Anti-Gaddafi murals
Ibrahim Hamid
September 2011

During the Libyan uprising of 2011, former leader Muammar Gaddafi was viciously ridiculed. Cartoonists attempted to destroy his aura of power by mocking his violent rhetoric, bombastic style, curly locks and Baroque sense of fashion.

Photograph courtesy of Kelvin Brown.

Ibrahim Hamid
September 2011

Ibrahim Hamid, nicknamed “Benghazi’s Banksy,” created many caricatures of Muammar Gaddafi. In a BBC interview, Hamid stated that he wanted this wall to look like a gallery filled with paintings to raise awareness. He explains, “I draw because this is the only way I can express myself. … Had I painted these pictures under Gaddafi’s rule, he surely would have punished me. … Now I feel like a free human being.”

Photograph courtesy of Kelvin Brown.

Muammar Gaddafi Kicked by the Tricolor
Libyan Flag
Unknown artist
Mural, September 2011

Libyan street art often depicted Muammar Gaddafi being forcefully ejected from the country. This mural reclaims the striped Kingdom of Libya flag (used from 1951-1969) instead of the solid green flag, symbolic of Gaddafi’s rule. Gaddafi’s flying figure is bullet-ridden, a literal display of the activists’ anger.

Photograph courtesy of Kelvin Brown.

Monkey of Monkeys
Ibrahim Hamid
Mural, September 2011

The caption of this mural reads “Monkey of Monkeys,” a play on the pompous title “King of Kings of Africa” given to Gaddafi at a meeting he convened of sub-Saharan African chiefs. He is shown eating fleas off of his son Sayf al-Islam. Through the metaphor of the monkey, the mural is laced with overt racial overtones.

Photograph courtesy of Kelvin Brown.

Gaddafi Fleeting the 17th of February Revolution
Unknown artist
Mural, November 2011

In February 2011 Muammar Gaddafi dramatically referred to his opponents as “rats” who would be ruthlessly chased and killed. By October, the former leader was in hiding like a rat in a hole. Street murals depicted Gaddafi as a rat on the run. Here, the tricolor spray mimics the proclaimed Libyan flag aimed to exterminate the “vermin” leader.

Photograph courtesy of Jill Dougherty.

Posters on a desk
2013

Syrian artists in Kafir Nabi have produced hundreds, if not thousands, of posters and banners. Creative and witty, they comment on Syria’s political turmoil and mock Bashar al-Assad. These posters are often written in English for an international audience. Many are readily viewable on the Facebook page Americans for Kafranbel and a Free Syria.

Photograph courtesy of Noor Haydar.

American Support
Syrian artists
Poster, March 2013

In this poster, the United States is depicted as a super-power represented by Jim Carey’s character from the film The Mask. It implies the U.S. is two-faced: shy, indecisive and cowardly, while also a powerful and violent trickster.

Photograph courtesy of Americans for Kafranbel and a Free Syria.

Asad and Putin Love Affair
Syrian artists
Poster, June 2012

In this poster, Russian President Vladimir Putin embraces Bashar al-Assad, evoking the movie Titanic. They stand on the Russian cargo ship MV ALAED that many believe carried military arms to Syria. This image emasculates Asad by showing his dependence on outside support to violently suppress the Syrian people.

Photograph courtesy of Americans for Kafranbel and a Free Syria.

SONGS & CHANTS

Ihal (Get Out!)
March 2011

Ihal was a common slogan chanted and sung throughout the Arab uprisings. Slogans were written on posters as well as repeated aloud in the streets. In this poster “Ihal” gives former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh a kick in the behind. In many instances, protests continued against incumbent rulers until this simple demand was met.

Photograph courtesy of Abdurrahman Jabar.

Al-Sha'b Yunid Isqat al-Nizam
Hossam el-Hamalawy
February 2011

The often-repeated demand, “The people want the downfall of the regime” – as this banner proclaims – became a persistent performance of dissent. With every repetition the demand gains volume and power, and with every beat the slogan unifies a people toward a common purpose.

Photograph courtesy of Hossam el-Hamalawy.

A Salafi’s Worst Nightmare
Nadia Khiali
Cartoon, 2013

This image from Nadia Khiali’s Willis from Tunis series mocks the anti-feminist ideals embraced by members of Tunisia’s rising Salafist movement. Identified by his trademark beard, the Salafi has a nightmare in which women are threatening to shave his face.

Courtesy of Nadia Khiali.

Tunisian Political Debate
Nadia Khiali
Cartoon, 2013

The Willis from Tunis cartoon series often comments on the setbacks of the Tunisian revolution, sometimes comparing the situation to a catfight. In this panel, instead of debating matters of substance, participants point fingers in all directions, accusing others of betraying the revolution.

Courtesy of Nadia Khiali.

Live Free or Die
Nadia Khiali
Cartoon, 2013

This cartoon comments on the left-wing protesters whose deaths have been linked to extremist Salafists. A young secular cat holds a sign reading, “Live free or die!” while he is beaten by a Salafi screaming, “Die!”

Courtesy of Nadia Khiali.

PERFORMING DISSERT

Top Goon: Diaries of a Little Dictator
Masasit Mati
Puppetry, 2013

This video series mocks Syrian President Bashar al-Asad’s violent crackdown against his political opponents. He is portrayed as a small man-child with a god complex and ironically called “Beeshu” – the endearing pet name for children named Bashar. The shows are created by 10 young Syrian artists known collectively as Masasit Mati.

Photograph courtesy of Masasit Mati.

Tahrir Monologues
Theatrical performances, February 2011

The Tahrir Monologues emerged as a theater project aiming to preserve memories of the early days of the Egyptian revolution in Tahrir Square. The stories are personal and yet reflect the experiences shared by millions of Egyptians who took part in demonstrations during the revolution’s inception.

Photograph courtesy of Kamal Samy.