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## **Arms suppliers urged to halt transfers to the Egyptian army**

Global arms suppliers must halt the transfer of small arms, ammunition and other repressive equipment to the Egyptian military and security forces, Amnesty International said today after the army again violently dispersed protests in Cairo.

The organization condemned the excessive use of force against protesters and called for a cessation of all transfers of small arms, light weapons and related munitions and equipment to Egypt, as well as a halt to all internal security equipment that could be used to violently suppress human rights, such as tear gas, rubber and plastic bullets and armoured vehicles.

“It can no longer be considered acceptable to supply the Egyptian army with the types of weaponry, munitions and other equipment that are being used to help carry out the brutal acts we have seen used against protesters,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International.

“It is clear that either the military police has been given orders to disperse demonstrators at any cost, or the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces does not control the army and security forces. Either scenario is equally worrying.”

According to the Egyptian Ministry of Health, at least 11 people have been killed and hundreds injured since Friday 16 December.

At least 300 people have been arrested and referred to the prosecution, among them at least 11 women and many minors reportedly as young as 10 years old. Around 50 more were arrested for several hours and then released. All were reportedly badly beaten and those still in detention are being denied medical treatment.

The violence began when military personnel moved in to clear a sit-in outside the cabinet buildings, burning tents, beating protesters with sticks and tyres and throwing stones and sharp items. The armed forces went on to use live ammunition and shotguns against protesters.

Amnesty International said that available video footage, showing harsh and prolonged beatings, indicated that military police were using excessive force gratuitously, with the aim of punishing demonstrators rather than maintaining law and order.

A video of military police dragging two women, one of whose clothes had been torn off, along the ground before severely beating and stamping on them has been circulated on the internet, provoking widespread outrage.

“The army, which has adopted a paternalistic attitude towards women since it has been in charge, has singled out women protesters for humiliation and degrading treatment. The aim of behaviour like this seems to be to deter women from demonstrating,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

“This is sadly in the same vein as the forced ‘virginity tests’ which the armed forces used against female protesters earlier this year.”

Journalists and others filming have been targeted by army and security forces. Amnesty International said that this seemed to be part of an effort by the SCAF to portray protesters as rioters and to prevent the documenting of abuses by the army.

The SCAF has praised the army and blamed the current violence on protesters, describing them as thugs and vandals who it says have provoked the army and security forces by attacking government property.

One Egyptian army official suggested that protesters in front of the cabinet should be burned in Hitler's ovens. Amnesty International said that such statements could only be construed as awarding the army and security forces a licence for abuse.

This weekend's events are the third time peaceful protests have turned deadly since October, bringing the total numbers of deaths in protests since then to at least 84 people.

In early October at least 28 people, including one soldier, died after a protest against religious discrimination in Cairo turned into a bloodbath. Casualties included bullet wounds and crushed body parts resulting from people being deliberately run over by army vehicles.

At least 45 people were killed after a crackdown on protests in Cairo and Alexandria in November. Bodies in the Cairo morgue reportedly showed head and chest wounds from live ammunition, including shotgun wounds.

The SCAF has promised to carry out investigations into these cases, but no results have so far been made public.

Earlier this month Amnesty International released information showing that the US had repeatedly transferred ammunition to Egypt despite security forces' violent crackdown on protesters.

“There has been welcome international condemnation of the SCAF's actions but more than words, we need to see concrete action by Egypt's international partners to stop the abuses,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

“It is not enough to wait for the outcome of the SCAF's own investigations into killings of protesters or other investigations. Their allies need to take steps to stop this at source.”