



# Circling the Square: Stories from the Egyptian Revolution

*Wendell Steavenson*

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What happened to the promise of Tahrir Square and the Arab Spring?

On January 25, 2011, the world was watching Cairo. Egyptians of every stripe came together in Tahrir Square to protest Hosni Mubarak's three decades of brutal rule. After many hopeful, turbulent years, however, Egypt seems to be back where it began, with another strongman, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, in power. How did this happen?

In *Circling the Square*, Wendell Steavenson uses literary reportage to describe the intimate ironies and ad hoc movements of the Egyptian revolution—from Mubarak's fall to Mohammed Morsi's. Vignettes, incidents, anecdotes, conversations, musings, observations and character sketches cast a fresh light on this vital Middle Eastern story.

Closely observing a wide range of people from a thug in a slum with a homemade gun to the democracy/documentary makers on Tahrir Square, to fundamentalist imams and military intelligence officers, Steavenson dares to ask: what am I looking at and how can I begin to understand it?

With a novelist's eye for character, Steavenson paints indelible, instantly recognizable portraits and dilemmas that illuminate universal questions. What does democracy mean? What happens when a revolution throws the ideas and values of a society into crisis? What is a revolution, and, finally, what can it accomplish?

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