

Egypt: Cue the Dirty Tricks, False Flags To Discredit Pro-Democracy Movement

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The looting of Cairo's world-famous Egyptian Museum over the weekend seems to have engendered the desired news headlines.

'Looters smash ancient treasures', 'Looters decapitate mummies', 'Looters rip off heads of artifacts' etc., read a rash of headlines, following the apparent breaking into the country's national museum, which is said to house the world's biggest of Pharaonic antiquities.

However, it has since emerged, although with much less headline coverage, that some of the would-be looters apprehended by protesters outside the museum were identified as working for the state's interior ministry.

Also, tellingly, Zahi Hawass, the Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, told Al Jazeera news service that protesters had actually tried to stop the alleged looters from entering the museum, but that the attackers managed to enter the building from the roof. Given that there was no apparent attempt to steal the priceless artifacts, it seems a strange expenditure of effort on the part of the culprits just to go on a wrecking spree for the sake of it.

The incident may be just a foretaste of a wider range of propaganda stunts or false flags, including atrocities and fatalities, that the Mubarak regime will enact in order to discredit the protest movement sweeping that nation, and to serve as a pretext for intensifying the crackdown by security forces, which has already left over 100 dead and 2,000 injured.

No doubt the US-backed Mubarak regime is struggling to contain widespread chaos rocking the country, with tens of thousands of people taking to the streets of major cities in defiance of curfews. And no doubt there are countless incidents of looting by people pent up by decades of poverty and unemployment.

But as the museum incident suggests, there could well be an element of state agent provocateur to turn public opinion, both nationally and internationally, against the legitimate grievances of the mass of Egyptian people, who are after all quite rightly calling for the 30-year-old Mubarak regime to be replaced by democracy to address long-standing social, economic and political deprivations.

Oddly, too, the state's police force is reported to have withdrawn from large residential areas across Egypt, which have subsequently become the target of unknown would-be looters and vandals. Added to that is the mass break-out by thousands of prisoners who managed to evade security at two jails outside the capital.

This headline from CNN: ‘Fears of anarchy and looting linger as new day dawns in Egypt’ followed by a statement from the country’s armed forces urging the “people to defend the nation” point (inadvertently) to a level of state orchestration of events to disorient the mass of protesters and to justify an intensification of repression.

More sinisterly, are reports that a police station in the town of Sheikh Zuweid came under fire last Friday with rocket-propelled grenades from unknown assailants. One of the missiles missed the police installation and hit a neighbouring medical centre, according to PressTV. No injuries were reported, but it could easily have created an atrocity – a false flag labeled on protesters that would have sparked an international outcry.

Repeated calls by Western leaders, including US president Barack Obama, for Egypt’s protest movement to refrain from violence are also significant. Never mind the utter hypocrisy of such exhortations by the US and other Western governments who have armed the Mubarak regime to the teeth and continue to support it in the face of mounting civilian casualties. The insidious follow-on from this rationale is that if protesters – more to the point agent provocateurs – engage in violence then Western governments can denounce the pro-democracy uprising, leaving it wide open to the heavy hands of the state forces.

In the chaos, fury and smoke gripping Egypt, the bigger picture remains ever important. The regime of Hosni Mubarak is a brutal police state deserving popular overthrow to bring about long-overdue democracy and social justice, with the end of routine and pervasive human rights violations and that state’s criminal collusion with the US-sponsored Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. Nevertheless, the US and other Western governments continue to back Mubarak – a fact that should be to these governments’ shame and condemnation. Western governments may eventually have to save face by shoving Mubarak aside to be replaced with another, more palatable puppet. But one thing is for sure: if Egypt’s protest movement keeps pushing for deep and meaningful democratic change (revolution) – inspiring other countries in the region to do likewise – that will be a step too far for the puppet masters in Washington and their ilk. So, to that end, cue more dirty tricks and false flags just in case anti-democracy violence has to be ramped up in order to make “Egypt safe”. And on that score, the Egyptian regime will be able to count on the expertise of Western secret services and the mainstream media for a helping hand.

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Finian Cunningham has written extensively on international affairs, with articles published in several languages. Many of his recent articles appear on the renowned Canadian-based news website Globalresearch.ca. He is a Master's graduate in Agricultural Chemistry and worked as a scientific editor for the Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, England, before pursuing a career in journalism. He specialises in Middle East and East Africa issues and has also given several American radio interviews as well as TV interviews on Press TV and Russia Today. Previously, he was based in Bahrain and witnessed the political upheavals in the Persian Gulf kingdom during 2011 as well as the subsequent Saudi-led brutal crackdown against pro-democracy protests.

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