

Egypt's regime perpetrates a massive election fraud

WIDESPREAD INTIMIDATION of voters and opposition candidates and blatant ballot rigging resulted in 'victory' for Egypt's ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) in the country's recent parliamentary elections.

David Johnson

Many polling stations were closed to voters, who also faced violence from security forces. Ballot boxes were stuffed with forged ballot papers. Candidates' representatives and independent observers were barred from polling stations. One candidate got no votes, even though he voted for himself!

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The NDP won 97% of seats. If the results are to be believed, over 90% of Egyptians want the NDP regime to continue! It's more likely that 90% want it to end. Independent estimates put voter turnout at 10%-15%, compared to 25% at the 2005 election.

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) won 88 of the 508 seats in 2005 (standing as independents as the MB is illegal), becoming the largest

opposition party.

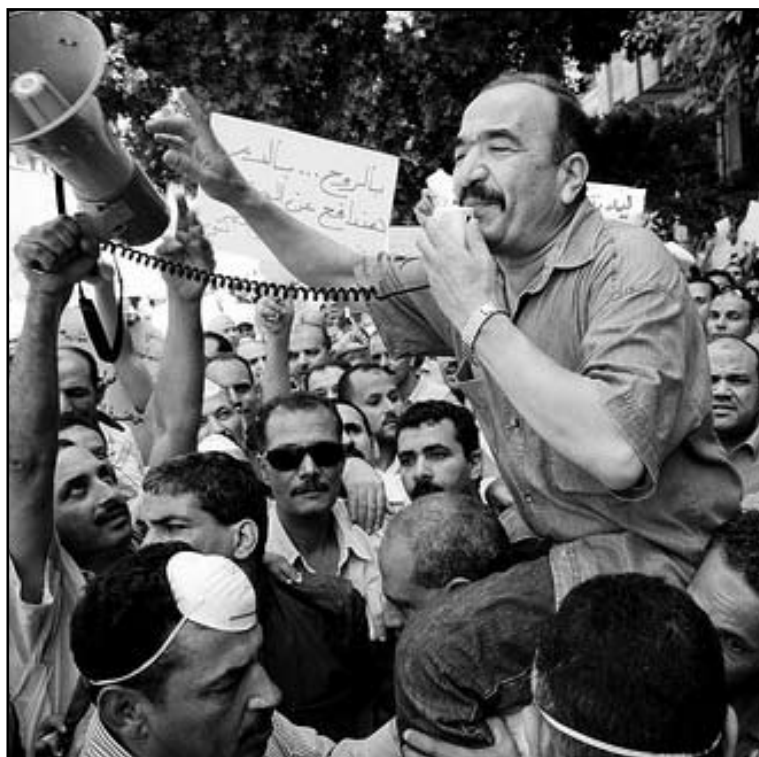
Laws were then changed, making it harder for opposition candidates to stand and even harder to win. Supervision of elections by judges was ended. They have a history of independence from the regime. In 2006 hundreds of judges protested against victimisation after electoral fraud was exposed.

Prior to this election, repression of the MB was increased. 1,400 leaders and activists were arrested, MB businesses closed and student members targeted by police. A media campaign was launched, aimed at undermining MB's reputation for being relatively free from corruption.

In the first round of voting the MB did not win a single seat. Other parties that contested the election won five seats between them. The MB and Al-Wafd, a liberal party, then withdrew from the second round of voting, although Al-Tagammu, an ex-workers' party, continued.

While the outcome of the election was never in doubt, the battle within the NDP to become candidates was fiercely fought. A non-refundable, minimum application fee of LE10,000 (£1,100) - three years pay on the minimum wage - did not deter a stream of businessmen keen to gain parliamentary immunity and government contracts.

Many recent scandals have exposed NDP politicians and wealthy businessmen profiting from close connections with ministers and the state. At the centre of this web are 82-year old president Hosni Mubarak and his son Gamal. A presidential election is due next year. The government was determined to prevent opposition in the new parliament.



A huge strike wave by workers gripped Egypt last year.

This election took place after a year of protests on a wider scale than for over 30 years.

Workers have been on strike and in occupations. Evicted residents protested over housing and property development. Poor farmers, people with disabilities, students, democracy protesters, opponents of police brutality and others have all been out on the streets.

Last spring at least four different protests took place each day outside parliament, some camping out for weeks.

Inside parliament nobody will be speaking for workers and the poor - against desperate poverty, high unemployment, rising prices and lack of housing, decent health services, education and welfare. This farcical election will fuel their anger.

A workers' party is needed to draw together these different protests. It could win mass support with a programme of democratic rights, free elections, an end to the dictatorship of big business, socialist nationalisation and workers' democracy.

Warmonger Rajapaksa forced to abandon his Oxford Union speech

HOWLS OF outrage greeted the news that the Oxford Union debating society had invited Sri Lankan president and suspected war criminal, Mahinda Rajapaksa, to address it on 1 December. But with thousands of Tamils in Britain preparing to picket the event, the Oxford Union cancelled Rajapaksa's invitation citing security concerns.

Earlier that week hundreds of protesters went to Heathrow airport as the man with the blood of tens of thousands of Tamil-speaking people on his hands touched down in Britain. Rajapaksa was being wined and dined at the Dorchester hotel and later met with secretary of state for defence, Liam Fox - while we pay the bill for his security.

Tamil Solidarity had contacted the Oxford Union by phone and email (see right) to demand that the event was cancelled, pointing out the long list of well-founded, well-documented allegations against Rajapaksa and his regime.

These allegations have been given extra weight by Wikileaks - which published a cable sent in January this year from the US ambassador to Sri Lanka, Patricia Butenis, pointing the war crimes finger at Rajapaksa and his crony regime: "... responsibility for many of the alleged crimes rests with the country's senior civilian and military leadership including President Rajapaksa and his brothers and opposition candidate General Fonseka."

However, the US administration

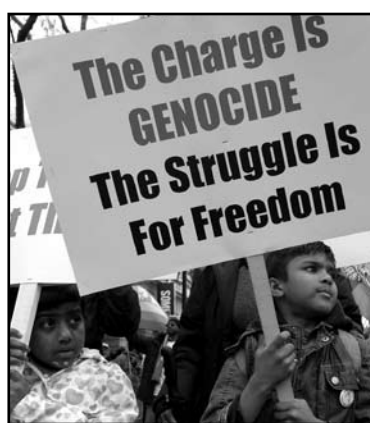


photo Paul Mattsson

weren't prepared to expose an important political ally in south Asia.

Miliband's opportunism

WIKILEAKS ALSO published a US Embassy memo which quotes a British Foreign Office official who claimed that David Miliband, as Labour's foreign secretary in 2009, (cynically) championed aid to Sri Lanka during the bloody end of the country's civil war in order to win the support of expatriate Tamils living in key Labour marginal seats.

"He said that with UK elections on the horizon and many Tamils living in Labour constituencies with slim majorities, the government is paying particular attention to Sri Lanka, with Miliband recently remarking to Waite [the FO official] that he was spending 60% of his time at the moment on Sri Lanka."

The following letter was sent by the campaigning organisation, Tamil Solidarity, to the president of the Oxford Union calling on the debating society to withdraw its invitation to president Rajapaksa.

Dear James Kingston and the Oxford Union,

We note with grave concern your invitation to president Mahinda Rajapaksa to address the Oxford Union this week.

Despite protestations to the contrary by the president and his regime, the brutality and excesses of the Sri Lankan armed forces in their prosecution of the civil war have been well documented. Let it be clear, we are not talking here about unsubstantiated reports. There is irrefutable evidence of the massacre of thousands of Tamil civilians, especially in the final weeks of the war last year. Irrefutable proof of the bombing by Sri Lankan armed forces of emergency hospitals and aid centres. There has been a series of criticisms from agencies such as the United Nations, International Committee of the Red Cross, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, to name just a handful. Now, this week, Channel 4 News has released further footage of summary executions which everyone, apart from the Sri Lankan regime and its representatives, agrees is authentic.

Following the brutal finale of the war, hundreds of thousands of Tamil-speaking people were rounded up in open prison camps and held in the most horrendous conditions, lacking basic sanitation, health and other essential services. Still, today, so-called 'secret' camps are in operation.

We could add many more examples - and invite you to look at the reports on our website - to illustrate the true nature of the regime, the head of which you have now invited to address your meeting.

This decision is a gross insult to the hundreds of thousands of Tamil-speaking people in Sri Lanka and worldwide, who are still grieving the loss of loved ones and who are trying to cope with the trauma, distress and fall-out from this most brutal of conflicts.

We urge you to rescind this invitation immediately.

Yours faithfully
Manny Thain,
Tamil Solidarity national secretary

Kazakhstan - a repressive and corrupt state

TIMUR KULIBAYEV is married to the daughter of Kazakhstan's dictatorial president Nursultan Nazarbayev. In 2007 he paid his golf partner Prince Andrew - fourth in line to the throne and Britain's special representative for international trade and investment - £15 million for his 12-bedroom mansion at Sunninghill Park, Surrey, paying £3 million over the asking price. It had been on the market for five years and is still empty and is now dilapidated.

John Sharpe

Leaked US state department cables refer to Kulibayev as the "perfectly tanned" "manicured billionaire", "the ultimate controller of 90% of the economy". He paid Elton John £1 million to sing at his 41st birthday bash in 2007.

But while the rich oligarchy in the former Soviet republic enjoy a jet set lifestyle, Socialist Resistance Kazakhstan - the counterpart of the Socialist Party in Kazakhstan - and other activists have been subject to a vicious wave of repression by the authorities.

Censorship, beatings, frame-ups, imprisonment and torture were used by the dictatorial regime in an attempt to frighten campaigners and trade unionists in the run up to the 1-2 December 2010 summit for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This was a meeting of 56 heads of state in Astana, Kazakhstan, which holds the OSCE presidency for 2010. Mockingly, Nazarbayev opened the OSCE conference on 'tolerance and non-discrimination' earlier this year.

Joe Higgins, Socialist Party MEP for Dublin, visited Kazakhstan as part of a European parliamentary delegation to investigate the human rights situation last September and was able to report to the European Union (EU) Human Rights committee on the brutal, repressive regime in Kazakhstan and its blatant breaches of human, civil and political rights.

But this doesn't appear to concern the EU or the OSCE who have eyes only for Kazakhstan's oil and are keen to do business with Andy's golf and dining partner.

See www.socialistworld.net for more information about Kazakhstan.

the committee for a workers international

THE COMMITTEE for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated. The CWI is organised in 40 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world.

For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3688, London E11 1YE. email cwi@worldsoc.co.uk. www.socialistworld.net