

Egypt: The Workers, Middle Class, Military Junta and Permanent Revolution

Tuesday 15 February 2011, by [EL-HAMALAWY Hossam](#) (Date first published: 12 February 2011).

Since yesterday, and actually earlier, middle class activists have been urging Egyptians to suspend the protests and return to work, in the name of patriotism, singing some of the most ridiculous lullabies about “let’s build new Egypt,” “Le’ts work harder than even before,” ect . . . In case you didn’t know, actually Egyptians are among the hardest working people around the globe already [1].

Those activists want us to trust Mubarak’s generals with the transition to democracy—the same junta that has provided the backbone of his dictatorship over the past 30 years. And while I believe the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, who receive \$1.3 billion annually from the US, will eventually engineer the transition to a “civilian” government, I have no doubt it will be a government that will guarantee the continuation of a system that will never touch the army’s privileges, keep the armed forces as the institution that will have the final say in politics (like for example Turkey), guarantee Egypt will continue to follow the US foreign policy whether it’s the undesired peace with Apartheid State of Israel, safe passage for the US navy in the Suez Canal, the continuation of the Gaza siege and exports of natural gas to Israel at subsidized rates. The “civilian” government is not about cabinet members who do not wear military uniforms. A civilian government means a government that fully represents the Egyptian people’s demands and desires without any intervention from the brass. And I see this hard to be accomplished or allowed by the junta.

The military has been the ruling institution in this country since 1952. Its leaders are part of the establishment. And while the young officers and soldiers are our allies, we cannot for one second lend our trust and confidence to the generals. Moreover, those army leaders need to be investigated. I want to know more about their involvement in the business sector.

All classes in Egypt took part in the uprising. In Tahrir Square you found sons and daughters of the Egyptian elite, together with the workers, middle class citizens, and the urban poor. Mubarak has managed to alienate all social classes in society including wide section of the bourgeoisie. But remember that it’s only when the mass strikes started three days ago that’s when the regime started crumbling and the army had to force Mubarak to resign because the system was about to collapse.

Some have been surprised that the workers started striking. I really don’t know what to say. This is completely idiotic. The workers have been staging the longest and most sustained strike wave in Egypt’s history since 1946, triggered by the Mahalla strike in December 2006. It’s not the workers’ fault that you were not paying attention to their news. Every single day over the past three years there was a strike in some factory whether it’s in Cairo or the provinces [2]. These strikes were not just economic, they were also political in nature [3].

From day 1 of our uprising, the working class has been taking part in the protests. Who do you think were the protesters in Mahalla, Suez and Kafr el-Dawwar for example? However, the workers were taking part as “demonstrators” and not necessarily as “workers”—meaning, they were not moving independently. The govt had brought the economy to halt, not the protesters by its curfew, shutting down of banks and business. It was a capitalist strike, aiming at terrorizing the Egyptian people. Only when the govt tried to bring the country back to “normal” on Sunday that workers returned to

their factories, discussed the current situation, and started to organize en masse, moving as a block.

The strikes waged by the workers this week were both economic and political fused together. In some of the locations the workers did not list the regime's fall among their demands, but they used the same slogans as those protesting in Tahrir and in many cases, at least those I managed to learn about and I'm sure there are others, the workers put forward a list of political demands in solidarity with the revolution [4].

These workers are not going home anytime soon. They started strikes because they couldn't feed their families anymore. They have been emboldened by Mubarak's overthrowal, and cannot go back to their children and tell them the army has promised to bring them food and their rights in I don't know how many months. Many of the strikers have already started raising additional demands of establishing free trade unions away from the corrupt, state backed Egyptian Federation of Trade Unions.

Today, I've already started receiving news that thousands of Public Transport workers are staging protests in el-Gabal el-Ahmar. The temporary workers at Helwan Steel Mills are also protesting. The Railway technicians continue to bring trains to halt [5]. Thousands of el-Hawamdiya Sugar Factory are protesting and oil workers will start a strike tomorrow over economic demands and also to impeach Minister Sameh Fahmy and halt gas exports to Israel. And more reports are coming from other industrial centers.

At this point, the Tahrir Square occupation is likely to be suspended. But we have to take Tahrir to the factories now. As the revolution proceeds an inevitable class polarization is to happen. We have to be vigilant. We shouldn't stop here... We hold the keys to the liberation of the entire region, not just Egypt... Onwards with a permanent revolution that will empower the people of this country with direct democracy from below...

Hossam El-Hamalawy

#Jan25 Public transportation workers call for overthrowing Mubarak

My sources has just confirmed this now... The Cairo Public Transportation workers, who started a strike today in five Garages: Nasr Station, Fateh Station, Ter'a Station, Amiriya Station, Mezzalat Station, Sawwah Station, have issued a statement with a list of demands, calling for overthrowing Mubarak. No public buses will roam Cairo tomorrow, except those buses that will bring the drivers to the central station in Nasr City's el-Gabal el-Ahmar, where the strikers have announced they will declare an independent union.

The strikers' statement has also called for abolishing the emergency law, removing NDP from the state institutions, dissolving the parliament, drafting new constitution, forming a national unity govt and setting a national minimum wage of LE1200 and prosecuting corrupt officials...

This comes as strikes have spread literally everywhere... It's happening people... It's happening... The working class has entered the arena with full force today. Mubarak's regime's fate will be sealed off SOON!

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<http://www.arabawy.org/2011/02/09/jan25-public-transportation-workers-call-for-overthrowing-muba>

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P.S.

* From Jadaliyya.com:

<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/629/the-workers-middle-class-military-junta-and-the-permanent-revolution>

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.almazryalyoum.com/en/news/who-you-callin'-lazy>

[2] <http://groups.diigo.com/group/egyptianworkers>

[3] http://www.arabawy.org/2010/06/04/politicization_workers/

[4] See below

[5] <http://www.youm7.com//News.asp?NewsID=350453>