A Generation Revolts: From the 1970s Student Movement to the 2011 Egyptian Revolution

ABDULLAH AL-ARIAN
Assistant Professor
History

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The historic 2011 uprising in Egypt brought an end to a three-decade dictatorship and saw the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood as the country’s leading political actor. But in exploring the recent emergence of this longstanding social movement, few analyses have taken account of its historical development and the experiences of its current leadership. In this talk, Abdullah Al-Arian will explore how the formative period of the 1970s, a dynamic era that saw the rise of student protests and the Islamic movement’s return after a twenty year absence, helped shape the current landscape of oppositional politics in Egypt. Tracing these developments through the lives of leading figures, from political activists like Esam al-Erian and Abdul Moneim Abul Futuh, to Egypt’s first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi, allows for the development of a more complete portrait of Egypt’s contentious political scene. To discern what path these leaders have charted for their country’s future, it is essential to understand the road that led them here.

Abdullah Al-Arian is an assistant professor of history at Wayne State, where he teaches courses on Middle Eastern and Islamic history. His upcoming book is entitled Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Egypt (1970-1981). He is also a contributor to the Al-Jazeera English network and website.