

US-backed Muslim Brotherhood unleashes bloody crackdown in Cairo

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Muslim Brotherhood (MB) forces supporting Egypt's Islamist President Mohamed Mursi are carrying out a bloody crackdown in Cairo. Amid intensifying mass protests in the past two weeks against Mursi, the Islamists are mobilizing their forces to try to crush strikes and protests.

In scenes recalling the “Battle of the Camels”—when then-President Hosni Mubarak's thugs attacked protesting workers and youth on Tahrir Square in the initial days of the Egyptian Revolution last year—MB cadres together with forces of the Salafist Call and al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya assaulted a sit-in of several hundred peaceful protesters in front of the presidential palace in Heliopolis in Cairo.

The sit-in began after hundreds of thousands of workers and youth protested, demanding the ouster of Mursi and the cancellation of Mursi's presidential decree, granting himself dictatorial powers, on Tuesday night. It was one of the largest mass protests against the MB and Mursi since Mursi's power grab two weeks ago.

According to eye-witnesses, thousands of Islamists stormed the sit-in Wednesday afternoon. They destroyed tents, attacked participants with rocks and sticks, and shouted: “The people support the president's decisions”, “Long live President Mursi,” and “We will cleanse the palace.”

In the evening and throughout the night, the Islamists intensified their attacks on protesters.

The Islamists erected metal barricades to block off workers and youth marching to the presidential palace. They cooperated closely with the Central Security Forces (CSF). *Ahram Online* reported that “Hundreds of Brotherhood supporters are standing right before the palace, and there are two rows of Central Security Forces in front of them.”

CSF units attacked anti-Mursi protesters at Roxy Square,

in Kahlifa El-Maamoun Street, and in other locations close to the palace with tear gas and rubber bullets. Reportedly live ammunition was also fired.

Protesters hurled back stones at the security forces and the Islamist thugs, shouting: “Down, down Mohamed Mursi,” and “The people want the fall of the regime.”

Imams incited the Islamist crowd to use the utmost violence against protesters: “Chase them and catch them in the name of God.” MB members and their Islamist allies chased protesters through the streets, beat them, and threatened everyone they caught using knives and other weapons.

Writing for *Ahram Online*, Ahmed Feteiha explained how Mahmoud Nabil, 24, had his arm broken by pro-Mursi thugs. “He said that he approached a bearded man supporting President Mursi and told him that what he and his colleagues were doing is unacceptable. The bearded man, according to the victim, threw him on the ground, and then another man used a hammer to break his arm.”

As of this writing, hundreds of protesters were reportedly injured and at least four people killed. The dead include Mirna Emad, a member of the Socialist Popular Alliance Party and Taha Magdy of the Revolutionary Socialists (RS).

The brutal crackdown is accompanied by a vicious propaganda campaign by the state-controlled media and the Islamists. On Wednesday the Islamist groups issued a statement accusing protesters of “sabotaging” the country and threatening that “non-peaceful protests are an offense to Egypt.”

When MB militias brutally assaulted protesters, Essam al-Erian, the deputy head of the MB's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), incited violence against them.

He said that what is happening at the presidential palace is “not clashes between supporters and opponents, but rather skirmishes between the guardians of legitimacy and the revolution against the counterrevolutionary attempts to topple legitimacy. There are thugs who want to depose the elected president.” Erian called upon citizens to “besiege those thugs and expose the third party, and those firing live ammunition.”

Mursi is unleashing this wave of repression with the full support of the US government and its European allies. They have hailed Mursi for his reliability during last month’s brutal Israeli onslaught against Gaza and the suppression of the Palestinians and given him a blank check for the repression his regime is now unleashing.

After Mursi worked to isolate the Gaza Strip during the offensive, the *New York Times* wrote that Obama felt he had a “connection” with Mursi developed over six phone calls. It added that Obama had decided to “invest heavily” in Mursi.

In an official statement, British Foreign Secretary William Hague also signaled his support for Mursi. He said, “The UK remains committed to supporting Egypt’s political transition and strengthening democracy. We are in close contact with both the Egyptian authorities and leaders of the opposition.”

On Tuesday Essam al-Haddad, Mursi’s assistant for foreign affairs and member of the MB’s Guidance Bureau, met on Tuesday in Washington with US National Security Advisor Tom Donilon. The US embassy in Cairo issued a statement on Wednesday on its Facebook page saying: “The two officials reaffirmed the strategic relationship between the United States and Egypt.”

After Washington’s long-time stooge Mubarak was ousted in mass working class protests last year, US imperialism sees the Islamists as its new ally in Egypt and entire Middle East to defend American strategic and economic interests. The MB’s backers in the US see the Islamists as the ruling class’s best hope to suppress the revolutionary optimism in the working class created by Mubarak’s ouster last year, and also to intensify the US war drive against Syria and Iran, which Mursi supports.

Before the protests, Egypt’s new Prosecutor-General Talaat Ibrahim Abdallah ordered investigations of the main figures of the liberal and secular opposition. The leaders of National Salvation Front (NSF)—the liberal leader Mohamed ElBaradei, the Nasserite Hamdeen Sabahi, former Mubarak

regime official Amr Moussa and Sayed Al-Badawi, the head of the liberal Wafd party—are accused of inciting the overthrow of the regime as part of a “Zionist plot.”

The Mursi regime’s invocations of a Zionist plot are a cynical and absurd attempt to mobilize the most backward elements of Egyptian society against protesters and the working class. It recalls the propaganda of former dictator Hosni Mubarak, who also sought to portray the mass protests against his rule as an Israeli and American conspiracy. In reality, just like his predecessor Mubarak, Mursi is backed by the US and works out his reactionary policies in close discussions with Washington and the Israeli state.

In fact, contrary to the bulk of the protesters, the NSF is not calling for the overthrow of Mursi. On Wednesday they issued a statement demanding the reversal of Mursi’s constitutional declaration and a new Constituent Assembly to redraft the constitution. As the Islamists launched their brutal attack on the protesters, the NSF called for a press conference declaring itself to be “ready for real dialogue to sort out this situation.”

The NSF speaks for sections of the Egyptian ruling elite who are in conflict with Mursi over the distribution of power and wealth inside the Egyptian state machine. However, their main fear is a revolutionary movement of the working class; the more the threat of a renewed mass uprising grows, the more they look for a compromise with Mursi. Last week thousands of textile workers marched in the industrial city of Mahalla al-Kubra against Mursi, and on Wednesday, striking doctors issued a statement objecting to Mursi’s constitution.



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