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Fourth International

Tunisia, Egypt: a revolutionary process of world scope

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The International Committee of the Fourth International at its annual meeting in late February 2011 unanimously adopted the following statement.

1. The extraordinary victory of the Egyptian people against Mubarak steps up the historical range of the Tunisian revolution that cut down the Ben Ali regime. In just a few days, the shock wave of these popular victories extended to the entire Arab region and beyond that, influencing the class struggle across the world. Demonstrations, strikes, assemblies, self-defence committees, mobilizations of trade unions, high-school pupils, democratic associations clashed with absolute determination against state apparatuses, most particularly the police. Millions of Tunisians and Egyptians came into activity to bring down the dictators, and continue to mobilize to keep control of their revolutions.

2. This is a process of permanent revolution, which combines social, democratic, national sovereignty dimensions, and is spreading internationally. The effects of the world economic crisis, combined with savage oppression and the shameless corruption of the dictatorships, brought together the most disadvantaged popular layers, the organized working class and the middle classes, young people and old, women and men. The Tunisian and Egyptian masses could no longer accept economic systems that marginalized them. As in many neighbouring countries, integration with capitalist globalization led to economic growth that did not create employment but rather an unprecedented concentration of wealth, an unequal development of the country and a general degradation of living and working conditions.

One of the main reasons for these revolutions has been the explosion of food prices in the last few years. The rapid process of climate change has led to the current world food crisis, particularly in countries like Tunisia. The economic liberalization imposed by the IMF, WTO and the EU has led to increased casualization of workers, drastic cuts in public services and mass unemployment particularly hitting young graduates. With the additional closing of the borders of the European Union to the possibilities of emigration, and the contraction of the labour market in the Gulf States, any prospect of escaping poverty has disappeared.

At the same time there was a drastic smothering of freedoms and democratic rights by police states which imposed generalized social control. The fact that the parliamentary representatives of the "opposition" parties were tolerated by the Tunisian and Egyptian dictatorships only as phantoms while civil associations were reduced to shells or prevented from functioning led to an impossibility of countervailing powers. This created a situation where, between the dictatorships and the populations, there was only the figure of an autocratic leader and a devoted and savage repressive apparatus. And the gangster-style functioning of the clans in power completed their delegitimization.

Lastly, these two regimes were characterized by their collaboration with the Zionist Israeli state, which exasperated their populations, who identify with the sufferings of the Palestinian people, even more.

Faced with all these injustices, strikes and social explosions had multiplied in recent years, allowing an accumulation of experience without however managing to break down the wall of fear for the majority of the populations. This wall was submerged in a few weeks, and in spite of the very many victims, the Tunisian people, then with their example in mind the Egyptian people, carried out an uninterrupted fight until the departure of the dictators Ben Ali and Mubarak.

3. With these victories, the people of the Arab area show their immense dignity, through their irruption onto the political scene of democracy and class struggle, no longer locked in the deathly alternative (or combination) of autocracies or Islamism in which they had been trapped for thirty years. The popular classes and, in first place, the working class of this region have won the means of asserting all democratic freedoms, women to assert their rights

and equality with men. The workers have won the means of fighting back on a much higher level against the neoliberal programmes of overexploitation, and to profoundly destabilize the means by which both American and European imperialist maintain their hold on the region, articulated in the State of Israel. The Israeli regime, and all currents within it, made no mistake when it demanded Western support for the dictators up to the very end.

The revolutions in the Arab region show the potential for social emancipation of all mass struggles against injustice. The active role of women in these mobilizations is an unmistakable sign. It makes it possible to combat the racist and Islamophobic campaigns on the so-called "clash of civilizations" that try to make us believe that the mobilization of Arabic-Muslim peoples paves the way to fundamentalism.

This dynamic will have effects in the whole world. It has already immediately in Jordan, with Yemen, with Bahrain, in Syria, in Libya, in Algeria, with Morocco and in Mauritania, even if one cannot foretell the exact rhythm and in which order the regimes will fall, given that each struggle has its own specificities. Especially in Libya where the regime has attacked the population with military jets and helicopters and already killed more than 500 people there is a rapid escalation of the situation, which demands our full solidarity.

These revolutions create new more favourable conditions for the struggle of the Palestinians, a struggle that the Fourth International encourages and supports. The Egyptian revolution puts concretely onto the agenda an end to that crime against humanity known as the blockade of Gaza. Faced with this, the response of the Zionist state could become harsher and more brutal. Mobilizations to stop this should be stepped up.

The dynamic of these revolutions encourages also the fights against the dictatorships in Iran and as far as China, where the oppositions take as a starting point methods of coordination used in Tunisia and Egypt, like the use of social networks. It will inevitably encourage the mobilizations of migrant communities from the Arab region, who are overexploited and oppressed in the advanced capitalist countries. More than ever we have to stand shoulder to shoulder with these populations.

But these processes could have still more global consequences in the same imperialist countries where the workers and the young people clash more and more massively with austerity plans, without finding the way of success: they show that a revolution from the bottom up is possible in the 21st century, that it can cut down an apparently impregnable political regime and win conquests that appeared inaccessible as recently as yesterday!

4. The gains of these processes are certainly fragile in both Tunisia and Egypt, but essential for what follows. Being based on recent popular experiences, and the longstanding implantation of the radical left in the trade unions, self-organization developed massively when it was necessary for demonstrators and the inhabitants of popular districts to protect themselves from police exactions and the regimes' militias, in Tunisia de Sidi Bouzid to the popular quarters of the big cities and the Kasbah in Tunis; in Egypt from Tahrir Square in Cairo to the popular districts of Suez, Mansourah or Alexandria. Unimaginable scenes a few days before, Muslims and Copts mutually protected their prayers; blue-collar workers and young Net surfers, women and clerics, writers and taxi drivers stood side by side at the points attacked by the henchmen of Mubarak. The people succeeded in destabilizing the army while systematically trying to fraternize with the soldiers.

The dictators fled, the leaderships of the parties in power were forced out under the pressure of the mobilizations, and the popular mobilizations continue. In Tunisia, the most corrupt leaders are being prosecuted, the funds and the goods of the RCD have been seized, and its buildings have become peoples' houses. Most political prisoners have been released. Though they have not been dismantled, the police apparatuses of the two countries are disorganized. The ministry employees are starting to exert control on their leaders, like those in the Tunisian Ministry for Foreign Affairs who forced the resignation of their minister who had praised the French Foreign Minister Alliot-Marie. Many Tunisian governors, mayors and public officials have had to resign. The Tunisian masses are even demanding the

departure of the newly-arrived French ambassador after his antagonistic statement! Many temporary employees in the civil service have been given permanent posts; the capital of the most corrupted enterprise leaders of Tunisia has been nationalized. In Egypt, these processes are also underway. Civil servants have obtained pay rises of 15%; many workers' strikes are developing in spite of the threats of the new regime.

5. Of course, the dominant classes did not remain inert and will be increasingly active faced with the revolutionary processes. In Tunisia, the "neutrality" of the army and the departure of Ben Ali were counterbalanced by the maintenance in power of his Prime Minister Ghannouchi and many leaders of the RCD, which was to be legitimated by the arrival in the government of several opposition parties and major trade union UGTT. The refusal of this and the popular mobilization imposed a second government where only the Prime Minister remains among the executives of the RCD. But the new regimes is advised by executives of French imperialism, and it is putting all its energy to convincing, alongside the Tunisian capitalists and the army, the workers to resume work "like before". It would be a question of closing a parenthesis... while simply announcing general elections in 6 months.

In Egypt, it is the army that is directly ensuring the "transition", with the menacing Suleiman as Minister of the Interior, a proven torturer, friend of Israel and agent of the CIA of public notoriety. There too, the people are called upon to be reasonable, to allow the continuation of tourism and foreign investments, with the promise of elections in a few months... and threats of a resumption of repression.

The Sarkozy and Berlusconi governments, which did not see what was coming and made matters worse in their support to the bitter end for Ben Ali, are at the forefront of the European Union in now requesting the revival of business and a return to police blockings of migrants. The Obama administration is much more flexible: not having foreseen controlled the movement in Egypt, it pretends to overlap with it. But its close links with the army command weighs as a permanent threat on the Egyptian revolutionary process, and will require keeping the Palestinian border in Gaza closed. Above all the international institutions will demand guarantees concerning the traffic in the Suez canal and respect of the fundamentals of modern capitalism: payment of the national debt, however iniquitous; respect of total opening to foreign capital and products, continuing deregulation.

6. In this process, the whole system has to be eradicated in order to establish all democratic rights and freedoms: right to free speech, right to strike, right to demonstrate, pluralism of associations, trade unions and parties, liquidation of the presidential institution and introduction of a revolutionary provisional government. Today the opening of a process of free elections for a constituent assembly is necessary.

In order for this not to be halted by a new regime of the oligarchies, this process must be based on the organization of the popular committees, coordinations and councils that emerged in the population. In this process, the anticapitalists will defend the key demands of a programme breaking with imperialism and capitalist logic: satisfaction of the vital needs of the popular classes - bread, wages, jobs; reorganization of the economy on the basis of fundamental social needs, free and adequate public services (schools, health), women's rights, broadening social protection for unemployment, health and retirement, radical land reform, socialization of the banks and key sectors of the economy, cancellation of the debt, national and popular sovereignty. This programme of a government that would be at the service of the workers and the population is proposed in Tunisia by the League of the Workers' Left (Ligue de la Gauche Ouvrière). This is a component of the 14th of January Front which brings together the left forces rejecting the Ghannouchi government and fighting for all democratic freedoms, a Constituent Assembly and the satisfaction of fundamental needs. This programme is also defended in Egypt by the regroupment of revolutionaries that is in process.

7. The Tunisian and Egyptian peoples, and all the people of the Arab region still need our solidarity in the fight for democratic freedoms. They need even more our mobilization to loosen the grip of imperialism: non payment of the foreign debts of the former regimes, restitution of the goods and financial assets of the dictators, protection of the

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national sovereignty of the people against the pressures of international capitalism; cancelling of the international agreements signed by the former regime in the military, security and migration sectors. Revolutionaries throughout the world also have the essential task of making all possible links with the trade unions, people's organizations and associations and anticapitalist organizations of these countries, to help with the consolidation of the revolutionary processes in progress, and to support the self-organization of the people concerned. The revolution underway in the Arab region is our combat!

We already support the following initiatives:

- ▶ the appeal of the Assembly of Social Movement meeting at the World Social Forum in Dakar for a worldwide of solidarity with the revolution in the Arab region on the 20th March of (anniversary of the invasion of Iraq in 2003);
- ▶ the conference of revolutionary organizations in the Arab region in Tunis called by the LGO from 25th to 27th March;
- ▶ the Mediterranean anti-capitalist conference called by the NPA which will take place in Marseilles on the 7th and 8th of May.

Amsterdam

22nd February 2011

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