

Revolutionary situation in Arab World

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I can say without hesitation that the Tunisian and Egyptian people are writing the first pages of the revolutions of the 21st century. They are sending shock waves throughout the Arab world, from Algiers to Ramallah, from Amman to Sana'a in Yemen. These revolutions are also results, from the crisis that is shaking the world capitalist system. Clearly this is similar to what could happen in Lanka. The "poverty riots" are combined with an immense mobilisation for democracy. The effects of the world economic crisis combined with the oppressive dictatorships are making these countries too weak links in the global capitalist system in the current situation. They are creating the conditions for the opening of processes of social and democratic revolution.

Demonstrations, strikes, mass meetings, self-defence committees, mobilizations by trade unions and civil associations are included in these mobilizations of all the popular classes. Like 'those below' and 'those in the middle' are together swinging over into insurrection. Those above who can no longer rule as before are frightened and desperate. There is convergence between parties from the radical opposition against the system. In Egypt we see hundreds of thousands of workers, young people and unemployed stand up against the dictatorship of Mubarak. In Tunisia, a bloody dictatorship was cut down. It was the focus of the hatred of a whole society; the popular classes and especially of the youth. The Ben Ali regime, its repression, its corruption, a system supported by all the global powers, France, the USA, the European Union, had to be thrown out. Similar movement is sweeping through Egypt too. There are, of course, historical differences between the two countries. But it is the same basic movement that is affecting the two countries. The Tunisian masses could no longer stand an economic system - "a good pupil of the world economy" according to Mr. Strauss-Kahn - which starved them. The explosion of the prices of basic foodstuffs, unemployment of almost 30 percent, and hundreds of thousands of trained and qualified young people without jobs constituted fertile ground for the growth of a social revolt that, combined with a political crisis, led to a revolution. These are the exact conditions developing in Lanka. In Tunisia too there were dramatic price rises for all essential products, including rice, wheat and corn, between 2006 and 2008. The price of rice tripled in five years, passing from approximately \$600 per ton in 2003 to more than \$1800 per ton in May 2008. At the same time, the IMF and the WTO are demanding the lifting of all tariff barriers and an end to all food subsidies.

Rise in food prices

The recent speculative rise in food prices encouraged a worldwide development of famine on an unprecedented scale, which is hitting a series of countries in the developing world. Egypt has also experienced the effects of this explosion of food prices. The economy does not create enough jobs to provide for the population's needs. The neoliberal policies implemented since 2000 have caused an explosion of inequalities and the impoverishment of millions of families. Nearly 40 percent of the 80 million Egyptians continue to live on less than two dollars per day. And 90 percent of the unemployed are young people under 30. They wanted price controls, wage rises and a system of subsidized distribution of foodstuffs; the people not being able to obtain basic necessities such as tea or oil. That the union leaders should demand this is unprecedented because they have been convinced neo-liberal supporters. That is the impact of the Tunisian events. In Lanka too such developments are taking place.

In Tunisia, this revolution has deep roots. The current social movement is the result of a cycle of mobilizations and movements which draw their strength from the history of the struggles of the Tunisian people and its organizations, in particular, many associations for human rights and democratic freedoms and trade unions like many sectors of the UGTT (General Union of the Tunisian Workers). It is a historical movement that started with this combination of social revolt and overthrowing a dictatorship but which today seeks to go further. It is a radical democratic revolution that has anti capitalist social demands. Ben Ali had to flee, but the essence of his gangster system stayed in place. The force of the mobilization has constrained the former Ben Ali supporters to leave the government gradually. Revolution wants to go further: "RCD out! ", "Ghannouchi out! ", behind these demands, it is the whole of the political system, all the institutions, all the repressive apparatus that should be eradicated. It is necessary to finish with the whole Ben Ali system, and to establish all democratic rights and freedoms: right of free expression, right to strike, right to demonstrate, pluralism of associations, trade unions and parties; abolish the presidency and install a provisional revolutionary government! Getting rid of the dictatorship and of all operations that want to protect the power of the ruling classes means today opening a process of free elections for a constituent assembly. This process should lead to a democratic government that would be at the service of the workers and the population.

In Egypt too, it is necessary to finish with dictatorship and to found a democratic process with all the rights and fundamental democratic liberties. The current movement is the most important since the 1977 bread riots but here again it has deep roots. For the last 30 years Mubarak has maintained a dictatorial regime, imprisoning and murdering his opponents, suppressing any independent expression of the social movement and political opposition. The electoral masquerade of November 2010, entirely controlled by the NDP which won more than 80 percent of the seats, is the latest example. In the last few years there have been important strike movements particularly of the textile workers of El-Mahalla, general strikes and demonstrations and protests by different social categories, big anti-imperialist mobilizations against the military occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan in 2004, marking the disavowal and isolation of a regime that is held up only by support of the USA and the European Union.

The three capitalist pillars

Egypt was, with Israel and Saudi Arabia, one of the three pillars of global capitalist policy in the region. The USA, Israel and Europe will do everything they can to prevent Egypt escaping from their zone of influence and will do everything they can to oppose a revolutionary development of the protests. The Tunisian revolution set the Arab world ablaze. It is also for a whole generation their first revolution. Everything can change today with the rising of the Egyptian people. The mobilization will undoubtedly have repercussions through the region, in particular encouraging the Palestinians despite the shameful statement of Mahmoud Abbas.

We have to build a solidarity wall around the revolutionary processes which developing in Tunisia and Egypt by taking the example of these struggles and launching such mass action against the dictatorial Mahinda regime.

P.S.

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