

Renewed mass protests mark anniversary of Egyptian Revolution

By Johannes Stern
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One year after the beginning of the Egyptian Revolution on January 25, millions of workers and youth took to the streets and squares all over Egypt to protest the-US backed military junta in Egypt. They demanded the ouster of General Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, the successor of ousted President Hosni Mubarak and leader of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), and the fall of the regime.

Like one year ago, several demonstrations from different neighborhoods of the capital headed towards Tahrir Square, whose entrances were secured by popular committees. Security forces and the military were absent from the square throughout the day. Despite heavy rain in Cairo, by early morning tens of thousands of protesters had already gathered in the square, shouting “Down, down with military rule”, “The people want to bring down the regime,” and “Revolution, revolution until victory, revolution in all Egyptian streets.”

Other chants were directed against the “killers of the slain protesters” and the stage-managed trial of Hosni Mubarak and his two sons. In the middle of the square a huge poster showed pictures of Mubarak, the former interior minister, Habib El-Adly, and Tantawi with ropes around their necks.

In Giza Square thousands gathered for a demonstration towards Tahrir chanting against the military, for a continuation of the revolution and for, “Bread, freedom and human dignity.” Chants were also directed against the United States and Israel.

Other mass demonstrations started from Mohandeseen, Heliopolis, Nasr City and the working class Shubra neighborhood, where people chanted: “Shubra people, let us go again and seize our victory.” Amal Mahmoud, a protester on the Shubra march, told the *Egyptian Independent*: “We are here to continue the

revolution. Nothing has been achieved, the SCAF is inducing corruption in the country, and we're here to get the rights of the martyrs, the injured and all Egyptians.”

Students marched in over 10,000-strong anti-military demonstrations from Ain Shams, Ghamra and Cairo Universities towards Tahrir Square. The marchers from Cairo University carried coffins with the names of the martyrs killed throughout the last year by security forces, shouting: “We are not here to celebrate. We are here to get the martyrs’ rights.” In the afternoon the square was completely filled with protesters, as were surrounding streets and squares in downtown Cairo. According to observers, the numbers of protesters were as large as one year ago.

Mass protests against the military junta were also staged in other Egyptian cities and governorates. In the port city of Suez, another centre of the revolution from the start, tens of thousands gathered in Arbaeen Square and later marched through the city, chanting “The people want the fall of the regime.”

In Alexandria half a million protesters participated in a march to the North Military Zone. A group of Salafists—an Islamist tendency notorious for its counter-revolutionary and anti-working class politics—was reportedly kicked out of the demonstration.

In Mahalla al-Kubra, a city with a long history of militant working class struggles, thousands took to the streets. Other protests took place in all other major Egyptian cities—Ismailiya, Luxor, Aswan, Fayoum, Qena and Port Said.

The British *Guardian* described the character of the protests as follows: “Outside of Tahrir Square, from every corner of the city, including Giza where I am walking at the moment, there are possibly hundreds of

thousands of people ... for them this isn't about celebration ... this [is] about fighting to complete the revolution and bring down the military government. [There is] a very angry mood and a very confident one.”

The determination amongst workers and youth that the regime has to be brought down through continued revolutionary struggle is a rejection of the so-called “democratic transition” organized by the military junta, its backers in the US government, and the Egyptian political establishment. It is an expression of the ever-widening class gulf between all the official political groups and parties and the revolutionary Egyptian workers and youth.

The political movements that called for the protests or participated in them—various youth coalitions, the April 6 Youth Movement, Kefaya, supporters of the liberal politician Mohamed ElBaradei, and petty-bourgeois “left” groups such as the Revolutionary Socialists (RS)—initially supported the junta. They claimed that it was the “protector of the nation” (in the words of ElBaradei), or that it could be pressured for more social and democratic reforms (the position of the RS).

After one year of bitter revolutionary struggles between the junta and the working class, these lies are exposed; the political establishment is now desperately trying to cover up its initial support for the junta and prevent the outbreak of renewed revolutionary struggles.

On the one hand, millions of protesters, driven by worsening social conditions and demands for social equality and genuine democracy, are renewing their calls for the downfall of the regime and demanding a “true second revolution.” On the other hand, the existing political parties are working to prepare the next trap for revolutionary workers and youth. The latest is a call for a handover of power to a civilian regime based on the parliamentary election recently held under martial law.

A handover of power to the Islamists, who dominate the parliament, would have nothing progressive or democratic about it. The Islamists were able to win the elections—marked by low voter turnout after a week of violent confrontations between the junta and protesters—because of the support they received from the petty-bourgeois “left,” the Egyptian financial elite

and their new patrons in the US and the Gulf monarchies. During the course of the revolution, the Islamists played a counterrevolutionary role from the start; they opposed the protests on January 25 one year ago and have been open supporters of the military junta since it took power.

Recently, Islamist officials declared that they would not touch the “special position” of the army and would work closely with US imperialism and international finance capital. Two weeks ago, Mohamed Morsi, the leader of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, met US Deputy Secretary of State William Burns and said that the FJP “believes in the importance of US-Egyptian relations.” Only some days later the FJP declared its support for a \$3.2 billion loan offered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Despite the deeply counterrevolutionary outlook of the Islamists, middle-class groups like the April 6 Youth Movement and the RS are determined to orient the mass protests to these right-wing forces. On Monday, after the opening session of the parliament, the April 6 group sent a message of congratulation to the parliament, asking it to “fulfill the demands of the revolution.”

On January 24 the RS published a speech by one of its leading members, Sameh Naguib, a lecturer at the American University in Cairo, demanding that the masses put the parliament “under siege [...] to push for demands.”

The renewed mass protests and the experiences of the past year of the Egyptian Revolution show that Egyptian workers and youth can achieve their revolutionary aspirations only through a struggle for power independent of the Egyptian bourgeoisie and their middle class appendages. To push the revolution forward, the Egyptian working class has to bring down the junta and replace it with a workers' state fighting for socialist politics in Egypt, the whole Middle East and internationally.

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