

Nasser on the Brotherhood

This undated video clip, with subtitles, appears at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TX4RK8bj2W0>. The brief remarks are punctuated with laughter and applause from the hall—an indication of the cultural shift that has taken place since that time.

Nasser: In 1953, we really wanted to cooperate with the Muslim Brotherhood, if they were willing to be reasonable, so I met with the head of the Brotherhood. He ate with me and made his requests. The first thing he asked was to make wearing the *hijab* mandatory in Egypt, and that every woman walking in the street wear a *tarha* [scarf]. [laughter] Every woman walking!

Male voice from the hall: Let him wear it! [laughter, applause]

Nasser: And I told him that if I made such a law, they would say that we had returned to the days of al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah [996-1021], who forbade people to walk during the day and only allowed walking at night.

My opinion is that everyone in their own house decides the rules. He replied, “No, as the leader, you are responsible.”

I told him, “Sir, you have a daughter in the School of Medicine, and she does not wear the *tarha*. Why didn’t you make her wear the *tarha*? If you are unable to make one girl—who is your daughter—wear the *tarha*, how do you want me to put the *tarha* on 10 million women, by myself?”