

The Arab revolutions mix despair and hope - “The most important task right now for socialists and revolutionaries across the Arab region is to get organized”

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Only in the most mechanical understanding of history do relations of oppression and exploitation automatically translate into revolution.

Having said that, it is important for socialists to look objectively at the current twists and turns of the revolutionary process. This is not just to feed intellectual curiosity, but more importantly to understand how revolutionary politics can adapt and push forward in such difficult times.

So it is important to understand recent events in the Middle East—especially Iraq—in a wider context.

In Tunisia, where the Arab revolutions began, we have seen the introduction of a new constitution. This guarantees important democratic rights, but it hasn't radically changed the nature of the state.

In Egypt, president Mohamed Mursi was deposed following mass protests, but this movement was hijacked with a coup d'état by the military council. The shift was confirmed in the recent election of military leader Abdel Fatah el-Sisi as president.

In Syria, Bashar al-Assad's regime has built on support from Iran and Russia, and the heavy deployment of Hizbollah fighters from Lebanon. This has stabilised it enough to solidify its power in the recent rigged elections.

Iraq witnessed mass protests in 2012 and 2013 in several Sunni-dominated regions. They were supported by various Shia figures including Moqtada al-Sadr—against the sectarian politics of Nouri al-Maliki. They faced heavy repression, which halted the popular movement.

Heavy repression that was directed against protesters in Bahrain has considerably limited the movement's momentum.

These events signal a rise in the counter-revolutionary wave sweeping across the region. Admitting such facts does not negate the revolutionary process.

Quite the contrary, it takes it away from the realm of fantasy towards the domain of reality.

Deviation

In this light, the recent events in Iraq are not, as many wish them to be, an upsurge in revolutionary politics. They sadly mark a deviation towards more regressive and sectarian politics.

And it is important to state that overwhelming dissatisfaction does not by its mere existence translate into a revolution, or an uprising. It can also become a breeding ground for sectarian and

counter-revolutionary politics.

This is most true in the absence of a unified popular movement, and more importantly, of an organised revolutionary party.

That is why the most important task right now for socialists and revolutionaries across the Arab region is to get organised. We have to work tirelessly in winning sections of the working class away from defeatist, opportunist and sectarian ideas. If these are left uncontested, they could lead to the disillusionment of workers into regressive and sectarian politics.

The revolutionary conditions and contradictions within Arab societies that led to the first waves of revolutionary upsurges from 2011 are far from being resolved. But history does not progress in a straight line.

Admitting the existence of the current downturn will allow us to be prepared and organised for coming struggles in the future.

And that is why it is crucial to avoid two traps. We must not negate the revolutionary processes, as many on the Stalinist and nationalist left have done by surrendering their souls to the ruling classes. On the other hand, we cannot afford to be taken up by a euphoric fantasy of wishful thinking and dreadful populism.

Either fault will foster the political conditions that favour counter-revolutionary despair.

We have a long and difficult task ahead. It is not enough to only produce the correct politics. We need to be able to build a true revolutionary party, that can transmit hope among the working masses. We need the capacity and ability to fight the ruling order, and at the same time to fend off the regressive currents within society.

We need a revolutionary party that can win the confidence of the people, and be ready to conduct the struggle to the end.

Bassem Chit

P.S.

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<http://socialistworker.co.uk/art/38425/The+Arab+revolutions+mix+despair+and+hope>

* Bassem Chit is a member of the Socialist Forum in Lebanon.