

Egypt - UN human rights experts urge restraint and respect for human rights standards

GENEVA (15 August 2013) – United Nations human rights experts today called for restraint and an immediate end to violent confrontations that have seen hundreds killed and thousands injured in Cairo in recent days. They described the situation as “an escalating and deeply worrying human rights crisis.”

The experts expressed their condolences to the families of all those killed and urged a full investigation into the actions of the military. They condemned killings and excessive use of force by the military and also called upon protesters to remain peaceful and reject violence and retaliation.

The international experts, appointed by the UN Human Rights Council, expressed their alarm at the violence and dismay at the death toll, which includes women, children and members of the media, and officially exceeded 500 on Tuesday as the military took action to break up protest camps in central Cairo.

The human rights experts appealed to all parties to fully respect human rights standards and exercise restraint in the current highly volatile climate. They called upon the Egyptian military to suspend any further action to remove camps set up by supporters of Mohammed Morsi and not to respond forcibly to new protests that are likely in the wake of Tuesday’s violence and high death toll.

“Legitimate, peaceful demonstrations must not be met with violence and those responsible for ordering and perpetrating killings are accountable for their actions under national and international law”, the experts stated. “Political, religious and community leaders on all sides must not incite further violence and should take urgent steps to defuse tensions and the current extremely dangerous situation”, they continued.

The experts called for calm and immediate steps towards political reconciliation. “A period of dialogue, reconciliation and inclusive political transition must begin that recognizes the legitimate concerns of all in society and has the objective of ensuring a stable, democratic and united Egypt”, they stated. They also called for tolerance including religious tolerance following assaults on places of worship including a number of churches.

The experts furthermore urged the Government of Egypt to respond positively to their request to visit Egypt in order to undertake essential human rights fact finding and to assist the Government in its efforts to ensure the protection and promotion of all human rights.

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