

Egyptian Attacks Are Escalating Amid Stalemate  
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## **Egyptian Attacks Are Escalating Amid Stalemate**

CAIRO — The lethal conflict between Egypt's military-backed government and its Islamist opponents escalated on Monday, with an expansion of attacks against government targets, signs that the authorities have failed to secure the streets and that both sides refuse to back down.

Three brazen attacks across the country included a drive-by shooting near the Suez Canal that killed six soldiers, a car bomb that killed three police officers and wounded dozens near the Red Sea resorts area, and the first rocket-propelled grenade launched in the struggle, exploding near an elite enclave of the capital and damaging a satellite transmitter.

The attacks came a day after security forces killed 53 protesters, many shot in the head and chest, in the worst outbreak of street mayhem in Cairo since mid-August.

Three months after the military ouster of President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, the violence was the latest evidence that the new government installed on July 3 by Gen. Abdul-Fattah el-Sisi had failed to neutralize the Islamist opposition even after arresting its leadership and demonstrating its willingness to use lethal force.

To many in the government, the protests and attacks seemed only to underscore the need to redouble its fight against the Brotherhood, which officials quickly blamed for Monday's attacks

To the Islamist opposition, however, a heavy turnout for a day of protests on Sunday despite the deadly reprisals only proved the resilience of their "anti coup" movement — even with no obvious leadership. Faced with a return to decades of repression, Islamists said, they had no choice but to continue their protests even if they risked death and stood little chance of reversing the takeover.

The seemingly random attacks on Monday, many analysts said, indicated that the violent backlash against the new government had taken on a momentum that the leaders of the Brotherhood could no longer restrain even if they wanted to.

While neither side could fully triumph, neither could see room to pull back, setting the stage for further bloodshed, said Emad Shahin, a political scientist at the American University in Cairo who has tried without success to broker steps toward compromise. "We have reached a bloody stalemate," he said.

Since Mr. Morsi was deposed, the killing of security officers has become an almost daily occurrence in the industrial canal zone of the lawless northern Sinai. But the car bomb on Monday morning in the south Sinai town of El Tur, in the same region as the biblical Mount Sinai

and the Sharm el Sheik resort, was the first sign that such attacks might be spreading to what had been a pillar of the Egyptian economy, its Red Sea resorts.

And the rocket-propelled grenade attack was the first time in years that such a heavy weapon had been used in the vicinity of the capital. The grenade tore a foot-wide hole in a satellite-transmission dish, and its explosion an hour before dawn sent shivers through the affluent neighborhood of Maadi, a heavily guarded precinct that is home to many embassies and diplomats.

No one claimed responsibility for the attacks, nor did they need to. The attacks were universally assumed to be the work of Islamists angry at Mr. Morsi's ouster, and, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized as spokesmen, two senior government officials blamed the Brotherhood despite its repeated public disavowals of such tactics. "Blackmail by terrorism," said one of the officials, a senior military officer.

Suggesting the Brotherhood was almost predisposed to violence, he argued that the violence might have been worse if not for the crackdown, in which security forces have killed more than 1,000 protesters and jailed hundreds of Islamist leaders. If the violence was this severe with the leaders behind bars, the officer asked, how much worse might it be if leaders were released?

The Brotherhood's "anti coup" alliance, meanwhile, saluted what it called the courage and sacrifice of "unprecedented numbers" who had turned out the day before. In a statement on Monday, the alliance called for student protests at schools and universities on Tuesday "to denounce the continuation of the massacres."

And it all but dared the government to continue the violence against protesters by calling for new marches on Friday to Tahrir Square, the symbolic center of the 2011 revolt against President Hosni Mubarak and more recently the staging ground for rallies in support of General Sisi. It was the attempt by pro-Morsi marchers to reach Tahrir Square on Sunday, when it was the site of a pro-military celebration, that set in motion the day of deadly violence, and the opposition alliance's plans to try again this Friday appeared to set the stage for more.

"Nobody will keep us from the square no matter what the sacrifices," the alliance said in its statement.

Leaders and supporters of the Brotherhood have said repeatedly for weeks that they have no choice but to continue their street protests regardless of the odds, because the new government has so far shown every intention of suppressing Egyptian democracy as well as their movement.

"This is a final ultimate battle with the military," Ahmed el-Erainy, 42, a business consultant and Brotherhood member recently released from prison after his arrest at an antigovernment sit-in, said on Monday. "It is the ultimate battle between us and them, and by us I don't just mean the Brothers — I mean the civil state versus the military state."

Like others in the Brotherhood, he dismissed the idea that its members could ever hope for fairness under the military-led government, and after his turn through Egypt's capricious and

politicized judicial system he laughed with particular relish at the idea that instead of street protests they might put their trust in the law and the courts. "What judiciary?" he asked. "There is no judiciary in Egypt."

H. A. Hellyer, a fellow at the Brookings Institution who is based in Egypt, argued that the Brotherhood's approach was tragically shortsighted. Egypt's security forces were likely to meet almost any mass demonstration with force, and the Islamists end up taking the blame for the loss of life, the chaos and any subsequent retaliation like the attacks on Monday.

"Who do you think will be blamed for that R.P.G. attack?" Mr. Hellyer said. "More people will die, you will have violence in other parts of the country, and all that will be blamed on the Muslim Brotherhood."

"It is only a question of whether the Brotherhood are pummeled out of the political arena, or if they withdraw on their own terms," he added.

But Professor Shahin of the American University in Cairo argued that by harassing the government the protests gave the Islamists some leverage, and that the current government was also in a battle it could never fully win. "You can't just say, 'I have half the population on my side and with it I can crush the other half,' and go on like that indefinitely," he said. "This military-backed government cannot consolidate on the basis of repression and the authoritarian measures of the '50s and '60s. That is a bygone era."

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