

# Egyptian Alliance Calls for Anti-Government Rally



Egyptians stage an anti-government protest rally. (file photo)

CAIRO (Press TV) – An anti-government alliance in Egypt has called on its supporters to hold a rally to protest the worsening situation in the North African country.

In a statement released on Thursday, the National Alliance to Support Legitimacy (NASL) urged its followers to stage a week-long demonstration, starting Saturday.

The alliance, established to support former President Mohamed Morsi, has held regular protest ral-

lies since his ouster last year.

Morsi, Egypt's first democratically-elected president, was toppled in a military coup led by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Egypt's current president and the then army commander.

Sisi is accused of leading the suppression of Muslim Brotherhood supporters as hundreds of them have been killed in clashes with Egyptian security forces over the last year.

Rights groups say the army's crackdown on the supporters of

Morsi has left over 1,400 people dead and 22,000 arrested, while some 200 people have been sentenced to death in mass trials.

International bodies and rights groups have already denounced the rulings as a grotesque example of the shortcomings of Egypt's justice system.

The UN Human Rights Council has also repeatedly expressed concern over the Egyptian security forces' heavy-handed crackdown and the killing of peaceful anti-government protesters.

## China Warns Foreign Powers Not to Use Hong Kong as 'Bridgehead'

BEIJING (Reuters) – China has warned against any foreign interference ahead of a crucial ruling on the city's political future on Sunday, saying Beijing will not tolerate the use of Hong Kong "as a bridgehead to subvert and infiltrate the mainland".

China's largely rubber-stamp parliament is set to meet on Sunday, when it is expected to limit 2017 elections for Hong Kong's leader to a handful of pro-Beijing candidates, a move likely to escalate plans by pro-democracy activists to blockade the city's Central business district on Sunday.

According to state media, an unidentified spokesman from the Chinese foreign ministry's Department of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan Affairs said China would

promptly "make solemn representations" to any "external force" that interfered in Hong Kong's internal affairs.

Hong Kong is a special administrative region (SAR) of China, administered by what is known as the Basic Law.

In an interview with state news agency Xinhua on Friday, the unidentified spokesman said "some people" ignored the long-term interests of Hong Kong and the provisions of the Basic Law "to collude with external forces in an attempt to interfere [with] the SAR government administration".

This was done "not only to undermine the stability and development of Hong Kong but also to attempt to use Hong Kong as a bridgehead to subvert and

infiltrate the mainland", the spokesman said.

"This will absolutely not be tolerated," he said.

The spokesman did not identify any outside countries. In 2013, U.S. envoy to Hong Kong Clifford Hart said Washington would continue to back "genuine universal suffrage" there.

Such a strongly worded statement from the ministry signals increasing anxiety among Chinese leaders about the outcome of Sunday's decision, which will be watched closely by diplomats and international human rights groups.

The expected decision to limit the number of candidates for the 2017 elections could trigger a showdown with pro-democracy demonstrators who are planning an "Occupy Central" campaign.

## Somali Army, AU Troops Attack Al-Shabab Stronghold



Somali army and the AU troops on patrol in an area of Somalia.

MOGADISHU (Press TV) – The Somali army and the African Union troops have launched a new offensive against the al-Shabab fighters in the country.

Military officials said on Saturday that the Somali army, backed by African Union forces, has launched an operation against

al-Shabab fighters in southern Somalia.

The attack aimed to capture the town of Bulomarer, about 110 kilometers (70 miles) south of the Somali capital city of Mogadishu.

"Operation Indian Ocean started late last night...the enemy is fleeing and the forces are making success-

ful advances so far," said Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur, the governor of Lower Shabelle region, where the offensive began on Friday.

Meanwhile, Ruqiyo Hassan, a resident in Bulomarer, said residents are fleeing the area.

"We are hearing heavy shelling," said Ali Mohamed, who lives close to the Bulomarer, adding that fighting was going on close to the town.

Losing Bulomarer would leave the group's current key base in the coastal town of Barawe vulnerable to attacks.

African Union and Somali government troops were also seen on roads leading to Barawe.

The Somali military officials say the operation will not stop until the group is eliminated.

Earlier this month, al-Shabab fighters killed 13 people in clashes with the Somali government and the AU troops in the central Hiran region.

## After Hard Bargaining, EU Set for Deal on New Leadership

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - European Union leaders are set to end weeks of wrangling over top jobs in Brussels and agree on Saturday on who will fill key posts in EU institutions that face major challenges from a combative Russia and a stuttering economy.

A summit in Brussels that was called after a pre-vacation meeting two months ago ended in deadlock is likely, diplomats and officials said, to hand Poland's conservative prime minister the influential role of European Council president and Italy's little tested young foreign minister given the running of the EU's common diplomatic efforts. But nothing is yet certain.

Russia's assumed military intervention in Ukraine will also be discussed when the prime ministers and presidents meet from late afternoon, but officials doubt they will do more than agree to study stepping

up their economic sanctions on Moscow.

EU foreign ministers meeting in Milan on Friday spoke of toughening an arms embargo, extending the list of individuals or sectors targeted by economic sanctions and also of sending military equipment to Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko will be in Brussels on Saturday, aiming to persuade the EU to do more to deter Russian President Vladimir Putin from supporting separatist rebels.

But while former Soviet satellite states in the east are keen for tougher measures, the western powers, notably Germany, France, Italy and Britain, fear damaging their own fragile economies by losing Russian business - and are even warier of risking an interruption in Russian gas supplies this winter.

## Ukraine Seeks to Join NATO Amid Unrest



A Pro-Russian separatist inspects a gun at a destroyed war memorial at Savur-Mohyla, a hill east of the city of Donetsk, August 28, 2014.

KIEV (Reuters) - Ukraine called on Friday for full membership in NATO, its strongest plea yet for Western military help, after accusing Russia of sending in armored columns that have driven back its forces on behalf of pro-Moscow rebels.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, defiant as ever, compared Kiev's drive to regain control of its rebellious eastern cities to the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in World War Two. He announced that rebels had succeeded in halting it, and proposed that they now permit surrounded Ukrainian troops to retreat.

Speaking to young people at a summer camp, Putin told his countrymen they must be "ready to repel any aggression towards Russia." He described Ukrainians and Russians as "practically one people," language that Ukrainians say dismisses the very existence of their thousand-year-old nation.

The past 72 hours have seen pro-Russian rebels suddenly open a new front and push Ukrainian troops out of a key town in strategic coastal territory along the Sea of Azov. Kiev and Western countries say the reversal was the result of the arrival of armored columns of Russian troops, sent by Putin to prop up a rebellion that would otherwise have been near collapse.

Rebels said they would accept Putin's proposal to allow Kiev

forces, who they say are surrounded, to retreat, provided the government forces turn over weapons and armor. Kiev said that only proved that the fighters were doing Moscow's bidding.

Russia drew a fresh rebuke from French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who told French television station France 24 that Russia could face more sanctions from the European Union.

"When one country sends military forces into another country without the agreement and against the will of another country, that is called an intervention and is clearly unacceptable," he said.

In Berlin, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said after speaking with his Ukrainian counterpart: "The border violations we are seeing - yesterday and even more so the day before yesterday - make us fear that the situation is increasingly getting out of control."

In Washington, White House spokesman Josh Earnest said Russia's footprint was undeniable in Ukraine.

"We have regularly marshalled evidence to indicate what exactly is happening, despite the protestations of the Russian government that for some reason would have us all believe otherwise," he said. "The fact is, those denials are completely without any credibility, and, you know, we've been pretty candid about that."

## News in Brief

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Environmentalist Marina Silva has widened her lead over President Dilma Rousseff to 10 percentage points in what could be a likely runoff in Brazil's October election, a survey by polling firm Datafolha showed on Friday.

It was the third poll in less than a week that projected the Oct. 5 election would go to a second-round vote in which Rousseff would be unseated by Silva, who entered the race just 10 days ago following the death of her party's candidate.

The popular anti-establishment figure is threatening to end the 12-year rule of the Workers' Party in a hotly contested vote that is being watched closely by investors hoping that a change of government will issue in more market-friendly policies.

Silva has surged to 34 percent support from 21 percent in a previous Datafolha poll conducted before she launched her candidacy. She is now tied with Rousseff whose support has fallen to 34 percent from 36 percent in a first-round vote.

If the race goes to a runoff on Oct. 26 as expected, Silva would win 50 percent of the votes, while Rousseff would get 40 percent, widening her margin of victory from six to 10 percentage points, according to Datafolha.

Support for centrist candidate and market favorite Aecio Neves has dropped to 15 percent from 20 percent in the previous poll on Aug. 18.

With Rousseff's re-election chances looking dimmer in the polls, the president suffered another blow on Friday with the publication of data confirming Brazil has fallen into recession.

The recession will give her opponents a powerful weapon at a moment when her candidacy is at its most vulnerable just five weeks from election day.

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TRIPOLI (Press TV) – Thousands of Libyans have held an anti-government demonstration in the capital, Tripoli, calling for the resignation of the new parliament.

People took to the streets of Tripoli on Friday, calling for the return of Libya's outgoing parliament, known as the General National Congress (GNC).

The protesters also expressed support for the militias from the so-called Fajr Libya coalition, who seized the Tripoli International Airport last weekend.

They further condemned the airstrikes allegedly carried out by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates on militia positions near the battered airport.

Similar demonstrations were also held in the cities of Misrata and Benghazi.

The crisis in Libya is worsening as clashes between rival militia groups continue and political divisions become deeper.

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BRUSSELS (Press TV) – European Union leaders have gathered in Brussels to discuss Ukraine's crisis amid allegations by the West and Kiev regarding Moscow's military involvement in the Eastern European country.

This comes as Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on Saturday pushed EU leaders for tightening sanctions against Russia.

Fears of a wider confrontation in the region rose after NATO said Russia has sent at least 1,000 troops into Ukraine to help the pro-Russia forces.

"Invasion of Russian troops in(to) Ukraine is an act of aggression and requires an adequate reaction from the EU," Poroshenko said on Twitter as he held meetings with top EU officials.

A high-ranking official in Poroshenko's administration said late Friday that Ukraine's delegation in Brussels will push for more substantial support for Kiev and "another set of sanctions against Russia."

The EU and the US have already imposed the toughest sanctions on Russia since the Cold War over Ukraine's crisis.

Poroshenko will also travel to the NATO summit in Wales next week to meet with US President Barack Obama and seek practical help from the military alliance.

During the summit, the EU leaders will also pick a president for the European Council to replace Herman Van Rompuy and a foreign policy chief to replace Catherine Ashton.