



Crisis at the Suez Canal

With the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak at the unrelenting demands of Egyptian protestors, the fate of Egypt still remains perilous. And when it seemed as if the situation could not degenerate further, now at least 1,500 workers from the Suez Canal Authority have protested over wage conditions and lack of equality.

The protests were staged in three nearby cities: Ismailia (east of Cairo), Suez (south of the Suez Canal), and Port Said (north of the Suez Canal). Small in numbers, the protests have not impaired travel along the waterway; the workers agreed to stage their protests only during breaks and other non-working hours so as not to disrupt traffic through the area.



“The Suez protests are part of growing labor unrest rekindled by the 18-day uprising that toppled longtime leader Hosni Mubarak on Friday,” the Associated Press reported, adding that “[s]trikes and protests are deepening economic malaise, compounded by weeks of bank closures that are hampering business operations and [by] the drying up of tourism.”

In addition to those protesting over wages, another 600 workers at Port Fouad Arsenal on the south of the Suez Canal have staged demonstrations for the same medical benefits and leisure that their supervisors and the special skilled engineers receive.

“There is discrimination between workers and engineers when it comes to many facilities that both parties need,” asserted Canal worker and protester Omar Ahmad, as reported on the Egyptian news website [Ahram Online](#).

A right to subsistence is what the Suez workers are demanding. Having seen the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 brought about by economic reasons (i.e., high food prices, higher wages and economic justice — all the typical euphemisms for socialism and communism), now these workers want their slice of the pie.

No injuries or acts of violence have been reported in connection with these specific protests; but considering the importance of the Suez Canal — and the events that unseated a dictator of over 20 years — the demands of these workers are not likely to be ignored. For if the protestors do refuse to work, the consequences may prove global, raising oil prices and undermining the ability of the U.S. Navy to move about quickly and effectively.



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