AN EYE FOR AN EYE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN THE DISCOURSE OF THE EGYPTIAN ARAB SPRING

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1. Introduction

Among the slogans of the January 25, 2011 revolution in Egypt some were immediately picked up by the international media to become part of the globally recognizable image of the Egyptian Arab Spring. The most characteristic case in point is ‘Bread, freedom, social justice and human dignity’, which are often presented as the demands (maṭālib) or goals (ahdāf) of the revolution. Meanwhile quite a few other slogans, reflecting even more closely the course of events on the ground, are less known internationally and lost in translation for the reasons of their idiosyncratic nature. One case in point is QIṢĀṢ (RETAIATION), which from the early days of the revolution featured among the most frequently voiced protestors’ demands. According to a witness account, a popular chant al-qiṣāṣ al- qiṣāṣ ḍarbū iḥwatnā bi-r-raṣaṣ (retaliation, retaliation, they hit our brothers with bullets) was first used immediately after the mass rally dubbed jumʿat al-ḡaḍab (Friday of Wrath), which occurred on the fourth day of the revolution (January 28, 2011), in which a large number of protestors (est. one thousand) were killed. Ever since, many specific rallies included QIṢĀṢ as a key element of their names-slogans, e.g. a large demonstration on Friday July 8, 2011 held under the name of jumʿat al-qiṣāṣ (the Friday of retaliation). Muhammad Mursi, Egypt’s first post-revolutionary president also thematized

1 Personal communication with Walaa Quisay, Oct. 2015, Warsaw.
QIṢĀṢ in his public discourse\(^2\). The prominence of QIṢĀṢ as a revolutionary slogan was so high that a local observer noted: *ata‘ajib kaṯīran min ḥāl miṣr – awwal marra fī ta‘rīḫ ajid ṯawra muḥniya ‘alā al-qīṣāṣ* (I am very much surprised at the state/situation of Egypt: [it is] the first time in my life that I find a revolution built on retaliation)\(^3\). The phrase ṯawrat al-qīṣāṣ (revolution of retaliation) was used occasionally by the revolutionaries themselves, albeit not in reference to revolution in general\(^4\), but rather to some specific protest campaigns, which used QIṢĀṢ as a motto\(^5\). When the military deposed president Mursi, his supporters used the phrase ṯawrat al-qīṣāṣ in reference to the growing anti-coup protest movement\(^6\). At its core, QIṢĀṢ is a Sharia concept, reflecting the *lex talionis* principle, popularly known to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike as ‘en eye for an eye’. However, as we shall try to demonstrate below it is far more than this, when it comes to the way the concepts functions in various types of discourses, including, notably, the one of the Egyptian Arab Spring.

We will begin our exposé of the concept’s rather complex semantics with the analysis of most frequent attributive collocations with the noun *qiṣāṣ*, adjectives ‘ādil (just), sarī’ (speedy, fast), ‘ājil (immediate) and nājiz (prompt, complete), which appear to highlight the most idiosyncratic part of the concept. The first among these pairs clearly points to a connection that exists between QIṢĀṢ as key slogan of the revolution and the revolution’s three big words, which we mentioned above, ḤURRIYA (FREEDOM), ‘ADĀLA (JUSTICE) and KARĀMA (DIGNITY)\(^7\). Having analyzed the concept, we concluded that the discussion of QIṢĀṢ may help better understand what kind of JUSTICE the

\(^2\) Cf. a characteristic media article of 2 June, 2012 titled ‘Mursi committing to retaliate for the martyrs of the revolution’ (mursī yata‘ahhad bi-l-qīṣāṣ li-šuhadā’ aṯ-ṯawra) on Al-Jazeera.net http://www.aljazeera.net/mob/f6451603-4dff-4ca1-9c10-122741d17432/ee5af389-1dbb-4835-b696-61466d70af7
\(^3\) The phrase is cited in an article titled Culture of Retaliation and Revenge (ṯaqāfat al-qīṣāṣ wa l-intiqām) by an Egyptian journalist Rola Kharsa published by an electronic publication al-Miṣrī al-Yawm, 14.2.2012 and is attributed to an unidentified ‘socialist, friend’ of the author – http://m.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/52941
\(^4\) which would be more often described as ṯawrat yanāyir (January Revolution) or the Revolution of Dignity.
\(^5\) Cf. a media article title on al-Miṣr al-Yawm ḥālid sa‘ād min ḍaḥiyat ta‘ḏīb ilā mufajjir ṯawrat al-qīṣāṣ min ad-dāẖiliya (Khaled Said: from the victim of torture to the exploder of the revolution of retaliation against the [Ministry of] Interior) – http://m.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/121626
\(^6\) For some graphic imagery advertising August 2014 events tagged as Revolution of Retaliation see http://goo.gl/txoNuR.
revolutionaries wanted to achieve back in 2011. Then, we shall take a closer look at the notion of QIṢĀṢ in the Islamic religious discourses, particularly, the Sharia one, to which the concept owes much of its capacity to dominate and shape political discourse and its illocutionary power in the dispute over the political power. The manner, in which the Islamic legal discourse and the lay public discussion treat QIṢĀṢ is not identical and the points of both overlap and difference between the two discourses merit a closer analysis.

Our overall methodological approach is grounded in George Lakoff’s conceptual metaphor theory⁸ and the Fillmorean frame-semantic analysis⁹. Each concept may be analyzed as a frame structure, i.e. a set of elements and relations among them, which may be described in terms of semantic roles (deep cases). We use the FrameNet⁰ project as a model in formulating frame descriptions matching our Arabic material. In discourse, however, concepts or frames that sustain them never appear as pure forms, but in a rather complex interaction with other concepts or frames. Patterns of such interactions appear as characteristic traits or marker of a particular strand of discourse. The Lakoffian notions of coherence¹¹ between metaphors and metaphorical entailment¹² are the two most important ideas that we use as a guideline in explaining the interaction between different concepts/frames in the discourse.

2. JUST retaliation

QIṢĀṢ often occurs in collocation with an attributive ‘ādil (just). This is particularly characteristic for news items describing rallies demanding qīṣāṣ li-š-šuhadāʾ (retaliation for the martyrs), cf.:

lam tamurr siwā ṣāʿāt ‘alā al-ḥukm ḥattā ẖarajat masīra fī al-qāhira wa talathā ba’d yawm wāḥid muẓāhara fī al-iskandariya tunaddid bi-tahāwu n wa tuṭālib bi-qiṣāṣ ‘ādil yušaddid ‘uqūbat šurṭiyeyn qatalā muwāṭinan dūna ḏanb¹³

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¹⁰ FrameNet is a web-based corpus, which draws on Charles J. Fillmore’s frame semantics; the corpus contains descriptions of the internal structure of semantic frames referring to various situations, actions, events, cf. https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fndrupal/home
¹² For the way Lakoff applies the term cf. Lakoff, G. and M. Johnson. 1981. *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 9, 12, 44, 91, 93, 94, 97, 102 etc.
¹³ http://m.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/121627
[a few] hours had not passed since the verdict until a procession came out in Cairo and a demonstration followed it a day after in Alexandria denouncing complacency and demanding a just QIṢĀṢ [that would] strengthen punishment of the two policemen [who] killed an innocent (lit. without guilt) citizen.

While as of mid-January 2015 Google search returned 31,600 results for al-qiṣāṣ al-ʿādil (the just retaliation, def. form), the indefinite form qiṣāṣ ʿādil ([a] just retaliation) returned only 3,570 results. The phrase does not accept negation except for a very specific set of contexts. The Google search for standard negation al-qiṣāṣ ǧayr ʿādil has returned no results, while for the indefinite form qiṣāṣ ǧayr ʿādil it showed only 8 results. Syntactically, the definite form in Arabic mostly functions as direct object, subject, or a Genitive attribute (e.g. jum ʿat al-qiṣāṣ al-ʿādil – Friday of just retaliation), while the indefinite one appears in the predicative position. In the latter case, the sentences are structured as X [is] a just retaliation for Y. Less frequent are cases with indefinite qiṣāṣ featuring in Genitive case after a preposition, e.g. 90% min jarāʾim al-qatl al-mumānḥaj li-ṣ-ṣuḥufiyīn dūna qiṣāṣ (90% of systematic murder crimes of journalists [are left] without retaliation). Syntactic limitation on the use of negation with the phrase does not appear to be the only one. The cases where negation does occur are limited pragmatically to ironic and polemical contexts. These observations lead us to the following conclusions: (1) the notion of JUSTICE is part of the semantic structure of QIṢĀṢ and the adjective ʿādil (just) is used as attributive with qiṣāṣ merely to reinforce this meaning component – (al)- qiṣāṣ (al)- ʿādil is not a type (a subset) of QIṢĀṢ, but QIṢĀṢ proper, the attribute ʿādil in the discourse only serves pragmatic purposes; (2) QIṢĀṢ features about ten times more often as a subject of demand compared to factual statements, i.e., speakers are ten times more likely to ask for QIṢĀṢ then to assert that it has actually been performed.

While we have being writing this piece, a dramatic change has occurred in the Google search counts for one of the collocations that we study in this paper, which happened within a period of slightly over one month. As of 24 February, 2015, the score for the indefinite form of the noun phrase qiṣāṣ ʿādil (just QIṢĀṢ) went up to 69,300 results, while for the definite form it showed only an

14 All searches cited in this article are limited to Egyptian web resources only.
15 We have discounted from our analysis the Accusative case indefinite form, which functions as a direct object, for it is graphically different from Nominative and Genitive case forms (it has the letter ʿalif at the end of each word).
16 A news article title on al-Yawm as-Sābi’ newspaper – http://goo.gl/m6A5c6
17 For instance in the above example the illocutionary point is the demand for a stronger punishment, which is based on the presupposition that just (i.e. proper) QIṢĀṢ is the one that is strong enough.
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insignificant increase (33,100 results). The updated figure for the indefinite form includes 1,370 reposts of essentially the same news item quoting a Twitter post by an Egyptian oppositional politician Ḥamdin Sabāḥī on the Egyptian air force retaliatory attack on ISIS in Libya18. The nature of many other more recent posts in the selection is similar to this one: *i’dām ḏuḥāṭ kardāṣa qiṣāṣ ‘ādil* (death penalty for the [Muslim] Brotherhood gang is a just retaliation)19, *i’dām qatalat ḥumāyāt ūrūd ‘ādil min al-qāḍā‘* (death penalty for the killers of officers of Kerdasa is a just retaliation from the judiciary)20. For all their relative scarcity, entries with the indefinite form related to President Mursi period are similar21, they all are meant to promote an image of a government capable of delivering justice. The 20-fold increase in texts asserting that QIṢĀṢ has been performed compared to effective decline in the number of texts demanding QIṢĀṢ to be performed22 appear to signify the change in discourse formation: the rapid come back of the old authoritarian self-congratulatory rhetoric that had dominated the public discussion during the Mubarak period.

Many contexts could be found, where *qiṣāṣ* and ‘idāla (justice) feature as fully synonymous nominations, cf. the following two quotations from the same source referring to the same piece of news:

(1) 90% min jarāim al-qatl al-mumanhaj li-ṣ-ṣuḥufiyīn dūna qiṣāṣ – 90% of systematic murder crimes of journalists [are left] without retaliation;

(2) … inna al-amr al-akṯar ṣaḏārat li-l-qalaq yakmnū fī al-lajna ad-duwaliya li-ḥimāyāt al-suḥufiyīn bi-anna 90% min al-qatala lam yatimm taqđimum li-l-‘idāla\1

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18 The significance of the Twitter post that could have led to its reprinting by every media outlet in Egypt may be attributed to the fact that a well-known politician with revolutionary credentials and a certified opponent of Ḥusnī Mubārak’s regime was now congratulating the Air Force, and by extension the president Siṣī’s regime.

19 A news article title heading dated 28 April 2014, on al-Wafd website citing a local ‘political activist’ Muhammad Abū-Ḥāmid praising the verdict of Minya governorate court in Upper Egypt, which issued 37 death and 491 life imprisonment sentences for members and supporters of Muslim Brotherhood – http://goo.gl/ANaHz1

20 A news article title heading dated 3 February, 2015 on Miṣr al-Balad website praising the death sentence for 183 defendants in the case of an assault on district police station at the village of Kerdasa, Giza governorate – http://misralbalad.com/page.php?id=25493#.VO3yP3yUcT8


22 The little growth in the number of definite form al-qiṣāṣ al-ʿādil occurrences effectively means that almost no new cases have been registered by the search engine during the period under review.
... the most troubling matter lies in statistics issued by the International Committee for the protection of journalists [which say] that 90% of killers have not been brought to justice.

It is obvious that the phrase taqdim li-l-'adala (bringing to justice) and qisāṣ in the two segments refer to the same event, and, hence, 'adāla and qisāṣ in this context are treated by the author as fully synonymous. The cited news article is largely based on an English original, which allows to match Arabic to source-language nominations: dūna qiṣāṣ matches the phrase 'get away with it', '90% min al-qatala lam yatimm taqdīmuhum li-l-'adāla' corresponds to the English phrase '90% of murderers walking free', while the English segment '370 journalists have been murdered in direct retaliation for their work' has been translated as '370 ṣuḥufiyan qutilū (...) fi-intiqām mubāšir li-qiyāmihim bi-`amalihim'. In the latter segment, an apparent negative evaluation embedded in the English word retaliation has prompted the Arab journalist to refrain from translating it as qisāṣ, and to use Arabic intiqām (revenge) instead.

In the following paragraph QIṢĀṢ is not only contrasted to the notion of (in)JUSTICE expressed as ḥīnamā wa tata’aẖẖar al-'adāla, ḥīnamā yaṭġā aẓ-ẓulm wa tata’aẖẖar al-'adāla, ḥīnamā yaṭġā aẓ-ẓulm, ḥīnamā yaṯakhār aḥad lā tandahiš ḥīnamā tarā al-muwāṭinīn wa qad taḥawwalū li-quḍāt wa jall ādīn fī al-waqt nafsihi li-tasūd šarī‘at al-ġāb bayn an-nās. When the injustice is excessive, and justice is late, when the law disappears, and the principle of QIṢĀṢ is obliterated so that the feeling of security vanishes, when the incident is repeated and no one moves, don’t be surprised when you see citizens having turned into judges and executioners at the same time, so that the law of the jungle prevails among the people.

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23 Both quotations have been borrowed from the same article published on al-Yawm as-Sābi', 3 Nov. 2014, the 1st quotation represents the title of the article – http://goo.gl/kZrUp0
25 Note also the rendition of qisāṣ as ‘legal retribution’ in the pious English translation of the Quran (Saheeh – http://quran.com/2).
26 There are several nominations in Arabic that express this idea with ūlm being perhaps the most comprehensive one and very common in the religious discourse.
QIṢĀṢ here concludes a list of nominations representing various aspects of JUSTICE and is even elevated to the status of an overarching principle of some sort.

3. **SPEEDY retaliation**

There is ample linguistic evidence both within what we have described as the discourse of the Egyptian revolution and in other genres of Arabic texts that QIṢĀṢ is expected to be performed in a speedy manner. Procrastination in the dispensation of justice, on the contrary, is often described as harmful to social peace and an incentive to further growth of crime. The discourse of the Arab Spring seems to pay far less attention to the notion of the quality of justice and attendant costs of ensuring such quality, including, notably, the time costs. The demand for a speedy QIṢĀṢ is a frequent occurrence in the language of political slogans during 2011–2013 Egyptian street protest, cf.:

wa ṭālab al-mutazāhirūn bi-dawla madaniya wa qiṣāṣ sarī’ min al-qatala wa al-fāsidīn

and the demonstrators demanded a civil state and speedy QIṢĀṢ against the killers and corruptionists and cleaning the state agencies…

Aside from sarī’ (fast, speedy) there are at least two other adjectives that frequently co-occur with QIṢĀṢ in the revolutionary discourse: ‘ājil (fast, immediate) and nājiz (full, complete, prompt). The semantic difference between the three adjectives is slight and the fact that they add almost nothing to the meaning of each other is attested by a rather infrequent co-occurrence of any two of these adjectives in collocation with QIṢĀṢ. Cf. a few examples:

qālat ad-duktūra Karīma al-Ḥafanāwī inna dimā‘ šuḥadā‘ ṭawrat 25 yanāyir lan taḍī’

and an appearance on aṭ-Ṭarīq TV channel by a prominent politician a co-founder of Kyfāya movement and the National Association for Change Karīma al-Ḥafanāwī – dated 13 August 2014 – i.e. just a week before a highly contested 20 August retrial of former President Mubarak.
Dr. Karīma al-Ḥafanāwī said that the blood of martyrs of January 25 revolution will not be wasted, having pointed out that they (probably in reference to her political party – A.) continue for the sake of an immediate QIṢĀṢ against Mubarak who has to be tried for all the martyrs who fell in January 25 revolution.

The adjective ‘ājil probably conveys the idea of urgency as compared to other adjective on our list. The phrase al-qiṣāṣ ‘ājil often occur in texts justifying political violence. Echoing the famous Islamist slogan Islām huwa al-ḥall (Islam is the solution), an article titled al-qiṣāṣ al-‘ājil huwa al-ḥall (immediate QIṢΑŞ is the solution) calls for sur’at taṭbīq al-qānūn (a speedy application of law) over the members of anti-government Islamist rebellion in Sinai underscoring the urgency of the matter by claiming that lā badīla siwā an taqūm ad-dawla bi-ḍ-ḍarb bi-yad min ḥadīd li-l-qaḍā’ ‘alayhim (there is no choice but for the state to deal a blow by a fist [lit. hand] of iron to get done with them)\(^{31}\). Speediness of QIṢΑŞ also implies simplicity, cf.:

badlan min an yakūn al-qiṣāṣ an-nājiz ahsāʿ at-ţawra wa asraʾaḥā taḥaqqūqan waqaʿ ṭunāʾ al-ḥukm al-ʾaskař wa al-madānī fī ḥaṭaʿ fāḏīh ’inda maʿtaʾāmal maʿa malaff jarāʾim rumūz al-ʿahd bi-ḥuṣnī mubārak wa intihāʾan bi-ajnābī hi min al-balṭājiya wa khuṣūr al-fāsidīn kān lā badīla siwā an taqūm ad-dawla bi-ḍ-ḍarb bi-yad ḥuṣnī mubārak…\(^{32}\)

Instead of [for] the prompt QIṢΑŞ to be the easiest and the speediest among the goals of the revolution in achievement, the military civilian duumvirate fell into a fatal error when [it] treated the file of crimes of the symbols\(^{33}\) of the bygone era beginning with the head of the regime Hosni Mubarak and ending with its tails including the thugs\(^{34}\) and small corruptionists as if it [would be] treating a crime of pickpocketing that happened on a public bus or a traffic accident…

It is characteristic not only of this example but of the entire sample that we have assembled for the purposes of this study using collocations of qiṣāṣ with adjectives ‘ādil (just), sarī’ (speedy), nājiz (complete, prompt) that they all appear to be built on a presupposition that the nature of crime is clear and there is no doubt whatsoever as to who is the offender.

The adjective nājiz (complete, prompt) is semantically somewhat more complicated compared to the former two adjectives. The source meaning of the root


\(^{33}\) The idiom rumūz (symbols) of smth. e.g. regime, political organization, historic period is used in reference to leaders and most prominent figures associated with some entity or period.

\(^{34}\) see footnote 26 above.
n-j-z is ‘accomplish, fulfill, complete’, the temporal semantics is part of the presupposition: whatever has been completed must have had some length, which by completion was cut short, hence the idea of promptness. Cf.:

\[
\text{inna al-'adāla al-intiqāliyya yajib an tatimm 'abra qānūn wa laṣya hadafuḥā al-intiqām bal, qiṣāṣ nājiz yurīḥ qu libro aḥāli aš-ṣuhadā’ wa al-mawjū’din…}^{35}
\]

The transitional justice has to be performed through law and its goal is not revenge but complete (prompt) QIṢĀṢ [that would] relieve families of martyrs and those who feel pain (lit. pained ones)…

Here the adjective nājiz is used to reinforce the meaning, which is already part of QIṢĀṢ semantics, i.e. the capacity to bring (prompt or complete) relief from moral pain\(^{36}\).

All three adjectives do not function as definitive attributes but rather as intensifiers, to the idea of speediness that is embedded in the semantics of QIṢĀṢ. The adjectives in collocation with the noun qiṣāṣ do not accept negation: phrases *qiṣāṣ ġayr sarī’* or *qiṣāṣ ġayr ’ājil* have returned no results on Google search, while al-qiṣāṣ al-muta’āẖẖir (the delayed QIṢĀṢ def.) showed 3 and qiṣāṣ muta’āẖẖir (delayed QIṢĀṢ indef.) – only one result, which renders them rather anomalous. A speedy QIṢĀṢ, hence, is not a type of QIṢĀṢ but rather QIṢĀṢ proper, same as just QIṢĀṢ. Consider also the following example: \text{inna al-qiṣāṣ min al-mujrimīn huwa aqṣar aṭ-ṭuruq li-taṭhīr al-bilād min al-fasād} (QIṢĀṢ against (lit. from) the criminals [is] the shortest way of clearing the country from corruption)\(^{37}\). The phrase, which contains no attribute explicitly conveying the idea of speediness is obviously built on a presupposition that may be formulated as: it takes little time to perform qiṣāṣ or, in other words, qiṣāṣ is speedy. In line with this presupposition, QIṢĀṢ is presented in the cited text as some sort of magic bullet – an instrument that may bring about a quick solution to complicated (and notably, protracted) social problems.

It is notable as well that the notion of speediness in relation to justice does not seem to have a negative connotation. An April 6 movement activist, ‘Alā’ ‘Abd-ul-Fattāḥ, along with 25 others was arrested for protesting against the newly re-introduced restrictions on the freedom of assembly in the early post-coup.

\(^{35}\) News article dated 5 August 2014, titled Ṣabāḥi: attafaq ma’a qānūn ‘adāla intiqāliyya lā intiqāmiyya aw intiqā‘iyya (Sabahi: I agree with the law on transitional justice, not the revengeful nor the selective [one’]) – http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/442821

\(^{36}\) The idea that pains of victim’s relatives must be relieved and QIṢĀṢ is designed to be the best means to that purpose, is essential for the Islamic legal discourse on the matters of retaliation, as we shall see below.

Egypt. The activists were then submitted to *al-muḥākama al-‘ājila* (speedy trial) and the activist’s mother commented on it saying: *lā yūjid ladaynā qaḍā’ ‘ājil fī miṣr wa lākin yūjid qaḍā’* (there is no speedy/immediate discharge of justice in Egypt, but there is justice that randomly arrests citizens). Obviously the two parts of the utterance are contrasted as *normative/commendable* vs. *abnormal/deplorable*, and the first part is based on a presupposition that *speedy* Justice is *good*. The belief in the speedy QIṢĀṢ stays as a positive value, of course, is very idiosyncratic idea. For instance, it sharply contrasts with the European idea of *revenge as a dish best served cold*.

In the media discourse, the demand for a *speedy QIṢĀṢ* is often contrasted to the description of *justice system* as prone to procrastination. Specific lexis combining temporal semantics with negative evaluation such as *taqāʿus* (slug-gishness, failure to do something) often feature in such contexts, cf.:

*al-taqāʿus fī jamʿ adillat qatl aš-šuhadā’ ḥattā ba’d al-i’lān ad-dastūrī yu’akkid ḍu’f raḥbat man bi-s-sulṭa fī al-qiṣāṣ*.

_Sluggishness_ in collecting evidence of the killing of martyrs even after the Constitutional Declaration confirms the weakness of desire [on the part] of [those] who are in power in [performing] QIṢĀṢ.

The idea of the desirability of _speediness_ may feature in a text discussing justice even without QIṢĀṢ being explicitly mentioned, cf.:

*… fa-qīmat al-‘adl ta’lū wa tazīd wa tastaqirr fī ḍāmīr al-mujtama’ ‘indamā ta’rī alusākām al-qada’ nājiza sarṭ’a lā yuqayyidahū tabāṭi al-iijra’āt wa lā tu’aṭṭiluhā ‘aqābāt šakliya aw mu’awwiqāt ‘amaliyya.*

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39 This term frequently occurs in the 2011–2015 Egyptian media texts (19,800 results on Google search for *muḥākama ‘ājila* –and 5,610 for *al-muḥākama al-‘ājila*), it is essentially a technical term used in reference to an abridged procedure applied in simple cases and has nothing to do with the notion of _speedy trial_ in the Western legal tradition as discussed below.

40 The saying is often described as an English proverb, while its origins are traced to French literary sources, whatever the origin, the phrase appears to have stricken a chord with all European cultures and expresses a commonly shared belief.

41 The phrase is attributed to the relatives of martyrs killed during January 2011 events – published on December 17, 2012 – http://albedaiah.com/node/11586

... for the value of justice goes up and increases and stabilizes in the conscientiousness of the society when the verdicts of judiciary come prompt and speedy, and the slowness of procedures does not restrict them and formal obstacles and practical impediments do not disrupt them.

This contraposition between the *speedy* QIṢĀṢ and *sluggish* formal justice system, a recurring theme in the discourse of the revolution, contributes to creating tensions between the notions of (formal) JUSTICE and QIṢĀṢ. The formal justice system may also be presented as merely an instrument for performing QIṢĀṢ, cf.:

{kamā akkad ‘alā ḍarūrat taḥqīq al-‘adāla wa ittiẖāḏ al-ijrā’āt wa sann al-qawānīn al-lāzima wa as-sarf‘a fī al-qisāṣ kay tabrud qulūb ālī aš-šuhadā’ wa yataḥaqqaq al-itsqrār al-manšūd

[He] also stressed the need to implement justice and take measures and adopt the necessary and *speedy* laws on QIṢĀṢ in order for the hearts of the relatives of martyrs to cool down and the desired stability to be achieved.

Note the metaphoric ‘hot hearts’, which are supposed to be cooled by QIṢĀṢ. The causative link between the notion of HEAT and speedy action could also be illustrated by examples from other contexts: a rubric on *urgent matters* in a media publication, for instance, may be called *qaḍāya sāẖina* (hot issues).

While the notion of *justice delayed as justice denied* in the English-language debate on justice, seems to be similar to the idea of *immediacy* associated with QIṢĀṢ in Arabic, there is a significant difference between the two. Different frame elements including both the core and non-core ones are foregrounded in the English (and generally Western) discussion on timely justice. *Trial* is the key locus and instrument of Justice in the English-language notion of the *speediness* of Justice. It is also notable that speediness in the Western legal tradition is seen as serving the interests of the defendant, while the QIṢĀṢ-centered discussion strongly foregrounds Punishment as the outcome of the process and the Victim and the Victim’s next of kin as the key protagonists. Cf.:

{al-qiṣāṣ al-‘ājil yā siyādat ar-ra’īs ya’nī ḥaqq ālī aš-šuhadā’ wa laysa amwāl wa ḥajj wa ‘umra wa ta’wīsḍāt

43 From an article on Miṣr 11 website (www.masr11.com), the quotation is attributed to a ‘political analyst’ Muḥsin Šalabī – http://goo.gl/8L8afM
44 See http://albedaiah.com/node/11586 for an article under this rubric. We will return to the discussion of the supposed soothing effects of retaliation in the section (4) on QIṢĀṢ in the Islamic normative discourse.
45 Cf. the notion of *speedy trial* in the US Constitution Sixth Amendment.
46 The phrase is attributed to Karīma al-Ḥafnāwī, a member of the oppositional National Association for Change and Social Justice Alliance http://www.cairoportal.com/story/126174
The immediate QIṢĀṢ, Mr. President, is a right of the relatives of the martyrs and not money and hajj and umra\textsuperscript{47} and compensations.

QIṢĀṢ is presented here as serving the interests of victim’s next of kin first and foremost. It also appears to be superior to other, milder, forms of justice. A frequently reoccurring theme in the revolutionary discourse is the idea that the adjudication of cases, which emerged in the context of the revolution, should be speeded up to ensure a speedy QIṢĀṢ, which is seen as essential for the progress of Revolution – an instrument that will quickly move the Egyptian society from the past to a better future. Cf.:

\begin{quote}
 kull mā nařū taḥṣīṣ dawā’ir li-nażr hādīhi al-qāḍīyā min aqīl sur’at al-injāz l-iglaq malaffāt al-mādī wa at-tawajjuh nahwa al-mustaqa‘al al-ajdal bi-qiṇi-llāh\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

All what we ask for [is] to designate sufficient [number of] departments [specifically] dedicated to the review of these cases for the speediness of delivery and in order to close the files of the past and turn toward the better future with God’s permission.

Here is the same idea expressed in a slightly different manner:

\begin{quote}
 nurīd as-sur’a fi taḥṣīṣ al-‘adāla wa al-qīṣāṣ li-kay narmī ẖalfa zahrīnā hādīhi al-baḡiḍa min tārīḫ mīṣr wa li-nakṣīf ‘an sawā’idinā wa na’mal ‘allā ra‘f miṣr min hāḏā al-ḥaḍīḍ allaḏī aqrāqa miṣr fi al-fasād wa al-muṣfīdīn\textsuperscript{49}.
\end{quote}

We want speed in ensuring justice and QIṢĀṢ in order to throw behind our backs this abhorrent era of Egypt’s history and roll up our sleeves and work on raising Egypt from this abyss which has drowned Egypt in corruption and corruptionists.

In this context a speedy QIṢĀṢ apparently lends its momentum to the Revolution, which is understood as a purposeful forward-going movement of the Egyptian people\textsuperscript{50}. QIṢĀṢ may even be presented as an instrument of a broad social reform:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{47} Hajj is a regular annual pilgrimage to Mecca also one of the five pillars of Islam (duty of every able-bodied Muslim who can afford it to be performed at least once in a lifetime), Umrah is a non-compulsory irregular minor pilgrimage; al-Ḥafnāwī is referring to a practice of sponsoring pilgrimage to holy places as a type of award or compensation by the government.

\textsuperscript{48} From an article published in al-Ahrām newspaper on 17 July 2011 titled kalimat ḥaqq (A Word of Truth) http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/Columns/News/90086.aspx

\textsuperscript{49} http://www.egyptianoasis.net/showthread.php?t=58345

turāwidūhu nafsuhu ‘alā al-fasād ba’d an yata’akkad inna miqṣalat al-muḥāsiba mawjūda wa tantaẓir raqbat ayy fāsid\textsuperscript{51}.

\textit{QIṢĀṢ} [is] also reform for the eradication of corruptionists and criminal means the preparation of ground for laying the foundation for a healthy (also \textit{whole} and \textit{sound} – \textit{A.B.}) construction on the one hand and [it] sends a message of deterrence to any official [whose] soul/self is tempting him to [engage in] corruption as he is convinced that the guillotine of accountability exists and is waiting for the neck of any corruptionist.

From that perspective it is clear why a prominent revolutionary Islamic preacher Maẓhar Šāhīn named an immediate QIṢĀṢ the most important among the revolutionary demands:

\begin{quote}
naḥnu mustamirrūn fī ṯawratinā ḥattā taḥqīqjamī‘ al-maṭālib wa ‘alā ra’siḥā al-qīṣāṣ al-‘ājil\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

we continue our revolution until the fulfillment of all our demands and foremost (lit. at the head of them) among them the immediate QIṢĀṢ

\section*{4. QIṢĀṢ in the Islamic normative discourse}

Sharia norms on retaliation are based on \textit{lex talionis} principle, which calls for a full qualitative commensurability of punishment with injury inflicted on the victim of a violent crime captured in the well-known idiom ‘an eye for an eye’\textsuperscript{53}. The Islamic legal literature on QIṢĀṢ is voluminous and instead of going into detailed discussion of it, we will focus only on a few aspects of this normative discourse most often cited by the contemporary Muslim apologists of a Sharia-based legislation, which appear to be quite idiosyncratic and significant for understanding the semantic structure of the concept. Each particular point will be presented as a link to other concepts and ideas, which are usually used to make sense of QIṢĀṢ.

\subsection*{4.1 HEALING and PREVENTION:}

QIṢĀṢ is presented in the Islamic normative discourse as a method of \textit{healing} the pains of people affected by

\begin{footnotes}
\item[52] The phrase is attributed to a prominent revolutionary Islamic preacher Maẓhar Šāhīn http://www.el-balad.com/154193.aspx
\item[53] The source of the idiom in the European languages is the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 21: 23–25, Leviticus 24: 19–21, Deuteronomy 19: 20–21); the Quran explicitly refers to the Biblical antecedent (Quran 5: 44, 45); the Babylonian law and the Medieval European legal systems, such as the Salic law and the [Kievan] Russian Justice are also exemplify \textit{lex talionis} systems.
\end{footnotes}
crime, such as relatives of the victim and the community at large, and preventing further crimes:

\[\text{wa al-qisāṣ huwa fi'l mujnī 'alayhi aw fi'l waliyih bi-jānin mīṭla fi'līhi aw šibhahu, wa hikmatuhu at-tašaffī wa bard harārat al-gayz; wa qad šarra'a allāhu al-qisāṣ zajran 'an al-'udwān wa istidrākān lamā fl an-nufūs, wa iḍāqatan li-l-jānī mā aḍāqahu al-mujnī 'alayhi, wa fihi baqā’ wa ḥayāt an-naw’ al-insānī.}\]

and QIṢĀṢ is an act of the injured party or the act of his executor\(^{55}\) [in respect] to the offender same as his act or similar [to] it, and its wisdom [is] the healing and cooling the heat of anger; and Allah has legislated QIṢĀṢ to rein in aggression and anticipate (forstall, redress) for what [is] in the souls, and let the offender taste what he let taste the injured party, and in it [is] the survival and life of the human kind.

The 5\(^{th}\) form of the verb tašaffā – (to be cured, healed, restored to health) features in similar contexts at least as early as the time of writing of the classical Arabic dictionary Lisān al-‘Arab (13 cent. AD)\(^{56}\). The notion of healing is not limited to QIṢĀṢ alone and since long was associated with the whole set of lexis belonging to the semantic field of Revenge, cf. a verse cited in Lisān al-‘Arab under the entry ṣaʾr (revenge): \(\text{šafaytu bihi nafsī wa adraktu ṯu’ratī}^{57}\) (I healed myself by him – i.e. by killing him – and realized my revenge). The long association between tašaffī (healing) and the semantic field of Revenge has led to the former acquiring such a strong connotation with the latter than in modern usage, particularly, the vernacular one, it functions as a synonym of revenge. This meaning found its way into the European dictionaries of Arabic, e.g. the English


\(^{55}\)For the sake of simplicity, in this paper, we have opted for one of the translations used by Lane in his classical Lexicon, executor, as a match for the difficult Islamic concept of wali, whenever wali ad-dam (see below) is meant – cf. Edward William Lane. An Arabic-English Lexicon. Beirut, Lebanon: Librairie du Liban. 1980/1997; the noun wali stems from the verb waliya (to be near, adjoin, follow; rule, govern), derivatives of the stem (e.g. the 5\(^{th}\) form tawallā also convey the idea of possession, hence, wali ad-dam – ‘next of kin, who possesses the blood of a slain relative’, meaning ‘having the right to kill his offender’, wali al-amr – ‘the one who possesses the [right to deliberate on] affairs’, which, depending on the context, means either a legal guardian or a ruler, see also footnote 34 below.

\(^{56}\)Cf. the following usage under the entry ṣafā in Lisān: tašaffaytu min al-gayz (I cured [myself] from wrath); and particularly, wa yaqūl al-qā’il minum: tašaffaytu min fulān iḏā ankā fi ‘adwūwihī nikāyatun kassūrhu (and some of them say: I cured myself from someone if [he] hurt his enemy in a manner that makes him happy; in later usage nikāyā also means ‘revenge’) – Ibn Manzūr. Lisān al-‘arab. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1955–1956, 15 vols.

\(^{57}\)Here the reflexive meaning, same as that of the 5\(^{th}\) form, is realized at the lexical level through the reflexive auxiliary phrase nafṣī (myself, lit. my soul), revealing the source meaning of the stem ‘heal’ even more – Ibn Manzūr. Lisān al-‘arab. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1955–1956, 15 vols.
An eye for an eye and the struggle for power in the discourse of the Egyptian Arab Spring

The link between QIṢĀṢ and tašaffī that comes out most explicitly in the Islamic normative discourse points to a wider cultural landscape, within which the concept of QIṢĀṢ is situated. This landscape, among other things, includes a belief that certain events (violent crimes among them) generate powerful negative emotions that could be compared to sickness. The notion of istidrāk lamā fi an-nufūs (anticipation for what [is] in the souls), which is offered as part of the rationale for QIṢĀṢ, also appears to be quite informative for the reconstruction of this cultural background. The plural form nufūs suggests that a negative mental or emotional process may also be going on in the souls of many, and QIṢĀṢ is there to prevent such development. It is presupposed that if QIṢĀṢ is not performed, more crimes will occur, which appears to be another entailment of CRIME is SICKNESS metaphor: CRIME may be viral, even endemic.

4.2 Retaining BLOOD: BLOOD is an important cultural symbol that stands metonymically for two things; LIFE and KINSHIP.

wa lā yajib al-qiṣāṣ illā iḏā tawaffarat aš-šurūṭ a l-ātiya: 1 – an yakūn al-maqtūl ma’ṣūm ad-dam wa law kāna ḥarbiyan aw zāniyan muḥaṣṣanan aw murtaddan fa-innahu lā ḍamāna ‘alā al-qātil lā bi-qiṣāṣ wa lā bi-diya li-anna hā’ulā jamī’an mahdūrū ad-dam

and QIṢĀṢ must not [be done] unless the following conditions are met: 1 – for the slain [one] to be prohibited (infallible, sinless) of blood, and if he were a warrior or an entrenched fornicator or an oppostate, there is no guarantee upon the killer of a retaliation and nor of blood money for those all [are the ones whose] blood [may be] wasted (spilled in vain)

In the above paragraph BLOOD is presented metaphorically as a RESOURCE that should not be wasted (spilled in vain). There are two types of BLOOD: ma’ṣūm and mahdūr. While both terms are semantically rather complex, particularly, the former one, the underlying basic idea that the pair conveys may be

58 Wehr, H. 1976. A dictionary of modern written Arabic. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. 3rd ed. Ithaca, NY: Spoken Language Services, Inc.; notably the governance model tašaffī here is inherited from the verb iqtaṣṣa min (take revenge against smb. – lit. from smb.).


60 Derivatives of the stem ‘-ṣ-m signify the ideas of (religious) purity, virtue, etc., the 1st form verb meaning ‘retain, preserve’ however points to the semantic core/source meaning of the stem.
described as *retainable* vs. *wastable*. In light of this opposition, the essential purpose of QIṢĀṢ is conceived of as *retaining* BLOOD.

**4.3 LIFE:** The concept of LIFE features in the most powerful Quranic text often cited as an argument for QIṢĀṢ – *wa lakum fi al-qiṣāṣ hayātun yā ālī al-albāb la allakum tattaqīn* (‘and [there is] for you in QIṢĀṢ life, o owners of minds (i.e. intelligent or reasonable people – A.B.) may you have fear [of God]’)

In the example below, LIFE is conceived of as an entity (perhaps a substance) that moves from parent to child. It is a _directed_ movement that has a _source_ (parent is a _source_ of LIFE for the child) and QIṢĀṢ may not reverse this direction by killing (fore-) father in retaliation for a child:


so that the killer not be a _source_ (lit. _root_) for the killed, and father shall not be retaliated against for the killing of his son and the son of his son, even if he became low (mean, ignoble) when he killed him, by no aspect of premeditation, unlike when the son has killed one of his parents, and he is killed by agreement for the father is _cause in the life_ of his son and his son shall not be a cause in his killing and depriving him of his life unlike if the son has killed one of his parents, and retaliation is [performed] against him for them; at-Tirmiḏī related [it] from ‘Umar that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said ‘the father shall not be killed for the son’.

The notion of Parent as a Root (*aṣl*) and the Cause of LIFE points to the metaphor of Tree underlying the concept of LIFE. Within this metaphor, LIFE is as a _genealogical_ Tree, which is a directed tree graph, where parents are vertices feeding their offspring through branches, thereby giving LIFE to them. The metaphor of LIFE as TREE is evoked even more clearly in the following definition listed among _šurūṭ al-qiṣāṣ_ (conditions of retaliation):

> an lā yakūn al-maqtūl juz’ al-qātil aw min furū’ihi (for the slain [one] not to be part of the slayer or [one] of his branches)

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61 Quran 2: 179, translation ours, for a widely accepted English translation see http://quran.com/2 (Saheeh International); most English translations accessible to us appear to be excessively interpretative – adding words that have no basis in the original, e.g. ‘legal retribution’ in lieu of ‘retaliation’, ‘saving life’ or ‘basis of life’ where we only find ‘life’ in the original.

62 This paragraph represents the 5th among 7 conditions (*šurūṭ*) of QIṢĀṢ according to as-Sayyid Sābiq. Fiqh as-Sunna. Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī (Egypt), 2002- http://goo.gl/f7gDXk

go on, the TREE has to continue growing, meaning that direction of the graph cannot be reversed and underlying vertices ‘giving life’ to one or more branches should be kept in place if even some offshoots may perish. Killing a parent (an underlying vertex) in retaliation for a child (dead offshoot) will be against the principle of growth, i.e. of LIFE proliferation thus conceived.

4.4 POWER: QIṢĀṢ is designed to empower the injured party (the victim or his/her next of kin) against the Offender. There is an explicit reference to this in the Quran, cf.:

wa man qutila maẓlūman fa-qad ja’alnā li-waliyyihi sulṭānan fa-lā yusrif fī al-qatli innahu kāna manṣūran (Quran 17: 33)

And whoever is killed unjustly, we have given his executor power, but let him not exceed limits in killing. Indeed, he has been supported.

When establishing the responsibility for the crime, the Islamic normative analysis shows awareness of coercion, as an act of power, and distinguishes between the powerful individual who has commissioned the crime and the party that physically carried it out, cf.:


That the killer has a free will: as coercion deprives of the will and [there is] no responsibility upon whosoever lost his will and if [anyone] vested with power coerced someone else to kill and he killed a human being without right then the one, who ordered [the killing] is to be killed, not the [one who was] ordered and the [one who was] ordered is to be punished.

The overlap between the concepts of QIṢĀṢ and POWER that characterizes the Islamic normative discourse turns QIṢĀṢ into a potentially useful asset in the debate for power, if applied in the context of the political discourse.

5. QIṢĀṢ in the lay public discussion

In the common parlance, QIṢĀṢ is used in reference to a broad range of cases, which go far beyond the strict requirements of Sharia, cf. a news item titled al-QIṢĀṢ as-sarī’ (speedy QIṢĀṢ) in an Egyptian newspaper:

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64 This is the 4th condition of QIṢĀṢ according to as-Sayyid Sābiq. Fiqh as-Sunna. Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī (Egypt), 2002- http://goo.gl/t7gDXk
intaqama al-qadr min ‘āṭil wa zawjatihi bi-l-manūfi ya fa-'uqba qiyāmihumā bi-s-saṭw al-musallaḥ ‘alā sā’iq bi-markaz Birkat as-Sab’ wa al-istīlā’ ‘alā sayyāratihi inqalabat bi-himā as-sayyāra allatī saraqāhā min ṣāḥibihā wa tamām naqluhūmā ilā al-mustaṭfā‘

The fate has avenged an unemployed and his wife in Manufiya after they had performed an armed assault on a driver in the center of Birkat as-Sab’ and have taken possession of his car, the car that they had stolen from its owner turned over on them and they were transported to the hospital.

Nothing in this situation fits the strict conditions (ṣurūṭ al-qiṣāṣ) as described in the Sharia books. QIṢĀṢ here is not part of a normative judgment but rather an expression of the author’s satisfaction that the offenders have been duly punished, it conveys a meaning that in English would be expressed by such idioms as ‘what goes around comes around’, ‘harm set, harm get’, ‘meet/get/obtain one’s deserts’ etc. The use of the verb intaqam (avenge) in the text titled ‘Qiṣāṣ’ is also quite notable, as it indicates that the contrast between the concepts of ITIQĀM and QIṢĀṢ emphasized in the Islamic normative discourse may be easily neutralized in the lay discussion.

In the lay discourse, the concept of QIṢĀṢ is linked not only to LIFE in a biological sense, i.e. LIFE as opposed to DEATH or the idea of the preservation of human species, but also to the notion of everyday LIFE – i.e. normal functioning of people in their habitual social environment and by extension the very notion of normalcy whose restoration in the aftermath of a violent crime calls for an immediate act of QIṢĀṢ. Cf.:

Ahmad Naji, coach of goalkeepers of the first football team at the al-Ahli club has pointed out the difficulty of exercises that the players will conduct with the resumption of sporting activities next Friday after the slaughter of Port Said. And Naji pointed out that the team is conducting its exercises in the midst of difficult atmosphere and bad psychological state [which] will not calm down unless QIṢĀṢ [is performed] at the highest speed.

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65 http://digital.ahram.org.eg/Accidents.aspx?Serial=1090626
66 The news article then goes on to describe the police interference in the case.
67 A news article published in Wafd newspaper on 14.02.2012 (i.e. four month before the presidential elections, when the military government that took power in the aftermath of the January 25 revolution was still in full swing) titled ‘Nājī: lā budda min al-qiṣāṣ fī asra’ waqt’ (Naji: it is necessary [to perform] qiṣāṣ in the nearest time’ accessible through the news integrator Masress – http://www.masress.com/alwafd/162776
Our next example, despite the Quranic quotation meant to make it sound more convincing, seems to express the same idea – QIṢĀṢ will ensure the return to normalcy and psychological relief:

fa-nahnu jamī’an ma’ā aṭ-ṭuwār aš-šubbān aš-šurafā’ al-anqiyyā’ fī maṭālib al-qiṣāṣ al-ʿādil mim-man irtakabū jarā’im qatīl wa sirqa wa ihdār li-l-māl al-ʿāmm wa nuridhu qaṭ’an qiṣāṣan sarī’an ḥayātun yā ūlī al-albāb.

And we all [are] [together] with young noble and pure revolutionaries in [their] demands for the just QIṢĀṢ against [those] who have committed crimes of murder and theft and squandering the public funds and we want it definitely [to be] a speedy QIṢĀṢ in order for the thoughts to calm down and for the souls to rest “and [there is] for you in QIṢĀṢ life, o owners of minds”.

Notably two of three crimes mentioned in this example do not qualify for QIṢĀṢ in strict Sharia terms, which are limited to violent crimes (murder and bodily injury), murder is however opening the sequence.

Perhaps the most essential common element shared by both the religiously inspired and lay discourses is the idea of (psychological) relief and social peace as the natural outcome, or even the purpose of QIṢĀṢ. The idea of immediacy/speediness as an immanent characteristic of QIṢĀṢ does not come out explicitly in the Islamic discourse on QIṢĀṢ, but the healing/soothing quality ascribed to QIṢĀṢ by the Islamic normative tradition appears to be quite coherent with this idea, as is the metaphor ĠAYŻ (ANGER) is FIRE, which we have discussed above.

Another idea common to both the Islamic and lay discourses is that QIṢĀṢ is the best, if not the only, method of preventing further crimes, which goes along with the presupposition that crime has a natural tendency to spread – like a sickness spreads in a community – unless prevented, while the best prevention method is essentially to give the offender a taste of his own medicine., cf.:


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69 Quran 2: 179
70 ‘To express this meaning derivatives of the root rd’ are used in lay discourses rather than zjr as in 2.1
Egypt Youth Party has presented its sincere condolences to all the Egyptian people in [respect of] the victims of a wave of explosions which affected numerous places in the Egyptian capital on this Friday morning (…) having stressed the need for the formation of emergency courts for the terrorists in order to issue their verdicts in a speedy and immediate fashion through preventive verdicts for anyone who would be tempted (lit. whose soul would seduce him) to compromise the security of Egypt.

Although QIŞAŞ is not mentioned explicitly in this segment, the argument is shaped by key ideas associated with it – the speediness/immediacy, prevention meant to forestall the perceived natural tendency of crime to spread.

6. Conclusions

The Islamic normative and lay discourses differ in the referential scope of QIŞAŞ. In contrast to Islamic normative discourse, the lay discourses often mix up the notions of INTIQĀM (REVENGE) and QIŞAŞ. The originally relatively narrow Islamic legal term, specifying punishment only for the violent crimes, QIŞAŞ has colonized most of the lay discussion on crime and morality operating as universal standard for how justice is expected to be delivered. QIŞAŞ has become the embodiment of the idea of natural (also God’s prescribed) justice. QIŞAŞ is essentially egalitarian as it is meant to re-instate a sense of balance in the community and to give everyone their due by privileging the Victim and his/her next of kin and empowering them against the Offender. By way of contrast, ‘ADĀLA (JUSTICE), associated with the formal institutions of power, is a non-egalitarian concept. The Egyptian revolutionary discourse reflects a growing tension between the two concepts. By privileging QIŞAŞ and making it their key demand, the revolutionaries challenged the powers that be and their slow and inhumane JUSTICE system.

Three ideas associated which QIŞAŞ, located, from the formal point of view, on the periphery of its frame semantic structure, are shared across both the Islamic normative and lay discourses and constitute an essential part of the local belief system: (a) QIŞAŞ means relief from negative feelings for both the individual and the group; (b) QIŞAŞ should be performed in a speedy fashion; and (c) QIŞAŞ is the best method of preventing more crime. These ideas appear to be closely linked to each other thus forming a neat conceptual unity. Another significant element of the frame-semantic structure underlying the concept is its link to the concept of POWER. In the context of a large scale political con-
frontation, the idea that the injured party, i.e. potentially anyone, every common person, may be empowered against the offender, has converted this Islamic legal concept into a potent instrument of the revolutionary struggle. It is this idea that is the source of an exceptional illocutionary force associated with the concept and the reason, why it has acquired such popularity as a slogan of the Egyptian Arab Spring. The argument around QIṢĀṢ, a shared value for all parts of the Egyptian society, its promptness or appropriateness has become a dispute for power. By calling on the authorities to submit to people’s will and threatening with a people’s QIṢĀṢ, the revolutionaries were affectively staging a symbolic offensive against the government.