

Political social media in Egypt is now a joke (guest-blog)

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Mubarak Mashup

During the 18 day Egyptian uprising, posts and discussions on social media focused on disseminating information and advice and advocating for Mubarak's resignation. Since February 11, this focus has shifted to interpreting and expressing what has happened. Jokes are one way people are using to get their message across, writes [Elizabeth Iskander](#), a research fellow at the LSE International Relations Department.

Egyptians are using the Internet as a supplementary space to comprehend and think out loud about the huge shift that has taken place in their country, as well as the challenges that lay ahead.

There are serious discussions circulating, and new groups being created to campaign for and against different constitutional amendments, to create new political movements and parties and discuss various aspects of building a new political and social culture.

Even the Supreme Military Council that has taken over political power now has its own official Facebook page. Less than 24 hours after its creation, the page had 89,627 fans.

But despite the gravity of the situation, and proliferation of such groups and pages, humour has become one of the main ways that Egyptians on Facebook are expressing their reactions to the revolution and its implications. Immediate reactions to Mubarak's resignation focused on mocking him.

In [one Youtube clip](#), Mubarak's final speech has a voice over repeating "mesh hamsy"—I won't leave—over and over until finally he says, "ok, ok, I will go to Sharm al-Sheikh!"

But the most discussed figure since February 11 has not been Mubarak or Field Marshall Hussein Tantawi who heads the military council, but a previously unknown figure who has become known as, "the man who was standing behind Omar Suleiman". This moniker stems from his appearance with Suleiman during the announcement of Mubarak's resignation. He has quickly become an icon of the revolution and a Facebook group calling for this man to stand for president has 5,775 fans. He also has a song dedicated to him circulating on [Youtube](#) and Facebook.

So while the debate about the role of social media in the lotus revolution rages on, for the Egypt's Facebook generation themselves, social media was and continues to be a space for them to discuss their aspirations for their country and to express themselves both through serious debate and through humour.

Their reaction to those that scoff at the ability of youth resistance movements and groups that use Facebook as *one* of their for, is encapsulated in a video clip that has gone viral in the last 24 hours. The [video shows Gamal Mubarak](#), once heir to the presidential throne, answering a question asking his opinion on opposition movements such as April 6th and Facebook groups. He responded with mocking laughter. Both on Facebook and surely outside it, Egyptians are now having the last laugh.

Countless Facebook groups dedicated to the man behind Suleiman uploaded photoshop pictures of him appearing behind other figures, such as Hitler, the former Tunisian president and Saddam Hussein.

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"The man who was standing behind Omar Suleiman", later revealed to be Lieutenant Colonel Hussein Sharif, commander of Group 64 of Egyptian Special Forces.

