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Egypt's security forces are getting away with murder: Amnesty International oral statement to the 25th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (3 – 28 March 2014)

18 March 2014

Item 4
General Debate

Mr President,

Egypt's security forces are getting away with murder.

On 14 August 2013, the world witnessed the full brutality of Egypt's security forces. At Rabaa al-Adawiya and al-Nahda squares, security forces used excessive and unnecessary force to disperse sit-ins by hundreds of Mohamed Morsi's supporters.

Over 550 protesters died at the hands of the security forces that day at Rabaa al-Adawiya alone, and 600 people died in violence across Egypt in the days after. Amnesty International's delegates on the ground visited the burned-out remains of the sit-in and nearby mosque, as well as the morgue. They found extensive evidence of repeated and sustained use of excessive force by the security forces.

That day was an unparalleled bloodbath that has left an indelible mark on Egypt's human rights record, one which no amount of spin by the authorities can erase. History will record it as the mass killing it was.

Yet over six months later, the fact remains that not one member of the security forces has faced sanction, criminal investigation or formal charge.

Instead, those killed on 14 August and in the following days have joined the hundreds of others whose deaths at the hands of the security forces have gone unanswered since the 2011 uprising.

Investigations have failed to establish the truth, the judicial system has failed to deliver justice, and the authorities have failed to provide adequate reparation. The security forces continue to operate in the long and deepening shadow of impunity.

After a long and stubborn silence, part of the international community finally challenged this impunity on 7 March, when 27 states expressed their concern in the Human Rights Council about Egypt's human rights situation.

Egypt's response has been to blame protesters, and to trumpet the human rights enshrined in its new Constitution.

If that is the case, Egypt should have nothing to hide. Amnesty International urges Egypt to commit to making the findings of its investigations public. Furthermore, given Egypt's poor record on accountability, we encourage its authorities to provide regular updates on their progress to the Human Rights Council.

Should Egypt fail to make real progress towards accountability, we urge the Human Rights Council to establish alternative mechanisms to do so.

Thank you Mr President.