

News Briefs

Compiled by Trevor Metcalfe

AOL buys Huffington Post for \$310 million

AOL recently acquired online blog site Huffington Post for \$315 million in what founder Arianna Huffington called "the time to take leaps," in a recent blog announcement. Huffington said AOL's video and local news capabilities would help the blog expand their reach to new markets. She said she hoped to create a company that reaches a global audience and makes a significant impact. More than 25 million people visit the blog each month.

Egyptian journalist shot, died Friday

The Egyptian protests claimed their first journalist. Ahmad Mohamed Mahmoud, a photographer for the Al-Ta'awun newspaper, died from gunshot wounds received seven days before. The journalist was shot with a sniper rifle while filming a conflict between demonstrators and security forces near Tahrir Square.

Obama challenges business leaders

President Obama challenged business leaders to speed up the economic recovery in a speech to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He encouraged the leaders to increase hiring of American workers and encourage entrepreneurs. Obama also defended his health care overhaul and financial regulation bills.



Megan Dombroski - Campus Voice Editor

About 20 students gathered on the quad Thursday to show support for Egypt. They held candles and signs reading, "Today, we are all Egyptians," and "I am with you." The vigil was organized by UNCA students Maayan Schechter and Amarra Ghani.

Students hold vigil for protesting Egyptians

Trevor Metcalfe

temetcal@unca.edu
Asst. News Editor

UNC Asheville students and community members stood in support of protesting Egyptians at a candlelight vigil held on the quad Thursday.

"It's important for Egypt to know even a small town in North Carolina is doing something for them," said **Maayan Schechter, one of the organizers of the event.**

About 20 people held candles and some held signs reading "Today, we are all Egyptians" and "I am with you" while participants talked about the events in Egypt and their impact on themselves and the world.

"This is a human rights issue, not a religious issue," Schechter said.

UNCA freshman **Frank Meadows** said he was following the protests in Egypt, and attended the vigil to show his support for them.

"I thought it would be a good gesture," he said.

Schechter and **co-organizer Amarra Ghani** said the vigil honored those killed or injured in the recent protests, and said the protests were not just about the country's future in the Middle East.

"I think this is bigger than that," Schechter said.

Ghani said the event presented a chance to speak up for Egyptians, and a chance for the UNCA community to respond

to the events taking place in the country.

Samer Traboulsi, assistant professor of history at UNCA, said Egypt historically served as a leader for the Middle East in arts, music and cultural power until about 20 years ago.

"Historically, all modern innovations came from Egypt, and they spread through the rest of the Arab world," Traboulsi said.

However, Traboulsi said this cultural center then shifted from Egypt to states located in the Gulf region of the Middle East.

"Egypt basically lost this role completely in the Arab world, and this was during the regime of Mubarak," Traboulsi said.

Hosni Mubarak, the current Egyptian president, assumed control of the country after the assassination of president Anwar el-Sadat in 1981.

"Politically, Egypt lost its role completely to the Gulf states, which is a result of the interests of Western powers and Israel in keeping Egypt stable and calm," Traboulsi said. "Too much stability, too much calmness, if you want, caused by oppression from the ruling regime basically sidelined Egypt completely, and I believe this is the main reason Egyptians got totally frustrated."

Traboulsi said even though Egypt's role in the region declined with the rise of Mubarak, the president held control until the recent events in Tun-

isia. On Jan. 14, violent protests removed president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali from power, replacing him with prime minister Mohammed Ghannouchi.

Traboulsi said the revolt ended one of the most oppressive governments in the Middle East.

"When (the Egyptian people) saw that this actually happened, this triggered the whole process, and the popular uprising started," Traboulsi said.

Many opposition parties, which were banned from Egypt under Mubarak's rule, began to support the Egyptians as the demonstrations progressed, according to Traboulsi.

"If you look at the first three or four days, they were completely nonexistent in the movement," Traboulsi said. "It's after the fourth day that they joined in to make sure that the revolution continues and does not lose stamina."

Traboulsi said the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the major players in the Egyptian uprising, maintains a presence in many Middle Eastern countries. The Mubarak government banned the organization from openly practicing in Egypt after wins in elections held in 2000.

"In a way it's an organization," Traboulsi said. "In some countries like Jordan they are a (political) party. Most of the time they're an opposition party."

Traboulsi also said clarification is needed when discussing

the government forces involved in the revolts: the Egyptian army, the Central Security forces and the police.

The Egyptian army deals only with outside threats to the country's security, according to Traboulsi.

"Since 1973, the last war with Israel, the army has not really fought any war," Traboulsi said. "Since signing the peace treaty with Israel, the army has been reduced."

Traboulsi contrasted this with the role of Central Security, a military institution dedicated to keeping Mubarak in power.

"So, you have the external front with the army, and you have the internal front in case what you see now ever happened," Traboulsi said.

Traboulsi said the police force is responsible for daily interactions with the citizens of Egypt, and is also the most corrupt of the institutions.

"The police are the most visible, because they are there in the streets everyday, and the police are the most corrupt because they are the ones that deal with the people," Traboulsi said.

Traboulsi said the legacy of the rebellion depends on whether the protesters can oust Mubarak, or if he serves the full length of his remaining term.

"The clear legacy, for now, is that for the next 10 years, no ruler can rule in the Middle East with total disregard of popular opinion," Traboulsi said.