

# Egyptian coup leader al-Sisi announces presidential candidacy

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On Wednesday night, Egyptian coup leader Field Marshall Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi officially declared his plan to run for president in upcoming elections. This is the latest effort in the US-backed junta's carefully planned campaign to install its leader as president in order to tighten its grip over the country and brutally confront rising working class opposition.

Sisi's televised address to the nation was a cynical mixture of nationalist phrasemongering and barely veiled threats. "I am here before you humbly stating my intention to run for the presidency of the Arab Republic of Egypt," Sisi declared. "Only your support will grant me this great honor." After announcing his nominal resignation from the military, he added that he considered himself "a soldier serving my country in any capacity desired by Egyptians."

Sisi's claim that he will act in the interests of the Egyptian people is a grotesque lie. Only a few days ago, Egyptian Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour compared Sisi to the former Chilean dictator General Augusto Pinochet, demanding that "this country as it stands today needs a strongman that can pull it together... Law and order is good toward investment and toward the economy."

As with Pinochet, Sisi is a US-backed dictator prepared to use fascistic methods to suppress the working class at the behest of his imperialist patrons and international finance capital.

In his speech, Sisi threatened the impoverished Egyptian masses with austerity and suffering. He warned: "I cannot make miracles. Rather, I propose hard work and self-denial," in order to "restore" Egypt.

Sisi cynically sought to wrap his declaration of war against the working class in the mantle of democracy. "My determination to run in the elections does not bar

others from their right to run. I will be happy if whoever the people choose succeeds," he declared, adding that he hopes for "a nation for all without exclusion."

This is coming from a man who has overseen bloody massacres and large-scale repression over the past several months. Since the July 3, 2013 coup, the military junta under Sisi's leadership has violently dispersed countless sit-ins, demonstrations and strikes, killing at least 1,400 people and jailing more than 16,000. It has banned the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), Egypt's main bourgeois opposition party, issued an anti-protest law and enshrined continued military rule in the constitution.

On Monday, an Egyptian court, in an act of political mass murder, sentenced 529 MB supporters to death. Further show trials are prepared. Only hours before Sisi's speech, Egypt's public prosecutor ordered another 919 MB members—including the MB's supreme guide, Mohamed Badie, and the leader of its political arm, Saad al-Katatni—to stand trial on charges including murder and terrorism.

While the junta is intensifying its campaign of terror, intimidation and outright political murder, the imperialist powers have combined pro forma criticism of the death sentences—European Council President Herman van Rompuy declared after meeting US President Barack Obama in Brussels on Wednesday that the US and the EU were "appalled" by the sentences—with declarations of support to install a mass murderer as president.

With consummate cynicism, White House National Security Council spokeswoman Bernadette Meehan said in a statement. "As the election process moves forward we urge the Egyptian authorities to ensure that the elections are free, fair, and transparent; that all

candidates are able to campaign freely, without fear of harassment or intimidation; and that the views of all the Egyptian people are fully represented.”

The Egyptian newspaper *Ahram Online* quoted a “European ambassador” as saying: “He [Sisi] has a very calculating mind and I am not surprised he took such a long time—although it was rather too long—to make his announcement.”

Sisi’s run for the presidency exposes the fraud of the “democratic transition” promoted by the imperialist powers, the military junta and the official political parties in Egypt.

More than three years after the revolutionary ouster of long-time dictator and US-stooge Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian ruling elite and its imperialist backers are moving to install an even more direct brutal dictatorship to put an end to all strikes and protests.

Sisi’s speech comes amidst a deepening social crisis and a renewed explosion of working class struggles. According to Democracy Meter, an Egyptian research center, the number of strikes and protests in Egypt reached a record 1,044 in February. On Tuesday, the Egyptian online newspaper *Mada Masr* wrote that “despite official attempts to bring an end to a wave of labor unrest... a broad range of Egypt’s labor workforce embarked on nationwide strikes on Tuesday.” It reported: “Doctors, dentists, pharmacists, postal workers, textile workers, custodial staff and others all staged walkouts during the day.”

The junta is preparing to confront the working class with terror. According to reports, police arrested leaders of the 50,000-member postal workers strike in dawn raids on Tuesday in Egypt’s second largest city, Alexandria. The postal chief has reportedly claimed that the workers are affiliated to the MB, which has been denied by family members. During the past two days, security forces have cracked down on students in Cairo protesting the death sentences for MB members. At least one student was killed.

The junta’s violent attempts to crush all opposition to its rule highlight the counterrevolutionary character of the liberal and “left” political organizations of Egypt’s affluent middle class. Organizations such as the National Salvation Front (NSF) and Tamarod—and their pseudo-left supporters, most prominently the misnamed Revolutionary Socialists (RS) group—played a key role in channeling mass protests against former president

Mohammed Mursi of the MB behind the military.

Now most of these groups are supporting Sisi’s presidency. The Tamarod movement gave its full-fledged support to Sisi. In a statement published on Wednesday it claimed that “our choice for a figure like the marshal [Sisi] is representative of a big section of the Egyptian people.”

Nasserite politician Hamdeen Sabahi, a leader of the NSF and the Karama Party, and so far the only other presidential candidate, praised Sisi’s candidacy in a tweet. “I welcome Sisi’s candidacy, and we seek ... democratic elections that [are] transparent and guarantee neutrality of the nation and the will of the people to choose their president freely.”

The liberal Constitution Party, formerly led by Mohammad ElBaradei, also hinted its support, declaring that “Sisi has the right to enter the race as civilian citizen after resigning from his military position.”



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