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# **Report on Internship**

*at Maat Foundation for Peace, Development  
and Human Rights, Cairo, Egypt*

In 2015, I had the chance to pursue a two-month internship at Maat Foundation for Peace, Development and Human Rights in Cairo, Egypt. The following paragraphs will describe my experience during my time in Egypt's sprawling capital. I will start to depict the organisation, what it does and what it wants. Thereafter, my tasks, inclusion into the organisation and the circumstances of my supervision will be presented. In the end I will reflect on my internship and its implications.

## **1 Maat for Peace**

Maat Foundation for Peace is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), which is seated in Cairo. Besides its own goals it acts as Head of Network for Anna-Lindh Foundation (ALF) in Egypt. The organisation employs about 30 people and gives interested persons the chance to volunteer. It was founded in 2005 by Ayman Okeil, the charming and dedicated head of the organisation. Fatma Othman, who is Programme Coordinator at Maat and Assistant to the Head of Network at ALF is in charge of the internship program. She was my immediate superior and coordinated the work among the interns.

Maat is mainly concerned with Egypt's journey to a free and just society. Its core values are Democracy and Human rights. All efforts are directed towards these values. Different projects pursue different goals. From informing citizens to generating expertise and knowledge, every kind of strategy can be observed.

An international network of NGOs, diplomats and governments is fundamental to the work of Maat. The employees are travelling to different countries all the time, expanding this network. Maat is part of an international team of election observers. Since the elections were held during the end of my abode in Cairo, this was an important part of our work. Everyone was busy, preparing the observation mission. Other partners are the UNHRC, Anna Lindh Foundation and many more!

MAAT is conducting a variety of projects in the field of promotion of human rights, support for democracy and the development of marginalized groups, which are often developed with one of their many partners.

## **2 Working at Maat**

During my eight weeks of working at Maat I had two continuous tasks that I was working on a daily basis. Additional to this my superior appointed project-based tasks that needed to be finished at a certain deadline.

The continuous tasks I pursued are the following: By the end of each working day, I crafted a press review of international media coverage on Egypt's politics. This press review was then completed the next day and sent to the staff of Maat. This is important for the organisation to keep track of current affairs, developments in public opinion and to audit international reception of bomb attacks in Egypt.

The second task was to analyse US-based think tank coverage on Egyptian politics, society and events since 2013. For this, I crafted a table of the top US think tanks and classified them according to their political alignment. Then, I started to filter every paper, article opinion or op-ed of each think tank with the keyword Egypt. The resulting texts were then summarized individually. Upon finishing all articles of one think tank, I crafted a sort of timeline and depicted a change of coverage and analysed their main focus. To this task it was very important, that I kept track of my methods, since my results will be used in forthcoming research of Maat. Since there is an enormous quantity of articles, etc. that have been published, it was only possible to finish the analysis of three think tanks: Brookings, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Center on Foreign Relations.

In between these tasks I obtained different, dead-lined tasks. Some of these will be presented in the following: I researched several funding opportunities and filled the applications to obtain the respective funding. Maat wants to be part of some international partnerships, to which I wrote the applications. I crafted several ideas and concepts for workshops with Egyptian civil-society workers, which will be conducted in 2016. During the end of my internship I created an invocation for applications as translators at Maat for Peace during the Egyptian election period. After receiving more applications than expected, I conducted telephone interviews with the applicants to filter out the top five, which would then be invited to personal interviews.

On September 16, 2015 I was part of a delegation to represent the foundation at a conference called "freedom and integrity of the Egyptian parliamentary elections between national legislations and international principles". During the conference I was delegated to connect to other organisations, to bring out Maat's goals towards other organisations and to meet potential cooperation partners. Additionally, I represented the organisations ideas on election observation.

### **3 Implications**

My internship was an amazing experience. This is mainly due to two reasons: 1st, during my involvement with Maat for Peace, I learned what it meant to work in a field that I wanted to work in for a long time. An NGO delivers the opportunity to work with every kind of person from civilian to social society worker to politician. It also entails the opportunity to conduct

research and write research papers as well as develop projects, workshops, etc. Soon, I understood that this is the field I want to work in after my studies.

2nd, living in Cairo and amongst Egyptians taught me to be open, sensitive and respecting. I learned a lot about a culture that I am very interested in. I had the chance to deepen my intercultural and inter-religious experiences through discussions during coffee-breaks and debates with my friends.

During my internship I was able to apply many theories and methods that I obtained during my studies. This way, I gained extensive experience in real-world applications of my studies. An internship at an NGO should be recommended to every student of political science, since it is a working setting many students might find themselves in.

To pursue an internship at an NGO abroad is even more recommendable, since it teaches us about cultures, religions and tolerance. Especially when focusing on International Relations, interning abroad should be considered a “must-do”.

In conclusion I can state, that my internship at Maat in Cairo truly changed my perspectives on religion, cultures, politics and many other things, - and therefore - changed my life.