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Letter to the Egyptian Black Bloc

from “black bloc anarchists” in the US

CrimethInc.

February 10, 2013

You strike the note—it sounds in us.

It is an honor to address you on account of your courage in the struggle still unfolding in Egypt.

For a decade and a half, we have participated in black bloc actions in the US and elsewhere around the world. Of course, we do not represent anyone or anything; the black bloc is a tactic, not a group—that is what makes it so frightening to our rulers. But on the basis of our experience with this tactic, we would like to share some of our perspectives in hopes of establishing a more explicit intercontinental dialogue.

We have already been in a kind of dialogue with you, exchanging signals of revolt across the ocean. We’ve circulated reports of your struggle here, and now we are seeing photos and videos of our actions appear in youtube collages from Egypt. But we want more dialogue than youtube collages allow. We want to be able to discuss strategy as well as tactics, and goals as well as strategy.

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First and foremost: you are not alone. You are part of a struggle against oppressive power that is taking place all over the world. The same economy that is plundering Egypt wrecks our lives and land here in the US; the same networks of armed force that tear-gas you in Cairo maintain “order” in New York City. If we are to win anything in this struggle, we can only do so internationally.

It is embarrassing that it took us so long to address you in Arabic—that shows how unprepared we are for the opportunities history is offering. But that may change quickly in the coming years. It will have to.

We have gained our experience with black bloc tactics under what you might call adverse conditions—as a small minority acting against a stable power structure, without much support from the rest of society. The black bloc evolved in that context, and it is interesting to see it appear in a situation of more generalized revolt.

Indeed, the longevity of the black bloc surprises everyone; over and over it has been pronounced dead, yet it keeps coming back. This is because, like Anonymous, it expresses the spirit of our times. In an era when tremendous disparities are maintained by surveillance and policing, any meaningful movement is bound to involve anonymity and clashes with the authorities.

The black bloc is important because it gives that anonymity and antagonism a political content: it ties specific struggles against oppression to the possibility of a generalized struggle against all oppressive power. It is a coup to “brand” anonymous collective confrontation with the authorities as *anarchist*—this means that everyone who stands up for himself against the authorities must ask, sooner or later, what his relationship to others’ struggles is.

It is fitting that the black bloc emerged in Egypt on the two-year anniversary of an uprising that only replaced one tyranny with another. The problems caused by capitalism and g