The 10th Anniversary of the Egyptian Uprising Against Hosni Mubarak Passes

Monday of this week marked the 10-year anniversary of the Egyptian uprising against longtime former leader Hosni Mubarak. On January 25th, 2011, thousands of Egyptians gathered at Tahrir Square in Cairo with several demands. Foremost among them, was the removal of Hosni Mubarak's regime and a transition to democracy. The Egyptian people were successful, and a democratic government led by Mohamed Morsi came to power. However, this victory was short-lived as the Egyptian military, led by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, overthrew the government and el-Sisi was installed as leader of the country. When the Mubarak government was overthrown a decade ago, Egyptians had hopes of democracy, freedom, and social justice but ten years on from the beginning of the uprising, the autocratic el-Sisi regime has brutally cracked down on dissent, basic human rights, political liberties, and the right to expression. Since coming to power, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has initiated extremely high levels of repression that international rights groups call the harshest in decades.

Ten years ago, Egypt was preparing to celebrate its annual National Police Day on January 25th, 2011. On this day, a diverse collection of young bloggers, activists, citizen journalists, and IT professionals gathered around Cairo demanding political reform. Hosni Mubarak had ruled Egypt with an iron first for 30 years, and buoyed by the Arab Spring, Egyptians across all walks of life protested against his rule. After 18 consecutive days of mass demonstrations, Mubarak resigned on February 11th, handing power to the Egyptian military. After the January Revolution, three main challenges faced Egypt: unemployment, terrorism, and empowering young leaders in politics.

Elections were called after the ouster of Mubarak, and on June 18th, 2012, Mohamed Morsi was declared the winner. Morsi was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization that has had a historically fractious relationship with the Egyptian political system. Before long, Morsi had angered Egypt's military, and he was overthrown in a coup in July of 2013. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the chief of the army at the time, then took power, where he remains today. Egypt's time as a democracy was remarkably short-lived, as el-Sisi and other members of the military were uneasy with Morsi's leadership from the beginning.

Sisi claims that he brought stability to the country, but he has done this through cracking down on dissent, imprisoning thousands of political opponents, and eliminating contrarian thought. As a result, the nature of the challenges facing Egypt is considerable, and there is a great risk involved for ordinary Egyptian citizens in openly confronting these challenges. According to el-Sisi in many of his public speeches, Egypt is passing through the most difficult time in its history. However, it is his own actions and behavior that is responsible for creating the existing undesirable circumstances in the country's political and social spheres. He has empowered the military to act with impunity, destabilized the region by becoming involved in the Libyan conflict, and sold out to patron countries in the Gulf. In the ten years since Egypt's uprising against Hosni Mubarak, not much has changed, and in fact one can legitimately argue that things have even gotten worse. Despite massive calls for democracy and political freedom, one autocratic leader has simply replaced another.