

**POLITICAL PLURALISM IN THE OSCE  
MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS**

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**HEARING**  
BEFORE THE  
**COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND  
COOPERATION IN EUROPE**  
ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION

JULY 16, 2014

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**JULY 16, 2014**

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## **POLITICAL PLURALISM IN THE OSCE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS**

**JULY 16, 2014**

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE,  
*Washington, DC.*

The hearing was held from 10:00 a.m. to 11:47 a.m. in Capitol Visitor Center Room SVC 203/202, Washington, D.C., Senator Benjamin Cardin, Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding.

*Commissioners present:* Hon. Benjamin Cardin, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Hon. Steve Cohen, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; and Hon. Alcee Hastings, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

*Witnesses present:* William Roebuck, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Egypt and Maghreb Affairs, Department of State; William Taylor, Vice President for Middle East and Africa, United States Institute for Peace (USIP); Shibley Telhami, Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, University of Maryland; Zeinab Abdelkarim, Regional Director for Middle East and North Africa, International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

### **HON. BENJAMIN CARDIN, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. CARDIN. Well, welcome to the Helsinki Commission hearing. I want to welcome everyone here. It's a pleasure to have this hearing on the OSCE, "Political Pluralism in the OSCE Mediterranean Partners," and I'm particularly pleased that Congressman Hastings is with us because—Alcee, the ranking Democrat on the Helsinki Commission in the House, has been the leader on the Mediterranean partnership issues, and he has invested a great deal of time by his personal visits to the region. And the last hearing that we had on the Mediterranean partnership was in 2009, I've been told, and that was coupled with the international seminar of parliamentarians from the region that Congressman Hastings organized, and one of the most, I think, productive discussions that we had that led to some very concrete proposals, so it's good now that we have another opportunity to evaluate where we are.

And let me just make a couple brief opening comments, and then I'm going to turn it to my colleague for his comments. The OSCE, as I think everyone here knows, consists of 57 participating states. But that's not the borders of the OSCE influence, as is clear from the Partners for Co-operation that we do have. And we do have, in the Mediterranean, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tu-

nesia that are Partners for Co-operation. And they recognize the value of the OSCE document. They understood that this is a consensus organization, so you're not giving up any of your sovereignty by being—participating in the OSCE. They recognize the value of the OSCE in dialogue, to sit down and talk with your neighbors and resolve issues. And they recognize the core principles of the OSCE that deal with issues of respect of territorial integrity, that deal with peaceful resolutions of conflicts, and the core values that recognize that security is not just your military might, but also your commitment to economic justice and your commitment to good governance and human rights. And that's why the Helsinki OSCE principles have been so widely desired and has had a major impact within the Mediterranean partnership itself.

Coming out of the seminar that I referred to in 2009 that Congressman Hastings was instrumental in convening, that seminar recommended functional partnership initiatives with our Mediterranean partners, including projects for youth exchange and broader accessibility of the OSCE initiatives for participants from the region. Our efforts also identified priorities for more leadership of the Mediterranean partnership from the region, which has become particularly relevant with the emerging empowerment of long-disenfranchised voices of political opposition.

The OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly have been able to generate unique opportunities for assistance in this new area of regional cooperation. For example, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was able to deploy an observation and assistance mission for the October 2011 elections to the Tunisian Constituent National Assembly. So they're using our mechanisms as a result of the initiatives that the Helsinki Commission has moved forward with on the Mediterranean partners.

The OSCE has been able facilitate exchanges with young diplomats from the region to serve in the OSCE Secretariat. And additionally, key materials from the thematic units of the OSCE and ODIHR have been translated into Arabic. So we think we've made a lot of progress in this region. Civil society and experts from the region have become increasingly active in the OSCE events and dialogue opportunities, coupled with expert visits from the OSCE institutions to advise governments as they review their structural reforms.

All of these activities have been possible through the OSCE Partnership Fund of extraordinary budget contributions from participating states and partners. These activities truly demonstrate the depth of the relationship stemming back to Helsinki Final Act of 1975, and leading us into the future.

I might just point out that in Baku, the 23rd annual Parliamentary Assembly meeting that took place just a few days ago, the partners were very much present, and we had very good discussions, and they were totally engaged in the work. They don't have a vote, but they were totally engaged in the work. They treat their partnership with OSCE as a real opportunity for progress in their countries.

And I might just add: The experience of the Mediterranean partners has generated a lot of interest in other regions of the world to use the OSCE framework. As we all know, President Park of the

Republic of Korea, when she addressed a joint session of Congress, mentioned that she would like to have a dialogue opportunity with the countries in the Northeast Asia region. As a result of that suggestion, I have followed up with the countries in Northeast Asia. I chair the Asian—Northeast Asia—the East Asia and Pacific Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I have followed up, and we are engaged to see whether they want to work within the OSCE itself or set up a similar mechanism for dialogue and cooperation.

So we're very proud of the progress that we have made and this hearing gives us an opportunity to hear firsthand from some—from experts as to how we can build on the success that we've made, planning into the future.

And with that, let me turn it over to Congressman Hastings for his comments.

**HON. ALCEE HASTINGS, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. HASTINGS. Thank you very much, Senator. I think you've summed up real adequately a number of our activities. I'd like to thank you for holding this hearing, in addition to thank our presenters who are here as well as our distinguished guests that are present.

I spent a number of years traveling among all of our Mediterranean partners on behalf of several different OSCE Parliamentary Assembly presidents. And even before the Arab awakening, I sought, along with others, to empower the voices of the disenchanted in the region and to press those who were in power to let pluralism flourish. From Rabat to Cairo to Algiers to Oman, I observed a common thirst for meaningful civic engagement.

The popular uprisings since the end of 2010 have shown the need for capacity development among the youthful population of the region, and I think all of us are mindful that each of our Mediterranean partners are full up with young people. And it was difficult sometimes to see so many, particularly young men, in Morocco and in Tunisia and Algiers and Egypt and throughout unemployed.

The senator has talked about the conference that we convened here in Washington, and we're fortunate to have had an extraordinary staff working with us in that regard, and Alex Johnson helped, along with Robert Hand and countless others, Marlene Kaufman, and we've done a lot of follow-up work, Mr. Roebuck. For example, I took an interest in refugee issues, and I might add it is only heightened by ongoing events in that area of the world today. And I perceive some serious difficulties if we do not address, in a meaningful way, not just humanitarian issues, but other concerns of countries having to absorb these numbers of refugees.

I smile at events—today, we are talking 50,000 or 60,000 people on our border. Would that someone would be on the Jordanian border and see how many people have a quest to get in from Syria and Iraq and from elsewhere.

Mediterranean partner states are beginning to come to the table and invest in the OSCE Partnership Fund. Morocco and Tunisia have even requested legal reviews for their structural reforms from the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights,

ODIHR. As I have recommended for years, investments are under way for youth exchanges and greater contributions from civil society in the region, and I applaud these efforts and especially look to our panel to remark on how we can do better, acknowledging the demographic trends and political realities.

I'd be remiss to not mention the violent conflicts in Iraq and Syria, which have displaced millions and vastly changed the political landscape of the region. We are on a dark trajectory if we don't strategically invest in positive civic engagement and much-needed educational resources for those vulnerable populations. As I've said over and over, if we don't engage those populations, we will see them again in another form, and their demands will not be met through peaceful political channels.

I look forward to our panelists on the role of the United States and the international community in affirming the aspirations of those who took to the streets demanding responsive government and basic civil liberties. I have had substantial meetings with Tunisians recently, and I suspect that of all of the countries in the region as far as pluralism is concerned, Tunisia at this moment is a little more advanced in addressing the subject, as well as Morocco is as well.

But anyway, I'm so glad you're here. I see Ambassador Taylor just walked in, so we'll hear from him a little bit. We met along the way. Anyway, thank you. Thank you, Senator.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you, Congressman Hastings.

I should point out, of course Congressman Hastings was the president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and now represents the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as the special representative for the Mediterranean Partners.

Congressman Cohen.

**HON. STEVE COHEN, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. COHEN. I just want to thank the chairman for putting together this panel. This is a very important part of the world and I'm here to learn. And I'm happy to see Mr. Roebuck here.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you. Well, our first panel consists of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs for Egypt and the Maghreb Bill Roebuck, a distinguished career Foreign Service officer with experience throughout the region, including service at a pivotal time as chargé d'affaires in Tripoli, as well as the head of the Political Section acting deputy chief of mission in Damascus. Thank you for being here. And as is the tradition of this committee, your written statements and all the written statements from the witnesses, without objections, will be included in the record. And you may proceed as you wish.

**WILLIAM ROEBUCK, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR  
EGYPT, AND MAGHREB AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Mr. ROEBUCK. Great. Thank you, Chairman Cardin. Congressman Hastings, Congressman Cohen, thank you very much. I will make a brief oral statement and then I welcome answering any questions you might have. Thank you for inviting me to testify be-



fore you today on North Africa. It's a particular honor for me to do so before the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt of course all participate in the OSCE Mediterranean Partners Forum, which provides an avenue for engagement with the OSCE, its institutions and the 57 participating states in promoting a vision of comprehensive security that includes political, military, economic, and environmental and human dimensions. We welcome initiatives such as this one that make important contributions to promoting democratic transitions and bolstering regional stability.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, North Africa is a region of tremendous potential, the birthplace of the Arab Awakening, or Arab Spring. It's currently undergoing a difficult but critical transition, the likes of which it has not experienced since the beginning of decolonization. And each country in our region is at a different stage along the path of democratic transition. Let me speak just briefly about each country in North Africa that we'll deal with.

Tunisia, as Congressman Hastings mentioned, has achieved much success already and continues to realize the democratic promise of its 2011 revolution. It's made positive strides with the ratification of a new constitution and the swearing in of an independent government that will lead it to elections later in 2014. However, it still faces a challenge from violent extremists, particularly Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia, that seek to counter its democratic transition; thwart the government's authority; insert an extreme form of Islam through harassment, incitement of violence and terrorist acts. We commend the government's efforts so far to counter this threat and we're optimistic about Tunisia's democratic transition.

Libya, on the other hand, faces many difficulties and I think we must take the long view in assessing Libya's progress towards democracy. After 42 years of dictatorship, Libya suffers from instability and poor governance. And these are challenges that Libya must confront, not alone but alongside those of the international community, particularly the partners, who have been heavily involved like ourselves, and Libyans themselves. We will work together to bring stability and security to Libya's fledgling democratic transition.

Libya is making progress, evidenced by its recent free and fair elections for a new Council of Representatives. This is the third successful set of elections that Libya has held since 2012. These elections represent an important milestone in Libya's path towards achieving the aspirations of its February 17 Revolution. Equally important for Libya is the work currently being undertaken by the Constitutional Drafting Assembly, which was also elected back in February.

On the bilateral relationship with Morocco, we have a very strong bilateral relationship. It's focused on promoting regional stability, supporting democratic reform efforts, countering violent extremism, and strengthening trade and cultural ties. Indeed, Morocco is one of our closest counterterrorism partners in the region. It's an active member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum and it's been a non-major—a major non-NATO ally since 2004. From an assistance perspective, our relationship with Morocco is robust and

supports a range of activities to increase political participation, strengthen women's rights and counter violent extremism.

Algeria and the United States also build on a strong bilateral relationship, characterized by our shared interest in combating terrorism and facilitating greater stability in the region. Our cooperation with Algeria on a range of issues further strengthens our relationship and provides greater security in the region. We appreciate, for example, the work that Algeria has done with Tunisia to combat smuggling and terrorism, and we continue to encourage Algeria to use their expertise and their capabilities to ensure greater stability in the Maghreb and the Sahel, where Algeria can be a big player.

Lastly, Egypt faces tremendous political, economic and security challenges. We believe a stable, prosperous and democratic Egypt will make the strongest and most effective partner as we pursue our shared interests. We do view Egypt as a strategic, long-standing partner with us, and we are working on that relationship. We share several crucial interests with Egypt, including countering transnational threats of terrorism, weapons trafficking, and maintaining regional stability on several fronts. The foremost among them is peace with Israel.

At the same time, it's also critical that we encourage a trajectory in Egypt that advances economic reform, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. And these two policy imperatives are reflected in our assistance. Through our economic assistance, we're seeking to demonstrate our commitment to achieving prosperity and improving the lives of the Egyptian people. And through our military assistance, we're helping Egypt protect its borders and counter violent extremism that threatens Egypt and the broader region. We also continue to engage diplomatically with Egypt and the broader region, but particularly with the Egyptian government, to underscore the need for democratic and economic reform, and we continue to work closely with Congress to ensure that our assistance supports broad strategic interests in Egypt and in the region.

These are historic times in North Africa and the U.S. government is working with our partners to assist and to provide support during this transition. Chairman Cardin, Congressmen, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. Certainly we are aware that our budgets are facing increasing pressure, but this region remains vital to protecting our national interests. With careful, targeted assistance and smart diplomatic engagement, we're successfully advancing our strategic interests in this region. Thank you again for your time and your attention, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Mr. CARDIN. Well, thank you for your testimony and thank you for your service. Let me at least get your view as to how helpful OSCE can be in Northern Africa particularly. We know that they have governance issues and election issues. ODIHR provides incredible help to member states of OSCE in regards to those issues. We know they have free media issues. We have a special representative for the media. We know that they have tolerance problems. We had the special representatives that deal with the different tolerance areas.

Has the OSCE been effective in Northern Africa, and can it be more effective in trying to accomplish the goals that you elaborated, which is basically good governance and stability and stronger allies for the United States?

Mr. ROEBUCK. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman, for the—for the question. The answer is yes. I think the OSCE and the partners have been—it has been an effective organization. It has—it has already done, I think, several things that have been successful in strengthening governance, helping with civil society. I'll just lay out a couple of examples of what they've been able to do.

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has been engaged with these partner countries, as you mentioned. This office gathered government and civil society representatives in Warsaw, for example. And these were representatives from Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Egypt for basically workshops on human rights and the democracy dimension that can help in these regions.

The Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has also trained election observers in several of these countries, and these observers have played a critical role in ensuring that these elections in Tunisia, for example, in Morocco and Egypt, were technically acceptable and, generally speaking, free and fair. They have also worked with women's participation in political processes, which is a very important area, and gender equality.

I do think there are areas where we can do further cooperation. You mentioned, for example, work with media. I think that's a very important area where there could be cooperation. A lot of these countries struggle with trying to develop free media. And the work that we're doing in these countries, and they're struggling with, continues on good governance, organizing elections, and strengthening civil society. In all these areas I think there's tremendous area for further cooperation.

Mr. CARDIN. You mentioned Libya in your review. Is it worth exploring a partnership of Libya and OSCE? There have been other countries that have shown an interest of affiliating with OSCE. I'm not aware of Libya's interest. Is that something we should be encouraging?

Mr. ROEBUCK. Yes, sir, I believe it is. Libya is interested in joining the partnership. In fact, they have—I believe they have put forward an application to do so. It requires, I believe, a consensus decision, so it's still being deliberated but we're strongly supportive of including Libya.

As I noted in my opening remarks, Libya is a country that faces tremendous challenges going forward in terms of governance, in terms of establishing basic security, protecting its borders, getting control of violent extremists who are using ungoverned space in Libya. And we believe that a partnership—that this is one example—participating in the Mediterranean Partnership with OSCE is one example of trying to bring Libya into—further into the international community, integrating it more closely with its neighbors.

It's going to have to rely very closely with its neighbors and with help from partners in Europe as it moves forward to try to grapple with security challenges like controlling its borders and also with governance—building good governance institutions inside Libya. So

we're strongly supportive of Libya becoming further engaged with the OSCE.

Mr. CARDIN. The conflict in Syria, and now with the problems in Iraq, are having major impact on partner countries. Jordan is directly affected by this. Egypt is directly affected by this. And obviously the underlying problems spill out to all of the partner countries. Can you just give us your assessment as to what these conflicts meant in regards to advancing OSCE principles in the partner countries?

Mr. ROEBUCK. I'll say a few words about these conflicts in Syria and Iraq. It's a little outside my area of expertise but I'll comment on the way they affect the countries in North Africa and the Maghreb, and I'll be happy to provide any further information you would like.

A couple of points. First, the situations in Syria and Iraq have, I think, more than anything else, created a counter-narrative to the Arab Spring democratic transitions. And this has been—this is—this has helped undercut, in some ways, the progress that these countries in North Africa made in 2011 to 2012 and into 2013. In some ways Iraq was a legacy situation that had already—the war had already taken place. Syria in some ways was an Arab Spring-type development in the beginning. But both these—both these countries have developed in different ways. The conflicts there have developed in ways that have created a counter-narrative to the Arab Spring democratic transition, and this has been problematic.

In addition to that, of course, these conflicts have spawned the increase in violent extremism. It was already a problem in the region. I think it's gotten a new footing in the region because of these conflicts. And finally, it's created humanitarian and refugee issues that have actually had spillover effect into North Africa. Libya, Egypt and Morocco, for example, are all dealing with refugee issues that have—Syrian refugees that have come to escape that conflict.

They're also dealing with jihadi elements in their own countries that want to go and fight in these conflicts. Iraq was a source for this, a magnet for this earlier, but Syria is a—is a strong, strong magnet for it now. They go and fight for a year or two in Syria then come back to these countries and pose major security challenges in a country like Morocco, for example. The countries are struggling to deal with this through operational counterterrorism means, through soft-side countering violent extremist ideology, and through regional counterterrorism efforts.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you.

Congressman Hastings.

Mr. HASTINGS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I thank you very much, Secretary Roebuck.

I want to take advantage of the fact that you and Ambassador Taylor are here and have had rather extraordinary experiences in your respective capacities and roles in not just an area of vital interest that we have pointed to about pluralism with our Mediterranean partners, but I can't let events in the last three days—and it seems a lot of times when we schedule matters, events kind of overtake matters, but in this instance the two of you have had experiences in Gaza and in the West Bank. And in previous years when difficulties occurred, or in the Mubarak era with Egypt,

Egypt played a rather pivotal role in helping to quiet the ongoing events in the respective years that those events exploded.

Now we see an even worse situation, quite frankly. And the question I guess I have is there a role that Egypt can play, and what, if anything, from the perspective of the United States, can we do to assist in trying to bring some peaceful resolution and political resolution to ongoing problems that exist between Israel and Hamas?

One of the concerns I have, of course, is that a different role seems to be taking place in Egypt, and specifically as it pertains to Hamas, they've cut off, rightly, I think, a lot of the channels that had been open, the tunnels and—in the Sinai, a couple of things along those lines. But just give me your take, and I'll stick to Egypt because I don't think that they are the only ones that ought to weigh in. I certainly think Qatar and Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, which aren't a part of this particular matter today, have significant roles to play. But how can we activate it? How can we, with LCC, get he and others involved, in light of the fact that they have ongoing conflicts in their own countries?

Mr. ROEBUCK. Thank you, Congressman Hastings. First I would say that we do believe that Egypt can play a role in helping to de-escalate the situation in Gaza and with regard to Hamas and its conflict with Israel that's ongoing. We have talked with the Egyptians about this. Secretary Kerry has raised this issue. We believe that the Egyptian government wants to be helpful and that they have the capability of doing so.

As you note, historically they have had the ability to work with Hamas as a mediating-type influence that can de-escalate. It's true that in the last few years, because of Arab Spring developments, they have been more absorbed internally, with internal developments, and that this to some degree may have affected their—at least their focus. But we still believe that they have the capability to play this role, and they've indicated a willingness to do so, and we've asked them to help out, and they are doing so and counseling both sides, but particularly Hamas, to de-escalate.

With regard to the broader aspect of your question about their efforts in the Sinai and on counterterrorism there, the current government has been very active in the Sinai, a very up-tempo set of operations. They have closed a lot of these tunnels that have been used for smuggling into Gaza. They have mounted counterterrorism operations against some of these extremist groups like Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, and they've had some success against these groups. And we want to be supportive of these efforts.

So overall, focus has been a bit internal, but we believe they can help, and we have asked them to do so and believe they will do so.

Mr. HASTINGS. I appreciate that. Just one—there are several questions I wanted to ask about Egypt and the Islamist issue and where you thought they were going to go with that, but I'll pass on that because I really do believe that in Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, we have, in my judgment, an opportunity to undertake to do some things perhaps in a more unique fashion. For example, I would ask of you what role, if any—and it may be early in their developing pluralism, but what role, if any, do you see trade playing? And I see opportunities with reference particularly to Tunisia,

and I would make one added comment. You and Senator Cardin mentioned Libya, and you also mentioned border control. While it is a major concern for us in our own country controlling our own borders, the simple fact of the matter is, for example, in Tunisia, Libyan matters, not just the terrorist matters, but refugees as well, spill over. The same thing comes to Tunisia from Mali and that area. Those problems spill over.

And I think if anything, we could begin thinking about trade, at least talk about it, and two, that we could do what we can with these respective countries to assist them in border security, recognizing the limitations that we have. And there's a lot in this. I'll—we've gone in one of our funds for support from \$4 million to \$500,000. That's just a real small amount of money, and I don't know how you and others coordinate it, but it would seem to me that we—if there was ever a time when the agencies who are directly involved need to be coordinating their activities, it would be now.

Mr. ROEBUCK. Thank you, sir. On the—let me start with the border issue, and then I'll go back to the trade issue.

I agree with you completely about the imperative of trying to help these countries with their border challenges. You're absolutely correct that part of the internal security problems that Tunisia faces are caused by spillover from Libya. Terrorists in Tunisia are fleeing into Libya and finding ungoverned space they can use for training camps and for safe haven and then going back across that border to, when they can, mount operations against the Tunisian government.

We're working with the Tunisian government. We're working with the Libyan government also on trying to shore up border security efforts. We have a significant border security effort with Libya that we're getting off the ground. It's a—Global Security counterterrorism—Contingency Fund, GSCF, which will cooperate with an EU effort on the borders in Libya. It's going to be a big challenge, and it's going to take years to get it under—they're—basically, their border control mechanisms have collapsed. So it's going to be a big challenge. In Tunisia, we are also doing border security efforts with the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior through some of our 1200 series programs, 1207, 1206, that type of thing.

So it's a huge challenge, and then the other way that we try to tackle the borders is through regional efforts, which can also be effective through the—like, the trans-Sahara counterterrorism partnership is one avenue that we use for this. But we do need to redouble our efforts. It's a huge challenge.

On the trade side, I agree with you, trade and promoting economic development, private sector development, job creation—these types of efforts are critical. Youth unemployment in many of these countries is over 50, 60 percent, and the populations of these countries is about 50 percent youth. So huge numbers of these young people, particularly young males who might be tempted by more extremist ideology, are not gainfully employed, so that's one subset of the whole trade and economic revitalization effort that's needed.

We have a free trade agreement with Morocco. It has boosted trade on both sides significantly. We have trade and investment

framework agreements with Algeria and with Tunisia. The Tunisians are interested in a free trade agreement. We have not moved forward on that at this time, but we're working with them to invigorate—reinvigorate the TIFA, the trade and investment framework agreement. We also have an enterprise fund, Tunisia-American Enterprise Fund, that's capitalized at, I think, a hundred million dollars, and a similar fund in Egypt capitalized at two or three times that size because of the bigger size of the country.

So these are huge issues. Trade can be used to help stabilize the situations in these countries and help with governance and capacity-building of the youth, which is critical.

Mr. HASTINGS. All right, thank you.

Thank you, Senator.

Mr. CARDIN. Congressmen Cohen.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My main concern is ISIS. And I'm not that aware of their tentacles. Do they have allies, cohorts, sympathizers throughout the Maghreb?

Mr. ROEBUCK. They—it's not clear yet. There have been some preliminary indications that the group I mentioned in the Sinai, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, for example, which is a violent Islamist extremist organization with some possible ties to—or al-Qaida—there are indications recently that they have pledged allegiance to ISIS. I would say that those reports so far are very preliminary and might not end up being confirmed, but they are out there.

If the situation in Iraq and Syria continues, that type of influence could spread. I would say for right now, it's relatively limited in the region. I would say the broader trends that I mentioned, the flow of foreign fighters, the more general rise of violent extremism are the two trends that are more worrisome. I don't think they're specifically focused on ISIS at this point, but that could develop.

Mr. COHEN. ISIS's goal, I guess, is they want to have a state in Syria and Iraq, Islamic state. But I would think their goal is to have a larger caliphate that encompasses the entire region. Is that not something you would surmise as well?

Mr. ROEBUCK. That is what their ideology sort of ascribes to, Congressman. I mean, there are different inflections of that depending on which group it is you're talking about, but that is a traditional ambition of these types of groups. My sense is that for now what they've been able to achieve in Syria and Iraq is a significant partial meeting of that ambition. I wouldn't say they're satisfied with it, but I would say that they have made significant gains towards that broader Islamic caliphate-type ambition, and that's why it's so important, the efforts that we are undertaking with others to counter that effort.

Mr. COHEN. And what type of influence do they have in Jordan, if any?

Mr. ROEBUCK. Congressman, on that one, I may have to get back to you. I don't have the information at my fingertips. I would—I mean, just in general terms, I would say because Jordan is right on the border of both of these countries and historically has been very influenced by developments in Syria and Iraq, it's inevitable that—they're right on the front line of what's going on. Border controls on the Iraq side, for example, have fallen to these elements,

and that inevitably implicates Jordan immediately border control and how to deal with these elements. I suspect there are also ideological influences that are beginning to penetrate into Jordan. But beyond that, I might have to defer to my experts on Jordan and get back to you.

Mr. COHEN. The Arab Spring didn't hit Jordan and Morocco particularly. Morocco was kind of a soft spring, but with kind of reform, limited constitutional extensions. How secure do you believe the monarchies are in those two countries from the same aspirations that we saw exhibited in Tunisia and Libya and Egypt?

Mr. ROEBUCK. Thank you, Congressman Cohen. I think the—in some ways, the traditional monarchies have helped those regimes, whether some of the instability and unrest that swept through other parts of the Arab—North Africa and shaped the Arab Spring. In Morocco, for example, I think the—that monarchy is hundreds of years old, and I think it provided some legitimacy to the government, and there's significant respect for the monarchy there. And in—I think it sort of softened the unrest that went through there. I also think that the king put forward some reforms that helped take the—some of the force out of the unrest that was developing in Morocco. He put forward a series of reforms. They voted on a constitution that had a lot of those reforms in them in 2011, and that has helped.

Mr. COHEN. But they're minimal reforms, are they not? I mean, they really haven't gone very far, it's—and the king still has a great deal of power. And I've been reading lately that it seems like the Moroccan people are not particularly satisfied. Have you—is that something that you've observed or been made aware of?

Mr. ROEBUCK. I would say yes and no on the question. They—the reforms are relatively limited, you're correct. I mean, they did try to put some minimal limits on the king's power, particularly his power to appoint certain types of individuals. They—the reforms sought to strengthen the role of the legislature. These types of reforms are—I would call them works in progress. But you are absolutely correct, the king and the palace retain significant, extensive power and influence in Morocco, and the strengthening of those democratic institutions—there remains a lot to be done.

On the dissatisfaction that Moroccan citizens feel and their desire for further reform, I think the evidence for that is mixed. I would surmise that you're probably correct that—because I think people generally speaking, everywhere have a desire for more freedom, and they want to develop democratic institutions. But there has not been significant unrest in Morocco since the Arab—

Mr. COHEN. So you're not concerned about the monarchies in Jordan and Morocco being able to sustain themselves, to survive?

Mr. ROEBUCK. No, not at this point, no, sir.

Mr. COHEN. OK. Thank you, sir.

Mr. ROEBUCK. Thank you.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate it very much.

Mr. ROEBUCK. Thank you. Thank you very much for having me.

Mr. CARDIN. We'll now turn to our second panel. And we're pleased to invite up Ambassador Bill Taylor, vice president of the Middle East and Africa of the United States Institute for Peace.



Ambassador Taylor is very well-known. His most recent public service was State Department special coordinator for Middle East transition, coordinating support to Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Syria. We know Ambassador Taylor for his work in the Mideast Quartet as well as the former ambassador to Ukraine. We will not question him today on Ukraine, but we could certainly do that.

Dr. Shibley Telhami, the Anwar Sadat professor for peace and development at the University of Maryland—that is—I'm very familiar with that position.

And Brookings Institution fellow—Dr. Telhami has made pivotal contributions to the Arab-Israeli peace process negotiations, is an expert on public opinion trends in our countries of interest today. So thank you very much for being here. We appreciate it very much.

Then we have Zeinab Abdelkarim, the regional director for the Middle East and North Africa at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Her expertise in electoral systems will help us characterize the state of reforms in the political processes throughout our countries of interest.

So we welcome all three of you to this hearing. As I explained earlier, your prepared written statements will be made part of the record without objection. You may proceed as you wish. And we'll start with Ambassador Taylor.

**WILLIAM TAYLOR, VICE PRESIDENT FOR MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA, UNITED STATES INSTITUTE FOR PEACE**

Mr. TAYLOR. Senator Cardin, Mr. Hastings, Mr. Cohen, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here. Glad to join my distinguished colleagues on this panel.

Political pluralism in several of the Arab countries is a very timely topic, as you've already referred to this morning. I'm very pleased to follow Bill Roebuck, a good friend from earlier times, and pleased that he had made many of the points that I will try to reinforce.

The views I express today are solely my own and do not represent those of the United States Institute of Peace, which doesn't take policy positions, as you well know. I'll concentrate this morning on two of the OSCE Mediterranean partners for cooperation, Tunisia and Egypt.

Tunisia has demonstrated remarkable maturity and commitment to the idea of political inclusiveness, and I'm sad to say, the Egyptians have not. At the beginning of 2013, Tunisia was struggling politically and economically and, was facing violent unrest. The elections in 2012, we recall, had given the moderate Islamist party Ennahda a plurality. It formed a coalition with two secular parties, it was called the troika. This troika was attempting to govern and create a new constitution at the same time.

After broad consultations around the country on various aspects of this new constitution, parliamentary work, which was required to finish the work, had stalled by early 2013. The attack on the U.S. embassy in Tunis by extremists Islamist forces in September 2012 had demonstrated the weakness of the government and of its security forces. The instability was then exacerbated in 2013, early

2013, February, with the assassination of prominent opposition party member, Chokri Belaid.

While the extent of violence in Tunisia was small compared to the numbers killed in other countries of this region, these incidents shocked Tunisians and led to two events: first, the resignation of the Ennahda prime minister, and second, an effort by civil society leaders to pull the country back from the crisis. Several political parties supported the effort. Ennahda did not.

At the same time—this is the beginning of 2013—the Islamist government that had formed in Egypt under Mohammed Morsi was also struggling to govern and to write a constitution. Unlike in Tunisia, however, the main Islamist party in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, had won a majority in the parliamentary elections, and Mr. Morsi had won a tight race for president.

Also unlike Tunisia, the Islamist majority in the Egyptian parliament and the Islamist president forced through a constitution without attempting to achieve consensus. Further, security forces and the Muslim Brotherhood supporters attacked peaceful demonstrators. Women's rights were violated, journalists were suppressed, and police abuse continued.

President Morsi issued a decree that exempted his decisions from judicial review. Demonstrations grew in opposition to the government's handling of the constitutional process as well as the social legislation in the parliament and economic mismanagement, leading to a large army-sponsored demonstration on June 30th, 2013, and a military coup on July 3rd that installed a military-backed civilian government.

At this point, events in Tunisia and events in Egypt intersect. Before the coup in Egypt, the Tunisian Islamist party, Ennahda, had resisted efforts by civil society to bridge political differences in Tunisian society. After the coup and another political assassination in Tunis, Ennahda decided to join what was then being called the Tunisian national dialogue. The Quartet-led discussions—there were four members of civil society in Tunisia—decided to bring in political parties. These discussions then lasted through the fall and into the winter.

In January 2014, this civil society-led but with participation of the main political parties reached agreement on three important points. They agreed on a text of the constitution, which had not been able to be accomplished, achieved in previous times when it was just in the parliament. Second, they agreed that new elections, long-stalled, would happen by the end of this year, by the end of 2014. And even more remarkably, the Ennahda-led coalition government agreed to step down and hand over power to a nonpolitical interim government that would take governmental influence out of the preparations for the elections later on this year.

In Egypt, meanwhile, the military-installed government had begun a harsh crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, killing more than a thousand Egyptians, jailing and prosecuting thousands more. Hundreds at a time have been convicted, sentenced to death, often on little evidence. The repression, which the new military-backed government defended as a fight against terrorists, soon extended to journalists, activists, and liberal groups accused of supporting terrorists.

This year Field Marshal and Defense Minister al-Sisi declared his candidacy for president under a newly ratified constitution and in May won an overwhelming victory, even though turnout in the election was disappointingly low. U.S. assistance to the government of Egypt, cut off after the coup, as called for by U.S. law, was partially restored.

Political pluralism, the topic of these discussions, in the region I believe is at its broadest in Tunisia, which is why I wanted to focus attention on this aspect of the Arab Awakening, the Arab Spring. The constitution was approved as a result of wide consultation across the country, full debate in the parliament, political compromise struck by civil society leaders and adherence to agreed rules as the parliament ratified the constitution overwhelmingly, with the parliamentarians standing to sing the Tunisian national anthem after the historic vote.

The leading role of civil society pulling the country back from violence, division and gridlock is the model of dialogue over confrontation and conflict. The Tunisian national dialogue, led by non-governmental quartet, as I said, was able to find consensus, bring in the quarreling political parties into the discussion, forge compromises that have set Tunisia on a positive if still fragile course toward a successful transition.

Egypt's political pluralism, on the other hand, is at best reminiscent of previous military dictatorships. The new military-backed government under President al-Sisi has not limited security measures to violent extremists, and it has instead used police and the courts to eliminate political opposition.

My recommendations: first, the United States and the international community should increase support for the Tunisian government and people as they continue to demonstrate that political pluralism is compatible with Islamic societies and is the formula for a successful transition to democracy. This assistance should include financial support from Western governments, international financial institutions, and the international private sector. Second. The United States should negotiate and sign a free trade agreement with Tunisia. And third. The United States and Europe should increase opportunities for Tunisian students to study abroad.

In Egypt, the United States and the international community should continue to condemn the repression, publicly and privately, as counterproductive and short-sighted. U.S. assistance to Egypt should concentrate on programs that enable Egyptians to take advantage of educational opportunities, both in Egypt and abroad. A large program of scholarships for Egyptian young people, with an emphasis on women and underdeveloped parts of the country, could pay great dividends for Egypt and for U.S.-Egyptian relations.

Mr. Chairman, I'm glad to answer questions.

Mr. CARDIN. Well, thank you. Appreciate that. Dr. Telhami.

**SHIBLEY TELHAMI, ANWAR SADAT CHAIR FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND**

Mr. TELHAMI. Thanks very much. Mr. Chairman, allow me as a citizen of—resident of Maryland and professor at the University of

Maryland to thank you for your service to our state and to the country.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you.

Mr. TELHAMI : I'd like to focus my comments on really the macro level of what's driving all this change in the Middle East. Let me start by acknowledging that this is not a good time for pluralism, freedom and democracy in the region. It's obvious to all of us. The question is, why is that the case? It's not that the region has been exactly known for democracy, for freedom and pluralism, it is that we really had high expectations, particularly with the advent of the Arab uprisings in 2010. The Tahrir Square pictures really generated a lot of excitement and hope across the globe as well as in the region. So what has happened? Why isn't it going the way we expected? That's what I'd like to talk about.

Let me start by talking about what is profoundly new in what's happening in the Middle East over the past few years. What is this Arab uprising? What's profoundly important and likely enduring in these Arab uprisings?

Let me start with one thing that is the most profoundly important, and that is that we're witnessing the empowerment of the individual on a scale we had never witnessed before, and it is enabled by an expanding information revolution. It's not going to go away. It's going to stay with us. And if you want to understand the scale of it, you have to compare it at some level with the Industrial Revolution: the empowerment of the individual, for very different reasons, in the West through industrialization and economic independence of the individual. We are seeing something akin to that because of the information revolution, and therefore people want their voices heard. That aspect of the Arab uprisings is here to stay. It's not going to go away. There'll be some reversal here and there, but it's expanding.

And in the long term, it's only good news because frankly, that's what's needed to happen in the long term. But in the short to medium term, it brings exactly the opposite. And here is why; I'll give you a focus on five issues why that is the case in most of the region.

Now, as we have seen, the region is not unified and there are some bright spots and some places that are worse than others or are better than others. But by and large, aggregately, it doesn't look very good. And there are five reasons for why this isn't going like some people expected, I think unreasonably.

First, when we say the public is empowered or the individual is empowered, it doesn't mean the public is unified. When you get empowerment of the people, you get empowerment of the religious and the secular, the Shia and the Sunni and the Muslim and the Christian and the rich and the poor, and now everybody wants the same thing; they all are vying for a piece of the pie in a changing polity where central authority is weakened and the rules of the games have changed. So the fact is it's a prescription for more competition and more conflict, even without sectarianism.

We focus on sectarianism. Obviously, that's an easy one to focus on in places like Syria or Iraq, but Egypt doesn't have that kind of sectarianism. And yes, it has 10 percent Christians, and minorities tend to suffer more than others in these kinds of competitions,

but the 90 percent of Egyptians who are Muslim are overwhelmingly Sunni, and yet look at the black-and-white divisions that have emerged. It was the zero-sum game that if you're not our friend, you're our enemy. And they're all, by the way, religious. Over 90 percent of Egyptians say they're religious. So it's not even about religiosity, it's about the role of religion in politics and a power struggle, and those divides happen in society no matter what you have. And so the empowerment of the individual in the short term doesn't add up into stability, it adds up to exactly the opposite.

Second, even when we say that the publics are empowered, publics are rarely the main factor in shaping politics. Even in democracies, we see that in our country, yes, publics matter in our electoral system, but we know the source of money and the source of corporations, and all the distribution of power is uneven in society. And so they're vying in a new system—to write new rules of the game against existing institutions. The bureaucracies haven't disappeared. The multinational corporations haven't disappeared. People with deep pockets haven't disappeared. The military institutions, above all, haven't disappeared, and they're all going to fight against this public empowerment to make sure that they have a piece of the pie in the new rules of the game that are being written.

And if you look at that, you see for example in Egypt that particularly the military institution is very important. Frankly, in every single episode of the Arab uprisings, the military institution has been perhaps the most determined aspect of the game because when Ben Ali was ordered to leave, essentially it was a military decision in Tunisia. When Mubarak left, it was with the encouragement of the military. And when Assad didn't leave, it was because the military backed him. And when the king of Bahrain didn't acquiesce, it was because of the military—in every single case, the initial outcome of the uprisings and what transpired afterwards is a function of a military decision. We saw what happened in Egypt with the military asserting itself again in the process that is unfolding. In Tunisia, they haven't made that decision. Don't rule it out completely depending on what happens. It's militaries that will remain. It's critical to the outcome of every single uprising.

The third point I want to make is that we all understand that when we look at the history of politics anywhere, not just in the Middle East, we understand that transitions are destabilizing and unpredictable. And it means that by and large, you have often emerging insecurity and economic deprivation that trump pluralism and democracy and work in favor of those who want to rule with an iron fist because you have people who are very terrified of anarchy, and people who are certainly very terrified of not having food for their children on the table. And that trumps everything else, including their toleration.

By the way, I happened to meet with President Sisi in Egypt just before the election. And he said to me, I understand what my priorities are. I understand what the Egyptian people want me to do now. Number one, security. Number two, the economy. And he's frankly right. And that's how he sees it in setting up his priorities. Now, whether we agree with the way he's doing it or not is a separate question, but it's very clear that's the case.

And by the way, this dynamic of the public being terrified of anarchy and economic deprivation in a way that trumps pluralism, democracy and human rights is one thing that other rulers in the region are using to terrify their publics against the expansion of the uprisings. One reason why the uprisings have stalled is that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would tell its people, do you want Damascus or do you want Riyadh? The King of Jordan can tell his people, do you want Aleppo or do you want Amman? And for now, no one wants Aleppo or Damascus or Tripoli, for that matter. And that's one of the things that is happening.

Fourth, while each country in the region has specific conditions that have to be evaluated separately, it is fair to say that there are commonalities in the Arab world. Sometimes we don't understand the regional dynamics. Yes, we have to look at every country separately for sure. They are different. Tunisia and Egypt are different. But there is a regional dynamic that cannot be separated from the domestic dynamic. And let me give you just a couple of examples.

In all of the polling, we see that there are common Arab aspirations as well as unique aspirations domestically. When we looked at the emergence of the uprisings starting in Tunisia and then expanded to the Arab world, they expanded across the Arab world but not into other countries and not even into other neighboring Muslim non-Arab countries because there is an Arab dynamic of aspiration. But more importantly, look at how the uprisings have been unfolding. In every single case, with the possible exception of Tunisia, in every single case you cannot understand what's happening without understanding the role of outside regional powers or, for that matter, global powers. Look at Syria: Saudi Arabia and Iran are in competition, all of the neighboring states, without the Saudi intervention in Bahrain. Even Egypt that we think of as autonomous with no military intervention, look at the tens of billions of dollars that are coming from the Gulf that are a very essential part of what might be likely to happen. So you can't divorce these two.

One final point I want to make, Mr. Chairman, has to do with the one non-Arab state in the group, Israel. And I say that now, obviously, we're all facing what seems to be a horrific set of killings that we witnessed; ugly killings that make all of us sick and obviously generate hostilities that might erupt into a larger-scale conflict. But the aspect I want to talk about is more about pluralism and democracy and the threat to pluralism and democracy that has emerged with that conflict.

Let me just very quickly focus on this issue. Israel within its 1967 borders has been a successful democracy. It has done a good job—not perfect, but a good job—as a democracy. Its relationship with the Palestinians in the occupied territories, in the West Bank and Gaza, has of course been rationalized by all of us as a temporary situation of occupation—which it is, theoretically, under legal law. And we all correctly focus our attention on getting a political settlement along the lines of a two-state solution to solve this problem.

If people conclude that the two-state solution is no longer an option and we look at occupation as a semi-permanent situation, the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians will start looking

differently and be evaluated in the context of one country, and that is going to be incredibly troubling for those who want equality and human rights—that's number one.

Number two, the spillover effect of that into Israel's own Arab population, the 20 percent who are citizens of Israel who can vote and get elected, who have participated democratically—they're legally equal citizens in practice; obviously, they are second-class citizens, but by and large, Israel has done a reasonably good job over the years to expand that. We are beginning to find now that if there is no two-state solution we're beginning to feel it now because a large majority of Israelis and large majority of Palestinians say there will never be a two-state solution in my own polling that I do there—with that, you find then that the Israelis who want a Jewish majority state start being fearful of the demographics. And when you're fearful of demographics, you start thinking Jew and Arab. And when you're thinking Jew and Arab, you're no longer thinking about Israel and Palestine; you're thinking domestically.

And we see how that has played into the hands of extremists on both sides within Israel itself in a way that undermines its democracy and pluralism. So we really have to be watchful of these trends that are going to potentially have consequences far beyond just the conflict but also into the nature of democracy and pluralism in the region.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you for that very thorough analysis.

Ms. Abdelkarim.

**ZEINAB ABDELKARIM, REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA, INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS**

Ms. ABDELKARIM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the commission, for the opportunity to testify today. I appreciate the chance to share with you IFES' considerable experience and expertise in assessing the overall political, socioeconomic, security and other issues surrounding the region's democratic transition. I will begin with a brief symposium of IFES' work in order to contextualize my testimony. Then I will provide background information and context to key considerations I would like to share with you today for you to take in consideration when addressing issues of pluralism in the region. They mirror to greater extent what Dr. Telhami has already covered. And then I will conclude with a few remarks.

Broadly speaking, IFES supports citizens' rights to participation in free and fair elections by strengthening electoral systems and by building local capacity to deliver sustainable solution for countries that seek to enhance their governance structure. We have been active in the Middle East and North Africa region for over two decades, advocating for societies where citizens have the opportunity to play an active role in making decisions that affect their lives and in holding their government accountable. Our approach empowers both the recognized local authorities as well as civil society by providing information and access to resources and training on democratic norms and international standards for election and political processes.

Indeed, the overall situation throughout the Middle East and North America remains fragile and very pluralized. Newly formed governments and elected institutions continue to face firm resistance from their opponents and have not been successful thus far in ushering major reforms or managing the mistrust or the economic uncertainty and internal security issues.

In deeply divided societies where ethnic, social, tribal and political affiliations are key considerations, it is imperative that the countries' transitions are managed in a manner that is inclusive and consultative and transparent. It is particularly important for citizens to perceive government affairs, legal reform processes and the country economic plans as open and transparent. The biggest danger is the growing tendency to reduce democratic practices to voting, constitutional drafting and electoral events.

A new constitution or the presence of electoral processes does not necessarily mean that a democratic transition of transparency and accountability have taken root. This kind of development across the region cannot be considered evidence of a new social contract between the transitioning states and their citizens. At best, these developments could be described as constitutional engineering led by small but dominant elites. Understandably, undeveloped and disorganized political and civil forces, as well as nascent civil movement in places like Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, are unable to wield much influence on near-term outcomes of the transition in these countries.

However, it is important to note that modern democratic practices evolve over centuries. It makes no sense to look for similarities in a remarkably different context, particularly so early in the game. Rather, it is best to let these political developments run their natural course. They are changes that are best measured in decades, not years. Each and every state will evolve in its own distinctive way and adapt to national, regional and global changes over time.

We all can agree that analysis in the midst of the current event is never easy and the future itself remains clouded with uncertainty. However, as these events and their causes unfold, eight key issues and concern that cover a range of political, economic and social factors must be taken into consideration when addressing pluralism in the regions.

And these are, first, a declining political legitimacy in authorities charged with overseeing the transition in a number of countries in the MENA region. The biggest challenge to democracies is their inability to provide services and effectively govern. Low public credibility can in some cases engender voter apathy, violence, ineffective governance and long-term political instability.

Second, a breakdown in security, rising instability and an increase in both human and weapon trafficking across borders will continue to cause human suffering and burden local governments.

Third, the lack of serious efforts to address continued economic meltdown and extreme poverty in some countries in the region does not bode well with stabilization or democratic development and could lead to more protests, insecurity if not addressed in the near term.



Fourth, increased tension between Islamist, socialist, liberal and other political entities. The struggle over the constitutional drafting process in these countries is a prime example of growing divide between Islamist and liberal as they debate the inclusion of Sharia as the source of all legislation, the role of men and women, the rights of ethnic and religious minority, the criminalization of attacks against religion and sacred values. These debates have been the center of the political discussion across the region for decades and it's going to stay for some time.

Fifth, the struggle for dominance in the Persian Gulf and the Levant remain unsolved. For decades there have been fierce competitions between the Salafist school of thought and Shiite Islamic Republic of Iran. Both sides have provided military and political backing to their allies across the region and it makes them an ineffective player in influencing the regional political transformation.

Six, as Dr. Shibley has indicated, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict remains a destabilizing factor for the Arab world. And can I leave it at that? He covered it very extensively.

Seven, the U.S. presence in the region faces a crisis in legitimacy where mistrust and suspicions are dominant features of the region—perceptions towards the U.S. involvement.

Eighth, shrinking space for democracy-building program, which in part is due to the resistance to U.S. involvement. A growing number of governments across the region are starting to crack down on democracy-building programs and publicly denounce democracy assistance, describing it as illegitimate political meddling in internal affairs and clear attempt to subvert political order.

Transition to democratic governance is neither fast nor easy, and the path to introducing and implementing democratic political reforms varies across countries. It is difficult to predict how long the transformation of the region will take and how far it will go. However, the regional upheaval is far from over and the highly motivated young generation who was on the forefront of the call for transformation will continue to challenge the present circumstances and guard the flame of change. And that's my conviction.

To remain effective, the international community and groups that promote democracy must come to grips with these new trends and a complicated history of democracy promotion globally and genuinely rethink their strategies of engagement. The emphasis on democratic election, participation by civil society, empowerment of the marginalized and ethnic groups, and competition between political parties will not guarantee that the state will respond to its citizens' needs for social and political accountability.

Undoubtedly there is a need to re-evaluate the way in which democracy is supported and sustained. The human security challenges facing the region today requires the promotion of a broader concept that includes tolerance, consensus and peace-building processes, accountability, human rights protection, capacity building for social and economic development, promotion of public involvement and consultation, and improvement on the political and political processes.

Disengaging or limiting democratic governance aid to the region at this juncture is a huge mistake. However, the international com-

munity should continue to leverage existing international frameworks, diplomacy and bilateral agreements to find ways to encourage democratic practices and a space for democracy-building programs. Efforts to plan future assistance have to take into consideration that democracy-building is highly political and not only a technical exercise.

Better understanding of the local context and norms, local ownership and respect for viewpoints and experiences of the targeted populations are key principles that must guide the international community efforts. Any intervention can easily lose credibility if perceived by local populations as ineffective or tainted by intervening countries' political self-interest.

With that, I conclude my remarks and I'm happy to answer any question you may have.

Mr. CARDIN. Well, let me thank all three of you. I thought your presentations were extremely helpful and put it in context. You're right, this is about political pluralism. And we're patient and we understand that it will not happen overnight. But it's very interesting: In 1975, when the Helsinki Accords were attained, it was not U.S. values. These were universal values. The Soviet Union fully participated in this process. So when you mentioned the fact of U.S. involvement in these areas of interest to our—to try to promote—or suspicion of promoting our values, it really is—what we're after is universal values.

Ms. ABDELKARIM. True.

Mr. CARDIN. And the core principles of OSCE—and I have them in front of me because it's part of the Ukraine resolution—Russia resolution we adopted in Baku—talks about sovereign equality, refraining from the threat or use of force, the territorial integrity, peaceful settlements of disputes, noninterference in internal affairs, respect for human rights, et cetera.

I mention that because when Ukraine—when Russia invaded Ukraine, it was OSCE that was on the ground. And it was a mechanism that allowed for, I think, an international, objective account of what was happening. And it provided the technical help that I think has been extremely helpful to Ukraine coming back and recognizing what it needs to do moving forward. In Northern Africa there is no comparable organization that I know of. Yes, we talk about the Partners for Cooperation, but that is—it doesn't have the same resources and the same visibility that a partner state has when it is jeopardized.

Ambassador Taylor, I was very much interested in your analysis of the civil societies—Tunisia. I guess my question to the panelists is, what mechanisms are available to provide that type of universal view of what's going on in the country, not Western view but universal view that what a country needs to do for stability—I thought your analysis about the challenges to pluralism—that just because you empowered individuals does not mean you're going to have pluralism. In fact it, in the short term, looks like it works against pluralism because they want stability and they go for more effective leadership, which many times denies pluralism.

So what type of institutions exist? What type of regional institutions or what type of societies exist in Northern Africa that we could work with, the OSCE partners, to try to promote understand-

able progress towards pluralism, knowing that it will not happen next year and that it will take time? Should it be civil societies? Is it different in each country? What is your thoughts on that?

Mr. TAYLOR. When I look at the advantages/disadvantages of the Helsinki process in the Middle East, in comparison to Eastern Europe, we don't have the same kind of challenges. The information revolution wasn't there. And this created a whole opening for a whole set of people who might be linked to the outside world. We don't really have that in the Arab world. If anything, the Arabs now have probably more information than they can handle and, despite all of the attempts to close it. I mean, they've got tens of channels that are coming their way, and the Internet and everything else, and they just can't have information.

So the question is, who are they going to look up to as a measure? And here is the positive thing about the Helsinki process: it isn't set up as an American process or a U.S. process, because obviously with all—for us as Americans we have a role to play for sure. I don't think that we should detach ourselves, but we should understand the limits of our ability because people have this sense that we're trying to dominate. And even when we intervene for really good humanitarian reasons, the next morning they'll say we did it for imperialist reasons, and if—somebody might try to use that against us and against those who are accepting aid from the U.S.

The good thing about the Helsinki process is that it is set up as a universal values kind of process, and that should be the focal point of the approach. How you do that, whether it links up directly to groups, I think it could be, or whether it could use international institutions to create more visibility in terms of holding up societies to particular standards, not the secretary of state is saying you're not living up to our standards, but somebody else is saying you're not living up to the international standards, I think that's the approach.

But here is the problem with civil society groups—and we've seen that in Egypt, we see it up to a point in Tunisia, but we see it elsewhere—they can easily be delegitimized because of linkages to the outside world. And that's usually the kind of the fine line that you have to figure out: How do you help them without de-legitimizing them? And I'm not sure I have a good answer for that.

Mr. CARDIN. Well, is the Tunisia—is the Tunisia model the right model? Does that work in other countries or is that unique to Tunisia?

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Chairman, I think Ms. Abdelkarim made a very good point. That is, local context is really, really important in each of these areas. I think the answer to your question about Tunisia is that there—Tunisia's civil society has pulled together into an organization and to an institution of some informal sort. And it was the lead union, the largest union in the country. It was a similar association of employers. It was the bar, so the lawyers that got together and then the legal human rights defenders. And that group—

Mr. CARDIN. But did those groups have contacts outside of Tunisia?

Mr. TAYLOR. To a small degree I think so, but that was not what was going on. They were really internally generated. The Tunisians

did this, Tunisian civil society. Those four organizations, they had legitimacy and this large public service—this large union that was across the country mobilizing more than any political party. Its members went across the country and were able to really provide the political muscle. But it drew in these others and drew in the employers. It drew in the lawyers and the human rights defenders. So that gave it a real breadth and strength to do this. But, Mr. Chairman, I think it really was Tunisian. And we can help them with caveats that she just mentioned about delegitimizing. They didn't ask for any outside support and they didn't need it. They did it themselves on this thing.

Just while—I'll mention, your point about institutions that can help countries in Northern Africa, in the Middle East, is a very important one. The Helsinki Commission is a great example of how Eastern Europeans—and you mentioned the excellent work it's been doing in Ukraine—East European and Central European countries had OSCE, Helsinki. They could hold the Russians to those standards that the Russians had signed up to, but they also had the EU, with its own set of standards, both economic and political, human rights, that they wanted to join, that they wanted to measure up to, and in order to join they had to meet those standards.

Many of them wanted to join NATO and did, because they still had security concerns. It turns out they had legitimate security concerns, and that others would like to join NATO at this point. We're seeing that. But in the Middle East and in North Africa we don't have those same kinds of attractive institutions that they can kind of lean toward.

Mr. CARDIN. Good point.

Ms. ABDELKARIM. I would like to add, I agree with Ambassador Taylor that Tunis didn't have the same restriction on civil society when it comes to, receiving foreign funding. Looking at other places in the region, such as, Egypt and Jordan, the restrictions that are put on the implementations of these programs and their finances and even the attendance of events by local actors is huge and is actually going to impact, in the long run, the effectiveness of these programs. Civil society enjoys completely different status in Tunis than other places in the region.

And I also agree that we don't have a regional institution. The Arab League is very weak. Yes, it has the charters on human rights and economic and free trade and so forth, but it's not a strong institution to bring the region together. So definitely looking for the international community is where most of the assistance is actually—could be coming from.

Mr. CARDIN. I would make this—as I said, we're patient. We recognize it's going to take time, and they do not have the same institutional support that Europe has. There's no question about that.

I think the two points—or three points that you raised concerning constitutional reform and electoral reform are critically important that we see progress made. I would add a third, which would be fighting corruption, which sort of—this goes through all of this. I mean, we saw in Ukraine that it was more about a corrupt government than it was a pro-Russian government or a pro-Europe government that the people brought down.

And I think the people have strong desires for a government that is not corrupt, and that can bring down even the most—and also, you got to make economic progress, and without ridding your country of corruption, it's hard to make the economic progress which is necessary for pluralism and democracy to flourish.

So as I look at this, how do we judge whether sufficient progress has been made in these countries so that we reward that, whether it's trade agreements or whether it is a strategic partnership for security? We've had a mixed relation with Egypt in recent times. How do we judge whether these countries have made real progress on constitutional reform, anti-corruption, electoral reform?

Ms. ABDELKARIM. They made some reform and progress, but not enough. It's just the first step. And it's going to evolve over time. And as I mentioned, we're waiting for the legislative bodies to be elected, the long-lasting ones, to see whether or not the elected representatives will continue to push for the necessary reforms.

Just from looking at my 10 years of working in the region, electoral process and the support that we've been providing to multiple countries, including Jordan, Yemen and Egypt, things have evolved tremendously over the years. Reforms have been made, and gaps in laws and legal frameworks have been addressed. But they're just the first step, and a lot more need to be done. So—

Mr. TELHAMI. Yeah. Well, with constitutions, obviously there are some things that are clear pertaining to rights and defining the state. But frankly, it's all about how you implement it and interpret it. We know that for sure—and we see it in Egypt because right now—

Mr. CARDIN. China has constitutional reform, but it doesn't work very well.

Mr. TELHAMI. Yeah, and when you also—I mean, look at what are our issues of good intention with Egypt, particularly when we talk about human rights and pluralism—it's not just the action that we're taking vis-à-vis the Muslim Brotherhood, but you can see these court rulings. And then when you ask the Egyptians and say, as I did ask Sisi, how do you explain how this takes place, he says, well, there's a separation of powers. Well, of course that's true in some ways constitutionally, you want a separation of powers, but you want those powers to be responsible, behaving responsibly. How do you reform the judiciary? How do you reform the Interior Ministry, separate from what the rules of the games are, because these institutions have legacies? These are what people call the deep state.

And it's a very hard thing to do because as you're trying to govern and you are focused on specific issues like security and the economy, and you take on these power centers that are entrenched at a time when people don't want you to be an authority leader that actually intrudes other powers—not an easy issue to do. But we need to watch for that. We need to push for that.

As Ambassador Taylor said, no matter what our capacity is, we need to speak with clarity. And I think we speak with clarity even more when we are appealing to universal values, not to what we like as American foreign policy. We have that moral authority. Handcuffing the U.S. particularly as a player is not simply the fact that people have this mixed view of us—on the one hand, they

don't trust what we do, on the other hand, they want us to intervene—but more than that is that let's be frank, human rights and democracy, we all want it. Our presidents want it. Our Congress wants it. The American people want it. But we want security and strategic interests even more.

And so our relationship with the Egyptian government, for example, is above all about the military-to-military relationship, the strategic cooperation now vis-à-vis Gaza or vis-à-vis something else, and those issues don't always go hand in hand. So we have limitations that therefore again speak to going outside that process, to finding some other mechanism too.

One final point on Tunisia, because I think we've focused on Tunisia as a success case, and I think it is. Tunisians should be applauded, I think, commended for moving in a right direction, and I'm hopeful that they will get here, although it's unclear still. It's an unsettled situation—if you look at it, you have to understand that we're still in the beginning of the process, not the end of the process.

But I happen to think that we underestimated two factors in why they've moved in this direction, beyond their unique domestic situation or civil society or groups. One factor is actually, they were frightened by what happened in Egypt. And so the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood was overthrown scared them and made the Islamists far more conciliatory in the final process as they moved in the constitutional process. So they learned from what happened.

But the second thing is I think historical accident, and it's not having to do with an institution. Rashid al-Ghannushi, who happens to be an exceptionally astute leader of the Islamists, and not only because of the particular values of his philosophy, but because he understood one thing that I think the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt didn't understand. He said that when you have a mature democracy like the United States, it's enough for a president to win half plus one, 50 percent plus one; that's enough. When you're in a transitional period or the like that we are in, it's not enough; you need a consensus to be able to sustain minimum stability. And I think that is a unique understanding.

That's why I think we also have to pick our allies pretty carefully. We see what we've done in various places where we were choosing allies based on expediency, not necessarily ones that are going to take us on the right path.

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Chairman, the only thing I'd add is to your question about how to measure our response in these areas, in—it's—Tunisia is one case, and Egypt's another. Tunisia is a pretty straightforward answer. It's apparently doing the right thing, at least as we're looking at it now. It's fragile, as Shibley says, but it is clearly going in the right direction on these areas that we've talked about. So we should respond, in ways that we can, whether it's trade or whether it's international financial support, direct support to the [?]-we should respond in that way.

Egypt is more complicated because they're not going in the right direction on political pluralism, and the repression is pushing them backwards and is probably destabilizing them, but they are important to us in some security ways. I'm less convinced about the importance of overflight rights and access to the canal and that kind

of business, but the concern about ISIS or the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, is a real concern. I don't know how big yet because it's not clear to me how much traction ISIS is going to have with its declaration of a caliphate, even among extremist Muslim organizations, much less the broad body of Muslim people. But that's important to us, and they will be able to play a role.

They did play a role in Gaza, but it was under President Morsi that they played this positive role. And it's not clear yet if they're going to be able to play that positive role.

Mr. CARDIN. That's very helpful.  
Congressman Hastings.

Mr. HASTINGS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I am grateful to all three of you and your presentations. They are illuminating. Regrettably, not enough of our colleagues in the Senate or the House are privy to the same kind of information with regularity.

Mine is more of an observation, I think, at this point than any questioning of either of you. Obviously, you all know your subjects, and you've studied them very carefully.

I think the takeaway for me is summed up in the senator's question about how do we measure and Ms. Abdelkarim's sentence in her closing remarks. Any intervention can easily lose credibility if perceived by the local population as ineffective or tainted by the intervening country's political self-interests. And then Mr. Telhami speaks to all of that at some point in his presentation.

And what I find interesting is I don't see how our country can help without having a self-interest, period. And then there are those that do not get accused as the United States does and manage successfully in many of these areas of conflict. I've always had a complete fascination with how the Dutch go in and out of Africa and get the diamonds, and they don't care who's fighting, but they've managed, somehow or another, to do that.

And what I'm finding fascinating in the last 20 years is China's hands-off approach to many of the issues that other countries are, Russia and the United States especially, involved in proxy activities in other areas. And China swoops in after all of the conflict, and let me use Iraq as an example. I don't know how long it will last with the current developments, but if we were talking two years ago, then China had the lead number of contracts in oil in Iraq and did not lose a soul. The persons who are doing most of the mining in Afghanistan today are the Chinese, and there is no plan, it doesn't seem, for the United States to benefit after having lost life and treasure.

So as one who has a continuing interest in this area—and I do serve as the co-chair of the Tunisia caucus, and I've been involved in all of these other countries with regularity and intend to stay so. Let me just sum up by saying this: There is an inseparable triumvirate of inadequate jobs, inadequate housing and inadequate educational opportunity. Looked at in the long range, the best thing that we could do as a country, for ourselves and for the world, is to encourage intercultural and educational exchanges—and I think, Ambassador Taylor, you spoke to some of that in your remarks—and to make special emphasis of education on small children, small meaning pre-K, and helping in that regard.

I believe that's where the greatest emphasis is needed. I don't see any real immediate solutions to any of these ongoing conflicts. I think America has been very naïve in thinking that democracy can be implanted in a lot of places, and I've expressed that often. I feel very strongly that one of the things that happens—and I've seen it here in my own country, and I've been a part of it. As an African-American here in this country, one thing I can say is government does things to people. I'm talking the United States government, not outside the government. I'm talking in Altamonte Springs, Florida, and the places where I've lived—does things to people rather than with people. And therein lays a part of the problem. And then when you are going abroad and start doing it, you have to know who the people are you're doing it with. And that has been a continuing sort of travail.

I've asked in this institution, and I continue to ask, that at the very least, we should have experts come in. I asked Gingrich and Gephardt. I asked Pelosi and Hastert. I haven't done so recently, but as early as 1992, and way before the ongoing circumstances, I said if we are going to be in these conflicts, then we at least ought to know the difference between a Sunni and a Shiite. We ought to at least know what a Pashtun is, what some cultural aspects are. And we don't. You couldn't get—we could go out here right now and find—I can find you 300 congresspeople that don't know that there are Christians in Iraq, or just as—for example, they may know a little bit about a few Christians in Egypt, but they don't have any idea about what's going on, and yet we make these interventions, and we make these policies without having a clear understanding.

That's my story, and I'm sticking to it.

Mr. CARDIN. Well, thank you, Congressman Hastings.

And let me thank all three of our panelists. I agree with Congressman Hastings. This has been extremely helpful to us to get a better understanding. We're Americans, and we're impatient by definition, so we also—I think it just does underpin the merits of the OSCE process from the beginning. It was nonthreatening to a participating state because it's consensus, that you can't force anything upon—there's no enforcement within the OSCE framework. And look at the impact it's had in developing universal values.

And the reality that if you're going to have a stable country, people have to have an economy that allows them opportunity—you can talk about—all about the—all the military presence, but if you don't have an economy that produces, you're not going to have a stable regime. And we've seen that over and over again in the Middle East because of that issue. And yes, people do want their individual rights heard. They do want the electoral process. But that's part—that in and of itself doesn't produce democracy. And I think—and pluralism.

So I think this has been extremely helpful for us, as Congressman Hastings said, to get a better understanding and reality of what the challenges are, and we certainly will be following up on this.

So again, thank you all very much for your testimony.



## **A P P E N D I X**

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## PREPARED STATEMENTS

### PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN CARDIN, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished witnesses and guests, I wish to welcome you to this Helsinki Commission hearing on “Political Pluralism in the OSCE Mediterranean Partners?” The Helsinki Commission has long prioritized engagement with our Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Partners for Cooperation in both the Mediterranean and Asia. I have seen the potential for the Helsinki Process as a model for both partner regions and I have led Commission efforts over the years on this concept. Our Commissioners, including Representative Alcee Hastings as OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, have led efforts in the OSCE PA to promote the interests of our Mediterranean Partners and forge a meaningful exchange for mutual learning; not just one-sided engagement in the region by external actors.

We could say that the political transitions resulting from popular uprisings at the end of 2010 have changed the face of OSCE engagement with the region. These years since have brought successes with some structural reforms and challenges in the development of viable political parties and electoral systems. Our Partners, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, have had very different experiences based on their different political systems. I see this hearing as a timely opportunity to explore common elements of transition among these countries and revisit how best to foster cooperation through OSCE mechanisms. As exemplified by the deployment of OSCE resources and expertise to manage the crisis in Ukraine, the OSCE remains a functional tool for fostering human security and a potential model for advancing common human security in the Mediterranean.

The Helsinki Commission last convened a hearing taking stock of political developments and overall engagement with all of our OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation in 2009. That year, I worked with Representative Hastings to convene a hearing on “The Future of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation” coupled with an international seminar of parliamentarians from throughout the region exploring Mediterranean Partner engagement. This event recommended functional partnership initiatives with our Mediterranean Partners including projects for youth exchange and broader accessibility of OSCE initiatives for participants from the region. Our efforts also identified priorities for more leadership of the Mediterranean Partnership from the region, which has become particularly relevant with the emerging empowerment of long disenfranchised voices of political opposition. Those voices have been both productive and disconcerting. Yet, the establishment of impartial electoral systems will lead the region to responsive governments that address the motivations of those who took to the streets.

The OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly have been able to generate unique opportunities for assistance in this new era of regional cooperation. For example, the OSCE PA was able to deploy an observation and assistance mission for the October 2011 elections to the Tunisian Constituent National Assembly. The OSCE has been able to facilitate exchanges with young diplomats from the region to serve in the OSCE secretariat. Additionally, key materials from thematic units of the OSCE and the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights have been translated into Arabic. Civil society and experts from the region have become increasingly active in OSCE events and dialogue opportunities coupled with expert visits from OSCE institutions to advise governments as they review their structural reforms. All of these activities have been possible through the OSCE Partnership Fund of extra-budgetary contributions from participating States and Partners. These activities truly demonstrate the depth of a relationship stemming back to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and leading into the future.

Our first panel features Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs for Egypt and the Maghreb Bill Roebuck. A distinguished career Foreign Service officer with experience throughout the region, including service at pivotal times as Chargé d’Affaires to Tripoli, as well as Head of the Political Section/Acting Deputy Chief of Mission in Damascus. We look forward to hearing your perspectives on

strategic investments through the OSCE, international partnerships and other initiatives like the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) to address political reforms in the region.

Our second panel will feature a broad cross-section of expertise on the region starting with Ambassador Bill Taylor, Vice President for Middle East and Africa of the United States Institute of Peace. Ambassador Taylor most recently served as State Department Special Coordinator for Middle East Transitions coordinating support to Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Syria following a distinguished career at State and work in the region. He will be followed by Dr. Shibley Telhami, Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland and Brookings Institution Fellow. Dr. Telhami has made pivotal contributions to Arab-Israeli Peace Process negotiations and is an expert on public opinion trends in our countries of interest today. Our expert panel will be concluded by Ms. Zeinab Abdelkarim, Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Her expertise in electoral assistance will help us characterize the state of reforms in the political processes throughout our countries of interest.

I see this hearing as an opportunity to examine not only the OSCE's development of institutional cooperation, but also the role of international actors and civil society in fostering political systems that respond to the needs of the region. As noted in the Helsinki Final Act, the security of Europe is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean as a whole. We look to our panels now for their thoughts on the development of political pluralism in the Mediterranean in recognition of our common security interests. Thank you for taking the time to join us.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ALCEE HASTINGS, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Distinguished guests, I also wish to welcome you and I thank my friend Chairman Cardin for convening this U.S. Helsinki Commission hearing on "Political Pluralism in the OSCE Mediterranean Partners?" During my service as OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, I spent a number of years traveling among all of our Mediterranean Partners on behalf of several different OSCE PA presidents. Even before the Arab Awakening, I sought to empower the voices of the disenchanted in the region and press those who were in power to let pluralism flourish. From Rabat to Cairo, Algiers to Amman, I observed a common thirst for meaningful civic engagement. The popular uprisings since the end of 2010 have shown the need for capacity development among the youthful population of the region and made engagement with the OSCE more functional than it has ever been.

I worked in 2009 to convene parliamentarians and experts from throughout the Partners in Washington for a seminar to reinvigorate what had been a diminishing partnership. This seminar yielded key recommendations that prompted efforts to add value to the partnership. This event also encouraged greater ownership of affiliated projects and initiatives by our friends from Partner States, so that our collective efforts would be meaningful to them. That same year was the last time that the OSCE convened its annual Mediterranean Conference in a Partner State. Political turmoil, instability and a lack of support for Israel's contribution to the partnership has kept some Partners from taking a leadership role in bringing the conference back to the Southern shore of the Mediterranean. We must change that. We must show that meaningful exchange will only come from dialogue of equally invested partners.

Mediterranean Partner States are beginning to come to the table and invest in the OSCE Partnership Fund. Morocco and Tunisia have even requested legal reviews for their structural reforms from the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). As I had recommended for years, investments are underway for youth exchanges and greater contributions from civil society in the region to OSCE events. I applaud these efforts and especially look to our expert panel to remark on how we can do better; acknowledging the demographic trends and political realities.

I would be remiss not to mention the violent conflicts in Iraq and Syria, which have displaced millions and vastly changed the political landscape of the region. We are on a dark trajectory if we do not strategically invest in positive civic engagement and much needed educational resources for those vulnerable populations. As I have said, time and time again, if we do not engage those populations, we will see them again in another form. And their demands will not be met through peaceful political channels.

I look forward to thoughts from our panelists on the role of the United States and the international community in affirming the aspirations of those who took to the streets demanding responsive government and basic civil liberties. Thank you for sharing your expertise with us.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM ROEBUCK, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR  
EGYPT AND MAGHREB AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Thank you, Chairman Cardin and Co-Chairman Smith, for inviting me to testify before you today on North Africa. It is a particular honor for me to do so before the U.S. Helsinki Commission. Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt, of course, all participate in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation forum, which provides an avenue for engagement with the OSCE, its institutions, and its 57 participating States in promoting a vision of comprehensive security that includes political/military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions. We welcome initiatives, such as this one, that make important contributions to promoting democratic transitions and bolstering regional stability.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, North Africa—Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt—is a region of tremendous potential. The birthplace of the Arab Awakening, it is currently undergoing a difficult but critical transformation, the likes of which it has not experienced since the beginning of decolonization. Tunisia has achieved much success already and continues to realize the democratic promise of its 2011 revolution, even as it faces significant security and economic challenges. Libya faces many difficulties and we must take the long view in assessing its progress toward democracy. However, Libyans are committed to making progress. For the second time since its revolution, Libyans across the country went to the polls in June and voted in free and fair parliamentary elections, selecting members for a new Council of Representatives. Morocco and Algeria are also undergoing reform processes that will benefit their economies and societies at home and increase stability in the region as a whole. Finally, our longstanding relationship with Egypt and its centrality to the region as a whole, require our commitment to democratic development in that country. These are historic times in North Africa and the U.S. government is working with our partners to assist and support during this transition.

*Tunisia*

Tunisia remains one of the Middle East and North Africa's best hopes for a successful transition to democracy and has made positive strides in the past few months—with the ratification of a new constitution and swearing in of an independent government to lead the country to elections in 2014. On January 26 of this year, the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) ratified the constitution by a landslide vote of 200 for, 12 against, and four abstentions. The new constitution enshrines democratic principles such as rule of law, pluralism, gender equality, and freedom of belief.

As with all transitions, of course, there are also challenges. Tunisia's economy has struggled since the 2011 revolution in the face of political uncertainty and security incidents. The Tunisian government has an ongoing commitment to reform its economy, aided by an IMF Stand-By Arrangement. Through this reform program, Tunisia is taking steps to address the vulnerabilities in its banking sector, reorient its budget toward a more pro-growth composition, and implement a comprehensive structural reform agenda to promote private sector development. As announced by President Obama in April, the United States and Tunisia signed a loan guarantee agreement in June allowing Tunisia to borrow up to \$500 million at concessionary rates to support this reform agenda.

Security remains vital to the success of the transition. However, violent extremists pose an ongoing threat as they seek to counter the democratic transition, thwart the government's authority, and impose their extremist understanding of Islam through harassment, incitement of violence, and attacks. Yet over the past year the Tunisian government has shown an increasingly strong resolve to manage the extremist threat. The Tunisian military and security forces require additional training and equipment to counter the newly-evolving terrorist threat. To do so, we have bolstered our assistance to help Tunisia reform its criminal justice sector to improve its ability to protect Tunisians and foreigners alike, as well as confront domestic and regional security challenges. We are also working with Tunisia to explore ways to provide at-risk groups with alternatives and prevent further marginalization or disconnection of these groups.

We continue to provide assistance through a number of mechanisms to support Tunisia's transition to a prosperous democratic country, to spur job creation, to provide entrepreneurship training, and to enhance access to finance for small and medium enterprises, and support the democratic transition. We are also working with Tunisian civil society to ensure a transparent electoral process by supporting domestic election monitoring, and we will be supporting international election observation of the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections.

*Libya*

Since the 2011 revolution, Libya has faced significant political and security challenges. Yet it remains in our national security interest to ensure Libya becomes a stable and democratic partner capable of addressing regional security challenges and advancing our shared interests. Despite the challenges, the Libyan people are committed to making progress. On June 25, Libya successfully held nationwide elections for the Council of Representatives (COR), a 200-member legislative body that will replace the General National Congress. Although turnout was lower than in 2012, COR elections represent for many Libyans a new beginning and important milestone for the country as it transitions to democracy. We expect the official results of these elections by July 20 and are ready to assist the new parliamentarians as they assume their duties, as requested. Furthermore, the Constitutional Drafting Assembly (CDA), a 60-member body tasked with drafting a permanent constitution, has begun its work in Bayda in eastern Libya after being elected in February.

Yet while the government is making progress toward democracy and legitimacy, it lacks the ability to project its authority across the country or fulfill many core government functions. Further complicating efforts to achieve national consensus is retired General Khalifa Hifter's recent campaign to eradicate Islamist-leaning militants from Benghazi. Although many Libyans support his goals, they are wary of his methods and future intentions. We continue to affirm that a political agreement—and not violence—is necessary to advance the transition and enable the constitution drafting process to unfold. Accomplishing this will require buy-in from a wide range of Libyans. At the request of the Secretary, Ambassador David Satterfield is working in his personal capacity to build consensus among key Libyan influencers around a set of 10 principles that will guide the way forward. His efforts, along with those of the international community, are essential to helping Libya move past its current challenges.

After 42 years of dictatorship, Libya suffers from instability and poor governance due to weak institutions, porous borders, huge stockpiles of loose conventional weapons, and the presence of militias. Some of these militias have extremist ties and continue to wield local and regional power, including blocking for over a year production and exports at many of Libya's onshore oil and gas facilities. However, we are beginning to see progress on this front and on July 1, Prime Minister Al Thinnai announced that militias controlling two ports in eastern Libya (Ras Lanuf and Es-Sidr) agreed to cease these disruptions, which has the potential to increase Libya's oil export potential by 560,000 barrels per day.

Libyans have grown weary of the pervasive lack of security in their country and have become impatient with their leaders' inability to restore stability. Elected officials, including the Prime Minister, have stated security is their top priority and we are working with the government to improve its ability to establish stability throughout the country. At the UK-hosted G-8 Summit in June 2013, we pledged to train a 5,000–8,000 member General Purpose Forces (GPF), prompting the UK and Italy to pledge to train 2,000 members each. The GPF assistance will be paid for by the Libyan government, and we are continuing to plan for this effort, which will take place later this year.

Border security is also a critical concern to the U.S. and our international partners in Libya. Libya's porous borders permit the flow not only of destabilizing Qadhafi-era conventional weapons, but also violent extremists throughout North Africa, the Middle East, and the Sahel. We are in the process of re-scoping a border security program in coordination with the European Union Integrated Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) to provide technical expertise, training, and limited equipment to build Libya's inter-ministerial border security capacity to address security along its western land border. We will also continue to work with international partners and allies to support a broad range of activities to help the Government of Libya in securing excess, at-risk, or easily proliferated conventional weapons.

Although Libya has great national resources, it has weak institutions, and requires targeted support now to develop the structures necessary to fund its own development. Alongside the international community, we are working with the Libyan government to build institutional public financial management capacity.

*Morocco*

We continue to enjoy a very strong bilateral relationship with Morocco, focused on promoting regional stability, supporting democratic reform efforts, countering violent extremism, and strengthening trade and cultural ties. Morocco—a major non-NATO ally since 2004—is one of our closest counterterrorism partners in the region, and an active member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum. We also enjoy a strong economic relationship; a bilateral free trade agreement entered into force

in 2006 that has helped triple bilateral trade, and in November 2013 we signed a Trade Facilitation Agreement.

President Obama hosted King Mohammed VI of Morocco in Washington on November 22, 2013, underscoring the long-term cooperation and friendship between our two countries. On this occasion we reaffirmed our close strategic partnership with Morocco and discussed the best means of promoting security and prosperity in the region.

Under King Mohammed VI, the Moroccan political system has gradually liberalized; the King founded the Arab world's first truth and reconciliation commission—to investigate abuses that occurred during his father's reign—and expanded women's rights. A new constitution was adopted in 2011, and Morocco's first Islamist-led government won nationwide democratic elections, but much progress remains to be made on implementing the guarantees and reforming institutions.

We will continue to support Morocco as it undertakes these important reform efforts. Our bilateral assistance focuses on promoting economic, political, democratic and social reforms; deepening our security partnership; promoting export control and countering violent extremism efforts; developing a professional criminal justice system; and encouraging broad-based economic growth. Our flagship assistance program has been Morocco's \$698 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact, which closed in September 2013 and focused on agriculture, fisheries, and small business development. Morocco was selected as eligible to develop a second compact by MCC's Board of Directors in 2012 and is in the project definition phase of program development. With regards to the Western Sahara, we support the United Nations-led process designed to bring about a peaceful, sustainable, and mutually-acceptable solution to the Western Sahara question. We also support the work of the UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for the Western Sahara, Ambassador Christopher Ross, and urge the parties to work toward a resolution.

#### *Algeria*

Algeria and the United States have built a strong bilateral relationship, characterized by our shared interests to combat terrorism and facilitate greater stability in the region.

Algeria has made progress on human rights and political transparency over the past 20 years. We are encouraging the government to create space for a more vibrant civil society and inclusive democratic process through supporting small civil society initiatives, such as funding training for local election monitors. We also aim to increase educational exchanges with young Algerians, including promoting English language learning.

The wealth from Algeria's significant hydrocarbon reserves has empowered the state at the expense of overall economic development. We continue to encourage Algeria to make market oriented changes that expand job opportunities and increase its attractiveness to foreign direct investment. With that in mind, we are working to strengthen our trade relationship with Algeria, and are seeking to reactivate the 2001 Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. In 2013, General Electric signed deals worth \$3 billion to provide gas turbines to Algeria, an example of the benefits of our efforts to promote U.S. business in Algeria. This will help create or sustain 4,000 American jobs.

We have encouraged Algeria to continue to expand its regional leadership role to help stabilize neighboring states. Algeria's experience fighting an Islamist insurgency during the 1990s resulted in a well-equipped and battle-hardened military that constitutes the strongest counterterrorism force in the region. We appreciate the work that Algeria has done with Tunisia to combat smuggling and terrorism, and we will continue to encourage Algeria to use their expertise to train and partner with less experienced militaries and law enforcement units in the region to help ensure greater stability in the Sahel and Maghreb.

#### *Egypt*

Egypt has undergone dizzying changes in the last three years. While its path forward is still being charted, its current trajectory has raised legitimate concerns about the future of democracy and human rights in Egypt. Egypt is also facing dramatic economic challenges as it moves to address unemployment, diversify and strengthen its economy, rebuild its tourist sector, and attract investment. We want Egypt to become a stable, prosperous, democratic country. While changes in Egypt have been shaped by internal dynamics, we recognize that these changes have broader implications for the region. Egypt is the most populous Arab nation—representing a quarter of the Arab world—and remains a bellwether for political and social trends across the Middle East and North Africa.



Egypt also remains a critical partner of the United States as we pursue our national security interests in the region and globally. We share several crucial interests, including countering the transnational threats of terrorism and weapons trafficking and maintaining regional stability on several fronts, foremost among them peace with Israel. Egypt is supportive of these interests and we believe a stable, prosperous, and democratic Egypt will make the strongest and most effective partner.

We remain deeply concerned about the state of human rights and political freedoms in Egypt, particularly the imprisonment of journalists and democracy activists, the lack of individualized justice and mass death sentences, and the enforcement of a harsh demonstrations law that is being used to close off space for dissent. These tactics are troubling: they reflect a profound lack of due process and complicate the achievement of political reform. Such tactics are at odds with the demands of the Egyptian people for justice; they further polarize Egyptian society and radicalize those whom they exclude from the political environment.

Secretary Kerry made these views clear during his visit last month when he emphasized our strong support for upholding the universal rights and freedoms of all Egyptians, including freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association. We will continue to call on President Al-Sisi and the new government to take steps to support a democratic transition in Egypt, one built on a foundation of the rule of law, civil liberties, and open political discourse. So, in Egypt, we are pursuing dual, though by no means contradictory, policy imperatives: protecting our shared strategic interests and encouraging political and economic reform in Egypt. Through our economic assistance, we are seeking to demonstrate our commitment to achieving prosperity and improving the lives of the Egyptian people. We are striving to sharpen that commitment, by focusing on key issues such as higher education, private sector growth, and longer term establishment of democratic institutions. Through our military assistance, we are helping Egypt protect its borders and counter violent extremism that threatens Egypt, the broader region, and U.S. interests. We know that respect for human rights and a more democratic political environment are also critical to achieving those goals.

We will continue to engage diplomatically with the Egyptian government to underscore the need for political and economic reform, and work closely with Congress to ensure our assistance—military and economic—supports our broad strategic interests in Egypt and in the region.

Chairman Cardin and Co-chairman Smith, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. Certainly, we are aware that our budgets are facing increasing pressure, but this region remains vital to protecting our national interests, as we look to maintain relationships with key allies and to nudge nascent democracies through difficult transitions, with the hope of promoting stability and countering extremist threats in the Middle East and Africa. With careful, targeted assistance, and smart diplomatic engagement, we are successfully advancing our key strategic interests.

Thank you again for your time and attention. I look forward to answering your questions.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM TAYLOR, VICE PRESIDENT FOR MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA, UNITED STATES INSTITUTE FOR PEACE

Chairman Cardin, Co-chairman Smith, Members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to present my views on political pluralism in several of the Arab Spring countries. The views I express today are solely my own and do not represent those of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not take policy positions. I commend you for this timely and important hearing.

In addition to my current position as vice president for the Middle East and Africa at USIP, I had the opportunity in 2011–2013 to coordinate assistance to Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria at the State Department.

I will concentrate this morning on two of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation—Tunisia and Egypt. I believe they demonstrate the range of experience and practice that we can see in this region. Tunisia has demonstrated remarkable maturity and commitment to the ideal of political inclusiveness; Egypt has not.

I will review briefly several of the events of the past two years in these two countries; I will then evaluate briefly the actions taken by leaders in Tunisia and Egypt.

At the beginning of 2013, Tunisia was struggling politically and economically and facing violent unrest. The elections in 2012 had given the moderate Islamist party Ennahda a plurality. It formed a coalition with two secular parties, called the Troika, and was attempting to both govern and write a new constitution. After broad consultations around the country on various aspects of a new constitution, parliamentary work on the constitution had stalled by early 2013.

The Tunisian economy, like others in the region, was suffering from low investment, low tourism and high unemployment.

The attack on the U.S. embassy in Tunis by extremist Islamist forces in September 2012 had demonstrated the weakness of the government and its security forces. The instability was then exacerbated in early 2013 with the assassination of a prominent opposition party member, Chokri Belaid. While the extent of violence in Tunisia was small compared to the numbers killed in other countries of the region, these incidents shocked Tunisians and led to two events: first, the resignation of the Ennahda prime minister, and second, an effort by civil society leaders to pull the country back from the crisis. Several political parties supported the effort; Ennahda did not.

At the same time—the beginning of 2013—the Islamist government that had formed in Egypt under Mohammed Morsi was also struggling to govern and write a constitution. Unlike in Tunisia, however, the main Islamist party in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, had won a majority in the parliamentary elections, and Mr. Morsi had won a tight race for president. Also unlike Tunisia, the Islamist majority in the Egyptian parliament and the Islamist president forced through a constitution without attempting to achieve consensus. Further, security forces and Muslim Brotherhood supporters attacked peaceful demonstrators, women's rights were violated, journalists were suppressed, and police abuse continued. President Morsi issued a decree that exempted his decisions from judicial review. Demonstrations grew in opposition to the government's handling of the constitutional process as well as to social legislation in the parliament and economic mismanagement, leading to a large, army-sponsored demonstration on June 30, 2013, and a military coup on July 3 that installed a military-backed civilian government.

At this point, events in Tunisia and events in Egypt intersect. Before the coup in Egypt, the Tunisian Islamist party Ennahda had resisted efforts by civil society to bridge political differences within Tunisian society. Ennahda had rejected invitations to join a dialogue sponsored by four parts of Tunisian civil society known as the Quartet and made up of the largest labor union, the association of employers, the Tunisian bar association and the league of human rights advocates. After the coup in Egypt—and another political assassination in Tunis—Ennahda decided to join what was then being called the Tunisian National Dialogue. The Quartet-led discussions lasted through the fall and into the winter, until, in January 2014, they reached agreement on three important points:

- They agreed on the text of a new constitution, which was then referred to the parliament and won overwhelming approval from its members.
- They agreed that new elections, presidential and parliamentary, would take place by the end of the year, that is, before December 2014.
- Even more remarkably, the Ennahda-led coalition government agreed to step down and to hand over power to a non-political, interim government that would take governmental influence out of preparations for the elections. In Egypt, meanwhile, the military-installed government had begun a harsh crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, killing more than 1,000 Egyptians and jailing and prosecuting thousands more. Hundreds at a time have been convicted and sentenced to death, often

on little evidence. The repression, which the new military-backed government defended as a fight against terrorists, soon extended to journalists, activists and liberal groups accused of supporting terrorists. This year, Field Marshal and Defense Minister al-Sisi, who once professed no interest in the military taking over the country, declared his candidacy for president under a newly ratified constitution and, in May, won an overwhelming victory, even though turnout in the election was disappointing. U.S. assistance to the government of Egypt, cut off after the coup as called for by U.S. law, was partially restored.

Political pluralism in the region is at its broadest in Tunisia today. The formation of a coalition government including both the Islamist Ennahda and two secular parties demonstrated that Islamist and secular political parties are able to work together. Islamist leaders soon learned that extremist violence, rather than reinforcing their position, undermined it, and that strong security measures were required to quell such attacks and maintain stability.

The Tunisian constitution, drafted after extensive consultation across the country, is considered a model in the region, acknowledging the Muslim foundation of Tunisian society and guaranteeing rights to religions, sexes and political streams of thought. The constitution was approved as a result of wide consultation across the country, thorough debate in the parliament, political compromise struck by civil society leaders, and adherence to agreed rules as the parliament ratified the constitution overwhelmingly, with the parliamentarians standing to sing the Tunisian national anthem after the historic vote.

The leading role of civil society—pulling the country back from violence, division and gridlock—is a model of dialogue over confrontation and conflict. The Tunisian National Dialogue, led by the non-governmental Quartet, was able to find consensus, bring the quarreling political parties into the discussion, and forge compromises that have set Tunisia on a positive—if still fragile—course toward a successful transition.

In Egypt, on the other hand, political pluralism is, at best, reminiscent of previous military dictatorships. Freedom of the press and for civil society organizations may be more constrained now than under previous governments.

Islamist leaders drew the wrong lessons from their elections, ignoring voices of minorities in parliament and society. Ramming through a constitution that was not broadly supported contributed to the rise of the opposition.

The new military-backed government under President al-Sisi has not limited its security measures to violent extremists and has instead used police and the courts to eliminate political opposition.

The cases of Tunisia and Egypt point the way toward potentially effective U.S. and international strategies for the region. First, the United States and the international community should increase support for the Tunisian government and people as they continue to demonstrate that political pluralism is compatible with Islamic societies and is the formula for a successful transition to democracy. This assistance should include financial support—in the form of loan guarantees, project financing, and incentives for private investment—from Western governments, international financial institutions and the international private sector. The United States should negotiate and sign a free-trade agreement with Tunisia. Western governments should provide training and equipment to Tunisia's security forces. The United States and Europe should increase opportunities for Tunisian students to study abroad.

Second, on Egypt, the United States and the international community should continue to condemn the repression, publicly and privately, as counterproductive and short-sighted. We have learned a lot in the past few years about governance in the Middle East; one clear lesson is that political oppression is not an effective tactic to increase stability.

U.S. assistance to Egypt should concentrate on programs that enable Egyptians to take advantage of educational opportunities, both in Egypt and abroad. A large program of scholarships for Egyptian young people, with an emphasis on women and underdeveloped parts of the country, could pay great dividends for Egypt and U.S.-Egyptian relations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to answer questions.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SHIBLEY TELHAMI, ANWAR SADAT CHAIR FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

This is not a good time for pluralism and human rights in the Middle East and North Africa, although there are important degrees and variations. In my short comments today, I will limit myself to describing some broad dynamics affecting pluralism, human rights, and democracy in the region so that we can have a context for a constructive discussion of the trends and possibilities. My focus will be on the challenges faced and not on the possibilities or the bright spots.

Let me start with the impact of the Arab uprisings and three issues that need to be understood.

The most profound, and probably enduring, change that has occurred in the region with the advent of the Arab uprisings is the empowerment of the individual in a region where the individual has counted less politically and culturally. This empowerment is driven principally by an expanding information revolution, especially satellite TV, the Internet, and social media, that is not going away. Governments have lost control of information, people's expectations are rising because of what they see outside their own countries, and the interactive nature of the Internet and social media is empowering. This public empowerment is in the long term an important and constructive force that is likely to push for more freedom, pluralism, and human rights. But in the short term, there are dynamics that lead to exactly the opposite, as we have witnessed in a number of states swept by public uprisings. It should be noted, however, that even countries that have felt only a limited impact of the uprisings, such as Jordan, Morocco, and Algeria, are not immune to the public pressure that comes with the empowerment generated by an expanding information revolution.

First, the fact that the public is empowered doesn't mean it is unified. In fact there Arab societies—and Israel's—are highly diverse, and that diversity had been muted by authoritarianism, in the case of the Arab states, and intense external conflict in the case of the Israelis. This diversity is not limited to the kind of sectarianism that we see in states like Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Bahrain. There are ideological, economic, and geographic divisions that surface to the top as we have seen in Egypt, aside from the roughly 10% of the population who are Christians, the Muslim majority is overwhelmingly Sunni. The divide between secularists and Islamists, among others, has pitted people against each other in a zero-sum confrontation that is at least as divisive as sectarianism. Public empowerment means that every group wants its voices heard and wants a share of power in a changing political empowerment. This is especially so as central authority weakens, and new rules of the game are being set up.

Second, in the struggle for a new system, and everyone vying for influence and a share of the pie, not everyone is equal. In these environments, minorities are most vulnerable as the state weakens, and we see this already in a number of states, where groups like Christian Arabs have become particularly vulnerable. In addition, the public is still fighting against existing sources of power that want to assert themselves in a new polity. This includes state bureaucracies, corporations, individuals and groups with deep pockets, and, above all, military institutions. In fact, in all the states with significant uprisings, the initial outcome, and the resulting conditions, could not be understood without understanding the roles of the military institutions: In Egypt and Tunisia, the initial toppling of rulers came with support or at least the acquiescence of the military, and the different results so far are partly a function of the decisions each institution has taken. The outcome will continue to depend on the decisions of each institution. In Syria, Bahrain, and Libya, the army supported the rulers and the outcome was ultimately dependent on that decision.

Third, transitions are destabilizing, and that usually is not a good thing for democracy, pluralism, and human rights. Deep insecurity and economic deprivation, often short-term results of a weakened central authority, provide fertile ground for those who want to rule with an iron fist—as fear trumps pluralism and human rights. We see this in many of the states facing the uprisings to varying degrees, and we see this also playing into the hands of those governments that have not had to deal with their own major uprisings. In fact, one reason why the Arab uprisings have not expanded beyond the early cases is that the anarchy, such as in Syria and Libya, and economic deprivation and limited insecurity, as in Egypt, have given rulers a way of frightening their own public: Do you want to be in Aleppo and Tripoli, or Amman and Riyadh?

Fourth, while each country in the region has its own specific conditions that have to be evaluated separately, it is fair to say that there are commonalities in the Arab world. And regional politics are interwoven with domestic politics; the international is sometimes hard to separate from the national. Polls indicate common aspirations

and, more centrally, note the early spillover from Tunisia across the Arab world, but not into other regions, including non-Arab Muslim countries. In addition, it is also obvious that the way the uprisings have unfolded in every country—with the possible exception of Tunisia—cannot be explained without reference to major external intervention. Syria is of course experiencing upheavals that are at the core internal, but the intensity, nature, and ultimately outcome of the struggle cannot be understood without the role of Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Syria's neighboring states, not to mention the United States and Russia. Even in Egypt, where there is no military intervention from the outside, the infusion of billions of dollars from the Arab Gulf states is an important factor of what happens in Egypt as President Sisi tries to stabilize the economy.

Fifth, the case of the non-Arab Middle Eastern state in the group, Israel, is of course unique, but there are potential troubles ahead for pluralism and democracy, whose prospects remain partly tied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel is a successful democracy with the pre-1967 war boundaries. But two things suggest troubling trends: the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have not had full independence, and the international toleration of this situation has been predicated on the assumption that occupation is temporary and that the focus should be on achieving a political settlement that leads to two states. If the hope for two states is lost, and a sense emerges that the status quo is semi-permanent, the Israeli-Palestinian inequality will be evaluated differently. Second, as the Israeli aspiration for a Jewish majority state becomes threatened within existing boundaries, we will see more ultra-Jewish nationalism reflected not only in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, but also in the internal dynamics between Israel's Jewish minority and the 20% of its population who are Arab citizens—as we have begun to see already. In turn, the absence of independence for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza will generate empathy among Israel's Arab citizens in a manner that plays into the hand of extremists on both sides—thus jeopardizing the coexistence of Jews and Arabs even within Israel's pre-1967 borders

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF ZEINAB ABDELKARIM, REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA, INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission, for the opportunity to testify today on the topic of Political Pluralism in the OSCE Mediterranean Partners. I appreciate the opportunity to share with you IFES' considerable expertise and experience assessing the overall political, socio-economic, security, humanitarian and other issues likely surrounding the region's democratic transition.

I will begin with a brief synopsis of IFES' work in order to contextualize my testimony. Broadly speaking, IFES supports citizens' right to participate in free and fair elections by strengthening electoral systems, and by building local capacity to deliver sustainable solutions to problems facing countries that seek to enhance their governance structures.

IFES has been active in the Middle East region for over two decades advocating for participatory societies where citizens have the regular opportunity to play an active role in making decisions that affect their lives and in holding their government accountable. IFES utilizes an integrated and innovative approach that empowers both the recognized local authorities, local actors and civil society activists by providing information on democratic norms, elections and political processes, international standards and best practices; carrying out trainings for key stakeholders on democratic and transitional issues; and providing resources and tools for civil society activists to implement civic education activities and prepare the country for a democratic transition.

The Arab uprisings reaffirmed the importance of democratic representation and the need for opportunity, access and freedom. Today, IFES programming continues to respond to challenges across the region in countries such as Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen. Our work across the region was made possible by direct funding assistance from the U.S. Government and other international donors, including the British, Swiss, Canadian and Dutch governments.

The overall situation throughout the Middle East and North Africa remains fragile and very polarized. As Syria's civil war rages on and Iraq's security and stability deteriorate, threats from Al Qaeda, foreign mercenaries and other radical groups stretching from the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula to Africa continue to undermine regional stability.

The trends that played a major role in the Arab uprisings just a few years ago—such as demographic challenges, struggling economies, poor internal security, insufficient access to justice, ineffective governance and stagnant social transformation—continue to affect both the region and individual States. These trends will remain sources of instability, and in some cases violence, in the near future.

Newly-elected governments and institutions continue to face firm resistance from their opponents and have not been successful thus far in managing political distrust, economic uncertainty and internal security. In deeply divided societies where ethnic, social, tribal and political affiliations are key considerations, it is imperative that countries' transitions are managed in a manner that is inclusive and consultative and engenders trust across these divisions. While any future elections in the transitioning countries will represent an opportunity for a population to express its degree of satisfaction with the country's state of affairs, the simmering political and societal conflicts that have plagued the countries of this region for decades, and the slow pace of political reform, will pose challenges for democratization moving forward. The biggest danger is the tendency to reduce democratic practices to voting, constitutional drafting and electoral events. A new constitution or the presence of electoral processes does not necessarily mean that a democratic tradition of transparency and accountability have taken root. It is particularly important for citizens to perceive government affairs, legal reform processes and the country's economic plans as open and transparent. The current developments across the region cannot be considered to evidence a new social contract between regional States and their citizens, in any regard. At best, it can be described as constitutional engineering led by a small elite faction of the dominant force or ethnic/religious group.

Understandably, undeveloped and disorganized political and civil forces as well as nascent civil movements in places like Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Jordan are unable to wield much influence on near-term outcomes of the transition in these countries. However, it is important to note that modern democratic practices evolved over centuries; it makes no sense to look for similarities in a remarkably different context, particularly so early in the game. Rather, it is best to let the political development run its natural course. These are changes that are best measured in decades, not years. It is not realistic to expect a fast and seamless transition to democracy. The history of colonial and imperial rule across the region, as well as the State's domination of the economy and society, shaped a culture of authoritarian political tradi-

tions that needs time and comprehensive locally-driven efforts to overcome. Each and every State will evolve into its own distinctive way as it adapts to national, regional and global changes over time.

Additionally and most importantly, the lack of political and societal consensus around major issues—such as the role of Islam and Shariah in the affairs of the State and society, the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, and the rights and role of women in their respective societies—is a fundamental internal struggle that cannot be ignored. Any external intervention on these issues has little influence over what is considered an internal struggle that can only be addressed when the peoples of the region genuinely seek to invoke civil liberties, justice and the rule of law regardless of the governing system they choose to implement.

Analysis in the midst of current political and regional events is never easy, especially as events unfold and their causes and the future itself remain clouded with uncertainty. In retrospect and based on close monitoring of recent and current events, this testimony seeks to reexamine these regional developments and offer a short outlook on key issues and concerns that will affect the development of political pluralism across the region. The following issues and concerns cover a range of political, economic and social factors that must be discussed when addressing pluralism in the region:

1. A decline in political legitimacy in some countries: Political forces overseeing transitions have suffered a serious decline in political legitimacy and public confidence in a number of the countries. The lack of commitment to change, or even attempts to introduce serious changes to the political and socio-economic status quo, have resulted in serious questions about those new governments' true commitment to pluralism and democratic principles. Their refusal to exercise inclusive and transparent governance; the ongoing human rights abuses (including the excessive use of force); torture and other ill-treatment by security forces; unfair trials; and discrimination against women and other religious and ethnic minorities will continue to lead to widespread protests and eventually contribute to further destabilization in what has proven to be an exceptionally fluid environment.

2. A breakdown in security, rising instability and an increase in both human and weapons trafficking: Security has been declared the top priority for most governments across the region. There has been a serious lack of stability since the inception of the 2011 uprisings as the security situation has steadily deteriorated and been further compounded by trans-border security threats. Bomb attacks, assassinations and weapons proliferations continue to be a daily problem for most governments, and arms have flowed out across borders and found their way to radical groups operating in the Levant, Arabian Peninsula, Sinai and North Africa. Impunity for political assassinations and other politically and religiously motivated violence is also on the rise across the region. The assassination of the Brigadier General Wissam al-Hassan that took place in Beirut in October 2012 was a dangerous twist that mirrored other successful attempts in Libya, Tunisia, Iraq and Yemen. The recent assassination of Salwa Bugaighis, a Libyan human rights attorney, has also sent a chill through democracy activists across the region.

Furthermore, the ongoing conflict between the different rebel factions in Syria, coupled with the inability of the Iraqi government to establish a viable non-sectarian political system or find a workable relationship between the central government in Baghdad and the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government, is bound to fuel the sectarian wars across the border for many years to come. As a result, parts of Syria and Iraq may well be threatened by secession or disintegration and a more dangerous security situation will emerge for the citizens of these territories.

3. Economic meltdown and extreme poverty in some countries in the region: The unstable security climate is one of the main impediments to economic development, and it remains to be seen whether the current governments can continue the pace of political, economic, and social reform over the long-term that many analysts see as crucial to addressing some countries' endemic economic problems. The lack of effort to seriously address these problems does not augur well for stabilization or democratic development and could lead to more protests/insecurity if not addressed in the near-term.

4. Increased tension between Islamists, socialists, liberals and the other political entities: Islam was largely absent from the mantras that gave birth to the uprisings; nor has it been at the forefront of any of the nonviolent mass movements in the region since. Recent analysis indicates that the primary cause of discontent and mobilization that lead to regime change in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen was an outcry for justice, rights, economic and political reforms. In fact, most of the Islamist movements in these countries did not join the demonstrations in their relevant countries until sometime after they started. However, in most of the transitioning countries or in the other Arab countries that have seen some legal and political re-

form, Islamists are a force in the new political order as they sought to portray themselves as the vanguard of opposition to the status quo. Examples of this tension can clearly be seen in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. The struggle over the constitutional drafting process in these countries is a prime example of the growing divide between Islamists and liberals as they debated the inclusion of Shariah as the source of all legislation, the role of men and women, and criminalization of attacks against religion and sacred values. These debates have plagued the region for many years and will continue to be at the forefront of the region's political sphere for years to come.

5. A decline in the status of women, ethnic and religious minorities: The possibility for all citizens to participate in the management of public affairs is at the very heart of democracy. In the majority of MENA countries, however, the political arena remains largely dominated by men, and is exclusively monopolized by men in some countries. Many fear the new political order of the region will impact universal human rights negatively, especially the already-sparse legal rights and protections in place for women and ethnic minorities. As the current governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya struggled to put together their new constitutions and representative bodies, the issue of the role of women and minorities was embodied in the debates on constitutional articles and quotas.

6. Power shifts and the geopolitics of the region: The struggle for dominance in the Persian Gulf and the Levant remains unresolved, volatile and highly dangerous. For decades, there has been fierce competition between the Salafi Saudi-Wahhabi school of thought and the Shiite Islamic Republic of Iran. Both sides have provided military and political backing to their allies across the region for years. Iran on one hand has been one of Iraq and Syria's strongest allies in the Middle East and has stepped up its military and political backing to these two governments in recent years. Similarly, Iran has also provided support, financially and militarily, to Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah for decades, and is suspected of providing financial support and arms to the Houthi Shiite opposition in its struggle against the Yemeni government. Conversely, the Bahraini government and six other Gulf countries have accused Iran of meddling in its sovereignty and inciting the Shiite uprising. On the other hand, given its vast resources, Saudi Arabia could play a pivotal and decisive role in determining the trajectory of development in Syria, Egypt and Yemen. Its efforts have been aimed at stabilizing neighboring countries, particularly Yemen, Jordan and Bahrain, containing Iran's agenda in the region, and ensuring that the new political order in the countries undergoing transition does not bring the Muslim Brotherhood or an Islamic-democratic model, along the lines of Turkey's AK Party, into power; the Kingdom has serious ideological differences with these two groups.

External regional players, in particular the U.S., Europe, Russia and China and their delayed and sometimes unwelcomed engagement make them ineffective players in influencing the region's political transformation.

7. Changing regional priorities regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: The peace process between Israel and Palestine is no longer the main regional pre-occupation, with the Arab region spiraling dangerously into further conflict and sectarianism. Yet the conflict remains a destabilizing factor that is also spiraling out of control, with no end in sight to the cycle of violence, revenge, killings, kidnappings, bombings and rocket attacks. The role of Hamas in the Gaza strip, as well as the Jewish settlements in lands that are meant to be part of the future Palestinian state, have been the main deal breakers each time the peace negotiations seemed to be about to produce change. Without a political solution that includes an end to the occupation, there is no telling when the current violent cycle will end.

8. Continued resistance to U.S. involvement in the region: The U.S. presence in the region, both ideologically and physically, faces a crisis in legitimacy, where mistrust and suspicion are the dominant features of the regions' perception towards the U.S. The post-Saddam period in Iraq has proved to be filled with human tragedies and grave tactical errors; including terror, violence, political instability and a brewing, potentially catastrophic civil war. Additionally, U.S. selectivity in forcing democratization or applying sanctions and embargoes on Middle Eastern countries has been met with much criticism in the region, and it faces sustained disapproval in relation to its reaction or lack thereof to the mass revolts that spread across the region. Most importantly, the self-inflicted disappointments against America's democratic principles and international standards through the torture of prisoners and detainees at U.S.-run facilities in Iraq and Afghanistan; the holding of hundreds of persons in legal limbo at Guantánamo Bay; the turning over of foreign detainees to foreign countries known to practice torture; and the astonishing scale of the U.S. drone and surveillance programs abroad continue to be at the forefront of the regional debate over the U.S. sincerity to uphold justice.

9. Shrinking space for democracy-building programs: A growing number of governments across the region are starting to crack down on democracy-building programs



and publicly denouncing democracy assistance, describing it as illegitimate political meddling in internal affairs and a clear attempt to subvert political order. It is important to note this backlash against and skepticism of democracy aid is global and not limited to the Middle East and is best understood as likely to persist for the foreseeable future. In recent years, some governments have expelled implementers of democracy assistance programs from their soil, prohibited local groups from taking foreign funds, and prosecuted local persons who have participated in trainings conducted by international implementers. They have further formalized this backlash by passing controversial new laws which impose heightened controls on local and foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operating in the country. There can be little doubt that the proponents of this resistance are clearly learning from and feeding off one another, and we should anticipate the space for democracy promotion to continue shrinking in the immediate future. Also, within the space that some of these countries will leave slightly open for this type of programming, we will see a spike in the level of scrutiny that will be imposed by governments on the finances, implementation and participation by local actors on these programs, which can have huge implications on their effectiveness.

Transition to democratic governance is not easy or fast, and the path to introducing and implementing democratic and political reforms varies across countries. It is difficult to predict how long the transformation of the region will take and how far it will go. However, the regional upheaval is far from over and the highly motivated young generation who is on the forefront of the call for transformation will continue to challenge the present circumstances and guard the flame of change. To remain effective, the international community and groups that promote democracy must come to grips with these new trends and the complicated history of democracy promotion and genuinely rethink their strategies of engagement. There are clear signs of a decline in the legitimacy of democratic systems in many parts of the region, including a crisis in representation, poor voter turnout at elections and referenda, a loss of trust due to poor performance by political parties, corruption, severe dissatisfaction among young people and an increase in human loss due to ongoing armed conflicts. It is critical that democracy promotion move beyond electoral politics and mobilization of the streets to enabling human rights, physical well-being and human development. Unfortunately, the emphasis on democratic elections, participation by civil societies, empowerment of marginalized and ethnic groups and competition between political parties will not guarantee State responses to its citizens' needs or the social and political accountability of the ruling regime in transitioning societies. To the contrary, and as evident by the quick call for elections immediately after the fall of the former regimes in the transitioning countries, open competitive politics often accentuate social differences and lead to violent conflicts. Undoubtedly, there is a need to re-evaluate the ways in which democratization is supported and sustained. The human security challenges facing the region today require the promotion of a broader concept that includes consensus and peace-building processes, accountability, human rights protection, capacity building for social and economic development, promotion of public involvement and consultation and improvement of political and electoral processes. Disengaging or limiting democratic governance aid to the region at this juncture is a huge mistake; however given the restrictions referenced above, the international community should continue to leverage existing international frameworks, diplomacy and bilateral agreements to find ways to encourage democratic governance and the space for these programs. Efforts to plan future assistance have to take into consideration that democracy building is highly political and not only a technical exercise. Better understanding of the local context and norms, local ownership, and respect for the viewpoints and experiences of the targeted population are key principles that must guide the international community's efforts. Any intervention can easily lose credibility if perceived by the local population as ineffective or tainted by the intervening country's political self-interest.

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