

January 3, 2012

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
Washington DC 20037

Dear Secretary Clinton,

We write to express our grave concern about the assault last week by the Egyptian authorities on Egyptian and international civil society groups. These latest actions undermine the already unsteady progress toward democracy in Egypt and raise serious doubts about whether the current military authorities will permit a successful transition from Army rule.

Claims by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) that it did not order the raids have no credibility. The raids are the culmination of more than six months of steadily increasing harassment of NGOs via the state media, Central Bank, Ministry of International Cooperation, and Ministry of Justice--all of which serve at the pleasure of the SCAF.

The SCAF's actions go to the heart of what constitutes democracy, that is, not just the casting of ballots on Election Day but the promotion of engaged citizenship and creation of robust institutions of law, fairness, and tolerance. If the SCAF succeeds in its current effort, it will lead Egypt down a path that no American administration can support.

In order to send a clear signal, we strongly urge that provision of all U.S. military aid be suspended immediately until Egyptian military authorities reverse their recent actions and demonstrate their commitment to the democratic process and to permitting human rights groups to conduct their activities without harassment or interference. It is currently impossible for the State Department to certify that "the Government of Egypt is supporting the transition to civilian government including holding free and fair elections; implementing policies to protect freedom of expression, association, and religion, and due process of law," as stipulated by the Congress in its FY2012 authorization. We also urge that current aid from FY2011 be suspended.

Madam Secretary, in addition to undermining the efforts of international and Egyptian civil society organizations to monitor the democratic process in Egypt, we believe the Egyptian authorities' actions, including and especially the targeting of three American groups, the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, and Freedom House, represent a deliberate test of the Obama administration's commitment to democratic reform in

Egypt. If the United States does not respond firmly, this will be read both by the Egyptian authorities, and more importantly, by the Egyptian people as acquiescence to the Egyptian authorities' assault on civil society and the democratic process.

The United States should use every tool at its disposal to persuade the Egyptian military to stop the assault on democracy and begin a real transition to civilian rule immediately. After a year of conversations with the SCAF by U.S. officials at all levels, it is clear that the message is not getting through; in fact, the SCAF's behavior and social and economic conditions in the country have deteriorated markedly. Withholding military assistance is the only way to get the SCAF's attention. The United States simply should not provide assistance to an Egyptian military that treats as criminals other Egyptians who also receive U.S. aid. The United States must show that if the military insists on continuing its disastrous course, it will do so without the support of the U.S. taxpayer.

Respectfully,

Michele Dunne (Atlantic Council)
Robert Kagan (Brookings Institution)

On behalf of the Working Group on Egypt

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