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H. RES. 1303

Calling on the Egyptian Government to respect human rights and freedoms of religion and expression in Egypt.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 24, 2008

Mr. WOLF (for himself, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. FOSSELLA, Mr. KIRK, Mr. McCOTTER, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. SOUDER, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. PITTS, Ms. WATERS, Mr. PENCE, Mr. MCGOVERN, and Mr. GOODE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Calling on the Egyptian Government to respect human rights and freedoms of religion and expression in Egypt.

Whereas the promotion of respect for democracy, human rights, and civil liberties are fundamental principles and aims of the United States;

Whereas the United States attaches great importance to relations with Egypt and considers fair and transparent elections as the only way to make progress towards a more democratic society;

Whereas Egypt plays a significant role in the Middle East peace process and in the fight against international terrorism and fundamentalism;

Whereas the Egyptian authorities have promised to put an end to the imprisonment of journalists and bloggers, but this promise has so far gone unfulfilled;

Whereas Shiites, Koranists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other religious minorities are harassed, arrested, and imprisoned by security services;

Whereas all Baha'i institutions and community activities have been banned in Egypt since 1960, and members of the Baha'i faith are denied government required identification cards solely due to their religious affiliation;

Whereas material vilifying Jews appears regularly in the state controlled and semi official media;

Whereas the Copts, Egypt's largest religious minority group and the largest Christian population in the Middle East, suffer from many forms of discrimination, including—

(1) a lack of employment in higher positions of the public sector, universities, army, and the security service;

(2) disproportional representation in Parliament and Shura Council;

(3) difficulty in building and repairing churches;

(4) lack of protection and lack of prosecution of perpetrators in cases of sectarian violence;

(5) government harassment of converts to Christianity while the government encourages conversion to Islam; and

(6) the inability to obtain government issued identification cards which reflect conversion to Christianity;

Whereas the opposition presidential candidate Ayman Nour is still serving a five-year prison sentence following an unfair trial in 2005 on politically motivated charges;

Whereas his health is deteriorating as a consequence of this imprisonment;

Whereas his numerous appeals for release on the grounds of his medical conditions and his request for a presidential pardon in March of 2008 have all been rejected;

Whereas Egyptian authorities closed the Centre for Trade Union and Workers' Services and its branches, this being the first closure of a nongovernmental advocacy organization by an executive decision;

Whereas the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies and its founder, Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, have been threatened for their work to promote democratic reforms;

Whereas other civil society development organizations, including the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, have also been restricted in their work; and

Whereas the recent arrests and action against nongovernmental organizations and human rights defenders undermines the commitments entered into by the Egyptian Government concerning fundamental rights and freedoms and the democratic process in the country: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) recognizes that respect for human rights is
3 a fundamental value, and the bilateral relationship
4 between the United States and Egypt should be a
5 platform for promoting the rule of law and funda-
6 mental freedoms;

1 (2) calls on the Egyptian Government to end all
2 forms of harassment, including judicial measures,
3 the detention of media professionals and, more gen-
4 erally, human rights defenders and activists calling
5 for reforms and to fully respect freedom of expres-
6 sion, in conformity with article 19 of the United Na-
7 tions International Covenant on Civil and Political
8 Rights;

9 (3) encourages the Egyptian Government to
10 honor its commitment to repeal the state of emer-
11 gency in order to allow for the full consolidation of
12 the rule of law in Egypt;

13 (4) encourages the Egyptian Government to
14 take the steps necessary to fully implement and pro-
15 tect the rights of religious minorities as full citizens;

16 (5) strongly supports measures to guarantee
17 academic freedom, freedom of the media, and free-
18 dom of religion or belief in Egypt, including by end-
19 ing arbitrary administrative measures, such as those
20 taken against the Centre for Trade Union and
21 Workers' Services and the Association for Human
22 Rights Legal Aid;

23 (6) urges the Egyptian Government not to im-
24 pose arbitrary restrictions on the peaceful activities
25 of civil society organizations;

1 (7) calls on the Egyptian Government for—

2 (A) the immediate release of Ayman Nour,
3 in light of reports of his deteriorating state of
4 health, and calls for an immediate welfare visit,
5 including a visit by qualified medical personnel;

6 (B) the release of all political prisoners
7 and other activists; and

8 (C) an end to the harassment of the
9 Koranists;

10 (8) stresses the need to fully implement the
11 principles of the 1969 Organization of African Unity
12 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Ref-
13 ugee Problems in Africa and the 1993 International
14 Convention concerning the rights and the protection
15 of migrant workers and their families;

16 (9) supports the concluding observations of the
17 United Nations Committee on Migrant Workers of
18 May 2007, which called for the re-opening of the in-
19 vestigations into the killing of 27 Sudanese asylum-
20 seekers in December 2005;

21 (10) calls for an end to all forms of torture and
22 ill treatment and calls for investigations when there
23 is reasonable suspicion that acts of torture have oc-
24 curred;

1 (11) calls on the Egyptian Government to
2 allow—

3 (A) a visit by the United Nations Special
4 Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhu-
5 man, or degrading treatment or punishment;
6 and

7 (B) a visit by the the United Nations Spe-
8 cial Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief;

9 (12) emphasizes the importance of ensuring and
10 strengthening the independence of the judiciary by
11 amending or repealing all legal provisions that in-
12 fringe or do not sufficiently guarantee its independ-
13 ence;

14 (13) stresses the need for respect and protec-
15 tion of the freedoms of thought, conscience, and reli-
16 gion as ensured in article 18 of the Universal Dec-
17 laration of Human Rights, article 18 of the Inter-
18 national Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and
19 the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimini-
20 nation of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimi-
21 nation based on Religion and Belief;

22 (14) welcomes the efforts made by Egypt to se-
23 cure the border with Gaza and encourages all parties
24 concerned to redouble efforts to fight smuggling
25 through tunnels into the Gaza strip; and

1 (15) urges the President and the Secretary of
2 State to put human rights and religious freedom de-
3 velopments in Egypt very high on the United States
4 Government's agenda during meetings with Egyp-
5 tian officials.

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