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## Violent Ramadan ahead: Egypt's army chief says no to dialogue with Brotherhood. Assad nixes ceasefire

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Muslim Brotherhood casualties in Cairo gunfire

The holy Muslim month of Ramadan beginning in the Middle East Tuesday, July 9, heralds more, rather than less, bloodshed. After at least 51 deaths in a Cairo shootout Monday, Egypt's military chief Gen. Abdel Fattah El-Sisi rebuffed US diplomatic efforts to bring the various political forces in the country around the table for dialogue. The high military council is divided on this: One faction urges a relentless crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood and its deposed president; a second, led by Gen. El-Sisi, says they mustn't be cowed

by the backlash to Monday's incident, but should keep the political process for a new and stable government on track

In line with this perception, Provisional President Justice Adli Mansour issued a decree Tuesday for elections to a new parliament in February 2014, followed immediately by voting for a new president. He did not fix a precise date. No one expects this decree to tranquilize the turmoil in the country or deter the Brothers from an uprising (intifada) declared against the powers that unseated them after Egyptian soldiers shot dead at least 51 of their supporters. They were accused by the army of trying to storm the Republican Guards Club in Cairo where deposed president Mohamed Morsi is held. The Brothers claimed they were just holding a peaceful sit-in.

The generals have geared up to meet this threat, which appears to have been kicked off Monday with attacks on strategic targets across Egypt - carried out, according to debkaf's military sources, by the Brotherhood's armed underground, Al-Gihis al-Sirri.

In parallel, the military is also deploying for a major offensive to curb the armed Salafi Bedouin rampant in Sinai and now harnessed to the Brotherhoods uprising. The generals believe this center of revolt must be nipped in the bud without delay for the sake of confining the MB uprising to mainland Egypt.

To this end, heavy military reinforcements were seen pouring into Sinai in the early hours of Tuesday. The urgency of cutting down the Brotherhood's capabilities for making trouble was attested to by the risk the Egyptian army took by withdrawing substantial military strength from the Suez Canal towns of Port Said, Ismailia and Suez and redeploying them in Sinai. They acted on the assumption that, in the short term, the Brothers would concentrate their defiance on street protests and clashes with the army to Cairo.

Our military sources report that Maj. Gen. Ahmad Wasfi, head of the Second Army, arrived Monday in the northern Sinai town of El Arish to set up a command center for the forthcoming campaign against the Islamist opposition and its allies, the Salafist networks linked to al Qaeda and the radical Palestinian Hamas.

The outbreaks in Egypt this week overshadowed the disastrous situation in Syria.

debkafile's military sources report that alongside thrusts on other fronts, such as Homs, the Syrian army and Hizballah are in the final stages of preparations for their big push to liquidate rebel strongholds in Aleppo and recapture Syria's second city.

Syrian President Bashar Assad decided to go ahead with this offensive despite the onset of Ramadan, during which Muslims fast from sunup to sundown for a month.

Iran and Moscow are speeding extra military and arms supplies to aid this effort by airlift.

Refusing to brook any further delays in the battle for Aleppo, Assad turned down a proposal by UN Secretary Ban Ki-moon's and the new Syrian opposition president Ahmad Jabra to declare a bilateral ceasefire for the month of Ramadan.

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