



Photo by Jorja Smith - Staff Photographer

A crowd gathered to hear Samer Traboulsi, UNCA associate professor of history, discuss the changing climate in Egypt following the resignation of their president two years ago.

Academic addresses political landscape of post-revolution Egypt

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Although Monday marked the second anniversary of the official resignation of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Egypt remains in a state of turmoil, with many opposing parties claiming a role in its constantly changing political scene, according to **Samer Traboulsi, associate professor of history at UNC Asheville.**

"It's in flux, like many places in the Middle East right now," said **Linda Cornett, chair of the political science department at UNCA.** "It's a changing time, and it creates lots of opportunities and lots of anxieties too."

Traboulsi, who conducts research on the history of pre-modern Middle East, spoke about post-revolution Egypt on Feb. 5 at UNCA's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the Reuter Center. The Western North Carolina World Affairs Council, OLLI and the department of political science co-sponsored a series of talks that included Traboulsi's speech.

"There was a good turnout," Cornett said. "It's a lively audience with a lot of experience, and it keeps the speakers on their toes."

Traboulsi told the audience about Egyptian police officials who beat young Khaled Saeed to death on June 6, 2010, after he filmed a police officer engaging in a drug deal. Wael Ghonim, another Egyptian, created a Facebook page to bring attention to the situation.

"This is really unique," said George Peery, president of the Western North Carolina World Affairs Council. "This is worth paying attention to."

Following the violent police attacks in 2010, an announcement on Facebook and Twitter prompted young Egyptians to protest in Tahrir Square on Jan. 25, 2011,

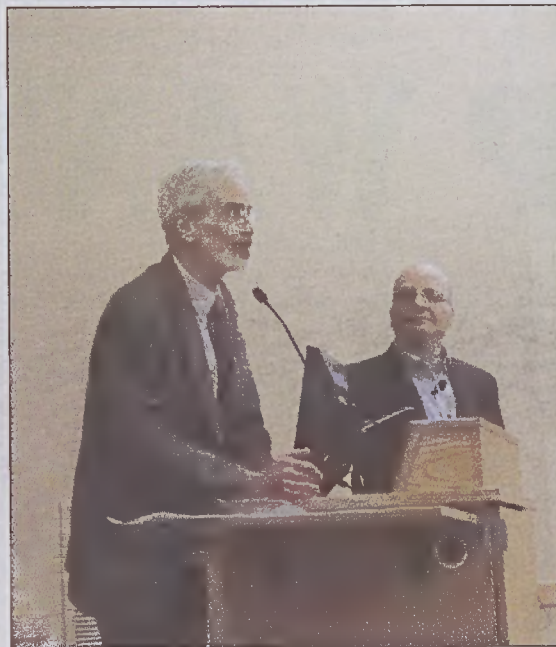


Photo by Jorja Smith - Staff Photographer

Samer Traboulsi talks about the state of knowledge of the Middle East within the last two years at the Reuter Center last Wednesday.

to which police forces retaliated violently, Traboulsi said.

"Youth movements are important often as instigators to political change, but they have less staying power than some more established institutions that also are often in the forefront of these movements but then stay there," said Cornett, a board member of the World Af-

fairs Council.

Responding to the protests in Cairo, Mubarak gave the first of three speeches on Jan. 28, 2011, to which citizens angrily showed the bottom of their shoes, a sign of disrespect. In an attempt to regain control following his second unsuccessful speech on Feb. 1, police officials riding on camels and horses attacked protestors in Tahrir Square in what became the Battle of the Camel on Feb. 2, until Mubarak officially resigned on Monday, following the third speech, Traboulsi said.

"Since then, of course, there's been this whole kind of Arab Spring, Arab Awakening," said Peery, a former political science professor at Mars Hill College. "What it will take is some kind of recognition that opposition voices are OK, but that somebody has to have enough power and enough agency and enough support to make decisions."

After Mubarak's resignation, a series of the first unrigged democratic votes in decades occurred. Voters passed constitutional amendments limiting presidential authority, including a ban on declaring a state of emergency, and participated in parliamentary elections. The Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's well-organized non-radical Islamists, took 47 percent of the parliamentary seats. The Al-Nur, or Light Party, Egypt's radical Islamists, took 25 percent, and the remaining seats went to independents, as dictated by Egyptian law, Traboulsi said.

"There is more support for seculars in the cities, but outside the city, there's a lot more support for the Muslim Brotherhood," said **Calvin Oppenheim, a resident of Weaverville who attended Traboulsi's speech.**

Although the secular youths instigated the protests that led to Mubarak's resignation, they only won two

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