Shredding of State Security Documents

Fate of the Archive of Oppression after the March 2011 Protests
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This report was based on a series of interviews conducted by researchers with activists, demonstrators and injured persons who participated in the protests in front of the State Security headquarters in March 2011 in Cairo and Alexandria; they are kept anonymous for their safety. The report also used the lawsuit file - in which officers and commanders of State Security were charged with damaging documents of the agency - including the public prosecutor’s inspection of the SSI premises. The researchers also relied on a series of studies and articles on the history of the state security apparatus and the security archive. The report also used press releases and official statements, which addressed incidents of shredding documents of the state security apparatus.

Introduction: 7 years after January the archive of oppression remains classified

This report is issued seven years after the revolution of January 25, 2011, which the Ministry of Interior and the media sector celebrate as the “police day”. This paradox, which has been going on for years, may reflect the contradiction between accounts by citizens, who took part in the January protests and demonstrations, and an official account that the state institutions are working to impose, to the extent that the president in one of his recent speeches said: “What happened 7 or 8 years ago in Egypt will not happen again” most likely in reference to the January 25 revolution.

Thus has persisted the status quo for years: citizens, activists and young people have participated in protests, holding on to the hopes of bread, freedom, and social justice, and an authority that seeks with all its power to obliterate the history of these protests and portray them as a conspiracy aimed at harming the security of the country. In this context this report is being published.

The content of the report is a new attempt by AFTE to revisit incidents of an event, remembered by millions of Egyptians and witnessed by hundreds of them in the midst of the events of the January 25 revolution. This was accompanied with violations against
some demonstrators, and more importantly with threats of indictment aimed at political activists every bow and then. In the process a security archive disappears which carried detailed of systematic human rights violations during the decades of Mubarak rule. This is the aspect that this report tries to address in its details.

At the beginning the report bears a narrative account of the stories of the wounded, demonstrators and activists in Cairo and Alexandria, and attempts to paint a comprehensive picture of what happened in those days, which may seem to some very long ago. Through the voices of these alone, the space is given to narratives, which the ruling authority has long sought to destroy. The report reveals motives, not including the overthrow of the state, and goals not including harm to the security of the country.

In a later part of the report, the report is based on official documents - the cases file of the shredding of documents.. the lawsuit, in which the prosecution tried to prove the destruction of state security documents. The report uses case documents, as well as statements by commanders and officers, inspection by the prosecution and details, which constitute important aspects of what happened.

The report reaffirms the importance of knowing the fate of the security archive - or so it attempts - and making it available to citizens. It addresses the repressive history of the state security apparatus in Egypt, with its changing names and constant practices. The report also shows how the security archive can be a tool for preserving memory and achieving transitional justice. This is a discussion that brings us back to the point where the demonstrators started in March 2011. We will not leave the State Security Archive to those who want to hide the truth from us, and we shall not be silent regarding attempts to conceal human rights violations.

Today, perhaps as you read these lines, your daily life may encounter security interference or hear stories about the violation and intimidation of citizens. The content and testimonies of this report may restore some of your vigor, so that these violations will not recur again or rather stop now.

This report is a first attempt by AFTE which needs greater and broader efforts to look for details and aspects that we may not have reached, and perhaps have not sufficiently addressed.
Section I: Protests in front of State security headquarters.. Stop shredding the documents

The dissolution of the state security apparatus and the accountability of its officers was one of the demands of the revolution of 25 January 2011, which toppled former President Hosni Mubarak and his regime.¹ After news spread that the SSI sector was disposing of documents condemning its officers, citizens gathered in front of SSI headquarters in several governorates. The demands of those gathered around the headquarters of the apparatus demanded a stop of the disposal of documents held by the State Security Service and the accountability of its members for the crimes established in those documents.² However, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which took over the administration of the country in that transition³, contributed to put an end to that, contrary to the hopes and wishes of protesters in front of state security offices.

Protests continued for two days in more than one governorate. Although the most prominent demands in these protests were the dissolution of the state security apparatus, this did not happen. The official decision at the time was to establish an alternative security apparatus for the state under the name “national security”. No officers of the organization were held accountable for the crimes they committed against citizens. Moreover, former Attorney General Hisham Barakat, in charge of the Supreme State Security Prosecution - three years after the “storming” of the State Security headquarters - commissioned the investigation of complaint no. 205/2014, filed against a number of political activists, accusing them of involvement in the raid of SSI offices and theft of some files related to national security.⁴ In addition, there are threats of indictment of activists and politicians in the case known to the media as case 250.

The first part of the report addresses some of the features of this event - on 4 and 5 March 2011 - based on the testimonies of those who experienced it themselves. These

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³ The army promises to transfer power to an elected civilian government and to respect international conventions, BBC Arabic, 13 February 2011, last visited 15 October 2017. https://goo.gl/v9Yd1v
testimonies paint an alternative narrative that is different from what the authorities are trying to propagate that the “storming” of the SSI headquarters is a conspiracy orchestrated by the Muslim Brotherhood with the aim of destroying public facilities and stealing files related to the security of the country. Therefore, we decided to withhold the names of those responding to our calls for testimonies, replacing them with pseudonyms to ensure their personal safety and to spare them any security persecutions, especially in the presence of news that a legal process will be initiated against those who participated in the break into SSI headquarters.  

Through these testimonies, the report attempts to answer two questions: What exactly happened when dozens demonstrated in front of the headquarters? How did the demonstrators deal with the documents they obtained, especially as they are of great importance because they are part of the security archive of the rule of former President Mubarak?

• The first spark: State security in Alexandria

The storming of the State Security headquarters in Alexandria was the first spark in a series of incursions into the headquarters of the apparatus, which took place in different governorates over two days. After the spread of information confirming the disposal by officers of the documents, hundreds of demonstrators in Alexandria headed for the area of Pharaohs, which is near the Sultan Hussein street, to demonstrate in front of the State Security in an attempt to prevent the destruction of the documents. Army forces were in the process of securing the headquarters, when state security officers inside the headquarters began throwing Molotov cocktails and shooting at demonstrators to disperse them. This prompted demonstrators to try to storm the headquarters. Also, army forces withdrew from the entrances of the building. The skirmishes between the demonstrators and the State Security officers at the headquarters continued late into the night, leaving three wounded with gunshot wounds, as well as thousands of scraps of documents that were destroyed and demonstrators were able to collect.

In his testimony to AFTE, Yasser recalls how he learned of the news of the officers’
disposal of State Security documents; he said that he went on Thursday, March 3, 2011, to observe what was happening in front of the State Security headquarters immediately after receiving a phone call from a friend who lives close to the building, telling him that documents are being shredded and taken out of the building, seemingly to be disposed of.

“I decided to check out the situation for myself. I walked until there but they had blocked the road with huge square barriers. I couldn’t see from afar, so I had to come pretty close to see what was happening inside. I saw a car standing and they were loading it with huge bags full of paper.”

Ahmed, one of the participants in the demonstration, in his testimony explains that he and a group of Alexandria artists went to the State Security headquarters, following contacts with friends who gave them the same information. Army officers present in front of the building told Ahmed and his friends to go to the northern military area and file a complaint because they are not authorized to stop the destruction of the documents.

“We went to the northern military area and tried to complain. They told us this is an independent authority and we cannot interfere; whether or not they shred, we have nothing to do with them. So we decided that the following day the demonstrations will head to state security to save whatever can be saved.”

On the same day, a call was launched on social media to organize a march from the al-Qaed Ibrahim mosque by the Raml station to SSI headquarters in the Pharaohs area, in order to prevent the destruction of documents and preserve what remains of them to hold perpetrators of the Mubarak regime accountable.

Ahmed continues:

We prayed in Qaed Ibrahim mosque. I was in my car, which has a microphone and loudspeakers and 12 people exactly going to state security. We were only few, so we entered El Raml station and chanted “Down with state security”, “State security are the dogs of the state”. Our number increased to 150. People started gathering and we moved towards state security. On the way we met a huge demonstration in Sultan Hassan street. They were all Salafis. They were be the Shallalat garden. They asked what are you doing. We said, we are going to state security.
They were afraid to enter the building. They said, OK, wait so that we can all go together. We told them we are entering the building. Come if you want to join us. And we did enter the building while chanting.”

In his testimony to AFTE, Shaher says:

“Our group met with a Salafist group on the way. We were expecting a clash, but it did not happen. And there were no religious chants, no secular/Islamist fighting. All the chants were calling for the downfall of state security and “release our brethren from prison”.

In describing the securing of the area, Yasser says that the SSI building is surrounded with many side streets, all of which were surrounded with concrete blocks. In the middle there were stationed central security vehicles and army armored vehicles, and the central security personnel were hiding in cars. Army forces were in control of the situation, securing the place in front of the concrete blocks and negotiating with protesters urging them to withdraw, and reassure them that nothing will happen to the files.

Hossam tells AFTE:

“The main objective was to hand over the officers and preserve the documents. It was an attempt to preserve their black history, believing that we would be able to hold them accountable. One advantage of the Egyptian bureaucratic state is that everything is documented, since the days of Mohamed Ali until now. All those crimes were documented. They document for themselves, but now things were turning against them”.

Along the same lines, Shaher explains:

“We had a naïve idea or a dream that we can prevent the shredding or burning of the files, because they testify to the crimes of that authority. Those papers were evidence of their despotism. The wrong information they took was evidence against them and not against us. Nobody wanted to take his own file. We wanted to preserve them because they carried proof of their indictment”.

At approximately 8 pm, the demonstrators distributed themselves over six entrances to prevent the escape of officers from State Security building and to ensure that no

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7. Ahmed’s testimony to AFTE
documents were leaked outside the building. The increasing number of demonstrators gathered around the building angered officers, who felt trapped and unable to leave. State security officers on the rooftops began to throw Molotov cocktails indiscriminately at demonstrators to disperse them, sparking nearly four cars, including the Interior Ministry’s jeep. The demonstrators got angry and their chants got louder. The officers began shooting, the demonstrators responded with stones, and as the situation began to escalate, the army began withdrawing from the scene.  

Three of the demonstrators were wounded by gunfire. Ahmad was the first. His injury was the result of live bullets that left a penetrating wound from the top of his chest to his lower back. He recalls:

“I remember that at about 8 pm, I found a central security shield and stick. I took them and turned to the main entrance in the middle of the clashes. They were throwing Molotov and we were throwing stones. I was holding a stone and about to throw it when I felt numbness in my arm. I threw what I was holding and ran towards the gate by which we were standing. They made me lie down on the pavement and I was bleeding. I was dizzy, almost dead. Then I didn’t feel pain or anything else. I just felt that I was breathing with great difficulty. I tried to stay calm to maintain this low breathing. They carried me until El Sultan Hassan street. They were chanting “There is no God but one God and the Martyr is loved by God” as if I had already died. They put me in a taxi and I was taken safely to hospital.”

The second injury was that of Yasser. He says:

“We had besieged them tightly, so they realized they were in danger. At a certain moment they decided to drown us with Molotov and bullets. Suddenly, the army disappeared; the officers and the soldiers entered their armored vehicles, as if planned. After a few minutes, I received a bullet. I didn’t understand what has happened. I heard an explosion and I fell to the ground. I touched my clothes and felt a gush of blood. I was hit in the abdomen. I panicked and got into a hysterical state. I grabbed my brother and told him to take me to hospital. WE took a car and I insisted

8. Video footage, taken by Hossam
to go to one of the military hospitals. I knew if I went to a government hospital I would die of medical neglect or they would kill me.”

Yasser was shot in the abdomen; the bullet settled in the left thigh from the back. He had surgery to remove the projectile. Ahmed explains that he had written a hospital report to prove his injury, but he received direct threats from people close to the authority if he insisted on the complaint. Threats included that his name is on a long list of defendants in case 250 - which has not been referred to trial yet. Although there is not sufficient information on the case, press statements and leaks confirm that the case includes a number of political activists who participated in the various events of the revolution, including the storming of state security headquarters, and that among the accusations was receiving funds from foreign sources, destruction of facilities and theft of files that relate to national security.

Panic escalated immediately after the injury of three demonstrators, especially after the withdrawal of the army forces from the scene, leaving the gates to SSI. Around 11 o’clock demonstrators marched towards the main gate of the State Security building. They removed the roadblocks, and began to inspect each building separately. They advanced with great caution after state security officers inside tried to shoot again to prevent demonstrators from advancing. The army intervened and asked demonstrators to leave the building and hand over the papers they had found inside. The army told them that the prosecution will arrive to detain the officers.

Hossam describes the scene of the officers’ exit from the building saying:

“Army officers arrived, high ranks, and made a path lined by soldiers so that they can get the SSI officers from inside, so that they have a safe exit from the building to the army vehicles. The day ended with those officers entering the vehicles and moving away. Then the army encircled the building. It was around 3 am. All protesters who were inside had come out and the army claimed that all officers have left and are under arrest and so the gathering does no longer make sense. I was skeptical that this was a real arrest. To be clear, even while I was still there I was doubtful that these were all the officers in the building and was wondering what they will do with the rest. It was clear that nothing will happen and that they just wanted this night to be over and then decide what to do next.”
• Cairo.. Rapid intervention to save state security documents

News of what was happening in Alexandria spread rapidly, and it appeared that a victory of the activists was pending. Activists and those interested in public affairs proposed to demonstrate in front of the State Security building in Nasr City, copying the events in Alexandria. In conjunction with these calls, individuals living near the State Security headquarters in Nasr City saw smoke rising from the vicinity of the building. It was agreed to assemble on Saturday, March 5, 2011 at 4 pm in front of a building near SSI. A limited number of military police were in charge of securing the building of the state security apparatus. Unlike Alexandria, the Nasr City building was vacated from state security officers, making the day pass easier without any clashes.

Emad says:

Before there was the storming of Alexandria, and pictures were posted on Twitter and Facebook. The next day people began to say, ok, let us go to SSI in Nasr City today. It was not organized. Then they said to assemble at 4 pm. Gradually the numbers increased.”

Baraa explains the reason for the demonstration:

“The day before there was the storming in Alexandria, and in response people were wondering, should we go? Will people go? Especially that some people were injured. People wanted to go, if only just to stand there and say that part of their demands is that whatever is in there together with the building should be delivered to investigation bodies. At the time I was a journalist. I took a camera and went there. I felt those were historic scenes, because SSI is an important authority in the Egyptian security system, with a long history of conflict with the political and public space. It is also the authority that was all the time responsible for harassing politicians and people who are active on public issues in general. That is a big part of this revolution was for freedom, for democracy, for opening up public space and social justice; and there was a main issue related to torture. And when they talk about changing the government or removing Hosni Mubarak or dissolving parliament, state security authority is also
of the same importance. A friend of mine said at the time that this moment was the moment where we can really say the January revolution has triumphed; that we are beginning a new era.”

The numbers of demonstrators increased. One of them discovered that the garbage collecting vehicle has left the building carrying destroyed papers. Army forces tried to calm down the crowd, reassuring them that the building is empty and that there is no movement inside. Demonstrators gathered in front of one of the gates, others climbed the fence of the building in an attempt to find secure entry points that could lead to the inside of the building, while the chants were getting higher “state security, state dogs, thugs in vandalizing the state.”

Baraa says:

“It was about 7.30 pm. People on the fence jumped into the building and kept ricking the gate while others were helping them from outside. The gate opened and we entered. There were no forces at all at this t. They were by the main gate. Then people spread all around the building. It was an easy, smooth storming of the place, as if it was left to be stormed. There was no obstruction and nobody tried to prevent it”

The SSI building occupies a wide area. Behind the fences there is an empty space, then several buildings.

Emad recalls how he entered some of them:

“I entered three buildings, the one immediately in front of the gate and two in other places. The first building I entered seemed like an administrative building. It had records with managerial and financial details. I entered the office of Hassan Abdel Rahman, head of SSI. I found a shield he had received while serving in Special Forces. I wanted to take it as a souvenir, but the army took it away from me. I found personal papers. I had the impression that all important documents were taken out. At one point there was surveillance of people working in Al Azhar in comparing religions. The only meaningful thing I found were two or three papers of those surveillance reports.”
“Inside the iron gate, when we entered we headed for the building immediately in front of us. It was all rooms and offices. Suddenly people started to shout, and people were pulling me to take pictures. We found some things, but then the whole situation became comic, because we found a bed. The first few floors of that building are the usual government offices. The rooms had sofas and fridges. Even the files looked like ordinary government files. Some people walked down to the ground floor and kept finding shredded paper. They went up the floors, almost all floors. One room had many video tapes and meeting space. Some tried to operate the tapes. There were rooms full of green files, on which were written things like “Two saints church” and such. Most of those things were press files of news, reports that so and so was presenting this or that program. Most information was about follow ups. Then there were very luxurious offices in the higher floors, on which was written director of the department. Luxurious offices like ministers’ offices we see on television. Most of the files were in that building. pictures of road accidents. reports by people on people. descriptions of people as cooperative and others as agitators. there were shredded documents on the floor and outside the room. At the time people tried to say, we can collect those papers and put them back together. There were many papers in black plastic bags.”

After about two hours, army and military police forces started to appear. They entered the building and called upon the demonstrators to leave. Rapidly the demonstrators formed groups to receive the files and collect them close to the entrance, demanding to give over the documents and CDs to a committee of the prosecution and judiciary. After some negotiation, the military forces permitted demonstrators to form a group to guard the documents jointly with some soldiers. Then a young man arrived and introduced himself as a judge. Demonstrators helped him move the files into a private car. They then responded to the call of the military and left the building after being searched.
State security and contemporary stories of tortures

Torture in Egyptian prisons and detention centers was one of the most important reasons that led to the outbreak of the revolution of January 25, 2011. The disclosure of cases of torture and exposing its practices and methods has been an effective factor in the political momentum over the years. State security had a systematic policy of physical and psychological torture under Mubarak. The fall of this authority constituted a symbolic victory. In the period following the revolution of January 25, hundreds announced their intention to go to demonstrate in front of SSI without fear, without coercion and out of their free will, and without being blindfolded. They besieged state security offices and demanded accountability of officers. They were also telling and sharing their own stories inside that building, of their time in this or that narrow cell, the number of nights they spent while blindfolded, no one answering their questions. They examined an iron structure they found inside and told how it was used to put detainees in strained positions. And how this electric gun shaped as a phone was used by officers as a game on detainees. Most of the stories were narrated by members of the Islamic movement, in front of SSI in Alexandria and Cairo. The space was open to present to everyone, without fear, the injustice they had suffered.

Yasser tells AFTE:

“It is saddening to remember those stories and to say all this now. We are in a worse tragedy. At the time people were like in a carnival for the oppressed and the tortured in this building. People were talking about their own stories of injustice, others were exposing their bodies to show us what they had done to him. It was very touching.”

Baraa describes the secret crypts that he found in the Nasr City SSI building:

“I entered the building that had the crypts. The building was complicated because it is not much higher than the ground and had underground floor. There were two floors by which you descend then passages, and cells on either side of the passages; all looked very much alike; it was very confusing for me; I didn’t know on which floor I was and at the same time could not walk back; that was the most suffocating thing; suddenly...
you do not know where you are; ventilation is very bad underground;
those passages go in circles; you enter one passage and then you return
to it again; the cells were very small; the size of this desk; it had a stone
bench but no light; the cell doors are iron; and at the end of the passage
outside there is an iron gate. Then people began to remember: I was here,
I remained blindfolded for 6 days without food; rooms became theater
stages where some people narrated what happened to them while others
were the audience interacting with them. One of them recalled that he
spent several days from 4 to 6 blindfolded. They would open the cell put
food and then leave. At other times they would only open the cell and say
nothing and he could not see what was happening. Sometimes he heard
sounds of cars. But nobody talked to him. Other people were suspended
from their knees; they use a stick and suspend them from their legs; they
would be handcuffed and they would leave them like this for 48 hours.”

• The army and the archive of oppression

After the news spread, the Egyptian authorities appealed to the demonstrators, who
had saved the documents, to hand over the papers to the concerned bodies, in order
to protect Egypt from the danger of spreading secrets that might affect its national
security. However, most of the testimonies received by AFTE insist that important
documents had already been destroyed, and that what they found was not even close
to Egypt’s national security, but was related to details of follow up by SSI officers of
personal relations of politicians and businessmen. Still, demonstrators trusted judicial
state institutions and handed over most of the documents that they succeeded in saving
from burning or destruction to army forces that were present in front of the headquarters
or to the public prosecution, which arrived by the end of the day, chanting “We entrust
you, we entrust you” and “The people have overthrown the regime”.

This happened after demonstrators received promises that an investigation would be
opened in the history of state security violations, in the deliberate burning and destruction

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of many files by SSI employees before they fled in addition to promises of restructuring the whole SSI authority.

Emad says:

“At the end after demonstrators negotiated with the army that judges will arrive to take the documents, they brought a judge – I don’t know from where and I am not sure he was a judge in the first place. I feel that the whole scene was not a serious one and that they could have brought any person in a suit who would claim he was a judge in some court, take the papers and leave. Then there were several vans that carried all the stuff and they took it away. I felt the whole thing was a show. It was obvious that the important documents were not in the building and that those papers I had in my hands were not important. “

Shaher adds:

“What we found were what is called preliminary files, information collected by an informer through very superficial contacts with a grocer or the like. They carried a lot of random, disorganized information. This is then taken into the agency, organized and filtered and the important info taken out to go through a different process. The same happens with unimportant info”

Suhaila, one of the participants in the demonstration in front of the State Security building in Nasr City, said that one of the demonstrators found her file in the midst of a number of files belonging to other political activists, pointing out that the file contained mostly very personal information and data, as well as a transcription of skype conversations with her friends. The next day, immediately after she saw the army’s appeal to citizens to return the files, she contacted Maj. Gen. Mohsen al-Fangari, one of the commanders of SCAF at the time, and told him she wanted to send her file. She put her file in an envelope, addressed it to the Maj. Gen Mohsen El Fangari in person and delivered it at the Ministry of Defense.
State security authority: a New Beginning

Those attempts by activists and demonstrators, although they raised considerable controversy at the time, did not succeed in any of its objectives, both at the level of preserving the security archive or the dissolution of the state security apparatus, which was first established in Egypt in 1913 under the name of the “Special Section” during the British occupation. Despite the changes that occurred in each new historical phase, most of the mechanisms of work of this agency continued, and every time its name was changed in an attempt to cleanse its bad reputation. After the 1952 revolution it acted under the name “General Investigation,” and after the accession of Muhammad Anwar Sadat it was called “State Security Investigation” (SSI) then “State Security investigation sector” and continued as such until the revolution of 25 January and the fall of Mubarak.

Following the “storming” of the State Security headquarters, a document that was found during the storming of SSI in Nasr City was published on social networks. The leaked document detailed a plan to absorb public anger against the agency. “In the midst of escalating events and rising voices with a special tendency to demand the dissolution of the state security apparatus without regard to national interests and Egyptian national security, there is a vision that can be proposed to accommodate the demands put forward, including: First, the announcement of the dissolution of the State Security agency to public opinion and in the media ... Second, change the name of the agency to “Internal Security Agency”, “National Information Agency”, “National Security Agency”, etc”.
Regardless of whether this document is true or not, its publication was intended as a warning and the demand for real guarantees that the agency will not return to work, even if under a new name.

Two weeks after the publication of the document, the Ministry of Interior spokesperson announced on 15 March 2011 that Minister of the Interior, Major General Mansour al-Issawi, issued a decree to abolish SSI with all its departments, branches and offices in all governorates of the Republic. And that SSI will be replaced with a new sector at the ministry called “The national security sector” with the aim of securing national safety, protecting the internal front and combating terrorism in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the law and principles of human rights and freedoms. He also declared that the agency’s role is serving the country, without interfering in the lives of citizens or their exercise of their political rights. 10

Most of those who have given their testimony to AFTE said that at the time the revolution was still at its peak. Therefore the protests exerted pressure that the authorities felt they had to contain in order to absorb the anger of the people and thus it became necessary to sacrifice “state security”, and give the impression that an era had ended and that the future will bring new more democratic policies, replacing the old with a new agency that had the same powers, albeit by a new name and history.

Ahmed says:

“SCAF felt that the agency had been exposed and that it needs to change its skin, and function in a different way; so kill the old one, allow the people to storm and then say we shall dissolve SSI to absorb our anger. Then they established “national security”. It was all a make belief and I think they had prepared this scenario during the 18 days. Of course we did not realize this except after it had been implemented.” 11

Almost seven years after the incident, the policies of non-transparency and allowing security authorities to operate outside the framework of the law are still ongoing. The judicial authorities acquitted 41 former and current leaders of the Ministry of Interior,


foremost Hassan Abdel Rahman, former head of the SSI, of charges of shredding, burning and destruction of state security documents.

Most media channels still describe what happened as a day when “a number of thugs attacked a public facility with the aim of overthrowing the state.” Most of the participants today are still afraid to be investigated under the so-called case 250, of which no details are known and which activists believe is kept to be used at the right time. This is confirmed by Suhaila, who says that during her interrogation by national security in 2014, she was asked to give her testimony in case 250, but she refused and requested an official summons to do so.

Yasser says:

“Those files should have been made available to the people. We would have then understood how those people think, how they wanted to bypass what has happened. There should be people who can access those documents and make them public. This would have served the revolution and this building should have been turned into a museum.”

Emad replies:

“This is the talk of the victorious. When we win we can think of what to do with the building. I never had hope at that time that there will be any meaningful legal path. Just as transitional justice, this is an exceptional phase that happens outside the process of normal law. This would have been different; when you have won or achieved much progress and wish to remember and redress.. we succeeded in causing some disturbance, but we did not win. We have to act while knowing that we are part of this chaos and disturbance and try to make this chaos our success, to make it political, to turn it into a strong movement that creates its figures and spreads ideas”

Those were the stories of activists and demonstrators who have tried to stop abuses routinely used by SSI. They aspired to preserve the security archive. Although these accounts are an important part of what happened in March 2011, this does not deny the fact that the narration by SSI officials forms another important part of the story. It helps us understand those incidents and to try to get answers to what had happened, and to know about the ultimate fate of this security archive. This is discussed in the second section of the report.
Section II: Review of the “document shredding” case

The second section of the report is based on the case known to the media as the “SSI documents shredding case”, including the investigations by the Public Prosecution and the investigating judge, which were conducted with security officials beginning with the Minister of the Interior and the head of the former SSI, in addition to officials of SSI branches and the information department of the agency as well as the inspection reports prepared by the public prosecution of the main SSI headquarters in Nasr City and other SSI branches in governorates.

• On the structure of the state security apparatus

General Hisham Abdel Fattah Abu Ghaida12, Assistant Minister of Interior and Head of SSI, who took over the post on March 2, 2011, explains the organizational structure of the agency. He says:

"The agency is headed by a president with the rank of assistant minister and its main office is currently in Nasr City. The head of the agency is assisted by a deputy and a number of general managers and directors of central departments, as well as heads of groups that differ according to the work assigned to each of them, in addition to branches and public administrations in each governorate. This varies according to the size of the governorate and the needed activity there."

Abu Ghaida explains that SSI is one of the policing sectors of the Ministry of the Interior, and its work is ultimately subject to the rule of law. Most of the work of the agency depends on collecting and extrapolating information and presenting it to the relevant authority. With regard to records or cases, this is subject to the supervision of the judicial body, to which the minutes are finally presented.

Regarding the information and documents held by the agency Maj. Gen. Abu Ghaida

12. Investigation by public prosecution, 7 March 2011 with Hesham Abdel Fattah Abou Gheida, assistant to minister of Interior and head of SSI.
"The information available to the agency carry degrees of secrecy, the highest of which is extremely confidential, then very confidential, then confidential, and some are of lesser value such as correspondence or letters. The way information is kept differs from one to the other. Extremely confidential information are kept in a safe place secured with armored doors inside the headquarters of the agency; the other type of information are well secured”

The information is organized according to the importance mentioned above, and is located in the head office of the agency and its branches. During his interrogation, Abu Ghaida referred to the role of SSI, as the body whose main task is to collect information.

Concerning the events of 25 January and their confrontation, Major General Abu Ghaida says:

"In terms of follow-up, the agency prepared accurate reports of the situation, which it raised to the Minister of Interior. In turn, he may raise them to political leaders. In those reports we propose methods of confronting or management of such problems and states of anger and how to absorb them. As regards the direct confrontation with the demonstrators this is the responsibility of central security and the security and general security directorates.”

The Central Administration of Information Management is one of the central departments referred to in the organizational structure and is entrusted with the preservation of documents and files. The report therefore deals with the modus operandi of this department and its responsibility for the preservation and protection of documents.
Central administration of information management: 13

It is the department that keeps all correspondence received from branches and geographical and central departments, and arranges it so as to be retrieved upon request. They are kept in addition to all annexes of those correspondences, including reports or any special requests for the destruction of excess papers. As for the organizational structure of the department, Major General Muhammad Jamal al-Din, Director of the Department, explains to the Public Prosecutor that it is divided into three main groups: documents, information and measures. Each group is headed by a brigadier, assisted by a group of junior officers. Each group includes several sections; for example, the information group has a survey section, the documents group has an electronic archive section, which has the task of directing hard copy documents to the computer department.

Regarding the nature of work of each of the three above mentioned groups, Gen. Gamal El Din says:

“The documents group is in charge of the preservation of papers from branches and geographic and central departments, such as all the memos and reports, and the information group is concerned with the preservation of survey reports sent to the main office, in addition to work permits, lost passports and their renewal, names of persons to attend important official occasions; the special measures group is responsible for compiling information on detainees, their names, the cases in which they are indicted and their detention orders.”

With regard to the method of archiving the documents referred to in the three groups, the director of the Department of Information Management explains that all documents are kept in the general archive of the agency, except for an archive called “highly confidential” affiliated to the information group, in which reports and memoranda of special and important nature are kept. Major General Muhammad Jamal al-Din asserts that all documents in this department are not subjected to destruction or disposal procedures, as they represent a historical legacy of the work of the agency, except for insignificant documents such as: work permits and lost or renewed passports after exhausting their purpose.

As for the method of disposal of insignificant papers referred to earlier, it is a continuous process and has no fixed duration. It may be done every three months or every year.

13. Investigation by public prosecution, 8 March 2011 with director of central directorate for circulation of information in SSI.
as needed. Regarding the destruction of documents, it is necessary to specify the documents to be destroyed in a list called the list for destruction. Officials in each group prepare this list, through a committee headed by the archive officer or a relevant group, formed for this purpose. This list is first presented to the head of the group for approval. Then it is presented to the head of department. After obtaining the required approvals, documents indicated in the list are destroyed by shredders available at the agency’s headquarters. Those lists are kept in a special record in the documents department.

- **Securing information and documents.. what happened?**

Minister of Interior Mahmoud Wagdi Mohammed Mahmoud explains the procedures he had undertaken between January 31 and March 6, 2011 to secure SSI offices and the documents therein. However on February 23, 2011, information was received indicating an intention to break into SSI offices in various governorates, and a confirmed information that the SSI offices in Monofiya and Gharbiya. As a result of this information, Wagdi says in an investigation before the Public Prosecution:

"I gave instructions to the head of the State Security Sector, Major General Hassan Abdul Rahman, to follow the books and enforce the special instructions to preserve the papers and documents, prevent their circulation and protect the offices in the from any intrusion. I repeated those instructions more than once and on the 1st and 3rd of March 2011 I issued a decree to transfer Major General / Hassan Abdel Rahman to work as first assistant to the minister of security and appointed Major General / Hisham Abu Gaida to take charge of the SSI sector, which he began on the second of March 2011. I received information that there is intention to storm some of the SSI headquarters, especially in Alexandria. So I sent a letter to the new head of SSI, Major General Hisham Abu Ghaida saying that in view of the current events and the necessity of taking maximum security of the facilities, and alerted him to notify all SSI departments

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and their branches all over the republic to maintain utmost degree of confidentiality for all the contents of these premises and all types of documents. I pointed out in my letter that it should be noted that the notice was given on Friday, February 25, 2011 to his predecessor in the light of available information then, referring to the intention to raid the SSI offices in Gharbiya and Menoufia; however he did not do that.”

On 5 March 2011, a letter was issued by General Adel Al-Saeed, Assistant to the Minister for the Inspection and oversight sector, to Major General Hassan Abdul Rahman, Assistant Minister for the Security Sector, stating: “The Minister referred to an inquiry regarding the implementation of the instructions to secure SSI premises, as regards equipment or documents in the light of the raids on certain premises “.

- **In the main state security headquarters**

In the previous section, the report dealt with the testimonies of demonstrators and activists about the storming of the State Security headquarters. Here, the report attempts to shed light on the statements of state security officials regarding the storming of their headquarters. In the investigations by the Public Prosecutor’s Office15, Major General Hassan Abdel Rahman said that information was available to the sector that:

> There were gatherings, vigils and demonstrations on 25/1/2011 in front of the Ministry of Interior, which developed in the following days into larger and more violent demonstrations, during which some of the headquarters of the SSI in various governorates were stormed, including the SSI headquarter in Damanhour, Beheira and seizure of documents, work reports and correspondence between branches and the main headquarter, which were later shown through the various media channels. AS a result of information confirming the intention of some demonstrators and outlaws to raid the headquarters in the various governorates and their branches, instructions were issued by the minister not to keep and important reports or documents in the offices or branches and to suffice with the originals of those documents kept in the main office in Nasr City.”

Major General Hassan Abdul Rahman, head of the SSI, explains the procedures for

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15. Investigation by public prosecution, 9 March 2011 with general Hassan Abdel Rahman, assistant to minister of interior for security affairs and former head of SSI.
securing information and documents, as follows:

First: The concerned authorities in the Ministry of Interior and Defense were informed of the substance of the information, in order to tighten security of the department.

Second: Some measures were taken to preserve the papers and information in the branches and their offices, in order to preserve their confidentiality, and in view of the existence of copies of them, in the central archive at the SSI headquarters.

These procedures, issued on February 24, 2011, by Major General Hassan Abdul Rahman, the head of the sector at the time include the disposal of archives in offices of the departments and branches and disposal of their contents, as well as disposal of an extremely classified archive present in the departments and branches. He explains the reason thereof:

”A very confidential archive contains information of a high degree of secrecy, all of which are kept in the central archive. Their leakage constitutes and infringement on security. That is why we decided to maintain safety of the central archive, because everything that is available in the branches has its original kept at the central office.”

Major General Hassan Abdul Rahman adds:

“Some branches complied and some branches thought they were safe and that their walls will protect them from any break-in, also and there were many papers and it took time to follow these instructions. I later knew on Saturday the 5th of March 2011 that the October Branch had not finished getting rid of the papers in accordance with the instructions; when it found a large gathering, and in view of the raid of the Alexandria branch the previous day, I knew they had to burn some documents to get rid of them, and they included insignificant memoranda. However, the appearance of the documents in the media was harmful to the prestige of the state”

The instructions issued by Major General Hassan Abdul Rahman, he says, were presented to the Minister of Interior. They were also issued on the basis that the Minister demanded that important reports and papers not be kept in the offices and branch offices and that the originals of these papers are kept at the headquarters of Nasr City. This statement contradicts what the Minister
of the Interior admitted to the examining magistrate. He said: “I have not been offered any suggestions concerning the contents of this correspondence, and I did not know anything at all until after I left the ministry and from newspapers.” The minister also says: “He is not entitled to issue such an order, and the Minister of Interior is also not entitled to issue such an order for its violation of instructions and periodical books and the issuance of such an order requires administrative and legal accountability.”

In response to the request by the investigating judge to inquire whether the secret archive of the SSI departments in Helwan and Cairo had been handed over to the former head of the SSI or not; in the first case, who was the recipient and where was it currently held. On 19 June 2012, Assistant Minister of Interior, Head of the National Security Sector, sent a letter to the investigating judge stating that: “A committee of former SSI generals and current national security staff who were involved in the subject under investigation.”

The letter included the conclusions of the work of the committee, which was formed by Major General Khaled Tharwat, Undersecretary of the General Directorate of the former SSI, Maj. Gen. Mu’tasim Murad, Director of the General Directorate of the former SSI, and General Hisham Zahran, current Director General of information in the national security sector. The committee’s conclusions were as follows:

Maj. Gen. Atef Abu Shadi confirmed that in his capacity as the most senior of officers working at the general directorate of state security investigation in Cairo at the time and in light of information regarding the intention of demonstrators to raid the office of the administration, he requested the permit of the deputy head of the agency at the time, to transfer the administration’s archive to the headquarters of the SSI in Nasr City to secure it. The transfer took place on the evening of 4 March 2011 and lasted until the morning of 5 March 2011. Four lorry vehicles belonging to the Cairo Security Directorate arrived and transferred the archive to the former headquarters. After that the office was raided and was later delivered under the supervision of the armed forces.”

Major General Mu’tasim Murad, director of the General Security Department of the SSI, said that he received a call from General Atef Abu Shadi, the deputy head of the agency at the time, where he decided that a number of vehicles will come to the agency from the General Administration of the State Security Investigations in Cairo carrying the archive.
He then received a call from the security officer in charge of the gates of the building stating that the vehicles have arrived and that he did not know what they were carrying. They were allowed to enter and were not received by a security officer, since this did not fall within his mandate. The security department was coordinating with the armed forces concerning securing the SSI sector in view of information regarding a possible raid.

General Hisham Zahran confirmed that by asking the head of the information group during this period (Brigadier General Hatem Salah, currently assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) he denied his notification or coordination with the two above mentioned administrations at the time regarding the receipt or arrival of their archives.

When the Public Prosecution inspected the SSI headquarters, it found that there were very large quantities of shredded documents. In response to that General Hisham Abdel Fattah Abu Ghaida said before the Public Prosecution:

“About a month ago a decision was issued by the former head of the General Major General Hassan Abdul Rahman to get rid of some documents, and some branches began to implement this, but did not manage for lack of time and sent us at the headquarters to shred the document under the supervision of the administration. Most probably they referred in that matter to the former head of the agency, who ordered the dispatch the documents that were not destroyed in the branches to the central office to be destroyed there, while securing the safe arrival of those documents to the central office.”

The Directorate of Conservation and Information, headed by Major General Mohamed Gamal, took over the process of destroying the sent documents, according to statements by Major General Hisham Abdel Fattah to the Public Prosecution. Regarding the type of documents that were destroyed on the day of storming the main SSI office, which were found upon the inspection by the General Prosecution of the headquarters, General Hisham Abdel Fattah says:

“In general, all the documents that were destroyed at the headquarters of the agency are unimportant papers, which I cannot specify. They are mostly follow-up reports and correspondence. I think it was not possible to document which papers were destroyed because of the attack on the headquarters.”
This raises a question: Where did the highly classified archive kept in the Nasr City office go?

The first inspection by the Public Prosecution took place on 5 March 2011. The inspection report prepared by members of the prosecution said found:

*The presence of a lot of papers, files, tools and computers gathered by the demonstrators inside the SSI building, so we collected the papers, files, documents and some computers and placed them inside two cars of the armed forces and we accompanied the two cars with their cargo of confiscated papers, guarded by the armed forces to the public prosecution main office, where they were kept and guarded by the armed forces."

On March 6, 2011, at 11 am, members of the Public Prosecutor’s Office accompanied by a guard of the armed forces entered the headquarters of the other State Security office located at Al-Tayaran Street in the constituency of Nasr City II police station, where they found:

*“Many books on the desks on the ground floor, and two files concerning some investigations and some individuals ... We also found many computers, all of which had their hard disks removed. We found remnants of some burned documents and papers inside the building in some of the rooms, as well as evidence of burned papers in the garden adjacent to the building inside the wall of the investigation office... Accordingly, we handed over the building to Captain Ahmed Shishtawi, officer in the armed forces, to keep, as well as a cardboard box containing a number of documents and CDs and we accompanied him with a report that we added to the confiscated documents and equipment.”*

After the public prosecution took charge over papers, documents and computers whether at the office of the prosecution or that of SSI itself under guard of armed forces, the public prosecution, on the 6th of March 2011 at 1:00 pm, according to its report, met with Mr. Mahmoud Yunis of the Military Intelligence, and charged by the armed forces to receive documents, papers, equipment, tools and computers located at the SSI headquarters. Indeed, all confiscated material, whether from the office or that held by the prosecution was delivered to the specialized military committee of the armed forces. Also, vehicles at headquarters were handed over to an Interior Ministry official and police cars were handed over to the relevant security directorates.
The Public Prosecution inspection of the headquarters of the State Security Investigation in Nasr City, according to the investigations of the prosecution with Hisham Abdul Fattah Abu Ghaida, Assistant Minister of Interior and Head of the State Security Service, and Major General Muhammad Jamal al-Din, Director of the Central Department of Information, confirmed the existence of four large police transport cars loaded with papers and documents.

- **Documents in state security branches**

  The report presents some examples of what happened in SSI branches in the governorates. The examples were chosen to express the various practices used in dealing with the documents.

  - **State security department in 6th of October**

    The Director of the SSI Department in the 6th of October area, General Abdul Hamid Khairat Muhammad Shukri, received instructions from Major General Hassan Abdul Rahman, the head of the security apparatus, to destroy a very confidential archive. So he signed the order and formed a committee to act upon orders coming from the head of the agency\(^{16}\). Lt. Col. Osama Abu Dheif Ahmed, Head of the Information Department of the General Directorate in October, received oral instructions from Brigadier General Ismat Mahani, head of the Operations Group in the administration, stating that a very confidential archive should be destroyed for fear of a raid on the headquarters\(^{17}\).

    Brigadier General Ismat Muhammad Muhani said: “Major General Muatasem Murad was the director of the security department in the agency; he asked for the director and I informed him that he was in Alexandria. He then told me of the existence of instructions to execute the extremely secret documents. I told him I will inform the director over the mobile phone. And I did call the director and he told me to authorize Osama Abu Daif and contact him. I contacted Osama Abu Daif and informed him of the conversation with Moatasem and that I contacted the director and that he asked me to ask you to contact him and Osama told me I have to contact him\(^{18}\).”

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16. Investigation by investigative judge on 22 January 2012 with General Abdelhamid Khairat, director of SSI in 6 October.
17. Investigation by investigative judge on 22 January 2012 with Officer Osama Abou Daif, head of information department in 6 October SSI branch.
18. Investigation by investigative judge on 22 January 2012 with Officer Esmat Mohamed Mehanna Abdel Aal, SSI department in 6 October.
The committee formed to destroy a highly classified archive consisted of Maj. Mohammed Mahmoud Hussein, Major Ahmed Najem and chief of police Osama Abu Dheif Ahmed, head of the information department. Regarding what has been done by the Committee, one of its members, Mohammed Mahmoud Hussein says:

“I went to Lt. Col. Osama Abu Daif in the last floor where the archive is kept. Present there was Captain Ahmed Najm. We entered a room inside the archive hall; a closed room for highly secret archives, where was only one such file of about 30 pages, which the Lt. Col. Osama Abu Daif shredded in our presence.”

- State security department in Giza

Major General Mohammed Issam Abdel Wahab, director of State Security Intelligence Department in Giza, notes that in February, information was received that a gathering will take place in front of SSI in Giza and that such a call was posted on Facebook. Out of concern for the archive kept in the Giza branch, the head of SSI was contacted to take consent to transfer the archive to a safe place. After the approval of the head of the agency, Major General Hassan Abdel Rahman, to transfer the archive to the administration of 6 October 6 since it was safer, administration officers were assigned to bring about 3 transport vehicles from the Security Directorate. The archive was transported over about 3 times, guarded by the police force. This took place before February 27, 2011, the date of the gathering. On February 26, 2011, a circular letter from the head of the agency arrived ordering the destruction of a highly classified archive. Maj. Gen. Mohammed Essam Abdul Wahab signed the order and gave it to the archive secretary, Brigadier Mohammad Naji who returned to his senior officer, and informed him that the very confidential archive was transferred to the 6 October Administration. Maj. Gen. Mohammed Issam told the investigating judge:

"On 4/3/2011 I watched on television the storming of the SSI building in Alexandria and the assault on officers. Upon the pressure by the officers for fear of recurrence of what happened in Alexandria, I requested the evacuation of the administration and organized a meeting attended by representatives of the Security Directorate in Giza and an officer of the..."
armed forces to develop a plan to hand over the building and its contents. An inspection took place and the hand over was done at 8 am, and the headquarters was handed over to them on”

Maj. Gen. Mohammed Essam told the investigating judge that on 4 March 2011 he was contacted by Brigadier General Osama al-Fiki, director of the office of the head of SSI who was asked him to send five officers to the October administration, where they will receive their instructions. 5 officers were sent there. Sergeant Ahmed Hassanein Hassanein\(^2\) says that on March 4, 2011:

”I was received instructions via mobile phone from a private number to go to the Administration of 6 October and there I will receive instructions. I went to the Administration and arrived there at 2 am on 5/6/2011. There was a great officer Brigadier Ismat Mehanni and I saw the officer Osama Abu Daif. There was a process of burning papers by the inside of the wall of the administration. I went to the location of the archive on the sixth floor and saw that the files of the administration of October and the administration of Giza were less than they were, and recruits are transporting files downstairs, including the Giza administration files. Around 3 or 3.15 I saw officer Assem Shamy, Captain Islam Samy, Captain Mohamed Riad, Major Mohamed Kamouna and Captain Mohammed Sharshar had arrived at the building. I saw them enter the administration building. I headed to the top floor where the archive is kept and sat there as an archive officer, and all files were taken down by recruits.”

He also said that Captain Islam Sami

“asked me to climb to the headquarters of the archive and ensure a speedy transport of the files by recruits. The files were tied together. Recruits were taking them down to the ground floor by throwing them down the stairwell, where they were transported in a minivan to be burnt.”

He continues:

“we remained until the next morning and I walked down with the last files around 10 am on 5/3/2011«.

\(^2\) Investigation by investigative judge on 27 February 2012 with a police sergeant at Giza SSI department.
Regarding this incident, Brigadier General Hussein Mohammed Abdul Rahim told the investigating judge:

"At about 10:30 or 11 o’clock, I entered the office of the director of the administration, General Abdul Hamid Khairat. I saw from his office some people gathering around the building. He asked me to follow up the situation. The numbers increased and when I left the building there were traces of burning papers next to the wall. I was told that a group of members of the Giza administration had arrived to destroy papers of the Giza inside the building of October for being safer than the Giza Department of Giza. One police sergeant was held in custody by the prosecution. His name is Ahmed Hussein and he admitted that he and a group of offices from the Giza administration were destroying some documents belonging to the Giza Department."

**State security branch in Dakahleya**

General Ghazi al-Desouki, former SSI inspector in Dakahlia, notes that on February 26, 2011, he received fax instructions from Major General Hassan Abdel-Rahman, First Assistant to the Minister of the Interior, including the destroying of a highly confidential archive through shredding. He says:

“I gave my signature thereon to Brigadier General Nasser Fattouh, head of the information group and undersecretary of the administration, to undertake the necessary measures to implement the directive in coordination with the heads of the foreign offices and I explained to him the importance of the matter and its urgency,

He also said about the instructions:

> In exceptional circumstances and failure to execute instructions in those circumstances that came directly from my superior would have led to my legal, administrative or disciplinary consequences. The execution of these documents was not intended to conceal a specific crime but was to protect the information contained therein and the sources that were dealing with the SSI, especially that the leak of this information would

22. Investigation by investigative judge on 22 January 2012 with Officer Hussein Mohamed Abdel Rehim, SSI department in 6 October
23. Investigation by investigative judge on 5 July 2011 with General Ghazi Eldessouki, former SSI inspector.
have lead to sedition, since they contained names of those who declared their Islam, and the leak of those names may have lead to sedition in their area of residence.”

In order to carry out the instructions, Major General Ghazi Al-Desouki decided to take the necessary measures. Brigadier Nasser Abdel-Azim Ibrahim Fattouh24, an officer of the State Security Investigation Department in Dakahlia, informed Major-General Ahmed Atef, the Archive Officer, of the files and papers to be deroyed, which were the highly confidential ones. He shredded those files with the help of some archive employees. Asking him about the confirmation by the prosecution of the presence of huge quantities of shredded documents and a very large amount of documents that were burned, he said:

"The shredded papers that are mentioned are leftovers and personal papers of the officers working in the administration, who felt the futility of keeping them, since they are waste, especially in view of the attacks and repeated attempts of raid on the building, as well as the fact that these papers resulted from the presence of a large number of central security forces and armed troops to secure the place and that the most appropriate ways to get rid of those papers and waste was burning because of the absence of any of the officials and workers in the neighborhood to do the cleaning work."

- State security branch of the Red Sea

Regarding the highly confidential archive, Brigadier General Fahmi Mohamed Fahmy Mugahid25, director of the Suez Department of national security, said that he received instructions via fax from the head of the agency and also through a telephone call from Brigadier Hatim Salah, the information officer in the main office, indicating the elimination of a highly confidential archive. He signed the fax for officer Tarek, in his capacity as the person in charge of the archive and information in the branch to carry out the instructions and executed the command in regard to the highly confidential archive through shredding.

24. Investigation by investigative judge on 5 July 2011 Nasser Abdel Azim Ibrahim Fattouh, former SSI officer in Dakahleya
25. Investigation by investigative judge on 2 October 2011 with SSI Fahmi Mohamed Fahmi
As for a very confidential archive, Brigadier Fahmi said before the investigative judge:

» A very confidential archive is as important as an extremely confidential archive because a very confidential archive includes results of polls, and represents those who are polled from commercial records as well as the poll of people assigned to important posts up to the fourth grade; the extremely confidential archive carries personal information of many citizens including those who converted into Islam, and in view of their importance we eliminated them in accordance with earlier instructions.”

As to who ordered the elimination of a very confidential archive Fahmi says:

"The instructions were issued by Brig. Gen. Osama al-Faki, Director of the Office of Major General Hassan Abdul Rahman; they arrived over two communications during the time of Major General Hassan Abdel Rahman that the instructions of the head of the agency is to eliminate very confidential archives wither through shredding or burning, and yet I did not comply and I kept the files until the time was right to hand them over to the security directorate. However, with the escalation of events we offered to deliver the very confidential archive to the Security Director of the Red Sea, but refused on the grounds that there was no place to accommodate the archive; he was tense and feared an attack on the Directorate if the information reached the demonstrators. Immediately and in his presence we contacted General Emad El Wakil, director of central security sector in the south of Upper Egypt, who acknowledged, after accepting the archives, the sensitivity and danger it may constitute for the Red Sea sector, which led me to transport the archive to a desert area away from the branch to avoid any damage, elimination or burning”

Lt. Col. Tariq Gumaa Mahdi26, in the Red Sea State Security Sector, told the investigative judge:

The inspector of the branch told me that he received instructions from the head of the agency to burn the archives in a security location far from the branch. I took the archive in a large transport van on the ring road of Hurghada and burned the files in a remote city in Hurghada. The armed

26. Investigation by investigative judge on 2 October 2011 with Officer Tarek Goma'a Mahdi in Red Sea SSI sector.
forces were informed, so they came and extinguished the fire and took the files that were being burnt.”

- **State security branch in Aswan**

Brig. Gen. Abdel-Gawad El-Naggar, inspector of the Aswan branch, received instructions from the Head of the SSI to eliminate a highly confidential archive through the periodic circular. He authorized it to the archive officer, and then passed the instructions to Officer Ahmed Mohamed Ibrahim Abu Zeid, who in turn briefed the archive officer, Tarek Mustafa, for him to execute the instructions received in the circular correspondence. 27

Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim Abu Zeid says:

*“Brigadier Abdul Jawad left me one book for the extremely confidential archive and another for the whole archive, and there was a telephone communication with SSI to speed the execution of the order.”*

In response to a question by the investigating judge about the heavy smoke at the State Security headquarters of Aswan branch on March 6, 2011, he said:

*”The former state security apparatus is based on a system that requires the presence of an incinerator in each of its branches to burn papers which are not important for which an order of elimination is given. The smoke may be the result of that.”*

As for the mounts of shredded and torched papers, he says:

*”The papers are chopped upon instructions to do so; as for the ashes they result from the routine burning of papers that need to be eliminated or unimportant papers or long unused papers, and that was the case before the events.”*

Brigadier General Abdel-Gawad said that following the execution of instructions, communications were cut with the SSI head office, and then the SSI offices were raided by some citizens. The headquarters of the branch was left and no contact was made with anyone. However, instructions were given to implement, either by correspondence or oral orders or faxes, without confirming the execution because the offices were deserted after execution.

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27. Investigation by investigative judge on 3 October 2011 with Officer Ahmed Mohamed Ibrahim Aboe Zeid, in Aswan SSI branch.
• State security branch in Beni Soueif

Maj. Gen. Medhat Kamal al-Din Hussein²⁸, SSI inspector in the Beni Suef branch, says that he received a fax signed by Major General Hassan Abdul Rahman, with an order to eliminate an extremely confidential archive; and after receipt of these instructions they were executed through shredding. Then the main office was informed of the execution, with a list of the numbers of the extremely confidential archive according to instructions. After General Hisham Abu Ghaida took over the chairmanship, Brig. Gen. Osama Al-Fiki, director of his office, informed me of three options to deal with the archive: either to keep it in a safe place, keep it in the security directorate or get rid of it. He also says:

"In view of my recent service in Beni Suef Governorate where I took over as State Security Inspector on 4/1/2011, I referred to the Director of Security about the implementation of the directive and pointed out that there is no place to keep the archive in the Directorate due to the lack of space; he excluded the availability of a safe place in the governorate to keep the archive and we agreed to get rid of the very secret archive, which is copies of the correspondence between branches, the hard copy originals of which are kept at the central office as well as on the computer. Those copies were destroyed in the desert adjacent to the city of Beni Suef, a place used for the incineration of the trash of the security directorate. The security director secured this mission of a number of lorries and regular and investigation forces as well as civil protection forces and a loader from the local council to accompany the mission. I gave instructions to the archive officers and branch officers to transport the very confidential archive in cars to the desert and burning them. I was following the directorate with the security director from his office."

• State security branch in Sharkeya

Like other branches, Al-Sharqiya Branch received the same instructions issued by the head of the agency to execute a highly confidential archive, in addition to oral instructions to dispose of all documents. The instructions were received by the branch Inspector Magdi Sultan, who in turn informed Major General Hisham Kamal Abdul Gawad,

²⁸. Investigation by investigative judge on 4 October 2011 with Medhat Kamal Husseim, SSI inspector in Beni Suef.
Undersecretary of the Sharkeya SSI branch. General Hisham Abdel-Gawad said that he received oral information from Brigadier General Hatem Salah, the information officer of the agency, to dispose the rest of the archive, and that he prepared a memo that was presented to the branch inspector. The content of the oral instructions, he told the investigative judge was the following:

"There is another decision in view of the security conditions prevailing in the country with massive demonstrations in the country and what happened of raids of some branches and departments of the agency in some governorates and the seizure of some of the documents in the archives of these departments and the serious risk this constitutes for the security of information concerning the Egyptian national security, in addition to the safety of persons to whom some of the information is related, some of which are archived and therefore can seriously endanger the lives of these persons by some individuals and groups that believe that the agency was acting against their interests, and in order to preserve the lives of persons cooperating with the agency (secret agents) he thinks that the branch archive should be shredded or transported to the security directorate or the main headquarters in Cairo."

Major General Hisham Abdel Gawad explained that all the documents in the archive of the branch in different degrees of confidentiality, whether extremely confidential, very confidential or confidential, are copies of correspondence, the original of which are kept in the main archive, in Cairo. As how the instructions were followed, he says:

"I would like to clarify that in all branches and departments of the agency without exception, there are incinerators for burners of papers and periodically there is burning of unimportant papers which are drafts of correspondence issued to various parties in addition to the fact that the branch periodically forms committees to eliminate many files of different nature, which result in accumulation of papers in the branch archive. As for the instructions received, the extremely confidential archive was shredded as well as the very confidential archive. After we finished shredding we did the burning."

29. Investigation by investigative judge on 8 December 2011 with General Hesham Abdel Gawad, SSI undersecretary in Sharkeya
Thus was the process of disposing of the archive in the branches of state security in the different governorates. Finally, it should be noted that SSI branch officials unanimously agreed to have received oral instructions the office of the head of the agency to get rid of the very confidential archives in the branches. The names of Usama Amer Abdul Rahman al-Fiki, Director of the Office of the Head of the Agency and Hatem Salah Abdul Mageed Sayed Ahmad, Head of the Information Group were repeatedly mentioned. However, the director of the office of the head of the agency and the head of the information group denied to have issued any instructions except that received upon a decision by the head of the device, Hassan Abdul Rahman, to get rid of the extremely confidential archive, during the hearing by the investigating judge.

We believe that it is important here and in conclusion for this section of the report to refer also to the observations of the examining magistrate included in the list of witness statements and evidence of indictment, as follows:

1. The defendants, from the 1st to the 12th admitted that they destroyed documents belonging to their employer (SSI). The defendants, from the 24th to the 31st admitted issuing instructions to destroy documents of their employer (SSI).

2. Inspection by the Public Prosecution Office of the SSI headquarters in Assiut confirmed the presence of a number of spools with paper scraps inside and quantities of burnt papers that were still hot at the time of inspection.

3. From the inspection by the Public Prosecution Office of the SSI headquarters in Aswan, the offices were free of documents and there were signs of shredding of a large quantity of documents, and the presence of five shredding machines surrounded by mounts of shredded papers.

4. From the inspection by the Public Prosecution Office of the site of burning documents of the SSI branch in the Red Sea (Hurghada), that it is a place on the side of the mountain road that is not paved and the fire is about 100 meters from the ring road. The inspection revealed the presence of a large number of burned papers and a large pile of documents was on fire. Members of the armed forces managed to save a large number of SSI files after the fire was extinguished.
5. Inspection by the Public Prosecutor’s Office of the SSI in Sharkeya showed traces of burning of a very large number of documents and papers belonging to the SSI and in the office of the inspector of the branch, there was a paper shredder with an amount of shredded papers inside it.

6. Inspection by the Public Prosecutor’s Office of the disposal site of SSI documents in Beni Suef that it is a desert area, about 700 meters from the nearest building, a desert and mountainous area, where traces of a pit were found, which has been covered by sand and was surrounded with scattered papers belonging to the SSI with burned edges.

7. Inspection by the Public Prosecutor’s Office of the SSI office in Talbeya revealed a large quantity of shredded papers and some papers with fire traces.

According to official investigations in the case of shredding documents, documents of the State Security Agency were burned and shredded in several branches, as well as in the main branch, while the armed forces reserved documents and contents that were in the main branch of Nasr City. Thus, the security archive of the State Security Agency, after the incidents raids into the headquarters of the agency in March 2011, is in the possession of the armed forces.
• **Basic information on the document shredding case**

The case is known as document shredding case, and carries the number 3658/2011 criminal cases October I, recorded as 2198/2012 South of Giza.

- **Defendants**

  1. Nasser Azim Ibrahim Fattouh: Brigadier-general at the Passport Department, and previously an SSI officer in Dakahlia, and resident in Mansoura.

  2. Tariq Gumaa Mahdi Abdul Sadiq: SSI officer and former SSI officer in the Red Sea, resident in the tourist center - Hurghada

  3. Mohammed al-Sayyid Taher al-Sharif: Director of National Security in Assiut, and former head of the SSI office in Naga Hammadi

  4. Tarek Ali Mohammed Mustafa: Brigadier-general at the Passport Department, and previously an SSI officer in the Aswan branch.

  5. Ahmed Mohammed Abdul Hamid Shukri: National security officer, former SSI officer in the Beni Suef branch, and resident in Maadi – Cairo

  6. Hisham Kamal Abdul Gawad Al-Naggar: a police general in the Security Directorate of Alexandria, and previously the deputy of the SSI in Sharkeya, and resident in Damanhur - Beheira

  7. Alaa al-Sayed Ibrahim Mahleb: National security officer in Damietta, and previously an SSI officer in the Damietta branch, and resident in Port Fouad - Port Said

  8. Wael Abdul Sami’e Mohammed Rifai: officer at Damietta Security Directorate, and previously an officer of the State Security Investigation Branch in Damietta


  10. Tayeb Mohammed Hamid: national security sector officer, and previously an officer of the SSI branch in Sohag
11. Samir Abdul Mageed Hassan Abdul Mageed: Police Brigade in the Medical Services Department, and former Inspector of State Security Investigation in Fayoum.


13. Mohamed Mahmoud Hussein Mahmoud Hussein: police captain in the national security sector, and previously an officer of the State Security Investigation in October and resident in Maadi - Cairo.


17. Ahmed Hazem Ahmed Zaki Hammad: Captain of the National Security Directorate in Gharbiya, former SSI officer in Zefta, and resident of Tanta II - Gharbia.


21. Walid Gamal Tawfiq Shoaiib: police officer at the Passport Department in Sharm el-Sheikh, former head of SSI Bureau in Talabiya, and resident in Al-Haram - Giza.

22. Mohammed Saleh Yousef Abu Raya: police captain in the Passport Department, former SSI officer in Desouq, and resident in Qutour - Gharbeya.

23. Mohammad Ali Ibrahim Fahmi: Police Brigade Director of Planning, Research and Follow-up Department, former SSI Director in Helwan.

25. Mohammad Ghazi Ghazi Al-Desouki: Police Brigade, Undersecretary of the Civil Status Department, and former Inspector of SSI in Dakahlia.

26. Fahmi Mohammed Fahmi Mugahid: Senior officer at the National Security Agency, and former SSI Branch in the Red Sea, resident in Heliopolis, Cairo.


29. Mohammed Sharif Abdulla Abdul-Baki Al-Agamawi: police brigade in the Civil Affairs Department, former SSI inspector in Suez, and a resident of Heliopolis, Cairo.

30. Magdi Mohammed Sultan: Retired Police Brigade pension, former SSI inspector in Sharkeya, and resident in the police buildings Smouha - Alexandria.

31. Medhat Abdullah Mohammadi Mohammed Yousuf: Police General, Director of the National Security Directorate in Dakahlia, former SSI Inspector in Damietta, and resident in Ismailia.


33. Samir Abdul Mageed Hassan Abdul Mageed: general, Medical Services Department, formerly SSI Inspector in Fayoum.


35. Abdul Hamid Khairat Mohammed Shukri Abdul Hamid Abdul Razek: Retired police general, previously Head of SSI in 6 October, and resident in Miami - Alexandria.


38. Mohammed Riad Mohammed Abu Ali: Police Brigadier in the National Security in Giza, previously an SSI officer in Giza, and resident in Old Cairo - Cairo.

39. Mohammed Hussein Hussein Sharshar: a police officer in the Passport and Immigration Department, previously an officer in the SSI Department of Giza, and resident in Sers-Ellaian - Menoufia.

Mohammed Ahmed Mahmoud Kamoun: Police Brigadier in the national security sector, previously an officer of the State Security Investigation Department in Giza, and resident in Sahel - Cairo


- **Charges**

During the period from February 25, 2011 until March 6, 2011, the Department of Giza Governorate and other governorates of the Republic,

First: 1st to 23rd defendants:

In their capacity as public employees (SSI police officers) deliberately destroyed the papers of their employer by shredding and setting fire to the archives of the departments, branches and offices of the State Security Apparatus as mentioned in the investigations.

Second: From the 24th to the 40th defendants

In their capacity as public employees (SSI police officers) participated in the instigation and assistance from the first to the twenty-third defendant in committing the crime of intentional destruction of the documents of their workplace, by inciting them to commit the crimes and helping them by giving instructions to them and their assistants that enabled them to commit the crime based on that incitement and help.

Third: All defendants

In their capacity as public employees deliberately harmed the interests of the body they are working for (the State Security Agency), as they destroyed the archives of the
departments, branches and offices of the Agency, as mentioned in the investigations, which led to depriving the agency of information and documents that are important to its national security.

The second part of the report sought to highlight the main statements by the defendants in the investigation of the document shredding case, to answer the question: what happened to the security archive and what is the fate of its remnants. The second section concluded with a review of the basic information of the case regarding the list of defendants and their responsibilities within the State Security Agency, and also In terms of the nature of the charges against them, which did not result in a real process of holding them accountable, since the lawsuit ended with acquittal of all defendants. Thus practices of officials and officers in the state security apparatus continue without deterrent from the law, and the security archive remains inaccessible to citizens. This is what the report discusses in the next section, in an attempt to show the importance of the security archive by shedding light on the history of the state security apparatus in Egypt.
Section III: Contexts of break into state security headquarters

"The right to the truth (disclosing the truth) in the Egyptian context has a central importance, especially with regard to the archive of the security apparatus, against which the masses have revolted for what it is known for: an agency that uses systematic methods of torture and has a long record of human rights violations, as well as its role in the situation of political, financial and administrative corruption that the Arab Republic of Egypt has witnessed, from the administration of elections and their powers in career appointments and so on, so that the role of the police and the ministry of Interior changed from an authority in the service of the people to an authority in the service of the ruler."

In this third and last chapter, the report examines the contexts in which the facts of the storming of State Security headquarters can be understood in 2011. Although AFTE focuses on providing alternative narratives and taking advantage of legal proceedings to preserve the collective memory of the events of the 25th revolution January and others, this report calls for greater effort. Without looking into the nature of that body and discussing the importance of its archives, we have dealt with the facts of the storming of the State Security headquarters in a way that does not help the objectives of this report. Therefore, this axis informs the reader of important dimensions and contexts, which help to understand what happened in March 2011.

In this section the report examines the archives of the state security apparatus as part of the Egyptian security archive. It also seeks to explain the role of the archives in the process of historical and transitional justice, in that the disclosure of the State Security Archive and the information contained in it is part of human rights. This right has not been paid attention to by successive Egyptian governments since the Egyptian revolution. The demonstrations that took place in front of State Security headquarters in Cairo and Alexandria on 4 and 5 March 2011 to protect the documents and archives of the State Security from damage were a missed opportunity to enable citizens to know the truth of the violations committed by this agency.

30. AFTE, Comparative policies, security archive and the right to truth: Egypt versus international standards and experiences
The report deals with the importance of the disclosure of the security archive in the pursuit of historical and transitional justice after the Egyptian revolution. The report shows some historical features of the State Security apparatus since its inception. For decades, this body has been maintained and nothing but its name has changed, while its mentality and violations continued the same. This is due to the failure to address the history of State Security and its oppressive history. Therefore, it is important to uncover the truth about the violations by disclosing the security archive, so that the memory of victims and the community of this agency can be preserved, and so that those responsible for the violations can be held accountable and this ensure that such violations do not recur.

- **State security, a badly reputed authority**

"In addition to the special supervision of the fields, the factories ... the government wanted to establish a general police system that would be “intelligent and effective, and is present everywhere”... This requires a system, as Cromer admitted, “analogous to the imposition of martial law”\(^{32}\)

*Timothy Mitchell, Colonization of Egypt*

The emergence of the police apparatus in Egypt dates back to the emergence of the modern Egyptian state by its founder, Muhammad Ali. In 1805 Muhammad Ali established a small law and order maintenance department in Cairo, then expanded its scope in 1857 to the so-called “Ministry of the Interior”, which is still the ministry entrusted with “implementing the law to maintain public order and secure citizens.”\(^{33}\)

The Ministry of the Interior with its extensions and sectors - most importantly SSI - has a history of violations and repression of citizens\(^{34}\). The former State Security Agency, known as the National Security Agency after the revolution of January 25, 2011, is a

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32. Ibid
33. Ibid
34. Example: HRW report, Egypt, Torture Epidemic may constitute a crime against humanity, 6 September 2017.
historical body that began and developed with the development of the modern Egyptian state. However, its foundations were strengthened as a security system during the English intervention in Egypt, which was followed by the British Mandate in 1914. Under the British occupation the forms and names of this agency changed – where it came to work in the interest of the British to suppress national and workers’ movements against colonialism.

In 1910, an assassination of Prime Minister Boutros Pasha Ghali took place in front of the Ministry of Justice building. The operation was carried out by Ibrahim Nassif al-Wardani and claimed the death of Boutros Pasha Ghali the next morning. After al-Wardani’s trial, he was sentenced to death, but the authorities were unable to arrest or prosecute the other members of the organization that planned for the assassination. As a result of this incident a so-called “secret service office” was established under the direction of the Sir Eldon Grost. Historian Harold Tollifson says that after this incident (the assassination of Boutros Pasha Ghali), the harshness of security agencies was stepped up by the “Secret Service Office” and its role in suppressing and controlling national and liberation movements was strengthened both in the era of Grost and Kitchener, who was his successor.

35. Harold Tollifson, Policing Islam: The British occupation of Egypt and the Anglo Egyptian Struggle over the control of the police 1900-1914), Contributions in Comparative Colonial Studies, Praeger, November 1999, P. 151,
36. Ibid,
Then in 1913, as a development of what was known as the “Secret Service”, a structure known as the “Special Section” was established and was headed by Salim Zaki al-Hekemdar. Although he was an Egyptian by nationality, he was known of being close to the British.

Maj. Gen. Hamdi Sarhan recalls: “The most famous person to occupy this post, Major General Salim Zaki, was used by the British occupation in ... the Political Security Agency at the time, to monitor patriots and eliminate their resistance to the occupation. It was called at the time “the private section” and is considered the oldest of its kind in

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the Middle East\textsuperscript{39}. Salim Zaki played an effective role in trying to control the leaders of the 1919 revolution. For example, the plot he drew for Abd al-Rahman al-Fahmi and 28 others, where they were subjected to a military trial on July 14, 1920 for plotting to overthrow the regime by forming a secret group. It was the Hekemdar who arrested them.

In the same period, another security apparatus, the “special division,” was established. This was purely British. Its reports were sent to the British House of Commons, the High Commissioner, and then to the English government in London.

As for the July regime, the governments of the Free Officers that followed the revolution of July 23, 1952, there era marked the establishment of the security doctrine. “The problem of the July regime is that it brought an isolated group of officers to power, without a political support, and therefore it had to govern by extending bridges with different forces and organizations ... while putting them under the control of their security bodies” says Amr Shalqani, quoting Dr. Sherif Younis\textsuperscript{40}. In other words, the July regime relied on security bodies to impose its control over the country as well as the various forces that existed in the country after the fall of the monarchy.

It can be said that the state security apparatus went through four basic stages: the phase of abolition and destruction of the apparatus for being colonial, and then the stage of re-revival under the name “General Investigation” on August 22, 1952, then its dissolution again in the Sadat era, through what was called “reform”, then its revival under the name “State Security Investigation”. Finally, after the January Revolution, it was dissolved like its predecessors and reinstated by the name of the “National Security Apparatus”.

During the reign of the first president after the July 23 revolution (General Mohammad Najib), Gamal Abdel Nasser assumed the post of Prime Minister and Minister of Interior. In August 1952 there were demonstrations of spinning and weaving workers in Kafr El Dawar, which included thousands of workers. Their demands were centered on transferring their workplaces to Kom Hamada and demands for better wages and better workers’ places in view of the deteriorated condition of the existing ones\textsuperscript{41}. Security forces besieged Kafr El Dawar and opened fire on the workers. One worker was killed,

\textsuperscript{39} Ayman Yuncef, from a report titled “who is the Hekemdar”, Mobtada magazine, 30 October 2015
\textsuperscript{40} Dr. Amr Shalkani, Rise and demise of the Egyptian legal elite 1805-2055, first edition 2013, Dar Eldhorouk, p. 305; see also Dr. Serif Yunis, Judges and Elections: the fair election discourse: dimensions, indicators and roots, 2006, p. 505-506.
\textsuperscript{41} Nermin Eshra report, “the execution of workers in the era of Mohamed Nagib”, El Wafd Newspaper, 30 April 2013.
which drove the organizers of the movement to move to the entrance of the city after news spread of the arrival of President Mohammad Nagib. But he had not arrived. Instead the demonstration was suppressed by the police; hundreds were arrested and brought to a military trial that was held in the courtyard of the factory for charges of acts of sabotage and riots.

The organizers of the demonstration, Mohammed Mustafa Khamis (19 years old), and Mohamed Hosni Bakri (17 years) were sentenced to death and others to prison and fines. Several days later, the security apparatus was re-established under the name “General Investigation”.

Under the name of the General Investigation, the apparatus continued its work during the reign of Gamal Abdel Nasser, and even intensified its power and was known for its bloody grip on the country; many terms emerged for those who were held by the apparatus “gone where there is no return”, “gone behind the son”, etc. At the time it was known that the aim of the apparatus was to crush communists and the Muslim Brotherhood. Then during the era of Sadat, he dissolved the apparatus, and then quickly re-introduced it under the name “State security investigation by Presidential Decree No. 111 of 1974. The agency continued its work during the Mubarak era had authority in every aspect and over all institutions and authorities, perhaps with the exception of the Egyptian military. State security investigation controls universities, job appointments and civil society, as well as guaranteeing results of presidential and legislative elections, administrative approvals, and the disappearance of anyone they want to disappear “behind the sun.” The performance of this agency under Mubarak was based on numerous violations of human rights as well as various forms of financial, administrative and political corruption.

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42. ibid
43. Ibid
44. Salah Meselhi, Amazing personalities: Memoirs, translations, documents, first group, Dar El Nahda, Masr, p. 430-450
The role of security archive in preserving memory and justice

With regard to the brutality of the security bodies there is a view that it is difficult to separate the modern nation state from colonial experience. The modern nation state inherited the organs and laws and even the infrastructure established by colonialism. In fact any transition that occurred in Egypt was only a partial one as long as the record of the security apparatus was not dealt with in a way that breaks with a criminal past full of human rights violations. This will only be achieved if we achieve disclosure of those crimes and when documents are made available that allow access to information and writing a history of historical justice and diverse narratives. Egyptian historical documents are easily accessed through the National Archives of England from their web page, and

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46. Franz Fanon, Black Skins white Masks, New York, Grove Press; see also Strategic Essentialism In Other Worlds, Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography, 1988, 22-197
are almost impossible to obtain from the Egyptian National Archives because of the security arbitrariness and mentality permeating all the organs of the state.

But is there really a mechanism for detecting the truth about violations by making the security archive or the State Security Bureau archives available? How has the disclosure of documents and archives been promoted to be a human right? What does this right have to do with transitional and historical justice?

The disclosure of the security archive plays a role in protecting the memory of communities and ensuring a transition to a more equitable system that ensures that violations of the past are not repeated. Transitional justice loses its meaning if it does not guarantee a kind of historical justice. Historical justice seeks to preserve the memory of societies, and it allows for multiple narratives emanating from the grassroots. Thus, the monopoly of power over the historical narrative prevents the realization of a degree of justice and equity in post-conflict societies.

When an authority destroys its security archive or blocks it completely from society, it establishes authoritarian principles that monopolize information and thus control truth, narrative, and history. It also obscures from society and individuals the due process of litigation and their attempts for material or moral redress. Also, if history is a reflection of society’s perception of its reality, this means that history must reflect the struggles of groups and individuals of those societies. History loses its meaning if it is not connected to the present. Therefore, history is one of the most important areas of social mobility. It is from this awareness that most states and authorities try to control the narrative of history, because history, as Bruce Montgomery said, “eventually becomes the only and ideal trial and conviction mechanism for human rights violators,” especially when the law fails to administer justice.

The concept of historical justice means the reflection of the narratives of individuals.

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47. Communities’ memories or collective memories: a concept indicating a memory or a shared memory between a number of individuals, where sharing is a result of a common social experience. The term was first introduced by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, student of Emile Durkheim. For more on this issue see: Maurice Halbwachs, 1950, La Memoire Collective, Les Pres universites de Paris.

48. Transitional justice refers to a range of judicial and non-judicial measures implemented by various States to address the grave human rights violations they have inherited. These measures include prosecution, truth commissions, reparation programs and various forms of institutional reform. (For more information, see: ICTJ website and publications)

49. Historical justice is part of transitional justice, implying the promotion and protection of discourses that explain crimes and mistakes of the past. For more see: Klaus Neuman and Janna Thompson, Historical Justice and Memory, University of Wisconsin, July 2015, P.3-9.

50. The term “post conflict societies” refers to societies that have gone through some kind of conflict, e.g. war, revolution, emergence from an oppressive regime… etc.

51. AFTE, History and the truth, paper discussing the concepts of conscience, memory and transitional justice, 12 May 2015.

and groups in history. Transitional justice is also guided by its first principles, which include the right to the truth. The right to know the truth has emerged as a legal concept at the national, regional and international levels. It is linked to the State’s obligation to provide information to victims, their families, or even the entire community, about the circumstances surrounding serious violations of human rights. Among the documents used to reveal the truth is the security archive - in our case we mean the archives of the state security apparatus with its various names throughout history. This archive and its documents are unique in the transition from dictatorial and authoritarian regimes, because it usually contains information on various forms of human rights violations that should be dealt with in post-conflict situations. Also, the archive usually contains information about people or events collected for security reasons. However, Egyptian governments that followed the January 2011 revolution did not establish policies that would reveal the archives of the state security apparatus; it remains an archive that has not yet been made available. This block by governments that followed the 2011 revolution is not confined to the archives of the state security apparatus under Mubarak or his predecessors such as Sadat, Abdel Nasser and Nagib, but extends to earlier periods, that is, since the occupation and the British Mandate over Egypt.

At the level of the right-to-truth mechanisms, security archives are used, as shown by international experience in terms of drawing up local policies for transitional justice. With the accumulation of international experience to achieve “transitional justice” in post-conflict societies, general best practices have been agreed upon in order for the process to succeed (transitional justice). Among these principles is the “right to the truth” as we have already mentioned.

The right to truth is defined as: “the right of victims who have been subjected to serious violations under international human rights and humanitarian law, their families and society to know the truth of such violations and to identify those responsible for them and the reasons and circumstances that led to them.” Through the disclosure of the truth several objectives are achieved: admitting to crimes of the past, national reconciliation, compensation of victims and survivors, in addition to ensuring that such violations are not repeated, etc. Although the criteria for maintaining the archive and its use to seek

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54. For more information see below table by OSF translated by AFTE titled "Security bodies document archive", As well as report by AFTE titled "Security archive and the right to truth".
55. Transitional Justice, see ref. 48
56. International Center for Transitional Justice, Seeking the truth – Elements of formation of effective committees, p.6.
to establish the right to the truth in order to achieve justice as well as transition justice vary according to the political and social context of each country, depending on what has been agreed upon in the context of the local movement generated by society itself - such as the outcome of a revolution - still there are a number of criteria that have been established through the momentum of other international experiences that went through crises and sought to achieve transitional justice. Therefore the return to these general criteria to draw a local map suited to the local context helps to avoid the mistakes of other experiences and to come up with a successful experiment.

It can be said that the criteria for dealing with the security archive to achieve a measure of transitional justice are centered on four topics:

First: Mechanisms for making such documents available and revealing the truth of the crimes reported therein.

Second, practical techniques to conceal some of the information contained in the archive during its disclosure, such as information regarding the privacy of victims of violations or of national security.

Third, procedures for the consequences of the disclosure and availability of the security archive such as compensation for victims and survivors, policies of political isolation or amnesty and reconciliation, and projects of commemoration (museums, monuments, scientific research projects, curriculum, etc.).

Fourth: The images of the organs and departments entrusted with the administration of this process in a manner that guarantees rights and freedoms through bodies responsible for their implementation (such as truth commissions, truth and reconciliation bodies, bodies for the preservation and accessibility of the archives, etc.)

All of these stages begin with access to those documents, ensuring their preservation, and holding accountable those who have attempted to destroy or conceal them. 57

One of the sensitive issues to be addressed is how to preserve information that touches on “national security” or “victim privacy” during the process of granting access to the security archive. A security archive always contains documents and information that affect those two issues. Here it is very important to be guided by international experiences.


14-311-311-115.pdf
These experiences resulted in drawing exceptions to the right to the truth. Although, according to international experience, disclosure of information and documents is subject to exceptions, regulations must be put in place to regulate those exceptions to ensure that they are not invoked to block all information and documents. The importance of respecting “privacy” is that it is a human right that should be preserved and observed. Taking into account information affecting “national security” is important because the availability of such information can be more damaging to the public. However, national security “as an exception should not be expanded; so a legal and institutional system must be established that defines its scope as an exception, so as not to be exploited and expanded.

Among the principles that were drawn to regulate the balance between the exception of national security and the right to information were the “Chuani Principles”, which provided which information could be blocked on the basis of national security and which information must be disclosed. The first category of information to be identified as a category of information the disclosure of which is of prime importance is all information on violations of international law and humanitarian law\(^58\). Dr. Khalid Fahmy explained that the protection of national security lies in the provision of information and documents to the Egyptian people so that they have a way of knowing their history. He warned in one of his lectures about the security mentality that sees in the blocking of information and documents a protection for national security. Such policy will only block citizens’ access to the Egyptian historical narratives in those documents and the national archive. In one of his lectures he said “I disagree with this policy (the policy of withholding documents), and again my disagreement with this policy stems not from my concern for scientific research and academic freedom, but also from my concern for national security. Is there a threat to national security greater than our youth deriving their knowledge about our modern history from books based on documents from other sources, including enemy documents?”\(^59\)

What has resulted from the disclosure of the security archive in other international experiences? In Argentina, the police intelligence archives of Buenos Aires and the Stavé General Police were used as evidence in several cases, and provided information

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58. "There is an overriding public interest in disclosing information on gross violations of human rights or serious violations of international humanitarian law, including crimes under international law and systematic or widespread violations of the right to personal liberty and security. Such information may not be withheld for reasons of national security in any circumstances" 12 June 2013.

59. Dr. Khaled Fahmy: Archives belong to the people, lecture at the National House of Archives, 23 June 2013.
on at least 19 cases of enforced disappearance. In Brazil, the transport of the police archive during the dictatorial period that extended from 1964 until 1985 to the national archives was done by Presidential Decree 5584 of 2005, which also launched a website in 2009 that accessed the archive to the public, which contributed to the governance of archival information, and is now not confidential.

In Bulgaria, a commission was set up in 2006 that allows researchers, investigators, citizens and relatives of those to whom information is related to access the archives of intelligence and the ComDOS from 1944 to 1991. In Paraguay, the technical police archive for the period of the dictatorship of Strosner (1954-1989) was made accessible and contributed to the identification of thousands of missing persons and prisoners, cases of torture, or those who were killed in South Latin America. The experiences of many countries such as Germany, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain and many others can be reviewed. 60

In the Egyptian context, despite the events of the demonstrations that took place around the State Security headquarters in an attempt to protect the documents and the subsequent prosecution of those responsible for shredding documents, the security archive was blocked and no one was allowed to see it. This, in addition to several factors, led to the failure of the process of transitional justice in Egypt. When the Egyptian judiciary - after the demonstrations around state security headquarters - attempted to question officials about the fate of the archive and the duty of the officials to protect it, and after the court acquitted officials of damaging the documents by stating in their testimonies that they had preserved a copy, no later government attempted to provide access to the State Security Archive.

60. Temporal archive and the right to truth, Egypt between international standards and experiences, 2 March 2015.
Conclusion

As the report reviewed documented information collected by AFTE, it also tried in its final section to examine important contexts to understand the facts surrounding the shredding of state security documents. It remains to emphasize the importance and necessity of publishing and circulating alternative narratives of the major events of the revolution of 25 January. The voices of citizens deserve to be listened to with interest, after years of imposing in every possible way a narrative that sees in the struggle of citizens for their rights and freedoms a conspiracy against the state and its repressive agencies. In this way, we have achieved our aim from this report, which is only completed by making room today and tomorrow to hear these narratives, and to continue to demand the rights of citizens to access the security archive.