

Morsi refuses to quit, offers consensus govt as deadline ends  
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July 3 (PTI) -- Beleaguered Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi today refused to quit and offered a consensus government to end a standoff with the powerful military, as the 48-hour deadline for him to meet people's demands expired with both sides pledging to sacrifice their lives to defend the country.

"The presidency envisions the formation of a consensus coalition government to oversee the next parliamentary election," the President's office said in a statement posted on Facebook.

Morsi reaffirmed his call for a national dialogue and the formation of a panel to amend the country's controversial Islamist-drafted constitution. He insisted on continuing as the President.

There was a "clear roadmap which is based on constitutional legitimacy... and includes the formation of a temporary coalition government based on national participation to oversee the coming phase," 61-year-old Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected President, said.

"There would be an agreement from all political trends over the (choice of) prime minister," his office said.

Morsi reiterated that he was a "president for all Egyptians".

Egypt edged closer to a return to rule by the army generals as both sides refused to back down with the 48-hour military deadline for Morsi to resolve the ongoing political crisis coming to an end.

Morsi, who looked increasingly isolated as many of his cabinet colleagues abandoned him, earlier said he had been elected in a free and fair poll to lead the nation and intended to stick to his task.

Meanwhile, the health ministry said 23 people were killed and 200 others injured in violence between pro-and anti Morsi supporters at Cairo University in the Giza district in the capital since last night, taking the toll to 39 since Sunday.

Morsi, in a 46-minute emotional address televised live across the country late last night, had warned that the only alternative to respecting the constitutional legitimacy of the office was further bloodshed on the streets.

Morsi said he would give his life for Egypt and insisted he is the legitimate leader and will not give in to "violence and thuggery" by resigning.

"The general commander of the armed forces said it was more honourable for us to die than to have the people of Egypt terrorised or threatened," the army today said in a statement headlined "The Final Hours". (MORE) PTI ZH DDC ASK AKJ ASK

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According to analysts, Morsi's statement showed that he and his party Muslim Brotherhood are ready to face the risk of challenging the powerful army.

The Interior Ministry today sided with the army and vowed not to favour any one political movement over another.

Asserting that police "belong to the people", the ministry issued a statement to fully support the army's stand over protecting "national security and the state's interests".

"The police apparatus renews its vow to... protect citizens and vital state institutions and to preserve the security of the protesters...The police belong to the people. They stand with equal distance from all political factions, and do not side with one faction at the expense of the other," the statement said.

Millions of people took to the streets this week under the banner of Tamarod (Arabic word for Rebellion) movement which is driving the campaign with a petition of signatures seeking Morsi's ouster and a snap election.

After Morsi's speech, the Tamarod movement accused him of "threatening his own people".

In a counter-measure, hundreds of Islamists took to streets across country yesterday in support of Morsi, who just completed an year in office.

In Port Said in Suez Canal region, hundreds protested against army's Monday statement that gave President Morsi the 48- hour deadline to resolve the current impasse, describing it as a "coup against legitimacy."

Hours after Morsi rejected the military ultimatum, the army today assured the people that it would shed its blood to defend Egypt against "any terrorist, radical or fool".

"We swear to God that we will sacrifice our blood for Egypt and its people against all terrorists, extremists and ignorant" groups, it said.

In a provocative comment, a high-ranking Muslim Brotherhood official yesterday said the Egyptian people should stand ready to give their lives away in order to stop a coup from taking place.

"Seeking martyrdom to prevent this coup is what we can offer to the previous martyrs of the revolution," Mohamed al- Beltagui said in a statement.

His statement refers to the more than 800 people who were killed in the 2011 uprising that toppled Hosni Mubarak.

Meanwhile, in New Delhi a spokesperson of Ministry of External Affairs said though no advisory is issued against travel to Egypt, the Indian mission has asked its citizens to avoid those areas where protests are taking place. PTI ZH DDC ASK AKJ ASK 07032125

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