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**One Hundred Seventeenth Congress**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
[www.foreignaffairs.house.gov](http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov)

September 13, 2022

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to express our concerns over the State Department providing the \$300 million conditioned on human rights in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to Egypt in Sec. 7041(a)(3) of the FY21 Consolidated Appropriations Act (PL 116-260).

We acknowledge the long-standing and historic bilateral relationship the U.S. and Egypt have, rooted in shared political, economic, social and cultural ties. We recognize and affirm the important role Egypt has played in the Middle East, historically in the Camp David Accords and subsequent Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, being the first Arab state to recognize and normalize relations with Israel in a courageous and intrepid diplomatic endeavor. Egypt's important role extends to more recent years in the fight against Al-Qaeda, ISIS and their affiliates, as well as facilitator and mediator with the Israeli government and Palestinian groups in achieving an end to recent fighting in Gaza.

Nonetheless, we remain concerned by continued reports – both by the State Department as well as credible international and Egyptian organizations – about the ongoing, pervasive, and systemic violations of human rights in Egypt that risk destabilizing the country. Tens of thousands of Egyptians, including journalists, political opponents, and human rights defenders, remain imprisoned on politically motivated charges, with many of them subject to abuse and mistreatment such as torture and medical neglect. Again this year, the State Department's own 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in Egypt documented "significant human rights issues" such as "unlawful or arbitrary killings," "forced disappearance by state security; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary detention," "politically motivated reprisals

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against individuals located in another,” and “serious restrictions on free expression and media, including arrests or prosecutions of journalists, censorship, site blocking, and the abuse of criminal libel laws.”<sup>1</sup>

Most recently, human rights groups documented the Egyptian military and army aligned forces celebrating extrajudicial killings in Northern Sinai<sup>2</sup> and a growing number of deaths of Egyptians in the custody of the security services, including economic researcher Ayman Hadhoud.<sup>3</sup> Egypt also continues to detain tens of thousands of political prisoners, many without charge, in inhumane conditions branding them as enemies of the state for even the mildest criticisms, exercise of free expression, and civil society activity.<sup>4,5</sup> Additionally, Egypt continues to hold U.S. legal permanent residents and family members of U.S. citizens on politicized charges, some without access to proper medical care or outside counsel, as well as conduct transnational repression including inside the United States against U.S. citizens.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, as the Department weighs whether to grant Egypt the \$300 million in FY21 FMF or to withhold such funds from obligation, we call on you not to certify that Egypt has taken “sustained and effective steps” to implement the criteria as required by law.<sup>7</sup> These criteria, among others, require Egypt to take demonstrable steps to: “(ii) implement reforms that protect freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, including the ability of civil society organizations, human rights defenders, and the media to function without interference; (iii) hold security forces accountable, including officers credibly alleged to have violated human rights; (iv) investigate and prosecute cases of extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances; and as defined in Sec. 7041(a)(3)(C) of P.L. 116-260, releasing political prisoners and providing detainees with due process of law.”<sup>8</sup>

Last year, we, along with other members of Congress, supported the administration’s

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<sup>1</sup> Department of State, “2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Egypt.” April 12, 2022.

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/egypt>

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch, Egypt: New Videos of North Sinai Executions.” August 30, 2022.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/30/egypt-new-videos-north-sinai-executions>

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch, Egypt: Flawed Investigation Into Death in Custody.” July 7, 2022.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/07/egypt-flawed-investigation-death-custody>

<sup>4</sup> Yee, V., McCann, A., & Holder, J. “Egypt’s Revolving Jailhouse Door: One Pretrial Detention After Another,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/07/16/world/middleeast/egypt-prisoners.html>

<sup>5</sup> Yee, “‘A Slow Death’: Egypt’s Political Prisoners Recount Horrific Conditions” *The New York Times*, August 8, 2022.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/08/world/middleeast/egypts-prisons-conditions.html>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, “Man Arrested for Acting in United States as Agent of Egyptian Government.” January 6, 2022. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/man-arrested-acting-united-states-agent-egyptian-government>

<sup>7</sup> Fiscal Year 2021, Consolidated Appropriations Act, Public Law No. 116-260, Sec. 7041(a)(3).

<https://www.congress.gov/116/plaws/publ260/PLAW-116publ260.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

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decision to withhold a portion of security assistance to Egypt contingent on measurable progress on human rights criteria. Unfortunately, while the Egyptian government released some political prisoners and launched certain initiatives aimed at improving the human rights situation inside the country, it has failed to take “sustained and effective steps” required by statute and has still not completed all of the administration’s conditions placed on the \$130 million withheld last September.

As the Biden administration continues to seek to prioritize human rights in our foreign policy following the Trump administration’s woeful abdication of our democratic principles, we call on you to uphold these values – and adhere to the spirit and intent of the law – in our bilateral relationship with Egypt.

Sincerely,



GREGORY W. MEEKS  
Chair  
House Foreign Affairs Committee



GERALD E. CONNOLLY  
Member of Congress



SARA JACOBS  
Member of Congress



TED W. LIEU  
Member of Congress

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Handwritten signature of David N. Cicilline in blue ink.

DAVID N. CICILLINE  
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Tom Malinowski in blue ink.

TOM MALINOWSKI  
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of William R. Keating in black ink.

WILLIAM R. KEATING  
Member of Congress