

Traveling Soldier

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February 2011

Donations Welcome

Special Issue: Egypt, Tunisia, Libya

The Time Has Come "to Revolt Against Oppression"

[Thanks to Mohammed Omer and Mark Shapiro, Military Resistance Organization]

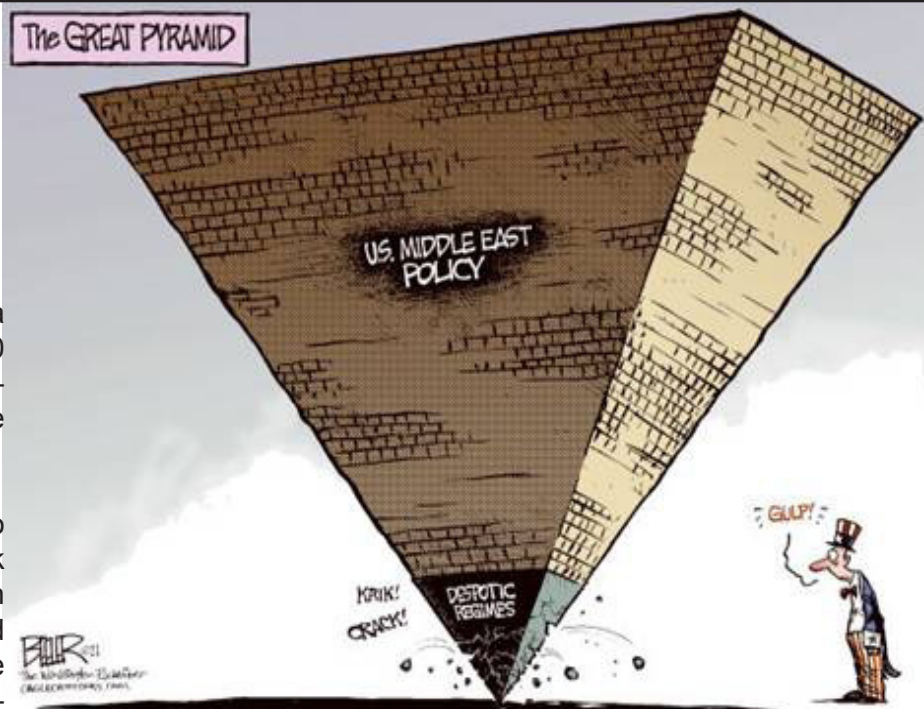
Feb 2, 2011 By Mohammed Omer, IPS

Khalid Ibrahim Al-Laisi has been a soldier in the Egyptian army for 20 years. Today, far from shooting protesters, he says the time has come "to revolt against oppression."

And as protesters vow to continue to press for President Hosni Mubarak to leave now, rather than at election time later in the year as he offered to do Tuesday, Al-Laisi, 38, is the face of an army that is one with protesters, not against them.

Khalid tells IPS just why. "My monthly wage is 1,100 Egyptian pounds (188 dollars). It's not enough, and I have to do another job in the evenings." He and his wife struggle to bring up their three children, aged 13, nine and four in the Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood of Cairo.

"No one can afford to live on these wages," he says.



"There is no joy in life. You bring a child into this world to enjoy life, not to feel trapped. One kilo of meat costs 60 Egyptian pounds (EGP) in today's market. To eat meat once a week costs me 300 (Egyptian) pounds a month. That leaves no money to go out and do anything else."

Al-Laisi was promoted recently, and that added 100 EGP to his salary. That went partly to pay for extra tu

toring for his son Mohammed. The tutoring costs 300 EGP a month.

The demonstrations have been effective, he says. "The bullet that does not hit, at least makes some noise," he says, repeating a popular saying in the army.

"Nothing comes overnight. But I am going to ask for my needs, because my life, like the life of so many others, has simply become

intolerable.”

The army man’s suffering is one with that of the people determined to continue the struggle to get Mubarak out. Mubarak’s declaration that he would leave was a triumph for the demonstrators, but not what many seemed prepared to be satisfied with, although crowds seemed divided on this.

“We still insist he should leave now,” political activist Buthaina Kamel said at Cairo’s Al Tahrir square after Mubarak’s television address Tuesday. Many demonstrators see their success as a revolution, and don’t want to give up.

Mustapha Al-Iraqi, a young oil engineer said he will not leave the square, and expects more protesters through the week. “President Mubarak is fooling around with our demands,” he said.

A high-ranking Egyptian official confirmed that the Egyptian Army will not shoot at protesting people.

The officers are expressing the sentiment of the soldiers, says Al-Laisi. “Who are we going to shoot? Our brothers and sisters?”

Groups of demonstrators were planning meanwhile to take their protests closer to Mubarak’s presidential palace.

Units of the Egyptian Army are surrounding the palace, which has been fortified with barbed wires and checkpoints.

It is still unclear how far the army will let protests go, and at what point at least some units of the army may step in against the demonstrations if the protesters go that far.

Army units deployed so far have been popular among the people,

and particularly the demonstrators. “The army and the people are one – hand in hand”, a group chanted. There has been an outpouring of expressions of support for the army.

The regime clearly wants to defuse the situation for now.

But, he said, “if the demonstrations are too peaceful, officials do not understand the urgency among the people.”

The protests are undoubtedly people driven, and not organized by parties. Muslim Brotherhood, the



An anti-dictatorship revolutionary argues to convince the soldiers not to remove opposition barricades next to the Egyptian Museum at an entrance to Tahrir square in Cairo, Egypt, Feb. 5, 2011. At the end of the day, the barricades were still standing. (AP Photo/Ben Curtis)

Yasmine Al- Jayyoshi, among the organizers of the demonstration, said she feared the regime would punish demonstrators. That was only another reason to stay on and protest, she said.

Al-Laisi said the violence was regrettable, and “private and public properties must be protected.”

Islamic party whose members won a fifth of seats in the last parliament despite reports of widespread rigging by the ruling party, seems to hold little sway over the thrust of the demonstrations.

The protests seem driven by wages and prices, and less by politics and ideology.

Egypt: The Clock Is Running

February 13, 2011 By Thomas Barton

The Egyptian February revolution has brought down the dictator.

The Egyptian people, long oppressed, have won a world-amazing political victory, and opened the way to wonderful possibilities.

But as yet there are only possibilities.

The material reality of the lives of the overwhelming majority of Egyptians who daily struggle to get enough to eat has not changed with the going of Mubarak.

One particularly murderous exploiter and a handful of his class allies have given up power, but the rest remain in their previous places, taking for themselves the wealth of Egyptian society.

They sacrifice a few of their associates to the revolution in a play for time to regroup and reorganize their forces.

The question opened now is which class will rule in Egypt, and that question will be decided in class warfare.

Preparation for a showdown in that war is beginning, hopefully on both sides.

Certainly those who consider the wealth of the society their private property are already preparing to insure their continued domination by armed force. This includes the members of the military general staff.

They are not all stupid, and some

understand that if this revolution isn't put down, as soon as practicable, they risk losing everything.

The soldiers will decide the outcome.

The soldiers' choice will be whether to follow the orders of the generals, who will be defending their own personal wealth and privilege as well as that of their class allies, or to choose to defy their generals

and go over to the Egyptian working class, and their allies. Winning the soldiers from below requires careful organization within their ranks.

This is not work that can be postponed.

This work is best organized now, before an offensive against the Egyptian revolution is set in motion by its enemies.



Shukran jazilan, Muhammad Saladin Nusair! Via February 19, 2011
Mother Jones [Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in.]

GENERAL, YOUR TANK IS A POWERFUL VEHICLE
By Bertolt Brecht

It smashes down forests and crushes a hundred men.
But it has one defect:
It needs a driver.

General, your bomber is powerful.
It flies faster than a storm and carries more than an elephant.
But it has one defect:
It needs a mechanic.

General, man is very useful.
He can fly and he can kill.
But he has one defect:
He can think

The Soldiers All Smiled With Delight



Tunisians citizens and a soldier discussing the political situation as they defy the curfew in the center of Tunis, Jan. 19, 2011. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

[Thanks to Alan Stolzer, Military Resistance Organization]

January 24, 2011 By DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK, The New York Times Company [Excerpts]

TUNIS — The general who may be both the most powerful and the most popular figure in Tunisia spoke publicly Monday for the first time since the ouster of the former dictator, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, pledging to uphold “the revolution” and urging patience until the interim government can hold new elections.

A crowd of soldiers who heard the speech, requesting anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly, said the general had explicitly endorsed the need for free elections.

Speaking fluent English, the soldiers said the general had told the crowd that both the people and the military would ensure a democratic outcome.

ding the country of the corruption that surrounded Mr. Ben Ali, and pledged their own support for a constitutional democracy.

Western diplomats and political scientists say the Tunisian military is unlike any other in North Africa and the Middle East — much smaller, more professional and historically apolitical. It has never fought wars and instead worked mostly on efforts like peacekeeping missions or disaster relief.

The soldiers themselves expressed considerable pride at the difference between their force and those in other countries in the region, like Egypt, where all three post-revolutionary dictators have come from the military and, they said, the military’s first loyalty is often to itself.

The soldiers all smiled with evident delight as they volunteered that their democratic revolution might threaten other Arab leaders. Challenges to the interim government’s

Caravans of hundreds of demonstrators had arrived in Tunis over the weekend from the impoverished southern provinces where the revolt began.

Defying an 8 p.m. curfew, they set up camp in the old-city square amid the office of the prime minister, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Defense.

Witnesses said that in the early hours of Sunday morning police officers stationed nearby tried to disperse the rowdy crowd with water cannons, but the Tunisian military again interceded to protect the demonstrators and hold back the police — a job that one army officer called “very difficult.”

By Monday morning, hundreds of local people had joined the newcomers, calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi, previously the right-hand man to Mr. Ben Ali. “Ghannouchi, wait, wait, we will dig you a grave,” they chanted.

Residents of Tunis donated stacks of old mattresses and bags of food for the demonstrators. Women dispensed sandwiches from the stone porch of the Ministry of Finance, renamed by graffiti artists the “Ministry of Thieves,” and demonstrators picnicked amid army tanks and coils of barbed wire.

The government appeared to be trying to wait out the protesters. A government official, speaking without authorization and on condition of anonymity, argued that the protesters would settle down after they had vented some of the pent-up anger left from decades of silence enforced by the old government.

Libyan Soldiers Defect

[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in. He writes "Shit hits the fan."]

21 Feb 2011 Al Jazeera and agencies [Excerpts]

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi will fight a popular revolt to "the last man standing," one of his sons said on Monday as people in the capital joined protests for the first time after days of violent unrest in the eastern city of Benghazi.

Anti-government protesters rallied in Tripoli's streets, tribal leaders spoke out against Gaddafi, and army units defected to the opposition as oil exporter Libya endured one of the bloodiest revolts to convulse the Arab world.

In Benghazi Habib al-Obaidi, a surgeon at the Al-Jalaa hospital, said the bodies of 50 people, mostly shot dead, were brought there on Sunday afternoon. Two hundred wounded had arrived, he said.

Members of an army unit known as the "Thunderbolt" squad had brought wounded comrades to the hospital, he said.

The soldiers said they had defected to the cause of the protesters and had fought and defeated Gaddafi's elite guards.

"They are now saying that they have overpowered the Praetorian Guard and that they have joined the people's revolt," another man at the hospital, lawyer Mohamed al-Mana, told Reuters by telephone. "We are in Tripoli, there are chants (directed at Gaddafi): 'Where are you? Where are you? Come out if you're a man,'" a protester told Al Jazeera on the phone.

Meanwhile the head of the Al-Zuwayya tribe in eastern Libya has threatened to cut off oil exports unless authorities stop what he called the "oppression of protesters", the Warfala tribe, one of Libya's biggest, has reportedly joined the anti-Gaddafi protests.

Protests have also reportedly broken out in other cities, including Bayda, Derna, Tobruk and Misrata - and anti-Gaddafi graffiti adorns the walls of several cities.

Anti-government protesters in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi have reportedly seized army vehicles and weapons amid worsening turmoil in the African nation.

A local witness said that a section of the troops had joined the protesters on Sunday as chaos swept the streets of the city, worst hit by the uprising against Muammar Gaddafi's 42-year old rule.

Mohamed, a doctor from Al Jalaa



One of two Libyan pilots, left, disembarks from his jet at the Malta International Airport in Gudja, Malta Feb. 21, 2011. Two Libyan airforce jets landed in Malta on Monday and their pilots asked for political asylum amid a bloody crackdown on anti-government protesters in Libya, a military source said. (AP Photo/Lino Arrigo Azzopardi)

hospital in Benghazi, confirmed to Al Jazeera that members of the military had sided with the protesters.

"We are still receiving serious injuries, I can confirm 13 deaths in our hospital. However, the good news is that people are cheering and celebrating outside after receiving news that the army is siding with the people," he said.

The forces who remain are "thugs" loyal to Gaddafi, Moftah said, and they are firing high-calibre ammunition at protesters.

The eyewitness report came a day after security forces opened fire at a funeral in the eastern coastal city on Saturday, killing at least 15 people and injuring scores more.

Against this backdrop of violence, opposition groups said some 50 Libyan Muslim leaders have urged security forces to stop killing civilians.

Military Resistance Statement on the TS Special Issue on the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya

Military Resistance has outreached to this armory in Harlem (and other places) for 8 years now. Our dedication remains firm, but now world events have escalated matters, rapidly bringing into focus new and critical horizons that concern your role and ours. Since we're all involved we need to try and keep up with these events and focus.

Consequently, we take this opportunity to rededicate our hopes for a better life, a better country and, at long last, true democracy.

You who read this are extremely critical to that future. Please consider what we feel to be the dawning of a new and just world in which all of us can contribute our very best.

With respect for your service.

In struggle,

Military Resistance

TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupations or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier.

But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance to Imperial wars inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. Contact us at

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

Traveling Soldier Editorial Board

J. Englehart (Iraq Veteran); P. Binh; F. Bouthillette (USNR, Veteran, Iraq Theatre); A. Winslow; T. Barton
Traveling Soldier is brought to you by the Military Resistance Organization

Troops Invited To Write In

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome.

Write to: Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email to Traveling Soldier at contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Phone #: 888.711.2550

Military Resistance Ten Points

Mission Statement

1. The mission of Military Resistance is to bring together in one organization members of the armed forces and civilians in order to give aid and comfort to members of the armed forces who are organizing to end the wars of empire in Afghanistan and Iraq. The long term objective is to assist in eliminating all wars of empire by eliminating all empires.

2. Military Resistance does not advocate individual disobedience to orders or desertion from the armed forces. The most effective resistance is organized by members of the armed forces working together.

However, Military Resistance respects and will assist in the defense of troops who see individual desertion or refusal of orders as the only course of action open to them for reasons of conscience.

3. Military Resistance stands for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. and other occupation troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Occupied nations have the right to independence and the right to resist Imperial invasion and occupation by force of arms.

4. Efforts to increase democratic rights in every society, organization, movement, and within the armed forces itself will receive encouragement and support.

Members of the armed forces, whether those of the United States or any other nation, have the right and duty to act against dictatorships commanding their services, and to assist civilian movements against dictatorship.

This applies whether a political dictatorship is imposed by force of arms or a political dictatorship is imposed by those in command of the resources of society using their wealth to purchase the political leadership.

5. Military Resistance uses organizational democracy.

This means control of the organization by the membership, through elected delegates to any coordinating bodies that may be formed, whether at local, regional, or national levels.

Any member may run for any job in the organization. All persons elected are subject to immediate recall, by majority vote of the membership.

Coordinating bodies report their actions, decisions and votes to the membership who elected them, and may be overruled by a majority of the membership.

6. It is not necessary for Military Resistance to be in political agreement with other organizations in order to work together towards specific common objectives.

It is productive for organizations working together on common projects to discuss differences about the best way forward for the movement. Debate is necessary to arrive at the best course of action.

Membership Requirements:

7. It is a condition of membership that each member prioritize and participate in organized action to reach out to active duty armed forces, Reserve and/or National Guard units.

8. Military Resistance or individual members may choose to support candidates for elective office who are for immediate withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, but do not support a candidate opposed to immediate, unconditional withdrawal.

9. Members may not be active duty or drilling reserve commissioned officers, or employed in any capacity by any police or intelligence agency, local, state, or national.

10. I understand and am in agreement with the above statement. I pledge to defend my brothers and sisters, and the democratic rights of the citizens of the United States, against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Signature

Date

Application Taken/Received By

MILITARY RESISTANCE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name (please print): _____

Armed Forces? (Branch) _____

Veteran? _____ Years: _____

Union: _____

Occupation: _____

Mailing address: _____

E-Mail: _____

Phone (Landline): _____

Phone (Cell): _____

\$ dues paid and receipt given by _____

(See next: Calendar year basis)

Armed Forces Members	@	Dues waived
Civilians	@ \$25	
Students/Unemployed	@	\$10
Civilian/Military Prisoners	@	Dues Waived

Comments:

NOTE: Civilian applicants will be interviewed, in person if possible, or by phone.