

Statement

Women in Arab revolutions: “We affirm our solidarity with women in the revolutionary process”

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This statement on solidarity with women in the revolutionary process in the Arab region was adopted by the annual International Committee (IC) meeting of the Fourth International on the 28th of February, 2012.

1. The movements that swept Ben Ali and Mubarak from power, saw the end of the Gaddafi dictatorship in Libya, have been challenging Assad in Syria for almost a year and have affected the whole of the Arab region are part of a process that has marked a real upheaval in the region. They show the strength of the aspiration of these populations to dignity, democracy and economic and social justice.
2. It is therefore logical that women, who are affected by the economic crisis in specific ways and whose rights in a number of countries in the region are particularly restricted, are present, active in or indeed leading these movements. In a number of countries women have emerged among the leading spokespersons for the movements, in Tunisia, in Egypt, even in Yemen.
3. Women participated from the start in these movements in the ways that seemed to them appropriate in their own societies, and that evolved as the movement developed. In many cases the force of these movements was such as to overcome traditional barriers between men and women, as has been emphasised in relation to Tahrir Square and the equality and freedom from sexual harassment experienced by the women during the large mobilizations leading to Mubarak's downfall.
4. As a result of the traditional place of women in all patriarchal class societies there is a tendency towards exclusion of women from political movements — in particular once the first stage of mass popular mobilisations is passed. This takes specific forms using traditional religious ideology in a context where fundamentalist currents are on the offensive in all religions, and in all those countries where Islamist currents have recently won elections.
5. In these countries, where authoritarian and corrupt regimes have been overthrown by the popular movements, parties presenting themselves as Islamist win mass popular support for different reasons: because they appear to be a new force free of links to the former regime and very critical of corruption, and as victims of the former regime and resistance to it, indeed religious conviction itself can be the motive for resistance. At the same time there is a real lack of any progressive, left, radical

alternative, largely because of the dismantling of all such parties by the repression of the previous regimes.

6. On the basis of their involvement in the general movement, women, believers or not, resist and fight back against specific anti-women attacks, such as the virginity tests in Egypt, inspired by some religious forces present. The protest against sexist attacks on women by the repressive forces led to a major mobilisation and women's march in Egypt.

7. In some countries of the region like Tunisia and Egypt there has historically been the presence of specific feminist currents. They now face the challenge of establishing strong and organic links with the predominantly young women who were in the forefront of the general movement and today are resisting the anti-women attacks.

8. Our task is to participate in building solidarity and links with the women resisting the anti-women attacks and new or already existing feminist currents as well as women active in specific milieus such as the trade union movement, through the appropriate movements and structures in our countries.

9. Through making known as broadly as possible the existence and activity of these groups and movements of women we will both help to strengthen their voice including in their own countries and show that the revolutionary process in the Arab region is indeed an emancipatory process, despite the contradictions that exist. This process should not be deviated by the reactionary use of religion. Solidarity with the region's women and the defence of their rights, especially by feminists of other countries, are very important in this regard.

10. We express our solidarity and support for the women victims of the physical repression, violence and torture from which so many women have suffered and died, notably today in Syria. We affirm our solidarity with the women in the revolutionary process, sharing the common battle against women's oppression.

Fourth International
