

UPDATE: THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST NGOS IN EGYPT

March 16, 2012

- I. Timeline**
- II. The Media Campaign Against NGOs**
- III. Potential Impact on FY12 U.S. Assistance to Egypt**
- IV. Statements from Egyptian Policymakers**
- V. Statements from U.S. Officials**

TIMELINE

[February 11, 2012](#): Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Martin Dempsey travels to Egypt to meet with the ruling military council. Although the trip had been [planned](#) prior to the crackdown on NGOs, much of his time was spent [urging](#) the Egyptian government to find a resolution to the crisis. Reportedly, after Dempsey's visit, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi [met](#) with Egyptian Prime Minister Kamal Ganzouri and Director General of Egypt's Intelligence Mourad Mowafy, and demanded that public statements on U.S. relations be toned down.

[February 12, 2012](#): U.S. Ambassador Anne Patterson meets with Foreign Minister Mohamed Amr to discuss the ongoing crisis. A source within the Foreign Ministry reaffirms previous convictions that the ministry is not involved in the proceedings.

[February 13, 2012](#): Egyptian MP Mohamed el-Sadat reports that the Egyptian government withdrew a proposed draft to replace the current NGO law. The draft law was widely seen as being even more restrictive than its predecessor.

[February 13, 2012](#): The Department of State releases its budget request for FY 2013, which continues previous levels of military funding at \$1.3 billion and economic funding at \$250 million to Egypt.

[February 14, 2012](#): Department of State Spokesperson Victoria Nuland announces that the Embassy has received a charging document from the Egyptian deputy prosecutor general. The document is 24 pages long, in Arabic, and appears to be the same document published previously by Al-Ahram. Please [click here for POMED's English translation of the charging document](#).

[February 14, 2012](#): Senator John Kerry introduces a resolution ([S. Res. 372](#)) concerning the NGO crisis. The resolution reiterates the importance of Egypt's relationship with the U.S. and urges "the Government of Egypt to protect civil liberties and cease intimidation and prosecution of civil society workers and democracy activists, and for other purposes."

[February 17, 2012](#): U.S. Representative McKinley submits a resolution ([H. Res. 559](#)) to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs "calling for the release of United States citizens being held by the Government of Egypt."

[February 18, 2012](#): The Egyptian judiciary announces that the trial of the 43 defendants will begin on February 26, 2012.

[February 20, 2012](#): Senators John McCain (R-AZ), Lindsay Graham (R-SC), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and John Hoeven (R-ND) arrive in Cairo to speak with Egyptian officials, including Field Marshal Tantawi, members of parliament, and members of the Muslim Brotherhood, about US-Egyptian relations and the ongoing crisis. Like Chairman Dempsey's visit, the senators' meeting had been [scheduled](#) previous to the defendants' referral to court.

[February 26, 2012](#): The trial of the 43 accused workers begins, with only the Egyptian defendants appearing in court. The trial is adjourned until April 26, 2012 for defense lawyers to become familiar with the case's documents and to find translators for the foreign defendants.

[February 28, 2012](#): The three judges presiding over the trial recuse themselves due to "unease." Reports that the judges stepped down because of [military and political pressure](#) are later [countered](#) by the President of the Cairo

Court of Appeals who states that he asked the head judge, Mohamed Shoukry, to step down because of his son's relationship with the U.S. embassy—a charge Shoukry denies.

[March 1, 2012](#): The travel ban for foreign defendants in the case is lifted and all but Ro leave Egypt. The NGOs [post bail](#) of 2 million EGP (~300,500 USD) for each of the workers who left. Concerning whether the defendants will return to Egypt for their trial, Spokesperson Nuland [states](#) “that’ll be an issue that each one of them will have to make their own decision about.”

[March 3, 2012](#): New judges are appointed to the case to replace those who stepped down. The first meeting for the trial is set to March 8, 2012.

[March 3, 2012](#): Decrying apparent interference in the judiciary, members of the Egyptian parliament call for a special inquiry on March 11, 2012, in which Prime Minister Ganzouri and other government officials will be summoned to explain the circumstances around the lifting of the travel ban and the judges' recusal.

[March 8, 2012](#): In a short and chaotic session, the NGO trial resumes with a new panel of judges. 15 of the 43 defendants appear in court, though only one American, Robert Becker, is present. Plaintiff lawyer Khaled Soleiman demands seven additional charges against the NGO workers, including espionage. The judges adjourn the trial until April 10 and order the return of the 13 indicted foreign NGO workers who left the country when the travel ban against them was lifted.

[March 11, 2012](#): Egypt's parliament moves toward a vote to order an end to U.S. assistance—a largely symbolic gesture given the ruling military council's veto powers. The chamber also votes to start the process of a no-confidence vote in the military-backed government after hearing testimonies about the NGO case from four Cabinet ministers.

[March 14, 2012](#): Five officials from the organization Ansar al-Sunnah—the second largest Salafi NGO in Egypt—are referred to criminal court on accusations of illegally receiving foreign funding from Qatari and Kuwaiti organizations.

[March 15, 2012](#): The New York Times reports that several senior administration and congressional officials expect Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to use a national security waiver to deliver at least some of the \$1.3 billion military assistance to Egypt as soon as early next week.

THE MEDIA CAMPAIGN AGAINST NGOS

A relentless Egyptian state media campaign since the revolution, which has vilified democracy activists and painted them as foreign conspirators intent on destabilizing Egypt, has succeeded in convincing the majority of Egyptians that the crackdown on democracy and human rights organizations is in their interest. [For example](#), during the 18 days in Tahrir Square in January and February 2011, state television spread rumors that “foreign looking” individuals were handing out free American fast food meals. Later, the ruling military council accused the April 6 Youth Movement of being trained abroad to undertake subversive activities. News talk shows on the state’s 24-hour Nile News Channel frequently [raise the specter](#) of “foreign” interference in Egyptian affairs, rising insecurity, and crime.

When the U.S. government sought to respond to the historic Egyptian revolution in March 2011 by reallocating \$150 million of Egypt’s assistance to support the country’s transition, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Fayza Aboul Naga harnessed state media to [depict the U.S. strategy](#) as taking money away from the Egyptian people at a time of dire need to support nefarious, self-interested Egyptian and American NGOs. In fact, \$100 million of this money was reprogrammed to support [economic growth and development](#) and \$50 million was reprogrammed to support [democratic development](#), and included programs that would help small and medium-sized enterprises, encourage entrepreneurship, help increase youth employment, support community-led initiative to improve resources and services, help alleviate poverty, advance gender equity, encourage transparency and accountability, strengthen the effectiveness and credibility of the electoral process, and ensure that the general public had the necessary tools and opportunities to exercise and or defend their rights regardless of race, religion, gender, or socio-economic status.

Since the investigation of these NGOs in July 2011, “the Ministry of Justice, other government parties, and the two investigating judges have been conducting a one-sided trial in the media for the last five months, making vague accusations against groups and persons via leaks to the press, with the goal of smearing civil society, especially human rights organizations, and painting them as collaborators with foreign agendas and conspirators against the country’s stability,” [according to 29 prominent Egyptian NGOs](#).

[A recent opinion piece](#) in state-run *Al-Ahram* newspaper by veteran investigative journalist Ahmed Mousa presents an archetypal example of the state’s tactics. This opinion piece was published as an introduction to the official indictment of NGO workers in a manner that colors the reader’s interpretation of the charges. The article is peppered with conspiratorial language intended to convince the reader that the current trial of NGOs is an issue of “national security” and that these democracy and governance NGOs are actually arms of the CIA seeking to divide Egypt. By couching the case in terms of national sovereignty, state media is able to convince readers that those who are against the crackdown on NGOs are also against Egypt.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON FY12 U.S. ASSISTANCE TO EGYPT

On December 16, 2011 Congress passed an [omnibus spending bill](#) for Fiscal Year 2012, which includes foreign assistance to Egypt. The bill makes the delivery of military assistance (\$1.3 billion) to Egypt contingent upon certification that the ruling military council is supporting the transition to a civilian government. It ties both military (\$1.3 billion) and economic assistance (\$250 million) to certification that Egypt is continuing to honor the Camp David accords with Israel. The bill language is as follows:

Sec. 7041. (a) Egypt-

(1)(A) None of the funds appropriated under titles III and IV of this Act and in prior Acts making

appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs may be made available for assistance for the central Government of Egypt unless the Secretary of State certifies to the Committees on Appropriations that such government is meeting its obligations under the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty.

(B) Prior to the obligation of funds appropriated by this Act under the heading 'Foreign Military Financing Program', the Secretary of State shall certify to the Committees on Appropriations 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.

C) The Secretary of State may waive the requirements of paragraphs (A) and (B) if the Secretary determines and reports to the Committees on Appropriations that to do so is in the national security interest of the United States: Provided, That such determination and report shall include a detailed justification for such waiver.

(2) The Secretary of State shall consult with the Committees on Appropriations prior to the transfer of funds appropriated by this Act under the heading 'Foreign Military Financing Program' to an interest-bearing account for Egypt.

According to Obama administration officials, the broader civil society issue remains unresolved after the lifting of the travel ban:

Rajiv Shah, USAID Administrator

[March 7, 2012](#) (Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing): Well, you know, it's been a challenging few weeks, of course, as you are aware. We took the position that we really wanted to see resolution to the issue with respect to NDI and IRI and their staff; that situation is still active and still being worked. We're pleased to see the US staff be able to leave, or the international staff. There are still remaining and outstanding issues there that we're working through. With respect to the remainder of our programmatic approach, we remain focused on trying to make sure that it's successful, it's responsive to critical needs, but in a context where we're really trying to work through some of these issues as a condition to continue that overall approach.

Victoria Nuland, Department of State Spokesperson

[March 9, 2012](#) (Daily Press Briefing): She [Hillary Clinton] also, as she always does, underscored the importance of settling the NGO issue in a way that allows Egyptian NGOs and international NGOs to operate in a way that is legal and that is clear in Egypt so that we can – these NGOs can support the democratic process.

[March 5, 2012](#) (Daily Press Briefing): We did issue a statement over the weekend making the point that as we have continuing concerns that the NGO issue be settled completely, ending up in the registration of not only of our own NGOs but also the Egyptian NGOs, that we have a lot of work to do together with the government and people of Egypt in support of this transition.

[March 2, 2012](#) (Daily Press Briefing): Our view is that none of these organizations—not ours, not the Egyptians, not the internationals—did anything wrong and that the circumstance arose as a result of the very unclear legal environment provided for these organizations. So not only do we want to get this

case resolved, we want to get the situation resolved as a legal matter so that all NGOs can register, including the Egyptian ones, and they can continue their important work.

March 1, 2012: With regard to, as you know, we had been concerned that this incident could have a severe impact on all of the things that we want to do together going forward. I would say that with regard to the issue in general, the departure of our people doesn't resolve the legal case or the larger issues concerning the NGOs. We remain deeply concerned about the prosecution of NGOs in Egypt and the ultimate outcome of the legal process, and we will keep working with the Egyptian Government on these issues. . . Well, the larger underlying issue of the role that NGOs play in Egypt's transitioning democracy is still an issue of concern to us. And it's not only an issue with regard to Americans and other internationals; it's an issue with regard to those Egyptians who remain charged and the NGOs that have been unable to register and our own.

So we will continue to try to work through these issues with the Egyptian Government. As you know, at some point in the spring, under U.S. legislation, the Secretary is going to have to make some certification decisions with regard to the continuing positive development of Egyptian democracy. That goes to the election process that's ongoing. It goes to all of the democratic issues.

...

Again, I'm not going to speak to how the decisions [for certification of aid] will be made, when the time comes, simply to say that we continue to want to see the NGO situation settled in a manner that allows all NGOs – our own, European NGOs, other international NGOs and Egyptian NGOs – to be registered. We think that's part and parcel of the democratic transition in process.

...

Well, as I said at the beginning, we are going to continue to work on this issue with the Egyptian Government. Obviously, Ambassador Patterson will be very much involved. I would expect that it will come up in all of our bilateral discussions with the Egyptians, because we want to see the situation with democracy-based NGOs, whether they're American, international, or Egyptian NGOs normalized. We want to see them registered. We want to see the aftermath of this case resolved in a way that is appropriate given the fact that we don't think that anybody did anything wrong. And as you know, we believe that these kinds of NGOs play a very important role as the Secretary made so clear yesterday in her testimony, including the role that we've already seen them play in validating the credibility of the elections that have already gone forward.

These statements illustrate that Egypt continues to violate “freedom of expression, association, and religion, and due process of law,” and thus preclude Secretary of State Hillary Clinton from certifying the allocation of military aid to Egypt. Nonetheless, the Obama administration could waive the requirement on national security grounds as stipulated in the omnibus bill.

The bulk of the \$1.3 billion of Egypt's military assistance is paid directly to American weapons manufacturers by the U.S. Department of Defense. These companies have been contracted to manufacture and ship tanks, planes, guns and ammunition to Egypt.

[Here you will find a list of these defense contractors and the value of their contracts.](#)

Payments to these contractors are due in the coming weeks, forcing the U.S. [to decide](#) whether to deliver military aid now in order to avoid incurring late payment penalty fees.

Unless otherwise specified within a given contract or by another governmental authority, defense acquisitions follow procedural guidelines from Subpart 32.9 (Prompt Payment) of the [Federal Acquisition Regulation](#) handbook issued by the Department of Defense. Subpart 32.9 states that payment on a contract is due either 30 days after the receipt of an invoice from the contractor or 30 days after acceptance of supplies delivered or services performed, whichever occurs later. In cases where an invoice is not applicable, the due date for payment must be stated within the contract.

In the case of a late payment, an interest penalty is added to the payment without request from the contractor. The unavailability of funds to make proper payments does not excuse the agency in question from paying an obligatory interest penalty. The interest penalty will be computed in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget prompt payment regulations at 5 CFR Part 1315. The interest penalty is computed from the day after payment was due until the day payment is made. According to the [Financial Management Service](#) of the Treasury Department, the Prompt Payment Act interest rate in effect on the first date after payment is due is to be used to compute the interest penalty; the interest rate in effect for January – June 2012 is 2.000%.

STATEMENTS FROM EGYPTIAN POLICYMAKERS

Below are highlights of Egyptian policymaker statements regarding the NGO issue. For a more extensive list of relevant articles quoting Egyptian policymakers since the raids on NGO offices on December 29, 2011 [click here](#).

Fayza Aboul Naga, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation

[March 9, 2012 \(Washington Post op-ed\)](#):

Deep, fundamental changes are occurring in Egypt. The process begun on Jan. 25, 2011, continues. Our friends must understand that Egypt will never be the same, that this is an Egyptian revolution and that the Egyptian people will determine its outcome.

Recent strains in the U.S.- Egyptian relationship over [unregistered nongovernmental organizations \(NGOs\)](#) operating in this country are unfortunate. Neither country benefits from these tensions. But a necessary first step to putting these differences behind us is U.S. understanding of the Egyptian government's concerns, which are shared by the overwhelming majority of Egyptians.

The problem did not begin on Dec. 29, when 17 offices of 10 NGOs operating throughout Egypt were investigated. It started several years ago. Egyptian judicial actions were not initiated to harm relations with the United States, nor were they implemented to curtail civil society. The [dispute involves a handful of NGOs](#) that are operating here illegally. But more than 35,000 Egyptian and 83 foreign NGOs, including 23 American ones, operate in Egypt without a problem. Egyptian civil society, with 200 years of history, is flourishing. Its future will not be determined by judicial action concerning a handful of NGOs operating outside the law.

Egyptian law requires all NGOs to register before starting operations. Last year alone, 4,500 NGOs were registered. The NGOs under investigation are not registered; their activities are, therefore, illegal. Whether and when they applied for registration, or should have, does not change the fact that they were operating illegally. Under the former regime, unregistered NGOs functioned at a minimal level and were funded directly by the State Department. The former Egyptian government attempted to deal with the issue through quiet diplomacy, with no success.

After the Egyptian revolution began last winter, the U.S. government decided that these NGOs should expand their activities. To fund this expansion, Washington chose to direct economic assistance that previously had been allocated under conditions negotiated in the 1978 bilateral agreement and in a mutually agreed-upon exchange of letters. The letters stipulated that U.S. funding should be provided only to registered NGOs after consultation with the Egyptian government. This was the established practice. But in February 2011, Washington unilaterally declared that unregistered NGOs would be funded. In the past 10 months, \$150 million that had previously been allocated to assist the Egyptian people, who are experiencing quite challenging times, was reprogrammed by Washington to these Egyptian and American NGOs. That amount is more than what was provided to NGOs over the past six years.

The Egyptian government objected to the United States ignoring the bilateral agreement that governed how to handle the disbursement of U.S. assistance. The action was particularly perplexing because U.S. officials were in the forefront of those commending the Egyptian transitional government's determination to honor all outstanding international commitments.

All nations restrict foreign political activities and foreign funding of those activities within their borders. Some of the alleged NGO activities would violate American laws if undertaken by foreign entities in the United States. Repeated requests by the Egyptian government to the U.S. government to address the situation went unanswered. Moreover, several staff members of one unregistered NGO collectively resigned, stating on independent television that the organization was engaged "in suspicious and wrongdoing activities, discriminating against Muslims and violating other laws." These allegations are being investigated.

U.S. officials' declaration last June that Washington was providing \$40 million to the unregistered NGOs brought the issue to the attention of the Egyptian people. In July, the Egyptian cabinet instructed the minister of justice to establish a fact-finding mission on all foreign funding. Its conclusions were submitted in late September. Given the seriousness of the conclusions, the cabinet decided a judiciary investigation was required. As part of that inquiry, the investigating judge independently ordered investigators to inspect the offices of the unregistered NGOs on Dec. 29 and seize evidence. I am told that these actions are no different from those undertaken by U.S. law enforcement officials.

Neither the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, as Egypt's acting national executive, nor the cabinet was involved in that decision. Nor should they be. Egyptians are baffled by calls urging the council to interfere in an ongoing judicial investigation. While the recent lifting of the travel ban on foreign employees of the accused foreign organizations is a judicial prerogative, limiting executive authorities is fundamental change Egyptians are trying to institutionalize.

As our parliamentary elections demonstrate, Egyptians are working hard to transform our society. They are choosing new leaders, promoting the rule of law, honoring international commitments and treating all people equally before the law. International institutions operating in Egypt must abide by Egyptian laws. When violations are committed, no one should be exempted from judicial investigation. Giving privileges to some was the way of the former regime. Egyptians now aspire to much more.

[March 12, 2012:](#)

Egypt can easily do away with US aid, Planning and International Cooperation Minister Fayza Abouelnaga said Monday.

The US comes in at the bottom of the ladder of countries that give grants or loans to Egypt, she said.

Addressing the People's Assembly Foreign Affairs Committee, Abouelnaga said former US President George W. Bush reduced economic assistance to Egypt to US\$200 million, an amount which current President Barack Obama raised to \$250 million. This amount is negligible compared to Egypt's gross domestic product, Abouelnaga said.

[March 11, 2012:](#)

Planning and International Cooperation Minister Fayza Abouelnaga on Sunday said she had no connection to the NGO funding case as soon as investigations for it started.

The case of foreign-funded NGOs has sparked widespread controversy, she said. However, she added that the ensuing attack on her has only made her stronger and more certain she was heading in the right direction.

She said the US government paid economic aid to unauthorized NGOs. After tracing the funds, investigators found that those NGOs had suspicious backgrounds.

[March 8, 2012:](#)

Fayza Abouelnaga, the International Cooperation and Planning Minister, said in a press conference that Parliament is not authorized to hold a vote of no confidence against the government.

Abouelnaga said in Wednesday's press conference that neither the government nor the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has anything to do with lifting the ban on the American activists.

She added that according to the Constitutional Declaration of 2011, the head of the military council appoints ministers and relieve them of their duties.

[March 4, 2012:](#)

Aboul-Naga, for her part, at a meeting with members of parliament's economic affairs committee on Sunday, insisted that she had no knowledge about the lifting of the travel ban. "I learned about it from the media, like any other ordinary citizen," she was quoted as saying.

[February 13, 2012:](#)

The Egyptian minister seen as the driving force behind impending trials of NGO workers, including 19 Americans, told investigators that the US funded groups to create a state of prolonged chaos in Egypt, official media reported Monday.

Planning and International Cooperation Minister Fayza Abouelnaga, believed to be the instigator of a judicial probe into foreign-funded civil society groups, made the accusation during her testimony to investigating judges in October.

Abouelnaga, one of the few remaining ministers from former President Mubarak's era, added that the United States and Israel want to hijack Egypt's uprising, which toppled Mubarak a year ago, to serve the interests of Washington and the Jewish state.

"The United States and Israel could not directly create a state of chaos and work to maintain it in Egypt, so they used direct funding to organizations, especially American NGOs, as a means of implementing these goals,"

state-run Middle East News Agency (MENA) quoted her as saying, in the first public disclosure of these statements.

"The 25 January revolution events came as a surprise to the United States... and it lost control over it after it turned into a revolution of the entire Egyptian population," Abouelnaga said.

"That was when the United States decided to use all its resources and instruments to contain the situation and push it in a direction that promotes American and also Israeli interests," MENA quoted her as saying.

"All evidence indicates a clear desire and determination to abort any opportunity for Egypt to rise as a modern democratic nation with a strong economy," she said. "This would represent the biggest threat to Israeli and American interests, not only in Egypt, but in the region as a whole."

Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)/Muslim Brotherhood

[March 4, 2012 \(Parliamentary Speaker Saad al-Katatny\):](#)

US Senator John McCain's thank-you to the Muslim Brotherhood and ruling military council for releasing suspects banned from travel aims to divide Egyptians, People's Assembly Speaker Saad al-Katatny said Sunday.

"The statement is part of the atmosphere of sedition that the US government works in, aiming to create division among Egyptians," Katatny said.

The US government should say who it spoke to from the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces or the Brotherhood so people can know who stood behind the decision to allow the suspects to leave, Katatny said. "Generalization will spark strife," he said.

He said he had "no secrets to disclose" about any deal to lift the travel ban, but that what is happening in Egypt behind the scenes is not good for the country and its judiciary.

"What's the benefit? No political deals are taking place in the dark," the speaker said. "If there was a deal like the prisoner swap ones, it should take place in public. People would have understood what happened if they had been informed about benefits."

[March 2, 2012 \(Muslim Brotherhood Statement\):](#)

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is baffled at comments made in numerous news media outlets regarding allegations made by US officials about the MB's "constructive role" in the NGO case. Local media interpreted that as: the MB mediated or intervened with relevant Egyptian authorities of the interim government to lift the travel ban against foreign defendants in this case.

Indeed, the MB would never allow itself to intervene in Egypt's judicial decisions. We believe in the full independence of the state's judiciary and respect its integrity

...

Hence, we absolutely refute any claims of Brotherhood mediation in lifting the travel ban on the indicted NGO foreign workers, and we denounce any domestic or foreign pressure which may have been used on the judiciary handling this case.

On the other hand, the MB has clearly announced its position, very early on, re-iterating its full support for safeguarding the freedom and independence of NGOs as an effective element in the democratic transformation process and necessary development in Egypt.

On many occasions, the MB has previously stated its support of civil and non-governmental organizations, and called – for so long - for an urgent and comprehensive review of the exceptional laws that restrict freedoms, including current laws that control the work of such NGO's.

The MB and Freedom and Justice MPs have vowed to work collectively, in a framework of consultation with other political parties and stakeholders to draft a law allowing freedom and legitimacy to these NGOs, free from restrictions, with Egypt 's best interests in mind.

While we consider our stance, as stated above, to be responsible and constructive, we reject any intervention, mediation or negotiations with regard to matters under judicial consideration. Under no circumstances can such intervention be constructive.

[February 20, 2012 \(Opinion of the Freedom and Justice Party in Arabic\):](#)

The party emphasizes that civil society is an essential partner for any political order in plans for revitalization, especially when it undertakes work that is complementary to all forms of development. This requires speed in the existence of a law that places the work of these organizations within the framework of national work so as to provide control by the Central Auditing Agency over the activities of NGOs and the funding of their programs, whether it is domestic or foreign.

The party emphasizes its confidence that the Egyptian judiciary, which is in charge of the investigation of funding for certain civil society organizations, will speak with impartiality and integrity and without any interference that undermines Egyptian sovereignty and its status.

[February 20, 2012 \(Freedom and Justice Party Supports Role of NGOs as Essential to Democratic Process\):](#)

The Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) today re-iterated its support for the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in supporting the democratic process, especially in nascent democracies. Under the previous, autocratic, regime, Egypt suffered many violations of civic and democratic rights. NGOs played an important role during that time in exposing the many atrocities of the regime. The FJP affirms its commitment to a vision of Egypt where NGOs continue to play an important role in holding government accountable. "The FJP supports immediate lifting of restrictions on the establishment and registration of NGOs, so interested groups can work legally and transparently," FJP Chairman Dr. Mohamed Morsi told FJPonline.com. "Indeed, Egypt needs the support of NGOs especially in the areas of human development, education, technology transfer and public administration."

The FJP supports legislation to regulate NGOs that includes regulation of funding sources. NGOs are most credible when relying on domestic funding sources such as tax-exempt contributions, donations and grants. If foreign funding is needed, it must be regulated in a way that allows full and periodic disclosure of donors. Foreign funding should be allocated for specified projects and be free from interference from the donor government or agency. NGOs that receive public or foreign funding should be precluded from taking partisan positions or campaigning for specific political parties. "NGOs are regulated with respect to funding and scope by most democratic nations and we will look to best practices around the world in crafting Egypt's approach," Dr. Morsi said.

The FJP fully rejects all forms of politically motivated crackdowns against NGOs, and demands that any investigations of alleged irregular or illegal practices must be done in accordance with the law and the due process. Government must ensure the safety of individuals working in these organizations, amidst heightened public anger driven by the media, and immediately release those who are proven to be innocent in court of law. Meanwhile, the Party equally rejects any attempts by foreign governments to undermine the ongoing investigations, or influence the legal process which must be allowed to take its full course so that the rule of law prevails, and the sovereignty of our country is preserved.

[February 17, 2012 \(Op-Ed by Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Mohamed Badie\):](#)

We seek to build a modern, democratic state on the basis of co-citizenship, the rule of law, freedom, equality and pluralism in all forms, as well as the peaceful rotation of power through the ballot box and respect for human rights. We seek a state based on freedom, justice and equality for all citizens, without discrimination based on creed, colour or faith. We seek to forge a new constitution that meets the demands of the people for genuine revival in the coming decades and centuries, with the understanding that national charters are written by consensus – not simply by majority.

...

At the same time, all political, intellectual, social, cultural and economic trends and forces in the country – along with civil society – must be allowed to operate and express their views. This will enable them to play a patriotic role and participate in the maintenance of Egypt's institutions, thereby raising the nation's overall status. What's more, a culture of affection, tolerance, mutual respect and co-existence among all citizens should be practiced. These are the demands of the people and the duty of rulers everywhere in the world; it is the only way to end the current crisis and achieve our desired renaissance.

The good people of Egypt look to those who would preserve their religion; maintain their country's domestic and foreign security; respect and apply judicial rulings; value social justice; promote virtue and ethics; and make daily life easier. They also look to those who would increase Egypt's prosperity and assign important tasks to those who are worthy of them.

[February 16, 2012 \(Senior FJP Leader Essam el-Erian\):](#)

"We (Egypt) are a party (to the treaty) and we will be harmed so it is our right to review the matter," Essam el-Erian, a senior Brotherhood leader, told Reuters in a telephone interview.

"The aid was one of the commitments of the parties that signed the peace agreement so if there is a breach from one side it gives the right of review to the parties," added Erian, the deputy leader of the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, the biggest group in the newly elected parliament.

[February 15, 2012 \(FJP President Mohammad Morsy\)](#)

The Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party on Wednesday criticized an initiative led by a prominent Salafi sheikh to replace US aid to Egypt, state-run news agency MENA reported.

FJP President Mohamed Morsy said any talk about alternatives to the aid could impede the establishment of the state's constitutional institutions, according to MENA.

"This is military aid linked to the Camp David treaty, and it's not the time to talk about it now," Morsy said while casting his vote for the Shura Council elections in Sharqiya.

[February 15, 2012 \(Op-Ed by Muslim Brotherhood Deputy Guide Rashad Bayoumy in Arabic\)](#)

The American-Zionist scheme was restless as it saw the features of freedom rise within Arab and Islamic societies. It began to scheme and chose the Ambassador [Anne Patterson], whose wretched past had witnessed her committing crimes in Pakistan, in order to complete its plan of internal conflict in Egypt.

Money poured into what they falsely call “human rights groups” and “civil society;” when the truth is exposed, we see the hateful intent to ignite the flames of sectarian strife. God will allow nothing but revealing what is behind the millions that have funded this suspicious activity. . .

America will not scare us with its threats to cut off aid – that impure restriction that shackles our freedom. We hope that people of all sects will work to refuse this humiliating gift, to unite the will of our honorable people by cutting off this aid, to achieve self-sufficiency in ever meaning of the word, and for the people to pay attention to this gang formed from the remnants of the NDP (National Democratic Party), the men of the State Security Investigations Service (SSI) who pulled the rug out from under them and lessened their influence, and those who work on account of these men.

[They should work] as well as for everyone to know that this lying inspirer of fear, which the American-Zionist plan uses with its followers in the government and their henchmen, strays far from the truth. Islam is a religion of compassion, a religion of glory, a religion of freedom, and a religion of dignity.

[February 9, 2012 \(Muslim Brotherhood Spokesman Mahmoud Ghozlan in Arabic\)](#)

Dr. Mahmoud Ghozlan, spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood, said that, “America did not understand the fact that the Egyptian people undertook their revolution to recover their freedom, dignity, and sovereignty and will not abandon them at any cost, for that would be as though the former deposed regime were still in place.” He added in a statement on Thursday that, “the actions that took place were legal, and it is a right of no one to intervene in the course of justice, not if he is Egyptian, much less a foreigner. The power of the judiciary and its independence are among the most important manifestations of national sovereignty.” He continued, “If America does not allow any other country to interfere in its internal affairs and this is its right, then it is our right and our duty not to allow a foreign country to interfere in our internal affairs.”

He stressed that the Muslim Brotherhood considered the accused innocent until proven guilty, but US threats cast serious doubt on their innocence; if it were confident in their innocence, it would wait for the judiciary to rule them so. He said, “It is well known that America does not allow any foreign organization to establish headquarters, open branches in their states, and practice activities without permission from US authorities.” He asked, “Why is all of this prohibited within America but routine in Egypt?”

Al-Nour Party

[February 9, 2012 \(Party Leader Emad Abdul Ghafoor\)](#)

Emad Abdul Ghafoor, leader of the Salafist al-Nour Party, praised the US-based National Democratic Institute, which was referred by the judiciary for criminal trial on charges of unlawful political work in Egypt, explaining that it provided prosperity to political life.

According to Abdul Ghafoor, al-Nour attended training by the National Democratic Institute, which is one of the American-funded organizations aimed at spreading democracy in Egypt and has been accused by Egypt of receiving foreign funds without obtaining a license to practice.

. . .

Abdul Ghafoor said, “In fact, we met with them, and they organized some political meetings, and we were attending some of these meetings. There is no doubt that there was some kind of enrichment of political life... In fact, we have no information about the background of the case or what goes on behind the scenes, whether these groups support illegal activities or oppose the regime of the country or not.” He explained, “I am of the mind that in this case, the judiciary rules on it and sees whether there truly is a fabrication or encroachment upon sovereignty, or that this claim is only a cover for the violence that is practiced against these groups.”

[February 9, 2012 \(al-Nour Spokesman Nader Bakr in Arabic\)](#)

Nader Bakr, the spokesman for the Salafi al-Nour Party, denounced the statements of some US government officials threatening to cut off aid in Egypt in the case of continuing the investigation of civil society organizations, saying to al-Masry al-Youm, “These organizations played a major role in distorting the Egyptian revolution. The threat of America is rejected, and we will not allow American aid to be a means of blackmailing Egypt politically.”

Mohamed El Baradei, Former Presidential Candidate

[March 2, 2012](#)

We immediately want to know the name of each official in the chain of command that toppled the independence of the judiciary, starting at the top. It’s time for accountability and cleansing. Now our refuge is the People’s Assembly.

[March 1, 2012](#)

NGO trials in Egypt: erratic due process is blatantly irreconcilable with independent judiciary & genuine democracy

[March 1, 2012](#)

To those who speak of sovereignty and independence: Whatever the circumstances of referring the issue of funding to the judiciary were, interference in its work is a strike in the death of democracy.

Amr Moussa, Presidential Candidate

[March 3, 2012](#)

Amr Moussa, former secretary general of the Arab League and a presidential aspirant, told Al-Ahram newspaper Friday that he wants Prime Minister Kamal al-Ganzouri to clarify what happened to the Egyptian people in an emergency statement.

“It is clear that political pressure has been exerted, leading [the judges] considering the case to step down,” Moussa said.

“What exactly happened? People have the right to know,” he added.

He also condemned the public exchange of accusations between senior judges, and said that the case highlighted the current confusion, uncertainty and mismanagement of the country.

[February 24, 2012](#)

Presidential hopeful Amr Moussa said Thursday he supports ending US aid to Egypt. In a speech during a campaign rally in the South Sinai city of Tor Sinai, Moussa said he believed the country would fare better without the money.

Egypt's conditions won't be improved until it stops receiving US aid, Moussa said.

On Wednesday, Moussa also called for a decreased dependence on U.S. aid and support, saying "a nation lives depending on aid must feel that there is something wrong."

[February 8, 2012](#)

Egyptian presidential candidate Amr Moussa said that, "The importance of non-governmental organizations cannot be ignored."

"The underlying sensitivity that I felt from the reports I read in the newspapers or when talking with officials is that there is a lot of money allocated to these organizations and without compliance to the laws or applicable rules, but at the same time, the current era is the era of NGOs." Moussa added that, "NGOs quickly became a vital factor in Egyptian civil society."

"I grasped the extent of the sensitivity of the subject of NGOs, but it is also sensitive for the Egyptian sides. The underlying sensitivity that we feel from the reports we read in the newspapers or when talking with officials is that there is a lot of money allocated to these organizations without respect for the laws and applicable rules, but, at the same time, we must recognize that the current era is the era of NGOs. We cannot deny the important of the existence of NGOs in the world as a whole, and here we have around thirty thousand small, medium, and even large NGOs. When I was working at the Arab League, I introduced NGOs in the League's work and invited them to attend and participate in meetings devoted to human rights and social development. I also introduced them to the work of economic and social councils and those for information and the press... and these organizations were always present. I assume that there is an agreed upon rule that these NGOs were created to help the community move forward and not for political work."

He added, "This is exactly what the government accuses the NGOs of doing. I don't know because I don't have a picture of the details of what happened, but my belief is that these NGOs are part of the new way of life."

Mohamed Anwar El-Sadat, Head of the Human Rights Committee of the Egyptian Parliament

[March 4, 2012](#)

Head of the human rights committee of the People's Assembly, Mohamed Anwar El-Sadat, called upon the head of the ruling military council Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi and El-Ganzoury to dismiss Aboul Naga after what the MP called "the dramatic end of the play of the NGOs case by allowing foreign defendants to travel and limiting the expected sentence to a fine."

"The minister of international cooperation is the main cause of this crisis since she filed a complaint against the civil society organizations and escalated public opinion using the media," Sadat said in a statement.

Members of the PA's committee criticized the entire government for its stance in the NGOs case and for allowing foreign defendants to leave. The MPs demanded accountability for all the parties involved in lifting the travel ban. El-Sadat said officials must clarify the specifics of the case.

...

Anwar Esmat El-Sadat, chairman of parliament's human rights committee and nephew of late president Anwar El-Sadat, for his part, called on Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, head of Egypt's ruling military council, to dismiss Aboul-Naga.

"She [Aboul-Naga] helped create the NGO crisis and incite Egyptian public opinion against them [the foreign NGO workers] in order to appear like a hero and offset her long association with the Mubarak regime," Sadat wrote in a letter to Tantawi. "It would have been better to deal with this tricky situation diplomatically rather than in a way that led to the violation of Egypt's dignity."

Amr Hamzawy, Member of Parliament

[March 3, 2012](#)

Liberal parliamentarian Amr Hamzawy said Friday he was 'offended' by the way in which the decision to lift the travel ban on the foreign non-governmental organisation (NGO) workers, accused of operating illegally, was executed.

In an interview with Al-Nahar satellite TV channel, Hamzawy explained that there is confusion over why the unnamed appeal judge on Wednesday allowed the foreign nationals to exit the country leaving the Egyptian NGO workers, also accused, to face trial.

The parliament should investigate the recent developments in the NGOs' lawsuit, Hamzawy added, especially as there are allegations that the judiciary may have been forced to change their decision. In particular, Hamzawy requested that the parliament subpoena Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri and the Minister of Justice Mahmoud Merai for pressuring the judiciary to lift the travel ban. He insisted that democracy cannot be accomplished without judicial independence.

[February 22, 2012](#)

At the same panel, MP Amr Hamzawy emphasized the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between organizations working on civil issues and those carrying out political agendas. "We cannot allow these critical social issues to become compromised by political interests or religious debates," Hamzawy urged.

[February 21, 2012](#)

Dr. Amr Hamzawy, a member of the People's Assembly, said that civil society organizations in Egypt are being subjected to severe campaigns due to the NGO law and that it is not the right of America to interfere in the affairs of the investigations of the state. He pointed out that American economic aid to Egypt does not require exerting pressure upon Egypt on its behalf, and it is possible to do without it; rather the problem is in military aid, which is worth \$1.3 billion that is marked for the purchase of new weapons and spare parts as well as for maintaining old ones.

Hamzawy added during his interview with Hala Sarhan on the program Nasbook (on Rotana Egypt) that we cannot do away with military funding suddenly; one must first develop a long-term plan to diversify sources of arms and not be limited to only America. He said, “No reasonable person who knows politics is asserting that America will cut off aid when it has strategic interests with Egypt. We’re in trouble because the source of Egyptian arms is singular; there are types of weapons that America refuses to give to us at a time when it gives Israel two billion dollars in military funding to provide the best military technology.”

STATEMENTS FROM U.S. OFFICIALS

White House

Below are highlights of White House statements regarding the NGO issue since POMED’s last backgrounder on February 10, 2012. For all relevant White House statements since the NGO raids on December 29, 2011 [click here](#).

[Press Briefing \(Press Sec. Carney\) \(February 29, 2012\)](#)

QUESTION: Jay, the NGO agreement under which the Americans are now free to leave -- I mean, I realize there’s some relief that they are, but has this incident done lasting damage here? I mean, Hillary Clinton got -- lawmaker after lawmaker today was asking about do we really continue to give aid to folks when they're doing this? What do you think?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I’ll make two points about that. One, I don't have any specific information about the reports that you mention with regards to the Americans in Egypt. I would note that we’ve worked this issue very hard with our Egyptian counterparts. It has been a priority of the President to resolve this, and we have made clear throughout the process -- Secretary of State Clinton, Secretary of Defense Panetta and others -- that we consider a very serious matter, and that it had the potential of affecting our relationship. But I don't want to get too far ahead of these reports until we have more details about them.

Defense Department

Below are highlights of Defense Department statements regarding the NGO issue since POMED’s last backgrounder on February 12, 2012. For all relevant Defense Department statements since the NGO raids on December 29, 2011 [click here](#).

[Testimony by Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Dempsey before Senate Armed Services Committee \(February 14, 2012\)](#)

McCAIN: General Dempsey, you do – I know you just returned from Egypt. All Americans are concerned about the events there concerning Americans who have had to move to the US embassy in order to preserve their safety and security. We realize the absolute criticality of our relationship with Egypt and the role that Egypt plays in the Middle East. What – what advice – what, what recommendation do you have as to how the United States should be handl– our government should be handling this very, very tough situation?

DEMPSEY: Senator, I – I had planned this trip to Egypt before the non-governmental organization crisis – and it is a crisis – occurred, and so when I met with Field Marshal Tantawi, General Anan, and General Mawafi, the key leaders with whom we interact – and have interacted, as you know, for decades – I explained to them that I was coming there to talk to them about our mil.-to-mil. relationship, about Syria, about Lebanon, about the

Sinai, but that I couldn't do that, because we had this issue that was an impediment to that. And we spent about a day and a half in conversation with them, encouraging them in the strongest possible terms to resolve this so that our mil.-to-mil. relationship could continue. But I'd like to –

McCain: And the results of those conversations?

Dempsey: I'm convinced that, potentially, they were underestimating the impact of this on our relationship. When I left there, there was no doubt they understood the seriousness of it. But I'd like to add, Senator, I know of the amendment that's be proposed to break our military relationship and cut off all aid, and I think my personal military judgment is that would be a mistake.

McCain: I want to assure you we're discussing that and ways to certainly avoid that action in time. But I hope you explained to the rulers who are military and leftovers from the Mubarak regime that this situation is really not acceptable to the American people, and our relationship with Egypt is vital but the fact of the matter is the welfare of our citizens are even more vital.

Dempsey: I completely agree, sir, and I did make that clear.

[Dempsey Addresses Concerns with Egyptian Military Leader \(February 12, 2012\)](#)

Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey met with his Egyptian counterpart, Lt. Gen. Sami Hafez Enan, as well as with Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi and other officials at Egypt's Ministry of Defense.

They discussed the long-term relationship between the U.S. and Egypt and several of that nation's regional issues. They also addressed Egypt's investigation of allegedly illegal foreign funding for pro-democracy nongovernmental organizations by more than 40 Egyptian and American activists, including 19 U.S. citizens.

Several Americans who are targets of the investigation have not been allowed to leave Egypt and have taken refuge at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo. Dempsey's trip was planned long before this situation developed and caused tension between the two nations.

"We discussed that [situation] very professionally," the chairman told American Forces Press Service during the flight back. "I expressed the fact that it caused us concern, not only about the particular NGOs and individuals currently unable to leave the country, but rather more broadly."

Dempsey said he asked the defense leaders, "What signal should I take from this in terms of how you see Egypt's future? Are you going to become isolated? Are you going to preserve individual freedoms or deny them?" He noted that "they don't have the answers right now."

Along with his concern, the chairman expressed the Defense Department's commitment to common interests, choices and consequences.

...

"But we've got some work to do" on resolving tensions related to the NGO issue, he added, "and so do they."

...

"I think they eager to have that kind of partnership with us," he added, "but we have to get beyond this NGO issue."

State Department

Below are highlights of State Department statements regarding the NGO issue since the travel ban was lifted on March 1, 2012. For all relevant State Department statements since POMED's last backgrounder on February 10, 2012 [click here](#) and for statements since the NGO raids on December 29, 2011 [click here](#).

[Daily Press Briefing \(Victoria Nuland\) \(March 15, 2012\)](#)

QUESTION: I've got – have you seen this letter or the Amnesty International statement about this ship carrying, allegedly carrying, lots of ammunition and weapons to Egypt?

MS. NULAND: We've – I've seen an Amnesty letter with regard to its concerns about future policy in Egypt, if that's what you're talking about.

QUESTION: Well, there's that letter, but – to the Secretary. But there's also the statement that talks about this ship that's on its way from this big ammo supply port in the States, on its way to Port Said, apparently. Is the Administration okay with that going there – with these armaments going to Egypt?

MS. NULAND: I'm going to take that one, Matt, because I haven't seen that particular --

QUESTION: All right. And then as regards to the letter to the Secretary, is she inclined to certify Egypt as complying with the congressional requirements?

MS. NULAND: Well, as you make clear, she is going to have to make some recommendations and she's going to have to make some decisions, but she hasn't come to any conclusions yet.

[Daily Press Briefing \(Mark Toner\) \(March 12, 2012\)](#)

QUESTION: On Egypt. To – Egyptian parliament has asked the government on Friday, I think, to refuse the U.S. aid and ask the U.S. Administration to release Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman. Are you planning to release him, and what's your reaction to that (inaudible) –

MR. TONER: The second part is news to me. I do know there was a motion to stop receiving U.S. assistance that's being deliberated by the Egyptian parliament. It's unclear whether or what that authority – or what, if any authority that motion would have. You know where we stand about our assistance. We believe it's in the interest of the Egyptian people, but certainly it's in the national interests of the U.S. to help Egypt in its transition to full democracy.

QUESTION: But you don't know what authority the parliament of a country has?

...

MR. TONER: And Matt, I'll just say it's hard to – I don't have any details whether this is a – for example, in our own system, a sense of the Senate or something like that.

QUESTION: Right. But even if it does pass, considering you praised the elections as being representative of the people, if the Egyptian people don't want this money, why do we force it on them?

...

QUESTION: I mean, there are a lot of taxpayers in this country who don't – who won't understand this, why we would – why you would continue to push money, their money, on a country that doesn't want it.

MR. TONER: We obviously – (laughter) – let the record note – but this is obviously – we move with extreme caution whenever we’re dealing with American taxpayer money and offering it as assistance. We never offer assistance unless it’s in the very clear national interests of the United States. So let’s be, first and foremost, very clear about that.

Secondly, I think we all agree that Egypt is undergoing a democratic transition, that it’s important for us, for the region, that this be successful. But this is a sensitive and difficult time for Egypt, and we’ve pledged to work with the Egyptian people. And certainly, it is, as you said, within their own right to decide whether or if they want this assistance. But my understanding is that has not yet been decided.

[Secretary's Remarks: Remarks at the United Nations Security Council \(March 12, 2012\)](#)

Our experience elsewhere in the world has taught us that successful political transitions are those that quickly deliver economic results—job opportunities and the hope for a better future. To succeed, the Arab political awakening must also be an economic awakening.

Governments across the region who share these priorities will need to keep making the sometimes difficult policy choices required to build a foundation for inclusive, private sector-led growth. As this year’s G-8 president, America is continuing the work of the Deauville Partnership started by France to promote regional integration, economic participation, job creation, and stabilization. The last of these is especially pressing: the international community must provide strong support for the IMF to quickly conclude an economic reform and stabilization program with Egypt. And we call on Egypt’s friends in the region and around the world to be prepared to use bilateral assistance to reinforce an IMF program with Egypt.

[Daily Press Briefing \(Victoria Nuland\) \(March 9, 2012\)](#)

QUESTION: Has any progress been made on getting the charges dropped against the NGOs? And what’s your readout of the protest that happened today outside the U.S. Embassy in Cairo? What was going on there?

MS. NULAND: Well, with regard to the protests outside of the Embassy, as you know, it’s a – Friday is a day that the Embassy is closed. So we only had security personnel there. Our understanding, from what I was able to glean before I came down, was that we had some of the usual protests that have been happening on Fridays against the current pace of reform by opposition folks who don’t think that it’s fast enough. Then we had some counter-protestors of a – sort of in an anti-American vein and some of them clashed with each other. But I frankly don’t have a full picture there, Cami, because, as I said, we had limited staff. But my understanding is that it’s now dispersed.

With regard to the NGO issue, I think you’ve seen the press reporting that the Egyptian court has now set the next hearing date for April 10th, and as I said, we’re continuing to work on this case.

QUESTION: Sorry. It’s okay. That’s fine. You mentioned that we are trying to solve – last Saturday when the statement came out, and then after that Assistant Secretary Feltman in his interview with Al Arabiya mentioned that it was kind of – that was – issue is good that we solved that. We can talk about other issue. But it seems it’s not solved. I mean, yesterday, for example, an American is in the trial, and is there anything going on regarding the – dropping the charges, or it’s like wait-and-see?

MS. NULAND: Well, I think Cami just asked a version of the same question. Again, the Egyptian court has now set another hearing date for April 10th. We are continuing to support the lawyers for those Americans

involved; to support the NGOs, whether they are American, international, or Egyptian in trying to do what we can to take care of this situation, which as you know we thought never should have arisen in the first place.

QUESTION: So regarding this, the same issue, which is kind of solved and not solved, it seems so. In the same time, is there other issues which, regarding the partnership or the strategic partnership as you describe in your statement on Saturday, anything going on or is that – everything is frozen or on standstill?

MS. NULAND: Well, our relationship with Egypt was never frozen. We're continuing to work together on a broad cross-section of issues, including the support that we want to provide for the presidential elections that are coming up and other support that we're giving to the transition process.

But in addition, as our statement said over the weekend, the Egyptian Government is now in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund on support that, frankly, we believe Egypt badly needs. We want to see Egypt and the IMF come to an agreement that is transparent and that can undergird the democratic transition period, because, as you know, there is hope not only that this change will bring political reform, but that it'll bring more economic opportunity for the people of Egypt. And of course our important conversations about regional security always continue.

QUESTION: Weeks ago you said this was an executive issue in Egypt. And it seems like in the debate within Egypt, it's been said it's a judicial issue. So which is it, in your eyes now? And if it is a judicial issue, how is the U.S. able to influence that one way or the other?

MS. NULAND: Well again, Cami, our view has been that we need to talk to all branches of the Egyptian Government about this – to the judiciary to the degree that we can talk to them about the fact that we viewed the situation as unclear as a matter of Egyptian law, and that that needs to be cleaned up with the executive in terms of its oversight of the judiciary. And that, frankly, this is a matter that goes to the larger question of the transition that Egypt needs to make from an authoritarian system where civil society organizations, whether they're Egyptian or whether they're international, didn't play much of a role in politics, to a democratic system where the role and the participation and the support that NGOs can give to the political process, to economic reform, to transparency in government, to being watchdogs over a judicial process, frankly, which they certainly play that role in our country and in democracies around the world, is strengthened, is encouraged, is enhanced, rather than feared. And that is a matter that needs to be clarified in Egyptian law and in practice.

QUESTION: Do you know procedurally that NDI and RNI and Freedom House are obligated under the law to share their operations and their funds and so on with the Egyptian Government?

MS. NULAND: Said, they had been cooperating all through the spring, summer, and fall period. They had been transparent about their finances. They had been transparent about the beneficiaries of their programs, all of those kinds of things, as requested. And that was one of the reasons that we were so concerned and caught off guard, frankly, when the judicial process moved from one of transparency to one of punitive action.

[A/S Feltman Interview with Al Arabiya \(March 6, 2012\)](#)

The United States is “fully supportive” of the efforts exerted by the Egyptian people to build a democratic system and is looking forward to continue the “strategic partnership” with the incoming government, a top U.S. official told Al Arabiya.

Egypt “is going through a transition period, look at Egypt today versus Egypt one year, one year and a half ago,” Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman told Al Arabiya in an

exclusive interview.

...

“We do want to be partners with them [Egyptian people] over the long term. Now we have had to spend a lot of time, for example, talking to people on Capitol Hill to remind people of the long-term interest that we have in Egypt and the long-term benefits that we think that both countries have,” Feltman said when asked whether the latest NGO-related crisis could have irreparable damage to the U.S.-Egyptian relationship.

The U.S. top official underlined that the American NGOs “have a good track record of working globally.” He said that “a couple of these NGOs were invited by the Egyptian government to serve as witnesses during the Parliamentary elections.”

When asked on whether U.S. aid to Egypt was safe or not, Feltman said: “Congress has appropriated the funds, but Congress has also added certain requirements. We have to take those requirements seriously and we’ll be looking at this in the weeks ahead.”

Feltman pointed out that Washington is fully committed to doing what it can to be a good partner, with Egypt. “And that doesn’t mean just U.S. assistance. That means trying to help the Egyptians achieve their aspirations more generally.”

Egypt is currently suffering from a critical financial situation, given the drop in tourism revenues and investment. “We want to work with the IMF and others to be able to help the Egyptians avert any kind of fiscal crisis. So the partnership we have with Egypt isn’t confined to fiscal year 2012 assistance, it’s a broad partnership.”

[Daily Press Briefing \(Victoria Nuland\) \(March 5, 2012\)](#)

QUESTION: Well, I know you said that the negotiations were continuing as well to get the charges dropped completely.

MS. NULAND: Yes.

QUESTION: How difficult is that process now with so much anger focused at the U.S.?

MS. NULAND: This has not been easy from the start, Cami, as you know. I mean, we have been engaged in discussions, as have other countries, as have the Egyptian NGOs themselves, throughout this period about the importance of trying to normalize and make clear the legal process under which NGOs operate in Egypt.

So our continuing effort is to do what we can to get these NGOs registered – ours, the Egyptian NGOs. It is not easy, but the environment has not been easy for this throughout. And we would just remind that not only the American and international NGOs, but the Egyptian NGOs played a crucial role in providing transparency and legitimacy for the elections that have already gone forward. And they have a role to play for the presidential elections, which are very important.

QUESTION: Would you say the environment’s gotten worse since the Americans departed?

MS. NULAND: Cami, I think it has been difficult all the way around and we have to keep working on these issues.

[Press Statement \(Victoria Nuland\) \(March 3, 2012\)](#)

We have all been focused over these past few weeks on the NGO issue, and it is a matter of serious continuing concern for the United States. But it is also important to underscore that the United States remains committed to a strong bilateral relationship with Egypt. Despite the recent strains, and differences on certain issues, the fundamentals of this strategic relationship remain strong. We continue to work together to protect regional peace and security and to address the full range of regional issues before us. The United States is committed to supporting the transition to democracy in Egypt, and we welcome the progress that has been made by Egypt in conducting free elections for both houses of Parliament. The United States is also committed to ensuring Egypt's economic and financial stability. In this regard, the United States continues to support the efforts of the IMF to conclude an economic reform and stabilization program with Egypt and remains in close touch with other donors on ways to assist the Egyptian economy. The United States and Egypt have been close partners for many decades, and we look forward to a close partnership for many decades to come.

[Daily Press Briefing \(Victoria Nuland\) \(March 2, 2012\)](#)

MS. NULAND: We had quite a discussion yesterday about the numbers on the plane coming out of Egypt. And as a result of our inability to give you numbers yesterday, some of the reporting was a little goofy. So let me just confirm that there were 13 individuals all together. Six of them were Americans from IRI and NDI. And there were seven others representing the nationalities that we gave you yesterday.

QUESTION: Can you explain – one American from NDI, I believe, has stayed in Egypt. Can you let us know if you're offering him anything, if there's anything you're concerned about with that – his decision to stay?

MS. NULAND: Well, as you noted, Michele, it was his personal decision to stay. He was offered the – a seat on the airplane, and he chose not to take it.

...

QUESTION: Sure. But what are the facts that are in dispute? Because as far as I can tell, they did pay bail and they did agree to go back to face the charges.

MS. NULAND: These guys were charged. There was a travel ban on them. The travel ban was lifted on the understanding that they would pay bail. So your assumption is that these charges will stand and they will be expected to go back for trial. Our point is that we will continue to work with the Egyptian Government to see if we can get this case dismissed, not only for our people but also for the Egyptians, because we think the case was unwarranted from the beginning.

QUESTION: But if the charges do stay – and I don't see why one shouldn't assume that they might – should they not return?

MS. NULAND: Again, as we said yesterday, this will be a matter for the individuals to decide, along with their lawyers, but our hope is that we don't get to that point, and that is what we're working for.

...

MS. NULAND: Well, I can tell you on this is that we discussed this issue of bail with the NGOs and we made arrangements with them so that the legal expenses associated with this incident would be treated as part of the

activities that the U.S. Government funds. And we agreed to this because the situation arose in the context of the democracy promotion work that they were doing that we had funded and supported on behalf of the United States. So – and apparently this is not unusual. In the past, we have paid legal fees when there are issues associated with these organizations and they get into issues –

QUESTION: Okay. So basically the taxpayer paid their bail?

MS. NULAND: The NGOs paid the bail –

QUESTION: With taxpayer money.

MS. NULAND: -- out of money that they receive from the U.S. Government.

MS. NULAND: -- of the activities they were involved in. Again, with regard to the question of what happens now with the bail, our goal is to get this case dismissed. That is what we want to see happen.

QUESTION: In that – and in that case they would – the Egyptians would return the money?

MS. NULAND: I can't speak to how this is going to go, but that is the expectation, that we will get this case dismissed.

QUESTION: Hold on. Hold on, Said. I need – I want to know if – is there some guarantee that this money is going to be repaid to either the institutions or to the U.S. Treasury if it is returned by the Egyptians? Do you expect the Egyptians to return it? Because otherwise I don't see why the U.S. Government is putting up however many million dollars it was that is just going to be seized because these people aren't going to go back to face trial if they're charged. So that's why – I just want to know what the end result of this money is. You have a guarantee you're going to get it back, or that the IRI and NDI are going to get it back, or is it just kind of flown out the window and never gets seen again?

MS. NULAND: Again, we worked with the NGOs to allow them to make arrangements to pay this bail because we considered it was important to be able to resolve this issue with regard to their safety and security. This –

QUESTION: I understand that, but there's a difference between bail that's supposed to be repaid once you – you get at least a portion of it back when you show up, when you don't jump bail.

MS. NULAND: Again, our hope and expectation is that we can get this case dismissed. That's what we want to work on, that's what we're continuing to work on. In that event, presumably this issue would be resolved. But again, these groups ended up in this situation because they were trying to do democracy promotion work, which they do in 70 countries all over the world on behalf of the U.S.

[Daily Press Briefing \(Victoria Nuland\) \(March 1, 2012\)](#)

QUESTION: The charges remain against these seven, correct?

MS. NULAND: That is correct.

QUESTION: And are you not concerned about that?

MS. NULAND: Well, obviously we are concerned about that.

QUESTION: And are the seven going to return to face the charges?

MS. NULAND: Well, that'll be an issue that each one of them will have to make their own decision about.

QUESTION: Why did the Egyptian courts decide to lift the travel ban?

MS. NULAND: I can't speak to that. They were – there were several motions made by the attorneys for the NGO employees. It was on the basis of one or several of those that Egyptian judicial authorities chose to act.

QUESTION: The Secretary said publicly that the United States Government and the Egyptian Government were in intense discussions on this issue. Did the U.S. Government provide any incentives whatsoever to – well, first of all, who were you talking to, given that the judiciary is an independent branch of the Egyptian Government? Were you talking to members of the Egyptian judiciary or were you talking to members of the government or members of the military? Who were you actually talking to?

MS. NULAND: Well, I think as the Secretary made clear in her testimony yesterday, we were talking to all colors and stripes of the Egyptian Government, including members of the judiciary, members of the executive branch, members of the military, trying to find a way through this and making clear our view that these people had done nothing wrong and that the case needed to be settled.

With regard to the decision, the decision to lift the ban was made through the Egyptian judicial system.

QUESTION: Is it not somewhat improper for you to be holding – for a government to be holding conversations with the judiciary of another country to try to free citizens that have been charged under the laws of that country?

MS. NULAND: Well, our concern here, Arshad, as we said throughout this, was that the regulatory and legal system under which these employees were operating was very unclear, was very contradictory; that the charges were unclear when they were made. So in addition to the lawyers for those individuals and organizations trying to clarify the situation and trying to make clear their view that they had done nothing wrong, the U.S. Government also sought to understand the legal situation under which this was being pursued and what the elements of recourse might be. I think you know we talked about the fact that we had sent some legal experts from this building to work with the judicial authorities to simply understand it and to see if there was a way through it.

QUESTION: Do you regard the Egyptian judiciary as independent?

MS. NULAND: We do.

QUESTION: Victoria, could you clarify for us the role of the U.S. Government in posting the bond? I understand that \$300,000 per individual was posted and the promise that they will return to face trial. Could you explain to us if there was any role for the U.S. Government in that aspect?

MS. NULAND: Well, first of all, let me just clarify that none of these people who have now departed were in custody, none of them were subject to arrest warrants. They were under travel restrictions. So at the request of the attorneys for the employees, the Egyptian court ruled that the travel restrictions would be lifted if the employees posted bail. So through their lawyers, the NGOs made payments on behalf of their employees from available funds. So there were no bribes paid, and this was paid by the NGOs.

QUESTION: No, I did not suggest that there was any bribes. I just wanted to ask if there was any official role for the U.S. Government to post bail. Some people may not have had the money. I mean, did you try to help them post that money? It's a huge sum of money for the bail.

MS. NULAND: The organizations paid the bail.

QUESTION: But these organizations get money from the U.S. Government. Was there any government money involved in this bail payment?

MS. NULAND: The checks for this bail, as I understand it, came from the organizations.

...

QUESTION: Are you aware of any similar activities to these organizations that are ongoing now in Egypt – efforts to democratize, efforts to teach people, rule of law, and so on? Are there ongoing activities by U.S.-based NGOs?

MS. NULAND: Well, there are many international NGOs and Egyptian NGOs trying to support the democratic process in Egypt. The degree to which this whole incident has had a chilling effect on the activities of NGOs, I can't really give you a calibration here, but certainly, it's been a very difficult situation for our NGOs.

QUESTION: Are you aware of any U.S.-funded or U.S. Government-funded NGOs that are having current activities in Egypt to do the same thing in democratization and teaching people the rule of law and others?

MS. NULAND: I'll have to take that one too. I don't know whether there are NGOs that are continuing to operate or whether all of them are waiting for a legal clarification now of their status. As I said, this issue is not settled, not only for us but also for the Egyptian NGOs.

...

QUESTION: I wanted to ask about what you're going to do going forward and whether – with the Egyptian Government – whether Ambassador Patterson is going to be having meetings on this or if there's any sort of formal structure set up now to deal with the aftermath to address the existing charges.

QUESTION: Is there anything formally set up though?

MS. NULAND: I don't know what you mean by formally. I mean in the sense that we are continuing to have this conversation at every level and at – in all of our encounters.

MS. NULAND: But this is not resolved in terms of the situation with NGOs from our perspective.

QUESTION: Well, you're dealing with the transitional government, meaning the military-led government.

MS. NULAND: Correct. Correct.

QUESTION: But, I mean, you also have the new parliament which is led by the Muslim Brotherhood and it's the prerogative of parliament to pass some laws that could deal with the NGOs. I'm wondering what the

discussions are with members of that parliament, members of the Muslim Brotherhood parties, to try to enact some permanent changes to NGOs dealing in the country.

MS. NULAND: Well, we're going to try to pursue this through all of the avenues that are available. As you've noted, there could be decisions made to register NGOs by the transitional government, this could be something that could be taken up by the new parliament as it is seated. From our perspective, whatever is most expeditious is something that we will support. We want to see NGOs that support democracy, whether they're ours or whether they're Egyptian, be able to play a role, particularly in the presidential elections coming up, and to be able to do it in a safe and secure way where everybody knows the rules of the road. So this has been a key part of our conversation and will continue to be so.

Congress

Below are highlights of Congressional statements regarding the NGO issue since the travel ban was lifted on March 1, 2012. For a more extensive list of relevant Congressional statements since POMED's last backgrounder on February 10, 2012 [click here](#) and for statements since the NGO raids on December 29, 2011 [click here](#).

[Pelosi: US-Egypt Relations Strong Despite NGO Spat \(March 15, 2012\)](#)

Ties between the U.S. and Egypt, severely tested when Egypt charged Americans working for democracy-building groups with illegal activity, remain strong, said House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi.

Pelosi, who is leading a congressional delegation to Cairo, said the [NGO] case will not be a barrier to relations between the two countries.

"The NGOs was a bump in the road," she told reporters. "We don't intend to have it stand in the way." The delegation met with the head of Egypt's ruling military council, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, and lawmakers.

Pelosi said she received assurances from Tantawi that power will be transferred to a civilian authority once a new president is elected.

[Rep. Bilirakis Statement on Release of Pro-Democracy Workers in Egypt \(March 2, 2012\)](#)

Washington, DC – Rep. Gus Bilirakis (FL-09), a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, released the following statement regarding Thursday's release of pro-democracy workers who had been charged in Egypt:

"I am grateful and encouraged by Egypt's decision to lift the travel ban imposed on pro-democracy NGO staff. However, until all charges against the 43 individuals are dropped and they are allowed to return to their work, this situation will not be fully resolved. Egypt is at a pivotal point in its history and with presidential elections approaching, the worthy mission of these dedicated workers who work to promote free and fair elections is more vital than ever."

[Proceedings from the Floor of the Senate \(McCain, Graham, Hoeven, Blumenthal\) \(March 1, 2012\)](#)

Senators McCain: (1:24 PM)

"These young people were from National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute and Freedom House, unfortunately, had to go to our embassy because they were going to be prosecuted under then Egyptian law and I'd like to begin by saying that our ambassador to Egypt, Ann Patterson, may be one of the finest diplomats that this nation has produced. The more the senator from South Carolina and I travel and the more representatives at the U.S. ambassadors that - embassies that we meet and have - have - have discussions and travel with, these people are enormously good and we are proud that they represent the united states, particularly Ann Patterson. She has worked tirelessly since this whole crisis began, and I believe that the majority of the credit for what the success outcome as far as our American citizens are concerned can be directly attributed to her dedication, her hard work, her tireless efforts day and night on behalf of these young people. So we are extremely proud of her."

Senator Graham: (1:28 PM)

"I'd like to add my gratitude and recognition of Ambassador Patterson, her whole team, the whole State Department team on the ground. They did a very good job making the case to the Egyptian government ... I think the reason this happened was because the collaboration between the State Department, the delegation, every aspect. American government and the people on the ground in Egypt I think understood the value of the U.S.-Egyptian relationship and the judicial system finally made a wise decision but to those left behind, we're certainly standing with you, and you will not be forgotten. If this had not been resolved, if they insisted on prosecuting and having the American citizens questioned, appear in cages before an Egyptian court based on an outlandish accusation, what kind of reaction would we have had in the united states and what damage would it have done to U.S.-Egyptian relationship in your opinion?"

Senator Hoeven: (1:34 PM)

"Taking this initiative to sit down with [Field] Marshal Tantawi, who is the leader of the military council, but also the leaders of the freedom and justice party, which is the majority party now in the parliament, and of course that is the Muslim brotherhood. We sat down with the Muslim brotherhood as well. I think those meetings were extremely important in helping to foster an understanding that broke the logjam. I too want to commend the work of our ambassador, Ambassador Ann Paterson. She did an outstanding job. I want to thank Secretary Clinton and the people at the State Department for their diligent efforts but I must say having the opportunity to be part of a delegation led by Senator McCain and Senator Graham gave us the opportunity to talk to the Muslim brotherhood, gave us the opportunity to talk to the leaders of the freedom and justice party and the next day they put out a statement, which I agree was very important in helping move things forward, because what they said in that statement were two things, two things that I do think helped break the logjam. First, that they support nongovernment organizations. They support nongovernment organizations. They recognize that these NGOs do important work, and they want to address the laws in Egypt to make sure that they have good laws that will enable the NGOs to continue. The second thing they said, which I felt was particularly important is they also expressed their concern about NGO workers and that those NGO workers be treated fairly."

Senator Blumenthal: (1:41 PM)

"Yes, we should be encouraging these nongovernmental organizations that are committed to the cause of democracy and human rights and civil society, their work in Egypt and in places like Tunisia and other areas of the Middle East as well as around the globe where democracy and freedom are at risk and sometimes at grave peril has been enormously important. I was so proud and grateful to be part of this trip led by Senator McCain and to really hear and see the kind of respect that there is in the world for his views, for his leadership as well as for Senator Graham's, and the receptiveness is probably an understatement, that Field Marshal Tantawi, leaders

in parliament, others in leadership had for his statements about the importance of allowing these Americans, these seven Americans who committed no crime, to leave that country and the power of his and senator graham's statements, the ability of our colleagues, such as Senator Hoeven and Senator Sessions, to speak not on behalf of the United States, because we were not there to negotiate, but really on behalf of public opinion in the United States, I think was very instrumental and shows the importance of the interchanges and the relationships that can be built when we interact face-to-face on the ground with our peers and contemporaries in foreign countries. Not that we were speaking as military people or as diplomats, but simply in reflecting the opinion of people in the united states that these Americans, innocent of any crime, should be permitted to leave the country."

[Chairman Kerry on the Return of American NGO Workers from Egypt \(March 1, 2012\)](#)

Washington, DC – Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry (D-MA) today issued the following statement after it was announced that seven American NGO workers are returning home from Egypt following the Egyptian government's decision to lift their travel restrictions:

"The release of these Americans helps defuse a crisis that was jeopardizing America's assistance with Egypt's democratic transition at a particularly volatile moment. Building a vibrant civil society in Egypt is integral to a working democracy, and these recent events underscored the fragility and uncertainty of that process. I remain concerned about the recent moves against Egyptian non-governmental organizations. Hopefully today's action reflects a new willingness to respect Egyptian civil society and attention can be refocused on Egypt's precarious economy. As I said on my visits to Cairo after the revolution, without adequate attention to the economic challenge, Tahrir Square could again be filled with protests calling for something other than democracy. Egyptians cannot afford to win a revolution but lose this moment of opportunity.

"I also want to underscore a grave concern of mine about a situation in Egypt. For two years now, I have been engaged with Egyptian and American officials about the illegal and still unresolved abduction of Colin Bower's two young boys from Massachusetts. While innocent Americans are now returning home after the NGO crackdown, Colin Bower's struggle to be reunited with his sons continues. I will redouble efforts to encourage Egyptian authorities to work with our government to resolve this case as soon as possible and return the boys to their father who was granted sole legal custody of his sons."

[Senators Issue Statement on Decision to Dismiss Travel Restrictions on American Employees of NGOs in Egypt \(March 1, 2012\)](#)

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senators John McCain (R-AZ), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), John Hoeven (R-ND) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) released the following statement regarding the decision today by the Egyptian judiciary to lift the travel restrictions on American and other foreign employees of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Egypt. The senators visited Egypt last week as part of a Congressional delegation.

"We welcome the decision today by the Egyptian judiciary to lift the travel restrictions on American and other foreign employees of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Egypt, including the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute. We are pleased and relieved that these individuals are now able to return home to their families.

"At the same time, we remain concerned about the fate of the many Egyptian employees who have worked for these NGOs and who remain in Egypt, where they are still subject to trial. These men and women have worked tirelessly on behalf of their fellow Egyptians to defend democracy, civil society, human rights, and the rule of

law in their country. We hope that the recent decision to postpone the trial of these individuals until April will ultimately lead to the court proceedings being halted altogether. We will continue to advocate for the rights of these Egyptian NGO workers, who have done no wrong.

“Last week in Cairo, we had meetings with the Speaker of Parliament and other newly elected parliamentarians from across the political spectrum, with leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, and with Field Marshal Tantawi and other members of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. These meetings reassured us that people of goodwill in both countries were working diligently to find a positive resolution to the recent crisis. No one did more in that regard than our Ambassador to Egypt, Anne Patterson. We are deeply grateful that one of America’s best diplomats was working day and night on this important and sensitive matter. The events of the past two months may have tested U.S.-Egypt relations, but the strength of our relationship prevailed. This is an opportunity to reaffirm the enduring strategic importance of the U.S.-Egypt partnership and the commitment of the United States, including the Congress, to Egypt’s democratic transition and future.

“We are encouraged by the constructive role played over the past week by the Muslim Brotherhood and its political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). Their statement of February 20 was important in helping to resolve the recent crisis. We know from our recent meetings in Cairo with the Speaker of Parliament, other leaders from the FJP and the Muslim Brotherhood, and members of Parliament from across the political spectrum, such as Anwar Al-Sadat, that the Parliament is considering new legislation to guarantee the rights of NGOs in Egypt. We strongly support these efforts and hope they will yield a new environment of liberty and protection for civil society groups in Egypt.

“Ultimately, the fate of NGOs in Egypt is not about America, despite the efforts of some to make it about America. It is about Egypt. It is about Egyptian democratic and civil society groups, the inherent rights they possess, and whether those rights are enshrined in law and protected by the government. It was the Mubarak regime’s restriction and oppression of civil society in Egypt that motivated Egyptians to rise up last year in protest for their human rights and dignity. The Egyptian revolution inspired Egypt’s neighbors. It inspired America. And it continues to inspire the world.”

[Comments Of Senator Patrick Leahy On The Egyptian Government’s Release Of U.S. NGO Workers \(March 1, 2012\)](#)

[Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee’s budget panel for the State Department and foreign operations, is the architect of newly enacted conditions on U.S. military aid to Egypt. Leahy’s committee included \$1.3 billion in military aid to Egypt in the Fiscal Year 2012 budget, signed into law in December. But for the first time, the aid is subject to conditions proposed by Leahy which are based on Egyptian military leaders’ Arab Spring pledges to the Egyptian people, concerning democratic reform and the rule of law. Leahy’s comments about the release of the U.S. NGO workers follow:]

“Cooler heads have prevailed in this crisis, and both countries now are able to press the reset button on a partnership that has endured for decades and which can continue to serve the interests of the people of both of our countries well into the future.

“These tireless and selfless U.S. citizens have been working side by side with the Egyptian people to bring life to Egyptians’ yearnings for their families and their country. These Americans never should have been charged in the first place, and neither should Egyptian NGO workers have been charged with any crime.

“I am gratified by the role that the new U.S. conditions have played in this situation. I expect that these conditions will continue to play a constructive role in the future, underlining U.S. support for the Egyptian people in their journey toward a more inclusive society and more accountable governance.

“The Obama Administration last year at first resisted these new conditions but has come to accept them as an integral part of our relationship. I commend and thank Secretary Clinton for her energetic and unrelenting efforts to resolve this standoff. I also appreciate the efforts of Senator McCain, Senator Graham, Senator Blumenthal, Senator Hoeven and others inside and outside of Congress and around the world in pressing for a successful conclusion and in making clear the consequences, under the new U.S. law, of letting this situation fester.

“We have long had a partnership with the Egyptian government. With these conditions on our assistance, we are widening that partnership to include the aspirations of the Egyptian people for their country.”

[Senator Ayotte's Statement on Egypt's decision to lift travel ban on American NGO Workers \(March 1, 2012\)](#)

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, released this statement following the Egyptian judiciary's decision to lift travel restrictions on American employees of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

"Egypt's decision to allow American NGO employees to depart the country is welcome news. It remains to be seen, however, whether Egypt will end the prosecution of civil society groups working there and allow them to operate in the country without further restrictions.

"As Egypt progresses through an important and historic transition, it is essential that the new government support an open and free democratic process. This decision is an important initial step in ensuring that Egypt and the United States will continue to enjoy a strong relationship that promotes regional peace and stability."

[Sen. Paul Statement on Safe Return of Americans Detained in Egypt \(March 1, 2012\)](#)

Washington, D.C. - Sen. Rand Paul released the following statement regarding reports confirming that a plane carrying previously detained American pro-democracy workers left Egypt on Thursday after a travel ban was lifted.

"It brings me great relief to know the brave American pro-democracy workers in Egypt are safely returning home to the U.S. The baseless charges against these Americans and their unlawful detainment did not go unnoticed. For weeks, I worked to bring attention to the unjust actions of the Egyptian government and now their safe return home brings resolution and closure to their families and the country," Sen. Paul said.

[Statement from Senator Kent Conrad on Lifting of Ban that Allows North Dakota Native Staci Haag to Leave Egypt \(March 1, 2012\)](#)

Washington— Senator Kent Conrad made the following statement after North Dakota native Staci Haag and several other American non-governmental organization (NGO) workers who had been prevented from leaving Egypt were allowed to exit the country today.

"This is wonderful news. Staci sent me an email this morning letting me know that she was safe and at the airport getting ready to leave Egypt. I am glad that this situation has been resolved and Staci is able to leave Egypt. However, she should never have been detained in the first place and we need to continue to work to clear her name. Staci and her colleagues have done nothing wrong and should be allowed to continue their work in Egypt and enter and leave the country freely."

Haag, of Fargo, is a resident director for the National Democratic Institute (NDI) a nonprofit, nonpartisan NGO that works to support democracy in foreign countries. She had been in Egypt assisting with the country's transition to democracy and was prevented from leaving the country after Egyptian authorities cracked down on pro-democracy NGOs.

Senator Conrad had been pushing the Egyptian government to lift the travel restrictions for Haag and her colleagues and wrote to Egypt's ambassador in the United States to express his concern about the situation.

[Berman Welcomes Imminent Return of American NGO Workers Held in Egypt \(March 1, 2012\)](#)

Washington, DC - Congressman Howard L. Berman, Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee made the following statement regarding the imminent return of American NGO workers held in Egypt. The statement follows:

“This was a troubling situation and though today’s developments are positive, this chapter is not closed. Egypt must formally drop charges against both American and Egyptian NGO employees, return confiscated materials, and allow NGOs to resume their operations. I hope to continue to work with Cairo to build an Egypt with a strong civil society and well-functioning democratic institutions.”

[McKinley Statement on Release of Americans by Egyptian Government \(March 1, 2012\)](#)

Washington, D.C. – Rep. David B. McKinley (R-WV) issued the following statement after seven Americans were released by Egyptian authorities earlier today after being detained since December 29, 2011. The group has been unable to leave the country due to a “no-fly” ban imposed by the Egyptian government.

“It is great to hear that the American citizens being held by the Egyptian government are now permitted to return home and reunite with their families. The United States has continued to pressure Egypt to release the American citizens and allow for the promotion of democracy within its borders. Our country can be a great asset to those seeking our assistance in promoting democracy, but we must take swift action when American lives are at risk. My thoughts are with this group as they travel back home over the next few hours.”

In February, McKinley authored House Resolution 559, which called for the immediate release of these U.S. citizens. It also called on Egypt to release all seized assets and funds, and allow nongovernmental organizations to work within Egypt towards Democracy.