

**Questions for the Record Submitted by  
Representative David Cicilline (1)  
Secretary of State John F. Kerry  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
February 25, 2015**

**Question 1:**

While seeking his first term, President Barack Obama stated, “America deserves a leader who speaks truthfully about the Armenian Genocide and responds forcefully to all genocides,” yet since taking office he has failed to fully recognize the Armenian Genocide and condemn its perpetrators. This year, however, marks the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan has extended an invitation to President Obama to attend the 100th anniversary commemoration ceremony in Yerevan. Will the President be attending? If not, why not and who from the Administration will be attending in his place?

**Answer:**

As the President has emphasized in his April 24 Remembrance Day statements, the achievement of a full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts of what occurred in 1915 is in all our interests. This year’s event has special resonance, as Armenia and the world mark the centenary of one of the 20th century’s worst atrocities, when 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire. We recognize the importance of historical remembrance, and for that reason, President Obama sent a Presidential Delegation to the Republic of Armenia to attend the April 24 centennial commemoration. The Delegation marked the terrible events that began in 1915 to demonstrate solidarity with the Armenian people. The Honorable Jacob J. Lew, Secretary of the Department of Treasury, led the delegation. In addition, Vice President Biden joined Armenian President Sargsyan at the May 7 memorial service held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

Our objective is to honor this centenary by standing in solidarity with the Armenian people to acknowledge the tragic events of 1915, honoring those – including the many Americans – who reached out to assist the victims. Acknowledging the painful elements of the past will help lead to the reconciliation needed to heal the wounds of the past so the Turkish and Armenian peoples can move forward together in a shared future of security and prosperity in the region.

**Question 2:**

In yet another of its ploys to cover up its culpability for the Armenian Genocide, Turkey has planned to stage a commemoration of the WWI Gallipoli battle on April 24, the same day as the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, although it normally commemorates this battle in March. Turkey had the audacity to invite the President of Armenia, without even responding to his earlier invitation to attend the Armenian Genocide commemoration in Yerevan on the same day. Sargsyan was quick to reject the invitation and noted “Turkey continues its conventional denial policy and is perfecting its instrumentation for distorting history.” Very few countries have accepted the invitation to attend. There are even reports that it will be cancelled, because of poor interest from international leaders. I implore the Administration to not send anyone to the Gallipoli event, but instead send U.S. Ambassador to

Turkey John Bass to the annual commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in Istanbul. Will the Administration be sending any representatives to the Gallipoli commemoration? If so, why?

**Answer:**

Ambassador Bass, as the President's representative in Turkey, attended the Gallipoli/Canakkale commemoration events on April 23-24, as a sign of respect for the citizens of all nations who lost lives in that battle. An estimated 200 international guests also attended the commemorations, including Britain's Prince Charles, Irish President Higgins, New Zealand Prime Minister Key, Australian Prime Minister Abbott, and numerous members of the diplomatic corps. Ambassador Bass and other personnel of the U.S. Mission in Turkey also attended a memorial concert held April 22 in Istanbul as part of the Armenian Remembrance centennial commemorations. The four-hour concert, before a packed 2,500-person capacity auditorium, featured Armenian music performed by musicians from Turkey, Armenia, and the United States and was also attended by Turkey's Culture Minister and the acting Armenian Patriarch. Our Consul General in Istanbul attended an April 24 mass held at the Armenian Patriarchate to commemorate Armenians who lost their lives starting in 1915; the Turkish government was represented at the mass by its Minister for EU Affairs. Other representatives of the Consulate General also attended an annual commemoration gathering for Armenians in Istanbul's Taksim square. President Obama sent a Presidential Delegation led by Treasury Secretary Lew to the April 24 centennial commemoration in Yerevan. Vice President Biden joined Armenian President Sargsyan at the May 7 memorial service held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

**Question 3:**

In light of the priority that the President has attached to moving Turkey toward an honest reckoning with its past, will the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, John Bass, be supporting any commemorations of the Armenian Genocide that will be taking place in Turkey? If not, please explain why not.

**Answer:**

Ambassador Bass and other personnel of the U.S. Mission in Turkey attended a memorial concert held April 22 in Istanbul as part of the Armenian Remembrance centennial commemorations. The four-hour concert, before a packed 2,500-person capacity auditorium, featured Armenian music performed by musicians from Turkey, Armenia, and the United States and was also attended by Turkey's Culture Minister and the acting Armenian Patriarch. Our Consul General in Istanbul attended an April 24 mass held at the Armenian Patriarchate to commemorate Armenians who lost their lives starting in 1915; the Turkish government was represented at the mass by its Minister for EU Affairs. Other representatives of the Consulate General also attended an annual commemoration for Armenians in Istanbul's Taksim square.

**Question 4:**

The United States has been consistently providing assistance to Nagorno Karabakh, but at modest amounts, despite the tremendous humanitarian needs there. AID conducted a needs assessment in 1998 and 2007. Has there been a needs assessment since 2007 and if not, why not?

**Answer:**

USAID's last needs assessment on Nagorno-Karabakh was conducted in 2007. The Administration determines annual U.S. assistance levels for programs in Nagorno-Karabakh based on

regular monitoring, the availability of funding, and competing priorities throughout the region. USAID would welcome the opportunity to brief you or your staff regarding needs assessments, project implementation, or other aspects of U.S. assistance in Nagorno-Karabakh.

**Question 5:**

Please provide an accounting of the Administration's distribution of aid in Nagorno Karabakh for FY15, including: 1) Name of project and purpose, 2) Institution(s) receiving funds, 3) Total funding disbursement, 4) Locations where each project is conducted, 5) Years funded, and 6) Assessment of goals achieved.

**Answer:**

The Administration intends to continue USAID's long-standing de-mining activities in Nagorno-Karabakh in FY 2015. We are currently reviewing the Congressional appropriation, and would be happy to brief you or your staff on our plans for assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh once they are more fully developed.

**Question 6:**

New reports have surfaced on Turkey's assistance and coordination with ISIS and Al Qaeda terrorists to attack the Armenian town of Kesab, Syria. What safeguards has the Administration put in place to ensure that the opposition fighters, which will be trained in Turkey, will not target Armenians or other minorities?

**Answer:**

Protection of civilians and religious minorities are among our highest priorities in the conflict in Syria and across the Middle East. During the March 2014 Syrian opposition offensive in northwest Syria, we discussed the situation in Kesab with senior levels of the government of Turkey, who assured us that it places the highest importance on protecting the civilian populations under threat in Syria. Turkey publicly rejected the Syrian regime's accusations that Turkey facilitated opposition attacks on Kesab. Turkey also offered protection and aid to the Syrian-Armenian residents displaced by fighting in Kesab, as it has to over 1.7 million refugees of all backgrounds from Syria forced to flee the violence. Our diplomatic mission in Turkey also visited these displaced Armenians shortly after the attack and these Syrian Armenians indicated to us that Turkey had extended to them extensive support. The Syrian regime and allied Lebanese Hizballah fighters recaptured Kesab from the opposition in summer 2014.

With regard to the Department of Defense's Train and Equip (T&E) program, rigorous vetting criteria are being used to ensure those members of the Syrian moderate opposition receiving training are trustworthy, moderate, and have the best interests of all Syrians in mind. The forces trained under the T&E forces will defend the Syrian people from attacks by ISIL and secure territory controlled by the Syrian opposition; protect the United States, its friends and allies, and the Syrian people from threats posed by terrorists in Syria; and promote the conditions for a negotiated settlement to end the conflict in Syria. The T&E curriculum also includes instruction on compliance with international human rights norms. Defending vulnerable populations is a primary tenet of the T&E program, and individuals found to hold views or aims antithetical to the goal of a stable and peaceful Syria for all Syrians will not receive training or other support from the United States government.

**Question 7:**

Armenia has accepted over 10,000 refugees from Syria and has generously granted them full citizenship rights. How much funding has the United States provided to Armenia to help resettle Syrian Armenians? Can you please provide a breakdown of the projects and amounts funded in Armenia to help accommodate the civilians who have fled Syria?

**Answer:**

The United States is committed to supporting the efforts of the Armenian government and people to receive and integrate nearly 12,000 Syrian Armenians. In FY 2014, the United States contributed more than \$29 million in humanitarian assistance to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) regional Europe appeal, which includes activities to help Syrians in Armenia. In addition, the United States contributed \$2.5 million to UNHCR to support regional needs, including those in Armenia. In Armenia, these contributions help provide rental subsidies, address critical food needs, support income-generation projects and microcredit grants, as well as providing basic medical services and one-time assistance for the most vulnerable. U.S. contributions also help UNHCR efforts to improve and enhance reception facilities in Armenia for new arrivals from Syria and elsewhere.

The U.S. remains committed to supporting programs that promote the full integration of vulnerable Syrians in Armenia. For example, the United States provided funding for a Save the Children program that supports community centers and kindergartens, provides job placement services, and grants to small businesses, and funds skills training to ensure that vulnerable Syrians are able to secure sustainable employment in Armenia.

**Question 8:**

What are we doing to mitigate the consequences of Lajes force structure reduction upon our relationship with Portugal and the Azores? Are we exploring all opportunities to improve our economic and diplomatic relations?

**Answer:**

The United States is committed to expanding relations with the Portuguese and Azorean people in the fields of business, science, defense, education, and culture. At the February 11 meeting of the Standing Bilateral Commission, 20 U.S. delegates joined Portuguese counterparts in identifying priorities and opportunities to spur economic development in the Azores. To ensure the streamlining at Lajes is implemented as thoughtfully as possible, U.S. and Portuguese officials have committed to intensified consultations and will meet at an extraordinary meeting of the Standing Bilateral Commission this spring.

**Question 9:**

20 years ago at the 4th World Conference on Women the world was called upon to recognize that women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights. Since then a lot of progress has been made, including thanks to the work you and this Administration have done to focus on women and girls as a cornerstone of foreign policy. We know that a woman's ability to decide when, whether, and how many children to have is fundamental to her ability to thrive and fully realize her rights and potential. Can you speak to how the U.S. is helping to expand access to voluntary family planning services as part of broader efforts to support women's health and rights?

**Answer:**

With the help of Congress, the United States continues to be the largest bilateral donor for voluntary family planning around the world. This further demonstrates the U.S. government's firm commitment to helping men and women across the globe meet their reproductive health needs. Enabling an individual or couple to decide whether, when and how often to have children is vital to safe motherhood, healthy families, and prosperous communities. USAID-supported research shows that voluntary family planning could prevent up to 30 percent of the estimated 287,000 maternal deaths that occur every year, because women can delay their first pregnancy and space later pregnancies at the safest intervals.

Through USAID, the U.S. government advances and supports voluntary family planning and reproductive health programs in more than 45 countries around the globe. As a core partner in the Family Planning 2020 Initiative, USAID is committed to working with the global community to reach an additional 120 million women and girls with family planning information, commodities, and services by 2020. These services empower individuals to choose the timing and spacing of their pregnancies, bear children during their healthiest years, prevent unintended pregnancies, and nurture healthier families and communities.

The U.S. government will continue to show leadership on this issue in multilateral fora such as the UN Commission on Population and Development, the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and the UN Human Rights Council. We persistently make the argument at these venues and elsewhere that sexual and reproductive health services, especially voluntary family planning, are essential to promote sustainable economic development, advance gender equality, and contribute to the U.S. government's goals of Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths and Creating an AIDS-free Generation.

Additionally, the U.S. government actively supports the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and many other development and humanitarian organizations to provide reproductive health services in crisis settings. This includes training staff, offering community education, establishing client follow-up, providing a variety of family planning methods, and maintaining a contraceptive supply chain system. These life-saving interventions help women, girls, and entire communities recover from crises and conflict.

Furthermore, as we take stock of the twenty year review of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Program of Action and focus on the twenty year review of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the review of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, the U.S. government will continue to work toward advancing these goals.

**Question 10:**

Do you believe that it is important for the U.S. to continue to honor its financial commitment to UN peacekeeping by paying its peacekeeping dues in full? How does failing to pay our peacekeeping dues in full impact critical missions in Mali, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among other places? What message do we send to our international partners – particularly countries who contribute uniformed personnel to peacekeeping operations – when we fail to fully fund our share of missions that we vote for on the Security Council?

**Answer:**

Peacekeeping missions are critical tools to maintain international peace and security, and advance U.S. interests around the world in places such as Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic

of the Congo, and Mali. For example, the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is currently sheltering over 112,000 people in the midst of a conflict that has internally displaced over 1.5 million people, and is supporting the delivery of humanitarian assistance in an environment of severe food insecurity. Many UN peacekeeping missions undertake significant, demanding tasks to protect civilians under threat of physical violence, to facilitate the delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance, and to help create the conditions for lasting peace in countries at war. We see our role as supporting these missions, and that U.S. leadership – and our treaty obligations – require that we continue to pay in full our UN peacekeeping assessments, and avoid risking that UN missions would not have resources available to carry out their mandates. Timely and full U.S. payment has helped to solidify the United Nations’ ability to attract and retain peacekeeping forces. Paying our peacekeeping assessments in full at the rate assessed has also strengthened U.S. leverage with troop contributing countries. This has allowed us to more effectively shape and to reform peacekeeping operations to deliver maximum impact. We do not want to strain important UN peacekeeping operations and cause delays in reimbursements to troop contributing countries that can affect future troop rotations.

As we call upon others to help reform and strengthen the United Nations, the United States must do its part – and pay its bills. The United States cannot lead from a position of strength if we are in arrears. Paying late and accruing arrears undermines U.S. credibility and influence at the UN, particularly on matters dealing with budget, finance, and management reform, and can negatively influence world opinion regarding U.S. commitment to multilateral engagement and respect for the role of multilateral organizations.

The current U.S. peacekeeping assessment rate for calendar year 2015 is 28.36 percent. At present, however, the Department only has the authority to make payments from appropriated funds at the calendar year 2012 assessed rate of 27.14 percent. Due to the difference in the amount assessed and the amount authorized to pay with appropriated funds, new arrears may accrue for FY 2015.

Given that our dues to the United Nations are treaty obligations, we hope that Congress will fully fund the President’s FY 2016 request, including the establishment and funding of the Peace Operations Response Mechanism, and authorize the use of appropriated funds to pay UN peacekeeping assessments in full and on time.

### **Question 11:**

As you know, in December 2011, President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum on International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Persons to “address the violence and discrimination targeting LGBT persons around the world.” In that Memorandum, foreign affairs agencies were directed to continue protecting the human rights of all individuals with an increased awareness of their protection of LGBT individuals, such as by combating criminalization of LGBT individuals, protecting vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers, and directly responding to human rights abuses abroad. Can you explain how the State Department has implemented this Memorandum? What types of trends or major events have we seen regarding violence and discrimination against LGBT individuals? And what is the U.S. government policy on the ground regarding human rights, including the human rights of LGBT individuals?

### **Answer:**

The U.S. Department of State has significantly expanded efforts to promote and protect the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons over the past years. Through our private engagement with governments and civil society, public diplomacy, foreign assistance, and

work in multilateral fora we have conducted activities in all of the areas of focus under the Presidential Memorandum on International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of LGBT Persons. We have also institutionalized these efforts throughout the Department.

Since December 11, there has been some new legislation in several countries including Russia, the Gambia, Nigeria and Uganda, that illustrates why the Presidential memorandum is needed.

Our Embassies around the world regularly engage with civil society and host governments on discrimination and laws that criminalize consensual same-sex conduct between adults. We have developed decriminalization strategies in regions where LGBT conduct is criminalized.

In many places, hostility towards LGBT persons is driven by the rhetoric and actions of faith leaders. But, in others, faith leaders and communities are advancing the cause of LGBT human rights and spreading messages of tolerance. It is clear, therefore, that in virtually all contexts, faith leaders and communities are and will be critical participants in the discussion about how to advance and protect the human rights of LGBT persons and we are actively working to identify and engage faith leaders around the world to encourage tolerance.

In addition, we have seen that among vulnerable populations, such as refugees and asylum seekers, LGBT individuals are particularly susceptible to persecution. Through the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), the Department has focused on identifying protection gaps for LGBT refugees and asylum seekers and developing targeted interventions to address those gaps. All new PRM employees are trained on LGBT issues. The Department also funds the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other nongovernmental and international organization partners to develop training materials focused on LGBT refugees and asylum seekers and strengthen institutional capacity to address their unique needs. PRM has supported nongovernmental partners to conduct research and pilot new programs to support LGBT refugees and asylum seekers in urban areas, and has also provided targeted assistance to partners working to provide safe shelter and services for LGBT survivors of gender-based violence. Department leadership is continually engaging, both privately and publicly, on behalf of LGBT refugees and asylum seekers. PRM annually communicates information to all embassies about the U.S. refugee resettlement process, including as it relates to LGBT applicants.

The Global Equality Fund is a multi-stakeholder initiative including governments, private foundations, and corporations that works to advance the human rights of LGBT persons globally. The Fund supports local civil society organizations with direct small grants to undertake short term projects, builds institutional capacity through long-term programs providing technical assistance to local and national civil society organizations and provides emergency support for advocates, civil society organizations and LGBT people under threat because of their work. Since the Fund was launched in December 2011, more than \$17 million has been provided to support activists and individuals working to promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons in over 50 countries worldwide. The Department continues to pursue new partnerships with foreign governments, foundations, and corporations in this important effort.

Responding quickly and effectively to violence and discrimination against LGBT persons is a priority for the State Department. To that end, we have developed a rapid response mechanism to address negative developments around the world.

The Department works in partnership with a diverse group of countries to develop LGBT-related resolutions, statements, and side events at the UN and in other multilateral fora. We aim both to pass resolutions specific to LGBT issues, and to highlight LGBT issues by making statements from the floor, co-sponsoring side events, and empowering LGBT people and LGBT-friendly civil society.

The Department in early 2014 reviewed our global LGBT strategy and identified several new initiatives to respond to negative developments and broaden the scope of our work to increase our impact. One of these initiatives is expanding our work on LGBT issues to include hate crimes. We are developing a comprehensive strategy to reduce targeted, bias-motivated violence against LGBT persons around the globe. The strategy seeks to coordinate programmatic, diplomatic and policy work on hate crimes and better link U.S. government efforts with civil society experts on the ground.

Special Envoy Randall Berry, who begins his work on April 16, will be critical to coordinating these various efforts.

**Question 12:**

I was very pleased to hear that the State Department has appointed a Special Envoy to protect the human rights of LGBT people around the world. However, is there any plan for funding the position, either with staff or with a programmatic budget?

**Answer:**

The Special Envoy will coordinate the Department's diplomatic engagement on advancing the human rights of LGBT persons. Within DRL, four employees are engaged full time on LGBT issues and approximately a dozen other staff spend a significant portion of their time on these issues. There are numerous others within the Department and at our overseas missions who also work to advance this agenda in the context of the U.S.'s bilateral and multilateral relationships. He will continue and deepen the efforts already underway in the State Department. That means coordinating and shepherding the implementation of the Department's strategy on human rights for LGBT persons, adopted in 2011, and the Presidential Memorandum issued later that year. He will also work to strengthen our relationship on this issue with like-minded countries, including through coordinated diplomacy and programming, and with those governments that see things differently. The Department's work with LGBT persons, allies, and activists abroad will be an important component as well.

The Special Envoy will have a direct role in leading assistance efforts as part of the DRL-managed Global Equality Fund, which since its founding in 2011 has programmed over \$17 million in 50 countries. He will play an integral part in identifying needs of LGBT communities and developing appropriate programmatic responses. While a number of governments, including our own, have made substantial contributions to the Fund, the number of viable program applications well exceeds the budget available, so the Envoy will also be seeking additional resources as part of his overall outreach.

**Question 13:**

I was very pleased with the creation of the position of Senior LGBT Coordinator at USAID, and believe this fulfills a critical function of our development work. What kind of funding have you provided for the position itself and related staffing, and how much are you providing in funding specifically to help strengthen the important work being done by LGBT groups around the world, or to combat discrimination and violence against LGBT communities worldwide.

**Answer:**

For FY 2015, USAID has committed \$1.5 million to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) office in program funds and approximately \$200,000 in operating funds, all under the direction of the Senior LGBT Coordinator. USAID maintains its support for the LGBTI office in the President's FY 2016 Budget Request by again dedicating \$1.5 million in Development Assistance funds



and approximately \$200,000 in operating funds, all under the direction of the Senior LGBT Coordinator. This does not represent the entirety of USAID funding for LGBTI issues, however, and will be in addition to LGBTI programs already funded, described below.

In FY 2014, USAID Agency-wide invested approximately \$3.5 million in stand-alone programs (LGBTI specific) and \$230 million in programs that include LGBTI beneficiaries (e.g. HIV/AIDS, education, human rights, gender). Those investments were via mission-funded programs, a multi-million dollar partnership, and centrally-funded awards. The Agency has also focused on enhancing public engagement and promoting our efforts externally, including presenting at seminars and conferences around the world, hosting USAID-sponsored events, and further engaging with stakeholders and advocacy groups to expand the work we can do together.

The Senior LGBT Coordinator established an Executive Committee to synchronize these efforts across the agency, with input and assistance from the LGBTI Agency Coordinating Committee, Mission Focal Points, and Champions across the Agency. Following the release of the LGBT Vision for Action during the summer of 2014, working groups were established to ensure that the Agency is providing implementation tools to help staff translate the aspirations and principles of the document into demonstrable action. Working groups are implementing the Vision through internal guidance, online and in-person training sessions, and external communications and engagement.

Despite robust volunteer staff engagement across the Agency, the Senior LGBT Coordinator continues to be the only full-time employee dedicated to LGBTI agency activities and programming. USAID is committed to increasing the amount of staff for the LGBTI office, under the direction of the Senior LGBT Coordinator.

#### **Question 14:**

I am deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Egypt. We have heard reports of human rights violations committed against many different minority groups there, including Copts and LGBT people. It's been reported that over 80 individuals have been arrested – some imprisoned for up to 6 years – because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. What is the US government doing to send a message to Egypt that we are concerned and that we are watching these issues closely? Will this message be communicated to the Egyptian government at the Egyptian Economic Development Conference in March? Who will represent the U.S. at that conference?

#### **Answer:**

We share your concern about the human rights situation in Egypt. The government has taken steps to protect and advance the rights of religious minorities. The new constitution requires that parliament pass a law facilitating the construction and renovation of Christian churches; al-Sisi won praise from the Coptic community for being the first Egyptian president to attend Coptic mass and for approving the building of a church in the village of thirteen Coptic victims of the ISIL beheadings in Libya. There have been some convictions for anti-Christian violence, which is almost without precedent. However, the government is reportedly failing to respond in cases of kidnapping and extortion of Christians in Upper Egypt, continues to prosecute Christian and other individuals for "denigrating religions," and accountability for former sectarian crimes remains problematic.

We are concerned by reports of individuals arrested because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We are following these cases closely, and we have raised our concerns directly with the Egyptian government. We have publicly noted our concerns about the treatment of those detained. The United States places great importance on the protection and promotion of the human rights and

fundamental freedoms of all people, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons around the world. We condemn any violence, discrimination, or legal action against individuals based on their perceived or identified sexual orientation or gender identity.

I will lead the U.S. delegation to the Egyptian Economic Development Conference in March, and we will continue to press the Egyptian government to respect the human rights protections afforded by its constitution and to provide all Egyptians with freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of religion, freedom of the press and due process. Restrictions on these rights will exacerbate rather than mitigate the threat of violent extremism and undermine the prosperity and stability that all Egyptians seek. We have also repeatedly raised our concerns about the NGO law and we will continue to support the ability of Egyptian NGOs and civil society to operate freely.

**Question 15:**

I was pleased to see that the U.S. removed the Gambia from eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act in December, as a result of their human rights abuses. Thank you for your leadership on that. However, I believe that President Jammeh's rhetoric and intentions are extremely dangerous and we need to be taking a more robust approach. What else is the U.S. government planning in order to send him a message that his ongoing human rights abuses will not be ignored?

**Answer:**

We continue to express our deep concern about human rights abuses in the Gambia in our meetings with Gambian officials. We continue to call on the Government of the Gambia to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens, regardless of their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. We have also begun consulting with key international partners about ways we can positively influence changes in Gambian policy and promote respect for human rights in the Gambia.

**Question 16:**

While the U.S. issued a strong response to the Anti-Homosexuality Act that was enacted in Uganda, it has not established a similar review process regarding Nigeria. I believe the U.S. must show that we will respond seriously whenever a country enacts such discriminatory laws. Why has the U.S. not taken similar steps in Nigeria?

**Answer:**

In Nigeria, we engage regularly to protect and promote human rights. For example, Secretary Kerry, in a January 2014 statement, expressed concern over the passage of Nigeria's Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA), and our Mission in Abuja continues to raise the importance of protecting the human rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered persons (LGBT) both in private with the Government of Nigeria and in public with local media. The Mission's engagements on the SSMPA have been informed by the local context. According to Pew Research Center, 98 percent of Nigerians believe homosexuality should not be accepted by society; the Nigerian National Assembly unanimously adopted the SSMPA; and Nigeria's leading human rights activists have refused to publicly ally themselves with Nigerian LGBT rights advocates. In response to these factors, the Mission's engagements on the SSMPA have focused on highlighting the bill's restrictions on the freedom of speech, assembly and association of all Nigerians; its potential to incite violence against LGBT persons;

its harmful effects on efforts to address HIV/AIDS; and the incompatibility of discrimination with international democratic and human rights norms. Our Mission also endeavors to increase dialogue between LGBT rights advocates and broader Nigerian society, including through roundtables with human rights activists and social media personalities. Mission Nigeria and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor support the development of Nigeria's budding LGBT rights movement, and our embassy and Washington continue to monitor the situation through frequent reporting and coordination calls.

Anti-LGBT sentiment in Africa is wide-ranging and pervasive. Progress will therefore be slow and piecemeal, as most human rights movements tend to be. Notwithstanding this reality, we will continue our efforts to promote and ensure the human rights of all individuals – including LGBT persons – throughout the continent.

**Question 17:**

Despite the progress that has been made combating the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, the battle is not over and in the meantime, the governments of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone have suffered a serious blow to state capacities. These are all countries with a recent history of civil conflict and low per capita incomes. How does the President's budget reflect plans for the economic recovery and stabilization of state institutions in these countries?

**Answer:**

The President's budget and the Emergency Supplemental Request emphasize our commitment to helping the Ebola affected countries recover from the largest Ebola outbreak in history and regain sustainable development trajectories supported by broad-based economic recovery and stable state institutions. While the economies of the three affected countries were severely impacted, U.S. programs including USAID's work in Liberia will promote economic growth and improvements to education and health systems. In Guinea and Sierra Leone, work to alleviate extreme poverty and improve food security will undergird efforts toward economic recovery in the region. We aim to bolster the Guinean economy through assistance to the country's national health strategy with an eye towards improving community participation, accountability, and transparency.

In addition to a heavy economic toll, three Ebola-affected countries also suffered from years of unrest and governance issues that could be exacerbated by the Ebola outbreak. We will continue to promote a secure, stable Liberia as UNMIL draws down with enhanced rule of law and increased public order management capacity by the Liberia National Police. We are also working to build a more professional and apolitical Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) that will be capable of supporting peacekeeping in Africa, as well as fighting drug trafficking and smuggling.

The FY 2016 request includes funds for the three impacted countries that will build upon the support provided by the emergency Ebola funding FY 2015 appropriation to the Department of State and USAID. With these FY 2015 and FY 2016 funds, USAID is supporting economic, social, and governance programs in Ebola-affected countries to address the potentially sharp increase in extreme poverty and other second-order impacts, including damage to the livelihoods of vulnerable households in Liberia.

Our ongoing work in West Africa aims to prevent backsliding in the near-term and strengthen critical institutions, work with civil society organizations to reduce stigma and establish survivor networks as well as infrastructure needed to keep countries on a path of development progress in the

longer-term. U.S. government support will help strengthen the capacity of government institutions to respond to this shock by increasing the effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of governance structures, as well as maintain momentum on key governance reforms. We are also partnering with the governments of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea to safely re-open and improve the condition of schools by supporting training, commodity supplies, and construction – including protocols for teachers and schools, thermometers and other critical equipment, and improved hygiene through small-scale water and sanitation facilities. These initiatives will protect critical literacy and numeracy gains.

**Question 18:**

Saudi Arabia is – and will continue to be – an important partner and ally of the United States in the Middle East. How has the death of King Abdullah and the change of leadership affected this relationship? Do you expect it to lead to a real improvement in the human rights situation?

**Answer:**

Saudi Arabia is a long-time friend and strategic partner of the United States and we continue to enjoy a strong, collaborative partnership with the Saudi leadership. The Saudis also are a critical partner in the fight against ISIL terrorists, flying over 200 air missions as of February and delegitimizing ISIL's extremist ideology. King Abdullah was indeed a great partner for the United States; the high level and bipartisan nature of the delegation the President led to Riyadh in January to pay condolences and engage King Salman and his leadership team sent a clear message about the value our countries assign to our bilateral relationship. Our societies remain very different, but the fact that we can participate in frank, high-level discussions with the Saudis on issues where we frequently disagree, such as on human rights concerns, is testament to the resilience of our bilateral ties. We continue to engage Saudi Arabia both publicly and in private discussions about building stronger respect for fundamental human rights. As we look to the future of our relationship, it is clear that the 86,000 Saudi students studying in the United States will bring home important lessons about the values of a free society. State Department-funded visitor programs also promote better understanding of our country, people, and values.

**Question 19:**

Liberia continues to deal with several post-conflict issues, many of which have been compounded by the Ebola epidemic. When I visited the country in the fall of 2013, I was shocked by the number of young girls I spoke with who were victims of gender-based violence. What is the United States doing to support equality and rule of law in Liberia; specifically, what are we doing to prevent gender-based violence and to support its victims?

**Answer:**

Liberia and the United States share a long history, and the United States has been Liberia's largest bilateral partner working with the government to move Liberia from a post-conflict country to a developed country. However, the Ebola crisis is a reminder that Liberia remains a fragile state. The Ebola outbreak threatened to undermine the social, economic, and political progress that Liberia has made since the end of its civil war. Since 2003, the United States has invested more than \$2 billion in rebuilding Liberia.

The State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) program in Liberia provides training, mentoring, and technical assistance to the national police, drug enforcement agency, prosecutors in the GOL Ministry of Justice, and public defenders. Strengthening the justice system in the country remains a critical goal in consolidating Liberia's democratic gains and to support equality and rule of law in Liberia.

Under the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI), the Global Women Peace and Security Initiative has invested over \$750,000 since 2013 in small grants to fund projects that advance the outcomes and actions committed to under the Protection from Violence and Conflict Prevention pillars of the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security.

Through coordinated efforts with the GOL, civil society organizations, and international donors, the U.S. government has continued to support efforts to increase awareness of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse in Liberia. U.S. government activities build the capacity of local organizations such as the Liberia Women Media Action Committee and the Women's NGO Secretariat, which led anti-rape campaigns to increase women's awareness of how to report GBV and access available services. Other activities include County and National-level roundtables as part of the 16 Days Against Gender Based Violence and an "I Know My Rights" campaign which conducted community outreach events and radio programs on GBV issues including rape and the rights of women with disabilities.

The U.S. Embassy in Monrovia also has several programs to build Liberia's capacity and ability to reduce and to improve the performance of judicial institutions such as procedural inefficiency and judicial corruption, prolonged pretrial detention, crowded prisons, security force abuses, arbitrary arrest and detention, official corruption, mob killings, human trafficking, and ethnic discrimination

U.S. assistance programs also continue to support transparency and good governance in Liberia. One example is USAID's Governance and Economic Management System program -- a five-year USAID program started in 2011 designed to build the capacity of targeted GOL ministries and agencies to improve economic governance.