



Cairo: Memoir of a City Transformed

Ahdaf Soueif

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From the best-selling author of *The Map of Love*, here is a bracing firsthand account of the Egyptian revolution—told with the narrative instincts of a novelist, the gritty insights of an activist, and the long perspective of a native Cairene.

Since January 25, 2011, when thousands of Egyptians gathered in Tahrir Square to demand the fall of Hosni Mubarak's regime, Ahdaf Soueif—author, journalist, and lifelong progressive—has been among the revolutionaries who have shaken Egypt to its core. In this deeply personal work, Soueif summons her storytelling talents to trace the trajectory of her nation's ongoing transformation. She writes of the passion, confrontation, and sacrifice that she witnessed in the historic first eighteen days of uprising—the bravery of the youth who led the revolts and the jubilation in the streets at Mubarak's departure. Later, the cityscape was ablaze with political graffiti and street screenings, and with the journalistic and organizational efforts of activists—including Soueif and her family.

In the weeks and months after those crucial eighteen days, we watch as Egyptians fight to preserve and advance their revolution—even as the interim military government, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, throws up obstacles at each step. She shows us the council delaying abdication of power, undermining efforts toward democracy, claiming ownership of the revolution while ignoring its martyrs. We see elections held and an Islamist voted into power. At each scene, Soueif gives us her view from the ground—brave, intelligent, startlingly immediate. Against this stormy backdrop, she interweaves memories of her own Cairo—the balcony of her aunt's flat, where, as a child, she would watch the open-air cinema; her first job, as an actor on a children's sitcom; her mother's family land outside the city, filled with fruit trees and palm groves, in sight of the pyramids. In so doing, she affirms the beauty and resilience of this ancient and remarkable city. The book ends with a postscript that considers Egypt's more recent turns: the shifts in government, the ongoing confrontations between citizen and state, and a nation's difficult but deeply inspiring path toward its great, human aims—bread, freedom, and social justice. In these pages, Soueif creates an illuminating snapshot of an event watched by the world—the outcome of which continues to be felt across the globe.

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