

Al-Sisi in Berlin: Red carpet for the hangman of Cairo

Johannes Stern
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No other event could have better exposed the human rights pretenses of the German ruling class than the official reception of Egyptian dictator Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Berlin. If the term “mass murderer” can be applied to any international head of state, it certainly applies to him.

The Egyptian despot is not a murderer on a par with the Nazis. But he is without a doubt comparable to General Augusto Pinochet, the former leader of the Chilean military junta, under whose rule (1973-1990) tens of thousands of regime opponents were imprisoned, tortured and killed.

Here is an incomplete but no less shocking chronicle of the bloodiest incidents in Egypt since al-Sisi organized a putsch on July 3, 2013 following mass protests against Muslim Brotherhood President Mohamed Mursi:

- * July 8, 2013: Egyptian security forces shoot 53 Mursi supporters in front of the building of the Republican Guard in Cairo.

- * August 14, 2013: The army and police storm two camps of anti-putsch protestors and kill more than 1,000 people, among them many women and children. Human Rights Watch identifies the “massacre” as the “worst incident of illegal mass killing in the modern history of Egypt.”

- * January 25, 2014: On the third anniversary of the Egyptian Revolution, military and security forces kill more than 100 opponents of the regime during demonstrations.

- * March 24, 2014: On a single day of hearings in the largest mass trial in Egyptian history, 529 people are sentenced to death.

- * April 28, 2014: In another mass trial, 683 more people are sentenced to death in less than 15 minutes.

- * May 15, 2015: Mursi himself and more than 100 other co-defendants are sentenced to death.

- * May 16, 2015: Six of those convicted are hanged. Amnesty International strongly condemns the trial and

points out that the confessions of the accused were extracted under torture.

That is just a small part of al-Sisi’s reign of terror. Anyone opposing his regime in Egypt who is not killed can expect to be arrested and tortured. According to Amnesty International, in the last two years 41,000 people have disappeared into the country’s prisons. Protests and strikes are prohibited by law. Independent media is suppressed, and parties and organizations that criticize the regime are forbidden.

The atrocities and serious human rights violations of the regime are so grave that even some figures in the bourgeois media and among German politicians felt compelled to raise criticisms. Norbert Lammert (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), president of the Bundestag, cancelled a meeting with al-Sisi on short notice with the explanation that in Egypt there was neither a parliament nor concrete prospects for elections. However, this did not stop Lammert from calling the visit from the dictator “desirable and necessary.”

Al-Sisi’s joint press conference with Merkel created a scandal. A young medical student, who according to media reports had been accredited as a journalist, shouted several times at al-Sisi: “He is a murderer, he is a Nazi, he is a fascist!” and “Down with the military junta!” In his remarks, al-Sisi praised the Egyptian military and defended the death sentences.

A visibly shocked Merkel was escorted from the stage together with al-Sisi. The chancellor may be a relatively limited bourgeois politician, but she might have sensed instinctively that the protest was directed not only at al-Sisi, the gravedigger of the Egyptian Revolution, but also against the policies of the German government and herself.

The German ruling class and its servants in the media never miss an opportunity to exploit the issue of “human rights” for foreign policy aims, or to justify economic

warfare against Russia and foreign deployments of the German military.

Now their masks have been torn off. Over the course of the past year, the German ruling class has attempted to dress up the return of aggressive foreign and great power policies with phrases about “democracy,” “peace” and “responsibility.” It is now clear what this is really all about: the economic and geostrategic interests of German imperialism.

Merkel did not mince her words during the press conference. After she had made clear that she was “pleased” with al-Sisi’s visit and the “open” exchange based on “partnership,” she declared: “I want to state that I consider the relationship with Egypt to be of great strategic importance.” The country is working “on a way that attempts to secure stability and the prosperity of the country.” Germany, she said, wanted to be “an important partner who can help.”

As for the death sentences, Merkel only said that “the high number of death sentences is, in our view, something that should be avoided.” She had nothing to say about the massacres, the mass imprisonments and the torture in Egyptian prisons.

Only the President of Germany, Joachim Gauck, could outdo Merkel’s unscrupulousness. The former pastor embodies more than any other the hypocritical moralizing of German imperialism. Only a few hours after receiving al-Sisi with military honors in Bellevue Castle, Gauck travelled to the opening of the 35th congress of the Evangelical Church in Germany in Stuttgart to decry the “poverty, injustice, conflicts, intolerance and destruction of the environment ... in many parts of the world.”

What the German elites mean by “help” and the “fight against poverty” is abundantly clear. As early as mid-March, Siemens, one of the largest companies in Germany, signed a contract and declaration of intent at an economic summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, worth 10 billion euros. Another form of German “help” comes in the form of close collaboration between German and Egyptian police and intelligence forces. The German government is planning at least six conferences this year with representatives of Egyptian intelligence and police agencies in order to develop mutual strategies in the fight against “terrorism.”

The visit of al-Sisi recalls the visit of the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, to West Berlin in May 1967. The federal government of that time was also seeking to secure new markets and strategic partnerships in the Middle East, and to that end it welcomed a brutal tyrant.

One of the counter-demonstrators in 1967, the student Benno Ohnesorg, was shot dead by police. In response to the subsequent massive radicalization of students, the German grand coalition government adopted an emergency law on May 30, 1968, granting the state massive new powers—all under the guise of the fight against “terrorism”.

As was the case at the time of the Shah’s visit, there is also a domestic dimension to al-Sisi’s visit. Unlike 1967, there have been no substantial protests in the last few days. However, under the surface an enormous storm of protest against the unpopular austerity and war policies of the German ruling class is brewing, and the eruptions to come will far surpass the events of the years 1967/1968.

Against a background of growing social tensions, the so-called “opposition parties” in the Bundestag felt an irresistible force of attraction to the Egyptian dictator.

“Dialogue is the only way to influence the resolution of conflicts, and therefore it would be wrong not to speak with Sisi,” declared the leader of the Left Party, Gregor Gysi on Twitter. The chair of the Greens in the Bundestag, Katrin Göring-Eckardt, issued a similar message: “Of course, when in doubt you have to speak with a military dictator when it concerns to the extremely difficult situation in the Middle East.”

Al-Sisi regularly justifies his brutal regime with references to the “struggle against terrorism” and the need to prevent a civil war in Egypt. In fact, its principal aim is to suppress the Egyptian masses who took to the streets in 2011 for democratic and social rights, toppled Hosni Mubarak and shook the Egyptian bourgeoisie and its Western allies to the core.

The fact that the Berlin elites now roll out the red carpet for the hangman of Cairo must be seen as a warning. The same German ruling class that elevated the Nazis to power in 1933 is once again preparing to use violent methods at home.



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