

# Civil Society and Its Resistance Under Authoritarian Regimes: The Arab Youth Climate Movement

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Lena G Deutsch

Corr Analytics

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## INTRODUCTION

Authoritarian regimes function with consistency through the use of coercion, military force, government subsidies, spending, and the legacy of functioning under a rentier economy. Rentier states receive a large amount of its national revenues from renting a natural resource to external clients (e.g. the Suez Canal, oil pipelines, uranium mining, etc). These external clients may be foreign governments or individuals. While these mechanisms of control are akin, it must be emphasized that respective authoritarian regimes are not the same despite their similar frameworks. This holds true post Arab Spring where regime responses to civilian rebellion in Libya, Yemen, and Bahrain, informed different models of regime responses to the uprisings.<sup>1</sup> I will follow the Arab Youth Climate Movement (AYCM) in Egypt, Qatar, and Jordan, to understand the ways environmental movements via Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) function under authoritarian regimes. This will be conducted by outlining the laws that restrict civil society from their civil liberties in each respective country, followed by the analysis of these restrictions in relation to the actions executed by the movement in each respective chapter.

In addition, laws that regulate civil society under authoritarian regimes will be explored, the laws on civil liberties, assembly, resistance, and the role of NGO's with regards to their freedoms and limitations. The AYCM will function as a constant variable to display the differences of the same movement based on the authoritarian regime that regulates it. In doing so, this raises a series of broader questions on the AYCM and the unique authoritarian political contexts it operates within. What are their limitations in their actions? Do the regimes see the

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<sup>1</sup> Heydemann, Steven, and Reinoud Leenders. "Authoritarian learning and counterrevolution." *The Arab uprisings*

climate change movement as a threat to their existence? Do authoritarian regimes recognize the correlation between fossil fuels and the strength of their authoritarian rule?<sup>2</sup> How is this same organization received in respective nations? Are there underlying themes in the acts of civil disobedience in the MENA region? In all, what are the parameters for the climate justice movement in the Middle East in respect to the laws that regulate civil society, and the repercussions when they are exercised? In this capacity, can there be organized civil society under authoritarian regimes?

The inception of AYCM was just before United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP18) Doha negotiations in 2012. The AYCM has over 20 national coordinators throughout 15 MENA countries to make its presence felt from the Gulf to the Atlantic, with a mission to “build a generation wide movement to solve the climate crisis”.<sup>3,4</sup> The AYCM does this by mobilizing activists, educating, empowering, and inspiring change regionally and globally. The AYCM has its youth participate at the COPs and international climate policy sessions. The grassroots organizational structure in conjunction with its access to the international arena makes the AYCM an integrated movement with a robust infrastructure to facilitate change. At its birth the AYCM partnered with Indy Act and 350.org, two larger collaborative organizations with aims to combat climate change. Indy Act was established in Lebanon in 2006 during the Israeli-Lebanese conflict, shortly after Israel bombed a

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<sup>2</sup> Ross, Michael Lewin. "Does oil hinder democracy?." *World politics* 53, no. 3 (2001): 325-361.

<sup>3</sup> AYCM Egypt. “Arab Youth Climate Movement,” *Facebook*.  
[https://www.facebook.com/pg/AYCMEgypt/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/AYCMEgypt/about/?ref=page_internal)

<sup>4</sup> <http://aycm.org/about-us/>

power plant that caused 10,000 tons of oil to spill into the Mediterranean Sea. Indy Act is a league of independent activists in pursuance of navigating bureaucratic hurdles.<sup>5</sup> 350.org operates similarly using collaboration and partnering with grassroots organizations. It differs from Indy Act in size; it is a much larger organization, allowing the organization to provide more resources and trainings with a less geopolitical basis than Indy Act.<sup>6</sup>

The role of petroleum producing nations that are rentier states and semi-rentier states have a unique role to play in this climate change movement. Nations will make individual commitments to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions based on their own emissions, and the amount of resources utilized by a given nation. Such national commitments are often in relation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change where most UN Member-States participate on issues pertaining to climate action. Though the US, China, and Russia are considered the greatest polluters and must commit to substantial amounts of pollution reduction and infrastructural turnover, what about countries like Qatar? Qatar's nationalized oil and gas company, Qatar Petroleum, is the third largest oil company in the world.<sup>7</sup> And although Qatar has renewable energy programs currently developing, natural gas is Qatar's domestic source of energy at 99.1% (petroleum as source 0.8%) thereby meeting its domestic energy demand, leaving Qatar with the ability to export the vast majority of its liquid fuel production.

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<sup>5</sup> Our History, Indy Act, <http://www.indyact.org/CustomPage.aspx?id=99>

<sup>6</sup> <https://350.org/about/#history>

<sup>7</sup> Qatar International energy data and analysis. (2015, October 20). Retrieved from [http://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis\\_includes/countries\\_long/Qatar/qatar.pdf](http://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/countries_long/Qatar/qatar.pdf)

As a rentier state, and with 49% of their economy currently reliant on their oil wealth,<sup>8</sup> what can the UNFCCC ask of Qatar? While most Arab leaders do not believe they are inherently responsible for reversing climate change, they want to be part of the solution. Nations like Egypt, Qatar, and Jordan have made significant investments in renewable energy to diversify their economy, in addition to cutting emissions. The process is just beginning. It will be the primary responsibility of millennials and future generations to combat and survive climate change.

## EGYPT

In the decades leading to the Arab Spring, the military and the public yearned to fix the “corroded” public sector as life was becoming more and more expensive. Legal necessities such as a driver license required off-the-book payments to the police whom intrinsically were part of the corruption. The murder of Khaled Said by the police was a breaking point for the Egyptian people and acted as a catalyst for the uprising in Egypt.<sup>9</sup> Though former Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, al-Sisi’s election has not ensured the Egyptian people a better future despite his landslide win in June of 2014 with 96.1% of the votes in his favor<sup>10</sup>. And even so the legitimacy of al-Sisi’s election is in question mostly due to the low voter turnout.<sup>11</sup> Violence on the behalf of the government and armed groups has increased. Al-Sisi and his cabinet were

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Lisa Anderson, "Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2011): 2-7. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23039401>.

<sup>10</sup> Staff Writer, "Egypt Election: Sisi Secures Landslide Win," *BBC News Middle-East*, May 29<sup>th</sup> 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27614776> Staff Writer

<sup>11</sup> Marwa Fikry Abdel Samei, "El-Sisi's Tainted Legitimacy." *Open Democracy*, May 29th 2014, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/north-africa-west-asia/marwa-fikry-abdel-samei/el-sisis-tainted-legitimacy>

governing by decree with no elected parliament, until January of 2016, though there are still rumors about its legitimacy<sup>12</sup>:

“At these meetings, not only did intelligence officials indicate that they were handpicking the individual candidates for the upcoming elections, but they also claimed a target of 400 members of parliament - the two-thirds supermajority required to pass constitutional amendments.”<sup>13</sup>

In 2012, lower parliament that drafts laws was disbanded by court order, leaving al-Sisi and his cabinet with far more power than his initial election as President.

Since Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s election to office Egyptian civilians have faced military trials, police stations have reached 300% of their capacity, and al-Sisi himself has made over three hundred legislative orders since his election. The U.S. State Department refers to the new legislations as:

“a series of executive initiatives, new laws, and judicial actions [which] severely restrict freedom of expression and the press, freedom of association, freedom of peaceful assembly, and due process, and they undermine prospects for democratic governance.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Staff Writer, “Egypt: Year of Abuses Under al-Sisi,” *Humans Rights Watch*, June 8<sup>th</sup> 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/08/egypt-year-abuses-under-al-sisi>

<sup>13</sup> Abdullah Al-Arian, “Egypt’s Hollow Parliament,” *AlJazeera*, January 12 2016,

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/01/egypt-hollow-parliament-160112071640089.html>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Many of these legislations, will affect groups like the AYCM. However, it remains unclear if the topical nature of AYCM's mandate is enough to avoid the scrutiny of new laws that are designed to limit civil liberties.

On August 15<sup>th</sup> 2015, al-Sisi enacted a new counterterrorism law, leaving the definition of counterterrorism so vague that it encompasses civil disobedience. According to Human's Rights Watch:

The new Law 95 of 2015 for Confronting Terrorism largely maintains the overbroad definition of terrorism in Egypt's penal code. Under this definition, a "terrorist act" encompasses any "use of force or violence or threat or terrorizing" that aims, among other things, to: Disrupt general order or endanger the safety, interests or security of society; harm individual liberties or rights; harm national unity, peace, security, the environment or buildings or property; prevent or hinder public authorities, judicial bodies, government facilities, and others from carrying out all or part of their work and activity.<sup>15</sup>

Article 35 under law 95 states that anyone who publishes or advocates untrue news about acts of terrorism or news that contradicts official Defense Ministry statements about counterterrorism operations can be punished by a fine of 200,000-500,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$25,000-\$64,000)." If a journalist were to publish information "untrue" or contradictory to statements issued by the Defense Ministry, the person can be barred from their profession for a year. Internet is under surveillance by the government, allowing them to punish someone with a

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<sup>15</sup> Staff Writer, "Egypt: Counterterrorism Law Erodes Basic Rights," *Human Rights Watch*, August 19<sup>th</sup> 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/08/19/egypt-counterterrorism-law-erodes-basic-rights>

minimum of five years in prison if they are caught using a website to promote ideas or beliefs that advocate and commission acts of terrorism.<sup>16</sup>

There is much interpretation left up to Egypt's Supreme Judicial Council so that many of the actions organized by the AYCM and their Western NGO counterparts could easily fall under violation of law 95. On March 19<sup>th</sup> of 2016, the AYCM chapter in Egypt met near Tahrir Square to observe Earth Hour.<sup>17</sup> Fortunately, no one was arrested or hurt. The AYCM goal to protest and peaceful advocacy was achieved. Public spaces such as Tahrir Square and their equivalents in other Arab nations were utilized as a profound symbol to the Arab Spring. These public squares acted as forums where many of the uprisings took place. The protests were in response to the years of oppression, exclusion, and denigration of the public. This method of occupation and mobilized political force not only exhibits power, but also has symbolic value through performance, highlighting role reversal and defiance.<sup>18</sup>

As the AYCM functions as an NGO, they are also subject to laws outside of civil disobedience and where else those actions may lie under the eyes of the law, and are subject to separate restrictions placed to suppress the powers of NGOs. NGOs hold power that a regime cannot due to its nature of mobilizing a public in ways that can fashion modesty of political allegiance. In the Arab Spring, many theories emerged concerning the role of NGOs. Sheila

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Nayrouz Talaat, "Youths Gather to Observe Earth Hour, Raise Environmental Awareness in Egypt," *Egyptian Streets*, March 20<sup>th</sup> 2016, <https://egyptianstreets.com/2016/03/20/youths-gather-to-observe-earth-hour-raise-environmental-awareness-in-egypt/>

<sup>18</sup> Charles Tripp, *The Politics of Resistance and the Arab Uprisings*, in *The New Middle East: Protest and Revolution in the Arab World*, Fawaz A. Gerges, ed. (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 135-154

Carapico, author of *Political Aid and Arab Activism: Democracy Promotion, Justice, and Representation*, describes the role of NGOS:

“[to] rationalize neoliberal economic agendas that often disadvantage the poor.

According to this analysis, civil society promotion was designed to cloister intellectual counter-elites into non-confrontational, white-collar activities outside the body politic (Guilhot 2005; Kamat 2003; Petras 1999; Robinson 1996; Encarnación 2000, 2003).”<sup>19</sup>

Are NGOs the long arm extending neoliberal Western ideology to the Middle East? Carapico makes a distinction between CSOs, (Civil Society Organizations), and NGOs, where NGOs are white collared equipped with connections to the World Bank, European Union, and the United Nations thereby using a top down approach to public mobilization. CSOs on the contrary are “people centered” and incorporate grassroots organization in tandem with civil disobedience, and workshops for professionals, therefore a bottom up approach.<sup>20</sup>

Regardless of whether or not AYCM ought to be classified as a CSO vs. an NGO, Article 11 of Law 84 would still affect them, as it prevents NGOs from engaging in politics, trade union affairs, or any other activities that would “threaten national unity or violate public order”.<sup>21</sup> If an NGO were to break law 84, which would be determined by the Ministry of Social Affairs, all members of the organization would face criminal penalties as opposed to civil penalties. Minutes

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<sup>19</sup> Sheila Carapico, *Egypt's Civic Revolution Turns 'Democracy Promotion' on Its Head*. In Korany B. & El-Mahdi R. (Eds.), (American University in Cairo Press. *Arab Spring in Egypt: Revolution and Beyond*, 2012) 199-222.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Staff Writer, “Egypt,” *Freedom House*, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-association-under-threat-new-authoritarians-offensive-against-civil-society/Egypt>

must also be submitted to the Ministry for review, and board members must be vetted. Ministers can dissolve NGOs by decree.<sup>22</sup> Article 54 of the Egyptian constitution states that the people have the right to assembly, to hold public meetings, but within the limits of the law. The law entails the approval of assembly by the Ministry of Interior, and approval is not a frequent occurrence.<sup>23</sup>

## **QATAR**

Qatar's journey and role through the Arab Spring was far different from that of Egypt's, as there was little unrest, especially in comparison to the revolution that occurred in Egypt. Qatar had reached a political shift throughout the 1990's and early 2000's, when Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani dethroned his father in 1995, revamping all aspects of economic and social life in Qatar. Al Jazeera was founded in 1996 shortly after the Emir's rise to power, which has provided Qatar with new lens of prestige and influence, as it also changed dynamics of reporting and journalism in the region while limiting negative coverage or critique on Qatar itself. Though policies conflicted between the U.S. and Qatar, the U.S. was offered a headquarters for Central Command in addition to an airbase in Doha, the capital.<sup>24</sup> Nation-wide elections in addition to a constitution created in 2005 guaranteed Qataris political freedoms and separation of powers.<sup>25</sup> The 2005 constitution also entailed the development of a parliament in which two thirds of the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Suzanne Maloney, "Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and the UAE: The Nervous Bystanders." *The Arab Awakening: America and the Transformation of the Middle East* (2011): 176-187.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

members would be elected, but this never came to fruition.<sup>26</sup> Additionally the new Emir gave serious attention and resources towards developing natural gas as the primary resource used to fuel Qatar's power demand.<sup>27</sup> These new efforts were seen as attempts to modernize and further develop the country.

According to Suzanne Maloney, author, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy, and former staffer of the policy-planning staff of the State Department, the Arab Uprising affected each of the Gulf nations differently, while Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain experienced uprisings generally centered on labor issues that took place in the form of full-fledged demonstrations and national uprising. Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the other hand, with smaller populations and featured "muted" unrest in part due to historic "political quietism"<sup>28</sup> where the function their rent-based economy suppressed a voice of the people. The Qatari regime used Al-Jazeera to redirect attention in 2011 to Saudi-backed repression in Bahrain. Although a useful distraction tactic, according to a survey taken by young Arabs in the beginning of the Arab Uprising, Qatari citizens ranked democracy a lower priority than any other Arab people.<sup>29</sup> To ensure the regime's control despite the relative disinterest in participating locally in the Arab Uprising, zero-interest housing loans were expanded, and funds were set aside to raise wages for public employees. The Gulf Cooperation

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<sup>26</sup> Katja Niethammer, "Political reform and foreign policy in Persian Gulf Monarchies." *International politics of the Persian Gulf* (2011).

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Qatar International Energy Data Analysis," *U.S. Energy Information Administration*, October 20<sup>th</sup> 2015,  
[http://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis\\_includes/countries\\_long/Qatar/qatar.pdf](http://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/countries_long/Qatar/qatar.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

Council (GCC) pledged \$20 billion dollars in aid to end protests in Oman and Bahrain.<sup>30</sup> The Gulf nations sans Bahrain have used their oil wealth to handle domestic issues sparked by the Arab Spring, but Qatar strategically used the regional disruption to advance their political agenda and enhance its prominence on the regional stage.<sup>31</sup> Through the Arab Spring, Qatari efforts were continued in engagements with Palestinian movements, and Qatari foreign minister Hamad bin Jassem al-Thani facilitated regional and international intervention in Yemen and Libya.

Qatar greatly differs from Egypt too due to its practice of Shari'a law as primary legislation. The Emir rejects or approves legislation after consulting with his advisory council (Shura) that consists of 35 members, and cabinet. As previously stated, the constitution enacted in 2005 was to create a parliament however this measure has not yet been enacted. The central municipal council acts as representatives for the Qataris, whom they elect.<sup>32</sup> Qataris can only elect officials on the municipal level. Generally, 50% of the cabinet is comprised of members of the royal family, making them over represented, and dominate CSOs and the economy. Political parties are currently illegal, and NGOs require executive approval, from the Emir.<sup>33</sup>

In a report submitted in September of 2013 to the UN Universal Periodic Review on behalf of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation (an NGO in General Consultative Status with ECOSOC) and the Gulf Center for Human Rights (GCHR) raised concerns related to civil society activists and human rights defenders, concerns relating to the freedom of expression,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Qatar," 2015 <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/160077.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Katja Niethammer, "Political reform and foreign policy in Persian Gulf Monarchies." *International politics of the Persian Gulf* (2011).

independence of the media and restrictions on access to information, and regarding the freedom of assembly were explained in accordance with legislation. Their findings are as followed:

Article 45 of the 2004 Qatari Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of association. However, in policy and practice this right is drastically subverted by a highly restrictive regulatory regime. Through draconian legislation, including wide scale prohibitions on rights-based activities, outsized discretion to deny registration to CSOs and unwarranted restrictions on international cooperation, the government has effectively criminalized the creation of an independent civil society sector in the country... Under Article 35 of the Associations and Private Institutions Law (Law No.12 of 2004) CSOs are prohibited from participating in undefined “political issues.” Moreover, CSOs must secure authorization from the Ministry of Social Affairs, which can refuse to register an organization if it considers them a threat to the public interest. As result, the number of CSOs registered in the country remains highly limited.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, Articles 46 and 81 from the 1979 Press and Publications Law renders a person in jail for up to six months for criticizing the Emir, and reporting news that would “cause damage to the supreme interests of the country”. According to Article 326 of the Penal Code, “defaming someone in public or exposing them to people’s disdain and malice” may be punished with two years in prison or fines up to 20,000 Riyals (5,400 US dollars).<sup>35</sup> Article 40 under the constitution provides the people the ability to assemble with accordance to the law, but as discussed earlier this is a rare occurrence due to restrictions and legal blockades where permission from the Director General of Public Security is required far in advance, and must provide an itinerary of the of the event.<sup>36</sup> It is clear now why Mehran Kamrava’s analysis of political liberalization in Qatar can be summarized by the following statement: “...domestic

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<sup>34</sup> CIVICUS, Gulf Center for Human Rights (GCHR), “The State of Qatar,” *UN Universal Periodic Review 19<sup>th</sup> Session of the UPR Working Group*, September 16 2013, [http://www.civicus.org/images/CIVICUS\\_GCHR\\_Joint\\_Qatar\\_UPR\\_Submission.pdf](http://www.civicus.org/images/CIVICUS_GCHR_Joint_Qatar_UPR_Submission.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

actors be they organs of civil society, or wealthy merchants, the clergy, or Qatari citizens have played at best a marginal role in the unfolding dynamics that have shaped country's politics."<sup>37</sup>.

As explored in my analysis of Egypt, the lines between CSOs and NGOs are blurred. Ultimately, it is for the regime to determine whether an organization is perceived as a CSO as opposed to an NGO in the eyes of the law. In November of 2012, Qatar had its first climate march in history, which facilitated by the AYCM. Qatar was the first Middle-Eastern country to host a UN climate change conference, COP 18, as they have taken on initiatives to combat climate change. Three years later in 2015, Qatar General Electricity and Water Company (QEWC) and Qatar Petroleum (QP) invested 500 million US dollars towards a joint venture company to fund renewable energy projects. In 2012, Qatar had announced plans to build solar photovoltaic (pv) panels with a capacity of 1,800 MW by 2020, which would account for 16% of the country's energy power<sup>38</sup>, with hopes to generate 10 GW by 2030. These measures were also mentioned in Qatar's first ever "Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016", but were not included in their INDC commitments to the UN in 2015.<sup>39</sup>

The next month, December of 2012, the AYCM along with other environmentalists around the world lamented the ineffectiveness of the conference as promises continued with little results to show for them. On December 1, 2012, another climate march proceeded in Doha with

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<sup>37</sup> Kamrava Mehran, "Royal factionalism and political liberalization in Qatar." *The Middle East Journal* 63, no. 3 (2009): 401-420.

<sup>38</sup> \$500 Million Renewable Energy Joint Venture Planned In Qatar. (2016). Retrieved May 06, 2016, from <http://cleantechnica.com/2016/01/01/500-million-renewable-energy-joint-venture-planned-qatar/>

<sup>39</sup> Qatar, Ministry of Environment. (2015). Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) Report. <http://www4.unfccc.int/submissions/INDC/Published Documents/Qatar/1/Qatar INDCs Report -English.pdf>

800 participants, thought to be Qatar's first ever demonstration. Approximately 100 of the activists were from the AYCM.<sup>40</sup> Though a demonstration, there should be no comparisons made to the Arab Uprising. The Guardian examines the event as follows:

...this was no impromptu "Arab spring" uprising, as much as a carefully and expensively orchestrated exercise by western-based NGOs and the Qatari government. The movement was started recently in partnership with the Lebanese environment activist group IndyAct, 350.org, the Global Climate Change Alliance and Climate Action Network. The activists from 16 Arab countries are in a state of shock being put up in the five-star Crown Plaza hotel (usually \$500 a night) by the Qatar government.<sup>41</sup>

The Qatari regimes compliance with the demonstration given the regimes terms and conditions partnered with the lavish accommodations provided to the activists is an appeasement tactic, a legacy behavior of a successful rentier state that had grown accustomed to political quietism.

The Article addressed the restrictions and guidelines to the protest. An organizer is quoted:

"Qatar is an Islamic country so we need to be respectful of the culture: men and women should dress modestly ... tops should cover the shoulders and upper arms, and skirts or shorts should fall to or below the knee. This march is for environmental issues only."<sup>42</sup>

This reportedly upset Palestinian and Iraqi protestors, in addition to other Arab activists as they "suspected manipulation from the West". An anonymous explained that while the protest was "beautiful" many things were not addressed regarding "the conflict and human rights".<sup>43</sup>

## JORDAN

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<sup>40</sup> John Vidal, "Doha Climate Conference Diary: Qatar's First Environmental March," *The Guardian*, December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/blog/2012/dec/03/doha-climate-conference-diary>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

Similar to Qatar during the Arab Spring, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was spared the tumult and regime change experienced in Egypt. Though protests began in January of 2011, they were not comparable to the rallies held in Tahrir Square in Egypt. The request of the Jordanian people was specific, asking for the resignation of Prime Minister Samir Rifai, but soon turned into the request for reform of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, demanding democracy and less power in the hands of King Abdullah II.<sup>44,45</sup> In November of 2012, thousands of people protested the removal of fuel subsidies causing security forces to intervene. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had demanded this motion in return for a loan that would bail out the failing economy. Shortly after, in January of 2013 elections were held two months early though the opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic Action Front (IAF) boycotted the election.<sup>46</sup> King Abdullah promised to consult the parliament on choosing the Prime Minister for the first time in history. By March of 2013 King Abdullah ensured the Jordanian Public that he was capable of leading a transition to democracy, to safeguard that the IAF would not come to power. The King also blamed security forces for "blocking his efforts on political reform".<sup>47</sup> The IAF is strongly supported by the Palestinian population in Jordan.

This was not the first time the IAF had felt disadvantaged in an election. In the parliamentary elections of 1997, the IAF protested a decree from 1993, an electoral law that decreased Islamist representation in the parliament that limited seats available disadvantaging

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<sup>44</sup> Curtis R. Ryan, "Jordanian Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring," *Middle East Policy Council*, <http://mepc.org/jordanian-foreign-policy-and-arab-spring>

<sup>45</sup> Staff Writer, "Arab Uprising: Country by Country- Jordan," *BBC News World*, December 16<sup>th</sup> 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-12482679>

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

“urban and Palestinian-Jordanian electorate.”<sup>48</sup> The new single ballot system favored tribal allegiances, taking votes from party allegiances. The IAF voted against an anti-terrorist law in 2005 in attempts to defend civil liberties. However, like Qatar, more acts of civil disobedience and political resistance fall under persecution.<sup>49</sup> The position of Jordan in the Arab Spring was politically strategic. Not only are there a large Palestinian and Iraqi refugee populations in Jordan, but also between 2011 and 2013 500,000 Syrian refugees entered the country. This had the potential of endangering Jordan’s relations with Syria by affiliating Jordan with a conflict it sought to avoid.<sup>50</sup> According to sources, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was able to remain relatively stable by coopting the ruling elite by rearranging ruling coalitions, so there is a familiarity of what was the status quo.<sup>51,52</sup>

In 2012 a Jordanian legal assistance group CSO, Tamkeen, was denied funding without explanation, violating the right to freedom of association as described by Human Rights Watch:

Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Jordan is a state party, guarantees the right to freedom of association and allows only for restrictions that exist in law and are necessary in a democratic society to protect public order, health, morals, national security, or the rights and freedoms of others. The broad language of Article 17 of Jordan’s 2009 law conditioning approval of foreign funding on a group not compromising “public order or morals” is an invitation to official abuse,

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<sup>48</sup> Wegner, Eva. *Islamist opposition in authoritarian regimes: The Party of Justice and Development in Morocco*. Syracuse University Press, 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Curtis R. Ryan, “Jordanian Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring,” *Middle East Policy Council*, <http://mepc.org/jordanian-foreign-policy-and-arab-spring>

<sup>51</sup> Nermeen Murad, “Here is how Jordan Escaped the Arab Spring,” *AlJazeera*, February 9<sup>th</sup> 2014 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/02/here-how-jordan-escaped-arab-spr-20142510106257977.html>

<sup>52</sup> Curtis R. Ryan, “Jordanian Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring,” *Middle East Policy Council*, <http://mepc.org/jordanian-foreign-policy-and-arab-spring>

Human Rights Watch said.<sup>53</sup>

Tamkeen works with those whom have been subjected to human trafficking, which are often migrant workers facing domestic abuse. Most of those who use Tamkeen's service are Asian domestic workers and Egyptian agricultural workers.

The same anti-terrorism law mentioned prior was amended again in 2014, further expanding the definition of terrorism, threatening freedom of expression.<sup>54</sup> As stated by Human Rights Watch:

The amendments, which would replace four Articles in Jordan's 2006 Anti-Terrorism Law, broaden the definition of terrorism to include such acts as "disturbing [Jordan's] relations with a foreign state." That offense is already in Jordan's penal code and is regularly used to punish peaceful criticism of foreign countries or their rulers. The amendments would also stiffen penalties. The government spokesman, Mohammed al-Momani, stated that the amendments are necessary to help authorities cope with an influx of Jordanian fighters returning from the war in Syria.<sup>55</sup>

Acts that can be considered terrorism include subjecting the kingdom to dangerous acts, exposing Jordanians for revenge or for money, using information systems or networks that promotes terrorist acts, or acts that subject Jordanians to danger, highlighting again "hostile acts" and "revenge."<sup>56</sup> Others include attacking the King or the royal family, and committing an act with the intent of provoking an "armed rebellion" or changing the constitution in an unlawful

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<sup>53</sup> Staff Writer, "Jordan: Government Clamps Down on Civil Society," *Human Rights Watch*, August 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/08/01/jordan-government-clamps-down-civil-society>

<sup>54</sup> Staff Writer, "Jordan: Terrorism Amendments Threaten Rights," *Human Rights Watch*, May 17<sup>th</sup> 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/17/jordan-terrorism-amendments-threaten-rights>

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

way. If groups like the AYCM complete an action or protest that does not rest well with the regime, the AYCM will be subject to penal code 118. The AYCM in Jordan has never acted violently, but if the movements tactics to spread awareness threaten the regime and its longevity, the vagueness of the laws and codes in place will be used to benefit the regime by using it flexibly, and at the disadvantage of the AYCM and groups of the like. As an example, Sufyan al-Tell, an environmental activist was persecuted for four years for criticizing the U.S. and Jordan's foreign policy on satellite TV programs, despite his exoneration.<sup>57</sup>

In 2014 Jordan proposed amendments to Jordan's 2008 Law on Associations, making it far more difficult for NGOs to form and operate.<sup>58</sup> The 2008 law with 2009 amendments prohibits the formation of groups that take on political objectives and/or violate "public order". The proposed amendment, Article 4, will prohibit the registration of groups whose objectives violate "national security, public safety, public health, public order, public morals, or the rights and freedom of others."<sup>59</sup> The Ministry of Social Development reviews applications; the Ministry of Interior receives all board decisions for approval, and provides clearances for board members after approval.<sup>60</sup> Articles 2 and 8 will increase the number of Jordanian citizens required to be founders of an NGO from 7 to 50, therefore making it near impossible for small groups to form NGOs. But what may hurt organizations like the AYCM the most is the

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<sup>57</sup> Staff Writer, "Jordan: End Free Speech Prosecution," *Human Rights Watch*, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/04/jordan-end-free-speech-prosecution>

<sup>58</sup> Staff Writer, "Human Rights Watch Statement on Proposed Amendments to Jordan's 2008 Law Associations," *Human Rights Watch*, August 7<sup>th</sup> 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/07/human-rights-watch-statement-proposed-amendments-jordans-2008-law-associations>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Department of Justice, "Jordan 2016 Human Rights Report," [https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/pages/attachments/2017/03/06/dos-hrr\\_2016\\_jordan.pdf#page=28](https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/pages/attachments/2017/03/06/dos-hrr_2016_jordan.pdf#page=28)

amendment that places restrictions on local branches of foreign NGOs.<sup>61</sup> Under Article 9 of the amendments, such inter-organizational transfers will require the approval of Jordan's council of ministers, which can reject such requests without providing a justification.<sup>62</sup> Organizations like Human Rights Watch are registered as local branches. As for foreign funding, the amendment requires an additional step where groups submit applications to receive funding to the Ministry of Social Development with numerous details explaining the transaction. If approved the funding request will be sent to the council of ministers for further approval.

### **The Constant? Arab Youth Climate Movement (AYCM)**

*“The Arab Youth Climate movement is an independent body that works to create a generation-wide movement across the Middle East & North Africa to solve the climate crisis, and to assess and support the establishment of legally binding agreements to deal with climate change issue within international negotiations.”*<sup>63</sup> -Mission statement of the AYCM

In previous years the AYCM collaborated with IndyAct, 350.org, Global Campaign for Climate Action, and the Climate Action Network (CAN). The AYCM holds workshops, organize marches, and chapters focus on regional issues. Looking at the laws and regulations within Egypt, Qatar, and Jordan, all three have imposed anti-terrorist laws with recent amendments, and have restricted funding and engagement of NGOs in relation to rights to assembly, press and

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<sup>61</sup> Staff Writer, “Human Rights Watch Statement on Proposed Amendments to Jordan’s 2008 Law Associations,” *Human Rights Watch*, August 7<sup>th</sup> 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/07/human-rights-watch-statement-proposed-amendments-jordans-2008-law-associations>

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> AYCM Egypt. “Arab Youth Climate Movement,” *Facebook*. [https://www.facebook.com/pg/AYCMEgypt/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/AYCMEgypt/about/?ref=page_internal)

publication, freedoms of association, public order, and foreign funding. The more recent crack-down of the Jordanian government on foreign funding for organizations like the AYCM and Humans Rights Watch that have international affiliates would explain the difference of social media presence, description, and lack of engagement in the Jordanian chapter of the AYCM.

According to [aycm.org](http://aycm.org), the environmental volunteers of the Jordanian chapter were initiated in 2011 by students at the Hashemite University (HU), and were referred to as the HU Greeners. The website says they have *recently* received their “official” NGO status and have become the Green Generation Foundation (GGF).<sup>64</sup> An action from October of 2012 was listed next on their page, titled “Qatar, it’s time to prevent lead”, which took place in Amman with the participation of volunteers from the “faculty of Natural Resources & Environment of the Hashemite University, Association of “we are for you” and “Street Theater” band.” The last three events on the Jordanian chapter’s page were last updated in 2014, one was a community workshop with locals from the city of Mahes, to raise environmental awareness about climate change, its impacts to the community, and potential localized solutions.<sup>65</sup> The other, in 2013, was an “environmental open day” with the Hashemite University partnered with UN volunteers, spreading the awareness of climate change via “Environmental Cinema, Environmental Fashion Show from recycled materials and Environmental Gallery.” Lastly, in 2014 another open day

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<sup>64</sup> AYCM Staff. "Jordan." Arab Youth Climate Movement. Accessed June 12, 2017. <http://aycm.org/where-we-are/levant-iraq/jordan/>.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

was held with the same missions but provided ways to implement change on individual and institutional levels.<sup>66</sup>

What we see here in the climate change movement in the MENA region that is not widely practiced in the U.S. is a more holistic approach to sustainable efforts. Theater, fashion, visual art, and performing arts are more consistently used to spread their message, and used as teaching tools. It is a fact that climate change is affecting communities globally, but presenting these facts in a palatable and accessible fashion is crucial to any movement. The Jordanian chapter includes feminist ideology and advocacy in Arabic, social media feeds (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), and actions, overall making the movement more accessible. Women are included in all events, including marches and marathons, to teach-ins and multi-national meetings. The organizer and participant's frustration regarding the Doha climate march was in reference to being unable to advocate for women's equality, the displacement of respective Arab communities, and other human rights issues while marching for climate change action, when these issues are intersectional in their movement.

In contrast to the Jordanian chapter, the AYCM Egyptian chapter is self-described as an NGO, with Facebook events titled "Growing Grassroots: Don't waste your future". The Egyptian chapter has over three thousand followers, and content posted almost every day. In reference to the AYCM Qatar Facebook page, the Qatari chapter was founded on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. The only Facebook event listed on their page occurred on September of 2016 titled "Arab Youth Climate Movement Qatar Open Day", and the link to the event is no longer in existence. The AYCM

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<sup>66</sup> *ibid*

chapter also recognizes themselves as an NGO. However, the Qatari web page under the AYCM website shows that there has been much activity, but at a regional and international level. In other words, there is little grassroots organizing efforts displayed that accessibly engage the local community.

There has been negligible coverage of the organization by news outlets globally since November of 2016, when the Jordan Times covered the conclusion of the AYCM climate change march that ended in Morocco.<sup>67</sup> Again, the AYCM and all its chapters have been active on social media such as Facebook and Twitter, but have not been featured in any recent publications.

As it pertains to the comparisons and contrasts of CSOs and NGOs, while formal legislation, amendments or decrees did not reference CSOs in Jordan, they are subject to the same laws as NGOs, and may be marginalized further. The actions by the AYCM resonate with that of a CSO, but the organizations approval by the Qatari regime to conduct two marches, neither of which resulting in violence, is peculiar given the lack of assembly of Qatari people, lack of demonstrations, and the criticism that comes with climate change initiatives. In addition, one of the AYCM's partners, the Global Campaign for Climate Action, is funded by the UNFCCC Secretariat, the European Climate Foundation, and other Western, international organizations.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Sawsan Tabazah, "Activists Conclude 300km Climate Change March," *The Jordan Times*, November 8<sup>th</sup> 2016, <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/activists-conclude-300km-climate-change-march>

<sup>68</sup> Staff Writer, "Funding," *Call for Climate Action*, <http://callforclimateaction.org/funding/>

Jordan's proximity to two refugee crises in addition to sharing water resources with Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon contributes to Jordan's strain intensified by climate change. In regards to the regime, on one hand it seems as though they are constraining any international funding that is not needed for the government to support its growing population. On the other hand, it appears King Abdullah II is consolidating power not just through his own capabilities as King, but may be limiting rights and liberties of the public due to new populations now residing in Jordan, concealing the marginalization of those people, and perhaps even punishing the public for their request to democratize Jordan. Unlike what was hypothesized, each chapter from a different part of the MENA region that I examined seems to have different methods in their movement. Some may say there is hardly a difference, but Qatar acts top down relative to the movement, and Egypt bottom up. It cannot be dismissed that one chapter works with local communities more so than the other.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The AYCM takes a more holistic approach to their movement while battling the hardships that come with peaceful protests and multinational movements under authoritarian regimes. Though the restrictions on the public with regards to civil disobedience and right to assembly lie on a regime determined spectrum, the AYCM has taken great strides in the direction for change and mitigation in all their chapters. It seems as though the Qatari regime has coopted the climate change movement for publicity and recognition for their continual revamping to be received as democratic. While citizens that want democracy fight for it within tight parameters,

at the very least they have made it clear to their governments that the status quo is uninhabitable. A question unanswered: How do respective regimes see the climate change movement in relation to their authoritarian rule? Do they feel threatened by it? Should this still be questioned even though regimes have legitimized climate change through their UNFCCC commitments? Though the answers to these questions remains unseen, it appears that the AYCM and its collaborative counterparts are gaining momentum in the MENA region, to spread awareness of the impacts of climate change, forming climate action, and continue to facilitate change for these contemporary issues.

### **About the Author**

*Lena G Deutsch is a senior/division III student at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts. Lena studies environmental sciences and Middle-Eastern studies. Her Division III project, a yearlong senior thesis, focuses on water conservation and allocation between Jordan, Israel, and Palestine. This is her first online publication.*

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