

Egypt: “Do not let the army fool you” - independent union leader speaks out

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Statement from Fatma Ramadan, member of the Executive Committee of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions

Al-Sisi’s “Permission” is a Deadly Poison

My comrades, the workers of Egypt are struggling for their rights and for a better Egypt. Egypt’s workers dream of freedom and social justice, they dream of work at a time when thieves who are called businessmen close down factories to pocket billions. Egypt’s workers dream of fair wages under the rule of a governments that are only interested in promoting investment at the expense of workers and their rights, and even their lives. Egypt’s workers dream of a better life for their children. They dream of medicine when they are sick, but they do not find it. They dream of four walls in which they can take shelter.

Since before the 25th of January and you have been demanding your rights, and your strikes and demonstrations for the same unanswered demands continued after Mubarak’s overthrow. Both the Muslim Brotherhood and the military have negotiated left, right and centre, not once having in mind your demands and rights. All they have in mind is how to put out the sparks you have lit with your struggle in times of darkness, even these sparks all burned in isolation from each other.

Did not the military forcibly end your strikes in Suez, Cairo, Fayyoun, and all over Egypt ? Did not the military arrest many of you and subject you to military trials just for practising your right to organize, strike, and protest peacefully? Have they not adamantly worked to criminalize this right through legislation banning all Egyptians from organizing peaceful protests, strikes, and sit-ins?

Then came Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood, who followed in Mubarak’s footsteps with dismissals, arrests, and smashing strikes by force. It was Mursi who sent police dogs against workers at Titan Cement in Alexandria, acting through the Minister of the Interior and his men. The same police and army officers who are right now being carried shoulder-high are killers, the killers of honest, young Egyptians. They are the authorities’ weapon against us all - and always will remain so unless these institutions are cleansed.

The leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood are planning crimes against Egyptian people on a daily basis, which have caused the killing of innocent people, while the army and the police are facing these with brutal violence and murder. But let each of us remember, when do the army and police intervene? They intervene long after clashes have begun and are almost coming to an end, after blood has been spilled. Ask yourselves, why don’t they prevent these crimes committed by the Muslim Brotherhood against the Egyptian people before they start? Ask yourselves, in whose interest is this continuation

of fighting and blood-letting? It is in the interest of both the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood and the military together. Just as the poor are cannon-fodder for wars between states, Egypt's poor, workers and peasants, are fuel for internal war and conflict. Has not the doorman's innocent son been killed in Mokattam, and in Giza as well?

Today, we have been asked to go out and authorize Al-Sisi's killing spree, and we find all three trade union federations in agreement: the government's Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF), the Egyptian Democratic Labour Congress (EDLC), and the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) (of which I am a member of the Executive Committee). I debated with members of the EFITU executive committee in order to convince them not to issue a statement calling on its members and the Egyptian people to go down on Friday, confirming that the army, the police, and the people are one hand as stated in the statement. I was in the minority, winning four other votes versus nine votes, and thus all three trade union federations called for workers to join the protests on the pretext of fighting terrorism.

We are thus faced with jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. The Muslim Brotherhood committed crimes and it must be held accountable and prosecuted for them, just like police and army officers and men of the Mubarak regime must be held accountable and prosecuted for their crimes. Do not be fooled into replacing a religious dictatorship with a military dictatorship.

Workers of Egypt, be aware, for your demands are crystal clear. You want work for you and your children, you want fair pay, laws that protect your rights against the laws that the businessmen of Mubarak have designed to protect their interests against your rights. You want a state which has a real plan for development, opening new factories in order to absorb a growing labour force. You want freedom, freedom of all kinds, freedom to organize, freedom to strike. You want a country where you can live as free citizens without torture or murder. You have to specify what stands between you and these demands. Do not be fooled and let them take you to battles not your own. Do not listen to those who ask of you today and tomorrow to stop pressing for these demands and rights on the pretext of fighting terrorism.

Fatma Ramadan

Member of the Executive Bureau of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions Friday,
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<http://menasolidaritynetwork.com/2013/07/26/egypt-do-not-let-the-army-fool-you-independent-union-leader-speaks-out/>

* Original Arabic here: <http://al-manshour.org/node/4316>

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