

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 200

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 26, 2009

Mr. WOLF (for himself, Mr. MANZULLO, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. PITTS, Mr. KIRK, Mrs. MYRICK, Mr. DOGGETT, Ms. BORDALLO, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. SOUDER, and Ms. ESHOO) 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 in its 2008 annual international religious freedom report, the United States Department of State concluded that religious freedom conditions declined in Egypt and the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom continues to place Egypt on its watch list due to serious problems of discrimination and intolerance;

Whereas the independence of the judiciary continues to be undermined through exceptional parallel court systems, executive administrative orders overriding judicial decisions, and politically motivated lawsuits;

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 continue to face discrimination when applying for government issued documents;

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;

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

(7) prejudice against Christian guardians in child custody cases which involve parents of both Muslim and Christian faith;

Whereas blogger Abdel Karim Suleiman is still serving a four-year prison sentence for the peaceful expression of his views and is the first Egyptian blogger to be charged and convicted for blaspheming Islam, inciting sectarian strife, and criticizing President Hosni Mubarak;

Whereas Egyptian authorities continue to apply the law on nongovernmental organizations in an arbitrary and discretionary manner, dissolving and harassing Egyptian human rights and political advocacy organizations;

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 Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim has been convicted in absentia on politically motivated charges;

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

Whereas excessive use of force by Egyptian security, including against African migrants at the Egypt-Israel border,

is occurring in violation of Egypt's obligations to protect fundamental human rights; 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;

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

15 (3) encourages the Egyptian Government to
16 honor its commitment to repeal the state of emer-
17 gency in order to allow for the full consolidation of
18 the rule of law in Egypt;

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

4 (5) strongly supports measures to guarantee
5 academic freedom, freedom of the media, and free-
6 dom of religion or belief in Egypt, including by end-
7 ing arbitrary administrative measures, such as those
8 taken against the Centre for Trade Union and
9 Workers' Services;

10 (6) urges the Egyptian Government not to im-
11 pose arbitrary restrictions on the peaceful activities
12 of civil society organizations;

13 (7) calls on the Egyptian Government for—

14 (A) the immediate and unconditional re-
15 lease of Abdel Karim Suleiman and all other
16 political prisoners and democracy activists;

17 (B) an end to the harassment of the
18 Koranists; and

19 (C) a repeal of the 1960 presidential de-
20 cree banning members of the Baha'i community
21 from practicing their faith;

22 (8) welcomes the Egyptian Government's deci-
23 sion to pardon opposition political leader Ayman
24 Nour for medical reasons after he served three of his
25 five-year prison sentence;

1 (9) stresses the need to fully implement the
2 principles of the 1969 Organization of African Unity
3 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Ref-
4 ugee Problems in Africa and the 1993 International
5 Convention concerning the rights and the protection
6 of migrant workers and their families;

7 (10) supports the concluding observations of
8 the United Nations Committee on Migrant Workers
9 of May 2007, which called for the re-opening of the
10 investigations into the killing of 27 Sudanese asy-
11 lum-seekers in December 2005;

12 (11) calls for an immediate end to Egypt's
13 "shoot to stop" border policy which has left at least
14 32 African migrants, including women and children,
15 dead;

16 (12) calls for an end to all forms of torture and
17 ill treatment and calls for investigations when there
18 is reasonable suspicion that acts of torture have oc-
19 curred;

20 (13) calls on the Egyptian Government to
21 allow—

22 (A) a visit by the United Nations Special
23 Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhu-
24 man, or degrading treatment or punishment;
25 and

1 (B) a visit by the United Nations Special
2 Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief;

3 (14) emphasizes the importance of ensuring and
4 strengthening the independence of the judiciary by
5 amending or repealing all legal provisions that in-
6 fringe or do not sufficiently guarantee its independ-
7 ence;

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

16 (16) encourages Egypt and all other parties
17 concerned to redouble efforts to fight smuggling
18 through tunnels into the Gaza strip; and

19 (17) urges the President and the Secretary of
20 State to put human rights and religious freedom de-
21 velopments in Egypt very high on the United States
22 Government's agenda during meetings with Egyp-
23 tian officials.

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