

Eleven Killed in Protests on First Day of Egyptian Constitution Vote



Cairo, January 15 (RHC)-- Clashes with police left as many as 11 dead during the first day of voting in Egypt's vote on a constitutional referendum. The Muslim Brotherhood, whose members largely supported ousted President Mohamed Morsi, called to boycott the elections after being branded a "terrorist organization" and expelled from political circles in late December.

Brotherhood supporters staged protests in at least four cities Tuesday and, according to Egypt's Health Ministry, the 11 protesters were killed and another 28 wounded in clashes with security forces. The ministry says the deaths occurred in Cairo, the adjacent province of Giza and two provinces south of the capital, Bani Suef and Sohag, Al Jazeera reports.

Media reports that 65 protesters were arrested after allegedly attempting to obstruct voting. The referendum, which continued on Wednesday, seeks national consent for a series of amendments to Egypt's constitution. But according to political observers, the Egyptian government and its supporters have also positioned it as not just a poll on the text's contents, but as a ratification of Morsi's overthrow, and as an attempt to establish order.

The draft constitution deletes much of the Islamic language written into law under Morsi's rule. However, opponents highlight certain clauses which they say allow for civilians to be tried in army courts, curb workers' rights and limit religious freedoms to members of the three Abrahamic religions.

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