

Leaked report reveals army torture, killings during the Egyptian Revolution

Johannes Stern
15 April 2013

Last Wednesday the British *Guardian* published an extensive article, titled “Egypt’s army took part in torture and killings during the revolution.”

The article is based on a leaked report submitted to Egypt’s Islamist president Mohamed Mursi in January but was never made public. It sheds light on the counterrevolutionary role of the Egyptian military in the Egyptian Revolution which led to the ouster of longtime dictator and US stooge Hosni Mubarak on February 11, 2011.

The chapter of the report seen by the *Guardian* implicates the Egyptian military—which publicly sought to present itself as a “neutral force”—in detaining, torturing and killing scores of protesters during the first 18 days of the revolution. Officially, at least 846 people were killed in the nearly three-week uprising. More than 1,000 people disappeared, and scores were found in morgues, shot or bearing signs of torture.

The leaked report states that armed military intelligence officers were deployed in a major hotel next to Tahrir Square on January 25, 2011—when the first mass protests against the Mubarak regime erupted—to observe and record events. Mubarak then sent in the army, after the police was defeated in street fighting in Cairo and other major Egyptian cities on January 28. After the army deployed onto the streets, it became ever more violent.

“The committee found that a number of citizens died during their detention by the armed forces and that they were buried in indigent graves, as they were considered unidentified,” the report says. It “recommends investigating the leaders of the armed forces about the issuance of orders and instructions to subordinates who committed acts of torture and forced disappearance.”

The report uncovers an incident in which civilians were detained by soldiers at a military checkpoint near

the capital Cairo on January 30, 2011, and then disappeared. Radia Atta, a witness who was searching for her missing husband, told the committee that she went to the roadblock and saw a large number of civilians lying on the ground with their hands and feet tied. The captives were later sent to a police station in Giza where they were searched and beaten by soldiers.

The leaked chapter of the report also examines the fate of a lawyer, Osama Abdel Hamid, from the Nile Delta governorate of Menoufiya who went to Cairo with some of his colleagues on February 1, 2011, to join the first so called “One Million Man March” on Tahrir Square. He was detained and tortured by the army and later found dead, according to the report.

Karim al-Gharbali, one of Abdel Hamid’s friends, told the committee that Abdel Hamid was deported by men in plainclothes, then incarcerated in the Egyptian Museum. This happened after the infamous “Battle of the Camels,” when Mubarak’s thugs mounted on horses and camels crossed army lines and attacked Tahrir Square on February 2.

A second witness, Hani al-Azab, said that he and Abdel Hamid were tortured and photographed with weapons and money in the Egyptian Museum. Later they were transferred to a prison operated by an army unit called Military Intelligence Group 75, where they were again tortured and forced to make confessions about crimes. They were then moved to a prison at the Hykestep military base on the outskirts of Cairo, where Abdel Hamid died from his wounds.

Abdel Moneim Allam, Abdel Hamid’s father, found the body of his son 12 days later in the Zeinhome morgue in Cairo, after he got a tip from a lawyer. He told the committee that his son’s body was “misshapen” by torture and had a fractured skull.

The leaked report clearly covers only a small portion

of the crimes committed by the Egyptian military in the past two years. However, it is nevertheless a powerful indictment of the entire political establishment in Egypt and its imperialist backers in the US and the European Union.

While the Egyptian army unleashed brutal violence against the Egyptian workers and youth to contain the revolution, Western governments and Egypt's political parties—whether Islamist, liberal or petty-bourgeois “left”—sought to prop up the Egyptian military after Mubarak's ouster. They portrayed the army as a supposedly progressive force that would organize a “democratic transition.”

Mohamed ElBaradei, the former UN official who currently leads the opposition National Salvation Front (NSF)—an umbrella group of various liberal and pseudo-left parties—summarized the Egyptian bourgeoisie's position towards the military after it took power. He described mutual trust between the Egyptian people and its army as a “red line” which must not be crossed, as it was “vital for national unity.”

After the military junta had attacked protesters on Tahrir Square, banned strikes, subjected thousands of civilians to military trials, and murdered hundreds, Mostafa Omar—a leading member of the pseudo-left Revolutionary Socialists (RS)—praised the army as a democratic force. He said, “Despite its repressive measures, the Supreme Council understands that the January 25 uprising has changed Egypt once and for all in certain ways.... The Council aims to reform the political and economic system, allowing it to become more democratic and less oppressive.”

Behind the support for the military and its repressive measures stand deep-rooted material interests. Western imperialism and the parties of the Egyptian ruling elite regard the military as the backbone of the Egyptian bourgeois state and the guarantor of their interests. In supporting the military, they are acknowledging the critical role the military has played in suppressing and containing the mass revolutionary movement of the working class since the first day of the uprising.

Mursi, who struck a deal with the army after his assumption of power, is seeking to cover up the report, issued by a committee which he hand-picked after becoming president.

In the face of a growing political and economic crisis and mounting strikes and protests against his regime,

Mursi relies ever more directly on the army to suppress the working class. In the past weeks Mursi repeatedly relied on the military to contain protests and break strikes.

In a move to dispel any possible tensions about the leaked report, Mursi met with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces on Thursday and promoted the commanders in chief of the Egyptian Navy, the Air Force and the Defence Forces from the rank of major general to lieutenant generals.

At the same time, Washington—which funds the Egyptian army to the tune of \$1.3 billion per year—recently sent another four F-16 fighter jets to Egypt. Eight jets have already been sent in the past weeks as part of a billion-dollar foreign aid package. Overall, 20 attack aircraft and 200 Abrams tanks will be given to the Egyptian military in 2013.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact