

One year since the military coup in Egypt

Johannes Stern
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This week marks the first anniversary of the US-backed military coup that brought the junta of now president and de facto dictator General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi to power.

In launching the coup, the army sought to pre-empt a mass movement that had developed against Muslim Brotherhood President Mohamed Mursi. The class struggle exploded in the first half of 2013, as workers mounted over 5,544 strikes and social protests against Mursi's government. When protests were called in late June, tens of millions of workers went onto the streets to express their anger at Mursi's free-market policies and his support for Israel's assault on Gaza and the US-led proxy war in Syria.

While the protests showed the immense power of the working class, their outcome revealed the essential problem of the Egyptian revolution: the chasm between the elemental anger of the Egyptian population and the absence of political leadership.

In the absence of a revolutionary party fighting to rally the working class in a struggle to take power on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program, the forces that emerged in control of the movement, primarily the Tamarod ("Rebel") movement, worked to channel popular opposition behind the army.

When al-Sisi launched a coup and deposed Mursi in close coordination with the American military and the Obama administration, liberal youth activists and pseudo-left political forces operating in and around Tamarod hailed it as a "second revolution." Sameh Naguib, a leader of the pseudo-left Revolutionary Socialists (RS), enthused: "This is not the end of democracy, nor a simple military coup ... People feel empowered and entitled by the events of the last few days."

In contrast, the day after the coup, the *World Socialist Web Site* warned the working class of the reactionary role the military would play. We wrote,

"The army will seek to enforce the policies demanded by finance capital. In the final analysis, the conflict between the military on the one hand and the ousted Muslim Brotherhood on the other is a fight between conflicted factions of the ruling class. The main target of the repression that the military is preparing will be the working class. The stage has been set for the denunciation of further protest actions by the working class as harmful to the 'national interest' and illegitimate."

This warning has been dramatically confirmed over the past year. After taking power, the al-Sisi junta unleashed a reign of terror against its political opponents, seeking to restore the military-police state as it existed under Hosni Mubarak, before the Egyptian revolution began in 2011.

The military government violently dispersed protests and strikes, shooting thousands in cold blood in the streets of Egypt's cities. It banned Mursi's Muslim Brotherhood and sentenced over 2,000 of its members and supporters to death. According to recent figures from the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, 41,163 people were jailed between the coup and May 15 of this year.

The year following the coup was without question a major setback for the Egyptian revolution. Yet it is not over. From the beginning, the Egyptian revolution has been driven by deep objective processes: the impoverishment and exploitation of the working class internationally, and the escalating crisis of imperialism in the Middle East. A new stage of the revolution will begin, and the key task is to draw the necessary political lessons to prepare for it.

The al-Sisi coup was the culmination of three-and-a-half years of bitter revolutionary struggles that have confirmed Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution. None of Egypt's bourgeois factions—the army, the Muslim Brotherhood, or the petty-bourgeois pseudo-

left groups that oscillated between them—had any progressive perspective to solve the democratic and social demands of the masses.

The task of building a truly democratic society freed from poverty and imperialist oppression, the Theory of Permanent Revolution explains, falls to the working class in a struggle for world socialist revolution. It was on the basis of this perspective that the WSWS opposed the al-Sisi coup.

The WSWS consistently defended this position from the beginning of the Egyptian revolution, explaining on the day before the working class toppled Mubarak: “The revolutionary Marxists must counsel workers against all illusions that their democratic aspirations can be achieved under the aegis of bourgeois parties. They must expose ruthlessly the false promises of the political representatives of the capitalist class. They must encourage the creation of independent organs of workers’ power which can become, as the class struggle intensifies, the basis for the transfer of power to the working class. They must explain that the realization of workers’ essential democratic demands is inseparable from the implementation of socialist policies ...

“Above all, revolutionary Marxists must raise the political horizons of Egyptian workers beyond the borders of their own country. They must explain that the struggles that are now unfolding in Egypt are inextricably linked to an emerging global process of world socialist revolution, and that the victory of the revolution in Egypt requires not a national, but an international perspective.”

In Egypt, all the necessary prerequisites for a revolution were present save one: a revolutionary party fighting for this perspective. The central question posed in Egypt, and internationally, is the construction of such a party, a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, fighting to rekindle the struggles of the revolution, bring down the al-Sisi government, and take up the fight for socialism.



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