

A Proclamation

Kawkab al-Sharq, 7 June 1933

What a magnificent proclamation this truly is — broadcast to the ends of the earth and across the civilised world about Egypt's love of freedom, its care for it, and its jealous custody of it. This proclamation will bear fruit in short order: it will improve people's opinion of Egypt and their view of its current system; the oppressed will flock to it for refuge, the wronged will seek its shelter, men of opinion will flee to it with their opinions, and men of doctrine will take it as a fortress against their opponents and enemies.

Egypt will become in the modern age the refuge of the displaced and the haven of the fearful, and people will know that the East has risen to do what the West has failed to do — to protect opinion and look after thinkers. What a magnificent proclamation this truly is, broadcast by our legation in Paris about our love of freedom and our protection of it. We protect it in our country so that no one dares covet it and no one approaches it with malice, and we do not content ourselves with protecting it in our country alone — we pursue it with protection everywhere it is exposed to aggression.

Our politicians, for all their differences of party and doctrine, say what they wish, do what they please, travel where they will — they are not prevented from speech, not turned away from action, not stopped from travelling, not seized from their journeys, not followed by soldiers wherever they go and wherever they turn, and soldiers do not enter the houses of God with them to watch them at prayer. They enjoy a political freedom that leaders have known in no country on earth. And for this they are content and reassured, praising the government and commending its fine performance and sincere effort in reconciling this broad freedom with the protection of order.

And our students, dispersed across Europe and America and many countries of the East in pursuit of knowledge — we insist on protecting them and looking after their wide right to ample freedom. If they wish to speak, act, assemble, give speeches, or submit to criticism the actions of the government or the government's opponents — this is permitted to them, and the nose of the countries hosting them is ground in the dust; those countries cannot object or restrict their freedom in the slightest. It is for this purpose that we established our legations, consulates, and mission offices, and spread them across the capitals and major foreign cities, so that whenever one of our students is moved to speak or act and a foreign government presumes to narrow the bounds of his speech and action, one of our legations or consulates or mission offices rises up and objects and presses the objection hard, threatens and magnifies the warning, and compels this foreign government to respect Egyptian dignity and permit Egyptians residing in its country freedoms of thought, expression, movement, and activity

that it does not even permit its own citizens.

And so Egypt has truly become in the modern age a symbol of the free life and an embodiment of genuine independence; the hearts of the fearful have truly begun to yearn toward Egypt; the souls of tyrants have truly begun to feel oppressed by Egypt; and foreign states have become anxious lest Egyptians visit their lands, multiply their visits, and prolong their stays — because if they do, they will bring this dangerous freedom with them, corrupt the hearts of those countries' own children, and spread across the earth a freedom resembling anarchy and corrosive of order. And were it not that these countries fear Egypt and dread its wrath and displeasure, they would have instructed their legations and consulates in Cairo not to stamp passports for Egyptians, or demanded of Egypt that it recall its ministers and consuls — because their legations and consulates are on the verge of threatening their security and corrupting their order. But Egypt, praise be to God, is awe-inspiring and formidable, loved and feared — it will never be exposed to what Russia was exposed to, no doors will be shut in its face, and no obstacle will be placed between its citizens and their freedom of movement and residence wherever they wish.

What a magnificent proclamation this truly is, broadcast by our legation in Paris when it rushes to the Parisian police and asks them to enforce in Paris the same forms of severity and varieties of despotism enforced in Egypt — asking them to ban assembly in Paris as it is banned in Cairo, and to prohibit speeches in Paris as they are prohibited in Cairo.

How very magnificent this proclamation broadcast by the Egyptian legation — when it presses its demands upon the Parisian police and the police refuse! And when the legation is aggrieved by this refusal and goes to the Parisian police to inform against the Egyptian students, claiming that if these students assemble they will shake the foundations of security and disturb the order! How very magnificent this proclamation, and more magnificent still is the fact that the Parisian police thinks well of the Egyptian legation — does not ban the assembly, does not prohibit the speeches, and treats those assembled with nothing but goodwill — until, when the assembly has taken place and the police have witnessed it, it becomes clear to them that the legation did not speak the truth about it, and did not act in good faith.

How very magnificent this proclamation — the one that makes the French laugh at Egypt, gives them a poor opinion of Egypt, and loosens their tongues against Egypt in ways the Egyptians would not wish. And more magnificent still is all of this happening while our Prime Minister is in Paris — the Prime Minister who established order, settled affairs, and restored to freedom its usurped rights and the dignity that had been squandered!

Yes, all of this is magnificent. And there is what is more magnificent and more astonishing still. There is our legation demanding that France expel Egyptians from its territory — and France refusing! And why not? Our legation knows full well that the Egyptian government has no power to drive Egyptians out of Egypt or expel them from Egypt — but it can demand the dispersal and expulsion of Egyptians from France. So why should it not achieve in foreign countries what it is incapable of achieving on home soil? And why not? Our legation knows full well that foreign governments from time to time ask Egypt to expel foreigners from its territory, and Egypt complies with what they want — out of weakness or an excess of courtesy. So why should it not ask France for what France asks of Egypt? Perhaps France is as weak as Egypt; perhaps France is as excessive in its courtesy as Egypt; perhaps France is as eager to please the Egyptian legation as Egypt is to please the French legation!

This is truly painful. This is truly grievous. This is truly an insult to Egyptian dignity. We could never have imagined that our legations were established to be tasked with such efforts or to undertake such burdens. We could never have imagined that the peasant's money would be levied and the peasant's back exposed to whips that lash and tear it, until when this money has been collected from him it is spent on legations living in foreign countries in luxury and comfort — to ask foreign governments to prevent Egyptians from assembling or giving speeches, or from enjoying what is permitted to people of freedom in free countries. If Egyptian dignity must inevitably be wounded in their own country; if Egyptians must inevitably be exposed to hunger, illness, and deprivation in order to supply their government with money it spends lavishly and without account — then at the very least let Egyptians be left free outside Egypt. At the very least let Egyptian money be spent on things that do not harm the Egyptian reputation and injure Egyptian dignity and expose Egypt to mockery and ridicule. If the authorities must inevitably be set against Egyptians in Egypt when they assemble or write or speak — then at the very least let foreign authority not be set against these Egyptians when they wish to do in foreign countries what the law of those countries does not forbid. If free Egyptians must inevitably be persecuted even outside Egypt — then at the very least let it not be Egypt itself that persecutes them; let the legations content themselves with recording grievances, cataloguing them, and sending them to the Ministry here to deal with these Egyptians when they return — and even this is evil, utter evil, and utter abomination. Even this is the furthest thing from what legations, consulates, and mission offices are for.

How fitting it would be for the Foreign Minister to restrain his legations and consulates from these unbecoming actions. How fitting it would be for the Minister of Education to protect the students from this scheming that is unbecoming. How fitting it would be for parliament to ask the Ministry — or express the wish to it, or beseech it — to preserve Egypt's

dignity and reputation from this evil that we ought not to approve or remain silent about, still less squeeze the peasant's money to spend upon it.