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One Hundred Eighteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

August 10, 2023

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
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 \$320 million conditioned on human rights in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to Egypt in Sec. 7041(a)(3) of the FY22 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 117-103).

We acknowledge the historic, deeply rooted bilateral U.S. – Egypt relationship, based in shared social, economic, and political 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 has continued to play a proactive role in the region by supporting and encouraging efforts related to the Abraham Accords as well as facilitating talks between the Israeli government and Palestinian groups.

Nonetheless, we are strongly concerned by reports from both the State Department as well as numerous credible human rights and civil society organizations about the persistent and continued systemic violations of human rights in Egypt. Thousands of Egyptians including journalists, peaceful civil society activists, human rights defenders, and political figures remain detained on politically motivated charges and are often subject to abuse, mistreatment, and medical neglect. The State Department’s own 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices documents specific and “significant human rights violations” committed by the Egyptian government such as enforced disappearance, torture and life-threatening prison conditions, and

severe restrictions on freedoms of expression and assembly.¹ The report cites cases of “52 prisoners and detainees that died as a result of abuse” while in government detention and the frequent criminal charging of journalists exercising the basic right to speech. In November 2022, rights groups documented and condemned the “arrest of hundreds of people” ahead of the COP27 conference for engaging in peaceful protests, blogging, or simply having information about such protests on their phone.²

Most recently, though Egypt has released certain detainees, thousands of others remain detained, many without any avenue to judicial appeal or access to legal counsel or family visits. Despite Egypt’s initiation of a new ‘national dialogue’ process and ordering the release of roughly 1,000 prisoners via its Presidential Pardon Committee, it has simultaneously detained thousands more and renewed the detention of nearly 5,000 existing prisoners.³ Additionally, Egypt continues to engage in transnational repression beyond its borders against family members and relatives of dissidents and activists, as evidenced by the Department of Justice’s arrest of a New York man for acting as an agent of the Egyptian government and spying on “U.S.-based political opponents” of the al-Sisi regime.⁴

Therefore, as the Department weighs whether to grant Egypt the \$320 million in FY22 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.⁵ 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. 117-103, releasing political prisoners and providing detainees with due process of law.⁶

As we continue to stand for the prioritization of basic human rights in our foreign policy and call on the Administration to adhere to the spirit and letter of the law in ensuring progress in the U.S. – Egypt relationship, we call on you to withhold the full \$320 million of FY22 FMF until Egypt’s human rights record significantly improves.

¹ Department of State, “2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Egypt.” March 20, 2023.

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/egypt/>

² Amnesty International, “Egypt: Arrests over calls for protests during COP27 expose reality of human rights crisis.” November 6, 2022. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/11/egypt-arrests-over-calls-for-protests-during-cop27-expose-reality-of-human-rights-crisis/>

³ Human Rights Watch, “Egypt: Events of 2022” (Country Report) <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/egypt>

⁴ U.S. Attorney’s Office (Southern District of New York) “Manhattan Man Arrested For Acting As An Unregistered Agent Of The Egyptian Government In The United States” January 6, 2022. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/manhattan-man-arrested-acting-unregistered-agent-egyptian-government-united-states>

⁵ Fiscal Year 2022, Consolidated Appropriations Act, Public Law No. 117-103, Sec. 7041(a)(3)(A). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-117publ103/pdf/PLAW-117publ103.pdf>

⁶ Ibid.

Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



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