

A REPORT/NOTES ON , CAIRO METRO LINE 3 (Phase 3)

Reference is made to the following European Investment Bank (EIB) documents:-

- a- CAIRO METRO LINE 3 (Phase 3),**
www.eib.org/projects/pipeline/2010/20100613.htm
 - 12-09-2012 , Non Technical Summary(NTS).
 - 28-08-2012, Environmental & Social Impact Assessment(EISA).
- b- European Investment Bank,**
www.eib.org/infocentre/publications/all/complaints-mechanism-operating-procedures.htm
 - COMPLAINT MECHANISM.
 - OPERATING PROCEDURES.

Many articles of the above documents clearly stress the importance and the care that the EIB gives to the subject of the consultation and acceptance of the local community to any project financed by its institution. It further sets the doors widely open in order to receive any complaint (EIB Complaint Mechanism). In democratic countries, the local people are being accepted as being the sole owners of the homes, the land and whole local community. This issue is so crucial and vital in such countries. While in non democratic regimes, this issue is totally ignored and of no importance. The whole world knows that for many decades, Egypt has been living under a totalitarian dictatorship, where people's will were always ignored, and their voices were never heard by the ruling regime. During these long decades, the ruling establishment total negligence to people's will, was in-turn transmitted to the majority of the Egyptian civil administration bodies. Therefore even after the 25th Jan.

revolution, it will definitely take the country many years before the present Egyptian administration, at most levels, could get familiar and train themselves to accept, understand and appreciate the democratic process of consultation/dialogue with the local communities, i.e., to respect their needs and accept their will. Infact, that would then require the introduction of a new administrative cultural process that would take ages, lots of efforts and resentments, in order to be implemented within the present mostly deteriorated administrative system.

During the recent meeting at Alsawi Sakia in Zamalek, and although the undersecretary of transport clearly stated that, different to the old, (before 25 Jan. revolution) method of imposing decisions on local communities. He now came to meet the Zamalek community in order to consult with them on the subject of the new Metro line 3 which would cross their Island underneath its busiest street, Ismail Mohamed street, and where the new station will be located too. However to the end of this meeting, we all felt that this gentleman had clearly attended this gathering in order “only” to “inform” us about “their decision”, and not to listen to our views and concerns. Throughout the meeting, he never accepted any point raised by any member of the community, not even promised to give it another thought. Therefore the meeting was a one way dialogue, not a consultation, and simply non complying with EIB/ESIA requirements. Yet on the other hand, it is very difficult, even unfair to expect from most employees in the present Egyptian administration to act otherwise. The whole system and most employees had always lacked any sort of earlier democratic training, practice or experience. And all

through their long service, they were never trained to recognize, respect nor to tolerate any of the local community concerns and will.

For that, and in compliance with EIB compliant procedure, we have decided to raise our future serious concerns with the European Investment Bank, whom we strongly feel that through their financial contribution to this project, as we shall later explain, our local community in Zamalek ,i.e, the local environment, the local building structures in Ismail Mohamed st., as well as the lives of its inhabitants, might be put at “high risk”, incase the new Metro line does not take a safer alternative route.

Therefore, we as part of the Zamalek community, we would like to express our entire “Refusal” to the suggested Metro route. However at the same time would like to propose “Four” other safer and more environmentally friendly, **alternative** routes :-

1st Alternative The new Metro line to cross Alwaraq island instead of crossing Zamalek. This is the “best solution” which would introduce badly needed development to Alwaraq community, while at the same time saving Zamalek lots and lots of chaos and deterioration.

2nd Alternative The new Metro line to cross Zamalek island at its furthest southern edge, (avoiding the busy and overpopulated Ismail Mohamed street) .

3rd Alternative The new Metro line to cross Zamalek underneath Gezira club horse track, next to the existing elevated bridge,(avoiding the busy and overpopulated Ismail Mohamed street).

4th Alternative The new Metro line to cross Zamalek island at its furthest northern edge, towards the end of Abo Alfida street, (avoiding the busy and overpopulated Ismail Mohamed stree).

During the 1950's, the Egyptian authorities, without even thinking of consulting or seeking the approval of Zamalek local community; took a weird, strange and illogical urban decision. Instead of constructing new schools and collages for the much larger communities of Bullack and Imbaba, within their own large and unlimited space area. They choose to confiscate old and beautiful palaces and villas within the smaller Zamalek island, converting many great architectural heritage into governmental schools, that would mainly serve the Bullack and Imbaba larger communities. An entirely wrong urban resolution was then taken, "inserting the Larger communities services(Bullack & Imbaba schools & collages), within the area of the much smaller community, Zamalek". Following were some of the awful urban consequences that were the direct outcome to the weird, illogical and unscientific urban planning decisions :-

- 1- The lives of all boys and girls that had to commute twice daily from their communities in Bullack and Imbaba to Zamalek, were made extremely complicated and difficult.***
- 2- It added huge unnecessary pressure to the already poor transportation systems within the three communities. A nightmare that we all greatly suffer from, until today.***
- 3- It made people's life within Zamalek extremely difficult, caused by the congested traffic, the disturbing noises and the alarming pollution ratios throughout this small island.***
- 4- The ratio of residents/to/daily visitors within Zamalek, as NAT undersecretary mentioned, raised to an alarming 1/8 ratio. Such ratios could be tolerated in downtown commercial area, not in residential.***
- 5- Since the early 1970's, and due to the overpopulated status of Zamalek. The newly up coming generations of the Zamalek***

community could not find accommodation within their island. Most of the newly married couples had to seek accommodation and residence in Mohandeseen, Dokki, 6th of Oct. city, etc....

Another dreadful, irresponsible, illogical decision and project that the authorities had also imposed few decades ago, over the Zamalek community without their consent, was the construction of the elevated bridge over the extremely busy 26th July main street in Zamalek. This ugly bridge that connects Giza to Cairo downtown serving “Only” these much larger communities, was just another bad example of the unprofessional urban planning mistakes that had greatly contributed to the introduction of more destruction to the once peaceful, clean and respected way of life within this island.

However and instead of learning from the past urban mistakes, and try to rectify the present detroration,by returning the schools and collages serving Bullack and Imbaba, back to their natural larger environment and communities. Also by refraining from the past unintelligent, illogical and unscientific thinking, in seeing no other method of providing connection between the huge governates of Giza and Cairo,except “through, over, or under”the tiny island of Zamalek. The proposed Metro route underneath Ismail Mohamed st., is just another bad repetition to the past urban disastrous mistakes.

We are then here facing two major issues:-

a- The construction of the above & underground new Metro station structures & facilities, at the entry of Ismail Mohamed street(infront of the Algerian and Spanish embassies).

c- The actual underground deep tunnel route that would cross Zamalek island underneath Ismail Mohamed street, connecting once again Giza governate to Cairo downtown.

As regarding the 1st issue, it is needless to talk much about the expected complete traffic blockage that will be the nightmare of the whole island, for several long years to come.

Needless too to talk much about the horrible noises and the unbelievable streets and air pollution and contamination that will accompany the construction process for many long years of pain and suffering that the whole Zamalek environment and community will suffer and live under.

Needless again to talk much about the expected future general decline in the Security & Safety levels, affecting local residents, visitors, foregin consulats & embassies,etc...putting more burden on the law enforce-ment forces striving to achieve peace & order against outlaws,theives, criminals,etc...to whom the new Metro route would represent an invitation, and a new easy access to the island.

Once again, it is needless to talk much about the efficiency (Art.3.12.2,ESIA) of the local contractors and their uncontrollable sub-contractors, the chaos and confusion that they will introduce into our streets and lives.

And in short, it is needless to talk much about all that because any small school kid living in Zamalek is capable of fully explaining the catastrophic consequences of constructing a Metro station in this very busy and relatively narrow street.

Finally, considering the incredible size of problems that such unprofessional planning would generate; also considering the actual modest capabilities of many government department's employees that would

be delegated the heavy responsibility of resolving such “impossible to resolve” problems. Where infact even the most experienced experts of the world, would stand totally helpless unable to resolve the problems and the nightmare created by such a disastrous project. Therefore any proposed “Mitigation” plan to overcome these disastrous effects, is just an inexperienced and naïve wishful thinking that has no connection what so ever with our real life in this country. The logic requires the planner to put some efforts in always seeking the least problematic solutions. Not take the worset, then put useless enormous efforts in seeking impossible solutions.

However the problems associated with the 2nd issue are even more severe and dangerous. They are basically related to the “SAFETY” of Ismail Mohamed street’s :- “BUILDINGS, PROPERTIES and its inhabitants LIVES”!

The present structural strength and durability of buildings along this street are not all identical. Some of them are very solid and had resisted many earthquakes that hit Cairo during the past decades. However the same cannot be said about the rest. The official records at Zamalek Hayy (municipality) would clearly highlight the situation. There are so many official notices given to many building’s and flat owners to evacuate tenants, to remedy or treat the serious structural problems of their properties along this street. In the opinion of the Hayy engineering dept., as indicated in many of their reports; several structures along this street are of different levels of deterioration, and would presently represent different levels of threats, to the building’s structures, as well as to the lives of its inhabitants and to the passers-by too. It does not take much, even to a person with no engineering background, to really panic just from the thought of boring & drilling a

huge underground Metro tunnel below the foundations' levels of these already deteriorated structures. And later having a thousands of tons rolling stock Metro run underneath! The question that instantly comes to mind here, is that who would take responsibility to any harm or loss of life if it would occur? Who would compensate flats and buildings owners for any buildings collapse or structural failure?

(Art. 3.5.4, EISA) insists on that :- *"... an additional study on noise impacts along the at-grade and elevated alignments is carried out as soon as possible inorder to assess the potential noise exposure..."*.

(Art.3.8.3,ESIA) again insists that:-*"...additional study required to perform a thorough investigation of the potential impact on historical buildings, and buried monuments...!"*.

However when it comes to the serious subject of buildings and underground VIBRATIONS, it just mentions(Art.3.5.4,EISA) that:-*"...based on previous Metro experiences and an assessment of the geological conditions, it is likely that the receptors (buildings)will be less sensitive to vibrations during the construction and operations phases"...* Or in other words no need for any serious studies, since the past experience showed that no serious effects occurred to structures caused by the Metro projects. Similar logic was also repeated in(Art. 4, EISA).

However and with all due respect, the above Articles and its Logic cannot be taken as a permanent Rule and a Proof of Safety applicable to all structures everywhere. We all know that every single location, every single street and every single building would have its own & special characteristics of quality, strength, durability and endurance to underground vibrations and to other external effects.

Nevertheless, if that strange logic is considered as true and accurate; though many people, based on past experience, would firmly confirm otherwise. It is still our legal & human right to request that, after a

detailed Vibration resistance test is being conducted, to each single structure along and in the vicinity of Ismail Mohamed street. Then the EIB , the Engineering Consultancy Firms as well as the National Authority for Tunnels(NAT) , who are jointly executing this project, should be prepared to take full legal responsibility for the “Loss of Any Human Life, or to Any Damaged Property”, during both the construction and the operation phases.

Apart from a small shy sentence at the end of (Art.3.11.2)listing the negative Socio-economic Effects, which might include:-“*...impact on houses and dwellings due to vibration*”. Very little concern was expressed in the EISA document on this serious subject.

Infact it is strange to read in(Art.3.14.1,ESIA) about the (PAPs) Project Affected People, and to find no much similar thought given to people that might lose their properties or even their lives, incase anything goes wrong during construction or later during operation.

It is even stranger to read in(Art.2.3,ESIA) that:-“*...The station was initially on the western side of Ismail Mohamed St. but this location was deemed impractical due to the presence of precious centenary banyan trees, which would have had to be uprooted...!*”. Again in (Art.3.15.2,ESIA) we read about similar concerns on trees, animals, birds, etc...

However all that could be said here is that, we are unable to find in the ESIA document a real concern to the foundations of the buildings, similar to the concern to the Precious trees’ roots! Nor can we find a real concern to the human inhabitants’ life, nor to the future of their buildings, similar to the concern shown to the trees’ inhabitants i.e., the birds & their future. Infact pulling down trees will not threaten the bird’s “life or future”. Birds could easily find many other trees to make a new nest/home. Whereas unfortunately many Egyptians

who lost their lives many years ago due to earthquakes; and many thousands who permanently lost their homes, hardly received any proper compensation, as many of them still live in miserable shacks around Cairo until today!

CONCLUSION

Having said all the above, we would mention again that all above serious concerns will disappear, incase one of the above 4 safer Alternatives is being adopted, for the new line 3(phase 3) route. It has to be clear that we are not against the idea of the Metro project, which is truly considered an important national project. What we are against is the appalling unprofessional choice of Zamalek the route, which will be disastrous to the local environment, to our lives and to our properties too.

Please note that due to the correct and proper scientific and human choice taken at the time. The previously constructed Metro station near the opera house in Zamalek, did not cause any serious problems.

Finally, we would like to put forward the following questions:-

a- Don't you think that people's comfort and tranquility, also avoiding turning there lives into constant hell and agony, during the long years of construction that will destroy whatever hope for peace left in their lives, would deserve from you to consider one of the available non destructive alternative routes?

b- Inspite of our knowledge that your assumptions related to vibrations effects on buildings foundations, were based on past experience not on scientific studies([EISA 3.5.4](#)). Don't you think that the slightest doubt or the smallest possibility of buildings structural

failure or collapse, would also deserve from you the adoption of Safer available more Human alternative routes ?

Finally, we would like to thank EIB for their keen interest in improving the quality of life in our country. Also for their democratic true interest in seeking the community acceptance to their projects, and opening wide the doors for all types of complaints;

(EIB COMPLAINTS MECHANISM, Article 3):-“...*Complaints may relate to any aspect of the planning, implementation, or impact of EIB project, including but not limited to:-*

- *Processes followed in preparation of a project.*
- *The adequacy of measures for the mitigation of social and environmental impacts of the project.*
- *Arrangements for involvement of affected communities, minorities, and vulnerable groups in the project.*
- *The manner in which the project is implemented....”.*

Thank you very much.....