

Fallen faces of the uprising: Ahmed Basiony

[Mia Jankowicz](#)

Mon, 07/02/2011 - 14:51

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Ahmed Basiony, a Cairo-born artist, experimental musician and teacher in his early thirties, was killed while participating in the first week of the January 25 uprising. Basiony is a husband and the father of two children, four-year-old Adam and several months year old Selma. He taught at the Art Education College at Helwan University, where he was pursuing his doctoral studies in the field of interactive arts and open source technology.

Early in his career as an artist, he received several prizes for his participation at the annual Youth Salon since 2001; he was the recipient of the Grand and Salon prizes in 2007 and 2008, respectively. Basiony exhibited his work, which spans multi-media, installation, performance and sound, in various spaces including the Gezira Art Center and the Townhouse gallery in Cairo, most recently participating in the shows Invisible Presence and Cairo Documenta. In his musical capacity, he was developing a strong personal language, experimenting with popular forms to produce a visceral, charged energy. He performed at festivals such as 100live, and with musician Abou Asala was working on an album with the label 100copies.

His influence across creative fields was felt not only through his practice but through his intellectual and teaching contribution. Supplementary to his formal teaching work he organized educational workshops for digital, live and sound art, enabling numerous young musicians to enter the field. “What he was doing with his music, performances, artwork and discussion had resonance with others and opened up thought for others,” says artist and musician Hassan Khan. His close friend and artist Shady Noshokaty says “he was a brave, funny man with an independent intellect and crazy energy; he put so much into everything he did, in his practice, as a person and in his teaching. This is a huge loss.”

Basiony’s last Facebook post said: “I have a lot of hope if we stay like this. Riot police beat me a lot. Nevertheless I will go down again tomorrow. If they want war, we want peace. I am just trying to regain some of my nation’s dignity.”

Ahmed Basiony died on January 28, the Friday of Anger. It is reported that the day prior to his death, he was severely beaten by Central Security Forces: he had been carrying a video camera. The day he died, he was separated from his friends at around 7PM. Several days later his body was found at the Um Al Masreyeen hospital in Giza. Hospital reports indicate he was shot five times, and run over by a vehicle. A Facebook “kolna Ahmed Basiony” has become a virtual memorial, where students, colleagues, friends, family and mentors share memories, anecdotes and prayers for him and his family.