

by those in opposition to the government, and includes a range of opposition voices, including secular-minded bloggers connected to the Kefaya movement, more conservative Muslim Brotherhood bloggers, and those dedicated to stopping torture and abuse by police. Many of these communities exist both online and off, some loosely affiliated and some with tighter networks. These groups serve as ideal outlets for sharing stories and exchanging visions of change.

These online communities in Egypt promote reform and serve as a rallying point when key events take place such as the arrest of bloggers and activists. Reform movements may be pushed forward by ideas and reports of injustice, such as the treatment of Khaled Said, but they are sustained by communities, such as these loosely affiliated online communities in Egypt. It is an open question whether these communities can emerge as coherent social movements while

remaining decentralized bottom-up institutions.

The Russian drivers movement offers another example where online organizing is contributing to a social movement, but also shows that change will most likely be limited to improved 'responsive authoritarianism' instead of fundamental political change. The core of this movement includes car clubs, such as the Federation of Car Owners, that organize largely online. They have organized successful protests against increased taxes, traffic police corruption, police scandals, and a series of fatal auto accidents involving wealthy and politically connected drivers who often escape prosecution for their crimes. Indeed, there have been a number of cases where the victims are blamed, despite video or witness evidence to the contrary.

One famous incident involved a senior executive of a large Russian oil company, which spawned a video appeal by a

popular rap musician that had 600,000 hits in just a few days. Video and witness evidence are gathered, shared widely on YouTube, debated in blogs and on other online forums, and eventually picked up by mainstream media where they generate further outrage. These protest events appear to have contributed (or at a minimum, hastened the president's decision) to fire 16 high-level police officers and order a restructuring of the Interior Ministry, one of Russia's 'power ministries.'

Following the 'horns of wrath' caravan protests in a number of Russian cities, drivers also successfully halted a doubling of taxes on car owners. While this type of change is limited, and will likely not lead to a change in regime type or greater democratization in Russia, it is significant in a country where there are few remaining opportunities for bottom up political action, and the Internet is a fundamental part of it. ■

GOOGLEDOCS IS MORE CONVENIENT THAN A PAPER PAMPHLET



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In both Egypt and Tunisia, social media and other technologies have been widely employed for protest purposes. In Tunisia specifically, Twitter and Facebook, as well as blogs and videos, have often been used to help fill in the coverage gap left by the mainstream media. Tunisians felt that their story was not being accurately portrayed, and thus uploaded videos, photos and other media to help inform the world.

In Egypt, we saw lots of organisation happening online prior to the beginning of the protests on January 25. **On Twitter, Egyptian activists pre-selected the hashtag #jan25 to represent their struggle** and that tag is now being widely used by media, supporters, and Egyptian residents on the ground in order to

aggregate information. **On Facebook, Egyptians have organised specific elements of the protest**, ranging from how to behave to what to wear and what to bring with you, as well as how to handle arrests or react in the case of tear gas attacks.

A lot of these tools were used in a very organic way. For example, a shared Google Doc was used in place of a paper pamphlet since, that way, it can be kept updated without having to make new prints or copies.

A Google Doc is better than paper because an unlimited number of people have access to it and it doesn't have to be reprinted each time there is an update: you simply need to have the skills to publicise it widely.

And if you need as many people as possible to see a video during as short a time period as possible, then you can download it via Facebook. For example, in Syria, we recently saw young people post videos of classroom abuse on Facebook and this action resulted in the firing of several abusive teachers. In practice, Twitter has also been used to help locate missing individuals.

But without the will of the people, any technology is useless. Without the desire and means for an uprising, one would not happen; these technologies simply make it easier for people to communicate. ■