

Egypt: Islamist president takes symbolic oath of office in Tahrir Square

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Mohamed Mursi, the first Egyptian president since the revolutionary ouster of long-time dictator Hosni Mubarak last year, took a symbolic oath of office in Cairo's Tahrir Square on Friday.

After Friday prayers, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) leader spoke before tens of thousands of people, presenting himself as the president of the revolution and claiming he would “continue [its] course.” Mursi then recited the presidential oath.

The stage-managed event was a fraud. Its central aim was to reassure the generals of the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) that Mursi would not challenge their control of the state. Barely two weeks after the junta dissolved the MB-dominated parliament in a military coup, Mursi stressed that his speech “does not mean that I do not respect the law, the constitution, the judiciary or any of Egypt’s patriotic institutions.”

In a further signal that he defends the junta and its counterrevolution, Mursi officially took the oath on Saturday before the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC), the Mubarak-era judicial body that declared the parliamentary election unconstitutional, opening the way for SCAF to dissolve the parliament as well as the constituent assembly that was tasked with drafting Egypt’s new constitution.

After the SCC ruling and dissolution of the parliament, the junta issued a constitutional “addendum” seizing all of the legislative and budgetary powers of the defunct parliament. SCAF formally decreed the independence of the armed forces from civilian control, preparing the ground for mass repression of renewed protests and strikes.

There were intensive talks between SCAF and the Brotherhood during and after the presidential elections, which were held under the junta’s auspices. Half of all

registered voters abstained from the elections, and protests erupted after the first round against both right-wing candidates—Mursi and the army-backed candidate, Ahmed Shafiq.

The day before Mursi appeared in Tahrir Square, SCAF member General Mohamed Assar told the privately owned CBC television that the army refused to abandon any of the powers it had gained through the coup.

“The [new] government will have a defence minister who is head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces,” he announced. Asked if this meant SCAF leader Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, Egypt’s de facto dictator, would keep his post as minister of defence, Assar said: “Exactly. What is wrong with that? He is the head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, the defence minister and the commander of the armed forces.”

Assar also warned political groups to “have balance in Egyptian politics.” He pointed to the “tasks” of the Islamists, stating that they “need to calm the people” and “assure Coptic Christians, liberals, artists and intellectuals that their rights are guaranteed.” He added that “president-elect Mursi has been doing a good job with regards to that.”

Washington also praised Mursi, whom it sees as an ally in the defense of its strategic and economic interests in Egypt and the broader region. On Wednesday, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton congratulated Mursi, declaring that “we have heard some very positive statements so far.” Clinton hailed Mursi’s pledge to honor all of Egypt’s international obligations, “which would, in our view, cover the peace treaty with Israel.”

She added, “We expect President Mursi to

demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity that is manifested by representatives of the women of Egypt, of the Coptic Christian community, the secular, non-religious community and young people.”

The same day, a Mursi spokesman announced that his first appointments as president of Egypt will be a woman and a Coptic Christian. He reportedly also plans to include figures from “left” youth groups in his cabinet.

Prominent names being considered reportedly include Ahmed Maher of the April 6 Youth Movement, Wael Ghonim, the Google executive and administrator of the “We are all Khaled Saeed” Facebook page, and Amr Hamzawy, former research director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Beirut and leader of the Freedom Egypt Party.

These developments make clear that the entire political establishment—the military, Islamists, liberals and middle-class pseudo-left organizations alike—are lined up against the Egyptian working class. As the “democratic transition” is exposed as a complete fraud, the Egyptian bourgeoisie and its imperialist allies are obliged to rely more and more openly on their pseudo-left appendages to maintain capitalist rule and intensify the oppression of the working class.

Both the April 6 Youth Movement and the pseudo-left Revolutionary Socialists (RS) were present on Tahrir Square in support of Mursi when he took his oath. Hisham Fouad, a leading RS member, claimed that Mursi's success in the elections had dealt “a serious blow” to the counterrevolution and was “a boost to the revolution.”



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