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2021



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Ikhtiar 2: When the magic turns on the magician

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The episodes of the Egyptian serial "Ikhtiar 2", which is being aired during the holy month of Ramadan this year, have sparked much controversy and rage, especially after the fifth episode that was dedicated to showing scenes from the dispersal of the Rab'a Al-Adawiya and Al-Nahda sit-ins, as well as other protests in various Egyptian squares, where hundreds of thousands of anti-coup demonstrators took to the streets in protest against overthrowing Egypt's first democratically elected president.

The events of the TV series shocked many opponents, especially those who lived through these bloody moments that left thousands of victims among protesters, as well as the arrest of tens of thousands. The scenes shown by the TV serial have revived the events of the massacre and awakened grief in the hearts of the families of victims, where the tears of orphans, bereaved families, and widows have barely dried up until this moment. The missing persons have not returned to their homes, the detainees have not been released, and the killers have not been held accountable, being in control of all the state's institutions and joints.

The Ikhtiar 2 episodes has also brought back to the front the societal division over the massacre of the century, the Rab'a Al-Adawiya massacre, where controversy around it has barely subsided eight years on. The Human Rights Watch report, titled "[All According to Plan: The Rab'a Massacre and Mass Killings of Protesters in Egypt](#)" issued on August 12, 2014, described the Rab'a sit-in massacre as "one of the world's largest killings of demonstrators in a single day in recent history" and "... the gravest incident of mass protester killings". The HRW report also stated that the crimes committed against peaceful protesters "most likely amount to crimes against humanity". Moreover, the report "identified more than a dozen of the most senior leaders in the chain of command who should be investigated for their roles in these killings, including Interior Minister Ibrahim, then-Defense Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, and the Special Forces head and commander of the Rab'a operation, Medhat Menshawy," adding, "Where there is evidence of responsibility, these individuals should be held individually accountable for the planning and execution or failing to prevent the anticipated widespread and systematic killings of demonstrators." Therefore, the Egyptian regime has always sought evading responsibility for the massacre using all possible ways.

Manipulation of events

The Egyptian military regime has not been satisfied with killing the peaceful demonstrators that rejected the military coup of 3 July 2013 in Rabaa Al-Adawiya Square, Al-Nahda Square and Egyptian streets by systematically opening fire with live ammunition on them, setting the bodies of the victims and the injured on fire, as happened in Rab'a and Al-Nahda, but it has also transferred the battle to every Egyptian home (by airing this biased serial that only relies on the narrative of the security forces) during the holy month of Ramadan, in attempt to evade responsibility for the bloodshed that has haunted the regime for years.

To achieve this, they falsified reality through a fake scenario that has nothing to do with the truth, and exploited extremely popular TV and cinema stars to justify the crimes committed by the military in these massacres. The series is orchestrated by the United Media Services company, headed by Tamer Morsi, and produced by the Synergy Art Production, also headed by Tamer Morsi, the media arm of Egyptian security services and owner of the Egyptian Media Group and Di Media company.

After the security services took control of TV production companies and satellite channels, they greatly focused on improving the mental image of the army and police forces that committed crimes against the Egyptian people, by highlighting an allegation that all opponents of the Sisi regime are criminals, Muslim Brotherhood, or enemies of the homeland. They even considered any criticism of the government or the country's deteriorating conditions as tantamount to total treason, and critics as traitors, agents of the enemy, or terrorists. The objective behind all this is to ensure that the regime would remain as long as possible, and that it would not be held accountable for the bloodshed and the arbitrary arrests that have continued for years.

The problem with the Ikhtiar 2 series is that it is not only an artistic work aimed at beautifying the ugly face of the military regime and acquitting Sisi and the junta commanders from the bloodshed of innocent people, but because it is tantamount to a declaration of a new war on the relatives of the massacre victims, the detainees, the displaced, and those who have fled abroad for fear of the oppression of the regime.

The events narrated by the series are aimed at falsification of the audience's public awareness through attempting to repair the ugly picture of the police, the media and the judiciary, and everyone that

participated in the killing of peaceful demonstrators in the minds of Egyptians, with the aim of protecting and immunizing them from any responsibility of the blood that was shed during the dispersal of the sit-ins and the protests and events that followed. The series is also an attempt to attract and exploit the emotions of the average Egyptian citizen who might be dazzled by the heroic image embodied by popular stars such as Ahmed Mekki and Karim Abdel Aziz.

Ahmed Mekki

The participation of the actor Ahmed Mekki in the Ikhtiar 2 series has enraged many of his fans since he posted a shot for one of the scenes on his personal page on social networking sites. After four years of absence, Mekki's role in the series was considered by opponents as a participation in the falsification of the events that occurred during the dispersal of the Rab'a and al-Nahda sit-ins in 2013.

In fact, Mekki had a neutral stance in most of the political events that Egypt has gone through since the 25 January revolution (2011), through the period before and immediately after the coup and the regime's abuse of the opposition, and he was different from other actors that have been used for years to demonize the opposition in favor of the regime. Therefore, the regime took advantage of this and pushed Mekki to play a central role in Ikhtiar 2 that would be more influential than other stars that used to be tools in the hands of the regime, such as Karim Abdel Aziz, Ahmed Ezz, or others.

In the series, Mekki plays the role of a police officer, Yousef al-Rifai, who participated in the dispersal of the Rab'a al-Adawiya Square sit-in in 2013. One of the most famous statements Mekki reiterated over and over again in the episodes aired so far was, "The problem is that the culture of difference no longer exists between us. You are completely different from me, so you are my enemy; and accordingly, killing you is permissible (legitimate) for me." The strange thing here is that this is indeed the approach adopted by the Egyptian regime in dealing with opponents, where the scriptwriter wanted to generalize it to include all critics of the government.

Karim Abdel Aziz

Observers of the works in which Karim Abdel Aziz has participated over the last ten years know well that he does everything dictated to him by authorities in a way that contradicts the nature of his mission and even his works before that period, most notably a series titled, "Escape", which was aired

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in the month of Ramadan in 2012, where Karim succeeded to highlight the suffering of thousands of Egyptian youths who have been victims of torture at the headquarters of the National Security Sector. He played the role of a simple Egyptian young man called Mahmoud who was arrested and charged in a fabricated political case that he had nothing to do with, and he accordingly suffered the most horrific types of torture at one of the State Security headquarters, including electrocution that led to the death of one of his colleagues in the same case. Abdel Aziz participated in several movies and series in the same context, such as "Abu Ali" and "One of the People", highlighting aspects of corruption in the police system.

But in the Ikhtiar 2 series, Karim Abdel Aziz contradicted these roles by playing the role of the perpetrator (the National Security Officer) by playing the role of a National Security officer, Zakaria Younes. In the first episode of the series, during an investigation conducted by Younes with one of the young men who were arrested and brought to one of the National Security headquarters, the National Security officer said: "Since your comrades were arrested, there have been no electric shocks," adding: "Look, Shaker. I will tell you a story that happened to me in 2009. When I was transferred to the State Security Sector (before the sector's name was changed to National Security Sector), there was a 16-year-old boy who was arrested in the house of one of the takfiris. When I investigated him, the boy denied any relation to the takfiri while crying and repeating: 'I am innocent', so I released him; but after one week, the same boy was accused of exploding a tourist bus in the Al-Azhar area."

The audience cannot also forget the beginnings of Karim Abdel Aziz when he filmed a shocking inappropriate footage with actress Ilham Shahin in a movie titled, "Madness of Life" in 2000. Tracking Abdel Aziz's works, we find that he can coexist with all circumstances and all regimes, without feeling the slightest problem in that; so, it is not surprising that he has participated in a series that targets distorting the largest massacre in Egypt's modern history, with disregard of the pains of families of victims or their children, while showing pride in killing and torturing peaceful protesters.

Attempt to link Rab'a dispersal to Sinai events

The events of the series manipulate the mentality of the audience by fraud and fabrication of events and scenes, especially the deliberate mixing between the events taking place in the Sinai Peninsula (the confrontations between the army and militants there) and the events of the dispersal of the

Rab'a sit-in. The writer of the series focuses on highlighting the heroism and sacrifice of the army and police killed in the Sinai, and then links this to the events of the sit-in dispersal, in attempt to hold the anti-military coup demonstrators responsible for what is happening in Sinai and accordingly justify killing them and setting their bodies on fire, in addition to the arbitrary arrests during dispersal of the sit-ins.

A failed attempt

The Ikhtiar 2 series is a failed attempt to distort historical realities, because it addressed historical events that are not far away, being only 8 years old, where eyewitnesses still live, and relatives of victims are still suffering until the moment. In fact, the real events of the dispersal of the Rab'a massacre were aired live from the square at the time, documented through hundreds of videos and photos. The official death toll that was announced by the Egyptian regime itself was the largest in Egypt's modern history.

Although the main objective of the Ikhtiar 2 series is to erase the memory of the Rab'a massacre from people's minds and falsify its events, the reactions confirm that magic has turned on the magician, as the series revived all the real scenes, documentation and testimonies of the Rab'a dispersal massacre in the minds of the Egyptian people. The Rab'a massacre will remain alive in the conscience of the whole world, as no one can forget the scenes of killing and burning of innocents by the police and army forces under the auspices of the Egyptian military institution and upon direct orders from then Minister of Defense Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Egyptian opposition

The regime's deliberate attempts to falsify historical realities and distort the peaceful sit-ins that protested the military coup and demanded restoration of democracy and the country's first democratically elected president, place an obligation on opponents to document the crimes that the police and army forces committed against peaceful protesters.

After all these sacrifices made for the sake of a just cause, it is not acceptable for Egyptians to remain idle and allow falsification of historical realities before their eyes. The series targets erasing the Rab'a massacre carried out by the military from people's memory through a handful of actors and writers. However, the regime's mass killings amount to crimes against humanity that are not subject to statute of limitations, nor to manipulation via TV serials orchestrated by security services.