

Persecuted Church Braces for Post-Morsi Egypt

We're watching the unfolding situation in Cairo as night sets on the Egypt capital. The deadline issued by the Egyptian armed forces has passed, and President Morsi has made calls for reconciliation but has not stepped down, which was the primary demand of the protestors. According to reports emerging from Egypt, President Morsi has been effectively removed from the decision-making process, and the armed forces will implement a road map for the country.

"The Egyptian people have spoken decisively that they want a government that will rule according to democratic and inclusive principles," says Todd Daniels, International Christian Concern regional manager for the Middle East. "During this period of transition, we urge various groups to work together to develop a political system that embraces democratic principles, not only in elections but in its institutions as well. We urge the people of Egypt to reject violence and work to develop social consensus and form a strong, united, democratic system that protects the rights and freedoms of all its citizens."

A meeting hours before the expiration of the armed forces deadline brought together many of the primary stakeholders in a post-Morsi Egypt. General Abdel Fattah el-Sissi met with liberal opposition spokesman Mohamed ElBaradei, two leaders from the Tamarod youth opposition group, a representative of the Islamic fundamentalist Nour party, as well as the Grand Sheikh of the Al-Azhar Islamic Institute and the Egyptian Coptic Pope Tawados II, Reuters reports.

The threat of violence grew, heading into Wednesday, as 16 were killed overnight and 200 were injured outside of Cairo University, Ahram reports. During the night, President Morsi

gave a statement saying he was prepared to give his life to defend Egypt in what can perhaps be considered a call to arms for Muslim Brotherhood supporters, according to BBC. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, headed by General el-Sissi, issued its own declaration: "We swear to God that we will sacrifice even our blood for Egypt and its people, to defend them against any terrorist, radical or fool."

As President Morsi and his supports cling to power, the security of the country continues to unravel, with the deadly clashes early Wednesday morning pushing the death toll to 39 and injuries now numbering more than 1,000. Another disturbing figure is the abuse against women. Human Rights Watch has documented nearly 100 cases of sexual violence against women during the protests, which highlight a disturbing trend that the government and security forces have failed to address. This is just one of the many failures to protect law and order and basic rights that has marked Morsi's year in power.

On Wednesday, Egyptian security forces issued a travel ban on President Morsi and dozens of the top Islamists from the Muslim Brotherhood to prevent them from fleeing the country. While some aides from the Morsi camp have called this a military coup, the armed forces have repeated they have no desire to bring the country under military rule. The military has moved forces into positions around the country in an attempt to minimize the violence as clashes between rival groups seem destined to explode.