

Egyptian junta intensifies crackdown after unresolved Cairo bombing

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The Egyptian military junta is seizing upon Thursday's bombing attack in front of the Egyptian interior ministry to intensify its crackdown against opposition to its dictatorial regime. On Thursday morning, a bomb went off near the motorcade of Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim as he left his home in Nasr City, an upscale neighborhood in the capital, Cairo, injuring at least 21 people.

A day after the bombing, parts of the city were under military lockdown. The army blocked roads around the Rabaa al-Adaweya Square—where the junta massacred hundreds of supporters of deposed Islamist president Mohamed Mursi on August 14—to prevent renewed demonstrations.

Security forces also stepped up their presence in Tahrir Square, the iconic center of the Egyptian revolution. Military vehicles and armored trucks of the notorious Central Security Forces deployed at entrances to the square and at the nearby Egyptian museum. Troops occupied the Qasr el-Nil bridge and all the main streets of downtown Cairo.

On Friday afternoon, security forces working with pro-regime thugs attacked protesters who took to the streets in several Egyptian cities despite the heavy military presence, in response to a call by the National Alliance to Support Legitimacy—an MB-led coalition demanding the reinstatement of Mursi since he was deposed in a July 3 military coup. Reportedly at least one protester was killed in the Nile Delta town of Damietta, and one protester was killed in Alexandria.

Security forces continue arresting the MB's leadership. According to the official Facebook page of the Freedom and Justice Party – the MB's political arm – Mohsen Rady, a former MP and the former head of the Culture and Information Committee at the People's Assembly, was detained by security forces from his

daughter's home in Nasr City. In the past weeks, at least half of the MB's leadership including Mursi and the MB's Supreme Guide Mohammed Badie have been detained and dozens of civilians sentenced in military courts.

The junta is also cracking down on political organizations who initially supported the military coup, such as the Revolutionary Socialists. On Thursday the RS announced that one of their leading members, Haytham Mohammadein, a labour lawyer and member of the El-Nadim Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence NGO, had been arrested at a military checkpoint and is currently in detention.

The day before the bombing the junta granted university security guards the right to arrest students. In October 2010, Egypt's Supreme Administrative Court ruled to remove police forces from university campuses, after their torture tactics against students became notorious and risked provoking broader opposition. The decision to grant security guards arrest powers highlights that the military regime seeks to turn the clock back to the darkest days of the Mubarak dictatorship, reinstalling the former apparatus of terror and propaganda.

Without giving any evidence, the junta was quick to blame the Ministry of Interior attack on supporters of Mursi and the MB. “We believe that today's events show the rest of the world the reality of the Muslim Brotherhood and that they are a terrorist group,” said Interior Ministry spokesman General Hani Abdellatif.

The MB and other Islamist groups, however, distanced themselves from the attack. Amr Darrag, Egypt's former minister of planning and international cooperation, said: “We strongly condemn the car bombing targeting the interior minister. Peacefulness is the only path.” Carrying out such attacks to frame the

Islamist groups and parties is an “evil thing,” said Darrag, stating that the incident was “an attempt to frame Islamist groups and accuse them of terrorism.”

Diaa al-Sawy, a leader of the National Alliance to Support Legitimacy accused the regime of being involved in the bombing to create a new pretext for its security crackdown. He told the Egyptian daily *Al-Masry Al-Youm*: “We are afraid this incident, at this time, possibly aims to provide the excuse for a massacre to be committed Friday during the demonstrations planned by supporters of President Mohamed Mursi.”

The interior ministry issued a statement on Friday urging the media not to publish any information on the bombing unless provided by the ministry itself.

The ultra-right-wing Al-Gamaa Al-Islamiya—a group involved in terrorist attacks in the 1980s and 1990s, before it officially renounced violence—also condemned the attack. “Whoever stands behind the attack wants to cut off all avenues for national reconciliation in Egypt,” a statement of the group said.

As the Islamists signal their willingness to make a deal with the military junta, the regime is seeking to use the cover of an alleged “fight against terrorism” to intensify its crackdown not only on its Islamist rivals in the Egyptian bourgeoisie but on the working class, the main force behind the revolution.

In recent months, the junta repeatedly cracked down on striking workers, on the pretext that “Islamists” were behind the strike. When the army violently attacked a strike of 2,100 steel workers at Suez Steel it published a statement claiming that “infiltrating elements” who were “exploiters of religion” tried to poison workers “in the name of religion.”

After crackdowns against Suez Steel workers and the strike at the Scimitar Petroleum Company, Sisi made clear in an address to the nation on August 18 that his dictatorship is primarily directed against the working class. He called on workers to “to double our production,” while denouncing strikes: “Don't give anyone the chance to interrupt your work. Tell those neighbors, please no more. If we can do this, we will effectively contribute to avoiding bloodshed and casualties... And again, don't let anybody interrupt production because this is another means of tearing the country down.”

It is already clear that the latest terror bombing will

be used by the military to tighten its grip over the country. Ibrahim, who survived the attack unharmed, threatened that the fight with Mursi's supporters was “just about to begin”. Ibrahim was appointed minister of interior by then-President Mursi himself but has been overseeing mass killings and arrests of thousands of protesters and MB members after the July 3 coup.

In a statement, Egypt's military-backed interim government threatened “that this criminal act will not deter the authorities from confronting terrorism with decisive force. Any act that will tamper with the security of the homeland will be met with an iron fist. Terrorism now is the first enemy of rights and public freedoms.”

The liberal and “left” parties are the new constituency for the reestablishment of a military dictatorship in Egypt. Threatened by mass discontent against Mursi and the MB, they lined up behind the military to forestall a revolution by the working class. They are now integrating themselves into the Sisi-dictatorship and provide the necessary support and propaganda for the military crackdown.

Ahmed Darrag, a leading member of the National Salvation Front, claimed that “the Muslim Brotherhood is mainly responsible for this attack, along with the groups that support it like Hamas, as well as countries like the United States, Germany, and the UK.”

A leader and co-founder of the Tamarod or “Rebel” campaign, Mahmoud Abdel-Aziz, wrote on his Facebook page: “Terrorism will be defeated in Egypt regardless of what the international terrorist organization wants.”

According to Ahram Online, the Popular Current led by Nasserite politician Hamdeen Sabahi also “restated its full support for the current government and its institutions, which it said were facing 'black terrorism'.”



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