

# April 6 verdict shows Cairo's 360-degree crackdown

**SIGNIFICANCE:** This week, a Cairo court banned Egypt's secular April 6 Youth Movement from operating in Egypt.

## ON THE GROUND

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– Michael Collins Dunn, Middle East Institute

## IMPACTS

**SOCIAL:** The ruling effectively silences one of the last public voices of the political opposition.

**POLITICAL:** Cairo is cracking down in an effort to boost stability and a perception of near universal support before Egyptians head to the polls.

**BUSINESS:** The crackdown will strengthen expectations that the new government's economic policies and reforms will not be challenged or overturned.

**On April 28, a Cairo court banned Egypt's secular April 6 Youth Movement, a key supporter of the overthrow of former President Mohamed Morsi's government in July 2013.**

Also on April 28, a different court in the southern province of Minya issued death sentences against the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and 682 people identified as Brotherhood supporters.

The simultaneous rulings are the product of two ad hoc judicial decisions and not coordinated, analysts tell Monitor Global Outlook. Still, both are part of an ongoing state crackdown on public dissent that is targeting secular and Islamist groups alike.

"In the eyes of the state and the eyes of the court, both groups are enemies of good order. [Authorities] want a sense of absolute support for the interim government, and presumably for [Field Marshal Abdel Fattah] al-Sisi," says Michael Collins Dunn, an Egypt specialist at the Middle East Institute in Washington. "The message right now is that anybody who isn't for us is against us.' It's just one more sign of the growing intolerance of dissent."

The ruling is the latest in a number of moves designed by the government to limit external signs of instability as it presses forward with a political road map viewed as a harbinger of legitimacy for Cairo's new military-backed cabinet. Though Monday's verdict was not issued by the state prosecutor's office, it formally expands state suppression that has, to date, been directed against individual April 6 members to the movement at large.

The special fast-track court that issued Monday's injunction against April 6 is the same body that banned the Palestinian militant group Hamas from formally operating in Egypt in March. The same court banned Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood last year.

In March, Egypt's cabinet issued a law ([/Briefings/2014/03/with-new-electoral-law-egypt-aims-at-smooth-vote](#)) prohibiting private individuals or entities from directly appealing official decisions about the process or result of Egypt's upcoming presidential election. Shortly after, it passed controversial amendments ([/Briefings/2014/04/new-investment-law-a-nod-to-business-egypt-fm-told-mgo](#)) to the country's investment law, banning third parties from appealing government contracts with investors. Both measures are intended to preempt private citizens and activists from using Egypt's courts to try to cancel election results and overturn state business deals.

The latest court ruling against April 6 targets one of last public voices of dissent in the country. The verdict comes at a time when the movement, a key supporter of both former President Hosni Mubarak's ouster in 2011 and President Morsi's removal from office last summer, is considered to be at its weakest. April 6 has been wrecked with internal divisions since the country's 2011 revolution. Two of its

founding members - Mohamed Adel and Ahmed Maher - are currently serving three-year prison sentences for violating the interim government's new protest law, which makes unauthorized public gatherings of more than 10 people a criminal offense.

Two days before the April 28 injunction, group members had taken part in a march to Egypt's presidential palace that called for the release of political detainees and decried the rules that led to the incarceration of Mr. Adel and Mr. Maher.

The verdict against the group also mandates the closing of any April 6 offices and bank accounts. A spokesman for the movement, which is known for meeting in private homes and public spaces, told local media that the movement has no formal offices, headquarters, or bank accounts. It remains unclear whether the ruling will lead to the freeze of individual members' personal bank accounts. Members who are not already in jail are not expected to be directly affected by the ruling. The group has said it will appeal the verdict.



Photo: Ahmed Gomaa/AP