

The Egyptian masses rise up again to complete their revolution!

Testimony from an Egyptian anarchist

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Hundreds of thousands of Egyptian people are fighting all over Egypt against the repressive apparatus of the military junta. This is a genuine rebellion of the bulk of the oppressed and not a clash between the Islamists and the army, as portrayed by some mainstream media. Anarkismo.net managed to talk to an anarchist-communist from Egypt, Yasser Abdullah, member of the Egyptian Libertarian Socialist Movement, who gave us his testimony of the complex struggle ahead and the potential for a complete revolution of the masses.

Since the fall of Mubarak in February, Egypt has been run by a military junta — the SCAF — which has left the basic structures of the dictatorship untouched. Protests and strikes have been met with extraordinary violence, unions have faced draconian laws to make any action impossible, torture has been widely practised and there has been selective repression against revolutionary militants in the social movements. 12,000 people have faced military courts during this counter-revolutionary crackdown against the living forces and demands that mobilised the Egyptian people on the 25th January unfinished revolution. All of this is happening while they have been stimulating sectarian conflict between Christians and Muslims in order to divert attention from the real problems of the Egyptian people. On Friday, the masses took over Tahrir again, demanding that the SCAF step down, in the middle of exceptional measures being decreed to reinforce its powers. The whole political spectrum, but significantly the Muslim Brothers (who have been very quiet since they have a number of secret agreements with the SCAF) came out that day because elections are programmed for November 28th and they fear that whatever the result, the real power will be hijacked by “Field Marshal” Tantawi, head of the SCAF. The SCAF, indeed, has passed a decree giving the military a veto over the Constitution to be drafted by the new parliament due to be elected in a week.

This Friday’s protest got all the international media talking about clashes between the Muslim Brothers and the SCAF. But the actual clashes started on Saturday, when a group of 200 diehard Tahrir revolutionaries were brutally attacked by the police. That was the spark that ignited these protests that have seen hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people, take over the streets again.

These current clashes have nothing to do with political Islam, which again — as on 25th January — has not been a main actor in the protest. This is a protest led by the same people that led the January revolution, who now realize the real counter-revolutionary nature of the army, poorly disguised in a “nationalist” aura.

At this very minute, there is street fighting in all of the major cities of Egypt, particularly in Cairo, Port Said, Alexandria and Suez. In Southern Egypt there are numerous demonstrations, and clashes with the repressive apparatus of the SCAF have also been reported. Police stations have been attacked and barricades have been built on most important roads and streets. The repression has been fierce: at least 6 people have died so far and over 1,000 have been seriously injured by the military and the hated Central Security Forces, the backbone of Mubarak’s repressive forces. Protesters at Tahrir were evicted some hours ago with gruesome force, with the use of armoured vehicles, suffocating gas (kindly provided to the SCAF by Obama) and rounds of rubber bullets and live ammunition — in scenes reminiscent of the Maspero Street massacre in October (See anarkismo.net). At this minute (11.30 pm), the protesters have managed to recover Tahrir once again for the people and for the revolution. The rallying cry of the people is “down with the SCAF, down with Tantawi”.

At 12pm we had the chance to talk with comrade Yasser Abdullah from the Egyptian Libertarian Socialist Movement, who explained to us what is happening in Cairo. His first-hand testimony of the events in Cairo is living proof that the revolutionary spirit is alive and well and that the coming days will be crucial for the Arab revolts. All forms of solidarity are needed for our libertarian comrades moving forward with the Egyptian people towards liberation.

1. What has been happening in Tahrir Square over the last couple of days? Who is protesting and what is the cause of the struggle?

A few days before Friday (18th November), a number of relatives of victims and martyrs of the Revolution started a sit-in in Tahrir demanding their rights. For ten months now, since Mubarak stepped down, none of those accused of killing and shooting people during the uprising have been sent to jail. Also, last July the SCAF (ie., the military junta) created a fund of 200 million Egyptian Pounds (about €25 million) called “the Fund for the Revolution’s Casualties and Martyrs” in order to compensate them and their families, but this was nothing but propaganda: the SCAF and Sharaf’s Government gave some of the victims jobs as garbage collectors, literally speaking, so the victims felt humiliated, that insult had been added to injury, so they started a sit-in for a respectable solution. On Friday, a “Million People” march was also planned, calling for an end to military rule and the interim civil authority before April 2012. After the march, the sit-in continued, and another march broke, called by the Islamist parties — who are against the sit-in and are trying to do their best in order to win the next elections, scheduled for November 28th.

So the sit-in was left alone with just a few dozen people; on Saturday 19th, at 11.00 am the Central Security Forces (CS, civil police) started an attack on the sit-in. There were around 200 protesters, who fought back against the CS. After that, the CS started to use tear gas and drove their armoured car into the protestors, running some over. Then some other protesters joined them to defend Tahrir square, and that’s how it all began. The CS attacked Tahrir, we fought them back, they took Tahrir for only half an hour, then we reclaimed it back and are occupying it — now, November 20th at 12.00 pm, there are ongoing clashes between protesters against both CS forces and Military police disguised as civil police.

2. *The Muslim Brothers until recently had been allied with the transition authorities... Why are they now clashing with the police as reported by the international media?*

After the referendum for the Constitutional Amendment on March 19th, the Muslim Brotherhood and all other Islamist forces, mainly the Salafis, allied themselves with the SCAF. On March 20th, a Salafi sheikh stated that the ballot box said “yes to Islam”... They did not see the referendum as being merely about amendments, but actually about Islam, whose spirit they saw reflected in people’s opinions as they voted. They claimed that most voters were for them because they represented Islam, and acted as if it were a referendum on them. From March onwards, the Islamists stood against any direct action against the SCAF, as they thought they would get into power at the next elections, so they had to compromise with the military junta... But now they feel that the SCAF has bluffed them, using their influence only to consolidate their own power. Actually, the junta and the Islamists are quarrelling brothers, they can shout in each other’s faces but they will not really fight. The ongoing clashes have nothing to do with the Muslim Brotherhood or any other Islamist party, or even any other party whatever its denomination. The majority of parties now are aiming at parliament not at revolution. Only one leftist coalition has announced they’re thinking of boycotting the next elections — all the other parties are putting all of their main attention on the next elections and they have not joined the Tahrir occupation. Only the main revolutionary forces and the unorganised youth who are ready to fight back for their rights are in Tahrir now, in defence of the revolution. The political parties are all looking for compromise with the junta, trying to win the next elections, to take power by an agreement with the SCAF... So to say that the ongoing clashes are by the Muslim Brotherhood or any other organised political force is nothing more than a big lie circulated by the mainstream media.

3. *Is there any potential for the popular movement in these protests? Do you think the military will consolidate its power or that there will be a renewed revolutionary wave?*

The potential for the popular movement now is very high... On November 19th I felt as if we had been taken back to January 25th. The main chants now are “Down with military rule” and “People demand the removal of the regime”. There have also been clashes in Alexandria and Suez. The casualties up to now (12 pm) are 1 dead in Cairo and 2 dead in Alexandria... Today there are plans for a day of action against the SCAF all over Egypt. This action is not being planned by any of the political parties, a positive thing, for after ten months of revolution the people now realize that their power lies in a leaderless, collective movement. They’re realising now that all the political parties are traitors, trying only to gain seats in parliament. I don’t think the junta can consolidate its power... They’re now in big trouble. On the one hand, their allies are demanding that they transfer their authority after the elections, and on the other hand, the protesters are in revolt on the streets, seeking to continue the revolution. I think the next few days will be a witness to all forms of action against the SCAF.

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