

Egyptian junta cracks down on media and political opponents

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Two months after the July 3 military coup the US-backed Egyptian junta is continuing its crackdown against all opposition, both from the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and from the working class.

On Tuesday a Cairo court ordered Al-Jazeera Mubasher Misr and three other TV channels, Al-Yarmouk, Al-Quds and Ahrar 25 to shut down on charges of posing a threat to national security. Officials claimed that the channels were linked to Islamists and were reporting one-sidedly in favor of deposed Islamist president Mohamed Mursi. On Monday, a court ordered the permanent closure of the Salafist Al-Hafez channel. Already on Sunday three Al-Jazeera reporters had been deported by Egyptian security forces.

In a statement published on Tuesday, Reporters Without Borders condemned the crackdown against journalists and media professionals since the coup. According to the report, Egyptian authorities have censored ten media channels and raided six offices. Five journalists were killed, 80 others arbitrarily arrested, and 40 assaulted by police or thugs cooperating with the security forces.

Over the weekend, security forces dispersed nationwide protests called by the MB's National Coalition to Support Legitimacy, killing at least eight demonstrators and wounding 221 according to official numbers. Ahead of the protests, the Egyptian Ministry of Interior had announced it would use live ammunition against protesters in "legitimate self-defense."

In the past two months the military junta headed by coup-leader General Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi has organized mass killings and arrests of thousands of protesters. Seif Abdel Fattah, a former Mursi advisor and political science professor at Cairo University, accused the junta of the "murder of more than 3000 Egyptians who were guilty of nothing other than opposing the coup."

Security forces continue to round up the MB's leadership. On Monday, special units detained Saad El-Husseini, the former governor of Kafr El-Sheikh, in a house in New Cairo. On Tuesday, Mostafa Isaa, a well-known MB leader and former governor of Minya was arrested.

The same day an Egyptian military court sentenced a Brotherhood member to life imprisonment while forty-eight others received sentences of between five to fifteen years. The defendants were accused of "shooting and adopting violent means" against the army in the port city of Suez on August 14, the day when the military and Central Security Forces violently assaulted protests and sit-ins by Mursi supporters across Egypt.

Deposed president Mursi himself will be tried at a criminal court in Cairo on charges "of committing acts of violence and inciting killing and thuggery" alongside with other leading MB figures such as the MB's Supreme Guide Mohamed al-Badie according to Egypt's state news agency MENA.

On the Sinai, the army continued its so-called offensive against "terrorism." On Tuesday it reportedly killed eight and injured 15 alleged Islamist militants in an air raid by four Apache attack helicopters.

The ultimate goal of the junta's so-called "war against terrorism" is to silence and suppress any resistance against its attempts to restore the military-backed dictatorship that existed prior to the Egyptian revolution under the rule of former dictator Hosni Mubarak. Ultimately, the central target of the junta is the working class, which was the main force behind the Egyptian revolution.

When the army violently attacked a strike of 2,100 steel workers at Suez Steel on August 12, it sought to

justify the attack on grounds that “Islamists” were behind the strike. An army statement published at the time claimed that “infiltrating elements” who were “exploiters of religion” tried to poison workers “in the name of religion.”

There are increasing attacks on strikes and working class protests throughout Egypt. On August 17 a strike at the Scimitar Petroleum Company was violently dispersed.

In recent days the military has deployed APC’s around the Misr Textile Company in Mahalla, where thousands of workers were on strike last week.

The anti-working class character of the coup was recently underscored by Egyptian billionaire Naguib Sawiris, who financed and supported the right-wing Tamarod conspiracy, the main mechanism for the Egyptian bourgeoisie to channel mass discontent against Mursi and the MB behind the military. On his Twitter account last Saturday, he demanded a ban for “protests and sit-ins for two years to take our breath and build our state.”

Recently, the *New York Times* published an article by David D. Kirkpatrick titled “Egypt Widens Crackdown and Meaning of ‘Islamist’” which gives a glimpse of the apparatus of terror and fear which is being reinstalled in Egypt.

Kirkpatrick writes: “Police abuses and politicized prosecutions are hardly new in Egypt, and they did not stop under Mr. Morsi. But since the military takeover last month, some rights activists say, the authorities are acting with a sense of impunity exceeding even the period before the 2011 revolt against Hosni Mubarak.”

He continues: “The government installed by Gen. Abdul-Fattah el-Sisi has renewed the Mubarak-era state of emergency removing all rights to due process or protections against police abuse. And police officials have pronounced themselves ‘vindicated.’ They say the new government’s claim that it is battling Islamist violence corroborates what they have been saying all along: that it was Islamists, not the police, who killed protesters before Mr. Mubarak’s ouster.”

Kirkpatrick points to the fact, that the term “Islamist” is used to persecute everyone opposed to the regime and particularly striking workers who are being labeled as “terrorists” or “agents of the MB.”

The most fervent supporters of these plans to put an end to all protests and strikes are amongst the left and

liberal affluent middle class layers and their political organizations. They first collaborated with Sawiris and the Tamarod campaign and now stand ready to actively suppress the working class.

Kamal Abu Eita, the new Egyptian minister of manpower and former leader of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU), combined his entry into the military backed government with demand that workers end all strikes and become “champions of production.” When the military put down the Suez Steel strike, he joined the propaganda campaign and claimed that MB members were inciting strikes.

Reflecting the class interests of an affluent middle class layer whose interests are bound up with those of imperialism and international finance capital, they are backing a military dictatorship to shield them from the threat of a socialist revolution in Egypt.

Hamdeen Sabahi, a Nasserite politician and former presidential candidate told Reuters last weekend that “General Sisi is a popular hero par excellence, and if he decides to enter the elections he is the most popular at the moment.”

The enthusiasm of the affluent liberal left milieu for the Sisi and the military junta is only equaled by that of the international banks. Recently a German fund manager at Landesbank Berlin, Lutz Roehmeyer, told Bloomberg: “I’m comfortable with this kind of military regime. We’ve seen this from time to time in emerging markets, and it usually serves as a force of stabilization.”



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