

Thousands protest military rule in Egypt after Muslim Brotherhood ban

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On Friday thousands protested against military rule in Egypt. Protesters marched in Cairo, Port Said, Assiut, Alexandria, Mansoura and other major Egyptian cities.

Protesters held up banners, chanted slogans against the military junta of General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, and denounced the July 3 military coup that ousted former Islamist president Mohamed Mursi and the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood (MB) from power.

The protests were called by the National Alliance for Supporting Legitimacy, a coalition of Islamist parties led by the MB. While Mursi supporters clearly dominated the protests, youth and students who are not Brotherhood followers but oppose renewed military dictatorship reportedly also participated.

Throughout the week, Egypt has witnessed anti-junta protests in universities and schools marking the beginning of the new school year. An unknown number of students have been arrested across the country. Reviving the terror tactics of the Mubarak dictatorship, the junta has granted university security guards the right to arrest students earlier this month.

In the Nile Delta town of El-Menoufia, seventeen-year-old student Sarah Adel Ibrahim was handed over to the authorities after she wrote “down with military rule” on the walls of a school, the state-run daily *Al-Ahram* reported.

In the coastal city of Marsa Matrouh, “two students were caught distributing flyers accusing the army and police of being killers,” according to a security source cited in the media.

In at least two cities, Friday’s protests were attacked by pro-army thugs and security forces. In the Nile Delta town of Mansoura, security forces fired tear gas canisters at funeral marchers after the burial of well-known MB member Safwat Khalil, who recently died in police custody. His mourners headed to Suez Canal

Street and staged a protest demanding the downfall of coup leader al-Sisi and Mursi’s reinstatement. The police arrested at least five protesters.

Clashes were also reported from Alexandria’s eastern Al-Asafra district, where hundreds of protesters chanted slogans against the army. Police forces arrived at the scene and fired tear gas to disperse the crowds.

The protests came after an Egyptian court outlawed the MB and its NGO on Monday, leaving the largest Islamist group in Egyptian society without any legal status. The presiding judge of the Cairo Court for Urgent Matters, Mohamed al-Sayed, announced a “ban [on] the Muslim Brotherhood organization and its non-governmental organizations and all the activities that it participates in and any organization derived from it.”

Al-Sayed also declared that an independent committee would be installed by the interim government to manage the MB’s assets until a final court decision is issued. A Brotherhood source indicated they would appeal the verdict within ten days.

While Egypt’s military-backed government declared that it will not dissolve the MB until all litigation measures against its arrested members are finalized, it seized upon the ruling to step up its crackdown on the MB. On Tuesday night police forces stormed the headquarters of the MB’s *Freedom and Justice* newspaper and shut it down. Already last week Egyptian prosecutors froze assets of leading MB members and other well-known Islamist figures as part of criminal prosecutions against them.

Since the July 3 coup, most of the MB’s leading members have been rounded up and arrested including its Supreme Guide Mohamed Badie, his deputy and multi-millionaire financier of the MB, Kheirat al-Shater and Mursi himself. All are facing charges that could

bring the death penalty. The junta has been overseeing mass killings and arrests of thousands of protesters and MB members since it took power.

A ban of the MB—which would reduce the group’s status even below what it was reduced to at the time of the Mubarak dictatorship, when the MB, while officially banned, was allowed to function as a means to derail opposition—is enthusiastically supported by the affluent liberal and pseudo-left milieu in Egypt which constitutes the new social basis for military rule.

Most of the liberal and pseudo-left groups which first helped channel mass working class protests against Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood preceding the July 3 coup behind the military are now the most aggressive supporters of al-Sisi’s police state, which has been established above all to suppress the working class, the main force behind the Egyptian revolution.

The lawsuit against the MB was filed by the National Progressive Unionist (Tagammu) Party, which was the official, state-sanctioned “left” opposition party under the Mubarak dictatorship. According to a report in the *Egypt Independent*, Tagammu’s current general secretary Refaat al-Saeed, a former Stalinist, said the verdict “crowned the party’s efforts of over 35 years to ban political activities on religious basis.” The same line is taken by myriad other liberal and “left” organizations. Ahmed Bahaa Eddin Shaaban, the head of the Egyptian Socialist Party, which is closely aligned to the German Left Party, said the ruling was “historic” and timely.

Marget Azer, the secretary general of the Free Egyptians Party, which was founded and financed by multi-billionaire tycoon Naguib Sawiris in April 2011, said the verdict would help bring the Muslim Brotherhood and all terrorist organizations to an end.

The deputy leader of the Democratic Front Party Hamdy al-Fakharany demanded that the MB be labeled a terrorist organization that aims to disrupt public peace and sow chaos and terrorism. “The verdict banning the Muslim Brotherhood is the beginning of bringing the group to a complete end worldwide, not just in Egypt,” he stated. The *de facto* outlawing of the MB with the support of the liberal and pseudo-left middle class affluentsia is another sign for the intensifying crisis of military rule in Egypt. Having nothing else to offer to the working masses than repression and impoverishment, the junta and its middle class hangers

on fear a renewed explosion of the masses which would not only be directed against the Islamists, but also against the military and its liberal and pseudo-left supporters itself.

Egyptian Interim Prime Minister Hazem el-Beblawi’s hollow promise to increase the minimum wage from 700 Egyptian pounds (100 \$US) to 1200 next year led to a sharp warning from Malek Bayoumi, the new president of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU). The EFITU is cooperating closely with the junta to suppress ongoing strikes and protests, and is deeply concerned by rising hostility in the working class.

He said, “I’m warning the government … they have to look after the workers, otherwise finally there will be a third revolution —in the factories, in the government, everywhere.”



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