

Egyptian court confirms death sentence for former President Mursi

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An Egyptian judge Tuesday confirmed death sentences for former President Mohamed Mursi and other leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is the latest judicial travesty organized by the military dictatorship in Egypt, a key ally of the US and European imperialist powers in the Middle East.

The decision was clearly and blatantly motivated by political considerations, with Judge Shaaban el-Shami issuing a long statement accompanying the ruling that praised the current military regime headed by General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi. He denounced the “diabolic satanic plans” of the Muslim Brotherhood, which ruled Egypt from June 2012 to July 2013.

In addition to Mursi, the court sentenced 98 others to death. Only six of these are currently held by the Egyptian regime, including Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Mohamed Badie and other leading MB members. The others were sentenced in absentia.

The initial sentence was given by the court last month, but Egyptian law requires that death sentences be referred to the Grand Mufti for consultation, after which it is confirmed by the court. This confirmation is supposedly subject to appeal, but the entire court system in Egypt is a judicial and legal travesty.

The sentence of death handed out to Mursi was based on charges that he participated in an elaborate conspiracy to break out of jail in the weeks prior to the ouster of long-time Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. The operation supposedly involved both the Shiite Muslim Hezbollah movement in Lebanon and the Sunni Muslim Hamas movement in Palestine, along with “criminal elements.”

There was no real effort to substantiate the allegations in court or to refute obvious absurdities related in the charges—such as the fact that, according to Hamas, some of those named as codefendants were in Israeli

prisons at the time of the alleged prison break.

Mursi has also been convicted on a second charge of “conspiring with foreign powers” during his time in office, an absurd charge for a head of state. He received a sentence of life in prison for this charge, though several of his codefendants in this case were sentenced to death.

The political motivations for the trial were stated openly by Judge Shami, who declared that the Muslim Brotherhood worked for decades “to overturn the regime [of dictator Hosni Mubarak] and to permit the spilling of blood between sons of the nation...” He added that the military, in seizing power, had “sided with the sovereignty of the people” who were demanding “the building of a strong and cohesive Egyptian society that does not exclude any of its sons and currents, and ends the state of conflict and division.”

Shami added that the Muslim Brotherhood had a history of “grabbing power with any price.” This from a representative of a state apparatus that has engaged in bloody and violent suppression of all opposition to the military junta that has been in place since the ouster of Mursi in 2013.

Mursi came to power in June 2012 in elections that were organized nearly a year and a half after the February 2011 uprising that forced out Mubarak. The Muslim Brotherhood made a deal with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which continued to exercise effective control of much of the state apparatus. The government received the backing of the US as it implemented right-wing economic measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund.

The military was never comfortable with this agreement, however. One year later, under conditions of mass protests and a developing strike movement

against the Mursi-led government, the military stepped in and deposed the Muslim Brotherhood, once again with the backing of the Obama administration.

The newly reconstituted military dictatorship headed by al-Sisi unleashed a wave of violence, including the massacre of 1,000 protesters in Cairo. It has also organized a series of show trials and mass repression, targeting Muslim Brotherhood members but aimed at terrorizing and intimidating all opposition in the working class.

In 2014, two mass trials resulted in death sentences for more than 1,200 people. According to human rights organizations, over 40,000 Egyptians have been disappeared in prisons, where they are subject to abuse and torture.

These measures have been accompanied by more direct attacks on the working class. In April of this year, a court effectively outlawed any strike by public sector workers.

These actions—which completely expose the humanitarian pretenses of the imperialist powers—have generally been accompanied by handwringing from the Obama administration, coupled with continued political and financial support for the junta.

Responding to Tuesday's confirmation of Mursi's death sentence, the Obama administration issued a pro forma statement of concern. White House spokesman Josh Earnest said that the US was "deeply troubled by the politically motivated sentences," adding that the way the proceedings have been conducted was "damaging to the stability that all Egyptians deserve."

There was no indication, however, that the latest judicial atrocity in Egypt would have any more effect on US financing of the Egyptian military regime than previous atrocities. In March of this year, the Obama administration announced that it was lifting a temporary hold on the shipment of military equipment to Egypt and the \$1.3 billion in funding planned for this year.

Al-Sisi has also been feted by the European powers, including an official reception in Berlin earlier this month.



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