

Former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi dies during show trial

Alex Lantier**17 June 2019**

Yesterday, Egypt's former Islamist president, Mohamed Morsi, collapsed inside a glass cage while on trial on espionage charges and died shortly thereafter in hospital, of a heart attack. A member of Egypt's now-banned Muslim Brotherhood (MB), Morsi was 67.

Egyptian Attorney-General Nabil Sadiq issued a statement, declaring: "The accused, Mohammed Morsi, in the presence of the other defendants inside the cage, fell unconscious, where he was immediately transferred to the hospital. The preliminary medical report stated that by external medical examination they found no pulse, no breathing, and his eyes were unresponsive to light. He died at 4:50 p.m., and no apparent injuries to the body were found."

The Egyptian army and Interior Ministry have reportedly placed their forces on high alert, fearing protests or riots by MB members or supporters.

Mursi's death was a cold-blooded act of state murder for which the Egyptian military dictatorship of General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Washington and its European imperialist allies are politically responsible. For six years after toppling him in 2013 in a bloody coup, the Sisi junta relentlessly prosecuted him on a series of concocted charges, sentencing him to death and multiple prison terms. All throughout, Sisi had close relations with US and European heads of state, who saw his regime as an indispensable instrument to suppress revolutionary struggles of the Egyptian working class.

While Mursi was in prison, the Sisi junta prevented him from taking his medicine even though he suffered from diabetes, high blood pressure and liver disease. It kept him in solitary confinement for 23 hours a day, limited visits from his family, and served him rotten food.

Mursi's family and human rights groups repeatedly

issued statements warning that the conditions of his imprisonment threatened his life. His family told the *New York Times* in 2016 that they were afraid Mursi might fall into a diabetic coma and Human Rights Watch issued a statement in 2017 warning that the Egyptian regime was denying Mursi vital medical care.

In 2018, the Detention Review Panel, a British-based human rights group, launched an investigation of Mursi's detention commissioned by Mursi's family. It concluded that Mursi's treatment was "cruel, inhuman and degrading" and could "meet the threshold for torture in accordance with Egyptian and international law." By that point, Mursi was periodically falling into diabetic coma, suffering from untreated abscesses in his jaws, neck injuries from sleeping on a cement floor, and losing kidney and liver function due to malnutrition.

Crispin Blunt, a British conservative parliamentarian serving on the Detention Review Panel, issued a statement yesterday on Mursi's death, declaring: "We feared that if Dr. Mursi was not provided with urgent medical assistance, the damage to his health may be permanent and possibly terminal. Sadly, we have been proved right."

Turkey's Islamist President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, and the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, all issued statements of condolences. The Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist organization to which Mursi belonged, issued a statement on its web site yesterday, declaring: "Neither the shock of the news nor the haste in spreading information about the details of his death will change the features of this full-fledged murder." It called upon masses of people to attend Mursi's funeral.

Mursi's son, Abdullah Mohamed Mursi, told Reuters yesterday that Egyptian authorities had denied them the

right to bury Mursi in the family cemetery and had not returned his body to the family.

Mursi was a right-wing figure, who legitimately provoked deep opposition among workers while in office. He won election in 2012 by default, because petty bourgeois parties like the Revolutionary Socialists (RS) had blocked a seizure of power by the working class during the initial revolutionary upsurge in 2011, when millions of protesters battling riot police and a general strike of the Egyptian working class brought down military dictator Hosni Mubarak. As president, Mursi continued Mubarak's austerity and police-state repression and his alignment with US and European imperialism.

But while Mursi's ouster in July 2013 unfolded amid protests by tens of millions of workers against the MB, it was led by the army, acting under political cover provided by the Tamarod ("Rebel") alliance of pro-military parties, backed by the RS. It transferred power to Sisi, who launched a bloody crackdown, shooting thousands of protesters in the streets. This crackdown, which aimed to restore a ferocious military dictatorship, unfolded based on propaganda claiming that the army was repressing Islamist terrorism.

As such, Mursi's trial became the spearhead of attempts by the Egyptian general staff, supported by Washington and the European imperialist powers, to criminalize all opposition to Egypt's military regime and install a regime of police-state terror aimed primarily at the working class.

Mursi was indicted and later condemned to death in 2015 on trumped-up charges of plotting attacks on police to spring MB members from jail just before Mubarak's overthrow. These charges, which criminalized millions of Egyptians who battled riot police in those weeks, sent an unambiguous message: that revolutionary struggle is punishable by death. At the same time, the army issued mass death sentences to hundreds of people in show trials in which the accused had no opportunity to present any defense, and arrested as many as 60,000 people, many of whom were tortured.

Virtually overnight, imperialist politicians in Washington and the European capitals—who had hailed Mursi as Egypt's first "democratically elected" president when they hoped his election would prevent revolutionary struggle by the working class—abandoned

Mursi, leaving him to rot in jail.

Perhaps the most sinister and grotesque comments came from then-European Union foreign policy chief Lady Catherine Ashton, who visited Mursi in prison shortly after the coup, in late July 2013. Affixing the European bourgeoisie's seal of approval on Sisi's coup, Ashton said she and Mursi had had been able "to talk about the situation, and we were able to talk about the need to move forward. The people around him do care for him. I looked at the facilities."

Since then, US administrations both under the Democratic President Barack Obama and Republican President Donald Trump showered the Egyptian army with billions of dollars in aid. Trump, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, then-UK Prime Minister David Cameron, and French President Emmanuel Macron all rolled out the red carpet to Sisi for state visits in their capitals. Macron's predecessor, François Hollande, who like Sisi ruled using a state of emergency to ram through deep social attacks on working people, reportedly considered himself Sisi's friend.

Today, amid mass protests by workers and youth demanding the fall of military regimes in Algeria and neighboring Sudan, as well as rising strikes and protests across the United States and Europe, the imperialist powers rely ever more closely on the hangman of Cairo. This year, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo traveled to Cairo to issue war threats against Iran, while Macron visited Sisi to sell him weapons amid the "yellow vest" protests at home. In March, shortly after Macron's return from Cairo, where Sisi has banned the sale of yellow vests, the French general staff announced that it had authorization to shoot "yellow vest" protesters in the street.

All of these governments are politically implicated in the Sisi regime's horrific abuse of Mursi in prison that led to his death.



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