

Cato Scholar and Former Interns Fight to Free Jailed Egyptian Blogger



“We must convince the human being of his individual sanctity, and that nothing surpasses him in importance and standing besides himself,” wrote Abdelkareem Nabil Soliman, or Kareem Amer as the online world knows him, on his blog in September 2006. He made many other posts in 2005 and 2006 that celebrated individual freedom, women’s rights, and secular government and protested fundamentalist Islam and the Egyptian government. Soliman today sits in a jail cell in his native Alexandria, Egypt, for his writings. On February 22, 2007, a judge sentenced him to three years in prison for the crime of insulting Islam and inciting sedition and one year for insulting Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.

A number of people affiliated with Cato, including senior fellow Tom G. Palmer and numerous current and former interns, have led a worldwide movement to publicize Soliman’s case, embarrass the Egyptian government, and ultimately free him.

The 23-year-old Soliman had been a law student at Al-Azhar University until he was expelled in March 2006 for criticizing the curriculum as contrary to free thought. That year Soliman also met Palmer at a conference, cosponsored by Cato, for bloggers in the Middle East. They stayed in contact through e-mail afterwards, and as a result Palmer was one of the first to hear when Soliman was summoned by the authorities last fall and ultimately detained.

Palmer told Soliman’s story in an op-ed with Raja Kamal of the University of Chicago that appeared in the February 21 *Washington Post*. A week later, the *Post* published an editorial, “Blogger on Ice,” which

drew further attention to Soliman’s case. The editorial blasted Soliman’s jailing as the “latest case in point” in Mubarak’s “relentless repression.”

Soliman also has an online network of friends concerned with individual liberty and human rights who came to his aid, many of whom met him at the Cato conference. Those friends started a website, freekareem.org, and an online petition.

Several former Cato interns have been active in the group, organizing and attending numerous demonstrations on behalf of Soliman at Egyptian embassies around the world. For example, April 27 saw rallies at embassies from Bucharest to New York, including a Washington, D.C., rally organized by current Cato intern Knud Berthelsen from Norway. Constantino Diaz-Duran, a graduate student at Columbia University and former Cato intern, is the group’s New York coordinator and has written about Soliman in the *Columbia Spectator* and the *New York Post*.

Diaz-Duran and others also administer the Free Kareem Amer! group on the online networking site, thefacebook.com. The group has more than 400 members, college students and others, who use it to communicate with each other about future rallies for Kareem.

Andrew Perraut, who began graduate studies at the London School of Economics following his internship at Cato, coordinates Free Kareem events in London. He finds it highly appropriate that so many former Cato interns have been involved. “What other group of interns could instigate a media firestorm and cause an international incident in the name of free speech?” he asks.

NEWS NOTES

Johan Norberg Joins Cato Institute as Senior Fellow

The Cato Institute is pleased to announce the addition of **JOHAN NORBERG** as a senior fellow. Norberg is a Swedish writer who focuses on globalization, entrepreneurship, and individual liberty.

Norberg is the author and editor of several books exploring liberal themes, including a history of liberal pioneers in Swedish history. His book *In Defense of Global Capitalism*,



originally published in Swedish in 2001, has been published in more than 20 different countries. The U.S. edition was published by the Cato Institute in 2003.

In Defense of Global Capitalism was awarded the Sir Antony Fisher International Memorial Award in 2002, and Norberg received a gold medal from the Friedrich August von Hayek Stiftung in Germany. The book also served as the basis for a television documentary on UK Channel 4 called “Globalization is good.”

His articles and opinion pieces appear regularly in both Swedish and international newspapers, and he is a regular commentator and contributor on television and radio around the world discussing globalization and free trade.

“Johan Norberg is a talented writer and communicator, and a passionate defender of globalization and individual liberty, so we’re delighted he’s decided to affiliate with Cato,” said Cato president Edward Crane. “We’ve worked with Johan on many occasions in the past, including publishing the English-language edition of his book *In Defense of Global Capitalism*, so we’re really excited about making our relationship a formal and ongoing one.”

Prior to joining Cato, Norberg was head of political ideas at Timbro, a Swedish free-market think tank, from 2003 to 2005. He then served as a senior fellow for the Brussels-based Centre for a New Europe during 2006. His most recent book is an analysis of entrepreneurship and innovation titled *När människan skapade världen (When Man Created the World)*. Published in Sweden in 2006, the book is now being translated into English.