Civil unrest in Libya has been growing, increasing significantly in mid-February 2011, as citizens attempt to overthrow Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi and his government. Col. Qaddafi rose to power in 1969 in a bloodless coup. From the onset of his regime, outsiders have questioned his human rights records and his involvement with terrorists. This year when the government shut down the Internet limiting the freedoms of the Libyan people. Ad- ditionally, the government forces killed 84 protesters and then fired into the unarmed funeral processions of the dead protestors increasing the death toll to 173 confirmed deaths by February 20th. Libya has prohibited entry into the country and has attempted to prevent news from leaving the nation. Rebels gained control of the second largest city, Benghazi and portions of the capital Tripoli. This prompted Col. Qaddafi to order military air strikes on rebel held areas. Rebels fear that Qaddafi will continue to kill unarmed citizens in these attacks until the surrender of the rebel troops. Several generals and military personal defected, since the rebellion is nearly impossible due to the lack of the internet and the ability of phones only to receive calls. Rebel forces are no match Qaddafi’s troops which are equipped with Russian weaponry. As the conflict lengthens the rebels are becoming less effective since normal citizens who are fighting to support democracy lack the skills of the government troops. Additionally, religious and tribal factions may further weaken rebel held areas due to regional conflicts. To counter the lack of organization of the rebel forces the Libyan National Council, located in Benghazi, has been formed to represent the rebels. This council was recognized by France on March 10th as the official government. Britain, Portugal, and the Arab League also support the Libyan Na- tional Council but have yet to declare them as the official government. Britain and France have proposed a no-fly zone over Libya to help limit the abilities of the Libyan Air Force in bombing the rebels and civilians in the towns not controlled by Col. Qaddafi. While this debate is occurring, Qaddafi’s troops have managed to capture Brega a key oil town that supplied the rebels to fuel their vehicles, and have moved within a 150 miles of Benghazi. The only major town between the rebel capital and Brega is Ajdabiya which is being fortified by the rebels to repel attacks by Col. Qaddafi. As Col. Qaddafi’s troops approach Benghazi, the rebels are pleading desperately to nations who claim to support democracy to intervene in Libya so that their democracy has a chance to survive.

THE SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON TODAY’S CIVIL AND TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTIONS

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Self-immolation by desperate young man sparks revolution in Tunisia

Habib Bourguiba became the first president of Tunisia in 1956. Zine el Abidine Ben Ali has been president since 1987 and was “re-elected” in 2009 for a fifth term with “89 percent” of the vote. But it is no secret that he is known to quell his opposition through the use of force and violence. Tunisia consists of about 10.4 million people who speak Arabic and French. Islam is official state religion, but the Tunisian government supports a secular society. The economy of Tunisia is suffering, as it is in many other countries. Unemployment is officially at 14 percent, and jobless rates are much higher among educated youths and in rural areas away from the coast. Life under Ben Ali is difficult and unfair for the people of Tunisia. Middle class and even lower class Tunisians are in poverty. And so the citizens, not the government, have come together to fight for better employment and to end the corruption that takes place on social networks.

As an activist in the recent Egyptian revolution, Wael Ghonim and the page “We are all Khaled Said” he created on Facebook played a significant role in organizing the Egyptians in the uprising. Shortly after the first protest in January 25, Ghonim was arrested by the police. However, Ghonim soon found out that he had become a symbol for the Egyptian movement. “I’m not a hero. I was writing on a keyboard on the Internet and I wasn’t exposing my life to danger,” Ghonim rejected the notion after his release. “The heroes are the one who are in the street.”

Eventually, the Egyptian President Mubarak was ousted after on February 11. Ghonim concluded that the success of the uprising was credited to the social media, such as Facebook, as well as the software Twitter. In fact, it is not the first time that social media played such a significant role in a revolutionary movement. Thinking back to the Moldova’s Twitter Revolution and also Ukraine’s orange Revolution, social media definitely contributed a lot to propelling people’s movements. Its function already goes far beyond simple communication. Under the social media’s effect, people who are absolute strangers now can rally together faithful to the movements. In the Egypt uprising, Facebook become especially crucial when protesters tried to share experience of passing through the streets blocked by the police.

There is no doubt that both Facebook and Twitter have been wisely used by protests in order to enact Egypt’s social change. But social media is just the trigger. The root of the success of the movement is people’s irreconcilable conflicts against the ruler, as well as their consistent determination.

Facebook in Egypt?

Not that important!

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A Peaceful Revolution?

Three weeks of protests in Jordan have led to the dismissal and resignation of the cabinet of King Abdullah on February 1st. Protesters are upset about the high unemployment, high prices of goods, and the inability to directly elect the prime minister under the current government. The protesters are motivated by the reforms taking place in Tunisia and Egypt. However, unlike those nations, they do not seek to replace King Abdullah who they view as a unifying force. This has led to a much quieter and more peaceful revolution than those occurring in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia. King Abdullah appointed former Prime Minister Marouf Bakhit on February 9th to implement the reforms demanded by the people. Many citizens are unsure about the new prime minister's ability to implement the changes since he failed to complete changes such as reorganizing government agencies he promised in his previous term as prime minister in 2007. Since his appointment, Bakhit has met with opposing parties in order to determine the best way to change the electoral process and decrease the corruption present in the government today. On March 3rd, Bakhit and his government received its confirmation vote from the Jordanian parliament even though many still question if he is the best person for the job.

The Teacher's Will

Revolution and uprising isn't secluded to the middle east, and various uprisings are occurring on our own soil. In Wisconsin, Governor Scott Walker wants to pass a bill trying to cut government spending. In this proposed bill Walker will save $300 million dollars over the next two years. However, the main part of this bill is prohibiting unions to bargain for anything other than pay raises, making members pay half their pension costs and 12 percent of health care costs. Of course the most upset over this is the Wisconsin teacher's union. Teachers all across the state skipped school Wednesday and Thursday to protest the proposed bill. Opposition has now surfaced as the teachers who skipped school were getting fake doctor's notes at the protest for their absences, which left many school districts scrambling to find replacements and being forced to cancel school. The other controversy that has arisen is that Wisconsin law prohibits teacher strikes. John Matthews, the Madison Teachers Inc. executive director, said that the teachers were involved in "a political action," not a strike. However, Peter Davis, legal counsel with the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission, counters John Mathew's statement saying, "A strike includes any concerted work stoppage by municipal employees, any concerted interruption of operation of services, or any concerted refusal to perform services for the purpose of enforcing demands on a municipal employer." Based on this definition the teachers were knowingly violating Wisconsin law and furthermore receiving fake doctor's notes to pardon their absence. What message are we sending our kids, their students, by letting this behavior be tolerated? If you don't get exactly what you want to cry and whine about it? Our children need to learn that life isn't fair, so rather than crying about it, suck it up and move on. The story that is overlooked because of the protests is the truth the negative affect unions have. One example is Megan Sampson. In 2010 she was named outstanding first year teacher in Wisconsin. A week later she was laid off. You might be wondering why a teacher of her ability could be laid off, but that is because her collective-bargaining contract states that staffing decisions are to be made based on seniority and union rules. It's a shame that the career of one of Wisconsin's best up and coming first year teacher is in the hands of a corrupt union with it's own agenda.

A Little About Facebook & It's Creator

Facebook is one of the greatest tools used from finding long lost friends to starting revolutions. Its creator Mark Zuckerberg was a brilliant up and coming computer genius when he invented Facebook. Since then he has gained unfathomable fame and fortune. For further information on Zuckerberg check out the new movie The Social Network, a movie following the start of facebook. We only intend to all of you readers that this movie will not disappoint and is this year's must see.

Egypt Ousts Prime Minister

Although technically independent since 1922, Egypt has never experienced a real Democracy. Currently, there are no guaranteed rights to privacy, free speech, assembly, press, or even a trial. Hosni Mubarak has ruled Egypt since 1981. There are periodical "elections" but Mubarak, now 82 years old, is "re-elected" regularly with more than 90% of the vote. Recently, it has been clear that he expects his son Gamal to succeed him. The real issue that has recently come to light is that the people of Egypt want fair and free elections with all choices on the table; they want a real democracy. Citizens also oppose the use of torture by the police, whose actions are protected by the Emergency Law. This law basically gave the state complete jurisdiction for anything falling under the category "security." Abuse by police has become endemic; and the reasons for arrest are far too corrupt. People disappear and die in police custody on a regular basis. It is estimated that there are close to 10,000 political prisoners in Egypt at any given time. Egyptians oppose corruption, too. It is prevalent at every level of society. Abuse of power is almost impossible to get anything done in Egypt without knowing someone or bribing someone. This is prevalent at every level of society. You need to bribe government officials to run a business, get or pay an electric or phone bill. If one is lucky enough to afford to buy a flat, the first thing to do is check the plumbing. Usually, it is so bad it has to be Usually, it is so bad it has to be torn out and reinstalled, even in new buildings. Buildings literally fall down in Egypt all the time. Finally, the people are fed up with poverty. It is rare for an employee to be paid a living wage. Living conditions are deplorable. In a country where most of the population spends about 50% of its income on food, increasing food prices have been devastating. The government is spending billions on weapons and "security", which protects them from the people more than it protects Egypt from any external threat. The gap between the rich and the overwhelming majority of poor is huge. Living this way has led to a sense of desperation and degradation for the Egyptians. The people really believe that their kids have little chance of having decent lives in their own country. As a result of all this discontent, demonstrators gathered peacefully in central Cairo on Jan. 25 to demand an end to Mubarak's power and protest their economic woes. The protests have come just days after Tunisian leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was forced into exile by demonstrations in his home country. Social media tools, such as Twitter and Facebook, were used extensively to rally support for the protesters. Egyptian organizers used Twitter to send out information regarding gathering locations, until the government blocked the service late on January 25th. The government ordered a communications blackout in "selected areas" on January 27th in an apparent bid to stop protesters from coordinating demonstrations. Cell phone services were restored on January 28th but Internet service remained blocked. After a historic 18-day wave of anti-government demonstrations, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has resigned and handed over power to the military. After over 300 people lost their lives, and with about 2,000 injured, the Egyptian people were successful.

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TO ALL EGYPTIANS HOPING TO SPARE THIS NATION STRIFE

The Arab Spring that began in Tunisia has spread across the Arab world. On January 31, the Tunisian president, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, was forced to resign after months of protests. The situation in other Arab countries is tense and uncertain. What will happen next? How can we prevent another round of violence and suffering?

Saudi Invasion Goes Unnoticed

The island of Bahrain in the Middle East is in a state of emergency due to weeks of pro-democracy protests. The al-Khalifa royal family declared the emergency after almost being overthrown in 4,000 Saudi troops landed on the island to protect the king’s rule. Bahrain’s people have long been subject to repressive forms of government. When under British control, the Colonial leading the state imposed fear and imprisonment for all who questioned the lack of democracy. Later, the United States stationed the Fifth Fleet off its coast causing it to follow American interests. When Saudi troops of the counter-revolution intervened, many there viewed it as an invasion of their nation. The troops destroyed opposition presses, an attempt to silence outcry against this unjust act. This led the pro-democracy supporters in Bahrain to criticize America and other nations for not speaking out against a foreign nation invading to keep the existing government in place. Many there believe they are being ignored by western nations who are reporting the conflict between the Shia and Sunni people, instead of between pro-democracy and pro-monarchy forces. With so little attention given to this conflict compared to Libya and Egypt people are coming to the conclusion that Western nations are only interested in spreading their values when something they desire is at stake such as oil. When democratic nations equally support democratic revolutionaries it is the duty of pro-democracy people around the world to condemn those nations’ actions along with those of the oppressor and support the Bahrain people.

Still NO Facebook in China?

On January 30, Google announced that they decided to stop censoring their search services on China mainland. Users visiting google.cn are now being automatically redirected to Google.com.hk (Hong Kong), where they uncensored search results. During recent years, the free speech on website in China has been limited further and further, including the persistent blocking of webos and software such as Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, Google Docs and Blogger. International news is strictly censored and blocked. While people in the Middle East are taking the utmost advantage of the social media on organizing revolutionary movements, Chinese people in mainland know few details about it. The Chinese Communist Party wants to keep the current status quo so that they unsurprisingly would not approve any revolutionary movement like that. Most images of Chinese people see from the press are burning vehicles, crowded streets and violent riots, which all remind a peril of chaos. Undoubtedly, the unrest in Cairo would remind most people the crackdown of protests in Tiananmen Square twenty years ago. In fact, there are some analogies going around between these two events. The Chinese movement, which led mainly by students and intellectuals, lasted almost one month and a half since May 1989. The demonstration turned into a dead end when the government officials and movement leaders failed to reach a consensus with each other. In early June the army moved into the streets of Beijing with troops and tanks and cleared the square with live fire. The exact number of deaths is not known but it is possible that thousands of people were killed. Most people believed that it was the disconnection between the upper leaders and protesters lead the fall of the demonstration. However, in current Egypt the protesters keep on using Facebook and Twitter to organize revolutionary activities and communicate with each other more directly. The social media did play a key role during the rebel in preventing making a chaos among the protesters. If the internet and social media were such advanced during that time, the tragedy of Tiananmen Square would possibly be avoided.

Facebook Pages we Like

We are all Khaled Said
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