

Egyptian junta installs Islamist Mursi as figurehead president

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Egypt's Supreme Presidential Electoral Commission on Sunday declared Mohamed Mursi, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) candidate, the winner of the presidential election runoff held the week before in the midst of a political coup carried out by the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).

The announcement followed a three-day delay during which tens of thousands of people, mostly MB supporters, thronged Cairo's Tahrir Square to denounce the military's assumption of dictatorial powers and the threat that the SCAF would falsify the election results and hand the presidency to its favored candidate, former Air Force chief Ahmed Shafiq, the last prime minister under deposed dictator Hosni Mubarak.

Many thousands were on the square Sunday awaiting the announcement while troops stood by to crack down on an anticipated eruption of anger in the event of a decision in favor of Shafiq.

Last week, the junta threatened to use an "iron fist" against protesters, and stationed troops and armored vehicles in front of the electoral commission offices, the vacant parliament building and other public offices in Cairo. At the same time, intensive behind-the-scenes negotiations were underway between the SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood over a deal to give Mursi the largely powerless presidency in return for the Islamists' acceptance of the military's assumption of dictatorial powers.

Mohamed ElBaradei, former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, was evidently involved in brokering the deal. Following reports that he was negotiating with the MB over a possible cabinet post, he met Saturday night with Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, the head of the SCAF.

It was an open secret that the electoral commission's

announcement would be determined by the outcome of these talks, not the vote totals from the presidential runoff.

In the event, the commission declared that Mursi had won the election with 51.7 percent of the vote compared to 48.3 percent for Shafiq, a difference of some 900,000 ballots. It said the turnout in the runoff was 51.6 percent, compared to an even lower 46 percent in the first round of the election.

The mass abstention reflected the lack of enthusiasm in the working class for both candidates—Shafiq, a holdover from the hated Mubarak regime, and Mursi, the spokesman for a right-wing, pro-capitalist Islamist party representing the interests of sections of the bourgeoisie and more affluent middle-class layers.

Soon after the electoral commission's announcement, Tantawi congratulated Mursi, who is slated to take office July 1. He will do so under conditions where the generals have dissolved the parliament and constituent assembly, decreed de facto martial law, and arrogated to themselves full power over legislative and budgetary matters, the security agencies and the military, and the formation of a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution.

This travesty of democracy, the outcome of a deal between rival factions of the ruling elite that excluded the sentiments and interests of the broad masses of Egyptians, was immediately hailed by Washington and other imperialist powers as a watershed in the "democratic transition" supposedly being carried out under the jackboot of the SCAF generals.

The Obama White House congratulated Mursi and the Egyptian people for "this milestone in their transition to democracy." At the same time, it warned the incoming president not to challenge the US imperialist-dominated political set-up in the region, including centrally the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. "We believe it is essential for the Egyptian government to continue to fulfill Egypt's role as a pillar of regional peace, security

and stability,” the White House declared.

British Foreign Minister William Hague said, “The people of Egypt have elected a new president. I congratulate him and them on the result and the peaceful process.”

This attempt to obscure the reality of a military dictatorship and enable the generals to prepare massive repression against a renewed movement of the working class is supported by the entire political establishment within Egypt, from “moderate” Islamists, to secular liberals to the various middle-class pseudo-left organizations. The latter have lined up squarely behind Mursi and the Brotherhood.

Last Friday, after two days of meetings with liberal Islamist defectors from the MB, secular Nasserites and representatives of the April 6 youth movement, Mursi held a press conference in which he announced the formation of a national front. He pledged to appoint a non-MB member as prime minister and assign other cabinet posts to representatives of non-Islamist “national forces.”

On Sunday, following the electoral commission’s announcement, the Revolutionary Socialists (RS) issued a statement declaring the election of Mursi a “significant revolutionary victory.” Ever since the revolutionary movement centered in the working class toppled US-backed dictator Mubarak in February of 2011, the RS has sought to give credibility to the claim that the army was presiding over a “democratic transition.” At the same time it has collaborated with the Brotherhood to block the emergence of an independent movement of the working class to overthrow the junta and replace it with a workers’ state fighting for socialism.

In its statement Sunday, the RS reiterated its support for the non-existent “democratic transition,” despite the assumption by the military of dictatorial powers. It said of the installation of Mursi: “Once again the masses are proving that they are still able to alter the plans of the counterrevolutionary military, and revolutionary legitimacy is still able to extract benefits and revolutionary laws.”

This is a continuation of the counterrevolutionary role of the RS and other pseudo-left organizations, such as the Socialist Popular Alliance, the Egyptian Socialist Party and the Communist Party of Egypt, most of which signed a pledge of support for the Egyptian constitution of 1971 and endorsed the role of the military in Egypt’s political life just days before the SCAF dissolved the parliament and constituent assembly and declared martial law.

Mursi’s central function will be to collaborate with the

military in unleashing state violence against a renewed movement of the working class, which all factions of the bourgeois establishment, including its “left” flank in the RS and similar groups, fear could topple the Egyptian state and open up the entire region to working-class revolution.

In a nationally televised speech late Sunday night, Mursi vowed to swear the oath of office before the seated parliament and not before the Supreme Constitutional Court, as the SCAF generals had decreed. This—one of the demands advanced in the RS statement—was an attempt to provide a fig leaf of defiance to an abject statement of subordination to the Egyptian military and US imperialism.

Declaring that “national unity” was “the only way to get Egypt out of this difficult crisis,” the US-educated president-elect expressed gratitude and admiration for the military, the police, judges and other government officials for their work “on behalf of the nation.” He said, “I must salute them because they have a role in the future.”

Then, in a bow to the US and Israel, he said, “we will preserve all national and international agreements.”

The pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist politics of the Muslim Brotherhood were laid out in a friendly interview with the head of the organization, multimillionaire businessman Khairat Al Shater, published Saturday by the *Wall Street Journal*. Making clear that he favored free-market economic reforms, Shater said, “Our economic vision is close to a modified capitalism.”

He went on to declare that the priority of the Muslim Brotherhood was a close “strategic partnership” with the US.

A key to the essential role the Brotherhood is seeking to play by gaining a foothold in the state apparatus is provided by Article 53b of the constitutional decree issued by the SCAF arrogating to itself dictatorial powers. The article states: “If the country faces internal unrest which requires the intervention of the armed forces, the president can issue a decision to commission the armed forces—with the approval of SCAF—to maintain security and defend public properties.”



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