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MIDDLE EAST NEWS | Updated August 14, 2013, 2:05 p.m. ET

## Egypt's Deadly Crackdown Spurs Street Violence

Health Ministry Says 149 Killed in Effort to Clear Antigovernment Sit-Ins in Cairo

By MARIA ABI-HABIB And LEILA ELMERGAWI



Egyptian troops staged a crackdown on protesters that turned deadly Wednesday morning in efforts to clear two anti-government sit-ins in Cairo, prompting Egypt's interim president to declare a state of emergency. Jeff Grocott has more. Photo: Getty Images.

**CAIRO**—Egypt's efforts to end Muslim Brotherhood protests turned deadly Wednesday morning, with well over 100 people killed across the country in violence set off when police, later backed by Egyptian soldiers, moved in against two antigovernment sit-ins in Cairo.

The move to clear supporters of former President Mohammed Morsi, which had been anticipated since his ouster by the military on July 3, set off violent upheaval across Cairo. Protesters tried to storm police stations across Egypt's capital, while entire neighborhoods succumbed to fighting between neighbors on opposite sides of the political divide, an early taste of the bloodshed that has been feared for weeks by many Egyptians. Several observers worried that the violence has spiraled out of control and taken on sectarian shadings.

Egypt's interim president declared a monthlong national state of emergency to start Wednesday afternoon.

Vice President [Mohamed ElBaradei](#), a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and secular leader in the interim government, resigned to protest the violent crackdown. Mr. ElBaradei had butted heads with the powerful chief of Egypt's military, Gen. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, over the standoff with Mr. Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood supporters, said officials familiar with the matter.

## Photos: Crackdown in Egypt

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*Reuters*

Police carried an injured member of the Muslim Brotherhood and supporter of deposed Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi in Raba'a al Adiwiya square after troops cleared two antigovernment sit-ins in Cairo on Wednesday.

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*Associated Press*

The White House condemned Wednesday's violence and said it opposed the state of emergency. Turkey, branding the day's events a massacre, faulted the international community for encouraging the intervention rather than defending democracy and constitutional legitimacy.

The crackdown began around 7 a.m. Wednesday. Witnesses said state security forces launched a surprise assault on Raba'a al Adawiya and Nahda squares with tear gas and gunfire—a departure from plans police discussed in recent days to form a cordon around the protests to prevent demonstrators from receiving food and water.

"I woke up to bulldozers and tents on fire," said one protester who had been living in Raba'a square for the past month.

By late Wednesday, the government had cleared and taken control of both protest sites, the Associated Press reported.

Shortly after 7 a.m., helicopters could be seen circling over Raba'a square. Snipers were visible on surrounding rooftops. Tear gas filled the air for a kilometer.

Muslim Brotherhood supporters surged toward the square in support but were forced to retreat. Gunfire came from the direction of the security forces.

Wounded protesters were being shuttled toward ambulances that couldn't gain entry to the square. Several slain protesters were also seen near the square and at a nearby hospital, with gunshot wounds in their heads, sides and chests.

Images provided by journalists and other observers also quickly circulated on social media, showing what appeared to be dozens of slain protesters, including women, laid side to side on hospital floors.

At least 149 protesters were killed and more than 1,400 wounded, according to the Ministry of Health. The Brotherhood placed the numbers far higher—saying that 2,200 people had been killed and more than 10,000 wounded.

The Brotherhood's apparent ability on Wednesday to mobilize supporters, burn down several police stations and overwhelm police forces threw into question the depth of the interim government's popular support. By the afternoon, the Egyptian army was called in to help reinforce the police who had led the crackdown of the squares earlier in the day.

"My son is in Raba'a and I cannot get in to help him," said Hussein Ibrahim, a supporter of the protests. "We have no guns, all we have is our bare chests. This is a coup and in any other country people would stand up to this. And Obama is talking about democracy? He is a hypocrite. They are killing us with American aid money," he said pointing to a military helicopter in the sky.

Egypt's military receives more than \$1 billion annually in U.S. aid.



The number of deaths arising from an Egyptian army crackdown on protesters in an effort to clear two antigovernment sit-ins in Cairo on Wednesday is being widely contested. WSJ's Maria Abi-Habib reports from the Egyptian capital.

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Wednesday's battles between Brotherhood supporters and government security forces backed by regular civilians illustrate the deep divisions on Egypt's streets, and the difficulty of achieving reconciliation between two entrenched sides.

"This only has one name: terrorism," said Hassan Mohamed, a 25-year-old Egyptian who supported the government's crackdown on the sit-ins. He pointed to a factory that he said Brotherhood supporters had set on fire, the flames consuming the entire 10-story building. "They are terrorizing the city and they are terrorizing us."

His comments exemplified the existential challenges consuming Egypt, in what has emerged as a neighbor-against-neighbor battle for the country's political soul and whether it will become a secular or Islamic state.

"With our blood and with our soul we will sacrifice for Islam and bring Sisi down," protesters screamed and clapped on the street, referring to the leader of the armed forces who orchestrated the coup against Mr. Morsi and his Brotherhood-dominated government following a massive popular uprising.

Civilians battling the Brotherhood supporters responded by chanting "the army and the people [are] one hand!"

Protesters camped out in the pro-Brotherhood tent city in Raba'a, which occupies a main artery of Cairo for the past month, described brute police force to clear the sit-in Wednesday morning.

The protester who said he had been on the square for a month said he navigated alleyways to escape Raba'a and the government snipers that occupied the tall buildings encircling the sit-in.

Snipers were seen on several rooftops on streets just outside Raba'a, giving cover to soldiers and police—some wearing balaclavas and others gas masks—which created a cordon around Raba'a to prevent Brotherhood supporters from reinforcing the sit-in. Tear gas filled the sky.

Those Brotherhood supporters were prevented from marching on Raba'a by security forces and ordinary Egyptians who came out to help the police. The crowd, which included women, quickly came under fire from the direction of the security forces.

A woman who had been tear gassed screamed, "God help us! We are unarmed!"

Ambulances were unable to get through to Raba'a due to thick plumes of tear gas. The wounded were instead being brought to the ambulances on motorcycle and then taken to nearby hospitals.

A Muslim Brotherhood pickup truck with a shot and wounded protester tried to navigate the streets but was stopped by a mob of pro-government people from the neighborhood.

The Egyptian army blocked reporters from going to the sit-ins, countering earlier police promises to invite the press and human-rights activists to observe the clearing of the sit-ins.

"They're killing people! Go take photos!" one motorcyclist screamed while taking his finger and making a slitting gesture across his throat.

"I'm going to the protest. God be a witness, God be our witness for Muslims," said one older woman who was being blocked by soldiers from joining the sit-in.

The government praised the performance of its security forces.

Our "forces have exercised self-restraint and professionalism in their actions, this is reflected in the low number of injuries. The government reiterates that it will stand firmly against the attempts of some elements to attack public buildings and vital institutions and police stations," a statement from the Egyptian government that was read on state television said. "The government is committed to moving forward with implementing the future road map in a way that does not marginalize any group."

Human-rights groups have condemned the brute force Egyptian police had used in recent weeks when clearing demonstrations. At least 130 protesters had died in previous standoffs with the police in the past month, according to Human Rights Watch, which called on state security forces to refrain from violence.

A soldier, who was sweating profusely and holding a flash grenade in his hand, blocked reporters from heading to the scene at one road to Raba'a, which was blocked off by soldiers and riot police.

"You can't go in. We're shooting at them, they're shooting at us. Everyone is shooting at everyone," the soldier said.

The Egyptian Interior Ministry said at least one police officer died and nine were injured by gunshots that were fired to disperse the sit-ins.

According to government news agency MENA, 200 protesters were arrested at both camps for possessing weapons.

"Europeans understand democracy but Muslims don't," said Mahmoud Sayed, a 35-year-old protester. "I'm not with the Muslim brotherhood and I'm not with the government. But democracy here doesn't work and I'm here to support the innocent people being killed."

Mr. Sayed said he had come out to the streets after he heard live ammunition outside his home.

Outside Cairo, human-rights groups reported several attacks on churches and Coptic Christians, giving the violence a strong sectarian cast. Many Brotherhood supporters blame Egypt's Christian minority for supporting the coup.

Churches were set on fire in the town of Sohag and the village of Delga in Minya, south of Cairo, while other churches in the Abou Helal district of Minya and in the city of Suez were also attacked, according to Ishak Ibrahim, a researcher with the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights.

Marches by pro-Morsi demonstrators in some places were also accompanied by the vandalizing of some shops and businesses belonging to Copts, he said.

"We've seen attacks like this before, but not of this severity and coordination," said Mr. Ibrahim. "There have been attacks before on an individual level, but these are mobs attacking simultaneously in governorates and these attacks are directly related to the dispersals of the sit-ins."

—*Lara Gibaly contributed to this article.*

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