

Egyptian court orders release of imprisoned former dictator Hosni Mubarak

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A Cairo criminal court ordered Egypt's long-time dictator Hosni Mubarak freed from prison on bail yesterday, starkly illustrating the Egyptian military junta's counterrevolutionary agenda.

While the court said it would hold Mubarak for 48 hours to let the prosecution appeal the verdict, prosecutor Ahmed el-Bahrawi told Reuters that the ruling, in a case involving alleged improper payments to Mubarak by the state daily newspaper *Al Ahram*, is "final" and cannot be appealed. Mubarak's lawyer Farid al-Deeb said that his client could be released as early as today.

Egyptian Prime Minister Hazem el-Beblawi's office said yesterday that Mubarak would be placed under house arrest, under the conditions of emergency rule the junta imposed on Egypt. Previously, Mubarak had been held in the Tora prison.

Mubarak's release on corruption charges is part of a legal and political strategy by the junta to rehabilitate the hated dictator and restore the *status quo* that existed before the revolution. At the center of its legal strategy is an attempt to clear Mubarak of responsibility for the mass killings of workers and youth by police thugs and sharpshooters during the 2011 revolution that overthrew him.

The 85-year-old former president was condemned to life in prison last year on charges of complicity in the killing of 800 protesters by police in the 2011 uprising. Mubarak appealed the verdict, however. Yesterday's ruling would allow him to go free until August 25, when he will petition not to be detained before the retrial on the murder charges.

More broadly, moves to rehabilitate Mubarak are integral to the junta's attempt to consolidate its power and move ahead with attacks on the working class.

The junta itself largely consists of former Mubarak

regime elements. It launched the July 3 coup against Islamist President Mohamed Mursi with the support of the Tamarod ("Rebel") alliance, backed by prominent Mubarak-era figures such as former Minister of Foreign Affairs Amr Moussa and former Aviation Minister Ahmed Shafik. Inside Tamarod, these figures worked with liberal and pseudo-left forces such as Mohamed ElBaradei's National Salvation Front and the misnamed Revolutionary Socialists (RS).

Since coming to power, the junta has carried out repeated massacres of protesters opposing the coup, killing approximately 1,000 people and wounding 6,000, according to official statistics. These crimes give the junta an even greater incentive to clear Mubarak of responsibility for the mass killings he oversaw.

The junta's moves to rehabilitate Mubarak are wildly unpopular, and numerous press sources speculated whether they would provoke renewed mass protests.

The former Mubarak regime elements inside the junta have the support of the liberal and pseudo-left forces who joined or collaborated with Tamarod. Yousef Auf, an Egyptian judge and non-resident fellow of the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington, commented: "The liberals over the past year, you know they were supporting the judiciary as a critic of Mursi. They cannot criticize this ruling."

Contacted by *Time* magazine, officials at Tamarod's offices in Cairo confirmed that they would not organize protests against Mubarak's release.

The constituency for continued revolutionary struggles against austerity and the army dictatorship is the working class, fighting against all the bourgeois parties and their pseudo-left, middle class satellites.

After two years of revolution and a powerful wave of strikes and protests against Mursi earlier this year, the liberal bourgeoisie and sections of the affluent middle

class closest to it have swung firmly behind the army and the regime. This finds consummate expression in the indifference to the freeing of Mubarak, and their support for a “war on terror” to crush domestic political opposition.

After a series of massacres of unarmed protesters over the last six weeks, the army is moving to arrest and jail the major leaders of Mursi’s Muslim Brotherhood (MB). On Tuesday Egyptian authorities had detained MB spiritual guide Mohammed Badie near a sit-in encampment attacked by security forces in the Cairo district of Nasr city.

Yesterday, Mourad Ali—a spokesman for the MB’s political party, the Freedom and Justice Party—was detained at the Cairo airport while trying to catch a flight to Italy.

Far-right Salafi preacher Safwat Hegazy was also arrested at a checkpoint near the Siwa Oasis in western Egypt, near the border with Libya. It is likely that Hegazy was trying to flee to Libya, which has been largely controlled by Islamist militias since the 2011 NATO war toppled the regime of Libyan Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Egyptian security forces said that Hegazy had disguised himself, cutting his beard and dying it black, and dressing as a local Bedouin.

The imperialist powers are also continuing their support for the army junta, while issuing a few empty criticisms to distance themselves from the bloodletting. European Union (EU) foreign ministers held “urgent” talks yesterday in Brussels to determine how to respond to the crackdown in Egypt. They reportedly agreed to stop export licenses on military equipment to Egypt and to “reassess” security cooperation with the Egyptian army.

The EU is moving, however, to help consolidate the junta by promoting a reconciliation with the junta. EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton indicated that she wanted to mediate talks between the junta and the MB, proposing “confidence building measures.”

Senior US officials in Washington had discussed on Tuesday whether to reduce the \$1.3 billion in yearly US financial assistance to the Egyptian military, which uses the funds to purchase US weapons. A White House spokesman denied reports yesterday that the Obama administration is cutting off aid to Egypt, and it appears that US funding will continue going to the Egyptian army.



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