

**COUNCIL MEETING OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL**  
Cascais, Portugal, 4-5 February 2013

**DECLARATION ON DEVELOPMENTS  
CONCERNING THE ARAB WORLD**

The Socialist International stands for the universal values of democracy and human rights, and throughout its history it has strongly spoken out for those across the world struggling for their fundamental freedoms and for a life free of oppression and violence.

The situations in many countries across the Arab world continue to be of great concern to the Socialist International, and the Council recalls the declarations of the XXIV SI Congress and the Special Committee on the Arab World.

Many were left dead by the brutality of the security forces in **Egypt**, which coincided with the second anniversary of the revolution, signifying a worrying return to violence against protesters. A state of emergency has been declared in the cities of Port Said, Suez and Ismailiya by the Egyptian president, with curfews and military control set in place for 30 days. Such declarations are a stark reminder of the situation that existed for many years under the previous regime, and these extreme measures must not be used to repress opposition or consolidate power.

The power of peaceful protest was clearly demonstrated by the events leading up to the Egyptian revolution two years ago. The SI condemns violence on all sides and expresses its solidarity with all those committed to the peaceful nature of the demonstrations.

The post-revolution violence that has left many dead and injured must be properly investigated, a crucial step to restoring Egyptians' faith in both the police and legal system. A lack of transparency has eroded the people's trust in the legal system, due to the acquittal of the police responsible for violence against protesters during the revolution. Police brutality must end and those responsible be brought to justice.

Politics in Egypt must be inclusive, with recognition by all actors that cooperation is needed in the process of rebuilding the country's institutions and establishing democracy. A government able to build consensus and a strong opposition is crucial to this process. We therefore call upon the government of Egypt to ensure that the new constitution and electoral law are both widely accepted, allowing for the growth of strong, independent democratic institutions and addressing any fears of authoritarian intent within the new government.

The SI continues to support progressive forces playing an important part in shaping the future democratic system. It pledges its support to the Egyptian Social Democratic Party (ESDP) and its allies in the National Salvation Front in this endeavour.

Reports on human rights atrocities in **Syria** emerge daily. Urgent action is needed to bring an end to the cycle of death and violence that is destroying the country. The international community has so far failed to protect innocent civilians in Syria by bringing about a cessation in hostilities.

The SI welcomes the outcome of the International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria, which took place in Kuwait on 30 January. In excess of \$1.5 billion was pledged by governments, which must immediately be used for Syrian refugees in dire need of help. In the long term however, their suffering will only be alleviated with an end to the fighting. The international community must intensify its efforts to achieve this, and, in the meantime, use all means necessary for the protection of civilian life.

We reiterate our support for the right of the Syrian people to determine their own future through free and fair elections without the threat of reprisals and repression. The sooner the repression and brutality against the people are brought to an end, the sooner this may happen, and the international community must stand ready to provide the financial and technical assistance that Syria will need to rebuild. We call on all sides to support the efforts of the UN to resolve the conflict in Syria through peaceful negotiation which will open the way for a clean break from the past and a democratic future for the Syrian people.

We are deeply disappointed by the failure of the government of **Bahrain** to implement the vast majority of reforms proposed by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, despite assurances to the contrary. The recommendations of the BICI report, published over 14 months ago, were subsequently endorsed by the Special Committee of the SI for the Arab World and their importance underlined by a declaration of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in June 2012. We remain convinced that their immediate implementation is vital, in particular in light of continuing government repression in Bahrain, including the torture of political activists, politicians, and protesters, the many death sentences passed down to those accused of calling for anti-government demonstrations, and continued detention of political prisoners.

We further call upon the Bahraini authorities to release Ibrahim Sharif, secretary general of the Wa'ad party and hundreds of prisoners of conscience and to implement negotiation with the opposition in order to implant freedom, democracy and social justice.

The situation in **Palestine** remains tense. Palestinians are continuing their non-violent struggle and international activism, while the Israeli occupation continues to enforce major controls, keeps Gaza under siege, and deepens the occupation by building more colonies and settlements on Palestinian land and widening its hold on Jerusalem in the East and in the South.

The peace process remains in an impasse that threatens the two-state solution. The Israeli election results came short of the former rightist Israeli government's expectations but do not represent a great opportunity for the Israeli peace camp to determine the course of the country's fate.

The Arab spring has not yet created a new stable democratic order capable of exerting pressure to advance towards the achievement of peace in Palestine. In spite of this, Palestinians achieved a victory by being admitted as an observer state to the United Nations. The SI and its members supported this achievement.

The important Palestinian demonstration in Gaza, which included all Palestinian parties, gathered 1.2 million people who celebrated the birth of Fateh, called for the unity of all

Palestinians behind their legitimate government, and added strength to the position of Arab progressive forces, calling for democracy based on pluralism, free elections and national unity.

The SI remains committed to its historic position supporting the Palestinian people's right to freedom, independence, unity and statehood, including their right to non-violent struggle for freedom and independence. The SI remains committed to the achievement of peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians based on the recognition of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital and on the 1967 borders living side by side with its Israeli neighbour in peace, security and harmony. For this to happen, a total cessation of settlement activities by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories must be achieved, leading to speedy negotiations on the basis of the internationally-supported terms of reference.

The Council recalls the declaration of the XXIV SI Congress in Cape Town **on Western Sahara**; further recalling the United Nations and African Union resolutions on Western Sahara; considering it as a case of decolonisation; and concerned with the recurring violations of human rights; the Socialist International reiterates its full support for the right of self-determination of the Saharawi people and demands the urgent implementation of all the United Nations resolutions and African Union resolutions guaranteeing this right. It urges the urgent resumption of direct negotiations between Morocco and Polisario Front under the auspices of the UN. The SI supports the efforts undertaken by the UN Secretary General to achieve a just, peaceful and lasting solution to this long conflict. We express our concern on the degrading situation on human rights and further demand the opening of the territory to independent observers, NGOS and the media. The Socialist International agrees to send a mission in the spirit of the proposal of the SI Mediterranean Committee.

The SI is following with interest the process of the establishment of democratic institutions in **Tunisia**, as well as the progress made towards the drafting of the constitution. The SI expresses its support for all the efforts undertaken in order that the constitution consolidate the universal values of human rights, social justice and gender equality.

The SI supports the efforts led by its member the FDTL to defend progressive values and ensure the conditions are present for the success of the democratic transition and peaceful alternation of power through transparent and free elections.

---