

Egypt's Mursi Defends Power Grab

Insists Move 'Temporary' and Aimed to Protect Constitutional Committee

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Faced with an ever-growing backlash over last week's power grab, Egyptian President Mohamed Mursi struggled to defend his edict, insisting that the move was "[temporary](#)" and not intended to centralize power in his hands.

Rather, in a new statement Mursi insisted that the move was meant to limit the power of the judiciary, and was primarily aimed at avoiding the "[politicization](#)" of the court system while keeping them from ousting the committee penning the new constitution.

Yet the edict went well beyond protecting the committee, claiming unilateral power for the president to do anything he deems necessary and insisting the court can't even theoretically review anything he does. To the extent it renders the court totally powerless it would seem to limit interest in its politicization.



Making the move temporary does seem to be a key part of the edict, and assuming it remains temporary it may placate some critics. The edict only sought to define presidential power until the new constitution is written, with the assumption that the constitution itself will define them afterwards.

"Temporary" measures in the Middle East have a tendency to last for decades, however, as with the "emergency law" in place in Egypt before the revolution, which granted Mursi's

predecessor Hosni Mubarak similar unchecked power. The longer it takes to get a constitution in place, the more Egyptians are likely to bristle at the power Mursi is now claiming for himself.

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