



The Permanent Mission of Egypt
to the United Nations
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نيويورك

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador/ Mootaz Ahmadein Khalil
Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations
before the Security Council on “The Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict”
New York, 19 August 2013**

Madame President,

I would like to welcome H.E. Madame Susana Ruiz Cerutti, Legal Advisor of the Argentinean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for being with us today and presiding the meeting. I would also like to commend the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Under-Secretary-General for humanitarian affairs and the Representative of the ICRC for their participation and important statements.

On the occasion of World Humanitarian Day and the tenth anniversary of the bombing of UN canal hotel in Bagdad, we would like to pay tribute to those who have lost their lives in service of peace, including Mr. Sérgio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to Iraq. Among them also were two brave Egyptians, Ms. Nadia Younes, Chief of Staff of the Special Representative, whom I had the honour to know in person, and Mr. Jean-Sélim Kanaan, member of the Special Representative’s staff.

I would like to thank Argentina for the excellent concept paper it has prepared which represents a valuable contribution to today’s debate. It is alarming that increasing numbers of civilians continue to suffer in armed conflicts around the globe. Egypt stresses the importance of the contribution of Peacekeeping Missions to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We support providing these missions with the necessary mandates, personnel and equipment to enable them to become an effective mechanism for early warning when violations occur. We stress the importance that UN peacekeeping missions uphold the principles of respect for the sovereignty and cultures specificities of the host countries as well.

We reaffirm the importance of compliance to the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law by all parties involved in armed conflicts, notwithstanding the nature of such parties. All parties have to comply with the principles of distinction and proportionality in armed conflicts. All parties have to refrain from targeting medical facilities and grant access to humanitarian assistance. Rapid and effective accountability for any violations against civilians in armed conflict has to be ensured. Impunity escalates violations, as much as it increases bitterness and hostility between the parties to a conflict.

Madame President,

Egypt regrets that today's important debate has been undermined by some delegations through addressing issues that do not fall within the legal scope of the "protection of civilians in armed conflict", let alone the mandate of the Security Council. We reject the reference to the recent events in Egypt in today's debate.

The recent events in Egypt do not constitute an armed conflict. Addressing Egyptian affairs in today's debate by those delegations demonstrates either a lack of legal knowledge or the pursuit of narrow political objectives. We remind those delegations of the following:

First: Within the meaning of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, a Non-International Armed Conflict is a situation in which one or more non-governmental armed groups are involved. In order to distinguish an armed conflict from less serious forms of violence, such as internal disturbances and tensions, riots or acts of banditry, the situation must reach a certain threshold of confrontation. Non-governmental groups involved in the conflict must be considered as "parties to the conflict", meaning that they possess organized armed forces under a clear military command structure and have the capacity to sustain military operations. The recent events in Egypt do not meet any of those qualifications.

Second: The situation in Egypt does not threaten international peace and security. It is an internal matter that will be solved only through an Egyptian led political process that includes all Egyptian political factions which reject violence and extremism. As the Secretary General of the United Nations has said in his press conference today "it is an Egyptian problem, and the Egyptian people have the right and the responsibility to resolve it by themselves for their better future".

I thank you for your attention.