

**Prosecutors open case against Egypt's Mubarak**  
**Reuters**  
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CAIRO, Jan 4 — Egyptian prosecutors seeking a conviction against Hosni Mubarak on charges of ordering the killing of protesters took the stand for the first time yesterday, criticising his political record in a session brought to an abrupt end by the presiding judge.

The head of the five-member prosecution team said Mubarak, 83, had succumbed to family pressure to arrange a transfer of power to his youngest son, Gamal, who stood alongside his father in a courtroom cage reserved for the accused.

A lawyer for the defence, Ismail Sha'er, speaking after the session was adjourned until Wednesday, said the prosecution had offered statements with "no basis in evidence."

Mubarak, toppled by a mass uprising in February last year, was again wheeled on a hospital trolley into the Cairo court. Doctors say he has a heart condition that means he cannot stand for any length of time.

The former president, his two sons, the former interior minister and senior police officers face charges ranging from corruption to involvement in the deaths of around 850 protesters during the uprising that unseated him.

"He agreed to succession and succumbed to the demands of his family and spouse who wanted to be mother to the next president after having been the wife of one," said Mustafa Suleiman, head of the prosecution team, presenting a view widely held among Egyptians and which helped galvanise the opposition to Mubarak.

In the first of three sessions set aside for the prosecution to present their case, Suleiman did not deal with the charge that Mubarak had ordered the killing of the demonstrators who rose up against him. Prosecutors said they would get to that part of their case Wednesday.

Judge Ahmed Refaat adjourned the session when Suleiman sought to give the floor to another member of the prosecution team. The session lasted about 90 minutes. Previous sessions have lasted several hours.

Mubarak, who ruled for three decades, is the first leader toppled by the wave of protests in the Arab world to stand trial in person.

In a country still in political and economic disarray following Mubarak's ouster, many Egyptians believe national renewal will be impossible unless justice is achieved for those killed and their families.

No official has been convicted over the killing of protesters during the 18-day revolt. Mubarak and the other defendants deny any responsibility for the deaths.

Ashraf Sayyed, a civil rights lawyer attending the hearing, said the prosecution had made "grand statements with no evidence ... Judge Refaat is giving the prosecutors' team more time to offer better and more solid arguments."

Some legal experts have criticized the judge for not meeting lawyers' requests for a further chance to question Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, head of the military council, which has governed Egypt since Mubarak stepped down.

Likewise, the judge did not meet their requests for the chance to question Tantawi's deputy, General Sami Enan.

"Unfortunately, the basis for this case is weak," said Essam Soltan, an independent legal expert.

"The judge could have demanded the testimony of Sami Enan before allowing the prosecutors to list their arguments. We have entered the next phase of the trial on the back of weak and insufficient evidence," he said.

"The reputation of Egypt's justice system is at stake. We are a year since the revolution erupted and not a single official has been convicted for the killing of Egyptians." — Reuters

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