

Egyptian military massacres 51 in Cairo

Johannes Stern, Alex Lantier
9 July 2013

The Egyptian army's bloody massacre of Muslim Brotherhood (MB) protesters outside the Republican Guard barracks yesterday morning in Cairo has shattered all claims that the army is carrying out a new revolution in Egypt. It is imposing a crackdown on opposition to Egypt's military dictatorship, which will ultimately be directed against the working class—the main force behind all the mass uprisings in Egypt since 2011.

During morning prayers yesterday, army units first fired tear gas at pro-MB protesters and then, escorted by armored vehicles, marched towards them, firing into the crowd. The massacre left at least 51 civilians dead and 435 injured, according to Egyptian Health Ministry figures, though the death toll could still rise considerably.

The purpose of such a massacre is to terrorize all opposition to Wednesday's coup and to the new military junta.

In order to understand the convulsive events now unfolding in Egypt and prepare the working class for the coming struggles, it is critical to grasp two different conflicts in Egypt. There are the conflicts inside the bourgeoisie itself—first and foremost over economic policy, but also on foreign policy issues and even questions of lifestyle—that have been inflamed since Mubarak's ouster.

In the past weeks, this conflict took mainly the form of an intensifying power struggle between the MB, led by former President Mohamed Mursi, and more secular-leaning elements of the ruling class. The military also has financial and economic interests that it is determined to protect. Both factions have given their support to IMF-dictated austerity and restructuring measures demanded by international capital.

The more decisive conflict, however, is the basic class struggle between the working class and the urban poor on the one hand, and the entire Egyptian ruling class on the other. This conflict has been further exacerbated by rising poverty and social discontent under Mursi's rule.

Recent months have seen waves of factory closures and strikes in Egypt. The military takeover was preceded by enormous mass protests, involving tens of millions of workers and youth, against the MB government. The intervention of the military, however, was not an expression of this movement, but a preemptive strike directed against the working class.

The action of the military in the first days of the military coup expose not only the nature of the new regime, but also the reactionary role of the Tamarod (rebel) coalition, which has been supported by pseudo-left groups like Egypt's Revolutionary Socialists (RS), which is allied to the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the United States and the Socialist Workers

Party (SWP) in Britain.

If the junta is currently concentrating on crushing the MB, it is because it has, with the help of Tamarod and the RS, at least temporarily sidelined opposition from workers and youth who participated in last week's mass protests. This has given the army room to maneuver and to consolidate its rule, as it prepares for a more decisive trial of strength with the working class.

Tamarod was the brainchild of a coalition of liberal, Islamist and pseudo-left opposition parties. Besides the RS, its supporters included Mohamed ElBaradei's National Salvation Front (NSF), the Islamist Strong Egypt Party of former MB member Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, the April 6 Youth Movement, and even former Mubarak regime officials such as General Ahmed Shafiq.

Tamarod was never anything other than a platform for the bourgeois opposition, representing sections of the ruling class. However, in the absence of any force mobilizing the working class in struggle against the entire capitalist class—that is, against both the MB and the corrupt forces inside Tamarod—it could tap into broad opposition to Mursi, gathering millions of signatures.

Tamarod's key demands—the dissolution of the Islamist-dominated upper house of parliament; the appointment of the chief of the judiciary as president; and the appointment of a free-market technocratic government—have been adopted by the junta wholesale as the basis of its rule.

In May, the RS threw their support behind Tamarod, promoting it as a “way to complete the revolution.” RS members collected signatures for Tamarod. The RS also organized meetings to promote it—on May 28 the RS cheered Tamarod leaders Mahmoud Badr and Mohamed Abdel-Aziz at their headquarters in Giza—and issued joint statements supporting Tamarod's program.

Immediately after the military takeover, leading RS member Sameh Naguib hailed the coup as a “second revolution” in a statement on the British Socialist Workers Party's (SWP) *Socialist Worker* web site. He declared that “this is not the end of democracy, nor a simple military coup,” writing that “people feel empowered and entitled by the events of the last few days.”

The RS have also sought to mobilize protesters to defend the junta. In a statement published on July 6 on their Arabic web site, the RS wrote that “the stubbornness, stupidity and criminality of the US-backed Muslim Brotherhood and Mohamed Badie, its general guide, open the terrifying horizons of civil war. This can be stopped only by millions coming into the squares and streets to protect their revolution. They must abort the US-Brotherhood plan to portray the Egyptian Revolution as a military coup.”

The RS then asked the junta to take “immediate steps to achieve social justice...and write a civil, democratic constitution which

entrenches the values of freedom and social justice.” Such friendly advice to a junta backed by US imperialism brands the RS as a counterrevolutionary organization, whose hands are drenched in blood.

The suggestion that it is American imperialism, in league with the MB, that is seeking to slander the military seizure of power as a coup is absurd, given the fact that the US government has deliberately not used the term in order to avoid certain legal consequences of doing so, including the cutting off of aid to the Egyptian military.

In fact, Tamarod maintained close contact with Washington and the European Union (EU) throughout the coup. ElBaradei entered into discussions with the US State Department and EU foreign policy officials, urging them to support a coup, as ElBaradei himself revealed in an interview with David D. Kirkpatrick in the *New York Times* last Friday.

In an article titled “Prominent Egyptian Liberal Says He Sought West’s Support for Uprising,” Kirkpatrick wrote that ElBaradei declared that “he had worked hard to convince Western powers [of] the necessity of forcibly ousting President Mohamed Morsi.”

Kirkpatrick wrote further that “on the days of takeover, Mr. ElBaradei said, he had spoken at length with Secretary of State John Kerry and Catherine Ashton, the European Union’s top foreign policy official, to help convince them of the necessity of removing Mr. Morsi.” According to Kirkpatrick, ElBaradei argued that “with so many millions in the street demanding Mr. Morsi’s exit... a military takeover was the ‘least painful option.’”

A revolution mercilessly exposes political charlatanism. The RS’ reactionary attempts to present the Tamarod operation and the US-backed coup as a “second revolution” are being refuted by mass murder in the streets of Cairo.

The RS’ current support for the military junta is the latest maneuver in a series of sordid operations since the beginning of protests against Hosni Mubarak in 2011. In response to the eruption of opposition in January 2011, the RS joined with ElBaradei and other factions of the bourgeois establishment in calling, not for the downfall of the regime, but for the government to institute “democracy, civil liberties and free and fair elections,” according to a joint statement issued on January 21.

After the January 25 protests developed into a mass revolutionary movement of the working class that forced out Mubarak, the RS threw their support behind the US-backed junta that came to power. On May 31, leading RS member Mustafa Omar penned an article for *Socialist Worker* claiming that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces junta “aims to reform the political and economic system, allowing it to become more democratic and less oppressive.”

When renewed mass protests erupted against military rule, the RS openly opposed a “second revolution,” shifting rapidly to support Mursi and the MB. In the presidential elections, they campaigned for Mursi, producing countless statements promoting the MB as “the right wing of the revolution” and Mursi as a “revolutionary candidate.” When Mursi finally became president, they celebrated his victory.

At the ISO’s Socialism 2012 conference, Sameh Naguib declared that “the victory of Mursi, the Muslim Brotherhood

candidate, is a great achievement in pushing back the counterrevolution and pushing back this coup d’état... Whenever there is the threat of counterrevolution, the Islamists will run toward the masses—will mobilize in the hundreds of thousands against the military regime.”

Naguib’s promotion of the MB as a revolutionary force was grotesque. As it turned out, however, it is the RS that again shifted, now backing a coup d’état against the MB.

The RS never give any explanation for these extraordinary twists and turns. They simply assert that the removal of the MB (which they suddenly denounce as counterrevolutionary) by the US-backed junta (which they suddenly praise as progressive) constitutes a second revolution.

Such wild, inconsistent political oscillations are the hallmark of a group representing corrupt sections of the middle class, closely tied to the bourgeois state and to world imperialism.

The RS’ latest maneuvers support the attempt by the Egyptian bourgeoisie and its imperialist backers to enforce policies demanded by finance capital even more ruthlessly than Mubarak and Mursi. ElBaradei has long been one of the most aggressive advocates of a new loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In exchange, the IMF will demand savage cuts to subsidies for basic goods such as grain and fuel, upon which masses of Egyptians rely.

The army is cobbling together a government committed solely to carrying out the policies demanded by international finance capital. Besides ElBaradei, the candidates for the post of new Egyptian prime minister include Farouq El-Oqda, a former head of Egypt’s central bank, and Adel El-Labban, a former Morgan Stanley banker who is currently a leading executive at Bahrain-based Ahli United Bank.

A ruthless military junta dedicated to enforcing austerity will inevitably come into bitter social conflict with the working class. The critical task now is building a leadership in the working class, basing itself on a struggle for socialism against all factions of the capitalist class.

By providing support for a bloody US-backed military coup seeking to create conditions for a more violent crackdown on the working class, the RS have put themselves yet again in the camp of reaction. Socialist-minded workers and youth in Egypt should treat this organization with contempt. In the revolutionary struggle of the Egyptian workers and youth for democracy and social equality, it stands on the opposite side of the barricades.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact