

## **Front-Row Seat to Revolution**

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For Alicia Ochsner, her sojourn in Cairo for the month of January was like a front-row seat to the revolution. "I wanted to stay," she said.



American students wait to board a bus that will take them to the Cairo airport. The U.S. State Department organized flights out of the country for the evacuees. (Photo by Alicia Ochsner)

Ochsner was studying at the American University in Cairo as part of her junior semester abroad until she and three other Tulane students were safely evacuated from Egypt on Monday (Jan. 31).

"I did not meet a single person who supported [Hosni] Mubarak [the president of Egypt]," said Ochsner, in a Skype interview from London, where she's staying for a few days with Tulane friends until her return to the United States.

"People told me, 'We would like to pick our own president,' " said Ochsner.

Ochsner, a political science major, naturally talked politics with Egyptian students during lunch and coffee breaks from her intensive studies in the Arabic language and the politics of the Middle East.

The Tunisian revolution, or Dignity Revolution, in December filled the Egyptians with hope that the political situation in their country could change, said Ochsner. “They saw what people can do, and they were inspired.”

When the peaceful protests in the streets began on Jan. 25, Ochsner was on a bus tour of old Cairo. Later, when back at the university, Ochsner, like millions of people around the world, followed the events on television. She and other students switched back and forth from the Al-Jazeera network broadcasting in Arabic and CNN International in English.

The Internet shutdown by the Egyptian government on Jan. 27 was a turning point in the decision by Tulane officials to arrange for the evacuation of Ochsner and the other students from Cairo to Paris.

Her experience this week in Egypt has not dampened Ochsner's fascination with the region. “I love the Middle East and the Arabic language,” she said.

Her ultimate goal is a career with the U.S. State Department.

“I told my mom, this is practice for my career.”