

# US, EU officials press for détente between Egyptian junta and Muslim Brotherhood

Alex Lantier  
1 August 2013

Amid an ongoing army crackdown, US and European officials are pressing for détente between Egypt's new military junta and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) of Mohamed Mursi, whom the army deposed in a July 3 coup after mass working class protests against the Mursi presidency.

As the junta prepares to implement unpopular social austerity policies, the imperialist powers and forces within the Egyptian political establishment are increasingly concerned that continued massacres will discredit the junta and encourage renewed mass struggles.

After Mursi met with European Union (EU) foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton on Tuesday, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina announced that he and Senator John McCain would travel to Cairo next week at President Obama's request. Graham said they would "reinforce in a bipartisan fashion the message that we have to move to civilian control—that the military is going to have to allow the country to have new elections."

Pointedly noting that he intended to talk to "political leaders," including MB officials, Graham said, "You cannot stop the progress and the march for democracy... the military has to turn over as fast as possible control to a civilian government."

This follows repeated calls by US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel to Egyptian military strongman General Abdel-Fatah El-Sisi, most recently on Tuesday, urging "restraint" in the army's bloody crackdown on MB protesters. Hundreds have been killed, including the massacre early last Saturday of at least 80 protesters near a pro-MB sit-in at Rabia al-Adawiya mosque in Cairo.

On Tuesday evening, largely peaceful pro-MB demonstrations were held to protest these killings in a

number of cities, including Cairo, Alexandria, Mansoura, Matrouh, Suez and Aswan.

European officials also signaled their preference for an agreement between the junta and the MB. French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius called for "the freeing of political prisoners, including former President Mursi," adding that his government wants "the newly installed regime to return as quickly as possible to a democratic approach and refuse violence."

For now, however, the junta is threatening to intensify its repression of MB protesters. In a statement released late yesterday, it declared that the situation caused by pro-Mursi sit-ins, "including the terrorist acts and road-blocking that has occurred," was "no longer acceptable, as it constitutes a threat to the country's national security."

The junta is also proceeding with its legal crackdown against the MB leadership. It ordered the MB's supreme guide, Mohamed Badie, the deputy supreme guide, Khairat El-Shater, and MB leader Rashad Bayoumi referred to criminal court on charges of inciting violence. Prosecutors also ordered the arrest of Islamist officials Osama Yassin and Essam El-Erian and Salafist preacher Safwat Hegazy.

The MB is refusing to negotiate without an agreement to first return Mursi to office. Yesterday, MB officials told state-run daily *Al Ahram* that, in his talks with Ashton on Tuesday, Mursi had rejected "pressure to accept his removal and acknowledge the coup."

Amid ongoing political turmoil, the junta is pushing for deeply unpopular austerity policies. On Monday, it announced it would introduce "smart cards" for use at fueling stations to control the use and price of natural gas, gasoline and other fuels by individuals, factories, bakeries and farmers. This had been proposed by Mursi earlier this summer in a bid to win support from the

International Monetary Fund for a \$4.5 billion IMF loan. The IMF is pushing for cuts to fuel and food subsidies.

The new finance minister, Ahmed Galal, signaled his support for subsidy cuts, possibly in connection with a bailout package arranged by the IMF. He said, “I’m not against dealing with the IMF in this framework, because it brings us credibility and new funds. There are advantages to dealing with the fund to achieve the aims you are after. But that doesn’t mean that it is my starting point. We indeed want to make reforms, irrespective of the IMF.”

The junta’s embrace of austerity exposes the reactionary role of the organizations in and around the Tamarod (“Rebel”) movement that backed the coup. They work to channel working class opposition behind support for either the MB or the army and oppose a revolutionary struggle by the working class against the entire Egyptian capitalist elite.

These forces include the liberal National Salvation Front (NSF) of Mohamed ElBaradei, the April 6 Youth Movement, and the pseudo-left Revolutionary Socialists (RS), whose collaborators include the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the US and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain. (See: “Egypt’s Revolutionary Socialists seek to cover up support for military coup”).

All of these groups now fear being discredited by their support for the coup. A comment in *Al Monitor* titled “Egypt’s Precarious New Reality” noted: “The heads of the National Salvation Front are becoming increasingly irrelevant to the national debate... Whether the NSF will remain in its current form (or at all) is becoming a matter of increasing speculation.”

*Al Monitor*’s comment made clear that this reflects a broader rightward shift in sections of the upper-middle classes towards explicit hostility to the outbreak of revolution in 2011 and support for the old military regime of Hosni Mubarak. It wrote, “Public and media commentary that either outright condemns the 2011 event—at times said to be a Brotherhood conspiracy—or appears somewhat regretful about it and the subsequent course of events is becoming increasingly vocal.”

The RS, representing sections of Egypt’s affluent middle classes closely aligned with the interests of US imperialism, are seeking to build new organizations to control and stifle political opposition in the working

class.

Speaking to the SWP’s *Socialist Worker* publication, RS member Hisham Fouad warned: “None of the political forces opposed to the Brotherhood, such as the Rebel campaign organizers and the National Salvation Front, could act as an independent, third force.”

Fouad is deeply concerned about a clash between the rightward-moving upper layers of society for which the RS speaks and the masses of workers. Speaking of the masses, he said: “They got rid of a failed president and are looking for someone to meet their demands. They don’t feel defeated... But what will the army offer? Can it solve the crisis? People’s expectations are that the problems they faced under Mursi will disappear. But if their expectations aren’t met, those in power will face a problem.”

The RS’ response is to work with Islamist and liberal forces to try to build new organizations, while cynically distancing themselves from their collaboration with Tamarod and their complicity in the coup.

Together with sections of the April 6 Youth movement and the Strong Egypt party of former MB leader Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, the RS have established a separate “Third Square” movement, setting up protests in squares that are occupied neither by MB or junta supporters.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**