

# Egyptian presidential elections expose bourgeois ex-left

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The positions of the bourgeois ex-left groups in Egypt before the June 16-17 presidential election have again exposed their political bankruptcy and counterrevolutionary role.

Hostile to a revolutionary struggle to mobilize the working class to overthrow the US-backed military junta and fight for socialism, ex-left groups—the state capitalist Revolutionary Socialists (RS), the Socialist Popular Alliance Party (SPAP), the Stalinist Communist Party of Egypt (CPE) and the Nasserist Tagammu Party—seek to disarm the working class by subordinating it to various sections of the Egyptian bourgeoisie.

The initial round of the elections were a political travesty, marked by low voter turnout and held under the dictatorial auspices of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) junta. After it produced a run-off between two right-wing candidates, the ex-left groups have started a cynical argument about which candidate might be a “lesser evil” and thus should be supported.

Their alignment with either Mohammed Mursi, the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), or the ally of the current regime, Ahmed Shafiq, the last prime minister under ousted dictator Hosni Mubarak, or the alleged “third way” of Nasserist Hamdeen Sabahi, exposes the ex-left parties themselves as tools of the Egyptian bourgeoisie.

On May 28, the RS issued a statement embracing the MB candidate, Mursi. In the statement titled “Down with Shafiq... Down with the New Mubarak!” the RS claimed that a vote for Mursi would be a vote against the “counterrevolution” and its candidate Shafiq. In the statement, the RS called upon the MB to form a government of national unity including Sabahi and the liberal Islamist Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh as vice presidents.

To justify their support for a right-wing bourgeois candidate, the RS claimed that “our position does not, of course, mean that we are dropping our criticism of [his] social and economic programme ... the political performance of the leadership of the Brotherhood ... and the trust of these leaders in the Military Council and their attacks on the revolutionaries.”

This statement exposes the fraudulent character of the RS’ politics. Though they are aware of the MB’s reactionary character, they are nevertheless willing to back them.

The RS also attacked those who do not distinguish “between the

reformists of the Muslim Brotherhood, who are supported by and will be supported by millions in the elections [...] and the fascism of the military’s man, Shafiq.”

To justify their support for the alleged “lesser evil” Mursi, the RS use the term “fascist” simply as an insult against Shafiq and the junta. By this they try to blur the fact that both the army and the MB are right-wing institutions of the Egyptian bourgeoisie, hostile to the working class. Both Shafiq and Mursi praised the army and police after the first round of the elections and signaled that they will intensify the counterrevolution if elected.

If it defines the ruling Egyptian junta as “fascist,” the RS should explain why they backed it last year, claiming that the junta “aims to reform the political and economic system, allowing it to become more democratic and less oppressive.”

More fundamentally, however, the SCAF junta does not exhibit the classic traits of fascism—a regime that sets into motion desperate layers of the petty-bourgeoisie to crush the working class, destroy its organizations, and politically atomize it. The political situation in Egypt remains marked by continuing protests in the working class and the profound discrediting of the army regime in broad layers of the population. The line of the ex-left parties is precisely to stymie further popular opposition, by backing either the MB or the junta.

Various other pseudo-left and liberal parties—including Tagammu, the Egyptian Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party of Egypt, the Socialist Popular Alliance, the Egyptian Socialist Party, the April 6 Youth Movement, Mohamed El-Baradei’s National Association for Change, and Sabbahi’s Nasserist Karama Party—were quick to make clear that they are willing to cooperate with either right-wing candidate.

They all signed a so-called “pledge document” on June 1 which was presented to both candidates. Amongst the principles outlined in the document are the defence of “Article 2 of the 1971 constitution and the Constitutional Declaration, which declares Islam is the state religion and the principles of Islamic Sharia law the chief source of legislation.”

The document stresses that it is “important to respect the role of the Armed Forces and its sacred function to protect Egypt’s national security.” It also pledges “to protect major institutions of the state from penetration and infiltration by political trends,” above all “the

judiciary, the army, the police, the venerable Al-Azhar, and educational institutions.”

The “pledge document” exposes the ex-left as defenders of the Egyptian state and tools of the SCAF junta. By signing it, they in fact committed themselves to the defence of the SCAF dictatorship and the state apparatus of the Mubarak regime. The document embraces not only the 1971 constitution, the legal basis of the Mubarak dictatorship, but also defends the apparatus of state repression, including the police and the army.

Only two days after the document was issued, Shafiq said he would “accept the pledge document as a whole.” Tagammu announced in a June 3 statement that it would support Shafiq if he signed the document. It claimed that backing Shafiq was the only way to prevent Egypt from becoming an Islamic state, warning that a boycott would lead to a victory for Mursi and the MB which “is a threat to the democratic and civil state.”

The renewed mass protests which erupted after the first round of the elections and intensified after the fraudulent Mubarak verdict—with protesters tearing down posters of Shafiq and Mursi alike and calling for the overthrow of the junta—came as a shock for the whole ex-left. Fearing they could lose control of the protests, which are likely to intensify after the run-offs, disputes emerged amongst their membership over whether the overt endorsement and collaboration with the right-wing candidates should be continued.

On May 31, the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), an international ally of the RS, intervened with an article titled “Egypt’s election dead end” published on *Socialistworker.org*. The author, Alan Maass, criticized the line of the RS and opposed their “call for a lesser-evil vote for the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood, an avowedly pro-capitalist organization committed to Islamist politics.”

The RS reacted with “A reply on Egypt’s elections” by Mostafa Ali, published also on *Socialistworker.org* on June 3. In the piece Ali defended the RS’ support for Mursi, arguing for “the need to first and foremost defeat the candidate of the counterrevolution.” He claimed that the election of Mursi would be “a significant victory in a hard defensive battle against counterrevolution.”

However, on June 4, the RS signaled a change in their line. They issued a statement titled, “To the comrades,” describing the support for Mursi as “premature,” apologizing for the “chaos and confusion the mistake has caused amongst the membership of the movement.”

One day later, the RS issued another statement rejecting “presidential elections until the political exclusion law is implemented” and calling “on the masses to boycott the elections if the law is not implemented.” On June 14, the Supreme Constitutional Court will rule if a political exclusion law banning former regime figures from running for office, which was passed by parliament, will be applied against Shafiq.

Meanwhile, some signatories of the “pledge document”—including the CPE, the SPAP and the Democratic Front faction of the April 6 movement—also declared that they will boycott the run-offs. On June 6, the spokesmen of Tagammu, Nabil Zaki, claimed that the party’s

support for Shafiq is based on a misunderstanding. He declared that Tagammu’s rejections of Mursi and the MB does not mean “a call to support Shafiq.”

The confusion in the ex-left is bound up with its fear of a renewed social explosion directed against the SCAF junta, the MB and the entire fraudulent framework of the junta’s “democratic transition”. Who would be left to confuse and demoralize the working class if the ex-left groups are already in an open alliance with one of the right-wing candidates, who are both discredited amongst the masses?

In an article published on June 12, Anne Alexander, a leading member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain, another international ally of the RS, also called for an MB vote. At the same time, she warned that “millions of voters, particularly in the main urban centers and working class areas, are disillusioned with the Brotherhood.” She added that “the scale of the protests last week shows both the need and the potential to build a revolutionary movement which can continue the resistance beyond the polling day.”

This does not address an obvious question: if millions of workers are disillusioned and angry with the right-wing MB, why should workers nonetheless vote for them in elections?

Alexander’s talk of building a “revolutionary movement” by the ex-left is nothing but phrase-mongering to hide their plans to forge another right-wing alliance to suppress the workers. Alexander writes that that such a movement “must retain the angry street fighters, the youth activists and the football ultras.”

As the SCAF junta and the MB are discredited amongst the masses, the ex-left hope that Sabahi and Fotouh might be able to lead a so called “third way” to control the workers. In her article Alexander praises both as “the two main revolutionary candidates.” This is a lie. Fotouh and Sabahi are, like Shafiq and Mursi, representatives of the Egyptian ruling class who are willing to defend the power and wealth of the elite against any independent movement from below.

Fotouh, who received the backing of the right-wing Salafist Nour Party and al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya in the initial round of the elections, recently called for a vote for Mursi in the run-offs. Sabahi’s Karama Party has collaborated closely with the MB and the military junta in the past months. It is part of the Brotherhood-led Democratic Alliance in the Egyptian parliament and was amongst the political parties that signed a deal with SCAF last November declaring their support and appreciation of SCAF’s role in “protecting the revolution” and organizing the “democratic transition.”



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