

Kerry affirms US support for Egyptian junta

By Johannes Stern
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In a show of support for the blood-soaked military regime in Egypt, US Secretary of State John Kerry visited Cairo on Sunday. He met with his counterpart, Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, and Egyptian President and de facto dictator Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Kerry announced that the US had released \$575 million in military aid that had been frozen since the military coup that overthrew Islamist President Mohamed Mursi last July.

As an immediate measure, the US will supply the Egyptian army with ten Apache attack helicopters. “The apaches will come and they will come very, very soon,” Kerry said at a joint press conference with Shoukry.

Washington’s demonstrative show of support for the regime came only one day after an Egyptian court upheld death sentences against 183 supporters and members of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), including its supreme guide, Mohamed Badie. The ruling by the Minya Criminal Court is the largest confirmed mass death sentence in recent history. It was handed down by Judge Said Youssef, who had sentenced to death over 2,000 people in mass trials in April.

Saturday’s hearing bore all the hallmarks of a show trial. Youssef arrived in an armored vehicle and was escorted into the courtroom by security officials. The hearing lasted less than 15 minutes. Most of the defendants were condemned in absentia. Seventy five were brought to a nearby prison, but were not allowed to attend the session.

Kerry’s friendly meeting with top representatives of a regime that seeks to drown opposition to its rule in blood exposes the lie that Washington is supporting a “democratic transition” in Egypt. Since mass working class struggles ousted its long-time stooge, President Hosni Mubarak, in February 2011, Washington has been working for the installation of a new US-backed dictatorship comprised of former Mubarak-era generals

and politicians. In the al-Sisi regime, it has realized this goal.

The official press conference revealed that Kerry and Shoukry have been “good friends” dating back to the Mubarak years. Addressing his Egyptian counterpart by his first name, Kerry declared: “I’m delighted to be back in Cairo. And I want to congratulate Sameh on his assuming the role of foreign minister of Egypt. And indeed, we have worked together previously.”

Shoukry was Mubarak’s secretary for information from 1995 to 1999 and served as Egypt’s ambassador to the United States from 2008 to 2012.

Kerry personally thanked coup leader al-Sisi for “a very candid and comprehensive discussion,” vowing “to work together in partnership in order to deal with the challenges that we face.”

Al-Sisi, a US-trained general and head of Mubarak’s military intelligence service, was a member of every government that followed Mubarak’s ouster. He has already proven that he is more than willing to “work together” with his masters in the White House and “deal with challenges.”

Al-Sisi led the US-backed coup against Mursi last July, following an explosion of mass protests against the Islamist president, whom Washington had previously supported. Since the coup, al-Sisi has overseen massacres and large-scale repression.

Under his leadership, the junta has violently dispersed sit-ins, demonstrations and strikes, killing at least 1,400 people and jailing more than 16,000. It has banned the MB and imposed an anti-protest law, while enshrining military rule in the constitution. Earlier this month, al-Sisi was installed as president following fraudulent elections, which Kerry described as “historic.”

With consummate cynicism, Kerry sought to combine Washington’s backing of al-Sisi and his junta with hypocritical phrases about “democracy” and

“human rights.” He declared: “I emphasized also our strong support for upholding the universal rights and freedoms of all Egyptians, including freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. We also discussed the essential role of a vibrant civil society, a free press, and rule of law, and due process in a democracy.”

Kerry knows precisely the “freedom” and “democratic rights” the junta is granting the Egyptian people. They are the “freedom” to be murdered and the “right” to be jailed and tortured for expressing political views opposed by the regime.

On Saturday, the British *Guardian* published an article about the hidden Azouli military prison in Ismailiya that gives a shocking picture of the military’s reign of terror. The *Guardian* reports: “Prisoners at Azouli are routinely electrocuted, beaten and hanged naked by their tied wrists for hours until they either give up specific information, memorise confessions, or until—in the case of a small group of released former inmates—they are deemed of no further use to their interrogators.”

According to Mohamed Elmessiry, an Egyptian researcher for Amnesty International, “many of those at Azouli are arrested randomly or with very little evidence, and then the intelligence services use torture to find out whether they are actually involved in violence.”

Khaled, a young activist, says that that he was tortured by soldiers and military police for several hours even before being driven to Azouli. “They used up two electric-shock machines,” said Khaled. “They brought a towel and put water on it and put it on my face to stop me breathing. The military policemen kept beating me. After four hours my clothes were ripped apart. My face was swollen. My eyes were closed. I got a wound in my jaw deep enough for a soldier to put his finger inside it.”

The brutal methods of the US-sponsored Egyptian military reflect the outlook of the American ruling class, which is determined to use any means necessary to defend its interests in the region. Kerry left no doubt that Egypt must continue to be the cornerstone of US imperialism’s counterrevolutionary efforts.

“I came here today to reaffirm the strength of the important partnership, the historic partnership between the United States and Egypt, and also to consult on the

critical situations that we face in the region—obviously, particularly Iraq, Syria and Libya,” Kerry said.

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