

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 28, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Blinken,

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill directs the administration to withhold \$320 million of Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to Egypt absent improvements on human rights. Over the last year, Egypt's human rights record has continued to deteriorate, despite the Egyptian government's claims to the contrary. Therefore, we urge you to withhold the full amount of \$320 million.

Of that amount, \$235 million is tied to "sustained and effective steps" by the Egyptian government to: 1) strengthen the rule of law, democratic institutions, and protect women and religious minorities; 2) protect fundamental freedoms, including the ability of NGOs and media to operate freely; 3) hold security forces accountable when they violate human rights; 4) investigate and prosecute cases of extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances; and 5) provide regular access to U.S. officials to areas where U.S. assistance is used.

Over the past year, the Egyptian government's track record on these criteria has not improved. Ahead of presidential elections scheduled next year, the Egyptian government has detained supporters and family members of a challenger who intends to run against President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The government has forced NGOs to register under a draconian law that prohibits any activities it deems political. The government has not only failed to investigate allegations of human rights abuses, it has also continued to commit "significant human rights" violations such as extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearance, torture and life-threatening prison conditions, and severe restrictions on freedoms of expression, assembly, and association, as documented in the State Department's latest human rights report.

An additional \$85 million of the FY22 FMF allocation is tied to the Egyptian government's "clear and consistent progress" in releasing political prisoners, providing detainees with due process of law, and preventing the intimidation and harassment of American citizens." Egypt continues to detain tens of thousands of political prisoners, including at least two United States legal permanent residents. Since President al-Sisi announced the formation of a national dialogue, the government has released approximately 1,000 prisoners through its Presidential Pardon Committee. But for each political prisoner who has been released, Egypt has detained three more. In addition, authorities have renewed the detention of nearly 5,000 political prisoners in that same time period. Incidents of Egyptian transnational repression have increased, including

the targeting of American citizens, including surveillance, threats and harassment, and even extraterritorial arrests. For example, last year the U.S. Department of Justice arrested a New York man for acting as an agent of the Egyptian government and spying on “U.S.-based political opponents of al-Sisi’s regime.”

Egypt and the United States share mutual security concerns that merit the sustainment of our military-to-military relationship. These include efforts to bolster Egypt’s efforts to defeat extremist groups, including the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the Sinai, and to strengthen efforts to counter foreign terrorist fighters. We can continue to support these objectives while enforcing the law to withhold \$320 million in military aid to Egypt due to a lack of necessary progress on human rights. As the administration’s decision to withhold a portion of Egypt’s \$1.3 billion appropriation for each of the last two years demonstrates, the bilateral security relationship can be effectively sustained at a reduced level of assistance while upholding our values.

The decisions to withhold these funds the last two years have resulted in the Egyptian government taking some steps to address U.S. concerns. But the steps to date have been wholly inadequate and we must therefore continue to demonstrate our concern for Egypt’s long-term stability by again withholding these funds until the government takes sustained and effective steps to improve human rights, as U.S. law requires.

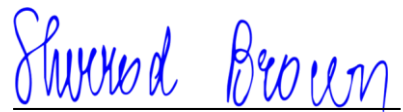
The decision the administration will make as to whether to enforce the conditions set forth by Congress on holding Egypt accountable for progress on human rights is critical to advancing long-term U.S. interests in Egypt and American credibility on human rights globally. We urge the administration to withhold the full \$320 million as called for by the FY22 Appropriations Act until Egypt’s human rights record improves.

Sincerely,

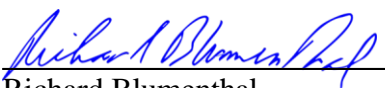
Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



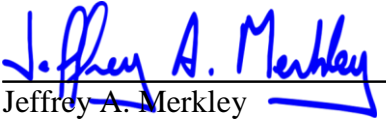
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



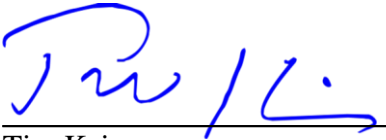
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



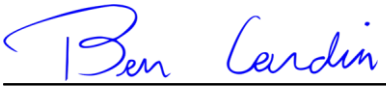
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator