Transcript

00:00:01 Speaker 1

Good afternoon, everyone.

00:00:03 Speaker 1

My name is Rehan Ismail.

00:00:04 Speaker 1

I'm a professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies here at the Middle East Center.

00:00:08 Speaker 1

And welcome to the first event this term.

00:00:12 Speaker 1

Tonight, we have Matthias Gear, who is a PhD candidate in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton.

00:00:24 Speaker 1

Mathias will discuss his book, published by Oxford University Press in 2025, titled Brothers Behind Bars, A History of the Muslim Brotherhood from the Palestine War to Egypt's Prisons.

00:00:39 Speaker 1

So it is very impressive because he's doing his PhD and he has already published a book.

00:00:45 Speaker 1

I think that is something to be very proud of.

00:00:49 Speaker 1

And Matthias is also working on an edition and translation of the travelogue of Said Qutub to be published by Syracuse University Press.

00:00:58 Speaker 1

And that is also kind of a forthcoming publication, so to be published soon.

00:01:05 Speaker 1

So he will discuss his book tonight with us.

00:01:10 Speaker 1

And as I've mentioned earlier, history of the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly looking at prison memoirs,

00:01:16 Speaker 1

looking at other sources as well.

00:01:18 Speaker 1

And I do not want to take time away from you, so you will be speaking for around 15 minutes, and then we will have a Q&A session.

00:01:26 Speaker 1

So please join me in welcoming you.

00:01:33 Speaker 2

Thank you, everyone, for showing up, and thank you especially to you, Rehan, for inviting me here.

00:01:39 Speaker 2

I'm very grateful to be here.

00:01:41 Speaker 2

Thank you also to Jenny, who is very

00:01:45 Speaker 2

graciously set up everything.

00:01:46 Speaker 2

Thank you to the Middle East Center, to St.

00:01:49 Speaker 2

Anthony's, and thank you again, everyone, for showing up.

00:01:54 Speaker 2

So yeah, I'm going to speak for roughly 50 minutes, an hour, something like that, and then hopefully we can take some questions.

00:02:01 Speaker 2

So the prison experiences of the Muslim Brotherhood had a quite unexpected soundtrack, the sounds and songs of Uncle Zoom.

00:02:11 Speaker 2

Languishing behind bars in mid-20th century Egypt, members of the Brotherhood, colloquially known as Brothers, collectively recall that ubiquitous voice of one of the most beloved performers of the Middle East.

00:02:24 Speaker 2

After the July Revolution of 1952, led by the free officers and Gamala ibn Masad, Egypt underwent a sweeping political transformation, a transformation that even extended to the country's long-neglected prison service.

00:02:39 Speaker 2

In official publications, such as the one you see here, the prison service, the celebrated a series of reforms, bans on shackles and certain forms of torture, permission to smoke inside cells and buy amenities from prisoner-run canteens, and even the installation of internal loudspeaker systems.

00:02:59 Speaker 2

Through these reforms, and especially the speakers, prisoners were indeed meant to experience the revolution.

00:03:07 Speaker 2

They were meant to listen to state radio to hear news from the outside world, and so the logic went to rehabilitate themselves for life in the new Republic of Egypt.

00:03:16 Speaker 2

They were also meant to be edified.

00:03:19 Speaker 2

And who better to perform this role than Umkul Zum herself, Egypt's so-called songbird of the revolution?

00:03:25 Speaker 2

Prisoners, in other words, were meant to be transformed into good, loyal, and law-abiding Nasserists.

00:03:32 Speaker 2

But soon,

00:03:33 Speaker 2

Guards began abusing these new technologies or disregarding the reforms altogether, instead instituting one of the most violent prison regimes in the modern history of the Middle East.

00:03:44 Speaker 2

Uncle Zum's romantic songs were blasted through internal speaker systems at the most vulnerable moments of the brothers.

00:03:51 Speaker 2

At night, during torture or in the midst of prayer, her voice filled up the cells of the ever-expanding system of prisons in Egypt.

00:04:00 Speaker 2

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who spent nearly a decade in prison,

00:04:03 Speaker 2

recall being haunted by her songs long after his release and subsequent exile to Qatar.

00:04:09 Speaker 2

Whenever Al-Gharadawi encountered them, he fought not with the revolution, but of the groans and cries of fellow brothers.

00:04:16 Speaker 2

Thus, while Uncle Zum was celebrated in concert halls far beyond the prison walls, her music took on an altogether different meaning inside the prisons of Egypt.

00:04:25 Speaker 2

There, her legacy, like that of the very country itself, was being contested by a growing counterpublic of political prisoners

00:04:33 Speaker 2

who was struggling to come to terms with the political realities of a post-colonial Egypt.

00:04:40 Speaker 2

Among the many imprisoned brothers who recalled the songs of Umkhunzum was Abd al-Asag Amanadin.

00:04:46 Speaker 2

Unlike Al-Gharadawi, who became a prominent voice of the Brotherhood, Amanadin represented the archetypical brother, a middle-aged family man from Cairo who,

alongside his daytime job, volunteered at night within the bureaucracy of the Brotherhood.

00:05:00 Speaker 2

Whether serving as teachers, accountants, doctors, secretaries, journalists, committee members, or typesetters, rank-and-file members like Amanadin formed the organizational backbone of the Brotherhood's hundreds of branches spread across Egypt.

00:05:16 Speaker 2

And like most card-carrying members, Amanadin was also arrested three times and helped in Egypt's most notorious detention facility, the military prison.

00:05:25 Speaker 2

There, Amanadin was subjected to severe abuse.

00:05:29 Speaker 2

Abuse documented in the testimonies of fellow political prisoners, including communists and Zionists, as well as in the archival records of the Red Cross and Amnesty International.

00:05:39 Speaker 2

Whippings, beatings, electrocution, disfigurement, and sexual assault were among the many abuses carried out inside the military prison.

00:05:49 Speaker 2

Gabit and Huq, an old friend and senior brother, later met Amanda Dean in another prison in Cairo.

00:05:55 Speaker 2

Curled up in a corner, Aman Adin sat isolated, refusing to discuss politics and constantly mumbling verses from the Qur'an.

00:06:04 Speaker 2

Gabes could barely recognize him, not only because of the dramatic change in his demeanor, but because Aman Adin no longer sported his usual fist-long beard, a symbol of piety for many brothers.

00:06:15 Speaker 2

Gods had forced him, like so many others, to pluck out his own beard and eat it while detained in a military prison.

00:06:23 Speaker 2

After the death of Nasser, members of the Brotherhood began to be released in the mid-1970s.

00:06:30 Speaker 2

Among them was Gabit, who recorded Amanadin's story in a prison memoir, thereby joining a growing movement of brothers who, from the 1980s onwards, published accounts of their experiences inside the prisons of Egypt.

00:06:42 Speaker 2

Concluding the story of Amanadin, Gabit noted simply, Every beard has a story.

00:06:51 Speaker 2

My book, Brothers Behind Bars, tells the story of the Muslim Brotherhood's experiences in Egypt's presence.

00:06:57 Speaker 2

Between the Palestine War in 1948 and the rise of President Anwar al-Saddad in 1975, more than 60,000 members passed through Egypt's expanding penal system.

00:07:08 Speaker 2

They were circulated across hard labor camps, penitentiaries, death rows, police stations, conventional prisons, infirmaries, and the holding cells of the security agencies that together constituted the castle state of Egypt.

00:07:21 Speaker 2

The book follows the brothers from the comfort of their homes into a prison system that was itself only gradually taking shape in the 1940s.

00:07:30 Speaker 2

Today, I would like to address four major issues concerning the prison years of the brotherhood.

00:07:35 Speaker 2

First, I will challenge 3 dominant narratives that have shaped our understanding of this period.

00:07:41 Speaker 2

Second, I will examine the methodological difficulties involved in writing a history based largely on memory.

00:07:48 Speaker 2

Third, I will suggest ways to critically assess the accounts provided by the brothers.

00:07:53 Speaker 2

And finally, I will offer broader reflections on the relationship between the institution of the prison and the historical development of Islamism.

00:08:01 Speaker 2

But before turning to these questions of argument and method, I want to make sure that we are all on common ground and therefore offer a brief overview of the prison years of the brotherhood.

00:08:13 Speaker 2

Founded in 1928 by the school teacher and preacher Hassan al-Banna,

00:08:17 Speaker 2

The brotherhood grew rapidly during the interwar years, becoming Egypt's largest religio-political movement by the end of the Second World War.

00:08:25 Speaker 2

Yet members have long understood their history not as one marked by success, but one marked by trial, Mehna, seeing it as part of a sacred narrative of divine testing stretching back to the Prophet Muhammad.

00:08:38 Speaker 2

They accordingly divide their prison years into free ordeals, 1948 to 51,

00:08:44 Speaker 2

54 to 64, and finally 65 to 75.

00:08:49 Speaker 2

The first ordeal occurred during the Palestine War.

00:08:52 Speaker 2

Although some members had been arrested in the early 1940s, the first wave of mass arrests followed the Brotherhood's decision to send approximately 1,500 volunteer fighters to Palestine.

00:09:03 Speaker 2

Their participation in the war, combined with growing political ambitions at home and acts of violence attributed to a small paramilitary wing,

00:09:12 Speaker 2

prompted King Farouk to dissolve the Brotherhood in 1948 and ordered the arrest of 4,000 members.

00:09:19 Speaker 2

Brothers soon began debating the legitimacy of political violence, asking, should they acquiesce to the authorities or should they rebel against King Farouk?

00:09:28 Speaker 2

While most opposed the use of violence, a small group, later known as the Secret Organization, took up arms, particularly after the assassination of Hassan al-Banna in 1949.

00:09:40 Speaker 2

Although few of the arrested brothers actually participated in the Palestine War, the crackdown established a pattern.

00:09:46 Speaker 2

Governments could use the violence of a few to suppress the activism of the many.

00:09:51 Speaker 2

After the July Revolution of '52, the same logic prevailed when an assassination attempt on Nasser and a purported plot to overthrow him justified renewed repression of the brotherhood.

00:10:03 Speaker 2

The second prisoner deal thus began in 1954.

00:10:06 Speaker 2

and was defined by escalating tensions between the brothers and the free officers over the political direction of the July Revolution.

00:10:13 Speaker 2

The brothers, who believed they had entered into an alliance with the free officers, felt betrayed when Abdel Nassad withdrew his support and abandoned what they understood to be promises of political and religious concessions in the new independent Egypt.

00:10:28 Speaker 2

Nassad, for his part, considered the brothers' demands excessive.

00:10:31 Speaker 2

and he was taken aback by the attempt to assassinate him by a small militarized faction inside the brotherhood.

00:10:37 Speaker 2

Throughout the 50s, the brothers were subjected to severe maltreatment which forced them to confront a central question.

00:10:44 Speaker 2

Should they negotiate with the regime or should they resist it?

00:10:48 Speaker 2

While younger brothers tended to adopt A more confrontational stance, senior ones, and especially those with prior experience in government, favored cooperation with the successor rulers of Egypt.

00:11:00 Speaker 2

These tensions led to the larger schism during the prison years of the Brotherhood.

00:11:04 Speaker 2

With the outbreak of the Suez War in 1956, the brothers began intensely debating whether to support Nasser.

00:11:11 Speaker 2

A minority opted for support, thereby earning the label supporters al-Mu'ayyidun.

00:11:18 Speaker 2

While the majority adopted a stance of non-violent opposition, a position endorsed by al-Banna's successor, Hassan al-Budabi.

00:11:26 Speaker 2

The ensuring conflict between the supporters and opponents marked a decisive rupture within the brotherhood.

00:11:31 Speaker 2

Among the supporters, a breakaway faction soon took shape, formed by brothers who saw the legalization of the brotherhood as intimately tied to keeping up relations with Nasr.

00:11:43 Speaker 2

Within the supporters, a breakaway group quickly began to form under the name al-Jama'a al-Mufassilah, the separatist society.

00:11:51 Speaker 2

This new faction believed that the only realistic path toward legal recognition was to preserve working relations with Nasser, and with their gradual release, the separatist brothers began operating a de facto new brotherhood outside the prisons of Egypt.

00:12:05 Speaker 2

And yet at the same time, within the camp of the opponents, the seeds of a third debate were being sown, namely the question of what defines a proper Muslim.

00:12:15 Speaker 2

Ten years later, the third ordeal became marked by growing radicalization among younger members of the Brotherhood.

00:12:22 Speaker 2

They had been startled by the violence used by the regime on the brothers, especially during what became known as the Torah Massaca, the killing of two dozen brothers in a prison in 1957.

00:12:33 Speaker 2

Paradoxically, however, the ordeal began with the arrest of a small group of young militant brothers who actually had never before set foot in prison, but had begun plotting to overflow Nasser inside the suburbs of Kargo.

00:12:46 Speaker 2

They were influenced by thinkers such as Sayyid Qutub, and once they entered prison, they increasingly adopted varying forms of takfir, excommunicating rulers, society at large, or even fellow members of their brotherhood.

00:13:00 Speaker 2

Senior brothers pushed back, most prominently through the publication of the book that you see here, Preachers, Not Judges, and by the mid-1970s had largely curtailed or expelled the more radical elements within the brotherhood.

00:13:15 Speaker 2

This internal containment, I argue, helped pave the way for the Brotherhood's rapid resurgence in Egypt in the 1980s.

00:13:24 Speaker 2

So, I now want to turn to what I see as my book's major interventions, and which challenge 3 major narratives about the prison years of the Brotherhood.

00:13:34 Speaker 2

The first narrative that I challenge holds that the Brotherhood effectively ceased to exist in prison, rendering incarceration little more than a footnote in the wider history of the Brotherhood.

00:13:44 Speaker 2

This position was first articulated by Richard Mitchell in his classic work from 1969, The Society of the Muslim Brothers.

00:13:52 Speaker 2

Witnessing their trials in Cairo in the 50s, Mitchell prematurely concluded that the brotherhood had come to an end, as he said, following the crackdown of Nasrid.

00:14:02 Speaker 2

Since the publication of Mitchell's work, much scholarship has followed suit and treated the prison years as an intermission rather than a formative period, appearing as little more than a pause

00:14:11 Speaker 2

before the movement's re-emergence in the 1980s.

00:14:15 Speaker 2

Yet in doing so, scholars have neglected the vast corpus of prison memoirs published since the 1970s, which in painstaking detail document the continuities of the brotherhood inside the prisons.

00:14:26 Speaker 2

How, one might ask, could a movement supposedly shattered beyond repair in the 1940s re-emerge so suddenly as the largest Islamist organization in Egypt by the 1980s?

00:14:38 Speaker 2

Well,

00:14:39 Speaker 2

The brothers, my research shows, very much kept the brotherhood alive within the prisons.

00:14:45 Speaker 2

They built vast underground societies, preserving the social, intellectual, and organizational cohesion of their movement, aided by a tight network of supporters outside prison, which included family members, but also members of the Muslim sisterhood.

00:14:59 Speaker 2

Supporters helped smuggle in food, newspapers, books, writing materials, and letters,

00:15:05 Speaker 2

ensuring that imprisoned brothers remain connected to like-minded activists beyond the prison walls, even as far away as Pakistan.

00:15:12 Speaker 2

For example, my research reveals that prominent Islamists such as Abu al-Aleh, Maududi, exchanged letters and books with Selkotub through channels facilitated by Muslim sisters.

00:15:23 Speaker 2

Like other political movements, most notably the Communists, the brotherhood came to see prison as a school, a venue for educating members far removed from the trivialities of everyday life,

00:15:34 Speaker 2

far removed, one may say, from the challenges of holding a job, of feeding one's children, and of running a household.

00:15:42 Speaker 2

Within this very homosocial environment, the brothers did what they did best.

00:15:46 Speaker 2

They organized.

00:15:47 Speaker 2

Something that is visually reflected in the collection of photographs you see here from the archives of Muhammad Ali Al-Taqir.

00:15:54 Speaker 2

He was a journalist from Palestine who happened to be imprisoned with the brothers in the 40s and smuggled in a camera

00:16:00 Speaker 2

into Camp Hockstep, a prison camp that is located just outside Cairo.

00:16:06 Speaker 2

He and many other political prisoners were impressed by the organizational skills of the brothers.

00:16:12 Speaker 2

We are amazed by the behavior of the Muslim brothers, wrote the communist and acclaimed writer Sonallah Ibrahim, who was incarcerated in the 50s.

00:16:20 Speaker 2

Problems with understaffing in the prison service meant that political prisoners at times enjoyed remarkable degrees of autonomy.

00:16:27 Speaker 2

For instance, in the 1940s, when the brothers were detained in

00:16:30 Speaker 2

prison camps on the Sinai Peninsula, they were able to walk straight out of the prison gates and down to the beach to fish or to buy groceries, only to return to the camp by nightfall when the gates closed.

00:16:43 Speaker 2

Whether placed in the western desert or on the beaches of the Red Sea, the brothers built sleeping quarters, schools, mosques, clinics, football fields, kitchens, theaters, book clubs, and importantly, headquarters for their leaders in a bid to continue the activities of the Brotherhood.

00:17:00 Speaker 2

They held elections, they planned rallies, and organized themselves into decision-making councils, working groups, committees, subcommittees, and so-called families, or usras, an organizational model long used to regulate the affairs of the brotherhood.

00:17:17 Speaker 2

Within these organizational structures, the brothers engaged in a wide array of leisure, artistic, and literary activities as a means of reflecting on the state of affairs in Egypt.

00:17:27 Speaker 2

Far from the stereotypes we encounter today of the uncultivated Islamists, I show how imprisoned brothers wrote and staged plays, how they performed stand-up comedy, penned novels, composed poetry, curated art exhibitions, established sports clubs, set

up debating circles with communists, sang hymns, and offered religious education and popular competitions in the recitals of the Qur'an.

00:17:52 Speaker 2

These activities were often understood as acts of resistance in their own right.

00:17:56 Speaker 2

and involve the cultivation of personal and collective discipline, maintaining order within the ranks, praying regularly, preserving bodily health, exercising and embedding religion in daily life in opposition to what they perceive as the increasingly secularist orientation of a republican Egypt.

00:18:16 Speaker 2

Indeed, many brothers even invoked Al-Farabi's concept of the virtuous city, Al-Medina and Faradah, to describe their prison society

00:18:24 Speaker 2

with some paradoxically noting that they actually experienced greater religious and political freedom behind bars than outside in what they called the big prison of Egypt.

00:18:35 Speaker 2

Thus, by emphasizing not what state repression prevented the brothers from doing, but rather what it allowed them to do, my book foregrounds their agency and attends to how they sought to make sense of their ordeals, both as Egyptians, as Muslims, but also as members of the Brotherhood.

00:18:53 Speaker 2

The second dominant narrative that I challenge holds that the Brotherhood's imprisonment inevitably led to a mass radicalization of the brothers.

00:19:01 Speaker 2

According to this view, Egypt's prisons functioned as an incubator for militant Islamism.

00:19:07 Speaker 2

According to this view, Egypt's prisons, sorry, and later, not just an incubator for militant Islamism, but also later militant organizations such as Gama'at al-Muslimineen, al-Jihad al-Islami, or even al-Ga'idah.

00:19:20 Speaker 2

These organizations are indeed said to have had their very origins in the ideology of the Brotherhood.

00:19:26 Speaker 2

As one prominent journalist once put it, America's tragedy on September 11 was born inside the prisons of Egypt.

00:19:35 Speaker 2

Beginning in the mid-1980s, this interpretation was advanced by historians such as Schill Kepel, Emmanuel Siban, and Johannes Janssen, who in 1984, 1985, and 1986, respectively,

00:19:47 Speaker 2

published influential works with such evocative titles as Muslim Extremism, Radical Islam, and Sadat's Assassins.

00:19:56 Speaker 2

Even as many of their assumptions remain problematic, their scholarship was at the time pioneering and helped a new generation of scholars make sense of the more militant aspects of the 1970s Islamic revival.

00:20:07 Speaker 2

But while these studies located the emergence of militant Islamism squarely in the prison experiences of the brotherhood,

00:20:15 Speaker 2

they were themselves written in a very different political moment, namely, the aftermath of Anwar al-Sadat's assassination in 1981 by a group with only peripheral connections to the Brotherhood.

00:20:26 Speaker 2

To be sure, several of Sadat's assassins had previously been imprisoned, but not alongside the brothers.

00:20:32 Speaker 2

Rather, they had been arrested during the sweeping security campaigns of the late 1970s following the crackdown on the militant group Gama'at al-Muslameen, more commonly known as Takfir war-Hechra, whose founder, Shukri Mustafa,

00:20:44 Speaker 2

had denounced the Brotherhood while in prison in the late 1960s.

00:20:50 Speaker 2

Although some brothers welcomed the assassination, most notoriously the editors of the breakaway magazine Nadaawa, the Brotherhood's official position remained one of firm opposition to political violence and support of Sadat.

00:21:03 Speaker 2

And yet, much of the scholarship on political Islam has approached its history in Egypt retrospectively.

00:21:09 Speaker 2

that is, beginning with the assassination of Sadat and reading backward into the prison years of the Muslim Brotherhood.

00:21:16 Speaker 2

However, recent research suggests that militant Islamism as it took shape in the 80s was a significantly later development, a development shaped not by prison, but by the context of the Salafization of the Islamic Revival, the Afghan Soviet War, and the rise of international terrorism in places as far apart as Palestine and West Germany.

00:21:37 Speaker 2

But even while the works of Keppel, Sivan, and Janssen clearly reflected the political developments of the 1980s, they also echoed a much older polemical tradition rooted in the era of Nasser himself.

00:21:50 Speaker 2

Beginning in the mid-50s, following the second crackdown, Nasser launched an extensive smear campaign against the Brotherhood.

00:21:57 Speaker 2

Allying with tabloid journalists and clerics from Al-Assar, the Free Officers produced carefully curated narratives portraying the Brotherhood as a threat to Islam and to Egypt.

00:22:07 Speaker 2

By the mid-50s, journalists were publishing sensational accounts of the arrested brothers.

00:22:13 Speaker 2

They depicted them as madmen who purportedly fashioned what they call dynamite belts in their basements, or conducted what they call weird ceremonies, in which young recruits were enticed with visions of virgins awaiting them in paradise.

00:22:27 Speaker 2

Such rhetoric is entirely absent from the brotherhood's own writings of the period,

00:22:31 Speaker 2

Yet it strikingly anticipates the popular narratives that have come to surround militant Islamism in the aftermath of 9/11.

00:22:40 Speaker 2

During the 1950s and 1960s, a stream of government-sponsored publications was accordingly released, designed to undermine the religious credibility of the brothers.

00:22:51 Speaker 2

These widely circulated pamphlets, some of which were translated into English, as you see here, bore vivid titles such as the Brotherhood of Terrorism or the Brothers of Satan.

00:23:01 Speaker 2

Paradoxically, however, they often reproduced the very same radical idioms they purported to condemn.

00:23:07 Speaker 2

By portraying the Brotherhood as a modern reincarnation of the ancient sect of the Khadijis, these texts went so far as to cast the brothers as outright apostates from Islam.

00:23:17 Speaker 2

By the mid-1960s, the smear campaign even acquired an international dimension when, in the context of the Arab Cold War, the brothers were increasingly depicted as foreign agents of Saudi Arabia.

00:23:29 Speaker 2

Although a handful of figures had found refuge there in the 50s, and likely received some degree of royal patronage, the notion that Saudi Arabia had entered into a formal alliance with the Brotherhood was largely baseless, as was the claim that the brothers had become Wahhabis.

00:23:46 Speaker 2

Regardless, these tropes quickly gained a life of their own.

00:23:50 Speaker 2

Already during the 50s, they found their way to popular literature, most notably in P.H.

00:23:54 Speaker 2

Newby's novel, The Picnic at Saqqara,

00:23:57 Speaker 2

which depicted the Brotherhood's elected violent infiltration of Cairo University.

00:24:02 Speaker 2

Or Yoan Vatsik's novel, This Fiery Night, which portrayed the Brotherhood as plotting murderous violence against the British.

00:24:09 Speaker 2

Beginning in the 1970s with the emergence of militant Islamism, nationalist historians within Egypt gave new life to these narratives, publishing influential accounts of the Brotherhood's history that largely reproduced the tropes forged during the crackdowns of the 50s.

00:24:25 Speaker 2

I suggest that this constellation of state propaganda, sensationalist journalism, nationalist historiography, and popular fiction profoundly shaped how historians came to understand the development of Islamism, perhaps most notably by advancing the argument that the Brotherhood's imprisonment gave rise to militant Islamism.

00:24:44 Speaker 2

But, as my book shows, some brothers had already been militarized long before they entered prison, namely in the context of the Palestine War.

00:24:52 Speaker 2

Similarly, more radical members went on to develop their own ideologies far beyond the prison walls, most notably in the suburbs of Cairo and Alexandra, and within the distinct milieu shaped by the rise of Salafism in the 60s.

00:25:05 Speaker 2

This is therefore not to deny that certain elements within the brotherhood embraced militancy or radicalism, and I really want to stress this point.

00:25:13 Speaker 2

Indeed, a substantial portion of my book is actually devoted to tracing the emergence of what I call prison radicalism, especially among a younger generation of brothers.

00:25:23 Speaker 2

Rather, it is to argue that state propaganda has produced enduring, interpretative frameworks that continue to shape, but also to distort, our understandings of the brotherhood.

00:25:34 Speaker 2

I therefore seek to push against the scholarly tendency to foreground the violence perpetrated by the brothers to the neglect of the violence inflicted upon the brothers.

00:25:43 Speaker 2

How brothers and Muslim sisters understood, endured, and indeed made sense of this violence that they experienced in Egypt's prisons remain

00:25:52 Speaker 2

remains a question that is seldom posed in the literature on Islamism.

00:25:57 Speaker 2

Ultimately, I argue that the prison years gave rise to a phenomenon far more consequential than that of militant Islamism, namely a sustained effort by the movement's majority to contain the radicalism of a minority and to instead articulate A disciplined, more moderate Islamism.

00:26:14 Speaker 2

Central to this effort was a pressing organizational dilemma faced by any movement under existential threat.

00:26:21 Speaker 2

That is, how to preserve the freedom, the integrity, and the cohesion of 10s of thousands of party members in the aftermath of repeated political setbacks.

00:26:30 Speaker 2

Curbing religious radicalism was then not only a theological or even a legal concern, but as well an organizational imperative.

00:26:38 Speaker 2

It was a means of holding the brotherhood together and preventing splintering into the kind of violent breakouts represented by figures such as Shukri Mustafa.

00:26:49 Speaker 2

Ever since they set foot in prison in the 1940s, the brothers thus continuously came to wrestle with one overarching question, how to live in a country that proclaimed itself to

be Muslim, but that seemingly had turned on itself and imprisoned its own Muslims, and this was indeed how they phrased this question.

00:27:07 Speaker 2

Throughout the 1960s, as repression deepened, this question grew ever more urgent, especially as the regime and its intelligence services themselves intervened in internal debates.

00:27:17 Speaker 2

often offering clemency to cooperative brothers.

00:27:21 Speaker 2

With the intensification of religious polemics and the involvement of al-Azhar, the stakes of this question only hardened, particularly during the last stages of

00:27:30 Speaker 2

imprisonment in the 70s.

00:27:32 Speaker 2

At this time, Al-Assad incorporation with the intelligence services launched the so-called de-radicalization program in prison, which at its core was about making brothers publicly, either on television or before fellow brothers, renounce their membership and particular interpretation of Islam.

00:27:49 Speaker 2

Eventually, some prominent leaders actually did publicly recant their own faith, giving rise to a host of questions among the brothers.

00:27:56 Speaker 2

How they, as themselves, could one

00:27:59 Speaker 2

collaborate with a ruler like Nasser?

00:28:01 Speaker 2

Was Nasser even Muslim?

00:28:03 Speaker 2

Were those who supported him or failed to support him Muslims?

00:28:06 Speaker 2

And were brothers who chose to collaborate with him still brothers?

00:28:09 Speaker 2

Were they indeed still Muslims?

00:28:12 Speaker 2

The answers to these questions varied widely, not only among the brothers, but also across shifting political contexts, especially in moments of national crisis, such as the Swiss War of 1956 and the Six-Day War of 1967.

00:28:27 Speaker 2

Could one actually fight for a tyrant like Nasser, even if it meant defending Egypt?

00:28:34 Speaker 2

And yet, the leadership of the Brotherhood, headed by Hassan al-Hudaybi at the time, remained consistently moderate.

00:28:41 Speaker 2

They denounced debates around patfir, that is, excommunication, and went to great lengths, even cooperating with the regime to counter radicalization among the brothers.

00:28:50 Speaker 2

As my book shows, the vast majority of members sided with the leaders of the Brotherhood.

00:28:56 Speaker 2

This did not mean that they refrained from articulating radical critiques of the state, they most certainly did, or that they acquiesced uncritically to the regime's political vision for Egypt.

00:29:07 Speaker 2

Rather, they upheld the position that consistently favored strategies of non-violent prison activism, among them litigation, spatial control, strikes, clandestine prayer, courtroom preaching, and hunger strikes.

00:29:21 Speaker 2

as a means of resisting or at least disengaging from the repression of Nasser's machine.

00:29:27 Speaker 2

For, according to the brothers, the main radicalizers were not them, but the increasingly repressive state of Egypt.

00:29:35 Speaker 2

So this brings me to the third and the final narrative that I challenge in my book.

00:29:40 Speaker 2

Let's say Gutub was the principal radicalizer of the brothers.

00:29:44 Speaker 2

I do not wish in any way to minimize Gutub's influence, particularly that of his radical work, Milestones,

00:29:51 Speaker 2

drafts of which began circulating within the prison system in the late 1950s.

00:29:56 Speaker 2

But Gotok himself was confined to a hospital, and largely isolated from the other brothers.

00:30:01 Speaker 2

His influence, therefore, was primarily intellectual, and only extended to a handful of radicalized brothers.

00:30:08 Speaker 2

Moreover, my research shows that Gotok himself was disturbed by some of the interpretations, especially among younger brothers, that emerged from readings of his work,

00:30:17 Speaker 2

and that he actually collaborated with segments of the leadership to counteract these effects on the brothers.

00:30:23 Speaker 2

Radicalization, then, must be situated not only elsewhere within the Brotherhood, but also outside of it, specifically in the growing influence of Salafism in Egypt during the 1960s.

00:30:33 Speaker 2

Rather than attributing this development to a single source, it is more accurate, I think, to view radicalism as a spectrum that by that decade had produced multiple and often competing ideologies and groupings on the fringes of the Brotherhood.

00:30:48 Speaker 2

Some of these gathered around Qutub's own brother, Muhammad Qutub, who from within the prison of Abu Sahib in the 1960s, condemned not only Nasser, but also fellow brothers and ordinary Egyptians as complicit in oppression, and came to regard some of them as apostates from Islam.

00:31:04 Speaker 2

Prison undoubtedly had a radicalizing effect on Muhammad Qutub.

00:31:08 Speaker 2

When he was arrested in 1964, he was completing a book of literary criticism on Jean-Paul Sartre.

00:31:15 Speaker 2

By the time he left prison a decade later, in 1974, and moved to Saudi Arabia, he had offered one of the most radical works in modern Islamic thought.

00:31:25 Speaker 2

Even more radical, however, was the young Shukri Mustafa, who drew inspiration neither from Sayyid nor Muhammad Qutb, but from the 18th-century preacher Muhammad al-Wahab, whose writings were beginning to circulate more widely among Salafis in Egypt by the 1960s.

00:31:41 Speaker 2

This enabled him to articulate a highly theologized form of radical Islamism in which the very obligation to excommunicate other Muslims, particularly those who failed to excommunicate other sinners, for him became the very criterion of proper belief in God.

00:31:57 Speaker 2

For this reason, Shukri Mustafa even excommunicated Sayyid Guto, and was by the 1970s completely alienated from the Brotherhood.

00:32:05 Speaker 2

With the publication of Preachers, Not Judges,

00:32:08 Speaker 2

The senior brothers had largely succeeded in marginalizing the radical groups, expelling many of their members, and in some cases, re-socializing others back into the brotherhood.

00:32:20 Speaker 2

So, rather than locating the development of radicalism squarely within religious groups such as the brotherhood, I want to suggest that we also look to an altogether different source, namely the increasingly repressive state of modern Egypt.

00:32:35 Speaker 2

Particularly, I wish to highlight the crucial role of state intervention in shaping the prison debates among the brothers.

00:32:42 Speaker 2

In the aftermath of the July Revolution, the free officers confronted the formidable task of forging a new political subject, loyal to the emergent Republic of Egypt.

00:32:53 Speaker 2

As domestic and foreign threats multiplied, questions of loyalty became ever more central to the regime, which began to draw rigid boundaries between loyalists and traitors of Egypt.

00:33:05 Speaker 2

This binary logic was evident not only in the sweeping purchase of the ancient regime, but also in the mass arrest of journalists, and, perhaps most tellingly, in the unprecedented revocation of citizenships and forced exile of dissident Egyptians.

00:33:20 Speaker 2

These tests of loyalty also extended into the prisons.

00:33:24 Speaker 2

Through a host of different means, surveillance, religious profiling, interrogations, cell searches,

00:33:30 Speaker 2

prison transfers, starvation, solitary confinement, indoctrination, and de-radicalization programs, I could go on, the authorities sought to subdue, co-opt, and fragment the brothers in an effort both to control them, but also to determine who was loyal and who was not to Nazar.

00:33:48 Speaker 2

As A consequence, some of the more radical brothers began to mirror the rhetoric of the state, or at least they came to feel justified in adopting it.

00:33:57 Speaker 2

juxtaposing the binary language of national loyalty with the concept of takfir, and directing it not only at their oppressors, but also over time at fellow Muslims.

00:34:07 Speaker 2

In this sense, Nasser's regime paradoxically helped give birth to a strain of radical thought that threatened not only the integrity of the brotherhood, but also the regime itself.

00:34:18 Speaker 2

I wish to highlight this reciprocal formation of ideology because the brothers and the free officers are too often treated as opponents, or even as opposites,

00:34:27 Speaker 2

when historically they were not only at times in close alliance, but were in fact shaped by the very same conditions that produced the revolutionary moment of post-colonial Egypt.

00:34:40 Speaker 2

My intervention naturally raises the question of sources, that is, on what basis can I even challenge these dormant dominant narratives of the present years.

00:34:49 Speaker 2

I therefore now want to turn to the second part of my talk,

00:34:53 Speaker 2

Namely, the sources that help us shed light on the prison experiences of the brothers.

00:34:59 Speaker 2

Traditionally, scholarship on the brotherhood's prison years focused almost exclusively on the phenomenon of radicalization, framing the prison years as a contest between two books, say Gudlup's Milestones, which you see here in the middle, and the counter-response on the right, Preachers Not Judges.

00:35:18 Speaker 2

By confining their analysis to legal and theological debates, studies by scholars

00:35:22 Speaker 2

have overlooked sources that illuminate the broader experiences of the brothers.

00:35:27 Speaker 2

Although some scholars have addressed these wider experiences, they have devoted disproportionate attention to a very small number of figures, most notably Sayyid Qutb, but also Hassan Al-Hudaybi, Abdel Hamid Kishk, and Yusuf al-Qaradab.

00:35:41 Speaker 2

Strikingly, the most studied prisoner is a woman, Zainab al-Ghazali, who led the movement known as the Muslim Ladies, Sayyidad, and Muslim Ads.

00:35:50 Speaker 2

Her prison memoir, I Am in Hayati, Days of My Life, which you see here on the right, remains the only such account translated into English, a fact that likely accounts for the disproportionate attention that she has received, compared to that not only of brothers, of other brothers, but also of other sisters, in fact.

00:36:09 Speaker 2

As a matter of fact, the three books you see here have for years been considered representative of the experiences of the brotherhood.

00:36:18 Speaker 2

But contrary to the vast number of imprisoned members of the brotherhood, figures such as Gotto Balhudaibi and El Razali were largely kept in isolation, far from the daily imprisoned life of their peers.

00:36:30 Speaker 2

Their experiences, I think, were in many ways peripheral to those of their fellow brothers.

00:36:35 Speaker 2

Placing undue focus on such leadership figures has had the unintended effect of muscling the voices of those rank-and-file members who made-up the vast majority of the imprisoned brothers.

00:36:45 Speaker 2

They have often remained nameless and seemingly powerless,

00:36:48 Speaker 2

although they were the ones most crucial in steering the development of the Brotherhood.

00:36:53 Speaker 2

But where do we find these supposedly voiceless voices of the brothers?

00:36:58 Speaker 2

Well, shortly after Nasser's death, and when a Sadab dissolved the former mass party, he burned thousands of police files and released hundreds of political prisoners, including members of the Brotherhood.

00:37:09 Speaker 2

Thus, in what the acclaimed writer Tawfik al-Hakim famously termed a return of consciousness, Egypt witnessed a rare period of intellectual freedom.

00:37:17 Speaker 2

that allowed the brothers to publish their own accounts of their experiences inside the prisons.

00:37:23 Speaker 2

Through a consortium of new publishing houses, the brotherhood began printing the first major wave of prison memoirs in the mid-1970s.

00:37:31 Speaker 2

Profiting from export sales to the Gulf, where exile members constituted a large share of the readership, the brothers were later able to finance a second and then a third wave of memoirs to appear in the 80s and the 90s.

00:37:44 Speaker 2

This revived publishing industry granted previously silenced voices sudden access to the literary scene, and hundreds of released brothers seized the opportunity to recount their lives behind bars in Egypt.

00:37:57 Speaker 2

Since then, hundreds of memoirs have appeared, either in Egypt or in sites of exile such as Beirut, Amman, Kuwait, and Istanbul.

00:38:06 Speaker 2

Given the continued policing of the Egyptian national archives,

00:38:10 Speaker 2

Prison memoirs offer a unique alternative to state archives, intelligence files, and prison registers that have long remained completely inaccessible to researchers in Egypt.

00:38:21 Speaker 2

So allow me to present just a small sample illustrating the breadth of this literature.

00:38:28 Speaker 2

At one end of the spectrum are the earliest memoirs, some written inside prison and left unpublished for years, such as those here by Hassan al-Banna's brother, Gamal al-Banna,

00:38:40 Speaker 2

a memoir that was written on cigarette paper in the 40s, or works that appeared during the brief interlude of political openness in the 1950s.

00:38:49 Speaker 2

This is the case with the memoirs of Mohammad Labib al-Bouhi, printed in limited runs on low-quality paper, making them fragile, easily damaged, and today increasingly rare as they circulated within and beyond Egypt.

00:39:02 Speaker 2

By the 1970s and 1980s, new forms emerged, including works like Gabid Risk's Accounts of the Present Years,

00:39:10 Speaker 2

which often incorporated interviews with brothers who themselves never wrote memoirs.

00:39:16 Speaker 2

The corpus also includes a substantial body of fiction, such as Nagib al-Khilani's celebrated novel, Rikla ila Allah, as well as collections of prison poetry by figures such as Hassan Nadaw.

00:39:30 Speaker 2

More unusual genres appear as well.

00:39:33 Speaker 2

We have collections of hymns, we have several prison plays,

00:39:37 Speaker 2

and even an anthology of prison jokes collected by one brother.

00:39:42 Speaker 2

Perhaps the most peculiar piece is a science fiction play by Ahmed Raif titled Al-Baud al-Khaimis, The Fifth Dimension.

00:39:49 Speaker 2

Written and performed in Abu Sabil Penitentiary in the 1960s and introduced by Mohammed Gutob, the play tells the story of an unlikely trio who, at the height of the Cold War, decided to leave planet Earth in a spaceship and resettle in a utopian society on Mars, a society

00:40:07 Speaker 2

a society that in Ahmed al-Raif's rendition appears distinctly Islamist.

00:40:15 Speaker 2

At the other end of the spectrum, we have works of theology and law, written or at least developed during incarceration, most notably by the brothers, Sayyid and Muhammad Qutb.

00:40:26 Speaker 2

Another noteworthy example is the work of Abd al-Hamid al-Khafaghi, which includes transcripts of prison debates between communists and brothers.

00:40:36 Speaker 2

There also exists a small but significant body of prison memoirs by sisters, which in many respects challenge the dominant narratives associated with Zainab al-Ghazali.

00:40:45 Speaker 2

Finally, by the 1990s, prison memoirs increasingly appeared through mainstream publishers such as Dada Shurouk, alongside more encyclopedic works, including bibliographical dictionary of so-called martyrs, that is, the roughly 50 brothers who lost their lives inside the prisons of Egypt.

00:41:04 Speaker 2

And yet, despite the wealth of prison memoirs, there must be no doubt that studying life inside prison poses problems, both practical and methodological, for any historian of modern Egypt.

00:41:16 Speaker 2

First, prison memoirs are products of memory, not unbiased eyewitness accounts, and therefore represent only a selective strand of the history of the brotherhood.

00:41:25 Speaker 2

Brothers were often compelled to record their recollections years after the events in question,

00:41:30 Speaker 2

further complicating efforts to distinguish retrospective interpretation from contemporaneous observation.

00:41:37 Speaker 2

Even after their release, many faced continued obstacles in documenting their experiences, as security services sometimes confiscated their manuscripts, as they did free times with Zainab al-Ghazali's now famous memoir, Days of My Life.

00:41:54 Speaker 2

A second problem is that the prison memoir as a genre

00:41:57 Speaker 2

has emerged as a site of significant ideological condensation within the brotherhood.

00:42:03 Speaker 2

Memoirs often reflect their authors' concern to testify, demonstrating a clear desire among brothers to take control of their own narrative, rather than being represented through the writings of foreign historians like myself, common as cellmates, or Nazarists.

00:42:18 Speaker 2

At the same time, memoirs also became a battlefield on which authors could pursue unresolved personal feuds,

00:42:25 Speaker 2

refine their ideological positions or compete with rival movements in Egypt.

00:42:30 Speaker 2

Within the religious marketplace of the Islamic revival, claiming the mark of imprisonment through graphic memoirs became one way for members to assert their moral authority in competition with like-minded groups, contending to represent Islam in modern Egypt.

00:42:44 Speaker 2

And yet, the fiercer struggles actually unfolded within the brotherhood itself, as the prison memoir quickly gave rise to a distinct strand of revisionist historiography championed by dissenting brothers.

00:42:55 Speaker 2

Ahmed Raif's publishing house, established in the early 80s, stood at the forefront of this trend, releasing several memoirs that dealt with sensitive subjects such as the phenomenon of prison radicalism in the 60s.

00:43:08 Speaker 2

They often provoked sharp backlash from senior brothers who condemned the memoirs as premature, as they said, or as a course of further demonization of the brotherhood.

00:43:18 Speaker 2

Producing critical memoirs could come at considerable personal cost, and several authors, including Raif himself,

00:43:24 Speaker 2

were branded as traitors by the Brotherhood.

00:43:27 Speaker 2

However, as Raif used to say, quoting Aristotle, Plato is my friend, but the truth is dearer to me than to Plato.

00:43:35 Speaker 2

Than Plato, sorry.

00:43:37 Speaker 2

Problems such as the fragility of memory and the politics of infighting pose significant challenges to a study such as mine, which relies heavily on the memoir tradition of the Brotherhood.

00:43:47 Speaker 2

I therefore now turn to the third question of my talk.

00:43:50 Speaker 2

That is, how can we critically assess the accounts of the brothers?

00:43:54 Speaker 2

Despite what one might assume, there are few official accounts with which to challenge the individual narratives of the brothers.

00:44:01 Speaker 2

As the late historian Hussam Tamam pointed out, the brotherhood itself has produced surprisingly few official histories, far fewer than one might expect from an organization

that is nearly 100 years old and has expanded geographically from North America to South Asia.

00:44:18 Speaker 2

Beyond the very real fear of repression, there are several reasons why the movement, I think, has produced so little historical writing, including a long-standing privileging of the spoken word over the written, the limited formal education of many members, and a religious concern about sparking decision within the brotherhood.

00:44:36 Speaker 2

For these reasons, several leading brothers chose to record their memoirs on cassette tapes rather than commit them to writing, and to this very day, those recordings remain in the hands of trusted friends outside Egypt.

00:44:48 Speaker 2

We must therefore look to other sources to make sense of and to challenge the accounts of the brothers.

00:44:54 Speaker 2

I have identified 2 main categories of such sources which help address a critical methodological question that lays at the heart of my book, namely how can we as historians get access to, let alone claim to speak historically about, events within one of the most heavily guarded institutions in the Middle East, that is the prison of modern autocratic Egypt.

00:45:16 Speaker 2

So the first category encompasses what I call government sources, that is, materials that highlight the workings of the state and that are published and therefore lie outside the confines of the Egyptian national archives.

00:45:28 Speaker 2

These include the prison magazine as Sojoun, published in the 50s and the 60s and which contained contributions by both prison officials and prisoners, including brothers.

00:45:40 Speaker 2

This magazine forms part of a larger corpus of technical or

00:45:45 Speaker 2

bureaucratic magazines that emerged in revolutionary Egypt, such as this one by the armed forces, which provide insight into the state dealings with or perception of the brotherhood.

00:45:56 Speaker 2

We also possess memoirs by government officials, ministers, and intelligence officers who dealt directly with the imprisoned brothers.

00:46:03 Speaker 2

Apart from autobiographies published by members of the Free Officers, the most noteworthy examples are the memoirs of intelligence officers Hassan Tawat,

00:46:13 Speaker 2

and both of whom worked on investigating the Brotherhood under Nazr.

00:46:20 Speaker 2

Lastly, this category includes a substantial body of reports.

00:46:24 Speaker 2

For example, the complete seven-volume transcripts of the Brotherhood's court trials of the 50s, which have been meticulously studied by the historian Johann Meiter.

00:46:34 Speaker 2

Even more significant, it also encompasses the publications of the Prison Service and the Interior Ministry, including, and we have

00:46:42 Speaker 2

registers, as you see here.

00:46:43 Speaker 2

We have published annual reports, and we have prison population statistics, all of which help contextualize the prison lives of the brothers.

00:46:55 Speaker 2

For example, annual reports such as this one that you see here from 1962 help us trace the transfer of brothers within the prison system of Egypt.

00:47:04 Speaker 2

So this particular report not only reveals that the Interior Ministry

00:47:10 Speaker 2

operated with an entirely new category of prisoner in the 1960s, those classified under the term amendakheli, or internal security.

00:47:20 Speaker 2

But, as you see here, it also shows that this category numbered in the hundreds, and that this

00:47:36 Speaker 2

A type of prisoner was concentrated in two prisons, namely Al-Wahad and Al-Qarnatir, which also happened to house the majority of the most radical brothers.

00:47:46 Speaker 2

The second category of sources encompasses what may be termed general prison writings, that is, prison literature produced by journalists, leftist activists, and foreigners who were unaffiliated with the brotherhood, but who became observers of or interlocutors with the brothers.

00:48:01 Speaker 2

While ordinary prisoners were isolated from the brothers,

00:48:04 Speaker 2

Political prisoners were at times in close contact with them, thereby offering a distinct perspective on events within the Brotherhood.

00:48:12 Speaker 2

Written in Arabic, in French, and in Hebrew, this body of literature includes communist prison memoirs such as those by Ilham Saif al-Nassr, Sonallah Ibrahim, and Dida Fausi Rossano, as well as the rare memoirs of figures like Ahmed Al-Zukum,

00:48:30 Speaker 2

who actually shifted his allegiance in prison from the Brotherhood to the Egyptian Communist Party.

00:48:36 Speaker 2

It also includes the four-volume prison memoirs of the acclaimed journalist Mustafa Amin, whose cell was actually adjacent to that of Hassan al-Dabi, and they had many conversations, as well as the memoirs of the Zionist Robert Dasser and the anti-Zionist Jew Alfar Adiyeh, who recently died in Cairo.

00:48:58 Speaker 2

Perspectives of imprisoned communists and Zionists are further preserved in the archives of their respective organizations, including the Jewish Research Archives in New York and the Egyptian Communist in Exile Collection at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam.

00:49:15 Speaker 2

These archives have proven especially valuable, as they often contain direct correspondence with imprisoned members, some of whom offer detailed reports on the activities of the brothers.

00:49:27 Speaker 2

Although these sources suffer from methodological limitations that are similar to those found in the writings of the brothers, the shared experiences of prisoners help illuminate what it meant to live under conditions of political imprisonment in Egypt.

00:49:39 Speaker 2

Even sources that are marked by strong antipathy toward the brotherhood, when read critically, I fame, yield significant information about life behind bars that are otherwise completely absent from accounts of the brothers themselves.

00:49:52 Speaker 2

I argue that drawing on and juxtaposing these diverse and at times conflicting sources provide an alternative point of entry into the prison institution itself, an approach that is essential for reconstructing the history of the Brotherhood's prison years.

00:50:09 Speaker 2

This brings me to the fourth and final and broader question of my presentation, namely, how should we understand the relationship between the prison institution and the historical development not only of the Brotherhood,

00:50:21 Speaker 2

but of Islamism more broadly.

00:50:24 Speaker 2

When the brothers were released in the mid-1970s, their situation was far removed from what it had been in 1948, or even in 1954.

00:50:34 Speaker 2

Former prisoners recall how difficult the first years after their release were.

00:50:38 Speaker 2

Many struggled to reconnect with family members, secure employment, or even find a place to live.

00:50:44 Speaker 2

Most were more preoccupied with reintegrating into society than with rebuilding the organization of the brotherhood.

00:50:51 Speaker 2

And some instead began new lives in self-imposed exile in Europe or the Gulf.

00:50:58 Speaker 2

Those who remained in Egypt, however, were struck by the new wave of religiosity that was sweeping society.

00:51:03 Speaker 2

Cassette sermons played continuously in buses and in kiosks.

00:51:07 Speaker 2

Headscarves became fashionable, even among bourgeois women.

00:51:11 Speaker 2

And medieval religious texts, such as those by Ibn Daymiyya and Ibn Ghayyim and Tosiyya, were sold at unprecedented rates in Cairo.

00:51:21 Speaker 2

Although the atmosphere was invigorating, it also carried an unsettling realization.

00:51:26 Speaker 2

Was the Islamic revival of the 1970s the product of the Brotherhood's own missionary efforts dating back to the 1930s, or did it actually emerge largely independent of the imprisoned brothers?

00:51:37 Speaker 2

Put differently, was it the political project of Islamism or the competing religious orientation of Zanafism that proved so crucial to the resurgence of religion in Egypt?

00:51:49 Speaker 2

The Islamic revival directly challenged the central claim of radicals like Sayyid and Muhammad Qutb, namely that society had abandoned Islam.

00:51:56 Speaker 2

That was simply not the case.

00:51:59 Speaker 2

Instead, it reinforced the Brotherhood's more gradualist view that education, not violent revolution, was the proper path to Islamization.

00:52:08 Speaker 2

This paradoxically was the exact strategy that enabled competing Salafi organizations, perhaps most notably Ansara Sunnah al-Muhammadiyyah, to avoid imprisonment altogether.

00:52:18 Speaker 2

and to immerse as influential religious actors in their own right in Egypt.

00:52:24 Speaker 2

By contrast, successive waves of repression in the 1980s and 1990s, and most dramatically following the overflow of Mohammed Morsi in 2013, continued to suggest that engagement in institutional politics, even peaceful electoral participation and victory, entailed profound risks for the Brotherhood.

00:52:44 Speaker 2

These painful experiences may therefore help explain the shifting religious landscape of Egypt.

00:52:48 Speaker 2

most notably the popular displacement of Islamism by Salafism.

00:52:52 Speaker 2

Today, more than a decade after the Arab Spring, over 45,000 brothers remain imprisoned across Egypt.

00:52:59 Speaker 2

Some have been executed or have died under torture.

00:53:02 Speaker 2

Others have been convicted in mass trials, while the vast majority remain today in prolonged pre-trial detention with little hope of release under what has turned out to be the increasingly repressive rule of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

00:53:15 Speaker 2

they have, so to speak, entered their 4th ordeal.

00:53:21 Speaker 2

How prison as an institution has shaped and defined political ideology such as Islamism is a question whose exploration can only deepen our understanding of modern political Islam.

00:53:30 Speaker 2

I have actually been hard-pressed myself to identify a single prominent Islamist who has not experienced prison, from Rashida al-Hanushi in Tunisia, to leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood's branches in Syria, in Jordan, and Iraq, to Palestinian Islamists in Israel,

00:53:46 Speaker 2

and to Abu Aleh and Maududi and his movement in Pakistan.

00:53:50 Speaker 2

Likewise, examining how the prison embodied, enacted, and exploited the coercive power of the state may help explain the later fascination among some Islamists, beginning in the 1950s, with capturing, disciplining, and mobilizing the awesome powers of the modern bureaucratic state in pursuit of their own particular interpretations of Islam.

00:54:10 Speaker 2

More broadly, we might think of the violent encounters between Islamist movements and newly decolonialized states as blueprints for how those very states came to manage dissent in the 20th and 21st centuries.

00:54:24 Speaker 2

In many cases, Islamists were, in fact, among the first subjects on whom states tested their methods of discipline, while prisons became laboratories for refining and continually reinventing, even experimenting with techniques of repression.

00:54:38 Speaker 2

I would welcome the opportunity to explore these and other questions further in discussion, but for now, I simply hope that my book serves as an invitation to examine more closely the relationship between castle institutions and Islamism.

00:54:52 Speaker 2

Thank you.