

Egypt: Washington Has Finger on the Trigger for More Bloodshed

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Egypt's capital Cairo and other major cities across the country are increasingly looking like battlefields as president Hosni Mubarak tries to tighten his grip on power in the face of nationwide protests calling for his abdication.

Reports of more than 50 civilians killed and more than 1,000 injured over night in police and army violence did not deter ten of thousands of people defying the now nightly curfew and secret arrests. Nor did that deter huge crowds from amassing on central streets of Cairo and Alexandria the following the day, which revealed the charred remains of government buildings, armoured cars and other debris, evidencing fierce clashes between armed forces and demonstrators,

Using a mix of heavy-handed state violence and seeming political concessions, the US-backed Mubarak is assiduously trying to quell widespread anger among Egypt's masses, who are calling for an end to his 30-year-old iron-fisted rule.

In a televised address to the nation, Mubarak announced the sacking of his government cabinet and made vague promises of social reforms to ease the burden of poverty, unemployment and other grievances that are endemic in Africa's and the Arab region's most populous state.

But so far, the mass of demonstrators do not seem to be buying his offer of reform, insisting that Mubarak and his regime must stand down. If anything, his concessions seem to be only emboldening the people who view the manoeuvres akin to a retailer offering belated slashes in sale prices – so that's how much you've been ripping us off up till now.

As Michel Chossudovsky points out, the linchpin in this volatile, potentially explosive situation is the US government (1). Mubarak was brought to power, stayed in power and remains in power thanks only to massive US political, economic and military support. He is powerless without Washington's say-so.

Significantly, within minutes of Mubarak's speech, US president Barack Obama made a televised address reiterating Washington's support for its "important ally" – meaning "faithful servant". Hypocritically, Obama claimed that the US supports the Egyptian people's "universal rights" while flatly ignoring their primary demand for Mubarak to quit.

Obama urged the Egyptian leader to refrain from using state violence to contain the situation that is rocking the country. But such urging rings hollow and cynical, given the latest disclosure by Wikileaks of diplomatic cables between the two countries that confirm

long-held suspicions that Washington is fully aware of Mubarak's atrocious human rights record. Incarceration without trial, extrajudicial killings and torture of Egyptian citizens deemed to be opponents of the regime are "routine and pervasive". But as the Worldwide Socialist Website notes, the US connection to Mubarak's police state goes further than mere awareness. The US is complicit in the state's use of murder and torture of its citizens. (2)

While the Egyptian state was already escalating its use of lethal violence and repression as Obama was speaking, the trigger for more bloodshed is held by Washington. If the protest movement calling for sweeping social and economic reforms goes further and begins to frame its demands in the bigger picture of opposition to US imperialism in their country and across the entire region, then that may be the point at which Washington gives its henchman in Cairo the signal to take the gloves off.

Egypt as with other countries across the Middle East and North Africa is at a critical crossroads. Will the masses be bought off with seeming reforms from their elites and persuasions from Washington (top US official Stephen Hadley is reportedly in talks with opposition groups) – or will they push for revolution? The coming days may see the answer and we will know it if the massive arsenal of US-supplied weapons in that country start blazing.

In this, the US public and across the world has a crucial role. People must see the nefarious role of the US and other Western governments in Egypt and connect the plight of the Egyptian people and others across the region with their own struggle against economic hardship under these same governments.

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NOTES:

(1) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=22993>

(2) <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2011/jan2011/wiki-j29.shtml>

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Finian Cunningham has written extensively on international affairs, with articles published in several languages. Many of his recent articles appear on the renowned Canadian-based news website Globalresearch.ca. He is a Master's graduate in Agricultural Chemistry and worked as a scientific editor for the Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, England, before pursuing a career in journalism. He specialises in Middle East and East Africa issues and has also given several American radio interviews as well as TV interviews on Press TV and Russia Today. Previously, he was based in Bahrain and witnessed the political upheavals in the Persian Gulf kingdom during 2011 as well as the subsequent Saudi-led brutal crackdown against pro-democracy protests.

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