**Egypt explained: What is going on?**

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A MILITARY coup has overthrown Egypt's first democratically elected president Mohammed Morsi as the country experiences its worst political crisis in two years.

Anti-Morsi protestors flocked in their tens of thousands to Cairo's Tahrir Square - the site of the 19-day protest which forced out dictator Hosni Mubarak in 2011 - in celebration after a week of bloodshed which has claimed nearly 50 lives.

In a televised statement, Military chief General Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi announced the instalment of chief justice of constitutional court, Adly al-Mansour, as head of state, along with a temporary freeze on the Islamist-drafted constitution, early elections and the introduction of a technocrat government.

"Those in the meeting have agreed on a roadmap for the future that includes initial steps to achieve the building of a strong Egyptian society that is cohesive and does not exclude anyone and ends the state of tension and division," General Sisi said.

**Egypt coup: What has happened?**

**Who are the protesters?**

**The Tamarod ('Rebellion') grassroots movement called the protests against the country's president, Mohammed Morsi.**

But the protesters represent a diverse cross-section of Egyptian society, and are not united behind one particular leader or group.

Earlier they claimed to have over 22 million signatures from citizens who called for Morsi's withdrawl.

"The president lost his legitimacy when he didn't follow the law or the constitution and when he put the interests of his group before those of the Egyptians," said Tamarod founding member Mohamed Abdel- Aziz in a press conference."

**Who is President Morsi?**

Morsi took office on June 30 last year after a 51.7 per cent victory in the country's first national elections. He is a leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist political movement but support has quickly dwindled. Over the last four days the military were the first to walk, followed by the police force and finally, the state media.

On Wednesday the interior ministry - who govern the police force - confirmed it had switched sides.

What are the protestors demonstrating against?

In 2011, Egyptians were protesting corruption. This time, it's about politics and jobs.

Many Egyptians are worried that the President is trying to transform Egypt into a hardline Islamist nation. In December 2012, Morsi signed a new constitution into law written by a panel that was dominated by Islamists. In November, he raised the ire of his opponents when he issued a declaration granting himself extensive powers.

The country is suffering through an economic crisis too. Egyptians face regular blackouts and fuel shortages, the price of consumer goods is rising and there aren't enough jobs.

**How violent are the protests?**

Nearly 50 people have been killed to date but hundreds more have been injured.

Sixteen people were killed and more than 200 wounded in a clash between supporters and opponents of Morsi at Cairo University.

Women are also being sexually assaulted, with a 22-year-old Dutch female journalist gang raped by five men in Tahrir Square on Sunday.

Activist group Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment recorded 44 sexual assaults and cases of harassment against women on Sunday night alone, The Sun newspaper reports.

**Why is it such a big deal?**

The turmoil began on the one-year anniversary of Morsi's installment to office after his opponents accused him of putting Egypt's power in the hands of Islam rule.

**How did Morsi react?**

The crisis reached its tipping point overnight after Morsi failed to meet the army's 48-hour ultimatum ordering him to resolve the crisis.

A statement via the president's Twitter account described the actions as a "full coup".

Morsi's national security adviser, Essam Haddad, backed the claims.

"For the sake of Egypt and for historical accuracy, let's call what is happening by its real name: military coup."

Earlier the ex-President rejected the military's demands in a defiant 75-minute address to the nation. "The people of Egypt gave me the mandate for president," he said, stressing that only he had the "constitutional legitimacy" to run the country.

**Do Egyptians trust the Army?**

The Army announced yesterday via social media that it is willing to sacrifice blood to resolve the crisis. The military is one of the country's most respected institutions. But while many protesters believe the military is in their corner, few trust them if they return to power.

That's because of a "bevy of human rights abuses" that occurred after the military temporarily seized power following the 2011 revolution, says Middle Eastern affairs expert Professor Bob Bowker from the Australian National University.

In 2011 Egyptian security forces allegedly forced female protesters into "virginity tests". Police in full riot gear were also caught on video savagely beating an unconscious female protester in a blue bra, smacking her with big sticks, kicking her and stomping on her chest.

**What's next?**

Judge Adly Mansour, chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court, will be sworn in today as interim head of state. The constitution will be revised and new parliamentary and presidential elections will be held, reports the UK Telegraph. But it says "the key question is whether the Muslim Brotherhood will be allowed to take part - and whether they will agree to do so".

**How will the Muslim Brotherhood react?**

The ousting of Morsi before his term is up is being labelled as a "dangerous move" by commentators, considering he won democratic elections.

CNN's Fareed Zakaria says the Brotherhood still has significant support in the country, and those supporters could lash out.

He added that the Brotherhood was "able to survive and flourish through five or six decades of complete persecution and an outright ban on their activities, so they're not going to go anywhere".

The UK Telegraph's Richard Spencer suggests that this could have consequences for the way Islamist leaders participate in democracy in the future.

"The implicit threat of many Islamist leaders is simple: if we cannot win by democratic means, why should we take part?"

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