



Muslim Brotherhood Stages “Day of Rage” in Egypt

Protests by supporters of ousted Islamist President Mohamed Morsi continued across Egypt on August 16, as the Muslim Brotherhood staged a “Day of Rage.” The protests were often violent, and witnesses reported four protest-related deaths in central Cairo, four in the Mediterranean town of Damietta, and four more in the northeastern city of Ismailia.

A writer for Reuters news observed that in calling for a “Day of Rage,” the Muslim Brotherhood used the same name that identified January 28, 2011, when Egyptians’ protests against then-president Hosni Mubarek became so potently violent that the police were forced to retreat.

As we reported two days ago, government security forces moved on August 14 to clear two camps of pro-Morsi protesters at Cairo University and across the Nile outside the Rabaa al Adawiya mosque. Thousands of Morsi’s supporters had been camped at Rabaa for more than six weeks. Following the government’s action, the intensity of protests has escalated.

The Reuters reporter observed that Egypt is “deeply polarized after months of political turmoil” and “stands close to the abyss of chaos with Islamist supporters refusing to accept the toppling of Morsi.”

“[Pro-Morsi protesters] have demanded the resignation of army commander General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the reinstatement of Egypt’s first freely elected president, who is in detention and has not been seen in public since his downfall,” continued the report.

Sara Ahmed, identified as a business manager, told the Reuters reporter: “Sooner or later I will die. Better to die for my rights than in my bed. Guns don’t scare us anymore.” She added: “It’s not about the Brotherhood, it’s about human rights.”

Not all Egyptians support the Brotherhood, however. Some civilians helped the army block access to the Rabaa al-Adawiya mosque, where security forces cleared away the protestors on Wednesday.

“We are here to prevent those filthy bastards from coming back,” Reuters quoted Mohamed Ali, identified as a 22-year-old business student.

A report in the [Washington Post](#) noted that “heavy gunfire echoed through central Cairo and across the Nile River, sending protesters and ordinary civilians fleeing down side streets and into buildings, as thousands of pro-Morsi protesters streamed across a major bridge into downtown. It was not





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immediately clear who was firing or what the targets were.”

The report continued: “State television showed a masked man firing an assault rifle from a bridge as he moved among pro-Morsi protesters. The 15th of May Bridge connects the upscale Zamalek district on a Nile River island to downtown Cairo.”

The *Post* reported that the rival [National Salvation Front](#), which it described as “a coalition of liberals and secular Egyptians who support the military’s removal of Morsi,” urged Egyptians to protest what it called the Muslim Brotherhood’s “obvious terrorism actions.”

The National Salvation Front is led by a group that includes former interim Vice President Mohamed el Baradei, who resigned his post on Wednesday.

El Baradei was a key figure in the 2011 revolution that ousted Mubarek and he was also a member of the council consisting of defense minister Abdul Fatah al-Sisi, the grand imam of al-Azhar, Ahmed el-Tayeb, and Coptic pope Tawadros II that declared Morsi to no longer be president.

[President Obama addressed](#) the crisis in Egypt in a statement made to the press from his vacation residence in Chilmark, Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts. He said, in part:

Just over two years ago, America was inspired by the Egyptian people’s desire for change as millions of Egyptians took to the streets to defend their dignity and demand a government that was responsive to their aspirations for political freedom and economic opportunity. And we said at the time that change would not come quickly or easily, but we did align ourselves with a set of principles: nonviolence, a respect for universal rights, and a process for political and economic reform.

In the above remark, Obama referred to the protests against Hosni Mubarek that climaxed with the January 28, 2011 “Day of Rage” after which the current protests are named.

An article published by [Egypt Independent](#) on January 24, 2012, on the first anniversary of the ouster of Mubarek, entitled “Was the Egyptian revolution really non-violent?” questioned the nonviolence of that revolution. The writer, Abdel-Rahman Hussein, asks: “For a revolution to succeed, can it be completely peaceful and nonviolent? When you are trying to overthrow a heavy-handed security-based regime that cracks down on dissent in a violent manner, can you succeed using only nonviolent means?”

Hussein continued: “The Egyptian revolution of 2011 was universally celebrated as peaceful in nature, especially with the media spotlight on Tahrir Square and the consistent and strategic chanting of ‘selmeya’ (peaceful) that rang out from the crowd. Yet numerous police stations and buildings associated with the ruling National Democratic Party were burned on 28 January and fierce battles occurred in Sinai and Suez. Flames looming in the skies of different Egyptian cities could be seen as a symbol of the regime’s fall.”

Back to President Obama’s statement:

The United States strongly condemns the steps that have been taken by Egypt’s interim government and security forces. We deplore violence against civilians. We support universal rights essential to human dignity, including the right to peaceful protest. We oppose the pursuit of martial law, which denies those rights to citizens under the principle that security trumps individual freedom, or that might makes right.

Obama also stated: “We call on the Egyptian authorities to respect the universal rights of the people. We call on those who are protesting to do so peacefully and condemn the attacks that we’ve seen by



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protesters, including on churches. We believe that the state of emergency should be lifted.”

One wonders, in a society as polarized as Egypt’s, and with tensions running high on both sides, if a state of emergency might help to calm the situation. If the situation is so bad that protesters can attack Christian churches with impunity, might not there be a need for more, rather than less, law enforcement?

Furthermore, the president’s statement “We oppose the pursuit of martial law, which denies those rights to citizens under *the principle that security trumps individual freedom*,” while correct in principle, might also be applied to U.S. policies since the institution of repressive measures, such as the Patriot Act, since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Are not measures such as the NSA’s surveillance of private communications and the intrusive searches of airport passengers by the TSA a prime example of the principle that “security trumps individual freedom”?

Obama did correctly state: “America cannot determine the future of Egypt. That’s a task for the Egyptian people,” but then went beyond his constitutional mandate to continue: “I want to be clear that America wants to be a partner in the Egyptian people’s pursuit of a better future, and we are guided by our national interest in this longstanding relationship.”

In his farewell address to the nation in 1796, George Washington, a close associate of the other Founding Fathers who authored our Constitution, took a different view as to what America’s role toward foreign nations should be:

Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter without adequate inducement or justification....

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible.

Related articles: [Egyptian Security Forces Storm Pro-Morsi Protesters](#)

Photo of aftermath of military action in Egypt: AP Images



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