

Egypt Jubilant Over President Ouster

Egypt is basking in the glow of making history. On Friday, President Hosni Mubarak stepped down, clearing the way for the armed forces to restore order until the September elections.

Over concerns that the military may not be so keen to step aside in the fall, Terry Ascott, SAT-7 CEO, responds, "We've seen enough poor judgment in the last few hours and days, where President Mubarak thought he could stay despite the anger on the street. I don't think the military or anyone in the military will make this mistake in this day and age, after what has happened over the last 18 days."

SAT-7 is a Christian satellite television ministry to the Middle East and North Africa. Their team in Egypt not only captured the unfolding of the events, they noted a fascinating aspect that arose. Seemingly, the Christmas Eve sectarian violence gave way to something bigger as those gathering under the banners of the Crescent and the Cross unite for change in government.

The miracle of Tahrir Square came when Muslims and Christians prayed together. Ascott says, "It's a great time to pray for the church in Egypt. It's got a great start. Christians and Muslims have been on the street side by side. They've recognized, in each other, a common cause. They've recognized each other as equal citizens in the Egyptian struggle."

Even as the jubilation gives way to the realities of building a stable government, Ascott cautions believers to continue on with the momentum gained by the people. "I hope that as we move forward, the church will be able to build on that. I hope they will also be able to engage in the social and political reconstruction of the country, because they have been

marginalized for so many years.”

Even as SAT-7 captured the demonstrations in the streets, there was little they could do with the programming. Offices had to be closed because of the studio’s proximity to the hundreds of thousands gathering. “We’ve been frustrated by not being able to do much live programming out of Cairo because the satellite tracks are basically taken by the news service, and our own normal way of getting programming out over the Internet has been blocked.”

However, their team in Lebanon came through at a critical time. “We’ve also been able to support the Egyptian church and the voice of the Christians in Egypt through live programming from our Beirut studio. where we engaged with church leaders in Egypt by phone.”

Once their situation became known, Egyptian believers were encouraged who came forward with support. “It was really interesting to see the response, especially from the Iraqi church that has suffered so much. They were expressing their love and concern for the church in Egypt.”

To encapsulate the shout that turned the Arab world upside down is impossible, but from the many voices came this theme: unity.

As believers re-engage in Egyptian society as salt and light, Ascott urges others to “pray for the future that it would indeed be a new era of freedom of expression; and not just freedom of expression, but freedom of citizens to practice their beliefs.”