forces and factors. The defeat of the revolution, exile, traumatic memories, news of political violence in Egypt, losing social relationships and the imprisonment of family members and friends are all constituents of dysphoric

subjectivities. Hence, understanding how these subjects came to be as such through their personal and political trajectories is important in understanding dysphoria as a state of political becoming. The subjects are constituted as such through marginalization. I showed that this mode of subjectivities is full of contestations through the feelings the subjects experience daily. Being split, between here and there, worried and insecure about the future and life could be overcome and challenged.

My main argument is two-fold: firstly, the socio-political phenomenon of exile is at the heart of Egyptian post-2013 politics and Egypt's counter-revolutionary aftermath. By providing an ethnography of the Egyptian exiles after the 2013 coup in Berlin, it is clear that the exiles are integral to the counterrevolution in Egypt, not outside of it. Exile is a reconfiguration of the counterrevolution in Egypt. The exiles, who are the families and friends of the political prisoners in Egypt and the ghosts of the 2011 uprising as I showed in Chapter 3, are inseparable to the emergence of the post-2013 military-backed regime. Secondly, the exiled subjects are dysphoric. The exiles are shattered between the realities of exile, and their lived pasts and longing for return. They experience intense feelings of insecurity, anxiety and dissatisfaction. The subject of exile, a liminal subject who is out of place and out of time, tries to enliven and emplace the conditions of exile. As they are in transition, dysphoric subjects are also in dynamic, changing states of self-discovery and becoming. Hence, dysphoria is a temporary state in a cluster of currents.

Exile can be a ground for initiating new contacts and a path to personal development and growth. Yassin al-Haj Saleh, a Syrian exiled intellectual in Berlin, argues that in exile there is a potential for personal liberation. He uses the concept of 'exilification' to refer to the attempts of turning the exile into home, in which the exiled makes from her exile an opportunity and a new beginning to resume a life that has been put on hold (al-Haj Saleh 2018). Exilification is a way of

accepting the conditions and the challenges of exile, and starting new commitments for a different world; neither by isolating oneself from the new social environment in expectation of going back home nor the full dissolution in the new society, in an attempt of a complete erasure of the past (al-Haj Saleh 2017). It is a state of in-betweenness, of balancing being "from there and from here" at once (Darwīsh 2007). Following this understanding, maintaining the old constitution of the self and considering it an act of resistance is counterproductive (al-Haj Saleh 2017). Exilification happens when the exiled attaches new meanings to the exile. By rendering exile a new beginning, a different struggle added to the 'old' one in the home country, the exiled does not spend the rest of her years awaiting return. However, she tries to live *in* exile not *around* it (al-Haj Saleh 2018). In that perspective, exile can be an emancipatory experience, as it was a result of seeking and calling for it.

Exile also can be taken as an opportunity for initiating solidarities with different marginalized groups and widening the understanding of the political (J. Turner 2016). Marginality might provide the conditions for forms of political becoming. The experience of exile might enable the exiles to rethink the terrains of national and sovereign politics, hence widen the understanding of politics beyond forms and acts of national citizenship.

Time will show that the exiles' escape and exits are by no way forms of political withdrawal, however, ways of political involvement otherwise by multiple means (Kirkpatrick 2017). It has been argued that the time the exiles spent in exile is a variable which influences how they deal and navigate their life-worlds therein (al-Haj Saleh 2018). Ehsan mentioned that he started to understand the Egyptian regime by every single day he spent in exile and his disbelief in national media expanded. Ahlam started to be involved in German politics and has a political standpoint in issues related to refugees and minority rights in Germany. Karim mentioned that

although it is a hard and harsh experience, he claims that exile enabled him to see a 'big picture' of the Egyptian politics and the nature of the 'war on terror'. Hasan said that repression in Egypt made him not able to think and voice his opinions. He thinks that exile provided him for a space for conciliation and political evolution. Osama said that he started to 'feel' the workings of politics and marginalization. He became more aware of minority and LGBT rights when he became an exile. The fact that the majority of the exiles are stitching their lives slowly, regardless of the difficulties they encounter, makes of exile a space of empowerment and growth. My interlocutors learn anew how to carry themselves, irrespective of their loss. As al-Abas who was "waiting his turn" in Egypt told me, "if I had not been gone outside the country, I would be in the notorious scorpion prison," one of the worst prisons in Egypt. It will take time, effort and self-commitment from Salem to talk about his mother and native Alexandria without bursting into tears.

The butterflies will never stop screaming for their freedom and the right to be wherever they want to be. They once screamed for a better Egypt. In exile, they scream for a better, more inclusive world. It is through these screams, I believe, the contingent personal and political legacies of the 2011 revolutionary uprising can be disentangled and rearticulated. I learned from my interlocutors that their screams are potentials for a better world. Their unsettled selves unraveled me. My thesis is an attempt to articulate some of their screams. My thesis is *a* similar scream.

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