

The Egyptian military council promotes sectarian strife and massacres protestors

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October 13, 2011

Last week, a salafist gang was allowed to burn and loot a church in Aswan province for five hours, together with the houses of some Christians. In response, Christians in Cairo, joined by many Muslims, came out to peacefully stage a vigil outside the State TV. The official response was brutal: armoured trucks ran over people wantonly while live ammunition was shot at protestors.

The military council in Egypt, the SCAF, is more and more isolated from the Egyptian masses each passing day. Once the people chanted in Tahrir square, just before Mubarak's fall, that the Egyptian people and "their" army were one. Now the gulf separating the two of them is becoming clearer: while the people still suffer from inequality, poverty, violence, military courts targeting protestors, emergency laws inherited from the hated dictatorship, the SCAF is making sure that "transition to democracy" is nothing but empty words. They are doing everything in their power to make sure that nothing at all changes. The people may have toppled the commander in chief in February, but all of his repressive apparatus was left intact, and the military's role, headed by general Tantawi, is to make sure that the *status quo* is not challenged. This is transition to democracy as promoted by the USA and the civilian-military elites of Egypt. So the dictator is gone, but everything remains untouched.

But the people are getting more and more exasperated with this course of events. These weeks have seen massive demonstrations and strikes of students in Alexandria, health workers, teachers, transport workers for their most immediate demands, as well as the Tahrir community in their thousands demanding an end to emergency laws, military courts and calling for the SCAF to step down. People are ready to defend their revolution. And the SCAF response has been predictable: repression, violence, lies, deceit, a genuine war of attrition against the people.

Yet in order to show its real face as the continuity of the hated Mubarak regime, they are irresponsibly agitating the ghost of sectarian conflict between Muslims and Christians. They have been doing so since April, stimulating attacks from a mixture of salafists (ultra-conservative Islamists) and *baltagayyah* (thugs hired by the Mubarak regime) against the minority Christian community, as a way to divert attention from the real problems of Egypt and as a way to undermine the necessary unity of the popular block. They hope thus to turn the collective struggle of the Egyptian masses into a cannibalistic war of credos. They let loose their dogs to assault

churches and communities, allow them to operate with complete impunity and then turn a blind eye. This proves as well the underlying alliances between the regime and conservative political islamists who have clearly stood out of the revolution to turn into the defence of the *status quo* – together with the technocrats and the military, the elites of the Muslim Brotherhood are sharing the cake. They have lost the two souls of the revolutionary movement: the youth and the women; they have also lost all progressive elements, and they are left only with the ugly face of conservative salafism. They now denounce the protestors and revolutionaries and are in the same bed with the army, that is, they are united against the revolution, against the people.

Last week, the salafist gang was allowed to burn and loot a church in Aswan province for five hours, together with the houses of some Christians. In response, Christians in Cairo, joined by many Muslims, came out to peacefully stage a vigil outside the State TV in Maspero Street. The official response was brutal: they sent armoured trucks to run over the people wantonly (as shown in video footage) while shooting live ammunition at protestors. Also, the army forcefully shut down TV25 and Al-Hurra because they were showing live footage of the Maspero street riots, which were moving towards Tahrir. At the same time, official TV used sectarian words, calling peaceful protestors “agitators” and asking people to defend their “army” from these “Christian” protestors. Such irresponsible calls were to provide an excuse for the salafist thugs who represented the paramilitary gang of the SCAF, in true Mubarak fashion.

The response of the people, whether Muslim or Christian, was strong and defiant: they bravely fought with stones and petrol bombs the fury of 1,000 soldiers armed to the teeth (plus their salafist thugs). Instead of falling into the trap of letting the conflict slip into a sectarian war, they chanted that the “*Muslims and Christians are one*” and “*Down with the Field Marshal*”, in reference to Tantawi. The Egyptian people have shown they can turn this attempt at sectarian conflict into an open challenge against the military rulers, who resort to desperate tactics to retain their power and fading legitimacy.

The result of yesterday’s (October 9th) fight was terrible: at least 25 human beings were massacred in cold blood by the SCAF, and over 270 were seriously wounded. The clashes continue today out of the hospital where the martyrs were brought. The government has responded by kidnapping and arresting scores of activists and organisers. But the Egyptian people are understanding more clearly by the day that their enemy is not defined by credo. Their enemy is there, the parasitic ruling class who hijacked the people’s revolution and the State that is crushing the free initiative of the masses that had its most inspirational blossom in the people’s committees which flourished in January.

- We stand in solidarity with the victims, showing that each one of their beloved martyrs is one of our own.
- We denounce the irresponsible promotion of sectarian strife by the military authorities.
- We denounce the kidnapping of the revolution by Tantawi gangsters.
- We denounce this terrible massacre which shows the true colours of the SCAF for everyone to see.
- We call for the unity of the Egyptian masses to tear apart the last remnants of the Mubarak regime and thus open the doors to a new life.

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Retrieved on 22nd December 2021 from www.anarkismo.net

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