

Imminent Crackdown in Egypt: Potential Consequences

by [Adel El-Adawy \(/experts/adel-el-adawy\)](/experts/adel-el-adawy)

Aug 9, 2013

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Adel El-Adawy \(/experts/adel-el-adawy\)](/experts/adel-el-adawy)

Adel El-Adawy was a 2013-2014 Next Generation Fellow at The Washington Institute.



Brief Analysis

Although aggressive military action could yield stability in the short term, the long-term consequences may not bode well for meaningful democratic transition.

After several days of high-level diplomacy and behind-the-scenes negotiations, all efforts have failed to reach a peaceful compromise and resolve Egypt's political deadlock. As a result, a crackdown on the protracted Morsi protests in the Rabaa al-Adawiyya and al-Nahda neighborhoods of Cairo and Giza could come at any moment.

On Wednesday, the U.S. embassy warned American citizens to stay away from both locations due to fears of violence. And on Thursday evening, Egyptian military spokesman Ahmed Ali stated that the sit-ins are not peaceful and pose a national security threat due to the presence of weapons and continued incitement. He added that "an expeditious move to disperse the [protests] could have negative consequences due to the presence of children and women in the crowds; therefore, a careful assessment of the dispersion strategy is being examined." Indeed, the transitional government has made clear that it wants to minimize loss of life, urging the demonstrators to leave before the Interior Ministry takes action to remove them. They have remained defiant, however, with some protestors even building iron fences around the sit-ins to hinder any move by security forces.

Whether a crackdown is legitimate or not, the regional and international response to such a development would put great pressure on Egypt's transitional government. The interim authorities already face internal tensions and debates about the potential consequences, with Vice President Mohamed ElBaradei and other senior officials even threatening to resign. Any high-profile resignation, especially by ElBaradei, would undermine the transitional government's credibility and destabilize the ongoing political process. An aggressive crackdown would also make it more difficult for the Muslim Brotherhood to join that process, since it would feed the group's victim/underdog narrative and thereby perpetuate its political marginalization.

Following a crackdown, the Brotherhood would likely continue to protest, leading to one of two scenarios:

1. The security apparatus becomes even more aggressive, completely suppressing the Brotherhood's supporters in order to create short-term political and social stability.
2. The security apparatus eschews extraordinary measures, leaving room for the Brotherhood to protest indefinitely and, perhaps, resort to more radical means of expressing their grievances. This in turn would threaten the political process.

Although the first scenario is more likely, both would make it difficult for an inclusive political transition to take place. Aggressive military and security action could yield stability in the short term, but the long-term consequences of such measures may not bode well for meaningful democratic transition.

Adel El-Adawy is a Next Generation fellow at The Washington Institute. ❖

RECOMMENDED

BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Unpacking the UAE F-35 Negotiations](#)

Feb 15, 2022



Grant Rumley

[\(/policy-analysis/unpacking-uae-f-35-negotiations\)](#)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[How to Make Russia Pay in Ukraine: Study Syria](#)

Feb 15, 2022



Anna Borshchevskaya

[\(/policy-analysis/how-make-russia-pay-ukraine-study-syria\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Bennett's Bahrain Visit Further Invigorates Israel-Gulf Diplomacy](#)

Feb 14, 2022



Simon Henderson

[\(/policy-analysis/bennetts-bahrain-visit-further-invigorates-israel-gulf-diplomacy\)](#)

TOPICS

[Arab & Islamic Politics \(/policy-analysis/arab-islamic-politics\)](/policy-analysis/arab-islamic-politics)

[Democracy & Reform \(/policy-analysis/democracy-reform\)](/policy-analysis/democracy-reform)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

[Egypt \(/policy-analysis/egypt\)](/policy-analysis/egypt)

[North Africa \(/policy-analysis/north-africa\)](/policy-analysis/north-africa)