

Egypt Military Rulers Under Pressure

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The military has given no timetable for the transition but says it is committed to civilian rule and democracy. A cabinet meeting, due later on Sunday, could provide some answers.

As Egypt celebrated the dawn of a new post-Mubarak era, the streets of central Cairo were still filled with euphoric crowds dancing to loud music and waving flags into the early hours of Sunday, more than 24 hours after Mubarak resigned.

On Sunday, shops will reopen and many will head back to work, with life expected to begin to return to normal after 18 days of protests that changed the course of Egypt's history.

Mubarak's toppling marked the beginning of a new, uncertain era in the Middle East where autocratic leaders fear Egypt's revolt could spill over into other parts of the oil-rich region.

Restoring order is a top priority. Tanks and troops have been guarding strategic buildings so far as police disappeared from the streets. Repairing police stations burned down during the protests is another urgent task.

Hundreds camped out in Tahrir Square in central Cairo overnight to keep up the pressure on the military leadership, saying they would stay there until the ruling Higher Military Council accepts their agenda for reform.

"If the army does not fulfill our demands, our uprising and its measures will return stronger," said Safwat Hegazi, a protest leader. Organizers want the dissolution of parliament and the lifting of a 30-year-old state of emergency.

Some protest organizers were forming a Council of Trustees to defend the revolution and negotiate with the military.

CARNIVAL ATMOSPHERE

The carnival atmosphere in Cairo contrasted sharply with the tense and menacing atmosphere prior to Mubarak's downfall when soldiers with tanks manned checkpoints and vigilantes with baseball bats guarded neighborhoods.

Brightly lit pleasure cruisers plied their trade on the Nile while horse-drawn carriages were back on the streets for intrepid sight-seers. Some people took photographs alongside smiling soldiers, and showed victory signs to each other.

Fashion and music shops reopened on Saturday night for the first time since the start of the crisis, and loud music reverberated through central Cairo all night.

Military leaders promised to honor Egypt's treaties, a message clearly aimed at easing concerns in Israel, which has a 1979 peace accord with Egypt, and in the United States, which considers that treaty the cornerstone of Middle East security.

US President Barack Obama welcomed the announcement from military leaders that they were committed to a democratic civilian transition and would stand by Egypt's international obligations. Obama called the leaders of Britain, Jordan and Turkey on Saturday to discuss Egypt.

The new administration, keen to dissociate itself from Mubarak's old guard, said it was investigating accusations against the former prime minister, interior minister and information minister, state television reported.

Mubarak, 82, was believed to be at his residence in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, his future unclear.

The events in Egypt sent shockwaves abroad. In Yemen, an anti-government protest was broken up on Saturday and in Algiers thousands of police stopped protesters from staging a march.

Source: bdnews24.com