

Mass protests against Egyptian President Mursi

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Hundreds of thousands protested at Cairo's Tahrir Square and throughout Egypt yesterday against Islamist president Mohamed Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).

In scenes recalling the initial days of the Egyptian Revolution, which led to the downfall of former dictator Hosni Mubarak in February 2011, the Egyptian masses are again demanding the ouster of a US-backed despot. Amongst the most popular chants were, "Down, down, Mursi-Mubarak" and "Mursi you coward, you agent of the Americans."

Unrest has been growing throughout the country since Mursi issued a constitutional decree last Thursday claiming all legislative, constitutional, executive and judicial powers.

Mursi's bid for dictatorial powers is backed by US imperialism. It came immediately after US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton thanked Mursi personally for his reliability to Washington during the brutal Israeli onslaught against Gaza. Mursi is also backing the US war drive against Syria and ultimately Iran.

Throughout the day, mass marches convened on Tahrir Square including protesters from all walks of life. Hundreds of artists marched from the Cairo Opera crossing Qasr al-Nil Bridge chanting "Down with the constitutional declaration."

In the afternoon, a demonstration by thousands of lawyers entered the square. According to the judges club, 99 percent of Egypt's courts and prosecutors had stopped work and started a strike against Mursi's decree, which bars judicial review of his decisions and basically eliminates the judiciary.

The biggest marches, with tens of thousands of protesters, began in the working class neighborhood of

Shubra in the north of Cairo, from Mostafa Mahmoud Mosque in Mohandiseen and from Fatah Mosque in Ramsis Square. Thousands traveled from other governorates to Cairo to join the anti-Mursi demonstrations.

In the evening hours, far more than 100,000 protesters gathered in the square and the surrounding streets, with chants of "Irhal, Irhal" (leave, leave) echoing through downtown Cairo.

Throughout the day, heavy clashes took place in Simon Bolivar Square behind the US Embassy where Mursi's Central Security Forces (CSF) attacked hundreds of youth with tear gas and rubber bullets. The protesters hurled stones back at the hated CSF units, which have been increasing their violent crackdown in recent days.

Since the outbreak of the clashes last Monday, hundreds of protesters have been detained by police and over 400 have been injured. So far, three protesters have been killed. Yesterday, Fatehy Gareb, a member of the Socialist Alliance Party suffocated from tear gas. Before that, 18-year-old Ahmed Naguib and 19-year-old Gaber "Jika" Salah, a member of the April 6 Movement, were gunned down by police.

Marches of students from the capital's three main universities—Cairo University, Ain Shams and Helwan—arrived in the late evening commemorating the martyrs. "Gaber Jika is dead and the president is responsible," and "Kill us, no matter what, your tyranny will not affect us," they chanted. They carried banners demanding: "Down with the supreme guide's rule."

Protests took place in all major Egyptian cities. In the coastal city of Alexandria, tens of thousands took to the streets. Protests were also staged in Suez, Mansoura, Aswan, Damietta, Bani Suef, Fayoum, Luxor, Tanta,

Zagazig and Mahalla.

The anti-Brotherhood protests were called by various liberal and pseudo-left groups, including El-Baradei's Constitution Party, the Nasserite Karama Party led by former presidential candidate Hamdeen Sabahi and the liberal Free Egyptians Party founded by billionaire tycoon Naguib Sawiris. Other organizations participating were the Socialist Popular Alliance Party, the Egyptian Social Democratic Party, the April 6 Youth Movement, Kifaya, the Tagammu' Party, the Revolutionary Socialists (RS) and others.

A class gulf separates these parties and the masses of workers and youth who are calling for the ouster of Mursi and the downfall of the regime.

Five months after the election of Mursi, the counterrevolutionary character of his regime is revealed before the Egyptian masses. "Power has exposed the Brotherhood. We discovered their true face," explained Laila Salah, a housewife, who said she voted for Mursi in the presidential election but is now protesting on Tahrir Square. After Mubarak, she said, "Egyptians will no longer accept being ruled by an autocrat."

The perspective of the secular and liberal opposition, however, is not to bring down Mursi in a mass revolutionary struggle. Despite their sharp factional conflict with the MB over how to distribute power and wealth inside the state machine, their goal is to reach a compromise with the Islamists. In a statement—presented by leading RS member Haitham Mohammadein at the headquarters of the Socialist Popular Alliance Party in Cairo on Monday—the groups called upon Mursi to cancel his decree and put forward a program ensuring "transitional justice".

In the last months the RS promoted Mursi to the hilt. They supported Mursi in the elections and sought to promote Mursi and the MB as revolutionary forces. After Mursi was declared president in June, Sameh Naguib, a leading RS member, celebrated his ascendance as "a real victory for the Egyptian masses and a real victory for the Egyptian revolution."

As workers and youth turn against Mursi's dictatorship, the pseudo-left groups seek to uphold the illusion that democracy can be achieved under Islamist rule and within the framework of the bourgeois state. The renewed struggles, however, make ever clearer the far deeper tasks facing the Egyptian revolution: the overthrow of the bourgeois state by a socialist

revolution, led by the working class, to eliminate capitalist relations and imperialist rule in the Middle East.

Both factions of the Egyptian ruling elite seek to prevent such a struggle by any means and fear a situation which could lead to a massive strike wave of the working class on a scale of the one that brought down Mubarak in February 2011. The last months have already witnessed one of the largest strike waves since the ouster of Mubarak, and yesterday's protests were joined by textile workers in Mahalla.

Through the night, clashes between anti-Mursi protesters and MB supporters were reported in Mahalla, with over 300 hundred people injured. In Alexandria, the MB's headquarters was stormed by angry protesters. Another headquarters was set afire in Mansoura. Reportedly, the security forces refused to protect the office. Several FJP headquarters in major cities have been attacked in recent days. The MB reportedly called upon the army to protect its headquarters in the Moqattam district in Cairo.

Having received the backing of Washington, Mursi and the MB are so far unwilling to make any concessions to their secular rivals and are rather preparing for massive repression. The MB accused their opponents of "not caring about the country's national interests," and Prime Minister Hisham Kandil threatened that his government will confront saboteurs. Gehad el-Haddad, a senior adviser to the MB, said Mursi would "not rescind the declaration."



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