

# Imperialism and Elections in Syria, Egypt and Ukraine

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*Why is the election in Syria so important that U.S. government officials have condemned it before it takes place? Why, at the same time, have U.S. officials embraced and applauded the results of elections organized by the military coup government of General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt and the election by the fascist coup forces of billionaire oligarch Petro Poroshenko in Ukraine?*

In Egypt and Ukraine, the apparatus now in place overthrew the elected government, brutally repressed all opposition and organized the election as a rubber stamp of its seized authority. In both countries, millions responded by refusing to vote. Opposition forces were jailed, beaten, threatened and driven from any form of participation in the process.

In Egypt, the empty polling stations were so glaring, with estimates as low as 10 percent voter turnout, that General el-Sisi's government frantically extended voting by a second day and then a third. A holiday was declared, free transportation was available to polling sites, and all who didn't vote faced a heavy threat of a \$70 fine — an extortionist charge for millions of the poorest Egyptians.

In Ukraine, despite millions of voters in eastern and southern Ukraine — the most densely populated urban areas of the country — the polling stations were also empty.

The boycott, millions strong, of the official election in both Egypt and Ukraine seriously undermined the dictatorships' claims of broad support.

However, just two weeks before, a popular referendum for local autonomy in eastern and southern Ukraine was voted for by millions. This election was dismissed as illegitimate by Ukrainian officials and their U.S. backers.

## **A failed boycott**

Rebel forces in Syria have also demanded a boycott of elections. They have threatened to enforce their boycott with mass terror at voting lines. But the massive outpouring of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and other countries to vote shows that the call for an election boycott has been overwhelmingly rejected.

Before the June 3 election day in Syria, the more than 3 million Syrians displaced outside of Syria by the U.S.-funded and -organized war aimed at regime change have made their views known in massive mobilizations.

In Lebanon, Beirut was paralyzed by the outpouring of tens of thousands of Syrians.

According to reports in the Western corporate-owned media, such as the Washington Post, New York Times, BBC and Reuters, traffic stretched for miles, bumper to bumper, while tens of thousands walked for miles and stood all day in the broiling sun to cast their vote. Reports are that half a million of voting-age Syrians thronged to the polls holding pictures of President Bashar al-Assad and waving Syrian flags.

This massive outpouring is a stinging rebuke to the U.S. and European Union and their declarations that Syria has no right to hold an election because the country is in the midst of a civil war. The masses are combating a U.S.-EU-Saudi-funded insurgency that wants to install a government composed of reactionary militias and mercenaries.

Secretary of State John Kerry has labeled the election a farce. Washington is committed to redoubling its efforts at regime change through the Saudi absolute monarchy and other unelected kings, emirs and princes in Jordan, Qatar and United Arab Emirates.

Around the world, citizens routinely vote in an election at the consulate or embassy of their home country. However, as further interference in the Syrian election, in the U.S., France, Germany, Belgium and United Arab Emirates, Syrians were denied the right to vote at their consulates and embassies. In New York City, Syrian Americans gathered in front of the United Nations to protest the U.S. denial of their right to vote.

### **Whose vote counts?**

Despite its instigation of coups, support of military dictatorships and feudal monarchies around the world, and its own history of massive denial of voting to millions of African-American people, U.S. imperialism maintains its right and intention to intervene aggressively in the electoral political processes of other countries. It has established numerous bodies to monitor elections and rule on their fairness.

U.S. and European imperialists assert the right to measure the political process by totally arbitrary standards. They send in military officials, politicians and corporate-funded “human rights organizations” and nongovernmental organizations. While claiming to be impartial, the election monitoring process is a form of intrusive intervention and coercion.

Washington’s endorsement or condemnation of an election has no connection to the political process of the election itself. The same is true for the European imperialist powers where capitalist class rule has a “democratic” veneer. Corporate support and media coverage are based on the ruling class’ calculation of whether the results strengthen their domination or challenge it.

The participation in or rejection of an election by millions of people expressing their own aspirations is not the basis of their cynical calculation.

### **International delegations to Syria**

Delegates from around the world have traveled to Syria to support Syria’s right to organize its own election and resist another imperialist regime change. These delegates from several Latin American countries and the BRICS countries — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — represent the majority of the world’s people.

There are few secure places where large numbers of foreign guests can be housed in a war

zone. Kidnappings for ransom, political exchanges, assassinations, suicides and bombings are a daily fact of life. That is a big weight on the government, and it is a big accomplishment if it can keep all the international delegates safe in the midst of organizing and securing hundreds of polling places and long lines of voters.

A delegation from the U.S., including a representative of the International Action Center, is participating as a way to show opposition to the imperialist attack on Syria.

These delegations are not in Syria to support or to condemn Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. That is wholly up to the Syrian people to decide, free of outside intervention and sabotage. But it is important to be in solidarity not only with Syrians' efforts to defend themselves with arms but with their right to hold an election.

### **Elections and resistance**

The Syrian people have fought French imperialism, Israeli occupation and constant Zionist wars; defended, housed and educated hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees and over 2 million Iraqi refugees; faced years of U.S. sanctions and sabotage; and now endured three years of non-stop war that has killed 150,000 Syrians.

President Assad is widely expected to sweep the election in Syria. It should be no surprise that the Syrian people are very likely to re-elect the man who led their country in battle against the terror that has displaced one-third of the population.

The vote for Assad might be seen as a vote for national cohesion against efforts at imperialist dismemberment and chaos. This is why the imperialists are so arrogantly demanding that Syria stop its election.

The vote in Syria is part of the Syrian people's struggle to maintain their economic and political independence, free from terrorist insurgents and tens of thousands of mercenaries.

The votes in Egypt and Ukraine are part of the effort to extend U.S. domination.

The massive boycotts in Egypt and Ukraine and the enthusiastic turnout in Syria are signs that millions of people are determined to make their aspirations heard.

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