

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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From: OpsNewsTicker
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Subject: EU calls on Egyptian authorities to halt violence (Reuters)

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The European Union's foreign policy chief urged interim authorities in Egypt on Sunday to halt violence against protesters and ensure a democratic transition following the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in February.

Catherine Ashton said in a statement she was "extremely concerned" about violent clashes over the weekend, particularly in Cairo's Tahrir Square, where police backed by the army used batons and teargas on Sunday.

Egypt's state news agency reported three dead in a second day of violence on Sunday and 192 wounded as demonstrators demand the ruling generals hand power to civilians. Medical sources say as many as 11 people died on Sunday.

"I urge calm and restraint and condemn the use of violence in the strongest terms," she said. "There is no doubt that the transitional process is a difficult and challenging one."

"I reiterate that the interim authorities and all parties concerned have the crucial task of listening to the people and protecting their democratic aspirations."

Egypt is due to hold a parliamentary election starting on Nov. 28 but protesters accuse the army of seeking to keep power from behind the scenes until a presidential election which may happen late next year or in early 2013.

Ashton also said she was concerned about military trials and an ongoing emergency law in Egypt which was revived by the interim military rulers after the toppling of Mubarak.

"Law and order must be ensured in a manner respectful of human rights," she said. "Citizens and political parties' demands that the transition moves forward and safeguards the principles of democracy must be listened to."

British Foreign Office minister Alistair Burt also condemned the clashes, saying in a statement the deaths were "deeply regrettable".

"It is important Egypt enters the coming elections in an atmosphere of calm and mutual respect," he said.

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