

The New York Times | International Herald Tribune

Army Ousts Egypt's President



Andre Pain/European Pressphoto Agency



Amr Abdallah Dalsh/Reuters



Yusuf Sayman for The New York Times



Hassan Ammar/Associated Press



Ahmed Gomaa/Associated Press



Tara Todras-Whitehill for The New York Times



Mohamed Abd El Ghany/Reuters



Yusuf Sayman for The New York Times



Tara Todras-Whitehill for The New York Times



Spencer Platt/Getty Images



Tara Todras-Whitehill for The New York Times



Opposition protesters filled Tahrir Square on Wednesday night.

By [DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK](#), [BEN HUBBARD](#) and [ALAN COWE](#)

CAIRO — Egypt’s military moved forcefully to seize power from President Mohamed Morsi on Wednesday, deploying tanks and troops in Cairo and other cities, restricting his travel and convening an emergency meeting of top civilian and religious leaders to devise an interim government and lay the groundwork for new elections.

[Ahramonline](#), the government’s official English-language Web site, said the military had informed Mr. Morsi that he was no longer head of state. There was no word on Mr. Morsi’s whereabouts.

The military’s actions came as enormous crowds of the president’s supporters and opponents filled the streets of the capital and soldiers were deployed in significant numbers to keep the spiraling political crisis from going out of complete control.

State radio said that the emergency meeting, which included Mohamed ElBaradei, a prominent Egyptian statesman who has emerged as a leading critic of Mr. Morsi, along with top Muslim and Christian leaders, had adjourned after several hours and a “road map” for a post-Morsi government would be announced later.

The developments followed the lapse of a 48-hour deadline imposed by the military generals on the increasingly isolated president to meet the demands of millions of Egyptians disaffected with the one-year-old governance of Mr. Morsi, the first democratically elected leader of Egypt.

By 6:30 p.m. military forces began moving around Cairo. Tanks and troops headed for the presidential palace — although it was unclear whether Mr. Morsi was inside — while other soldiers ringed the nearby square where tens of thousands of the president's supporters were rallying.

Many of the Islamists had armed themselves with makeshift clubs, shields made of potcovers or metal scraps and plastic hard hats, and there were small scuffles with the better-armed soldiers. Some soldiers fired their weapons in the air. But the military forces held back.

Soldiers also were seen erecting barbed-wire fences and barriers around a barracks where President Morsi may have been working, Reuters reported, quoting witnesses.

Mr. Morsi's senior foreign policy adviser, Essam el-Haddad, issued an open letter Wednesday afternoon on his official Web page lamenting what he called the imminent takeover of Egypt's first freely elected government.

"As I write these lines I am fully aware that these may be the last lines I get to post on this page," he wrote. "For the sake of Egypt and for historical accuracy, let's call what is happening by its real name: Military coup."

Security officials said the military's intelligence service had banned any travel by President Morsi and senior Islamist aides, including the Muslim Brotherhood's supreme guide, Mohamed Badie, and his influential deputy, Khairat el-Shater.

People close to the president said at around the same time that talks with the generals continued but looked increasingly futile. A decisive move was expected within hours, these people said, although the president and his advisers remained at liberty.

With millions of Egyptians waiting to see what the military would do, Mr. Morsi reiterated in a Facebook posting what he had said in a long and rambling televised speech Tuesday night, vowing to stay in power as Egypt's first democratically elected president following the 2011 revolution that overthrew Hosni Mubarak.

“The presidency reaffirms that violating constitutional legitimacy threatens democratic practice by veering off the right track and threatens the freedom of expression that Egypt has lived since the revolution,” the statement said.

Among those called to the meeting with the generals was Mohamed ElBaradei, the former United Nations diplomat who has been tapped by the protesters demanding Mr. Morsi’s ouster as one of their negotiators over a new interim government, Reuters reported, citing unnamed official sources.

Mr. ElBaradei has been an outspoken critic of Mr. Morsi and his allies in the Muslim Brotherhood, the Constitution they pushed to a referendum and the previous period of military rule. He has declined to comment in his current position. News agencies reported that top Muslim and Christian religious authorities were invited as well.

Gehad el-Haddad, a Brotherhood spokesman, vowed that the group would not bend in its defiance of the military. “The only plan,” he said in a statement posted online, “is to stand in front of the tanks.”

The Obama administration, which has been watching the crisis with increased worry, reiterated that it had taken no sides and hoped for a peaceful outcome. “We do, of course, remain very concerned about what we’re seeing on the ground,” a State Department spokeswoman, Jennifer R. Psaki, told reporters at a daily briefing. “And we do realize, of course, that is an extremely tense and fast-moving situation in Egypt.”

The escalating tensions between Mr. Morsi’s Islamist supporters and their opponents continued to spur street violence overnight. Egyptian officials said at least 18 people had died and more than 300 were injured in fighting near an Islamist rally in support of Mr. Morsi near Cairo University. State media reported that the dead included victims from both sides and that most died of gunshot wounds.

Even before the military deadline expired, there were signs of a new crackdown on Mr. Morsi’s allies in the Muslim Brotherhood. Police officials said Wednesday that they had arrested six bodyguards protecting the Brotherhood’s spiritual leader.

The police initially reported that more than 40 Islamists were wounded by birdshot, and Islamist witnesses later said that the police had begun shooting at them as well. But after the initial attack, the Islamists began lashing out and

beating people suspected of being assailants. Opponents of the Islamists said they too were shooting as the fighting continued through the night.

By morning, the area around Cairo University was filled with burned cars, smoldering piles of garbage, makeshift barricades, and torn textbook pages in English, French and German. Campaign posters from last year's historic presidential election still hung on the walls.

A few hundred Islamists and a smaller crowd of their opponents clustered in opposing camps, both sides armed with clubs and sticks. A sign hung by Mr. Morsi's supporters declared: "To the coup supporters, our blood will haunt you, and you will pay an expensive price for every spilled drop of our blood."

Some of the Islamists gathered belong to more conservative factions than the Muslim Brotherhood and said the efforts to oust Mr. Morsi demonstrated that democracy itself could not be trusted. "Isn't this the democracy they wanted?" asked Mahmoud Taha, 40, a trader. "Didn't we do what they asked?"

"We don't believe in democracy to begin with; it's not part of our ideology. But we accepted it and we followed them and then this is what they do," he said. "They're protesting against an elected democracy."

His friend who gave his name as Abu Hamza, 41, said: "This is a conspiracy against religion. They just don't want an Islamist group to rule."

All said they were bracing for a return to the repression Islamists endured under the former government of President Hosni Mubarak. "Of course. What else are they going to do?" said Ahmed Sami, 22, a salesman.

Their opponents were vitriolic. "God willing, there will be no Muslim Brother left in the country today," said Mohamed Saleh, 52, a laborer armed with long shaft of timber labeled "martyr in the making."

"Let them get exiled or find rocks to hide underneath like they used to do, or go to prisons, it doesn't matter," he said. "No such a thing as 'an Islamist party' shall exist after today."

The confrontation on the streets reflected an equally bitter clash at the most senior levels of state and military power.

"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," the armed forces

said on a military-affiliated Facebook page early on Wednesday in a posting titled "Final hours." It was published shortly after Mr. Morsi delivered an angry, impassioned speech pledging to uphold the legitimacy of the elections that brought him to power last year.

The posting quoted Gen. Abdul Fattah el-Sisi, Egypt's top officer, as saying "it was more honorable for us to die than to have the people of Egypt terrorized or threatened."

Mr. Morsi insisted late Tuesday that he was the legitimate leader of the country, hinted that any effort to remove him by force could plunge the nation into chaos, and seemed to disregard the record numbers of Egyptians who took to the streets demanding he resign.

But before the president's speech, Egypt's generals took control of the state's flagship newspaper, Al Ahram, and used it to describe on Wednesday's front page their plans to enforce a military ultimatum issued a day earlier: remove Mr. Morsi from office if he failed to satisfy protesters' demands.

The military's vow to intervene raised questions about whether Egypt's revolution would fulfill its promise to build a new democracy at the heart of the Arab world. The defiance of Mr. Morsi and his Brotherhood allies raised the specter of the bloody years of the 1990s when fringe Islamist groups used violence in an effort to overthrow the military government.

Under the banner headline "removal or resignation," Al Ahram reported that the generals would "abolish the controversial Constitution" and form a committee of experts to write a new charter, form an interim presidential council with three members led by the chief of the constitutional court, and put a military leader in charge of the executive branch as an interim prime minister.

Mr. Morsi refused to back down. In an impassioned, if at times rambling, midnight address broadcast on state television, he hinted that his removal would lead only to more violence.

"The people empowered me, the people chose me, through a free and fair election," he said.

"Legitimacy is the only way to protect our country and prevent bloodshed, to move to a new phase," Mr. Morsi said. "Legitimacy is the only thing that

guarantees for all of us that there will not be any fighting and conflict, that there will not be bloodshed.”

“If the price of protecting legitimacy is my blood, I’m willing to pay it,” he said. “And it would be a cheap price for the sake of protecting this country.”

Mr. Morsi was responding to the threat by the military issued a day earlier that he had 48 hours to meet the protesters’ demands. With the clock still ticking on that deadline — set for about 3 p.m. Wednesday Egyptian time — it still remained possible that the sides could reach some compromise or power-sharing arrangement. But the vehemence of the president’s speech and the official reports of arrests made the possibility seem remote.

Faced with the huge protests against Mr. Morsi and the growing paralysis of Egyptian politics, a more conservative Islamists party, Al Nour, also broke with the Muslim Brotherhood to join the call for early presidential elections. But Al Nour and other ultraconservatives, known as Salafis, have sought to preserve the newly approved Constitution because they cherish its provisions regarding Islamic law, and a military-backed constitutional panel may well revise them.

Brotherhood leaders have sounded increasingly alienated and determined to fight. “Everybody abandoned us, without exception,” Mohamed el-Beltagy, a senior Brotherhood leader, declared in a statement posted Tuesday on the Internet. “The police looks like it’s assigned to protect one group of protesters and not the other,” he wrote, “and maybe instead of blaming the thugs they will shortly accuse our supporters of assaulting themselves in addition to their alleged assault on the opposition.”

“They want us to go away to prevent bloodshed,” Ahmed Aref, a Brotherhood spokesman, declared to a crowd of Morsi supporters not long after the president’s speech. “We tried that before in the fifties, and people’s blood was shed in prisons, detention centers and by the hands of dawn visitors for 20 years. Do you want this to happen again?”

“No!” the crowd cheered.

David D. Kirkpatrick and Ben Hubbard reported from Cairo and Alan Cowell from London. Kareem Fahim and Mayy El Sheikh contributed reporting from Cairo, and Rick Gladstone from New York.