

Stop Egypt's Pinochet from murdering 529 Muslim Brotherhood prisoners!

26 March 2014

Monday's death sentence handed down by a kangaroo court in Egypt to 529 supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) marks a new stage in the military junta's brutal efforts to terrorize and intimidate popular opposition.

The trial in the southern city of Minya was a travesty. Most of the accused were not present. The judge, a bloodthirsty lackey of the military, screamed insults at the few defendants who were allowed in the courtroom. Defense lawyers were barred from the court. The filthy proceedings lasted less than two days, and ended with more than 500 defendants being condemned to the gallows for the killing of one policeman.

The trial was staged for the sole purpose of providing a pseudo-legal cover for the state murder of supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, the main political opposition to the military dictatorship.

With consummate cynicism, the United States and the European Union combined a perfunctory criticism of the death sentences with a declaration of support for the regime of mass murderers. Their "deep concern" and "shock" would not be permitted to undermine the "important relationship" with the junta. The European Union described "the death penalty" as "cruel and inhuman", called upon "the Egyptian interim authorities" to apply "international standards" and stressed: "This is particularly important for the credibility of Egypt's transition towards democracy."

The junta has murdered thousands and is about to hang hundreds of its opponents, and the European Union has the gall to still talk about Egypt's "transition towards democracy."

Not wishing to be outdone, the US State Department, in a declaration that might have been penned by a master of black comedy, called upon "all parties and groups in Egypt to make sure that as their democratic transition moves forward, it's done so in an inclusive

manner." The 529 condemned must await further instructions from Secretary of State John Kerry as to how they should "move forward" to democracy as they stand on the gallows with their hands tied and ropes around their necks.

The military would not have dared hand down the death sentences were it not confident that it is acting with the support of the Obama administration. Field Marshall Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi is nothing other than a modern Egyptian version of the late Chilean dictator, General Augusto Pinochet. Like the former Chilean dictator, al-Sisi came to power in a US-backed military coup and has the support of the imperialist powers in erecting a fascistic military dictatorship and declaring war against the working class.

Following the US-backed 1973 coup against the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende, Pinochet—with the help of death squads, concentration camps and torture chambers—turned Chile into a bloody playground for international finance capital. Supported by the CIA and various US governments, Pinochet's junta carried out killings and disappearances of political opponents, pushed through low wages and high interest rates and exploited a workforce at gun-point to generate maximum profits for a tiny ruling elite.

As in Chile, the Egyptian junta's barbaric methods serve the interests of its imperialist patrons. The US and European governments supported the July 3, 2013 military coup and the junta's subsequent repression of countless sit-ins, demonstrations and strikes. Since the coup—carried out amidst mass protests against Muslim Brotherhood President Mohamed Mursi—the junta has banned the MB, killed and jailed thousands of its supporters, issued an anti-protest law and enshrined its privileges in a new constitution.

With the backing of Washington and Brussels, the

Egyptian military junta is seeking to extend its reign of terror to the entire working class and violently crush all strikes and protests at the behest of international finance capital.

This program was clearly spelled out by Egyptian Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour. In a recent Reuters article titled “Egypt investors believe Sisi presidency will bring stability” he is quoted as saying:

“In the West, a candidacy and maybe the election of an army officer or an ex-officer to the presidency of a developing, third world country would raise eyebrows and call to mind the image of a Pinochet rather than a George Washington... a dictator rather than a reformer. [But] this country as it stands today needs a strongman that can pull it together... Law and order is good toward investment and toward the economy.”

International banks and investors have long been calling for Sisi’s installation as president. “I think most investors would say it doesn’t appear all that democratic, but it’s more stable, so my investment will be safer,” said Gabriel Sterne of Exotix, a London-based frontier market bank active in Egypt. A report by Bank of America Merrill Lynch last month described a potential Sisi presidency as “market-friendly in the near term”, and demanded a “crucial” loan from the International Monetary Fund.

Earlier this month, Sisi threatened years of austerity and suffering to the Egyptian working class: “Our economic circumstances, in all sincerity and with all understanding, are very, very difficult... Possibly one or two generations will [have to suffer] so that the remaining generations live.”

The escalation by the junta of its counter-revolutionary attempts to violently crush any opposition to its rule comes amidst growing signs of social conflict and a renewed explosion of working-class struggles. On Monday, Democracy Meter, an Egyptian research center, reported that the number of strikes and protests in Egypt reached 1,044 in February, including doctors, textile workers, public servants, bus drivers and other sections of the working class.

According to media reports, five leaders of the post workers strike in the coastal town of Alexandria were arrested from their homes in dawn raids on Tuesday. On the same day, Sisi praised a newly formed

“anti-terror unit,” threatening that the army is capable of “doing the impossible.” According to the Egyptian Daily *Al-Mary Al-Youm*, he declared that, “maximum effort has to be exerted to confront threats and challenges of the homeland’s national security.”

The death sentences and the junta’s preparations for an ever more direct fascist dictatorship is a warning. It confirms that the ruling elite will stop at nothing and is ready to defend its class interests with the bloodiest measures against any challenge by the working class.

The International Committee of the Fourth International calls on the working class in all parts of the world to come to the defense of the condemned prisoners and the beleaguered Egyptian working class. Protests and demonstrations should be organized denouncing the imperialist-backed junta and demanding the annulment of the death sentences and the release of all the defendants.

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