

Egyptian President Mursi vows to stay in power despite mass protests

Johannes Stern
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Defying millions of protesters demanding his ouster, US-backed Egyptian President Mohamed Mursi gave a speech Tuesday night declaring that he would stay in office as president of Egypt. He repeatedly blamed corrupt “remnants of the former regime” for the political crisis in Egypt.

“The remnants of the former regime, they are fighting against our democracy,” he declared, referring to the adherents of former dictator President Hosni Mubarak, who was ousted after 18 days of mass working-class struggles in February 2011. Mursi declared, “If they come back to the people, they will be rejected. They are accustomed to corruption, rigging elections, sucking dry the blood of the people.”

The reaction of millions of protesters gathered on Tahrir Square, before the presidential palace in Cairo, and on streets and squares throughout Egypt recalled the scenes after Mubarak’s defiant speech on February 10, 2011—when, the night before his ouster, he pledged to stay in office.

Angry protesters shouted “Irhal, Irhal” (“Leave, leave”) and chanted the main slogan of the Egyptian Revolution: “The people want the downfall of the regime.”

Since June 30—the first anniversary of Mursi’s inauguration—millions of protesters have gathered in streets and squares throughout Egypt. The BBC described “the number of anti-Muslim Brotherhood protesters” as “the largest number in a political event in the history of mankind.” (A video showing the protests around Tahrir Square in Cairo can be seen [here](#).)

This sets the stage for explosive conflicts in Egypt today, in the face of continuing mass protests and the expiration of a 48-hour ultimatum issued on Monday by the Egyptian army. The army demanded “reconciliation” between Mursi and bourgeois

opposition parties, failing which it would suspend the constitution and dissolve the Islamist-dominated parliament as part of a “road map.” This effectively amounts to a threat to install a military dictatorship to contain—and, if need be, to crush—working-class protests.

Mursi’s portrayal of his regime as a bastion of democracy and his identification of masses of workers and youth protesting against him with remnants of the Mubarak regime are absurd lies. In fact, millions are demanding his ouster precisely because he is identified with the anti-working class and pro-imperialist policies of his predecessor, Mubarak. However, the working class also faces a struggle against the threat of a military dictatorship imposed on Egypt with the support of US imperialism and the Egyptian bourgeois opposition parties.

Mursi’s defiant speech comes amid intense back-channel discussions inside the Egyptian army and in Washington over whether to continue backing Mursi, how far to bring in the bourgeois opposition into government, and how to deal with the renewed revolutionary upsurge in the working class.

On Monday, US President Barack Obama called Mursi from Tanzania, on the final stop of his African tour. Obama reportedly said that Washington was committed to “the democratic process in Egypt and does not support any single party or group.” Obama added that he “encouraged President Mursi to take steps to show that he is responsive to their concerns, and underscored that the current crisis can only be resolved through a political process.”

General Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, is reportedly in close discussions with his Egyptian counterpart, General Sedki Sobhi.

Mursi is himself attempting to negotiate a deal with

the security forces and the opposition, as his government unravels. In his speech, he sought to reach out to the political opposition parties and declared his allegiance to Egypt's army and police forces. He vowed to "keeping an open channel for dialogue," declaring: "We want a strong army. Don't ever insult the Egyptian army. Safeguard the army with me because it is our support... I'm telling all Egyptians, no violence between each other or towards the army or police."

Before Mursi's speech, six ministers of his government and a number of presidential advisors handed in their resignations. As the Mursi regime disintegrates, the Muslim Brotherhood is desperately seeking to mobilize its Islamist base to defend Mursi. In violent clashes between rival protesters, at least 16 were killed and hundreds injured.

The renewed mass struggles in Egypt are sending shockwaves throughout the Egyptian ruling elite and its allies in Washington and the European capitals. Since Mubarak's ouster, the imperialist powers have relied heavily on Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood to defend their strategic and economic interests in Egypt and throughout the region. Mursi repeatedly cracked down on protests and strikes in Egypt. On foreign policy he supported the Israeli bombing campaign against Gaza last autumn and recently declared his support for the US-led proxy war in Syria.

Speaking to *Ahram Online*, one European diplomat in Cairo summed up the confusion and shock the mass protests against Mursi's government are causing in Western capitals: "This is so much bigger than what we anticipated. I mean even bigger than we were anticipating yesterday, when it was becoming clear that the demonstrations would be bigger than we had anticipated."

On Tuesday, a military source said that the Egyptian military is preparing to deploy on the streets of Cairo and other cities if necessary. *Al Jazeera* Egypt reported that soldiers marched and trained in the streets of Suez, the city at the southern entrance of the Suez Canal. The army is already guarding strategic locations such as government buildings, the presidential palace and the Suez Canal.

Preparations for a military coup are facilitated and supported by the reactionary positions of the liberal and pseudo-left opposition parties, which are attempting to

stoke an atmosphere of euphoria over the prospect of the army ousting Mursi.

The "Tamarod" ("rebel") platform or "30 June Front"—which is backed by Mohamed ElBaradei's National Salvation Front, the Islamist Strong Egypt Party, the April 6 Youth Movement, the misnamed Revolutionary Socialists, and remnants of the Mubarak regime—declared in a statement that "the army's historic role is to take the side of the people."

The "30 June Front's" program hardly differs from the "road map" advanced by the military. It calls for the dissolution of the Shura Council, the appointment of an independent prime minister, the delegation of all presidential powers to the head of Egypt's High Constitutional Court, and the appointment of a technocratic government.

A sharp warning must be made to the working class. Such an unelected dictatorial government would ultimately be directed against the Egyptian workers and youth. The Egyptian bourgeoisie is desperately looking for a mechanism which allows them to delegitimize protests and give the military time to prepare a violent crackdown. This would be precisely the task of a national reconciliation government as it is now envisioned by the Islamists, the military and the opposition alike.

The urgent task facing the Egyptian working class is to mobilize itself in a revolutionary struggle against both the current Islamist regime and the threat of a military dictatorship supported by US imperialism and the opposition parties.



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