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Egypt Junta Bans Muslim Brotherhood

By Jason Ditz

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Egypt's military junta has a new excuse to crack down violently against the elected government today, after a Cairo court ordered the complete ban of the Muslim Brotherhood, which ran the largest and most successful political party during Egypt's brief democratic experiment.

The verdict authorizes the military, which seized power over the summer in a violent coup d'etat against President Mohammed Morsi, to confiscate all assets of the Brotherhood, which includes large numbers of schools, hospitals and charity organizations across Egypt.

The ban came as a result of legal challenges filed by pro-junta "liberal" political factions, which argue that the Brotherhood's organization of anti-junta protests amounts to "terrorism."

The banning eliminates a successful, influential political party from the field if indeed Egypt holds future elections, but it remains to be seen how much credibility the so-called liberal factions will retain after endorsing the junta's crackdowns.

From the junta's perspective, it also eliminates the only real challengers to their continued rule, as the feckless political opposition that remains have shown little ability to mobilize anybody when they aren't being bankrolled by the US to provide a pretext for a coup.

Exactly what this means for the Muslim Brotherhood itself remains to be seen, however, as the group has been banned off and on throughout its history, and has always managed to survive.