

“Not because my birth certificate states that I am a Muslim and not because I was born into a Muslim family do I really have to follow it.”

KAREEM AMER

By: Mohamed Fadel Fahmy

The Air-Arabia flight hauling me from the United Arab Emirates arrived to Alexandria-Nozha airport at 1 am. I had spent many vacations on Alex’s magical beaches in the past and devoured its delicious seafood. The Pearl of the Middle East is just one of the many names given to the second largest city and the main port of Egypt. I sat in the backseat of the cab, a 1970 model, one of thousands of black and orange series of cabs that have been roaming the magical streets of Alexandria for decades and have become part of its national insignia. I watched the sea and the motion of its waves as the taxi drove down part of the 140 km stretch of sand along the Mediterranean Sea. For once, my mission in Alex was not based around sun bathing. I came a long way to interview Kareem Amer, who has become an outcast in society for being a free thinker, a blogger with a voice. The taxi driver interrupted my moments of peace to remind me that the Greek architect Dinocrates had built Alexandria at the orders of Alexander the Great. I was not sure if the old driver was showing off his city or just fishing for a ‘baksheesh’, the Arabic slang for tip, a word every tourist that visits Egypt is probably accustomed with. I gawked at the old buildings lining the shore and tried to make out some of the Greek names written on them. Indeed, Alexander the Great immortalized his name and left behind a city flourishing with culture, political and economic intellect.

The white sandy beaches may have remained intact but the democratic revolution the Greeks promoted into the history of mankind may well be a topic of the past, nonexistent or just an illusion the Egyptian government prefers to advertise every now and then when the U.S. decides to ‘squeeze’ for reforms. I realize the date is October 23, 2006 as I fill in the application to check into the Sheraton-Montazah situated across the street from ‘Miami’ beach and the Montazah Palace. The hospitable receptionist bombards me with details about my room and the amenities of the hotel but he clearly sees that I am not interested so he hands me the room access

card. As I follow the bellhop towards the elevator he smiles, “Welcome to the Bride of the Mediterranean Sea,” another nickname given to Alexandria.

I listen to the bellhop recite his knowledge about the Montazah Palace. He reminds me that King Farouk, the last King of Egypt had resided in this palace before he was abdicated in the 1950's by his successor, Gamal Abd El Nasser. The King was famous for his corruption and his lavish spending. The bellhop then escorts me to my room's balcony to show me the panoramic view of the sea weaved in with the palace grounds and endless acres of trees. I wondered about Farouk's luxurious life as I stared at the palace's enormous garden. During the hardships of World War II, the King had insisted on keeping all the lights burning at his palace during a time when the city was blacked-out due to bombing. I handed the bellhop his 'baksheeh' hoping he would cut the history lesson short. At this point, I was only interested in calling the man I have flown across the ocean to see. He is the first Egyptian blogger jailed for expressing his views in the so-called democratic Egypt President Husni Mubarak falsely promotes through his National Democratic Party. I once called the president a dictator in a liberal's suit on an interview with Radio Free Europe in 2005 during the theatrical presidential elections he allowed. Why the word allowed? Because he has been the president for twenty-three years! He is not a Saddam Hussein but the tactics and brainwashing he uses to put a stronghold down on his people may well be of the same oppressive nature. Since 1981 and specifically after the assassination of President Anwar Al Sadat, Egypt has been under a "state of emergency" by which the government has rationalized the use of indefinite detentions without trials. The opposition continuously calls for the abolishment of this martial law, which was once utilized in the arrest of Kareem Amer for simply expressing his anti-Islam views on his blog only two months after he had launched it.

Kareem Amer was born on June 17th, 1984 in Alexandria to Muslim parents. His father had landed a job in Italy and brought his wife along with him for a three-year trial period. They moved back to Egypt months before the birth of Kareem in 1983. His mother did not feel comfortable being a veiled women living in Italy surrounded by people who consume alcohol and who do not follow Islam. Upon their return, the father mixed with members from radical Islamic groups that eventually reshaped his life and the life of his family. Some of his new friends were members of

the Jihad group who advised him to let his beard grow and to force his wife to wear a 'nikab' that covers her full face and head. She would be considered an infidel if she refused to cover up her face. These groups were able to influence his father's thinking until he gradually immersed into the Salafi way of thinking. Salafism is a movement within Sunni Islam that has become very popular in the Middle East among radicals. The word Salaf itself means ancestors and those who follow it consider the first three generations of Muslim's who are prophet Mohamed's companions as the perfect examples of how Islam should be implemented in the everyday life. Salafis, also known as Wahabis, emphasize many rituals and follow strict rules in their everyday life. No photographs or images of any living beings with souls are allowed. That may explain why Kareem's father banned the television set and the computer from their home. Music of any kind was also forbidden. The trouble didn't end there. Kareem felt so depressed when he saw his father force his two sisters Zeinab and Fatma (named after the two daughters of prophet Mohamed) to cover up and wear a nikab as soon as they reached puberty. It got worse when he forced them to stay home from school at the age of ten. The Salafis reject every kind of socialism and capitalism. There is no room for concepts such as economics, political parties, social justice, revolution, and constitutions. Kareem was threatened constantly by his dad if the thought of skipping prayers crossed his mind and this left a sort of psychological trauma in his personality. At times, Kareem found himself confused as he prayed to please his dad not God, fearing that his own father would chop his neck off as he threatened him numerously. It still got worse. At the age of five his father decided to officially change Kareem's name to Abdel Kareem (the slave of Allah, the kind). Kareem and his four brothers were then forced to enter the famous Al-Azhar University known to be the oldest university in the world dedicated to Islamic education and respected for its position as a center of Islamic scholarship and education. It was a form of slow torture as Kareem called it. Elementary education at Al-Azhar consisted of intense daily classes revolving around teaching children to memorize and recite the Quran. Scholars reverted to hitting for the simplest reasons. Like the military, if one student was at fault the whole class paid for his mistake. Kareem became extremely introverted and avoided joining his peers in any recreational activities mainly because he feared his dad's threats about mixing with the wrong crowd. Salafis reject dogmatic theology or gossip. They consider mingling and free speech similar to Greek philosophy which could endanger the idealism of

“pure” Islam. Kareem hated his life. Four of his seven daily classes were about the Quran and its interpretation. By sixth grade he had memorized the entire Quran. Salfist Muslims were expected to indulge in Islamic activities, particularly promoting Islam through jihad (fighting in the name of Allah) and dawah (spreading Islam through preaching). He felt strangled by his peers, his four fundamentalist brothers who had become members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and most defiantly his father who had become very aggressive at home with his wife and two daughters. Some Salfis believe in supporting the state by spreading their beliefs non-violently. Others urge their followers to fight against foreign, non-Muslim occupation but not against governments that claim to be Islamic. The most extreme Salfists sometimes called Jihadists-Salafists believe it’s vital to engage in jihad to overthrow regimes that claim to be Islamic by defeating the organizations and authorities of the government’s system. Kareem took advantage of this no-life situation as he called it and read a lot of Islamic, Christian and Jewish history books. He finally reached a decision that he did not want to live carrying a Bin Ladinesque beard nor did he want to live in a cave with no music, internet or television. Our contemporary world today suffers from the likes of Osama Bin Laden, the Salafi Saudi Muslim and his second hand man Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri who had fled from Egypt to promote his Salafi theories in Afghanistan. Abdel Kareem Nabil Suleiman who is also known as Kareem Amer not only rejected Salfism, but he also decided that there was no God out there. He lives his life today as an atheist. His only mean of freedom of speech on his blog led to his arrest after he attacked Islam and accused it of being a violent religion. This led to endless problems in his life. Aljazeera and BBC among other media agencies had interviewed him after his release but only broadcast a one minute segment that did not serve him justice. His case had caused protests outside the U.N. building in New York calling for his immediate release. His dad left his mother, remarried and took the two daughters away with him. Evidence of his anti-Islam opinions were printed off his blog and used against him by the Supreme Council forming general policy, headed by a Grand Imam, known as "Sheikh Al-Azhar." He was expelled from the Al-Azhar, an education he was ready to abounding after he had denounced his Islamic religion. When I asked him if he still prays five times a day he answered, “I consider the first of July of last year 2005, a historical day in my life because I was able to disregard the habit of praying, a ritual I followed for years without one convincing reason.”

Kareem Amer's own words from an audio-recorded interview conducted by Mohamed Fadel Fahmy.

I started blogging because it was a way of expressing my disapproval of many issues in society, specifically the ill treatment of women in the Muslim world. That freedom didn't last long. I launched my blog in August 2005 then I was arrested two months later on October 26, 2005. I liked the idea of blogging when I first saw a blog called An Egyptian Girl, owned by a girl called Shainaz.

The blog world represents the new media to me. It allows individuals to become news reporters and it is not the government who is in total control of journalism anymore.

I used to write in Cops United (A Christian Coptic online paper). A girlfriend of mine introduced me to their site but I later realized that they are not promoting civil rights like they advertise. They are simply bias towards Christianity. They want to separate the nation and religion. They simply want a religious Egypt just like the Muslim Brotherhood. I only started to write so that I can have a voice. I wanted to feel alive. I did not have any rebellious ideas in my head. It was a form of venting because my problem since I was a kid is that no one ever listened to me, or I couldn't simply talk to anyone. Blogging has opened doors we could not even dream.

My problem with Islam built up gradually. It was not over night. I do not think I was ever a real Muslim in any way. Not because my birth certificate states that I am a Muslim and not because I was born into a Muslim family do I really have to follow it. These are mandatory identities forced on us from birth. Many people defend Islam and say that it is a peaceful religion. But, I of course studied in Al-Azhar, the oldest and biggest Islamic institute in the world and what I learned there really disgusted me. The oppression of women in the Islamic Sharia (guidelines) is one of my biggest problems with this religion. I do not think I need to go into detail about that. It is obvious.

I live in Muharam Beik, close to the train station. I am a quiet person, and I do not really socialize with many people and I do not have too many friends. I use the

internet at Friends Net Cafe. After the latest confrontation between the Muslims and Christians in Alexandria in October, 2005 I was at the café sharing my opinion about Islam to the owner when suddenly a man barged in and dragged me outside. A group of guys beat me up and tore my shirt. I was able to escape then I ran back into the café. They used a huge iron rod that they had planned to hit me with and broke the store's front glass. I refused to leave the café until the police arrived. I was naïve to think the police would help. They treated me like a criminal not a victim. I still do not understand why those thugs beat me up. They were obviously extreme Muslims. Sadly, Egypt is divided into two teams. You are either Christian or Muslim. I never went back there again. I reverted to using the net at the Royal Alexandria library for an annual subscription of thirty Egyptian pounds. It was once the largest library in the world. You would think that the library which had come to symbolize the entirety of knowledge in the ancient world would represent freedom of speech. Not true. Many sites are blocked!

On the night of the arrest I was in deep sleep when I heard the loud knocks at 3 am. My mother opened the door. One of the Amn El Dawla (National Security) cops pulled me out of bed and threw me on the floor. He ordered me to put my clothes on then he explained to my mother that they were taking me in. The five other cops dressed in civilian clothes searched the house looking for a computer but I didn't own one. At first, they were treating me well. When I asked them about our destination, one of them replied, "ten minutes and you will find out."

As soon as I entered the National Security headquarters, the officer in charge ordered me to face the wall just like we were punished in school. Half an hour later, a different officer approached me from the back and blindfolded my face. He then dragged me and pushed me up four floors to a room where I sat silent on a chair for hours not aware that there was someone in the room watching me.

The blindfold was not tight. Suddenly, I could only see the man's shoes as he approached me. I then saw his hand and he said, "I want you to tell me everything or I will gradually torture you like there is no tomorrow. "Ok. What do you want to know?" I answered.

"You know," he replied.

"Because of the last blog?" I asked.

"Yes. The one called 'The Naked Truth About Islam As I Saw It'."

Then he went quiet and ordered another cop standing by to take me out of the room. He wanted to speak on the phone. Moments later, he called me in. He continued to talk on the phone. I understood that he was reporting to a higher rank. He asked him,

“What do I do with him? Is he innocent or not?”

They didn't know what they were doing or maybe they were manipulating me.

Then the man started interrogating. He asked me about my ulterior motives behind this article. “What do you mean?” I asked. He was puzzled that I come from an extreme Salafi-Islamic family and here I was putting down Islam. He got furious and wondered if I was being funded by other people. Then he stood up and yelled, “Don't make a fool out of me.” Indeed, his imagination was weird.

He paced around the office as he read the article out-loud to me. “How can a Muslim write such an article?” He yelled.

The Naked Truth About Islam As I Saw It in Moharam Beik

Yesterday the Muslims revealed the real shady colors of their faces. They proved to the whole world that they are at the peak of their barbarism, inhumanity, and aggression. They announced to the whole world that they are not governed by any morals when they deal with criticism by others. The events I saw yesterday, orchestrated by those poisonous insects are pathetic and it just proved to me the fake preaching they advertised for the past centuries. They pretend that they are extremely forgiving and peaceful...but the real face has been revealed portraying their barbarism, blind extremism, racial nature, and their negligence of other people's identities in order to erase their existence.

Some may defend what these Muslims did by saying that their actions do not relate in any way to the basics of Islam brought to us by prophet Mohamed fourteen centuries ago. The truth remains that their actions do not defy Islam's preaching when it encouraged ignoring, hating, robbing, and killing non-believers.

People who try to trick us by their hypocritical defense of Islam and its extreme rules know this very well but they prefer to ignore these facts and live in illusions that don't relate to reality in any way. I witnessed with my own eyes those cowboys break in to the stores of our Christian Coptic brothers while Moharam Beik fell out of the control of the local governance. I saw them throw the shop's supplies right and left while chanting extreme Islamic cheers and I saw them

steal money from the drawers of these shops and divide it between them as if it's a loot of a war they won against those whom they labeled the infidels, slaves of the cross!

I watched them break in to a liquor shop owned by a Coptic man called Labib Lotfi and I watched them destroy everything their dirty hands could reach inside the store like the refrigerators and the scale. Some of them stole boxes of booze so they can drink and get drunk after a days hard work of fighting the infidel Coptics! Some people may assume that this shop was destroyed because alcohol is forbidden in Islam. However, across the street from it stands another liquor shop owned by a Muslim but of course no one dared to touch it. Do you realize this racial crisis?!!

What the Muslims did yesterday is extremely nasty, ugly, and criminal and it leaves no doubt that they have become a burden on humanity and their existence in society threatens its individualism and shakes its independence. Muslims do not recognize the right for others to live freely and express themselves. They look down at non- Muslims with arrogance and fight them until death. Is it normal to let such a distorted ugly creature live freely in this world to kill, destroy, steal, and burn?!!

The Islamic teachings that prophet Mohamed spread fourteen centuries ago must be met with bravery and courage. We have to expose its ill views and warn humanity of its danger. We have to look at these teachings with logic because it aims at transferring the human into a vicious monster who does not understand anything in life but the language of killing, stealing, fraud, and the rape of women.

We have to stand strong with all our bravery against these teachings that have become a burden on society and have been adopted by the likes of Osama Bin Laden, Al Zarkawi, and Al Zawahiri and the likes of those barbaric cowboys that attacked our Coptic brothers and burned their homes, and stole their property and tried to attack their church and kill their religious men. We have to remove our racial and religious robe and view issues in a more humanitarian way.

We have to put all the terrorists and extremists idols of the Islamic history on trial for their criminal actions starting with Mohamed Bin Abdullah and his blood thirsty disciples like Khalid Bin Al Walid, Omar Bin El Khattab, Saad Bin Abi Wakas, Al Mughaira Bin Sheba, Samra Bin Gundub, The kings of Beni Umia and Beni Abbas, and the Al Othmans, and we must not forget the modern

contemporary criminals of Islam that have become more popular than movie stars and sultans of music!

We have to show the world the truth about those criminals that unfortunately have become idols to many of our youth, children, and women. We have to expose them and reveal their fake teachings and prove to the world that they are a danger that must be deterred and destroyed at the roots. Before you judge the people responsible for the crimes of The Black Friday at Moharam Beik you have to first judge the dirty teachings they followed, those teachings are what drove them to go out and steal and loot. Judge Islam and sentence it and its symbols to death to make sure that what happened yesterday will not be repeated. All the efforts to end wars and confrontations, and predicaments will fail as long as Islam remains on this planet. You will find that the dirty fingers of Islam are as usual behind every catastrophe that happens to humanity!

Abdel Kareem Nabil Suleiman.

posted by kareem @ [10/22/2005 11:40:00](#) [109 comments](#)

“You should be executed and hung. How can you insult prophet Mohamed and his disciples,” He shouted, attacking me.

I was trying not to provoke him but I could not help myself. I told him I am only a Muslim in the open but I cannot do it anymore.

“Islam is a peaceful religion, this terrorism you see today is not Islam,” He yelled.

I answered him calmly, “How about when the prophet’s disciples ordered the death of Yahoud (Jews) of Bani Kurida? Was not this from Islam? The Jews had only attacked some churches and attacked some Christians but they were never as barbaric as the Muslims.

I told him I am not making this up. This is all documented in history. The man seemed ignorant. He just wanted to get some information from me but he really had no background about the subject at hand.

The interrogation lasted five hours. He kept asking me if I had any relations with Christians. If I was approached by anyone who wanted to convert me to Christianity? Which churches I have visited?

I had never entered a Church in my life. There was a point when he really pressured me.

“Which churches do you visit? I will not ask you again?” He asked. “I will electrocute you if you don’t confess.”

He cursed me continuously, “You faggot. You son of a bitch”

I clearly explained to him that my parents know that I am an atheist by now. Then he got really close and slammed my forehead with a sharp object, twice. I am not sure what it was but it really hurt. He then poked my chest with the same object twice. When I continued to deny he turned back to his desk. I later found out that this object was an electro cutter but he did not have it plugged in.

He knew that I was a member of the opposition parties Al-Ghad (Tomorrow) and Kifaya (Enough). Then asked me about which protests I attended.

At the end of the interrogation I told him, I wanted to use the bathroom. I had been holding it in for hours but I did not want to ask him in case he wanted to use that weakness it against me to break me.

I spent the next two days sitting, sleeping, and eating on a chair in the reception like an animal or worse. My family was not allowed to visit me. I was then transferred to the political prisoners ward in Bab Shark (Eastern Gate) police station in Alexandria. I did not expect that. I thought they were going to release me. Inside, I met many political Islamic prisoners. One of them was Abu Omar El Masri. Twenty-two CIA agents had kidnapped him outside his home in the Italian city of Napoli in 2003. They detained him in Italy for some time without the knowledge of the Italian government before transferring him to the Egyptian authorities. Abu Omar was able to send a message from Egypt to his wife in Italy. The Italian intelligence intercepted it. In the message, he told his wife that he was physically tortured and abused by the Egyptian authorities, in order to confess about his terrorist accomplices in Italy or Egypt. The Italian attorney general used this message to pressure the Egyptians to transfer him back since he had entered Italy under the status of political asylum. He had been in his cell in Alexandria for over a year. I remember when I asked Abu Omar why he was arrested he discreetly replied, “I am a trouble maker.”

Our conversation was interrupted when the guards barged in and took me away for finger and foot printing. When I returned Abu Omar asked me, “What did they want from you?”

When I told him about the fingerprints, his face went pale. “You will probably be transferred to jail. Don’t let them break you.”

I also met a Mohamed Medhat, a leading figure in Al Qaeda who had been incarcerated for six years. He boasted about his training days in Afghanistan and how the Yemeni intelligence agencies would supply them with fake passports to support their cause. He then went on to describe how the Egyptian intelligence electrocuted him and his friends on a daily basis but could never break their will. When I first entered the cell I was nervous being around these people but they invited me to eat with them on the floor. They asked me several times about my charges so I just told them that I was arrested for writing against the government. You do not want to tell these extremists that you have denounced Islam. When they prayed in the cell, I also joined them to avoid any confrontations or violence. I only spent one night there. I was shoved in the morning into the back of the transfer truck accompanied by two guards. They had no clue where we were going until we reached the Alexandria-Cairo desert highway then it was obvious that I was being transferred to Toura Farms Jail in Cairo.

It was freezing. The guards were wearing heavy winter coats. Unfortunately, I left my house wearing a short sleeve shirt. I watched the guards sleep as I massaged my arms to try and warm up. I tried to visualize the jail according to what I have seen in the few movies I watched.

“Why are you here?” asked the warden.

“Because I wrote against Islam on the net,” I answered boldly.

“Don’t tell any of the inmates that. We have caught so many of them trying to commit suicide. They do not care and they have been locked up for a long time. If you fear for yourself don’t tell anyone and don’t discuss your views and ideas with anyone.”

I was officially classified as an infidel. Muslims whom I met inside that have converted to Christianity were also locked up under this classification. I entered the prison finally after being thoroughly frisked. I was imprisoned in solitary cell number 1 in ward number 1. The guards would open the cell door at 8 am until 5 pm. I tried to avoid the jail populace and spent most of my time reading books that I borrowed from the library. Unfortunately, my ward was full of members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Some of them were serving sentences but the majorities were detained indefinitely. Of course, when I arrived they were all curious about my case but I could not reveal the truth. They assumed I was a member of their organization, which was good for me.

Inside, I met a man that had influenced my father and taught him a lot about Salafism. He was caught with a machine gun at a time when a new terrorism law had banned Islamic fundamentalists from carrying guns. Those breaking this law would face execution and he was just waiting for his turn.

I also met many prisoners who have been inside for over ten years or more. The majority are imprisoned under the emergency martial law, without even a trial or a sentence.

After eleven days of hell the warden came to my cell and informed me that I was pardoned by order of Habib El Adly, the Minister of Interior. He was pressured by other bloggers in Egypt who had formed a campaign for my release. They held banners in the streets and wrote articles on their blogs. On the day of my release my mother was preparing herself to come visit me. My family only knew about my incarceration in Toura by coincidence. A neighbor of mine from Muharam Beik had been incarcerated for nine years in Toura without trial. Only when his wife came to visit was I able to send my family a message with my whereabouts. Can you believe that my mom had checked with the Ministry of Interior about my place of incarceration but they refused to tell her? How humane is that! Upon my release, I was shocked to learn that my brothers at Cops United also wrote blatantly in favor of my release.

Through out my childhood, my family cornered me into an illusion that the government in Egypt is fighting Islam. For example, when the previous Minister of Education tried to ban the veil in schools my dad used it as an example that Islam is being oppressed. The truth is, I was the one being oppressed and pressured by my parents. The first time I entered a theatre was in 2002, imagine! My parents were separated in 2002. This is when I got more freedom. I live with my mom now but she still bans computers and televisions. I think the government was on to me since I started writing during the Muharam Beik confrontations. Some people had informed me that the article I published on my blog was printed and distributed to random people on the street. It was very easy for the government to fish me out because I was using my real name and my contacts are posted clearly on my site. I was also a member of the opposition party Al-Ghad (Tomorrow) which was led by Dr. Ayman Nour, the presidential candidate that lies in jail now as we speak. I was one of his representatives at a conference in Cairo. That day, I sat in the bus heading to Cairo with members of the party when they started praising Islam loudly and glorifying the

likes of Abu Musaib Al-Zarkawi of Al Qaeda. I joined this party as a liberal knowing that its gist was far from religion. When I confronted them with some of my thoughts they accused me of being an infidel and then I had to resign.

When I was expelled from Al- Azhar I was not upset. I was forced by my parents to study Islamic Sharia and had no choice. I was a 'B' student through out my higher education. However, it was hard for me to attend classes because I would be provoked by the scholars and their silly preaching. When I tried to discuss certain contradictory points they did not allow it. Therefore, I didn't attend much and studied at home and just showed up to the exams to avoid problems. After my release, I received a telegraph at home from the dean of the university summoning me to his office. My meeting with him was tense. He had printed several blog entries including the article I was arrested for and wanted to make sure that I had written them. At the end of your meeting he wrote a memo stating; "Kareem was summoned to my office and when confronted with the articles he confirmed that he had written them." He then asked me to sign the note but I refused because he has no right to invade my privacy. It had nothing to do with the university. I went back home to wait for the council's final decision to be announced at a later time. The idea of leaving Egypt was now lingering in my head day and night but I didn't have a passport. In order to get a passport I had to get my documents signed by the university to prove that I am a student. A day later, I returned to the university to try and get the documents signed but it seemed that the administration had taken their final decision and they refused to sign my papers. The next day I was summoned to the punishment committee on March 14, 2006. A Christian lawyer called Mamdouh Nakhla from Cops United volunteered to attend with me so I did not mind at all. It was a coincidence that he was a Coptic Christian. At the university they assumed that I was going to convert to Christianity. What they could not understand is that I did not believe in God!

Listen, if someone wants to attract another to anything especially if it's something not tangible like religion that is hard for the mind to grasp then this person should introduce it gradually. My family had it all wrong when they tried to push religion on me and instill fear to get their message through. Religion and faith should be in the heart. I am not worried that the police are watching me. Let them do whatever they want. I am not doing anything wrong or embarrassing. I do everything in the light but it bothers me that my privacy is invaded. I just got a new cell phone number because my old line is tapped. I do not regret a word I have written on the

contrary I have developed new ideas after my arrest. I thought of moving abroad but not on the basis of a political asylum because that would cause me major problems and I don't want to be banned from entering my country. I will continue to write freely. If they want to arrest me again then let them. It does not even worry me or cross my mind. I do what makes me happy. If I give in then I will not be happy. Previously, I felt like I was living a double life. I did not like what I saw around me. I am not afraid although last April I was threatened with murder when my name was listed among others and sent to various sites by an Islamic group. There are thirty-three names on that list. Among the names on the list is an American-Syrian lady called Wafa Sultan who is known for relating terrorism to Islam. She was hosted on a talk show on Aljazeera twice and really went harsh on the Islamists. The following links to Al Arabya news site and another website launched by the extremists contains the list of names and some reactions of those people threatened including Wafa Sultan who is currently living in California. She reacted by saying, "I receive many threats through individuals but this is the first time that I get one from an organization. What surprised me is that they know the names of the children of some of the people listed." She has informed the federal agency in the U.S. and requested protection. The statements signed by the group's media spokesperson Abu Zer Al Mukdisi stated that they would follow the writers everywhere if they do not post apologies on their personal websites within three days starting on April 10, 2006.

On the other hand some positive support came from the Egyptian Human Rights organization. I was also ecstatic when I heard of the protests outside the U.N. building in New York calling for my release. One of the photos of this protest posted on the net shows a banner with Arabic writing stating, "Free Abdelkareem Nabil"

The local Egyptian papers did not state the truth. Instead, they wrote that I was arrested for writing against the current regime. They used my case to attack the government. That was not the reason for my incarceration. Anyway, it is not a new thing. The government has always oppressed their own people. But, I don't let anyone treat me like a victim. There is a saying I believe in; "If death is a must then it's a sin to die a coward." I feel like I was not alive before. I feel better now although I am under a lot of pressure in my neighborhood and by my extreme brother and mother.

Some of my brothers' friends who are members of the Salafi movement have requested that I write an apology on my blog about what I had written or else they would kill me in the name of Islam.

I did not let anything bother me because much of what you hear on the street are rumors and people sometimes get way too excited and blow things out of proportion. The Muhram Beik predicament between the Christian and Muslims is the best example. The nature of the quarrel was political and racial because the city was on the verge of legislature elections and the Muslim majority wanted to drop the Christian candidates. The Mary Girgis church situated on the corner of my street had hosted a play called "I Was Blind, But Now I Can See" back in 2002. The play got its share of critique and slander because of its controversial nature toward Islam. It is important to mention that the Marcy Girgis church is surrounded by two mosques on the same block. In one of the scenes, A Muslim sheikh offers money and women to a Christian man and succeeds in converting him into Islam. As the newly converted man indulges into Islam, he realizes that Muslims must follow the Koran literally which leaves him aggressive towards other non-believers and finds himself degrading women to an unbearable level. As the play ends, the man converts back to Christianity and yells, "I was blind but now I can see"

Three years later the fiasco resurfaced because CD's of the play were distributed in the neighborhood by unknown sources. The tension built up for weeks then on Friday after the prayers the situation escalated and the riots started. On that afternoon, I saw the National Guard surround the church to protect it. The angry Muslims fueled by many rumors and political dirty schemes wanted to storm into the Church and this is when the clashes started. After the riots ended, the Muslims waited for a week for an apology but it did not come so they repeated the attacks the following Friday after the prayers again at midday. What I witnessed during these riots is what inspired me to write the article. The truth as I saw it and nothing else.