

Egypt's Revolutionary Socialists fight back against repression

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In December the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), fresh from unleashing murderous violence against the demonstrators who occupied the street outside the Cabinet Office, near Tahrir Square, moved against a number of liberal and left wing individuals and organizations. They urgently need international solidarity now to halt the witch hunt

In late December Egyptian Security forces raided 17 non-governmental and human rights organizations and accused them of being US agencies paid to undermine the Egyptian state. Cynical rubbish indeed given that the Armed Forces is in receipt of \$1-3 billion a year in US military aid! Naturally this action drew protests from the US State Department and even a threat to cut aid to the military. However attacks on more radical left wing organisations cannot expect to draw protests from Washington.

About the same time the Revolutionary Socialists (RS) ? one of the largest and most dynamic far left organisations ? was subjected to attacks because of video clips of a meeting put up on the Interior Ministry website, in which leading RS members spoke of the need to demolish the existing Egyptian state. Salafist Islamist TV stations took this up and a legal complaint was filed by Gamal Tag el-Din, a leading lawyer in the Muslim Brotherhood.

The RS and its allies on the left (the Revolution Youth Coalition, the National Association for Change and fifteen political parties) issued statements condemning the attacks. The RS itself launched a boldly worded and courageous defence of their words and actions. The RS statement of 21 December was headed ?Yes ... we do want the downfall of the state of tyranny, poverty and dependency?.

It continued:

?Yes, we are seeking to overthrow the state of tyranny and poverty that has ruled us for the last 30 years, and continues to rule us today, the state that has killed thousands of fighters in its prisons, the state which has looted and stolen from the poor to increase the wealth of the rich.

This is the state which backs the bosses in their confrontations with workers. This is the state which refuses to take back the companies it sold off cheaply even though the courts ruled in favour of the workers' campaign to return them to public ownership - demonstrating that for this state the power of capital is more important than the authority of the judiciary.

This is the state which allows the capitalists to sack and starve workers, peasants and the poor in their thousands, but then issues laws making their protests a crime.?

Beyond the secular left the response amongst the rank and file, younger activists of the MB was very positive with many posting criticisms of Tag el-Din on its website and pointing out how the RS had defended MB members from state repression as well as its role in the anti-Mubarak revolution. This hostile response to the attacks soon had both the Brotherhood and its electoral front the Freedom and Justice Party, claiming they did not support the complaint and finally Tag el-Din himself was forced to withdraw it. But the danger has been exposed - the leadership of the MB is largely supportive of the interior ministries witch-hunt and will be willing to co-operate, behind the scenes if necessary, with any persecutions.

On 26 December the Revolutionary Socialists initiated a united campaign by the left for mutual aid against further repression as well as for the maximum mobilisation for the anniversary of revolution.

The RS - via several media interviews with its spokespeople, has used the campaign to make effective propaganda for its radical views on the need for the revolution to go forward, overthrow the military dictatorship and disintegrate the state apparatus of repression.

These attacks will not be the last and there needs to be international support from the left and the workers movement to defend Egyptian Socialists and militant trade unionists from attack, whether it comes from the state or from the MB and the Salafists groups who have won a huge majority in the new parliament and will doubtless use it to crack down on the left. The revolution hangs in the balance, and the fight against inevitable attempts at counter-revolution are an essential component of the struggle for victory.

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