

Egypt's Left Launches 'Democratic Revolutionary Coalition'

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An initiative of 10 leftist parties and movements - named the Democratic Revolutionary Coalition - is officially launched Wednesday; members announced that protest will be held 22 September in Cairo

Ten leftist parties and movements announced Wednesday the formation of a joint coalition named the Democratic Revolutionary Coalition (DRC) during a press conference at the headquarters of Egyptian Socialist Party in downtown Cairo.

"The Egyptian left has always been one of the main pillars of the national movements in Egypt's history," said Ahmed Bahaa El-Din Shaaban, secretary general of the Egyptian Socialist Party.

Shaaban explained the reasons behind the current initiative to unify, due to "the criticality of the current situation in Egypt, with attempts at turning Egypt into a religious state ... Egyptian identity is being threatened, and the revolution is at stake."

The long-time socialist activist pointed out that this is the first time in Egypt's history that the left unites.

In 2006, different leftist groups tried to form what was known as the Socialist Alliance. This aimed at creating a leftist alternative, especially amid the new wave of industrial action emerging at the time. Yet no sooner had the alliance been announced than differences between its members paralysed its work on the ground.

After the 25 January uprising, five socialist groups and newly established parties, namely the Egyptian Socialist Party, the Socialist Popular Alliance, the Tagammu Party, the Workers and Peasants Party, and the Egyptian Communist Party, announced that they would unite with the Revolutionary Socialists to form a "socialist front." Once again the initiative failed to produce a leftist umbrella. Four of the groups that tried to unite in 2011 are now members of the DRC.

The new coalition is formed of 10 leftist parties and movements: the Egyptian Socialist Party, the Socialist Popular Alliance, the Tagammu Party, the Workers and Peasants Party, the Egyptian Communist Party, the Democratic Popular Movement, the Egyptian Coalition to Fight Corruption, the Socialist Revolutionary Movement (January), the Socialist Youth Union and the Mina Daniel Movement.

Coalition leaders said they aim to ally with other national coalitions; however, Workers and Peasants Party co-founder Kamal Khalil underlined that any coalition is possible except "for whoever allied with SCAF, was party to Mubarak's regime or was against the revolution."

"We're going through a dangerous phase that demands the unity of all national forces and not just the left," said Khalil.

Khalil revealed the DRC's intention to unite with both Nasserist Hamdeen Sabbahi's Popular Current and reform campaigner Mohamed ElBaradei's Constitution Party.

"We will unite on the streets and during elections. From now there is no 'I' but 'us.' This is a starting point for a democratic coalition against the classist rulers," said Khalil, stressing that unity will be based on the goals of the revolution rather on an ideological basis.

Forces coordinate

A number of initiatives are emerging in the political sphere in an attempt to counter Islamist domination over political life in Egypt. One is former Arab League secretary general Amr Moussa's Conference Party, a party of 25 currents and movements representing liberals, leftists and remnants of the Mubarak regime.

Sabbahi's Popular Current is also emerging as a powerful force, and this week ElBaradei's Constitution Party was legally recognised.

Many during the press conference voiced criticisms of the Muslim Brotherhood, implying that it is now their rival in the battle to accomplish the goals of the revolution.

"The domination of the Muslim Brotherhood in political life in Egypt is a danger that we need to overcome," said Adel El-Mashad, a member of the Socialist Popular Alliance.

El-Mashad said that the Brotherhood, the group President Mohamed Morsi hails from, have left them with no options but to be at the front rows of their opponents.

"The Muslim Brotherhood are still weak, but they are doing the best they can to gain further control over the country, and that will be through compromising to the imperialist and Zionist forces," added El-Mashad.

Also criticising the Brotherhood during the press conference, Salah Adly of the Egyptian Communist Party said: "They are now calling the workers strikes sectoral and accuse them of repelling foreign investment; they are using the same rhetoric that was used during the time of Mubarak."

Adly pointed out that during President Morsi's visit to China in late August he was accompanied by "Mubarak-era businessmen."

"We've seen how strikes are being suppressed these days, the Nile University students, public transportation workers, and the workers of Cairo University," said labour activist Khalil who said the Brotherhood is "now showing their true colours."

Khalil addressed the Brotherhood, warning them that the same Egyptian people that ousted Hosni Mubarak is able to oust the Brotherhood and their supreme guide.

"Oppressing strikes and the Egyptian people is crossing the red line," said Khalil, who accused the Brotherhood of pairing up with the former Mubarak regime in ruling Egypt.

"They're following in the steps of Mubarak, but rather in a worse manner with more subordination to the US and Israel," said Khalil.

Protests to follow

By the end of the conference, members announced that a protest will be held 22 September in Talaat

Harb Square, to voice key demands, which are: refusal of the Islamist-dominated Constituent Assembly; demanding the release of prisoners jailed during protests on politics-related cases, and the release of the military officers arrested 8 April.

The protest is also scheduled to oppose the IMF loan, to demand the removal of the current minister of interior, who activists see as “a clone of the ex-minister of interior, Habib El-Adly.”

El-Adly served as interior minister under Mubarak from 1997 till 2011. During his tenure, police brutality became pervasive, which is deemed to be one of the factors that triggered last year’s uprising.

Under El-Adly’s command, police forces also opened fire on protesters in the early days of the revolt, which toppled Mubarak on February 11 of last year. Both men in June were slapped life sentences for ‘failing to protect civilians’ during that period.

Hesham Fouad, a leading member of the Revolutionary Socialists, told Ahram Online that his movement is happy that the left is once again considering unity, adding that “Even though the principle of having a united left is essential for us, we don’t think that working with the Tagammu Party is acceptable.”

The Tagammu Party, the oldest formal leftist party, was accused by many groups on the left as being opportunistic. However, party leaders say that many changes have been made to mend party politics.

“Before talking about unity, we have to know on what stances, and with who. We can’t afford another bubble that will quickly burst,” Fouad said.

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P.S.

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