

## Egypt's military gives Morsi 48-hour ultimatum



**AP** HAMZA HENDAWI, SARAH EL DEEB and MAGGIE MICHAEL July 1, 2013

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt's military gave a "last-chance" ultimatum Monday to President Mohammed Morsi, giving him 48 hours to meet the demands of millions of protesters in the streets seeking his ouster, or the generals will intervene and impose their own plan for the country. Army helicopters swooped over Tahrir Square trailing Egyptian flags, to the cheers of the crowd opposed to the Islamist leader.

The military's statement, read on state TV, put enormous pressure on Morsi to step down. Giant crowds demanding his departure in cities around the country for a second straight day erupted into delirious parties of celebration, with men and women dancing, and some crying as patriotic songs blasted from speakers on cars.

But any army move against Morsi after the two-day deadline risks a backlash from Morsi's Islamist backers, including his powerful Muslim Brotherhood and hard-liners, some of whom belong to former armed militant groups.

After the army statement, multiple officials of Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood insisted that the military and street protests cannot overturn the legitimacy of the president's election. An alliance of the Brotherhood and other Islamists read a statement at a televised press conference calling on all people "to rally in defense of legitimacy and reject any attempt to overturn it."

Pro-Morsi marches numbering in the several thousands began after nightfall in a string of cities around the country. In Cairo, thousands of Islamists massing outside a mosque near the Ittihadiya presidential palace reacted with shock and fury to the military announcement, some vowing to fight against what they called a coup against the "Islamist project."

"Any coup of any kind against legitimacy will only pass over our dead bodies," one leading Brotherhood figure, Mohammed el-Beltagi, told the rally. A line of around 1,500 men with shields, helmets and sticks — assigned with protecting the rally against attackers — stamped their feet in military-like lines, singing, "Stomp our feet, raise a fire, Islam's march is coming."



Opponents of Egypt's Islamist President Mohammed Morsi protest outside the presidential palace, in C ...

Army troops at checkpoints on roads leading to the pro-Morsi rally checked cars for weapons, after repeated reports some Islamists were arming themselves.

The army's stance also raises a unsettling prospect for many of Morsi's opponents as well — the potential return of the military that ruled Egypt directly for nearly 17 months after the Feb. 11, 2011 fall of autocrat Hosni Mubarak. During that time, many of those now in the anti-Morsi campaign led protests against military rule, angered by its management of the transition and heavy hand, including killings of protesters.

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Even many who welcomed Monday's announcement expressed worries over a possible outright military takeover.

"Morsi will leave, but I'm concerned with the plan afterward. The military should be a tool to pressure, but we had a bitter experience with military ruling the country and we don't want to repeat it," said Roshdy Khairy, a 24-year-old doctor among the throngs in Tahrir Square Monday night.

Hours after its announcement, the military issued a second statement on its Facebook page denying it intended a coup. "The ideology and culture of the Egyptian armed forces does not allow for the policy of a military coup," it said.

Instead, in its initial statement, the military said it would "announce a road-map for the future and measures to implement it" if Morsi and its opponents cannot reach a consensus within 48 hours — a virtual impossibility. It promised to include all "patriotic and sincere" factions in the process.

The military underlined it will "not be a party in politics or rule." But it said it has a responsibility to find a solution because Egypt's national security is facing a "grave danger," according to the statement.

It did not detail the road map, but it heavily praised the massive protests that began on Sunday demanding that he step down and that early elections be called — suggesting that call had to be satisfied. It called the protests "glorious," saying the participants expressed their opinion "in peaceful and civilized manner." It called "for the people's demands to be met."

Morsi met Monday with military chief Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi and Prime Minister Hesham Kandil, according to the president's Facebook page, without giving further details. Associated Press calls to spokespeople for the presidency were not answered.

In a sign of Morsi's growing isolation, five Cabinet ministers said on Monday they have resigned their posts, the state news agency said. The five are the ministers of communications, legal affairs, environment, tourism and water utilities, MENA reported.

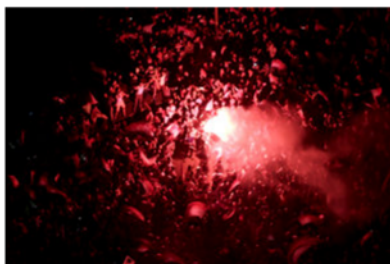
The governor of the strategic province of Ismailia on the Suez Canal, Hassan el-Rifaai, also quit Monday.

The swiftness of the military's new statement suggested it was prompted by the stunning turnout by the opposition on Sunday — and the eruptions of violence that point to how the confrontation could spiral into chaos if it continues.

Sunday's protests were the largest seen in Egypt in the 2½ years of turmoil since protesters first rose up against Mubarak in January 2011. Millions packed Cairo's Tahrir Square, the streets outside the Ittihadiya presidential palace and main squares in cities around the country on the anniversary of Morsi's inauguration.

Deadly violence broke out in several parts of the country, often when marchers came under gunfire, apparently from Islamists. In Cairo, anti-Morsi youth attacked the main headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood with stones and fire-bombs, while Brotherhood supporters barricaded inside open fired on them. The clash ended early Monday morning when the protesters broke into the luxury villa and ransacked it, setting fires.

Nationwide, at least 16 people were killed Sunday and more than 780 injured, Health Ministry spokesman Yehya Moussa told



Opponents of Egypt's Islamist President Mohammed Morsi chant slogans during a protest outside the pr ...



Supporters of Egypt's Islamist President Mohammed Morsi wave national flags and his posters during a ...



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The crowds turned out again Monday across the country — in slightly smaller numbers, but in a more uproariously joyous mood after the military's announcement gave them hope of a quick victory. The group organizing the protests, Tamarod, Arabic for "Rebel," issued an ultimatum of its own, giving Morsi until Tuesday afternoon to step down or it would escalate the rallies even further.



Opponents of Egypt's Islamist President Mohammed Morsi wave national flags during a protest outside ...

"Come out, el-Sissi. The people want to topple the regime," protesters in the Nile Delta city of Mahalla el-Kubra chanted, drumming out a rhythm with a stick on the carcass of a sheep. "Sheep" is the slur many in the opposition use against Brotherhood members, depicting them as mindless followers — to the fury of the Brothers, many of whom are professionals from doctors to university professors.

The broad boulevards packed with anti-Morsi protesters outside Cairo's Ittihadiya palace transformed into a party. "In every street in my country the sound of freedom is calling," blared a song that originally emerged during the anti-Mubarak revolt. Bands on a stage played other revolutionary songs.

"God willing we will be victorious over the president and his failing regime," said Mohammed el-Tawansi, sitting on the pavement with his wife singing along.

"He divided us, now the people and the army are together. They will not be able to do anything. They can't fight the people and the army," he said, referring to the Muslim Brotherhood.



In this photo released by the Egyptian Presidency Monday, July 1, 2013, Egyptian President Mohammed ...

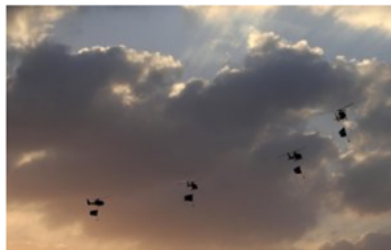
Down the street, protesters Amr el-Ayat raised a banner reading "cautious optimism".

"The military statement was good, because we have no other way now," he said. "But I worry people will deify el-Sissi. The military is to protect not to rule."

Some were perfectly happy to have the military take over. In Tahrir, Omar Moawad el-Sayed, a math teacher with the beard of a Muslim conservative, said he wished el-Sissi had outright announced military rule.

"The military is the most impartial institution now," he said.

Some hoped that the "road map" the military had in mind would be a framework drawn up by Tamarod. Under it, after Morsi steps down, the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court would become an interim president and a technocrat government would be formed. An expert panel would write a new constitution to replace the one largely drafted by Islamists, and new presidential elections would be held in six months.



Military helicopters fly over the presidential palace, in Cairo, Egypt, Monday, July 1, 2013. Egyptf ...

For Islamists, however, the idea of Morsi stepping down was an inconceivable infringement on the repeated elections they won since Mubarak's fall, giving them not only a longtime Muslim Brotherhood leader as president but majorities in parliament.

Morsi and Brotherhood officials say they are defending democratic legitimacy and some have depicted the planned protests as led by Mubarak loyalists trying to return to power. But many of his Islamist allies have also depicted it as a fight against Islam.

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"The military has sacrificed legitimacy. There will be a civil war," Manal Shouib, a 47-year-old physiotherapist at the pro-president rally outside the Rabia al-Adawiya Mosque not far from Ittihadiya.

Ahmed Abde-Aziz, who was the "trainer" of the line of men doing military-style drills, shouted and roared in a tirade against Mubarak loyalists, Christians, judges, police, opposition politicians, columnists and writers he said were conspiring against Morsi. He said they attacked "anywhere that has Islam in it."

"El-Sissi's statement doesn't concern us. We will sacrifice ourselves to defend legitimacy and we will die if this is our destiny," he told The Associated Press. "If the whole of Egypt is wiped out so that God's word can remain, so be it."

At sunset, the cleric at Rabia al-Adawiya led prayers, asking God to "accept us as martyrs for Your cause and make Your slave Mohammed Morsi victorious."



Protesters pray during a demonstration against Egypt's Islamist President Mohammed Morsi in Tahrir S ...

Nearly 1,500 supporters of the president marched in the Canal city of Suez after night prayers, chanting for Morsi and damaging cars. Some carried sticks and rifles that fire birdshot, witnesses said. Residents confronted them, taking their weapons and firing in the air to disperse them, while the army deployed and fired tear gas.

Outside Ittihadiya, protesters contended that Morsi could not survive with only the Islamist bloc on his side.

"It is now the whole people versus one group. What can he do?" Mina Adel, a Christian accountant said. "The army is the savior and the guarantor for the revolution to succeed."

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Associated Press writers Tony G. Gabriel and Mariam Rizk contributed to this report.



An Egyptian protester waves a national flag on a roof in Tahrir Square during a demonstration against ...