

Interview with an Egyptian Anarchist Communist

Libertarian Communist Federation

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Can you please tell me your name and what movement you are from?

I'm Nidal Tahrir, from Black Flag, a small group of Anarcho-Communists in Egypt.

The world is watching Egypt, and even moving in solidarity. However, due to the internet being cut, information was difficult to find. Can you tell me about what has happened in Egypt in the past week? What did it look like from your perspective?

The situation in Egypt is so crucial right now. It began with an invitation to the day of rage against the Mubarak regime on January 25th. No-one expected that an invitation to a day of rage from a loose group, a Facebook page, not really organized, called "We are all Khalid Said" (Khalid Said is a young Egyptian who was killed by Mubarak's police in Alexandria last summer), it was that Tuesday that began everything, it was the spark for the whole fire. On Tuesday there were big demonstrations in the streets in every Egyptian town, on Wednesday the massacre began. It began with trying to finish the sit-in in Tahrir Square late on Tuesday night, and continued into the following days, especially in Suez town. Suez has a special value in every Egyptian heart. It was the centre for resistance against the Zionists in 1956 and 1967, in the same district. It fought Sharon's troops back in the Egyptian-Israeli wars. Mubarak's police carried out a massacre - at least 4 people killed, 100 injured, gas bombs, rubber bullets, flame throwers, a strange yellow substance thrown above people, maybe mustard gas. Friday was called the Jumu'ah of Rage - Jumu'ah is Arabic for Friday, it's the national weekend in Egypt, in many Islamic countries also. It's a sacred day in Islam because of the big prayers on this day, called Jumu'ah prayer. It was planned for demonstrations to go on after prayers, at noon, but the police tried to prevent the marches with all of its power and violence. There were many clashes in Cairo, (downtown, in Mattareyah, east of Cairo), all over Egypt, especially in Suez, Alexandria, Mahalla (in the delta, one of the centres of the working class). From noon to sunset, people marched in Cairo to Downtown, for a sit-in in Tahrir, till Mubarak's regime was removed, chanting one slogan: "The people demand the removal of the regime". At sunset, 5pm CLT, Mubarak declared a curfew and brought the army into Egyptian towns. This curfew was followed by a police-planned breakout, letting out the criminals and thugs called Baltagayyah. The police planned a widescale breakout of criminals in many Egyptian prisons to scare people in Egypt. No police, many army troops couldn't control the street, people were scared. It was followed by a news jam on Egyptian

TV channels, radios, newspaper about luddites in many towns, about thieves firing at people. People organized "popular committees" to secure every street. This was welcomed by the regime to make people more scared about instability in the country, but it is also a point we could start from to build workers councils.

As of Wednesday, there are clashes between pro- and anti-Mubarak people. Is that the correct way to describe it? Who are the "Mubarak supporters?" How are these clashes affecting the attitudes of average working-class Egyptians?

It's absolutely wrong to call it clashes between anti- and pro-Mubarak. The pro-Mubarak demonstration consisted mostly of Baltagayyah and secret police, to attack the protesters in Tahrir. It only began after Mubarak's speech yesterday, after Obama's speech too. Personally I think Mubarak feels like a slaughtered ox who is trying to throw his blood over his killers. He feels like Nero and wants to burn Egypt before his removal, trying to make people believe he's a synonym for stability, safety and security. In this way he's really made some progress - a holy national alliance has now been formed against the Tahrirites (Tahrir protesters) and the "Tahrir Commune". Many people, especially the middle class, are saying that the demonstrations must end because Egypt has been burned, famine has begun, but it's not true at all - it's only an exaggeration. Every revolution has its difficulties and Mubarak is using fear and terror to stay longer. Personally, I'm saying that even if the protesters were responsible for this situation, even IF, Mubarak must leave, he MUST go because of his inability to deal with the situation right now.

What do you see happening in the next week? How much is the position taken by the US government affecting the situation there?

Nobody can figure out what will happen tomorrow or next week. Mubarak is a stubborn idiot and the Egyptian media is making the biggest media campaign in its history to detain the protests planned for next Friday, 4th February. There are calls for another million-person march to Tahrir, called the "Jumu'ah of salvation". The position taken by the US government affects us more than the demonstrations. Mubarak is such a traitor, capable of killing the whole people, but he couldn't say no to his masters.

What has the participation of class-struggle anarchists been? Who are their allies?

Anarchism in Egypt is not a big trend. You can find some anarchists but it's not a big trend yet. Anarchists in Egypt have joined both the protests and the popular committees to defend the streets from the thugs. Anarchists in Egypt put some hope in these councils. The anarchists' allies in Egypt are the Marxists, of course. We are not now at a time of ideological debate - the whole left is calling for unity and then argue about anything. The anarchists in Egypt are a part of the Egyptian left.

What forms of solidarity can be built between revolutionaries in Egypt and revolutionaries in the "West"? What can be done immediately and what should we do in the long term?

The most difficult obstacle Egyptian revolutionaries face is the cutting of communications. Western revolutionaries must put pressure on their governments to prevent the Egyptian regime from doing this. That's for now, but no-one can say what will happen in the long term. If the revolution is successful, then Western revolutionaries must build solidarity with their Egyptian comrades against the expected aggression from the USA and Israel. If the revolution is defeated, then it will be a massacre for all Egyptian revolutionaries.

What will the main tasks be, once Mubarak leaves? Has there been much planning about this on the street level? What have anti-capitalist revolutionaries proposed?

The main task now, speaking about the street demands, is new constitution and provisional government, and then new elections. There's much planning about this issue by many political trends here, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. Anti-capitalist revolutionaries are not very numerous in Cairo - the communists, democratic left and Trotskyites are calling for the same demands about the constitution and new elections, but for us as anarchists - anti-capital, anti-State too - we will try to ensure that the committees that have been formed protect and secure the streets, make them stronger and try to turn them into real councils.

What do you want to say to revolutionaries abroad?

Dear Comrades all over the world, we need solidarity, a large solidarity campaign and the Egyptian Revolution will win!

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