

“Silence is Complacency”: Against the Coup in Egypt

A return to the Mubarak Regime.

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The following article is based on a speech given by Roger Annis to a rally in Vancouver on August 17 that was convened by Egyptian-Canadians in the city to condemn the coup d'état in Egypt of July 3 and the police and military violence that has continued in the country.

The original speech has been slightly edited to include several additional points.

Friends, I am here today to express our shock, anger and outrage at the violence of the military regime that took power in Egypt last month in an illegal and unconstitutional coup d'état. We express our solidarity with the brave and courageous people across Egypt who are standing up to this regime and its bullets. We join them in calling for a return to constitutional rule.

We demand that the governments in Canada, United States and Europe cease their complicity with the criminal, military regime and its July 3 coup d'état. They must scrap all military assistance to the Egyptian military. They must condemn the coup and they must support a return to legal and constitutional government. They must demand that political prisoners be released forthwith, including President [Mohamed Morsi](#) and other leaders of his party. The draconian,



Vancouver protest for Egypt, August 17, 2013.

emergency measures
by the coup regime
that effectively outlaw
civil liberties must be
ended.

They must also demand that the punitive measures against the Palestinian people in Gaza who are suffering as a result of border restrictions by the military regime be ended. Emergency aid should be provided as needed. Israel must end its treatment of Gaza as an outdoor prison that it can bomb or cut off at will.

Today in Cairo and other cities, we are seeing the violence of the criminal regime continue. Dozens have been killed. The El Fateh Mosque was placed under siege and then assaulted by police and vigilantes.

Fascist Gangs

The emergence of vigilante gangs – I will call them fascist gangs – is a new element coming to the fore in Egypt following the coup. They are working in concert with police and soldiers in assaulting people protesting the coup and as well as anyone they think “looks” like someone inclined to oppose the military, that is, sporting a beard or otherwise dressed according to an Islamic code.

The killing yesterday in Alexandria of [Amr Kassem](#), a permanent resident of Canada and pharmacist living in Toronto, appears to have been just such an attack – he was shot in the back of the head by a sniper. His wife, Asmaa Hussein, told the *Globe and Mail*, “He was there among thousands of people. People are being killed in the street for no reason.”

Ms. Hussein is calling on the Canadian government to condemn the military violence in Egypt. “In this kind of a situation, silence means complacency,” she said. “If countries like Canada aren’t ready to speak up against this injustice, who is going to speak?”

Many of the people in these fascist gangs or who are otherwise supporting the military coup and dictatorship were the same people who marching in June and demanding the overthrow of President Morsi and the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) government in the name of “democracy.” What are we to make of these protests in June, in light of the events since?

The Egyptian people have many grievances. The country is living through very harsh economic conditions. It is their right and responsibility to bring their concerns to the attention of their government with petitions, street demonstrations, acts of civil disobedience – whatever it takes to improve matters. The February 2011 uprising against the former dictator [Hosni Mubarak](#) was a giant step toward more such rights in Egypt.

But it’s another matter entirely to call for the overthrow of an elected government. The only alternative to President Morsi’s government was military rule. So it was reckless in the extreme as well as politically unjustifiable to be demanding its forced removal.

It is said that President Morsi had one year to prove that he could govern the country and he failed to do so, therefore he had to go. This is nonsense. Firstly, he was elected to a four year term (in June 2012). Secondly, he was not given a year to prove what he could do – he wasn’t given a single day. Following his election, the political and economic elite in Egypt

set out to overthrow him by creating economic and social chaos – supplies of food, gasoline and other essentials were disrupted, police refused to perform their duties, causing crime rates to rise, and so on. The U.S. and the European countries used the threat of reducing aid as a pressure tactic to weaken the Morsi government and strengthen the opposition to it among military and economic elite.

The elite's determination to do all this was propelled also by their loss in the 2011 legislative elections, in which the FJP-led political alliance came out far ahead of other lists, with 45 per cent of the vote, and by the [referendum on constitutional changes](#) that they lost in December 2012 (passed by 64 per cent, with a 33 per cent participation rate). Sadly, many otherwise progressive people in Egypt and the world were fooled into joining this political enterprise of destabilizing the Morsi government.

Popular Alternatives

Yes, there are times when popular will must prevail over the constraining legalities of capitalist elections. Look at Canada – in each of Ottawa and in British Columbia, we have governing parties supported by less than 25 per cent of the adult population. Conservatives have become masters at galvanizing their core support and alienating potential opponents from participation in elections. But our answer to this must not be to sit back and let someone else solve our grievances. We must fight for necessary policies from governments nonetheless and we must build authentic and popular alternatives. Imagine how stupid it would be for someone in Canada with a grievance against this or that national or provincial government to call upon the military and police to step in and take over.

Many of us in the anti-war movement are socialists. That's very logical for us – capitalism creates war, the answer to that is to create a sharing and socially just society in which war will have no place. Unfortunately, the word "socialism" has been dragged through the mud in Egypt and abroad because many people calling themselves by that name have supported or turned a blind eye to the July 3 coup and its consequences. Thankfully, there are socialist governments in the world that are rescuing the name. [Venezuela](#) has joined [Ecuador](#) in withdrawing its ambassador to Egypt in protest against the violence of the military regime. And President Evo Morales of [Bolivia](#) as well as the government of [Cuba have issued statements](#) condemning the violence.

I am also here today on behalf of Haiti Solidarity BC. That country knows a thing or two about military coups. This has been a major preoccupation of Haiti solidarity activists because Haiti has suffered two military or paramilitary coups against democratic government – in 1991 and 2004. The second coup was openly supported by Canada, the United States and Europe. The political disruption and violence that followed the 2004 coup and the weakening of national government that it caused go a long way to explain why the official, international aid effort following the January 2010 earthquake has been such a failure.

It looks like we have a long and difficult struggle ahead of us to restore democracy and civilian rule to Egypt. This is a struggle that should concern not only Egyptians but also people around the world. We pledge our support to building a broad-based, movement against this coup in Egypt. We need to reach out to trade unions, churches, political parties and young people to join us in building it.

I want to close with some words by Mona AlQazzaz, a spokesperson of the Muslim

Brotherhood, who spoke earlier today to Al Jazeera from London, England. She explained, "We are seeing a return to the Mubarak regime. We have seen mass murder, the worst state-led violence in the history of the country. The international community cannot allow this to continue."

She was asked how long will the Muslim Brotherhood keep protesting the military regime? She answered, "How long did it take Nelson Mandela to overcome apartheid in South Africa? We will not give in to this mafia... We will remain defiant, we will remain peaceful, and we will take to the streets until the end of military rule in Egypt."

We join in calling for an end to military rule in Egypt and the restoration of the constitutional and elected government. President Morsi and all other political prisoners should be freed. •

Roger Annis is a writer and activist based in Vancouver, BC. He is a member of Haiti Solidarity BC and the Vancouver StopWar Coalition.

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