Comment:

The Lebanese Uprising in the Digital Age

Karim Merhej

Elina Qureshi

Abstract

On October 17, 2019, following the announcement of a tax to be placed on calls made via the mobile communication application WhatsApp, thousands of Lebanese citizens took to the streets to protest against this arbitrary decision. The protest quickly morphed into a country-wide uprising in which citizens from all walks of life participated. Digital technologies were heavily used by both protesters and counter-revolutionary forces. This descriptive commentary piece will seek to shed light on how the former used digital technologies in ingenious ways to further the cause of the uprising while the latter used them to break the uprising's momentum, with the hope that such a piece can pave the way for further research on the intersection of social movements, technology, and counter-revolutionary tactics.

Introduction

On October 17, 2019, the Lebanese Minister of Telecommunications announced that a tax would be imposed on voice calls made through WhatsApp, the messaging mobile application used by the vast majority of the population. Within hours, Lebanese citizens took to the streets to protest against this arbitrary decision. The protest in Beirut quickly metamorphosed into a countrywide uprising. Through protests and other forms of civil disobedience, citizens voiced their anger against decades of governmental mismanagement, high-level corruption, socioeconomic deprivation, and environmental degradation (Issam Fares Institute 2019). Protests ebbed and flowed until roughly the beginning of March 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic triggered a strict government-imposed countrywide lockdown, and citizens by and large were reluctant to congregate in crowded spaces. The centrality of

Corresponding author: Karim Merhej, American University of Beirut, P.O. Box 11-0236, Riad El Solh, Beirut, Lebanon. E-mail: km63@aub.edu.lb

WhatsApp to the outbreak of the uprising led to the inevitable dubbing of the movement as a "WhatsApp Revolution" (Smyth 2019), a misleading label that devalues citizens' agency and ascribes their determination to confront injustice by describing it solely as a reaction to the threat of a tax on a mobile app (DW 2019).

Based on the literature on how digital tools – namely social media platforms and mobile communication applications such as WhatsApp – have been used to usher in protest movements and bring about political change, and based on our experiences as participants and observers of the uprising, this commentary will look at three ways in which such digital tools have been instrumentalized by Lebanese activists, organizations and concerned citizens to further the goals of the uprising. It will also look at how such tools have been employed for counter-revolutionary purposes by the political establishment and their networks of patronage. While the uprising eventually faltered for numerous reasons – such as the adept usage of counter-revolutionary tactics by entrenched powers, the economic and financial collapse that began to manifest itself in late 2019, or the Covid-19 pandemic which further plunged the country into the abyss – we believe that it is worth looking back and examining how digital tools were used during the uprising so as to better understand the potential that such tools bring forth for effective mobilization, as well as the dangers inherent in their usage.

Digital Tools and Mobilization

Much has been written on the potential that the Internet in general, and social media platforms in particular, have regarding facilitating the mobilization of activists and like-minded citizens towards a common cause. Following the outbreak of the Arab uprisings in 2011, a wide trove of scholarly research emerged on this particular issue. In a review of numerous scholarly publications which followed the Arab uprisings, adopting both qualitative and quantitative methods, Smidi and Shahin (2017) showcase that scholars, in general, agree that social media platforms played, at the very least, an enabling role, facilitating the protests as they were used by individuals to connect with one another and jointly organize demonstrations. However,

scholars also point out that focusing solely on social media is very problematic, as such a focus could potentially shroud other factors that would have contributed to the outbreak of uprisings – namely socioeconomic deprivation and prior social movements that may have paved the way for the mass uprisings.

This was clearly the case during the Lebanese uprising that began on the October 17, 2019. As Lebanese traditional media outlets are by and large owned by the political class and their crony allies in the private sector or subservient to their interests, social media-based alternative media outlets flourished. Established in August 2015 by independent feminist activists during the widespread protests against the Lebanese government's mismanagement of the country's waste crisis, the Facebook page *Akhbar Al Saha* has become a very reliable source of mobilizations occurring all across the country. Relying on a network of anonymous volunteers and reporters who submit raw and unedited videos, *Akhbar Al Saha*'s posts have allowed activists to keep up with what is happening on the ground and to know where they should go in order to support the mobilizations (Lteif 2020). *Akhbar Al Saha*'s anonymous administrators have told newspaper *L'Orient-Le Jour* that their aim is "to provide a more realistic image of what is happening on the ground," stressing the necessity of providing accurate information on what is happening on the streets, as they claimed that the Lebanese media "belong to political parties and are at the orders of the government" (Tabbara 2019). These claims are well-warranted. In 2018, the "*Media Ownership Monitor – Lebanon*," launched by the Samir Kassir Foundation and Reporters Without Borders, revealed that the vast majority of Lebanese media outlets are controlled, directly or indirectly, by the country's political establishment or their allies in the private sector (Samir Kassir Foundation and Reporters Without Borders 2018).

Daleel Thawra, launched on October 20, 2019, is another particularly useful platform. Providing a schedule of the day's main events, including marches, discussions, and protests, it serves as a clear guide for protestors to know where to assemble and what to attend. According to one of the coordinators of the site, the impetus behind establishing the *Daleel* was that "[in] the first

few days, there was some confusion, [and] people needed to be informed" and many wanted to contribute to the uprising but didn't know how to do so – hence why the *Daleel* was established, allowing anonymous volunteers to list the major events planned so that citizens can access the programming as well as submit demands or post events (Tabbara 2019). The *Daleel* is also active on social media platforms, where its coordinators post daily updates on events happening on the ground, as well as other resources that pro-testors, activists, and everyday citizens may need. Even as the uprising has died down, the *Daleel* remains active, sharing content and events that active citizens and supporters of the uprising might find relevant, such as webinars tackling major socioeconomic and political issues, charitable initiatives, or general news updates.

As Smidi and Shahin (2017) have highlighted, it would be wrong to focus solely on digital initiatives to explain the growth of protests during the upri-sing. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that alternative media outlets and social media platforms such as *Akhbar Al Saha* and *Daleel Thawra*, among many others, did play a role in mobilizing citizens during the uprising.

Digitally Sharing Knowledge and Spreading Awareness

A facet of the Lebanese uprising that generated much discussion and ad-miration is the way in which citizens came together to engage in open dis-cussions dealing with a wide array of topics. Since the beginning of the uprising, numerous public spaces, such as the Samir Kassir Garden and the Lazarieh building parking lot in Beirut's central district, became open meeting grounds for such discussions. Participants and hosts, including professors and civil society leaders, discussed topics ranging from political change, economic reform, and the future of the uprising (Bajec 2019). These events were often organized by activists who used digital tools to not only spread the word on the discussions or talks but to also film and upload them online so that the videos could be viewed by those unable to attend. One such group of activists was *Bedna Nthour*, *Bedna Na3ref*, which organized numerous lectures by speakers on specific topics, such as Lebanon's histo-ry, the judicial system, privatization of public spaces, and cybersecurity to

name a few (Bedna Nthour, Bedna Na3ref 2020). The lectures would then be followed by a Q and A session whereby audiences would engage in a discussion with the lecturer. The group advertised its events on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Unfortunately, it appears that the group is no longer active. Nonetheless, the discussions organized and the fact that they were filmed and uploaded provides activists and concerned citizens with a treasure trove of easily accessible valuable information.

Prior to the uprising, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) had already made great strides in their online presence, using social media platforms and the Internet in general to expand the reach of their campaigns (Hodali 2019). Such efforts included the production and sharing of short informative videos as well as easy-to-understand infographics. During the uprising, many of these NGOs and CSOs upped the ante by producing timely content that could be easily shared online, be it on social media platforms or on mobile communication applications. One particular example can be highlighted. Legal Agenda is a Beirut-based non-profit organization established in 2009 which conducts and publishes reports, studies, and news bulletins on legal matters in Lebanon and the Arab world to encourage citizens to use the law to strengthen social movements against authorities that often use it to tighten their control on society. Following the outbreak of the uprising, Legal Agenda increased their production of "educational videos and publications offering a detailed analysis of different proposed laws and protesters' rights" (Lteif 2020). Some of the videos took the form of an interview with an expert in a particular field. One noteworthy video was posted on November 10, 2019. At the time, the Lebanese Parliament was set to convene on November 12, to vote on two controversial laws: a broad amnesty law which would have effectively "pardoned public officials accused of serious misconduct and corruption," and a law establishing a specialized court for financial crimes, which stated "that the court's decisions [would not be] subject to appeal, which would violate fair trial guarantees, and [would not] allow ordinary citizens to refer cases to the court" (Majzoub 2019). Given that the disgust and exasperation towards the perceived corruption of the Lebanese political class was one of the main reasons why protestors had been going down in droves

to the streets, the two laws were considered a spectacular slap in the face. Legal Agenda's video, lasting a little over three minutes, clearly explained what was at stake, highlighting the problematic content of both laws (Legal Agenda 2019). On the morning of the planned parliamentary sessions, protestors gathered in significantly large numbers to block parliamentarians' path in Beirut's central district, and the parliamentary session was postponed indefinitely (Awadalla and Knecht 2019). There is no doubt that Legal Agenda's video, widely shared via social media and mobile communication applications, played a role in making citizens aware of the high stakes.

CSOs and NGOs such as Legal Agenda are not the only entities that have sought to make complex and crucial issues that affect our daily lives, such as legal matters, understandable to the broader public. The economic and financial crisis-turned-meltdown that has been plaguing Lebanon for several years now and which worsened significantly prior to the outbreak of the uprising, coupled with a dramatic devaluation of the Lebanese Pound (LBP), triggered many questions regarding the Lebanese economy among everyday citizens, especially given the fact that commercial banks began to impose unregulated informal capital controls and citizens haven't been allowed to access their savings in USD (Al-Attar 2019). With credible knowledge on the state's economic condition difficult to find and reassurances from the government itself deemed untrustworthy, a group of Lebanese experts in finance and economics began to provide simple, clear explanations on the ongoing economic crisis on social media platforms, especially Twitter, with the aim of helping the general public become more knowledgeable and able to engage in informed discussions. In the months since their work began, they have taken on the role of a quasi-watchdog group and consolidated their analyses on a website *Finance 4 Lebanon*.

There is no doubt that the Lebanese uprising has spurred much knowledge sharing – both online and offline. This section has sought to provide a few examples of how everyday citizens and NGOs and CSOs have used digital tools to share knowledge on a wide array of issues which may appear indecipherable and complicated for a lay audience – such as financial and economic matters or legal issues – and stimulate conversations and debates.

The next section will highlight how independent media outlets and NGOs and CSOs have used digital tools to document what is happening on the ground, and often highlight events or issues that may have been deliberately omitted by traditional media outlets – such as human rights abuses.

Documenting and Commenting on the Uprising

As mentioned previously, the majority of traditional media outlets in Lebanon are owned directly or indirectly by the country's political elites or by wealthy individuals in the private sector tied to the former. In other words, the content produced by such outlets tends to reinforce the socioeconomic and political status quo, and their coverage of social movements tends to be biased or shallow – if covered at all. This has prompted several independent media outlets to pop up over the past few years, offering critical content that is drastically different than that provided by traditional media outlets and challenging entrenched notions regarding Lebanon's sociopolitical and economic context. The uprising served as a clear example of how these outlets sought to delegitimize the protest movement, such as by accusing protesters of being foreign-funded agents (Chehayeb 2019).

One such outlet that signifies this break with the traditional media outlets is Megaphone. Established in 2017, Megaphone initially began as a Facebook page launched by independent activists and journalists producing videos on specific topics dealing with Lebanon's political system, economy, and society, putting out critical takes on the entirety of Lebanon's political establishment. Following the outbreak of the uprising, Megaphone – just like many NGOs and CSOs – stepped up their game, putting out short informative videos on a quasi-daily basis highlighting the latest developments on the streets (Megaphone 2020). It is worth noting that many of these videos highlighted facets of the uprising that are not much covered in the traditional media or are simply glossed over, such as the detention of activists, or the emergence of non-politically aligned unions (Megaphone 2019). Cumulatively, these videos "have been watched millions of times" (Azhari 2019). In addition to the videos produced, Megaphone launched a website at the onset of the uprising dedicated to publishing "no-holds-barred opi-

nion pieces, penned by leading Lebanese progressive thinkers" and dealing with numerous social, economic, and political matters (Azhari 2019).

The emergence and rapid growth of alternative media outlets based on social media platforms are some of the highlights of the uprising. Throughout the uprising, these outlets provided much-needed critical coverage on the key political developments taking place in the country and have continued to provide such content after the uprising died down. Although it is difficult to gauge the extent to which these outlets can compete with established traditional media outlets, there is no denying that they are having an impact on the way citizens look at and understand the political, social, and economic contexts in Lebanon.

Digitally-enabled Solidarity

The economic and financial collapse that Lebanon has been witnessing since the value of the Lebanese Pound began to drop in August 2019 has led to a stark deterioration in living conditions all across the country. While widespread poverty is not a new phenomenon in Lebanon and has arguably been a staple of post-civil war life in the country – in 1996, a report by the UN Economic and Social Council of West Asia (ESCWA) had "estimated that 28 percent of Lebanese families were living below the poverty line" (Baumann 2016, 96) – the current collapse has made these figures look paltry. In August 2020, ESCWA estimated that over 55 percent of the population was living below the poverty line and struggled to access bare necessities (ESCWA 2020). The collapse of the Lebanese Pound has wrought havoc on the Lebanese economy, which has long been heavily reliant on imports. While accurate and reliable statistics are hard to come across, there is no denying that countless businesses have closed and the unemployment rate has soared, while costs of all goods, even essential food staples, have skyrocketed. Explaining the multifaceted reasons as to why such a crisis occurred falls outside the scope of this commentary. What this section will shed light on is how, faced with increased precarity and deprivation, citizens from all walks of life began to come together to establish digital networks of solidarity and mutual assistance.

Karim Merhej, Elina Qureshi

While solidarity and mutual assistance amongst citizens are certainly not new in Lebanon, the way citizens have made use of digital tools to reach out to and connect with those in need is quite innovative. For instance, after hearing about numerous suicide cases that took place and after seeing a photo of a woman offering to sell one of her kidneys, a Lebanese citizen launched a group on Facebook called *LibanTROC*, which currently has just over 60 thousand members (LibanTROC 2020). Initially conceived as a group whereby people could exchange services and items, the urgent demands made by the members rapidly turned the group into a virtual place whereby citizens with the means to help could connect with those in need (Antonios 2019). Digital tools have greatly facilitated needy citizens' access to assistance and networks of solidarity and charity, with groups on Facebook such as LibanTROC being only one example of such digitally-enabled solidarity.

Nefarious Instrumentalization of Digital Tools

It is clear that the use of digital tools greatly contributed to the uprising's momentum. However, such tools have also brought new and unforeseen dangers. For instance, the political establishment and their supporters were able to instrumentalize social media platforms for their own ends. Participation in online activism – from organizing and spreading the news, sharing opinions, and promoting protest-related events – is necessarily linked to a personal profile. This allows authorities to easily identify dissidents and makes them publicly available as targets for harassment. The ability of pro-government groups and forces to identify, harass, and humiliate protestors has manifested itself in several visible ways. In mid-June, the National News Agency reported that the country's Cybercrimes Bureau had been put on the lookout for social media posts that violated criminal defamation laws, namely "insulting the president" (Amnesty International 2020). However, the Bureau had been questioning prominent pro-uprising journalists, activists, and bloggers for many months prior. In March, it was reported that the Bureau had summoned at least sixty activists for questioning in just three months (Amos 2020). Although the constitution guarantees freedom of speech ("within the limits established by law"), the penal code criminalizes defamation against public officials and makes it possible to imprison a dissident for one to three years, depending on the target of their alleged defamation.

Aside from mainstream, public social media platforms, protestors can also be monitored in their semi-private chats. Although WhatsApp is encrypted, there have been various reports of pro-government "infiltrators" in group chats, which are frequently used to organize and spread information (Mackenzie 2019). Aside from gaining insight into the protestors' plans and mobilization, this gives authorities yet another way to observe who the active organizers are and who is involved.

Groups supportive of political parties have used social media to harass pro-uprising journalists and public figures. Prominent journalist Dima Sadek is one example. After posting videos of anti-Hezbollah chants and loudly voicing her support for the protest movement, a hashtag, "Dima the lowest," began to trend on Twitter, and Sadek and her family were inundated with insults and threats through social media, leading her to be sidelined at work and eventually resign in late 2019 (Michaelson and Safi 2019). Another pro-uprising journalist, Layal Saad, had a similar experience, receiving thousands of abusive messages online as well as a constant influx of angry calls (Caramazza 2019). The political establishment and their supporters used such online harassment tactics to discredit the uprising and defame specific figures who had amassed a non-negligible following on social media platforms.

While spreading wild rumors and misinformation is nothing new, such practices have become particularly dangerous in the digital era, whereby one bit of false news can rapidly spread like wildfire and reach thousands before being subjected to any modicum of fact-checking. This particular tactic was widely used during the uprising, and it was quite common for dubious messages and voice notes slandering the uprising or specific activists to spread rapidly through WhatsApp, sowing much doubt and confusion among citizens.

Conclusion

Without falling into the trap of believing that the uprising would not have occurred without digital tools, there is no doubt that these tools and social media platforms have played an instrumental role in the Lebanese uprising.

Designated platforms such as *Daleel Thawra* and constant communication over smartphone applications such as WhatsApp were extremely useful for organizing events, mobilizing protestors, and sustaining the momentum of the uprising. Public discussions, organized, advertised, and streamed on social media served to de-privatize knowledge, bringing expert insight into the public sphere and helping to instill a deeper understanding of the country's political, economic, and social issues among the population. Alternative news sources and the rise of citizen journalism helped to document the uprising, providing a much-needed non-mainstream view of the uprising as well as documented evidence of human rights abuses by the state security apparatus. Online platforms, such as the Facebook group *LibanTROC*, continue to provide protestors and citizens a space to reinforce their solidarity and provide support to one another.

Nonetheless, digitally-enabled activism has increased the visibility of protestors to authorities and made them vulnerable. Lebanon's defamation laws can, and have been, used to victimize and silence protestors and activists. In this way, social media has increased activists' susceptibility to being identified and harassed, be it by the political establishment or by their supporters. Lastly, social media and mobile communication applications can easily become platforms through which misinformation can spread rapidly, a key counter-revolutionary tactic used to delegitimize the uprising and break its momentum.

As the Covid-19 pandemic brought the uprising to a standstill, and as Lebanon further plunged into an economic and financial crisis, it was only expected that the uprising would die down. This commentary sought to examine how digital tools were instrumentalized by protestors and activists to further the protest movement, as well as to highlight what are the dangers inherent in using such tools. We hope that this commentary not only sheds light, however briefly, on this important facet of the Lebanese uprising but also would provide a grounding for future scholarly research on the intersection of social movements, technology, and counter-revolutionary tactics.

References

Al-Attar, Sahar. 2019. "Lebanon's crisis: the end of the illusion." *Le Commerce du Levant* website, December 12. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.lecommercedulevant.com/article/29505-lebanons-crisis-the-end-of-the-illusion.

Amnesty International. 2020. "Lebanon: New Coalition to Defend Free Speech." *Amnesty International* website, July 13. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/07/lebanon-new-coalition-to-defend-free-speech/.

Amos, Deborah. 2020. "Lebanon's Government Is Accused of Swarming WhatsApp To Catch Protestors." *NPR* website, March 9. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.npr.org/2020/03/09/809684634/lebanons-government-is-accused-of-swarming-whatsapp-to-catch-protesters.

Antonios, Zeina. 2019. "Sur les réseaux sociaux ou à travers les applis, l'entraide se développe." *L'Orient-Le Jour* website, December 28. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1200147/sur-les-reseaux-sociaux-ou-a-travers-les-applis-lentraide-se-developpe.html.

Awadalla, Nadine, and Knecht, Eric. 2019. "Protests force Lebanese parliament to postpone session, banks reopen." *Reuters* website, November 19. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-protests/protests-force-lebanese-parliament-to-postpone-session-banks-reopen-idUSKBN1XT0NJ.

Azhari, Timour. 2019. "Megaphone: The voice of Lebanon's uprising." *Al Jazeera* website, December 8. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2019/12/08/megaphone-the-voice-of-lebanons-uprising/?fbclid=IwAR12uIFOCta6TR1C0MXBbzHf2QaPe2BDfjHtCVa1PqmvCt1NZeCqbU0i2x0.

Bajec, Alessandra. 2019. "Lebanon's revolution spawns 'direct democracy' with citizen assemblies and people's parliaments." *Al Araby* website, November 21. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2019/11/21/conversation-circles-generate-ideas-in-the-lebanese-revolution.

Baumann, Hannes. 2016. *Citizen Hariri: Lebanon's Neoliberal Reconstruction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bedna Nthour, Bedna Na3ref. 2020. *Facebook.* Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.facebook.com/Bedna.Na3ref.

Caramazza, Gaia. 2019. "Lebanon's social media looks like the Wild West, and women journalists are in the crosshairs." *Al Araby* website, December 4. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2019/12/4/lebanons-women-journalists-being-harassed-for-reporting-the-truth.

Chehayeb, Kareem. 2019. "Narrative wars: Lebanon's media take shots at popular protests." *Middle East Eye* website, November 6. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/information-wars-mar-lebanons-popular-uprising.

DW. 2019. "Lebanon: WhatsApp tax sparks mass protests." *Deutsche Welle* website, October 18. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.dw.com/en/lebanon-whatsapp-tax-sparks-mass-protests/a-50880357.

ESCWA. 2020. "ESCWA warns: more than half of Lebanon's population trapped in poverty." *ESCWA* website, August 19. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.unescwa.org/news/Lebanon-poverty-2020#:~:text=ESCWA%20warns%3A%20more%20than%20half%20of%20Lebanon's%20population%20trapped%20in%20poverty,-19&text=Estimates%20reveal%20that%20more%20than,year's%20rate%20which%20was%2028%25.

Hodali, Diana. 2019. "A bright moment for online activism in Lebanon." *Deutsche Welle* website, May 7. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.dw.com/en/a-bright-moment-for-online-activism-in-lebanon/a-48626722.

Issam Fares Institute. 2019. "Demands raised by certain groups who participated in the October 2019 Uprising." *American University of Beirut* website, November 12. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/news/Pages/20191112-demands-raised-by-certain-groups-who-participated-in-the-october-2019-uprising.aspx.

Legal Agenda. 2019. *Facebook*. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2512741145445847.

LibanTROC. 2020. *Facebook*. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.facebook.com/groups/Libantroc.

Lteif, Diala. 2020. "The Lebanon Revolution Takes on The Media: A Resource on Alternative News Outlets." *Jadaliyya* website, July 1. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/40379.

Mackenzie, Laura. 2019. "WhatsApp 'being hijacked in attempts to dismantle Lebanon protests.'" *Wired* website, November 10. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://wired.me/technology/privacy/lebanon-protests-whatsapp/.

Majzoub, Aya. 2019. "Problematic bills on Lebanon Parliament's Agenda." *Human Rights Watch* website, November 19. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/11/19/problematic-bills-lebanon-parliaments-agenda.

Megaphone. 2019. "The Revolution revives syndicates (Al thawra tu'id ihya' al naqabat)." *YouTube* video, December 17. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xuGQGiI3LE.

Megaphone. 2020. *YouTube* channel. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0hXXVnhgr3lxmP46dmWmEA.

Michaelson, Michael, and Safi, Michael. 2019. "#Disinformation: the online threat to protest in the Middle East." *The Guardian* website, December 15. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/15/disinformation-the-online-threat-to-protest-in-the-middle-east.

Samir Kassir Foundation and Reporters Without Borders. 2018. "Media Ownership Monitor – Lebanon." PDF document Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://lebanon.mom-rsf.org/fileadmin/rogmom/output/lebanon.mom-rsf.org/lebanon.mom-rsf.org-en.pdf.

Smidi, Adam, and Shahin, Saif. 2017. "Social Media and Social Mobilisation in the Middle East: A Survey of Research on the Arab Spring." *India Quarterly* 73 (2): 196-209. DOI: 10.1177/0974928417700798.

Smyth, Gareth. 2019. "What's Up with Lebanon's WhatsApp Revolution?" *Lobelog* website, November 8. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://lobelog.com/whats-up-with-lebanons-whatsapp-revolution/.

Tabbara, Acil. 2019. "The 'leaderless Lebanese revolution'" is getting organized." *L'Orient–Le Jour* website, November 26. Accessed [September 28, 2020]. https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1196388/the-leaderless-lebanese-revolution-is-getting-organized.html.