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Dr. Amr Darrag  
Testimonies and Reviews - 2



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## Dr. Amr Darrag: Testimonies and Reviews - 2

### Introduction

In his introduction to this series of episodes, Dr. Amr Darrag said, “The events and stations I have undergone took seventeen full episodes to cover, each one lasting for nearly one hour... Despite the effort I have exerted in completing this production, I enjoyed it so much. It, really, revived my memory and even my emotions and feelings while I was narrating the most important events over my whole life in this short span of time, reviewing my most important experiences, successes, or failures, which, shed a lot of light, in a panoramic way, on an important stage of the nation’s history, through my modest narration.”

In [Part 1](#) of Dr. Amr Darrag’s Testimonies and Reviews ([First Episode](#)), he talked about the early years of his childhood which greatly influenced his character in the afterwards. Dr. Darrag also shed light on the political atmosphere during the Nasserite period which witnessed a complete closure in Egypt’s political arena at the time. The first episode ended with Dr. Amr saying that after Abdel Nasser’s death, he noticed that his mother, his female relatives, and women in general were wearing black clothes, to express their sadness, adding that Nasser’s funeral scene was also a kind of expression on the people's part of their feelings towards the death of the “leader”.

### Second Episode:

In the [second episode](#) of the series of episodes that the London-based Al-Hiwar TV has broadcast (within a program titled: “Reviews”), interviewing Dr. Amr Darrag, the Egyptian Minister of Planning and International Cooperation in the government of Dr. Hisham Qandil - Dr. Darrag continued to talk about the early years of his upbringing. He emphasized the efficiency of the educational process in the government-owned schools at this time, where he received his secondary education. He said that Salah

Abu Ismail (1927-1990) was his teacher of the Arabic language. (Salah Abu Ismail was a prominent Azhar scholar at the time and later became a member of Egyptian parliament. Salah Abu Ismail is also father of Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, the well-known lawyer, politician, and presidential candidate after the January Revolution, who was sent to prison after the coup d'état led by Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi in July 2013.)

He added that his teacher of French was actually a French national, pointing out that the educational process was free of the current complexity of education. Dr. Darrag said he was fond of reading, and finished reading many of the novels of Naguib Mahfouz, Youssef Sibaie and others, which positively affected the quality of his Arabic language. At that time, watching television did not take up much of the time and interest of people as it is the case today. However, Dr. Darrag was only allowed to watch selected TV programs at weekends, particularly on Thursday and Friday.

Regarding his interest in politics and public affairs, Dr. Amr Darrag, who is currently the Chairman of the Egyptian Institute for Studies (EIS), said he did not engage in politics from an Islamic perspective, but his interest in politics was a general concern, shaped by his early follow-up of the defeat of June, 1967 and its repercussions, as well as the subsequent transformations from Nasser's rule to Sadat's rule and the development of the Palestine Cause and Zionism. Dr. Darrag said that during the Nasserite era there were political detainees, including Dr. Ahmed al-Malt, one of his relatives and a prominent Brotherhood leader at that time. However, his family used to whisper about Al-Malt's conditions in prison, as the main concern of all people then was to remove the shame of defeat and the bad effects of Israeli aggression inflicted on everyone.

In general, religion was not present in the scene at the time, amid moral decay, indecent clothing of women, and fear from going to the mosque, which were the general features of the Egyptian society. Even Dr. Darrag was not aware that there were prayers performed in mosques other than the (weekly) Friday prayers; as his



father used to perform his prayers at home, except the Friday prayers, which they performed at the mosque.

At high school, Dr. Amr was interested in the English and French singing, and joined a musical band for singing Western songs - as a singer, not a musician. Although this did not last for long, it had a positive effect on Dr. Amr's acquisition and proficiency of the English language. Among his memories about this period, Dr. Darrag said that the Gezira Sporting Club, Egypt's largest multi-sport facility of which he was a member, used to prevent little children (under 18) from remaining in the club after sunset, an indication of the moral standards that existed at that time. Despite the existence of wide-range mixed relations between young men and women at that time, however he, thanks to God, did not indulge in any improper relations of any kind.

One of the most influential figures to Dr. Darrag at that time was Mohamed Ahmed El Masry (1924-2003), the principal of the Saidia Secondary School, who was also a famous comedian at the Egyptian radio station, also known as Abu-Lamaa. However, as a secondary school principal, Abu Lamaa was very strict and successful. This greatly affected Dr. Amr throughout his life – and inspired him to take the proper action at the proper time.

This approach (the proper action at the proper time) was, according to Dr. Amr Darrag, represented by Abu Bakr Al-Seddiq, a senior companion of Prophet Mohamed and the first Caliph after His death. So, Abu Bakr was also one of the most important figures that influenced Dr. Darrag greatly in his life. Abu Bakr was known for his mercifulness and decisiveness at the same time. By fighting the apostates and rebels, Abu Bakr used the tools of power as the head of state to extend his authority, and gave up his tender feelings and kindness because of situation requirements. Therefore, for Dr. Amr, Abu Bakr has been the ideal character to follow in this regard. (The Ridda Wars, also known as the Wars of Apostasy, were a series of military campaigns launched by the first

Caliph Abu Bakr against rebel Arabian tribes during 632 and 633, directly after Prophet Mohamed died. However, most of these tribes were defeated and reintegrated into the Caliphate.)

Dr. Amr Darrag said that after Nasser's rule, the Nasserites used to ridicule his successor, Anwar Sadat; and most Egyptians composed and repeated jokes for mocking him. However, within one year, Sadat managed to get rid of all the supporters of the Nasserite stream, sent them all to in prison, and was able to control all joints of the state. These steps were a sign of a bold leader that addressed aspects of the system of governance and eliminated the centers of power, paving the way for major changes. Dr. Darrag said that at the beginning of his era, Sadat was known for his unfulfilled promises, which led the Egyptian people to come out with ridiculous jokes against him. Dr. Darrag went on to say that the left-wing movement, that controlled the student unions at the time, used to launch massive demonstrations at Cairo University. Also, the people were skeptical about the army's ability to achieve victory over Israel. However, victory in the October War increased Sadat's popularity and stabilized his regime. The people's morale then soared up until the Israeli penetration took place, driving Egyptians to disappointment, and leading to the Separation of Forces Agreement between Egypt and Israel; and ridiculously, the Egyptian leadership considered this a victory. (On October 16, 10 days after the start of the war, Israeli forces, under the command of Ariel Sharon, managed to penetrate Egyptian and Syrian defense lines and came within a shocking distance from Cairo, the Egyptian capital city.)

Back to Dr. Amr Darrag's personal experience, he pointed out that his ambition and awareness of what he wanted to achieve was influential in his life. While his family wanted him to become a physician by joining the Faculty of Medicine, he insisted on joining the Faculty of Engineering, adding that his dream since childhood was to

become an engineer. In this regard, Dr. Darrag referred to Hassan Al-Banna's book "Memoirs of the (Islamic) Call and the Preacher" and recalled an essay that Al-Banna wrote in his graduation exam at the Faculty of Dar Al-Olum, in which he meticulously formulated his dream (to establish a major Islamic movement) which he later achieved. Finally, Dr. Darrag stressed the importance of helping our children to draw and build up their future dreams, so that they could achieve success in life.

