

Egypt's mass death sentences: A crime made in the USA

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US Secretary of State John Kerry welcomed his Egyptian counterpart, Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy, to Washington Tuesday, just one day after a court in Egypt sentenced to death nearly 700 people—alleged members and supporters of Muslim Brotherhood of ousted President Mohamed Mursi.

The five-minute “trial” saw no evidence taken, much less any defense arguments allowed, and the majority of the defendants sentenced to hang were not even in the courtroom.

This trial follows by barely a month an earlier judicial travesty in the same court, in which 529 were sentenced to die. In both proceedings, the defendants were charged with responsibility for protests in which a single policeman was killed following a US-backed military coup that toppled Mursi, Egypt's first elected president. In the wake of the coup, the military conducted a bloody crackdown that claimed as many as 2,000 lives.

Mass trials and mass death sentences on this scale are without precedent anywhere in the world in recent history. They are only the most recent and visible of the atrocities of the regime that took power in July of last year. Thousands more Egyptians remain imprisoned without charges for political reasons, many of them held in clandestine torture centers.

Washington's welcome for the chief foreign representative of this criminal regime was nothing less than obscene. In a press conference at the State Department, Kerry joked with the Egyptian foreign minister as the two addressed each other on a first name basis. Later, at the Pentagon, Fahmy was given an “honor cordon” welcome. He was ushered into the building through ranks of American soldiers standing at attention with fixed bayonets, as Egypt's flag flew and its anthem was played by a military band.

In his brief remarks Tuesday, Kerry stressed that Egypt is “a very important strategic partner” of the US, sharing “common interests.” He allowed that Egypt had been “going through a very difficult transition period,” a condition that presumably justifies mass killings, imprisonment without trial, torture and drumhead trials dispatching 1,200 people to the gallows.

What Egypt is “transitioning to” was not specified in the secretary's remarks. While the phrase is habitually used with the word “democracy,” the events of the past three years have made it clear that the real transition, guided by Washington, is from the mass popular revolution that overthrew the 30-year rule of the military general and dictator Hosni Mubarak to the imposition of a new US-backed military-run dictatorship under Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

While praising the regime for its “positive steps” toward democracy, Kerry said that there had been “disturbing decisions within the judicial process—the court system—that have raised serious challenges for all of us.”

This is the closest that the secretary of state came to describing what is taking place in Egypt. He discreetly avoided words such as “mass trials” and “death sentences,” never mind “massacres” and “torture.” He made no mention of the banning this week of the April 6 Youth Movement, which played a prominent role in the mass protests that led to the fall of Mubarak.

Kerry concluded by saying that Washington is “looking for certain things to happen that will give people the sense of confidence about this road ahead. It's actions, not words, that will make the difference.”

The hypocrisy and cynicism here are staggering. There has already been plenty of “action” on both sides. The Egyptian junta has proceeded with its criminal repression. The Obama administration has

responded by announcing that it is sending the regime 10 Apache attack helicopters, one of the most deadly weapons in the suppression of popular unrest, as demonstrated by the US during the occupation of Iraq. The administration has also cleared Cairo for \$650 million in additional military aid.

Why should anyone believe that the Egyptian regime would carry out these crimes without the approval of Washington?

Over the past several weeks, Kerry, while invoking “democratic values” and “international law,” has led the drive to bring Russia to heel over Ukraine, mobilizing the full power of US imperialism and going so far as to risk military confrontation with a nuclear power. Yet Washington is supposedly powerless to do anything to change the policy of a military dictatorship in Cairo headed by Field Marshal Sisi, a proud graduate of the US Army War College. Rubbish!

So naked is the Obama administration’s complicity in the foul crimes in Egypt that token opposition has been heard in the US Congress to the military appropriations, with Senator Patrick Leahy (Democrat, Vermont) threatening to block them in committee. In remarks on the floor of the Senate Tuesday, Leahy referred to the Egyptian regime as “a dictatorship run amok.” Such qualms notwithstanding, the Obama White House has made it clear that it is determined to deliver the military hardware and aid.

The administration’s policy reflects the outlook and interests of financial and corporate ruling circles. As Reuters reported this week in its latest survey of leading Middle East investment managers, Egypt boasts “the most clearly bullish stock market,” having risen by 55 percent since last summer’s bloodbath. Forty percent of those surveyed “expect to boost allocations and none intends to reduce them.” The news agency explained: “This is because of hopes that a victory by former army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in May 26-27 presidential elections will lead to more political stability and economic recovery, despite continued social tensions.”

Sisi’s victory in a sham poll conducted under military rule is assured. The “hopes” of these layers were further boosted this week with the regime’s indication that it intends to resume the privatization of state enterprises that had been halted under Mursi.

Taking their cue from Wall Street and the corporate

ruling class, the media has treated the crimes of the Egyptian regime with the same kind of discretion observed by the State Department. While the editorial pages of the major newspapers are filled with fulminations against Russia, a near silence has been observed on the events in Egypt. Such self-appointed champions of “human rights” as the *New York Times*’ Nicholas Kristof have not seen fit to make their pseudo-moral cases against the junta in Cairo.

The principal target of the savage repression meted out by the regime in Cairo is the Egyptian working class, whose mass strikes and protests led to the downfall of the US-backed dictatorship of Mubarak in February 2011. Dispatching hundreds of people at a time to the hangmen, mass imprisonment and torture are all meant to terrorize Egyptian workers and thereby quell their continuing struggles. Washington understands this and approves.

While the politics of the Muslim Brotherhood could not be further from those of international socialism, the *World Socialist Web Site* calls upon workers in every country to defend those who are threatened with death in Egypt. The demands must be raised for an end to the military regime’s persecution, the overturning of the criminal death sentences and the immediate release of all those who have been imprisoned for politically opposing the dictatorship and the US-backed coup that brought it to power.



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