

Egypt: “Workers need a political voice”

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I will answer your questions in a personal capacity, rather than officially on behalf of the unions, because whenever there is a split in society, you find a corresponding division within the unions. The majority support the Army’s intervention, and think that it is a victory for the people and an expression of the people’s will.

Workers did participate in the Rebel campaign, and went down into the streets on 30 June and afterwards, but they participated as individuals. There was some organised participation by workers, in the form of statements which national and regional union federations such as the Suez Workers’ Federation and the Port Said Workers’ Federation put out. After the end of 30 June, we saw the beginnings of workers’ participation in an organised way, which could have reached the level of civil disobedience. For example, some council workers did succeed in totally shutting down local government institutions in the provinces in co-operation with the protesters in the streets. This happened in Daqahiliyya and Beheira provinces. I think that the army rushed out a statement on the first day, fearing the radicalisation of this movement, just like when it removed Mubarak.

Workers took part because over the past two and half years their demands have been completely ignored. These were demands which they raised long before the revolution, and dreamed of achieving after the downfall of Mubarak, but that did not happen. Instead the persecution of trade unionists increased, the law on trade union freedoms was not issued, while other laws criminalising protests and strikes were passed. Workers were arrested, their strikes broken up by force, they were sacked and faced other forms of victimisation.

Morsi’s regime and the Military Council practised the same policies against workers and their leaders. I think that the popular movement lacks organisation and a political voice. This situation has allowed the Right, represented by the army, police, the remnants of the old regime, and even the liberals, to ride on the back of the mass movement. I believe that the trade unions must work hard to strengthen their networks while raising the voice of workers and their demands.

What you can do:

* Send messages of solidarity to the Egyptian workers’ movement and independent unions via [menasolidarity gmail.com](mailto:menasolidarity@gmail.com)

* Solidarity signs for photo messages here (Solidarity with the Egyptian Revolution) and here (Solidarity with the independent unions in Egypt).

View online : [MENA Solidarity Network](#)

P.S.

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