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**Tunisia and  
Egypt rise up:  
victory to the  
Arab peoples'  
intifada!**

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In developments of great magnitude, wrote Marx, “*twenty years are no more than a day – though later on days may come again in which twenty years are embodied*”. The current revolutionary struggles in Tunisia and Egypt furnish yet more proof of the correctness of this profound observation. Before the events of recent weeks, both Tunisia and Egypt presented an outward image of calm serenity. Their dictatorial governments felt secure, and the masses gave the appearance of having reconciled themselves to their fate under the suffocating dispensation of each regime.

## Condition of the people

Both regimes were notorious for the application of brutality and medieval torture; for their attempts to crush and destroy physically, morally and intellectually all those who presented the slightest danger to them. Torture, beatings, show trials and imprisonment have been the lot of their opponents, from communists to Islamists. All political, trade-union, progressive thought or cultural manifestation has been repressed.

In the economic sphere, both regimes, while allowing imperialist corporations and their local agents to plunder freely, imposed unbearable burdens on the working class and broad masses, thus arousing the resentment of vast swathes of society. Both have been notorious for cronyism and a byword for corruption, which has penetrated from the lowest state functionaries to the highest echelons of the state apparatus.

Although nominally both countries maintained a democratic façade, with the trappings of elections, in practice these were rigged affairs in single-party states, backed by thuggish police and paramilitary forces.

Although both regimes were advertised abroad as shining examples of ‘modernisation’, and portrayed as guarantors of ‘stability’ and ‘fighters against Islamic fundamentalism’, as a matter of fact, they were part of a string of states – from Israel to Saudi Arabia and Jordan to Yemen – that have been nurtured and supported by various imperialist powers in order that they might maintain their domination of the region’s resources (oil in particular) and keep extracting maximum profit.

To this end, US imperialism funds Egypt’s military to the tune of \$1.3bn a year, which has served to prop up the Mubarak dictatorship and keep it in the imperialist fold, where it has played a despicable role in helping to contain the Palestinian people’s struggle for national liberation. By extension, this unholy alliance was aimed at the suppression of the wider struggle of the Arab peoples against imperialist brigandage and predatory wars in the region.

It was in these conditions that the recent events unfolded so swiftly, as resistance to the two regimes finally burst through to the surface. No one had seemed to have the faintest idea that these apparently impregnable regimes, which had stifled and repressed the masses for so long and ruled over them with a rod of iron, had become so brittle and vulnerable.

## The Tunisian spark

The regime in Tunisia began to unravel on Friday 17 December, when Mohammed Bouazizi, a young man from a central Tunisian village, set himself on fire after police refused to let him sell fruit and vegetables without a permit and confiscated his stall. The news of his self-immolation spread like wildfire, and Mohammed’s protest against unemployment soon turned into a nationwide revolt against exclusion, grinding poverty,

exploitation, corruption, injustice and tyranny.

Attempts were made to crush this *intifada* (uprising) using a mixture of disinformation and brutal repression. The killing of demonstrators by police, however, merely gave impetus to the uprising, transforming it into a political movement for freedom and power through the overthrow of the Ben Ali clique.

Faced with determined mass resistance, Ben Ali the threatening bully quickly became a pale, quivering old man, pleading with the people to be allowed to stay a little longer – first for three years, then for just six months. Each time, the Tunisian masses thundered in response: ‘Not a day longer’. Finally, on 14 January, Ben Ali and his wife Leila fled to Saudi Arabia in the dead of night, carrying with them £35m in gold.

The reverberations of the Tunisian revolution have been felt across the region. The Arab masses have greeted with euphoria this first successful attempt at the overthrow of one of the region’s despotic rulers by the popular masses – achieved without foreign intervention or a coup d’état.

While events in Tunisia have brought joy to the Arab street, they have stunned reactionary rulers and brought them face to face with their worst nightmare: the thought that the Tunisian disease might infect their own subjects. This infection, however, cannot be stopped. Huge demonstrations have already taken place in Yemen, Jordan, Algeria and Mauritania.

## Egypt rises up

On Tuesday 25 January, inspired by their Tunisian brothers, tens of thousands of Egyptian protestors took to the streets in towns and cities all over the country, defying tear gas, water cannon, batons and live ammunition used by the hundreds of thousands of police who were deployed to disperse them.

In Cairo, protesters controlling Tahrir Square threw stones at police and chased them down the streets. As the demonstrations have continued, the country’s 350,000-strong police force has been forced to withdraw from the cities, to be replaced by an army that seems far less sure of its allegiance.

The main demand of the Egyptian demonstrators is an end to the corrupt and autocratic rule of Hosni Mubarak. He has so far clung on to his position, but he looks shakier every hour, and the protesters are determined not to let up until he goes.

Events in Tunisia and Egypt prove that no amount of repression and security apparatus, even backed by imperialism, can put a permanent stop to the Arab peoples’ struggle for liberation, especially now that the people of the region have finally started to lose their fear of their reactionary regimes.

Seeing the writing on the wall, imperialist statesmen and media have been blubbing about human rights and democracy, almost giving the impression of supporting the people’s uprisings. In part, they hope to hide imperialism’s backing of the dictatorships, but they also hope to influence future developments in a direction favourable to imperialist interests.

It is very much to be hoped that the masses will be successful in smashing all plots to steal their revolutions, and in installing revolutionary-democratic and genuinely anti-imperialist regimes – regimes that are able to attend to the problems of their own people and free the region from the suffocating grip of the imperialist looters. The Arab people have everything to gain from such a struggle, and we wish them every success.

**Victory to the *intifada*!**

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