

DEMONSTRATIONS IN TAHRIR SQUARE: TWO YEARS LATER, WHAT HAS CHANGED?

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2013

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 11 o'clock a.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The subcommittee will come to order. I want to recognize the presence in the audience of a dear friend of our committee, Annette Lantos, the widow of the late chairman of this committee, Tom Lantos. It is always a pleasure, Annette, to see you. Thank you.

After recognizing myself and the ranking member, my good friend, Mr. Ted Deutch, for 5 minutes each for our opening statements, I will then recognize other members seeking recognition for 1 minute each.

We will then hear from our witnesses and without objection, the witnesses' prepared statements will be made a part of the record and members may have 5 days to insert statements and questions for the record, subject to the length limitation and the rules.

Before I begin my remarks, I would like to convey my deepest condolences to the families of the nearly 20 tourists killed and others injured in the horrific hot air balloon accident in Egypt today. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families.

The Chair now recognizes herself for 5 minutes. Two years ago, on January 25, Egyptians were poised to cast off the yoke of oppression and maybe, just maybe, bring an end to authoritarian rule in Egypt. The hopes of the Egyptian people and those of many other nations across the globe, including here in the United States, would be that Egypt would finally be able to transition to true democratic rule.

Then in June 2012, Mohammad Morsi and the Islamic Muslim Brotherhood came to power. Hopes for a free and democratic society in Egypt quickly eroded into fears that the new Muslim Brotherhood-led government would turn on its people. Last November, Morsi took unilateral action to consolidate his power by issuing a decree that he would be immune from judicial challenge while also orchestrating a draft constitution that imposes strict Islamist practices.

The new constitution was hastily put together after opposition parties and religious and ethnic minority groups abandoned the discussion over their objections to the Islamist-dominated proceedings. Instead, the Muslim Brotherhood-led government was able to integrate Sharia law into the constitution while leaving out crucial protections for ethnic and religious minorities.

In addition, there have been reports of unprecedented crackdown on Egyptians trying to express their freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly. Earlier this month, a live TV broadcast caught Morsi's police agents brutally beating, stripping, and dragging an Egyptian civilian, Hamada Saber, during protests against the regime in Cairo. Dozens of protesters have died or have been injured in clashes with the Morsi regime, yet this has not deterred Morsi, nor has it affected the Obama administration's stance on Egypt.

Since the 2-year anniversary of the Egyptian revolution, Egyptians have rushed to Tahrir Square and to the streets chanting the same slogans they used to oust Mubarak. In their eyes, this revolution is not over. Their objectives have not yet been reached as they thirst for democracy and protections of their human rights. Nevertheless, the U.S. administration continues to double down on its failed Egypt policy and has done nothing to prevent U.S. taxpayer dollars, F-16 fighter jets, tanks, and other support to be sent to the Morsi regime.

Much attention has justifiably been given to the Benghazi attacks on September 11th, but many may forget that our Embassy in Cairo was also attacked on that same date. During this attack the Egyptian Government failed to provide the necessary security support needed to prevent the protesters from breaching the walls of our Embassy.

As our nation is set to face dramatic economic cuts this week due to sequestration, we should not be providing funds without conditions to the Muslim Brotherhood-led government that is not conforming to democratic principles and is not on the right path to fulfill its obligations to the international community and to its own citizens.

As the administration seeks to send hundreds of millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars to the Morsi regime, we need to reexamine our aid package and use it as leverage to promote true, democratic reforms in Egypt. To accomplish that, I reintroduced HR 416, the Egypt Accountability and Democracy Promotion Act. This bill conditions our security and economic assistance to Egypt in order to advance US national security interests by ensuring that Egypt protects freedom, human rights, the rule of law, civil society organizations and upholds the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty.

During Morsi's tenure, videos surfaced showing Morsi describing Jews as "bloodsuckers and descendants of apes and pigs." Morsi has yet to demonstrate his willingness and ability to properly secure the Sinai. And Morsi has rolled out the red carpet to Ahmadinejad in an attempt to reestablish ties with Iran, a state sponsor of terrorism that actively seeks the destruction of our closest friend and ally, the democratic Jewish state of Israel. We must recognize that the Morsi government is unstable and not yet proven worthy of unabated economic and military support.

And with that, I yield to the ranking member, my friend, Mr. Deutch for his opening statement.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Thanks to the witnesses for appearing today and before I start, I also would like to just express my condolences to the families of those who were lost in the tragic hot air balloon accident, families who literally are in all parts of the globe, and our thoughts and prayers will be with them.

In the aftermath of Hosni Mubarak's 30-year reign, US policy toward Egypt has become increasingly difficult to navigate as Egypt's civil society and government institutions are now led by inexperienced politicians whose organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, had been banned for decades. The fact remains that Egypt is now governed by an Islamist government and we must determine how US policy should reflect this change.

The United States continues to provide \$1.3 billion in military funds to the Egyptian military in hopes of wielding American influence and creating a stable security situation for the United States and for our allies. Despite our large amount of assistance, we still have major disagreements with Egypt. There is no doubt we have a drastically different world here with President Morsi. And the history and belief system of the Muslim Brotherhood is profoundly alarming for both the United States and for our ally, Israel.

The tempting position, therefore, is to oppose all aid to Egypt. Such a decision, I believe, would have serious ramifications for our interests. First, it is likely that Egypt would abrogate its peace treaty with Israel. Second, the Egyptian military would lose tremendous power and the military still operates virtually independent of the Morsi government and weakening the military would give the Muslim Brotherhood nearly complete control. Third, it is safe to say that Ahmadinejad and the Iranian regime would love nothing more than to see the U.S.-Egypt relationship crumble as it would bolster Iran's ambitions to be the region's power. Therefore, despite my objections to many aspects of the current Egypt Government, I cautiously continue to support our military and economic assistance to Egypt, but only, only if we can be certain that our aid is used in the smartest and most effective way possible; only, only if it protects the security interests of the United States and our allies.

The collapse of U.S.-Egyptian relations would pose a grave security threat to our troops in the region and to Israel, and the effects would reverberate throughout the Middle East. The US has been cautious in dealing with the new Egyptian leadership, and continued political missteps and outrageous statements by President Morsi seem to repeatedly highlight our concerns. Morsi's attempts at seizing extra presidential powers in November, the rushed passage of an incomplete constitution, and the continued refusal to engage with opposition parties have reignited tensions across Egypt. These actions beg the question can Mohammad Morsi and a Muslim Brotherhood-led government be a reliable US partner? Morsi has shown little appetite for taking political risks, save for his role as broker of the cease fire between Hamas and Israel last fall.

Despite the United States' strong condemnation of Morsi's past anti-Semitic and anti-Israel comments, he has yet to disavow these

and other past statements of great concern. This is incredibly troubling. Yet, Morsi has repeatedly given assurances that he will uphold the 1979 Peace Treaty with Israel.

In addition, the Egyptian military has been destroying smuggling tunnels in the Sinai into Gaza, the main route used to transport weapons to Hamas. But the Sinai became a virtually lawless region following the revolution. Instability in the Sinai had given way to an increase in kidnappings and activity by radical groups, all of which culminated in an attack along the border that killed 16 Egyptian soldiers last August. In the 6 months since the attack, the Egyptian military has ramped up its efforts to control the Sinai and I am encouraged by the cooperation between Israeli and Egyptian militaries, but it remains to be seen whether Morsi has the political will to withstand any future rise in domestic opposition to the Peace Treaty with Israel.

I am encouraged by yesterday's news that President Morsi has moved parliamentary elections to May in order to allow for all Egyptians to take part. The secular opposition, now somewhat united, is already threatening to boycott those elections. President Morsi must engage the opposition in a meaningful way. Efforts to shut out the opposition will result in the continued polarization within Egypt and continues to keep tensions running high on the streets.

It is incumbent upon the United States to send a clear message that democracy must be upheld. President Morsi simply must commit to ensuring the rights of all Egyptians. We have got to ask ourselves and I hope our witnesses will address what level of trust, if any, exists between the Muslim Brotherhood and the opposition parties. Is the Muslim Brotherhood attempting to consolidate power? And finally, what are the next steps to ensure that American interests and the interests of our allies are protected while not letting Egypt become a failed state or worse.

I look forward to exploring these issues and others with our panel. And again, thanks very much for being here today.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Deutch. I will recognize members for a 1-minute opening statement should they desire.

Mr. Chabot of Ohio, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific is recognized.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Madam Chair, for holding this important hearing to look at developments in Egypt, 2 years after the so-called "Arab Spring." One of the great concerns I had at the time of the revolution in Egypt, a concern I know you shared as well, was that the rise to power of the Muslim

Brotherhood and its Islamist jihadist allies would threaten the peace and security in the region, particularly with regard to our closest ally in the Middle East, Israel. I am sorry to say that those concerns 2 years later have not been alleviated.

I am looking forward to hearing the testimony from our distinguished panel of witnesses this morning, who I know will share their thoughts with us on what's happening now in Egypt and what developments we can expect to see in the months ahead with regard to our bilateral relationship, the Egyptian-Israeli relationship, Egypt's role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and the

stability or lack thereof of the Morsi government. I know their comments will be enlightening and I know we all look forward to them. Thank you very much.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chabot. Mr. Vargas of California is recognized.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to thank you for holding this hearing and thank the distinguished panel for being here today. I, too, have great concerns about the issues in this region, especially here in Egypt. The Morsi regime and the Muslim Brotherhood rule means that our national security interests for the rights—and also the rights of the Egyptian people, I think, are threatened. I've seen, all of us have seen, since the assumption of office in June 2012, President Mohammad Morsi has done a terrible job in bringing about a peaceful transition of power from marginalizing his opponents, critics, and protesters to strengthening the relationships with Iran. Morsi's actions have rightfully caused great concern here in the United States.

I would also ask the panel if they could address the issue of what effects these developments in Egypt will have on our peacekeeping forces. My understanding is that we continue to have 600 Americans in Egypt as well as 1,000 others in the force. So anyway, I would like to hear about that, too, because I think it is very important for us to know how Egypt is stabilizing the peace with Israel and as well threatening our own troops. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. Mr. Kinzinger of Illinois is recognized.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you all for coming. You know, one of the concerns especially over the next few days as we deal with sequester which we're all going to get sick of hearing, I already am, we're dealing with the question and the issue of America's role in the world and especially when it comes to Egypt. What I am concerned about and what I am interested in hearing from you is what do we do to stay engaged in Egypt? What leverage do we have besides just aid? Because I am afraid that we're sending the message both with sequester and I think frankly with this administration's actions that America is disengaging from the world.

My concern is when you see America retreat from the world, you see that retreat followed up by chaos coming where America once was. And I fear the day when our allies no longer love us and our enemies no longer fear us. And so my concern and my question is how do we ensure that we have the maximum leverage in Egypt? How do we maintain an alliance with them, but also hold them accountable to the values that we believe and frankly, the values that America stands for around the globe.

I thank you all for coming.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, sir. Mr. Kennedy of Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the ranking member and thank you very much, the witnesses, for being here today and to the chair again for holding a very important hearing today.

We heard so much about the role of Egyptian youth in igniting the Arab Spring, the Arab Awakening, and the important role that

it played in Tahrir Square and the demonstrations and the youth movement throughout North Africa and the Middle East. And I would love to get and am looking forward to hearing your comments about what the international community, what the United States can do and should be doing in order to make sure that so many of these young adults that are coming of age in a transition to democracy continue to believe in democracy and continue to make sure that they have a stake in this process as it moves forward. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, sir. Mr. DeSantis of Florida.

Mr. DESANTIS. I am not going to make a statement, Madam Chairwoman. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I will give your time to Mr. Meadows of North Carolina.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today, specifically as we look at this particular issue. I would love for you to address as we start to look at there has been reports recently of a draft constitution and comparing that to the 1971 constitution and the word changes that are out there. So as we start to look at that, some of the things mentioned in there were very problematic when we look at a democracy and truly the rule of law. So I would love for you all to comment on that. Thank you. I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, sir. Congresswoman Meng of New York is recognized. Thank you.

Ms. MENG. Thank you, Madam Chair, and Ranking Member, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today. There are obviously very disturbing trends in Egypt that must be closely monitored. Egypt must recognize that its greatest threat is not Israel, but rather the scourge of extremism and violence that is overtaking its country and threatening the stability of its neighbors. As such, our military aid to Egypt must increasingly focus on border security, counterterrorism, and counterinsurgency activities. And we must insist that our aid serves these purposes.

So as not to repeat the mistakes of the past, we must pressure Mr. Morsi's government to build the institutions and civil society necessary to achieve true democracy. Relatedly, I am deeply concerned about the threats to women in Egypt. The recent surge and violence against women and the curtailment of their political rights are not only women and human rights issues, but they also lead us to question the Egyptian Government's commitment to a free and democratic society. I look forward to hearing from the panel. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Dr. Yoho of Florida.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Madam Chair, Ranking Member and panelists. I just want to say, you know, in these tough economic times, it is absolutely necessary for us to scrutinize every dollar that the American people spend and for our Government to follow through with that and that we give it in good faith that we get a good return on that investment. And I look forward to hearing your statements today so that we can draft up some great policies to help both countries and the rest of the world. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, sir.

Congresswoman Frankel of Florida.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you, Madam Chair. I look forward to hearing this panel. I am interested in really the good and the bad and the ugly. I would like to know what Egypt is doing well to bring security to Israel and the Middle East. And what are the areas that we need to be concerned about. I think all of us and the American people, especially as we talk about the budget cuts and so forth, is for you to tell us why continued aid to Egypt would be important for the security of Israel and important to the stability of the Middle East.

I would like to echo Ms. Meng and say that I, too, am concerned about the reports of rape and attacks on women protesters. And I would want to know what, if anything, can be done about that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much. Mr. Weber of Texas is recognized.

Mr. WEBER. Thank you, Madam Chair. I really don't have a lot to say. I am looking forward to hearing from our panel. I am interested in the jets sales, the jets that are set to go to Egypt. I don't know if any of you are set to address that, but I hope to have some discussion about that and I echo my good friend and colleague, Dr. Yoho's comments about we need to be very good stewards of our money and good policy going forward. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, sir. And Mr. Connolly of Virginia.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Madam Chairman, and I, too, welcome our witnesses today. I think it is really important that this subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee be very cognizant of the fact that Egypt is a work in progress. It is not going to be perfect. And where it is not and we can try to influence it in a positive direction, that is what we need to do.

We have a lot at stake. This is the largest Arab population in the world. Camp David must respected. We have a lot at stake in this relationship. And so I think we need to eschew harsh rhetoric while still trying to use our good influence to good effect on the Morsi government. So I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today, but I would hope we would keep moderation and nuance in mind in what is an emerging and evolving Egypt. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. And now the Chair is pleased to welcome our witnesses. First, we have the Honorable Elliott Abrams, senior fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, DC. Previously, he served as Deputy Assistant to the Secretary and Deputy National Security Advisor in the administration of President George W. Bush. Welcome, Dr. Abrams.

Next, we would like to welcome Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Also, Dr. Lantos established the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice in 2008 and serves as its President and Chief Executive Officer, carrying on the legacy of our late chairman and dear colleague, Congressman Tom Lantos. We welcome you.

And finally, we welcome Dr. Tamara Cofman Wittes. Dr. Wittes is a senior fellow and the director of the Saban Center for Middle

East Policy at Brookings. Dr. Wittes served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs from November 2009 to January 2012.

I would like to kindly remind our witnesses that your prepared remarks have been made a part of the record and I kindly request that you keep your statements to 5 minutes. Thank you so much and we will begin with the Honorable Elliott Abrams.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ELLIOTT ABRAMS, SENIOR FELLOW FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. ABRAMS. Thank you, Madam Chairman. It is a pleasure to be here today. I thank you for the invitation. The questions the members have posed will only take about 4 hours to answer.

There are a lot of disturbing trends as several of you have mentioned. More charges have been filed for the crime of insulting the President in the less than 1 year of Mohammad Morsi's rule than since 1892.

Freedom of assembly, I'll give another example, is very much under threat under new laws that have been proposed. The problem seems to be that the Muslim Brotherhood leaders of Egypt are not seeking compromise and accommodation. They are seeking just to rule Egypt and rule it in their direction. The chairman of the Egyptian Human Rights Organization wrote recently "as the situation stands, a grim future lays ahead for democratic transformation and human rights in Egypt." And he added that Egypt's new draft constitution "fails to offer the necessary safeguards for human rights." In fact, the term human rights doesn't appear.

The thing is President Morsi won by 51 to 48. He didn't win in a giant landslide in that June election last year. Nearly half of all Egyptians did not want a Muslim Brotherhood government. And that should have suggested that accommodation and compromise were the way to go and the healthiest thing, but don't seem to.

As you know, Egypt's economy is in real trouble, too: The Egyptian pound falling, foreign currency reserves falling, tourism falling, foreign direct investment falling. Desperate need for foreign currency with which to buy bread. Egypt is the largest importer of grain in the world, but grain traders today say "they are living hand to mouth."

Now the IMF keeps postponing, having to postpone loan negotiations due to political turmoil in Egypt. There is another huge problem which is the growing lack of law and order, the rising crime rate, and especially the number of assaults on women. There is an epidemic of sexual harassment and rape in Egypt. And women who take to the streets to protest are often themselves subject to more abuses.

I want to go back to the economic because the fact is they are linked. Egypt cannot solve its economic problems until it addresses its political problems. The economic solutions require some hard steps and those cannot be taken unless there is a kind of consensus. But there is no political consensus and therefore, there is no consensus on what to do on the economy.

The political crisis and the economic crisis are linked.

So I would urge the committee to take a bottom to top look at our aid program, the timing, the conditionality, and the composition. I don't think we should return to what was really our pattern of decades which was if their foreign policy is okay, we don't much care what happens inside Egypt. I think that was a mistaken policy.

I don't think we should be supplying things like F-16s that Egypt does not need to address the security concerns that it really has: The absence of law and order in the streets, the problems of anarchy, really, in parts of the Sinai, the prevention of terrorism in the Sinai. We run a great risk, I fear, of appearing to many Egyptians to be indifferent to the human rights struggle that is taking place in Egypt today. If we are on auto pilot with the aid program, that is the message that they are going to receive. And despite the huge changes in Egypt in the last couple of years, there really haven't been many changes in our aid program. So there is no impact from President Morsi's horrendous anti-Semitic comments. There is no impact from the new constitutional provisions which disfavor anyone but Sunni Muslims. There is no impact from the continuing trial of 43 NGO workers who were set to work on our aid program. Those trials have not ended. But there is no impact on our aid program.

I think all of this needs to be taken into account as you look forward to the continuation of the aid program in Egypt. I don't think it can be right that those vast changes there lead to zero changes in the way we give aid to Egypt. I urge to undertake that kind of review. And I thank you again, Madam Chairman, for holding this very important hearing.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Abrams follows:]

Demonstrations in Tahrir Square: Two Years Later, What Has Changed?

Prepared statement by

Elliott Abrams

*Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies
Council on Foreign Relations*

Before the

**Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, House Committee on
Foreign Affairs**

*United States House of Representatives
1st Session, 113th Congress*

Hearing on “Demonstrations in Tahrir Square: Two Years Later, What Has Changed?”

Madam Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for inviting me to testify today on developments in Egypt.

All of us were moved to see the Egyptian people overthrow the Mubarak dictatorship in February 2011. There was a moment of hope that Egypt would move toward democracy. The press was free, freedom of assembly was respected, and free elections were immediately planned—and then held. But two years later, the hopes of many of us, and of millions of Egyptians, are dimmed.

Freedom of speech? Listen to this news report:

President Mohammed Morsi’s first 200 days in office have seen more lawsuits filed on charges of “insulting the president” than during the governments of all Egyptian rulers since 1892, a leading rights group said. About 24 lawsuits for insulting Morsi have been filed against journalists and activists since his election in June, the Arab Network for Human Rights said in a report. Under ousted President Hosni Mubarak, four such cases were filed, the group said. Only one case was filed under Anwar Sadat, and five under King Farouk, it said.

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<http://www.newsmax.com/MiddleEast/egypt-morsi-insults-lawsuits/2013/01/22/id/472354#ixzz21Svly5Wu>

Freedom of assembly? Here's the wire story:

"The UN's human rights office on [February 19] took Egypt to task over a planned law on public protests, saying it would curb freedoms and breach international rules. "Although freedom of assembly can be subject to certain restrictions, freedom should be considered the rule, and restrictions the exception," Rupert Colville, spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, told reporters. He said draft legislation approved last week by Egypt's cabinet would undermine "one of the cornerstones of democracy."

http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/65143/Egypt/Politics-/UN-rights_watchdog_criticises-Egyptian-protest-law.aspx

The problem seems to me to be, in part, that the Muslim Brotherhood leaders ruling Egypt does not seek accommodation and compromise. They seek to rule, and to move Egypt in their direction they favor while they can. The chairman of the Egyptian Human Rights Organization recently wrote that:

"As the situation stands, a grim future lays ahead for democratic transformation and human rights in Egypt. There is a legal edifice that fails to furnish solid human rights guarantees and the same type of gross human rights abuses that sparked the revolution are resurfacing with increasing frequency."

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/1395/21/1/human-rights-after-the-revolution.aspx>

He added that Egypt's new draft constitution "fails to offer the necessary safeguards for human rights. In fact, the drafters of the constitution avoided the term 'human rights' altogether."

As you know, President Morsi did not win office last June in a landslide; he won 51-48 percent. So nearly half of all Egyptians who voted did not want a Brotherhood government at all. That should have suggested to the Brotherhood's leaders that compromise and coalitions are the healthiest thing for Egypt today, but that does not seem to be their intention.

The Egyptian economy is in a broad decline today, with the value of the Egyptian pound falling, foreign currency reserves falling—indeed down about 10% in January alone and down two-thirds in two years, low rates of foreign investment, little recovery in tourism, widespread unemployment and underemployment, and a desperate need for foreign currency with which to buy increasingly expensive oil and bread. Here is what the Financial Times reported:

"Egypt, the world's largest wheat importer, is struggling to buy the staple in the international market because of the impact of a currency crisis.... Grain traders shipping wheat to Egypt said Cairo had cut back on its overseas purchases as the Egyptian pound plunged against the US dollar. The slowdown has depleted the country's grain stocks to unusually low levels, traders added. Cairo on Wednesday said that government inventory levels of wheat, usually at enough to cover six months' worth of consumption, had almost halved to just 101 days. 'They are living hand-to-mouth,' said one Swiss-

based international grain trader." <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/828043ca-7608-11e2-8eb6-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2LXwaR0r0>

Meanwhile, as you know the IMF keeps having to postpone loan negotiations with Egypt due to the economic and political turmoil there.

One final point before I turn to the aid question. There is another growing problem in Egypt: the lack of law and order, the rising crime rate, and especially the increasing number of assaults on women. There is an epidemic of sexual harassment and rape in Egypt, and women who take to the streets to protest publicly are often themselves subject to yet more abuses. <http://www.meforum.org/3450/egypt-rape-sexual-harassment> As two female journalists based in Cairo, Sophia Jones and Erin Bianco, wrote as long ago as last June, "it is an everyday psychological and sometimes even physical battle. We open our closets in the morning and debate what to wear to lessen the harassment—as if this would help. Even fully veiled women are harassed on Cairo's streets." <http://www.thedailybeast.com/features/world.html> Lest the assessment seem too gloomy, it was confirmed to me by an American official this month.

So what should we do—continue the aid program, change it, or end it?

Our aid will do little good unless there is a change toward political compromise in Cairo. The IMF is right to keep postponing the negotiations over its own loan package. An IMF spokeswoman said that "we are willing to provide financial assistance for an economic program that addresses the current economic and financial challenges, is socially balanced, and has broad ownership so that it can be implemented by the government." <http://news.yahoo.com/doubts-egypt-4-8-billion-imf-loan-193824514--finance.html> What does broad ownership mean? That there must be a political agreement between the Muslim Brotherhood government and other key leaders and parties, because the current *political* crisis will make it impossible to solve the *economic* crisis. They are tightly linked. But so far, Morsi has taken no steps in that direction. His attitude seems to be that he won the election so he gets to rule—period. Unless and until that attitude changes, I would hope that he is not honored by an official visit to Washington. We should be using our influence to press President Morsi to compromise with moderate and secular political and civil-society leaders, so that Egypt can truly address the many problems it faces.

I urge the Subcommittee to look carefully at the timing, conditionality, and composition of our aid. I attach to my testimony a column in the Washington Post by two members of the Working Group on Egypt, of which I am a member, and which I think analyzes the situation we face very well. We run the risk of continuing an old and I think harmful pattern of ignoring what is going on inside Egypt so long as their foreign policy is stable and more or less to our liking. We run the risk of supplying things like F-16s that they do not need to do the security work they really need to do—to protect law and order in Egypt and prevent terrorism in the Sinai. And we run the risk of appearing indifferent to the struggle for human rights in Egypt—indeed that's what increasing numbers of human rights and democracy activists believe we are doing: ignoring them.

In these two years Egypt has changed profoundly. But our aid program has not changed at all; we seem to be on autopilot. On January 28th we sent four more F-16s, despite the revelations about President Morsi's anti-Semitic comments, despite the constitutional provisions that threaten the rights of many Egyptians, not

least those who are Christian, Baha'i or anything besides Sunni, and despite the overall human rights situation. Can it be right that we fail to undertake a top-to-bottom review of the aid program—its goals, assumptions, and effects? Can it be right that the trial of 43 NGO workers who our aid program set to work in Egypt is still underway and they are still legally threatened—but aid flows are unaffected?

I urge the Subcommittee and the Congress to undertake such a review during this session, and I sincerely thank you, Madam Chairman, and the Subcommittee for holding this hearing. As important as Egypt is, we cannot control its future trajectory. We are not responsible for the decisions, good and bad, that its rulers make. But we are responsible for our own words, our own policies, and our own aid, and all should be used to promote an Egypt that is more stable and more free. Let's be sure that Egyptians know which side we are on.

Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Dr. Abrams.
Dr. Lantos Swett, thank you.

**STATEMENT OF KATRINA LANTOS SWETT, PH.D., CHAIR, U.S.
COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. Thank you so much, Madam Chairman. This is an extraordinarily important hearing. We can always rely on you, Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen, to draw attention to the most pressing issues of the day and so I am really very grateful that you have chosen to convene this hearing.

The short and simple answer to the question how have things changed in the last 2 years is that much has changed in Egypt, but much more needs to change if the Egyptian people are going to realize their hopes for a genuine democracy that represents all Egyptians, fully respects the rule of law, and complies with international human rights standards including freedom of religion and belief. These issues matter significantly.

Madam Chair, because of these concerns I led a UCIRF delegation to Cairo earlier this month to assess religious freedom condition in the country. And I think that gives me a bit of an advantage because I literally was there in just the last few weeks and look forward to answering your questions about the very fascinating encounters we had with a wide range of individuals.

The overwhelming sense we got from nongovernment interlocutors with whom we met was that there was little reason for optimism about the country's short-term trajectory under President Morsi. Some we spoke with felt strongly that the Morsi government has not been inclusive of or taken seriously the liberal and secular opposition's views. The most common concerns we heard focused on the poor state of the economy, increasing radicalization in a society that negatively impacts women and religious minorities, troubling provisions in the new constitution limiting religious freedom and other rights, and frustration about the continuing climate of impunity for numerous acts of violence, including those targeting Coptic Christians since the beginning of the revolution 2 years ago.

Regarding the violence and continuing climate of impunity, it is unclear to what degree how much the current government could effectively do to improve the situation even if it had the genuine desire to do so, but we found skepticism among many we spoke to that that desire was there. As a consequence of the ups and downs in Egypt over the past 2 years, there have been some positive societal developments, particularly among religious and secular groups. Christian communities, including Coptic, Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic, and others, have started to organize with opposition groups and representatives from al Azar to counter religious extremism. Notably, all Christian groups have come together to form for the very first time in Egyptian history a council of churches which has held its first meeting just last week.

Overall, our visit to Egypt confirmed that the situation is indeed complicated and concerning. Egypt is arguably the most important country in the region and during this transition is inadequately protecting the rights of its citizens, including the right to freedom of religion and belief. The United States has a unique role to play

and our Government must do more to press Cairo to implement real and meaningful reforms. We cannot afford to sit idly by.

And before I close my testimony, I would like to share a very dramatic encounter I had with the Deputy Minister there that in some ways was the most revealing episode of our whole visit. I brought up to him the comments that others have referenced by President Morsi calling on the Egyptian people to nurture their children and grandchildren in hatred of Jews and Israel down to the last generation, calling Jews the descendants of apes and pigs. And I was sitting much, much closer to him than we are, a little more like the distance between my good friend and colleague, Elliott Abrams. And I said to this individual who happened to be a Salafi Muslim, I said, "Your President is calling on hatred of me and of my children to be nurtured and by your children down to the last generation. Your President is calling me the descendant of apes and pigs, calling my seven children the descendants of apes and pigs."

You could hear a pin drop in the room. I said, "This is not the conduct, this is not the language, of a civilized society. This is not the way people address their fellow citizens and their fellow human beings in a civilized society." I pivoted and said, "What if your President, tomorrow, were to stand up and address the Egyptian people and the world and say, enough, this is a stain on our character. This is a stain on our national honor. Never again, no more will we permit people in positions of responsibility and power in our country to speak in this way about our cousins, the Jews." I said, "Well, he would receive plaudits from every corner of the world, deserved plaudits. And it would open potentially a new day for the 1.2 billion Muslims in the world."

Well, when I shared this experience the next day with a reformer, their answer to me was very interesting. They said, "The day after the day after President Morsi said something like that he would be assassinated by his own people." And I found that to be perhaps the most disheartening and most illuminating moment of our trip to Egypt. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Lantos Swett follows:]

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TESTIMONY OF

DR. KATRINA LANTOS SWETT

CHAIR

U.S. COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA OF THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

ON

DEMONSTRATIONS IN TAHRIR SQUARE:

TWO YEARS LATER, WHAT HAS CHANGED?

FEBRUARY 26, 2013

I want to thank the Members of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa for holding this hearing, "Demonstrations in Tahrir Square: Two Years Later, What Has Changed?" and for inviting me to testify here today on behalf of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Madame Chairman, with your approval, I would like to submit my written testimony for the record.

The short and simple answer to your question is that much has changed in Egypt, but much more needs to change if the Egyptian people are going to realize their hopes for a genuine democracy that represents all Egyptians, fully respects the rule of law, and complies with international human rights standards, including freedom of religion and belief. These issues matter significantly. Over the nearly 15 years of USCIRF's work, we have observed a strong correlation between religious freedom, social stability, security, development, and the consolidation of democracy. Conversely, the lack of religious freedom correlates with instability, insecurity, extremism, and a host of other social and political problems. Consequently, if Egypt is to prosper and hold true to the original principles of the January 25, 2011 revolution, it must protect religious freedom for all its citizens.

Madame Chair, because of these concerns, I led a USCIRF delegation to Cairo earlier this month to assess religious freedom conditions in the country. I was joined by fellow Commissioners Dr. Azizah al-Hibri and Dr. Zuhdi Jasser. We met with a wide range of interlocutors, including the U.S. ambassador and high-level Egyptian government officials, human rights defenders and women's rights advocates, and Muslim religious leaders and members of religious minority communities.

The overwhelming sense we got from non-governmental interlocutors was that there is little reason for optimism about the country's short-term trajectory under President Morsi. Some we spoke with felt strongly that the Morsi government has not been inclusive of or taken seriously the liberal and secular opposition's views. The most common concerns we heard focused on: the poor state of the economy; increasing radicalization in society that negatively impacts women and religious minorities; troubling provisions in the new constitution limiting religious freedom and other rights; and frustration about the continuing climate of impunity for numerous acts of violence – including those targeting Coptic Christians – since the beginning of the revolution two years ago.

These views were reinforced just last week when 21 leading human rights groups in Egypt released a joint statement saying that, "the rights situation in Egypt currently appears even direr than it did prior to the revolution and the ouster of the former president."

Egyptian government officials painted a picture of a difficult and arduous transition; yet they asserted that much progress has been made given the messy business that is a democracy. Officials cited free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections, the acceptance of a new constitution, and the emergence of a new democratic political system. Regarding the violence and continuing climate of impunity, it is unclear how much the current government could effectively do to improve the situation even if it had the genuine desire to do so.

As a consequence of the up's and down's in Egypt over the past two years, there have been some positive societal developments, particularly among religious and secular groups. Christian communities – including Coptic Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic, and others – have started to organize with both opposition groups and representatives from Al-Azhar to counter religious extremism. Previously, Christians were not encouraged to participate in various civil and political activities, but now the official churches have urged the community to be active in the democratic transition of a new Egypt. Contrary to his initial position of wanting to focus primarily on matters inside the Church, even the new Coptic Pope has been outspoken in recent weeks about concerns regarding the direction the democratic transition has taken.

Notably, all Christian groups have come together to form for the first time ever an Egyptian Council of Churches, which held its first meeting last week. Additionally, they have come together with al-Azhar, one of the leading Islamic centers of learning in Egypt and the world, to form an umbrella organization, named the “The Family Home.”

In general, many diverse interlocutors expressed a positive view of the moderating role Al-Azhar has played since the January 2011 revolution. The Grand Sheikh at Al-Azhar has spearheaded a number of efforts, including interfaith dialogue initiatives, aimed at unifying the various religious communities and countering extreme Islamist views.

Overall, our visit to Egypt confirmed that the situation is indeed complicated and concerning. Egypt is arguably the most important country in the region and during this transition is inadequately protecting the rights of its citizens, including the right to freedom of religion and belief. The United States has a unique role to play and our government must do more to press Cairo to implement real and meaningful reforms. We cannot afford to sit idly by and watch.

Let me highlight some of our specific areas of concern.

The Constitution

First and foremost are concerns about certain provisions in the constitution. Some former members of the Constituent Assembly complained to us that conservative elements hijacked the process of drafting the constitution, which led to several liberals, Christians, and Al-Azhar representatives withdrawing their membership before the drafting of the constitution was completed.

Most of those we spoke with expressed concern about various articles in the new constitution. In particular, there were numerous concerns about Article 219 which defines Islamic Shari'ah in such terms as to raise concerns that it is too narrowly drawn and may infringe on the rights of some Muslim schools of thought. Christians are also concerned that Article 219 could infringe on their rights. Most were fine with Article 2, which is holdover language from the 1971 constitution, and states that “The principles of Islamic Shari'a are the principal source of legislation.” However, Article 4, when read in conjunction with Article 2, potentially gives Al Azhar scholars a consultative role in reviewing legislation. Some of the people we spoke with stated emphatically that only the Supreme Constitutional Court should be designated with this role, not a religious body.

Depending on how it is interpreted, Article 43 could be especially problematic. It states: “Freedom of belief is an inviolable right. The State shall guarantee the freedom to practice religious rites and to establish places of worship for the divine religions, as regulated by law.” Article 43 has a number of flaws. Protections are limited to “rites” and places of worship; international standards protect a much broader range of activities and expression. Furthermore, because this concept of religious expression is limited to followers of the “divine” religions, followers of other religions, such as Baha’is, not to mention atheists and agnostics, are excluded from enjoying basic freedoms. Also, there is no mention of the right to change one’s religion.

Government officials believe that Article 43 guarantees religious freedom for all Egyptian citizens, including Baha’is. However, some officials feel that Baha’is would need to test this freedom in court, since the Baha’i faith is not one of the religions the constitution references. Others disagree, as evidenced by reported comments by the education minister stating before our visit that Baha’is cannot enroll in public schools because they are not mentioned in the Constitution. That Egyptian Baha’is should face this burden is a disturbing development.

Articles 31, 44 and 45 also raise concern. Article 44 states that “insult or abuse of all religious messengers and prophets shall be prohibited.” This ban is supported by Article 31, which says “[i]nsulting or showing contempt toward any human being shall be prohibited.” These are impermissible limitations on freedom of expression under international human rights law. Article 45 states: “Freedom of thought and opinion shall be guaranteed. Every individual has the right to express an opinion and to disseminate it verbally, in writing or illustration, or by any other means of publication and expression.” However, the language in the Articles 44 and 31 appears to limit this provision. Egyptian officials were unequivocal about Article 44, stating that there are consequences for insulting or injuring the religious feelings of others, in essence permitting the criminalization of “defamation of religion.”

People with whom we met expressed mixed views on a way forward with the constitution. Some expressed hope that President Morsi’s recent offer at a dialogue on the constitution would result in amendments to various articles of concern. However, many others are not optimistic that President Morsi’s offer will lead to a positive outcome and actual revisions of the constitution.

Impunity

There continues to be serious concern with impunity from sectarian violence, particularly violence targeting Copts and their property. The good news is that the number of deaths and injuries from sectarian violence in 2012 is down significantly when compared to 2011, although there continue to be attacks and destruction of property, particular in Upper Egypt. However, perpetrators of past sectarian attacks impacting predominantly Copts – and some Muslims – such as in Alexandria in January 2011, Imbaba in May 2011, and Maspero in October 2011, have gone unpunished. For the most part, Egyptian officials told us this was not a sectarian problem, or one facing just Copts, but one that impacts all Egyptians. Officials noted that some of the investigations have produced insufficient evidence to prosecute perpetrators. Nevertheless, impunity has been a recurring problem for many years, and the new government installed since the revolution has not moved quickly to address the issue of justice and accountability.

The ongoing violence, and the failure to prosecute those responsible, 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 to ease tensions and resolve disputes. In some cases, authorities compelled victims to abandon their claims to any legal remedy. USCIRF continues to assert that reconciliation efforts should not be used to undermine enforcing the law and punishing perpetrators for wrongdoing.

“Contempt of Religion” and Blasphemy

Article 98(f) of Egypt’s Penal Code prohibits “contempt” or “defamation” of religions by criminalizing “any use of religion to promote or advocate extremist ideologies...with a view toward stirring up sedition, disparaging or showing contempt for any divinely revealed religion, or prejudicing national unity and social harmony.” In the past, this provision has been used to detain and prosecute individuals and members of religious groups whose practices deviate from mainstream Islamic beliefs or whose activities are alleged to jeopardize “communal harmony” or insult the three “heavenly religions”: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Other provisions of the penal code address various forms of religious insult. For example, Article 161 prohibits the printing and dissemination of deliberately distorted religious texts for state-protected religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism), and also criminalizes the mocking or ridicule of religious ceremonies in public. And Article 176 punishes public incitement and holding a religious community in hatred or contempt.

USCIRF has observed an increase in “contempt of religion” cases since the January 25, 2011 revolution, with cases impacting Muslims as well as cases disproportionately impacting Copts. We are awaiting further clarification from Egyptian officials on a number of these cases. However, I must tell you that there are fundamental differences in our approach to this issue. Some Egyptian officials told us point blank that if individuals in Egypt say things publicly that “injures” or insults the religious feelings of others, there should be consequences, including criminal prosecution.

Building Places of Worship

The building and maintenance of places of worship continues to be a major problem in Egypt, as it has been for many years. No churches were approved for construction in 2012, despite applications being submitted to governors, as currently required. We were informed that this delay was due to the stalled discussions regarding 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 lower house of parliament was disbanded in 2012, Christian churches temporarily placed on hold negotiations about the draft law because they wanted it to be significantly revised. In all likelihood, until the People’s Assembly is elected and seated this summer, there will be no progress on this front.

Converts and Re-Converts to Christianity

Egyptian-born Muslims who have converted to Christianity simply cannot reflect their change of religious affiliation on identity documents, and in many cases, these converts also face intense social hostility. In past cases where 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. 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.

In some instances, converts, who fear government harassment if they officially register their change in religion from Islam to Christianity, reportedly have altered their own identification cards and other official documents to reflect their new religious affiliation. Over the years, some of these individuals have been arrested for falsifying identity documents following conversion. Other converts have fled the country for fear of government and societal repercussions.

Baha'i Community

The Baha'i community continues to be banned due to a politically-motivated 1960 decree and, as a result, the approximately 2,000 Baha'is who live in Egypt are unable to meet or engage in communal religious activities. Baha'is who are married still cannot get ID cards, which makes it impossible to conduct every day transactions including going to a bank, registering for school, and owning a car. Single Baha'is can put a dash on ID cards in the space left for religion. As Article 43 of the constitution stands, Baha'is would be unable to build places of worship since the provision only cites the “divine religions,” or Muslims, Christians, and Jews, as those authorized to build places of worship. As mentioned earlier, the only way at this point to test this provision would be for Baha'is to sue in court.

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism continues to be deep-seated and pervasive throughout both society and government. Recently unearthed 2010 comments by President Morsi that urged Egyptians to “nurse our children and grandchildren on hatred” for Jews and Zionists” and another interview in which he referred to Jews as the descendants of “apes and pigs” underscore the depth to which Egyptian society is infected with these deplorable attitudes. When confronted on these comments, Egyptian officials with whom we met attempted to divert the discussion to attacks on the state of Israel.

As long as disfavored Muslims, Copts and other Christians, Baha'is and other religious minorities are not sufficiently protected, USCIRF will continue to spotlight the problem and recommend that the U.S. government take strong action in support of religious freedom. USCIRF Commissioners are in the process of deliberating on Egypt and developing policy recommendations for the U.S. government. Our 2013 Annual Report will be released to Congress by May 1.

USCIRF recommended in 2011 and 2012 that Egypt be designated a "country of particular concern", or CPC, for systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, consistent with the definition as provided in our statute. Prior to 2011, USCIRF had placed Egypt on the Commission Watch List. During 2011-2012, USCIRF concluded that the Egyptian transitional government continued to engage in and tolerate systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief.

Let me highlight just a few of our longstanding recommendations:

- First, the United States should press Egypt to improve religious freedom conditions by repealing discriminatory decrees against religious minorities, removing religion from official identity documents, abolishing the "contempt of religion" laws, and passing a unified law for the construction and repair of places of worship.
- Second, the United States should urge Egypt's government to prosecute government-funded clerics, government officials, or any other individuals who incite violence, while disciplining or dismissing government-funded clerics who preach intolerance and hatred.
- Third, the United States should increase pressure on Egypt to bring to justice those who have committed violence against fellow Egyptians on account of their religion.
- Finally, in 2012, USCIRF recommended that, pursuant to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-74), the U.S. government should not certify the disbursement of military assistance to Egypt until the Egyptian transitional government demonstrates that it is using funds appropriated through the Foreign Military Financing Program to implement policies that protect freedom of religion and related human rights in Egypt. As I mentioned, we are currently reviewing this recommendation related to U.S. aid to Egypt but have not yet made final determinations for our 2013 recommendations.

Madame Chair, I thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today and look forward to any questions you might have.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.
Dr. Cofman Wittes.

**STATEMENT OF TAMARA COFMAN WITTES, PH.D., DIRECTOR,
SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY, THE BROOKINGS
INSTITUTE**

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. Thank you, Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Deutch, distinguished members, I am delighted to be with you. US policy toward Egypt since the revolution has rested on two pillars: Preserving the Camp David Peace Treaty and the security of the Israeli-Egyptian Gaza border and trying to provide economic assistance that could, with wise Egyptian policy, help to stabilize the Egyptian economy and help a new government deliver for its people. But like a stool with only two legs, this strategy is incomplete and it will not produce stability in Egypt for the reasons my friend, Elliott Abrams, has noted.

The United States needs to weigh in and press the President of Egypt and his party, as well as other relevant parties, to make the necessary accommodations to put Egypt back on the path to a stable, democratic transition. Now some argue that the United States can't have any real impact on Egyptian politics today. I disagree for two reasons. First, because we still have a lot to offer and it is not all about our assistance dollars. Second, because Egyptians, both inside and outside government, still care what we think and what we do about it. If they didn't care, if they thought we didn't matter, they wouldn't spend so much of their time trying to embroil us in their domestic arguments.

And because they still care, I believe the leverage we have is probably most effectively deployed as incentives, not as arm twisting. Our recognition, our investment, our visits, our good opinion, our expressions of partnership all matter, along with our aid dollars.

Now we can't afford to take a short-sighted approach to Egypt's transition. We cannot afford to focus on a transactional relationship with the current winners. We can't assume we know who will come out on top at the end of this messy transition. We have to keep our focus on two long-term goals. First is building lasting stability through democracy. And that is the choice of the Egyptian people. They have made clear that whatever economic and social problems they are facing, they want to solve them through democratic means. So we need to support that goal consistently.

The second is building a broad coalition in Egypt to support cooperative relations with the US. We will never return to the days when Egypt's interests were defined by a single man. The US should not be seen as having taken sides in Egypt's fractious politics. We need to engage broadly with Egyptian politics, with Egyptian society, to make the case for partnership and we do have common interests with Egypt and with the Egyptian people.

Egyptians have suffered greatly from Islamist terrorism. In polls, they reject violence against civilians at a higher rate than any country in the world where Gallup does this polling. Egypt's peace treaty with Israel has spared a generation of Egyptians the destruction of war and brought them stability. Egypt's majority, its young people, want a better future and they know that in the 21st

century this requires Egypt to be connected to the world and the norms that we share.

Let me turn briefly to the record of the Muslim Brotherhood which raises real concerns as my colleagues have stated about their commitment to core democratic principles, their obligations as democratic actors. We should communicate our concerns consistently and at the highest levels, but we also have to recognize that with all their flaws, the Brotherhood won the freest and fairest elections in Egypt's modern history. They may win the next election. They may not win forever, if human rights can be protected and a strong pluralist system can be built, but we cannot ignore the Brotherhood or wish them away.

The real leverage we have is that the Brotherhood-led government wants our recognition and they seek our partnership. So we can make clear that their electoral victory does not absolve them of their basic obligations to democratic rules and norms, if they want to be recognized as democratically legitimate on the global stage.

The political opposition, of course, has lessons to learn as well. And I think all of these actors will either learn the art of the deal or they will fail in the eyes of Egyptians and the world.

Let me make one more comment about something disturbing that I have heard from a number of Egyptians in recent weeks who are so worried about the instability and chaos in their own country, that they have begun to talk about the possibility of a military takeover again. I think a military takeover would be a disaster for Egypt, for Egyptian stability, for American interests. Military rule would divert attention and resources from crucial border security and counterterrorism functions. It would undermine our ability to continue the cooperation that is so valuable, both to us and to them. And that is especially important for the US as we continue to drawdown from Afghanistan, face terrorism challenges in Gaza and Sinai and the prospect for confrontation with Iran.

Distinguished members, I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Cofman Wittes follows:]



THE SABAN CENTER
for MIDDLE EAST POLICY
at THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

Egypt Two Years After the Revolution:
Where Egypt Stands, What the United States Can Do

Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee
on the Middle East and North Africa
by

Tamara Cofman Wittes
Director, Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution
February 26, 2013

Madam Chair, Ranking Member Deutch, distinguished members of the Committee: thank you for inviting me to share my views with you today.

US policy toward Egypt since the revolution has rested on two pillars: a relentless focus on preserving the Camp David peace treaty and the security of the Israel-Egypt-Gaza border, which has led the administration to prioritize keeping the military relationship (and the associated aid package) as much as possible unchanged; and a diligent if ineffective effort to provide economic assistance that could (working with others, and in combination with wise policy by the Egyptian government) help to stabilize the Egyptian macroeconomy and help a new democratic government deliver for its people. The theory has been that promoting security cooperation and economic stabilization would produce political stability in this large and important Arab country.

But like a stool with only two legs, this strategy is incomplete -- and it will not produce stability in Egypt. As my colleagues Robert Kagan and Michele Dunne wrote in last week's *Washington Post*, "Egypt's economy is struggling and disorder is rampant primarily because the country's leaders for the past two years...have failed to build an inclusive political process." In Egypt, and in US-Egyptian relations, the central issue is not "the economy, stupid": it's "politics, stupid." And the United States, which has so far been too reticent about Egypt's dangerously devolving politics, needs to weigh in and press the president and his party -- as well as other relevant parties -- to make the necessary accommodations to put Egypt back on the path to a stable democratic transition.

The United States still has the capacity to influence political developments in Egypt -- although we certainly cannot dictate outcomes and should not try. Influence will not come through dictates and demands. It will require that the United States use diplomacy skillfully with government and non-government actors, and deploy its resources in careful coordination with others who share our interests: in Egypt, the region, and the international system. Fortunately, those others are not few in number.

There are those who argue that the United States cannot have any real impact on the mess that is Egyptian politics today. They say that Egyptians are too resentful of America's long support for Mubarak, and that if we press our views too hard, the newly empowered Egyptian government will simply walk away and find friends elsewhere.

I disagree, for two reasons -- First, because we still have a lot to offer. While our budget constraints, our policy process, and our own political dysfunction have made us both less generous and less adroit in our response to the Arab Awakening than we should be, we do still have cards on the table, and cards to play -- and those cards are not all related to assistance dollars. Second, because Egyptians both inside and outside government still care what we think and what we do about it. If they did not care, and they thought we couldn't have any impact, they would not spend so much of their time trying to embroil us in their domestic arguments.

And because they do still care what we think, the leverage we have is probably best deployed as incentives, not as threats or arm-twisting. Our recognition, our investment, our good opinion, and our expressions of partnership all matter, along with our aid dollars. The Administration has reallocated resources to increase support for Egypt's fragile economy and suffering citizens during this transition period. And the Administration has also proposed, in the FY2014 budget, to put more funds on offer for Egypt and other governments in the region if they pursue necessary reforms. With appropriate conditions and accountability, this type of additional assistance can be a useful tool to encourage good choices.

So while Egypt has changed in fundamental ways, making the work of securing US interests immeasurably more complex than it was a few years ago, that is no reason for us to throw up our hands -- indeed, that's precisely what we cannot afford to do.

Egypt remains the most significant economic, political, and cultural force in the Arab world today. It is located at one of the world's great geostrategic crossroads, an essential pathway for global commerce and for the United States' global military reach. Egypt's peace treaty with Israel is a cornerstone of regional stability that has saved three generations of Israelis and Arabs from the destruction of wars like those that came before Camp David.

Egypt's majority, its young people, want to build a nation that offers them the opportunities for betterment that their parents were denied, and that leads the region once again in political influence, culture, and diplomacy. They want their nation to fulfill its potential to be an economic powerhouse in the region. And they know that in the twenty-first century, this will require Egypt to be tightly connected to the world -- and bound to the norms of international law, free markets, moderation and stability that all of us share.

Just as Egypt and Israel still have fundamental national interests in maintaining their peace treaty, Egypt and the United States still have fundamental common interests in regional security, counterterrorism, non-proliferation, and Arab-Israeli peace.

- Egyptians have suffered greatly from Islamist terrorism, and in polls they reject violence against civilians at a higher rate than any country in the world.
- Egyptians have suffered greatly from war -- Arab-Israeli wars, but also other conflicts in their neighborhood. They know that The Camp David treaty has brought their people thirty-five years of peace, and they want the benefits that regional peace brings.
- Egypt has been a stalwart opponent of nuclear proliferation. As the region and the world continue to confront the dangers of Iran's nuclear program, we have a shared interest in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, and countering Iran's efforts to undermine regional stability.

These common interests, widely shared by Egyptians and Americans, have sustained our partnership over the years -- not some crass quid pro quo. America's interests still lie in a positive, cooperative relationship with Egypt. And the basic ingredients of a cooperative

relationship are still in place -- as our swift and effective cooperation to resolve the Gaza crisis last November proved.

But the United States cannot afford to take a short-sighted approach to Egypt's transition, neither one focused on a transactional relationship with the current rulers, nor one focused on other narrow, short-term goals. We must not assume that we know who will come out on top of this messy transition. At the heart of the Egyptian revolution, the deeper trends that produced it, and the aspiration of Egyptians for democracy, is a strategic opportunity for the United States -- to build a stronger, more reliable and more equitable partnership, with an Egyptian government that is rooted in the consent of the Egyptian people and is accountable to them. We can do so while holding firm to our principles and our interests. We must not lose this opportunity, which may be a once-in-a-generation event.

We must keep our focus on two, interlinked, long term goals:

- The first is building lasting stability in the Arab world's most important country. As the Arab Awakening demonstrated clearly, such stability that will only come about through the establishment of more open, participatory, accountable government that treats its citizens with dignity and works diligently to offer them real opportunities. Whatever daunting economic and social problems they are facing, Egyptians have made clear that they want to solve those problems through decisions made by a democratic system. We should support that goal wholeheartedly and help them build the institutions and the social infrastructure that will help democracy emerge, thrive, and deliver for Egyptians.

Egypt's democratic transition is important to us, and not only because Egypt's stability is important to us. As you know well, where democracy and democratic freedoms are valued, the world also gains in security. Democracies give people a stake in their governance and weaken the appeal of those who call for violence. A democratic Egypt will be a stronger partner for the United States in advancing our shared interests in security, stability, and prosperity for the region and the world.

- The second goal is building a broad coalition in Egypt to support cooperative relations with the United States. We will never return to the days when Egypt's interest were defined and pursued by a single man or a small coterie, out of the public eye and without regard to domestic opinion. For better or worse, Egypt's foreign policy going forward will be influenced by its domestic politics. For that reason, it's especially important that the United States not invest too much in any one relationship with any one Egyptian faction, and not be seen as having taken sides in Egypt's fractious politics. Rather, we must reach across the political spectrum, and engage broadly with Egyptian society, to explain who we are, what we want, and what we can offer, and to make the case -- together with those Egyptians who feel similarly -- for a strong US-Egyptian partnership.

That said, it's a tremendous challenge for the United States to engage effectively with the feisty new practitioners of politics in Egypt. Because of decades of repression, many have little experience in the give-and-take of democratic politics, and little acquaintance with the interests at the heart of US engagement in the country and the region. Political winners and losers are both appealing to Washington for support, and condemning American interference -- sometimes at the same time.

Looking at the outcomes of Egypt's first two elections -- the parliamentary elections last spring and the presidential elections last summer -- anxiety is understandable. The winners produced in both cases include actors with questionable commitments to democracy, much less to the

values and interests the United States holds dear. But just as democracy never guaranteed the triumph of the Arab world's marginalized liberals, neither should Americans presuppose that these democratic elections now guarantee the long-term success of the Islamists.

We need to support a pluralist political system where the Egyptian people continue to have real choices, and where political parties can compete openly and speak freely. Free and fair elections can only occur where basic political rights are respected, including free speech, free assembly, and free association. The president and ruling party have no business restricting these rights, certainly not in the runup to the parliamentary elections. We also need to engage broadly with the full array of peaceful political actors -- to make clear through deeds and words that we have not anointed anyone as our chosen partner in Egypt. And we need to articulate our principles and interests for all parties to see: that we respect the outcomes of free and fair elections, and that we expect parties who claim to be democratic to hold firm to certain basic ideas: they must reject violence, commit to equal citizenship and equality under the law, and protect political pluralism. Also, that we want to know the clear stance of aspiring Egyptian leaders on the issues of keen interest to the United States -- Iran's nuclear program, a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the continuation of Egyptian-Israeli peace.

A year ago, I told this subcommittee that it was important for the United States to remain engaged with political actors across the spectrum in Egypt, including the newly elected parliamentarians from the Muslim Brotherhood. I said then, "From an American perspective, we should judge the Brotherhood and others in the new parliament by what they do, and so far there appears to be a basis for dialogue and a potential for constructive partnership."

Looking at the situation today, almost exactly a year later, I see some troubling indicators. Writing on Islamist parties in 2008, I laid out four key criteria by which to evaluate whether these groups could be constructive participants in a democratic process. Whether they rejected violence as a means to achieve their political goals, whether they accepted the equality of all citizens regardless of gender or religion, whether they accepted political pluralism and alternation of power, and whether they insisted on a role for religious authorities in overseeing the outcomes of a democratic political process.

By those lights, the Brotherhood today raises concern. The Brotherhood has proceeded in a manner that reveals real ambivalence about legal equality for all citizens; and a readiness to allow review of legislation by unelected religious officials -- though a resistance to mandatory review as proposed by Salafi parties. The constitution ultimately drafted largely by Brotherhood and Salafi representatives subsumes individual rights to state authority, is dangerously weak on the rights of women and girls, and distinguishes harmfully between religions receiving full recognition and protection, and others that are not considered so deserving. Most troubling of all, as documented by human rights groups during the December clashes at the presidential palace, and as reported in recent weeks, the Brotherhood and President Morsi have evidenced a willingness to condone and cover up the use of violence and torture by party cadres and by the internal security services against opposition activists and journalists -- shockingly, the same tactics Mubarak used against the Brotherhood and other opponents of the old regime.

We can and should be concerned by these indicators of the Brotherhood's violating basic expectations for parties that want to be recognized by the world as legitimate actors in a democratic system. We should communicate these concerns consistently and at the highest levels. But we must also recognize that with all their flaws, the Brotherhood won the freest and fairest elections in Egypt's modern history. And they may well win the next elections. They are a

sizeable force in Egyptian politics not only because they are well-funded and well-organized and well-disciplined, but because they appear to represent some significant constituency among Egyptian citizens. They may not win forever -- but we cannot ignore them or wish them away. What we can do is make clear that their electoral victory does not absolve them of these basic obligations to democratic rules and norms -- not if they want to be recognized, and they most certainly do, as democratically legitimate in Egypt and on the global stage.

This is our real leverage -- that the Brotherhood-led government wants our recognition, and seeks our partnership. We should continue to deal with Egypt's elected leaders, even if we have profound disagreements with them -- we do that all over the world in pursuit of our interests. But we should also make clear that engagement does not mean endorsement. And we can support, with all the tools at our disposal, those in Egypt working to hold the elected government accountable, those supporting and defending human rights, and those working to build the strong institutions, vibrant civil society, and pluralistic political system that will ensure the Brotherhood will face real competition from other voices.

The Brotherhood has revealed a consistent preference for majoritarianism over pluralism -- that is, they believe that since they won elections, albeit narrowly, they should get to decide policy issues alone, regardless of others' preferences. But as the constitutional crisis and the failure to achieve a deal with IMF shows, on policy issues of the greatest importance, a majority is not enough -- wider political consensus is necessary to ensure that decisions have enough support to stick, and provide a sound foundation on which to build the institutions of a new democracy. This is a bitter lesson for those who may feel that they have waited decades in the wilderness for their chance to rule.

But Egypt after the revolution will never again be a place where any party or president can rule unconstrained. The last two years has shown the vibrancy and diversity of Egyptians' political views. With time, and in an environment where human rights are respected, this pluralism will be reflected in elections. The Brotherhood will either learn the art of the deal, or they will fail in the eyes of Egyptians, and the world.

The political opposition has lessons to learn as well. While they are rightly outraged by the Brotherhood's heavy handed approach, and justly worried that the rushed constitution, the flawed electoral law, the degraded rights environment and the opaque electoral calendar will once again leave them out in the cold. Some call for a boycott of the parliamentary elections, some for street demonstrations to force President Morsi from office, some for a military coup.

If both sides continue to treat their political competition as a zero-sum game, both sides will lose -- and they may take Egypt over the cliff with them. As a balance of payments crisis drifts closer and closer, fuel and flour shortages mount, and public discontent boils into the streets where police now carry live ammunition and torture activists with impunity, we must worry about the impact of this mutual intransigence on Egypt's basic stability.

A few farsighted voices, viewing the looming crisis, call for dialogue and compromise. This is the path we must support -- actively, not with wishful thinking and not by providing top cover for those who are sitting in the hot seat and avoiding tough decisions. The Egyptian leadership has enough people telling them to hold on, that international aid is coming and after the elections things will settle down. We need to be a friend to Egypt -- and that means we need to have enough respect and hope for friendship with Egypt's leaders that we tell them the truth.

The truth is that President Morsi cannot make the tough economic decisions he needs to make to get an IMF loan, and to get access to billions of additional dollars in international assistance tied to that loan, unless he brings along some of his opposition. He needs their help to stabilize his country.

The truth is that elections that do not earn the trust and participation of the political opposition will not produce a parliament with broad enough support in Egyptian society to make authoritative laws for the new Egypt. The president and his party must work to make these elections meaningful for all Egyptian political parties. That may require them to amend the electoral laws and procedures. And Egypt's political opposition must make sure they offer Egyptian voters a real choice and participate fully in the polls. A boycott would compound Egypt's polarization and political crisis.

The truth is that a military takeover would be a disaster for Egypt's nascent democratic transition, a disaster for Egyptian stability, and a disaster for Egypt's military. It may look to some desperate people like the only way to forestall terrible chaos, but it would not. A resumption of military rule in Egypt would likely lead to massive street protests, compounding the existing instability and insecurity in Egypt's cities. It would likely lead to even greater violations of human rights, as we saw more than 10,000 Egyptian citizens hauled before military courts during the last period of military rule. And of course it would upend the progress that has been made -- and despite the problems, progress has been made -- in Egypt's hesitant transition to democracy. Furthermore, military rule would divert the attention and resources of the Egyptian military from crucial border security and counterterrorism functions, and undermine our ability to continue the military cooperation that is so valuable to both of us, especially as we face a drawdown from Afghanistan, continued security challenges in Gaza and Sinai, and the prospect of a confrontation with Iran.

In fact, the military has a lot of capacity to help stabilize Egypt and stave off a worse crisis -- but not by leaping back into governing. As it did in 2008, the military can help compensate for rapidly rising food prices and flour shortages by using its own supplies, bakeries and distribution chains to get bread to hungry Egyptians. To be sure, these roles carry political consequences. But if they are undertaken in support of a civilian government that is operating on the basis of political consensus, these measures can be stabilizing rather than threatening of Egypt's emerging democracy.

In other words, distinguished members, I believe that Egypt's transition is still in an early and uncertain phase, that the course of that transition matters deeply to the United States, and that the United States still has significant power to affect the trajectory. Egyptians want a relationship with the United States, but one based on equality -- rooted in mutual interests and mutual respect. Ordinary Egyptians want for themselves a government that respects their rights and dignity, that answers to their priorities and that serves at their pleasure. They want secure borders, safety on their streets, stable neighbors, and peace in their region. That is what we want for them as well. Egypt's leadership and its political elites will eventually hearken to these demands, or face continued protests and instability. We should wield our influence -- rooted in clear principles and interests, and in cooperation with others -- to support those in Egypt working to build sustainable democracy and a fruitful partnership with the United States.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Excellent testimony. Thank you, the three of you so very much and I am sure that we will have very good questions after I am done.

But I wanted to ask two questions. Number one, on conditioning US aid to Egypt and number two on the prospects of improved relations or deterioration of relations with Israel. Would you agree that our leverage to be credible we cannot simply grant financial aid to Egypt until Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood-led government meets certain conditions that cannot and must not be waived, and do you support conditioning our US aid to Egypt until it recognizes certain conditions, its citizens' human rights, religious minority rights, protects law and order, cracks down on illicit activities in the Sinai, etcetera?

And secondly, on relations with Israel, how do you see Egypt-Israel relations in this coming year and with the elections that Egypt is going to be holding in the near future? Do you think that this will be good for Israel, the kind of language to be used? Is it a bargaining chip in all of the political debate, etcetera? We will begin with the Honorable Elliott Abrams.

Mr. ABRAMS. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Those are very difficult questions. On the question of relations with Israel, Morsi has been careful. For example, within the last few weeks, Hamas made another request to open an office in Cairo. And the Government of Egypt said no. And you have seen the reports about the flooding of those Sinai smuggling tunnels with water and with sewage. So those are two things we care a good deal about. Those tunnels are how those arms get into Gaza. The Government of Egypt seems to be doing a good job, indeed a better job than the Mubarak regime did.

So I think Morsi realizes that any trouble with Israel would be devastating at least, at least economically in terms of foreign investment, tourism, the IMF.

Just on the first part, I want to say I agree with you. I think conditionality is important. And again, the two go together. If there is no political conditionality, the economic—

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I don't want to cut you off because I know you elaborated on that in your statement.

Mr. ABRAMS. Right.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. If I could have the two other witnesses.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. Absolutely. Can you hear me now? Sorry about that. I was saying that in 2012, UCIRF did in fact, recommend that the United States Government should certify progress on protection for religious rights and broader human rights as a condition of disbursement of military assistance. So the position that UCIRF has taken in the past, recent past, has been that there should be some conditionality on aid as a means of exercising leverage. We're still in the process of our deliberations for our upcoming report, so I won't address that specifically, but I will say here under the watchful gaze of my late father, that I know that when he was serving in Congress, not only his watchful gaze, but his dog, Gigi. So that that is a double whammy. I really better behave myself. But he did support a degree of linkage and conditionality. And he always felt that that was a means of leverage.

On the issue of relations with Israel, I agree with my colleague, Elliott Abrams, that Morsi has been careful, but I think the underlying danger, and this is a great fear that I have, is that as this government is unable to deliver on a whole range of promises, you have these huge raised expectations on the part of the Egyptian people that are now slamming into all sorts of disappointment on the economic front, on the political liberty front, on the rights front, and there is, unfortunately, a long history in that region of the world of unifying people—

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I am going to cut you off a second, just so I can have Tamara speak.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. Of course.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Madam Chair. I think we have to distinguish between the military aid and the economic aid. The economic aid, as you know, has been shrinking over the last 10 years or so. And so I think on the economic side we can be most effective either by putting more money on the table if we think it is a good investment or more likely by working with others. If you look at the total package of assistance that is waiting on the signing of an IMF loan, it is about \$14.5 billion. That is a much more significant lever than what we can provide alone. And so we should work to develop conditions that are shared by the Western governments and the multi-lateral organizations that are providing this aid.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. We will wait for your Israel answer at another time.

My ranking member, Ted Deutch is recognized. Thank you.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Madam Chair. Egypt is currently among the largest recipients of aid from our country. Our aid to Egypt is a stipulation of the Camp David accords. It has been the backbone of our relationship with Egypt for decades now.

If we were to eliminate aid to Egypt, we risk US security, I think Israel security, stability within the region. We give bad actors in the region, like the Iranian regime, I think exactly what they would want, but it is not just a question, and you have already started speaking to this. It is not just a question of whether or not we provide it, it is how—I think we need to ask the question, how do we provide, what do we provide, and in the context of both of those questions, how human rights respect for women and religious minorities, democratic principles, to the extent there is conditionality, how are those—how do we do it? What are the metrics? How do we figure that out as to how we provide the aid?

When we provide foreign military funding to countries they pay, as I understand it, they pay for their purchases up front. In the case of Egypt, they have the opportunity to finance their purchases. They pay their contracts out over time. The only other country that enjoys that system, I think is Israel. And so the Egyptian military now has multiple contracts outstanding with American defense firms. A study that the GAO did back in 2006 found that Egypt had agreements in place in excess of \$2 billion, some of which weren't going to come due until 5 years later. The point is if something happened that required a quick cutoff of US aid to Egypt, like a violation of the Camp David Accords, at that point the United States and ultimately the American taxpayer would be on

the hook to pay the termination penalties that the defense contractors would be owed.

So should that continue and should the conditionality be part of perhaps how we administer that aid?

And then finally, and you have spoken to this some, but I would like you to elaborate, for the past 30 years, Egypt has been purchasing military hardware like F-16s and Apache helicopters. M1A1 tanks, but Elliott Abrams has spoken to this and we have now heard from many of my colleagues that perhaps it is in our national security interest and Israel's security interest and most importantly Egypt's own security interest that we shift from supplying those sorts of offensive capabilities to advance counterterrorism capabilities. And I would like you to address what that would actually look like, what that shift would entail.

And then the last question is would the Egyptian military and would the Egyptian Government object to greater intelligence and counterterrorism cooperation with the United States? And if the answer to that is no, they wouldn't object, then shouldn't they acknowledge that US assistance may be better served by focusing on those other areas?

Dr. Wittes, let us start with you and then we will come back.

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. Thank you, Congressman Deutch. Briefly, I think on the economic side the most important change we can make is to reverse the one change we have made since the revolution. We have halted our democracy assistance and our support for Egyptian civil society. And in a moment of transition, that is, I believe, a mistake and something we need to correct. We need to resume that support now.

On the military side, yes. I think that increasingly the Egyptian military and the Egyptian Government are aware that their primary security challenge is not a massive land force invading their country. It is the 21st century security challenges we are all facing and that we need to work together to combat. And I think in many ways the Libyan revolution and the spiraling effects of that on the neighborhood drove that point home.

I think this is a time when together Egypt and the United States can do a real strategic reassessment of military aid and how we use it.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thanks. Mr. Abrams, what would that look like?

Mr. ABRAMS. Too much of the money goes to very big ticket items like F-16s. If you are trying, for example, to keep order in Sinai, F-16s are not helpful. Other things may be. Helicopters may be. APCs may be. Jeeps may be. Training may be. So I think you would lose some of the big ticket items, but you would have a different composition of the military aid program.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thanks. I am out of time, but I hope Dr. Swett you will have an opportunity to speak to if we move to conditionality what would those metrics look like? What would we actually expect to have happened in order to accomplish that?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much. Mr. Chabot, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific is recognized.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank our witnesses again for their testimony this morning. I don't know if any of you had the opportunity to watch 60 Minutes a couple of weeks ago

when President Obama and Secretary Clinton appeared for a joint interview to reflect on the administration's foreign policy. The President made an interesting statement. He said and I quote: "When it comes to Egypt, had it not been for the leadership we showed, you might have seen a different outcome there." My first thought was did he really say that? And my second thought was I can't believe the interviewer let that go unchallenged.

Today, in Egypt, its Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated President has carried out a naked power grab of considerable proportions. He bullied through a new constitution backed by the Brotherhood that threatens the rights of women and non-Muslims. Garbage is piling up in the streets. The police force is said to be just as corrupt as it was during the Mubarak regime. Civil uprisings are occurring throughout the country. Opposition figures cite abduction and torture by government officials. And now we even hear that bakeries throughout Egypt are contemplating a strike later this week to protest rising wheat prices.

So I guess I would have to ask just how much worse could things have been in Egypt without the benefits of this President's alleged leadership? If I may, I would also like to get your thoughts on parliamentary elections now scheduled for April. Egyptian opposition leader Mohamed ElBaradai told the BBC yesterday that if the elections are held, given the adoption of the Islamist-drafted constitution, it could set the country on a "road to total chaos and instability" and then he added "we need to send a message loud and clear to the people here and outside of Egypt that this is not a democracy, that we have not participated in an uprising 2 years ago to end up with a recycling of the Mubarak regime."

I wonder if you might want to comment further on the prospects for the parliamentary election and what further bumps in the road we can expect as we approach the April dates?

Dr. Abrams, I would like to hear your thoughts on those points that I just brought up.

Mr. ABRAMS. Thank you. The problem goes back again to the lack of any kind of consensus. The government is moving forward despite opposition and not seeking to get any buy in from groups outside of the Muslim Brotherhood. So one could envision parliamentary elections that would kind of bind up the nation's wounds. I don't think these will because the opposition doesn't believe that the ground rules are fair and believes as you just said that the constitution was railroaded through. So they are just being disregarded.

My fear is that if you combine that with a declining economic situation, you are going to see more and more disorder and the temptation, as Dr. Wittes said, is always in a situation like that to look for a foreign enemy.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. We only have a limited amount of time so let me go to another question. I will open this up to all the panel members. As we all remember when we saw the protesters on Tahrir Square, the ones who really did favor reform and change and democracy and all the rest, it was inspirational to a lot of folks. And of course, the Brotherhood at that time was saying we are not interested in governing. We don't want the presidency.

That is somebody else's business. And of course, they were the organized group in the country and we saw what happened.

Are there any prospects for the non-Muslim Brotherhood folks to be better organized and do better down the road? Where are we there? And I will go with Dr. Wittes here and then we will move down that way, although I only have a minute, so if you could make it relatively brief.

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. Thank you. I will be as brief as I can. The other political parties right now believe that because of the crisis facing the President and the Brotherhood, they can fight this out in the streets. Both sides are playing a zero-sum game and that is not constructive. Ultimately, if these opposition parties are going to be successful, they have to get in and compete and win people's votes. And so yes, the President needs to reach out to them and change the electoral law so they will come on board and they need to bargain and come on board and run.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. Dr. Swett?

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. Yes. I think that we saw in the religious communities a new activism, a new sense on the part of some of the minority communities that they need to get engaged politically and to some degree make common cause with the secularists. They have no confidence in this government. No confidence in their role in the society in the future. And there were very, very grave concerns expressed about the constitution and the way it bakes into the cake some of the illegitimacy that they see in the government.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. I ran out of time. Just let me say it was a real honor to work with your father on this committee for so many years.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. Thank you so much.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. It really was. He was a hero to so many. Congressman Vargas is recognized.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity. If this was a tabula rasa, a blank slate, we would never give aid to this country. I mean an oppressive leader, who oppresses his people; the Muslim Brotherhood that doesn't respect other religions; the President who has said the most anti-Semitic things we have heard in the last years. I mean this is simply a country that we wouldn't want to give aid, especially military aid.

However, a lot of us do remember Anwar Sadat. We do remember that Egypt did come together and sign a peace treaty. We remember him ultimately causing his life. They didn't kill him the next day, it took a few years, but they ultimately did assassinate him for that. He spoke at the Knesset.

So I guess my question to you is obviously we all have great concern about Egypt, its size, its strength, its peace treaty with Israel. Could you comment about that? I think the American people think it is crazy to give these guys money and F-16s, but at the same time there is this other side.

Dr. Elliott Abrams, could you comment on that?

Mr. ABRAMS. Several members of the committee have said this is the most populous Arab country and in some ways has long been the most influential. I don't think any of us are thinking about breaking off from Egypt, particularly because we don't like this government which may last for a couple of years or a couple of dec-

ades. So I think the question is as you look at the aid program, not what will make this government happy, but given the changes in Egypt and our uncertainty about where they will be one or 2 or 5 years down the road, what should that aid program look like?

I don't think a program that looks exactly as it did, exactly as it did when Hosni Mubarak left office, except that we have stopped the human rights programs can possibly be the right way to go. But I wouldn't stop the aid or suspend the aid. I would change it.

Mr. VARGAS. How would you change it? Since you haven't had much time here, I would like to ask you how would you change it?

Mr. ABRAMS. Very briefly, I would say look, we need to sit down with the new Government of Egypt and say the status quo won't work for us. It won't work for Congress. It won't work for the American people. Let us put together a new package and talk to the Egyptian military about what their needs for this coming decade are.

I don't think that they are in a position to say to us, particularly if we are talking with other donors, go away. We are not interested in re-thinking this. So I think it would look like a military aid package that is adapted to the real dangers facing Egypt today. And on the economic side, I think Dr. Wittes is right. It is not so much would we give, it is that we have enormous influence as part of a coalition of donors.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. I don't have the competency to address the specifics of the military aid package, but on the broader issue of conditionality and linkage, I think that when we, as a country, set aside our human rights concerns for what we perceive as our hard-core, tough interest, military interest and security interest, we are showing a shortsighted lack of vision and we lose not only the moral power of the cause we seek to advance, but we also lose the credibility with what is in that part of the world called the Arab street. We lose that sense on the part of the people in the country that we are standing for important values.

And so I think we really do need to look at conditionality and linkage when it comes to vast sums of aid, whether military or otherwise and we cannot disconnect that from the situation of religious freedom or broader human rights in the society.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you.

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. Just something very brief to add. We want a long-term relationship with country. It is a geo-strategically important country. But at a moment of tremendous change, we need greater flexibility in the way we engage. And so we need to look at the aid package in that light. How do we increase our flexibility? And in that regard, I think the issue of the cash flow financing that Congressman Deutch raised is a very important one because when that military aid is tied down, we don't have the flexibility to make the changes we need.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you. And one quick last question to Dr. Abrams. Our 600 peace keepers, I believe we still have in Egypt. If you could comment on that, any danger to them?

Mr. ABRAMS. Yes. That is a really important point. It is not a fighting force. It is an observer force, the O in MFO is Observer.

Mr. VARGAS. Right.

Mr. ABRAMS. There have been a couple of incidents already. Because there is a real breakdown of order in the Sinai, so it seems to me that we need to look first of all, are they really able to defend themselves. And secondly, again, as part of the aid package, is the Egyptian army ready, willing, and able to defend them?

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much. Mr. Meadows is recognized.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you. As each of you have testified, we keep coming back to this change in the mix as we see it, perhaps going from more of a military assistance to an economic assistance or as Dr. Wittes said, democracy assistance.

Can you characterize that a little bit better in terms of well, we are not just sending dollars there with no conditionality, as you would put it? How would we look at the dollars that were spent in terms of taking away from the military assistance and seeing if we truly have some stability in terms of peace keeping within the region? Each one of you can comment on that.

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. I think the military assistance, we have to recognize it plays an economic role as well indirectly in that it is a large component of the military budget. And—

Mr. MEADOWS. You mean our military budget?

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. No, the Egyptian budget. So it has a displacement effect. To the extent that our military assistance is helping them carry out crucial functions, if we were to transfer that to economic assistance some other way they would have to pay for that or it wouldn't get done. So we do need to look at the practical consequences of making such a shift.

I am actually of the view that working with others in the international community, we could put an economic package on the table that would be significantly larger and could be a positive incentive for the right kinds of decisions by an Egyptian Government. The administration put into its last budget proposal a Middle East transition fund that would make money available to governments in the region that were making good choices.

Mr. MEADOWS. What are those good choices? Let us get back to the condition. We all talk—we all want to get together and sing Kumbaya. But what are those good choices that we are looking at there?

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. Transition to democracy, in other words enshrining human rights, protecting minorities, building good institutions with transparency and accountability, good economic choices meaning free market choices and choices that will produce stability and deliver for people, not just for corrupt cronies.

Mr. MEADOWS. Okay, based on the changes to the constitution, do you see that those protections for religious freedom as being really valid?

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. If I could address that? I think one of the most critical issues that we would need to look to as a metric as to whether or not Egypt is going to be capable of reforming is, in fact, whether they revisit this very problematic constitution. There are a number of very, very troubling provisions in it. There are some that sound good, but they are overridden by competing provi-

sions that in all likelihood will trump the good ones, the nice rhetoric.

Mr. MEADOWS. Right.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. And there are provisions that aren't discussed that much on this side, here in this country that were brought to our attention by women's groups for example, lowering the age at which girls can be married off, lowering the age of child labor, a number of really, really problematic things and perhaps the overarching problem is that the constitution, the process by which it was adopted, written and adopted, lacks credibility. And so you have this huge divide in the society where all the people we would like, all the reformers, all the secularists, all the minority communities, the human rights activists, will have nothing to do with it and reject it.

So unless we see a willingness on the part of the Morsi government to revisit the constitution, to reopen the process and change some of these very problematic provisions, I think that would be a very, very troubling indicator.

Mr. MEADOWS. So would all of you agree that that becomes one of those conditions that becomes a line in the sand that if they are not willing to do that that we need to reexamine our aid to the region?

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. You know, I would say I am uncomfortable with the language line in the sand because of the complexity of things. We have all talked about the fact that Egypt is in that region a very indispensable nation. It is the largest nation and as goes Egypt, so may go much of the region. So we want to see Egypt succeed.

And the matter of conditionality and the matter of linkage is one that has to be handled deftly. I know there has been a lot of talk about sequester and meat cleavers. We don't want in terms of the way in which we approach issues of conditionality to be done in a manner that doesn't reflect deftness and flexibility.

Mr. MEADOWS. So a soft condition?

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. I am more comfortable with that language.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much. Mr. Grayson, my Florida colleague is recognized.

Mr. GRAYSON. Thank you. I am wondering is there any evidence that Egyptians themselves regard relations with Israel as an important part of their political discourse? For instance, is there polling to show that if they rank the important issues to them individually that they rank the relationship between Egypt and Israel as an important issue?

Let's start with you, Ambassador.

Mr. ABRAMS. I don't know the answer to that question.

Mr. GRAYSON. You are a very honest man. Anyone else want to take a shot at that?

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. I don't know the answer to the question specifically about polling on the relationship with Israel, but I believe that the Pew Research group has done polling on something that is very linked which is the levels of anti-Semitic attitudes in Egypt and they are off the charts. Don't hold me to this, but I believe they

are among the highest in the world and among the highest in the region.

I didn't really get to finish an answer earlier, when——

Mr. GRAYSON. You are going to have to on somebody else's time. I am sorry.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. Okay.

Mr. GRAYSON. But let me continue talking about what we are talking about here. Let me ask you this, do the main Egyptian political parties have stated positions on Egypt-Israel relations and if so, what are they?

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. The Brotherhood's stated position or rather the Brotherhood's party, the FJP's stated position is to maintain the Camp David Treaty, although there are individuals within the party who have called for a national referendum on whether to keep the treaty. This is part of the ambiguity that makes this period so uncertain and troubling.

Amongst the other parties, I don't have these facts in front of me. My recollection is that a number of them have said yes, we would maintain all of Egypt's international obligations. But of course, the treaty itself is de minimis in a way. It is what are they willing to do if they are holding the reins of power to keep the peace and to deal with security challenges as they arise.

As Elliott Abrams noted, even the Morsi government has taken a number of very specific steps that we felt were important to keep the peace. They know that this is a sine qua non for us. I think the question we have to ask ourselves is is that all we want?

Mr. GRAYSON. Well, given the high level of anti-Semitism that you just described why is it that no political party in Egypt has tried to galvanize its own support by trying to exploit that anti-Semitism or has that happened?

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. I think that has happened. I think that is incorrect what you just said. In fact, I think exploiting anti-Semitism is taking place on a daily basis from pulpits, in newspapers, and academia and on the part of politicians. The great fear that I have is that if Egypt is not successful and we want Egypt to succeed, it is an old playbook, not a silver lining's playbook, it is an old, dark cloud playbook. In that region and in other parts of the world that whipping up anti-Semitism, finding a scapegoat, and making Israel, which I must say in the minds of most Egyptians, Israel and Jews are synonymous. There is no differentiation between hatred of Jews and hatred of what they view as the Jewish Zionist entity. So sort of the bright lines that we might say, will they or won't they abide by the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Accord, and the indication is that for the timing, the intention is to do so, those lines get very muddled in the discourse there.

I think that we do our foreign policy a disservice when we don't realize the extent to which these vitriolic, venomous, and really poisonous attitudes seep into and characterize the lens through which they view relations with Israel.

Mr. GRAYSON. Is that anti-Semitism programmatic? In other words, are there specific elements of anti-Semitic platform, like for instance, let us say terminating the Camp David agreements? Or is it simply a manifestation of emotion and hatred and very little beyond that?

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. I think manifestations of emotions of hatred rarely are confined and rarely don't have spillover effects in terms of the policies of nations. So again, I think it is accurate to say that programmatically, no party has come out and said we want to destroy Israel, we are going to wipe it off the face of the map, we are going to abrogate the peace treaty. But the discourse is saturated with dialogue that is problematic and creates a climate in which as the Arab street, if you will, as the population becomes increasingly frustrated with the lack of delivery on the dreams they hoped for, it becomes a dangerous possibility that that old playbook is brought into action.

Mr. GRAYSON. And the other parties, what is their position?

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. There isn't a lot of specificity on this, frankly. I think it is opportunism more than anything. Right now, the priorities of the Egyptian people are jobs, education, and healthcare. But if governments aren't able to deliver, parties can't deliver on those core needs, then the temptation to populism gets much, much stronger.

Mr. GRAYSON. Thank you, all.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. Thank you very much. Dr. Yoho of Florida is recognized.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you guys. I appreciate the input. This is something that just fascinates me. You know, back in the 1800s, de Tocqueville came to the United States to see how our country was succeeding and growing so well. And when he went back and reported, he said, "Rarely could I find anybody that did not understand the Constitution." And then when Anwar Sadat got assassinated, the question was will the people pick somebody according to the constitution and the interviewer says the people of Egypt don't know and don't understand their constitution, so whoever is in charge of the military and that was Hosni Mubarak.

And now we are going through another change, another evolution as Dr. Swett, you brought up. They have been evolving for thousands of years and we are going through another one and we are at a situation where we put a lot of money into that to help build stability in the Middle East which I think is important. I think we will agree to that.

I hear all of you saying how we need to make sure they have open elections. We need to have free speech, open democratic elections, extend religious freedoms, and personal freedoms and women's rights. But what we are doing and correct me if I am wrong is we are passing on Western ideology to a country, to a religion, and a political system that doesn't accept it. I feel personally that is why we are seeing such an upheaval of that in the Middle East.

My question at this point is with the Morsi government, is it even stable enough to receive, and I am going to call it the cookie, that America has? And that cookie is foreign aid. That cookie is a stable government that they can become a partner with. Are they stable enough to receive that in lieu of the fact that we have got these tanks and the airplanes going over there? And the people in my district aren't real happy about this and they want it stopped, until we can come back and say yes, we have a very stable government and these are the things they are going to follow, the 1970

peace accord, Camp David Peace Accord. And we want to make sure those things—I just want to hear your thoughts on that.

Mr. ABRAMS. I would say Congressman, this is a period of transition in which they are fighting it out and we hope they will fight it out at the ballot box rather than in the streets. But when you say, for example, you know, they don't accept our standards, they actually are pledged to those standards. They have signed up to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and so forth. So they have said they would. And as we said, that was a close election. Morsi won 51 to 48. There are millions and millions and millions of Egyptians who are angry, for example, about the treatment of women in the last few months in the streets of Egypt, about the lack of law and order. So I think the critical thing is that we don't walk away from this, that we let the people who are fighting for the kind of human rights standards that we believe in know we hope they win.

Mr. YOHO. I hope so.

Mr. ABRAMS. Politically, morally, and through our aid program, we should be on their side.

Mr. YOHO. Well, one of my questions, too, is you said that they signed those agreements, but I also know a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still, you know. People will say and do something to get a reward, but do they follow through? It is like you are saying we have propped up the Mubarak regime and there was a lot of human rights abuses going on in that and you were saying we are giving money, but yet we knew that was going on, but we kind of turned a deaf ear to it.

Mr. ABRAMS. We did and I think it was a mistake. And we see that mistake now. He crushed the center. He crushed the liberals, the moderates, and he let the Muslim Brotherhood basically play around so that when he fell, the opposition is completely divided, except for the Brotherhood which is very well organized and takes power. So we pay a price for this now, too.

But I think there are a lot of Egyptians who would like to see us take a kind of political and moral lead in saying these are the standards that Egypt and Egypt over decades has pledged itself to and should meet. And we will hold Egypt responsible if it fails to meet this.

The problem from the point of many Egyptians is they think we are walking away from it.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. I would just say based on the many, many meetings we had with a wide variety of interlocutors that the viewpoint of most of the reformers, again, the people we would feel that we have most common cause with, right now is very pessimistic. They are not optimistic about the direction things are going. And they are highly suspicious and skeptical of the underlying motives of the Muslim Brotherhood government. They do not feel comfortable with it and the actual concrete markers, this flawed constitution and a variety of other markers, the impunity, the failure to prosecute those who have launched violent attacks against Coptic Christian communities. These markers do not give them encouragement.

So the people on the ground with whom we met for the most part were worried, were concerned, and felt that things were going in

a very troubling direction. The government officials with whom we met said this is complicated. This is hard. We are trying. We think we are going to get it right. And where the full truth lies is hard to know.

Mr. YOHO. I appreciate it. We are out of time. Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. Congresswoman Frankel is recognized.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the panel. I want to talk about unintended consequences. I think everybody here probably agrees that there is a lot of troubling aspects of the Morsi regime. My question to you and especially as it relates to the security of Israel and the stability of the Middle East, what are the unintended consequences of us having—withdrawing aid now or having conditions that could not be met?

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. I think one reason why we haven't seen significant change in the aid relationship is because things are uncertain. Responding tactically in the initial follow on to dramatic events makes sense. I think that the way the Gaza crisis in November was resolved demonstrates that this Egyptian Government understands the importance not only to the United States, but to its own interests and its own priorities taking power, keeping power and governing, of keeping stability with its neighbors and particularly with Israel.

So at the sort of practical, functional level, I think we have achieved our objective. The question is how do we ensure that we are creating an environment where the security of Israel and the sustenance of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty will be maintained over the long term. And that gets to some of these societal issues that we have been discussing. But it also gets to the fact that the Egyptian people have priorities that are domestic priorities. And they know that they need trade with the world. They need tourism from the world. They need investment from the world. And they are not going to get that in an environment of chaos or an environment of conflict with their neighbors.

So the maintenance of peace with Israel is fundamentally in the interest of the Egyptian Government, the Egyptian military, and the Egyptian people. And part of the role that we can play, I think, is to help make that case across Egyptian society and in all our engagement with Egyptian political actors.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. I agree with everything that Dr. Wittes said. I would just add that interestingly, President Morsi is now something of a moderate within his government and I think we need to be mindful of the fact that he is being pulled in even more extreme directions by some of the Salafist elements within his own government and his party. So he does not enjoy full support and stability for this somewhat more moderated, if you will, and stability-oriented posture that he has taken. So the evolving nature and the inherent instability and uncertainty of what we are facing there makes policy decisions very, very difficult. And you refer to the law of unintended consequences, it is a great fear of every policy maker. You may be doing the right thing, but will you get the right result for doing the right thing.

Mr. ABRAMS. One of the things I worry about is the deterioration in the Israeli-Egyptian military relationship. It has been good, al-

though largely hidden for political reasons in Egypt. It has been good for a very long time. What we have seen in the case of Turkey which was a terrific relationship, Israel-Turkey military, it is pretty much gone. And it is not the Turkish military that did that. It is the Turkish political leadership. That is something that we should be worried about. I think I would say the mil-mil relationship between Israel and Egypt has deteriorated significantly since Mubarak left. The question is how to maintain what is still there. Mostly that, of course, is not our job. It is the job of the Israelis and the Egyptians. But I think it is something that we should talk to the government of Egypt about because it is set against this background. It is harder and harder to do if the overall discourse is anti-Israel and anti-Semitic in a very great degree. But I think that is something to watch for.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much. Mr. Weber of Texas is recognized.

Mr. WEBER. Thank you, Madam Chairman. This is for Mr. Abrams to start with. You said in your opening comments that you didn't think sending F-16s to Egypt was a good idea, and I don't remember exactly, it is not in your prepared remarks that we have, that perhaps they need APCs, which I took as Armored Personnel Carriers, and a couple of other things that you listed, like training. And yet, you do say that they have a bad record in human rights violations.

So what makes you think that they won't take those military assets that we send them and use them against their own people?

Mr. ABRAMS. That is a terrific question.

Mr. WEBER. I am glad you think so.

Mr. ABRAMS. It is absolutely right and you know, I can remember days in Latin America in the Reagan administration when we were happy to give people in those days F-5s because we knew that they couldn't use them against their own populations, so we wouldn't have a human rights problem in that way.

There is absolutely no guarantee.

We do know that the F-16s are not going to be useful to address the security concerns that ought to be theirs and certainly are our concerns, for example, the Sinai. The only thing you can do, I think, is put some kind of conditionality on it and let the Egyptian political and military leadership know that this is temporary and it is going to be cut off if this continues which is what we do in a lot of countries. But it is a great worry because the relationship between in Sinai, for example, the Egyptian military and police on the one side and the Bedouin on the other is bad enough already. So the likelihood that there would be human rights abuses is very real.

Mr. WEBER. Then you go on to say we have sent four F-16s, if I remember your comments correctly. How many more do we lack, and what is the time frame?

Mr. ABRAMS. There were four on January 28 and the whole package I believe is 16. I believe it is 16 over the next 1½ years.

Mr. WEBER. So are you concerned that those will be eventually used with all of the rhetoric that is going on against Israel, or are you concerned that those will be used against Israel in the near future?

Mr. ABRAMS. No, I am not because I think it is so clearly against the national interest of Egypt and against this government's. I think it would be a piece of insanity. One can worry about what happens 5 years down the road if this government collapses and is replaced by a Salafi, a worse government, but for this government, I think they will not do something that could lead to the collapse of the regime. And a conflict with Israel which they would lose in potentially humiliating fashion, could lead to the collapse of the regime.

Mr. WEBER. Okay, and then Dr. Swett, I am going to let you answer that question you didn't get to earlier.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. Oh, you are very kind. You know, I did sort of address it in response to—well, actually, Congressman Grayson didn't let me say it. You are right. I simply was intending to make the point that if Egypt is not able to succeed, if they are not able to fulfill the economic and domestic needs of their people, it is very hard to imagine this Muslim Brotherhood government just sort of willingly turning over power to a more secular, a more moderate, a more Western-oriented, if you will, government through democratic processes. And I worry that the virulent anti-Semitism and just unending avalanche of hatred toward Israel and the Jews could become a pretext, in fact, for scapegoating and for turning attention away from the domestic failures by provoking confrontation, maybe not all out military conflict.

Mr. WEBER. Pardon me for interrupting, but if and when that happens, then what Mr. Abrams said goes out the window, because they will indeed use those assets in such a fashion—

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. Or will permit terror from their side of the border.

Mr. WEBER. State-sponsored terrorism. Does that really exist? Who knew.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. Impunity is really the way many governments operate, that things are permitted to happen and not stopped. And so that would be, I think, a very real concern from my perspective.

Mr. WEBER. So, back very quickly to Mr. Abrams, if you had your druthers, you would shut down the rest of those F-16s?

Mr. ABRAMS. I would.

Mr. WEBER. Okay, and how about you, Dr. Swett?

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. You know, I am here talking about religious freedom and tolerance and human rights and so I think I probably better stick to my area of expertise on that one.

Mr. WEBER. Thank God you recognize that. Dr. Wittes?

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. Very briefly, I will say I would like to see more of our military-to-military engagement involve training, involve counterterrorism missions, involve the kind of engagement that allows us to continue socializing the Egyptian military toward professionalization, toward norms of human rights and toward the rule of law as a tool for security and stability.

Mr. WEBER. Thank you. I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, sir. Mr. Connolly, my friend from Virginia, is recognized.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Madam Chairman, and welcome to our panel. Ambassador Abrams, you mentioned twice that Morsi

only got 51 percent and 48 percent voted against him. What is your point?

Mr. ABRAMS. My point is that he should recognize in ruling Egypt that he is not a dictator, that there is going to need to be widespread public support including in the Parliament among the other parties to do the hard things that this new Government of Egypt has to do. So far, he has acted as if he had 99 percent of the population—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Abrams, you will forgive me for observing, you served in an administration that came into power with a Supreme Court ruling 5 to 4 when the other guy got more votes than your guy. So I mean I wish the Bush administration had followed your advice in terms of that—

Mr. ABRAMS. I think we did because we had people in Congress.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I don't think Democrats felt that was the case. I think it is very dangerous business, frankly, when we question the legitimacy or implicitly question the legitimacy of an election. There may have been irregularities. The fact of the matter is Morsi won an election, whether it was 51 percent or 80 percent, he won. And we have to deal with it. I think we are in dangerous grounds when we question the legitimacy of it and especially when we have had our own problems, frankly, in our country.

Mr. ABRAMS. I didn't use the word legitimacy, Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I understand.

Mr. ABRAMS. And I would compare Tunisia where they also won an election, but have had a coalition government in an effort to reach out to other parties.

Mr. CONNOLLY. But you made a very good point from my point of view which was that for 30 something years, we supported the Mubarak government and in doing so we sort of were complicit in turning a blind eye to the creation of any alternative political space. And now we are faced with a Muslim Brotherhood government which was inevitable if there was no political space since it was the only group that could network, albeit sometimes illegally, but it did it.

The real question to me, I was in Egypt in May, and I met with the Muslim Brotherhood. It was before Morsi's election. To me, the real question is can the Muslim Brotherhood evolve to some level of acceptable democratic governance that respects the rights of minorities, especially—Dr. Swett, you talked a lot about anti-Semitism, but we haven't talked about Coptic Christians and the respect for that very substantial minority in Egypt and what rights are they going to have in this new constitution that got forced through the legislative body? So to me, that is the question and I wonder if you agree is that the question? And what's the proper role of the United States in trying to help them with that?

It seems to me a sledge hammer is not going to help. They have got their own domestic politics and if it looks like they are caving to our pressure that is rather crude. I don't think politically that is going to work. So in the time that is left, I wonder if you would care to comment?

Dr. Wittes?

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. Thank you. I think we have a lot of cards to play. As I said, I think they care about our recognition. They

care about the seal of approval, if you will, from Western governments. It is why President Morsi was so eager to continue with his trip to Germany, even though he was facing massive protests in the cities of the Suez. And he didn't get the full-throated support of the German government in the way that he wanted because of the human rights problems in his country.

So I think that we need to continue to think about that kind of leverage.

Also, ultimately, what will compel the Muslim Brotherhood to behave in a way that can make them a constructive democratic actor? Competition. We need to ensure that this is going to be a pluralist political system. That means rights need to be protected and it means we need to help the other parties get their act together and ensure that not only these next elections, but the ones after and the one after that are free and fair.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. You know, Mark Twain once said that "history doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes." And in responding to your question about can the Muslim Brotherhood evolve and change, I just am having a *deja vu* moment when I remember when Putin came to power in Russia. And the discussion at that time was can a KGB guy be trusted with Russian democracy? And a lot of people were nervous about it, including myself. And as that verdict is coming in, it is not actually a very positive verdict. Count me skeptical on that question.

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

Mr. CONNOLLY. Can we just allow Mr. Abrams to answer?

Mr. ABRAMS. Thank you. I wanted to say I agree completely with Dr. Wittes. The answer I think is competition. If they think they will lose power in a free election, they will begin to move. So anything we can do to promote, free debate, free elections will help.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much. Mr. Cotton is recognized.

Mr. COTTON. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I agree with my colleague from Virginia that structural constitutionalism is very important to freedom and it works very well here in the United States, so I would like to explore how it works in Egypt. There has been plenty of talk about freedoms that we enjoy under our Bill of Rights, religion, speech, assembly, press, freedoms of women, minorities, due process in criminal cases, rights of property, rights of contract. As Madison said, those are only parchment barriers. If you don't have things like what we have in the articles of our Constitution, separated powers and independent judiciary and prosecutor, judicial review, fair, regularly scheduled, impartial elections, I would like the witnesses to comment on the status of those kind of structural protections in Egypt. And also whether our Government is prioritizing those as opposed to simply prioritizing elections?

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. Well, I will start. I think there are two structural features that I would highlight. The first is within the Constitution itself, the section that lays out the rights of individual citizens is structurally subsumed to the rights and privileges of the state. So that is an architectural problem. And it is the reverse of what we have with our Bill of Rights. In fact, it is the reverse of our whole structure.

The other issue I would highlight and one reason why I think we have seen such troubling indicators over the last 9 months or the last 1½ years is that essentially, we have had an executive ruling unconstrained. There hasn't been a functioning Parliament in Egypt to check that executive's power. The judiciary is compromised for a variety of reasons, a lot of holdovers from the previous regime, questions about its independence.

So without institutional checks on executive power, without effective opposition parties to check the power of the ruling party, where does accountability come from? The only place left is civil society. And I have to say that Egyptian civil society organizations have been doing an incredible job of trying to hold this President accountable. Transparency measures, giving information in public, documenting abuses, challenging proposed laws, but they can't do it themselves. They need external support. They need our partnership. And they need those institutions to be built.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. I would say from the religious freedom perspective there are, as I indicated earlier, a number of problematic provisions. The one thing that was brought to our attention repeatedly is that one of the provisions in this new constitution seems to give a religious body, Al-Azhar, the authority to interpret the constitution and this was of enormous concern again to secular and reformist groups. They were adamant that only a court, a supreme judicial court, should have that authority. And we heard just repeated worries on the part of a variety of people and not just secularists, but certainly the Coptic minority, that Egypt was moving in the direction of becoming a religious Islamist state. And that relates to a whole slew of fundamental architectural issues about how you are going to protect that range of rights that you referred to earlier. So through the religious freedom lens, really problematic aspects of the constitution are of grave concern.

Mr. ABRAMS. Nothing to add. I think that is really quite right. Well, one thing to add. We do have a role here to play. Whether we like it or not, if we are silent about these issues, we weaken the side that really we are on in those debates in Egypt.

Mr. COTTON. So if I can synthesize what I have heard, some of the provisions that we might call the Bill of Rights are troublesome, some of the architectural designs are more troublesome yet. Do you think that our State Department, our Government, is doing enough to emphasize the need for those kind of structural protections of individual liberties?

Mr. ABRAMS. I don't think so, Congressman. It appears that human rights and democracy activists in Egypt don't think so and that is an important issue. I fear that we are lapsing back into the way we mostly over 30 years handled the Mubarak regime which was to go along with the occasional statement. And frankly, the occasional statement from the State Department spokesmen or the Embassy spokesmen won't cut it. It really has got to come from the President or Secretary of State if it is going to have any impact.

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. I would agree with that. I think the default position is always to be quietly critical and publicly passive. And I just don't think that cuts it. I don't.

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. I will just say we said that we would stand up for a set of principles in the course of supporting democratic transition and we need to do that.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Connolly. Mr. Schneider of Illinois is recognized.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you and thank you for joining us today.

Ambassador Abrams, you talked about the importance of mil-mil relationship between Egypt and Israel. And I would like to explore a little bit beyond the personal relationships across the board, both Egyptian-Israeli, Egyptian-United States. As we look at Egypt and as it seems to be moving on a path toward more extremism, similar to what you described in Turkey, how do we decide when to push forward on relationships to stay engaged to maybe look for an alternate detour route for those relationships and when to stay silent?

Mr. ABRAMS. I think it is very difficult, of course, to make those decisions. One way to do it, I think, is to be talking to the people who are fighting for the things that we believe in, the standards we believe in, in Egypt, the democracy, the human rights activists, who are feeling let down right now. They will have an important view of whether more statements by the United States would help or hurt and what is a good symbolic act to take. I think we should also be talking to some of the other Embassies in Egypt. Some are active on human rights issues. Many are not. But you know, you have in a sense to rely to some degree on your diplomats, too.

The problem I think has been that diplomats in Cairo over the years have tended to have far closer relationships with the Government of Egypt, whatever that government is, and to want to succor that relationship and not make trouble for that relationship by having others outside the government with groups that whatever the government is it views as troublemakers.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Dr. Wittes.

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. Thank you. I will tell you a few of the things I have heard from activists on the ground because I think Elliott is right, we need to listen to them. They have said please don't cut off economic aid. We are in desperate straits, but hold our Government accountable. They have said please don't invite President Morsi to Washington until he has dealt with the political facts he needs to deal with here at home. And they have said please speak out on the principles that you articulated as the foundation for your support of democracy in the region.

And we have said repeatedly, in fact, from the beginning of the Obama administration that parties that want to participate in democratic politics need to respect equality of all, including women and minorities. We have said that they need to respect the rules of the election after the election as well as before.

So the precedents are all there, but we need to be consistent about applying them.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. But occasionally desperation can be the enemy of accountability, especially for diplomats. How do we make sure as we are holding, trying to hold Egypt to our standards that we are not pushing them in the wrong direction, that we hold to the accountability while maintaining the support that they require?

Ms. LANTOS SWETT. You know, one thing that I think we need to bear in mind is we are not holding them to our standards. We are holding them to international standards to which they have subscribed. We are holding them to treaty obligations that they freely undertook which they are not being accountable to. So you know, it sometimes is important to keep that distinction in mind. Certainly, in the work that we do at UCIRF, we do not seek to hold other countries to America's standards on religious freedom which in some ways are not entirely identical to international standards. We seek to hold them to international standards. And I think that that needs to be emphasized in our dealings because then it is perhaps less offensive in terms of how we deal with other countries.

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. If I may just make one more point? I think there are politics here, too. A lot of the persuasion involves helping them recognize that adhering to these standards is in their own interest.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Right.

Ms. COFMAN WITTES. A lot of Coptic Christians voted for Mohammad Morsi in the hope that he could bring along some more conservative forces to recognize that Egypt had to be an Egypt for all its citizens. And when he was inaugurated and spoke those words they had hope. He promised to appoint Coptic Christians to his cabinet. And he has reneged on a lot of those promises. But there is a constituency there. Egyptian politics doesn't have to be dictated by sect or by religious identity. It has a strong national identity. And if we can help Egyptian politicians see how they could benefit, then I think we will be farther along.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Ambassador Abrams.

Mr. ABRAMS. Just one quick remark. You do not need to worry that Secretary of State Kerry is going to be getting memos from the Near East Bureau that says break off from Egypt. Let us just cut them off. I think we need to worry that the memos from the Bureau and the cables from Embassy Cairo are going to be go slow, go soft, it is difficult here, let us not make trouble, let us be careful, let us nurture the relationship. I think they are going to go far over in that direction. It is built into the system.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. Congressman Deutch and I agree, excellent panelists. Thank you very much and this subcommittee is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:46 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X



MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

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

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

February 19, 2013

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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

DATE: Tuesday, February 26, 2013

TIME: 11:00 a.m.

SUBJECT: Demonstrations in Tahrir Square: Two Years Later, What Has Changed?

WITNESSES: The Honorable Elliott Abrams
Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies
Council on Foreign Relations

Katrina Lantos Swett, Ph.D.
Chair
U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

Tamara Cofman Wittes, Ph.D.
Director
Saban Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institute

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 Middle East and North Africa HEARING

Day Tuesday Date 02/26/12 Room 2172

Starting Time 11:03 a.m. Ending Time 12:45 p.m.

Recesses (to) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session

Electronically Recorded (taped)

Executive (closed) Session

Stenographic Record

Televised

TITLE OF HEARING:

Demonstrations in Tahrir Square: Two Years Later, What Has Changed?

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Steve Chabot, Adam Kinzinger, Tom Cotton, Randy Weber, Ron DeSantis, Mark Meadows, Ted Yoho, Theodore Deutch, Gerald Connolly, Alan Grayson, Juan Vargas, Bradley Schneider, Joseph Kennedy, Grace Meng, Lois Frankel

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

Alan Lowenthal

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.)

- SFR - Kennedy
- SFR - Connolly

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED _____


Subcommittee Staff Director

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)
**MENA Subcommittee Hearing: Demonstrations in Tahrir Square: Two Years Later, What Has
Changed?**
Tuesday February 26, 2013
11am

It has been two years since the ouster of Hosni Mubarak. To outside observers, Egypt does not seem much closer to a clean, democratic resolution. Ongoing clashes in Egypt have raised questions about the aftermath of the Arab Spring, where weak governments and extreme voices are competing for legitimacy and influence. In the end, a stable, cooperative Egypt is in the interest of the United States, its allies, and ultimately Egyptians.

One could observe the competing actors in Egypt most clearly in the slew of protests after the departure of Hosni Mubarak. One writer succinctly characterized the aftermath of post-revolution Egypt by stating that post-Arab Spring governments, with their “weak mandates, ever shifting loyalties and poor security forces—have made the region a more chaotic and unstable place, a place more susceptible than ever to rogue provocateurs fomenting violent upheavals, usually in the name of faith.”¹ While the citizens of Egypt are navigating the complicated, post-revolution landscape, the world is watching. Events in Egypt do not occur in a vacuum, and short-sighted decisions on behalf of those clamoring for power have the ability to harm Egypt’s standing among its allies.

The Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) has raised concerns among outside observers, particularly when it comes to the rights of religious minorities and Egypt’s past commitments to Israel. These concerns have real life consequences. The example that comes to mind most quickly is U.S. aid to Egypt—in 2012 alone, Members of Congress placed holds on \$510 million worth of aid to Egypt—\$450 in Economic Support Fund (ESF) money for Egypt’s debt obligations and \$60 million for the establishment of the Egyptian-American Enterprise Fund. There are also several bills active in the 113th Congress that would affect U.S. aid to Egypt, including one bill that would outlaw all FY2013 aid to Egypt (H.R. 276)² and another bill that would prohibit the U.S. government from allowing the sale or transfer of several defense articles to Egypt (S. 201),³ including F-16 aircraft and M1 tanks. There is real concern in Washington about Egypt’s future, and it would be in Egypt’s interest to heed these concerns.

Since the beginning of Egypt’s revolution, the United States has been willing to work patiently and prudently with Egypt, despite growing pains, in the hopes of maintaining the relationship while the country finds its democratic niche. Recent protests have shown us that the path to an organized, deliberative democracy requires time and effort. However, the individuals that relish in harnessing the power of the mob would only gain influence and followers if the United States were to disengage from Egypt. Moving forward will be challenging, but not impossible, if Egypt commits to being a credible partner with the United States. Whatever the outcome of the elections scheduled for April, a government that respects rule of law, civil and judicial institutions, and the rights of minorities would be a credible partner for the United States.

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¹ Bobby Ghosh, “The Agents of Outrage,” *Time*, September 13, 2012, <http://world.time.com/2012/09/13/the-agents-of-outrage/>.

² Introduced by Rep. Vern Buchanan with 8 Republican cosponsors.

³ Introduced by Sen. Rand Paul with no cosponsors.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD OF THE HONORABLE JOSEPH P. KENNEDY III**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES****“DEMONSTRATIONS IN TAHRIR SQUARE: TWO YEARS LATER, WHAT HAS CHANGED?”**

February 26, 2013

Dr. Cofman Wittes:

Egypt and its neighboring countries face unique challenges in the years ahead as the region confronts the increasing threat of AQIM's expanding sphere of influence compounded with limited economic opportunities for the next generation.

In your testimony, you mention that Egypt's young people want to build a nation that offers them opportunity and fulfills their country's potential to be an economic powerhouse in the region. One thing that struck me about Egypt is the incredible youthfulness of its population, and of the surrounding populations. The median age in Egypt is 24.6 years. In Chad it is 16.9 years; in Libya, 24.8 years; and in Niger, the median age is only 15.2 years. At the same time, many of the countries in the region face alarmingly high unemployment.

In the short-term, the dramatic number of young people facing limited economic opportunity provides fertile ground for terrorist organizations looking to take root and recruit new members. Moreover, it seems that a critical part of promoting successful democracies for the long-term – and of preventing the exploitation of disaffected and unemployed youth – must be strengthening Egyptian civil society through measures like education and infrastructure.

I am curious to hear how you believe the United States can effectively promote economic stability in Egypt. What is the appropriate role for us there, and are there specific initiatives around education, economic development, healthcare or other sectors that you believe deserve our focus? Beyond Egypt, do you see a role for the U.S. in confronting global youth unemployment and the effect it can have on economic and political stability, especially in our most conflicted regions, both in the short-term and in the long-term?

[NOTE: Responses from Tamara Cofman Wittes, Ph.D., to the questions submitted for the record by Honorable Joseph P. Kennedy III, were not received prior to printing.]

