

*TOM DECKER*

## **REFLECTION ON APRIL 1, 2011— NAHID**

Nahid Maker died today. One of my seniors, Nahid would have graduated in two months. She didn't feel well, so she went to her home to rest and recover for the weekend. After eating a little bit with her mother, Nahid went to bed for a nap and never woke up. She was 19 years old.

So I spent this evening weeping with Egyptian and Sudanese young people. Nahid was very respected and appreciated on this campus. She had mastered the art of rising above the petty alliances and cliques that exist in every high school. About a year ago she approached our pastor on campus and asked to be baptized. Nahid committed herself to the Lord through baptism and plunged into the cleansing wave of assurance in Him.

She is typical of our Sudanese students. Tall, erect, athletic, beautiful, with a smile that lights up a room. She connected well with everyone, but didn't need to drive or steer her friendships. She befriended you as a gentle presence. Nahid was the only child of a Sudanese Catholic mother. Her father is a criminal locked up in some jail in Sudan, so Nahid was everything to her mother. I cannot conceive of the grief her mother is suffering.

Telling over 100 teenagers their friend died that afternoon is hard—very hard. We interrupted our vespers program and after a very brief introduction we said, “Nahid died today.” The eruption that followed is unlike anything I have ever experienced. Nile Union Academy is almost half Sudanese refugees and half Egyptians. Their cultural expressions of grief are far more emotive than in my Western culture. In a moment my normal, smiling teenage students transformed into a cacophonous mass of fainting, self-slapping, clothes-tearing, hair-pulling, yelling, running, weeping humanity. I stood on the steps outside our chapel observing the

diverse expressions of grief like a battle commander trying to understand the immensity of the chaotic situation he has so suddenly found himself in. I then found myself weaving my way slowly through my precious students, entering into their wailing, their confusion and denial, their tears, and their silence. For the next three hours I was pounded on, sobbed on, run from, and collapsed into.

Tonight I am tired, so very tired. But tomorrow will come accompanied by the opportunities and challenges of living in the battleground of the universe. I will wake, as I do each morning, surrendering my weak-willed head, heart and hands to the God of the universe. I will ask Him for strength again to be His man in this place for this day. I know my God—He will give me all I need.