

## Danger of NATO intervention looms as Syrian crisis deepens



By DANIEL XAVIER

The menace of imperialist intervention looms over Syria as tensions increase between the regime of Bashar al-Assad and the Western powers and their Middle Eastern surrogates. On June 22, the Assad government shot down a Turkish airplane that was conducting a reconnaissance mission in Syrian airspace. Despite an apology from Assad, the Turkish government (which is a member of NATO) responded by amassing more F-16 fighter jets and other military forces on the Syrian border.

The mounting tensions occur in the context of more violent attacks perpetrated by the Assad regime against the Syrian opposition. The Houla massacre of May 25, in which over 100 civilians perished in unclear circumstances, and the continued bombings outside of Damascus have stirred calls in the West for "regime change." In the meantime, repression by the Syrian army and its associated militias has been met by increased attacks by the armed opposition, which has seen a steady rise in foreign aid.

While the Assad regime has received military assistance from Russia, the Syrian opposition has been accepting arms and equipment from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar—as well as from the United States. *The New York Times* recently confirmed that the CIA has been involved in smuggling arms to select militants from the opposition. And *Time* magazine reported in its issue of June 25 that the U.S. State Department has budgeted over \$72 million to train armed Syrian dis-



Bulent Kilic / AFP / Getty Images

(Above) In this June 2011 file photo, protesters in Istanbul denounced Assad after Syrian tanks sent hundreds fleeing into Turkey.

sidents in encryption, hacking, and video production. Foreign ministers from the United States, France, Great Britain, Russia, China, and several other nations met in Geneva on June 30 to broker an agreement for a transitional government in Syria. No Syrians were represented in these negotiations, which were supposedly seeking to achieve "an inclusive Syrian-led political process to address the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the Syrian people."

The West has been silent on how a "Syrian-led political process" could develop without the input of the Syrian masses. Nonetheless, the imperialist powers could not come to an agreement during the conference, which resulted in an undefined plan to create a transitional government. Russia insisted that the arrangement would not specifically exclude Assad from any transitional regime. Elements from both the Syrian opposition and the Assad government have denounced the plan brokered at the Geneva meeting.

The Syrian National Council (SNC), a group of Syrian elites in exile who have positioned themselves as the head of the opposition movement, has repeatedly called on the West to intervene militarily to oust Assad and end the violence that is tearing the country apart. In the week leading up to the Geneva conference, it was reported that 800 people were killed in fighting between Assad's forces and the Syrian opposition. Heightened imperialist intervention, however, like the one conducted by NATO in Libya, would only result in more civilian casualties and deaths.

The fate of the Syrian revolution lies in the hands of the workers, peasants, and oppressed minorities struggling for their freedom. These forces must seek to maintain their political independence

and take the opposition in a different direction than what is proposed by the Syrian National Council. This includes opposing imperialist intervention, which will only seek to co-opt the movement and bend it to the interests of foreign capital.

To this end, we call for the formation of a revolutionary party based in the working class and oppressed communities. Such a party must have a political program capable of uniting the Syrian people in their aspirations for freedom, democratic rights, and economic justice. Moreover, the Syrian people will only know true freedom when they overthrow the exploitative capitalist system, cast out their oppressors, and reshape society to one that is based on grassroots democracy, with the goal of meeting human needs instead of private profit.

No to imperialist intervention! No to the Assad regime! Victory to the workers, peasants, oppressed communities, and youth of Syria! ■



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

### MUSIC FOR GERRY FOLEY

Jean Romsted and Tom Bias, members of the Solidarity Singers of the N.J. State Industrial Union Council, lead people in song during June 9 New York tribute to *Socialist Action* International Editor Gerry Foley, who died in Mexico, April 21. San Francisco and Dublin, Ireland, also held memorials.

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# Court confirms 10-year sentence for Lynne Stewart

BY JEFF MACKLER

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit has confirmed the 2010 decision of Federal District Court Judge John Koeltl to change his 28-month jail sentence for radical attorney and human rights activist Lynne Stewart to 10 years. The court's June 28 decision was not unexpected.

Following federal prosecutors' appeal of what was widely considered a "lenient sentence," the Second Circuit all but ordered a compliant Koeltl to re-sentence Stewart, and harshly. Koeltl did just that, forcing Stewart to appeal to the very court that originally pressured Koeltl, in what was widely considered a "career decision," to do Stewart great harm.

Stewart was convicted at an outrageous 2005 New York frame-up trial on five counts of conspiracy to aid and abet and provide material support to terrorism. Her crime? Representing the "blind Sheik," the Egyptian cleric, Omar Abdel Rachman, who has also been convicted on trumped-up conspiracy charges. Stewart issued a press release from her client stating his views on how Egyptian Muslim oppositionists should react to the ongoing crimes and murders of Egypt's then President Hosni Mubarak.

Stewart was convicted of violating a vaguely worded court-ordered SAM (Special Administrative Measure) that barred her from revealing her client's opinions. The penalty for such violations had traditionally been a mild slap on the wrist, perhaps a warning to not repeat the "violation" and to prohibit attorney-client visits for a few months. Stewart, barring an unlikely Supreme Court reversal, will now serve her 10-year sentence with perhaps a one-year or 10% reduction for "good behavior." She is incarcerated at FMC Carswell in Fort Worth, Texas.

Koeltl's original 28-month sentence statement, in the face of federal prosecutors' demanding 30 years, not-



ed that Stewart, known for representing the poor and oppressed for three decades with little financial remuneration, was a "credit to the legal profession." Stewart served as lead counsel for her client along with former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who testified on her behalf during the trial. Clark has issued similar press releases with no punishment. Indeed, an indignant prosecutor during Stewart's trial suggested that Clark also be charged with conspiracy, but his superiors decided that imprisoning the nation's former top attorney was not yet in their game plan, and the suggestion was ignored.

The Second Circuit decision was based on allegations that Stewart had demonstrated insufficient deference to the original sentence. The court claimed that her statement to the media immediately following her sentence that "I can do 28 months standing on my head" had shown contempt for the legal system. I was standing next to Stewart at that moment and was saw nothing other than a great expression of relief that she (70 years old at the time) would not be sentenced in effect to death, based on the 30 years that federal prosecutors sought.

The Second Circuit also took umbrage at Stewart's

courageous statement when she took the stand to make her closing remarks. Her attorney, Michael Tiger, asked, referring to Stewart's is-

suing the press release on her client's behalf, "Lynne, if you had to do it all over again, would you do the same thing?" With a tear in her eye, Stewart stated, "I would hope that I would have the courage to do it again; I would do it again." Stewart also insisted that her sworn duty to represent her client had to be weighed against the formalities of laws or court orders that prevented such diligent representation.

This refusal to bow to authority, to show the "required deference" to legal bullies with power outraged her persecutors, who sought vengeance in the rigged criminal "justice" system.

Stewart's now rejected appeal argued three essential points:

1) In relying on Lynne Stewart's public statements to enhance the original sentence of 28 months, her First Amendment rights were abridged.

2) The fourfold increase in the sentence was substantively unreasonable and failed to balance her lifetime of contribution to the community and country with the criminal act of which she was convicted.

3) The judge's findings of perjury and misuse of her position as an attorney, on which he also based the increase, were in error.

"Free Lynne Stewart" must remain the rallying cry of all those who cherish civil liberties and democratic rights. Stewart, like so many others, but perhaps among the first tier, was a victim of the government-promoted malicious and murderous "war on terror," aimed at stifling all dissent and imprisoning the innocent to justify its wars against working people at home and against the oppressed and exploited across the globe.

Write Stewart at: Lynne Stewart 53504-054, FMC Carswell, P.O. Box 27137, Ft. Worth, TX.

Jeff Mackler is the West Coast Coordinator of the Lynne Stewart Defense Committee.

## A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

We propose an EMERGENCY CONGRESS OF LABOR to discuss and take steps to implement the following demands —

1) Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers' committees.

2) No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.

3) Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.

4) Immediate and full withdrawal of U.S. troops and mercenaries from Iraq & Afghanistan! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.

5) Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age to 55. Provide unemployment and retirement payments at the level of union wages and benefits.

6) To combat inflation: A sliding scale of wages and pensions that matches the rises in consumer prices. To combat high medical costs: A free, universal, public health-care system.

7) Immediate citizenship for all undocumented workers. No job discrimination; equal pay for equal work — regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin color, or national origin.

8) Nationalize manufacturing, big agribusiness, energy, and transportation corporations and place them under the control of elected committees of workers.

9) To mobilize support for the demands it adopts, the EMERGENCY CONGRESS should organize ACTION COMMITTEES in every workplace and neighborhood threatened by the crisis. These committees can draw up more concrete demands than the ones outlined above.

10) To put all these measures into effect, we need a LABOR PARTY — based on a fighting union movement and all people who are oppressed and exploited. For a workers' government!

**SOCIALIST ACTION** Closing news date: July 7, 2012  
Editor: Michael Schreiber Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly by Socialist Action Publishing Association, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Socialist Action, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. RATES: For one year (12 issues, 1st-class mail): U.S., Canada, Mexico — \$20. All other countries — \$30. Money orders and checks should be in U.S. dollars.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of Socialist Action. These are expressed in editorials. Socialist Action is edited, designed, and laid out entirely by volunteer labor. It is printed by members of Local 583, Allied Printing Trades Council, San Francisco, Calif.



For info about Socialist Action and how to join: Socialist Action National Office, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610, (510) 268-9429, [socialistaction@gmail.com](mailto:socialistaction@gmail.com).

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# NY protest against 'stop & frisk'

By MARTY GOODMAN

On Father's Day, June 17, several thousand marched behind a banner demanding that the New York City police "End Stop and Frisk" and "End Racial Profiling." Said NAACP President Ben Jealous, a central march organizer: "Stop and frisk is the most massive local racial profiling program in the country."

The ethnically diverse rally marched from the northern tip of Central Park on 110<sup>th</sup> St. and then proceeded south on 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., past exclusive homes, to Mayor Michael Bloomberg's mansion at 79<sup>th</sup> St. At the march's end, near the mayor's home, cops strong-armed dozens of mostly young marchers, who had conducted a vocal, impromptu rally of their own, and pushed them out of the street. There were no arrests.

Mayor Bloomberg, whose personal wealth is \$22 billion, is an enthusiastic supporter of "stop and frisk." Another proponent is Bloomberg appointee Ray Kelly, New York's top cop, who headed the training of Haitian police under a deadly U.S.-led United Nations military occupation.

The mostly silent procession, which avoided central Harlem by pre-arrangement with city officials, according to reliable sources, was modeled on the 1917 NAACP silent 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. march in protest of a racist riot and the lynching of Blacks in East St. Louis.

Other rally organizers were activist/politician Rev. Al Sharpton of the National Action Network and union leaders loyal to the Democratic Party—most prominently, union President George Grisham of SEIU 1199. The march was endorsed by nearly 300 community organizations, which included immigrant rights groups, Muslim organizations, and Occupy Wall Street.

Among the signs carried by protesters were "Skin color is not reasonable suspicion," "Stop and Frisk: The New Jim Crow" and "Frisk the Bankers." Another, "He Couldn't Be Here Today," showed a drawing of Amadou Diallo, an unarmed Guinea immigrant killed by a hail of 41 bullets fired by NYC cops in 1999, igniting massive protests.

Donna Lieberman, Executive Director of the N.Y. Civil Liberties Union, has called stop and frisk an "unconstitutional violation of civil rights." According to a report released by the NYCLU, police stopped and interrogated 685,724 individuals in 2011, a more than 600-percent increase in street stops since 2002, Bloomberg's first year. An incredible 87% were Black or Latino. Of those, nine out of 10 were found innocent. Less than 2% had weapons. Black and Latino males, between 14 and 24 years old, were 41.6 percent of all stops in 2011, but only 4.7% of the city's population!

Top cop Kelly maintains that the policy lowers street crime. Facts speak differently. For example, murder in New York dropped 11% from 2002 to 2011. However, the murder rate dropped by 50% in Los Angeles, 43% in Washington, D.C., and 35% in Chicago over the same period, cities without stop and frisk.

On May 15, Federal Judge Shira Scheinlin granted a hearing for a class-action suit against the policy by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR). Said CCR attorney, Darius Charney, "This is not about five or six bad officers;" it affects "hundreds of thousands of people in the city." Also pending are at least three lawsuits by civil liberties organizations against the NYPD's patrols of privately owned buildings and the detaining of tenants with the landlord's permission.

The NYPD has also targeted New York's Muslim community through police surveillance on legal antiwar activity, infiltration, and frame-ups on "terrorism" charges. Virtually ignored by the corporate media and organizers who sought to deflect criticism of Obama was a contingent linking attacks on the Muslim community to the war drive. Participants included Majlis Ash-Shura of Metropolitan NY, the United National Anti-War Coalition (UNAC), Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), the NY Board of Imams, Occupy Wall Street, the Muslim Peace Coalition USA, Pakistan USA Freedom Forum, the May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights, and many others.

Speaking to *Socialist Action*, Rokhsana Mun, youth organizer for DRUM—which brought several hundred, mostly women, low-wage workers of Southeast Asian origin to the march—said, "We have a vibrant immigrant community that has showed its solidarity with all communities of color. All communities of color must unite against all forms of police brutality, surveillance



and stop and frisk." The Muslim Peace Coalition had about 200 marchers, many from the Harlem mosque of Imam Talib, who was invited to march up front with the lead banner.

## Testimony of police violence

Christopher Chadwick, a Brooklyn college student, told *The New York Times*, "They talk to you like you're ignorant, like you're an animal." Recently, in Queens, Louis Morales, 15, and Alex Mejia, 16, were shoved into a car by narcotics police. One cop told them, "Say one word and I'm going to make your parents pick you up at the jail. You guys are just a bunch of immigrants."

Jason Morales, an organizer for the union SEIU 1199, interviewed on Pacifica radio's "Democracy Now!" program, said, "It's been more than 20 times that I've been stopped and frisked in my neighborhood in Brooklyn and never arrested." When asked why, he replied, "I'm assuming because of the color of my skin. I'm brown. I'm Latino, and we experience that day in and day out. As a teenager that's all I experienced."

Tyquan Brehon, 18, an African American high school student, told *The New York Times* that he has been stopped more than 60 times, several times handcuffed, and detained for hours without charges. His case was made into a short film by Julie Dresser and Edwin Martinez.

Stop and frisk is similar to other racist policies. The NYPD "Street Crimes Unit," now disbanded, was responsible for the death of Amadou Diallo in 1999. In Miami, what are called police "jumpouts," guns drawn, were responsible for several high profile deaths of African Americans over the last decade. At the June 17

march were the fathers of Ramarley Graham 18, and Trayvon Martin, 17, murdered in South Florida, victims of racist violence against African Americans.

Ramarley Graham was killed Feb. 2, 2012, in the Bronx by Richard Haste of the NYPD narcotics unit, who claimed Graham had a gun. But Graham was unarmed. He was shot in his bathroom in front of his grandmother and little brother. At first, cops claimed that Graham was running to his door, but a camera video showed him walking. Cops came into the house, guns drawn, kicking down a door without a warrant. Haste was charged with manslaughter.

Some 500 protesters, many from Occupy Wall Street, rallied outside Graham's Bronx home. Frank Graham, father of the slain teen, said, "We are human beings. Stop treating us like animals! My son did nothing wrong. I want justice for my son, my baby." Protesters then rallied at the 47<sup>th</sup> precinct, chanting, "NYPD, KKK, how many kids did you kill today?"

Other high-profile murder victims of the NYPD include the elderly Eleanor Bumpers, killed in her home in 1984; Anthony Baez, whose football struck a police car in 1994; Sean Bell, killed in his van by police bullets; and Patrick Dorismond, a Haitian immigrant. Abner Louima, also a Haitian, was tortured by police (who stuck a plunger up his rectum), sparking huge protest rallies.

Coincidentally, the day of the march carried news of the death of Rodney King, who was savagely beaten in 1992 by seven racist Los Angeles cops. King received 50 blows to the head, was kicked and tasered. Although it was caught on video, the cops were acquitted, which resulted in six days of rebellion and 55 dead. In the end, two were sentenced to two years behind bars.

Socialists support mass mobilizations against cop racism, brutality, and illegal spying. At the same time, we point out that there can be no permanent solution to police violence until we do away with capitalism. ■

**The Gov. Scott Walker victory** in Wisconsin's recall election last month should not surprise us. The Democrats are incapable of defeating the right. Don't the last 30 years demonstrate that? Every vote for a Democrat has meant the success of the "Republican" agenda, based on the loyalty of both parties to the 1%. In fact, Democrats, Obama in particular, have proven adept at advancing reactionary policies that would have sent protesters into the streets if George Bush had carried them out. Wisconsin is one more reason we need a fighting labor party!

The root of this election is the treachery of the Democratic Party, which squashed a mass movement of workers in defense of their right to collective bargaining and a standard of living that they had fought for. The Dems and their union flunkies pulled the plug and sent workers ringing door bells for the Democratic Party's 1%. What the Dems and their apologists in the union bureaucracy avoid is that the big questions of working-class power are really determined in the streets and in worker action, principally strikes, and not in the ballot box.

— MARTY GOODMAN



(Left) Woman casts vote in Oaxaca state, July 1.

(Below) Enrique Peña Nieto addresses media, July 2.

# Evidence mounts of scam to buy votes in Mexico

By JAIME GONZALEZ

MEXICO CITY—Utmost care had been exerted by the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) to prepare the stage for the “impeccable” electoral process that culminated on July 1. For months, day in and day out, the media drummed the message that there would be no excuse for not voting: this time, all precautions had been taken to guarantee a clean election. With great fanfare, the four registered presidential candidates signed an agreement binding them to respect the results.

For a long time, however, it had been quite obvious that big money had already selected the next president. More specifically, it had infused enormous amounts of cash into the race in order to bring forth a near miracle—to revive the PRI (Revolutionary Institutional Party), the political machinery that had served the dictatorship centered on an all-powerful president and had oppressed Mexico for the last 70 years of the 20th century. A telegenic state governor, Enrique Peña Nieto, had been chosen, and no largesse was spared. The TV monopolies went as far as organizing Peña’s wedding with a soap-opera actress, including a trip to visit the Pope at the Vatican.

The backdrop to this cheap comedy was the widely felt perception that the whole country has been sinking under the presidency of Felipe Calderón, who had also been chosen by the owners of Mexico. Calderón had dutifully obeyed his master’s voice in Washington, and carried out a disastrous extension of the ineffectual and discredited 30-year-old “war of drugs.”

Nobody really knows how many people have died during the last five years and a half because of Calderón’s brute-force approach, but the number of victims most probably lies between 50,000 to 100,000 (most of them people who had nothing to do with trafficking, and much less with armed crime). When the Army and Navy were unleashed in a purported fight against the drug lords, the PAN government brought out a monster that preyed on society, as has been only too evident in the state of Chihuahua.

The world economic crisis hit Mexico’s economy really hard in 2009, and since then economic growth has been lackluster at best. The most evident problem is the huge youth unemployment rate.

A profound apathy towards elections and the registered political parties had set in, in great measure as a consequence of Calderón’s rigged election victory in 2006. Only a small proportion of potential voters seemed to be paying any attention to the boring campaigns of this year’s three main contenders: Peña Nieto, for the PRI; the PAN’s Josefina Vázquez Mota, who used every opportunity to promote herself as “different;” and the so-called candidate for the left, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who was running under the slogan that he would preside over a “loving republic” (“la república amorosa”).

López Obrador retained only shreds (substantial shreds, but shreds nonetheless) of the popularity he had enjoyed in 2006. His party, the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution), had been suffering serious defeats as a consequence of betrayal of the aspirations of its followers, and also because of the corruption and incompetence of many of its elected mayors and governors. In order to distance themselves from the PRD, many of López Obrador’s closest followers created a whole collection of groups and fronts as a way of promoting their candidate.

The “loving” candidate (“el amoroso”) had radically changed his rhetoric from emphasizing his worries for the poor and destitute in 2006 to an effort to create the most



Susana Gonzalez / Bloomberg

attractive image possible towards business people—going as far as publicly forgiving the media monopolies for the role they had played in the last election. His efforts were to no avail; all polls showed that his ratings were far behind Peña Nieto.

## The YoSoy132 movement

At the end of May, a totally unexpected phenomenon changed the electoral climate. Students at a private university for the well-to-do, the Iberoamerican University (popularly known as La Ibero), carried out a loud and energetic protest against Peña Nieto, during a visit his campaign organizers had regarded as simply routine. At one point, the PRI’s candidate had to run in order to avoid the students, who reminded him that he had repressed the inhabitants of Atenco township near Mexico City (a repression that included serious human rights violations, including rapes and torture).

With the usual help by the TV monopolies, the PRI’s machine answered this affront with its usual slandering: those who protested were not real students, but provocateurs who had been planted by Peña’s opponents. This inflamed the protesting students even more, and they called on colleagues from nearby universities to join them in protesting in front of one of the main studios of the Televisa consortium, a dominating media corporation that they correctly perceived as being central in the huge operation to install Peña as president.

One hundred and thirty-one students put together a video on YouTube to show their Iberoamerican University ID cards. Many more had posted their own videos claiming “I am 132.” And so, the #YoSoy132 movement was born. The movement quickly spread to the main university in Mexico, UNAM.

The movement’s most visible feature is its repugnance toward the PRI and the TV monopolies, and it has inspired not only huge concentrations and demonstrations, but a widespread and enthusiastic monitoring of the electoral process as well.

López Obrador’s ratings began to climb rapidly, leaving PAN’s candidate far behind. The chance of stopping the PRI created a massive wave of electoral enthusiasm. “El amoroso” López Obrador proudly announced that he was going to win the elections.

No matter how much López Obrador courted them, however, the owners of Mexico had planned otherwise, and the size of the humongous machinery they had set in motion was only too evident. On June 26, just a few days before the election, the London-based newspaper *The Guardian* claimed it had received information that proved Televisa

had been using a secret unit to promote Peña and to “rubbish” his rivals.

## More and more evidence

July 1 was the day of reckoning for all electoral illusions. As voters went to cast their votes, more and more disquieting evidence of the magnitude of the fraud began to appear in internet sites run by citizens’ groups who were monitoring the elections. Contamos.org.mx, for instance, was flooded with complaints about ballots being stolen in one place or another, all sorts of irregularities at voting stations (especially in PRI dominated districts), and most notoriously, the widespread buying of votes. The aforementioned *contamos.org.mx* has been exhibiting a video taken inside a PRI so-called “raccoon hideout” (an epithet that is very unfair to raccoons, of course) where people are shown receiving money in exchange for their electoral ID cards.

In the evening, when preliminary results were announced, with Peña pulling several points ahead of his rivals, López Obrador was stunned. He had no further messages other than he would wait until the counting was over, and that he would abide by his promise to respect the results.

On Monday, July 2, people who had received the PRI’s money in the form of pre-paid cards for the Soriana supermarket chain, went wild trying to spend their money as fast as possible, and clogged many of the chain’s stores. Two of these stores had to be closed by authorities, due to safety concerns. PRI spokespeople deny that these tumults had anything to do with the elections, claiming the pre-paid cards were legally given out by the State of Mexico’s Education Department as part of a stimulus program.

The Mexico City daily *La jornada* sent reporters to the stores, and they spoke to several people who had sold out their votes only to find out that their cards had no funds ([www.jornada.unam.mx](http://www.jornada.unam.mx), July 5). In several State of Mexico districts that are very close to Mexico City, the PRI operatives “offered cards with 1500 pesos [about 110 U.S. dollars], but only if we gave them our voter ID.” The operatives asked for a photo of the ballot, with the PRI symbol crossed out and, in exchange, they handed out the cards. All those interviewed claimed to have acted “out of necessity.”

There is no doubt that the U.S. State Department was very much aware of how Peña Nieto’s victory was being cooked (as evidenced by U.S. Embassy cables published in Wikileaks), and there is little doubt it was also aware of the scam unfolding on election day. So the only reason for Obama to rush to congratulate the PRI’s candidate shortly after the preliminary results were announced is that the U.S. government was complicit in the show.

While López Obrador is trying to channel discontent into a lengthy and tricky legal process, the #YoSoy132 movement has pledged to continue its protests, and to spread them far and wide.

## The FIS: a new front is born

Socialist Action’s sister organization in Mexico, Liga de Unidad Socialista (LUS), had been waging an energetic campaign to create awareness that the election had already been set up, and called on potential allies to form a political front to explain that the poor, the exploited, and the oppressed of Mexico were not represented by any of the registered candidates. Four organizations answered our initial call: the Grupo de Acción Revolucionaria (GAR), a Trotskyist organization that was formed mainly by activists and leaders of the 1999-2000 student strike at UNAM; the network around *Madera*, a web-based newspaper led by former guerrilla fighters and political prisoners of the 1970s; the Partido Obrero Socialista-MAS (POS-MAS), another Trotskyist organization, who had launched the leader of a successful workers cooperative, Jesús Torres Nuño, as a non-registered presidential candidate; and a women’s rights organization, the Feministas Comunistas.

Preceded by several joint actions, on June 23, these four groups and the LUS announced the formation of the Frente de Izquierda Socialista (FIS) in a very enthusiastic ceremony attended by 150 people. The wide majority of those present were young, and many are active participants and leaders in the #YoSoy132 movement.

Also present at the founding of the FIS were participants of the Atenco township, one of the most important symbols or popular movements in Mexico. The leaders of this movement addressed the gathering in very enthusiastic terms, but explained that their organization could not join the FIS because it, by its very nature, was politically plural. Dozens of participants from several other movements and regions of Mexico addressed the meeting as well, which ended with the singing of “The Internationale.”

The participating organizations are considering not only joint actions but a deeper political discussion on how to effectively propel the demands included in their front’s proclamation, such as the need for truly democratic elections, a Constituent Assembly, the 35-hour week, an end to impunity (referring to the fact that human rights abuses by police and other officials rarely go to trial), and other crucial questions that affect the Mexican population. The FIS’s initial program culminates in the goal of forming a workers and peasants government. The foundation of this front has opened an opportunity to give wide visibility to a program that represent the interests of workers, the poor, the oppressed, and all those that were invisible for the rich and powerful that staged the electoral show. ■

By LISA LUINENBERG

Two major policy changes affecting undocumented immigrants and the struggle for immigrant rights have recently been announced.

First, in a clear bid for Latino votes as the November presidential election approaches, President Obama announced on June 15 that the Department of Homeland Security will stop deporting certain “low priority” undocumented youth and will create a temporary protective status that could benefit over a million young immigrants. Secondly, the U.S. Supreme Court finally handed down its decision on SB 1070, ultimately upholding one of the most controversial provisions of the anti-immigrant Arizona law, known as the “show me your papers” provision.

Obama’s recent announcement that ICE would stop deporting undocumented youth came after several DREAMers (young undocumented activists organizing in support of the DREAM Act) occupied his Denver campaign offices for several days to pressure him to issue an executive order to stop deporting undocumented students. Obama’s announcement comes at a critical time in his presidential campaign, and this latest immigration policy change is clearly aimed at gaining the support of Latino voters.

These new guidelines, known as the “deferred action” policy, may help up to an estimated 800,000 to 1.4 million undocumented youth currently living in the U.S. Young people who qualify for deferred action will be given temporary protection from deportation, a work permit, and a driver’s license. This temporary status would last for two years, after which it would supposedly be renewable.

To qualify for the new policy, undocumented youth must have arrived in the United States before the age of 16 and currently be under the age of 30 (and must be at least 15 years old to apply); have lived in the U.S. for five continuous years leading up to the June 15 announcement; currently be in school, have graduated from high school, obtained a GED, or have been honorably discharged from the U.S. military; and must not have been convicted of a range of offenses, including a felony, a significant misdemeanor, multiple misdemeanors, or otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety.

Many will be barred because of the restrictive requirements. According to the PEW Hispanic Center, high school dropout rates for foreign-born Latino students are above 50%, and only 5% of those dropouts have a GED. Immigrant youth applying for deferred status must collect extensive documentation to prove they meet all these different requirements, and on top of that must pay a \$500 fee to the government, along with an additional \$1,000-\$4,000 if they use the services of an immigration lawyer.

While many immigrant rights activists are hailing the deferred action announcement as a historic victory, some immigrant youth remain unsure. “The thing that sits badly with us is DHS cannot provide any assurance of relief and is going to do everything on a case by case basis,” stated Mohammad Abdollahi of the National Immigrant Youth Alliance in an interview with *Colorlines*. Many immigrant youth are rightfully wary of promises from the Obama administration in light of record deportations (close to 400,000 a year under Obama) and a disappointing result after the DHS announced last year that they would be reviewing deportation cases and removing those of “low priority.” This review resulted in only 4363 out of nearly 300,000 cases being dropped.

Obama’s policy change is not part of a new law or even an executive order—it is simply a change announced by the president and overseen by the Department of Homeland Security and ICE. As such, it could be reversed at any time.

Worst of all, the Obama administration has made it very clear that deferred action status is no more than a temporary fix. “This is not amnesty. This is not immunity. This is not a path to citizenship,” announced Obama. “It’s not a permanent fix. This is a temporary stop gap measure that lets us focus our resources wisely while giving a degree of relief to talented, driven, patriotic young people.”

In short, deferred action is nothing more than a temporary, second-class status that offers undocumented youth a permit to work but no way to obtain residency or citizenship or help their parents or other family members get the same. This temporary status will protect them from deportation, but there is no guarantee that they will be able to receive work benefits, adequate pay, or the right to organize or participate in unions.

This type of second-class status is similar to that included in previous comprehensive immigration reform proposals, which all included increasing dependence on work visas. The United States economy is heavily dependent on cheap, exploitable immigrant labor, and guest-worker programs (for example, the post-World War II Bracero program) have long been

# Obama ‘gives relief’ to immigrants; Court upholds Arizona ‘papers’ law

David Sanders / Arizona Daily Star / AP



(Above) June 25 protest outside Arizona State Bldg. in Tucson following Supreme Court decision.

notorious for low wages, poor working conditions, and union busting.

In this light, some DREAMers have promised to keep the pressure on Obama high in the coming months. Said Abdollahi of the National Immigrant Youth Alliance, “We know Obama needs the Latino vote, but until he stops our deportations, we’re going to keep pushing.”

## Court rules on Arizona law

The Obama administration’s recent announcement on the deferred action policy was closely followed by a historic Supreme Court ruling on Arizona’s notorious SB 1070 legislation, which was challenged in court on grounds that it was unconstitutional for states to implement immigration laws that conflicted with federal immigration policy (the law was not challenged on grounds that it would violate civil liberties).

In its ruling, handed down on June 25, the Supreme Court struck down three provisions of SB 1070 that would have (1) made it a crime for an undocumented person to be in Arizona; (2) made it a crime for an undocumented immigrant to seek work; (3) allowed police to make warrantless arrests of anyone they had probable cause to believe had committed a deportable offense.

However, the Supreme Court let stand one of the most notorious sections of the law, section 2(B), known as “show me your papers”—a provision that requires law-enforcement agents to determine the immigration status of anyone they stop as long as they have “reasonable suspicion” that the person is an undocumented immigrant. The court also let stand another little-known provision allowing individual taxpayers the right to sue law-enforcement agencies if they suspect them of not rigorously enforcing the law.

The ruling prompted groups on both sides of the debate to claim a partial victory, despite the fact that section 2(B) will allow police officers across Arizona to continue to engage in racial profiling and discrimination on a daily basis. Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio is already well known for his racial profiling and abuse of civil rights in Maricopa County.

In a letter issued to the Department of Homeland Security, almost 100 civil rights groups wrote, “We write to you today as civil rights leaders in Arizona to tell you that we are afraid of what is coming. We are afraid that the color of our skin will make us targets for harassment, perpetual arrest, and limitless detention.” The ACLU is already preparing to register complaints arising from abuse of the law.

In a bid from the Obama administration to mitigate the significance of the Supreme Court ruling, Attorney General Eric Holder immediately announced that the provision “is not a license to engage in racial profiling.” The Department of Homeland Security then announced that it plans to suspend the 287(g) program throughout Arizona. 287(g) is a notorious ICE program that deputizes local police to act as immigration agents.

However, it soon became clear that the federal government is only ending a small portion of 287(g), which authorizes police to ask people on the street

about their immigration status. And 287(g) programs operating inside local jails, where most immigration enforcement occurs, will be left in place, along with Secure Communities, an even more extensive program that uses databases of biometric information (like fingerprints) to check the immigration status of people who are booked into jail, regardless of whether they have actually committed a crime or not.

Both 287(g) and Secure Communities have already come under fire from civil and immigrant rights groups for abuse and racial profiling, and Secure Communities is on track to be implemented nationwide by 2013, a goal promoted by the Obama administration.

It was the federal government’s complicity in programs like 287(g) and Secure Communities that led the Supreme Court to their decision to leave SB 1070’s “show me your papers” provision intact. Justice Kennedy, writing for the majority, stated, “The status checks [do] not interfere with the federal immigration scheme. Consultation between federal and state officials is an important feature of the immigration system.”

Congress has made clear that no formal agreement or special training needs to be in place for state officers to ‘communicate with the [federal government] regarding the immigration status of any individual, including reporting knowledge that a particular alien is not lawfully present in the United States.’”

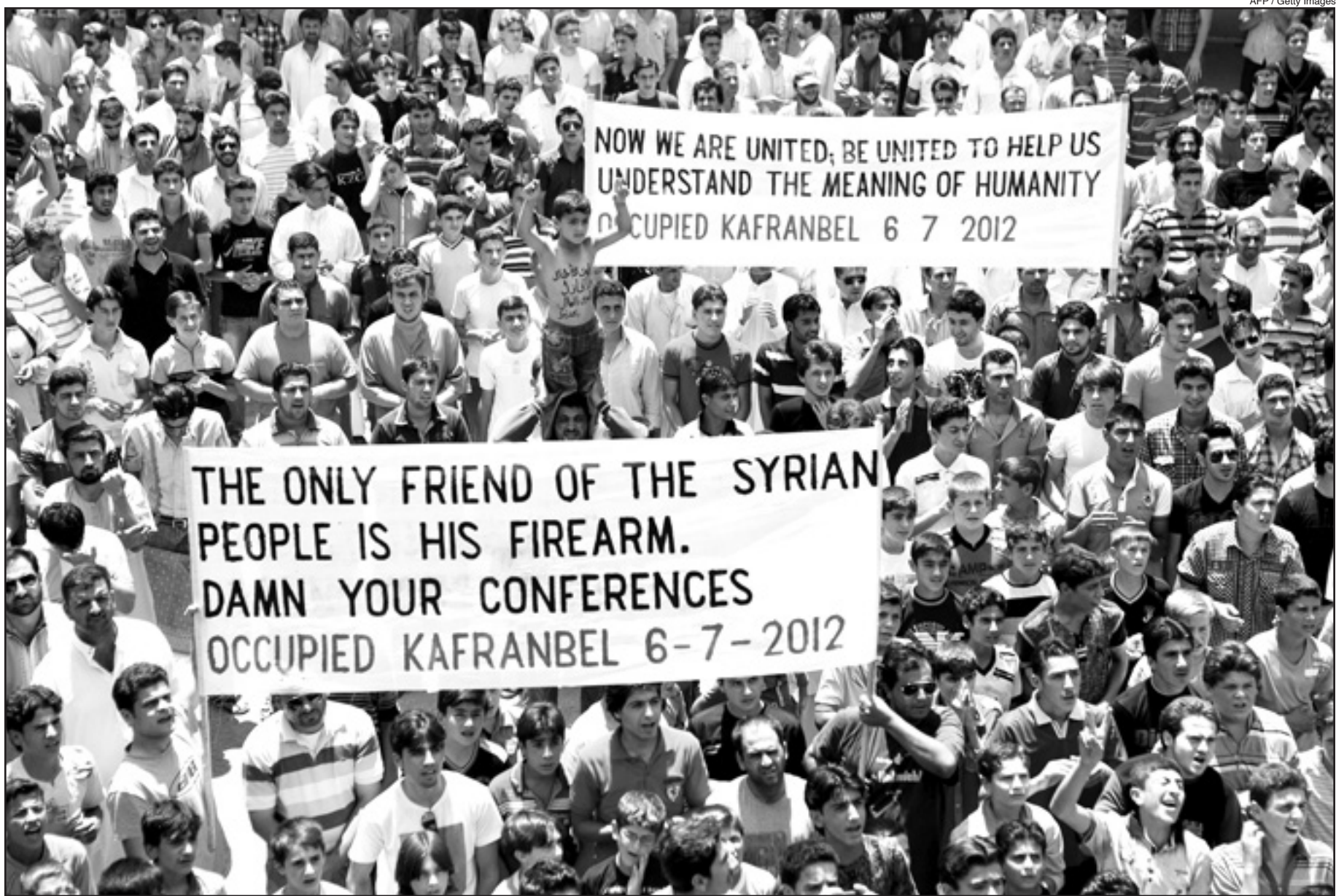
ICE programs like 287(g) and Secure Communities are the reason that despite Obama’s paying lip service to demands to stop deportations in the immigrant community, the annual number of deportations under his administration continues to rise. The Supreme Court’s decision on SB 1070 also opens the door for other states to pursue similar harsh anti-immigrant policies and validates similar laws that have already been passed in states like Utah, Indiana, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina.

In the meantime, immigrant rights groups will continue to pressure the federal government not to collaborate with Arizona law-enforcement efforts, while at the same time demanding that the Department of Homeland Security suspend the operation of Secure Communities as well as terminate all 287(g) agreements still standing in Arizona.

The only thing that emerges clearly from all the new developments on the immigrant rights front is that while Obama announces immigration policy changes to pander to the Latino vote, thousands of families are being ripped apart while their loved ones await deportation; thousands of undocumented workers are exploited on a daily basis because they have no rights to organize in their workplaces; thousands of people of color are discriminated against daily by police solely because of the color of their skin.

In the end, actions must speak louder than words. There can be no solution to the immigration crisis unless immigrants rise up and show their collective power like they did on May Day 2006. ■

# The ongoing potential



## of the Syrian revolution

By ANDREW POLLACK

In their battle to rid themselves of the murderous, corrupt Assad regime, the Syrian people faced a succession of obstacles. Decades of repression had left organizers trying to make up for lost time when the revolt broke out. This was followed by a usurpation of leadership of the movement by various bourgeois forces, from the Muslim Brotherhood to pro-capitalist former regime or military officials, all seeking imperialist aid and intervention while promoting a military “strategy” divorced from and opposed to the needs or capacity of the masses. Now we see increasingly direct intervention by the U.S. and its Saudi, Turkish, Qatari, and other proxies. Yet through all this, mass organizing has continued—whatever the ebbs and flows.

As we go to press, two outcomes look increasingly likely: (1) a “peace” plan brokered by the UN under U.S. direction, which garners Russian and Chinese support by leaving in power much of the old regime, and perhaps even Assad himself, while including some forces from the Syrian National Council/Free Syrian Army “opposition”; (2) stepped-up military aid to the SNC/FSA to deepen and prolong the civil war to the point where an imposed “peace” plan becomes more acceptable to all concerned.

“All concerned,” of course, does not include the grassroots movement that began the revolt, and which still persists. This movement, as throughout the Arab Revolution of the last two years, first took shape through neighborhood-based committees, which repeatedly mobilized in the face of murderous regime attacks.

But there are a number of indications that this movement can—if not soon, then surely over time—develop a program and strategy to oust Assad while keeping the imperialists and their traitorous Syrian flunkies at bay.

Evidence of this includes the continued mobilization at the grassroots level; the roots of the uprising in economic exploitation, and the resulting determination of the country’s workers, peasants, youth, and women to win liberation; and the historic regional potential and implications of the revolt.

In contrast to the overwhelming focus of the mainstream media on the political and military activities of the bourgeois, pro-intervention “opposition,” numerous leftist commentators point to continued activity at the grassroots.

For example, author Phyllis Bennis, associated with the Institute for Policy Studies and United for Peace and Justice, reported on June 28 that “the original non-violent opposition—broad and diverse, secular and faith-based—is maintaining its opposition to arming of the opposition and to outside military intervention. What’s more, she claimed that street protests “are continuing despite civil war-like conditions. It appears that more public mobilizations ... are on the rise again with broadly democratic participation, especially in and around the major cities of Damascus and Aleppo, once known as relative strongholds of regime support.”

Other reports focus on activism by particular sectors. A report dated June 30 from Britain’s MENA Solidarity Network (“The revolutionaries are our children”) described the efforts of women in the town of Zebdani, west of Damascus, who from the beginning of the revolt insisted on being in the forefront of the struggle: “We insisted that women stand in the first line. An argument started with the enthusiastic young men, as everyone wanted to lead the march. But we insisted, and pledged, that we will not allow the security forces to touch our children.”

Said the MENA reporter: “Women are taking an increasing role in the revolution. As well as writing placards and sewing revolution flags, we are rescuing the wounded, caring for the families of the detainees, as well as joining the demonstrations in increasing numbers. The Zebdani women produce a newspaper called *Oxygen*, which is published every 15 days.

“For the women, the revolution is no longer simply about bringing down of the regime—it is about transforming the whole of our society.”

An article published on June 8 in *jadaliyya.com* by Layla Al-Zubaidi (“Syria’s Creative Resistance”) pointed to grassroots efforts still ongoing to keep alive the

(Above) Protesters from Kafranbel (Kfar Nibl), a village in northern Syria, denounce imperialist “Friends of Syria” conference, held July 6.

uprising through cultural activities. She described “a wealth of satirical dramas, jokes, chants, graffiti slogans, videos, songs, and dances that have proliferated since Syrians began to rise up against the rule of the Assads.” These activities are to a certain extent a temporary substitute for demonstrations which are met with murderous gunfire, but—as was seen in the profusion of biting humor in Egypt’s squares—are also a permanent and valued part of the revolution.

For decades, wrote Al-Zubaidi, “Syrians would do no more than whisper. ... Political jokes were kept within trusted circles and people were forced to bow to the iconography of their leader, a cult celebrated in schools, public spaces, cultural productions and the media. As the uprising evolved, the state media, sticking with the delusional narrative that all protesters are armed terrorists, has lost its grip on most of the public. A powerful counter-culture unlocked minds, drawing on popular tradition and skillfully exploiting the tools of modern communications technology.

One artist was quoted as saying, “It is not the elite artists or intellectuals who form the avant-garde, but the ordinary people. ... I consider myself an expert on Syria,” he said, “But suddenly places are springing up out of nowhere and we’re hearing dialects that we never knew about. Now it’s the simple people in the country, whom everyone considered illiterates, who are giving us an education. Look at Kfar Nibl.”

Kfar Nibl, a village in northern Syria, “was entirely unknown until sarcasm and wit put it on the map. Kfar Nibl has become a trademark for the best and funniest slogans, shared and disseminated by activists and fans. When the Arab League monitors arrived in Damascus and took up residence at the Sheraton Hotel, a picture was passed around showing a group of villagers holding a banner that read: “The people of Kfar Nibl demand the building of 5-star hotels, so that we

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# ... Revolution

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can attract the Arab monitors to visit us! Security forces invaded the village several times, but the slogans continue."

"We should safeguard the civic soul of this revolution," said another artist, "and I believe that women will be the leaders in that."

"He pointed out that it was young women who recently took their protest to the heart of political and business establishments. On April 10, 2012, the day that the ceasefire negotiated through Kofi Annan's initiative was supposed to come into effect, 34-year-old Rima Dali poured white paint on her red dress in front of the parliament, holding up a sign that read: 'Stop the killing. We want a homeland for all Syrians.' A few days later, four young women sprawled like corpses on the floor of Damascino Mall while upper-class shoppers tripped around them.

"As biting dissent has stripped the regime of whatever legitimacy it once enjoyed, he bitterly admits, it is now naked violence and the higher stakes of international politics that keep it standing. He finds wisdom in an entry on a Facebook page: 'The regime is gone, but how do we get rid of it?'" This is a common refrain in writings and speeches of oppositionists: now that the masses have lost their fear of Assad, the regime has already fallen in their hearts, in their vision of their future: all that remains is to unify and expand the forces needed to remove it physically.

Another opening to make that so comes in the increasing defections from Assad's army, defections by soldiers whose loyalty will now be contended for by the pro-imperialist opposition and the grassroots movement. The mainstream media constantly points to Washington's frustration with the inability of the varied local militias who have adopted the rubric "Free Syrian Army" to unite in a disciplined force worthy of the name "army."

Those divisions can be a leverage point for local committees trying to organize armed elements who are resisting control by the SNC and its masters. The committees can insist that the defectors put their arms under the leadership of the movement, and return to the original role from which many of them sprang—defense of peaceful protests against regime attacks. And what would be more natural than that defectors returning to their hometowns and villages should maintain their arms but use them in defense of their communities?

## Heightened exploitation in Assad's Syria

Phyllis Bennis, cited above, is one of many authors and activists pointing to the continued support for Assad among the country's bourgeoisie: "Despite his government's history of brutal repression, Bashar al-Assad still enjoys significant support from parts of Syria's business elites, especially in Damascus and Aleppo."

In the same vein, Syrian exile Khalil Habash, member of the Syrian Revolutionary Left (Yassar Thawri Suri), described the policies of exploitation, corruption, and enrichment that have sustained the Assad regime. A melding of military and security officials, grown wealthy from state-owned assets, with a restored wing of the old private bourgeoisie, benefited from successive waves of privatization and neoliberal austerity policies. Such policies, he wrote, have also "satisfied the upper class and foreign investors, especially from the Arab Gulf, by liberalizing the Syrian economy for their benefit and at the expense of the far majority of Syrians hit by inflation and the rising cost of living" (Habash's May 29 article first appeared at [www.newsocialist.org](http://www.newsocialist.org); reprinted at [www.internationalviewpoint.org](http://www.internationalviewpoint.org)).

But these same policies enraged the country's workers and peasants, its youth suffering the same horrific rates of unemployment as those throughout the region. It is these policies, and the repression needed to enforce them, that eventually ignited the uprising. And with space to organize, the victims of these policies can develop a program to take economic power out of the hands of Assad and his followers, a program that could give renewed and heightened motivation for the grassroots to retake its leading role in the revolution.

Like other radical authors, Habash noted the origins of the revolt in the towns, villages, and neighborhoods most impacted by exploitation and crisis, from rural areas such as Idlib and Deraa to the working-class suburbs of Damascus and Aleppo, areas which all "show the massive involvement of the downtrodden."

He notes the "successful campaigns of general strikes and civil disobedience in Syria in December 2011 that paralyzed large parts of the country," campaigns that "showed the activism of the working class and exploited who are indeed the heart of the revolution. This is why the dictatorship has laid off more than 85,000 workers from January 2011 to February 2012, and closed 187 factories."



(Left) Assad and generals visit Syria's Tomb of Unknown Soldier in 2002.

As in Egypt, there were massive strikes in the years immediately before the revolution. The degradation of living standards of the majority, coupled with repression, led to visible protests since 2006. "In May 2006," Habash wrote, "hundreds of workers of the Public Building Company in Damascus held a demonstration that erupted in clashes with security forces. In Homs, clashes broke out between the police and demonstrators protesting against the demolition of homes occupied by poor people. Data from 2007 shows that people living in extreme poverty, defined as those unable to obtain their basic food and non-food needs, rose to 2 million. About 62% of the people living in poverty are from rural areas and live in food insecurity or are vulnerable."

"In 2007, several clashes between the police and demonstrators took place in Aleppo, Homs, and Damascus. In 2008, demonstrations were held by workers in the port of Latakia, and Dhabia and Zabadani near Damascus. In 2009 and 2010, the regime also faced protests, until the beginning of revolution this year. Wealth gaps and inequality had continuously increased these last few years."

We can be optimistic that, especially with the aid of working-class-based revolutionaries in Egypt and elsewhere in the region, and with solidarity from around the globe, Syria's own revolutionaries will find a way to articulate the economic grievances of the masses in a way that makes clear to the country's workers their potential to run society for their own benefit once Assad is ousted and the imperialists kept out. This clarity would fortify their efforts to unify and strengthen the local committees in which workers and the other exploited and oppressed are a majority.

## Potential regional solidarity

Finally, there is the potential represented by the Syrian revolution's regional, indeed global, significance.

This significance is manifested on the one hand by the eagerness of U.S. and European imperialist powers to use the country as a proxy battleground with its competitors in Russia and China. In fact, Syria is just a salient in the line of battle, the point along that line which at the moment is enduring the fiercest fire. The

entire region is being fought for.

The awareness of the region's masses that this is what is at stake reinforces, and is in turn reinforced by, their knowledge that the "anti-imperialist" Assad has every bit as much blood on his hands, and is every bit as much the enemy of his country's working masses, as any of the other dictators recently overthrown or facing a mass movement seeking his overthrow.

Khalil Habash, cited above on the economic roots of the revolt, also hit the nail on the head concerning its regional implications and potential: "Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman was right to say that post-revolution Egypt is a larger threat to Israel than Iran, and this can also be applied to Syria. A free, progressive, democratic and truly independent Egypt and Syria are infinitely more dangerous to the Zionist apartheid state and its occupied territories than the repressive Syrian and Islamic Republic."

"The Syrian revolution is part of the revolutionary process taking place in the Arab world, and should not be separated. The Syrian people are struggling like Egyptians, Tunisians, Bahrainis and other democrats, socialists and anti-imperialists in the region."

"The Syrian people are the true revolutionaries and anti-imperialists, and not the regime of Bashar Al-Assad. It is the Syrian population who welcomed Palestinians, Lebanese and Iraqi refugees when they were attacked and occupied by the imperialist powers such as Israel and the U.S. The victory of the Syrian revolution will open a new resistance front against the imperialist powers, while its defeat will strengthen them."

But in the meantime, Palestinian refugees living under Assad face the same butchery as their Syrian sisters and brothers; over 150 Palestinians have been killed in attacks by Assad forces, 700 injured, and more than 35,000 detained. This makes the regime's demagogic use of the Palestine struggle particularly embittering—but also particularly motivating for Palestinians wherever they are to organize solidarity with the Syrian revolution.

This solidarity has in the past been shown in war against corrupt and reactionary regimes—including against that of the Assads. California State University at Stanislaus professor As'ad Abukhalil recently reminded his readers of the counterrevolutionary role of Hafez Al-Assad in 1976, when a chance for the Arab Revolution to take a huge step forward in Lebanon, as Lebanese battled side by side with Palestinians, was crushed by Assad. "The Syrian regime," he wrote, "intervened to smash a promising revolutionary movement that would have changed the map of the Arab East" (from *Al-Akhbar English*, reprinted at [jadaliyya.com](http://jadaliyya.com) on June 22).

That promise can be realized again, and the chances of its doing so soon are increased by the continuing march of the revolution in Egypt, the steadfast resistance in Yemen and Bahrain, and by the foretaste of the next Intifada seen in the late June-early July days of revolt by Palestinians against their own corrupt "Palestinian Authority" for having invited Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz (the man responsible for the 2002 massacre in Jenin) to Ramallah for negotiations.

People in the United States have an important part to play, by redoubling efforts to demand that Washington keep its hands off the revolution in Syria and everywhere throughout the region. ■

## ... Egypt solidarity

(continued from page 8)

ment to be able to address the demands of revolutionaries. As a result, the Delegation demands an end to the U.S. provision of economic aid with neoliberal conditions and other forms of coercion."

Delegation member Lamis Deek—who is also the founder of the NLG's Muslim Defense Project—then detailed the varied forms of repression that allow such policies to continue. She emphasized strongly that such U.S.-financed repression, and the secrecy with which it is planned, funded, and carried out, is "a violation of the democratic rights of American people too: how can we decide freely when we're denied the basic facts by our government?"

Emphasizing once again the link between the revolution and the liberation of Palestine, Deek also

noted that among the top demands of the Egyptian people is the opening of the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza.

They concluded: "We stand in solidarity with all Egyptians who continue to confront the forces of state repression and work for the establishment of a legal system that will protect dignity, freedom, and basic human rights. These demands are embodied and expressed in the broadly unified revolutionary chant for 'bread, freedom, and social justice.'"

The delegation is working on a full report of its findings due out later this summer. In the meantime, delegation members are working with organizations and activists to organize around its demands. The first event in this campaign is a public report-back by Delegation members in New York City on July 10. For more information on these activities, see [defendegyptianrevolution.org](http://defendegyptianrevolution.org) ■

# Robin Hood: Hero of the People

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

Paul Buhle, "Robin Hood: People's Outlaw and Forest Hero." Illustrated by Garry Dumm, Christopher Hutchinson, and Sharon Rudahl. (PM Press, Oakland, Calif. 2011) 106 pp., \$15 paper.

As I write, in late May 2012, a playhouse here in Philadelphia is advertising its production of "Robin Hood" as an action play "aimed at kids five years and up." At the same time, in Chicago, anti-NATO demonstrators are calling for a "Robin Hood tax" on financial transactions, as part of their demand to "tax the rich."

Who is the real Robin? Is he the swashbuckling hero portrayed in cartoons, TV, and Hollywood musicals? The class-conscious guerrilla leader, fighting to avenge the peasantry against their oppressors? Or perhaps the "Green Robin," who with his Merry Men inhabits the woodlands in respectful harmony with Nature?

Robin is not the same champion to all people. Throughout the centuries, he seems to have been redefined, if not re-invented, with each telling of the tale. Nonetheless, scores of works have probed into the question of Robin's identity—an extraordinary quest, considering that most investigators agree that the Robin Hood stories are mainly fiction.

With his new book, "Robin Hood: People's Outlaw and Forest Hero," Paul Buhle, editor of the left journal *Radical America*, enters the ranks of historians seeking to uncover the multiple themes and meanings of the Sherwood Forest legend. In his conclusions, however, Buhle readily sides with those who perceive that Robin over the centuries has appeared primarily as a standard-bearer in battles against injustice.

He states, "No other medieval European saga has had the staying power of Robin Hood; no other is wrapped up simultaneously in class conflict (or something very much like class conflict), the rights of citizenship in their early definitions, defense of the ecological systems, and the imagined utopia of freedom disappearing into a mythical past."

Buhle acknowledges, of course, that scriptwriters often eviscerate the political content of the Robin Hood legend. A number of recent movie renditions reduce the hero to little more than a romantic or heroic action figure. Or worse, they present him as the willing agent of jingoistic big-power politics. For example, says Buhle, while Ridley Scott's "Robin Hood" mega-feature of a couple of years ago might give a slight nod to Robin's role as the defender of downtrodden villagers, the subject "in practice only manages to protect one empire against another."

The earliest known references to Robin Hood in popular culture appeared in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, including in the rolls of several English justices. This suggests that the outlines of the fictional character might be based, however loosely, on the historical memory of the exploits of a real person or persons.

Buhle skips over this tantalizing question, however, and begins his chronology many centuries later with "The Dream of John Ball," a novella by William Morris, artist and "father of British socialism." In this work, which was serialized for newspaper readers in 1886-87, Morris plots the adventures of a man who leaps from the modern era into a 14<sup>th</sup>-century English village. There he



finds a group of yeomen (independent small landowners) who have risen up against the corrupt local sheriff and other Crown officers who seek to oppress them.

The villagers are led by the lay preacher John Ball, a real though obscure figure in English history. According to Morris, Ball led his followers along the trail of rebellion blazed by Robin and his men. Thus, a ballad singer in Morris' narrative states to the time-traveler, "Was it not sooth that I said, brother, that Robin Hood should bring us John Ball?"

John Ball was a participant in the uprising of 1381, whose major leader was Wat Tyler. The yeomen under Tyler's command armed themselves with staves and pitchforks and marched on London to protest high taxes and growing poverty. After meeting with the King, Tyler was betrayed; he and Ball were assassinated, and the movement was dispersed.

Buhle argues that Wat Tyler's uprising of 1381, "the first major outbreak of a class and social conflict across England ... prepared the ground for the popularity of the Robin Hood saga." Robin Hood was called into existence by popular desires for a hero figure to represent their struggles for social justice.

Perhaps the first allusion to Robin in literature, William Langland's "Piers Plowman," appeared in manuscript in the years immediately preceding Wat Tyler's rebellion. In the story, Sloth, a priest, confesses, "I kan [know] not parfitly my Paternoster as the preest it singeth, / But I kan rymes of Robyn Hood and Randolf Erl of Chestre." In other words, he cannot always remember his prayers, but he can readily recite the ballads of popular heroes. (Five centuries later, Mark Twain put a similar statement into the mouth of the whimsical

young rebel, Tom Sawyer.)

While Buhle convincingly argues that the period of Wat Tyler's rebellion was a "Robin Hood era," the reader might wonder

why Buhle concentrates the better part of two chapters on those years alone. It was a full century after Wat Tyler that the efforts by landlords to enclose the pastures began to get fully underway in England, expelling thousands of small farmers from the countryside. Didn't the impoverished population need Robin Hood at that moment to help chart a path of resistance?

Indeed, Buhle briefly notes, Robin as protector of the poor appeared again in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century in a collection of verse tales under the title, "A Lyttell Geste of Robyn Hode." But from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century onward, a more conservative Robin began to enter English literature, often as an official project to erase the militantly radical one. Following the defeat of the Spanish armada, audiences saw Robin Hood as a patriotic national hero on the London stage.

And Shakespeare's Robin Hood-type characters, such as Orlando and the Duke in "As You Like It," were noblemen who had temporarily fled palace life for a sylvan arcadia.

From there, Buhle follows the contrasting renditions of Robin Hood and his band through the centuries. Important examples include Joseph Ritson's popular volume of 1795, poet John Keat's antiwar Robin and Marian of 1817, Walter Scott's patriotic "Ivanhoe" of 1819, storyteller and illustrator Howard Pyle's "Merry Adventures" of 1883, and Errol Flynn's version filmed on the eve of World War II (1938), in which he vanquishes (Hitlerite?) evil while vying for the heart of Olivia de Havilland's Maid Marian.

Buhle presents his chapters as a series of almost autonomous essays. Each chapter is packed with facts and critical insight, but often on themes that to a certain extent had been dealt with earlier. The discontinuity and repetition in the narrative left me a bit confused, at least on my first time thorough the book, over where the author was leading his readers.

Luckily, the book's illustrations provide a framework to help us make sense of Buhle's choppy structure. The illustrations appear in four separate sections that underscore major themes of the adjacent chapters. Gary Dumm gives us a comic-strip portrayal of the peasant and religious struggles in England of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Christopher Hutchinson, a supporter and contributor to *Socialist Action* newspaper, uses collage to provide "Robin Hood" heroes for the modern age (Che, Malcolm, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Luxemburg, etc.). And Sharon Rudahl's cartoons tell the tales of Maid Marian—warrior, revolutionary activist, and proto-feminist.

Why read this book? Because the world still has a need for Robin. Today, Buhle points out, "the rich and powerful now command almost every corner of the planet and, in order to maintain their control, threaten to despoil every natural resource to the point of exhaustion. Meanwhile, billions of people are impoverished below levels of decency during centuries of subsistence living."

Yet resistance to authority continues, and so, Robin lives on "in the streets of Cairo, Egypt, and Madison, Wisconsin, USA, among the many other places where people dream of a better life and struggle for it openly, cheerful to be rebellious." ■

## U.S. solidarity with Egyptian revolution

By ANDREW POLLACK

Since the uprising against Mubarak began there have been regular solidarity protests, forums and other activities in the U.S. In New York, this support coalesced in the formation of the Coalition to Defend the Egyptian Revolution. In April, leading members of that Coalition were among the lawyers, activists, and scholars who organized and participated in a National Lawyers Guild Delegation to Egypt. Their primary mission was to investigate the role and responsibility of the U.S. government and corporations in human rights abuses, and to document how decades of U.S. military and economic intervention has violated Egypt's popular sovereignty and locked the country in a web of debt.

The delegation met with a broad range of activists, including human rights advocates, youth leaders, Islamists, leftist intellectuals, and trade unionists, as well as with civil society organizations that provide vital legal and social ser-

vices to poor and working-class Egyptians who have been targeted by the state for their activism.

The delegation's press statement upon release of its initial findings noted that "the U.S. government has been complicit in these gross violations by providing direct military and financial aid to the current Egyptian regime, by maneuvering politically to help the regime cling to power in the days after Jan. 25, 2011, and by delaying for almost 15 years the passage of the Small Arms Trade Treaty, which could prevent the regime from using American weapons against the Egyptian people.

"During the people's uprising, U.S. corporations continued to ship tear gas and other weaponry to the very government that was shooting at unarmed men, women, and children in the streets of Egypt. ... Furthermore, the U.S. government and private corporations have supported the economic policies of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, which have resulted in long-term

job insecurity, increased poverty, and drastic concentration of wealth."

In a media-briefing conference call to release the statement, Delegation member Corinna Mullin reminded listeners that the main demands of the revolution have been "Bread, Freedom and Social Justice," and that U.S. and IMF/World Bank economic intervention stand in the way of realizing those demands.

She described the web of aid and loans in which Egypt is enmeshed, a web drawing tighter all the time. What's more, the \$1.3 billion in U.S. military aid each year subsidizes both the U.S. and Egyptian military-industrial complexes (in the latter case that means subsidizing businesses owned directly by the military representing about 40% of the economy).

The U.S. Agency for International Development also sends \$815 million a year to promote "market freedom," which reinforces the neoliberal policies encouraged by imperialist governments, banks, and agencies, and which

are enforced through austerity-imposing Structural Adjustment Programs, as well as by mandating opening markets and ownership to foreign firms, ending food and other subsidies, and privatization. These policies, said Mullin, are responsible for the conditions that gave rise to the revolution's core grievances. What's more, under USAID's "Food for Peace" program, Egypt has gone from being an exporter to an importer of grain.

The most recent proof of what Mullin said is contained in a July 2 Reuters report quoting Morsi's top economics adviser as saying that Egypt will soon approach the IMF and other financial institutions for loans. Since Mubarak's departure last February, says Reuters, SCAF has swelled the country's budget deficit by borrowing short-term from local banks at high interest rates and by draining the country's foreign reserves.

Mullin concluded that these policies taken together are a form of neo-imperialism, and are intended to restrict the ability of any post-revolution govern-

(continued on page 7)



By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

*PINK RIBBONS, INC.*, directed by Léa Pool, written by Patricia Kearns and Léa Pool; based on the book by Samantha King.

Statistics show that every 23 seconds a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer, and one dies every 69 seconds from the disease.

The eye-opening Canadian documentary, "Pink Ribbons, Inc.," is aptly subtitled "Capitalizing on Hope." Director Léa Pool filmed events in the Susan G. Komen Walk-for-the-Cure during Breast Cancer Awareness Month (BCAM), held in major locations around the world. AstraZeneca, a corporation that produces cancer-causing chemicals and drugs, founded BCAM, which takes place annually in October.

Watching the film, the preponderance of hot-pink EVERYTHING got to me—from the twisted pink ribbon to pink flamingo glasses. Nowadays, you can't turn around without a proliferation of pink products being pushed at you.

Pool interviewed social commentator Barbara Ehrenreich. Diagnosed with breast cancer, she opted out of going pink, saying she was highly offended by the infantilizing of women; and how one was expected to be upbeat. Anger is negative; the efforts to find a cure are made to be fun! Still, I wondered, where would AIDS research and treatment be if it weren't for the anger of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) in the 1980s? That organization propelled the eventual success of a viable AIDS treatment.

Komen's "walk for the cure" has spread worldwide. During one BCAM, world leaders spotlighted monuments and/or historic sites, like Niagara Falls, in pink. When interviewed, someone asked, "What does lighting up Niagara Falls with pink lights mean?" It's enough to make you gag.

The efforts to find a cure started in the 1940s. It was seen as a battle. (Ehrenreich commented, "I wasn't battling anything. I chose to live"). During World War II, members of the American Cancer Society marched in military uniforms to demonstrate the "fight against" cancer here at home while "our boys" fought enemies overseas. Back then the ratio of breast cancer deaths was 1 in 22, now it's a shocking one in eight.

Today, an astounding 59,000 women die of breast cancer each year. Ronald Reagan had pledged to invest millions of dollars into finding a cure, with very little to show for it. It became a philanthropic endeavor involving huge corporations. Yet many wonder where all the money is going.

Cancer surgeon Dr. Susan Love feels that chemotherapy and radiation are poisons. She wants more research. Still, few scientists are studying the effects of pesticides, toxins, and plastics in the environ-

## Pink Ribbons, Inc.

Léa Pool / "Pink Ribbons"



ment—some plastic products disrupt hormones in all species. It is a known fact that certain plastics mimic female hormones, destroying endocrine functions.

Interestingly, so far, studies have included only white women, when an inordinate number of women of color, due to income disparities, live in environmentally compromised areas. Yet Komen sponsors can't work with environmentalists because of its ties to companies whose products contain carcinogenic substances! No mention was made concerning men with breast cancer. Perhaps Polo or some other male-oriented company will step up. Now, though, men get their own week during BCAM.

The Komen "cancer industry" hooked up with corporations and evolved into selling their products. That was until it was discovered that its yogurt contained bovine growth hormone. Yoplait, which the company has since stopped using, supports Komen. Revlon and Estée Lauder got on the pink bandwagon, both whose cosmetics contain carcinogenic chemicals—they promised to investigate. Avon's Avon Foundation for Women disassociated itself from Avon Products to protect itself from the liability of its cancer-causing ingredients.

During one BCAM, Kentucky Fried Chicken sold its deep-fried chicken in pink buckets (a short film clip shows Colonel Saunders in a pink suit, having switched his trademark white for the occasion), creating controversy. The hypocrisy is stunning considering that these companies whose products cause cancer purport to fight it.

Sports teams signed on to BCAM realizing they

could profit. Since many NFL players were not nice guys, it joined to upgrade its image, and, in my eyes, made players ridiculous with pink laces in their cleats; pink ribbon logos on helmets and other equipment. After an influential breast cancer survivor ordered herself a pink-striped Mustang, Ford held raffles for a designer Mustang, proceeds to benefit Komen. Sadly, a dozen female Ford employees who had assembled the cars' plastic interiors, died from breast cancer.

"When I see a pink ribbon," activist Judy Brady says, "I see evil." That's how I felt each time Nancy Brinker, Komen Foundation founder, was interviewed, in her blush, band-box pink jacket, her robotized voice, her smooth, heavily

made-up face, and her perfect hair.

Pool talked to a group of women with Stage IV, or end-stage cancer, whose breast cancer metastasized. "We're made to feel we didn't try hard enough," one said. Their doctors say that they can take drugs to prolong their lives. "But what kind of life would we be living?" they asked.

Philanthropic foundations believe that the solution is more money. Yet there is no coordination between federal and/or private foundation cancer research organizations. And only a tiny percentage of all the Komen funds go to research (15% last year, down from 20%). Komen has cut by nearly half the proportion of funds it spends on research grants.

In this capitalistic society, drug companies profit by peoples' terminal illnesses—a truly egregious cycle. Heads of pharmaceutical corporations must be rubbing their hands knowing that the more drugs they sell, the more people will develop cancer, a disease with an indefinite remission or end-time, so corporations know they can sell their wares indefinitely. A Stage IV interviewee said: "It's like they're using our disease to profit, and that's not OK."

The film was made before the Planned Parenthood controversy, in which Komen pulled its funding from that organization. Karen Handel, a Komen vice-president, and five other leaders have resigned, yet the flack continues. Would that the hundreds of thousands of people who participate could realize that they are being exploited for corporate profit. They need to get angry, organize, and speak out! They need the energy of an ACT UP. ■

## Chicago Teachers Union authorizes strike

By DAVID BERNT

CHICAGO—In a strong show of rank-and-file unity, close to 90% of the membership of the Chicago Teachers Union authorized the union to strike if the union's leadership is unable to negotiate a contract with Mayor Rahm Emanuel's handpicked school board. The strike vote was conducted as the mayor has conducted a union-busting campaign against Chicago teachers.

Last year, citing budget concerns, the mayor's school board unilaterally cancelled a negotiated 4% raise for teachers. The union countered that much of the budget shortfalls in The Chicago Public Schools are due to the city's diversion of property tax revenues to Tax Increment Financing funds, which are largely used to give handouts to politically influential developers and major corporations. These TIF funds divert hundreds of millions of dollars from the schools, as well as parks, libraries, and the general city budget.

Past recipients of the city's corporate welfare fund include war-profiteer Boeing (to help them move into a downtown corporate headquarters) and the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, who received a generous donation from the city for the worthy cause of helping renovate the bathrooms at the stock exchange.

Adding insult to injury, the mayor, President Obama's former chief of staff and close ally, has been blaming teachers for the poor performance of Chicago schools. Emmanuel has called for more



M. Spencer Green / AP

non-union charter schools, school "turn arounds," in which all teachers in a given school are fired, and has pushed to eliminate tenure and step increases in pay based on seniority.

Emmanuel's school board has proposed in negotiations that teachers receive "merit" pay increases based on students test scores. Teachers and their unions have responded that the over-emphasis on test scores has resulted in teachers being forced to "teach to the test" instead of responding to the real education needs of their students.

Teachers point out that there is a shortage of social workers and teachers aides in schools; class sizes need to be reduced so teachers can realistically work with all their students; curriculum in schools has been deadened to simply teach to standardized tests; and 25% of CPS schools lack a library.

Mayor Emmanuel was a major backer of SB 7, an Illinois state law that severely weakened teacher unions. Written and proposed by tea-party-type educational "reformers" in the misnamed group, Stand for Children, it was passed with almost universal Democratic and Republican support and then signed by the Democratic governor of this "blue state." The law also won the backing of the mayor for its restrictions on the Chicago Teacher Union's right to strike.

The law stipulated that CTU would need 75% of the membership to vote in favor of authorization to strike. Typically, unions need only 50% plus one of members who vote to authorize a strike. One of the right-wing backers of the law boasted that SB 7 would make it impossible for CTU to strike. He was proven wrong when the CTU organized the all-out vote mobilization that result-

(Left) CTA Pres. Karen Lewis speaks to media after casting ballot in strike vote.

ed in 90% of the active membership to not only vote, but vote in favor of strike authorization.

Part of that law gave the mayor the power to impose a longer school day, starting next year, without negotiations with the union. In contract negotiations the union has proposed a proportional increase in pay for longer hours worked. The union has also proposed smaller class sizes and more resources for them to do their jobs properly. But such reasonable demands have not stopped the corporate press in Chicago from waging a campaign to blame "greedy" teachers for putting themselves in the way of "educational reform."

The leadership of the CTU, elected in 2010, was born from a rank-and-file movement, Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE), who waged a several-years-long struggle against school closings and other fights, as the previous leadership of the union did next to nothing. Since being elected, the CORE leadership has organized the membership of the CTU around several fights culminating in the recent contract campaign. Evidence of this is the fact that not a single one of the 615 schools in CPS voted against strike authorization.

In May, CTU organized an indoor rally, followed by a march in downtown Chicago, as a show of strength. About 6000 teachers rallied and marched to show the mayor that he could not bully Chicago teachers anymore. ■

# Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

Barry Weisleder / Socialist Action



## Revolutionary solidarity from Canada to Greece

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The following is the text of a presentation to a meeting of OKDE-Spartacus, in Athens, on June 24. Barry Weisleder is Federal Secretary, SA/LAS.

**K**ali spera, sintrofisses ke sintrofes (good evening, women and men comrades). We have been in Greece for 12 days, but I'm sorry that I still do not speak your ancient and beautiful language. Judy, Elizabeth and I bring warmest revolutionary greetings to you from Socialist Action/Ligue pour l'Action socialiste in the Canadian state, and from Socialist Action-USA National Secretary Jeff Mackler.

We have visited many places in Greece—Nafplio, Corinth, Sparta, Olympia, Delphi, and Kalambaka, but the time we spent in Athens is most memorable because we were with comrades of the OKDE (Organization of Communist Internationalists in Greece)—Spartacus.

We particularly wish to thank comrades Michael and Andreas, who have been so kind and generous. Thanks to them we were able to bring solidarity to the steelworkers' strike at Elinika Halivourgia, we participated in the anti-fascist demonstration of over 1000 people in Perama, southwest of Athens, and we joined the pre-election rally for ANTARSYA, the revolutionary political coalition, at Nea Smyrna Park in south Athens.

As comrade Andreas has wisely written, "Greece is the future of Europe." We take the meaning of that in a dual sense: both the severe capitalist austerity, and the working class resistance to it.

Due to our recent travels I am mindful of the slogan that was inscribed long ago above the entrance to the Temple of Apollo in Delphi: "Nothing in excess." If only the capitalists would follow the advice of the ancients! We would have no crisis of overproduction, no huge debt burden, no wars, and no environmental plunder. But of course, we would have no capitalism!

As we watched the Greek election results with you on June 17, it was clear that the biggest social struggles are still to come. A weak bourgeois coalition government formed. Antonis Samaras of New Democracy, and his shameless partners in crime, PASOK and the Democratic Left, have no popular mandate to continue to bleed the working class. But more attacks on the working class are the only way for the ND coalition to comply with the Troika (European Commission, EU Bank and the IMF) and the cruel Memorandum.

Ironically, it seems now that the major difference between the ND-led right-wing coalition government and the reformist SYRIZA-led opposition is that Samaras wants a delay of two years for implementation of the crippling debt payments, and Alexis Tsipras wants

a four-year respite.

In any case, it was wonderful to see ANTARSYA election posters in many cities across Greece. Despite its reduced vote, ANTARSYA is known nationally as a revolutionary alternative to the capitalist agenda. Hopefully, it will play a larger and larger role as the crisis deepens and as the reformist mis-leaders of the working class are exposed. Our task as Fourth Internationalists in the Canadian state is clear as well, and that is to increase our active solidarity with OKDE, and with ANTARSYA, and with the workers and farmers of Greece who will be victorious in the coming battles.

In this presentation I will focus on two things: One is the situation in the Canadian state, including in Quebec, where a rebellious mass movement led by students has taken centre stage. The other topic is the Fourth International and our tasks in relation to it.

To begin, I should say to the OKDE comrades who last week asked me to arrange work visas to Canada for them: I'm sorry, I do not have the power to obtain visas. I also need to warn everyone that Canada is caught up in the global capitalist crisis. Canada is the world's eleventh largest economy, with a population of 33 million, and is a member of the G8. Between October 2008 and October 2010, the Canadian labour market lost 162,000 full-time jobs. It lost a total of 224,000 permanent jobs.

Officially, unemployment is 7.3 per cent. For those 15 to 29 years of age, it is officially 15 per cent. It is higher for immigrant workers—who are often forced to work in low-wage, temporary jobs. When you add the number of workers who are discouraged, who have stopped looking for work, the real unemployment rate is double the official rate. In fact, it would be much worse if not for the high price of oil and natural gas.

Canada is a net exporter of energy fuels. That industry has generated thousands of jobs, especially in western Canada. At the same time, exploitation of the Alberta Tar Sands, which is an energy wasteful and foul process, is destroying the environment.

Now, if you think that's bad enough, we have a government that has made things considerably worse. The Conservative government led by Stephen Harper, like many neo-liberal regimes around the world, has seized the opportunity to make workers pay for the crisis we did not create. The Harper regime is cutting public services. It is making unemployment insurance benefits less accessible. Federal and provincial governments are starving education, health care, public transportation, social housing, and municipalities.

To recover from the crisis, which means restoring private profits, the ruling rich say we must live within our means. That means, for us, higher taxes, fewer services and lower environmental standards. For the rich

(Photo) An anti-fascist demonstration in Perama, a town southwest of Athens, in June.

it means higher salaries, more investments abroad, and more government spending on wars of occupation. As you know, Canadian Forces are in Afghanistan, and Canadian police are part of the foreign occupation in Haiti. It also means billions of dollars in public bailout money for domestic firms in trouble, until those firms decide to move abroad.

Canada and the United States have experienced a certain de-industrialization. This is happening to steelworks and diesel engine plants in southern Ontario. In the process, workers lose their jobs, lose their company pensions, and face a retirement in poverty. Where some jobs are kept, new hires are paid less, with fewer benefits.

Meanwhile, the rich fund political parties that form governments that break strikes. Three major strikes were broken by government in the past year: at Canada Post, at Air Canada, and at Canadian Pacific Railway. Sadly, the Canadian Labour Congress, and the leaders of the biggest unions, have failed to respond in a meaningful way. A one-hour rally of 20,000 workers, here or there, is not enough when a general strike is sorely needed, just for starters. Our labour leaders negotiate concessions to capital, and then they advise us to wait three or four years to elect a New Democratic Party (NDP) government.

The NDP is a social democratic party organically linked to the unions in English Canada. It is considerably to the right of SYRIZA. On May 2, 2011 the NDP became the Official Opposition, with 4.5 million votes, which was over 31 per cent of the total cast. The Conservatives won a majority of seats in Parliament, with only 39 per cent of the votes. The historic party of capitalist rule in Canada, the Liberal Party, fell to third place.

So, the political situation is polarizing. The hunger for change, for greater equality, for a cleaner, sustainable environment is growing. One sign of it was the Occupy movement, which emerged in dozens of cities across Canada last fall. But the proof of it is what is happening in Quebec today.

For the past 130 days, the streets of Quebec have been vibrant with protest. The Quebec provincial government imposed a 75 per cent increase in fees for students at colleges and universities. Three large federations of Quebec students' unions, after more than a year of preparation, launched a strike. The strike closed most post-secondary institutions. Massive street demonstrations of 200,000-plus occurred monthly; also several thousand march each night.

The students enforced their democratic strike with mass pickets at the schools. The Jean Charest Liberal provincial government responded with repressive legislation, which includes heavy fines for those who picket schools or march without police permission. One result was a march of over 300,000 in Montreal to defy the law. Solidarity demos then began in Toronto, Vancouver, and other cities across English Canada.

The student rebellion in Quebec is an expression of the fight against national oppression. Access to inexpensive, quality university education is seen in Quebec as a right and a gain of the national liberation movement of the 1960s. The largest, most democratic and most radical student federation, La CLASSE, demands free post-secondary education and the removal of repressive Law 78. Our slogan across English Canada is "Spread the Quebec Strike."

Socialist Action/Ligue pour l'Action socialiste, works openly and aggressively on many fronts. We have a strong working-class orientation. For that reason we are building a class-struggle opposition inside the NDP and inside the unions. The NDP Socialist Caucus, which we help to lead, has hundreds of members and supporters across Canada. SA itself has members in cities from Montreal to Vancouver, mostly concentrated in the Toronto region. SA events in Toronto regularly attract 50 to 100 people.

Up to 200 copies of *Socialist Action* newspaper are sold each month, and we just launched a new publication in English Canada.

The radical left in Canada is very small and very sectarian. We strive for cooperation on key issues, but collaboration is tough to achieve. We think the road to a mass revolutionary workers' party will travel through big struggles in the existing unions and the NDP. Most of the radical left ignores those arenas, but that is where we are building our base.

This brings me to our relationship with the Fourth International. In 1994 we were expelled from the Canadian section of the FI, then called Socialist Challenge/Gauche socialiste. Why? Because we are committed to building a Leninist-Trotskyist party—not a loose network of Marxists, anarchists, and reformists. Socialist Challenge, the component of the section in English Canada, dissolved into such a network one year after we were expelled. The Quebec group remained intact, but it strongly opposed our collaboration with the FI.

At the FI World Congress in 1995 we appealed our

(continued on page 11)

By ANDREAS KLOKE

The elections to the Greek Parliament of June 17 were needed because after the elections of May 6 no parties were able to form a coalition government. The result, not unexpectedly, was a “victory” for the rightwing New Democracy (ND), with 29.7% (compared to 18.9% from May 6). The left alliance SYRIZA rose from 16.8% (May 6) to 26.9%, but was again only the second strongest party. Thus, the 50 “extra” seats in parliament, decisive for the formation of a government, were captured by the now leading memorandum party ND.

ND is forced, however, to form a coalition government with the badly shrunken and discredited ex-social democratic PASOK, the third strongest party, with 12.3% (a decrease of 0.9%). DIMAR, the right-wing split from the SYN-party (the leading force in SYRIZA), will also be involved in the new government. DIMAR polled 6.3% (+0.2%) and is thus the sixth strongest party. For the first time, DIMAR openly takes over responsibility for the memorandum policies. The “Independent Greeks,” a spin-off of ND, who refuse to support the memorandum policies, achieved a fourth place finish once again, with 7.5% (-3.1).

The neo-Nazi gang of Chrysi Avgi (“Golden Dawn,” GM) is now in fifth place, with 6.9% (-0.1). The stabilization of the neo-Nazis is even more remarkable since their terrorist character was openly revealed in the weeks after the May 6 vote, with open attacks on immigrants and leftist politicians using knives and clubs—in full public view. Nobody can say any longer that the voters do not know what they were voting for.

The Communist Party (KKE) received just 4.5% and lost 4% compared to May. All parties below the 3% threshold on May 6 had high losses and became almost insignificant for the outcome of these elections, including LAOS with 1.6% (-1.3), “Dimourgia Xana” with 1.6% (-0.6), the “Green Ecologists” with 0.9% (-2.0), and [the far-left coalition] ANTARSYA with 0.33% (-0.9). The valid votes cast represented 61.5% of the electorate (-1.2), again significantly lower than ever before.

A closer look at the election result shows that the shift between “right” and “left” compared to May 6 is not very big. The right-wing parties (from ND to GM)

# New government in Greece

together polled 47.3%. The percentage of PASOK as a “new” right-wing party should be added to this. The left received altogether 39%, taking into account also DIMAR and the Greens. The memorandum parties, so far ND and PASOK, but now DIMAR too, scored together 48.3%, and of course have a clear majority in Parliament. In accordance with the rules of bourgeois parliamentarism, this might be interpreted as providing a “democratic mandate” for the continuation of the memorandum policies. Nevertheless, this “mandate” is, even in a formal sense, quite weak.

ND’s “success” must be partially attributed to the unprecedented propaganda campaign of the memorandum parties and the mass media in Greece and other European countries, according to which an electoral victory of the left would have meant Greece’s immediate exit from the euro, the absolute economic ruin of the country, the termination of all payments etc. In addition, ND was able to attract most of the traditional right electorate that was very fragmented on May 6.

Nonetheless, the election results of ND are generally weak, reflecting a historic downward trend that will continue now with ND’s role as the leading government party. On the left, the SYRIZA party or alliance could establish itself as the clear leading force primarily because had it come in first this would have held out the prospect of a “left government.”

## Situation of the left

As for the left-wing parties or alliances and their prospects, it should be noted that the slogan “Elections now!” issued by the two leading reformist parties, KKE and SYRIZA, especially since the great general strike of October 2011, represents a strategic failure. It was not possible to stop the memorandum policies through parliamentary elections.

The relative strengthening of the Left as a whole in the two elections was the result of the large mobilizations of social resistance from May 2010, with its high points of June and October 2011 as well



(Left) PASOK leader Evangelos Venizelos during talks to form a government with New Democracy.

as Feb. 12. It must be understood that the resistance was not strong enough to bring down the memorandum policies. Thus it is not accidental that the strength or weakness of the entire left in the elections reflects the real balance of power between the main classes in Greek society. In this respect the election results are the political expression of the temporary defeat of the resistance movement.

The weakening of KKE in the elections can be partly explained by its resolute “isolation tactics” along with its strict refusal to cooperate with other left forces at any level. This is connected to a necessarily complete lack of any prospect designed to end the prevailing policy, whether it be by strengthening the resistance movement or by the (ultimately illusory) parliamentary path.

The SYRIZA leadership has taken clear steps to carve out space as a “left” alliance for the management of the existing political and social system—i.e. Greek capitalism—at the government level, particularly after May 6. Still, it is obvious that the ruling classes of Greece and the EU prefer to get along without the services of SYRIZA in this regard.

The SYRIZA leadership has fully accepted the logic of the Troika credits and their principal legitimacy and thus the debt repayments, at the same time also the wage and pension cuts and the general lowering of living standards imposed by the first memorandum, as well as the pro-

spect of remaining in the euro-zone. These things were seen as the primary objective of government policy, thus accepting the “legitimacy” of the extortionate dilemma posed by the ruling classes. In this way, the main demand of last year’s movement “We owe nothing, we do not pay, we do not sell!” was completely diluted, or turned into its opposite.

On the central issue of migration the SYRIZA leadership succumbed in large part to the prevailing policies and declared immigrants to be a “problem.” The SYRIZA leadership has not said a single word about how the social resistance can be put back on its feet or how the deadly threat posed by the neo-Nazi hordes can be stopped.

For ANTARSYA the election results of June 17 are almost tantamount to a collapse. All of the weaknesses of this formation after May 6 have become blatantly clear—for example, its lack of coherence at the central level as a result of an inability to overcome the egoism of various organizations, the weakness of the basic units of the local committees, an inability to confront the political situation after May 6, to take a stand and respond clearly and convincingly to the central issues.

ANTARSYA must make the necessary self-criticism in the face of this defeat and draw the appropriate conclusions. It can hardly continue if it fails to do so. Only in this way will it be possible for ANTARSYA to develop as one of the main engines of the resistance movement and as the anti-capitalist and revolutionary pole of the left.

There is no shortage of starting points for joint actions by the entire left in the spirit of a united front policy. The programmatic perspective for the battles ahead has, to a large degree, been correctly outlined by ANTARSYA. The class struggles will undoubtedly sharpen in the coming months. This is what the social resistance must prepare for. ■

## Victory for Ontario LGBT youth

By EVAN ENGERING

Prodded by years of lesbian/gay rights agitation, Ontario New Democrats compelled the provincial Liberal Party to stand up and defy theocracy. The parties passed the Accepting Schools Act in June, mandating that all Ontario schools allow Gay-Straight Alliance clubs to be formed in publicly funded Catholic Separate schools.

In Mississauga (west of Toronto), Catholic high school student Leanne Iskander sparked the controversy when she attempted to form a GSA club in her school, but was met with disapproval from her school administration.

In 2011 the Ontario Liberal minority government introduced an anti-bullying bill aimed at making schools safer. There was only one problem: making LGBT students safer in schools meant allowing them to form their own support groups, which Catholic students weren’t being allowed to do.

Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty’s position on the clubs was vague at first. He appeared to be playing it safe. NDP leader Andrea Horwath, however, wouldn’t allow him to sidestep the issue. She stood up in the legislature at Queen’s Park and demanded an answer: “Nearly two thirds of LGBTQ students and their parents say that they feel unsafe in their schools. There have been at least three young people who have taken their own lives in the province of Ontario. It is heartbreaking, but it is also completely unacceptable. Can

we finally put the politics aside and answer a simple question: Will students who want a GSA club in their schools be allowed to put one together and have one in their schools?”

After that, there was no hiding, and no ambiguity. McGuinty acceded to inclusivity. The stakes were high. Religious groups, even non-Catholics, launched a campaign of press conferences, rallies, and videos all aimed at maintaining their “religious freedom” to discriminate against LGBT youth on the taxpayers’ dime.

The Progressive Conservatives, taking a page from the social conservative ex-Reform Party core of the Conservative Party of Canada, made common cause with the theocrats.

But no matter how much the archaic religious hierarchy and their Conservative backers kicked and screamed, it was to no avail. The Accepting Schools Act passed the Ontario legislature with Liberal and New Democratic support on June 5, and will be school policy in time for September.

Another recent major queer rights victory is the passage of Toby’s Law, which amended the Ontario Human Rights Code to include the categories of gender identity and gender expression, the first such vic-

tory for transgendered rights in North America. Although all parties voted for it, the initiative of course came from the NDP—again the result of a long struggle by campaigners for transgendered rights and their supporters.

In a political setting where religious groups are trying to roll back reprodu-

tive rights south of the border, Bill 13 and Toby’s Law are a testament to how much activists can challenge authority and make a change in Parliament, schools, and homes. From one student daring to form a club, to a last minute amendment to legislation, the struggle against injustice is advancing. ■



Kostas Tsironis / AP

## ... Solidarity

(continued from page 10)

expulsion. The delegates voted unanimously to adopt the recommendation of its Canada Commission, the body that investigated the split. The World Congress voted that Socialist Action in Canada be recognized as “a group of partisans of the FI,” and be invited to all FI meetings.

This decision was never implemented.

Nevertheless, we continue to seek participation in the Fourth International, and we appeal for your support.

The FI contains the largest international grouping of revolutionary militants who identify with our historic programme and strategy. That is where to begin to re-build the revolutionary workers’ international needed to save humanity from economic and environmental catastrophe.

Together we must build a revolutionary international, build Leninist parties in every country, and strive for the world socialist revolution.

Capitalism has nothing to offer by poverty, war, environmental disaster, sexism, racism, and national oppression. We have a world to win.

Archimedes explained the principle of the lever. Our political lever is the party. With this lever we can move the world. And as Leon Trotsky famously said, “With this lever, we shall be all.” ■

# Muslim Brotherhood takes Egyptian presidency

Daniel Berehulak / Getty Images



(Left) Women supporting the Muslim Brotherhood celebrate at June 19 Cairo election rally when Mohamed Morsi declared victory.

By ANDREW POLLACK

After massive theft of votes from liberal and radical candidates in the first round of Egypt's presidential elections in May, there was widespread fear that the country's ruling military would rig the results in the run-off between its favored candidate, Ahmed Shafiq, and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) candidate, Mohamed Morsi, a fear exacerbated by the delay in announcing those results. To hedge its bets in case it couldn't get away with outright theft of the election, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) issued a series of rulings in the days before the results were announced, dissolving parliament and stripping the incoming president of virtually all power.

SCAF's measures included giving military police and soldiers the ability to arrest and detain civilians. It also overturned legislation passed by the dismissed parliament that had forbidden former Mubarak regime figures (like Shafiq) from running for president.

To top it all, just a few hours before the polls for the runoff had closed, SCAF announced an "addendum" to the constitutional declaration of March 2011, under which it, and not the now-dissolved parliament, would pick members of the commission to write a new constitution. It also limited what could be in such a document, reserving control of certain ministries to itself, and establishing its right of veto over constitutional provisions that contravened the "interests of the country," as well as reserving to itself the right to declare war (obviously intended as reassurance to Israel and the United States).

In sum, SCAF was attempting to carry out a "soft coup," i.e., a usurpation of a variety of powers preserving its dictatorial role, as opposed to a "hard coup" involving violent attacks and mass detentions. No one is under any illusion about the potential for SCAF to switch from the former to the latter. But the Egyptian masses showed by flocking back to the country's squares that they would not abide by a theft of the presidential election and would continue mobilizing against SCAF's new measures.

The Tuesday after its dissolution some parliament members had threatened to convene outside their building, from which SCAF had locked them out. In the end, few from the formerly MB-dominated parliament turned out, which was viewed as yet another indication of the MB leadership's unwillingness to confront the military.

Starting on Tuesday, June 19 (after the second round voting was done), masses of people returned to the squares in Cairo, Alexandria, Suez, and elsewhere, answering calls by the Brotherhood along with radical youth and leftist political organizations to demonstrate against the military's new moves and the threat that Shafiq might be declared president. The squares

## Workers, youth continue demands for full democracy, economic reforms, and an end to military 'soft coup.'

remained filled until Morsi was declared the winner. Now the question is whether the Brotherhood leadership—which at a number of points since Mubarak's downfall has aligned itself with SCAF against pro-democracy protesters—will continue to support mass mobilizations to challenge the military's legal and constitutional maneuvers.

An early test of the MB leadership's fortitude came with Morsi's swearing in. The military had insisted it be done in front of the SCAF-appointed Supreme Constitutional Court, but activists demanded he come to Tahrir Square and take his oath before the masses. In the end he went first to Tahrir, and then to the Court.

The Brotherhood—which, under its religious overlay, is a bourgeois party whose leadership consists overwhelmingly of rich businessmen—is trapped between the awareness of its ranks of the need to mobilize against the soft coup, and its fear of those same ranks. The leaders, like the ranks, realize that they are in danger of becoming a ruling party that isn't allowed to rule—or perhaps even to exist. Yet the leadership fears far more a coming together of its mostly working-class and peasant base with the revolutionaries in the squares and workplaces who want to pursue to the end this revolution, whose main slogan remains "Bread, Freedom, and Social Justice."

The MB leadership is particularly scared because it had been able to keep its ranks from joining mobilizations called by radical groups since the revolution, even when those groups were being violently attacked by the military, and it was able on occasion to turn some of its members toward slander and violence against them. But in June the squares of Egypt once again became a place where the rank and file of the MB and various Islamist groups stood shoulder to shoulder with secular radical elements in opposing military rule and in dialogue with each other about how best to do so. Clearly, this unified, quick, and massive mobilization convinced SCAF not to steal outright the election but rather to rely on the new laws and appointments that it had just made to maintain the vast bulk of real power.

The demands in the statement by a broad alliance of radical groups calling for the Tahrir mobilization gives a good sense of the dangers posed by the soft coup, and the steps needed to roll it back. The groups demanded a mass mobilization against the military's consti-

tutional and legal usurpations; a declaration by the president-elect rejecting the same; parties, political movements and trade unions to elect a Constituent Assembly on the basis of consensus in order to block the military's attempts to intervene in the formation of the assembly; and that the president-elect must issue an immediate order calling on the military to return to its barracks and cancelling the powers granted to the military police to arrest civilians.

The groups also demanded that the president-elect issue an immediate amnesty for all civilians detained by the military and form a committee to investigate the crimes committed against the revolutionaries and to punish the killers of the martyrs. They called for the president-elect to cancel the exceptional measures that restrict the exercise of democratic rights, and especially the criminalization of strikes.

A related statement was issued by the Revolutionary Socialists. They warned the MB youth in particular to continue their mobilization and to keep a watchful eye on their party's leaders, and called for masses to stay in the squares until their demands were met.

In addition to echoing the demands of the alliance (of which it is a part) against the "soft coup" measures, the RS demanded the immediate surrender of power by the army; a popular referendum on the dissolution of parliament; the complete purging of all state institutions that have been militarized in recent months; stabilization of prices, an end to privatization, nationalization of the monopolies and the return of the companies for which sales to private owners have been overturned by the courts.

The RS also pointed again to the need to unite the squares and the workplaces, to link the economic and the political. And in fact the return to the squares in June was matched by an uptick in action at workplaces—and even a combination of the two.

On July 6, six health-care workers' unions united in calling for a general strike over the state budget just passed by SCAF. The unions called on Morsi to fulfill his promises of increasing the health budget. A leader of the doctors' union, Abdel Rahman Gamal, told *Al Masry Al Youm* that the unions denounced SCAF for seizing legislative authority and passing the state budget, saying the new budget was no different than the last one of Mubarak.

The same paper (available on the web in English as *Egypt Independent*) reported that on July 3, hundreds of workers at the Alexandria branch of Pirelli, the huge Italian tire manufacturer, had joined environmental monitoring unit workers in front of the presidential palace to meet Morsi to raise their demands over wage and job security issues.

And the same week a group of Metro workers began a sit-in at a Metro stop and threatened to begin a hunger strike if their demands were not met. They demanded that Morsi implement permanent contracts promised by SCAF-appointed Prime Minister Kamal al-Ganzouri but never delivered.

This workplace-based militancy is being matched by Cairo slum residents who are resisting eviction by rich real estate developers.

An early indication that the MB hopes to be able to ignore such working-class-based action is seen in the report by revolutionary blogger Hossam el-Hamalawy that top MB officials were claiming that workers protesting in front of the presidential palace were part of some "counterrevolutionary plot," and had called them "mercenaries" paid to protest by State Security Police and businessmen affiliated with the dissolved National Democratic Party.

For news of what U.S. activists are doing in solidarity with the Egyptian revolution, see page 8, as well as the website of the Coalition to Defend the Egyptian Revolution: [defendegyptianrevolution.org](http://defendegyptianrevolution.org). ■