

## **Football United**

London, 14 November

Cars honking, Egyptian flags flying in the air, people chanting and cheering. This is the typical scene of Cairo's streets before important football games for the national team, only that isn't Egypt but London.

Hundreds of eager Egyptians fans were gathered waiting impatiently to get into Shishawi coffee shop in Edgware Road to watch the event that brings the nation all together even abroad.

The World Cup qualifier match against Algeria is screened live from Cairo where Egypt has to win by a three-goal margin to advance to the World Cup for the first time since 1990. A win by a two-goal margin will set up a playoff game on the 18th of November in Khartoum, Sudan.

"We are going to destroy them," yells Samia a 20 years old woman jumping around with her Egyptian flag.

The tension is high. Waiters are running all over to sit the customers in the overcrowded coffee shop where people are hoping to witness their beloved country make history in one of the most prestigious football competitions.

Mohamed El Garf who has been living away from Egypt for 19 years anxiously says, "this game is so important to me and to everyone, the last time we've been to the World Cup was in 1990. I am worried, I hope we get there."

The game is about to begin, people are rushing and get seated before the

kick-off quickly smoking the traditional water pipe and sipping some tea.

Upstairs, a room is filled with chairs lined up in front of a big flat screen TV airing the game from the national Egyptian channel.

### **Football clashes with Algeria**

A man shouts, “ Is anyone here in this room Algerian?” Apparently no one, since people started laughing, jokingly swearing at the opposing team.

Egypt has had a long history of clashes in football with Algeria where riots and violence often occurs between supporters and players.

Twenty years ago, in 1989 when Egypt beat Algeria to reach the World Cup, Algerian footballer, Lakhdar Belloumi, attacked the Egyptian team’s doctor with a bottle, blinding him in one eye.

Incidents like this are still happening. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of November four members of the Algerian team were injured as Egyptian fans attacked the bus upon the team’s arrival in Cairo.

“There were always clashes in history, it happens all the time with football, it’s not justified but everyone has the right to be a fanatic when it comes to defending his country,” said Ahmed a 29 years old engineer.

Despite the growing fanatic hatred against Algeria, two Algerian girls managed to sit down in the “Egyptian Room” of the coffee shop. Dalilah, a 26 years old journalist says she has nothing against Egypt as she has many close Egyptian friends who were in fact sitting next to her.

“I think the media are taking it too far, it’s becoming a too bigger issue for nothing.”

### **The Goals of Victory**

The game now starts, the room quiets to whispers of prayers for the team. People look tense, but in the blink of an eye two minutes after kick off, the room turns into chaos.

Egypt scored the first goal. Cries of joy are filling the air and people are jumping up and down hugging each other.

Somehow their celebrations ended quickly when the score on the TV screen hasn't changed and still reads zero- zero.

A man yells furiously " Why isn't it a goal? What happened, why are they doing this to us?"

A great moment of confusion and disappointment fills the room until the little box at the top of the screen reads Egypt 1, Algeria 0. Another round of screaming and dancing starts again, but even more intense. The team is getting closer to make millions of Egyptians' dream come true.

After a stressful 92 minutes of panic and anger, when everyone lost hope and is prepared to go home with regrets Emad Moteb surprisingly scored and did make Egyptians' dream come true.

The Pharaohs won another chance to qualify for the world cup next Wednesday in Khartoum's playoff game with Algeria.

While the ecstatic fans are rushing out to celebrate the victory in the streets, Ahmed Hassan, one of the waiters of Shishawi is smiling while tidying up the place.

"Here in London it's not the same when all of us watch a game together. We are like a family and winning makes it easier to be away from home".