

Egyptian Islamists accept army dissolution of parliament

Johannes Stern
11 July 2012

Amid increasing tensions between the Egyptian army junta and the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood (MB), the Brotherhood signaled its acceptance of the army coup of June 14 that dissolved the parliament. On that date, the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) declared the Islamist-dominated Parliament unconstitutional.

On Sunday Egypt's new Islamist president, Mohamed Mursi, had issued a decree reinstating the dissolved parliament with "all its powers." He also called for new parliamentary elections within 60 days after the drafting of a new constitution.

To pressure the SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) junta to accept the presidential decree, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) called for mass protests on Tahrir Square in Cairo for Tuesday.

On Monday SCAF reacted to Mursi's decree with a statement defending the dissolution of the People's Assembly, the lower house of Egypt's parliament. SCAF also defended the June 14 coup. Based on the SCC ruling, the generals had dissolved the parliament and the constituent assembly shortly before the run-offs of the presidential elections. By issuing a constitutional addendum, they granted themselves sweeping powers including control over the legislature, the budget, and the drafting of the new constitution.

In their Monday statement, the SCAF generals warned Mursi and the Brotherhood to respect the constitution, adding that they were "confident" that state institutions would respect "constitutional decrees."

Fearing the destabilizing effect of a power struggle between the Islamists and the army, the Egyptian regime's imperialist backers intervened to press for a compromise. In a news conference, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said: "We strongly urge dialogue and concerted effort on the part of all to try to deal with

the problems that are understandable but have to be resolved in order to avoid any kind of difficulties that could derail the transition."

Under pressure from SCAF and its imperialist backers, Mursi and the MB were quick to reassure the generals that they would not challenge SCAF's control of the state, but continue to play their role as figureheads for SCAF. Mursi also assured Western imperialism that he will protect its strategic and economic interests in Egypt and throughout the region.

Also on Tuesday, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle met Mursi for talks in Cairo. After a 40-minute meeting with Mursi, he told reporters that he had "the impression that a solution can be found." He added that Mursi assured him "that he does not aim to question the decision of the constitutional court, but that this is rather about how to organize the ruling's implementation."

Westerwelle said Mursi also assured him that all of Egypt's international agreements would be respected, "including those in the Middle East"—a reference to Egypt's peace treaty with Israel.

Mursi's initial defiance of SCAF and the junta's reaction highlighted the rising power struggle between the Egyptian military and the Islamists, who are two rival factions of the Egyptian ruling class. Both control vast portions of the Egyptian economy, and the military views the MB's increasing influence in the Egyptian state machine after last year's revolutionary overthrow of former dictator Hosni Mubarak with suspicion. The MB seeks to attract more foreign investment and further privatize and liberalize the Egyptian economy, which the generals regard as a threat to their economic power.

Despite their conflicting interests, the main concern of all factions of the Egyptian political

establishment—the military, the Islamists, or the liberal and petty bourgeois pseudo-left forces—is blocking the emergence of renewed revolutionary struggles by the working class. The Egyptian workers and youth were the main force behind the Egyptian Revolution, and their historic struggle beginning last year shook the Egyptian bourgeois state and Western imperialism in the Middle East to their foundations.

The parliamentary session summoned by Mursi on Tuesday was a show of utter subservience to the junta and its institutions. The meeting lasted only five minutes, and MB Speaker of Parliament Saad al-Katatni announced that the legislative body had gathered only “to review the court rulings, the ruling of the Supreme Constitutional Court.” He stressed that the parliament “is not contradicting the ruling, but looking at a mechanism for the implementation of the ruling of the respected court. There is no other agenda today.”

El-Katatni proposed to appeal the SCC’s ruling against the parliament. Parliament approved the proposal and adjourned. El-Katatni then declared that parliamentary sessions will not resume until the Appeals Court’s verdict. The MB then called off the announced mass protests on Tahrir Square.

Later on Tuesday, the SCC overruled Mursi’s presidential decree to reinstate the Egyptian Parliament. According to the state-controlled daily *Al-Ahram*, the SCC ruled that its 14 June verdict must be enforced.

By overruling Mursi’s decree, SCAF made clear that it seeks to defend its full control over the Egyptian state, and that Mursi’s powers as president will still be determined by the generals.

The main power Mursi has is to call for the use of the military to repress the population. The constitutional addendum issued by SCAF and endorsed by the MB allows the president to “issue a decision to commission the armed forces—with the approval of SCAF—to maintain security and defend public property...if the country faces internal unrest requiring the intervention of the armed forces.”



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact