

decided to limit the number of waivers for assistance for countries that are identified in the State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report as failing to meet minimum standards for combating human trafficking. She also noted the administration's pledge of \$45 million to a fund to end modern slavery, funds that, as is true for W-GDP, the President did not include in his budget and from an account the White House proposed to cut.

I agree with the goal of holding governments accountable for failing to meet minimum standards for preventing trafficking in persons, but informed people know that cutting funding for health, education, environmental conservation, counterterrorism, and governance programs does nothing to prevent human trafficking, while it undercuts our ability to make progress on other issues of national interest.

Yet that is exactly what the administration has done. By belatedly approaching human trafficking as if nothing else matters and limiting use of the waiver authority Congress provided, administration officials have spent months tying themselves in knots over which programs to continue and which to suspend. The result is that implementing partners are running out of money, services are not being delivered, and important programs are shutting down.

The Trump administration needs to stop governing by sound bite. If the White House is serious about addressing human trafficking and other complex challenges, it should work with Congress to secure the necessary funding and apply the law in a common sense manner that is consistent with our national interests.

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#### EGYPT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to briefly discuss the situation in Egypt, a country where unchecked repression has come to define the government of President el-Sisi.

The 2011 Egyptian revolution brought hope of a democratic future for the country, but it has failed to materialize, subverted by aspiring autocrats. After winning historic democratic elections in 2012, the Morsi government sought to consolidate its control, issuing a declaration to provide the President with sweeping authorities and eliminating checks on Executive power. The response was another popular uprising and a military coup led by then-Defense Minister Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

Although cheered by some who favor President el-Sisi's crackdown on the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood and anyone suspected of being affiliated with it, his Presidency has become a model for autocratic rule. His police have arrested human rights lawyers, journalists, civil society activists, and opposition politicians. Anyone who criticizes the regime or calls for a more

democratic system is threatened, arrested, and accused of "terrorism" or some other vague crime against the state. Once detained, they have been subjected to physical and psychological abuse while they wait for months or more often years before being subjected to sham trials that make a mockery of due process.

Earlier this month, President el-Sisi's government took another step to consolidate his rule. Egypt's rubberstamp Parliament approved constitutional amendments that would enable el-Sisi to remain in power until 2034, 12 years beyond the end of his second and final term. Other amendments would enable el-Sisi to tighten his control of the judiciary, create a second Parliamentary chamber dominated by Presidential appointees, and expand the authority of the military to codify its role in civilian political life. Egypt today is a civilian government in name only. The military, led by el-Sisi, effectively wields total control.

In 2011, we all hoped the Egyptian people had a brighter, albeit challenging, political future ahead of them, but 7 years after the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, the el-Sisi government is erasing any remaining hope for democracy in the country. The calls of those who flooded the streets under Mubarak and Morsi for greater political freedom and civil liberties, less corruption, and more accountability are treated not as visions for Egypt's future, but as threats to el-Sisi himself.

Regrettably, it seems that the only constant in U.S.-Egyptian relations over the last several decades, besides Egyptian Government repression and billions of dollars in U.S. military aid, is the reticence with which successive U.S. administrations have confronted this issue. There always seems to be an excuse for why now is not the time to insist on meaningful progress to advance democracy and human rights by our ally Egypt. If not now, when? What line would the Egyptian government have to cross for the Congress and the administration to recognize the threat that a brutal military dictatorship poses to stability in Egypt, and to our long-term interests in the region?

Every U.S. administration has engaged, in varying degrees, in quiet diplomacy to address human rights abuses and corruption overseas and issued public statements or withheld foreign aid to encourage progress. Diplomacy, if backed up with consequences, can achieve results, but successive Egyptian Governments have gambled that, at the end of the day, we will look the other way in the mistaken belief that doing so serves U.S. security interests, and by and large, that has been the case.

It is interesting to compare the Trump administration's selective condemnation of government repression in other countries, where the number of political prisoners is a fraction of those in Egypt, to President Trump's pro-

nouncement that President el-Sisi as a "great guy." What a sad commentary on what this country purports to stand for.

We must acknowledge what history has repeatedly shown, that upholding our values is the best way to protect our interests. That does not mean cutting off all aid and walking away from Egypt. That kind of reactionary approach is equally short-sighted. What it does mean is that we need a more principled, measured, and consistent policy and make clear that our aid is not a blank check—that Egypt's leaders are not above the law; that freedom of expression is universal; that due process is a right; that torture, cruel and inhuman treatment are forbidden under international law; and that governments should be accountable to their people.

At a time when President el-Sisi is seeking to manipulate the legislative process to cement his hold on power for life, senior officials at the White House, the State Department, and the Pentagon need to stand up for what is first and foremost in our national interest: the principles that define us as Americans.

I hope all Senators will join me in encouraging the Trump administration to learn from the mistakes of its predecessors and realign our policy toward Egypt with our values.

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#### OPIOID CRISIS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this morning, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services and Related Agencies held a hearing on the opioid epidemic and how States are responding to the crisis. I was pleased Beth Tanzman, the executive director of Vermont's Blueprint for Health, agreed to be a witness at today's hearing to share the innovative approaches Vermont has taken to combat opioid use disorders. Ms. Tanzman has also served as Vermont's deputy commissioner for mental health and also directed adult mental health services for Vermont's Department of Mental Health.

While certainly not spared from the opioid epidemic, Vermont is ahead of much of the country in many ways: Our State openly identified the problem, and our former Governor, Peter Shumlin, dedicated his entire State of the State address in 2014 to constructively seek ways to not just help addicts get clean, but to halt this scourge in its tracks. Public health leaders, addiction specialists, doctors, and State leaders came together and implemented a system to integrate substance abuse treatment with primary healthcare.

Ms. Tanzman's testimony focused on the system developed through this collaboration, known as the Hub and Spoke Model. The plan helps support those in recovery with nine regional