

Some Claim 'Coups' as Egyptian Court Dissolves Parliament

Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court on Thursday ruled that the Islamist-led Parliament must be immediately dissolved, while also blessing the right of Hosni Mubarak's last prime minister to run for president, escalating a battle for power between the remnants of the toppled order and rising Islamists.

The high court, packed with sympathizers of the ousted president, appeared to be engaged in a frontal legal assault on the Muslim Brotherhood, the once-outlawed organization whose members swept to power in Parliament this spring and whose candidate was the front-runner for the presidency as well.

"Egypt just witnessed the smoothest military coup," Hossam Bahgat, director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, said in a Twitter post. "We'd be outraged if we weren't so exhausted."

The ruling means that whoever emerges as the winner of the runoff will take power without the check of a sitting Parliament and could even exercise some influence over the election of a future Parliament. It vastly compounds the stakes in the presidential race, raises questions about the governing military council's commitment to democracy, and makes uncertain the future of a constitutional assembly recently formed by Parliament as well.

The decision, which dissolves the first freely elected Parliament in Egypt in decades, supercharges a building conflict between the court, which is increasingly presenting itself as a check on Islamists' power, and the Muslim Brotherhood.

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