

## RESISTANCE AGAINST THE AUTHORITARIANISM OF THE EGYPTIAN REGIME IN THE NOVEL *MUZAKKARAT FI SIJN AL-NISA'* BY NAWAL AL-SA'DAWI

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**Abstract:** This research aims to reveal the factors that led to the public's resistance against the Egyptian authorities in the novel *Muzakkarat Fi Sijn al-Nisa'* by Nawal Al-Sa'dawi. The issues presented in the novel are related to the inconsistency of the Egyptian authorities in implementing the democratic system they claimed to uphold, which in turn provoked resistance from the people. This study is a library research using a qualitative approach. The data in this study consist of words, phrases, and sentences related to the people's resistance against the Egyptian authorities in the novel. The data collection technique in this research was carried out through library research, as the main source of data comes from literary texts. The data analysis technique in this study employs the dialectical method, which seeks to integrate two theoretical frameworks Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature and James C. Scott's theory of resistance to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the social phenomena represented in the literary text. The results of this study indicate that there are two forms of resistance carried out by the people against the Egyptian authorities: open resistance and hidden resistance. Furthermore, the resistance stems from three main factors: authoritarian governance, human rights violations, and social injustice perpetrated by the Egyptian authorities.

المخلص: يهدف هذا البحث إلى الكشف عن العوامل التي أدت إلى مقاومة الشعب للسلطات المصرية في رواية مذكرات في سجن النساء للكاتبة نوال السعداوي. تتعلّق القضايا المطروحة في الرواية بعدم اتساق السلطات المصرية في تطبيق النظام الديمقراطي الذي زعمت أنها تلتزم به، مما أثار مقاومة من قبل الشعب. يُعدّ هذا البحث من نوع الدراسة المكتبية ويستخدم المنهج النوعي. تتكوّن بيانات هذا البحث من كلمات وعبارات

وجمل تتعلق بمقاومة الشعب للسلطات المصرية في الرواية. وقد تمّ تنفيذ تقنية جمع البيانات من خلال الدراسة المكتبية، إذ إن المصدر الرئيسي للبيانات هو النص الأدبي نفسه. أما تقنية تحليل البيانات المستخدمة فتعتمد على المنهج الجدلي الذي يسعى إلى دمج إطارين نظريين هما سوسيولوجيا الأدب لألان سوينغود ونظرية المقاومة لجيمس سي. سكوت، من أجل الوصول إلى فهم شامل للظواهر الاجتماعية الممتلئة في النص الأدبي. تشير نتائج هذا البحث إلى وجود شكلين من المقاومة التي قام بها الشعب ضد السلطات المصرية، وهما: المقاومة العلنية والمقاومة الخفية. كما أن هذه المقاومة نابعة من ثلاثة عوامل رئيسية هي: الحكم الاستبدادي، وانتهاكات حقوق الإنسان، والظلم الاجتماعي الذي مارسته السلطات المصرية.

## Introduction

Since the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, Egypt has adopted a democratic system in its governance (Dvoll, 1999). In reality, however, during Anwar Sadat's administration, the Egyptian authorities failed to effectively implement democratic principles. This failure stemmed from the abuse of power by the regime, which did not allow citizens to criticize government policies. This is evident in the regime's imprisonment of individuals who attempted to voice dissent, accusing them of not fulfilling the rights and duties that had been promised to Egyptian citizens (Dvoll, 1999). Such actions by the authorities are considered a form of authoritarianism that triggered resistance among the people (Anderson, 2011).

Resistance to authoritarianism by the Egyptian regime is portrayed in the novel *Muzakkarat fi Sijn al-Nisa'* by Nawal Al-Sa'dawi. The people in the novel feel that the rulers at the time did not represent their interests. The regime's actions threatened the welfare and freedom of the people, prompting them to resist in defense of their rights. The forms of resistance depicted in the novel include demonstrations, protests, strikes, and other forms of opposition (Hardinanto & Raharjo, 2022).

This resistance emerged due to the authoritarian nature of the Egyptian rulers, who failed to accommodate public criticism. During President Anwar Sadat's rule, he undermined democratic principles within Egypt's governmental system. This was largely a result of the implementation of a liberal economic policy known as *Infitah* by the regime (Athur, 2008). The limits of presidential power were clearly defined in the 2014 Egyptian

Constitution. However, the regime abused this authority, allowing the president to wield power beyond that of parliament. This is reflected in electoral processes that were supposed to be free and fair but in reality had not yet materialized, despite being enshrined in the 2014 Constitution. Another indication of authoritarianism was the military apparatus being placed under the control of the ruling powers. In practice, the democratic ideals promoted by the regime contradicted the very conceptual framework it claimed to uphold (Heikal, 1986).

According to James C. Scott, individual or collective protest in the form of violence or rebellion constitutes a series of actions by the people to attain autonomy and liberate themselves from oppression and coercion by the ruling powers. The shift toward a capitalist economy pushed rulers to extract as much profit as possible from the people's vulnerability (Dani & Putra, 2020). The rise of public resistance was a means for society to express dissatisfaction with the inequalities they experienced (Scott, 1985). The ultimate goal of such resistance was to restore the people's rights that had been destroyed by the regime, so they could freely develop themselves and live in a just society.

There are several previous studies that have examined the same literary material. Isma Fauziyah and Budi Sujati employed Antonio Gramsci's hegemony theory to highlight how power maintains its dominance ideologically. Their study emphasizes the political aspect of hegemony rather than the active and symbolic forms of resistance expressed by the people (Fauziyah & Sujati, 2019). Nour El Captan analyzed Al-Sa'dawi's work from the perspective of women's prison narratives, focusing on women's experiences and trauma, yet did not explore the broader social mechanisms of resistance within Egyptian society (El Captan, 2023). Meanwhile, Muhammad Youssef Suwaed examined the exploitation of women and social change in Al-Sa'dawi's writings, but did not specifically analyze patterns of resistance through a sociological theoretical framework (Suwaed, 2017). Further inquiry into El Saadawi's novel *Melawan Sistem Perbudakan* highlights the realistic depiction of women's experiences under systems of enslavement, emphasizing internal conflict, symbolism, and solidarity in the face of oppression. This study also reveals Saadawi's critical stance toward the social structures that perpetuate slavery and her portrayal of female characters' struggles for liberation (Pratama et al., 2024). The patriarchal domination reflected in *Perempuan di Titik Nol* is similarly shown to construct a social order where women are viewed as weak and are subjected to violence in both personal and social contexts (Srirahayu, 2022).

Further research demonstrates that injustices toward women occur across different stages of life—before, during, and after marriage—and manifest in physical, mental, and sexual suffering (Suprpto & Setyorini, 2023). Women’s resistance is also portrayed through psychological transformation and the development of critical awareness, enabling them to challenge patriarchal values and redefine their identity (Meilani & Ahmadi, 2025). Studies on Indonesian novels indicate that resistance is not always direct or confrontational, but can be expressed symbolically through emotional solidarity, education, and negotiation in both domestic and public spheres (Widiarti et al., 2025). Gender inequality has also been identified in the form of marginalization, stereotyping, subordination, and excessive workload, countered by acts of resistance expressed through both thought and action (Yuliyani & Andalas, 2023).

In contrast to these studies, the present research offers novelty by integrating Alan Swingewood’s sociology of literature theory with James C. Scott’s theory of resistance through a dialectical approach. This theoretical combination allows for a deeper understanding of how symbolic and social forms of resistance operate simultaneously in *Muzakkarat fi Sijn al-Nisa’*, reflecting the tension between authoritarian control and the people’s struggle for freedom.

In line with this observation of resistance in *Muzakkarat fi Sijn al-Nisa’* by Nawal Al-Sa’dawi, there is evident criticism and opposition toward the regime’s liberal capitalist economic policies and the authoritarian imposition of ideology during the Sadat era, often enforced through collaboration with external actors against segments of the population. This aligns with James C. Scott’s framework, which emphasizes resistance to authoritarian rule. Communities unable to engage in direct activism often resort to both overt and covert forms of resistance. Open resistance occurs through demonstrations, while hidden resistance involves discreet strategic planning, each with its own unique forms. The central issue being protested is the Egyptian people’s resistance to the authoritarianism of the ruling dictatorship (Scott, 1985).

## **Method**

The research method to be used includes the type of research, data sources, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques (Pradopo, 2003). The type of research employed is library research, Library research is deemed appropriate for this study because the analysis focuses on textual and sociological interpretations of the novel rather than empirical observation.. This approach involves examining, reviewing, reading, and

comparing various references and literature sources relevant to the research theme, and drawing conclusions from the findings (Hadi, 2002). Accordingly, this study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach. This method allows the researcher to describe and interpret the dynamics of power and opposition as reflected in characters, narrative structures, and symbolic expressions. The data sources for this research consist of words, phrases, and sentences found in the novel *Muzakkarat fi Sijn al-Nisa'* by Nawal Al-Sa'dawi.

The data collection technique in this research was carried out through library research, as the main source of data comes from literary texts rather than from fieldwork. The novel *Muzakkarat fi Sijn al-Nisa'* by Nawal Al-Sa'dawi. This analysis is supported by theories relevant to the research objectives, particularly Alan Swingewood's literary sociology approach and James C. Scott's theory of resistance, in order to examine the forms of resistance carried out by the people as reflected in the literary work. The choice of this technique is adjusted to the research object, whether it be formal or material (Spivak, 2021). In presenting the results of data analysis, the researcher will describe the research findings narratively. The study explained the data analysis results by elaborating on each piece of data found during the research process.

## **Result and Discussion**

The main protagonist in the novel *Muzakkarat fi Sijn al-Nisa'* is Nawal, who represents women's collective resistance against Egypt's authoritarian and patriarchal system. Through her imprisonment, Nawal narrates the struggle of women who face political oppression, social injustice, and gender-based discrimination. The storyline reflects resistance to the repressive political structure under the Egyptian regime and highlights how individual experiences become a form of collective protest.

### ***Public Resistance in Egypt***

James Scott's concept of social resistance highlights the injustices experienced by the people at the hands of state authorities. Economic policies that emphasize openness have, in fact, placed pressure on society in maintaining their livelihoods. The state, which should serve as a protector of its citizens, instead fails to show supportive action, giving rise to resistance movements (Scott, 1985).

Scott argues that protests carried out by individuals or groups—sometimes involving violence or rebellion—are natural responses by society to achieve autonomy and to break free from the pressure and oppression imposed by those in power. The shift

toward a capitalist economy has led the political elite to exploit society's vulnerabilities for their own maximum gain. The emergence of public resistance reflects a way for the people to express dissatisfaction with the various injustices they face (Scott, 1985). The ultimate aim is to restore the rights that have been stripped away by the ruling powers, enabling people to freely develop themselves and live justly. As a result, various forms of resistance against the Egyptian authorities have emerged (Asiyah & Artono, 2020).

### 1. Open Resistance

James C. Scott describes open resistance as a form of resistance that is clearly visible, concrete, and involves direct communication between opposing parties, such as between the authorities and the public (Scott, 1990). Open resistance may include acts of open rebellion, such as demonstrations, which are carried out in a structured and coordinated manner by leaders and participants involved in the resistance. The following are examples of open resistance carried out by the public against the Egyptian authorities:

#### a. Resistance Through Demonstrations

Open resistance includes organized movements planned systematically through cooperation between leaders and members participating in the resistance (Scott, 1990). For example, in Egypt, public resistance against the ruling regime at the time triggered a series of student demonstrations at Ain Shams University and Alexandria University. These students voiced their opposition to the Infitāh political policy, which they believed had harmed the Egyptian people. The demonstrations were eventually suppressed after President Anwar Sadat deployed the Egyptian military (Febriana et al., 2020). In addition, Sadat implemented new security regulations related to political activities on university campuses, including threats of life imprisonment and even the death penalty for activists opposing the regime (Erlich, 2005). At that time, the situation in Egypt prompted many citizens—students in particular—to take to the streets of Cairo in protest, as illustrated in the following quote:

ولم تفصلني الناظرة: علمت من أبي أنه دافع عني... قال للناظرة إن من حق الطالبات البنات المشاركة في المظاهرات الوطنية مثل الطلبة... وعلمت أيضا أن المدرسات

والمدرسين دافعوا عني لأنني كنت متفوقة في الدراسة. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 237)

*"The headmistress did not expel me: I learned from my father that he had defended me... He told the headmistress that female students also had the right to participate in national demonstrations, just like the male students... I also heard that the lecturers, both women and men, defended me because I was an outstanding student."*

Based on the quote above, student protests and demonstrations began taking place in the streets of Cairo. Likewise, activists from political parties, the press, and religious organizations raised their voices against the poor policies implemented by Anwar Sadat. They demanded the revocation of Egypt's agreement with the United States and the rejection of the capitalist economic system that had begun to take hold of their country. Anwar Sadat did not remain silent in the face of this growing movement. He ordered the Egyptian Minister of Defense to deploy military and police forces. As a result, many students and activists who opposed Sadat's policies were arrested. As stated by Thayyib, "Sadat closed universities and twenty academies, targeting political activists who voiced opposition to the government in Egypt" (Thayyib, 1981). Despite this, the public did not remain passive and continued to resist by openly criticizing the regime.

#### b. Resistance Through the Media

According to James C. Scott, resistance through media falls under the category of more open or public forms of opposition. Media-based resistance can be part of what Scott calls the "public transcript"—openly declared resistance (Scott, 1985). This occurs when groups or individuals deliberately and openly challenge authority or power structures through media channels such as newspapers, radio broadcasts, television, and social media platforms. This form of resistance was carried out by the Egyptian public through articles in various newspapers and radio broadcasts that opposed the regime. In 1977, around seven underground newspapers were published by left-wing groups in Egypt. Their influence and development grew to such an extent that the Egyptian authorities, through the Ministry of Information, introduced new regulations aimed at exerting full control over newspaper publications (Erlich, 2005). This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

أخبار الاعتقالات في مصر تتصدر أنباء العالم. السادات وضع معارضية في السجون  
ولازال يتحدث عن الديمقراطية حتى المذيع في صوت أميركا يقول إن الديمقراطية في  
مصر ليست حقيقية. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 147)

*"News of the arrests in Egypt topped global headlines. Sadat had thrown his opponents into prison, yet he continued to speak of democracy. Even the announcer on Voice of America said that democracy in Egypt is not genuine"*

Based on the excerpt above, it is evident that the Egyptian authorities exercised strong control over official media outlets. The passage clearly reveals the contradiction between Sadat's democratic claims and his repressive actions toward political opponents. By showing this irony, the novel criticizes how the regime used the idea of democracy to

justify its power while suppressing freedom of expression. The reference to the Voice of America emphasizes that even international observers recognized the lack of genuine democracy in Egypt.

Nevertheless, a number of journalists and independent publishers made efforts to disseminate uncensored and unedited information. Their work represents small but meaningful acts of defiance against the regime's control over public discourse. In Sa'dawi's narrative, this spirit of resistance mirrors the broader struggle for truth and justice, where expressing reality itself becomes a form of opposition to authoritarian power.

### c. Resistance Through Sending Letters to the Authorities

Prisoners sent letters to the authorities in the hope that their criticisms would be heard and responded to by those in power. One of their main hopes was that the authorities would consider their release or improve the conditions of their detention. They may have felt that this was the only way they could communicate their grievances to the relevant authorities (Amin, 2011). This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

قرأنا تصريحكم في الصحف بأن التحفظ ليس عقوبة. ولم نفهم هذه العبارة. لأن  
الحبس وراء القضبان داخل السجن عقوبة في حد ذاته. فما بال أن نحرم أيضا من  
الحقوق القانونية والإنسانية للمتهم تحت التحقيق. لا زلنا حتى اليوم محرومات من  
حق تحديد التهم الموجهة إلينا. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 281)

*"We have read your statement in the newspapers that preventive detention is not a punishment. We cannot understand this statement, because being imprisoned behind bars is a punishment in itself. Furthermore, we are also being deprived of the legal and human rights due to a suspect under investigation. To this day, we are still denied the right to know the charges brought against us".*

Based on the excerpt above, sending letters or petitions to the authorities was part of the legal and administrative procedures that allowed prisoners to fight for their rights. These letters could include appeals, requests for clemency, or demands for a case review. The reason prisoners sent letters to the authorities at that time was because, when Mubarak was appointed president, he promised to improve the economic situation and address social issues, to combat corruption, and to release religious and political leaders who had been imprisoned under Sadat's regime (Haynes, 1997). Based on the excerpt above, student demonstrations and protests began to take place in the streets of Cairo. Likewise, political party activists, the press, and religious organizations voiced their opposition to the poor policies implemented by Anwar Sadat. They demanded the annulment of Egypt's agreement with the United States and the rejection of the capitalist

economic system that was beginning to take hold of their country. Anwar Sadat did not remain silent in the face of this public movement. He ordered Egypt's Minister of Defense to deploy military and police forces. From that moment on, arrests were made targeting students and activists who criticized Sadat's policies. As Thayyib stated, "Sadat shut down universities and twenty academies, even those political activists who voiced their opposition to the government in Egypt. Nonetheless, the people did not remain silent and continued to resist by criticizing the authorities, as illustrated in the quote below:

تحمست واحدة من المنقبات: والله العظيم سوف أقول كل ما عندي وليسمع  
الطاغوت. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 286)

*"A woman wearing a niqab spoke passionately: "By Almighty God, I will say everything I have to say. Let the oppressor hear it."*

Criticism and resistance began to emerge as a result of the Egyptian government's system that failed to meet the people's needs. These demonstrations occurred because the government's policies did not align with Egypt's democratic ideals. The authoritarian regime tended to violate human rights, including the freedoms of speech, assembly, and association. Repressive actions such as arbitrary arrests, torture, and even executions were often used to silence opposition. The absence of freedom of expression is reflected in the following excerpt:

وقلت: ليس ضده شخصيا, أنا لا أكتب ضد أي أحد شخصيا. لي آرائي وأفكاري.  
المفروض أن البلد فيها ديموقراطية وكل إنسان من حقه أن يكتب رأيه الحر. (Al-  
Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 285)

*"And I said: "It's not against him personally. I never write against anyone on a personal level. I have my own views and thoughts. A country should be democratic, and every person should have the right to express their opinion freely."*

وقلت: لكن المعركة تتطلب النقد الموضوعي من أجل عدم تكرار الهزيمة! واندرج اسمي  
في القائمة المغضوب عليها. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 288)

*"And I said: "But the struggle demands objective criticism to prevent the repetition of defeat! And my name ended up on the list of those who incurred his wrath."*

Based on the excerpt above, the criticism of the Egyptian government by activists and students continued even after Nawal and her colleagues were imprisoned. They expressed solidarity with the injustice faced by the detained activists. These demonstrations were intended to demand the release of the prisoners, as shown in the excerpt below:

هناك حملة عالمية كبيرة في صفك, ومظاهرات من النساء أمام السفارات المصرية للإفراج عنك. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 217)

*"A large international campaign is on your side, and women are demonstrating in front of Egyptian embassies demanding your release."*

Based on the above excerpt, the condition of the activists in prison prompted the public not to stay silent but to protest through demonstrations. They joined in protests that were broadcast on Egyptian television in 1981. Especially since Nawal was known as a strong and revolutionary Egyptian woman, the people insisted that the authorities release Nawal and the other activists from prison. As reflected in the quote below:

والناس هنا أيضا يسألون عنك كل يوم... والجيران... والأصدقاء, والأقارب... موقفك قوي للغاية فأنت كاتبة مستقلة وروائية معروفة و مناضلة من أجل حقوق المرأة وحرية الإنسان. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 205)

*"And here, people ask about you every day... the neighbors... the friends, and the relatives... Your stance is incredibly strong—you are an independent writer, a well-known novelist, and a fighter for women's rights and human freedom."*

Based on the excerpt above, it is clear that society tried to resist and push for the release of the imprisoned activists. However, the authorities remained indifferent to the people's voices, which sparked outrage among university students and campus activists. On January 15, 1972, students staged a protest in the main hall of the Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University. Their action was also supported by Pan-Arabism activists and supporters of Palestinian independence.

## 2. Hidden (Covert) Resistance

James C. Scott defines hidden resistance as a form of resistance carried out by individuals or groups through less structured processes. This kind of resistance often reflects a gradual form of dissent, involving careful consideration of resistance methods, desired outcomes, and individual decisions in balancing the will and ability to resist. According to Scott, hidden resistance refers to acts of dissent, criticism, or protest that are covert and often go unnoticed by those in power. It is resistance carried out quietly or beyond the reach of the authorities. Hidden resistance can occur in various contexts, including within prisons where strategies are secretly developed among communities living under authoritarian rule (Scott, 1990).

In the prison context, detainees united in covert resistance may carry out actions that go unseen by guards or authorities. In the following excerpt, the prisoners criticize

the authorities' decision to group different religious and ideological detainees together—questioning whether this was a tactic to divide and weaken them. Ironically, the result was increased unity and the formation of strategic resistance among the prisoners in response to the oppressive actions of the regime. This is reflected in the excerpt below:

وكنا نتساءل: إذا كانت الدولة تتهمة هؤلاء المتحفظ عليهم داخل السجون بإشعال الفتنة الطائفية والكراهية والحقد بين فئات الشعب، لماذا إذن وضعتهم جميعاً في عنابر واحدة. لماذا حبست المسلم المتطرف مع المسيحي مع اليمين مع اليسار! أتريد بذلك أن يفتك بعضهم ببعض داخل السجون؟ (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 215)

*"We kept asking ourselves: If the state accuses these detainees of inciting sectarian strife, hatred, and animosity among the people, then why did it place them all in the same prison ward? Why did it imprison radical Muslims alongside Christians, right-wing and left-wing activists? Does the state want them to destroy each other inside the prison?"*

لكن الذي حدث هو العكس تماماً. ساد الوئام بين الجميع. تحقق التفاهم داخل السجن بين كل فصائل المعارضة. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 227)

*"But what happened was exactly the opposite. Harmony prevailed among everyone. Mutual understanding was achieved inside the prison among all factions of the opposition."*

Based on the excerpt above, the prisoners engaged in resistance by secretly writing about the authorities. They documented the policies and actions of those in power in a discreet manner, which could later serve as evidence or as a means to confront oppression (Al-Sa'dawi, 2010).

### ***The Factors Behind Public Resistance Against the Egyptian Authorities***

#### **1. Authoritarian Leadership**

The Egyptian authorities engaged in abuse of power, where the president held more authority than the parliament. Free and fair elections had not yet been realized in Egypt, despite the 2014 Constitution explicitly calling for them. In practice, civilian and military control differed significantly—military forces were actually commanded directly by the president. The democratic elements that the leadership claimed to support contradicted the very principles they had promoted (Heikal, 1986). This is reflected in the following excerpt:

كل شيء عندنا في يد الدولة وتحت سيطرتها المباشرة أو غير المباشرة. بالقانون الواضح أو بالقانون الخفي، بالعرف أو بالخوف المزمع القديم من السلطة. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 22)

*"Everything in our country is in the hands of the state, under its direct or indirect control—through clear laws or hidden ones, through tradition or through an old chronic fear of authority."*

Based on the excerpt above, the Egyptian ruler during Anwar Sadat's era had misused the power entrusted to him. He made drastic policy changes, even reversing the direction set during Nasser's rule. Whereas Nasser promoted socialism and anti-Western imperialism in pursuit of justice and social equality for all citizens, Sadat shifted toward the capitalist *Infitāḥ* ("Open Door") policy. This policy welcomed foreign capital and investment and fostered closer cooperation with the West for the sake of economic growth and development. This transformation is illustrated in the following excerpt:

والسادات فوق في السماء. ملك ولا الملك فاروق في زمانه! ولو طلب لبن العصفور. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 123)

*"And Sadat is perched high in the sky. A king—greater even than King Farouk in his prime—even if all he asks for is birds' milk."*

In addition, Sadat's contradictory approach extended to his media policies. Although freedom of the press was one of the democratic elements he supposedly championed, in reality, Sadat ordered the publishers of *Al-Ahram* to spread misinformation about his opponents (Syamsudin, 1988). *Al-Ahram* is one of the most influential publications in shaping political opinion in Egypt, dating back to the pro-revolution era, and today includes a strategic studies center that serves as a major source of analysis and information about Egypt, the Middle East, and Africa (Sihbudi, 1995). This abuse of power is captured in the following excerpt from the novel:

لماذا يقول لي رأيا ويكتب رأيا آخر: 'إذا فصلوني من الأهرام هل تتولين الإنفاق على أولادي في المدارس'. الناس من خوف الذل في ذل. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 22)

*"Why do you say one thing to me, and write the opposite in the newspaper?" He replied, "If I get fired from Al-Ahram, will you feed and educate my children?" People are so afraid of humiliation that they live in it."*

This excerpt demonstrates that Sadat, as Egypt's ruler, did not accommodate democratic governance. James C. Scott argues that authoritarian rule is characterized by strong control and centralized power in the hands of the central government. Authoritarian leaders often maintain tight control over their territory and citizens and enforce rigid rules and regulations (Scott, 2000).

## 2. Human Rights Violations

One of the acts of human rights violations was the Egyptian regime's suppression of public dissent. In response to criticism and resistance from the people, Sadat introduced new security regulations that impacted both public activity and campus environments (Arabella et al., 2024). These regulations threatened life imprisonment and even the death penalty for activists who opposed the regime. After being ratified on February 11, 1977, anyone involved in resistance was labeled a threat to the state and subjected to punishment (Erlich, 2005). "When the storm was over, Sadat proclaimed new security measures, stipulating life imprisonment, even capital punishment, for subversive activities, including the organizing of worker's strikes. On 11 February, the measures were ratified by a referendum and the president was enabled to effectively avert further radical leftist initiatives. He then proceeded to purge the campuses of politicians and politics" (Erlich, 2005).

This situation is reflected in scenes where Egyptian police forcibly arrested activists and writers under Sadat's orders. This is portrayed in the following excerpt:

قلت: دقوا الباب، رفضت أن أفتح لهم. لم يكن معهم أمر من النيابة. كسروا الباب  
وجاؤوا بي إلى هنا. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 95)

*"They knocked on the door, but I refused to open it. They had no warrant from the prosecutor. They broke down the door and dragged me here."*

This excerpt shows that writers who dared to criticize government policies risked imprisonment. This reflects the situation experienced by Nawal, who was taken from her home by police acting under orders from the regime. As she descended from her apartment, she saw a woman carrying her child, who shouted, "There is no justice for anyone who dares to criticize Sadat." This is further illustrated in the following excerpt:

حبس مطلق كامل بغير حقوق إنسانية ولا قانونية... حبس مطلق لا أحد يعلم متى  
ينتهي إلا رجل واحد، هو الذي أصدر قرار التحفظ... وهو الوحيد القادر على إلغائه  
أو تغييره. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 51)

*"Absolute imprisonment, without legal or human rights... Detention whose end is known only to one man—the man who issued the order—and he alone has the power to cancel or change it."*

Based on this excerpt, individuals who sought to criticize Sadat's policies faced imprisonment. This clearly contradicts democratic principles, which are supposed to

ensure the freedom of every citizen to participate in national decision-making (Wibowo, 2017). As portrayed in the excerpt below:

إذا كانت الأصوات الحرّة المدافعة عن حرية الرأي والكلمة قد إرتفعت في كل مكان من العالم تطالب بالإفراج عني و عن كل من دخل السجن بدون محاكمة وبدون تهمة وبدون جريمة, فلماذا لم يرتفع صوت واحد من داخل مصر؟! (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 215)

*"If the voices of freedom defending the right to free expression have been raised all over the world demanding my release and the release of all those imprisoned without trial, charge, or crime, then why hasn't a single voice been heard from within Egypt itself?"*

ألهدنا الحد كمت الأفواه, واستقرّ الرعب في العقول والنفوس؟ (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 95)

*"Has it reached the point where mouths are sealed shut and fear has settled in minds and souls?"*

From this excerpt, it becomes clear that not only activists but also writers who addressed freedom of speech and criticized the Egyptian regime were subjected to severe punishment.

### 3. Social Injustice

Social injustice occurred when the government began discriminating between different social classes in Egypt, particularly between the poor and the wealthy. For impoverished citizens, accessing justice and their basic rights as Egyptians became increasingly difficult. Meanwhile, Sadat's lifestyle starkly contrasted with that of the people living in poverty. He reportedly owned 120 vacation homes, many of which were renovated at the cost of billions of Egyptian pounds. Additionally, he increasingly engaged with Western activists (Amstrong, 2003). This disparity is reflected in the following excerpt:

وقالت إحدى الزميلات: هذا ظلم مثل الظلم الواقع علينا. نحن هنا في السجن حكموا علينا بالتامر على الوطن والفتنة الطائفية دون أي دليل. (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 199)

*"One of the cellmates said: "This is injustice, just like the injustice we are experiencing. Here we are in prison, judged for treason and sectarian incitement without any evidence."*

Based on the excerpt above, it is evident that the policies under Anwar Sadat were marked by abuse of power. His regime suppressed the Egyptian people, especially writers, activists, and politicians who offered criticism but were never given the opportunity to express their views (Muhammed, 2020). Is expressing an opinion or having independent

ideas a crime? Is a writer so dangerous that they must be silenced through unjust imprisonment? This reality of social injustice is further described by Nawal in the following quote:

وقلت بغضب: هذه دولة بغير قانون وبغير عدالة, وهذا التحقيق لا فائدة منه ولا

عدالة فيه! (Al-Sa'dawi, 2019, p. 255)

*"I said angrily: "This is a country without law and without justice. This investigation is pointless and completely unjust!"*

The quote above illustrates the unstable state of democratic law. Citizens who dared to criticize the government at that time were forcibly taken by the military to Barrages prison without a clear arrest warrant. Similarly, the investigations conducted on detainees were inconsistent with Egyptian legal procedures.

## Conclusion

The results of this research show that there are two forms of resistance carried out by the people against the Egyptian rulers: open resistance and hidden resistance. Open resistance refers to movements conducted systematically with coordination between leaders and participating members. This can be seen when the people resist through demonstrations by the public and student groups, resistance through media, writing articles, and sending letters to the Egyptian authorities. Meanwhile, hidden resistance tends not to have a visible manifestation of action because it is individual in nature and considered to influence the existing order within a person. This resistance occurs when people detained in prison resist by secretly developing strategies and uniting within the prison. The resistance carried out by the people against the Egyptian rulers occurred due to three factors: authoritarian rulers, human rights violations, and social injustice within society perpetrated by the Egyptian authorities. Theoretically, this research expands the study of Arabic literary sociology by uncovering the representation of social forms of resistance through James C. Scott's theory, while also contributing to the strengthening of interdisciplinary studies that connect literature, power, and resistance in the modern Arab world.

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