

Egyptians living abroad

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From the recent high school graduate that decided to leave Egypt to gain the experiences of studying abroad, to the Egyptian that unwillingly was born outside Egypt, to the Egyptian whose faithful Egyptian grandparents have emigrated from Egypt seeking a better life, they all are the same. Yes, one category brings all of these people together: They are Egyptians living abroad. The perceptions and reactions you get when you mention "Egyptians living abroad" differs depending on how you call them. You will be surprised when you find out that people react differently to Egyptians living abroad depending on how you identify them.

Many Egyptians are aware of their family members and friends that work or live in other Arabic countries in the region. If you were to address these Egyptians and ask them if they agree that "Egyptians that work outside of Egypt" should be giving the right to vote, you will most certainly get a response of agreement. Not only that, but you will also get to hear a story of their "Brother" or "Cousin" that works in Kuwait, Qatar, or Saudi Arabia and how they are suffering to feed their families.

Likewise, if you were to address a group of middle class Egyptians that personally have no one close to them working abroad, and asked one of them "Do you think Egyptians working in Arabic countries should be giving the right to vote in the upcoming presidential election?" they will often nod saying yes of course. Such a response changes when you ask middle class Egyptians about whether Egyptians living in "Europe and America" should be giving the right to vote in the presidential election. Once you utter the question you start to receive personalized reasons from some Egyptians about why Egyptians living in Europe and America should not be "trusted" to vote in the presidential elections. You hear "America will force them to vote in a certain way" or "They are living far away and do not have the ability to determine who is a good candidate or not".

Sometimes, you cannot just help it but ask are these people aware of what they are saying? Voting is a right, not a privilege and therefore you cannot grant it willingly to some people and at the same time prevent others from obtaining it! How can a post-revolutionary Egypt strive to become a state of law while its citizens are putting their personal preferences and what they contain of biases ahead of laws? Preferences do change,

and if we base rights of citizens on individualistic preferences, then can we even call ourselves a state?

Egyptians

living abroad should be embraced and granted full rights because without them Egypt will be missing a vital member. We cannot ignore the role Egyptians living abroad play in supporting the Egyptian Economy. Furthermore, Egyptians abroad are excelling in many fields and gaining experiences and knowledge that is priceless. Most Egyptians living abroad are striving to perfect the living conditions of Egypt and wish to try to play, even a little role, in Egypt's development. Do not we then allow them? I say we should. It is time for Egypt to put personal preferences to the side. It is time to unify and not segregate. The right of Egyptians living abroad to vote is an important issue and we cannot ignore it.

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter"-Martin Luther King