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HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN EGYPT

JOINT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

AND THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

OF THE

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HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN EGYPT

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2013

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
AND SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittees met, pursuant to notice, at 9:08 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. The subcommittee will come to order. Subcommittees, I should say. This is an important and unique day. It is Human Rights Day. And both the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations and my distinguished colleague, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and her subcommittee are combined today in chairing this hearing and raising the issues of human rights abuse in Egypt. Today's hearing examines the escalating human rights abuses in Egypt. It is fitting that we are holding this hearing today on International Human Rights Day, December 10th, because we are witnessing grievous violence and other abuses directed against religious and political minorities, particularly the Copts and other Christians about which our Government and the media has said far too little, which seems to be a pattern worldwide.

I would note parenthetically that the persecution of Christians is escalating. Witness the slaughter of Christians in Central African Republic, CAR. I would note Bishop Nongo of the CAR told my subcommittee just a few weeks ago in this room that Christians were being targeted simply because of their faith, while the United Nations, the United States, and the rest the world looked on.

On Thursday, I will be chairing a hearing on American Pastor Saeed Abedini, who was jailed and is suffering torture in Iran. Pastor Abedini's wife, Naghmeh, will tell our subcommittee on Thursday, and I quote, in part,

> "While I am thankful for President Obama's willingness to express concern about my husband and the other imprisoned Americans in Iran during his recent phone conversation with Iran's new President, Hassan Rouhani, I was devastated to learn that the administration didn't even ask for my husband's release, when directly seated across the table from the leaders of the government that holds him captive."

She goes on to say,

> "My husband is suffering because he is a Christian. He is suffering because he is an American. Yet, his own government, at least the executive and diplomatic representatives, has abandoned him. Don't we owe to it him as a nation to stand up for his human rights, for his freedom?"

Unfortunately, there seems to be a pattern.

After President Mubarak resigned in February 2011, the world hoped for a new Egypt, a just government for all Egyptians, which would not make and replicate President Mubarak's mistakes, but reality has been just the opposite. Horrific anti-Christian pogroms have taken place under each of the post-Mubarak governments. For some of these abuses, the governments bear the responsibility of inaction. For others, they bear direct responsibility. In recent months, undercurrents of abuse and contempt for human dignity long existing in Egypt have turned into flash floods of violence.

For example, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces presided over the Maspero protest massacre in October 2011. At least 25 people were killed and more than 300 injured, almost all of them Copts, when the military drove trucks through the crowd and used live ammunition against the unarmed protesters. Under the now displaced Morsi government, three low-level soldiers involved were charged with minor crimes and received 2- to 3-year sentences. No commanding officers were held responsible for ordering or failing to prevent the deadly assaults.

While Mr. Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party at times voiced support for an Egypt that was home to both Muslims and Christians, his inaction belied his rhetoric. In April 2012, St. Mark's Cathedral, seat of the Coptic Pope, was attacked by 30 to 40 Muslim youths. While dozens of Copts were sheltering inside, security forces joined the mob. Rather than dispersing the crowd they participated in the all-night attack or stood idly by as rocks, gasoline bombs, and gas canisters were lobbed into the iconic cathedral.

Despite this, President Morsi denied that the clash was sectarian in nature. After Mr. Morsi was removed in July of this year, the military ended the Muslim Brotherhood's sit-in with violence, killing hundreds of protesters. Tragically, some in the Muslim Brotherhood scapegoated the Copts, although the Copts had nothing to with the military's violence response. On August 14th, the day that will be remembered as the worst day for Copts in some 700 years, 37 churches, five schools, and three bible societies, four other Christian institutions, and many homes and businesses were burned or damaged by mobs. More than 100 deaths were documented in the initial spate of violence and its aftermath.

Some Copts had charged the military government in Egypt with allowing the attacks on Coptic persons, businesses, churches, and homes to continue, often inside of police stations and in spite of repeated and direct calls for help, in order to solidify government power as an alternative to the Muslim Brotherhood as well as to justify their own heavy-handed crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood denies any involvement in the attacks occurring across the country and has at times condemned

them. Yet the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party branch in Helwan reportedly posted a statement holding the Coptic Pope responsible for Morsi's removal and otherwise linked Copts to attacks on the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood also called for Friday prayers to be held in an evangelical church in Minya after it was occupied and converted into a mosque on August 15th. Whoever the attackers are, and that is one thing we hope to learn more about today, the bottom line is that Coptic citizens are having their most basic human rights—freedom of religion, association, and equal protection of the laws—denied. We can never rest while human dignity, when it is so grossly trampled upon, nor can we ever accept the suffering that has marked Coptic life for decades, very much including the abduction, forced conversions, and forced marriages of Coptic girls and women.

These abuses have continued unabated, and by some reports, have escalated sharply following the Arab Spring, as have the abuse of the Egyptian courts to prosecute blasphemy cases against Christians, moderate Muslims, and secularists. Moreover, despite the nearly $1.5 billion in foreign aid American taxpayers gave to Egypt each year, neither the Mubarak government nor the Morsi government, or now the military government, has seen fit to return kidnapped American children Noor and Ramsay Bower, who were abducted by their mother to Egypt in 2009, in violation of valid U.S. court orders, to the United States. They, along with some 30 other American children in Egypt, are forced to live without the love and guidance of an American parent who daily fights for their return, while being stripped of half of their culture and half of their identity.

In addition, freedom of expression continues to be under fire. The current interim government has been arresting and jailing journalists critical of the military government, jamming the broadcast signals, deporting foreign reporters, and otherwise closing the offices of news outlets that are, "broadcasting lies."

In his September 23rd speech at the United Nations, the President stated that his "approach to Egypt reflects a larger point: the United States will at times work with governments that do not meet the highest international expectations, but who will work with us on our own core interests." These core interests were early defined in the speech to include the "Camp David Accords and counterterrorism" efforts, but I believe mistakenly have not included human rights. Human rights and the intrinsic dignity of every human being from womb to tomb are important in and of themselves. But for those who fail to grasp this, there is another important point to be made. It is the strategic interest of the United States to encourage governments to respect the rights of their own people because governments have failed to do so are, in the final analysis, unstable. This should be the abiding lesson of the Arab Spring.

The President also stated that future U.S. support to Egypt "will depend on Egypt's progress in pursuing a democratic path." Again, it is unclear what criteria this entails. What if the democratic path does not include the protection of human rights, such as what we saw under the Morsi government and now the interim government.

It is not democracy per se that is to be the goal, but rather duly-elected constitutional government that respects minorities, the separation of power, and fundamental human rights. Tyranny of the majority is not an acceptable option.

What is clear is that the U.S. needs a new approach. This administration's shortsighted approach of not clearly linking aid to the protection of human rights in Egypt has been unequivocally ineffective. It is my hope that our hearing today will shed light on what went wrong and how the U.S. can be more effective in protecting human rights going forward.

I yield to my good friend and distinguished colleague, Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Smith. Thank you for your leadership throughout the years on any issue related to human rights and thank you for shedding some light on this terrible human rights abuse that is going on in Egypt. It is an honor to hold this hearing with you. Thank you, sir.

During the Morsi and Muslim-Brotherhood-led era, we witnessed a steady increase in human rights abuses perpetrated by the Islamist government as Morsi began to solidify his power and crack down on fundamental freedoms of Egyptians. There was a precipitous increase in the arrests of journalists, a widespread crackdown on opposition demonstrators, wanton disrespect for the rule of law, and an overall deteriorating state of human rights throughout Egypt. Then this past July, the people of Egypt grew tired of Morsi's oppressive regime and its blatant disregard for human rights and again, took to the streets en masse.

Since Morsi's removal from power, Muslim Brotherhood supporters have terrorized the Egyptian people with violent protests, and the end result has left hundreds killed and many more injured. The Egyptian military has responded in kind, and the interim authorities have moved to initiate restrictive assembly laws. And though the military has taken some steps to keep Egypt safe and secure, such as conducting operations against al Qaeda and the lawless Sinai, the general security situation restrictions on civil society and a lack of the rule of law and respect for human rights demonstrate that Egypt still has a long way to go toward creating a truly democratic society.

While Egypt's interim government has said that it is protecting religious minorities, we still see attacks against the Coptic Christian community all the time. Though the government may not outwardly incite these attacks, it fails to provide the adequate protections to prevent them from happening. Christians have seen a drastic increase of attacks against them as they have been scapegoated by Morsi supporters. Horrifying reports of attacks against Christian communities and of young Christian girls being abducted and forced into marriage with radical Islamists depict the grim reality that Christians are currently facing in Egypt. But Christians aren't the only groups that continue to suffer. Other religious minorities such as Jews, Bahais, Sufi Muslims, Shiites, and others, have been targeted by extremists, and women's rights are woefully inadequate.

While the latest draft Constitution in theory has provided more rights, in practice, it is so left open to interpretation, thus not nec-

essarily affording any more rights to those groups who need protection the most. The committee tasked with drawing up this new Constitution was not truly representative of the interests of all Egyptians. Of the 50 members, only five were women, and only four were Coptic Christians. It is the duty of the interim government to help shepherd Egypt toward a new dawn of democracy. In order for Egypt to return to the path toward democracy, the new Constitution must protect the rights of women and religious and ethnic minorities, everyone's human rights must be recognized, and the political party process must be allowed to take root with free, fair, and transparent elections.

I hope that the new draft Constitution will be implemented in a way that adequately addresses these concerns and is not just simply a document that can be thrown out at a moment's notice. The ideals enshrined in this document must be the bedrock foundation that can inspire a country that is in danger of losing its way.

A successful democratic transition in Egypt can only occur once those protections are respected, solidified and enforced. In addition, Egyptian authorities must pardon the 43 NGO workers, many of whom are American citizens, who were unjustly convicted and sentenced earlier this year and allow the NGOs to operate without fear of government reprisals as they help to support civil society.

The path to democracy is a difficult one, but it would be a tremendous accomplishment if the people of Egypt can implement the democratic reforms they have called for and realize a free and functioning civil society. Without a strong basis in democracy, any election will fail to achieve the democratic results we all hope and pray to see in Egypt. And I thank the chairman again for the joint hearing.

Mr. SMITH. I want to thank the distinguished chairwoman for her very eloquent statement and for her never-ending efforts to combat human rights worldwide. Thank you, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen.

Mr. Weber.

Mr. WEBER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. And I want to echo my colleague to the left. I want to associate myself with her remarks. She did a great job. You are exactly correct, we need to address this. When we make policy, that should be utmost and foremost on our mindset. If we don't, then we are, as the Scripture says, a clanging gong and tinkling cymbals. So what we want to make sure that we pay close attention and the policy that we set holds these people to account. We express our concern, our love, and our intent to put an end to these human rights violations across the globe, but especially in Egypt and that we set the policy in place to do that. And I commend you once again for holding this hearing. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Chair recognizes Chairman Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Today we hope that we will be sending the message that the people of the United States are standing in solidarity with those oppressed Christians who are suffering persecution in Egypt. That is the message of today. But the greater message is that the people of the United States believe in religious freedom. We believe that people, no matter what their faith, have a right to live their lives as they

choose without being persecuted or brutalized by either their government or by the citizens of the country in which they reside.

The United States is on the side of those people who believe in freedom, and we are on the side of those who are persecuted for their beliefs, whether they be Christians or whether they be Muslims, whether they be Buddhist, or whether they be atheists. The fact is our country was founded on those principles. But far too often, our Government has not had the courage to act upon those beliefs which are supposed to be the fundamental beliefs that we have held since the beginning of our country.

So today, Mr. Chairman, I would hope that we reaffirm not just in words, but are willing to reaffirm in policy and in deed that when people, especially as we focus on the Christians in Egypt, are being brutalized, that we will not stand idly by and not just express our words but stand with those in Egypt who would end that oppression. And this, today, unfortunately, there seems to be confusion in our Government as to whose side we should be on. We are on the side of those people who want freedom and not radicals who would repress their own fellow citizens.

So today we welcome our witnesses. I thank the chairman for calling this hearing so that we can express these very important sentiments of solidarity to a people who are being persecuted. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Chairman Rohrabacher.

Ms. Frankel.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you. I am honored to be here. Thank you for being here.

I join Mr. Rohrabacher. I think it was last month when we went to Cairo. And we met with General al-Sisi and Acting President Mansour, and also we met with the Coptic Pope there. It was a very short but interesting visit. I am really just looking forward to hearing what you have to say. When we were there, we were assured by General al-Sisi and President Mansour that they were redrafting a Constitution. And that this would be the first critical step back toward democracy. So, of course, I would be interested in hearing about that.

And of course, the Coptic Pope did talk about some of the repression and abuses. So I would certainly be interested in hearing about that. And again, I thank you for being here.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Ms. Frankel.

Like to recognize Chairman Frank Wolf and just note parenthetically that our first witness, Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, is with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Mr. Wolf, in 1998, was the author of the International Religious Freedom Act, which not only created a State Department effort and an office, but also a parallel organization that has spoken truth to power ever since when State has fallen short. More importantly, it has been absolutely robust in bringing human rights issues and religious freedom issues to the forefront. That law was written by Chairman Wolf.

Mr. Wolf.

Mr. WOLF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be very brief. I don't serve on the committee. But I want to thank Mr. Smith and all the members of this committee. This is almost the last bastion in the Congress that really holds hearings and deals with these issues.

Last week, the House of Commons did a 3-hour debate. You couldn't get a 3-hour debate in the House or the Senate if you paid for it. And if it were not for the members of this committee, all of you, this issue may very well go away. And Mr. Rohrabacher talked about our obligation. President Reagan, who he was a speechwriter for, said that the words in the Constitution were a covenant not only with the people in Philadelphia in 1787, but with all the people in the world. They are a covenant with the people of Cairo, their covenant with the people of Alexandria, they are a covenant with the people of the people all over the world. I believe that we are breaking the covenant at this very moment. And a covenant is more significant than a contract. We are breaking a covenant. And I visited Egypt a couple months ago and met with women's groups. They all believe that our Government was a strong supporter of the Morsi government. We met with a Muslim group. That they believe that our Government was the strongest supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood. We met with the Christian groups. They all believe that we were the strongest supporter of the Morsi government. They believed that Anne Patterson and the American Embassy was not a sanctuary of freedom, but it was basically a support group for the Morsi government. And also we met with a number in the secular community.

So again, I thank the committee. I think we could lose Egypt. I think we are really facing a point, if this administration doesn't deal with certain things, and they are going to be here for the next 3 years, we could lose Egypt. And then the stories will be about who lost Egypt. And the answer will be, the Obama administration and the Congress lost Egypt because they did not side with the people of Egypt who wanted freedom and democracy against the Muslim Brotherhood. So I would thank Mr. Smith and all the members here. If it were not for you guys, men and women, this issue just would not be dealt with.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Chairman Wolf.

Mr. Meadows.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing. Thank you for being here. It is good to see you. You know, obviously, the transition of power is never easy. It is always combined with, not only cultural, but religious differences, among protests many times and trying to scream for power. What I am interested in hearing from you this morning is how can we help provide a standard. I think what we have heard today has been that there is really not a dependable standard on what we expect. And if you go all the way back to Cuba and some of the others we knew what those were about. I lived in Florida at the time. And I knew the human rights abuses that were happening there because we could feel them. We heard the stories. And yet the story is not getting told, whether it is in Egypt or across the Middle East. So how can we as Members of Congress come alongside you, support this effort, and make sure that it gets highlighted.

At your same table, we had people talking about NGOs and how they had been convicted in absentia and how they felt like Congress had left them out and was not bringing those issues to the forefront. And so I look forward to hearing your testimony on how we can, not only highlight this issue, but how we can make a dif-

ference. For those that are persecuted, that perhaps do not have a voice, it is critical that we have this. As important as so many of the issues are, it is critical that we use this not to ignore human rights abuses in favor of economic stability, or whatever it is, but let's tie those together. And I look forward to hearing your testimony. And I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Meadows.

Mr. Bilirakis.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it very much. And thank you, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, as well. This is such a very important issue. And because of your leadership, we continue to focus on this. And it is so very important to me, my constituents. So I appreciate the opportunity again to participate since the safety of Coptic Christians in Egypt is something that I have worked on since I have been in Congress. As an Orthodox Christian and a member of the International Religious Freedom Caucus, I am especially alarmed at the dwindling number of Christians in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Egypt, and throughout the Middle East. While this hearing today focuses on Egypt, and it should, I want to take a moment to reiterate that Christians are facing persecution across the region. Christianity is not new to the Middle East, and we must not forget that the ancient indigenous communities of Coptic, Syrian, Assyrian, Catholic, and Greek Orthodox communities that have lived and thrived in the Middle East for thousands of years.

Today in the face of ongoing unrest, these Christians have exhibited bravery in the face of existential danger, these attempts that we see to push Christians from their ancestral homeland. Let us not forget that "Coptic" translated means Egyptian. These attempts must be denounced by all. I thank the chairman, of course, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen and Chairman Smith, for holding this hearing today, and I remain committed to working with my colleagues in the House to continue bringing light to the situation in Egypt and across the Middle East.

I would like to thank the panelists again for being here today. I thank them for their testimony. I have met with many of you to discuss the topic at hand over the past year. And while I wish I could say that things have improved over that time, I am afraid they have not. So let's continue to work on behalf of these wonderful people. Thank you so very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Bilirakis.

I would now introduce our first witness, on the first panel, who is Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, who is a member of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. He is also the founder and president of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy. Dr. Jasser is a first-generation American Muslim whose parents fled the oppressive Baath regime of Syria. He earned his medical degree on a U.S. Navy scholarship and served 11 years in the U.S. Navy. He achieved the rank of Lieutenant Commander. His tours of duty included medical department head aboard the USS *El Paso*, chief resident at Bethesda Naval Hospital, and staff internist for the Office of Attending Physician for the U.S. Congress.

He is recipient of the meritorious service medal. He is a respected physician currently in private practice, specializing in in-

ternal medicine and nuclear cardiology. He is the past-president of the Arizona Medical Association. He has been a frequent speaker on behalf of human rights and religious freedom, has been before our subcommittee before. We have always benefited greatly from his wise counsel and insight. Dr. Jasser.

STATEMENT OF ZUHDI JASSER, M.D., VICE CHAIR, U.S. COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Dr. JASSER. Thank you, Chairman Smith. And I want to thank the members of Subcommittees on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations and on the Middle East and North Africa for holding this very important hearing on human rights in Egypt and inviting the U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom to testify.

With your approval, I would like to submit my written testimony which also reflects what we have learned in our delegation to Egypt in February for the record.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, so ordered.

Dr. JASSER. Today could not be a more appropriate day to hold this hearing, given that 65 years ago, 48 nations in the U.N. General Assembly adopted a remarkable document that is relevant today as it was then, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet today, too many governments including Egypt fail to honor human rights. Among the recent convulsions in Egypt, few have been more shocking or emblematic of the January 2011 revolution's derailment then the Egyptian security forces killing more than 1,000 demonstrators in August and then the horrific attacks by extremists in the Muslim Brotherhood supporters against the country's Coptic Christian population. Today I want to highlight the plight of the Copts and the other religious minorities and Muslim dissidents, and briefly review the new Constitution and conclude with recommendations on protecting religious freedom for everyone in Egypt.

Since the transition's beginning, Egyptian human rights activists have been concerned that radical groups have advanced the country with detrimental effects on fostering an open civil society and democratic reform and improving freedom of religion or belief. During former President Morsi's year in power, sectarian rhetoric and incitement increased significantly with conservative clerics and extremists without consequence or accountability, fanning the flames of hatred.

The most vilified groups included Christians, Shi'a, Bahais, and all religious minorities. In fact, five Shi'a were lynched to death in June as a consequence of increased sectarian incitement to violence by jihadi and Salafi groups. While the government has failed to bring to justice the perpetrators of sectarian attacks, the courts have continued to charge, convict, and imprison Egyptian citizens for blasphemy, concept, and defamation of religions. Since Egypt's 2011 revolution, our Commission has observed a significant increase in these cases, with disfavored Muslims being the most targeted, however, Christians are disproportionately affected.

In September 2013, just a few months ago, a leading Egyptian human rights organization reported a significant surge in religious defamation cases and identified 63 cases of individuals, 41 percent

being Christian, a percentage out of proportion to their population. The Copts are particularly affected and victims of impunity for those who target them. Besides directly violating religious freedom, blasphemy and defamation of religion laws fuel Egypt's longtime impunity problem by provoking assaults against Copts and other religious minorities for alleged blasphemous speech.

Large-scale attacks on Christians during 2011 resulted in the deaths of dozens and injuries to hundreds with the perpetrators remaining unpunished to this day, inviting further violence. Following Morsi's July ouster, violent attacks again increased, targeting Copts and other Christians. Since mid-August, at least seven Copts have been killed and more than 200 churches and other places where Christians congregated have been assaulted, many of which destroyed. In October, four Copts were killed, including two children. Besides Copts, other vulnerable religious minorities have faced assaults on their religious freedom.

My written testimony briefly reviews the status of the Bahais, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the continued growing anti-Semitism. Let me note here that Egypt has banned the Bahai faith and Jehovah's Witnesses since 1960s, and then 2012 material vilifying Jews continued to appear regularly in Egypt's state controlled and semi-official media.

Egypt's 50-member constitution committee recently completed its work and sent the final draft to the Egyptian interim President. The draft will be put to referendum coming this January. An initial reviews shows the removal of some problematic provisions from the suspended 2012 Constitution, and other positive additions, although how the provisions are interpreted and implemented will be crucial. For example, Article 64 of the new draft provides freedom of belief being absolute. Article 65 broadly guarantees freedom of thought and opinion, and 53 prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, among other grounds. But like the Morsi era Constitution, Article 64 limits the freedom to practice religious rituals and establish practices of worship to only three divine religious: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, thereby not allowing the Bahai community to exercise their own rights and establish places of worship. And even that freedom is limited with Christians having limitation on being able to build new churches and other manifestations of that.

In the end, our recommendations are, number one, due to Egypt's failure to protect the religious freedom and even the lives of its people, USCIRF, for the third consecutive year, recommended that the U.S. designate Egypt a Country of Particular Concern. The U.S. must urge Egypt to repel its contempt of religion and related laws, its Penal Code, and discriminatory decrees against religious minorities. Given the continued violence against Copts and other religious minorities, the U.S. should press Egypt to prosecute government-funded clerics, officials, and others who incite violence, and urge Cairo to bring the violent to justice.

Finally, the U.S. should refuse to certify the disbursement of the appropriated $1.3 billion in foreign military financing to the Egyptian military until the Egyptian Government demonstrates that it is using some of the FMF funds to implement policies that protect freedom and related rights. Once the Egyptian Government so

demonstrates, it should be urged to ensure that its police implement a comprehensive plan to protect religious minority communities in their places of worship. Congress should require the State Department to report every 90 days on the Egyptian Government's progress on these and related recommendations. The treatment of Egypt's religious minority communities is a barometer of the country's well-being. If the Egyptian revolution is to succeed, nothing is more important than ensuring that Egypt's Government recognize the full freedom of religion or belief being a fundamental human right. For the sake of stability and security, and because of Egypt's international human rights commitments, the U.S. Government should urge Egypt to choose the pathway to democracy and freedom. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Dr. Jasser, thank you so very much for your leadership and your extraordinary statement.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Jasser follows:]

TESTIMONY OF

DR. M. ZUHDI JASSER

VICE CHAIR

U.S. COMMISSSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

AND THE

SUBCOMMITEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

OF THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

ON

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN EGYPT

DECEMBER 10, 2013

I want to thank the Members of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa for holding this hearing on "Human Rights Abuses in Egypt" and inviting me to testify today on behalf of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). With your approval, I would like to submit my written testimony for the record.

Today is a particularly appropriate day to hold this hearing. Emerging from the ashes of World War II, 65 years ago today, December 10, 1948, 48 nations in the UN General Assembly adopted a remarkable document that is as relevant today as it was then: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This vote revealed a consensus across cultures that people possess basic rights which governments need to affirm and protect. However, today it is all too apparent that too many governments fail to honor those rights, including the pivotal right of religious freedom. During today's hearing, we will focus on one of these governments, Egypt.

Among the recent convulsions in Egypt, few have shocked the conscience more or been more emblematic of the derailment of the January 2011 revolution than the killing of more than 1,000 demonstrators in August by Egyptian security forces and the subsequent horrific attacks by extremists and Muslim Brotherhood supporters against the country's Coptic Christian population, the largest non-Muslim religious minority in the Middle East. As USCIRF has documented over the years, much of the sectarian violence targeting Copts has occurred with impunity.

Because of these and other concerns, a USCIRF delegation journeyed to Cairo earlier this year where I joined fellow Commissioners Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett and former Commissioner Dr. Azizah al-Hibri. We spoke with a broad array of interlocutors, from the U.S. ambassador and high-level Egyptian officials to human rights defenders and women's rights advocates, and from Muslim religious leaders to members of religious minority communities.

We concluded from these meetings and our own observations that, notwithstanding the serious human rights problems of the Mubarak era, there were scant grounds for optimism in the Morsi era. Among those with whom we spoke, their most common concerns focused on increasing religious radicalization that negatively impacted women and religious minorities; troubling provisions in the new constitution limiting religious freedom and other rights; and frustrations about the continued climate of impunity since the start of the revolution for numerous acts of violence, including those against Copts. Some of this continues to apply today.

As evidenced by the violence unleashed against Copts since August 14 of this year and the increased stifling of dissent by the interim government, the post-Morsi era has gotten off to a similarly bad start.

Indeed, it is obvious that in spite of the revolution's early promise of progress, hopes have been dashed repeatedly for a peaceful and inclusive democracy that upholds the rule of law for all and adheres fully to internationally recognized human rights standards, including those pertaining to freedom of religion or belief for every Egyptian, including members of religious minorities.

In my testimony, I will discuss the status of religious freedom in Egypt, with a focus on Copts who are its largest religious minority, numbering at least eight million people. I also will discuss the problems faced by other religious minorities and Muslim dissidents and conclude with USCIRF's recommendations on protecting religious minorities and the right to religious freedom for every Egyptian.

By any measure, the importance of religious freedom in Egypt and around the world cannot be overstated. Across the world, there is a powerful correlation between religious freedom and related human rights on the one hand and social stability, safety and security, economic development and prosperity, and political democracy on the other. Similarly, our Commission has seen how the absence of this freedom correlates with instability and insecurity, violent extremism, and a plethora of other societal ills.

We believe that Egypt is no different when it comes to this critical correlation. A successful transition to stable democratic governance in Cairo, and with it, respect for fundamental freedoms including religious freedom, is central to Egypt's stability and its future as a pivotal anchor in the volatile Middle East. And to the extent that the United States and the world community have a stake in what happens in this region, we must not disengage from these issues, but continue to take a firm stand for freedom.

As Egyptians are debating their new constitution, some of the worst Morsi-era provisions have been removed, although the true test will be how the Egyptian government interprets and implements this new document once passed by referendum.

Incitement and Increased Sectarian Rhetoric

Since the beginning of the transition, human rights activists inside Egypt have been concerned that radical groups have advanced in the country, with detrimental effects on the ability to foster an open civil society, genuine democratic reform, and improvements in freedom of religion or belief. Crime and lawlessness in Egypt increased due to a decrease in police and security presence, with some extremist militant groups using this lapse to impose extra-judicial punishments. Early on, Sufi Muslims experienced increased attacks and harassment by Islamist militant groups, which deem as heretical a number of Sufi religious practices, including the veneration of saints.

In the months leading up to the June 2012 presidential elections, sectarian tensions between Muslims and Christians were exacerbated by an increase in incitement to violence in Egyptian media and government-funded mosques. There was another spike in tensions in September 2012 after an anti- Muslim film, "Innocence of Muslims," surfaced on the Internet, resulting in protests in front of the U.S. Embassy in Cairo. Islamist clerics and some Gulf-funded satellite television stations used the film as an opportunity to denounce and demonize Coptic Christians, including a prominent Salafi cleric who publicly defiled and ripped a Bible. During former president Morsi's year in power, sectarian rhetoric and incitement had further increased. Fanning the flames were conservative clerics and extremists, who often used incendiary, sectarian rhetoric and incitement without consequence or accountability.

Among the most vilified groups are Christians, Shi'a, and Baha'is, all religious minority communities. In June, five Egyptian Shi'a were lynched in Giza and extremists dragged their

bodies through the streets, shouting anti-Shi'a slogans. These Shi'a were targeted solely because they were congregating at a private home to commemorate a religious festival.

Blasphemy and Defamation Cases

While the government has failed to bring to justice the perpetrators of sectarian attacks, the courts have continued to convict and imprison Egyptian citizens charged with blasphemy under Article 98(f) of its penal code which prohibit "contempt" or "defamation" of religions.

Since Egypt's January 2011 revolution, USCIRF has observed a significant increase in contempt-of-religion cases.

While most of those targeted are disfavored Muslims, Christians are disproportionately affected. For example, in July 2012, Mohamed Asfour, a Shi'a teacher, was sentenced to one year in prison, reduced from three years, for contempt of religion and "desecration of a place of worship," although his lawyer says that all he did was pray in a mosque according to Shi'a rituals. Earlier this year, the government charged Bassem Youssef, a Sunni comedian and satirist, with "insulting Islam" on his popular television program.

At least one other Egyptian affected was an atheist. In December 2012, an Egyptian court convicted and sentenced to three years in prison activist Alber Saber for posting of online content that allegedly "insulted God and cast doubt on the books of the Abrahamic religions" and "denied the existence of God and his creation of mankind."

The majority of those sentenced to prison terms were Christian, mostly based on flimsy evidence and flawed trials. In October 2011, a Cairo criminal court sentenced Ayman Yousef Mansour, a Christian, to three years in prison for insulting Islam and the Prophet Muhammad on a Facebook page he allegedly created. His 2012 appeal was rejected and he remains in prison. In September 2012, an Egyptian court upheld the conviction and three-year prison sentence for Coptic teacher Bishoy Kameel for posting cartoons defaming the Prophet Muhammad on Facebook. In November 2012, an Egyptian court convicted in abstentia seven Egyptian expatriate Copts – allegedly associated with the "Innocence of Muslims" online film – and sentenced them to death for harming national unity, insulting and publicly attacking Islam, and spreading false information. In January 2013, the Grand Mufti upheld their death sentences.

In September 2013, a leading Egyptian human rights organization, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), reported a "surge" in religious defamation cases, particularly since the January 2011 revolution, including in the two months after Morsi was removed from power. The report, titled "Siege of Thought," identified 63 cases of individuals tried for defamation of religion. The report found that outside of Cairo, particularly in Upper Egypt, 100 percent of individuals accused and tried were found guilty. In addition, the report found that 41 percent of the defendants were Christians, a high percentage when compared to the larger population.

Coptic Christians and Impunity

Besides directly violating religious freedom, blasphemy and defamation-of-religion laws fuel Egypt's longtime impunity problem by provoking assaults against Copts as well as other religious minorities for alleged blasphemous speech.

Large-scale attacks on Christians during the first year of the transition in 2011 resulted in the deaths of dozens and injuries to hundreds – such as in Alexandria in January 2011, Imbaba in May 2011, and Maspero in October 2011. The perpetrators of each of these incidents remain unpunished, inviting further violence.

Following President Morsi's ouster from office on July 3, 2013, there was another increase in violent attacks against Copts and other Christians. Since August 14, the day the Egyptian military and security forces dispersed pro-Morsi protesters, violent religious extremists and thugs launched a coordinated and unprecedented series of attacks against churches throughout the country. In August, at least seven Copts were killed and more than 200 churches and other Christian religious structures, homes, and businesses assaulted. In October, four Copts were killed, including two sisters aged eight and 12, when gunmen on motorcycles opened fire at a wedding party outside a church near Cairo.

The inability to protect Copts and successfully prosecute those responsible for violence targeting the Coptic community continues to foster a climate of impunity, especially in Upper Egypt. In recent years, in response to sectarian violence, Egyptian authorities have conducted "reconciliation" sessions between Muslims and Christians as a way of easing tensions and resolving disputes. In some cases, local authorities and Muslim and Christian religious leaders have abused these reconciliation sessions to compel victims to abandon their claims to any legal remedy.

Copts and other vulnerable religious minorities thus face a dual injustice. First, they face prosecution, conviction, and imprisonment merely for their religious identity. Second, those who attack, maim, and kill them often face no consequences. Copts can lose their freedom or their lives for saying the wrong word or words, but those who kill them often lose nothing at all.

Discrimination against Christians

For all Christian groups, government permission is required to build a new church or repair an existing one, and the approval process continues to be time-consuming and inflexible. No churches were approved for new construction or repair in 2012, despite applications being submitted to governors, as currently required. During USCIRF's February visit, Egyptian officials stated that the delay was due to the stalled discussions on the law regulating the establishment of places of worship. In 2011 and 2012, Egyptian officials stated that there had been progress on that law. However, after the People's Assembly was disbanded in 2012, Christian groups temporarily placed on hold negotiations about the draft law because they

wanted it to be significantly revised. Some Christian interlocutors expressed preference for a law that governs only churches and not all places of worship. In all likelihood, until the election and seating of the People's Assembly next year, there will be no progress on this issue.

Egyptian-born Muslims who have converted to Christianity cannot reflect their change of religious affiliation on identity documents, and in many cases, these converts also face intense social hostility. In fact, Mohamed Hegazy – the first convert to Christianity to sue the government in 2007 to allow him to change his religion on his ID card – was arrested last week reportedly for proselytizing and inciting sectarian strife, among other bogus charges. In past cases in which converts have sued for the right to reflect their new religious affiliation on ID cards, Egyptian courts have ruled that Muslims are forbidden from converting from Islam based on principles of Islamic law because conversion would constitute a disparagement of the official state religion and entice other Muslims to convert. Regarding re-converts to Christianity, there remain systemic problems for individuals who converted to Islam and decided to convert back to Christianity to have this change reflected on identity documents. During USCIRF's visit to Egypt, several interlocutors explained that despite a July 2011 law making it easier to reflect one's religion on ID cards—and not having to declare "formerly Muslim"—it still is difficult in practice to obtain identity cards.

Other Vulnerable Religious Minorities

Baha'is: Besides Coptic Christians, other vulnerable religious minorities have faced assaults on their freedom to practice their respective faiths. Since 1960, Egypt has banned the Baha'i faith. As a result, the approximately 2,000 Baha'is living in Egypt are unable to meet or engage in communal religious activities. Al-Azhar's Islamic Research Center has issued *fatwas* over the years, mostly recently in 2003, urging the continued ban on the Baha'i community and condemning its members as apostates.

Intolerance of the Baha'is has risen since 2011, especially in government-controlled media and in public statements prominent Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi groups have made.

For example, in July 2012, Mahmoud Ghozlan, a Brotherhood spokesman, said the Baha'is are of "Zionist" origin and should not be allowed to practice their faith under the constitution. In February 2012, Abdel Moneim al-Shahat, a prominent Salafi leader, stated publicly that Baha'is were a security threat undeserving of any rights under a new constitution, and should be tried for treason. In August 2012, Gamal Abdel Rahim was appointed as chief editor of the state-controlled newspaper, Al-Ghomhurryia. In 2009, he had called for a Baha'i activist's murder on live television and incited residents in Sohag to burn Baha'i homes. Three days after his broadcast aired, arson destroyed several Baha'i houses in a Sohag village. In November 2012, and again in January 2013, Egypt's Minister of Education reportedly said in two separate media interviews that Baha'is could not enroll their children in public schools because their faith is not among those protected by state law or the constitution.

Baha'is who are married still cannot get identity cards, making it impossible to conduct daily transactions like banking, school registration, or car ownership.

Jehovah's Witnesses: As with the Baha'i faith, Jehovah's Witnesses have also been banned since 1960, although the community has existed in Egypt since the 1930s. Since their ban, members of the community have endured decades of harassment, physical abuse, and imprisonment at the hands of the Egyptian government. In recent years, the government permitted Jehovah's Witnesses to meet in private homes in groups of fewer than 30 people, despite the community's request to meet in larger numbers. However, the community is not allowed to possess their own places of worship or to import bibles and other religious literature. In December 2009, Egypt's Seventh Circuit Administrative Court handed down a verdict denying Jehovah's Witnesses legal status.

Today, security officials have stepped up harassment and intimidation of the community by monitoring their activities and communications and by threatening the community with intensified repression if it does not provide membership lists.

Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Community: In 2012, material vilifying Jews with both historical and new anti-Semitic stereotypes continued to appear regularly in Egypt's state-controlled and semi-official media. This material included anti-Semitic cartoons, images of Jews and Jewish symbols castigating Israel or Zionism, comparisons of Israeli leaders to Hitler and the Nazis, and Holocaust denial literature. Egyptian authorities failed to take adequate steps to combat anti-Semitism in the media. Officials claim that anti-Semitic statements in the media are a reaction to Israel's policy toward Palestinians and do not reflect historical anti-Semitism. Human rights groups cite persistent anti-Semitism in the education system, which increasingly has been under the influence of Islamist extremists.

The small remnant of Egypt's Jewish community, now consisting of only about 50 people, owns communal property and finances required maintenance largely through private donations. In 2010, Egyptian authorities restored the Maimonides synagogue in Cairo, named after a 12th century rabbinic scholar.

In January 2013, President Morsi's 2010 anti-Semitic comments came to light. He had urged Egyptians to "nurse our children and grandchildren on hatred" for Jews and Zionists and in another interview referred to Jews as the descendants of "apes and pigs." When confronted on these comments during USCIRF's our visit in February, Egyptian officials with whom we met tried to divert the discussion to attacks on the state of Israel.

Constitutional Process

Thus far, in the post-Morsi era, Egypt's 50-member constitution committee recently completed its work and transmitted a final draft to the Egyptian interim president, Adly Mansour. The constitution is expected to be put to a referendum in January. An initial review of the draft shows some positive changes from the suspended 2012 constitution that could bode well for religious freedom, although how the provisions are interpreted and implemented remains to be seen and will be crucial.

Article 64 of the new draft provides that "freedom of belief is absolute," Article 65 broadly guarantees freedom of thought and opinion, and Article 53 prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion among other grounds. Like the Morsi-era constitution, however, Article 64 limits the freedom to practice religious rituals and establish places of worship to the three "divine" religions, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. This would mean that the Baha'i community, for example, would not be able to exercise their own rites and establish their own places of worship.

Based on international human rights standards, religious freedom applies without exception to every person, and it encompasses more than just rituals and worship. It includes the right to manifest one's own faith or beliefs, individually or in community, in public or in private, through worship, teaching, practice, and observance. It also includes the right to change one's religion or to try to convince others to do likewise. International law specifies the narrow circumstances under which religious freedom can be restricted.

In a positive development, the new draft removed a provision of the 2012 constitution that narrowly defined Islamic Shari'ah. The draft continues to provide that Islamic Shari'ah "principles" are the "principal" source of legislation (as has been the case since 1971), but it removed a Morsi-era provision potentially giving a religious body, Al Azhar scholars, a consultative role in reviewing legislation, and returned that function to the Supreme Constitutional Court.

The new draft also does not include the Morsi-era constitution's blasphemy ban (a provision stating that "insult or abuse of all religious messengers and prophets shall be prohibited). However, the new Article 53 requires that "incitement to hate" must be punishable by law. If this undefined phrase is interpreted to prohibit speech that insults religious beliefs, symbols, or figures, it would in effect be another constitutional blasphemy ban. This would flatly contradict the freedoms of belief, thought, and opinion.

Finally, another positive addition is Article 235, which requires the new parliament to pass a law governing the building and renovating of churches, a longstanding limitation on Christians and a flash point for sectarian violence targeting the Coptic community.

Recommendations

Due to Egypt's failure to protect the religious freedom of Copts and other religious minorities, its continued domestic and international support for blasphemy and religious defamation laws, its pursuit of blasphemy cases against its own citizens, from Copts to disfavored Muslims, and its repeated failure to bring their sectarian attackers to justice, USCIRF recommended for three consecutive years (2011-2013) that the United States designate Egypt a country of particular concern, or CPC, marking it as among the world's worst religious freedom abusers. USCIRF is currently evaluating recent developments in advance of its 2014 determinations.

Washington also must urge repeal of Egypt's contempt-of-religion and related laws in the penal code, as well as discriminatory decrees against religious minorities, such as lifting bans on

Baha'is and Jehovah's Witnesses, removing religion from official identity documents, and passing a unified law for the construction and repair of places of worship.

In response to the continued violence against Copts and other religious minorities, the United States should press Egypt to prosecute government-funded clerics, government officials, and others who incite violence, while disciplining government-funded clerics who preach hatred. Washington also must urge Cairo to counter the violence by bringing the violent to justice, thus breaking the climate of impunity.

Finally, the United States government should refuse to certify the disbursement of the appropriated $1.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to the Egyptian military until the Egyptian government demonstrates that it is using some of the FMF funds to implement policies that protect freedom of religion and related rights in Egypt. Once the Egyptian government so demonstrates, it should be urged to ensure that its police assess security needs and develop and implement a comprehensive and effective plan for dedicated police protection for religious minority communities and their places of worship, particularly Coptic Christians, Sufi and Shi'a Muslims, and Jews. Congress should require the U.S. State Department to report every 90 days on the Egyptian government's progress on these and related recommendations.

Conclusion

In a very real way, the treatment of Egypt's religious minority communities is a barometer of the country's well-being. If Egypt's revolution is to succeed, nothing is more important than ensuring that Egypt's government recognize that full freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right that should be honored and respected, and commit itself to protecting the right of every Egyptian, regardless of background or belief, to exercise this freedom in peace and without fear of reprisal. For the sake of stability and security, and because of Egypt's international human rights commitments, the United States government should urge Egypt to choose this pathway to democracy and freedom.

Mr. SMITH. In his testimony, Bishop Angaelos, His Grace Bishop Angaelos, makes the point that religious minorities in general, Copts, Jews, Shiite, Sufi, and Bahai, are suffering attacks, in large part, because of the breakdown in law and order. You have pointed out that although the true test will be—there are changes being made in the Constitution—the true test will be as to how the Egyptian Government interprets and implements the new documents once passed by referendum.

Is the Constitution really going to make a difference in the abuse of blasphemy laws? You also point out that there is a surge in religious defamation cases, particularly since January 2011, including in the 2 months after Morsi was removed from power. One hundred percent of the individuals who were accused and tried were found guilty. Maybe you could speak to what is causing this surge in blasphemy cases, and again, will the new Constitution mitigate that abuse?

Dr. JASSER. Thank you, chairman.

These are really key questions, in that, you know, we can always try to give a government a honeymoon period, if you will, as they reboot and try to course correct their democracy. But the bottom line is that there is a lot of evidence to show that while there is a rush to take to trial those who are arrested or brought to justice supposedly for blasphemy and restrictions on freedom of speech, those who commit acts of violence are not brought to justice.

So certain phrases in the Constitution that we see, some of the articles I mentioned are hopeful, there are some things that we should be concerned about, in that they have a limitation on freedom of speech discussing incitement to hate. It is not the standard that we agreed to even at 1618 that talked about limitation on incitement to violence, or imminent violence. That is not the standard they are using. So there is a large, gaping hole there that can allow the current regime, the current government to continue in a way that would not respect human rights and freedom of speech. And there is an opportunity now.

I think as much as there was clear direction downward and backward during the Morsi regime in which there was a loss of human rights, the Constitution was an Islamist document that was based in Sharia and other aspects that were not based in freedom. Now is an opportunity. And I think what we need and our recommendation that we are laying out—is that our policy needs to be linked to religious freedom. What happened is that you saw the violence happen in August against the Coptic and Christian communities and it took until October until there was actually a mention that we would limit funding and restrict some of the military funds. So there was no connection there.

Sometimes it was referred to as criticism of the Brotherhood. And meanwhile, as many of the other members have stated, it is being interpreted by the world that we did nothing during the Brotherhood year, and now we are doing something once the Brotherhood have left and the people have made a statement. So unless we do things and link them to religious freedom, they are going to be misinterpreted. It doesn't mean we shouldn't continue to put pressure because of the limitations of the current Constitution and the fact that it has just been a piece of paper, and the only way

to make it real is to hold them accountable with measurements every 90 days, as we laid out, and then linking that to cases.

The Hegazy case, the Asfour case, and other cases in which people have been put in jail. These human beings are depictive, as you will hear from other testimony, of the reality on the ground, which is very different than the Constitution.

Mr. SMITH. My time is just about out. But I would just note parenthetically that in the last foreign operations appropriations bill, Frank Wolf, Trent Franks, Kay Granger, and I, and others, included language conditioning our aid on religious freedom. Sadly, it was waived by Secretary Clinton.

Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Welcome, Dr. Jasser.

Dr. JASSER. Thank you.

Mr. CONNOLLY. From your testimony, how would you compare the issues of religious freedom in Egypt between the Morsi government and the current government?

Dr. JASSER. Well, it is hard to judge the current military government since they have only been still getting their organization together. But I think on the ground, we see the Constitution shows some improvement. There have been certain provisions from the Morsi Era Constitution that have been removed. We have seen some aspects that have gone. There is one article, 235, that talks about separating from government provisions the building of religious structures, which I think would be very important for the Coptic community, to control the building of their own churches, that has for long been authorized. There have been no new churches authorized. So there are some things we are seeing that would be hopeful. On the ground——

Mr. CONNOLLY. With respect to religious freedom.

Dr. JASSER. With respect to religious freedom——

Mr. CONNOLLY. I am just clarifying what you are saying. You're talking about—because I want to be very clear. There are obviously aspects of the draft Constitution, current draft Constitution that Americans would find abhorrent. The carve-out for the military, the lack of civilian oversight of the Defense Minister. Those are not democratic provisions, those are most certainly protections for a military government that are not democratic provisions. We would agree?

Dr. JASSER. Yes, sir. And——

Mr. CONNOLLY. So what you are referring to is this Constitution draft, however, is better than the one previously promulgated with respect to religious freedom.

Dr. JASSER. Yes, sir. And it is not a binary choice in that the voice of the people in Egypt I think could be better than either. What the Brotherhood brought to the table with Morsi and what currently is being brought to the table by President Mansour and this constitutional committee. But if you look at Morsi's Constitution, every minority abandoned the process. This process has still engaged many of the minority communities in the committee itself. But what it is going to produce—and I will agree with you in that on the ground there has been little change as far as religious freedom. The impunity for acts of violence—nobody has been brought to justice for what happened to all of the churches that were dese-

crated in August. Very little justice has been brought with that. So these are the things that need to be targeted. And our Commission has been built on the fact that when religious freedom is protected, the rest of society will be healthy. When it is not protected, it will deteriorate and all the other things you are talking will never be a success.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right. Just want to make sure that we got that clear on your record. I thank you for your testimony. I know we are under a time bind today. So appreciate you being here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Jasser, thank you for your service on the Commission. And for several years the Commission has argued that Egypt should be placed on the Country of Particular Concern list when it comes to the human rights situation there. What headway do you see that we are making in that? What progress? And you also recommend about the disbursement of aid that we were talking about, that the U.S. should refuse to certify the disbursement of our military aid to the Egyptian armed forces. We have already seen many Gulf nations pledge sums of money that dwarf our $1.3 billion.

Do you worry that if we cut off aid Egypt will get that money elsewhere? We hear that a lot when we talk about conditioning our aid and leveraging our aid, and that we would lose whatever leverage we have left and these human rights abuses will continue. So if you could address that one as well.

And would you favor an approach in which we transition the foreign military assistance money that we give to economic support funds in which that money could still go to Egypt, but would go to building up civil society, democracy promotion programs, and other security programs that Egypt would need in order to maintain its stability and security? Thank you, sir.

Dr. JASSER. Thank you, Madam Chair Ros-Lehtinen, and I appreciate the opportunity.

There is no doubt, as we designated Egypt as a CPC in 2011, 2012 and 2013, it has not only not improved, it has continued to worsen. So not only does it deserve that designation, but 2012, especially under Morsi, demonstrated significant strides backwards. And this is why you saw in revolution 2.0 in Egypt 10 times more demonstrations of people against that government than you saw in the first revolution.

And as a result of the criteria by which our Commission works in designating CPC status, Egypt fits every one of those as far as specific targeting, egregious offenses, and religious freedom. As far is the aid is concerned, I believe, as you mentioned, there can be 90 days review in which that aid doesn't become a lever that you can only pull once. In that it is a constant measure of the success or failures that that society is making.

If you use, and this is one of our primary criticisms of the current approach of the State Department, is that often, as was mentioned by Chairman Smith, because we were so late and because then it was waived in 2011, 2012, the certification was waived, there are specific benchmarks that was legislated by this body that Egypt should meet, in elections and human rights, et cetera, that

it has not met. And when it was ready to decertify that funding when we should have with the Brotherhood, it did not happen and it was waived. And now it appears when we are doing it in October 2013 that we are somehow rewarding the Brotherhood. And this is why we have to get the timing right, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't link that to civil society, progress, and methods in which we link it every 90 days to progress on the ground that protects women's groups, that protects religious minorities, shows that some of these cases that we have highlighted in my written testimony are actually being released and we have a program in which Members of Congress can identify individuals in jail that they can then promote as being examples of how Egypt and other countries can fix themselves.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much. And thank you for your work.

Dr. JASSER. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Frankel.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you again and welcome and thank you for your testimony.

So I have a number of questions. I will try to get them out first and you can then try to answer them.

Again, first of all, the timetable on the drafting of the Constitution, and do you think that there is a transition back to democracy? Although I am not really sure after the coup what exactly democracy is in Egypt. But, as I said, when we were there we were told there was going to be this new Constitution, an election for a Parliament, and then an election for a President.

And the—you expressed, I guess, disappointment or frustration over the fact that there has not—there has not been a justice system handling this oppression. Is the infrastructure there to do that?

Dr. JASSER. That is a great question, Congresswoman Frankel. And I believe the infrastructure is there. They have the funds, some of which we give them, that we could tie to that and hold them accountable and show that if they have certain cases that we could identify, whether it is the Mohamed Hegazy case, who converted to Christianity and wants his I.D. to be able to show that or another case of an individual who wrote on Facebook criticism that Mohamed has been in jail for 3 years, or the case of a Shitte individual who was imprisoned because he did a ritual that wasn't traditional, according to Islam.

So there are ways that we could tie representations in their justice system that would show whether they genuinely are moving toward democracy and rule of law or whether it is continuing to be the same old system in Egypt and just shifting around of the chairs on the deck.

Ms. FRANKEL. How are the prosecutors and the judges being appointed?

Dr. JASSER. You know, the traditional way—I mean, oddly, Mansour came out of the Supreme Court system there.

Ms. FRANKEL. Right.

Dr. JASSER. It is very local oriented and a historical system in Egypt that is based on a very nepotistic tribal system. It is certainly not a balanced system. And this is one of the things we

should look at, as Congressman Connolly was pointing out, is, do they have a balance of power? Do they have other aspects of democracy that we would hold as standards and should be part of their systems and have not been? But that is really beyond our mandate at the Commission. I think if you hold accountable standards of international religious freedom along with it, it will expose some of these aspects that have put into place and allowed longtime judges.

One of the things the Brotherhood and President Morsi did do was start to put even more radicalization as far as some of the judges. And as he started to replace some of those judges was when you saw a rise of the people against him.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Weber.

Mr. WEBER. Chairman, I am going to pass this time.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So here we are in this quandary that we want to make sure that a standard that is an honest standard, not just protection of Christians, but protection of the religious rights of all people of Egypt, are protected. And we have just gone through a phase where there was an expansion of repression and persecution. And we know that that phase was a result of a political move toward a certain direction.

And those who thwarted that move and thwarted that effort are now in charge. And we, as you say, the timing, if we try to maintain that standard, the timing would have us being tough and perhaps withdrawing some of our support from the current group that actually stopped a bad trend. Maybe you could help us out on how we can get out of this quandary.

Dr. JASSER. Thank you, Congressman Rohrabacher. I think the way to get out of it is to realize the Egyptian population is not a victim of basically worse and the worst. And the January 2011 revolution was against an era that was repressive and brought forth all of the things that had us designate them as a CPC in 2011. And we should have held them accountable to religious freedom standards at that time. And then it went even worse when democracy was a manifestation of simply elections and became mob-ocracy rather than principles of religious freedom. So to move forward, I think we have to be principled and link our funding to demonstrations on the ground, building civil society, having benchmarks that in every 90-day period that show that they are making progress in defending minorities, in protecting churches, in prosecuting those who burn down churches just as quickly as they prosecute free speech issues, which should stop and no longer limit free speech. So all of these things can be done.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Let me ask you, then, on this we are now selling spare parts to the military for equipment that we provided Egypt in the past. Just at a time when there is an expanding insurgency or a challenge to peace in the Sinai and elsewhere.

Are we being, and will we be viewed as hypocrites about our beliefs and freedom if we provide those spare parts knowing that if this government goes down and those who succeed, and then these insurgency movements would impose harsher restrictions on the people, are we being hypocritical?

Dr. JASSER. Well, I don't believe so because I think that ultimately if we let the world create the narrative of what we are doing at every level, whether it is at spare-parts levels or at funding, then it will appear that way. But if we allow—if our President and our State Department constantly makes it clear what the standards of religious freedom are and what we link those who at every speech in the Rose Garden and every moment the Secretary has an opportunity to mention it, then it will be clear what our standards are. But if we let those go and we lose opportunities and come and make a statement on funding 3 months later after things happen, then the narrative will be that we are hypocritical. But we should set our own narrative on a daily basis, not on an every quarterly basis.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I would hope that we don't do anything that we weakens, like denying spare parts to the military.

Dr. JASSER. Right.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Weakens their ability not to have even a worse regime come into power. And I would hope we do not do that. But I agree that the United States must really speak with an honest voice on these standards.

Thank you very much for your testimony.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Chairman Rohrabacher.

Mr. Meadows.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your service to our country, not only here but in the Navy as well.

Dr. JASSER. Thank you.

Mr. MEADOWS. We greatly appreciate your insight. Three things: One is the inconsistency in terms of the Egyptian people and what they need to look to us in terms of that standard. I am very concerned that over time, the image of us supporting one regime over the other is very real to the Egyptian people. And in light of us trying to address these human rights violations now in terms of religious persecution, the image is out there that we supported the Morsi regime, we don't support this one, when in actuality, it is more of supporting freedom in the respectful rule of law across the board. So how do we address that uniquely?

I think the other one is, how do we have a respect for and a love for the Egyptian people and for many of them of a Muslim faith that—where it does not get viewed as we are trying to put Christianity and make a Christian Egyptian versus just trying to stand up for those that are being religiously persecuted? I think it is a dangerous tightrope that we walk, because the perception many times is that we want our democracy and our religion to be one that is placed on the Egyptian people. So if you could speak to those two things. And if we have time, I will come back to a third question.

Dr. JASSER. Thank you, Congressman Meadows. This is so important, I think the paradigm has shifted from the old era in which diplomacy was based on the lesser of two evils. And as Secretary Rice said in 2005 in Cairo that somehow we were choosing trying to side with security over freedom, and we got neither. And I think ultimately the Commission's purpose has been to highlight the fact that religious freedom when it is lifted up can then bring with it a more healthy society. And I think how we get our credibility back

is to continue to lift that up repeatedly. And the problem is that is there is an opportunity right now.

And, yes, there will be an image problem because of the lost opportunity in 2011, 2012, and now it appears that somehow our standards are to reinforce further authoritarianism. And when, in fact, what we are doing is laying that out as a course correction in democracy. And the only way we can do that is by siding with the people and siding with principles. Because regardless of the way the policy is manifesting from the State Department or from the White House, the bottom line is is the majority of Egyptians are not looking favorably at the U.S. these days. And that is because of the lack of clarity in principle and because we haven't sided with the majority of Egyptians that went to the streets, that still have a problem not only with the Brotherhood, more so but still with the current government and are seeking the means to move forward. And we should tie some of that military aid to a civil society progress because it is going to take a generation, years to improve these things. It is not going to happen overnight.

And the last point you made about the, sort of the sense that this is just a Christian issue for America. It is not. I think the religious freedom issues of the Copts is tied into the Bahais, is tied into Muslims who are targeted, from Bassem Youssef, who is the Jon Stewart of Egypt, who is targeted, to so many of the Shitte Muslim community that are called deviants by some of the clerics and judges when, in fact, they don't have religious freedom to practice their own rites. And others, Muslim dissidents that are part of the majority, the millions that went to the street against the Brotherhood were 90 percent Muslim that did not want the Brotherhood, and we forget that, and our policy should articulate that.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you so much. I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Cotton.

Thank you, Mr. Meadows.

Mr. COTTON. Could you elaborate just a little bit on the point about the majorities that have taken to the street, both under the Morsi regime at its end and also in the last 6 months since General al-Sisi and the military reclaimed power, and how much, if any, of the focus of those majorities is on the issue of religious freedom, religious liberty of minorities there?

Dr. JASSER. Well, I think if you follow Facebook traffic, social media, a lot of them have looked at cases like the Asfour case, the Hegazy case, and others, and see these as individuals that are persecuted that are becoming—Bassem Youssef became an icon because he challenged. He was arrested because on his TV program he supposedly was insulting Islam, which they equated to insulting the President, President Morsi.

This is a problem not only with the Islamists, but you are finding similar limitations in speech in the Mubarak era and maybe even in the current regime. So these things need to be highlighted and underscored as being one of the primary pathologies that need to be corrected. The majority of people, if you look at their social media and what brings them to the streets, is that they want these issues highlighted by leaders of the free world.

Mr. COTTON. In the United States we have the First Amendment, and it is important, it is first, after all, and it includes freedoms

of religion, speech, press, and assembly. And a certain level of those are all linked in man's God-given ability to reason together. Is there a sense in those majorities in Egypt, in your opinion, that threats to the rights of religious minorities are actually threats as well to the political and the speech rights of the majority?

Dr. JASSER. When we went to Egypt in February, we met with a number of different representatives from various religious minority groups, from civil society groups. We met with a very impressive women's rights group. And all of them said how much they dreamed of an Egypt that would bring those principles forward and that for too long those principles have not been defended from their government and that they seek the means to change that.

Now, the issue is, how does that transition, how do those principles on the ground transition in the infrastructure and the leadership? And I don't think, if the U.S. takes a pass on being open about that, that that is going to happen. I think the West needs to be involved in that transition process and link some of our aid.

Now, if we decrease our aid, will they get it from elsewhere? They may. But they still want Western help in doing this, American help, because they know the principles that we share in protecting minorities.

And the rule of law is important, and this is why some of the cases are so important. What you articulated as our First Amendment respect, many in Egypt still for decades have not understood the respect of the rule of law. And that is why we have to tie our relationship to them to cases that respect the rule of law.

Mr. COTTON. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Bilirakis.

Thank you, Mr. Cotton.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. And again, thank you for allowing me to sit on the panel today as well.

Dr. Jasser, thank you for all your good work. I really appreciate it. And of course thank you for your service to our country as well.

Could you speak to how the United States, the State Department, prioritizes Coptic Christians in their approach to the U.S. policy to Egypt? And do you think more can be done by the State Department to urge Egypt to respect the rights of religious minorities?

Dr. JASSER. Well, certainly when we have engaged the White House, NSC, and State Department, they certainly have expressed similar concerns about the targeting of Coptic Christians and in our meetings seem to respect that. Now, however, if you look at how frequently it is mentioned publicly and brought from statements from the President or from the Secretary of State, I would say that it is not enough. We sent a letter to the President in September talking about these things, and we have not gotten a response yet from the Secretary or from the President about these issues and our concerns of what happened in August to the Coptic community.

So I would tell you, as an independent commission that seeks to highlight religious freedom concerns, we have not been as happy with the response from the administration as could be and this opportunity to use the plight of the Coptic community to set Egypt in the right direction for religious freedom, as they are moving

away from the Brotherhood era, away from some of the mistakes they made after the revolution, but toward a better future rather than back toward what they had during the Mubarak era or some of the same problems that happened under the Brotherhood.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Let me ask you a question. The Coptic community and the Christian community in general, of course we care about these issues affecting our brothers in Egypt. What can my constituents do? What can they do to influence this administration with respect to this and make it a top priority of this administration and the State Department? What would you suggest?

Dr. JASSER. I think our constituents can do what we are trying to do here, what all of you by being here and listening have done, to continue to press our State Department, press our not only elected officials, our media, our universities to recognize what Pew and others have studied repeatedly, the linkage of religious freedom to healthy societies, the linkage of religious repression to sick societies. And that once we highlight that, and certainly there are so many other issues on America's plate, but if we ignore this issue, societies like Egypt that are pivotal to American security, not only because of Egypt itself, economics, but the Camp David Accords and so many other things will fall apart in the Middle East if we don't protect religious freedom in Egypt. And your constituents, I think, can have a much larger voice than all of us here by reminding their leaders, the media, and others to pay attention to religious freedom.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much. I agree 100 percent. Thank you so much. I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so much as well. Thank you for your extraordinary testimony, your expertise and counsel, and we benefit always when you testify.

I would like to now ask our second panel to make their way to the witness table, beginning first with His Grace Bishop Angaelos, who is the general bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom, the ancient church of Egypt, and the largest Christian denomination in the Middle East. Bishop Angaelos was born in Cairo, Egypt, and emigrated to Australia during his childhood with his family. In 1990 he returned to Egypt to attend monastery, where he was consecrated a monk. In 1995 he was delegated to serve a parish in the United Kingdom with a pastoral ministry that spans almost 2 decades. The bishop travels extensively around the world to speak at various youth conferences and conventions and is the director of the Coptic Church's Media and Communications Office in the United Kingdom and for all of Europe.

We will then hear from Mr. Samuel Tadros of the Hudson Institute, a research fellow there for religious freedom and a professorial lecturer at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. His current research focuses on Egypt politics, Islamism, and the fate of religious minorities. Before joining the Hudson Institute in 2011, Mr. Tadros was a senior partner at the Egyptian Union of Liberal Youth, an organization that aims to spread the idea of classic liberalism in Egypt. In 2007 he was chosen by the State Department for its first Leaders for Democracy Fellowship Program in collaboration with Syracuse University's Maxwell School.

We will then hear from Dr. Morad Abou-Sabe, who is currently professor emeritus and consultant at Rutgers University. Previously he served as president and assistant chancellor for research and business development at Misr University for Science & Technology, a large private university in Egypt. In his public and community work he has served on many boards, nationally, internationally, and has served as a senior adviser to the Commerce Secretary of the State of New Jersey. In February 2001 he was nominated for a position in the Office of Secretary of Commerce, and he also has served as president of the Egyptian-American Professional Society and numerous other civic organizations. I had the distinct honor of meeting with the professor and a delegation several months ago, and his insights were very, very illuminating, and I thank him for that.

We will then hear from Mr. Ted Stahnke, who is from Human Rights First, joined it in January 2008, and is the director of policy and programs. Prior to joining Human Rights First he served at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, where he led the Commission's effort to strengthen U.S. foreign policy to advance the right to religious freedom and belief. Mr. Stahnke has served on official U.S. delegations to human rights conferences and served as an expert in international human rights law, training officials from the U.S. Departments of State, Justice, and Homeland Security. He has authored and coauthored numerous scholarly publications.

Your Grace, please begin.

STATEMENT OF HIS GRACE BISHOP ANGAELOS, GENERAL BISHOP, COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Bishop ANGAELOS. Chairman Smith, first of all, thank you very much for the opportunity, and I am thankful to all the members who are here as well. I must thank you all for braving the weather and coming regardless of all the impediments that you must have braved. I am also apologizing for this cold that I have, and I assure you it is not caused by your weather. It is definitely a British import which I bring.

I am also very thankful for the witness that I have seen here because far too often people who walk these corridors, whether in this country or in other places, are accused of being self-interested, and they are accused of following a personal agenda. What we have heard today is a presence and a witness for those who are in need of support and are in need of that fraternal relationship. And I somehow feel that in light of the last hearing, that my presence here is quite superfluous because of everything I have heard and the insight that you have.

Mr. Chairman, I have also submitted testimony for the record.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, yours and that of all of our witnesses will be made a part of the record, and any extraneous materials you want to add.

Bishop ANGAELOS. Thank you.

Christians, as everyone knows here, have been part of Egypt's history for 2,000 years, since the establishment by Saint Mark. We are only a numeric minority; we do not consider ourselves a minor-

ity group, as indigenous people of Egypt. And as was mentioned earlier and as is absolutely right, the presence of the Christians in the Middle East, the birthplace of Christianity, is not only something we should encourage, but is actually of great importance, because it is a stabilizing factor in the culture of the Middle East and its identity.

I don't only speak here as a Christian, because that would be very un-Christian of me. We speak as Christians for everyone, and our view of human rights is for a human rights perspective that covers everybody. This hearing was postponed for various reasons, and it is only providential that it happens today, on this day which is set aside to remember human rights internationally. And I think that is the core of this testimony and the core of what we will be presenting today.

The first attacks on minority groups in Egypt was not on Christians after the uprising, it was on Sufi shrines. We have seen Shiite Muslims killed in the streets, we have seen Baha'is treated unfairly, and so if we are looking at equality issues, we should be looking at equality across the board.

During the last administration, of former President Morsi, one indication was that in April of this year the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral was attacked for the first time in known history, in the presence of police forces then looking, on while a few days earlier the headquarters of the Freedom and Justice Party was attacked and was actually quite substantially protected by the same police force.

So it is this culture that we have seen in the past of an impunity that leads toward a lack of equality. There is a tendency of oversimplification as well, being either pro-military or pro-revolution. The presence of Christians is that we are Egyptians before anything else and that we want a country that actually proposes a movement for all.

I issued a statement in August of this year warning that if incitement continued in Rabaa al-Adawiyah with the Muslim Brotherhood's presence there, there would be widespread attacks on Christians and Christian places. I am not prophetic by any means, but unfortunately only a week later we saw the attacks on close to 100 churches and Christian institutions in Egypt. That needs a new pragmatic and intentional movement toward democracy, not just majority rule, which we saw last time, but democracy that represents all, and the new Constitution hopefully will take us through that. It will be presented for referendum.

What we need to address at the moment are issues of illiteracy and poverty that make constituents vulnerable when they vote and when they are indoctrinated, when they are manipulated either financially or in terms of ideology, and of course religion becomes part of that. What we also need is foreign investment to bring people to actually be able to have a livelihood and support their families.

I have seen a lot of stick and far too little carrot when speaking about Egypt in that we are very clear on pointing out shortcomings, but this is a process that countries that have embraced democracy for centuries are still going through, and so there are steps forward. I have respectfully heard terminology of a military

government, and the word "coup," whereas this is perceived to be a civilian government; the word coup. We have also looked at the happenings of not only January 25, 2011, as well as June of this year, as an outcry of the Egyptian people, Christian/Muslim, secular/religious, man/woman, young/old, everyone in the streets.

And so we are hopeful for a new Egypt as long as there is a pragmatic and proactive, intentional move toward equality. Cases like the Hegazy situation, where we are told there is freedom of religion, yet people cannot really freely choose their religion.

We have a vested interest in Egypt moving ahead. We have a vested interest in Egypt for all Egyptians. We don't just speak as Christians because that, as I said, would be un-Christian, but we speak as Egyptians who want a successful a nation as it has been for millennia. I would, even as a Christian clergyman, love to stop speaking about Christians and Muslims and start speaking about the spirit that we had on January 25, 2011, where there were Egyptian flags flying in Tahrir Square calling for a new Egypt. Unfortunately, those intentions and that dynamism were not capitalized on sufficiently. There were personal agendas brought in, and there was manipulation of that good spirit that then led us down a very, very dangerous path.

Egypt has a second chance now, and that chance needs to be taken. If we see the same activities of the last Presidency follow again, I don't know if we will have a third chance. We speak as Christians with hope. We have faced persecution far greater than this. We are still there as the biggest Christian denomination in the Middle East, and as the last actual bastion of Christian presence in the Middle East. But above all we stand as Christians for human rights for all and for equality, both of right, but also of accountability before a law that respects every person and brings the best out of every person for a nation that embraces every person.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Your Grace, Bishop Angaelos, thank you so much for your testimony and for your leadership.

[The prepared statement of Bishop Angaelos follows:]

Testimony before The Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

"Human rights abuses in Egypt"
Tuesday 10 December 2013

His Grace Bishop Angaelos
General Bishop
Coptic Orthodox Church, United Kingdom

Preamble

While this hearing was originally due to take place on 1 October 2013, it is providential that it has now been set for 10 December, the day proclaimed in 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly as 'Human Rights Day'. This day was chosen to commemorate the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the tenets of which are at the core of this testimonial statement, and are the entitlement of every Egyptian and every member of our shared humanity.

Introduction

The uprising in January 2011 was expected to bring about change and offer new hope for Egypt. It saw citizens from all walks of life standing in unity in their call for reform, and this was seen as a turning point in their struggle towards a free and just Egypt; their experience in the years following the uprising however has revealed that this goal is a long way from realisation. The principles of freedom, equal citizenship and social justice must serve as the pillars of the current process of nation-building and reform, both constitutional and political.

In their contemporary history of the past decades, Christians in Egypt have been suffering persecution and marginalisation, even before the uprising. In its aftermath however, this suffering has intensified significantly.[1] The frequency in attacks on Christians and other religious minority groups, their communities and places of worship is increasingly disturbing. Carried out by radical elements in society, these attacks are not merely on individuals but on the Christian and minority presence in its entirety. Those intolerant to religious minorities are partly enabled by the breakdown in law and order and the growing culture of impunity that Egypt has witnessed in previous years. Moreover, the persecution of religious minorities over the past decades has not manifest itself solely in physical attacks, but has frequently been embedded in process and policy, then translated into dealings with citizens on unequal grounds, inevitably having resulted in greater division and marginalisation. It is not only Christians who suffer marginalisation, persecution and attacks, but other religious minorities

[1] United States Commission on International Religious Freedom; *Did you know...Egypt*, 28 January 2013; http://www.uscirf.gov/reports-and-briefs/spotlight/3922-did-you-knowegypt-january-28-2013.html

such as Bahá'is, Jews and Muslim minorities such as Sufi's and Shiites.

This report, and any content or sentiment expressed in it, are by no means an attempt to discredit Egypt, which Egyptian Christians have proudly held as their indigenous homeland for over two thousand years, or undermine its current transformative process, but to input into safeguarding this process by shedding light on the inequalities that impact Christians as the largest numerical minority, and in turn other minorities, and thus potentially undermine that very process.

Historical perspective

The Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt is the largest Christian denomination in the Middle East and has a long history of persecution. The Church starts its calendar in the year 284 AD, marking the beginning of the rule of Emperor Diocletian, during which hundreds of thousands, if not millions, lost their lives for their Faith. The second strong wave of persecution then came with the Islamic conquest in the 7th century, during which Christians were given the choice between paying the *jizya* tax, conversion to Islam or death. Against this backdrop, non-Muslims have historically been given so-called *Dhimmi* status. While the term *Dhimmi* is no longer used, the socio-political inequality that has existed over the past decades implies that many minorities, including Christians, have felt that they have a lesser citizenship. Even throughout the 20th century, the pattern of discrimination and systematic persecution at the hands of both state and non-state actors continued to exist, and in recent decades, concurrent with the rising trend of Islamisation, there has been an increase in violent attacks against Christians. Under the Sadat and Mubarak eras, Egyptian Christians suffered many such attacks, including the massacre of 81 Christians in the Zawya al-Hamra neighbourhood in 1981,[2] the massacre of 21 Christians in Al Kosh in 2001,[3] a drive-by shooting resulting in the death of six Christians leaving their church after prayer in Nag Hammadi in 2010[4], and the death of 21 Christians on 1 January 2011 by a car bomb outside Saint Mark and Saint Peter church in Alexandria,[5] as well as many other similar incidents.

More recently, an incident in the Upper Egyptian governorate of Minya evokes experiences of the persecution faced by Christians in the *Dhimmi* period centuries ago. In this incident, two men, Emad Damian and his cousin Medhat Damian, were killed by Islamists in the Assiut governorate for refusing to pay a *jizya* tax.[6] In the current day and age, and in the context of the ongoing process of democratisation in Egypt, such an incident should be unthinkable, yet it is indicative of the reality lived by some Christians in certain parts of Egypt on a daily basis; the reality that a radical fringe of society is opposed to their very

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[2] Egypt Independent; *Roots of religious violence lie in both state and society*;13 September 2013: http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/roots-religious-violence-lie-both-state-and-society
[3] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; *Christian minorities under attack: Egypt*;20 January 2011; http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/01/20/christian-minorities-under-attack-egypt/25y3
[4] BBC News; *Egypt Copts killed in Christmas church attack*; 7 January 2010; http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8444851.stm
[5] BBC News; *Egypt bomb kills 21 at Alexandria Coptic church*, 1 January 2011; http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12101748
[6] Assyrian International News Agency; *Two Christians Murdered in Egypt for Refusing to Pay Jizya to Muslims*; 13 September 2013; http://www.aina.org/news/20130913143703.htm

presence.

2011 uprising and transitional period

As the years following the uprising have shown, the Christian community and other minority groups bear an even heavier burden in times of political instability and changes in leadership. Their suffering seems to increase significantly, extending beyond ongoing persecution on a daily basis.

In the transitional period after the first uprising of 2011, the situation for Christians in Egypt progressively worsened. Christians increasingly witnessed incidents involving the violation of their freedoms and faced intensified threats to their peace and security. Such incidents include the burning and demolition of, and attacks on, churches, the kidnapping of Christian girls and attacks on peaceful marches, resulting in the loss of many innocent lives. One of the most significant of these incidents is the death of 28 peaceful demonstrators at Maspero in October 2011,[7] dubbed by the Coptic Orthodox Church and various advocacy organisations in the United Kingdom as Egypt's 'Bloody Sunday'.

The Morsi presidency

Since the initial wave of protests leading to the removal of former president Mubarak the Egyptian political landscape has undergone significant changes. The most important of these was the formation and increasing influence of Islamist parties, having newly found legitimacy after being outlawed for the largest part of their existence during previous regimes, and despite the fact that political parties based on religion were legally prohibited.

After having gained a strong presence in the November 2011 parliamentary elections, the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party nominated Mohammed Morsi as its candidate for the first, and deeply polarised, presidential elections in Egypt, which he won with a 0.7% majority. The view of many however is that during both parliamentary and presidential elections, the use of religious coercion was prevalent throughout the nation. Although Mohammed Morsi resigned from his position as Chairman of the Freedom and Justice Party immediately after the elections, he remained publically affiliated with the party throughout his presidency and catered almost exclusively to its sympathisers. He is on public record, on numerous occasions referring to them as 'his family and his clan'. Religion played a more prominent role than ever before in Egyptian politics, decision-making and citizenship during his presidency.

Under the rule of Mohammed Morsi, there was a general break-down in law and order. The low level of state commitment to ensuring protection and justice for its citizens further increased religious minorities' susceptibility to violent attacks at the hands of extremists. Not only Christians came under attack of radical elements of society. With increasing anti-Shiite rhetoric relating to the conflict in Syria, four Egyptian Shiite Muslims who gathered to

[7] Amnesty UK; *Egyptian army must answer for 'bloodbath' at Coptic protest*; 12 October 2011; https://www.amnesty.org.uk/news_details.asp?NewsID=19751

celebrate a religious feast were brutally killed by a mob in Cairo on 23 June 2013.[8] During this and other similar incidents, security forces did not prevent violent and religiously motivated mob attacks, or their escalation, against individuals or property. Whether due to inability or unwillingness, state protection was not guaranteed.[9]

The basic civil, political and social rights of citizens, especially those adhering to beliefs or ideologies different from the ruling party, were under great threat during the presidency of Mohammed Morsi. Egyptian Christians and other minorities witnessed a significant increase in violations of their religious and civic freedoms. These aforementioned violations include the denial of peaceful worship and construction of sacred places, restrictions on the choice or expression of faith, and violent attacks resulting in loss of life, displacement and destruction of property. In an unprecedented incident on 7 April 2013, the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Mark in Cairo was violently attacked by mobs. The Cathedral is located within the premises of the Patriarchate and headquarters of the Church and is therefore a symbolic presence of Christianity in the region. Security forces did not arrive in time to prevent the mob violence from escalating. When they eventually did arrive, police forces were seen to simply stand by and watch, and in cases even assist the attackers, visibly firing tear gas into groups of Christians gathered within the Cathedral precinct.

Efforts by secular and liberal elements in society during the Morsi presidency to draft an inclusive constitution were thwarted by Islamist pressures to implement *Sharia* law and push for a theocratic state. The result was a constitution, drafted by an Islamist-dominated Constituent Assembly and decreed by Mohammed Morsi, which gravely inhibited the freedoms and violated the rights of those who held opposing religious or political views. The ambiguity of Islamic *Sharia* law interpretation during this time gave rise to a series of criminal blasphemy or 'defamation of religion' cases against non-Muslims or Muslims with moderate views opposed by radical Islamists. These cases are based on Article 98 (F) of the Egyptian Penal Code, which criminalises contempt for religion and has practically resulted in illegitimate, ungrounded accusations and legal action against political or ideological opponents of the dominant power.[10] This so-called 'blasphemy law' only seems to have been working in one direction however, holding people to account when they have allegedly insulted Islamic religious symbols. One such example is of Alber Saber, an activist and blogger, who was arrested in September 2012 for sharing a film that was deemed insulting to Islam on his Facebook page and, under Article 98 (F), was eventually accused of publicly declaring himself an atheist.[11]

The discontent of the Egyptian people during the twelve months of Mohammad Morsi's presidency sparked nationwide protests initially calling for early presidential elections, and once ignored, calling for him to step down. This was referred to by many as Egypt's 'second

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[8] Human Rights Watch; Egypt: Lynching of Shia Follows Months of Hate Speech - Police Fail to Protect Muslim Minority; 27 June 2013; http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/27/egypt-lynching-shia-follows-months-hate-speech

[9] United States Commission on International Religious Freedom; *2013 Annual Report, Egypt*; http://www.uscirf.gov/images/2013%20USCIRF%20Annual%20Report%20(2).pdf

[10] Freedom House; *Policing Belief, The impact of blasphemy laws on Human Rights*; October 2010 ; http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Policing_Belief_Full.pdf

[11] Human Rights Watch; *World Report 2013, Egypt*; http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/egypt

uprising' and had the support of the Egyptian military forces. Mohammed Morsi was removed on 3 July 2013, marking the beginning of yet another transitional phase, comprising constitutional reform and elections. A new constitutional committee was appointed under interim-president Adly Mansour.

Current transitional period

After the removal of Mohammed Morsi and sit-ins of protesters calling for his return were dispersed by the security forces, an unprecedented wave of violence erupted against Christians. They alone were set as scapegoats and erroneously blamed and accused of instigating or contributing to the violent dispersal of pro-Morsi demonstrators. These accusations subsequently led to the destruction, looting and burning of over one hundred churches and Christian properties across the nation in the space of only a few days.[12]

A view to the future

The principles of equal citizenship, social justice and freedom should all be reflected in the dealings of the state with its citizens and must be institutionalised into all aspects of governance. The process of legitimate constitutional reform will prove pivotal over the coming period as it is the key to ensuring that all Egyptians are viewed and treated equally before the state and its institutions. Egypt's legal reform agenda must be geared towards this notion of equal citizenship, meaning equal rights and equal accountability before the law. This development will not only prevent potential institutional discrimination, but set a clear precedent for those who have previously enjoyed impunity and benefited from exclusive policies. First and foremost, the implementation of equality before the law would entail dealing with citizens on the basis that they are Egyptian before being anything else; man or woman, young or old, secular or religious, Bahá'í, Christian or Muslim. This would in turn need the removal of the stipulation of one's religion on the statutory national identification cards. Finally, the model of reconciliation that is called for is one that must be built upon prior criminal acts being investigated and accordingly dealt with, and future ones being subject to a stringent rule of law; only then will Egypt be able to live true reconciliation and work towards a common future.

As the indigenous people of Egypt, with a great respect for the authenticity and independence of their homeland, in the past few months, Christians have once again proven themselves to be peaceful, law-abiding and participating citizens. In these actions they absolutely negated accusations of their reliance upon and loyalty to foreign powers or negatively-perceived domestic authorities.

In conclusion, Egyptian Christians respect the value and sanctity of the life of every Egyptian and empathise with families that have lost loved ones. They also take pride in their indigenous homeland and support every effort and process that works towards creating a

[12] Coptic Orthodox Church UK and EU Media and Communications Office; *Christian churches, homes, properties, businesses and individuals attacked in Egypt from 14 August 2013 to date (22 August 2013)*; 23 August 2013; http://copticmediauk.com/2013/08/christian-churches-homes-properties.html

prosperous, safe and cohesive state, ensuring the formation of a constitution and legal system that protects the rights of every citizen while also holding him or her accountable before that same system.

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Mr. SMITH. Mr. Tadros.

STATEMENT OF MR. SAMUEL TADROS, RESEARCH FELLOW, CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, HUDSON INSTITUTE

Mr. TADROS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and honorable members, for holding this hearing and inviting me to speak today.

For the past 3 years Egypt has witnessed tremendous political change that has resulted in four different regimes ruling the country. Unfortunately, under those four regimes no improvement has taken place on the question of human rights. In fact, there has been a significant deterioration in human rights abuses in the country, especially or significantly regarding Coptic Christians, which will be the focus of my talk today.

On the 28th of November, just a couple of days ago, two attacks occurred in two separate villages in the governate of Menya. In the first attack, a mob gathered after a rumor of a sexual relationship between a Christian man and a Muslim woman, which resulted in the burning of a couple of Christians' homes, a couple of people being shot, and ransacking and looting of Christian businesses and houses. In the second village, the rumor was not of a sexual relationship, but the apparent crime was a Christian attempting to build on a piece of land that he owns that is viewed as part of the Muslim section of that village. As a result, again, we saw this attack, horrific attacks, pogrom-like attacks, where the mob moves from house to house searching for the people to kill and attack.

In both cases we have seen a complete absence of the Egyptian police from taking any action to stop those attacks from occurring, nor is there any punishment for those that are responsible for them. We have seen again this habit of reconciliation sessions whereby the victims and those attacking them are put together in a room supposedly to solve their differences outside of the rule of law.

Under the Mubarak regime, Christians in Egypt suffered from both official discrimination in terms of exclusion from the public sphere, from government positions, and the police absence to protect them, as well as violent attacks by Islamist groups, especially in the insurgency, Islamist insurgency in the south of the country during the 1990s. However, in the last years of Mubarak's rule we have seen the increasing participation of ordinary citizens in those attacks, mob-like attacks again, that go completely unpunished and unprevented.

After the revolution, those that had hoped that the situation would improve were shocked by the fact that things deteriorated. We have seen a reinforcement of previous patterns of discrimination as well as an emergence of new patterns, especially when we talk about the new phenomena of the blasphemy laws that were mentioned in earlier testimony, as well as the practice of forced evacuations where the entire Christian population of a village would be forced to leave as punishment for any affront that a member of the community is viewed as having done.

Under the Morsi government, while the Muslim Brotherhood paid lip service to protecting Christians and to inclusion of everyone in the new Egypt, we have seen a Constitution that completely excluded Christians from the process of writing it, a Constitution

that enshrined grave limitations on religious freedom, threats to religious freedom, as well as sectarian rhetoric done by officials in the government, specifically advisers to Mr. Morsi, and the Muslim Brotherhood, the ruling party, in their official Web sites against Christians, Christians being blamed for all problems of the country, from train accidents to the continuous deterioration in the security situation.

As a result, we have seen an encouragement, this culture of impunity becoming the culture of encouragement to attacks on Christians, leading up to this massive attack on the Coptic Cathedral, unprecedented in Egypt's history. After Mr. Morsi's forceful removal by the military from power, the Coptic Pope was singled out as the one responsible for the coup. The coup in Egypt is described by the Muslim Brotherhood as the Christian coup, the Christians are the ones behind it, the Christians are the ones that are being presented as leading to it. As a result, we have seen increased incitement against Christians, again by Muslim Brotherhood Web sites, official Web pages, and in the Muslim Brotherhood demonstrations that have specifically targeted churches in their attacks, leading up to the massive attack of Christians on the 14th of August, which is the largest attack happening against churches in Egypt since the 13th or 14th century.

The new regime's attempt to give the Egyptian police a complete free reign in controlling the Islamist violence, in dealing with the Islamist question, has meant that the Egyptian police has returned to its practices and ability to deal with the Christian portfolio as they like, meaning a return to practices under President Mubarak.

I wish to sum up by giving a couple of very clear points about what the situation is as we attempt to deal with it. Who is attacking the Christians? Unfortunately, it is ordinary people. It is no longer just Islamist organized groups that are attacking Christians, but it is now possible, it is now very likely that ordinary citizens are participating in those pogroms.

Why are they attacking the Christians? The reasons vary. Sometimes it is the sexual rumor of a relationship between a man and a woman, sometimes it is the rumor that the Christians are attempting to build a church, sometimes it is an affront, insult perceived by a Christian member to Islam, sometimes it is just a land dispute. But whatever the reason, we get the situation of the mob gathering, attacking the Christians, going home to home, looting, burning, searching for people to kill. Now, with a deteriorating security situation, there is an increased resortation to or availability of guns leading to higher deaths in those situations.

The government action, there has been no prevention attempt of stopping those attacks. Once the troops arrive, when they arrive late, there are inadequate troops to deal with the situation. They lack any established security protocol to deal with such pogroms or such attacks. They resort to random arrests of both Christians and Muslims, whereby they attempt to pressure both communities into those reconciliation sessions and attempt to remove the immediate trigger by, for example, stopping the Christians from building the church or removing the family that is viewed as insulting Islam from the village.

The National Government has no political will at all to address the root causes of this violence in Egypt or to deal with the larger question. As an example to cite, on the 4th and 5th of July, 2013, a mob gathered in the village of Nagaa Hassan, Luxor, to start this attack on Christians. They went from house to house searching for the Christians, finally found them hidden in one house. They attempted to attack; the police arrived. The police, instead of saving those Christians from death, then negotiated with the mob and reached an agreement whereby the women and children would be saved and the men would be left to die. The women begged the police officers, they fell on the police officer's legs, begging him to save their husbands. He said no, he had given his word to the mob. As the police was leaving the room, the men were butchered. Four men were killed in that house that day.

When asked by Human Rights Watch later on, the head of the Egyptian security in the governate of Luxor, Major Khalid Hassan, replied as to what had happened that he saw nothing wrong with the police performance. According to him, and this is a direct quote: "There was no reason for the police to take any special measures, it's not [the police's] job to stop killings; we just investigate afterward."

I would be happy to discuss what can be done about it in the question-and-answer session. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Tadros, thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tadros follows:]

House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

Human Rights Abuses in Egypt

Testimony of Samuel Tadros
Research Fellow, Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom
10 December 2013

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for holding this important hearing and for inviting me to testify today. For the past three years, Egypt has undergone enormous political upheaval with four different regimes ruling the country. Despite significant differences between those regimes, human rights violations have continued to be the norm and not the exception. The focus of my testimony today will be on the plight of Egypt's indigenous Christians; the Copts, and their continued persecution under Egypt's various regimes.

On the 28th of November two separate attacks on Copts took place in the southern Egyptian governate of Menya. In the village of El Badraman, a mob angered by rumors of a sexual relationship between a Christian man and a Muslim woman attacked Christians and burned several of their houses. In Nazlet Ebeid, the mob action followed an attempt by a Christian to build a house in a piece of land he owns in a neighboring Muslim village. In the aftermath of both attacks, security forces arrested Christians and Muslims from the villages indiscriminately and forced a reconciliation session to calm local feelings.

Unfortunately the latest attacks are neither random, novel, nor the last that will take place. While the scale of attacks and persecution of Egypt's Christians has varied under the various regimes that have ruled Egypt, it has been part of a continued and increasing pattern.

Under President Hosni Mubarak, Copts suffered both from widespread discrimination at the hands of the Egyptian government as well as being targets of violent attacks on their persons, property and churches at the hands of Islamists. In the last years of Mubarak's regime, the increasing participation of ordinary citizens in mob attacks on Copts became a worrying phenomenon as the level of anti Christian hatred swelled.

Official government discriminatory policies included tremendous restrictions on the building and renovation of churches, exclusion of Christians from key government positions, punishment of converts to Christianity, and a variety of favorable policies towards Islam as the official state religion.

The Islamist insurgency that brought havoc to Egypt's southern governates in the late eighties and until 1998 was especially brutal on Copts. Islamists, who viewed Copts as warring infidels targeted their businesses and their churches. In many southern towns and villages, Copts were forced to pay special payments, termed *Jizya*, to Jihadi groups in order to protect themselves from attacks. The violent attacks forced many Copts to flee the southern governates where they were historically concentrated to the capital, Cairo, and further to the West.

In the last years of the Mubarak regime, Islamists were increasingly replaced with ordinary citizens as the main source of attacks on Copts. Mobs composed of ordinary citizens often formed at the slightest rumor regarding a perceived Coptic affront to Islam. The three main causes of the mob violence were; rumors of a sexual relationship between a Christian man and a Muslim women, which is not permissible in Islam, rumors of a Coptic attempt at building or renovating a church, and rumors of a perceived insult to Islam or its prophet by a Copt. The details of each attack varied, the end result would not. A mob immediately formed and started attacking Coptic homes and shops, ransacking and burning them. In some cases the mob attack would leave a number of Copts killed.

Attacks on Copts took place in situations of complete police absence. While often aware early on that mob attacks were to occur, the police never intervened to prevent those attacks. Arriving at the scene after the attacks, the security forces resorted to arresting both Christians and Muslims, often randomly and in equal number to appear even handed. No distinction being made between victim and victimizer. Arrested Copts were used as a bargaining chip by the security forces to force Copts into a reconciliation session involving local community and religious leaders. Those sessions forced Copts to drop any legal charges against the attackers and often forced Copts to sign agreements prohibiting them from building a church and forcing Copts perceived as having offended Islam into leaving the village. No punishment was ever brought on the perpetrators of those attacks creating a culture of impunity.

The increase in the level of attacks on Copts reached its conclusion in the last days of the Mubarak regime with the bombing of the Two Saints Church in Alexandria on New Year's Eve.

The hopes unleashed by the Egyptian revolution of a new era of harmony between Egypt's religious groups and an end to discrimination against Copts came to naught. Instead, previous patterns of religious discrimination were reinforced and the number of attacks on Copts substantially increased. The complete collapse of the police and the state's repressive apparatus liberated Islamists from any constraints. While on the national level, Islamists were sweeping elections and dominating the political sphere, on the local level, Islamists, more emboldened by the rise of their brethren nationally, and the collapse of the police were increasingly asserting their power on Egyptian streets and villages and enforcing their views on society. The ruling military regime proved both unwilling and incapable of offering any protection to Copts and putting an end to attacks on them.

Attacks on Copts and their churches swelled dramatically under the rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and they were no longer limited to obscure villages and shantytowns but spread to the streets of Cairo. Church buildings were attacked and burned, mob violence against Copts was on the rise, and the new horror of forced evacuations from villages was becoming more common. Copts in small villages were increasingly forced to adhere to the Islamists' standards and vision enforced on the ground. Violence against Copts reached its height with the Maspero massacre in October 2011 when army soldiers shot Coptic protestors and ran them over with armored vehicles. Continuing with practices developed by the Mubarak regime, reconciliation sessions were held after attacks and perpetrators were not punished. It was only natural that a culture of impunity would soon become a culture of encouragement.

A new development was blasphemy charges, mostly brought against Copts accusing them of defaming and insulting Islam. Seven Copts were accused in such cases under the rule of SCAF with four of them receiving prison sentences. Their crimes varied from being blamed for a facebook page insulting religion to simply being tagged in an offending picture on facebook. Sentences increased during that period from two years to six. Immediately as news of the perceived affront to Islam spread, an angry mob would attack the home of the accused Copt looting and burning. Families of the accused were forced to flee the area either willingly out of fear of harm or forced by reconciliation sessions. Trials of the accused were a mockery of justice, with courts surrounded by an angry mob and the accused denied legal representation.

Mohamed Morsi's election to the Egyptian presidency aggravated an already deteriorating situation. While the Muslim Brotherhood and President Morsi paid lip service to ideas of tolerance and inclusiveness and promised equality for all of Egypt's citizens, such promises were made in English for international consumption. The reality was strikingly different. During his one year rule, attacks on Copts dramatically increased on the local level as well as exclusion on the national level.

On the national level, the scarce Coptic representation that existed in the government further declined. As attacks on the local level increased, the government was unwilling to take any action to protect Copts and punish the perpetrators of the attacks. President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood pushed forward a constitution writing process that alienated non Islamists. After the withdrawal of non Islamist members and church representatives, the suggested text, passed the following month in a popular referendum, enshrined the Islamic nature of the state and the second class states for Copts severely limiting equality and religious freedom.

The constitutional articles were a setback for equality and religious freedom. They included dropping language prohibiting forced evacuations within the country (Article 42), limiting the freedom to practice religion and build houses of worship to "heavenly religions" (Article 43), a blasphemy article (Article 44), a limitation on all the freedoms and rights of the constitution as being exercised insofar as they do not contradict the

principles in the section on state and society (read Sharia) (Article 81), a body to control religious endowments (Article 212), and a very narrow definition of "the principles of sharia", which according to Article 2 were the main source of legislation (Article 219).

The Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist parties and leaders insisted on using sectarian rhetoric that inflamed local angers against Copts. Copts were used as scapegoats for the problems Egypt was facing from train accidents to opposition demonstrations. The Islamists' incitement against Copts was especially vicious during electoral competitions. Islamists publically warned Copts of blood being spilled and severe repercussions if anything would happen to the Islamist project. Islamist media outlets continuously fabricated stories about secret Christian militias that were behind street violence. The level of incitement by Islamists contributed to the increase of the number and scope of attacks on Copts.

On the local level, both the number and scope of attacks on Copts increased under President Morsi. The mob had a completely free reign to exercise its will on Coptic victims. In April 2013, in an unprecedented and alarming development the Coptic Cathedral in Cairo, the very center of Christianity in the country, where the Pope resides and where the remains of Saint Mark the Evangelist are buried came under attack. The attack, which lasted for a couple of hours and which Egyptians watched live on their television screens shocked Copts and was the clearest indication of the indifference the Morsi government held for the plight of Copts.

The number of blasphemy cases increased during President Morsi's one year rule with more Copts receiving prison sentences, and seven Copts receiving the death sentence for their alleged roles in the anti Islam movie. Blasphemy accusations were accompanied with attacks on the accused homes, forced evacuations and financial penalties levied by reconciliation sessions.

President Morsi's forceful removal from office by Egypt's military was hailed and supported by a wide spectrum of politicians and public figures in the country. The Coptic Pope's participation in the coup announcement meeting was however signaled out by Islamists as a grave crime. Incitement against Copts reached unprecedented levels on websites and in speeches of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups. Immediately upon the announcement of the coup, several churches were attacked. Church walls were filled with anti Christian slogans, and Christian homes were marked in many villages in the south of Egypt. In all of those attacks, the police was completely absent.

One telling example was the brutal attacks on the Copts of Nagaa Hassan near Luxor on the 4th and 5th of July 2013. As the angry mob moved house to house looting and burning and searching for the Christians to kill, they finally found a group of Christians hiding in a home. The police, which arrived at the scene before the killing was to begin, negotiated with the mob on taking the women and children out and leaving the men to be killed. Four men were butchered in that house the second the police left with the women and children. Major Khalid Hassan, Luxor director of security informed Human

Rights Watch later that he found nothing wrong with the police's performance. "There was no reason for the police to take any special measures, it's not [the police's] job to stop killings, we just investigate afterward."

On the 14th of August, and as news of the military's massacre of Morsi supporters in Cairo spread around the country, angry mobs incited by Islamists ransacked, burned and attacked churches and Christian owned businesses. Throughout the day, the mob was completely free to act as it pleased with the police nowhere in sight. The destruction was immense. Among the destroyed churches was one built in the 4th century. In many instances, the mob was able to return and continue its attack for a number of days. The attacks that day were the single largest attack on churches in Egypt since the 14th century.

Despite hopes held by many Egyptians and especially Copts that the Muslim Brotherhood's removal from power would result in an improvement of their condition, Egypt's new regime has shown little interest in dealing with the root causes of the sectarian problem. The free rein given to the Egyptian security forces in their fight against Islamists has meant a continuation of previous patterns of security practices against Copts. The security forces have done little to prevent attacks on Copts from occurring and less to find and punish the perpetrators. They have resorted to indiscriminate arrests of Christians and Muslims in order to force reconciliation sessions that ensure that the guilty party escapes punishment.

Egypt has witnessed tremendous political changes in the past three years with revolutions and military coups taking place in a quick pace. After thirty years in power, Hosni Mubarak was sent to a prison cell, and Mohamed Morsi moved from a prison cell to the presidential palace and back again to a prison cell. Throughout those three years however, the plight of Christians has not seen any positive change, but has instead gravely deteriorated. No matter who rules Egypt, the twin phenomenon of the growing hatred of Christians and the willingness of their neighbors to attacks them, and the failure of Egyptian governments to protect them and stop the attacks have become the hallmarks of the Copt's continued plight.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Abou-Sabe.

STATEMENT OF MORAD ABOU-SABE, PH.D., PROFESSOR EMERITUS, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY (FORMER PRESIDENT OF MISR UNIVERSITY FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY)

Mr. ABOU-SABE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this hearing, and I really appreciate getting that opportunity here.

My emphasis in my statement is really not so much about Christians and the human rights abuses of Christians, because I believe that the Morsi government had actually abused the rights, the human rights of all Egyptians, and that is really I think something that should really be pointed out. So my focus is really more coming into U.S.-Egyptian relationships and, you know, the basis for which many of these things have happened.

So I would say that the events of June 30, 2013, in Egypt, which resulted in the ouster of former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, were in response to the massive and unprecedented protests by the Egyptian people. Morsi's overthrow was supported by and facilitated by the Egyptian military. Since Morsi's ouster, the U.S.-Egyptian relations have gone through abrupt changes that threaten and continue to threaten the special relationship between the two countries.

Now, just for a short historical perspective on how we got this special relationship, one can only begin by crediting the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat for the start of this relationship. When Sadat took his unimaginable and bold steps in the 1970s, which were essentially ending the Egyptian-Soviet relationship and expelling the Russian advisers on July 18, 1972, and then making his historic trip to Israel on November 20, 1977, no one understood at the time what he was doing or where he was heading. Sadat ended Egypt's relationship with the Soviets at the time that he was preparing for the 1973 war with Israel. However, Sadat knew and was convinced that the Arab-Israeli conflict could only be resolved by the United States and that all that matters to the U.S. in the region were Israel and the flow of Middle East oil.

Taking these bold steps, Sadat put Egypt in a most precarious position that resulted in his own assassination by the Muslim Brotherhood and the isolation of Egypt for many years afterwards from the rest of the Arab world. Since then, and especially after the signing of the Camp David Accord and a peace treaty with Israel, the U.S.-Egyptian relations, however, have been at their most cordial levels. This cordial relationship, as it may now have become clear, was particularly for keeping the Egyptian-Israeli treaty safe. It did not matter what the Mubarak 30-year dictatorship had done to Egypt or the Egyptian people as long as the peace treaty was safe.

Now, with the January 25th revolution in Egypt, the U.S. administration aligned itself with the Muslim Brotherhood as the most organized group among all the political parties and political organizations in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood were deemed to have the highest likelihood to step in the governance of Egypt. This new relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, especially after Morsi's election to the Presidency, was further strengthened when Morsi

was able to secure a cease-fire between Hamas and Israel on November 22, 2012.

It can be assumed that in this close relationship the U.S. administration saw the possible venues for the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, while the Muslim Brotherhood saw the possibility of moving forward with their renaissance project with the help of the United States. This view is supported by, for example, one, the unusual close relationship between the American Ambassador in Cairo and the Muslim Brotherhood organization outside of President Morsi himself, a matter that caused resentment among many Egyptians and political party leaders.

It was most evident when the U.S. Ambassador took upon herself to meet with the Muslim Brotherhood officials who had no official status in the Egyptian Government. It further confirmed that Morsi was, in fact, a figurehead and that decisions came from the MB leadership office at Al-Mokattam district in Cairo. In the meantime, the Muslim Brotherhood and President Morsi were working on establishing legal rights for the Palestinians in northern Sinai to buy land and settle in the northern Sinai as a prelude to Hamas expansion into the Sinai.

One of the vehicles for achieving that was to grant Egyptian citizenship to as many as 50,000 Palestinians in one stroke. Former President Morsi was able to do so by changing the Egyptian law that defined Egyptian citizenship, which applied only to all persons born in Egypt to Egyptian fathers. Morsi and the MB simply changed the law to allow all those born to Egyptian mothers to become Egyptian citizens, opening the door for thousands and thousands of Palestinians whose mothers were of Egyptian nationality. Simply it is not. Now the Egyptian Government is trying to review these newly acquired citizenships.

Egypt, to Morsi, and the Muslim Brotherhood did not matter. There was no understanding of Egyptian sovereignty or defined borders. It was just land that they could deal and hand over to anybody they wanted.

Now, the impact of the immediate position taken by the United States Government in response to Morsi's ouster was to call it a military coup, and Congresswoman Frankel just continued to repeat that now. And based on that, the administration initiated the process of suspending U.S. military aid to Egypt. Such a response by the administration represented a clear departure from the U.S. longstanding position in support of Egypt.

It also showed another side to the administration's foreign policy toward Egypt. It showed the newly developed alliance between the U.S. and Muslim Brotherhood organization and the Morsi government, as I pointed out above. Such unlikely relationship was a great surprise and disappointment to all Egyptians who did not understand why the U.S. would partner with an Islamic group that has historically been implicated in the types of violence that are characteristic of al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

On the ground, the U.S. administration condemned the military overthrow of Morsi and cautioned the Egyptian Government against the use of force in dealing with the peaceful protesters. Little did Washington know that the Muslim Brotherhood protests and sit-ins were actually militarized, not peaceful. There was no

holdback by the Muslim Brotherhood leadership from issuing their numerous public threats from their own staged platforms and on live television of the dire results if any attempts were made to evict them.

These were the peaceful protesters who were constantly reported by the New York Times and other U.S. reporters in Egypt. You could only see the contradiction between what the U.S. media reported and what every Egyptian, including myself watching from here, was viewing directly and live on Egyptian satellite television while listening to the MB's threats. There was no hesitation on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood protest leadership to admit their role in the terrorism against Egyptian military and security that was taking place in the Sinai, as they continued to make pronouncements: If the Egyptian Government yields to our demands, all violence in Sinai would immediately stop. These were the peaceful protesters the administration was supporting and the U.S. media was reporting.

There was also a human cost to the U.S. support of the MBs. Namely, it cost hundreds of Egyptian lives that were lost from both protesters, as well as the security forces, during the forcible eviction of the sit-ins. These lives could have been saved if the Muslim Brotherhood did not count on the U.S. support and would have at least allowed the 8-week mediation efforts by the international community to succeed. To this day, the MBs believe that they were the aggrieved rather than the aggressor and the cause of the violence that they perpetrated. They have continued to hold violent protests, block roads, and instigate the Egyptian people irrespective of their unrealistic expectation of Morsi's return to office.

In the meantime, former President Morsi was held in custody for several months before he was charged in court on the 4th of November and was subsequently remanded to prison awaiting trial, you know, slated for January 2014. Among the alleged charges against Morsi are incitement to murder and, more importantly, the charge of espionage, having colluded with international organizations against the interests and security of Egypt. There is currently a gag order on discussions of these particular cases.

The conflicting signals by the administration with statements from the State Department holding on to the U.S.-Egyptian relations while at the same time other U.S. officials continued to call the ouster a military coup played a major part in the resistance of the MBs to any kind of mediation and resolution. Significant among those were the statements by Senator John McCain and Lindsey Graham, who visited Egypt in July and met with Morsi. After their meeting they came out and in a press conference once again called the ouster a military coup. In fact, Senator John McCain in his comments predicted a civil war in Egypt as a result. Luckily, this prediction has not happened, at least until now.

These reactions and contradicting statements by U.S. officials simply confirmed the ambivalence of the U.S. foreign policy toward Egypt. Not only that, but it also implied that the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has changed and that a new agenda may be under development as we speak.

The same ambivalence was demonstrated by the same U.S. administration after the January 25th revolution in Egypt which re-

sulted in the resignation of the U.S. longstanding ally Mubarak. The unyielding question remains, why was a relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood and what was the purpose of aligning ourselves with a terrorist organization with a long-documented history that backs it up? What was our ulterior motive behind this relationship that we would undertake at the expense of an ally and a regional power like Egypt?

On June 26, 2013, before Morsi's ouster, a report signed by some 20 human rights organizations was published by the Cairo Institute of Human Rights Studies assessing the 1-year rule under Morsi. The report was entitled "One Year Into Mohamed Morsi's Term, Manifold Abuses and the Systematic Undermining of the Rule of Law." In this report the many facets of human rights abuses were reported undertaken by the Morsi government in that.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Abou-Sabe, unfortunately we are going to have to leave the room at 11 o'clock because there is going to be a sweep of the room because Senator Kerry will be coming in shortly thereafter.

Mr. ABOU-SABE. Okay.

Mr. SMITH. If you could just sum up, and then Mr. Stahnke, and then we will go to some very quick questions.

Mr. ABOU-SABE. Yes, sir.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, sir.

Mr. ABOU-SABE. I will sum up essentially in just a couple of words. As Egyptian-Americans, we therefore call upon the President and the Congress to carefully examine our role in fostering peace and stability in Egypt. It is imperative upon us to take the lead in establishing a close relationship with the Government and the peoples of Egypt. We need to be mindful of the facts behind the events before jumping to conclusions and taking other drastic measures as those that have been taken. We also call upon the U.S. media to bring the truth behind the violence that is perpetrated by the terrorists and so forth.

Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Abou-Sabe. Thank you very much for your testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Abou-Sabe follows:]

Statement of Morad Abou-Sabe'
for the Congressional Hearing about Human Rights Abuses in Egypt
December 10th, 2013

Introduction:

The events of June 30, 2013 in Egypt, which resulted in the ouster of former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, were in response to the massive and unprecedented protests by the Egyptian People. Morsi's overthrow was supported and facilitated by the Egyptian Military. Since Morsi's ouster, the US-Egyptian relations have gone through abrupt changes that threatened and continue to threaten the special relationship between the two countries.

Historical perspectives on the US-Egyptian Relations:

For a short historical perspective on how we got to this special relationship, one can only begin by crediting the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat for the start of that relationship. When Sadat took his unimaginable and bold steps in the 1970's, which were:

1- Ending the Egyptian - Soviet relationship and expelling the Russian advisors on July 18th 1972, and then
2- Making his historic trip to Israel on November 20th 1977.

No one understood at the time what he was doing or where he was heading? Sadat ended Egypt's relationship with the Soviets at the time when he was preparing for the 1973 war with Israel. However, Sadat knew and was convinced that the Arab Israeli conflict could only be resolved by the United States and that all that mattered to the US in the region were Israel and the flow of Middle East Oil?

Taking these bold steps Sadat put Egypt in a most precarious position that resulted in his own assassination by the Muslim Brotherhood and the isolation of Egypt for many years afterwards from the rest of the Arab World.

Since then and especially after the signing of the Camp David accord and the peace treaty with Israel, the US-Egyptian relations have been at their most cordial levels. This cordial relationship, as it may have now become clear, was for keeping the Egyptian – Israeli treaty safe? It did not matter what the Mubarak 30 year dictatorship had done to Egypt or the Egyptian people, as long as the peace treaty was safe?

The establishment of the US - Muslim Brotherhood relationship, after the January 25th 2011 revolution in Egypt.

With the January 25th 2011, revolution in Egypt, the US administration aligned itself with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB's), as the most organized group among all political parties and political organizations in Egypt. The MB's were deemed to have the highest likelihood of stepping to the governance of Egypt? This new relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, especially after Morsi's election to the Presidency, was further strengthened when Morsi was able to secure a cease-fire between Hamas and Israel on November, 22nd, 2012 (see attached).

It can be assumed that in this close relationship, the US administration saw possible venues for the resolution of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict. While the MB's saw the possibility of moving forward with their Renaissance project., with the help of the United States? This view is supported by:

1- The unusual close relationship between the American Ambassador in Cairo and the MB organization, outside of President Morsi? A matter that caused resentment among the many Egyptians and political parties leaders,
2- It was most evident when the US Ambassador took upon herself to meet with MB's officials who had no official status in the Egyptian Government?
3- It further confirmed that Morsi, was in fact a figurehead and that the decisions come from the MB leadership offices at Al-Mokattam district of Cairo?

In the meantime, the MB's and President Morsi, were working on establishing legal rights for the Palestinians in Northern Sinai to buy land and settle in Northern Sinai as a prelude to Hamas's expansion into the Sinai. One of the vehicles for achieving that was to grant Egyptian Citizenship to as many as 50,000 Palestinians, in one stroke? Former president Morsi was able to do that by changing an Egyptian Law that defined Egyptian Citizenship which applied only to all persons born in Egypt to Egyptian Fathers.

Morsi and the MB's simply changed the law to allow all those born to Egyptian Mothers to become Egyptian Citizens, opening the door for the thousands of Palestinians whose mothers were of Egyptian Nationality? Simple isn't it? Now the Egyptian government is trying to review these newly acquired citizenship?

Egypt to Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, did not matter. There was no understanding of Egyptian Sovereignty and defined borders? It was just land that they could hand over to whomever they wanted.

Impact of the US Position on the MB's intransigence:

The immediate position taken by the US government, in response to Morsi's ouster, was to call it a military coup. And based on that, the administration initiated the process of suspending the US military Aid to Egypt? Such a response by the administration represented a clear departure from the US long standing position in support of Egypt. It also showed another side to the administration's foreign policy towards Egypt. It showed the newly developed alliance between the US and the Muslim Brotherhood organization and the Morsi Government, as I pointed out above?

Such unlikely partnership was a great surprise and disappointment to all Egyptians, who did not understand why would the US partner with an Islamic group that has historically been implicated in the types of violence that is characteristic of Al-Qaeda and its affiliates?

On the ground, the US administration condemned the military overthrow of Morsi AND cautioned the Egyptian Government against the use of force in dealing with the "Peaceful Protestors?" Little did Washington know that the MB protests and sit-ins were actually militarized. There was no holdback by the MB leadership from issuing their numerous public threats from their own staged platforms and on live TV, of the dire results if any attempts were made to evict them? These were the peaceful protestors who were constantly reported on by the NY Times and other US reporters in Egypt. You could only see the contradiction between what the US media reported and what every Egyptian, including myself watching from here, was viewing directly and live on Egyptian and satellite television, while listening to the MB threats.

There was no hesitation on the part of the MB protest leadership to admit their role in the terrorism against the Egyptian military and security forces that was taking place in Sinai? As they continued to make pronouncements: "If the Egyptian Government yields to our demands, all violence in Sinai, would immediately stop?" These were the peaceful protestors the administration was supporting and the US media reporting?

There was also a human cost to the US support of the MB's, namely it cost hundreds of Egyptian lives that were lost from both the protestors and the security forces, during the forcible eviction of the sit-ins? These lives could have been saved if the MB's did not count on the US support and would have at least allowed the eight-week mediation efforts by the international community to succeed? To this day, the MB's believe that they were the aggrieved, rather than the aggressor and the cause of the violence they perpetrated. They continue to hold violent

protests, block roads and instigate the Egyptian people, irrespective of their unrealistic expectations of Morsi's return to office?

In the meantime, former president Morsi was held in custody for several months, before he was charged in Court on the 4th of November, and was subsequently remanded to Prison awaiting trial, slated for January 2014. Among the alleged charges against Morsi are: incitement to murder and more importantly the charge of espionage, having colluded with international organizations against the interest and security of Egypt. There is a current ban against discussing these charges, since they are still under investigation, (see attached).

The conflicting signals about the Morsi ouster by the US Administration:

The conflicting signals by the administration, with statements from the State department, holding on to the US Egyptian relations while at the same time, other US officials continued to call the ouster a military coup, played a major part in the resistance of the MB's to any kind of mediation and resolution. Significant among these were the statements by senators McCain and Graham, who visited Egypt in July and met with Morsi, After their meetings, they came out and in a press conference once again called the ouster a military coup. In fact Senator McCain in his comments, predicted a civil war in Egypt, as a result? Luckily his prediction did not materialize, at least until now?

These reactions and contradicting statements by US officials simply confirmed the ambivalence of the US foreign policy towards Egypt? Not only that, but it also implied that the US foreign policy in the Middle East, has changed and that a new agenda may be under development as we speak? The same ambivalence was demonstrated by the same US administration after the January 25th Revolution in Egypt, which resulted in the resignation of the US long-standing ally Mubarak?

The unyielding question remains, why was there a relationship with the MB's and what was the purpose of aligning ourselves with a terrorist organization, with a long documented history that backs it up? What was our ulterior motive behind this relationship that we would undertake at the expense of an ally and a regional power like Egypt?

Morsi's one-year Human Rights Abuses report:

On June 26th, 2013, before Morsi's ouster on July 3rd, a report signed by some 20 Human Rights Organizations was published by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, assessing the one-year rule under Morsi. The report was titled "One year into Mohamed Morsi's term, Manifold abuses and the systematic undermining of the rule of law, (see attached).

In this report, the many facets of human rights abuses that were undertaken by the Morsi government, lead by the MB organization, were discussed? The report sites many such abuses, of which I point out two as follows:

1- "The constant use of defamation of religion as a tool to undermine freedom of Expression has been one of the landmarks of the first year of Morsi's presidency. " Another item that stands out in the report was:
2- "At the same time as jihadist elements have benefited from presidential amnesties and a blind eye to their terrorist activities in the Sinai, smear campaigns against human rights organizations have continued, as has the politically motivated, vindictive trials of their staff..."

These activities under Morsi, were in concert with the ultimate goal of the Muslim Brotherhood to change the character of Egypt into an Islamic State, as a first step to building the MB's dream, that of establishing a Global Islamic State? What the US administration miscalculated, in aligning itself with Morsi and the brotherhood, was not recognizing that:

1- Egypt is not an Islamic State, never was and never will,
2- That Egypt's secular character was far more ingrained in people's minds that could not be changed by the dictates of the Muslim brotherhood's political ideology?
3- There was no anticipation that the Egyptian people would quickly recognize that the MB's were not preaching Islam, but imposing their own political Islamic ideology that was foreign to every Egyptian, and
4- There was no realization that such a dramatic change would occur within only one year, while the MB's were busy entrenching their organization into all parts of the Egyptian infrastructure.

These were some of factors behind the total rejection of the MB's by the Egyptian People, to the extent that their possible return and acceptance into the society, is deemed impossible? As such, any thoughts of establishing an Arch of "Moderate Islamic States in the Middle East" as a means of combating terrorism, an apparent foreign policy strategy by the Administration, was clearly based on faulty premises and is unlikely to happen any time soon.

As the administration begins to re-evaluate Morsi's overthrow, and ascertain that it was the Egyptian People's will to rid the country from the Muslim Brotherhood rule, I hope that our relations with Egypt will go back to it's normal state in the very near future.

We recognize that democracy in the Middle East, including Egypt, all be-it an important goal, is a work in progress and will take time to achieve. We also believe that mixing religion with politics in a country that for centuries has kept its peaceful and secular character can only bring unrest, as we have just witnessed under the MB's one-year rule. This is a matter that we do not need nor can afford.

As Egyptian Americans, we are keen on seeing Egyptian democracy built on the same values we have in the US, where separation of Church and State is one of the bedrocks of our democracy, we aspire to have that be the system of choice for Egypt and all Egyptians.

We therefore call upon the President and the Congress to carefully examine our role in fostering peace and stability in Egypt. It is imperative upon us to take the lead in establishing a close relationship with the Government and the Peoples of Egypt. We need to be mindful of the facts behind the events before jumping to conclusions and taking other drastic measures as those that have been taken. We also call upon the US media to bring the truths behind the violence that is perpetrated by the terrorists that want to turn Egypt into another arena for their destructive activities. We are confident that The Egyptian People will repulse with the utmost force any attempts by the MB's to derail Egypt from it's path to democracy which was charted by the January 25th and the June 30th Revolution.

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Mr. SMITH. Mr. Stahnke.

STATEMENT OF MR. TAD STAHNKE, DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND PROGRAMS, HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST

Mr. STAHNKE. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman, Madam Chairwoman. Thank you for convening this hearing, for your leadership on human rights in Congress. Members of the subcommittees, thank you as well. We look forward to working with both subcommittees to try to advance human rights protections in an increasingly volatile Egypt.

The rapidly deteriorating situation of Egypt's Coptic Christian minority is an alarming symptom of an unresolved and worsening political crisis. If left to fester, this crisis could further destabilize Egypt and the region, as well as hold back the possibility of economic and political reform and the protection of human rights, and be profoundly harmful to the interests of the United States and our allies.

As you have heard, there has been an unprecedented escalation in attacks against Coptic Christians since August 14th, when the military violently dispersed those protesting President Morsi's ouster. Discrimination against members of religious minorities, incidents of sectarian violence that go largely unpunished, anti-Christian incitement, and anti-Semitism have, unfortunately, long been a feature of Egyptian life. But the political polarization of the past few months has taken violence against Christians to unprecedented levels. Many have been killed, well over 100 churches, homes, and other properties have been attacked. Perpetrators have not been brought to justice. In addition, members of other religious minorities have been attacked and continue to be persecuted, including Baha'is, Shitte, and Sufi Muslims.

It is the great misfortune of the Christian Coptic community that they are pawns in a highly destructive zero-sum political game between the Muslim Brotherhood and the military-backed national security state. The Morsi government bears considerable blame for fueling a climate of anti-Christian intolerance when its rhetoric became increasingly paranoid and Christians were among the forces said to be conspiring against it. And following Morsi's overthrow his supporters, openly blamed the Copts for it, claiming that Christian hostility to Islam and the idea of a Muslim Egypt led them to conspire with the military and hostile foreign powers like Israel and the United States. This demonization of Christians has made the community more vulnerable to the violence that has followed.

At the same time, the military-backed government seems more interested in pointing to anti-Christian violence as evidence of Muslim Brotherhood extremism than in taking effective measures to protect Christians from attack. This posture of pointing to the violent excesses of Islamic extremists as an excuse to resist their own reforms is a familiar throwback to the days of Mubarak.

Egyptian authorities under the SCAF, under Morsi, and under the current government have failed to protect the Coptic community and to hold accountable those who incite and commit sectarian violence. The current government needs to do so. It should also remove longstanding restrictions on religious freedom, such as abusive blasphemy laws and the decrees banning Baha'is and Jeho-

vah's Witnesses. It should enact a nondiscriminatory law for the construction and repair of places of worship.

But these recommendations alone, we fear, are inadequate as a response to the crisis now confronting Egypt's Coptic community and, by extension, all Egyptians. The current government and the security apparatus are largely made up of the same people who have held power in Egypt for decades. They are unlikely to change their ingrained habits on sectarian issues and may even see some advantage in assaults against Christians continuing, because it supports their narrative. Thus, there needs to be progress toward a political solution in Egypt, one that includes movement toward political reconciliation as a first step.

Teconciliation is a challenge, as the current government has engaged in a brutal and wide crackdown against the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters and has also repressed non-Islamist critics and repressed fundamental freedom to speech and assembly. We detail the deterioration of the human rights situation throughout the transition period, and especially since Morsi's overthrow, in our written statement. Government force is implicated in the mass killings of hundreds of protesters since August 14th, the wholesale roundup of Muslim Brotherhood political leaders and sweeping charges of involvement in violence or terrorism, intensifying restrictions on the media and harassment of government critics, the increased use of military trials against civilians, and incommunicado detention leading to torture.

This is all familiar. The state security apparatus is back, promoting a climate of fear under the rubric of a war on terrorism. And to make matters worse, all this is taking place against the backdrop of a breakdown in the rule of law and the deterioration of state institutions which began under the SCAF and continued under Morsi.

A polarized, increasingly violent Egypt is a serious problem for the United States. The White House says that they are undertaking a thorough review of Egypt policy, and we welcome that. Indeed, supporting repressive governments in spite of its abuses has failed in the past, and a major shift in U.S. policy is needed to one that puts Egypt's commitment to human rights and democratization at its core. We set out several recommendations for U.S. policy blueprints, published last week, but let me end by suggesting a few of those recommendations.

Working with its donor partners, the United States must establish sizable sustained economic incentives for Egypt's leaders, including IMF loans, which should be conditioned on Egypt adhering to human rights standards. The administration suspended some military aid following the coup, and they are right to set human rights conditions on full resumption of aid to Egypt. If it wishes to benefit from a close cooperative relationship with the United States, the Egyptian military must use its power to move Egypt back onto a path of peaceful, inclusive, civilian-led governance, and this necessarily entails some form of reconciliation.

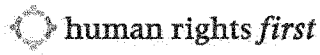
Some supporters of President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood should be let back into the political process. Credible Islamist leaders need to condemn violence against religious minorities, and there is a reduced incentive to do so when thousands are in jail,

frozen out of the political process, and indiscriminately labeled as extremists and terrorists. We shouldn't ask Egyptians to accommodate Islamists who espouse violence or hatred, but leaving the large part of the Egyptian electorate that wishes to support an Islamist political party in elections, leaving them disenfranchised is not a recipe for stability. The United States should publicly promote reconciliation and continue to try to initiate a process to advance it.

And finally, the State Department and USAID should increase their efforts, bilaterally and/or multilaterally, to fund independent civil society organizations with the capacity to monitor government institutions and expose official wrongdoing, as well as promote religious pluralism and intolerance. There are many influential voices in Egypt who are suspicious of the U.S. Government's commitment to democracy. The Embassy in Cairo needs to continue to show that, in Washington they need to continue to show it, Congress continues to need to speak out about it, and the U.S. should be working with other like-minded governments to bring about a successful political reform in Egypt. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Stahnke, thank you so very much for your testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stahnke follows:]



TESTIMONY OF TAD STAHNKE
DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND PROGRAMS
HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST

BEFORE THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

"HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN EGYPT"
December 10, 2013

Introduction

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for convening this hearing to examine the growing human rights abuses in Egypt, with a particular emphasis on religious freedom and the situation for religious minorities in Egypt. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to share Human Rights First's findings and recommendations on this important matter and to discuss ways that we can work together with you to advance human rights protections in an increasingly volatile country that remains very important to the United States. We are grateful to you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership on keeping key human rights issues front and center in the Congress. We look forward to continuing to work with you and Ranking Member Bass and others on the Subcommittee to assist in these efforts.

Human Rights First has longstanding ties with human rights defenders and civil society leaders in Egypt. In the past three years, we have focused considerable attention on the country, making repeated visits, issuing multiple reports as well as dozens of statements intended to promote U.S. leadership in improving respect for human rights there. Religious freedom is a universally recognized and fundamental human right; it is the cornerstone of freedom of expression and assembly, which are essential for secure and thriving societies. Religious freedom is also a human security issue, and as such it needs to be taken into account in U.S. national security and counterterrorism, conflict prevention and mitigation, and democracy promotion strategies. This is particularly true with respect to the current political upheavals in the Middle East, where in Egypt and elsewhere successful transitions will be measured by the embrace of religious pluralism and whether religion will be used as a weapon to suppress dissent and the rights of women and religious minorities.

The rapidly deteriorating situation of Egypt's Coptic Christian minority is an alarming symptom of an unresolved and worsening broader political crisis. Egypt

has been a key partner and ally for the United States for decades. It is also a bellwether for other states in the region. An Egypt racked by instability and violence represents a serious long-term threat to U.S. interests. It would also have a negative impact on prospects for a more stable Middle East, making more remote the vision of a peaceful region in which the rights of all are protected.

Crisis for Egypt's Coptic Community

Egyptian human rights organizations are reporting an unprecedented escalation in sectarian attacks against Egypt's Coptic Christians since the military violently dispersed protesting Morsi supporters on August 14, 2013. Armed police backed by the military used force, including live ammunition, to clear protests that had been established after the dismissal of President Morsi on July 3. Hundreds of people were killed in the worst incident of political violence in Egypt for many decades. Total fatalities from clearing the sit-ins reached over 800, with dozens of members of the security forces also losing their lives. In another serious incident, some 55 pro-Morsi protesters were killed at a single demonstration in Cairo on October 6. Well over 2,000 people have been killed in political demonstrations since August 14.

While discrimination, anti-Christian incitement, and periodic incidents of sectarian violence, sometimes fatal, have long been a feature of Egyptian life, the political polarization of the past few months has taken this violence and the level of threat against the Christian minority to unprecedented levels. In a letter to President Obama dated September 12, 2013, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) noted that over 130 Coptic churches and Christian religious structures, homes, and businesses have been attacked since August 14. Around 45 churches and religious structures came under simultaneous attack in the immediate aftermath of August 14. Unfortunately, the Egyptian pattern of impunity for sectarian attacks continues. A leading Egyptian human rights group was warning that a failure to recognize the seriousness of the situation "may push the country toward broad civil violence."

This spike in anti- Christian violence has abated in recent weeks, although isolated attacks on Christians, their homes, businesses, and churches continue. The sudden rise and fall in the frequency of attacks has fueled rumors and speculation about who was responsible for the anti-Christian assaults. The official government-backed version of events is that disgruntled Morsi supporters took revenge on Christians whom they blamed for having conspired to depose President Morsi. The intensity of official efforts to denigrate the Brotherhood and its supporters, and the way that reports of these attacks fed into a narrative that the authorities are engaged in a fight against violent religious extremists, whose extremism is demonstrated by their attacks on Christians, fed a competing theory that the authorities let these acts of violence take place for their own political advantage—and may even have, in some instances, instigated them—making the Christian victims of these attacks collateral damage in a cynical political maneuver.

For decades, institutionalized discrimination against Christians; official unwillingness to investigate violent attacks on Christians or to hold perpetrators or those who incite violence criminally accountable; and toleration of sectarian hate speech in the media, including the government-controlled media, have contributed to chronic problems of persecution and insecurity for the approximately 10% of Egypt's 85 million population who are Coptic Christians. Not all Christians are economically disadvantaged. There is a history of certain Christian families prospering in business. The Sawiris family controls one of Egypt's largest private business empires, for example, creating a perception that Christians have benefited unfairly from state patronage, and thereby fueling resentment from the majority Muslim community, even if the reality for the great majority of the Christian population is one of systematic discrimination and relative disadvantage.

These problems were well known and had been getting worse in the later years of President Mubarak's long period of rule, during which time a disturbing pattern of mass killings of Christians—followed by insufficient investigations and a lack of accountability—began to emerge. Perhaps the two most notorious examples of this disturbing trend are the Nag Hammadi massacre of January 8, 2010, in which 11 Copts were shot outside a church in a small town in Upper Egypt, and the car bombing of a Coptic church in the city of Alexandria on January 1, 2011, in which at least 21 worshipers were killed and many more injured while attending New Year's Eve services, another serious incident of anti-Christian violence in which the authorities are alleged to have played a role.

The Political Context for the Current Crisis

The mass protests of January and February 2011 that brought down the thirty-year presidency of Hosni Mubarak were actively supported by many Christians. Religious coexistence was one of the several positive values publicly espoused by Egyptian protesters.

However, two legacies of the overthrow of President Mubarak have had a detrimental impact on the situation of Coptic Christians in Egypt. The first is a general decline in public safety that has left vulnerable minority communities at risk of harassment and violence, with little hope of protection or justice from the police or local authorities. The second is a highly polarized struggle over the political future of Egypt that has become increasingly violent in recent months. The Morsi government must bear its proportion of the blame for fueling a climate of anti-Christian intolerance even during its time in office, when its rhetoric became increasingly paranoid and Christians were among the forces said to be conspiring to overthrow the elected government. Protests against the Morsi government were often described as having been promoted by Christians and populated by Christian participants, when in fact street protests have been an almost constant feature of Egyptian public life since January 2011 and such protests rarely had a sectarian cast. This demonizing of the minority population contributed to a climate in which violence against Christians could easily take place.

It is not surprising that the removal of Mubarak – who stifled political opposition for decades – should lead to a political vacuum and a period of uncertainty. What is regrettable is that the political contest in Egypt continues to be reduced to a binary competition between military-backed authoritarianism—currently represented by General Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, the Commander in Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces, the chief public instigator of the military overthrow of President Morsi—and Islamic extremism, currently portrayed in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood, the clandestine religious movement in which President Morsi was a senior figure.

Unfortunately, the two poles of the binary competition for power between the military and the Muslim Brotherhood feed off each other. Each side points to the excesses of the other as justification for their own authoritarian actions. This has produced a vicious circle of escalating repression and instability that squeezes out alternative political voices and cuts away at the middle ground.

It is important to emphasize that the political spectrum in Egypt is much more complicated than this binary depiction allows. Political movements of different kinds have emerged since February 2011, including a wide array of liberals, leftists, nationalists, and Islamists. Some of these movements are moderate, inclusive of religious diversity and supportive of basic rights and freedoms for all Egyptians; others, like some of the so-called Salafi Islamic political movements, are openly hostile to such values. One of the ironies of the current situation is that, in order to provide a façade of including Islamist political groups, the interim government has included representatives of Salafi political parties in the constitution drafting process and has not closed down their political parties or detained and prosecuted their leaders, even though their political ideas are more extreme than many of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders and supporters who are currently in jail and branded as extremists. In common with the opportunism that seems to have characterized the behavior of virtually all political factions in Egypt, the Salafi parties have been happy to go along with this arrangement, presumably in the hope that they will gain advantage over their main rivals in the Islamist political camp, the Muslim Brotherhood.

In the elections that have taken place since Mubarak's removal, Egyptians have sometimes engaged in tactical voting. For example, many democratically-inclined, non-Islamist voters chose Morsi over Ahmed Shafik, a former general associated with the military-backed Mubarak regime, in the run-off vote in the presidential elections in June 2012. But in doing so they sought to throw off the vestiges of the old regime and did not endorse the maximalist political program of Islamization, (or Ikwhanization) of the state that the Morsi government gave the appearance of aspiring to become. Alienated over time, many of these former Morsi voters became supporters of the Tamarrod movement and called for the president's removal from power, or at least for early presidential elections. One of the many failings of the Morsi presidency is that he failed to realize that his coming to power was not a ringing endorsement by the Egyptian people of the Muslim Brotherhood's agenda.

His actions in power disregarded the views of many of the people who voted for him—not to mention, the great majority of Egyptians did not vote for him at all.

Similarly, many of those who supported the Tamarrod movement, and may even have supported, or at least acquiesced to, the military removal of President Morsi on July 3, did not do so expecting to be implicated in the mass killing of hundreds of protesters on August 14 , and the further violence that has ensued, or the wholesale round up of Muslim Brotherhood political leaders, or the intensifying restrictions on the media, the increased use of military trials against civilians and the return of the super-empowered national security state that has emerged in the last five months.

It is the great misfortune of the Copts that they are pawns in this highly destructive zero-sum political game between the Muslim Brotherhood and the military-backed national security state. Supporters of President Morsi have openly blamed the Copts for the removal of their president, claiming that Christian hostility to Islam and to the idea of a Muslim Egypt they claim to represent led them to conspire with the military and hostile foreign powers, like Israel and the United States, to overthrow a legitimately elected president. The disproportionate blame attached to the Christian community by Morsi supporters after July 3 made the community more exposed and vulnerable to the violence that has followed.

At the same time, the military-backed government and its supporters seem more interested in pointing to the anti-Christian violence as evidence of the extremism of the Muslim Brotherhood than in taking effective measures to protect Christians and their places of worship, homes and businesses from attack. While the current situation is more extreme than in the past, this is not a new phenomenon. The Mubarak regime was always ready to point to the violent excesses of Islamic extremists as an excuse to resist any pressure to implement political reform or liberalization. In a statement dated August 25, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights noted: "The security apparatus in particular has not changed the way it deals with such attacks, an approach inherited from the era of ousted President Mubarak. It has failed to intervene to prevent escalation and has been slow to respond to citizens' pleas for help." The pattern of impunity in the aftermath of sectarian attacks continues.

Supporters of President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood leadership cannot escape complicity in the escalation of attacks on the Copts. The last few months in Egypt may be seen as an object lesson in the dangers of incitement and how hateful language leads to violence. The Brotherhood in its official publications and websites, and in the statements of some of its leaders, has long tolerated anti-Christian sectarian statements, speaking about the need for an Islamist Egypt in which the Copts would be, at best, second-class citizens.

The more open media environment after the overthrow of Mubarak permitted the emergence of a variety of Islamist media outlets, some of them backed by funding from extreme religious movements in the Arab Gulf region. Hateful sectarian

rhetoric, targeting Christians, Jews, Shi'ite Muslims, and non-Islamist critics of Islamic extremism became more commonplace. The protests that sprang up after the removal of President Morsi from office on July 3 featured much inflammatory rhetoric blaming the Christians for supporting the military takeover.

This climate of political manipulation, hatred and incitement underlies the recent wave of violence. One of the worst incidents of retaliation against Copts for their supposed role in engineering the ouster of President Morsi occurred in the town of Dalga in Minya governorate. After July 3, Islamic extremists claiming to be supporters of President Morsi took control of the town, expelled the police and carried out a pogrom against the Christian population. Churches and Christian homes and businesses were burned and vandalized and Christians were forced to pay protection money to their Muslim neighbors, termed a "jizya" to give it some supposed legitimacy in terms of Islamic law. More than a hundred Christian families are reported to have fled from the town.

Egyptian human rights groups condemned the slow response of the authorities to this violent assault on the Christian community in Dalga. Only on September 16, after more than 76 days of the town being under the control of armed Islamic extremists—during which time a 4th century Christian church was burned to the ground—did the security forces move in to reclaim control of the town. Even then, the authorities did not make special efforts to protect the remaining Christian population or to facilitate the return of Christians forced out of the town.

The response of the Muslim Brotherhood to the violence in Dalga was instructive in that it showed both the way some Brotherhood media outlets used the violence to try to further blame the Copts for encouraging state violence against the Brotherhood, while using other, English language, media outlets to express solidarity with the Copts and to blame the authorities for failing to protect places of worship.

The Arabic language website of the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Freedom and Justice Party accused some Christian families in Dalga of "spreading false news" about the assaults on Christians in the town. It accused the Copts and their supporters of making false accusations in order to legitimize a further massacre of Brotherhood supporters by the security forces. Such accusations can only increase the animosity of Morsi supporters against Christians and make them more likely to condone, if not actively support, anti-Christian violence.

This pattern of different Muslim Brotherhood media outlets and different spokespeople delivering multiple, inconsistent messages has been observed before. Mina Fayek, writing on the Atlantic Council's Egypt Source blog, referred to this practice as "the Brotherhood's Doublespeak." For every conciliatory statement about tolerance and inclusion a competing quote can be found that conveys the opposite message.

The rapid deterioration in the situation of the Copts in Egypt is inextricably bound up with Egypt's political crisis, and it is hard to see how there will be substantial improvement in their current dire situation absent progress towards a political solution in Egypt that will require movement towards political reconciliation as a first step.

It continues to be the case, as it was under Mubarak, the SCAF, and the Morsi government, that the Egyptian authorities need to enhance the protection for the Coptic community, to be more responsive to complaints from the Christian community of assaults or harassment from extremists, and to hold accountable those who incite and take part in sectarian violence. The current government also should remove some of the long-standing restrictions on freedom of religion and building blocks of legal and societal discrimination targeting religious minorities, which would include repealing abusive laws prohibiting blasphemy and defamation of religions, repealing the decree banning Baha'is, and enacting a unified law for the construction and repair of all places of worship.

But these recommendations in and of themselves are inadequate as a response to the crisis now confronting Egypt's Copts and by extension the people of Egypt. The authorities to whom these recommendations might be directed are the same ones who have been in power in Egypt for many decades. They are unlikely to change their ingrained habits of giving low priority to the complaints of persecuted Christians. As noted above, their leaders may even see some advantage in such assaults against Christians continuing because it enables them to build their narrative of being engaged in a struggle against terrorists and extremists.

The Broader Challenges for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Egypt

The escalating persecution of Christians is a symptom of an unresolved political crisis in Egypt that, if left to fester, could result in many disturbing developments that would destabilize the region, hold back any possibility of economic development or peaceful democratic transition or the protection of human rights in Egypt, and be profoundly harmful to U.S. interests and to the interests of American allies.

The overall rights environment has been in steady decline throughout most of the transition, especially under SCAF rule starting in mid-2011, and continued to decline under Morsi. However, things have taken a dramatic turn for the worse in the aftermath of the July 3 coup.

The removal from office of President Morsi on July 3 by the military was met with widespread appreciation by many people in Egypt. (It is hard to know whether the supporters of the removal of Morsi represented a majority of Egyptians, or not.) Many of those who identified with the democratic, inclusive ideals of the protests that brought down President Mubarak joined the popular movement for Tamarrod

(rebellion) and were prepared to see military force used as their instrument, viewing the continuation in power of President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood as a greater threat to Egypt's democratic future than the military removal of a democratically-elected president. After mass popular protests led to the removal from office of President Mubarak in February 2011, popular street protests have assumed high prestige as indicators of political legitimacy. It has arguably become a challenge to prospects for peaceful democratic change in Egypt that street protests confer more popular legitimacy than electoral processes. It remains the case that an effective way to campaign for political change in Egypt is to mobilize large numbers of people in the streets. Popular mobilizations against the recently adopted law on public assembly are only the most recent example of this, and in accordance with recent practice, the interim government, or at least parts of it, seem prepared to take the protesters' objections into consideration.

The interim government appointed by the military to replace President Morsi's government included several credible liberal figures. Many have commented on the irony that a military coup may have resulted in Egypt's best qualified and most competent government ever. The appointment of Mohamed el-Baradei, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, and a leader in the opposition to President Mubarak, as a vice-president for international affairs was a powerful statement that the intervention of the military in Egypt's political life would be a return to the democratic ideals of the Arab Spring and not a reassertion of control by the military-backed security establishment.

This was not to be. No single act has set the tone for the military-backed interim government more than the August 14 dispersal of the pro-Morsi protests in greater Cairo at the cost of over 800 lives. Objections that some of the pro-Morsi protesters were armed and had themselves used violence cannot excuse this disproportionate use of force.

The incidents of August 14 are not the only violations of human rights perpetrated by the interim government. There have been further incidents of mass killings of protesters, such as on October 6. The authorities have held President Morsi and his close advisers in almost total incommunicado detention since his removal from office on July 3. Thousands of senior Muslim Brotherhood leaders have been detained since August 14 and held under sweeping charges of involvement in violence or terrorism.

Media outlets have been closed down, some of which gave a platform for extremists who incited hatred against Christians and other religious minorities, but other more mainstream outlets, like parts of Al-Jazeera, whose coverage was seen as too favorable to the Muslim Brotherhood, have also been closed.

The official media has embarked on a witch hunt against the Brotherhood and their supporters, who are indiscriminately painted as terrorists and extremists.

The harassment and persecution has not stopped at supporters or alleged supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. Non-Islamist critics of the military-backed interim government, like Ahmed Maher, a founder and leader of the April 6 youth movement that was central to the February 2011 uprising, have also been targeted with a criminal investigation for failing to endorse the repressive tactics of the military-backed government. Mohamed al-Baradei, who resigned from the government after August 14, has also found himself the target of a criminal investigation for criticizing the government's approach.

The military-backed government's repression of dissenting opinion, its insistence on a "you are either with us or against us" approach, has created a chilling climate for freedom of expression that is redolent of thought control associated with repressive dictatorial regimes of the past.

The methods associated with this kind of rule are from the well-worn playbook of the Mubarak era. The state security apparatus, sidelined and chastened by the uprising and its aftermath, is also back, promoting a general climate of fear and intimidation under the rubric of a "war on terrorism." Extended periods of incommunicado pre-trial detention are conducive to torture that is also reported to be returning as a common practice.

To make matters worse, all of this is taking place against the backdrop of a consistent breakdown in rule of law and the deterioration of state institutions. Again, this trend began under SCAF and continued under Morsi, both of whom engaged in politically-motivated prosecutions and selective law enforcement, and even encouraged vigilante violence when it suited their political ends. The decline of the state is most dramatic in the Sinai, where decades of state neglect and marginalization have combined with political instability and the massive influx of weapons from Libya and Sudan to escalate what was previously a low-level insurgency. But the trend has also reached the Nile valley heartland, as evidenced by the recent assassination attempt against the minister of the interior as well as the recent takeover of towns by Islamist mobs that have chased away the police for many weeks.

The return of the full-blown repressive security state will not bring lasting stability to Egypt, even if it may temporarily tamp down raw opposition to military takeover. The results of this approach are already becoming clear, partly in the escalation of attacks against Coptic Christians, but also in other acts of political violence, like the assassination attempt mentioned above. Egypt has been down this road before with a brutal clampdown on the Brotherhood and Islamism, resulting in acts of terrorism and low level civil conflict. There is no reason to believe that the current repression will be any more successful than its previous iterations, and every reason to fear that the consequences may be even worse.

Implications for U.S. Policy

The derailing of Egypt's democratic transition into a polarized, increasingly violent political conflict is a seriously negative development that requires a much more robust response from the United States if a way forward is to be found. Indeed, the United States should implement a major shift in policy to one that puts Egypt's commitment to human rights and democratization at its core. Supporting repressive governments in spite of authoritarian abuses, gross human rights violations, and growing internal instability has failed in the past. Human Rights First set out new recommendations in a Blueprint for U.S. government policy last week.

Influential voices in Egyptian society—old and new—are suspicious of the U.S. government's commitment to human rights. The U.S. embassy in Cairo needs to work with embassies from like-minded countries to show consistent and public support for independent civil society, and to explain to the Egyptian public how and why it is supporting democratic values—not as some conspiracy to undermine Egypt's sovereignty and harm Egypt's interests, but as part of a global commitment to promoting and protecting universal values of human rights.

The United States should turn an entirely new page on how it engages with Egyptian governments and the Egyptian people. Rather than giving its support and seeking cooperation with successive authoritarian leaders in Cairo, U.S. policy should be rooted in seeking to promote stability, and a return to inclusive civilian government in Egypt through respect for human rights and the rule of law. If it does not take this opportunity, the United States will inevitably continue to lose credibility and influence in a country it desperately needs to be stable and free.

Egypt's political crisis is a global and regional problem. The United States must work multilaterally with its regional and European allies who stand to be most adversely affected by any further deterioration in the political situation in Egypt. Working together with its allies can begin to exert diplomatic pressure on all parties to the conflict to end the discourse of mutual destruction, and move towards reconciliation. It may also help reverse unprecedented levels of anti-American sentiment, tied to the perception of U.S. policies toward Egypt that pay little heed to the interests of the Egyptian people.

If the Coptic Christian minority in Egypt is to be protected, political reconciliation, including permitting some supporters of President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood back into the political process, is imperative. As noted above, incitement from Morsi supporters and from the Muslim Brotherhood as an institution has contributed to the spike in violence against Christians in Egypt. For such violence to decrease it will be necessary for credible leaders associated with Morsi and the Brotherhood to adopt a discourse that consistently condemns such violence. While thousands of the Brotherhood's leaders and supporters are in jail, including its senior leadership and the leadership of it political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, there is no one with the stature to speak in the name of the

organization to disown and condemn the violence. There is also no incentive for the Brotherhood to take such a conciliatory position.

Indiscriminate labeling of all Brotherhood supporters as extremists and terrorists, as the official media in Egypt is now determined to do, and the punishment of those who dare to question or depart from this official narrative, only makes such necessary reconciliation more difficult.

The United States should not ask the Egyptian authorities to accommodate Islamists who espouse violence in their political discourse or practice as part of Egypt's political system, but leaving the large part of the Egyptian electorate that wishes to support an Islamist political party in elections disenfranchised is not a recipe for stability or inclusiveness. The United States should publicly promote reconciliation and initiate a process leading to the formation of an inclusive, civilian-led, democratic government in Cairo, and explain to Egyptians how it plans to encourage reform, human rights, and the rule of law.

There must be clear, uniform conditions set for the registration and operation of political parties that agree to be bound by the rules of peaceful, democratic contestation. Espousing sectarian hatred should not be part of any legal party's platform, but claiming inspiration from the non-violent values of a religious tradition must be accommodated.

The adoption of a new draft constitution provides some opportunities for the U.S. government to frame its interactions with Egyptian leaders geared towards promoting human rights using language and provisions that appear in the new draft. The new draft includes some enhanced protections for international standards and the Egyptian authorities should be encouraged to live up to them. With respect to the situation of religious minorities, the new draft includes a prohibition against discrimination on religious grounds. There is an unusual constitutional article requiring the new Parliament, when it is elected, to pass a long-discussed uniform law on the repair and construction of religious buildings. This law would be aimed to overcome official obstacles to the repair and construction of churches, and to facilitate the repair of the many churches damaged in recent protests. At the same time, there are elements of the draft that raise human rights concerns, especially the continuation of the right of the military to try civilians before military courts, and the lack of accountability of the military to civilian authorities. Of even more concern, adopting a draft constitution including safeguards for basic rights and freedoms while flagrant violations of the right to freedom of assembly have just been imposed, while thousands of the government's political opponents are jailed and subject to judicial proceedings that lack fairness and appear selective, and while violence by the security forces has been unleashed against civilians with unprecedented ferocity, does not inspire confidence that fine language will be translated into effective safeguards.

Working with its donor partners the United States must establish sizeable, sustained economic incentives for Egypt's leaders that should be conditioned on Egypt adhering to democratic norms and international human rights standards. Consistent with the policy goal of supporting the rule of law and human rights, the United States should use its voice and vote at the IMF to refrain from approving loans to Egypt until sound economic policies are in place and meaningful progress is made on key human rights and rule of law benchmarks. The United States should also communicate to other potential lenders and donors its assessment of Egypt's economic progress and reliability. Egypt's economy desperately needs liquidity, but an IMF loan absent human rights reforms is a recipe for a new economic crisis and continued instability.

While the initial investment from the United States and its partners would have to be large if it was to have the desired effect, the benefits to the international community of a successful transition and an economic recovery in Egypt would be commensurately large. The costs of failing to adequately support Egypt at this time of peril for the country would be unimaginably high, and the Christians of Egypt would be among the first victims.

The Obama Administration suspended the delivery of "certain military systems" after the coup and the ensuing violence, and President Obama stated that the resumption of military assistance "will depend upon Egypt's progress in pursuing a democratic path." The president is right to set human rights and democracy conditions on military aid to Egypt. The Egyptian military leadership holds effective political power in Cairo. If it wishes to benefit from a close, cooperative military relationship with the United States then it must use this power to move Egypt back on to a path of peaceful, inclusive, civilian-led governance.

The United States government knows the values and practices that undergird the functioning of a successful democratic state. These include the rule of law, protected by an independent judiciary; a free press, and clear legal protections for freedom of expression; religious freedom and protection of the rights of religious minorities; and strong independent civil society organizations with the capacity to monitor the behavior and conduct of government institutions and to expose official wrongdoing. This infrastructure cannot be built overnight, and it must be put in place by Egyptians themselves. U.S. policy should be geared towards producing a substantial multilateral initiative to help Egyptians build this necessary infrastructure. The State Department and USAID should continue to find ways—bilaterally and/or multilaterally—to fund civil society efforts to combat human rights abuses and promote religious pluralism and tolerance.

Mr. SMITH. Again, we are going to have to leave the room shortly because of the security sweep in anticipation of Secretary Kerry's trip, so what I thought, all of us on the panel will go through a few questions, and if you could take notes, we will do it all at once, and then you answer those questions as you see fit.

Bishop Angaelos, if I could just say, you mentioned the kidnapping of Coptic Christian girls, which is an issue that I chaired three hearings on, and Congressman, the chairman, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, was there at each of those hearings. We did not get good answers back from the administration. As a matter of fact, they failed to raise those issues in any substantive way. Could you speak to that very briefly? And there are many other issues I would like to ask you, but time does not permit it.

Dr. Abou-Sabe, you mentioned the close relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood. Who advised the administration, if you know, to do that? I remember when you briefed me in my office several months ago, you went to great historical lengths to tell me and my staff what the true underpinnings of that organization are and the hostility that they bear to so many, including other Muslims. If you could speak to that.

If I could, you mentioned, Mr. Stahnke, about the suspicious nature of many toward the U.S. Government. It didn't help that when the President spoke at the United Nations he talked about our core interest including Camp David Accords and counterterrorism and no mention, as far as I could tell, whatsoever of human rights. So if you could speak to that as well.

And, finally, the forced reconciliation issue that, Mr. Tadros, you spoke to, it seems to me that law enforcement should be all about enforcing the law. Somebody commits a murder, a rape, burns down somebody's house, you arrest, you prosecute, and then you jail based on the evidence. You don't force a Coptic Christian or the victim into a "reconciliation." If you could elaborate on that.

Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank our panel for their testimony. Many of these issues are heartwrenching issues. And as my friend Ileana Ros-Lehtinen knows, I was a Senate staff member for 10 years, and every time President Mubarak appeared before our committee—I worked for Claiborne Pell at the time—we forcefully tried to make the case on behalf of minorities, especially Coptic Christians in Egypt, and the house arrest of Pope Shenouda and other issues. It is a little bit troubling that those same issues haven't changed. In fact, maybe have gotten worse.

I will say, however, human rights are human rights, whether you are a Copt or a Muslim. The fact of the matter is hundreds, if not more, of Egyptians have been slaughtered on the streets of urban Egypt since the military coup. I had a constituent come to see me last week. He had to pick up his brother. He is an American citizen, he had to pick up his brother back in Cairo. He was shot in the head, one bullet. He went to visit the morgue. There were dozens of bodies from protests, street protests. Shot in the head. And interestingly the death certificate said died of natural causes. And it is an elaborate process to get the police to redo the death certificate if you want the body. And if you are a Muslim that is a big

deal. If you are a Christian, too, but there are time limits. Very elaborate process to go to the police and get them to admit this was homicide, not a natural cause. The trauma is extensive.

And I say that both Muslims and Copts and others in Egypt are suffering today. And I would hope, Bishop Angaelos, that in the Christian view you and I share it encompasses the violation of the human rights of Muslims as well as Copts, because in your safety is also theirs and in theirs is also yours. And I wonder if you might comment a little bit about that from your perspective.

And, Mr. Stahnke, I thank you so much for acknowledging those points, because I think as we move forward in the United States we have got to deal with the political reality of how do you put together a coalition that can work moving forward, that encompasses all of the points of view of Egypt.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Madam Chair.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Two questions, one on the draft Constitution and the second on the NGOs. As we know, Morsi rammed through a Constitution that severely restricted all rights, women's rights, religious rights, ethnic rights. And although the referendum passed, it only had a 33-percent voter turnout. Now we have got this draft Constitution. In theory it recognizes the rights of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, but leaves other religious minorities, such as the Baha'i community, unprotected. What can we do to ensure that the new Constitution would not restrict the fundamental rights of any Egyptian and that real progress is made, not just in theory but in practice?

And on the NGO convictions, they still have not been overturned. The draft NGO law that is proposed will have many of these NGOs still fearful if they continue operating in Egypt. What can we in the U.S. do to ensure that the Egyptians have what they need to build the capacity, foundation for a strong democracy? What do you think that the future of the NGOs will be? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Frankel.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I just want to say that, for me, I say freedom of religion is like the H_2O of human rights. What water is to the body, for many people freedom of religion is the water for their soul. So I want to emphasize that. And so when I was in Egypt, I think I mentioned that we met with Coptic Pope Tawadros II. He shared stories with us of the burning of the churches and the oppression, showed us photos, and so forth.

My first question is, do you believe that this concept of freedom of religion is recognized universally in Egypt? Is it something that most Egyptians even know or feel?

And then the other issue I would like you to comment on, and I think it was raised by Mr. Rohrabacher, I think he was getting there, which is, you know, there is a concept called "first, do no harm." And so my second question would be really is, what about Israel, the stability of the Middle East? There has been some suggestions of us perhaps withdrawing support or having certain conditions for support of the military. I would like you to comment on that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Weber.

Mr. WEBER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I could get these questions answered, to my staff, I guess. They are not going to comment later. Is that right, Mr. Chairman? We are out of time? Oh, they are going to comment, okay.

For each of you, what do you view as the greatest hope of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims? What is their greatest hope? And how do we reconcile those differences? And that is pretty simple, isn't it? And I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much.

Here we are stuck with trying to figure out whether we are going to use our heads or whether we are going to use our hearts, and whether there is a contradiction in America's soul about these very questions that we are talking about today. We must obviously be committed to our ideals, and yet we must also understand if we do not have a commitment to a practical policy we could end up bringing the world and bringing ourselves to the opposite of where our ideals would have us go.

So I would suggest that finally where does this all land us for this hearing? And that is, and I would just like to state and get your opinion on it, denying spare parts to the Egyptian Army at this moment would not lead to a better world and to a better situation in Egypt, and that is my analysis of it. What is your response to that?

Mr. SMITH. And Mr. Meadows.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will just ask each of you to submit for the record, if you would, where the Egyptian people view five inconsistencies in U.S. foreign policy. Inconsistencies. And so where do the Egyptian people see where we are saying one thing and doing another? If you could do that.

And I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Your Grace, if you could begin, and each of our distinguished witnesses.

Bishop ANGAELOS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the view of the kidnapping of those, of course, as has been mentioned numerous times, there is an inequality before the law, and so the way that the matters are investigated sometimes depends on who is on the receiving end of the alleged criminal action. And so I think what we have seen is in times there have been forced conversions. There have been forced kidnappings. At those times, security forces have been reluctant to investigate. Even if the outcome of the investigation is that it was an intentional action, or it was a personal choice, the investigation needs to be transparent, needs to be honest, and we haven't seen those. What we have seen is where calls have been made in particular cases that have been proven to be forced. They have been set aside because they have been designed not to cause offense to particularly majority Muslim areas where that could cause trouble for the security forces.

So there are, just as in the case where people were attacked in their homes and this deal was struck, sometimes similar things are done to ensure that there is some sort of equilibrium kept at the expense of the Christian community there, of course.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Tadros.

Mr. TADROS. A couple of on the general questions. I think there are definitely huge abuses of human rights in Egypt, not only to Christians, as the honorable Member pointed out, the massacre of Muslim Brotherhood supporters was probably the largest such massacre in Egyptian history, and it is an extremely polarizing event. I know it is easy to talk of the Egyptian people, but there are divisions within those people. The Muslim Brotherhood continues to have supporters. Exact figures are hard to tell, of course, because we didn't have an election. Street demonstrations are hard to count and hard to determine who has more supporters on the street, so there is a continuous polarization today in Egypt, and there is no plan on how to solve that situation.

Egypt is not transitioning to democracy. There is an attempt to rebuild authoritarian regime with some changes as to different shaping just from what was under Mubarak, but there is no attempt to create a serious democracy in Egypt at all. People have a lot of anger—both sides in Egypt have a lot of anger toward the United States, and part of it is simply conspiracy theorizing and active propaganda by the various groups, whether it is the Muslim Brotherhood or the Egyptian military to paint the United States as an enemy and to use that as an attempt to shore support for the various sides.

Specifically, to the rule of law, I think there has been a lot of focus on general words. We need to have a general situation where people in Egypt are all treated equally. These are all nice words, but the important things, the specifics that can deal with that situation, I would like to suggest a few.

First, identification. It doesn't take a genius to identify what are the most vulnerable villages in Egypt that are likely to witness attacks. Experts on the situation of Christians in Egypt could have told you before the 14th of August that the governorate of Menya was likely to have the most attacks. So, a process needs to be there where the 100 most vulnerable villages can be identified. The Egyptian Government should be urged to do that. The U.S. might be able to help, giving resources to help that process to happen;, it is important to prevent those attacks from happening at the first place.

Secondly, the Egyptian police needs to have a security protocol to deal with mob violence. Again, if this situation has been repeating itself one time after the other, there needs to be a clear security protocol on how to deal with those specific incidents.

Thirdly, a crisis office in the Egyptian Presidency that has actual power to deal specifically with that issue so that it is not an issue left to each local governor or local police station to deal with, but there is a headquarters that deals with it.

Fourthly, a rapid response unit whereby once the situation is created in one of those villages, and that office immediately sends a rapid response unit to deal with that situation in the village.

Fifth, the reform of the legal system in terms of having actual punishment, giving up on those reconciliation sessions, punishing those people that attack the Christians.

Lastly, a localized reward and punishment system. Again, if the governorate of Menya witnesses the most attacks on Christians

and the local authorities there are not willing to protect the religious minorities or the worst violators of human rights, then probably the governorate of Menya should not be receiving U.S. funding through USAID. Perhaps the governorate of Sohad, which has a better performance on those issues would get more USAID funding of that regard, so localizing both punishment and rewards for the governorate in an attempt to enforce the local governors and the local authorities to deal with those specific issues.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Thank you. Dr. Abou-Sabe.

Mr. ABOU-SABE. Thank you. The first question—I thank you, Mr. Chairman. Your first question is about what was behind this, and I don't really have any particular evidence, but what the news media in Egypt have reported on throughout early this year, essentially that there may have been some sort of an agreement of sorts for, more or less, annexing a portion of the northern Sinai with Gaza for the benefit of the solution of the Palestinian-Israeli problem, and in essence, that that portion of the Sinai was going to be used to allow additional Palestinians, to come in, and that really was—so the Muslim Brotherhood was essentially the entity that came in the right time that would allow that to happen because of its close relationship with Hamas and all that, and the idea was essentially to establish an arc of "moderate Islamic states," essentially, you know, between Egypt, Gaza, and Turkey, and obviously that all was really very, very incorrect and bad.

In terms of the U.S. foreign policy, the question, the question that was asked about U.S. foreign policy, I think it is important that—there is a whole feeling in Egypt among the people that, you know, people are like, you know, conspiracies, in essence, that there is a fear that the U.S. may be, as well as other countries, may be embarking on a redefining of the Middle East, and I think Secretary Condoleezza Rice had publicly stated in many situations that we are redrawing, we are going to create some chaos and some havoc and there will be some instability, and out of this instability we might end up with some democracy and maybe with the democracy that we get, then we need to really redraw the map of the Middle East in the way that we can actually have an impact on the outcome itself.

So, I mean, it is a very long story, but the suspicion is there. And I am not in agreement to people that say that the aid is an essential part for Egypt. I think it is not. It is really the relationship and the support for the development of the country, allowing the country to utilize its resources, allowing it to use its human resources is very, very important in Egypt.

And the last point that I will say essentially, religious freedom, the question I was asked about religious freedom. Islam came to Egypt 1,400 years ago, and until the Muslim Brothers came into the picture last 1½ years or 2 years, everybody in Egypt had the full opportunity to practice his religion, whatever it was. I grew up in Egypt, and when I was in the grade school and high school, most of my friends were Christians, and actually I had a Jewish friend as well, Eliahu Cohen, and never had any difference. My name is Morad, which is not an Islamic name.

I was many, many times confused that I was also a Copt, so it was not an issue until the Muslim Brothers came in, and that is

why it is important to really recognize that. Freedom of religion in Egypt is there always, has always been there. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Mr. Stahnke.

Mr. STAHNKE. Thank you. Well, Mr. Chairman, I think it was unfortunate that the President did not mention human rights in his U.N. speech. That was a missed opportunity to be clear about what the United States stands for, and this administration and previous ones have shown an ambivalent relationship to promoting human rights and democracy in Egypt and in the region, and we are hoping that the policy review that the administration says that it is undertaking will make it clear and actually reorder U.S. priorities to focus more clearly on democratic and human rights developments.

Now, the President's comments do, I think, get a little bit to what the question Mr. Rohrabacher had about in terms of our head and our hearts. But in my view, there is a difference between spare parts and aid for the Egyptians to conduct counterterrorism and border security and even some of the specific things that Mr. Tadros mentioned about protecting civilians.

The difference between that and sort of prestige weapons systems, some sort of false sense of balance of military power, I think that the US aid relationship can be looked at and reformed and reordered to bring about a mix of carrots and sticks, conditions, but also the promise for significant economic development. I think the Bishop mentioned that, you know, that the country is in dire need of economic development, and you know, the Saudis can give cash, but the West can bring about investments. Stability can help bring about tourism again in the country. This is the type of economic development that the country needs and that the United States and its Western partners and the IMF can bring about, but they should do it in a phased way in response to serious reforms on some of the human rights issues that Mr. Connolly mentioned as well as the religious freedom issues that we are talking about today.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Stahnke.

Again, because of the sweep that is pending for Secretary Kerry's testimony, the hearing is adjourned. I would ask everyone if they could leave the room immediately so they can come in and do the sweep, and I thank you so much for your tremendous insights and for your expert testimony. Hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:15 a.m., the subcommittees were adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Record

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ), Chairman

Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman

December 3, 2013

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held jointly by the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at www.foreignaffairs.house.gov):

DATE: Tuesday, December 10, 2013

TIME: 9:00 a.m.

SUBJECT: Human Rights Abuses in Egypt

WITNESSES:

Panel I
Zuhdi Jasser, M.D.
Vice Chair
U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

Panel II
His Grace Bishop Angaelos
General Bishop
Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom

Mr. Samuel Tadros
Research Fellow
Center for Religious Freedom
Hudson Institute

Morad Abou-Sabe, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus
Rutgers University
(Former President of Misr University for Science & Technology)

Mr. Tad Stahnke
Director of Policy and Programs
Human Rights First

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations the Middle East and North Africa* HEARING

Day *Tuesday* **Date** *December 10, 2013* **Room** *2172 Rayburn HOB*

Starting Time *9:00 a.m.* **Ending Time** *11:15 a.m.*

Recesses [0] (to) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Rep. Chris Smith

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]
Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING:

Human Rights Abuses in Egypt

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

AGH: Rep. Weber, Rep. Meadows
MENA: Rep. Ros-Lehtinen, Rep. Frankel, Rep. Connolly, Rep. Cotton

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

Rep. Wolf*, Rep. Rohrabacher, Rep. Bilirakis

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] **No** [ ]
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

Mr. Tadros' response to Rep. Meadows' question for the record
Materials submitted by Dr. Abou-Sabe for the record

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *11:15 a.m.*

Gregory B. Simpkins
Subcommittee Staff Director

RESPONSE FROM MR. SAMUEL TADROS, RESEARCH FELLOW, CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, HUDSON INSTITUTE

QUESTION FOR THE RECORD OF THE HONORABLE MARK MEADOWS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
AND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
"HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN EGYPT"
December 10, 2013

Please submit for the record five inconsistencies the Egyptian people view in U.S foreign policy. Where do the Egyptian people see instances where we are saying one thing and doing another?

Dear Sir,

Given the amount of polarization in Egyptian society at the moment it is nearly impossible to speak of one Egyptian people in terms of their worldview, understanding of politics, and view of the United States government.

As such I would have to divide my answer into two representing the two different competing powers and visions currently locked in a zero sum struggle, while acknowledging the fine lines within each camp and the existence of people who share neither.

For both camps United States government actions are understood and interpreted within the framework of existing worldviews and reinforced by local propaganda.

For supporters of deposed President Mohamed Morsi, the United States is viewed as an enemy; sometimes of Islam in general, sometimes more specifically of the Islamist project. The United States, according to their worldview, holds ill will towards them. As such, the United States decision not to label the military coup that took place in Egypt, as a coup is understood as a continuation of that hostility. Statements by Secretary Kerry suggesting that the Muslim Brotherhood hijacked the Egyptian revolution, that the military had to intervene, and that Egypt is now moving towards a transition to democracy have all served to reinforce that impression. For the more radical members of this camp, the United States has not only failed in condemning the coup but actually conspired with the military to remove President Morsi.

For supporters of the Egyptian military, the United States is also viewed as harboring ill will towards Egypt. Many non-Islamists felt betrayed by the failure of the United States to condemn President Morsi's power grab in December 2012. Subsequent meeting by Ambassador Paterson with Muslim Brotherhood officials up to the eve of the coup, served to reinforce the impression that the United States has taken the Islamists' side. Regime propaganda has spread outright lies and fabrications regarding the intentions of the United States and claims of secret plans to divide Egypt. Egyptian TV stations and newspapers have suggested a long list of conspiracy theories

regarding President Obama, his connection to the Brotherhood, his secret pacts with them, and his hatred of Egypt. As such supporters of the military interpret every US action as part of such plans.

For both camps, anti American propaganda and conspiracy theories serve to reinforce previous perceptions of the United States and to shore up support.

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY MORAD ABOU-SABE, PH.D., PROFESSOR EMERITUS, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY (FORMER PRESIDENT OF MISR UNIVERSITY FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY)

Opinion: Egypt is challenged by a high-stakes tug of war

Times of Trenton guest opinion column
on June 28, 2013

By Morad Abou-Sabé

It is difficult to imagine that the Egyptian revolution of Jan. 25, 2011, happened more than two years ago, and that the first year of Egyptian President Morsi's rule is about to end June 30. Certainly, a lot has happened in that short period of time, but where it will take Egypt is as uncertain today as it was after the removal of former President Mubarak two years ago.

The tug of war that has characterized the battles between the Muslim Brotherhood and the rest of the country has paralyzed Egypt in every way possible, whether it is the lack of security and the robberies in broad daylight that have taken over every corner of Egypt or the free-fall economy that spiraled out of control, leaving unemployment at record highs. As stated in an April 2013 World Bank report: "Egypt's economy is still suffering from a severe downturn, and the government faces numerous challenges as to how to restore growth, market and investor confidence."

What has happened in Egypt since Morsi's election has demonstrated, by all accounts, internal and external, the inability of the Muslim Brotherhood and its Freedom and Justice Party to govern the country. In the meantime, Morsi's government has concentrated on consolidating its powers, controlling all senior and middle management positions throughout the government by installing its members and associates to these positions.

Not only that, but adding insult to injury, Morsi just appointed a former convicted terrorist responsible for the massacre of tourists in the 1990s to the governorship of Luxor, the site of these massacres. The minister of tourism found the appointment to be so appalling that he immediately resigned.

In an important speech by the Muslim Brotherhood's strongman and once its nominee for Egypt's presidency, Khairat El-Shater, explained in no uncertain terms the "Nahda (Renaissance) Project" of the Brotherhood in April 2012. El-Shater's long speech was no less than a manifesto of the Brotherhood's plan for Egypt's doomed future.

As El-Shater opened his remarks, it became utterly clear what he has in store for Egypt: "As Ikhwan (the Muslim Brotherhood), it is imperative that we, as well as the entirety of the [nation], God willing, take advantage of this revolution which took place in Egypt and continues in the countries surrounding us, and which undoubtedly represents a historical moment and a major new transformative stage."

He continues: "Thus the mission is clear: restoring Islam in its all-encompassing conception; subjugating people to God; instituting the religion of God; the Islamization of life; ... establishing the [renaissance of the nation] on the basis of Islam ... [is the] overall mission which we are seeking to accomplish as Ikhwan."

So what else is in store for Egypt under the Brotherhood? It is the establishment of an Islamic state that would be the center of a global Islamic state. As El-Shater continues: "Thus we've learned [to start with] building the Muslim individual, the Muslim family, the Muslim society, the Islamic government, the global Islamic state, reaching the status of [eminence] with that state ... the empowerment of God's religion."

With all that going on and while Egypt moves closer and closer to a "non-state" status, with the absence of law and order and the many elements that define a functioning government, our esteemed Anne Patterson, U.S. ambassador to Egypt, met with El-Shater and said "the Egyptian conflict should be resolved through the ballot box," in clear support of Morsi's government. Patterson's comments drew the ire of all the opposition groups in Egypt and, more important, the army, as evidenced by its statement cautioning the ambassador from interfering in Egyptian internal affairs.

I do not know how long the Obama administration will continue to blunder, not knowing whom to support or with whom to work. The absence of vision is embarrassing and can only end up blowing back in our face. I cannot imagine our administration endorsing such lunacy as was expressed by Mr. El-Shater, to say nothing of meeting with him.

Sunday marks the first anniversary of Morsi's presidency. The whole country is agonizing about what will happen that day. As the opposition groups collected more than 14 million signatures to recall Morsi's presidency and call for early presidential elections, the Brotherhood militia is gathering forces to prevent any such move from taking place, in support of President Morsi. In the meantime, the army's chief of staff has called on the parties to resolve their differences in a peaceful manner. The army further cautioned that it will not tolerate any violence.

The stakes are high in Egypt, not only for Egyptians but also for America. The rise of radical Islam, as envisioned by the Muslim Brotherhood or the Taliban or al Qaeda, can only be a dangerous step, if it succeeds, toward a real clash of civilizations. I hope that day will never come.

Morad Abou-Sabé is president of the Arab American League of Voters of New Jersey. Contact him at ***Morad@abousabe.com****.*

Will U.S. help Egyptians in their quest for democracy?

By Morad Abou-Sabé

The events unfolding in Cairo, and other Egyptian cities, offer a great promise of change in the governance in Egypt. Inspired by the success of the revolt that culminated in the exile of the president of Tunisia, the uprising in Egypt was also organized using Twitter and Facebook. Messaging among some 50,000 respondents set Jan. 25 for their demonstration against the government. The outcome in Egypt may not necessarily be the same as in Tunisia; however, these next few days could be critical for the success of the opposition.

Egypt is the largest Arab country in the Middle East and has been the primary stabilizing force in the Arab-Israeli conflict for the past 40-plus years. Egypt, under the late President Anwar Sadat, was the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel. That peace treaty remains in effect to this day.

The assassination of President Sadat in 1981 brought into power President Hosni Mubarak, who was Sadat's vice president. Ever since his ascension to the presidency 30 years ago, Mubarak has held the reins of power in Egypt.

Meanwhile, even with a peace economy for five six-year terms under Mubarak, Egypt did not manage to keep up with the needs of its growing population, which today stands at 83 million. Instead, the economic gap between the haves and have-nots widened, poverty increased to new levels, the quality of education plummeted, the country's service infrastructure has become dilapidated, unemployment remains at record highs and inflation continues to rise by the day.

As such, Egypt has not only lost its leadership position in the region, but has also not helped its own people share in the economic, educational and technological advancements that characterized that period, especially during the last 20 years. Instead, there has been an unprecedented decline in all facets of life for the average Egyptian, an absence of enforcement of the rule of law, and an enormous increase in the corruption that has become prevalent at all levels of government.

This decline did not come from a lack of drive or ability on the part of the average Egyptian. Rather, it has been, for the most part, due to the preoccupation of the government and the ruling elite with maintaining their hold on all facets of life in the country, distributing the country's wealth among themselves and, above all, keeping the presidency in the family and changing the constitution to allow passing on succession to Mubarak's son.

During this short period of Egyptian history, the U.S. government has not done what it should have to help democratic change in the country. While providing annual monetary aid of $2 billion to $3 billion, the primary interest of the U.S. government has been to keep the status quo. The United States' interest in using Egypt as the stabilizing element in Middle East politics was, and apparently continues to be, more important than helping democratic change in the country. The latest pronouncement by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on the current situation was nothing but a disappointment to all Egyptians, who were hoping for the all-too-important U.S. support for their cries for peaceful change to a democratic rule in Egypt.

Using Egypt to prod the Palestinians, when needed, in the many attempts for a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict continues to be the policy of the U.S. government. Providing lip service, from time to time, for democratic change, the U.S. interest remains in keeping the corrupt governments where they are, not only in Egypt, but also in many other countries in the region. For fear of an assumed Islamization of the government, if the current regime is changed, the U.S. government continues its support of the Mubarak regime even against the constant cry and demand of the Egyptian people for free elections and the pursuit of democratic change.

It is not clear at this early stage what may happen in Egypt and whether the Mubarak government will commit to the changes demanded by the opposition, namely: Mubarak's declaration that he would not run for the presidency at the end of his current term (2011), as well as a dissolution of the current parliament and new and free elections for a new parliament.

These demands call for an important and valiant step by the U.S. government. The U.S. must help at this important juncture to achieve a peaceful democratic change in Egypt — a change that would help the 83 million Egyptians have an opportunity to freely participate in their own governance and a chance to rid the country of the rampant corruption that has beleaguered it for so many years. The Egyptian people are not radical in any way. Throughout Egypt's 7,000-year history, Egyptians have been submissive to their rulers and mainly kept their focus on their work and families.

It is time for Egypt to have a chance at democratic governance — a chance for the Egyptian people to freely choose their government. The Egyptian people want a democratic change to civil governance — and not a revolution that would only bring another dictator.

Morad Abou-Sabé, Ph.D., is president of the Arab American League of Voters of New Jersey.

Letter to President Obama: Clear Resolutions, Not Transitions, Will Give Egyptians A Voice

Jeffrey H. Toney/NJ Voices
February 03, 2011

This article was co-authored with Dr. Morad Abou-Sabe, President of the Arab American League of Voters of New Jersey.

Dear President Obama,

The US bears an enormous responsibility for the ongoing crisis in Egypt as violence escalates. Unfortunately the delay of a formal response from the White House to the political strife that began January 25, combined with ambiguity in your speech on the evening of February 1 has done little to quell the unrest of the crowds of hundreds of thousands of Egyptian citizens awaiting a clear path forward.

Mr. President, people are dying in the streets in Egypt right now. Cairo may soon become a firestorm of riotous factions battling for political power if you do not stop Mubarak from using his ruthless tactics that include turning people against each other. Those hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Egyptian citizens who protested peacefully for the last nine days are caught in the middle of an increasingly aggressive response from Mubarak's administration.

Continuing to support Mubarak against the clear and unanimous interest of the Egyptian people is not what we expected from the US Government, and does not reflect the spirit of your eloquent speech delivered in Cairo in June 2009, when you said:

But I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. These are not just American ideas; they are human rights. And that is why we will support them everywhere.

The Egyptian people are waiting for your Administration to put these powerful words into action. We have full confidence that you can do so decisively and swiftly.

We know full well that your heart is with the freedom of the Egyptian people and that deep in your heart you want to see democracy and freedom flourish across the Middle East. Mr. President, let your heart guide your policy, let your pronouncements meet that intensity.

Time is not on the side of the young Egyptian masses who are only seeking a chance for having their dignity back, a chance for having their human rights and freedom reaffirmed. Last evening, you called for Egypt to begin a transition now. A transition lasting until the Fall cannot resolve the ongoing human rights violations in the streets of Egypt. It is a disease for which the only cure is clear, swift resolution and peaceful transition of power for the next chapter in Egypt's history. Let the US and Egypt do this together, hand in hand.

A version of this article was published at ***ScienceBlogs*** and at ***The Huffington Post.***

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Khairat al-Shater on the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood

UPON HIS RELEASE FROM PRISON IN MARCH 2011, KHAIRAT AL-SHATER, the Deputy Guide of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, was reportedly tasked by the Guidance Council of the Brotherhood with performing a comprehensive review of the movement's overall strategy in the post-Mubarak era. This new strategy, which is supposed to reflect the fact of the Brotherhood's rise as the most powerful political force in Egypt today, has often been referred to as "The Nahda Project." (Nahda means "Renaissance" or "Rise.")

We know very little about al-shater as a politician. he has been described as the "IronMan" of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). As one of Egypt's most successful businessmen, his prestigious stature within the MB's ranks might be attributed to his financial support to the movement over the years. His prestige also derives from the enormous personal suffering that he has endured for the MB's cause: He has spent more than half of the past two decades in prison, and his property has been confiscated twice in the same period. Al-Shater, moreover, is well connected internationally, and has very strong business ties across the region—in Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, among other places. He is also said to be a major supporter of Hamas.

When the Muslim Brotherhood sought to contest the present Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri and his cabinet, it was not surprising that their nominee for the office was Khairat Al-Shater. When, more recently, the Brotherhood failed to force their will on the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, the movement decided to renege on all of their reassuring promises since the outbreak of the Egyptian Revolution in 2011 and run a candidate in the upcoming presidential elections. Once more, this candidate was Khairat Al-Shater.

The importance of Al-Shater and his project therefore cannot be exaggerated. The following text is a complete English translation of a lecture Al-Shater gave in Alexandria, Egypt on April 21, 2011. The lecture, which is entitled "Features of Nahda: Gains of the Revolution and the Horizons for Developing," is perhaps the single most important elaboration to date of not only Al-Shater's worldview and politics, but of the MB's plan for the future of Egypt and the region more generally in the post-Mubarak era.

The following translation of Al-Shater's speech is based on a transcription of a video recording of the lecture, which is presently available on YouTube.[1] This transcription and translation is made available through the efforts of a team from the Egyptian Union of Liberal Youth, including (as transcriber) Ahmed Ragab Mohameed, (translator) Damien Pieretti, and (editor) Amr Bargisi. *~Translator's Note*

* * *

FIRST OF ALL I WOULD LIKE TO DIRECT MY THANKS TO MY MENTORS AND IKHWAN in Alexandria for this audience and reception, with thanks due to Ustath[2] Gum'a Amin, Deputy General Guide and our mentor for a long time, and to all of our mentors in Alexandria, and likewise to our sisters in the Administrative Office, thanks to all of you, and may God reward you well and bless you, and accept your deeds and ours. I truly feel great happiness to have this meeting today with my brothers in Alexandria, after prisons have deprived us for a long time from meeting you and enjoying your company, and this was bestowed upon us by God after the success of the great revolution of this kind and blessed people, so may God reward you well.

Our talk today is about the developing of Ikhwani[3] work. As you all know that His Grace the [General] Guide and the Guidance Bureau charged me with the supervision over the issue of developing Ikhwani Work. This matter, as you all know, is an imperative and continuous one. We were taught that Ihsan[4] is an important degree in the life of the Muslim which he constantly seeks by pursuing the causes[5] for improving [one's] work up to the highest degree of mastery. We were also taught that wisdom is the believer's objective, wherever he finds it he is the most worthy of it. And, we were taught that the mercy of God comes to him who came to know his times, so that his path became straightforward. Therefore one's [i.e. our] approach, while keeping faith in the General Rules of the Islamic method, is to continuously examine reality and the changes he or his Ummah[6] experience, or that occur in his life or in that of the Gama'a,[7] so as to pursue the causes which render his methods, manners and means compatible with this reality; benefitting from all its positive changes while minimizing the effects of its negative changes. The issue of improvement, betterment, mastery, developing or

The complete version of this article can be accessed at:

http://www.hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/1272/khairat_al_shater.pdf

Links to Videos submitted by Dr. Morad Abou-Sabe

http://youtu.be/jhycTFgwBPo

http://youtu.be/XWDM1srJ1-E

http://youtu.be/PgfvLJIRXZI

http://youtu.be/SXZZOj6gbKQ

http://youtu.be/qpb0yN5a1sc