

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 19, 2017

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. President:

We are gravely concerned by the worsening situation for human rights and civil society in Egypt, including the new law restricting nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which was signed into law by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on Monday, May 24, 2017. This law allows for unprecedented repression and will criminalize the work of many NGOs in Egypt, making it virtually impossible for them to operate. We believe it is essential that you make clear to President el-Sisi that repealing this restrictive law and resolving politically-motivated NGO cases are critical to preserving and strengthening the U.S.-Egypt relationship.

While the United States and Egypt have shared interests in regional peace and stability, our two countries are regrettably diverging on issues related to human rights, the role of civil society, and universal values. Over the years, the U.S. Congress has provided more than \$77 billion in nominal dollars in bilateral foreign assistance to Egypt, including \$1.3 billion in annual military aid since 1987.

However, there are major gaps in the U.S.-Egypt relationship that challenge the longstanding partnership between our two countries. Most glaring is the current situation for human rights and civil society in Egypt. Under the leadership of President el-Sisi, the Egyptian government has systematically cracked down on civil society groups and independent media, jailed tens of thousands of political prisoners, and used violence and intimidation against individuals critical of the government.

In November 2016, the Egyptian parliament passed a draconian law that would prevent NGOs from operating freely in Egypt. Although many Members of the U.S. Congress shared their concerns regarding this law with President el-Sisi, he moved forward to enact the measure. This law not only negatively impacts Egypt's future, but sends a deeply concerning signal regarding Egypt's commitment to fundamental freedoms and universal values. At a time when Egypt is seeking to stabilize its economy, NGOs have stepped in to provide critical services to Egyptian citizens. Instead of working cooperatively with these groups, the el-Sisi government will paralyze much of the nonprofit sector and constrain civil society from responding to social needs.

A strong U.S.-Egypt relationship is important to advancing American interests in the Middle East, and a key element of that relationship must be the protection and advancement of

human rights and other universal values. The United States must engage the Egyptian government on these issues or we risk enabling Egypt to perpetuate the very sorts of conditions that help to breed violent extremism and terrorism.

The U.S. Congress will take the Egyptian government's recent actions into consideration as we review our bilateral assistance to Egypt to ensure that the American people's tax dollars are used appropriately. We strongly urge you to encourage President el-Sisi to support human rights and civil society, and to take the necessary steps to allow NGOs to operate freely and independently and without fear of government interference.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



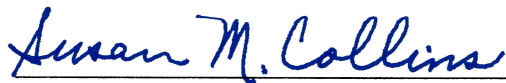
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