



NEWSLETTER 5

Tahrir Square: Tanks but No Tension? Egypt and the Arab Spring

On the day you are probably reading this, we are screening **Clash**, directed by Mohamed Diab. A thriller about post-Revolution Egypt set during the three years of turmoil that followed the ousting of former president Morsi from power, it is a powerful reflection of recent events in Cairo (and elsewhere in that country).

Two of our long-time Phoenix members, Christine and Mike Smears, arrived in Cairo two days after President Mubarak was removed from office, and they have written their thoughts on what turned out to be a holiday with a difference.

In August 2010 our son and daughter-in-law, having learned Arabic, began a twelve-month career-break working and studying in Egypt. Little did they suspect that February 2011 would witness the end of the thirty-year iron rule of President Hosni Mubarak, following the revolution which began on the 25th of January.

We had, before the uprising, already booked a two-week stay with them in Alexandria, arriving on the 13th of February. Despite the revolution raging, and ignoring all warnings and pleadings of our nearest and dearest, we resolved to take the trip. Mubarak obligingly stepped down on the 11th of February.

We have never had such a holiday. Did we see the pyramids? No, they were closed. Did we enjoy the Al-Khalil market? No, it was not in operation. Did we see the notorious Cairo police headquarters? No, demonstrators had burnt it to the ground. But instead the euphoria was universal: from the moment we arrived at Cairo airport, not surprisingly being the only tourists in the entire country, we were greeted with flowers, feted and thanked effusively for coming.



This euphoria extended into all walks of life. Ordinary members of the public, especially young people, busily repainted public buildings, proclaiming 'Now it is **our** country'. Other citizens took responsibility for directing traffic, the police having been swept aside in the revolution as Mubarak's ruthless enforcers and torturers were in hiding. Students and young professionals told us of their dreams and hopes, of a democratic society at last where people could not only vote but hold civilised conversations in cafes expressing opposing points of view.

We said little. Democracy is hard-won and takes decades, even centuries, to achieve, and it can rarely be reinstated directly after a dictatorship. Moreover, the roots of later conflict were apparent: many devout Muslims, with unimaginable courage and generosity, formed human shields around Coptic Christian communities to protect them – but extremist Salafists were planning attacks. The Muslim Brotherhood had for years played a subdued and beneficent role in providing social care for the disadvantaged – but now began to flex its political muscles. Cairo's Tahrir Square was the scene of an unprecedented celebration on International Women's Day – but tanks were parked just round the corner.

Elections would follow, but could Egypt manage to maintain the fragile checks and balances needed for a liberal and open democracy? History has given us the answer.

With Mubarak gone, and all he stood for, Mohamed Hussein Tantawi Soliman was the *de facto* head of state until the inauguration as President in June 2012 of Mohamed Morsi. Morsi had ordered Tantawi to retire, but in succeeding him, his period of office lasted just 368 days. Following the widespread protests at the end of June 2013 that are the background of **Clash**, he was unseated three days later by a military coup council which suspended the constitution and established a new administration led by General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi. The Muslim Brotherhood protested against the military coup, but the pro-Morsi protests were crushed in the August 2013 Rabaa massacre in which at least 817 civilians were killed. Since his overthrow, Egyptian prosecutors have charged Morsi with various crimes and sought the death penalty, a move denounced by Amnesty International as "a charade based on null and void procedures. His death sentence was overturned, and he is still currently imprisoned on a life sentence.



Amnesty International These are three of AI's cases you may wish to support this evening.

UK Immigration Detainees

Tens of thousands of people are held in immigration detention centres every year, often in terrible conditions and with no fixed time-limit on their detention. Amnesty UK and its partners are calling for the government to introduce a time-limit for immigration detention centres.

Your solidarity message will be delivered to people in immigration detention centres through partner organisations.

Bangladesh

Xulhan Mannan and Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy were killed for their LGBTIQ activism. They helped set up and run Bangladesh's only LGBTIQ magazine. The murders have set back the progress being made in attitude change. Eighteen months on no-one has been formally charged with murder.

Send a message to Xulhan's brother Minhaz.

Egypt - Azza Soliman

Women's rights lawyer Azza Soliman is facing imprisonment having dedicated her life to defending victims of human rights abuses.

She has been targeted by the authorities and now faces three trumped-up charges. If found guilty Azza will face imprisonment.

Send a message of solidarity and support

La-La-Land?

No, don't worry, we are not about to screen the worryingly successful music-fest from Hollywood, but here are the links if you wish to revisit the musics that have played over our slide sequence as you have waited for the **Phoenix** films this term.



The Olive Tree: for our first film of the year we played a tree-themed list, including songs from Chet Baker (*I Sing to the Trees*), Sarah Morgann (*The Olive Tree*), and Monty Python (the *almost* appropriate *Lumberjack Song*) [spotify:user:gcole1951:playlist:0sefihf6fJGA7wDH2V7Ncx](https://open.spotify.com/user/gcole1951/playlist/0sefihf6fJGA7wDH2V7Ncx)

Frantz: Philippe Rombi wrote the original music for this film so was the choice in week two; *La Leçon de Violon*, *La Lettre de Frantz*, and *Le Départ d'Adrien* were heard along with a beautiful reading of Verlaine's poem *Chanson d'Automne* [spotify:user:gcole1951:playlist:1xzssACgISNTXhevt7vUi2](https://open.spotify.com/user/gcole1951/playlist:1xzssACgISNTXhevt7vUi2)

Graduation: Vivaldi's *Stabat Mater* features in the film from time to time so was parts of that work were included in our pre-film sounds, with further contributions from modern-day Romanian singer Stela Enache. [spotify:user:gcole1951:playlist:0LRrRqveGfK9ZWxGNShQWs](https://open.spotify.com/user/gcole1951/playlist:0LRrRqveGfK9ZWxGNShQWs)

After the Storm: two Japanese songs (from Hanare Gumi and Teresa Teng) were augmented by Beethoven's *String Quartet No. 14 in C Sharp Minor* for this film with the wonderful Grandma! [spotify:user:gcole1951:playlist:2RnRb58MY3oG0q53WicY7](https://open.spotify.com/user/gcole1951/playlist:2RnRb58MY3oG0q53WicY7)

The Exterminating Angel: as the key turned in the lock behind you, our chosen music included two harpsichord pieces by Pietro Domenico Paradisi, a Chopin waltz, and music from Kirk Knuffke and Mike Pride's album that shares the film's title. [spotify:user:gcole1951:playlist:7Ib8n0hpMJyMCst2ii6WIK](https://open.spotify.com/user/gcole1951/playlist:7Ib8n0hpMJyMCst2ii6WIK)

A Man Called Ove: before the splendid humour of the film, A Man Called Ove rubbed shoulders with Debussy, Swedish singers Lille Lindfors and Sonja Aldén, Demis Roussos, and Willie Nelson with his telling *Always on My Mind*. [spotify:user:gcole1951:playlist:6OzIwDcdTGGm6a4owBuwQR](https://open.spotify.com/user/gcole1951/playlist:6OzIwDcdTGGm6a4owBuwQR)

Dancer: Hozier's *Take Me to Church* had to be in this playlist, but there were also tunes from Black Sabbath, Coldplay, Andrew Bird, not to mention Khatchaturian's *Spartacus*, and Lykke Li's inevitable *Dance, Dance, Dance*. [spotify:user:gcole1951:playlist:2xu1HqsAChckVD9Uc0RvtX](https://open.spotify.com/user/gcole1951/playlist:2xu1HqsAChckVD9Uc0RvtX)

A United Kingdom: there is little truly Botswanan music available, but music from neighbouring South Africa provided tunes like *Pula Kgosi Seretse* (Miriam Makeba & the Skylarks), *Thixo Somandla*, *Juluka* and these featured alongside jazz standards from the time (from Louis Armstrong, Tommy Dorsey, and Jo Stafford). [spotify:user:gcole1951:playlist:7xZNC5lDtuK2bR1I6cWgUt](https://open.spotify.com/user/gcole1951/playlist:7xZNC5lDtuK2bR1I6cWgUt)

Clash: *Shorom Borom* by Egyptian singer/actor Mohamed Mounir opened the playlist, followed by some *mahraganat* music, aka the sound of the Cairo underground, full of defiance and the will to live; this is Cairo's street music revolution, just right for the film's subject matter. [spotify:user:gcole1951:playlist:3OzkX7iYVehgwTLuB8vi4f](https://open.spotify.com/user/gcole1951/playlist:3OzkX7iYVehgwTLuB8vi4f)



My Life As a Courgette: having started with trees, we end the term with vegetable-themed tunes; in the musical cook-up, you heard the J.B.s' *Pass the Peas*, The Rutles' *Cheese and Onions*, Half Man Half Biscuit's *Asparagus Next Left*, and it's up to you to spot the vegetable in Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers' version of *Let's Call the Whole Thing Off*. [spotify:user:gcole1951:playlist:4g50sne6DTtU9mwdUfKtUE](https://open.spotify.com/user/gcole1951/playlist:4g50sne6DTtU9mwdUfKtUE)