



File Photo: Abdel Fattah el-Sisis/Al Jazeera

Former Minister of Defence and current President of Egypt Abdel Fattah el-Sisi will be able to grant immunity to any military officers he deems fit, to prevent them from getting prosecuted over the 2013 deadly crackdown due to a law passed by Egypt's Parliament known as the 'Law Governing the treatment of certain senior officers of the Armed Forces'.

At least 900 people were killed in Rabaa al-Adawiya and Nahda squares massacres on 14th August 2013 following the overthrow of then-President Mohammed Morsi. Human Rights Watch (HRW) described it as 'one of the world's largest killings of demonstrators in a single day in recent history'. el-Sisi, who was the General of the Armed Forces during this period, will be able to confer lifelong reserve status upon such officers. These officers will enjoy diplomatic immunity while travelling abroad, while also getting the benefits and the rights of a sitting government minister.

Amr Magdi, HRW's Middle East researcher, said the immunity law approved on Monday showed that military personnel who know that they have committed crimes that might rise to crimes against humanity are trying to protect themselves from any potential for accountability in the future."Although they are extremely powerful now, they know how grave the offences they were involved in are and are aware that time can and will change when finally justice will find its own way," he told the BBC. HRW also warned that the Egyptian authorities were increasingly using counterterrorism and state-of-emergency laws and courts to unjustly prosecute journalists, activists, and critics for their peaceful criticism.

This bill will not only give a clean chit to the officers who were accountable for some of the darkest days in Egyptian history but will also ensure that the President opts for those people who are loyal to him as his confidantes.

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