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## **Egypt: Police must impartially protect protesters on all sides as death toll rises**

Security forces must do more to protect protesters from violent attack and avoid the use of excessive force against peaceful gatherings, Amnesty International said as Egypt braces for major rival political rallies on Friday.

“Security forces have repeatedly failed to protect protesters, bystanders and residents from attacks by armed assailants. They have also failed to intervene effectively to end violent clashes between rival groups”, said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme.

More than 180 people have been killed in violent clashes or other political violence since 30 June, when mass demonstrations were held calling for the fall of former President Mohamed Morsi. Since then political violence has escalated between supporters and opponents of the deposed President leading to an increasing loss of life.

“Continued failure to properly police rival street protests will lead to further bloodshed and an escalation of human rights abuses,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

A call by General Abdel Fatah Sisi, Minister of Defence, for mass street protests on Friday to grant the army a mandate to quell “terrorism and violence” has raised fears of further bloodshed in the coming days. The call was backed by the Tamarud campaign which coordinated the protests that led to Morsi’s removal. Supporters of the deposed president will hold a rival rally on the same day.

The general’s call raises concerns that the security forces may be preparing to use force to end sit-ins and demonstrations by Morsi’s supporters. On 8 July, at least 51 pro-Morsi protesters were killed in the vicinity of the Republican Guard Club in Cairo as a result of excessive and disproportionate lethal force by security forces.

“Given the security forces’ routine use of excessive force, such a move is likely to lead to yet more unlawful killings, injuries, and other human rights violations,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

In recent days Amnesty International has documented the repeated use of firearms by both opponents and supporters of the deposed President, including in the cities of Cairo and Mansoura. The organization is urging leaders across the political spectrum to denounce human rights abuses by their supporters and call on them to end violent attacks on rival protesters.

In one incident during a pro-Morsi march on 19 July in Mansoura documented by Amnesty International, security forces failed to intervene when unknown assailants attacked a pro-Morsi march and three protesters: two women and a young girl were shot dead. Another woman protester was seriously injured after sustaining a blow to the head.

Clashes in Greater Cairo in the early hours of Tuesday morning left at least 12 people dead including opponents and supporters of deposed President Morsi, as well as a few bystanders. Nine people, including Morsi supporters and local residents opposing his presidency, were killed as a result of live fire during clashes in Giza.

Also on 22 July, anti-Morsi supporter Amr Eid Abel Nabi, 21, was shot and killed when supporters of the deposed President approached Tahrir Square, the symbolic centre of opposition to Mohamed Morsi. A video filmed by a journalist shows apparent Morsi supporters – wearing helmets and armed with sticks and guns, firing intermittently in the direction of Tahrir Square.

Two more died in clashes in Qaliub, north of Cairo.

Israa Lotfy Youssef, an 18 year-old university student was among those killed in Giza. She was attending the pro-Morsi sit-in on Monday night to pray with the rest of her family. Her brother told Amnesty International: “At about 5am, we heard gunfire, and people were screaming and saying that the shooting was coming from the Faculty of Engineering Building. At that moment, amid the confusion, my mother went back into the tent and found Israa lying on the ground in a pool of her own blood.”

Abdel Dayem Mekhemar Ahmed, who worked in a coffee shop in Giza Square, was killed near Cairo University after being shot in the back. Eyewitnesses reported that the shooting originated from the roof of the Faculty of Agriculture.

Elsewhere in the country insecurity is also rife. Armed attacks against police stations and security forces in northern Sinai have escalated since the ousting of President Morsi, reportedly resulting over 30 deaths among security forces and suspected members of suspected armed groups.

On the evening of 23 July, the Security Department in Mansoura was targeted in a bomb attack, leading to the death of a conscript, and over 20 injuries, according to the Ministry of health.