

EGYPT MILITARY CRACKDOWN:

Bodies Pile Up As Escalation
Continues Amid The Slaughter



Euro-Mid Observer
المركز الأورو متوسطي لحقوق الإنسان

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The EuroMid Observer for Human Rights has documented the killing of at least 1215 protesters across Egypt, of which 914 protesters killed in Cairo, after Egyptian Armed Forces moved in to clear the two sit-ins of Pro-Morsy supporters on Wednesday 14 August. Among the victims are children, women and elderly. Our team in Egypt also estimates that there are at least 8000 injured, and approximately 1,500 persons are missing until Saturday 18 August 2013.

Many of the at least 914 protesters were killed on August 14 over a period of several hours during clashes with Egypt's riot police and plain clothed men at and near the Pro-Morsy's sit-ins at Rabaa al-Adawiya and Al-Nahda in eastern Cairo.

Prior to the 14 August clashes, the EuroMid Observer for Human Rights visited the two main protest sites, both of which were densely populated with women, children, and men who have been staging a 47 days-long sit-in to protest the removal of President Mohammed Morsy. Both sit-ins would at certain moments have a gathering of at least 150,000 people. On July 31, the Egyptian cabinet authorized the interior minister to "take all necessary measures to face these dangers and put an end to them within the framework of the constitution and the law." The EuroMid Observer for Human Rights warned the Egyptian Authorities not to use abusive and excessive force in the dispersal of protests as Egypt's riot police have consistently responded with excessive and unlawful lethal force in dispersing demonstrations and have showed insufficient respect to protecting the right to life.

On 14 and 15 August, EuroMid researchers were present at the two Pro-Morsy's sit-ins at Rabaa al-Adawiya and Al-Nahda. Our team interviewed thirty-seven witnesses to the violence at both sit-ins and reviewed extensive video footage of the events. One of our researchers was at the Rabaa Field Hospital. Our researchers visited numerous hospitals and field hospitals in Cairo, as well as the city's Zeinhum morgue and the Iman mosque temporarily housing dozens of the dead. They documented scores of deaths, and eyewitness reports from medical staff who described how many of the injured and dead had sustained bullet wounds to the upper body.

All Photos taken by:
Mosa'ab Elshamy



Breaking down the sit-ins

The violence started around 6.30 a.m. on Wednesday 14 August as Central Security Forces (riot police) backed by helicopters and snipers, surrounded both sit-ins and fired tear gas at three different entries while heavy semi-automatic bursts of gunfire were heard. Video footage showed the sounds of successive gun shots and men in the crowd falling to the ground. This was confirmed by our colleague that was at the Rabaa sit-in who stated that “people started to fall right away, which means that security forces were using live gunfire as snipers were firing tear gas and live ammunition from rooftops and helicopters”. EuroMid researcher counted 42 victims in the first hour. He also confirmed that the security forces shredded through the labyrinthine networks of

tents and tarpaulin shacks, setting them on fire, with women and children still inside of them, causing many casualties and injuries. An eyewitness told EuroMid “a mother and her baby were crushed to death inside the tent”, as severe chaos rose among the bloodshed.

The Egyptian security forces had announced one safe corridor from which protesters could exit the Rabaa sit-in parallel to Tayaran Street. Protestors and eyewitnesses stated that the security forces deliberately targeted protesters who were using the safe corridor, and attacked physically and verbally protesters as they were trying to escape. One witness told EuroMid that a protestor got shot as he was carrying a causality trying to flee via this corridor.

“This is not an attempt to break-up a peaceful sit-in, this is a huge military operation against unarmed civilians” said Sandra Owen, Researcher at the EuroMid Observer for Human Rights.



“The use of deadly fire on such a scale and the killing of so many by the security forces prove that there was an intention to kill with no regard for people’s lives.”

As army troops provided security at the locations, armored bulldozers were used to plow into the barricades at the two camps. For about 12 hours, both sit-ins and its nearby suburbs were subjected to a near-continuous barrage of live fire. The excessive use of teargas on the protesters led to many cases of suffocation, especially among children and infants; as the hunting for activists and reporters was taking place simultaneously while many others got arrested.

At the nearby field hospital, Rabaa Medical Field Hospital, casualties and injuries were coming in numbers that were higher than the medical staff could handle. The Field Hospital was unequipped to handle the severe cases. Due to the constant stream of bullet-riddled, the hospital windows were draped with blinds as a precaution against sniper rounds. According to Egypt’s Health Ministry, 638 people were confirmed dead on Thursday evening. Yet the true figure is much higher.



In the first hour only of the massacre, 42 bodies were crammed up against each other on the floor of the field hospital. As more protesters were killed, the dead were housed in other areas. Behind the stage which has been used during the pro-Morsy rally, 25 additional bodies were laid out wrapped in white shawls, unrefrigerated in the sun.

In the following 2 hours, the reception area of the Field Hospital was turned into yet another morgue to store a further 26 bodies. One floor up in a tiny storeroom, 5 more corpses were lying in pools of fresh blood.

The main staircase of the field hospital was filled with the dead and wounded. Injured protesters, most of them by live fire, were stretchered up to the operating rooms, while the dead were stretchered in the other direction. Ten



corpses were laid out in the prayer hall of the adjacent Rabaa al-Adawiya Mosque. Another room in the mosque was turned into a makeshift morgue where a total of 31 bodies had been placed. The same hall was being used to treat wounded protesters, surrounded by frightened protesters, women and children, fleeing the rounds of gunfire outside. Corridors barely two yards wide were lined with dozens upon dozens of wounded.

Our team in Egypt has counted 914 corpses in the different hospitals, morgues and mosques where they were transferred after the Rabaa massacre. We also estimate that there are at least 8000 injuries ranging from burns to birdshots and live fire, and approximately 1,500 persons are missing until Saturday 18 August.

It has to be noted that dozens of injured were detained in Cairo Stadium until the late hours of Wednesday night without receiving any medical care. More than 7000 protesters were subjected to severe beatings and humiliating and degrading treatment during their detention by the security forces at Cairo Stadium.





Rabaa Field Hospital

The Rabaa Field Hospital is a six-floors building near the Rabaa square, and has several halls attached to the mosque. At about 10:00-10:30 am, the excessive use of tear gas and the smoke from the burned tents suffocated those in the Field Hospital and the mosque. Hospital staff had to wear their gasmasks to perform their work.

Within less than 3 hours, the Field Hospital itself and the adjacent halls were completely full with corpses and injured protesters. The injuries varied from birdshots to live bullets, burns and asphyxiation. EuroMid was present in the Field Hospital as many of the dead and wounded were brought in, and counted 139 corpses in the first 3 hours. We were told by medical staff that the “majority of the bullet injuries





were to the head, neck, and chest, as well that the angle of gunshot wounds indicated they were shot from above”.

A doctor interviewed by the EuroMid judged some of the deaths to be targeted killings, as the position of the shots could only result in death. He also confirmed receiving the corpse of one man who was burned to death in his tent.

“Extrajudicial executions are acts outside the realm of rule of law and hence deprive the targeted individual(s) of their right to life, as well as the right to defend themselves against charges against them” says Sandra Owen, Euromid Researcher, “The killing of a person by governmental authorities without the sanction of any judicial proceeding or legal process is an unlawful punishment that violates the Declaration of Human Rights”.

Three eyewitnesses, including video footage, confirmed to the EuroMid researcher at Rabaa that the security forces imposed a siege on the Field Hospital, with police forces blocking the entrance to Rabaa from both Nasr Street and Abbas Akkad Street. The security forces also prevented ambulances from coming through from the very beginning of the violent crackdown. EuroMid researcher at the field hospital witnessed the arrival on a stretcher of an ambulance medic shot in the head. Our other EuroMid researcher inside al-Demerdash Hospital stated that “protesters rushed in had shots in the head, arms and legs with live ammunition.”

“Heavily armed security forces stormed the field hospital and torched the whole building with dead and injured citizens still inside. By destroying and burning down the hospital with the corpses still inside, the police wanted to erase the evidence of their massive crime.”

A Doctor EuroMid spoke to at Rabaa Field Hospital

The Rabaa Field Hospital is an established medical facility and clearly marked as such. Eventhough International Human Rights Law applies to situation of armed conflicts; it allows some “exceptional” derogation from the rules that in a normal situation should be obeyed. When something is unlawful in the situation of an armed conflict it is most definitely unlawful in other situations. Under International Humanitarian Law, hospitals are protected civilian objects, and therefore benefit from the humanitarian principles of distinction and proportionality. According to Rule 35 of ICRC/IHL, directing an attack against a zone established to shelter the wounded, the sick and civilians from the effects of hostilities is prohibited. In a resolution adopted in 1970 on basic principles for the protection of civilian populations in armed

conflicts, the UN General Assembly stated that “places or areas designated for the sole protection of civilians, such as hospital zones or similar refuges, should not be the object of military operations”. Therefore directing an attack against the Rabaa Field Hospital, that sheltered the wounded, the sick and civilians from the effects of hostilities is prohibited. It is a criminal act to deliberately attack a hospital or other medical units, whether civilian or military. Medical personnel in general may not be attacked.

Around 12:00 pm, the medical staff at the Rabaa Field Hospital had to prepare to evacuate as security forces were approaching the area and were set to bulldozer the Field Hospital. Doctors and all medical staff were ordered to hide their medical ID cards and to take off their white coats in



fear of any arrest or assault.

The evacuation did not start right away, as casualties were rushed in constantly. As smoke was filling up the air, many women and elderly sought refuge in the area close to the mosque. The sound of the live ammunition was ongoing.

A doctor told the EuroMid that “a sniper was shooting at anyone who was coming in or out of the hospital. The sniper was also targeting those who were looking from the hospital’s windows.”

Around 3 pm, the EuroMid researcher stated that massive waves of casualties were rushed into hospitals with injuries that were much more fatal. A doctor at the field hospital stated that he has seen “patients with their heads blown out and their brain tissue on the floor”. Around 4pm, the basement and the first

floor were completely covered with corpses and injured. Some ambulances were trying to transfer patients who needed acute surgical help from the backdoor. According to a doctor at the field hospital “the ambulances only succeeded in transferring 5% of those who need surgical help”. With a lack of equipment and supplies, doctors worked mainly on patients who had a relative chance of survival. Manual respiratory was conducted on injured by relatives or other volunteers. The situation was tragic as gunfire was continuous.

Around 5pm, EuroMid researcher stated that live bullets targeted the main door of the hospital. The Rabaa Al-Adaweya field hospital was stormed by the Central Security Forces and Special Forces units, in cooperation with the Egyptian Armed Forces, as they shot live

bullets, birdshots and threw gas bombs, causing severe injuries. The purpose was to completely clear out and bulldozer the field hospital. Other eyewitnesses inside the hospital, including a nurse, reported that men in black uniforms threatened them at gunpoint to open



the door. A few minutes later live gunfire was used. The EuroMid researcher stated that the medical staff and family members plighted for the safety of the corpses and the victims, but they were terrorized by the abusive security forces. A doctor told Euromid that “heavily armed security forces stormed the field hospital and torched the whole building with dead and injured citizens still inside. By destroying and burning down the hospital with the corpses still inside, the police wanted to erase the evidence of their massive crime”.

The EuroMid Researcher who fled from the field hospital after a whole day in it, witnessed a devastating scene in the surrounding Rabaa camp. Corpses were on the streets and the entire camp was on fire. Black smoke was rising as helicopters with snipers were shooting gas bombs. As he was walking out the Rabaa camp, our colleague stated that “As I looked back, security services had gained complete access of the hospital and were clearing everybody out into the surrounding streets. Thousands of people were escaping the camp, as police bulldozers moved in to destroy the remaining building. I saw a huge cloud of smoke arising from the place where the field hospital was. I don’t think they managed to transfer all the corpses and injured before setting the place on fire.”

Sandra Owen, Researcher at the Euro-Mid Observer for Human Rights, stated that “the use of excessive lethal force by the security forces against a majority of peaceful supporters, shows an unprecedented level of disregard for human life, and indicates the bloody escalation, initiated by the Egyptian Security and Armed Forces”.

Egyptian Security Forces surround the Iman Mosque

On Thursday 15 August, EuroMid researchers visited several hospitals, morgues and mosques converted into morgues, where victims killed in the Rabaa al-Adawiya and Nahda sit-ins were brought, as well as some of those evacuated from the Rabaa Field Hospital.

A EuroMid researcher was present at the Ta'min al-Sihi Hospital, where he counted 52 corpses killed in the clashes, including at least one woman. The hospital had received more than 220 injuries, some of which needed to be hospitalized for treatment.

Cairo's Zeinhum morgue had carried out 125 autopsies by 11 am on Thursday morning, while corpses were still piled up.

EuroMid researcher at the Iman Mosque, which was converted into a makeshift morgue, counted 259 corpses, wrapped in shrouds and kept cool with blocks of ice; most of the bodies bore gunshot wounds. Lists with names of 265 people had been hung on the mosque's walls. Our colleague said that at least an additional 50 bodies from Wednesday's violence still lined floors of the makeshift morgue.

At least 23 corpses were charred as to be unrecognizable as a result of the police burning down the site's mosque, its makeshift hospital - and the corpses already piled inside it, when storming the Rabaa sit-in.

Health Ministry death tolls include only bodies that have passed through hospitals, indicating the rows of dead at the mosque are uncounted in any official figures.

A doctor at the Iman Mosque told Euromid that "More bodies still lay in the remains of the Rabaa camp, but security forces were preventing the mosque helpers from retrieving them".

As death tolls rose, official certificates to allow the bodies to be buried were harder to get. Dr Hany Nawara,

an official from the Egyptian doctors' syndicate told EuroMid that "the authorities are attempting to cover up the victims' cause of death. As relatives want to bury their dead, the police is refusing to register the cause of death as murder and want to list them as accidents or suicide".

The EuroMid researcher was shown official certificates of death where the cause of death was not mentioned. "The ministry of health was refusing to send forensics, pushing the families to a point of despair, whereas they will choose to bury their loved ones without registering the cause, lowering the official death toll of the Rabaa massacre", said EuroMid researcher.

Egypt's Minister of Interior stated 43 members of the security forces, including 18 officers, were killed across the country, with more than 200 injured since Wednesday 14 August. Interim Prime Minister Hazem el-Beblawi, on Egyptian TV, defended and justified the clearing as "necessary to restore the security of Egyptians" and praised the Ministry of Interior and police for showing "restraint to the maximum level". Protesters at Rabaa al-Adawiya told EuroMid that they used rocks and Molotov cocktails and set police vehicles alight in an attempt to prevent the dispersal.

Sandra Owen, EuroMid Researcher, insists that "responses to demonstrations must comply with international standards, even when some participants err by resorting to violence, including the use of firearms. International standards forbid the excessive use of lethal force, and do not justify the intentional murder of protestors by police or military snipers. The use of force must not exceed

what is required to prevent the use of violence. Firing live ammunition at crowds is intolerable and should be considered a criminal act”.

Egypt’s violation of Human Rights



EuroMid researchers were present at both Pro-Morsy sit-ins. They have also met with dozens of survivors, relatives of victims and activists who had been detained, and survivors of torture. They have also spoken to government officials who tried to justify the abuses that were taking place. Based on the initial testimonies, review of extensive video footage, and other evidence we’ve gathered, there seems to be little doubt the security forces have been acting with blatant disregard for human life.

Egyptian security forces have used systematic and unjustified excessive force and live gunfire, as there had been no urgent need for such excessive use of lethal force. International conventions, including those signed by Egypt, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, provide for the right to life and the right of citizens to peaceful assembly and demonstration, and ban the use of force to break up a peaceful sit-in.

- Violating the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association of the protestors

The Egyptian Authorities have blatantly violated the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association of the protestors, which states that: “Everyone has the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and that no one may be compelled to belong to an association”. Resolution 15/21 of the Human Rights Council “Recogniz[ed] the importance of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association to the full enjoyment of civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights; and Recogniz[ed] also that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are essential components of democracy”.

Responses to demonstrations and sit-ins must comply with international standards, even when some participants err by resorting to violence, including the use of firearms. International standards forbid the excessive use of lethal force, and do not justify the intentional murder of protestors by police or military snipers. The use of force must not exceed what is required to prevent the use of violence. Firing live ammunition at crowds is intolerable and should be considered a criminal act.

The rules of the international law restrict the eligibility of the use of force to the fullest extent, so that it is limited in the case of a serious threat to the lives, as “law enforcement officials shall apply non-violent



means before resorting to the use of force and firearms. They may use force and firearms only if other means remain ineffective or without any promise of achieving the intended result." Such non-violent means include negotiation and mediation, or even dispersing demonstrations by water cannons and other means which protect and save lives.

As the Egyptian authorities have resorted to violence, they have blocked a number of initiatives that were on the table to resolve the crisis through political negotiations. Promises by the authorities to use lethal methods only as a last resort to disperse protesters appear to have been broken.

The United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, stipulates that "whenever the lawful use of force and firearms is unavoidable, law enforcement officials shall exercise restraint in such use and act in proportion to the seriousness of the offence and the legitimate objective to be achieved; minimize damage and injury; respect and preserve human life; and persons contravening these rules by committing or be complicit in committing unlawful killing shall be punished." The Egyptian security forces have a track record of excessive force against demonstrators with catastrophic consequences.

- Unlawful Use of Teargas

Rules under international customary law ban the use of certain weapons as an instrument to contain assemblies. Central Security Forces (riot police), backed by the Egyptian Army, fired teargas canisters and gas bombs directly at the densely populated sit-ins, causing severe cases of asphyxiation and injuries among women, children and elderly. Eyewitnesses reported that as a result of the excessive use of teargas, the stampede rushed forward, and some people were crushed to death. It appears that security forces firing tear gas at the stampeding protesters exacerbated the situation, as people could not see a safe passage and may have been the cause of some of the deaths.



Although teargas is not considered to be a lethal weapon, it can cause serious injuries and medical problems for people exposed to it, even when used with restraint. Teargas canisters and gas bombs turn into dangerous projectiles when fired directly into crowds, causing lethal casualties when hitting the upper body.

International guidelines such as the UN Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms stipulate that the police are expected to use discretion in crowd control tactics to ensure a proportionate response to any threat of violence, and to avoid exacerbating the situation.

In addition to firing teargas canisters directly at protesters, the Egyptian police forces fired teargas and gas bombs in huge quantities into confined spaces, a mosque, a hospital, and makeshift health clinic in contravention of the UN Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms.

The Egyptian authorities should hold the commanders and police forces who used these canisters in such an irresponsible way accountable for inflicting unnecessary harm and endangering lives.

- Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

EuroMid was present at the Rabaa Field Hospital as many of the dead and wounded were brought in; the majority of the bullet injuries were to the head, neck, and chest. The angle of gunshot wounds indicated they were shot from above. The nature and number of

deaths and the positions of injuries suggest that there is some sort of targeted killings, intended purpose to killing and disregard for the lives of the protesters.

Extrajudicial executions are acts outside the realm of rule of law and hence deprive the targeted individual(s) of their right to life, as well as the right to defend themselves against charges against them. The killing of a person by governmental authorities without the sanction of any judicial proceeding or legal process is an unlawful punishment that violated the Declaration of Human Rights.

The Egyptian forces have not opened or announced it would open an investigation into any of those cases, which is contrary to the provisions of Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, which state the need to investigate cases of unlawful killings and that the "purpose of the investigation shall be to determine the cause, manner and time of death, the person responsible, and any pattern or practice which may have brought about that death," and that "the body of the deceased person shall not be disposed of until an adequate autopsy is conducted by a physician," in addition to "exceptional circumstances may not be invoked as a justification of such executions."

EuroMid is therefore calling for UN experts – especially the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions – to investigate the circumstances of the violence and the pattern of excessive and unwarranted lethal force used by the Egyptian authorities.

Accordingly, given the Egyptian authorities' poor track record in holding members of the security forces accountable for using excessive, and unwarranted, lethal force against protesters, EuroMid is concerned about the ability of the Public Prosecution to conduct full, impartial and independent investigations.

- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

We emphasize that Security Forces and the Army are responsible for protecting all protestors, including both supporters and opponents of the deposed president. However, instead, a serious escalation in human rights violations -- such as extrajudicial killings; arbitrary arrests; excessive use of force; and deprivation of freedoms of association, speech and expression - has been documented, targeting those who oppose the military's ouster of President Morsi. The Egyptian authorities have not only perpetrated such acts, but also turned a blind eye to their practice by others.

On 15 August, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay has appealed to all sides in Egypt to step back from the brink of disaster after a day of bloody violence left hundreds dead or injured. "The number of people killed or injured, even according to the government's figures, point to an excessive, even extreme, use of force against demonstrators. There must be an independent, impartial, effective and credible investigation of the conduct of the security forces.

Anyone found guilty of wrongdoing should be held to account” she said.

Under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Egypt is a party, even in times of emergency no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his or her life or be subject to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.





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