Human right groups reveal French complicity in torture in Egypt

Francis Dubois
14 July 2018

Several major corporations and successive governments in France were and are actively participating in the repression of the Egyptian people by the current military dictatorship. They are active accomplices in mass surveillance of the population aiming to identify political opponents to be tortured and disappeared, and in arming the military junta of General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi.

This is the conclusion of a 64-page report titled "Egypt: repression made in France," published on July 2 by a group of human rights organizations including the Human Rights League (LDH). It documents the explosive growth since Sisi's coup in 2013 of the French sales of weapons and mass surveillance material to Egypt, as well as the support of presidents François Hollande and Emmanuel Macron for Sisi.

At the "heart of the repressive machinery" supported by France in Egypt, the report states, is the "omnipresent surveillance of the population." The report points to Egyptian domestic intelligence's systematic acquisition of mass spying equipment and wholesale interception of communications. The regime carries out "massive and constant surveillance of digital activism" and aims to turn "social media into an intelligence asset for the authorities."

This surveillance, made possible by France, produces "systematic and grave violations" of human rights, the report continues: "Human rights violations due to surveillance by Egyptian intelligence of communications and digital activity go from simple arrests to heavy prison terms and include arbitrary detention, forced disappearance, extrajudicial executions, torture leading to death, rape, and the public broadcasting of private conversations."

The report adds that it makes possible "the fabrication of evidence" against people suspected of political dissidence.

The report cites sales by Renault of armored vehicles, by Manurhin of machine tools used in the production of bullets, and by Nexa Technologies of the highly intrusive Cerebro surveillance system, the Cortex database system, and the Morpho/Idemia database that allows for mass collection of individual data.

According to the report, these programs are used to identify any potential opponent or undesirable person and target them for detention, torture or execution. Other material sold includes "crowd control technology," light armored vehicles, Airbus-Thales military satellites and Safran patrol drones.

By furnishing this material, the French state and business community are considerably increasing the Egyptian military junta's repressive capacity and making themselves complicit in its crimes. The exported surveillance material, according to the report, "gives the [security] services greater and more intrusive surveillance and identification capacities than that of the material they previously had, and in particular reinforces their capacity to spy on the population, laying out the structure of a true architecture of state control."

Sisi took power in July 2013 after a bloody military coup that toppled the Islamist government of Mohamed Mursi, but was above all aimed at the working class, which in 2011 had mobilized in a revolutionary struggle that overthrew the hated dictator Hosni Mubarak. Sisi's counterrevolutionary operation was backed by the pseudo-left Revolutionary Socialists group and its international affiliates, like the International Socialist Organization in the United States.

The report accuses the French state and the Hollande and Macron administrations of having made a "political

© World Socialist Web Site

choice” to sell Sisi equipment specifically designed to repress social movements.

It describes a regime of state terror imposed on Egyptians by laws banning all opposition to the regime, forced disappearances, arrests, mass arbitrary incarceration, “torture … and other harmful treatment inflicted by security forces” and police in “police stations and detention centers.”

“The use of lethal weapons and assault weapons to disperse protests has significantly increased,” the report adds.

Extrajudicial executions have increased the toll from the already massive resort to the death penalty. The report estimates at 60,000 the number of political prisoners and mentions “2,811 cases of forced disappearances by the security services” between July 2013 and June 2016. It says this practice has “become a modus operandi of the Egyptian security forces.”

The report stresses the criminal character of French supplies to the Sisi regime and the systematic violation of French and European law that is involved. The French authorities, it states, have “chosen not to respect European Union decisions on weapons exports to Egypt, including by overstepping the European Union’s decision … on 21 August 2013 to ‘suspend all export licenses towards Egypt of equipment that could be used for internal repression.’”

In December 2017, the crimes against humanity section of the Paris prosecutor’s office opened an investigation into Nexa Technologies for “complicity in torture and forced disappearances in Egypt.”

The report partially illuminates the links between the Macron government and the Sisi regime. It identifies former Hollande defense minister, and Macron foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian as the main conduit for collaboration with Sisi. It reports that it is under his influence that military supplies and contracts with Egypt “exploded” starting in 2013. These contracts “mark the beginning of uninterrupted political support of the French government to the new Egyptian military regime,” the report notes.

Sisi officially decorated Jean-Yves Le Drian in February 2017.

Macron received Sisi for a lavish visit in October 2017. He refused to publicly mention the crimes of the Egyptian regime, insisting that he “had no lessons to give” to Sisi.

The activities of the Macron government exposed by this report constitute a warning to workers across Europe. The French state and business community, under the political oversight of the social democrats, Macron and their allies, are descending into the worst political criminality.

France is testing in Egypt a technical apparatus for surveillance and repression that the Nazi Gestapo would have envied.

The EU, with Germany and France in the lead, is planning the systematic construction of detention camps on European soil, supposedly destined for refugees, but ready to be employed against the massive opposition to austerity and militarism that is growing among European workers and youth.

These developments call for stepped-up opposition to police state measures by workers in France, Egypt and internationally.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site