

Egyptian military regime plans sharp attack on working class

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The day after carrying out a bloody massacre killing 51 supporters of ousted Muslim Brotherhood (MB) President Mohamed Mursi, the newly-installed Egyptian army junta issued a constitutional decree vesting unlimited powers in the military-backed president. It also named free-market economist Hazem El-Beblawi as prime minister, signaling plans for a sharp attack on the working class.

These events confirm that last Wednesday's military coup against Mursi's Muslim Brotherhood (MB) did not represent the aspirations to democracy and social equality that drove masses of workers and youth to protest against Mursi last week. Rather, with the support of liberal and pseudo-left forces that joined the Tamarod ("rebel") coalition, the coup aimed to forcibly pre-empt rising political opposition in the working class before it turned into a revolutionary struggle against the entire ruling class.

Yesterday's constitutional declaration gives President Adly Mansour dictatorial powers during a "transitional period" lasting until next year's presidential elections, at least six months. During this period, the president would have full legislative authority, controlling state policy and the state budget, as well as the power to decree a state of emergency with the approval of a hand-picked cabinet.

It is the military, however, that will be the final arbiter. A separate National Defense Council headed by the Egyptian president will oversee security, the military budget and any laws relating to the armed forces. Through this mechanism, the army is ensuring for itself an independent and dominant position inside the Egyptian state.

The "transition" period would include the appointment of a panel by the president to make proposed amendments to the constitution implemented

under MB rule in 2012. The new constitution would be put forward for an up-or-down vote in a referendum prior to any new elections.

Like last Wednesday's coup, the new constitutional declaration enjoys Washington's support. Egypt's *Al Ahram* daily cited anonymous US officials who praised the declaration for having "laid out a plan for the path forward." They added, however, that Washington would "react with some caution" to the plan, as it was issued only one day after the bloody massacre of MB protesters outside the Republican Guard barracks in Cairo.

Mansour's naming of El-Beblawi as prime minister is a signal to the major international banks and the Persian Gulf oil sheikhdoms that the junta will carry out deep attacks on the working class.

El-Beblawi is founding member of Egypt's Social Democratic Party, having earned a Ph.D. in economics at the University of Paris and worked as a UN official. He is widely known as an advocate of cuts to state subsidies for grain and fuel prices, on which millions of workers in Egypt depend. He laid these views out in an interview with *Daily News Egypt* on June 29, the day before protests began against Mursi.

He said, "We must create a clear understanding for the public that the level of subsidies in Egypt is unsustainable, and the situation is critical. Subsidies have exceeded reasonable limits, and take more than 25 percent of the budget ... People must understand that they must accept some of the consequences: the cancelling of subsidies requires sacrifices from the public and therefore necessitates their acceptance."

The *New York Times* praised El-Beblawi's nomination as a "signal that the military-led transitional government intends to move forward with economic reforms and restructuring, including reductions in the

country's vast public subsidies.”

Egypt's EGX30 stock market index jumped 3.3 percent, to 5,295 points, as investors anticipated massive new profits from the junta's free-market policies.

The army's constitutional declaration also continues, and even expands, the Islamist legal foundation of the state. According to state-run Egyptian daily *Al Ahram*, “The declaration states that the Arab Republic of Egypt is a democratic system based on citizenship, Islam is the religion of the state, Arabic is its official language, and the principles of Sharia law derived from established Sunni canons are its main source of legislation.”

The explicit reference to the Sunni branch of Islam is aimed at maintaining the support of far-right Sunni Islamist forces such as the Salafist Al-Nour Party, which backed the coup.

As a result of opposition from the Al-Nour Party, the regime's first choice for prime minister, Mohamed ElBaradei, the leader of the National Salvation Front, was scrapped. ElBaradei, who played a key role in soliciting US backing for the coup, will serve as vice president of foreign affairs.

The Maspero Youth Union, a Coptic Christian group that also supports the new regime, criticized the declaration, pledging that they would fight for an “equal-opportunity country that safeguards dignity.”

The response of the liberal and pseudo-left forces inside the Tamarod alliance, including the National Salvation Front of Mohamed ElBaradei and the pseudo-left Revolutionary Socialists (RS), shows how thoroughly they are integrated into the Egyptian dictatorship. They issued only mild objections to the constitutional declaration.

On its Twitter account, Tamarod wrote: “It is impossible to accept the C.D. [constitutional declaration], because it founds a new dictatorship. We will hand over to the president an amendment to the C.D.”

In fact, Tamarod and its supporters—the international affiliates of the RS, including the pseudo-left International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the United States and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain—continue to back the coup.

Yesterday, the SWP's Judith Orr penned an article, titled “Egypt—second revolution sweeps out a

president,” to praise last Wednesday's coup as a revolution. She wrote, “The army's takeover was more than the simple military coup that much of the media are describing it as. It does not signal the ‘end of democracy.’”

While acknowledging that Monday's massacre of pro-Mursi protesters “has shocked people,” she said, “Some protesters saw the clampdown on the Muslim Brotherhood as welcome.” Orr's implicit claim that “democracy” existed in Egypt, either under the Mursi regime or now under the junta, brands the SWP and its co-thinkers as propagandists for counterrevolution.

It will not be long before the army employs the methods of mass killing and provocation against opposition in the working class to El-Beblawi's reactionary social agenda.

Tensions are still running high in Egypt, amid the junta's continuing crackdown on MB members. Though Monday's massacre of pro-MB protesters outside the Republican Guard barracks in Cairo was provoked by the army, prosecutors are now preparing charges including murder, thuggery, and undermining general security against 650 pro-MB protesters who survived the massacre.

Mursi supporters are planning to hold a mass rally today in Cairo to protest the coup and commemorate the victims of the massacre.



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