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Egyptian riot police crush peaceful protest

By Hugh Miles in Cairo

BATON-wielding riot police broke up a peaceful anti-government demonstration in the Egyptian capital Cairo yesterday, the latest sign that President Hosni Mubarak has abandoned his nine-month flirtation with democratic reform.

Police descended on protesters who had gathered to express their solidarity with two judges who have become the heroes of the democratic movement after accusing the government of cheating in elections last year. The two men have been charged with "tarnishing the image of the judiciary" but refused to enter a court room yesterday where their case was due to be heard.

After nearly 25 years of dictatorial rule, Mr Mubarak succumbed to US pressure last September when he agreed to hold Egypt's first ever presidential election.

