Interview transcribe.

Interviewer: Mohamed Soliman.

Interviewee: Anonymous.

Location: Mutual acquaintance’s apartment.

Date: 09/03/14.

Topic: How the army deals with an AUC alumni and how time served in the Army can effect alumni’s chances of employment.

Soliman: My name is Mohamed Soliman and today I am interviewing an AUC graduate who for reasons we are going to talk about wishes to remain anonymous due to the sensitivity. Hello, how are you?

Interviewee: I am good, how are you?

Soliman: I am good, thanks. So you graduated in 2012 from electronics engineering.

Interviewee: Yes, I graduated fall 2012 electronics engineering major and business admin minor.

Soliman: And as soon as you graduated you applied for jobs straight away.

Interviewee: Of course, I had to apply for jobs because I knew I had military service after four months and had nothing to do for 4 months, so I applied just in case I do not get accepted in the army. and every single company I applied to told me they can't hire me or can't even let me get to the stages of the application process because I have to finish the military service, so I went to at least 5 (companies) and they kept telling me I can't, they can't even talk to me because I had to finish the papers, so I went to finish the papers and four months later I realized there's no way to get out of military service.

Soliman: So how long have you been in the military for?

Interviewee: I've been in it since April of 2013, so that’s a good 10 months

Soliman: And how…  
Interviewee: 11 months even.

Soliman: I bet you can't wait to finish, right?

Interviewee: Of course, I have 72 days left.

Soliman: Knowing that you're an AUC graduate.

Interviewee: Yes.

Soliman: Do you get any different treatment from the other?

Interviewee: Yes.

Soliman: Soldiers?

Interviewee: At first I decided to keep my the fact that I graduated from AUC a secret to myself but afterwards it was more difficult to keep lying about it because they had my records. But once they found out I graduated from AUC, everyone started treating me differently, they thought just because I actually, my parents were fortunate enough to put me in a good school, that I am more spoiled or different or I can’t take harsh treatment, but that’s not the case, so everyone would try to prove, make me suffer more than the others, in order to make themselves feel that they are teaching me something, but that was not needed at all, so for example they would give me the more difficult chores, or yell at me more just to try to teach me something.

Soliman: So what kind of things were you asked to do in the army?

Interviewee: I was asked to do a lot of things, the more common things that everyone does, is cleaning after the officers but the more demeaning aspects were, picking up their garbage and cleaning toilets and there's lots ya3ni, washing dishes was, of course, ya3ni something we did a lot, that’s ya3ni, there is a lot of demeaning things, the fact that they don't even call you by your name and they call you with very demeaning terms such as yalla if that could be translated into something ya3ni. they refuse actually to use your name because they think it makes the relationship between the both of you personal, they try to keep it so that you can’t even talk to them as a friend, you can only, or even as a boss, there's no ya3ni, you have to respect them and fear them at the same time.

Soliman: Is there any one in particular that gives you a hard time?

Interviewee: Yes, especially the officers, and the soldiers are actually quite nice. Everyone suffers equally because they get, ya3ni a year or two years of their life wasted and they are nice to each other, but the officers they feel like we owe them, or some, ya3ni, or we're responsible to be, to do everything they ask. One particular officer, used to send me to do his chores with my car.

Soliman: With your car?

Interviewee: Yes, my personal car.

Soliman: And do they pay gas or anything?

Interviewee: They don't even pay, they don’t even give you the day of, and they don't do anything. They force you to use your car because you can't say no. Everything they ask you to do, you have to do or else you'd be put in prison. One friend of mine, refused to bring his car because he was, he needed money for gas and he was low on money, they put him in jail for a week, just because he refused to get his car.

Soliman: wow.

Interviewee: Yes.  
Soliman: This is very harsh.

Interviewee: Yes, we do all, ya3ni, really, really difficult things with the cars. Ya3ni, one time I went all the way to ras sudr which is about 180 kilometers, just to pay the electric bill of an officer.

Soliman: Oh my God. \*laughter\*

Interviewee: Yes, of his shallette.

Soliman: Do you do any like, how is the work-out?

Interviewee: Actually the workout is beneficial but the treatment during the workout is very harsh, they tell you if you do not run fast enough, or don't do enough pushups they won’t let you have your vacations, but even though it's your right to get your vacation.

Soliman: And how are the cabins like where you...

Interviewee: Stay.

Soliman: Stay and eat and sleep and the bathrooms

Interviewee: Usually for most of my stay it was, was not particularly bad, but the recent two months, we had very large numbers of soldiers come in for training that they would do, leaving in a month, so the huge number lead to people sleeping, in the , on the sand, like putting blankets on the sand and sleeping on them, and lots of people sleep in the mosques, they don’t even find a room to sleep in, the bathrooms of course are terrible, and in terrible conditions because of the huge number of people and there is no time to clean after them.

Soliman: And then one soldier has to clean up after the rest.

Interviewee: Exactly, but either way he can't keep up with the huge numbers.

Soliman: What about the food, how is the food like?

Interviewee: The food, the food is not amazing, but we got used to it. Like last week we had 800 soldiers and everyone was supposed to have chicken, so usually everyone, each person gets like one quarter of a chicken, last week we had 30, 30 whole chickens for 800 people.

Soliman: what?

Interviewee: So probably, no one, less than half the people ate.

Soliman: And do you sleep there at base, or do you go home and come back every day?

Interviewee: I usually go home after I do things with my car with the officers, but sometimes when there's nothing they want from me, they force me to stay and sleep because I am of no use to them.

Soliman: So it’s, all the use is for them.

Interviewee: Yes, exactly. And I don’t even have a place to sleep so I sleep on the couch.

Soliman: Must be very difficult to sleep on the couch after the workout.

Interviewee: Of course the couch is half my size.

Soliman: One last thing.

Interviewee: Sure.

Soliman: How do you think you being forced to join the army, effected your chance of employment, do you think the chances that you had when you graduated are going to go to someone else and are you going to have less opportunities?

Interviewee: Of course when I graduated the opportunities were much better because I was still a fresh grad and everything still fresh in my mind, but now because of all the work I’ve been doing in the army, I probably forgot most of what, the technical things I learnt in engineering specially, because you have to keep studying engineering in order to remember. So, probably in, when I apply for jobs, my opportunities will be much less, because no one wants to hire someone applying one year later after they graduated and in that year they were doing absolutely nothing of use and of relevance to the field.

Soliman: Seeing as you graduated from electronic engineering, did you tell the, your officers that in the army?

Interviewee: Exact, I want to tell you one particular incident, one officer once asked me if I had graduated college, so I told him yes, so he asked me are you sure ya3ni, is it a 5 year program or a 4 year program, so I told him yes, so he said so you're a smart guy, I said yes, of course, so he wanted \*laughter\*, a type of Turkish coffee, he wanted a cup of coffee a certain way that only smart people supposedly know how to make.

Soliman: And were you able to make it?

Interviewee: Of course not, I don't know how to make coffee. Turkish coffee.

Soliman: Ok

Interviewee: So he called me a donkey and left.

Soliman: Really?

Interviewee: Yes.

Soliman: Why don't you ever tell them that you're an electronic engineer?

Interviewee: I do.

Soliman: And don't they let you do anything with that? Anything with your major.

Interviewee: No, there's no use to them, people with, people with education, there's no use. The only difference is you get, actually there's no, not even the slightest difference. In the treatment doesn’t make a difference at all, sometimes they even make fun of you, because most of the, not officers, the volunteers in the army, they have less, way less education, so they try to, they feel that they are less, so they try to make up for it, with, by calling you stupid.

Soliman: Alas, thank you very much.

F: No, thank you.