

French President Macron visits the hangman of Cairo

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President Emmanuel Macron's trip to Cairo on Sunday for talks with Egypt's bloodstained military dictator General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was a barely veiled threat, tacitly endorsed by governments around the world, against the working class.

For eleven weeks, hundreds of thousands of "yellow vest" protesters in France have marched every weekend to demand higher living standards, tax increases for the wealthy, and an end to repression and militarism. But the financial aristocracy will make no concessions to workers' social and political demands. Rather, it is preparing a drastic intensification of repression of social protest amid a universal turn of the capitalist class around the world towards authoritarian forms of rule.

The meaning of Macron's visit to Sisi is unmistakable. Sisi is infamous for his resort to mass murder to drown in blood revolutionary struggles of the working class that erupted in Egypt in 2011. During the 2013 coup against Islamist President Mohamed Mursi, his troops shot thousands in broad daylight on the streets of Egypt's cities. Since then, more than 60,000 people have been jailed, as the Sisi junta carries out mass show trials of its opponents and resorts to systematic torture, documented by human rights groups, of thousands of political prisoners.

Macron's claim Sunday night that he is visiting the hangman of Cairo so that he can "speak more openly" about "human rights" is ludicrous. Sisi banned the sale of yellow vests in Egypt last year for fear that mass protests would spread from France to Egypt. Macron's meeting with Sisi doubtless concentrated on a feverish discussion of repression.

Faced with a parasitic financial oligarchy that cannot and will not make concessions, the working class faces a political struggle that can have one of only two

outcomes: revolution or counterrevolution.

In Cairo, Macron made clear France would continue arming Sisi to the teeth against the Egyptian workers. French sales of Rafale fighters and other military hardware to Sisi are to continue despite Macron's mealy-mouthed comments on human rights. "I would differentiate between the two subjects," he said. "They are not linked for us and they never were."

Asked about Amnesty International's report that French armored vehicles were used in the 2013 repression in Egypt, Macron said France "foresaw they would be used for military purposes." He claimed that there is "no possible ambiguity" in French weapons sales, that they are intended for the "defense of Egyptian territory against external enemies," not against the Egyptian people.

Who does Macron think he is kidding? French armored vehicles serve to repress the workers not only in Egypt, but also in France—since Macron took the hitherto unprecedented step of deploying armored vehicles against the "yellow vests." As Macron escalates repression in France and showers Cairo with weaponry, Sisi can take Macron's toothless remarks as a green light to use French arms for further crackdowns in Egypt.

The authoritarian regimes and police-state policies of the capitalist class are now facing a challenge from the working class. After over a quarter century of imperialist war in the Middle East since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, and a decade of European Union (EU) austerity after the 2008 crash, the mechanisms used to suppress the class struggle are collapsing. A global upsurge of the class struggle, of which the 2011 uprising in Egypt was a forerunner, is underway.

The beginning of 2019 has seen a wildcat rebellion

by 70,000 autoworkers in Matamoros, Mexico, the largest strike on the North American continent in 20 years, as well as strikes and anti-austerity protests across Europe, and continued mass “yellow vest” demonstrations in France.

On January 14, after nationwide demonstrations in December, a general strike of 700,000 public sector workers in Tunisia brought the country to a standstill, as tens of thousands in Tunis chanted, “The people want the fall of the regime.” Last week, Sisi met with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, whose government has arrested hundreds and killed dozens since protests began last month over the rising cost of bread and other basic commodities.

As masses of workers and youth internationally enter into struggle, it is critical to draw the lessons of Macron’s trip to Cairo. Macron’s hailing last year of French fascist dictator Philippe Pétain, or German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer’s endorsement of neo-Nazi riots in German cities, are not isolated accidents. Faced with a challenge from below, the ruling class will seek to use the most ruthless methods.

The French ruling elite’s response to the “yellow vest” protests has been to launch mass arrests and repression on a scale unseen in metropolitan France since the Nazi Occupation. Over 5,000 protesters have been arrested, including more than 1,700 on a single day on December 8. At least four protesters have had their hands blown off by police stun grenades, another 20 have lost eyes from police bean-bag bullets, and one person has been permanently deafened.

Photos have emerged showing riot police in Paris carrying Heckler & Koch G36 assault rifles loaded with live ammunition, and a furious debate is ongoing in the French ruling class about attempting to implement the repressive policies pioneered by Sisi in Egypt against the “yellow vests.”

On January 7, Luc Ferry, a former education minister and self-proclaimed “philosopher,” lashed out on radio against the “yellow vests,” demanding that the military fire live ammunition at them: “We have the fourth largest army in the world, and it is able to put an end to these c—ts,” he said. “These kinds of thugs ... from the extreme right, the extreme left and from the housing estates that come to hit the police—enough!”

This statement sums up the sentiments prevailing not just in the ruling classes of France, but of the whole

world, who see the turn to dictatorship and repression as the only means to prop up the increasingly hated capitalist system.

The most basic needs of the working class today, including the defense of the most fundamental democratic rights, cannot be met outside of a frontal assault on the fortunes and prerogatives of the capitalist class—a struggle of the international working class for the expropriation of the ruling class and the building of socialism.



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