

Pro-Morsi protesters dig in as gov't calls for crackdown

Maggie MICHAEL *The Associated Press*

CAIRO — Protesters holding sticks and wearing helmets and makeshift body armour stand behind mounds of sandbags, tires and brick walls. They change guards every two hours to ensure they stay alert.

With Egypt's military-backed government signalling a crackdown is imminent, supporters of ousted Islamist President Mohammed Morsi are taking no chances with security at their two protest camps in Cairo.

On Wednesday, the Cabinet ordered the police to break up the sit-ins, saying they pose an "unacceptable threat" to national security.

Interior Minister Mohammed Ibrahim said the order will be carried out in gradual steps according to instructions from prosecutors. "I hope they resort to reason" and leave without authorities having to move in, he said.

Ahmed Sobaie, spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood's political arm, the Freedom and Justice party, derided the Cabinet decision as "paving the way for another massacre."

"The police state is getting ready to commit more massacres against the innocent, unarmed civilians holding sit-ins for the sake of legitimacy," he said.

In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf appealed to the military-led government to avoid violence.

"We have continued to urge the interim government officials and security forces to respect the right of peaceful assembly," she said. "That obviously includes sit-ins."

Organizers are portraying the sit-ins outside the Rabaah al-Adawiya mosque in eastern Cairo and a smaller one across the city near Cairo University's main campus as evidence of an enduring support base for Morsi's once-dominant Muslim Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood has so far refused to



Supporters of Egypt's ousted President Mohammed Morsi hold sticks and wear protective gear during a march in Cairo late Tuesday. The interim Egyptian government has called for pro-Morsi sit ins to be broken up.

co-operate with the country's interim leaders, whom it calls "traitors," or participate in a military-backed fast-track transition plan to return to a democratically elected government by early next year. Instead it tries to keep thousands of supporters camped out in tents decorated with photos of Morsi, occupying a cross-shaped intersection facing the mosque.

Authorities have already cracked down on the organization, arresting Morsi and other senior leaders. On Wednesday, Egyptian

prosecutors referred three top leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood to trial for allegedly inciting the killing of at least eight protesters last month outside the group's Cairo headquarters.

Security forces also have killed more than 130 protesters during clashes outside the camps on two occasions.

At least six makeshift gates have been erected as the sole entry points to the Rabaah encampment, with dozens of protesters standing guard, checking IDs, searching

bags and patting down visitors.

Once through the gates, posters with photos of Morsi and slogans calling him the "legitimate president" are plastered on tents, corners and light poles while giant loudspeakers play some of his fiery speeches and women chant "Morsi is my president."

The overwhelming majority of the protesters echo the demands of the Brotherhood leaders still free: reinstate Morsi and reverse all measures taken by the military, including the suspension of the constitution.

Court upholds New York decision to send sex offenders from prison to mental institutions

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — A judge decided Wednesday that the former governor of New York didn't violate the rights of sex offenders by transferring them to mental institutions after their prison sentences ended instead of letting them go free.

The case highlighted the sometimes questionable treatment of sex offenders in the U.S.

Former Gov. George Pataki decided in 2005 to have health and prison officials evaluate the worst sex offenders for possible involuntary commitment to mental institutions once released from prison.

The practice was halted in 2006 after a

court found that several men who were committed should have been entitled to hearings before it happened.

Some remained in psychiatric institutions for years.

Six of the sex offenders sued Pataki and other officials in 2008, claiming the officials had abused their authority by denying them their freedom.

A message left with Pataki's attorney wasn't immediately returned.

Pataki testified he authorized evaluations of sex offenders before they were freed as a way to protect the public.

Defence lawyers noted that of the nearly 800 inmates examined, fewer than 200 were committed to mental institutions.

Cameras catch train drivers sleeping, reading

Michael WARREN *The Associated Press*

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina — Argentina has put cameras in commuter train cabins that captured drivers reading books, talking on cellphones and even sleeping when they should have been focused on the rails.

Interior and Transport Minister Florencio Randazzo presented the results Wednesday as he announced new measures designed to improve train safety.

One train driver can be seen sleeping through repeated road crossings between stations. Another covers up his cabin's camera with a shirt. Still others read books and talk on cellphones at high speeds.

Randazzo said these motormen have been fired or disciplined, and that all drivers, guards and signalmen must now pass a physical inspection when they report for work each day, including a blood-oxygen test to guard against falling asleep or driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Also, their licenses will now have to be renewed every year, and the conductors will

have to pass rigorous new exams including 100 hours of additional training, he said.

The cameras were installed after Argentina's latest deadly commuter train crash, which killed three people in June. The government has run the commuter rail system directly since another train slammed into a downtown station last year, killing 51 people. Randazzo has said the conductors were responsible for both wrecks.

The driver of a Spanish train that crashed last week, killing 79 people, told a judge Wednesday that he was talking by phone to the train's on-board ticket inspector moments before the accident.

Argentina's train unions had rebelled against the cameras, staging a day-long strike last month. They still blame bad brakes and other maintenance failures for both of the Buenos Aires train wrecks.

"I'm not going to defend a motorman who goes asleep," union leader Ruben Sobrero said in a radio interview. But he accused Randazzo of trying to sling mud at everyone by pointing out a few particular cases.



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