

Small Screen Censors ...

Foundation and Collapse of the Drama Commission

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Methodology

The report was based on the official data issued by the Supreme Council for Media Regulation on drama, as well as the periodic statements, reports and periodic reports issued by the drama committee formed by the Council, whether published on the official website of the Council or in newspapers and talk shows. The report was also depended on a review of the existing laws governing the drama censorship process as compared to the previous one.

Introduction

Since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi took power in 2014, major changes have taken place in Egypt's media and cultural landscape. The current authority has exploited the popularity of the June 30 protests and the war on terror, and has begun to pass legislation, create some bodies and expand other powers to control the media and cultural landscape, thereby shrinking the spaces for freedom of expression outside state control, which were created by the January, 25th revolution.

The president referred many times to culture and the arts, and he always sought to emphasize the role they played in shaping citizens sense of belonging and their consciousness. He therefore urged the workers in the media and cultural fields to adhere to the vision of the state in their work, and to report, in collaboration with members of society of any violations, each according to their position and authority.

In general, the arts represent an educational value for the authority whose aesthetics are used to elevate the values of patriotism of a “moral religious character.”¹ In particular, this concern increases by curtailing and curbing the role of art and culture, and impos-

1. Youtube, 90 minutes, Interview with Egyptian drama giant, director Mohamed Fadel, posted on 23 April 2018, Last visit November 2018
<https://goo.gl/LkD8ik>

ing control thereon, the more this art becomes accessible to a larger audience, which the Authority ultimately tried to exercise through the Higher Media Council and the Drama Committee. The statements of the Council and its Committee expressed the Authority's vision of creativity and culture.

The drama committee wanted to use the power granted to it by the Council in what it described as the development of the Egyptian drama through the subsequent censorship of creative works that are "hostile to society and its values", as described by officials of the drama committee. In the manner of the "Plato City of Virtue," which was known to be hostile to "acting" in general, and the "theater" in particular, in which Plato considered that the task of culture is to prepare "gentlemen"², the commission began its work.

Over a seven-month period, the Commission's duration of work before resigning, the committee submitted reports and recommendations of sanctions on the "black list of drama ", which violated conditions and standards and "distorted Egypt's image abroad", and which made the censorship role of the committee difficult. On the one hand, the committee was forced to engage in external conflicts with artists and intellectuals in order to encourage them to adhere to the standards of "good drama." On the other hand, it engaged in an internal struggle with the Supreme Media Council about its powers and the enforcement of sanctions, which have been declared and to which the Council did not totally commit.

It is therefore that we thought that the release of this report at this time following the resignation of the Drama Committee is important and necessary, as we seek to examine the extent of the success of the drama committee to restrict the freedom of creativity. Despite the suspension of the drama committee temporarily, which caused the collective resignation of its members, we cannot overlook the success achieved by this Com-

2. Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy, Part I*, Translated by Zaki Naguib Mahmoud et al., Published by the Egyptian General Book Authority, 2010, pp. 190-192..

mittee, where the volume of excesses in the drama of Ramadan this year compared to last year indicated a significant decrease in the number of incidents which the committee considered to be in violation of standards³, a matter which may indicate the success of the committee to increase the rate of self-censorship. The report also attempts to understand the nature and role of the drama committee, whether it is the role determined by its decree of formation or the role it sought to play on the ground. The report shows how the Authority leads its discourse on culture and creativity in a direction that does not respect the freedom of expression and creativity, and how the Drama Committee attempts to adopt this discourse from the present authority and its predecessor to the simulation of taboos and prohibitions of 1976, which are very similar to the irregularities established by the Drama Committee.

The report also seeks to urge intellectuals and creative artists to act in order to confront such practices and pressure the current authority and the Supreme Council of Media to reject any attempt to revive the drama committee or to present a new proposal for its work in favor of freedom of creativity, provided that it is not a new censorship body.

3. Egypt .. National Council for Women monitors abuses against women in Ramadan drama, Al Ain News, published on 11 May 2018, last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/Ho9Psa>

The Supreme Council introduces the work of the Drama Committee

Before the formation of the drama committee, the Supreme Council for the Regulation of Media, established at the time in accordance with Law 92 of 2016, played a general role in supervising the dramas and creative works shown on television. The President of the Council, Makram Mohammed Ahmed, and its members launched a number of statements against the violations of Egyptian morals, customs and traditions in drama, announcing the existence of new regulations for the development of drama in 2017 and the formation of committees to monitor everything displayed on the screen. It should be noted here the changes in the law of the formation of the Supreme Council of Information, which abolished in early September 2018 Law No. 92 of 2016, to be replaced by Law No. 180 of 2018⁴, but the new law, as its predecessor, does not include provisions that allow censorship of creative works.

The Council's powers and the size of its powers began to be clear, as well as the limits of its control over drama and creativity. On June 7, 2017, the Council issued a report⁵ entitled "Monitoring the excesses of the series and programs of Ramadan from 27 May to 6 June 2017."

The Council set out six patterns of violations, Verbal abuse, insults and verbal obscenity, using crude sexual insults, deliberately displaying scenes of defamation and sexual harassment, and showing serials containing free lessons on how to use drugs, joining ISIS, political insinuations and historical mistakes." The Council then monitored the scenes that included a breach and issued a decree to penalize the heads of the channels 200 thousand Egyptian pounds⁶ for every word that was deemed offensive by the

4. Mohammed al-Jabali and Mohammed Attia, Sisi ratifies the law on the organization of press and media and the Supreme Council, Al Youm Al Sabèè, published on 1 September 2018, the last visit of November 2018, <https://goo.gl/5RXzot>

5. Mohamed Ali, We publish the report of the Supreme Council for Media Regulation on the excesses of Ramadan series and programs, Al-Ahram, published on 7 June 2017, last visit August 2018, <https://goo.gl/12v846>

6. Mahmoud Othman, the return of Hesbah .. On the interference of "the highest media" in the drama of Ramadan, Foundation for Freedom of Thought and Expression, published on July 2, 2017, last visit to November 2018, <https://goo.gl/AeaG3Q>

Council and presented in any of the dramas, and to withdraw the license of the media outlet in case of a repeated breach and noncompliance with the penalty within six months, where a new license is then required. The Council also sent letters to television channels to confirm the deletion of scenes that include scenes of violence or contain words “not suitable for the Egyptian people.”⁷

However, the incompatibility in the field of competencies between the Supreme Council of Information and the Censorship Authority of Artistic Works, the moral tone that some saw as condescending to the Council’s reports on the content of dramas and the omission of the representation of creative artists within the Council caused a sharp wave of attack against the new orientations of the Council.

The text of the law establishing the Supreme Media Council - recently replaced by a new law without significant differences with regard to the powers of the Council - has several functions, the most important of which is the receipt of complaints regarding the content of the newspapers and what is published in the media, especially the content that affects the reputation of the people or exposed to their own lives. The law refers to the Council’s authority to take “appropriate measures” against the newspaper or the media outlet if it violates the law.

On the other hand, the Media Syndicate Act⁸, in its first article, states that “an activity shall not be considered a media activity if it involves cinematic, television or theater act, as well as recreational activities.” The law defined media activity as “any activity based on broadcasting news, information, ideas, opinions or facts from its source through audiovisual means to inform and enlighten public opinion.” The terms of reference of the Syndicate do not include the monitoring of the performance of creative works,

7. Mohammed Al Sayed, “Media council” issues his first report on excesses of the series and programs of Ramadan, Al Youm Al Sabe’e, published on 7 June 2017, the last visit in September 2018, <https://goo.gl/w9NtNk>

8. Mohamed Sayed, Syndicate of Media: Ramez Underground Offenses Exceeds Community Values and Values, Al Youm Al Sabe’e, Published May 31, 2018, Last Visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/wSYyeh>

which makes the Supreme Media's interventions in the content of dramas infringing in accordance with the law.

The process of censorship of creative works is subject to other laws and regulations. One of the most important stages of this regulatory process, which includes regulating the contents of the state television, is Law No. 430 of 1955 regulating censorship of cinematographic films, television, songs, plays and standing performances, law no. 350/1970 of the General Directorate for the Control of Artistic Works and the definition of its jurisdiction, which regulates the prior censorship of works of art, the decision of the Minister of Culture No. 220 of 1976 on the basic rules for the censorship of works of art, and the decision of the Prime Minister No. 162 of 1993, concerning the executive regulations for the censorship of audio and audiovisual works, which includes the executive regulations of the law.

“The competent authorities of the Union of Radio and Television shall comply with the rules referred to in the preceding articles when allowing any work on television or radio and in the presentation of any advertisement relating on such outlets. These bodies must direct special attention to the content regarding its respect for values of society and the high quality of the productions, to ensure they are devoid of any vulgar substance, considering that what they broadcast reaches individuals of all ages, which requires special responsibility (protection for young people)”.

Article 5 of the Prime Minister's Decision No. 220 of 1976

Article 1 of Act No. 430 of 1955 regulating censorship of cinematographic films, TV, songs, plays and standing performances stipulates that the purpose of censorship is “to protect public order, morality and the high state interests”, while the law does not provide for any precise and specific definition for these three protected categories. Resolution No. 220 of 1976 on the basic rules for the control of works of art, regulates in Article 5 control of the work produced by the Union of Radio and Television, and

states that the censorship decisions in Article I and II aim for the preservation of public morals and public order and the protection of young people from “delinquency”. To achieve these objectives, the General Directorate of the Censorship of Artistic Works may not grant a license to display, produce or advertise any work if this work includes any of the following matters, outlines in 20 points:

- Preaching atheism and insult to the divine religions and religious beliefs and favoritism of acts of sorcery.
- Showing the image of the prophet (explicitly or symbol), pictures of one of the adult caliphs, the people of the house and the ten missionaries or their voices, as well as showing the image of Jesus Christ or the images of the prophets in general, all after consideration of the competent religious authorities. Improper performance of Quranic verses and Prophetic sayings and all contents of holy books or non-observance of the rules of recitation, or failure to observe the provision of religious rites in the correct manner.
- Portraying of funeral ceremonies or burying the dead in a manner contrary to the sanctity of death.
- Justifying acts of vice in a way that leads to compassion for the perpetrator or to use them as a means to serve noble ends.
- The depiction or presentation of vice in such a way as to encourage the simulation of its actors or to make the element of vice in the context of the events sufficient to punish the perpetrator in the end, if the general effect that arises from it suggests incitement to vice.
- Portraying the human body naked in a way that is contrary to the norms and traditions of the society and not to take into account that the clothes worn by the actors reveal physical details that embarrass viewers or contradict the

norms in society, or to highlight the angles that outline or flagrantly emphasize body details. Erotic scenes or homosexuality scenes and physical movements and phrases that are suggestive.

- Indecent scenes and scenes of dance in a way that lead to sexual excitement or are improper and indecent in the movements of dancers and actors or both sexes.
- Portraying drunkenness, alcohol and drugs as something familiar or recommended and offer gambling and lottery games in a way that encourages them to be a source of income.
- The use of expressions, signs, obscenities, that harm general taste, are vulgar, lack of prudence and taste when using words that are closely associated with sexual life or sexual sin.
- Non consideration of the sanctity of marriage and the ideal values of the family or to display scenes that are incompatible with the due respect of parents unless they are meant for good advice.
- Presenting crime in a manner that is sympathetic, stimulates imitation, gives a halo of heroism to the offender, downgrades the commission of a criminal act and reduces its danger to the community to suggest simulation.
- Presentation of crimes of revenge and retaliation in a way that calls for their justification.
- Show scenes of murder, beatings, torture or cruelty in general, in a detailed and brutal manner, and use of terror solely for terror and public intimidation or for the shock the viewer.
- Presenting suicide as a reasonable solution to problems of humanity.
- Distorted presentation of historical facts, especially those relating to national figures.

- Defamation of a foreign country or a people with friendly relations with the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Egyptian people, unless it is necessary to provide a historical analysis required by the context of the subject.
- Presentation of any themes that represent a particular human race or people in such a way as to expose them to ridicule, unless necessary to create a positive impression of a specific purpose such as anti-apartheid.
- Presentation of social problems in a way that calls for spreading despair, hopelessness, provoking thoughts, creating class or sectarian strife or undermining national unity.

The prohibitions of 1976 are very similar to the standards set by the Drama Commission of 2018, which we will discuss later, but the latter is concerned with dramatic and creative work after its display on the screen. Both derive their standards from the three taboos of “religion, sex and politics”, which were included in Act No. 430 of 1955, which were expanded in the subsequent censorship laws.

The Drama committee against All

The Supreme Council for Media Regulation, after several meetings, issued a decision to establish a specialized committee for drama. This decision was probably aimed at setting the Council’s practices towards creative work in an organizational framework that justifies the Council’s decisions. The task of the drama committee is to monitor drama work, report any transgression and refer those responsible to accountability bodies with the aim of promotion of quality of drama works, also, probably, in an attempt to disavow its anti-creative nature. Makram Mohammed Ahmed delegated the presidency of the committee to director Mohamed Fadel, who was keen to deny the censorship nature of the committee since he was a creative artist and a film maker before he headed the committee. The committee also included critics, film makers and script writers.

The drama committee represented one of the most important transformations in the drama and cultural industry. The Ramadan drama season of 2018, which coincided with the peak of the committee's work, was described as the worst drama season ever⁹. During the seven-month period of the Commission's work, before it resigned in June 2018, the Commission expanded the practices initiated by the Supreme Council. The Committee was keen to contain drama, establishing five different monitoring committees, which examines every scene to be shown on Television, to impose its mechanisms of action in the form of subsequent control of creative work.

The role of the drama committee began in its new supervisory role. This role derived from the conservative general orientation of the Egyptian state and its opposition to all forms of creativity and free expression. The committee also benefited from the practices of the Supreme Council, which preceded its formation, especially in view of a weak resistance by creative artists to the intervention in drama works. It is possible to see the expansion of the work of the Committee through its periodic reports published on the website of the Supreme Media Council, in which the drama committee tried to draw a professional image of the nature of its work, and in cooperation with 4 monitoring committees that follow the Supreme Council of Media, the National Council for Human Rights, Women's Rights and the Anti-Addiction and Abuse Fund¹⁰. The Commission followed the drama season 2018, and issued daily, weekly and final reports on the content of the work presented during the month¹¹, and rephrased and expanded patterns of irregularities.

In contrast to six patterns adopted by the Supreme Council in 2017 to monitor irregularities, the Commission adopted 19 patterns: "slander, slander, verbal abuse, vulgarization, incitement of hatred, ridicule and degrading expressions, scenes of violence, sexual

9. Nourhan Nasr and Wafaa Mohammed, after 10 days in the drama Marathon drama Ramadan series in the balance of critics, Alwatan, published on 27 May 2018, the last visit August 2018, <https://goo.gl/b4nLNQ>

10. Ghada Wali reviews the results of the media observatory of smoking and drug scenes Ramadan drama "Video", the official website of the Supreme Council of Media, published on 26 June 2018, last visit October 2018 .<https://goo.gl/qXiqCm>

11. The drama committee continues to monitor the excesses of the series of Ramadan in its second report, the official website of the Supreme Council of Information, published on June 1, the last visit of October 2018, <https://goo.gl/vo3LJL>

insults, obscene scenes, smoking, drugs and alcohol, Insulting the mother, insulting the father or husband, distorting the image of women, and insulting brotherly countries. Through these patterns, the Drama Committee prepared 5 statistical reports¹², including the number of scenes and dialogues that are in breach in each pattern.

The committee of drama has been widely criticized since the first day of its formation. The conflicting comments by committee members helped to draw a halo of ambiguity about the nature of the role played by the amount of interventions in creative works. Through the announcements of the committee and its members in press statements or through its decisions and actions, which some considered to reflect “National moral condescension”¹³, the Commission established itself as a punitive censorship body, similar – according to statements of the Chairman of the Committee- “a Traffic Officer on the drama street.”¹⁴ The committee started out from the state discourse, which we mentioned earlier, and it angered the community of creative artists and intellectuals, especially after its monitoring reports and the penalties it wished to impose on violators, as well as the list of priorities it set for drama themes.

“The drama development committee has nothing to do with censorship, and it was formed only with the aim of developing drama, and to ensure that all freedom of creativity is provided, on condition that this does not affect the security of society.”

Mohamed Fadel, former head of drama committee

12. The official site of the Supreme Media Council, eagle Upper Egypt and the lightest hand, the most exceeded in the second statistical analysis of the Drama Observatory, published on May 28, 2018, last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/pjVb2c>

13. YouTube, Akher Elnahar, Director Magdy Ahmed Ali Egyptian Drama Committee: Honestly I don't understand your role, published on 6 February 2018, last visit November 2018, <https://goo.gl/9ezHWx>

14. Public opinion - Chairman of the Control of Workbooks: Drama Committee in the Chamber of Media Industry's strongest law enforcement, TEN Channel, published on 21 January 2018, last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/9ku4Qj>

The drama committee saw its internal role as an extension of the state's war on terror and the enemies of the country. The director of the committee, Mohamed Fadel, said on more than one occasion¹⁵ that the drama committee was to regulate the "chaos of drama" created by the "25 January chaos". The Commission also wanted to ultimately and with the continuation of its work create self-censorship imposed by the artist himself, whether out of fear of penalties and sanctions or to pass his work easily without obstacles.

»Before 2011 we did not hear about problems of this kind facing the soap operas" said Mohamed Fadel; "No one asked Osama Anwar Okasha to delete a word or a stray scene. It was the conscience of the artist that ruled the whole process; he knows that his series will be seen by all members of the family, and was preserving the sanctity of homes, and we did not intervene except after there was a need to intervene. "

Despite the wish of the current authority and the Supreme Media Council to continue the work of the Committee and to approve its policy and support its continuation, the Commission's severe attack on dramas and content and the size of the irregularities observed and the penalties demanded by the Drama Committee of the Supreme Council more than once, has put the council in a difficult position, where the implementation of such sanctions, which included fines for each offensive word , and the warning to withdraw the licenses of space stations that continue to broadcast the irregularities of dramatic acts is very difficult, in view of the massive number of violations monitored by the Drama Committee and in view of the anger against the existence of the committee and that the imposition of such sanctions would threaten the work of private channels, which presented itself as a powerful alternative to state information and production sector of Maspero.

In its last report on the Ramadan drama 2018, issued in June, the committee reported

 15. Inas Abdullah, Chairman of the Drama Committee: 5 monitoring committees to follow the series of Ramadan and control abuses, El Shorouk, published on 18 May 2018, last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/qVL65Z>

345 violations of the standards in the series of Ramadan in about 10,000 scenes in 16 series, which is 3% of the total number of scenes viewed as a random percentage seen by the committee.

The report of the drama committee pointed out that its work was limited to following up the extent of the screens' compliance with the professional standards of the media, issued by the higher media council, and did not address the artistic aspects of creativity, but noted in the same report that "there is an innovative absence to address the issues of martyrs and their heroism as one the most important issues related to the existence of the homeland and to provide an example and model for adolescents and youth."

Less than two weeks after the recommendations of the Drama Committee report were submitted to the Higher Media Council, the Drama Committee and its members submitted a collective resignation on June 25, 2018, stating that the reasons for the resignation, accepted by the President of the Supreme Media Council, came after the Supreme Council of Media did not comply with sanctions and penalties for violators, and that the continuation of their role as a "decoration" without powers and enforcement authority, is impossible.

"We started our work six months ago, but from my point of view there is an invisible coalition and power of channel owners, who are pumping money to demolish the industry."

Critic Khairia El Bashlawi, member of the former drama committee¹⁶

16. Hala Nour, "Drama Committee": the interests are stronger than to face them .. The "statement of resignation" coming soon, Almasry Alyoum, published on June 28, 2018, last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/JGXndE>

Besieging drama... more than one stage to cross

The production, filming and presentation of drama works in Egypt are subject to interference by several state bodies: its laws and regulatory bodies on the one hand, and capital and production companies on the other. Moreover, investment bodies and satellite channels play an internal role in interfering with it, in addition to the self-censorship imposed by the creator.

This process ensures that a number of actors working together succeed in constraining drama works before their public display to the audience. We can thus consider that the censorship process passes through various stages, making it impossible for the artistic work to reach its audience as it was meant to do, especially in view of the conflicts between the various censorship bodies and with the diverse points of view and interpretation and levels of understanding of those vague expressions regarding morality, public decency, religious, governance and patriotism.

Thus, the current authority continues, using various discourses and terminology, to violate freedom of creativity. However, the current authority seeks to stimulate its public discourse against freedom of creativity by “sharing power” with members of society and making them key actors and players in the process of censorship by reporting abuses.

The Drama Monitoring Committee of the Supreme Media Council had allocated a special number to receive citizens’ complaints and observations on the dramas of 2018 through whatapp messages. Also the monitoring committee at the supreme media council, chaired by Suzan Qellini¹⁷, had participated in the drama monitoring process in collaboration with mass media students at Ain Shams university, considering it “part of the training program organized by the faculty”.

17. Karim Saleh, students of “Ain Shams” participate in monitoring the image of women in the Ramadan drama, El Bawaba News, published on 18 May 2018, last visit October 2010, <https://goo.gl/Qr7us5>

The other side of the regulatory authority's recent characterization is capitalist in nature. Through deals and investments, the current authority is re-mapping the Egyptian media market and seeking ownership of the media¹⁸, thereby ensuring control of a significant percentage of public media platforms and outlets.

Through two major deals, in December 2017, Eagle Capital Investments acquired the shares of Egyptian businessman Ahmed Abu Hashima in the Egyptian Media Training and Consulting Company, owner of a number of newspapers and news websites, as well as the ON satellite network. Tamer Morsi is currently the Chairman of the Board of Directors.

Press reports confirm that Eagle Capital Investments, headed by former Minister of Investment Dalia Khurshid, is a direct investment fund owned by Egypt's General Intelligence, which was recently set up to manage all of the company's civilian investments in a large number of companies that are partially or wholly owned by the General Intelligence. Prior to the start of the Ramadan season, Tamer Morsi made a series of important¹⁹ decisions that directly affected the drama market in 2018. The company implemented some of the recommendations of the drama committee regarding the exclusive works and the budget for the purchase of series and advertising expenses, Drama 2018, and also postponed the network channels ON display of three series that were scheduled for the month of Ramadan. Tamer Morsi only announced that the three series will be broadcasted later, which did not happen time of writing this report.

18. Under suspicion .. Who monitors the ownership of the media in Egypt, the Foundation for Freedom of Thought and Expression, published on 22 March 2018, last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/4DggrV>

19. Al-Ahram Portal, Tamer Morsi: Egyptian Media Rebuilding the Drama and Advertising Market, Published on May 17, 2018, Last Visit October 2017, <https://goo.gl/TXzY1t>



The channel had stopped the series of “Aho De Alli Saar” starring Ruby and removed it from the list of those to be shown in Ramadan²⁰, one day before Mohamed Henedi announced that his series, “Land of hypocrisy”, will not be shown on the same channel for reasons known only to the channel. Producer Gamal Aladl also announced that the series played by the famous Egyptian actress Yousra “We have other statements to make” has been cancelled, without giving clear reasons.

These TV series had stirred a wide debate before Ramadan. According to press reports, the participation of journalist Ibrahim Issa in the series of Henedi, known for his criticism of the current rule and the rulers of Saudi Arabia, led to the stumbling of the show in Egypt, and replaced scenes of Issa with another artist in a version shown in the Gulf. Also, as what was raised about the singing of the artist Fadel Shaker – who returned after having joined armed groups in Syria- in the opening scenes of the Yousra series.

The crisis of “the land of hypocrisy” revealed a new aspect of censorship. The producer Gamal Al Adl talked in a television interview about the interference of Saudi authorities in showing the series by asking them to delete some scenes by Ibrahim Issa, declaring that Saudi Arabia, like any other country including Egypt, fine-tunes the content

20. Abdel Fattah Ajami, Who is behind the ban from show of the series of Yousra, Henedi and Ruby on ON? Tamer Morsi is the password, Tahrir News, Posted on 11 May 2018, Last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/LcMS2N>

shown on its national official television through a process of internal censorship.

The second deal at the time, the Falcon's takeover of the Hayat channels, was announced in September 2017. A group by the name of "Communication", one of the companies of the Falcon Group for Security Services and Sigma Media, announced that the two parties had signed an agreement, by which the former will acquire the satellite channel Al Hayat. That was before "Egyptians' Media" acquired Al-Hayat channel in a new deal concluded last July²¹. It should be noted that Sharif Khalid, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Communication (Tawasol) Group is a former agent of the military intelligence, and that the Falcon group is the most present in the field of private security, and its board is chaired by Major General Sharif Khalid former agent of the military intelligence and former head of the security sector of the Union of Radio and Television.

Through the above, we find that the current authority ensures that its practices contain drama and creative works, after creating more than one stage through which creative work passes. The new regime has introduced two new paths that differ from those of its predecessor in imposing new forms of censorship. On the one hand it continued the latter's path in maintain censorship laws that contain drama works in their various stages before public display, and introduced a new committee specialized in drama exercising an inspection after public display. On the other hand, it tries through business deals to gain ownership of channels and to exert control at the level of the source, which was clear during the 2018 drama season and which was reflected in statements by some artists. This indicates the extent of interference by production companies, believed to be affiliated to state bodies, in the process of production and show of drama works.

21. Amr Sohsah, the Egyptians' media to acquire the network of Al Hayat TV, Al Youm Al Sabeè, published on 5 July 2018, the last visit of November 2018, <https://goo.gl/eC5w5p>

“Victorious” drama... what creativity is sanctioned by the state?

The fields of culture and information received great presidential interest, and were always addressed by President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi in his speeches, which emphasized the need to limit abuses. We present here examples in various periods of the President’s speeches on culture and information, and how these speeches and their implications influenced the drama committee and other committees formed while monitoring the content of creative works.

During his inauguration of the Suez canal development axis, El Sisi said “The late leader Gamal Abdel Nasser was lucky, because he was talking and the media was with him²².” This sentence is very descriptive to reflect the ideal model that the Authority sees and supports in governance. The drama committee and its members also recalled the rule of President Gamal Abdel Nasser to pay tribute to the level of artistic and creative works at the time, or to praise the intervention of the state which tightened its grip on the production process and the nationalization of the production market²³, as well as in recommendations by the media council, foremost those related to the need for the return of the state’s “national productions” to the drama market and the need for a national drama festival to be organized and supported by the ministry of culture. During his meeting with the delegation of artists during his presidential candidacy, Al-Sisi clarified that the role of art has declined during the last period compared to previous periods²⁴, stressing that the developed nations are trying to market their foreign image and always try to export their image to different countries in the world. These messages were formulated with great care, to highlight the role of values in society and indirectly instill good meanings within the hearts of young people and children.

 22. Mohammed Abbas, Sisi: “Abdel Nasser was lucky,” Al-Masry Al-Youm, published on 5 August 2014, last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/1mjf7k>

23. Makram Mohammed Ahmed: The Ramadan drama market is chaotic due to the absence of the State “Video”, the official website of the Supreme Council for Media, published on 15 May 2018, last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/jrF45w>

24. Hisham Amin, Pictures “Sisi” pays special tribute to Faten Hamama during his meeting with the delegation of artists, Al Watan, published on 19 May 2014, last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/PMJKRw>

“We worked to move the state against the axis seeking state destruction, and worked to address all the reasons for the overthrow of the state, and we call on the media to create a phobia against the idea of the fall of the state.”

President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, Youth Conference in Alexandria, July 2017²⁵

It is clear here that the current authority, like others, is very adamant about its image. Therefore, its control of the cultural and media platforms seeks to nourish the image of the “victor” of itself and its vision of morality, religion and government. It seeks to project this image and to frequently repeat it until it is imprinted in the minds, and are sought by the audience in drama works, so that it can be projected back on the state.

“We need our experience to be rich. I repeat to all of us even to the media, TV, movies and series, who will take this upon themselves, who will shape consciousness. Mr. Ahmed you, and Ms. Yousra you will be held accountable for that “by God”. Yes, you will be held accountable. Present people with hope, give them hope for tomorrow, improve our values and morals; only you can do this. Each state sector will have a role and we shall see next Ramadan”.

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi during a ceremony celebrating the 2015 police day

This nationalistic moralistic tone adopted by the Authority in its speeches calls for the performance of serious and moralistic art, which portrays a society of high virtue, and presents members of this society as key actors in the process of change that begins and ends by individuals, completely individualistic individuals, totally free to make free choices and become good people in a moralistic society, where there are no conflicts or complexities.

25. Al Watan, “We worked to move the state against the axes of state destruction, and we worked to address all the reasons for the overthrow of the state, and we call on the media to create a phobia against the idea of the fall of the state.” Published on 25 July 2017, last visit October 2018 <https://goo.gl/vJwxYn>

This was what the Drama Committee proposed for the meeting discussing the TV drama season of 2017. At the meeting, it was agreed to draft a working paper on the priority topics of content that the community needs at the current stage, such as those that “raise the values of cooperation and spread joy.”

We also find that the list of irregularities monitored by the Egyptian National Council for Women²⁶ on the first half of the month of Ramadan, which it presented to the drama committee in the reports, strongly expressed the stereotype women in Egyptian society, projected in a beautiful drama genre of a utopian society. Below we shall present some of those quotes.

Examples of the “bad” women’s image in the report of the National Council for Women:

- Positive images of women whose son is martyred by terrorist groups and refuses to receive compensation despite their need, and the appearance of women involved in terrorist groups.
- The appearance of drugs and smoking among women, and the excess audacity in some scenes of women, alienating the public and malicious to human feelings.
- The appearance of women who bear humiliation and beating without objecting.
- The emergence of some professions for women in a negative way, especially the media presenter that precedes events and misrepresents and condemns without evidence.
- The wife who screams at her husband constantly and asks him a lot of things .. The wife who controls the husband and criticizes him in front of others .. The wife who controls her husband and is usually not grateful.

26.” National Council for Women” issues the final indicators of the Monitoring Committee for Ramadan Drama, the official website of the Supreme Council of Media, published on 3 July 2018, the last visit of October 2018, <https://goo.gl/ebZeoY>

Examples of the positive image of women in the report of the National Center for Women:

- The female friend who supports the main character in defending his rights and cares for his family.
- The ambitious, persevering young female journalist who seeks to achieve self-actualization despite circumstances and works to help her boss to work to uncover the truth and access information.
- The woman who is responsible for her home and successful in her work and trying to find solutions to problems and seeks to satisfies all parties, help her family and support them
- The female divorcee who does not succumb to the surrounding social conditions and succeeds in her work.
- The liberated women within the traditions of society capable of leading the work in companies, participating alongside men and excel above them.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Supreme Council of Media and its chairman Makram Mohamed Ahmed face many problems and difficulties in the new formation of the drama committee. The council approached members of the film and drama sector²⁷ to persuade them to chair the committee, replacing Mohamed Fadel. However, successive apologies²⁸ received by the council raised questions about the future of the committee and whether there will be a review of the role of the Committee and its terms of reference and statements emanating from the membership. Makram Mohammed Ahmed had promised to announce the formation of the new drama committee in early July 2018²⁹, which has not been achieved so far because of the reluctance of everyone after the wide criticism it was met with.

We can consider that the suspension of the work of the drama committee until it is re-constituted is a limited success for creative artists and workers in the field of television drama, where the drama committee was forced to struggle with the Supreme Media Council to prove the authority of the committee and its ability to implement its decisions and define the obligations of art workers, a conflict that was temporarily resolved in favor of the drama workers, as the Supreme Council of Media did not abandon its wish to revive the drama committee again.

AFTE believes that the responsibility of shaping the next phase lies to a small part on the shoulders of intellectuals and workers in the field of television drama industry. Therefore, we call on this group to use the confusion of the Supreme Media Council in re-forming the committee, and pressure to cancel the work of such committees, or pressure to propose another alternative to this committee, mechanisms and that

 27. Ahmed Al-Bahnasawi, Media council begins negotiation with 3 script writers to chair the Drama Committee, Al Watan, published on 1 July 2018, last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/bpSG5w>

28. Ahmed Bahnasawi, Yosri Elgindi: apologized to the media council regarding chairing the drama committee, Alwatan, published on July 2, 2018, last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/oBdSpb>

29. Ahmed Al-Bahnasawi, Tomorrow .. the media council settles on the formation of the drama committee after the resignation of its members, Al Watan, published on 1 July 2018, last visit October 2018, <https://goo.gl/E9ukZ4>

are not related to the control of dramas, but rather propose agreements and laws that guarantee freedom of creativity based on provisions of Article 67 of the 2014 Constitution, and to take into account the diversity and plurality of modern access tools of this age, with which the terms such as censorship and prevention become totally absurd, seeking to facilitate the work of creative artists and to identify their problems without restrictions or conditions, and to ensure that the viewer has the right as a consumer to the enjoyment of drama works without falsification or control, by limiting advertising to only three adds per series.

Despite the difference between this proposal and the previous work of the drama committee, the Committee has addressed in its meetings recommendations that contribute to adoption of a different role, such as emphasizing the need to protect the viewer's right to enjoy watching drama works without excessive advertisement breaks and the need to activate protocols of cooperation by sending of delegations of artists for study and training abroad, and to coordinate with the relevant State bodies regarding excessive prices, fees and premise rentals.

“Freedom of artistic and literary creativity is guaranteed. The State shall encourage arts and literature, sponsor creative artists and writers and protect their productions, and provide the means necessary for achieving this end.

No lawsuit may be initiated or filed to stop or confiscate any artistic, literary, or intellectual works, or against their creators except by the Public Prosecutor.

No freedom restricting sanction may be inflicted for crimes committed because of the publicity of artistic, literary or intellectual product. As for crimes related to the incitement of violence, discrimination between citizens, or impingement of individual honor, the Law shall specify the penalties therefore.

In such cases, the court may obligate the sentenced to pay punitive compensation to the victim of the crime, in addition to the original compensations due to the victim for the damages incurred. All the foregoing shall be in accordance with the Law.

Article 67 of the 2014 Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt

The experience of the drama committee, which was short-lived, shows the inability of the state represented in its councils, bodies and intellectuals to make a decisive victory by imposing its moral and ethical standards by presenting an ideal image of Egypt and the Egyptians, an image that claims to doctor reality to make it the desired and hoped for reality and on the other hand can be later used as a reference for new pretenses, depicting the desired individual and society or their imagined image of women, classes, police, professionals, etc.

However, this failure was not only a result of the success of the defenders of freedom of expression, or those who advocate for the existence of reduced censorship, but because of the inability of the drama committee to understand the freedom of creativity that existed in the period when the state previously dominated the production of drama or the later stage that witnessed openness and diversity in production. In both eras drama works enjoyed a margin of freedom, which allowed for the production of some works which would not have passed the standards of the resigned drama committee.

It does not appear that the state represented in its Higher Council for Media Regulation has been able to support the vision of the highly reactionary drama committee. This may be due to the presence of producers and manufacturers outside the control of the state on the one hand and attempts by the state itself to take control of production, which enforces those standards of a Utopia at the source without a need for committees to intervene postproduction.

Perhaps the trend that the drama committee has already succeeded in is to unleash more and more parties to compete in creative works and to contain it from all sides, a trend that could help enhance self-censorship among creative actors and producers themselves.