The Rab’a Massacre and Mass Killings of Protesters in Egypt

ALL ACCORDING TO PLAN

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SUMMARY AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS
In July and August 2013, many of Egypt’s public squares and streets were awash in blood. On July 3, 2013, the military deposed Mohamed Morsy, Egypt’s first elected civilian president and a high-ranking member of the Muslim Brotherhood, on the heels of massive popular protests against Morsy calling for early presidential elections.

Over the course of the following two months, Muslim Brotherhood supporters organized two large sit-ins in Cairo and smaller protests across Egypt to denounce the military takeover and demand the reinstatement of Morsy. In response, police and army forces repeatedly opened fire on demonstrators, killing over 1,150, most of them in five separate incidents of mass protester killings.
Human Rights Watch’s one-year investigation into the conduct of security forces in responding to these demonstrations indicates that police and army forces systematically and intentionally used excessive lethal force in their policing, resulting in killings of protesters on a scale unprecedented in Egypt. The evidence we examined includes on-site investigations at each of the protest sites during or immediately after the attacks were underway, interviews with over 200 witnesses, including protesters, doctors, journalists, and local residents, and review of physical evidence, hours of video footage, and statements by public officials. On this basis, Human Rights Watch concludes that the killings not only constituted serious violations of international human rights law, but likely amounted to crimes against humanity, given both their widespread and systematic nature and the evidence suggesting the killings were part of a policy to attack unarmed persons on political grounds. While there is also evidence that some protesters fired on security forces during some of these demonstrations, Human Rights Watch only documented their use in a few instances, which do not justify the grossly disproportionate and premeditated lethal attacks on overwhelmingly peaceful protesters.

Numerous government statements and accounts from government meetings indicate that high-ranking officials knew that the attacks would result in widespread killings of protesters; indeed, in the single largest incident, the Rab’a and al-Nahda dispersals, the government anticipated and planned for the deaths of several thousand protesters. One year later, security forces continue to deny any wrongdoing, and authorities have failed to hold a single police or army officer accountable for any of the unlawful killings.

August 14 Rab’a and al-Nahda Square Dispersals

The gravest incident of mass protestor killings occurred on August 14, when security forces crushed the major pro-Morsy sit-in in Rab’a al-Adawiya Square in the Nasr City district of eastern Cairo. Using armored personnel carriers (APCs), bulldozers, ground forces, and snipers, police and army personnel attacked the makeshift
forces killed between 400-800 protesters largely over a 24-hour span during the Tiananmen Massacre on June 3-4, 1989 and that Uzbek forces killed a roughly similar number in one day during the 2005 Andijan Massacre.

The dispersal of the Rab’a Square sit-in lasted 12 hours, roughly from sunrise to sunset. Police commenced their assault, in coordination with army forces, at around 6:30 a.m. by lobbing teargas canisters and shooting birdshot pellets at protesters located near the entrances to the square. They quickly, within minutes at some entrances, escalated to live fire, according to dozens of witnesses. Led by army bulldozers, police slowly advanced from each of the five major entrances to the square—two on Nasr Street, two on Tayaran Street, and one on Anwar al-Mufti Street behind the Rab’a al-Adawiya Mosque—in the early morning hours, destroying makeshift fences erected by protesters and other structures in their path. The advancing forces were supported by snipers deployed on top of adjacent government buildings. Many protesters retreated to the central area of the square for safety, but some remained on the peripheries to hurl stones, Molotov cocktails, and fireworks at advancing forces.

Injured and dead protesters quickly filled the Rab’a hospital and makeshift facilities across the square, where volunteer doctors and other medical professionals, many themselves demonstrators, tended to serious injuries using basic donated equipment and medicine. Doctors in Rab’a hospital told Human Rights Watch that the vast majority of injuries they treated were gunshot wounds, many to the head and chest. Security forces from the morning fired at makeshift medical facilities and positioned snipers to fire on those who sought to enter or exit Rab’a hospital. Security forces advancing on the ground as well as snipers deployed on top of buildings intensified fire over the course of the morning, until indiscriminate gunfire became prevalent at the entrances around 8 a.m. By 9-10

The indiscriminate and deliberate use of lethal force resulted in one of the world’s largest killings of demonstrators in a single day in recent history. By way of contrast, credible estimates indicate that Chinese government
a.m., though, security forces had become bogged down by rock-throwing protesters at each entrance, who had positioned themselves strategically to minimize exposure to direct fire, and slowed their advance.

In the early afternoon, after a brief mid-day break when gunfire was less intense, security forces intensified their fire as they made their final advance into the heart of the square. Security forces killed many protesters in these final hours, with no part of the square protected from widespread gunfire. By around 5:30 p.m., police had encircled remaining protesters around the Rab’a mosque and hospital, located near the center of the square, and then forcefully took control of the hospital. At this point, they ordered the majority of those remaining to exit, with instructions to leave corpses and the injured behind. As the last protesters left the square, fires broke out on the central stage, the field hospital, the mosque, and on the first floor of Rab’a hospital. Evidence strongly suggests that the police deliberately started these fires. Security forces detained over 800 protesters over the course of the day, some of whom they beat, tortured and in some cases summarily executed, six witnesses told Human Rights Watch.

Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim alleged in a press conference on the day of the dispersal that the use of force by the police in both Rab’a and al-Nahda squares came in response to violence, including gunfire, from protesters. Human Rights Watch’s investigation found, in addition to hundreds of protesters who threw rocks and Molotov cocktails at police once the assault began, demonstrators fired on police in at least a few instances. According to the official Forensic Medical Authority, eight police officers were killed during the Rab’a dispersal. However, the protesters’ violence in no way justified the deliberate and indiscriminate killings of protesters largely by police, in coordination with army forces.

Extensive witness evidence, including from independent observers and local residents, establishes that the number of arms in the hands of protesters was limited. In Interior Minister Ibrahim’s August 14 press conference, in fact, he announced that security forces had seized 15 guns from the Rab’a sit-in. In an August 18 speech, then-Defense Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said referencing the Rab’a dispersal that, “I am not saying everyone was firing,
but it is more than enough if there are 20, 30, or 50 people firing live fire in a sit-in of that size. If the figure of 15 guns is an accurate representation of the number of protesters in the square, it would indicate that few protesters were armed and further corroborates extensive evidence compiled by Human Rights Watch that police gunned down hundreds of unarmed demonstrators.

Furthermore, police officers stood on top of APCs facing protesters and snipers operated from atop buildings in plain view for long periods of time, according to witnesses and dozens of videos that Human Rights Watch reviewed. Police waited 11 hours without safe exit, including for injured protesters in need of medical attention.

Moreover, much of the shooting by police appears to have been indiscriminate, openly firing in the general direction of crowds of demonstrators instead of targeting armed protesters. While Human Rights Watch cannot establish whether initial gunshots that day came from the security forces or armed protesters, interviews with over 100 witnesses, including local residents not sympathetic to the protesters, confirm that security forces resorted to widespread shooting from the first minutes of the dispersal, with APCs, bulldozers, ground forces, and rooftop snipers already in place.

On the same day as the Rab’a dispersal, August 14, security forces also dispersed a second smaller encampment of Muslim Brotherhood supporters in al-Nahda Square, near Cairo University in Giza in greater Cairo. The al-Nahda dispersal followed the same pattern as in Rab’a: at around 6 a.m. security forces demanded from loudspeakers that protesters leave the square, but then, almost immediately, resorted to firing at protesters, including those attempting to leave from the designated “safe” exit. Witnesses described how police fired at protesters both deliberately and indiscriminately, using teargas, birdshot and live ammunition. As some protesters took shelter inside the Engineering Faculty Building at nearby Cairo University, further violence ensued, when security officers fired at protesters barricaded in the building.

The Ministry of Health set the death toll for the dispersal of the al-Nahda sit-in at 87.

For weeks in the run-up to the August 14 dispersals, Interior Minister Ibrahim, then-Defense Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, then Prime Minister Hazem al-Beblawy, and other government officials stated that a forcible dispersal of the sit-ins was necessary. Officials maintained that the sit-ins disrupted residents’ lives, increased traffic congestion, provided a forum for sectarian incitement and terrorism, and a locale for demonstrators to detain and abuse opponents, including some to death. Human Rights Watch interviewed local residents who catalogued the serious effects the sit-in had on their everyday lives and reviewed evidence to suggest that some protesters detained and abused a number of persons they suspected of being infiltrators, possibly resulting in casualties.

However, these allegations fail to justify a forcible dispersal that resulted in the deaths of at least 817 people and amounted to collective punishment of the overwhelming majority of peaceful protesters. The mass killings of protesters were clearly disproportionate to any threat to the lives of local residents, security personnel or anyone else. The extent that the government had a legitimate security interest in securing the sit-in site, it failed to carry out the dispersal in a way designed to minimize the risk of life, such as by ensuring safe exits. Lethal force should be used only when strictly unavoidable to protect an imminent threat to life—a standard that was far from met in this case.

Egyptian and international mediation efforts to prevent a forcible dispersal by striking a political deal between...
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Muslim Brotherhood leaders and the government took 
forms that were taken to different hospitals around Cairo. The quasi-offi-
cial National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) released a report on the Rab’a dispersal in March 2014, in which it 
cited the figure of 624 civilians killed.

These figures, though, ignore compelling evidence of 
additional uncounted bodies in morgues and hospitals 
across Cairo documented by Human Rights Watch re-
searchers and Egyptian human rights lawyers on August 
14 and in the days immediately following the Rab’a dis-
persal. Based on an extensive review of evidence, which 
compared death lists put out both by the official FMA and 
 quasi-official NCHR and human rights lawyers and other 
survivors, Human Rights Watch documented 827 deaths in 
the Rab’a dispersal alone. Human Rights Watch also 
reviewed evidence of a possible 246 additional deaths, 
documented by survivors and civil society groups. This 
evidence, in addition to credible reports of additional 
 bodies taken directly to hospitals and morgues without 
accurate record or known identity, and individuals still 
missing from Rab’a, it is likely that over 1,000 protesters 
were killed in Rab’a alone.

In September, Prime Minister al-Beblawy told the Egyptian 
daily Al-Masry al-Youm that the death toll from the Rab’a 
and al-Nahda square dispersals on August 14 was “close 
to 1,000.” He added, “We expected much more than what 
actually happened on the ground. The final outcome was 
less than we expected.” The Egyptian government appar-
ently planned for, and anticipated, a violent dispersal that 
would result in widespread killings of protesters without 
any serious effort to implement the safeguards they prom-
ised, including warnings and safe exits for protesters.

On November 14, FMA head Dr. Hisham Abdelhamid held 
a press conference and announced that the final death-
toll for Rab’a was 622, including 377 bodies autopsied 
at the official morgue, 167 bodies identified in Iman 
Mosque Rab’a Square and another 83 bodies that were 
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In a televised interview on August 31, 2013, Ibrahim con-
firmed that the Interior Ministry had estimated losses of 
“20 percent of the people,” acknowledging that the 
sit-in involved “more than 20,000” people and that “you 
will find thousands lost from their side.” Human Rights 
Watch used satellite photographs from one night of the 
sit-in, August 2, to estimate that there were approxi-
mately 85,000 protesters in the square that night; even 
assuming the actual attendance on August 14 was only 
20,000, as Ibrahim postulated, a 10 percent casualty 
rate would still represent 2,000 fatalities.

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Other Mass Killings Incidents

The Rab’a and al-Nahda square dispersals were both 
preceded and followed by other mass killings of protest-
ers. In July and August, as protesters organized marches 
across Cairo in response to the military’s overthrow of the 
Morsy government, security forces repeatedly used 
 excessive force to respond to demonstrations, indiscrimi-
nately and deliberately killing at least 282 protesters in 
different incidents separate from the August 14 disper-
sals between July 5 and August 17, 2014.

In the first of these incidents, on July 5, soldiers fired live 
ammunition at protesters gathered outside the Republi-
can Guard headquarters on Salah Salem Street in east-
ern Cairo, where protesters believed Morsy to be held. 
The soldiers killed at least five protesters, including one 
who was attempting to place a Morsy poster on a fence 
outside the headquarters.

Three days later, on July 8, army units opened fire on 
crowds of Morsy supporters participating in a peaceful 
sit-in outside the same Republican Guard headquarters, 
 killing 6 protesters according to the FMA. Two officers 
on the scene were also killed. The attack began at dawn 
and continued for the next six hours. Soldiers and snip-
ers posted on military building rooftops used live ammu-
nition to fire at assembled protesters and those emerging 
from a nearby mosque after performing morning prayers. 
Some protesters threw stones and Molotov cocktails and a few used firearms, but witnesses said that the vast 
majority of protesters were unarmed. Based on its in-
vestigation, Human Rights Watch found that the major-
ity of these killings were unlawful. In the aftermath, the 
military refused to acknowledge any wrongdoing on the 
part of its forces or the police, saying that protesters had 
planned to attack the Republican Guard headquarters. 
Interim President Adly Mansour said he would set up a 
judicial panel to investigate the incident, but he failed to 
do so before leaving office on June 8, 2014.

In another incident on July 27, hours after thousands of 
Egyptians took to the streets in an orchestrated demon-
stration at al-Siut’s behalf to give the government a “man-
date to fight terrorism,” Egyptian police deployed to stop 
a march of hundreds of Brotherhood supporters moving 
out of the Rab’a sit-in on Nasr Road towards the Octo-
ber 6 Bridge. Over a period of at least six hours, police 
and plainclothes armed men acting in coordination with 
security forces shot and killed 95 protesters, according 
to the FMA. One policeman also died in the clashes. Hu-
man Rights Watch’s investigation of this incident, which 
included being in the field hospital as many of the dead 
and wounded were brought in, concluded that security 
forces used intentional lethal force against largely peace-
ful protesters. Medical staff reported that the majority of the 
bullet injuries were to the head, neck, and chest, indi-
cative of intent to kill. A doctor on the scene concluded,
based on the nature of the wounds, that the shootings had to have been from close range. Later in the day, the interior minister insisted, “We never, as police, pointed any firearms at the chest of any demonstrator.”

Two days after the Rab’a and al-Nahda dispersals, on August 16, police at the Azbakiya police station in the Abbasiyya neighborhood of central Cairo opened fire on August 16, police at the Azbakiya police station in the statements by victims and witnesses, including independent observers, and video footage show that the police intentionally fired on largely peaceful protesters. Human Rights Watch documented several instances of police killing clearly unarmed protesters. Witnesses who saw bodies and wounded in the hospitals and morgues, including medical personnel and journalists, told Human Rights Watch that a high number of protesters had suffered wounds in the head, neck, and upper body, raising the question of whether some police officers may have been shooting to kill.

Both the police and army took part in the attacks on demonstrators. Army units played the primary role in confronting demonstrators outside the Republican Guard headquarters on July 5 and 8, though police participated as well. Police dispersed the July 28 march outside the Manassa Memorial and the August 16 demonstration in Ramses Square. Police, including both Central Security Forces (CSF) and Special Forces (ESF), took the lead role in the Rab’a and al-Nahda dispersals, though the army played a critical role. Army forces secured the entrances, operated some of the bulldozers that cleared the way for police to advance, operated some of the helicopters, including Apaches, that flew over the square, and opened a military base adjacent to Rab’a Square to snipers; police officers led the advance into Rab’a Square and appear to be responsible for most of the force used there.

International legal standards allow the intentional use of lethal force in policing situations in limited circumstances where strictly necessary to protect public life. While security services may have been justified in using a degree of force to stop armed attacks by protesters or even to disperse protests that constituted a danger to public security, there is no justification for the manner and scale of the violence used by Egypt’s security forces. Those planning the dispersal operations were under a strict duty to take all feasible measures to ensure the operations posed a minimal risk to life, which the organizers comprehensively failed to do.

Moreover, the systematic and widespread use by Egyptian security forces of unlawful lethal force, resulting in the deaths of well over 1,000 protesters, in a manner that was not only anticipated, but planned by Egyptian government leaders, likely constitutes the crime against humanity of murder. The mass killings at Rab’a and al-Nahda squares fit a pattern of government security forces’ widespread and systematic killings of protesters seen throughout July and August 2013 following Morsy’s ouster. The prohibition of crimes against humanity is among the most fundamental in international criminal law and can be the basis for individual criminal liability in international fora, as well as in domestic courts in many countries under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

This report identifies the most senior security officials and key leaders in the chain of command who should be investigated and, where there is evidence of responsibility, held individually accountable for the planning and execution or failing to prevent the widespread and systematic killings of protesters during July-August 2013, including:

- Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim, who formulated the dispersal plan and oversaw its implementation and acknowledged that he “ordered the Special Forces to advance and purify” key buildings at the heart of Rab’a Square;
- Then-Defense Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who held a command role over the armed forces, which opened fire on protesters on July 5 and July 8, oversaw security in the country as Deputy
Prime Minister for Security Affairs, and acknowledged spending “very many long days to discuss all the details” of the Rab’a dispersal;

- Special Forces head and commander of the Rab’a operation Medhat Menshawy, who boasted that he told President Mubarak about the Rab’a Square on the morning of August 14 that “we will attack whatever it cost us.”

The report further identifies other figures, including the head of the General Intelligence Services, Mohamed Farid Tohamy, eight key Interior Ministry deputies, three senior army leaders, and several high-ranking civilian leaders, whose roles in the mass protester killings of July–August 2013 should be investigated further. If found complicit in the planning or execution of the mass killings of protesters or failing to prevent crimes committed by their subordinates that they knew or should have known about, they should also be held accountable.

The government has created a fact-finding committee to investigate the mass killings and the quasi-official National Council on Human Rights has released a report on its own investigations into the Rab’a dispersal finding wrongdoing. However, there has been no actual accounting for what happened or any credible judicial investigations or prosecutions, much less actual accountability. The police and government to date have refused to acknowledge any wrongdoing on the part of security services in their violent dispersal of the sit-ins or other attacks on protesters. In a news conference on August 14, Interior Minister Ibrahim said that his ministry successfully had carried out the dispersal of the Rab’a and al-Nahda sit-ins “without losses,” and referred to a non-existent “international standard death rate of 10 percent” and not seriously investigated police or army officers for protester killings since June 30, 2013, but have extensively investigated protesters in relation to clashes with security forces. Prosecutors have initiated criminal proceedings against over 1,000 protesters and bystanders detained from the Rab’a and al-Nahda dispersals alone. Many face lengthy prison sentences.

One year after the dispersals, authorities have failed to hold accountable police and army officers and other officials responsible for the repeated use of excessive lethal force against demonstrators, including killing and for the provision of victim compensation.

Prosecutors to Human Rights Watch’s knowledge have not seriously investigated police or army officers for protester killings since June 30, 2013, but have extensively investigated protesters in relation to clashes with security forces. Prosecutors have initiated criminal proceedings against over 1,000 protesters and bystanders detained from the Rab’a and al-Nahda dispersals alone. Many face lengthy prison sentences.

The government also has refused to publicly disclose almost any information on the dispersals, even to the NCHR in connection with its investigation. Nasser Amin, a member of NCHR and lead author of its report on the Rab’a dispersal, said on the Egyptian channel ONTV that the Interior Ministry did not cooperate with its investigation, including failing to provide its dispersal plan, and suggested that it sought to hide the truth. Although video footage of helicopters and buildings overlooking Rab’a Square show security forces recording the dispersal, the Interior Ministry has only selectively released footage pointing to violence on the parts of some demonstrators.

The NCHR report on the Rab’a dispersal, released on March 16, has significant methodological weaknesses that seriously undermine its findings. In particular it relies heavily on testimony of local residents, largely antipathetic to the Brotherhood, and there is little use of accounts of participants in the sit-ins who were the primary witnesses and victims. Nonetheless, the NCHR report concluded that security forces used excessive force on August 14 and faulted security forces for insufficient warnings and failure to provide a safe exit for much of the day. It also called for the opening of a full judicial inquiry in the dispersal and for the provision of victim compensation.

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Five months after promising to do so, Mansour announced in December 2013 that he had established “a national independent fact-finding commission to gather information and evidence that accompanied the June 30, 2013 revolution and its repercussions.” The committee, though, has operated with little transparency and, by its mandate, will not make its findings public. The decree establishing the committee further failed to provide it with the authority to compel witnesses, including government officials, to testify or to subpoena information, raising questions about the sort of information it has relied upon during its investigation.

Since the events of July and August 2013, Egyptian authorities have continued to brutally suppress dissent. While focused overwhelmingly on the country’s largest political opposition group, the Muslim Brotherhood, authorities have also targeted other opposition groups and individuals. Security forces have continued to use excessive lethal force against demonstrators, including killing
57 protesters on October 6, 2013 and 64 on January 25, 2014, according to the FMA. An assembly law passed in November 2013 authorizes the Interior Ministry to forcibly disperse protests that they have not been approved in advance and to arrest demonstrators on vague grounds such as “attempt[ing] to influence the course of justice” or “impedi[ng] citizen’s interests.” Authorities have also arrested, by their figures, at least 22,000 people since July 3, many on charges relating to their exercise of basic rights or for membership in the Muslim Brotherhood, which the government declared a terrorist organization on December 25, 2013. Prosecutors routinely renew pretrial detention orders against those detained on the basis of little evidence that would warrant prosecution, effectively detaining them arbitrarily for months on end, lawyers have told Human Rights Watch. Many of the cases that have gone to trial have been riddled with serious due process violations, including mass trials that have failed to assess the individual guilt of each defendant, yet resulted in sentences of lengthy prison terms or even the death penalty for hundreds of defendants.

Human Rights Watch reiterates calls it has made throughout the last year for the Public Prosecutor to thoroughly, independently, and impartially investigate the mass killings of protesters since June 30, 2013 and prosecute those found to have committed violations. Government statements make clear that the August 14 dispersals and attacks on demonstrators before and after were ordered by the government. As such, investigations must look at those responsible in the chain of command, including Interior Minister Ibrahim and then-Defense Minister and now President al-Sisi, ensuring that all perpetrators of serious human rights abuses are brought to justice regardless of rank or political affiliation.

The new Egyptian government should also acknowledge the serious violations that it committed in July and August 2013, provide fair compensation to victims’ families, and undertake a serious process of security sector reform that results in a police force that acts in accordance with international standards on the use of force in future policing of demonstrations.

In light of the failure of Egyptian authorities until now to undertake investigations and continuing rampant im-
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Egyptian Government

• Order security forces to end unlawful, excessive use of force and to act in accordance with international human rights law and standards on the use of force in policing demonstrations.

• Make public the findings and recommendations of the post-June 30 fact-finding commission, in addition to those of the 2011 and 2012 fact-finding commissions.

To the Public Prosecutor

• Thoroughly and impartially investigate the unlawful use of force by security forces for protester killings since June 30, 2013, and prosecute those, including in the chain of command, against whom there is evidence of criminal responsibility.

• Immediately release any people still detained without charge following demonstrations in July and August 2013, or immediately charge them with specific cognizable criminal offences followed within a reasonable timeframe by a fair trial.

To UN Member States

• Establish through the UN Human Rights Council an international commission of inquiry to investigate all human rights violations resulting from the mass killings of protesters since June 30, 2013. The inquiry should be mandated to establish the facts, identify those responsible with a view to ensuring that the perpetrators of violations are held accountable, as well as collect and conserve information related to abuses for future use by credible judicial institutions. Such a call follows a joint declaration made by 27 states during the March session of the Human Rights Council, which cited the need for “accountability” and “bring[ing] to justice those responsible” for the violence.

• Suspend all sales and provision of security-related items and assistance to Egypt until the government adopts measures to end serious human rights violations, such as those related to suppression of largely peaceful demonstrations, and to holding rights violators accountable.

• Under the principle of universal jurisdiction and in accordance with national laws, investigate and prosecute those implicated in serious crimes under international law committed in Egypt in July-August 2013.
In July and August 2013, tens of thousands of Egyptians, many supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, participated in demonstrations across Egypt to denounce the military’s July 3 ouster of Mohamed Morsy, Egypt’s first elected civilian president.

In All According to Plan: The Rab’a Massacre and Mass Killings of Protesters in Egypt, Human Rights Watch documents the manner in which Egyptian police and army forces methodically opened fire on crowds of unarmed protesters at six demonstrations in July and August 2013, killing at least 1,150 people. Human Rights Watch’s year-long investigation into the killings included interviews with over 200 witnesses, visits to each of the protest sites, and review of video footage, physical evidence, and statements by public officials. The report concludes that the systematic and widespread killings likely amount to crimes against humanity.

In the single largest incident, Egyptian security forces forcefully dispersed the major pro-Morsy sit-in Rab’a al-Adawiya Square in Cairo, where demonstrators, including women and children, had been camped out for over 45 days. Using armored personnel carriers, bulldozers, hundreds of ground troops, and snipers, security forces followed a violent dispersal plan that had been formulated by Egyptian authorities in full awareness that it would result in the deaths of thousands. Security forces attacked the protest encampment, including makeshift hospitals. They gave little to no effective warning and surrounded protesters, leaving no safe exit for those seeking to escape the violence, for nearly 12 hours. Security forces killed at least 817 and likely over 1,000 protesters, making it one of the world’s largest killings of demonstrators in a single day in recent history.

One year later, the Egyptian government has failed to hold accountable even a single Egyptian police and army official. In light of this failure, the report calls for international accountability, prosecution of those implicated in serious crimes under international law, and full suspension of military aid and law enforcement support to Egypt.

(above) The front of Rab’a al-Adawiya mosque on August 15, 2014, the day after security forces dispersed the over month-long sit-in that had taken place in the surrounding area. The mosque, which had served as a refuge for women and children seeking to escape the violence during the dispersal, was set ablaze as security forces took control of central Rab’a Square around 6 p.m. The Egyptian government has claimed that protesters set the mosque afire, but accounts gathered by Human Rights Watch strongly indicate that security forces were responsible.

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(front cover) A volunteer tends to an injured demonstrator in front of a police armored personnel carrier (APC) in Rab’a Square in Cairo, Egypt on August 14, 2013. That day, Egyptian police and army forces opened fire on tens of thousands of demonstrators who had been staging an open-ended sit-in calling for the re-instatement of former president Mohamed Morsy, and violently dispersed the demonstration, killing at least 817 protesters.

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