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## **Egyptian authorities urged to rein in security forces**

Amnesty International has urged the Egyptian authorities to rein in security forces to prevent further deaths of protesters, amid continuing nationwide protests.

Thousands have joined demonstrations across Egypt in recent days against poverty, police abuse and corruption.

"The Egyptian authorities must rein in the security forces to prevent bloodshed," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"The authorities cannot continue to rely on the 30-year-old State of Emergency to enforce a blanket prohibition on public demonstrations and grant sweeping powers of search and arrest."

The organization said protesters must have the right to organize protests and demonstrate free from intimidation, violence, and the threat of detention and prosecution.

Late last night communication lines to much of Egypt were severely disrupted, with internet connections and mobile phone services being cut off.

This followed disruption to SMS services, Twitter and Bambuser earlier in the week. Prominent human rights activists had also had their mobile phone accounts deactivated.

"By taking this dramatic step of stopping the flow of information between Egyptians the authorities have shown the lengths to which they will go to remove the right to peaceful protest," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

Amnesty International has condemned Egyptian security forces' disproportionate and unnecessary use of live rounds and lethal force against protesters, which yesterday reportedly led to the death of another demonstrator.

Amnesty International has received information that 22-year-old Ahmed Atef was killed yesterday in North Sinai when security forces in the town of Sheikh Zuweid opened fire on a crowd of more than 1000 demonstrators. Seven protesters were reportedly killed in the north-eastern city of Suez.

There have now been at least eight people killed and many more injured in the popular unrest across Egypt that has seized the country since Tuesday.

At least 1120 protesters have been detained by the Egyptian security forces, according to figures gathered by lawyers and human rights organizations.

A number of detained protesters have told Amnesty International that they were beaten up during arrest and in detention at the Central Security camps, and denied adequate medical care.

Yesterday eight members of board of the Muslim Brotherhood organization, including Eissam Aryan and Mohamed Mursi, were arrested, as well as 20 other leaders from various governorates.

## **Background**

Under international law police may use force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required for the performance of their duty. In particular, they must not use firearms against persons except in self-defence or defence of others against the imminent threat of death or serious injury.

Charges against protesters have included gathering, assault on security forces, damaging public property and disrupting traffic. These charges have often been used by the authorities in order to curb freedom of assembly and deny Egyptians the right to peaceful demonstrations.