

Egypt: Army poised to take power

International Secretariat, League for the Fifth International Tue, 02/07/2013 - 05:57

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As millions take to the streets in towns and cities across Egypt, the government of Mohammed Morsi faces imminent collapse. But his overthrow, which has already cost the lives of 16 demonstrators, will not automatically mean a victory for the mass of Egypt's workers and peasants, as the experience of the mass mobilisations over the past two and a half years has repeatedly shown.

Although the weekend's demonstrations were called by 'Tamarod' (Rebel), the campaign for early elections launched in April by leaders of the April 26th Youth Movement and the National Salvation Front led by Mohamed al-Baradei, they were prompted by an ultimatum from the Army which had given Morsi a week to comply with 'the demands of the people'. Now, the chief of staff, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, has called for Morsi to respond to the wishes of the people within the next 24 hours, that is, effectively to go before he is removed.

The great danger now is that he will be replaced, if not by a direct military government, which would be unlikely, then by a government of civilians and 'liberals' selected by the Army and dependent on it. This would mark the culmination of the high command's strategy for restoring their power after it was forced to accept the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak and then forced to make way for civilian rule. No doubt, this has been coordinated with Washington, anxious to restore a military dominated regime, albeit with a facade of a civilian, even 'liberal' government, as a reliable agent of its policy.

The only forces that can stop this are the masses already on the streets. But to secure their victory they need their own organisation and leadership. Already, the independent unions have called for a general strike and this is the key, not only to ensure Morsi's defeat but to prevent the revolution being stolen by the army.

In every town and city, striking workers need to form their own strike committees and democratic councils to spread the strike and take control. To do this, they must organise their pickets as the basis of their own militia. They must disband the armed thugs of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafist organisations and fraternise with the rank and file soldiers of the army. The chain of command of the military forces must be broken by the rank and file soldiers electing their own councils and leaders.

There should be no recognition of any government installed by the Army, the only government the workers and their peasant allies should accept is a revolutionary government based on their own councils. Until then, they should maintain their own organisations and their own mobilisation. A revolutionary Provisional Government would take emergency measures to secure the economic needs of the people: nationalise all banks and finance, expropriate all landlords, recognise workers' control of all industry and means of communication, disband and disarm all the forces of state repression and convene a revolutionary Constituent Assembly based on the workers' and peasants' councils.

The overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, was the signal that spread the revolution across North Africa and the Middle East. Now, the seizure of power by the workers and peasants of Egypt in their own name can inspire a new mobilisation to complete that revolution, removing power from the forces of reaction and opening the way to a Federation of Workers' Republics of the Maghreb and Middle East.

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