



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on July 8, 2013

Egyptian Army Massacres Protesters; U.S. Continues Foreign Aid

The Egyptian Army massacred scores of pro-Morsi protesters in front of the Cairo National Guard headquarters July 8, where the former elected president is presumed to be under house arrest. However, more than a week after the military coup against Muslim Brotherhood-aligned President Morsi, the U.S. government has yet to call it a “coup” or suspend foreign aid payments to Egypt.



The *Washington Post* reported: “State-run television said that 51 people were killed and 435 were wounded in the shooting. Mahmoud Zaqzooq, a Muslim Brotherhood spokesman, said 53 were shot dead, including five children.” But the Muslim Brotherhood website, [Ikwahanweb](#), set the total wounded at more than 1,000.

Military government spokesmen blamed the protesters for the violence, according to the *Washington Post*, quoting military spokesman Ahmed Mohamed Ali as claiming that “Any law in the world allows soldiers to defend Egyptian security when confronted with live fire. We are no longer talking about peaceful protests.” The military spokesman stressed that pictures distributed by the military to the media indicated that the Muslim Brotherhood supporters came into the courtyard prepared for violence: “You saw the video where they have guns, spears, grenades,” The spokesman told the *Post*, “When the opponents of Morsi gather, do you have violence? No. When the supporters of Morsi rally, people get killed. They’re the ones who carry guns.”

However, it has become clear the Egyptian military incurred minimal losses in the threat. [According to the New York Times](#), “At least 51 civilians were killed, all or most of them shot, and more than 300 wounded, doctors and health officials said. Security officials said at least one police officer died as well.” The police officer in question may have been hit by friendly fire, according to eyewitness accounts that place him in a car near where protesters had fled from military gunfire. Additionally, the *New York Times* account suggested that “Some of the blood and bullet holes were hundreds of yards from the walls of the facility’s guard house, suggesting that the soldiers continued firing as the demonstrators fled.”

Despite the violence, President Obama has yet to announce a cut-off in foreign aid payments to the new military junta in charge of Egypt, as [required by federal law](#). Up until the massacre, the Obama administration has refused to call the removal of the elected president a “coup,” admitting in a [July 1 press conference](#) that

They went through an election process that, by all accounts, were [sic] legitimate. And Mr. Morsi was elected. And the U.S. government’s attitude has been we would deal with a democratically elected government. What we’ve also said is that democracy is not just about elections, it’s also about how are you work with an opposition; how do you treat dissenting voices; how do you treat minority groups.... We have some regular assistance that we provide Egypt. We have some dollars



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that have been held up and have to be approved by Congress. But the way we make decisions about assistance to Egypt is based on are they in fact following rule of law and democratic procedures. And we don't make those decisions just by counting the number of heads in a protest march, but we do make decisions based on whether or not a government is listening to the opposition, maintaining a free press, maintaining freedom of assembly, not using violence or intimidation, conducting fair and free elections. And those are the kinds of things that we're examining, and we press the Egyptian government very hard on those issues.

Secretary of State John Kerry [said](#) essentially the same thing in a July 6 press statement calling for an end to the already escalating violence in the streets.

Of course, the military coup involved not only the removal of Morsi as president, but also the overturning of the constitution adopted by the nation by a 64-percent popular vote. ([The constitution was inferior](#), however, with an overwhelmingly powerful presidency, weak bill of rights, and massive social welfare commitments.) In essence, Egypt was transformed from a state with an elected president, elected legislature, and a constitution to a government without laws being ruled by military decree.

The Obama administration's delay in cutting off U.S. foreign aid payments — currently [about \\$1.6 billion per year](#) — has caused a wave of bipartisan congressional backlash. Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy has posted the [relevant sections of foreign aid law](#) on his senatorial website, stating that "our law is clear: U.S. aid is cut off when a democratically elected government is deposed by military coup or decree." Republican Senator Rand Paul, who offered an [amendment](#) on the floor of the Senate to cut off aid to Egypt back on January 31, came out [swinging](#):

Before America supported the Muslim Brotherhood, we supported Morsi's predecessor, Hosni Mubarak. For decades, we aided the Mubarak regime to the tune of about \$60 billion in total.... But what kind of example do we set when we side with the enemies of freedom? How can we have influence in troubled parts of the world when we cuddle up to regimes responsible for much of the trouble?

Senator Paul's amendment to end aid to military aid to Egypt failed by a [vote of 79-19](#).

In those statements, Senator Rand Paul echoed the [views of his father, retired Congressman Ron Paul](#), who blamed the crisis on decades of U.S. intervention in Egypt's internal political affairs with its foreign aid money: "The United States has at one point or another supported each side, which means also that at some point the US has also opposed each side. It is the constant meddling in Egyptian affairs that has turned Egyptians against us, as we would resent foreign intervention in our own affairs."

Senator Paul [tweeted](#) just before the violence that: "In Egypt, democratic authoritarianism is replaced with military junta. American neocons say send them more of your money." But even some of the Republican neoconservatives have voiced new-found opposition to aid to the military government. "It was a coup," Senator John McCain [said](#) on CBS' *Face the Nation* July 7, "and, reluctantly, I believe that we have to suspend aid until such time as there is a new constitution and a free and fair election." McCain had been among the 79 senators who [voted to table \(kill\) the Paul amendment back in January](#).

The massacre by military forces also [forced the Islamist Al Nour Party from the military's coalition](#), one that may make the military junta less stable. The Al Nour Party was the only Islamic party to back the coup, but [described](#) the July 8 attacks as a "massacre." It also received the most votes in the 2011-12 parliamentary elections, after the Muslim Brotherhood's Peace and Freedom Party. The Al Nour Party is salafist in ideology, which the *New York Times* [describes](#) as "ultraconservative Islamists." Salafists



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generally support a more rigorous adherence to Islamic Sharia law than the more moderate Muslim Brotherhood. The defection of the salafists means that all of Egypt's Islamic parties have abandoned the military, and the military — against which the Muslim Brotherhood has called for an "[uprising](#)" — can be depicted as anti-Muslim in this majority-Muslim country.

Photo of protesters in Cairo: AP Images



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