

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
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Subject: Fw: Brawls in Egypt court as judges meet on constitution (Reuters)

A familiar scene.

From: OpsNewsTicker@state.gov [mailto:OpsNewsTicker@state.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, July 17, 2012 07:07 AM
To: NEWS-Mahogany
Subject: Brawls in Egypt court as judges meet on constitution (Reuters)

CAIRO (Reuters) - Brawls broke out in an Egyptian courtroom as judges prepared to issue rulings on Tuesday that will either bolster the country's new President Mohamed Mursi, or undermine him in his power struggle with the military.

With his allies in the Muslim Brotherhood hailing a "decisive" day in the country's democratic transition, hundreds of Mursi supporters came to protest at the courthouse, accusing the generals of using the judiciary to undermine his authority.

With opinion split on how the Cairo administrative court would rule, tension was high as lawyers, protesters and members of the public pushed and elbowed one other.

"Down, down with military rule," shouted supporters of the Brotherhood, drawing an angry response from their opponents.

"Down, down with the rule of the (Brotherhood's) Supreme Guide," shouted a woman as the courtroom descended into mayhem.

"I have never seen a courtroom like this anywhere in the world. This is no way for us to work. Do you call this justice?" said one lawyer, Khaled Fouad.

Judge Abdel Salam El-Naggar arrived and told the crowd "Your presence here will not intimidate the court". He suspended the session to allow time for the atmosphere to cool.

The power struggle unleashed by the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak last year has shifted from the streets to the ballot box and now the courts as Islamists vie for influence with their perennial adversaries in an army-led establishment.

At Tuesday's hearings judges will decide if an assembly drafting a new constitution should be scrapped. They will also hear appeals against decrees by the military and one from Mursi that recalled an Islamist-dominated parliament that the generals had dissolved.

"Everybody should know that the conspiracy against parliament will end in failure, as will the conspiracy against the constituent assembly and the constitution, and the president himself," said Essam al-Erian, leader of the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, in al-Ahram newspaper.

Brotherhood supporters warned the army not to undermine the country's new elected institutions.

"Who elected the constitutional assembly? Parliament. And who elected parliament? The people. We are the ones to determine our fate," said 20-year-old student Ahmed Mohamed el-Sayed, a member of the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP).

On its Facebook page, the FJP declared the Cairo administrative court's deliberations "decisive" for the nation.

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