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Egypt Junta Defends Massacre as Toll Rises to 638

By Jason Ditz

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Fresh off of yesterday's massacre of at least 638 people and the wounding of over 4,000 others, according to what is likely a low-ball official toll, Egypt's military junta is loudly defending its crackdown, with Ambassador Ashraf Elkholy insisting that the public protests were "unaccepted in any community" and that any other government would've done the same.

Junta officials continue to refer to the civilian protesters as "terrorists" while growing anger at home and abroad seems to be totally lost on them. Officials even bragged about authorizing troops to use "live ammunition" against protesters starting today, even though an overwhelming number of yesterday's dead were shot by the same sort of ammunition.

The true death toll remains entirely speculative, with the Health Ministry's figures of 638 dead and 4,000 wounded excluding hundreds of slain civilians being held in makeshift morgues around the massacre sites, and the wounded toll no doubt counting only those who managed to get to official hospitals, while large numbers of casualties continues to flock to mosques where doctors had set up unofficial emergency clinics to treat them.

Though the coup initially enjoyed support from a broad coalition of mostly unelectable "liberal" politicians a large number of them appear to be scrambling to distance themselves now that it's come to this, with Vice President Mohamed ElBaradei the highest profile resignation but a lot of

other politicians also fearing that their nominal political bases will be further eroded by being linked to wholesale slaughter on the streets of Cairo.