



# Political Alienation In Al-Baroudi's Poetry

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates the theme of political alienation in the poetry of Al-Baroudi, a contemporary Egyptian poet known for his incisive social commentary and critical engagement with power structures. Al-Baroudi's verses are marked by a sense of disillusionment, dissent, and estrangement from mainstream political ideologies, reflecting the poet's deep skepticism towards authority and the status quo. Through an analysis of selected poems by Al-Baroudi, this study explores how the poet articulates feelings of political alienation, disenchantment, and disconnection from the dominant narratives of power and governance.

**Key Words:** Political, Alienation, Injustice, Tyranny, Ruling elite

## I. INTRODUCTION

It can be argued that the political context of Al-Baroudi's time played a significant role in his exile and separation from his homeland. Al-Baroudi was known for his revolutionary spirit and his unwavering commitment to justice, equality, and the rule of law. These principles were expressed in his politically charged poetry, which emphasized patriotism, love of revolution, and a deep concern for the welfare of the nation.

Al-Baroudi's poetry was characterized by a scathing critique of the corruption and disorder that had become endemic in Egypt, as well as the fear and uncertainty that had taken hold of the nation's people due to the tyranny of rulers like Ismail and Tawfiq. He condemned the squandering of the hard-earned wealth of the people on frivolous pursuits and personal pleasures, and called for a more equitable distribution of resources that would promote the nation's development and progress (Al-Daswqi 47).

Al-Baroudi's political views and activism were seen as threatening by the ruling elite, who sought to suppress dissent and maintain their grip on power. As a result, he was exiled from his homeland, effectively silencing his voice and depriving the nation of his artistic and intellectual contributions.

Al-Baroudi's exile serves as a poignant reminder of the vulnerability of intellectual and artistic freedom in societies where dissent is not tolerated and where the ruling elite seeks to maintain their power at all costs. It highlights the importance of protecting and promoting these values in a healthy democracy, where individuals are free to express their views and contribute to the intellectual and cultural life of the nation without fear of persecution or retribution.

## II. BLAMING THE RULERS

Al-Baroudi's legacy illustrates the transformative power of poetry, which can serve as a potent tool for social and political change. His poetry not only reflected the social and political realities of his time but also provided a channel for the aspirations and hopes of the people for a better future. Through his poetry, Al-Baroudi inspired a generation of poets who followed in his footsteps, using their craft to challenge injustice, oppression, and corruption, and to advocate for a more equitable and just society.

One of the politically charged poems that reflects Al-Baroudi's political leanings and his condemnation of the injustices of the ruling elite is a poem he composed in more than a hundred verses towards the end of the reign of Khedive Ismail called "Qualities of Wisdom". The poem, which laments the deteriorating state of affairs

in Egypt, was written during a period when the country was plagued by financial turmoil, mounting debts, and foreign interference in its affairs. The poem also denounces the corrupt and incompetent rule of the Khedive, who was widely regarded as a foolish and ineffectual ruler.

The poem opens with the following lines:

I adorned the fine qualities of wisdom with the ornament of poetry,  
And in seriousness I say, what can replace humor's glee?  
My heart refuses to stray from the path of glory's law,  
Charmed by the eyes' enchantment, I resist the spell of flaw (1-4).

Al-Baroudi's opening stanza in this poem reveals his intention to express his deep attachment to his homeland. He achieves this by eschewing humor and relying on seriousness and elevated language, which serve to underscore the gravity of the political situation in Egypt and his commitment to achieving justice and liberation for his fellow countrymen.

Al-Baroudi's decision to employ a serious tone in this poem reflects his desire to highlight the severity of the political crisis facing his nation. He sought to expose the injustices perpetrated by the ruling elite, who had violated the individual conscience and autonomy of the people, and stripped them of their natural rights and freedoms. Al-Baroudi's use of elevated language and serious themes also served to elevate the status of poetry as a means of political expression and social critique (Al-Nashif).

He continues saying:

Let not the siren song of pleasure sway my quest for glory,  
For in the thrill of ambition, no revelry can tell its story.  
Amidst the clamor of those who call for deeds of honor and esteem,  
A lone mourner weeps in solitude over his shattered dream.  
'Tis the disparity between creatures that reveals the need,  
To discern between the adornment of virtue and the decay of greed (7-12).

Al-Baroudi's unwavering commitment to the pursuit of glory for the sake of his homeland is reflected in his ability to remain focused on his goals, undistracted by the pleasures and temptations of life. He remained vigilant and devoted to his duty, always striving for excellence and seeking to achieve the highest standards of honor and integrity for his fellow countrymen.

Al-Baroudi recognized that people are distinguished by their individual qualities, morals, and aspirations in life. He drew a clear distinction between those who are consumed by frivolous pursuits and pleasures, and those who stand for honor and truth, seeking to achieve greatness in life. He emphasized that there can be no compromise between those who exhibit prudence and steadfastness in the pursuit of justice, and those who engage in nothing but idle play and amusement.

Al-Baroudi's resolute stance in pursuit of the collective goals of his community embodies the qualities that set him apart from others. His steadfast commitment to justice and honor, and his unwavering dedication to the welfare of his people, demonstrate his exceptional character and his contribution to the cultural and intellectual heritage of his nation.

He positioned himself as a champion of individual excellence and called on his fellow countrymen to display strength and determination in their pursuit of their rights and aspirations in life. He believed that weakness was a trait of the cowardly and could not serve any purpose. Al-Baroudi's conviction was strengthened by the injustices he witnessed, such as the imposition of exorbitant taxes on the people, which led some women to sell their jewelry and clothing to pay their taxes. He noted the persistence of oppression, the denial of rights, and the imposition of humiliation and subservience to the ruling elite.

He believed that people must be bold in their pursuit of freedom and must resist being subjugated to the ruling elite throughout their lives. He urged them to resist and fight for their demands and not to remain passive in the face of injustice. Al-Baroudi realized that achieving one's goals required courage and determination, and that people must be willing to resist and fight for their rights. For that end, he says:

Take flight to the soaring heights of glory, leave the mundane below,  
Like the falcon, only the highest peaks can satisfy your soul.  
Transcend the trivial and the lowly, set your sights on distant stars,

For amidst the tempestuous sea, there lies a melody that heals the scars.

The idle dreamer may never reach his goals, despite his whims and fancies,

But the bold and steadfast, with unwavering courage, shall triumph over all that chances (13-8).

Having instilled a sense of purpose and ambition in the hearts of his fellow citizens, Al-Baroudi directed his attention towards the ruling elite, lambasting and blaming them for the degradation of Egypt's once exalted status. He attributed Egypt's descent into ignominy to the corruption of the ruling elite and the instability of their rule.

Al-Baroudi's criticism of the ruling elite was a reflection of his patriotic fervor and his desire to see his country restored to its former glory. He recognized that the ruling elite had failed in their duty to uphold justice and to ensure the welfare of the people, resulting in the decline of Egypt's position in the world (Saed 59).

Al-Baroudi's message serves as a call to action, urging the ruling elite to reform and to restore Egypt to its rightful place as a bastion of culture and civilization. He says in this regard in the same poem:

We have become targets of evil in a time,  
Where the wise obey the call of sloth and crime.  
A group of men, the worst of the lot,  
Has caused our souls more misery than we ever thought.

Each rogue is pushed by malice and disdain,  
And the council is weary of their endless bane.  
Egypt has fallen from her lofty height,  
As the pillars of rule have been shaken in plight.

The land of the Pharaohs now lies in submission,  
After a proud history of glory and ambition (45- 54).

He was not a supporter of the injustice and disdain for the Egyptian people that occurred during the reign of the Khedive, as corruption spread and rights were lost. He was not satisfied with the state of Egypt during the Khedive's rule, noting that it had previously been a land of great prosperity and power. Al-Baroudi recognized that the country was headed towards a precipice and began to distance himself from Ismail, whom he had previously supported.

Al-Baroudi believed that Egypt's interests required its people to stand united in defense of its resources and dignity against Ismail's rule. This moment marked the beginning of Al-Baroudi's entry into the political arena, as he called for revolution and the overthrow of Ismail's corrupt regime (Marashdah 39).

He urged the people to confront the corrupt regime and to resist until the country was restored to its former glory, saying again:

I know not what fate befell the heroes of yore,  
After the battles and the clashing swords they bore.  
Have the trees of glory wilted and died,  
Betrayed by the cowardice of men who hide?

They do not defend their brethren, even if it may cost,  
Their own lives, succumbing to fear and frost.  
They fear death and plot to evade its grasp,  
Unaware that cunning and deceit cannot alter fate's clasp (67-74).

He called for the urgent need to stand up against injustice through the use of weapons and fighting, in order to achieve justice and overthrow the tyrannical rule that had spread corruption throughout Egypt, causing the people's demands and rights to be lost. He believed that it was necessary to rise up and abandon laziness and procrastination in the pursuit of their demands. Rather, they must advance with strength, determination, and unity, until every oppressor is expelled from Egypt. However, Al-Baroudi recognized that the use of weapons alone was not sufficient to achieve this goal. Instead, it was necessary to use reasoning and intellect to achieve the desired outcomes.

Al-Baroudi's call for armed resistance against tyranny was a reflection of his deep-seated belief in the importance of justice and the welfare of the people. He understood that the use of violence was sometimes necessary to overthrow oppressive regimes that had lost their legitimacy. However, he also recognized that reason and intellect were crucial tools in achieving the desired outcomes. This belief in using both force and reason was a hallmark of Al-Baroudi's thinking and had a profound impact on the political discourse of his time. He states:

If a young man lacks the wit to live with ease,  
He is but a few, a burden to appease.  
Act now, before it is too late to seize,  
The reins of destiny, and the world that flees.

Follow the example of noble and trustworthy peers,  
Who will be your support in times of fears,  
Leading you to victory, in moments of tears (99-05).

The emergence of Al-Baroudi's rebellious nature against injustice and tyranny can be traced to his recollection of the ancient kings who had ruled before and were succeeded by other kings who were corrupt and oppressive to the people. Al-Baroudi recognized that the corrupt and oppressive rule of those leaders was not conducive to the welfare of the people, and he sought to encourage them to resist and fight against the tyranny that plagued their society.

Al-Baroudi's willingness to offer advice and guidance to his people in the face of the oppression they suffered at the hands of their rulers, made him a popular figure among them. He recognized that it was possible to overcome even the most entrenched forms of tyranny through the collective efforts of committed individuals, provided that they remained steadfast in their commitment to justice and equality. To that purpose he says in his poem "Terrible Foolishness:"

Where are the ancient kings who once ruled with might,  
Their splendor and power now a distant sight.  
They have passed on, leaving behind other kings,  
Who bring destruction and despair on their wings.

I see everything perishing in decay,  
In the hands of fate, slipping away.

.....  
Oh people, seize the moment before it's gone,  
In this life, opportunities are few and far-flung.

Why enduring the humiliation with patience and grace,  
For we are but grains of sand in this vast, endless space.  
And how do you see a land that is enslaved,  
By the grace of God, yet so ungrateful and depraved.

I see a harvest waiting to be reaped,  
But where are the swords that once cut deep (43-87).

Al-Baroudi, expresses his dissatisfaction with the rulers of Egypt, whom he believes have brought nothing but misery and suffering to the Egyptian people. According to him, these rulers have not shown any mercy to anyone, young or old, and have only caused corruption and disgrace to the country and its people.

He portrays Egypt's situation as one of pride and dignity, which has been undermined by the despotic rulers who have imposed their will on the people, plunging them into darkness and despair. He highlights the need for the people to rise up and fight for their freedoms and rights, as life is too short to wait for change to come on its own.

Al-Baroudi reflects the sentiments of many Egyptians who have suffered under the rule of oppressive regimes. It underscores the importance of good governance and the need for leaders to prioritize the welfare of their people above their personal interests.

In recent decades, Egypt has experienced political turmoil and economic instability, which has led to widespread social unrest and political upheaval. The country has gone through several revolutions, each aimed at overthrowing corrupt rulers and establishing a democratic system of governance.

Despite these efforts, Egypt continues to face numerous challenges, including human rights violations, economic inequality, and political repression. Al-Baroudi's statement serves as a reminder of the need for continued efforts to build a just and equitable society in Egypt, one where all citizens can live in peace and prosperity (Abdulmunem 36).

He expresses those thoughts through these verses in a poem called "Hallmark of Glories":

With no pure child nor elder chaste,  
The rulers of Egypt brought only a wretched waste,  
Once a wonder of the world, now a desolate place,  
With corruption spreading through each town and race.

Like locusts, they devoured all in their path,  
Oppression burning bright like an unrelenting wrath,  
No mercy shown to the weak or the old,  
Mothers and children, their agony untold.

Under their reign, Egypt became a land of pain,  
Humiliation, suffering, and torture, all in vain,  
These are the traces of their injustice and shame,  
A legacy of cruelty, forever to blame (38- 49).

### III. BLAMING HIS PEOPLE

In the following poetic verses, Al-Baroudi expresses his sense of alienation from his own people, whom he feels have turned against him despite his service and sacrifice for their benefit. He believes that they have become hypocrites, harboring nothing but hatred towards him, and have falsely accused him of crimes he did not commit, solely to remove him from power.

This feeling, in turn, represents a decisive shift in Al-Baroudi's psyche, from calm and rational thinking to a more zealous and fanatical mindset. This transformation may be attributed to his disillusionment and disappointment with the people he once served, who he now sees as ungrateful and treacherous.

Such a shift in mentality can have significant implications for an individual's behavior and decision-making. In the case of Al-Baroudi, it may have led him to adopt more extreme views and take more radical actions to achieve his goals. It may also have made him more distrustful of others and more prone to isolation and withdrawal.

This phenomenon is not uncommon among leaders who feel betrayed by their own people or those they once trusted. It underscores the importance of maintaining a balanced and rational mindset in the face of adversity and disillusionment, to avoid falling into the trap of extremism and fanaticism. It also highlights the need for leaders to cultivate a close relationship with their people and to build trust and mutual respect, to prevent such feelings of alienation and betrayal from arising in the first place (Al-Daswqi 84).

Those verses, taken from his poem " Khalil Al-Zaman", go as follow:

I've lost my time with a people, had I  
Found others, my burden I would deny.  
If fate throws me back to their midst,  
I'll leave them, with good deeds to persist.

Their hypocrisy is their only root,  
No principles, just misguided pursuit.  
Ignorant in disputes, they act like fools,  
But in prosperity, they break all rules.

Their faces are deceiving, with anger beneath,  
Their words of love, with treachery they bequeath.  
The morals of children, when they are tried,  
Reveal their ignorance, and false pride (11-22).

Al-Baroudi continues to express his regret, intertwined with a sense of alienation and disgust towards his people. He laments their lack of reason and honesty, despite his good intentions towards them. He had hoped that they would join him in his fight against oppression, but instead, they accused him of seeking power and position.

He wishes that he had never trusted his people or encouraged them to fight for their rights. He believes that they are unworthy of freedom and dignity, and wishes he could distance himself from them by retreating to the top of a mountain. He feels that it would be better to be alone than to face the ingratitude and betrayal of his own people.

His people had asked him to lead them in their struggle for justice, and he responded by raising his voice and fighting for their cause. However, once he had taken action, they turned on him and attacked him from behind, before fleeing and leaving him to face the consequences. All these emotions are depicted in the following verses from the previous poem:

Woe to them, this people, devoid  
Of reason and friendship, never overjoyed.  
I thought the best of them, but alas,  
My heart now bears the weight of my failed trust.

Oh, if only I had never led them,  
And faced the obstacles that now condemn.  
If only I could retreat to the highest peak,  
And escape the fate that they now seek.

They exposed me to danger, then turned away,  
Swiftly abandoning me without a word to say.  
Oh, how I regret my faith in this lot,  
Who left me to rot in this deserted spot (40-51).

In another verse, we see a tone of reproach towards the people of his homeland who failed to support him in his time of need. For one who does not aid his brother in times of trial, cannot be considered a friend or a companion. Therefore, he warns them not to blame him if he were to abandon them in the future.

Al-Baroudi's words reflect a sense of disappointment and frustration with the lack of support he received from his fellow countrymen. He expresses his concern that they may continue to fail him in the future, and warns them of the consequences of their inaction saying in his poem "Ask about My Heart":

If you won't aid me, my own kin,  
Then go and leave me, I won't give in.  
Will my heart feel pain and grief,  
Without a rebel or a relief?

For one who does not aid his brother,  
In times of need, he's like no other.  
So don't blame me if I choose to leave,  
My heart's desires, I won't deceive (11-8).

Al-Baroudi's poetry is replete with blame and reproach towards his comrades in the struggle who failed to support him and defend him. He explains that what he suffered was due to his love for his country. He believes that he has nothing more precious than himself to sacrifice, but he did not find support from his Arab brethren, whom he trusted.

#### IV. BLAMING THE WHOLE ARABS

His question, "When did you break the covenant, O Arabs?" embedded in his poem "For Every Tear That Falls", is a rhetorical expression of disbelief and astonishment, highlighting his disappointment with his Arab brethren for failing to uphold their commitment to the cause of justice and freedom:

For every tear that falls from my eyes,  
There's a reason that makes me agonize.  
So how can you blame me for my pain,  
When my heart is burdened with love's reign?

Oh brother of injustice, do not rush to condemn,  
For love is a power that conquers all men.  
If only reason could guide us in the dark,  
We would not be so easily swayed by doubt's mark.

If only we knew what the future holds,  
We would avoid the pitfalls that life unfolds.  
I have nothing left but myself to offer,  
And I have done so, will mercy take cover?

Oh defenders of the oppressed, where are you now,  
When I am in need and you hold the power to endow?  
You have abandoned me, though I trusted you so,  
When did you break the covenant, O Arabs, do you not know?

Is it not a duty to provide shelter for the guest,  
When he fears that he will be put to the test? (1-18).

Al-Baroudi vehemently denies any wrongdoing or fault, attributing all of his actions to his great love for his homeland and his desire to protect its interests and preserve its freedom. He emphasizes that he has never committed any crime that would warrant the treatment he has received from his oppressors.

He staunchly defends his nationalist stance and his commitment to defending his country, and refuses to apologize for his beliefs and actions. He asserts that he is not remorseful for his patriotic positions, and that he is patient in his faith in Allah.

Among the wonders of my time I have found,  
That I am punished for words so profound.  
I have committed no crime deserving such fate,  
So why must I suffer war and hate?

Is defending my faith and my nation,  
A sin that warrants exile and damnation?  
Let not the envious think I regret,  
For I am patient and in Allah's faith I am set (31-38).

Al-Baroudi's words express the injustice and oppression he faced for simply expressing his beliefs and defending his faith and homeland. He laments the irony of his situation, where he is punished for speaking truth to power, without committing any crime or wrongdoing.

He questions the morality of those who would punish him for defending his faith and his nation, and highlights the arbitrary nature of the oppression he faces. His words reveal his steadfastness and unwavering faith in Allah, despite the trials and tribulations he endures.

## CONCLUSION

Al-Baroudi's ability to maintain his composure and remain unfazed by the false allegations and attacks on his character is a testament to his strength of character and his unwavering faith in his cause. His ability to rise above the negativity and hostility directed towards him is a source of inspiration for others who may be facing similar challenges.

Al-Baroudi's message of hope and inspiration continues to resonate with people today, serving as a reminder that the fight against oppression is a never-ending one that requires constant vigilance and determination. His legacy remains an inspiration to those who seek to promote positive change in their societies, and his rebellious spirit, commitment to justice and equality, and willingness to offer guidance and advice to his people serve as a model for those who seek to promote social justice and political reform.

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