

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

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DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2017

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:06 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The subcommittee will come to order.

After recognizing myself and Ranking Member Deutch—playing the part of Mr. Deutch will be our esteemed gentleman from Virginia—big day today, an election in Virginia—for 5 minutes each for our opening statements. I will then recognize other members seeking recognition for 1 minute. We will then hear from our witnesses.

And, without objection, the witnesses' prepared statements will be made a part of the record, and members may have 5 days to insert statements and questions for the record, subject to the length limitations in the rules.

The Chair now recognizes herself for 5 minutes.

Promoting democracy and governance is not only important for supporting American values, but it is also in our national security interests. The recent changes we are seeing in the Middle East and North Africa illustrate the growing demand for real reforms. The changes might be occurring slowly—and sometimes too slow, in my opinion—but the U.S. should and must answer this call.

In the long run, more democratic governments are also stable and reliable allies. Legitimate, inclusive, and responsive governments not only make better trading partners, but they also help prevent the kind of marginalization that is pushing so many to violence and extremism in the Middle East today.

For the sake of U.S. interests, we have an obligation to support democracy and governance programs, working whenever and wherever possible to bolster civic institutions and electoral processes, to share best practices for rooting out corruption, for strengthening the rule of law, and to build the kind of support for democracy that can withstand the ups and downs of difficult transitions.

I commend IRI, NDI, IFES, and Freedom House for their tremendous work, not only in countries where they are welcomed openly but also inside and on the margins of conflict zones, where they empower stakeholders and prepare them for the next stage.

The ranking member and I have been lucky to witness firsthand some of your efforts when we travel throughout the region. Just recently, IRI and NDI hosted a roundtable with young Jordanian women leaders who are doing remarkable work as they seek a better future.

My staff was also encouraged by the work of IFES in a trip to Tunisia last year, where they were briefed on their electoral programs and assistance with the process of decentralization.

And Freedom House continues to be a bastion of liberty and democracy throughout the world. Your reports have been instrumental in formulating policies and advocating for things like freedom of the press, digital media, and civil liberties.

But despite all of these efforts, what always seems to be missing from our end is a consistent and patient U.S. strategy that outlines our long-term democracy and governance programs, our goals, and how we can achieve them.

Just in the past 4 years, our democracy and governance, D&G, assistance to the MENA region has varied widely, from about \$200 million in fiscal year 2015 to \$500 million in fiscal year 2017 to \$300 million in the fiscal year 2018 request.

While some variance in approach is to be expected, especially across administrations, being more consistent in our messaging and in our assistance must be prioritized. We need to be consistent about what we expect from our partners, making clear in no uncertain terms that any kind of repression will have consequences.

We need to hold governments accountable and call out our friends and allies when we see any kind of democracy backsliding. We need to find ways to keep our democracy and governance assistance, D&G, at steady levels, build on prior achievements, and not let progress fall by the wayside.

We need to prioritize the participation of youth, of women and minorities in civic life. And we need to lay the groundwork so that when the inevitable democratic setback does happen, our programming has made institutions and communities stronger, more resilient, and better able to withstand democratic challenges.

As we look across the region today, there are no shortages of these challenges.

In Lebanon, despite many hailing its democratic process, we just saw the Prime Minister resign because of Iran and Hezbollah's influence in the government.

In Libya, despite successes at the local and municipal levels, rival factions continue to spar over the role of the national military.

In Tunisia, the large majority of citizens are increasingly frustrated about the direction of the transition, including a recently passed reconciliation law that could let public officials off the hook for corruption.

In Egypt, space for civil society has all but disappeared, as the Sisi government silences even the most innocuous criticism. Rumors that Egypt may amend its NGO law should not be taken seriously until we see tangible progress. We have seen this bait-and-switch strategy too many times before with the Egyptians.

And I am increasingly concerned that more countries like Tunisia, with its draft NGO law, will take a page out of Egypt's playbook.

With countries all over the region struggling to implement reforms, we must make sure that our programming is moving in the right direction, both in focus and in intensity. We cannot let the short-term wins come at the expense of our long-term goals. We must be patient, consistent, and concentrated on promoting democracy and governance for those fighting for those ideals and for our own U.S. interests.

I am so pleased to have our four witnesses here today from organizations doing this work on the ground. I look forward to hearing about the challenges that you are facing as well as any recommendations that you may make for Congress and the administration.

And, with that, I am so pleased to yield to today's ranking member, Mr. Connolly, my friend from Virginia.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you. And thank you, my friend from Florida. We are going to miss you in this body. But thank you for convening today's hearing.

And thank you so much to our witnesses for participating.

They represent four organizations that do America proud. I have had the privilege of visiting with NDI and IRI and Freedom House and others all over the world, from Sri Lanka to Mongolia, to Ukraine, to Georgia. And, you know, they are a beacon of hope in those countries, and they represent America's best.

As Members of Congress and as Representatives of the American people, we here in Congress must reaffirm the values upon which our Nation was founded, especially when the Trump administration neglects to do so. Our constituents believe that all people should enjoy the basic freedoms of speech, expression, religion, and freedom from tyranny, oppression, torture, and discrimination.

American foreign policy should reflect and promote those core values, not only because it is the right thing to do but also because it serves our national interests. The hard truth is that, when the United States does not act as a forceful advocate for those principles and our interests abroad, we leave a vacuum. And when U.S. leadership retreats, adversaries who do not share those interests and those core values are all too happy to fill that vacuum.

Ultimately, that endangers the United States' security. Violent extremist ideologies that have given birth to al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other terrorist organizations spread freely where democratic governance is weak, justice uncertain, and legal avenues for change scarce.

The disease plaguing societies across the Middle East is poor governance and unrepresentative leadership and the lack of political space. But we can treat this disease through our efforts to reduce poverty, expand opportunity, nurture societies that respect fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, facilitate broadly representative government institutions, and minimize corruption.

While the U.S. has always allocated significant resources to supporting democracy and good governance programs in the region, the willingness of our leaders to publicly call for respect for human rights has been equally important. After all, words matter.

That is why many of us are deeply troubled by this administration's approach, which disinvests in democracy promotion and remains silent in the face of democratic backsliding. President

Trump's budget would have slashed democracy assistance to the region by a staggering \$200 million. And raising the issue of human rights seems to have disappeared from our regional foreign policy agenda.

Beyond funding, President Trump has declined to invest in the human resources necessary to carry out the State Department and USAID's mission. At State, only 4 of 22 assistant secretary vacancies are filled—4 of 22. And the Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs still lacks a nominee. At USAID, only 1 person has even been nominated to fill the 10 deputy and assistant administrator positions.

President Trump has failed to nominate Ambassadors for five key countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, and his incoherent foreign policies drove the charge d'affaires, the United States charge, in Doha to resign. We have hollowed out diplomatic presences and made it more difficult to implement comprehensive and sustained democracy and governance programs.

We are already witnessing the effects of the Trump administration's retreat. On President Trump's first foreign trip, he failed to raise human rights concerns in Saudi Arabia, in striking contrast to his predecessor. Just this week, there have been mass arrests of Saudi Arabian royals, ministers, and businessmen in a supposed anti-corruption purge, but critics warn that this crackdown may be a strategy for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to consolidate power and silence political opposition.

Tragically, the Middle East and North Africa are home to some of the least democratic governments in the world. Therefore, U.S. support for democracy is that much more critical.

I am a proud member of the House Democracy Partnership, which works with partner countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon to strengthen democratic legislatures, with support from the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, both of which do great work.

It is through organizations like these represented today that we train the next generation of women for political leadership, promote programs that counter violent extremism, provide governance training to communities in liberated areas of Syria so they can be more resilient in the face of extremist groups.

Citizens must be reassured that, at the end of the day, our Government is working and working for them. There is no better way to ensure that this is the case than by supporting local governments.

During my 14 years serving in local government, I was constantly reminded of how immediately one's performance is judged, rewarded, or punished. Everyone knows where you live. The accountability is absolute. Democracy is built from the bottom up, not the top down.

These important efforts contribute to long-term stability in a region that desperately needs it. A consistent, effective, and sustained strategy is crucial to reflect our Nation's commitment to universal values of freedom and equality and to treat the disease of oppression and disenfranchisement that has helped breed violent extremism in the region.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses, Madam Chairman, regarding how democracy and governance work is being protected

by the United States Government and promoting our national interest in this critical region.

And I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you for your opening statement, Mr. Connolly.

I now recognize the members for any opening statements they would like, and I currently have Mr. Rohrabacher and Mr. Cicilline on deck, if that—and Mr. Issa. So we will start with Mr. Rohrabacher.

Thank you, Dana.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much.

Years ago, of course, I was in the Reagan administration. I worked in the Reagan White House for 7½ years. And when we came there from around the United States to be part of that new administration, we were determined to defeat the number-one enemy of freedom in the world, our idea we had to prioritize, and our priority was to bring down the Soviet Union.

And that is what we did. I think it was one of the greatest accomplishments I have ever seen in my lifetime, of bringing down the Soviet Union without a confrontation between Russia and the United States. That is because Ronald Reagan did make it democracy versus communism and freedom versus tyranny. But when we were in the White House, we made sure that we were not going to have an overthrow of a less-than-free country and have it replaced with a communist dictatorship.

Today, radical Islamic terrorism is the number-one threat to the civilized world. And radical Islam manifests itself when it takes over a government with what you would call radical Islamic fascism. So, whatever we do to try to promote democracy—and I agree with the sentiments that have been expressed—let us not do it in a way that radical Islamic terrorists will take over governments that are flawed.

And that is a great challenge that we have, because if we become too idealistic and we end up promoting communism during the Cold War or fascism before that because we have overthrown and hurt and undermined governments that are, yes, not acceptable by our standards but better than communism or better than radical Islamic terrorism, then we have failed.

So I enjoyed Mr. Connolly's remarks, and I think that we have to take that idealism but also take it with pragmatism.

Thank you very much.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. Cicilline of Rhode Island.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen and Ranking Member Deutch, for calling this important and very timely hearing today.

And thank you to our acting ranking member, Mr. Connolly, for his thoughtful opening statement.

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing today and providing your testimony but, more importantly, for the extraordinary work that you do around the world.

In 2011, I was a fairly new member of this subcommittee, and, like many of us here, I watched the unrest in the Arab world, what we now know as the Arab Spring, with a mix of hope and fear—

hope that millions of people who suffered under authoritarian repression in the region would finally be heard and able to escape this repression that has been so endemic to the region. My fear was that the hopes and dreams of millions of Arab men and women would be crushed by the entrenched systems of corruption that have been in place for so long.

Since 2011, millions of people have lost their lives in the fight for freedom in the Middle East. Unfortunately, terrorists and extremists have taken advantage of these genuine movements for civil and human rights and sow chaos and murder and further oppression, the very things so many hoped to escape.

There are some points of light amidst the darkness, most notably in Tunisia. But, as our witnesses' written testimony points out, the Middle East region today remains beset by corruption, authoritarianism, and repression. And I fear that the lack of leadership we have from this administration on these issues leaves American national security interests exposed to the chaos and uncertainty that authoritarianism breeds.

I look forward to the witnesses' testimony today, and I hope that we may shed some light on constructive ways the United States can support democracy and good governance in the region.

And I thank the witnesses again and yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Cicilline.

Mr. Issa of California.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Madam Chair.

During the questioning, I certainly hope that we will spend more than a little time on the current crisis in Lebanon. As I think all of our witnesses today but particularly our two democracy-oriented ones go, Lebanon has for generations had a delicate balance between more than 17 confessionals. That balance has worked because election law has allowed representation of Druze, Shia, Sunni, Christians of several sects, and the like.

In a recent change in the election law agreed by the various parties, it became clear that the attempt or the belief by some was that Christians would have a greater share, while, in fact, the recognition was that the Shia Hezbollah-backed segment also believed that they would gain a functional majority. It now appears, with the resignation and exile of the Prime Minister, that that belief is very possible in 2018.

At the close of a long battle against ISIS in which both the Lebanese Armed Forces and Hezbollah engaged on the Lebanese-Syrian border against ISIS forces, it now appears as though the fight has turned internally. And I would like to have as much information given to us that we can then turn into policy. Because the United States is a major supporter of democracy in Lebanon, of the Lebanese Armed Forces, and of Lebanese universities, and that has always been based on their delicate balance and their ability to continue with it.

And thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. A valuable contribution. Thank you, Mr. Issa.

And now it is a delight to present our witnesses.

First, we would like to welcome back Mr. Scott Mastic, the new vice president for programs at the International Republican Institute.

Congrats on your recent promotion, Scott.

Prior to this position, Mr. Mastic served as IRI's director for the Middle East and North Africa region.

We look forward to hearing your testimony.

Next, I am pleased to welcome back Mr. Leslie Campbell, who serves as the National Democratic Institute's senior associate and regional director for the Middle East and North Africa programs. Mr. Campbell has directed programs in the region since 1996.

Thank you for being here this morning, sir.

And, third, I would like to welcome Zeinab Abdelkarim, who serves as the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, IFES, regional director for Middle East and North Africa programs. Previously, Ms. Abdelkarim served as deputy chief of party in Yemen and as deputy director for Middle East programs for IFES.

We welcome you here today.

And, finally, we would like to welcome Dr. Robert Herman, vice president for international programs and for emergency assistance programs and multilateral initiatives at Freedom House. Prior to his current position at Freedom House, Dr. Herman worked for the State Department, USAID, Management Systems International, and many other organizations.

We thank you for your service, sir, and we look forward to hearing your testimony.

And, Mr. Mastic, we will start with you.

And, as I said at the beginning, all of your prepared remarks will be made a part of the record.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF MR. SCOTT MASTIC, VICE PRESIDENT FOR PROGRAMS, INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE

Mr. MASTIC. Thank you. Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Congressman Connolly, members of the committee, it is my pleasure to testify before you today. I will offer summary remarks to the written statement submitted for the record.

It is no secret that democracy in the Middle East and North Africa has faced formidable obstacles since 2011. Having said that, many people talk about the Arab Spring as if it was the last hope for democracy in the Middle East. I prefer instead to think of it as the first convulsion of democratic change in a part of the world where, with the exception of Israel, democracy has been notably absent.

It is tempting to look at failing states in Libya, Syria, and Yemen and conclude that rule by strongmen is preferable to chaos. Yet such an approach does not advance the long-term interests of the United States or our allies. Rather, improved governance and strengthened democratic values are central to defeating the threats posed by radical Islamism.

At IRI, we think the United States must pursue a smart approach to democracy and governance, to advance democratic gains where possible, and that democracy and governance assistance has a critical role to play in stabilizing conflict zones.

With respect to democratic gains, we must act to ensure that Tunisia's democratic progress becomes more consolidated. Other positive developments that deserve our support include allowing civil society to petition on legislative matters in Morocco and vibrant debates over the merits of decentralized government occurring in multiple countries.

Perhaps the most important achievement of the Arab Spring is the role of young, emerging leaders working within civil society and the space that is being created by new dynamism, even in countries like Lebanon, where the pervasive reach of Hezbollah poses an ever-present threat.

IRI is supporting democratic gains across the region by training women to be strong advocates and successful elected officials, supporting up-and-coming civil society leaders, advancing decentralization by strengthening sub-national governance, and working with political stakeholders to compete within the bounds of the democratic process.

Regrettably, the last years have also produced horrific, violent conflict and security vacuums. Working to stabilize these areas of conflict requires our urgent attention. While policymakers often focus on maintaining security through military and intelligence assistance, IRI augments these efforts by focusing on legitimate citizen-responsive governance as a means to combat violent extremism.

At IRI, we believe that good governance delivery is a central factor in shaping the potential for conflict and violence. Successful governance requires acting in good faith, creating nondiscriminatory policies, providing equal opportunity, focusing on jobs and service delivery, being responsive to citizens, and punishing corruption and incompetence.

These principles are also crucial to helping countries get out of conflict. To offer one example, in Iraq, the success of ISIS was directly tied to marginalization of the country's Sunni population. With the defeat of ISIS, it is crucial that we now move quickly to help key provinces build more inclusive, effective governing systems. It is also crucial that we support local decision-makers and institutions against the negative influence of Iran, which continues to advance its hegemonic ambitions on the region.

There are two challenges I want to address briefly.

The first is the trend of constricting civil society space as a result of draconian NGO laws. Egypt's once vibrant human rights and democracy community has been all but silenced by a new NGO law that gives the Egyptian Government sweeping powers. In practice, the law makes it virtually impossible for Egyptian NGOs to operate legally. Egypt, regrettably, is a leader in this regard, but there are signs other countries may enact similar laws and that a trend is emerging.

A final challenge lies here at home. There are government regulations that prescribe how donors should select appropriate choice of instrument for democracy assistance programs. IRI and most democracy NGOs agree with Congress' recognition that there are unique benefits of assistance mechanisms for democracy programs.

IRI's long-term approach, our network of trusted local partners, and our invaluable people-to-people relationships gives us a unique

advantage in delivering value for the American people and serves U.S. interests well beyond the scope of individual programs.

Madam Chairman, my recommendations are as follows: First, we would like to see greater support for democracy and governance programs, participatory governance, anti-corruption, democratic elections, and political leadership; second, we would like to see a prioritization of sub-national governance programs that help to stabilize environments plagued by conflict; third, IRI calls on the U.S. Government to raise the region's constricting space for civil society, both privately and publicly, with counterparts; and fourth, Congress should provide greater oversight of choice of instrument to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent in the most efficient and results-oriented way.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mastic follows:]



Congressional Testimony

Democracy and Governance in the Middle East and North Africa

Testimony by Scott Mastic
Vice President for Programs
International Republican Institute

U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

November 7, 2017

Introduction: Why Invest in Democracy and Governance?

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, Members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to testify before you today on the topic of democracy and governance in the Middle East and North Africa.

It is no secret that democracy in the Middle East and North Africa has faced formidable obstacles since the Arab Spring in 2011. In light of the tumultuous developments of the past six years—ranging from political and sectarian polarization to a constricting civil society space to the horrific civil wars and mass atrocities in Syria and Yemen—we cannot simply speak in terms of universal values or political ideals when tackling the subject of democratic development in the region.

In order to fully appreciate the complexity of this issue, we must reflect upon the situation prior to 2011, analyze how it impacted the ensuing years and consider the trajectory we appear to be on today. Many people talk about the Arab Spring as if it was the last hope for democracy in the Middle East. I prefer to think of it as the first convulsion of democratic change in a part of the world where—with the exception of Israel—democracy has been notably absent. This democratic deficit—combined with deep-rooted social fissures throughout the region—produced the challenging dynamics that confound the region today.

It is tempting to look at failing states in Libya, Syria and Yemen and conclude that rule by strongmen is preferable to chaos. Yet such an approach does not advance the long-term interests of the United States or our allies, and has been proven to be an unreliable tactic for confronting pressing strategic challenges such as the continued rise of violent extremism. The continuing pathologies of the region like extremism are functions of governance failures and the legacy of decades of Arab autocracy. Improved governance and strengthened democratic values, like pluralism, moderation and tolerance are central to defeating the threats posed by radical Islamism. Citizen-responsive governments make it more difficult for the Islamic State (ISIS) to exploit public disillusionment stemming from sectarian fissures, demographic grievances and feelings of societal alienation or disenfranchisement.

Today I will argue that the United States must pursue a smart democracy and governance approach to advance democratic gains where possible, and will make the case that democracy and governance assistance has a critical role to play in stabilizing conflict zones.

Supporting Democratic Gains

Reflecting upon the changes that have taken place in the region since 2011, there are several promising advances that, although by no means assured, are worthy of mention.

Much has been made of Tunisia as the lone success story of the Arab Spring, which is interesting in light of the fact that IRI's own public opinion polling shows that the Tunisian public is not yet satisfied with how democracy is delivering. Tunisia has faced multiple setbacks, including political assassinations, high-profile terrorist attacks, economic stagnation and popular protest movements. Despite these challenges, Tunisians have had peaceful transfers of power through two democratic national elections, ratified the most

progressive constitution in the Arab World, and continue to address political differences peacefully through formalized democratic process, negotiation and consensus. The fact that Tunisia's largest secular political party has entered into a governing coalition with the country's most prominent Islamist party makes Tunisia a unique test case for democratic development in the Arab world, and stands in stark contrast to the case of Egypt, where the Muslim Brotherhood made a power grab and railroaded a constitution through in 2012.

We must act to ensure that Tunisia's democratic progress becomes more consolidated. The country is progressing towards local and regional elections, passed historic legislation regarding violence against women and has launched a "war on corruption" by arresting prominent individuals tied to the old order. At IRI, we think that increased support for good governance, anti-corruption and democratic elections is crucial to keeping Tunisia on a democratic track.

Tunisia is not the only country in the region making progress on issues such as women's rights. Lebanon and Jordan recently rescinded regressive laws that allowed rapists to expiate their crime by marrying their victims, an atrocious practice that must be consigned to the dustbin of history. Likewise, as I am sure you are all aware, after years of recalcitrance Saudi Arabia has finally granted women the right to drive. This may seem to be a small accomplishment, but for women activists who brought ostracism upon themselves and their families because of their involvement in this fight, attaining the right to freedom of movement represents an important victory.

Other positive developments in the region include the codification of the right of civil society organizations to petition and table motions on legislative matters in Morocco, as well as an ongoing and vibrant debate over the merits of decentralized government in countries including Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. In what is perhaps the most important achievement of the Arab Spring, there is a palpable vibrancy in the region's civil society that was previously barely noticeable. The role of young, emerging leaders working within the civil society space is bringing a new dynamism to politics and challenging the old order, even in countries like Lebanon where the pervasive reach of Hezbollah poses an ever-present threat.

IRI is supporting democratic gains across the region by training women to be strong advocates and successful elected officials; supporting up-and-coming civil society leaders to serve as conduits of citizen interests; advancing decentralization by strengthening subnational governance; and working with political stakeholders to compete more effectively within the bounds of the democratic process.

So that's the positive. Regrettably, the last years have also produced horrific violent conflict and security vacuums that are being exploited by radical Islamists including ISIS. We cannot ignore the degree to which political dysfunction in Libya, for example, impacts the potential for democratic consolidation in Tunisia, or the degree to which the civil war in Syria drives deepening polarization between Shia and Sunni communities in Iraq. Working to stabilize these areas of conflict requires our urgent attention. Today, I would like to speak about the

important role democracy and governance plays in building resiliency and stabilizing conflict zones.

Stabilizing Fragile and Failing States

IRI works in countries around the world—and in the Middle East in particular—that suffer from violent extremism and political instability. While policymakers often focus on maintaining security through military, intelligence and law enforcement assistance in these countries, IRI augments and undergirds these efforts by focusing on legitimate, citizen-responsive governance as a means to combat violent extremism.

Poor governance is a leading cause of conflict. Corruption, the abuse of power and economic mismanagement are easy predictors of future instability. These factors lead to marginalization and alienation. We should not forget that the catalyst for the Arab Spring in Tunisia was systemic corruption by the former dictator Zine Abidine Ben Ali.

While there are myriad complex historical and social factors that combine to generate violent extremism, at IRI we believe that governance delivery is a central factor shaping the potential for conflict and violence. Successful governance requires acting in good faith, crafting non-discriminatory policies, providing equal opportunity (even if opportunities are scarce), focusing on jobs and service delivery, being responsive to citizens and punishing corruption and incompetence.

These principles are also crucial to helping countries get out of conflict. By working to support legitimate governance that responds to citizen needs and provides effective mechanisms for debate, decision-making and conflict resolution, democracy and governance assistance helps countries emerge from conflict and prevents ISIS and similar groups from further undermining weak governing systems.

In Iraq, the previous success of ISIS was directly tied to marginalization of the country's Sunni population. I don't have to tell you the enormous cost this has generated not only for Iraq, but for the United States and regional and global security. With the defeat of ISIS in Iraq, it is crucial that we move quickly to help key provinces build more inclusive, effective governing institutions. It is also crucial that we support local decision makers and institutions against the negative influence of Iran which continues to advance its hegemonic ambitions on the region.

In Libya, dysfunction at the national level and resulting violence provided conditions ripe for exploitation by radical Islamists. However, as the level of violence has not reached the intensity seen in Syria and Yemen, effective subnational governance efforts with municipal councils have managed to take root. IRI surveys reveal that municipal governments are viewed as more legitimate by Libyans than other traditional sources of legitimacy, including tribal leaders. Effective governance by municipal councils makes Libyan communities more resilient to groups like ISIS even in the face of continued political gridlock at the national level. Local governance has also proven to be an asset in strengthening Libya's democratic

development, as it has allowed Libyans to experience the benefits of democratic institutions first hand within their communities.

IRI's programs prioritize a governance approach in conflict-ridden environments to fill security vacuums and build resiliency. Whether it is the post-ISIS cities of Mosul or Sirte, lasting peace cannot be achieved without citizen responsive governance.

In Iraq, this means working with provincial councils to help decision makers understand their governing roles and constitutional mandate, and supporting them to become more inclusive in their decision making.

In Libya, this means working with municipal councilors, mayors and community groups to help municipal government realize its mandate and mobilizing local interests to effectively advocate to the national level. Democracy and governance efforts of this type contribute to regional stability and make democratic gains more sustainable.

Madame Chairman there are two additional challenges I want to address briefly.

The Constricting Civil Society Space

The first is the trend of constricting civil society space as a result of draconian nongovernmental organization laws and other rules that make association and advocacy nearly impossible. Allowing only pro-regime entities access to the public space has a long history in certain countries of the Middle East and North Africa. As a consequence of the Arab Spring, however, nervousness about the potential for similar uprisings has generated an even greater crackdown on civil society in some countries.

Certain Gulf Cooperation Council countries allow for almost no role by independent civil society. Since 2013, Egypt's once vibrant human rights and democracy community has been all but silenced. In January 2017, a new law was passed that gives the Egyptian government broad discretion to deny registration of any non-governmental organization (NGO), heavily restricts the ability of NGOs to receive funds, and prohibits activities based on sweeping language regarding national security. In practice, the law makes it impossible for Egyptian NGOs to operate legally, leaving them in a sort of purgatory whereby the government has the power to shutter organizations and prosecute individuals arbitrarily.

In the political space, the Egyptian government has silenced any type of meaningful opposition. In May 2017, Khaldi Ali—a former presidential candidate and prominent human rights lawyer considered to be a possible contender against President Abdel Fatah El Sisi in the 2018 elections—was convicted on the specious charge of “violating public morals.” In September, authorities ordered the closure of Al-Balad library, a bookstore and cultural center owned by the president of the Egypt Social Democratic Party. The government has become intolerant of criticism even from traditionally pro-government figures: Naguib Sawris, the founder of the Free Egyptians Party which holds a parliamentary bloc, was ousted, likely because of his criticism of the government's economic mismanagement.

This is not to understate the legitimate threats to Egypt's national security. The question is whether draconian restrictions on civil society help countries better deal with these threats, or if such actions actually exacerbate them. In Egypt, more than a quarter of its 95 million plus population lives below the World Bank designated poverty line¹, and 29 percent of children under the age of five suffer stunted growth as a result of malnutrition.² Groups working in the civil society space help address these enormous development challenges and fill a void that cannot be filled by the state. Moreover, by silencing groups promoting inter-communal coexistence, women's rights and human rights, Egypt is removing arrows from its quiver in the fight against radical Islamism.

Egypt may be a particularly egregious example of this trend, but it is not alone. Libya, in 2016, considered an NGO law of equally troubling proportions that stalled mostly due to national political dysfunction. The number of attacks on NGOs and human rights activists by militias and quasi-government forces has also been on the rise in Libya. As in Egypt, these groups are providing critical services that are not being met by national institutions. In eastern Libya, the security services have increasingly subjected civil society groups (particularly those that have relationships with international organizations) to surveillance and harassment.

Civil society is under constant threat in the region's open war zones of Syria and Yemen. In Syria, squeezed by both extremist groups and a predatory authoritarian state, civil society activists providing urgent humanitarian relief are in a state of constant peril. Assassinations of civil society activists by ISIS and other extremist groups are commonplace, while one needn't look further than the White Helmets to understand how airstrikes by Syrian dictator Bashar Al Assad threaten this group.

Madam Chairman, I've addressed some of the main challenges facing the Middle East and North Africa, but I would also like to mention a final challenge that lies here at home. This challenge relates to the United States government's approach to supporting democracy and governance.

Choice of Instrument: Grants versus Contracts

There are government regulations that proscribe how donors should select the appropriate choice of instrument—assistance (grants and cooperative agreements) versus acquisition (contract) mechanisms—for foreign assistance programs. IRI and most democracy and governance focused NGOs agree with Congress's recognition that there are unique benefits of assistance mechanisms being the choice of instrument to implement democracy assistance programs. However, as IRI has testified previously, in recent years we have observed an apparent preference by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for high-dollar acquisition mechanisms to carry out these programs.

¹ *Egypt, Arab Rep.* The World Bank Data. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/egypt-arab-rep>

² *Nutrition at a Glance: Egypt.* The World Bank.

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/NUTRITION/Resources/281846-1271963823772/Egypt.pdf>

While there are instances when an acquisition mechanism may be appropriate—for example, procuring goods or services for government-to-government support—in most instances assistance mechanisms are better-suited to provide the flexibility needed to conduct programs that occur in a political context. This is especially important in the fluid political environments of the Middle East and North Africa.

The ability to navigate shifting political landscapes is centrally important to delivering impactful programs, and requires a mechanism that can respond to events with agility. In addition to providing that vital source of adaptability, assistance mechanisms also prevent implementers from being seen as agents of the U.S. government: the co-creation elements of assistance mechanisms allow for more responsive and localized understanding of complex environments to design and carry out effective, sustainable support that is driven by local needs.

As a mission-driven organization, IRI, like other non-profit democracy and governance organizations, has long-term goals and relationships that make us uniquely equipped to understand and adapt to the vagaries of political change. In the nearly 80 countries where IRI works, we are used to seeing decision makers change, governing priorities change, political calculations change. IRI's long-term approach, our network of trusted local partners and our invaluable people-to-people relationships gives us a unique advantage in delivering value for the American people's investment in foreign assistance—serving U.S. interests well beyond the scope of individual programs.

Madame Chairman my recommendations for future support for democracy and governance in the Middle East and North Africa are as follows:

Recommendations

- (1) **Advance democratic gains where we can.** It is important to consolidate democratic gains in Tunisia and advance good governance, women's empowerment, youth inclusion and civil society across the region. We would like to see greater support for participatory governance, anti-corruption, democratic elections and political leadership programs.
- (2) **Stabilize fragile and failing states by investing in democracy and governance.** Violent extremism is an enduring pathology of the region, and is a function of governance failures and the legacy of decades of autocracy. To move beyond this situation, democracy and governance work must be recognized as an important tool in the fight against violent extremism. Specifically, we would like to see a prioritization of subnational governance programs that help stabilize environments plagued by conflict.
- (3) **Address the constricting civil society space.** Congress and President Trump's administration have an important role to play in preventing the further erosion of freedom of association, speech and assembly throughout the region, and especially

among key U.S. allies. Democratic values are who we are as a people, and IRI calls on the U.S. government to raise the region's constricting space for civil society both privately and publicly with counterparts.

- (4) **Increase oversight on choice of instrument.** Congress should provide greater oversight of the choice of instrument for democracy and governance programs to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent in the most efficient and results-oriented way.

Conclusion

Madame Chairman, Ranking Member Deutch, Members of the Committee: thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony today. There is no question that there are formidable challenges in the Middle East and North Africa region. We ask that democracy and governance assistance be counted as an important tool in responding to those challenges. Whether it is instilling greater confidence in government, defeating violent extremism, or advancing the rights of women, youth and other marginalized groups, a smart democracy and governance approach is crucial to advancing the interests of the United States and delivering value for the American people.



Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Great recommendations. Thank you so much,
 Mr. Mastic.
 Mr. Campbell.

**STATEMENT OF MR. LESLIE CAMPBELL, SENIOR ASSOCIATE
 AND REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH
 AFRICA PROGRAMS, NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE**

Mr. CAMPBELL. Thank you, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Acting Ranking Member Connolly, and members of the committee.

It is sometimes posited that the Arab Spring unleashed a new era of instability in the Middle East by toppling repressive but “stable” dictators. However, this often-stated thesis collapses under scrutiny, as these supposedly stable regimes are increasing the locus of conflict and regional disarray.

On the other hand, the countries that undertook limited democratic reform or were relatively well governed prior to the 2011 uprisings—Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, and Lebanon—have demonstrated resistance to destabilizing forces and continue on a path of limited liberalization, if not deep reform. Countries with long histories of authoritarian government or dictatorship—Libya, Syria, and Egypt, as examples—are in various states of societal and political crisis.

In other words, more democratic and open government is actually correlated with the relatively peaceful parts of the region, while authoritarianism and repression have spawned and furthered instability and conflict. And it is in this context that I want to describe NDI’s programs in democracy and governance, both successes and challenges.

Across the region, a continuing youth bulge, matched by dim economic prospects, is creating conditions conducive to turmoil. Sixty percent of the population in the region is under the age of 30, and half of these are just entering the workforce. However, unemployment in the MENA region is twice the global average.

A further overlay in this complex regional tapestry is the rapid growth of Russian-style crackdowns in civil society. Egypt has become one of the world’s most hostile nations to civil society activism, and even Tunisia, Morocco, and Jordan have at least discussed laws that would restrict civil society and foreign funding.

Despite the obstacles, though, Middle Easterners do not perceive that they are witnessing the end of reform and modernization, and NDI is just as engaged across the region as ever, with requests for support outstripping funding and human resources.

Some examples of these programs: Campaign schools to train the next generation of women political leaders; help women counter violence, which is exacerbated in conflict zones; teaching the principles of democracy and open debate to youth so they become invested in their country’s future instead of radical ideologies and groups; providing governance training to communities in liberated areas of Syria so they can become more stable and resilient against extremist groups; helping ease tension between refugees and host countries in Jordan and Lebanon, where displaced persons are equivalent to one-fourth of the total population; election monitoring in Jordan and Tunisia to give voters confidence in election out-

comes; and parliamentary support programs in Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco.

NDI also spends a lot of time emphasizing engagement with youth and marginalized groups like LGBTI persons. For example, Jordan's USAID-funded Ana Usharek, which means "I engage" in Arabic, a university- and school-based youth civic education program, involves over 24,000 students from 28 universities and 330 public schools across the country. Ana Usharek's success in Jordan has spawned similar programs in Morocco and the West Bank that reach youth in their teens.

To date, NDI's State Department-funded Regional Campaign Schools program has involved over 400 participants from 13 countries representing 92 political parties. Thirty-two of these participants reported running for political office in the last 1½ years, with 10 winning, while another 21 reported running for other elected positions such as university bodies, unions, and political parties.

NDI also continues its National Endowment for Democracy-funded online Arabic language training site, Taalam/Sharek, which means "learn and participate," which has had more than 1.6 million visits and 132,000 materials downloaded since its launch just last year.

The results of this modest investment: The countries that have chosen the route of reform have not generated hundreds of thousands of refugees, typically don't allow or host extremist groups and let them use their territory, and are not at war with the U.S.

In an era of tight budgets, the U.S. Congress can rest assured that modest investments in democracy and governance deliver solid results.

To that end, I would recommend: That the U.S. continue to invest in democracy programs in the countries that have made a long-term commitment to reform and which have shown positive results. That list includes, in my opinion, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, and Lebanon. And I look forward to discussing Lebanon further;

That countries emerging from conflict, such as Iraq, enjoy increased support for the strengthening of inclusive institutions and structures of governance, which will help ensure that extremists do not regain a foothold;

That democrats and local activists in countries in conflict like Yemen, Syria, and Libya continue to enjoy the support of the U.S. Government as they strive to create and sustain democratic subcultures at the local level while they wait for a national peace;

That democracy programs enjoy multiyear funding streams that allow longer-term investments in programs and relationships and avoid the stop-and-go that often happens;

That money approved by Congress for democracy programs be spent by the administration in an expedited fashion;

That Congress and the administration protest unreasonable laws or limits on speech or organizing in civil society in the Middle East;

And, finally, that USAID- and State Department-funded democracy and governance programs be extended to the Gulf region as well, with a particular emphasis in that region on encouraging equality of women.

Thank you for allowing me and NDI to share these thoughts.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Campbell follows:]

Leslie Campbell
Senior Associate and Regional Director, Middle East North Africa
National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Tuesday, November 7, 2017

Democracy and Governance in the Middle East and North Africa

It is sometimes posited that the Arab Spring unleashed a new era of instability in the Middle East by toppling repressive but “stable” dictators. However, this oft stated thesis collapses under scrutiny as the remaining, supposedly stable regimes are increasingly the locus of conflict and regional disarray. Putting a lie to the “dictatorship equals stability” thesis, the countries that undertook limited democratic reform or were relatively well-governed prior to the 2011 uprisings -- Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon -- have demonstrated resistance to destabilizing forces and continue on a path of limited liberalization, if not deep reform. Countries with long histories of authoritarian government or dictatorship -- Libya, Syria and Egypt -- are in various states of societal and political crisis. In other words, more democratic and open government, where it exists in the Middle East, is actually correlated with the relatively peaceful parts of the region, while authoritarianism and repression have spawned and furthered instability and conflict.

Of course, any typology has exceptions. Iraq, Yemen and Bahrain have been drawn into the rift between Saudi Arabia and Iran and are increasingly influenced by powerful outside forces. Algeria and Oman, with long traditions of independence and resistance to joining regional trends, are steering a third course by avoiding Arab Spring-like protests while pursuing limited change.

Across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), a continuing youth bulge matched by dim economic prospects is creating conditions that risk new upheaval if key constituencies remain excluded from decision-making processes. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2016 *Arab Human Development Report*, 60 percent of the population in the MENA region is under the age of 30 and half of these are just entering the workforce. However, unemployment in MENA is twice the global average, regional youth voting rates are the lowest in the world and the rate of youth participation in protests is on the increase. Moreover, refugees in the region make up 57 percent of the global total while internally displaced people account for 47 percent worldwide, creating added pressures on local populations and resource distortions.

A further overlay on this complex regional tapestry is the rapid growth of Russian-style crackdowns on civil society organizations and against foreign funding in support of democracy. Egypt has become one of the world’s most hostile nations to civil society activism, and even Morocco and Jordan have discussed laws that would restrict civil society and foreign funding. In Egypt, political pluralism has been eradicated, and in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia seemingly benign internet postings that do not parrot the official line can provoke harassment or even jail. In light of the crackdown in certain countries, NDI’s approach is to work with local partners where cooperation is allowed, and rely more heavily on online engagement where conflict or political repression put local partners and activists at risk.

Despite the spectre of increased governmental restrictions and the inherent challenges of encouraging political reform in a volatile region, there are several imperatives in the realm of democracy and governance that remain as urgent today as they were pre-2011. Citizens of the Middle East do not perceive that they are witnessing the waning of demand for reform and modernization. Rather, their demands for accountability and transparency have only begun. Supporting the aspirations of young people, providing solidarity to courageous political activists who challenge the status quo and encouraging the political inclusion of marginalized women, persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons and religious and ethnic minorities is just as relevant

today as it was prior to the Arab Spring. NDI is just as engaged across the region as ever and requests for support outstrip funding and human resources.

NDI is grateful for the support from so many key partners, including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Department of State (through the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Office of Assistance Coordination), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Global Affairs Canada.

The support that NDI receives for democracy work from U.S. and international donors has never been more essential. Such support allows NDI to encourage more democracy and better governance in a tough MENA neighborhood. These programs are a cost-effective way to complement investments in diplomacy and development because if countries fail politically, all other development goals fail -- including trade, health and education. Small sums help stabilize emerging democracies, help avoid military conflict and stem refugee crises that flood international borders. Strong institutions create stronger business climates and enhance the national security interests of the U.S. and our allies throughout the Middle East and Europe. If there is one thing we have learned in this interconnected world, what happens inside these countries transcends borders and regions, especially when it comes to conflict and the flow of displaced people and refugees.

Examples of NDI programming in MENA that have impact far beyond the cost include:

- Campaign schools to train the next generation of women political leaders and help women counter violence, which is exacerbated in conflict zones;
- Teaching the principles of democracy and open debate to youth so they become invested in their country's future instead of radical ideologies and groups;
- Providing governance training to communities in liberated areas of Syria so they become stable and more resilient against extremist groups;
- Helping ease tension between refugees and host countries in Jordan and Lebanon, where displaced persons are equivalent to one-fourth of the total population;
- Election monitoring in Jordan and Tunisia to give voters confidence in election outcomes;
- Parliamentary support in Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco to encourage elected representatives to be more responsive to voters, to ease corruption, to include ethnic and marginal groups in the political process and to strengthen institutions in order to consolidate fragile democracies.

As a response to the youth bulge and the increasing political alienation of young people, NDI has emphasized engagement with youth, marginalized groups and movements outside of traditional politics and institutions. For example, Jordan's *Ana Usharek* (I Engage) university and school-based youth civic education program, involves over 24,000 students from 28 universities and 330 public schools across the country, and has spawned similar programs in Morocco and the West Bank. With the influx of 1.3 million Syrian refugees, NDI has implemented a program in northern Jordan to assist communities with Jordanian-Syrian populations to address tensions and implement joint grass-roots initiatives; to date more than 6,100 people have participated, including over 1,100 Syrians.

Activities in Algeria include more engagement with aspiring youth civic and political activists and nascent service-oriented civic groups -- including an increasing emphasis on those outside of the capital. The Institute couples this work with political party support that focuses on building trust and facilitating communication between the political elite and citizens, focusing on youth in particular. With a 15-year presence in Algeria, NDI is one of the few international groups with a formal standing in the country working equitably with the full spectrum of political actors and engaging with new constituents such as disability groups just starting to find a role in political life.

In addition to the new university program in Morocco -- which has seen application rates at double the number of spaces for the current semester -- the Institute is engaging with elected officials and community members in the north of the country. NDI addresses the drivers of radicalization and marginalization in Morocco, while also supporting civic groups that are holding local and national governments accountable on promises for youth employment, women's entrepreneurship, public input in local government actions and the inclusion of people with disabilities in municipal committees.

Unresolved open conflicts continue in Libya, Syria and Yemen, causing instability and excluding any modicum of national unity or governance. Where the Institute has had a presence on the ground, local staffing and partner engagement continues. For Syria, NDI continues to operate from Gaziantep, Turkey and works on creating "democratic subcultures" around the country by building the capacity of local councils and citizen groups through distance learning, virtual engagement and local NDI-trained technical advisors inside Syria. The Institute has worked over the last several years with dozens of local councils across opposition-held Syria, training more than 2,000 council members and staff on how to more effectively provide basic services and engage with citizens, as well as holding more than 1,000 civic education sessions that have reached more than 10,000 citizens across the country.

In Yemen, NDI staff on the ground continue to engage with political parties, youth and women, building capacity for the day that a peace agreement brings an end to active conflict. NDI conducts dialogues with political party leaders, youth, civil society organizations and women to ensure that political processes are not captured exclusively by the warring parties, militias or an entrenched political elite but are informed by a wider variety of voices and interests. A side effect of NDI's ability to convene and animate discussion among diverse, often competing political groups in Yemen is the ability to promote compromise and agreement. In Yemen, NDI has helped:

- convince political parties to stop boycotting elections in the late 1990's;
- facilitate the creation of the first secular/Islamist party coalition in the Arab world in 2001;
- broker an end to certain tribal disputes in Marib and Shabwa in 2005 and 2006;
- create a national political dialog in 2012; and
- convene senior southern (Hirak) political leaders to discuss a common platform in 2014.

The Institute continues its work in Yemen by pursuing consensus among political parties on the framework of a post-conflict political process. The outlines of a lasting agreement in Yemen are clear, even if an end to current fighting remains elusive: a national unity government, a

negotiation about regions and their powers and elections to re-legitimize the institutions of the State.

In Bahrain, Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia, demand remains high for training and mentoring in democracy-related subjects despite the constrained political space. Requests for NDI's help in these countries continues to outstrip supply. As an example, programs for Bahrain bring together moderates who are committed to promoting peaceful community cooperation, and Bahrainis have embedded with Tunisian civil society groups to gain experience. Nearly double the number of women, including several sitting municipal councilors, applied for 30 available spots in a Saudi program and over 250 Egyptians applied for slots in a training program implemented over the past year.

NDI is continuing to implement regional programs to provide support to other country-level initiatives, promote regional solidarity and create safe opportunities for sharing and lessons learning. These include regional gatherings and exchanges for campaign training and improved policy-making among party activists and leaders, as well as advocacy training and planning opportunities for marginalized groups such as LGBTI activists. To date, NDI's State Department-funded Regional Campaign Schools program has involved over 400 participants from 13 countries, representing 92 political parties and 24 civic organizations; collectively, participants report having trained more than 20,000 others in the region. Among participants, 32 reported running for political office, with 10 winning, while another 21 reported running for other elected positions, such as in university bodies, unions and political parties. The Institute also continues to maintain its National Endowment for Democracy-funded online Arabic-language training site, *Taalam/Sharek* ("Learn/Participate"), which has had more than 1.6 million visits and over 132,000 materials downloaded since its launch last year.

In Iraq, the liberation of Mosul will require action to establish meaningful and inclusive governance, keep regional forces that have fought ISIS from turning against each other and avoid a power vacuum similar to the one that originally led to the loss of the area to radical forces. NDI is preparing for post-ISIS challenges with extensive opinion research in Ninewah province and other areas formerly under, or vulnerable to these extremists, to help inform post-liberation planning and the design of conflict resolution strategies to reduce sectarian division. NDI works across the political party spectrum to encourage cross party policy working groups, support the formation of national, multi-sectarian political alliances and to advocate a full voice for Sunni, Shia and Kurds in the national decision-making process. A nationwide poll conducted by NDI in the spring of 2017 found that a new optimism among many Iraqis has opened a window of opportunity to advance Iraq's transition to democracy. Iraqis' demand for inclusive democratic institutions that deliver on citizens' high expectations has built a rare momentum for national leaders to bridge the sectarian divide and develop a strong vision for the future.

While restive Sunni-dominated western Iraq and ongoing tensions between Baghdad and the Kurdish region will remain challenges for Prime Minister Abadi, there are a number of recent positive indicators in Iraq. Abadi has announced that national and provincial elections will be held in May, 2018 and new party formations are emerging. There are a number of new initiatives to form national, multi-sectarian electoral coalitions, and political moderates, encouraged and supported by Abadi, are emboldened. Of concern, "Hash'd Al Shaabi" Iran-backed militias, formed to help liberate Mosul and western Iraq from ISIS, show increasing signs of political ambition and their history of human rights abuses sow fear in Sunni dominated regions. The recent independence plebiscite in northern Iraq, an increasingly assertive Turkey and instability

in Syria distract from the modest gains in good governance led by the surprisingly successful Abadi.

Perhaps the unlikeliest of modest success stories in the region has been Lebanon. Long dominated by neighbors and regional powers, still recovering from the effects of a long civil conflict and deeply divided, Lebanon has demonstrated surprising societal and political resilience. With agreements on the appointment of a president and prime minister, formation of a broad coalition government, and successful municipal elections in Lebanon in 2016, there was increasing hope – and likelihood – that parliamentary elections will take place in 2018 to replace the current legislature, which was elected in 2009 and has twice extended its own mandate and postponed polls. The recent news about the resignation of Prime Minister Saad Hariri and the reemergence of the intense Saudi-Iranian rivalry over influence in Lebanon puts an election -- and further progress in governance -- at grave risk.

In conclusion, it is clear that the demands for freedom and accountability did not end with the Arab Spring. But the citizens of the MENA region do not want further upheaval and revolution but would prefer gradual change -- with genuine, long lasting reforms. The proof of this thesis is the stability and relative success of the carefully liberalizing countries of the Maghreb and recent improvements in Iraq and Lebanon. What is more, encouraging and assisting democracy and good governance in the region has positive impact for a small expenditure. The countries that have chosen the route of reform have not generated hundreds of thousands of refugees, do not host or allow extremist groups to use their territory and are not at war with the U.S. or its allies. In an era of tight budgets, the U.S. Congress can rest assured that modest investments in democracy and governance deliver solid results. To that end, I would recommend:

- 1) that the U.S. continue to invest in democracy and good governance programs in the countries that have made a long term commitment to reform and which have shown positive results -- including Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon;
- 2) that countries which are emerging from conflict - such as Iraq - enjoy increased support for the strengthening of inclusive institutions and structures of governance which will help ensure that extremists do not regain a foothold;
- 3) that democrats and local activists in countries in conflict like Yemen, Syria and Libya continue to enjoy the support of the U.S. government as they strive to create and sustain "democratic subcultures" at the local level while waiting for a national peace;
- 4) that democracy programs enjoy multi-year funding streams that allow longer term investments in programs and relationships and avoid stop and go programs;
- 5) that money approved by Congress for democracy programs be spent in an expedited fashion;
- 6) that Congress and the Administration protest unreasonable laws or limits on speech, organizing or civil society activity in the Middle East and particularly criticize the unreasonable limits on foreign assistance for NGOs or NGO laws that impose impossible restrictions on activities; and

7) that USAID and State Department funded democracy and governance programs be extended to the Gulf region with particular emphasis on encouraging the equality of women.

Thank you for allowing me and NDI to share these thoughts with you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much.
And now we will hear from Ms. Abdelkarim.

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

Ms. ABDELKARIM. Madam Chairman, Acting Ranking Member Mr. Connolly, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, on behalf of IFES, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to share with you our Middle East and North Africa programs and discuss the greatest challenges to democracy in the region.

IFES work in the MENA region focuses on building the foundations that are essential to the development of civic culture and effective, resilient democratic institutions. With support from USAID, MEPI, DRL, and international donors, we work with a wide spectrum of local partners. This includes the judiciary, the legislature, civil society, independent media, and the institutions responsible for managing the electoral processes.

For example, in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen, IFES has supported electoral processes such as boundary delimitation, voter education, voter registration, vote counting, and out-of-country voting. In Lebanon, Yemen, Morocco, Libya, and elsewhere, IFES has assisted locally driven constitutional-building and election reform efforts.

IFES has also worked on greater access to the political process for persons with disability, women, youth, and other marginalized groups in countries like Syria, Libya, Morocco, and Lebanon.

Over the years, IFES has increased its collaboration with government and regional organizations, including the League of Arab States and the Organization for Electoral Management Bodies.

We operate in extremely challenging environments, where widespread and deeply rooted political unrest continue to persist. Factors that played a major role in the 2011 uprisings, such as unemployment, struggling economies, inadequate access to justice, and ineffective governance, are not sufficiently addressed. The breakdown in security and rising volatility caused by ongoing civil wars, the rise of extremist groups, and foreign intervention are daunting factors that do not promise stabilizations or democratic developments in the short term.

Despite these challenges, there is still a widespread desire for fundamental democratic ideals. And despite violent and ruthless suppression, the people of the MENA region have not surrendered their democratic aspirations.

Unfortunately, U.S. assistance to democracy and governance programming in the region has declined. We must reevaluate the way in which democracy is supported and sustained. Instead of short-term solutions, the U.S. must aim for a long-term democracy assistance strategy and continue to promote a broader notion of democratic governance that includes tolerance, consensus and peace-building, human rights protection, and capacity-building for social and economic development.

Our strategy should be grounded in realistic expectations about the pace and the course of change. We must leverage existing inter-

national frameworks, bilateral agreements, diplomacy, and development to cultivate great space for prosperity, peace, and security.

U.S. support for fundamental rights and democratic norms must be unequivocal. Therefore, pressure must be maintained on governing elites to be responsive and accountable to their citizens and to genuinely pursue democratic freedom, access to justice, and the rule of law, regardless of the governing system they choose to implement.

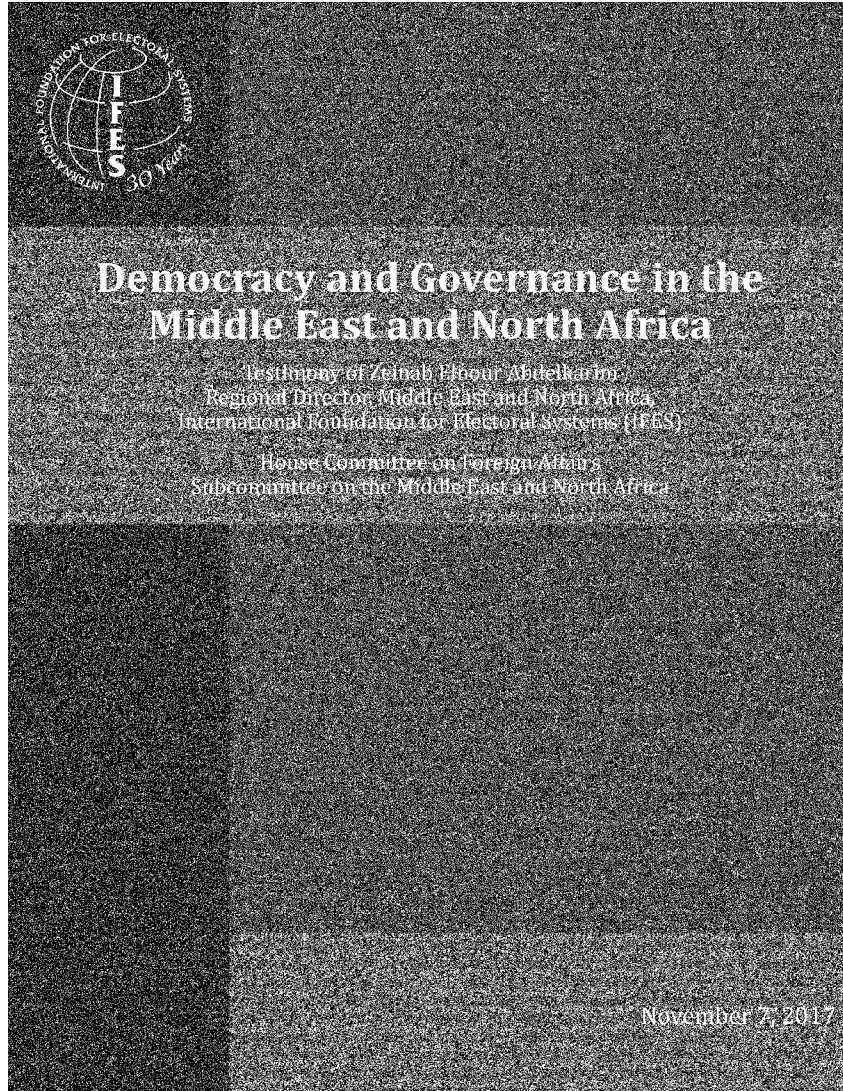
Furthermore, democracy assistance must complement, but not be eclipsed by, counterterrorism efforts and military-to-military collaboration.

We ask the U.S. Congress to continue its support to democracy programming, especially when many countries in the region will likely see national and local elections in 2018, including Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Tunis, and possibly Libya, as strengthening national institutions will help to make elections more legitimate and responsive rather than destabilizing events.

Last but not least, we continue to lean on Congress' support for robust funding levels for democracy programs and encourage you to leverage your oversight role in ensuring appropriations are obligated and spent.

With that, I end my remarks and thank you, Madam Chairman, for the opportunity to testify. And I am happy to answer any questions that you might have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Abdelkarim follows:]



**Testimony of Zeinab Elnour Abdelkarim
Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa, International Foundation for Electoral Systems**

“Democracy and Governance in the Middle East and North Africa”

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa**

November 7, 2017

Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Deutch, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to share the work of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and to discuss challenges to democracy and governance (D&G) in the region.

As a global leader in democracy promotion, IFES advances good governance and democratic rights by providing technical assistance to election officials; empowering the underrepresented to participate in the political process; and applying field-based research to improve the electoral cycle. For 30 years, IFES has worked in over 145 countries worldwide to ensure there is a vote for every voice.

With support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); the U.S. Department of State's (DOS) Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL); and numerous international donors – including the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and its Foreign Commonwealth Office; the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs; Global Affairs Canada; the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; and the United Nations – IFES has supported decades of credible electoral processes in over a dozen countries across the MENA region. In many countries, IFES works as part of the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) with the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, under USAID's Elections and Political Transitions mechanism to deliver comprehensive democracy, human rights, and governance programming.

Unfortunately, with shrinking foreign aid budgets; an unstable security environment; and a shift of resources to humanitarian, economic and counterterrorism assistance, we have witnessed a decline in direct United States Government (USG) D&G assistance to such areas in the region as Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Yemen. Support to credible, competitive and inclusive elections and political processes in the MENA region is more critical than ever, particularly given the simmering conflicts that have plagued parts of the region for decades, as well as the slow pace of political, economic and social reforms.

With political extremism and armed conflict continuing to pose serious challenges for democratization, stability and security of the region, it is critical that the U.S. and its allies support citizens as they strive to attain such democratic ideals as civil liberties, justice and prosperity. Diplomatic disengagement and a decline in D&G assistance will only exacerbate the current situation; the U.S. and its allies must be prepared to implement a long-term strategy to capitalize on even the smallest gains in the democratic space. Although the growth of extremist movements, escalating geopolitical competition, ongoing violence and ruthless repression have swept aside the initial enthusiasm for the democratic uprisings that

took place across the region over the last decade, these challenges should not discourage the promotion of good governance. Indeed, the popular uprisings, which started in 2009 with Iran, have demonstrated the broad appeal to basic democratic ideals among the people of the MENA region.

Small Investments in Electoral Assistance Advance American Interests

Stable democracies make for better trading partners, provide new market opportunities, improve global health outcomes, and promote economic freedom and regional security. To give just one example, Tunisia has held two credible elections to date with USAID-supported IFES technical assistance, and continues to welcome IFES support as it prepares for municipal elections. With USG assistance, Tunisia has resisted authoritarianism and failed statehood, and is a reliable partner in the fight against *Daesh* (the Islamic State group) and violent extremism.

In addition to the tangible benefits, D&G assistance promotes American values. For example, electoral assistance helps such traditionally marginalized groups as youth, women, and persons with disabilities gain equal access to public institutions, win economic and political self-determination, and fully realize their individual rights. Inclusion and empowerment activities also help strengthen the credibility and stability of democracies more broadly, as democratic institutions flourish when all groups of society are represented.

Electoral assistance is also a sound investment that pays long-term, tangible dividends – in its FY18 State and Foreign Operations bill, the House mandated that the administration spend no less than \$2.3 billion on democracy programs. This is less than .05 percent of the House-passed International Affairs Budget, which represents less than one percent of the overall budget. Electoral assistance programs themselves are a drop in the foreign assistance budget. For example, Syria, one of our flagship MENA programs, operates at a budget of \$2.5 million over three years.

IFES in the MENA Region: An Overview

With over two decades of support to election management bodies (EMBs) in the MENA region, IFES has:

- Assisted institutions in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Tunisia, Palestine and Yemen to plan and responsibly implement operational tasks across the electoral cycle, from boundary delimitation to support to the voter registration process, the procurement of election materials, voter education, Election Day operations, counting and results transmission and out-of-country voting.
- In Lebanon, Yemen, Morocco and elsewhere, IFES has assisted local partners by providing in-depth analyses of legal and regulatory frameworks, as well as targeted and actionable recommendations for reform or development of electoral laws.
- In Libya and Tunisia, IFES has supported the development of the legal framework for adjudicating election-related complaints, and built the institutional capacity of the judiciary and election commission to effectively manage and resolve electoral disputes. IFES has supported efforts to strengthen legislation to align with international best practice; define the roles and responsibilities of the judiciary; and develop collaborative and consultative relationships between institutions during the electoral process.

Over the years, IFES has also supported civil society and traditionally marginalized populations to advocate for greater access to electoral and political processes. For example:

- Through our work with local organizations on advocacy best practices and women's leadership as part of our Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa (SWMENA) programming in Lebanon, Morocco, Yemen and Libya.
- Our work with disabled persons organizations to raise public awareness on the need for greater access to the political process for persons with disabilities in countries like Egypt, Morocco and Lebanon.
- IFES training programs for civil society organizations that focus on campaign finance reform and monitoring in Jordan, Yemen and Tunisia.
- IFES engagement with youth leaders to increase civic engagement in countries like Syria and Libya.

Challenges and Recommendations: Democracy and Governance Assistance in the MENA Region

More than six years after the popular uprisings that swept most of the region, the crisis of legitimacy that led to widespread unrest largely remains and citizens remain dissatisfied with their governments' response to the difficulties they face. Trends that played a major role in the uprising – struggling economies, unemployment, demographics, inadequate access to justice, and ineffective governance – are still insufficiently addressed; the breakdown in security and rising volatility caused by ongoing civil wars, increased sectarianism, terrorism, extremism, authoritarianism, corruption and foreign interventions are daunting factors that do not promise stabilization or democratic development in the short term. Indeed, if unaddressed, they will continue to lead to further insecurity.

The near and long-term political situation in the MENA region has become increasingly uncertain, and some of the assumptions that underpin our work – such as an open political environment, sufficient security and ongoing donor support – are under threat. Nonetheless, IFES' long presence in the region has allowed it to build deep relationships with local stakeholders and positioned it as a trusted partner and honest broker, able to not only efficiently support electoral processes in these challenging environments, but also pilot innovative, country-specific approaches to resolving challenges in the early stages of the political and electoral processes. We understand that democracy building is highly political and not only a technical exercise, and intervention can easily lose credibility if perceived by the local population as ineffective or tainted by other countries' political self-interest. Therefore, IFES always strives to ensure that its programs are guided by a strong understanding of the local context and norms, promotion of local ownership, and a deep respect for the viewpoints and experiences of the targeted population.

To remain effective, the U.S. and its implementing partners must re-evaluate the ways in which democratization is supported and sustained. The following trends and challenges will continue to impact the viability and growth of political pluralism across the region; these trends may, in turn, limit the impact of D&G programming in the short term:

- **Challenge: Electoral democracy does not necessarily guarantee a transparent and accountable democratic transition.** In many countries across the region, governments have used the legitimacy conferred by elections to push reactionary agendas, which often include repressive laws on human rights, civil society, press freedom, and political party formation. These laws are frequently justified under the banner of state sovereignty as "counterterrorism" or "state emergency" legislation. Therefore, we cannot ignore the doubt that will continue to be cast over elections, legal reforms, and constitution-making as legitimate tools of democratization.
 - **Recommendation:** The human security challenges facing the region today demand that democracy supporters in the USG and Congress continue to denounce efforts to erode

democratic norms embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international law; and pressure governing elites to be responsive to their citizens, accountable to their demands and genuinely seek to invoke democratic freedoms, access to justice and the rule of law, regardless of the governing system they choose to implement.

- **Challenge: Fragmentation of states' authority and legitimacy.** Non-state actors continue to seek the establishment of alternative political realities that are antagonistic to the basic construct of the state. For example, paramilitary organizations and non-state actors have fractured normal political spheres in Libya, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt and Yemen and have devolved authority to localities. The popular demand for change has mushroomed far beyond the immediate stakeholders involved in each nation into proxy wars which have underlying religious, ethnic, geopolitical, and economic undertones and are far from over. The inflow of military support and cash to proxies will only widen the gap, prolong the divide and defer political transitions. This will prolong economic and political stagnation, and will challenge the precept of a peaceful transfer of power through elections as the primary means to voice political dissent. Without political will and a strategy to integrate these destabilizing players into the society and makeup of the state, we should expect non-state actors and other member states to continue using alliances, targeted political/financial/security support, and networks to exert significant influence on events in their sphere. Their actions will not necessarily conform to any shared set of norms, principles, or standards that will guarantee acceptable outcomes, leading to lengthy conflicts across multiple states, a high number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and slow or delayed political transitions.
 - **Recommendation:** The U.S. government should aim for a long-term democracy assistance strategy that is linked to and coordinated with – but not eclipsed by – counterterrorism and military deterrence. The promotion of a broader notion of democratic governance that includes tolerance, consensus and peace-building, accountability, human rights protection, capacity-building for social and economic development, promotion of public involvement and consultation and improvement of political and electoral processes will further American security.
- **Challenge: The increasing number of IDPs and refugees from regional conflicts is creating new political dynamics.** The ongoing conflicts across multiple countries have disrupted agricultural production, markets, and critical infrastructure, causing billions of dollars in damage that will take decades to reverse. These countries will continue to be at risk for, and suffer from, food insecurity and energy and clean water shortages, and are likely to continue suffering political unrest and costly humanitarian crises because of their inability to reach peaceful settlements or meet their populations' basic food demands. The humanitarian situation inside Syria, Yemen and parts of Iraq and Libya remains dire and conditions are not in place for IDPs or refugees living in neighboring countries to return home. By 2017, there were approximately five million Syrian refugees in the MENA region and over 15.1 million IDPs and returnees.¹ Iraq has 3.2 million displaced persons and Libya has 217,000 displaced due to insecurity in those countries.² And while

¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/syria-emergency.html>; <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/publications/fundraising/593e4c3e7/unhcr-global-report-2016-middle-east-north-africa-mena-regional-summary.html>.

² <http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,IRQ,59e88c354.0.html>; <http://www.unhcr.org/libya.html>.

Yemen has over 1.98 million IDPs, it is also hosting 280,539 refugees.³ Conversely, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Jordan is hosting over 736,000 refugees, Lebanon has over one million refugees (not including Palestinians who have been there for decades), and Turkey is hosting over 3.2 million refugees.⁴

The high number of IDPs and refugees across multiple countries will have far reaching implications for not only the nations from which these populations are fleeing but also those countries bearing the social and economic brunt of the inflow of refugees. Host countries have shared their resources and provided access to their schools, hospitals and other services on a scale rarely seen before. However, they are struggling to contain growing internal intolerance.

- **Recommendation:** The international community has a responsibility to spare no effort in bringing peace and stability to the MENA region so that conditions for voluntary, sustainable returns can be created. Meanwhile, it is critical that the international community stay the course and support host governments by continuing to invest in refugee and host community programs, as well as sharing the financial responsibilities with those countries on the front-line. Organizations like IFES must be supported as they learn to navigate the enfranchisement of IDPs and refugees.
- **Challenge: A decline in the status of women, ethnic and religious minorities.** In the majority of MENA countries, the political arena remains largely dominated by men from certain ruling parties or groups. 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. For example, in countries like Lebanon and Egypt, recent electoral laws have removed or failed to integrate quotas for women. Women have also not been sufficiently represented on transitional bodies; nor have they been part of negotiation processes, as is the case in Syria.
 - **Recommendation:** IFES applauds the passage of the Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017 and encourages Congress to uphold its tenets, particularly in the MENA region. Additionally, we ask you to support sustained measures to encourage and enhance the promotion of women's political participation and leadership, particularly the elimination of violence against women in politics.
- **Challenge: USG funding for D&G in the MENA region remains limited and selective.** Congress' continued support of D&G in even the current challenging budget environment is greatly appreciated. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of both 2016 and 2017, as well as the FY18 State and Foreign Operations bill passed by the House in September, mandated that the administration spend no less than \$2.3 billion on democracy programs. However, since 2011, these funds have not been adequately directed toward the MENA region.
 - **Recommendation:** We ask the U.S. Congress to continue its support for robust levels of democracy assistance, and to pressure the administration to direct more D&G resources to the MENA region. The fluidity of the present crises necessitates a better and more balanced foreign assistance strategy.

³ <http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,YEM,,59e88b944,0.html>.

⁴ <http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,JOR,,59b7fae44,0.html>; <http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,LBN,,596df29b4,0.html>; <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>.

- **Challenge: Parts of the region are facing unprecedented political developments.** These developments have far reaching implications that can potentially lead to the disintegration of countries like Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen. In some cases, citizens within these countries are calling for self-determination and autonomy for their regions, causing further destabilization. We continue to see a decline in the legitimacy of democratic systems in many parts of the MENA region, the loss of trust in political parties and national legislatures, and severe dissatisfaction among young people, minorities and other disfranchised groups.
 - **Recommendation:** The history of colonial and imperial rule, as well as state domination of the economy and society, has shaped a culture of authoritarian political traditions that require time, effort and holistic, thoughtfully developed, locally driven efforts to overcome. Patience and steadfastness must be at the core of USG assistance to the MENA region.
- **Challenge: The U.S. government and international community frequently invest in short-term, event-based electoral assistance.**
 - **Recommendation:** USAID and DOS should consider more strategic ongoing support that spans several years in advance of an election date and continues into the period after the elections, with a focus on “lessons learned” that will improve future electoral cycles. Our experience has shown that consistent, long-term support throughout the electoral cycle enhances stability during uncertain democracy-building processes. Furthermore, long-term capacity building of EMBs and other stakeholders strengthens broader governance goals such as inclusive representation, gender equality, access to justice, and greater transparency and accountability of government institutions to their citizens.

Effective Electoral Assistance in the MENA Region

Despite the numerous challenges facing the MENA region, IFES remains engaged in many countries – including Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia – to support democratic institutions that will form the backbone of emerging democratic societies. Credible elections, independent judiciaries, engaged civil society, moderate political parties, independent media, and responsive government and parliamentarians are all critical institutions for the future of political pluralism. At the same time, we continue to develop the capacity of governmental and regional organizations emerging as lead institutions on elections and political transitions in their home countries and elsewhere, by promoting best practices and facilitating sharing of experiences among countries.

The following three country programs provide an example of where consistent, long-term technical assistance provided by IFES has led to enhanced results and sustainable solutions.

Egypt

The political environment in Egypt is challenging and often constrained in opportunities for political contestation. Within this landscape, elections have remained one of the few vehicles for the expression of political and social opinion in Egypt. Despite this challenging operating environment, IFES’ work in Egypt – particularly since 2011 – has had a significant positive impact on improving the effectiveness of, and citizens’ access to, the electoral process. IFES has carried this out in two key ways: one, the improvement

of electoral processes and decision-makers access to information on elections, and two, creating opportunities for greater citizen-government engagement.

To help improve electoral processes, IFES has supported training for election management staff and judges on how to conduct elections in compliance with international best practices. This type of training is vital for ensuring that citizens can trust the electoral process. In preparation for the 2015 parliamentary elections, for instance, IFES worked with the High Election Commission (HEC) on steps to enhance electoral integrity through an integrated approach that included targeted procurement of election materials, revision of relevant electoral procedures and training of staff on the use of the procured materials and newly developed procedures.

In the past, the secure storage of ballots has been a critical issue raised by domestic and international monitors. For the 2015 elections, IFES supported the training of approximately 1,050 judges and over 700 civil servants in charge of the intake and archiving of sensitive election materials. We provided training on specially procured products and newly developed procedures to store election materials, thereby making future access to these materials easier. After the first phase of the 2015 parliamentary elections, the HEC received 67 complaints about violations of electoral policy. According to the HEC chairman, “the proper archiving of material helped in the courts’ rejection of most appeals.” The IFES-provided procurement and training was a step toward a sounder election process.

Other international entities have acknowledged Egypt’s progress in this area. For instance, in a House of Representatives Foreign Affairs MENA Subcommittee hearing on the 2015 elections, [Democracy International provided testimony](#) that both acknowledged the challenges of the environment, but also stated: “To the credit of the High Election Commission, and those who provided technical assistance to it, such as the International Foundation for Elections Systems (IFES), the administration of these elections over the past two years has been generally satisfactory...”

Most recently, electoral reform in Egypt took a significant step forward with the establishment of the permanent, independent National Electoral Authority (NEA). This is a critical step in line with both Egypt’s own commitments, as it was mandated in the 2014 constitution, and international best practice. For several years, IFES has invested in bringing election officials in Egypt to other countries to learn about best practices and international standards in electoral management, such as the independence of the EMB, secure use of election technology, and ensuring that elections are accessible to all voters. In December 2016, Egypt’s Local Administration Committee within its House of Representatives, invited members of the cabinet to discuss the proposed local administration bill regulating future local elections. One invitee, General Mohamed Refaat Komsan, had previously traveled with IFES to other countries to learn about international best practices in election management. He stated that the cabinet’s proposed NEA bill was drafted while considering the international standards and best practices that he observed while participating in a number of international technical exchanges. These exchanges, which expose public officials to best practices and experiences outside their own country, play a key role in helping ensure local practice aligns with international standards.

Finally, IFES is supporting more participatory governance by connecting civil society and government, even in a highly restrictive environment. IFES is one of the few international NGOs that can operate and connect civil society and government. Our program in Egypt has consistently delivered a greater focus on the electoral rights of persons with disabilities, women and other marginalized groups. We regularly conduct

workshops that bring together government officials, political parties, civil society, and the National Councils for Human Rights, Disability Affairs, and Women to discuss issues related to electoral reform and improving electoral processes. Without international implementers like IFES, marginalized populations will have fewer channels to engage government, and vice versa. However, through expanding its engagement with these national councils that are largely responsible for policies promoting the rights of women and persons with disabilities, IFES can complement these policies to promote greater political and civic engagement, and also support these councils to engage with civil society in Egypt.

Tunisia

Tunisia has been a model of solid transitional democracy. The country held two rounds of elections in 2011 and 2014 and enacted one of the most progressive constitutions in the regions. The next electoral event will be municipal elections, which will be the first in the country's modern history.

Despite Tunisia's achievements, the country continues to face enduring challenges related to coalition building within the government, lack of security due to geopolitical issues with borders with both Libya and Algeria, and an internal crisis within the High Independent Election Commission (ISIE) that has affected the election timeline.

IFES' programs have focused on a variety of approaches, one of which is the provision of technical assistance to the election administration. IFES trained ISIE staff members on enhancing their professional skills, addressed critical needs ahead of the municipal elections and has been developing online electoral courses for ISIE employees and other relevant stakeholders. IFES has strengthened local partners' outreach campaigns through the creation and distribution of voter and civic education materials and organization of street marketing campaigns. Additionally, to create targeted voter information campaigns for illiterate voters ahead of the municipal elections, IFES conducted the first-ever study on the political participation of illiterate Tunisians and completed a follow up study on the relationship between illiteracy and vote-buying at the request of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

One of the most innovative activities conducted under our Tunisia program has been the organization of six Hack for Democracy (H4D) camps, which consist of hackathons with a democracy and governance theme. The aim is to increase young Tunisians' participation in public life by encouraging them to develop innovative technological solutions, build their business skills and knowledge of democracy and transform ideas into startup initiatives.

IFES has also tried to address journalists' lack of skills in providing rigorous, impartial and analytical reporting, particularly on critical events that impact the whole country, like elections. IFES organized a series of trainings on governance topics for journalists from community radio stations. The trainings covered the basics of elections and decentralization, the legal framework for elections and media coverage of elections. IFES also provides remote support and individual coaching sessions to the journalists who participate in the trainings. In addition, IFES has supported these radio stations in airing a weekly radio program called "Eye on Municipalities," which raises awareness about voter registration.

Syria

The Syria conflict continues to dramatically shape the region, with narrowing options for a negotiated settlement. An estimated 11 million Syrians have fled their homes since March 2011, with almost five million seeking refuge in neighboring countries. A tenuous legal status and distinct lack of economic and educational opportunities have driven many even further, to Europe and beyond. Syrian refugees are increasingly turning away from the conflict and the prospect of a future Syria, disillusioned by the fact that their voices seem unheard and their concerns forgotten. In such a difficult environment, IFES has designed an innovative, impactful program that has succeeded in empowering a wide range of Syrian stakeholders, including opposition leaders, civil society organizations, and activists, to foster a population that can advocate for peaceful, democratic change and combat extremist influence.

Since 2012, IFES has supported Syrian opposition groups and individuals involved in negotiations over a transition. IFES is closing substantial gaps in knowledge and improving understanding of critical issues that must be addressed during the negotiations for any transition process to be successful. Focusing on four key issues – proposed systems of representation; voter eligibility and registration; election administration under United Nations supervision; and out-of-country voting – IFES works closely with leaders from the wide network of the High Negotiations Committee and the Syrian opposition to empower officials to engage on these topics.

Support for a vision of a democratic Syria cannot only be top-down. Accordingly, IFES has established a civic engagement platform in Gaziantep, Turkey focused on community-level dialogue on the transition and other governance issues for Syrians in Turkey. Since its inception in May 2016, the *Musharaka* (Participation) Forum has directly engaged 6,875 Syrian participants, 54 percent of them women, and has had over 285,000 visitors to its digital platform.

The Forum’s “Building Leaders” program works with adolescents to cultivate the next generation of democratic-minded activists and citizens; its Women’s Forum targets underserved populations seeking ways for their voices to be heard and opportunities for empowerment. Over 118 civil society organizations are now part of its network. Six new civil society organizations working on peacebuilding initiatives have been created through the Forum. To restore the fractured trust and communication between Syrians and the opposition leadership, *Musharaka* elected representatives to interact with the High Negotiations Committee and *Etlaaf*, the Syrian opposition coalition. Through this work, IFES is actively re-engaging Syrians in their country’s future, and offering a viable alternative to extremist ideologies or a return to the conflict for vulnerable populations that have not traditionally received such support.

Additionally, IFES’ Civic Education Center located in Syria has brought 422 Syrians together for training, dialogue, and civic awareness initiatives. Interfaith, collaborative proposals for social services and public activism have been drafted under the Center’s banner, teaching Syrian activists the critical importance of community-based engagement and helping them understand the crucial role they will play in a future democratic Syria through peacebuilding and advocacy.

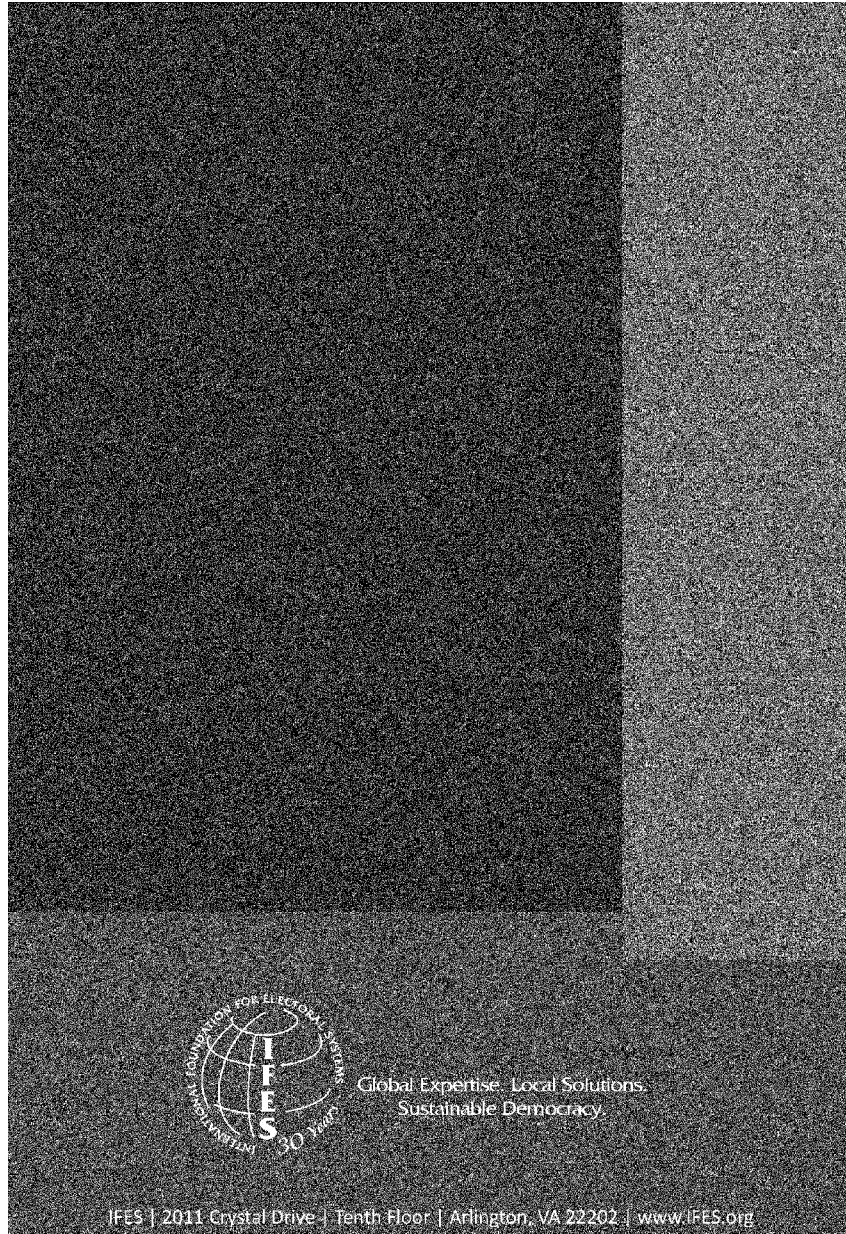
Taken together, IFES’ interventions in Syria are integrated to ensure that Syrians across the conflict’s landscape – grassroots actors inside Syria and Turkey, civil society organizations working toward a stable and prosperous Syria, and key opposition and transitional figures – are actively engaged in Syria’s future. Through this important program, IFES has established a beacon of hope and optimism.

Conclusion: Renewing Our Commitment to Democracy in the MENA Region

The time is now to stop the decline and reinvest in D&G funding in the MENA region. Many areas in the region will likely see national and local elections take place in 2018, including Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Tunisia, and possibly Libya and Palestine. Strengthening institutions such as EMBs, regulatory bodies, the judiciary, parliament and civil society is paramount and will help to make these events more legitimate and responsive, rather than destabilizing and a flashpoint for violence.

Let us not forget that the transition to democratic governance is never fast nor easy, and competing interests such as national security, geopolitical and economic interests should be entwined with the promotion of basic human rights. A renewed commitment to supporting the citizens of the MENA region in their pursuit of credible, inclusive, transparent, and responsive democracies will in turn support American interests at home and abroad.

Madam Chairman, thank you again for this opportunity to testify. On behalf of IFES, we are honored to partner with the U.S. Government and Congress, international aid organizations, our CEPPS partners, and of course, the people of the Middle East and North Africa in support of a more democratic and prosperous region.



Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much for coming.
Dr. Herman.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT HERMAN, PH.D., VICE PRESIDENT
FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS, VICE PRESIDENT FOR
EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND MULTILATERAL
INITIATIVES, FREEDOM HOUSE**

Mr. HERMAN. Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen and Acting Ranking Member Connolly and distinguished members of the subcommittee, on behalf of Freedom House, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify here today.

And, more importantly, let me convey my organization's deep appreciation for the subcommittee's strong bipartisan support for democracy, human rights, and governance programming in the Middle East and North Africa.

And, Madam Chairwoman, your retirement after the current term ends will be a tremendous loss to our community. You have been a tireless and passionate advocate for this work.

Let me also say how proud I am to be here with my esteemed colleagues from sister organizations that, like Freedom House, have the privilege of working with courageous and committed activists and dedicated public servants around the world, including in the MENA region, and doing so with the support of funding from the United States Government.

Our "Freedom in the World" reports have chronicled a decade-long decline in freedom, while a recent report, "Breaking Down Democracy," unpacks the rise of modern authoritarianism that, at its core, is a systemic, sophisticated, collaborative, global assault on democratic institutions, norms, and values.

The MENA region, among the world's most repressive, where only 1 in 20 people live in a country rated "free" by Freedom House, reflects this alarming trend. While it is unwise, as we have heard, to proclaim the Arab Spring a failure, especially as Tunisia struggles to build a democratic society, the MENA political landscape is grim. Between resilient, despotic regimes and countries engulfed in sectarian-driven conflict, people have little prospect of exercising their fundamental rights or organizing to bring about political change.

Let me mention three interrelated impediments in the region.

First, the closing of civic space is a strategy used by virtually every government in the region, often through the sharing of worst practices that prevent pro-democracy civil society to organize effectively to advance common interests. In countries such as Egypt, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, the goal is to crush dissent entirely. The authoritarian regimes use subservient judicial and legislative bodies to lend a patina of legitimacy to their repression. Stigmatization and vilification efforts using state-controlled mass media seek to undermine activists' credibility with the population.

Second, the dearth of accountability of the ruling elites to the citizens is a consequence of the concentration of power and the comparative weakness of civil society and of the suppression of independent media that prevents these critical institutions from performing their watchdog role. A culture of impunity can galvanize pro-reform sentiment, but it also can leave citizens disillusioned.

sioned and feeling they have no agency to influence decisions that affect their lives.

Third, the rise of violent extremist groups, such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, stems in no small part from the denial of fundamental freedoms and anachronistic political systems that fail to address the legitimate grievances and aspirations of citizens. MENA governments have used the genuine threat posed by these radical groups to crack down on peaceful political activity, frequently invoking anti-terrorism legislation to justify broad-based repression.

Let me offer a few recommendations.

First, Congress and the executive branch should work together to ensure that U.S. policy and strategy toward the MENA region emphasizes strengthening government accountability, protecting basic human rights, broadening political competition and participation. Democracy and human rights programs are much more likely to have impact if they reflect the overall U.S. policy priorities as well as our core principles and values.

We must avoid the pernicious, false tradeoff between security and stability on the one hand and respect for fundamental freedoms and democratic norms on the other. Giving a pass to allies and security partners that block democratic reform and systematically violate rights and engage in large-scale corruption erodes our moral authority and contributes to conditions that can fuel radicalization, impeding our ability to advance our national interests.

Second, democracy and human rights governance funding should focus primarily on civil society and establish their nascent political parties as the most likely catalysts for nonviolent political change. Providing support to state institutions makes sense only where there is demonstrated political will to undertake meaningful reforms.

And, at the same time, security assistance, a major source of U.S. Government funding in the region, should be conditioned on the would-be recipient government meeting a meaningful standard of human rights and democratic accountability.

And, if I can, just one more. The U.S. should work with like-minded governments to press across the MENA region on issues of corruption and impunity, a combination that has left citizens angry and disillusioned and undermined their confidence in governing institutions. Sanctions regimes, such as the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, should be used whenever appropriate to hold accountable perpetrators of corruption and human rights violations.

I look forward to your comments and questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Herman follows:]



Written Testimony by Dr. Robert Herman
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House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
 Hearing: Democracy and Governance in the Middle East and North Africa

November 7, 2017

Introduction

Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch and distinguished members of the subcommittee, it is honor to appear before you today. I would ask that my full statement be admitted into the record.

On behalf of Freedom House, let me commend you for holding this timely hearing and convey my appreciation for the opportunity to address the important issue of formidable impediments facing democracy and human rights program implementers in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

I am proud to share this space with my esteemed colleagues from IRI, NDI and IFES, venerable sister organizations committed to bolstering democratic institutions and processes around the world. All of our organizations have extensive experience in the MENA region, one of the world's most repressive, where only 1 in 20 people live in countries ranked "free" by Freedom House, where people can express their opinions freely and take part in elections that meet international standards.

For more than 75 years, Freedom House, founded very intentionally as a bipartisan organization, has been at the forefront of the struggle to advance democracy and fundamental freedoms. We pursue this goal through a combination of research and analysis, advocacy in the U.S. and internationally, and programs on the ground designed to empower local partners, ensuring that they have the requisite array of tools and strategies to be effective catalysts of non-violent democratic change.

Our present programming in the MENA region focuses on Tunisia, where we are supporting civil society to monitor and advance critical justice sector reforms while in Jordan we are working with local partners on women's economic empowerment. We have implemented projects in several other countries including Egypt, Morocco, Yemen and Kuwait. Our emergency assistance program has helped more than 900 individuals and organizations with security trainings, legal representation expenses, advocacy grants and relocation.

Global and MENA Region Trends

In our annual *Freedom in the World* reports, we have chronicled more than a decade-long global decline in the state of political rights and civil liberties. Dozens of countries with poor records regressed further while some that had made significant progress along the democratic path experienced backsliding. In several cases this could be attributed to the emergence of virulent populism.

At the same time, as documented in our recent report, *Breaking Down Democracy*, we are witnessing the rise of modern authoritarianism and the corresponding assault on liberal democracy. The new wave of repressive rule is arguably unprecedented in its combination of global scope and degree of collaboration, typified by the active exporting of “worst practices” rather than simple passive diffusion of ideas. Suppression of dissent at home is matched by a concerted strategy on the part of the leading authoritarian states such as China, Russia, Iran and Saudi Arabia to aggressively challenge democratic norms and undermine multilateral institutions that have democracy and human rights as part of their mandate.

It is a far more sophisticated version of brutal dictatorship that characterized previous eras, though there is no shortage of autocratic regimes prepared to engage in large-scale deadly violence against their own people. Syria, North Korea, Sudan, and arguably the Philippines, are just some of the most egregious rights-violating governments.

The Middle East and North Africa region offers a grim political landscape. Some six years after the beginning of the Arab Spring, which inspired tremendous hope that democracy might take root in a region known for despotic rulers and the absence of fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, the aspirations of tens of millions of people across the region have been largely vanquished.

With the exception of Tunisia, which is struggling to build on uneven democratic progress the past few years and carries the burden of trying to dispel the widely subscribed view that democracy cannot thrive in the Arab World, many of the authoritarian regimes proved resilient in the face of popular grassroots movements, weathering the political storm and reasserting their monopoly on power.

However, it would be a mistake to paint the MENA region with a single brush stroke. There is political variation; some national environments are more open than others. Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan and most obviously Tunisia, present fewer hurdles to in-country programming than do consolidated authoritarian systems such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Bahrain or than conflict-torn countries including Syria, Libya and Yemen. But even where there is a modicum of political space as in the monarchies of Morocco and Jordan, it is still bounded by red lines and other restrictions that inhibit broad-based political participation.

Sectarian cleavages and an enduring struggle for political influence between Saudi Arabia and Iran also exact a toll on democracy activists and others committed to a very different future for the MENA region. There are dynamics at work within these societies that will generate opportunities for change. But today, across the region's broad expanse, internationally-focused NGOs and their would-be local partners that engage in democracy and human rights related programming must contend with environments that are inimical to the goals of these efforts.

Having largely prevented formal political opposition from forming or suppressed it where there was any sign of gaining influence, the region's governments have focused their attention on civil society as a potential threat to authoritarian power. In addition to creating a political environment hostile to the formation of organizations involved in promoting democratic reforms and respect for human rights, these regimes have resorted to demonizing and stigmatizing activists and advocates, portraying them as purveyors of alien values, self-interested deceivers looking to secure grants from international donors, disrupters of domestic tranquility, and even as terrorists. And they have no problem getting out their message, relying on State controlled mass media and the dearth of independent reporting that could provide at least a measure of alternative views.

The governments have also relied on subservient legislatures and judicial systems to claim they are upholding the rule of law in a cynical attempt to give a patina of legitimacy to a determined effort to stifle what is seen as a threatening sub-sector of civil society. In some countries, a proliferation of GONGOs –Government Organized NGOs—has also been an effective strategy embraced by the State to create the impression among the citizenry and with the international community that civil society is supportive of government policies.

And yet, despite all these profound challenges and ever-present risks, courageous women and men continue to put their lives on the line in seeking to exercise their basic rights, including freedoms of expression, association, assembly and religious belief. In some cases they have partnered with U.S. organizations like those represented here today, to carry out projects to help bolster their capacity to push for peaceful democratic change, form political parties to compete for political power, address the terribly unequal status of women, or to hold government to account in an effort to combat the twin scourges of corruption and impunity.

Major Impediments

Far and away the most daunting obstacles to effective implementation of democracy and human rights programs in the MENA region are those erected by ruling elites to prevent challenges to their dominant place in society. To them, citizens demanding a voice in how a country is governed, independent professional journalists investigating suspected corruption, or historically marginalized communities attempting to organize to have their legitimate grievances addressed -- all of these constitute threats that must be confronted.



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But rather than weaken or eliminate these barriers, U.S. policy and practice often has the opposite effect, fortifying them and in the process damaging U.S. interests and prospects for democratic political change.

There are a few distinct yet inter-related major impediments in the MENA region that make implementing democracy and human rights projects so challenging and merit elaboration.

Shrinking Civic Space

The closing of civic space is shorthand for a multi-dimensional attempt by governments as well as by some non-state actors to erect a variety of obstacles to keep citizens from organizing effectively to promote their common goals. This is particularly true of those who have taken up the struggle for democratic reform, respect for human rights, and for accountable governance at the national or local level, though it can also ensnare those working on socio-economic development if it involves empowering people who then challenge the authorities.

Closing of civic space can take many different forms. Often it entails legal restrictions on protests and other activities or on the ability to receive funding from foreign sources, including from the U.S. or other governments. Laws criminalizing defamation are quite common and can be effective in encouraging self-censorship among journalists and activists with a threat of large fines and jail time. Anti-terrorism laws have become ubiquitous across the region and are framed so broadly as to invite widespread abuse, enabling the countries' leaders to go after political opponents that neither advocate nor employ violence.

Authorities can also establish excessively stringent registration or reporting requirements, unleash frequent visits from the tax inspection service or the fire marshal or resort to planting drugs on activists. There is no end to the creativity of authoritarian governments when it comes to ways to harass, intimidate and incarcerate, often by manipulating the legal system in societies that are subject to rule *by* law, not rule *of* law.

The crackdowns on the core freedoms of expression, association and assembly make it exceptionally difficult for nascent organizations upgrade their capacity, forge coalitions, mobilize citizens or undertake just about any activity that could be seen as a challenge to the dominant power structure. Whatever the means, the objective is the same -- to eradicate or render wholly ineffective formal political opposition or civil society intent on bringing about systemic change.

The shortage of political oxygen also has the effect of exacerbating sectarian cleavages and contributing to radicalization because festering grievances go mostly ignored. Without a reliable, institutionalized means to deal with these problems in a fair way, citizens,

especially young people, can become disaffected, seeing no path to improve their circumstances through normal political mechanisms.

Dearth of Accountability and Rampant Impunity

That the denial of fundamental freedoms is endemic in the MENA region is distressing enough but it is the lack of accountability and a corresponding culture of impunity that makes it so challenging to design and implement effective DRG programs that address the underlying causes of the problem.

Because there is nothing akin to a reliable system of institutional checks and balances or a robust civil society and independent media performing a watchdog role, those in power face little scrutiny. They are abetted by very low levels of transparency when it comes to government functions, all of which minimizes the prospect of holding accountable perpetrators of human rights violations, large scale corruption and other transgressions.

One of the consequences of widespread impunity is a lack of trust in a country's political leadership and institutions of government. The resulting frustration and anger can help galvanize people-powered action as it did in the heady early days of the Arab Spring. But especially after almost all those popular uprisings produced relatively little in the way of tangible democratic progress (not even slightly more pluralistic political systems), we may be looking at a situation where citizens become cynical, more atomized and much less likely to believe they have the ability to influence decisions that affect their lives and to alter the status quo.

Young people may be the most vulnerable to abandoning hope, a grave setback for the possibility of one day seeing potent democracy movements across the region. MENA countries can ill afford to have the next generation opt out of civic life because studies show they tend to be more open-minded and more embracing of values we associate with democratic societies. It will also mean that programs designed to advance the prospects for democratic reform may not be able to tap into what should be a comparatively strong constituency for such change.

Violent Extremism and the Security State

The rise of violent extremism has had an enormous impact on the entire region, albeit appreciably more in some countries than others, elevating the priority attached to security both by the region's governments and by the U.S. and donor states that have provided outside support. There is little question that the rise of Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and other radical movements pose genuine security threats to the populations of MENA countries. The question is how to respond most effectively to the threat without trampling the rights of citizens and refraining from employing strategies that will exacerbate and expand rather than mitigate the threat.

In this environment, governments that might have tolerated the existence of civil society organizations pressing for democratic reform no longer see a need to do so, putting in jeopardy much needed programs that, ironically, are trying to tackle some of the underlying causes of the very same extremist violence with which the governments must now contend. Invoking a threat to citizen security is a time-tested way to rally support for what might otherwise be an embattled regime. It could also become a convenient pretext to crush all dissent and political challengers and rule with an iron fist, particularly if the government is skilled at labeling pro-democracy voices as disloyal.

Anti-terrorism laws across the MENA region are routinely crafted so as to give governments even more latitude to do whatever they think is necessary to contain and defeat radical forces. In countries where there are few constraints on executive or royal authority, there is ample room for selective application of these and related laws. Democracy and human rights campaigners, journalists and members of the political opposition, if it exists, are easy targets in a situation where labeling an individual a terrorist all but ensures the State can act with impunity. Indeed in many instances it is harsh repression by MENA governments against perceived enemies and the inability or unwillingness to address the legitimate grievances of historically marginalized communities that has fueled extremism by creating conditions that increase the likelihood some people will be radicalized and mobilized.

Where extremist groups have provoked large-scale armed conflict – as in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and elsewhere – it can be exceedingly difficult to undertake projects, particularly ones geared to engaging those societies' ample democracy deficits.

Funding Levels and Flexibility

The resources made available by the U.S. government for democracy and human rights projects are a fraction of the funding for broader social and economic development work and security-related programming. In fiscal year 2016, more than 75 percent of foreign assistance for the MENA region went to peace and security funding, while less than five percent went to democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) funding. The level of DRG funding is also exceedingly modest compared to the nature of the challenge and the importance of progress in this sphere to advancement in others, including broader-based economic opportunities and the multi-dimensional battle against violent extremism.

It is also worth noting that of the funding dedicated to DRG activities in the MENA region, a significant portion goes to working with government institutions. While this type of programming can be very effective under certain circumstances, spending scarce DRG funding to implement programs in conjunction with authoritarian regimes that have no interest in actual democratic reform is a waste of taxpayer dollars.

In addition, of the funding that does go to civil society, a significant portion is directed towards formal NGOs. When operating in closed political environments like those encountered in almost all MENA countries, having to work almost exclusively with formerly constituted NGOs or being limited to partnering with NGOs in general rather than having some flexibility to provide support to other types of local actors constrains implementer creativity and prospective impact.

Recommendations

The complexity of the challenges to implementing effective DRG programming in the Middle East and North Africa precludes the formulation of simple cure-all solutions. The recommendations below largely correspond to the aforementioned principal impediments.

1. Congress and the Executive Branch should work together to ensure that U.S. foreign policy towards the MENA region has a strong emphasis on protecting human rights, strengthening government accountability, broadening political competition and promoting pluralism. Programs to advance these goals have a much higher likelihood of success and durable impact when they are consistent with overall U.S. policy. Policies and programs that reflect our core values will advance our interests while steering us clear of the pernicious false trade-off between security and stability on the one hand and respect for fundamental freedoms on the other. Pyrrhic stability should not be an acceptable policy aspiration.

Giving strategic partners and allies a pass on human rights and accountable governance undermines our national security interests over the longer-term while also eroding our credibility and moral authority with populations in those societies and beyond.

The U.S. also should not shy away from promoting an inclusive vision of democracy, one in which all people, including historically marginalized communities, can actually exercise their basic rights and have the ability to influence decisions that affect their lives. It places us on the right side of history or, more accurately, on the right side of men and women risking their lives in many MENA countries to shape a democratic future for those societies. Inclusive democratic societies are not only more fair and just but are more likely to prosper economically, deal more effectively with inevitable and healthy political contestation through debate and compromise rather than violent conflict, and are ultimately more resilient.

The Executive and Legislative branches should do more than simply provide resources for DRG programs. U.S. diplomats, senior White House officials as well as Members of Congress can publically demonstrate solidarity with embattled democracy and human rights activists and NGOs – if the latter are comfortable with such an embrace. Understandably, to the extent U.S. or other foreign powers are

seen as backing corrupt and rights-violating regimes, high profile demonstrations of support for local civil society actors may be rebuffed. Collective action with counterparts from other influential democratic donor countries can be even more effective.

2. DRG funding for the MENA region should focus primarily on civil society and promoting political competition, civic participation and accountability of ruling elites to the citizenry. Providing support to state institutions may be part of an effective strategy but only where there is demonstrated political will to undertake meaningful reforms. Funding for innovative, locally-owned DRG projects should also be at a level that reflects the outsized importance of progress on people-driven democratic governance for moving the country forward socio-economically. Even in active conflict zones there is a case for DRG funding if there are individuals or organizations documenting and reporting on human rights abuses, as the information they gather could well prove critical to one day bringing perpetrators to justice, striking a powerful blow against impunity.

Security assistance, a major source of U.S. government funding in the MENA region, should be conditioned on the would-be recipient government meeting at least minimum standards for human rights and democratic accountability. Such assistance could also be crafted in ways that would contribute more directly to DRG-related goals.

USAID and the State Department should deepen ongoing discussions that include civil society about possible ways to support emerging movements, inchoate groups, and nascent networks rather than just formally constituted NGOs that have the capacity to put together strong proposals and boast proven administrative skills but may not be as connected in their communities or have identifiable constituencies. Especially in highly restrictive environments where traditional NGOs are comparatively easy targets for the authorities, greater donor flexibility to identify more nimble, dynamic and creative actors would be an important innovation. This strategy does not mean abandoning NGOs; it's a call to add to the tool box.

3. The United States should work with like-minded governments to press states across the MENA region on issues of corruption and impunity, which have proven absolutely cancerous from the standpoint of the legitimacy of governing institutions. Sanctions regimes such as the *Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act* should be utilized whenever appropriate to bring accountability for corruption and human rights violations. Blocking or revoking U.S. visas or freezing the U.S.-based assets of officials engaged in these activities will not end those practices but it could serve as a deterrent to others and is another tool in the fight against corruption and human rights abuses that will bring hope to activists and organizations taking aim at impunity at high levels.

Conclusion

Progress on democratic reform and adherence to internationally recognized human rights is no panacea to solve the panoply of profound political, economic, social and security challenges in the Middle East and North Africa. But there is little chance that countries would make meaningful progress across that full spectrum and meet the aspirations of the people who call MENA home without greater freedom and accountable governance. Such programs represent a long-term investment in a more democratic and prosperous future.

Freedom House urges Members of Congress and administration officials at the highest levels to support robust democracy, human rights and governance programming and the broader policies that reinforce them as the most effective strategy for helping courageous, committed and skilled change makers succeed in achieving their ambitious goal to transform their respective societies.



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Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Good recommendations from all of you. Thank you so much.

I will start with you, Mr. Mastic. The Lebanese Prime Minister's decision to resign over the weekend has a lot of people worried about the future of Lebanon, as well as increasing regional tensions between Iran, Saudi Arabia. With Lebanon's parliamentary elections scheduled for May of next year, it would seem that we should be ramping up our democracy and governance efforts to ensure that moderate parties aren't getting pushed to the side by Hezbollah. What kind of U.S.-funded democracy and governance efforts are you seeing in Lebanon right now? And are we prioritizing the democracy and governance aspect the way we should in advance of this election?

Mr. MASTIC. Thank you.

I think what we have seen this weekend reflects the limitations of a notion of a national unity government when the main power player in that government is an illiberal, authoritarian movement that has compulsory force that it could utilize outside the bounds of state institutions. And so now we are sort of in a situation of limbo again about when and whether we will proceed to parliamentary elections.

My concern is that, over the last several years, I have noted a pulling back from or reluctance with respect to U.S. assistance to support what I would consider to be key U.S. democratic allies in Lebanon. And I think, in many instances, it is because of this notion of trying to keep things in a stable situation and encouraging sort of a national unity approach, but, really, we have quickly reached a limitation on that, given the nature of the dynamics within Lebanon and the presence of Hezbollah. So what I would hope to see now is a redoubling of efforts in supporting political actors in preparing for parliamentary elections and specifically those that fall more in line with the interests and values of the United States.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

Ms. Abdelkarim, in your written testimony, you recommended that the U.S. should aim for a long-term democracy assistance strategy that is linked to counterterrorism deterrence. How does inconsistent democracy and governance assistance hurt us here in the United States? And if you could tell us, if the U.S. doesn't prioritize democracy and governance in the region and increase the public trust in the power of elections, what dangers do you see for democratic progress in that region?

Ms. ABDELKARIM. Over the years, the U.S. has limited its support—I should say, been very selective in the countries that it decides to give support to. The post-Saddam period in Iraq has proven to be filled with human tragedy, including violence, political instability, and growing civil war. The mistrust and the suspicions are very dominant features of the region's perception of the United States. Therefore, a long-term strategy that focuses on providing support equally across the board to countries that are in dire need for our intervention and support will be key.

You know, unfortunately, we will continue to be viewed as meddling in politics and interfering to change the political order. The backlash against democracy aid requires, you know, a building of

trust and buy-in, and we should not seek to impose ourselves but, in fact, you know, seek to be invited to support.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

And, lastly, Dr. Herman, in your written testimony, you highlight the degree of collaboration and active exporting of worst practices in the current wave of repressive rule. What are some of those examples of the worst practices that you have seen in the Middle East and North Africa region? And to what do you attribute this new collaboration?

Mr. HERMAN. Thanks. Well, in some ways, the Middle East was a latecomer to what I call the rise of modern authoritarianism. You have had, certainly, repressive, despotic governments in place for a long time, but this new phenomenon that we are seeing, which is, as I said, a little bit more sophisticated. Many of these governments around the world, leading authoritarian states, whether it is Russia, China, and others—and now I would put Saudi Arabia and even Iran in that category—in most instances, what they have tried to do is stifle or, as I said, crush dissent and doing that cynically in using laws for that purpose.

So there is, as I said, a patina of legitimacy. They think by using these institutions that have been compromised and are subservient to authoritarian power—in this case, either to the royal rulers or to authoritarian governments—that is the way of doing it. And then there is an active effort to export these. And so what you will see oftentimes is these metastasize, like a cancer, across the world. This is not just a passive diffusion of ideas. There is, as we say, an authoritarian playbook, where people are meeting, discussing, and strategizing together. And part of the problem here is that the democratic governments in the world have been slow to recognize that and, I think, to recognize the challenge that is posed by this more concerted effort.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Dr. Herman. Thank you so much.

And I would like to ask Ambassador Wagner to take over chairing this subcommittee because I have to go to the Intelligence Subcommittee. Thank you, Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you.

Mrs. WAGNER. [presiding.] I thank you.

And we will now turn to our ranking member, Mr. Connolly, for his 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank the chair.

And to your point, Mr. Mastic, about Lebanon, I would note that in the previous administration the budget for Lebanon was \$213 million in foreign aid, mostly economic and democracy projects. This administration has cut that to \$103 million—less than half. And I mentioned in my opening statement that the budget for democracy assistance in the region was cut by more than 40 percent—or would have been cut by more than 40 percent in the Trump budget request. So let me ask you, Mr. Campbell, and you, Mr. Mastic, in particular, a 40-percent-plus cut, does that affect your operations in the region, or can you just suck it up? Does it have substantive impact?

Mr. CAMPBELL. It has substantive impact. And, in fact, I had mentioned Lebanon. Maybe it will be a big topic of discussion

today. The numbers you gave, I am sure they are exactly the case. But there has been no support for political party training or elections support in Lebanon, even with the specter of an upcoming election.

As Scott said, there is a lot to be done, and there has, up until now, been no support. There has been support for other democracy-type programs, which are the, you know—that are good. I am not criticizing them. But 40 percent across the region, which didn't happen, luckily, would have decimated our programs. Most of the programs that we described are, you know, very small: \$500,000, I described—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right.

Mr. CAMPBELL [continuing]. State Department-funded programs, \$300,000, \$700,000. This is very little money. So a cut like that would be devastating.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Mastic?

Mr. MASTIC. Yeah, so beyond the across-the-board decrease in the administration's request, I think it is more useful to look at how we are utilizing the money and the targets of opportunity for where we are utilizing it.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yeah, but, Mr. Mastic, that is not my question. My question is: Would it affect your operations on the ground in the region if you had to absorb a 40-percent-plus cut, if that is what this cut translated into?

Mr. MASTIC. It honestly depends on what countries we are utilizing the money in and where the cuts are. Because in the budget request that was given, in some instances there were increases in countries in this region.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I think—

Mr. MASTIC. So it depends on where we are implementing programs—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right.

Mr. MASTIC [continuing]. And how that money—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Some countries, more; some countries, less. Sure. I think it is important to know that, with both IRI and NDI, it is not just your specific projects or programs on the ground, but there is a nexus that gets created by your presence. So there is an NGO nexus, there is a civic engagement nexus, there is even a business nexus attracted to this magnet of democracy-building. And when you cut that or eliminate that or jeopardize that, lots of other things are affected in the ripple effects, I think you would both agree.

Mr. MASTIC. Yes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Let the record show both agreed.

Dr. Herman, should we be worried about Tunisia? Tunisia is often cited as the one example out of the Arab Spring that kind of went the right direction. And after the fall of Ben Ali, you know, we see democratic institutions, we see multiparty participation, we see changes in society. And yet there seems to be some backsliding. I mean, the government indefinitely delayed long-planned local government elections, which really bothers somebody who comes from local government, who believes that is where the seeds of democracy are planted, and then the resignation of the National Election Commission leadership, largely due to political influence, we

think. Is Tunisia in trouble? Is our hope for Tunisia perhaps illusory?

Mr. HERMAN. I don't think it is illusory, but if there is a lesson that we can learn from what we have seen elsewhere around the world, that even consolidated democratic countries can experience backsliding, as we have seen in many places. And so, if there is a lesson there, you can never take for granted—and those are in consolidated democratic societies, which Tunisia certainly is not. So, yes, there has been tremendous progress, but, in order to keep going, yes, I think we should be concerned. What happens in Tunisia, a small country with outsized influence in the region—because it is absolutely critical that there is success in Tunisia in terms of moving forward for democracy, because they will be a beacon in the region. So the answer—

Mr. CONNOLLY. I couldn't agree—

Mr. HERMAN [continuing]. Is yes—

Mr. CONNOLLY. All right. I am sorry for—I am running out of time. That is why I am cutting you off. I couldn't agree with you more, but let me just cite, since I am kind of fixed on these Trump budget numbers, the Trump budget would have cut democracy assistance to Tunisia almost in half. Would that be helpful?

Mr. HERMAN. No, I don't see that it would be helpful if there are fewer resources. Of course it depends what kind of programming they are going to and the rest. But no, of course, resources in the case of an instance like Tunisia, absolutely critical. But so is U.S. policy to make sure that—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Sure.

Mr. HERMAN [continuing]. We are doing everything we can to support them in their effort to move forward democratically.

Mr. CONNOLLY. All right. In the interest of time, let me move on to another subject. I met with representatives of a lot of the people at this table and others—young, bright, idealistic Egyptians in Cairo a few years ago. And they were under arrest under the previous government, and they haven't been treated much better under this government, under el-Sisi.

You know, we talk about democracy-building and so forth. There was a lot of rationalizing about the coup that overthrew the previous elected government, even though we didn't like the fact that it was a Muslim Brotherhood government, and we replaced it with a government that, you know, mowed down 817 men, women, and children in one of the deadliest mass killings by a government in recent times and a constant crackdown on democratic institutions. What is the status of especially local Egyptians who participated with us? I have been very concerned that we never give the signal that we care more about the American employees than we do about our local, because they put their lives on the line. And I just wonder, in the time left, if the two of you, particularly, would comment. And I don't know whether Dr. Herman has a comment as well. Where are we in Egypt with our locals who have put themselves on the line for democracy-building?

Mr. MASTIC. Thank you for that question. I will start and be brief. So there is no change in status since the June 2013 convictions of our organization, NDI, Freedom House, and two other organizations in Egypt. So 43 persons were implicated in that trial,

commonly known as the NGO trial. As of now, they remain in the same sort of situation or status since that conviction, which is: Convicted to 5 years in prison, with hard labor. Thankfully, no one is actually in prison, because they were convicted in absentia. The thing I would add, I think, is that the case itself that was utilized to put these persons on trial remains open, and so it is continuing to be used in going after Egyptian NGOs, primarily, now. So not only is our situation not resolved, but the case itself is utilized to continue to go after Egyptian NGOs.

Mr. CAMPBELL. If I can add just something briefly, a fact that probably most don't know is that, of the 43 people that were convicted in what are called the NGO trials, the vast majority were non-American. Fourteen were American, and the rest were Egyptian and other nationalities, most of them Egyptian. Appeals were filed on behalf of those employees. The appeals have never been brought forward by the Egyptian courts or heard. So the Egyptians are purposely keeping the whole thing in limbo, basically as a message to sort of back off NGOs and civil society. So it is still very much a going concern.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Madam Chairman, for your indulgence.

And thank you.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank the gentleman. His time has expired.

And I am pleased to take over the chairmanship of this subcommittee at this time while our chair, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, is in Intel. And I want to thank you all for being here today. Beyond critical national security concerns, promoting democracy and human rights is the most important objective of American diplomacy and aid. I appreciate the work that your organizations do in advancing American values across the world, and I am grateful that you made time to be here today. I would agree with Mr. Mastic that the lack of democracy and the prevalence of poor governance cause conflict across the Middle East and in North Africa. Fragile, failing, and authoritarian states pose serious political and security dilemmas. And it is very difficult for civil societies to make their voices heard in the MENA region.

Mr. Mastic, you wrote that advancing women's empowerment is an important step in promoting democratic gains in the Middle East. To you and perhaps to Ms. Abdelkarim, what progress or obstacles have your organizations seen on the ground regarding women's empowerment issues and allowing women to play a meaningful role in Middle East governments?

Mr. MASTIC. Thank you. Well, for one thing, I think it is important that we sort of acknowledge or cite gains when they occur. And a couple of important things have happened recently, including very forward-leaning violence-against-women legislation that was passed in Tunisia, some changes in Jordan and Lebanon with respect to inheritance rights. So those kind of things matter, I think, and are some positive signs about how there is social change occurring in the region.

With respect to the obstacles, though, of course, there remain sort of, like, deeply embedded social/cultural obstacles to the idea of women's leadership in the public space. And, in many instances, women are sort of sidelined from having a seat at the table, espe-

cially on things that sort of extend beyond the realm of what people consider to be women's issues in the region. So part of our strategy has been to try to empower women as leaders in every sphere, every sector, including sort of, like, economic—on economic issues, on defense and security issues, on various types of political leadership and thought.

Mrs. WAGNER. Okay. Ms. Abdelkarim, could you comment, please?

Ms. ABDELKARIM. Sure. If we looked across the region, the legal frameworks for election across the board continue to improve to increase the women's political participation. However, it is very limited, and political parties continue to push for male candidates, knowing that the likelihood of them securing a certain constituency would be more possible if they run with male candidates. Nonetheless, you know, progress is happening slowly.

Just recently, you know, from the meetings that I had in Lebanon, to answer to Mr. Issa, it was shocking to us to see that the election law that was passed earlier this year have no quota or reserved seats for women and leave it fully for the political parties to determine, you know, the ranking of the women in their lists. That, indeed, is going to limit the number of women that are going to be selected for the next Parliament. And, also, we have seen countries like Egypt eliminated quotas that they had in the past. Despite these limitations, you know, we see improvement on the women's movements and advocacy, you know, greater than it used to be.

Mrs. WAGNER. I have limited time. Ms. Abdelkarim, you also wrote about IFES' civil engagement platform—

Ms. ABDELKARIM. Yes.

Mrs. WAGNER [continuing]. That focuses on Syrians who are now living in Turkey. One piece of that was the women's forum. Can you discuss how the women's forum operates and what its goals are?

Ms. ABDELKARIM. Okay. The women's forum is basically a group of women that we engage with through our local civil society groups, working on building their capacity to ensure that they would play an effective role in advocating for their rights, especially when, you know, the time comes for looking into putting the legal framework for the country in the future. We also ensure that they have a safe haven for exchanging, you know, ideas and information, that they could, you know, advocate more effectively through the leaderships of the oppositions that are leading the conversations in Turkey and Gaziantep.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank you.

Dr. Herman, I have run out of time. I am so appreciative of Freedom House's work in the civic space. And I wonder if in writing you could respond to, you know, how can USAID and the State Department, sir, better include and aid civil society participation in some of these conflict zones.

[The information referred to follows:]

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM ROBERT HERMAN, PH.D., TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE ANN WAGNER

The short answer is yes, so long as such encounters do not place an activist or organization at greater risk, a determination that they must make. Symbolic acts

can matter quite a lot. In general, democracy and human rights advocates deeply appreciate and covet public expressions of support and solidarity because it can bring greater legitimacy to their work and often provide a counter-narrative to the vilification and stigmatization efforts undertaken by the authorities via state-controlled media. Meetings between US diplomats, senior administration officials or Members of Congress and embattled activists are also powerful statements to the target government that the U.S. stands with them as they seek to exercise their fundamental rights and bring about political reform. Such demonstrations of support will be more impactful if seen by the various actors as part of a larger policy to advance democratic freedoms and accountable governance.

Mrs. WAGNER. With that, my time has expired, and the Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Rohrabacher, for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you—

Mrs. WAGNER. Oh, I am terribly sorry. I am sorry. The Chair now recognizes—

Mr. CONNOLLY. We are still here.

Mrs. WAGNER. How could I miss you, Mr. Connolly? Yes, yes. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island, Mr. Cicilline, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you again to our panelists.

Dr. HERMAN, I want to start with you. When President Trump takes high-profile meetings with leaders like President Sisi of Egypt, President Erdogan of Turkey, and King Salman in Saudi Arabia and fails to bring up issues of human rights or democratic governance, what message does that send to the region, both to the people and to other leaders? And, in your experience, has there been any shift in perception on the part of regional leaders in terms of the U.S. expectations in regards to the protection of human rights since President Trump took office as a result of both his statements and the failure to raise these issues in high-level meetings?

Mr. HERMAN. Thank you for that question. I know we talk a lot about programs and funding that goes to programs that we implement, but sometimes these sym—and they are not just symbolic, but the meetings that leaders have—I would say, that our leaders have with their counterparts, it is absolutely critical that these issues be raised. It sends the right signal both to those governments that this is something that is absolutely essential to American values and all that, but it also sends a very hopeful message to the activists on the ground, who are putting their lives on the line, that we have their back, that we are supporting the work that they are doing, we are raising this, we are talking, we are raising these issues with those governments. Absolutely critical. It is not a substitute for programs; it is not a substitute for good policy. But it has to be a—and we should encourage our Ambassadors and others to do that, assuming that that is something that, given the crackdown we are seeing on civil society, that that embrace is not going to be counterproductive.

Mr. CICILLINE. But I guess my question is, knowing that, have you seen a shift in perception in the region by this administration and this President in particular, his failure to raise those very issues in those high-level meetings?

Mr. HERMAN. I think there is a lot of concern that the U.S. has both, I would say, even more broadly, is retreating from its global leadership role but also how that then redounds to the country level and not raising it as much, yes.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you. And, Mr. Campbell, just to follow up on Egypt for a moment, how would the newly proposed NGO law impact civil society and media organizations in Egypt? And, with the imposition of this law, would the United States be able to maintain foreign assistance on these issues to Egypt and still be in compliance with the Brownback Amendment, which, of course, states that foreign governments may not control our democracy assistance?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Well, first of all, the new law codifies what was really happening under the old law, which is that, unless the Egyptian Government agreed with your program, you weren't going to get a registration, is the basic idea. You run the programs by them first, get full agreement. And, of course, if you did that, that meant for sure that you wouldn't be meeting with anyone that was remotely opposition, you wouldn't be dealing with civil society organizations that were human-rights-oriented, et cetera. In my opinion—I am not a lawyer, and I don't study this, but I think just the fact that it is required to have your program run by the authorities first for their approval would run afoul of the Brownback Amendment. That seems quite obvious.

Mr. CICILLINE. Uh-huh.

Mr. CAMPBELL. And the other problem with the law is that it is so unclear as to how you can appeal things or move things forward that it allows the Egyptian Government to leave NGOs in limbo, and inevitably they get in trouble because they don't know, you know, what is allowed and what is not allowed.

Mr. CICILLINE. And I don't know—I would just ask this next question. With almost a dozen Saudi royals reported arrested over the past couple of days for what has been described as corruption, it naturally raises the question of what legal system is in place in Saudi Arabia to even charge officials with corruption. Can anyone on the panel shed any light on this? Mr. Herman?

Mr. HERMAN. I don't know specifically in the Saudi case, but we can't pretend that these countries and governments are rule of law. It is the rule by law, not the rule of law. So the idea that we go through this and—I don't know what is happening there, but we have seen this time and time again, that anticorruption laws are used to go after one's political opponents rather than really address the root causes of the corruption. I don't know if that is the case in Saudi Arabia.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Mastic, you looked like you were——

Mr. MASTIC. So it is always a, sort of, challenge to understand the timing and motivations behind certain things that happen within the Saudi Kingdom, especially when it relates to the royal family, right? The one thing I would say is simply: What we have noted is that there is widespread concern and public dissatisfaction across the region—we have seen this in opinion polling and other places—about the issue of corruption. It is a palpable issue that is undermining the legitimacy of government and leadership. And so, in many ways, not fully knowing the motivation, one just sort of

understands that it could occur at this time and that it is responsive, I would argue, to certain things that are going on in the Kingdom.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you. I would just ask, Madam Chair—I know my time has run out, but I would ask the members of the panel if they could provide a written answer describing the situation for LGBT individuals generally throughout the region. We talk a lot in this committee about the targeting of LGBT individuals by ISIS, which is horrific, but the truth is that the entire region, with the exception of Israel, is a very harsh and even dangerous climate for those who seek to protect the rights of LGBT individuals. So I would love to hear from the panel in as much detail as you can on the current situation. And, with that, I yield back.

[The information referred to follows:]

Question for the Record Submitted by Les Campbell,
Senior Associate and Regional Director for Middle East and North Africa Programs,
National Democratic Institute

For Representative David Cicilline

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is one of the most repressive and dangerous places for lesbian, gay, transexual and intersex (LGBTI) individuals. Restrictive laws on sexuality are in place throughout most countries in the region, where homosexuality is generally considered a crime or mental illness, and consequences for homosexual acts range from imprisonment and fines in Morocco to execution in Saudi Arabia and Iran. Even raising a rainbow flag can unleash a wave of mass arrests, as in the recent case of Egypt, where a newly proposed anti-LGBTI law is now due for discussion by local legislators. Silence is no longer an option for activists however, as they band together to raise awareness on the plight of LGBTI persons in Egypt and throughout the MENA region.

As the international discourse on LGBTI rights has increased over recent years, so has the activism and organizing of sexual and gender minorities in MENA. Advancements in protections of the safety and civil liberties of LGBTI individuals in other countries, such as the passing of marriage equality in the United States and Facebook's celebratory rainbow filter for profile pictures, has had an unintended ripple effect throughout the MENA region, sparking an online debate on gender, sexuality and LGBTI rights - topics long considered taboo and consequently absent from public discourse until only very recently. Other local breakthroughs, including statements from former government officials in Morocco and Tunisia in support of LGBTI rights and legal cases won by transgender individuals seeking to officially change their identity in Lebanon, have given new hope to gender and sexual minority activists in the region. Inspired by this momentum, LGBTI groups across MENA have begun to expand their local organizing efforts from providing emergency security, medical and legal support to individuals in need to directly raising public awareness about LGBTI issues and pushing for legal reform when possible.

LGBTI activists throughout the MENA region have noted that while providing social services to their peers and raising their voices online is important, they recognize the need to hone their advocacy strategies, broaden their networks and build alliances beyond the LGBTI community if they are ever going to realize the lasting change they seek. NDI works with LGBTI activists throughout the region to provide training on advocacy skills and strategies.

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM MS. ZEINAB ABDELKARIM TO QUESTION ASKED
DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE DAVID CICILLINE

Although the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) promotes inclusive democracy and the democratic rights of all people, IFES does not currently have a program targeting the human rights of LGBT persons in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. However, generally, the struggle for equal rights

and protections for LGBT individuals in MENA is embedded in the broader movement for democracy, freedom and human rights in the face of conservative religious forces in the region. Homosexuality is a crime in many MENA states and is punishable by death in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Qatar, and Iran. Systemic data is difficult to obtain in many countries in the region, however hate crimes, state-sponsored violence and chronic abuse of LGBT individuals are widely reported. Amnesty International estimates 5,000 gays and lesbians have been executed in Iran since the 1979 revolution. In Egypt, homosexuality is not illegal, however hundreds of LGBT individuals have been arrested since the 2013 ousting of president Mohamed Morsi, on grounds of “debauchery” (which carries a jail term of up to 17 years). Violence against LGBT people under the Islamic State profoundly violates human rights. Testimony to the UN Security Council has recorded reports of systemic torture and murder of suspected homosexuals under al-Qaeda in Iraq and ISIS in Syria.

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM ROBERT HERMAN, PH.D., TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE DAVID CICILLINE

The Arabic speaking Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is a diverse region, and the laws and treatment of LGBT people in the various countries that comprise the region is equally diverse.

Overall, the social context and legal situation for LGBT people is repressive, with more than 14 countries explicitly criminalizing homosexuality and 6 of these countries penalizing homosexuality with the death penalty in all or part of the country. Furthermore, the climate of impunity means that LGBT people may be socially ostracized or face physical harm from families or the general community.

Despite this climate, there are active LGBT organizations in a number of the countries in MENA, and at least one regional organization, based in Lebanon, that supports these LGBT organizations and works across the region on “sexuality, gender, and bodily rights.” The vibrancy of these organizations, as well as some of the positive legal and social gains is also part of the context of being LGBT in the Arabic speaking MENA region.

With regard to the criminal and judicial landscape, it varies from repressive to more permissive. For example, the legal situation in Lebanon is more open. While Article 534 of the Penal Code criminalizing sexual relations that contradict “the laws of nature” is technically still on the books, a series of court rulings means that the police and judges are unlikely to enforce this law. The Lebanese Psychiatric Society declassified “homosexuality” as a disease in 2013. In 2016 Court of Appeals in Beirut confirmed the right of a transgender person to change official papers, but only after undergoing surgery.

On the other hand, as noted above, almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the countries in the region explicitly criminalize same-sex sexuality, some imposing the death penalty. The judicial implementation of these laws vary; in Iran, executions are not infrequent. In other countries with the death penalty, such as Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen, and Mauritania, executions have not been reported in more than a decade, but ‘homosexuals’ and transgender people are widely viewed as immoral and criminal, and can be punished by flogging, fines, or imprisonment.

The presence of ISIS in some parts of the region has meant that some men suspected of being gay or transgender have been executed by the group, and has increased the level of terror among members of the LGBT communities in regions where ISIS is present.

The overall climate of impunity as well as the belief that being “homosexual” or transgender is immoral, means that some LGBT individuals may face exclusion from families, physical attacks from the community, forced marriage, “corrective rape,” or honor killings if they are known or suspected to be gay or transgender.

Forced anal testing for “homosexuality” is another practice that is still utilized by police and medical professionals in some countries. According to Human Rights Watch, in Egypt and Tunisia, medical personnel have been involved in subjecting men and transgender people who are arrested for “homosexuality” or “debauchery” to barbaric and discredited forced anal exams to “prove homosexuality”. Such forced exams violate the Convention Against Torture, have no medical justification, and can cause profound trauma.

Egypt made headlines during the last two months with a crackdown on the LGBT community; more than 62 people, mostly men but a few women, have been arrested since a rainbow flag was raised during a concert on September 22, 2017. While some of those detained have been released, several of these people have already received prison sentences of several years for charges such as “incitement to debauchery.”

The cases are currently being appealed. The Egyptian parliament is also considering a bill to explicitly criminalize same-sex relations; currently arrests are made under other pretexts. While this particular crackdown has not yet sparked similar actions in other countries in this region, these types of public crackdowns can sometimes have ripple effects.

Despite the sometimes hostile social and legal climate, vibrant LGBT organizations are also present. For example, in countries such as Tunisia, Lebanon, and Jordan, organizations organize social events, do advocacy for rights, and provide direct services to LGBT community members. In more repressive countries, online groups connect individuals with one another, and with a larger LGBT community. Groups in Beirut organized the first Pride week this year, including public events and parties. In Tunisia, one group conducts a large public feminist arts festival that also includes people with non-normative gender and sexual identities. Rights-based organizing has seen progress in some countries, such as Lebanon, and the presence of these groups in countries from Iraq to Morocco demonstrates the resiliency of communities and organizations.

NOTE: No response was received from Mr. Scott Mastic prior to printing.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Issa, for 5 minutes.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And I am going to live up to my promise on Lebanon, but, Dr. Herman, to paraphrase a statement from “Casablanca,” are you shocked there would be corruption in Saudi Arabia? No.

Mr. HERMAN. No, of course not.

Mr. ISSA. Okay. So the possibility, in addition to all the other possibilities, is that in Saudi Arabia corruption by high-ranking people in the government-slash-royal-family certainly was possible.

Mr. HERMAN. No question, yes.

Mr. ISSA. I look forward to seeing it.

Similarly, the statements that have been made about Lebanon, that Lebanon’s corruption, if you will, was rising very quickly—ma’am, you are shaking your head “yes.” Would you—you seem to be aware of the challenges going on over these last couple of years in Lebanon, specifically in the area of corruption, and then I want to get into election law.

Ms. ABDELKARIM. Sure. Concerns are rising, for example, on the procurements for the elections. That is where I shook my head. There is concern that the procurement processes that the government takes are not open and transparent and they lean toward sole-sourcing of certain, you know, businesses. So I totally agree. And that concern is widely spread among, you know, the stakeholders.

Mr. ISSA. Yeah.

Now, briefly, the change in the election law in Lebanon, which is one of the subjects of concern for the two democracy organizers, if you will, the election law in Lebanon has worked for many, many years, as flawed as it is. The new election law, would you fairly characterize it as a form of gerrymandering? Not that the old one wasn’t.

Ms. ABDELKARIM. Yes.

Mr. CAMPBELL. You know, I will start on this.

First of all, the old election law had—to say that it was flawed is an understatement, because there were no written ballots, and

the fact that a person could bring in a blank piece of paper of their own, any kind of paper, and write in the name of the candidate, without question, led to all sorts of voter fraud——

Mr. ISSA. Oh, yeah. It was practically like Chicago.

Mr. CAMPBELL [continuing]. No question.

The new law, yes, I mean, I have received information that shows that it would probably favor, perhaps, one side over the other. However, it was agreed to—there were improvements in the law.

What I was hoping was that we would have a debate about the law and have improvements prior to the election. I mean, the fact that it seems, as Scott mentioned earlier——

Mr. ISSA. Is there still time for that? Assuming, for example, that Lebanon recognizes that our aid and our support is going to be contingent on free and fair elections, including a fair allocation of, if you will, district—because it is a district-based system, it holds open the possibility that you draw the lines, you draw the results.

Mr. CAMPBELL. There is time. And I think that there is a debate, there is an open debate. I think, with General Aoun as President, you have some parts of the Lebanese community, particularly the Christian community, thinking that they will get more fair representation. There have been analyses that show that Hezbollah and their allies might, you know, be favored by the election law. I think it is an ongoing debate. There is more than enough time to change it.

The shame of this whole situation would be, in my opinion, if a Parliament which was last elected in 2009 and has really lost any kind of momentum or legitimacy ends up being a casualty of this. People are desperate in Lebanon, as you know, for change and some forward momentum there.

Mr. ISSA. Briefly, because I want to follow up on Egypt. Go ahead.

Mr. MASTIC. Yeah, sure.

I do think there is time.

One of the things I will say about an advantage with the election law change is that I think it provided some opportunity for new independent voices and actors to come into the electoral competition space. And that is positive in the sense that it is generating more dynamism in the political debate.

And so, if there is additional change, I would hope that it at least sort of preserves a system that allows for new independent movements and actors to sort of come into the electoral competition.

Mr. ISSA. Well, and that is something that I think we in the United States would assume that we favor in a parliamentary system.

But let me switch to Egypt for a moment. You were involved in that. I will note Mr. LaHood's presence as one of the individuals caught up in that challenge.

We had full access in Egypt. We were allowed to—both of your organizations were allowed to freely operate in Egypt. And you had years of building, if you will, these political organizations, mostly intellectuals who formed, if you will, third parties, and yet it collapsed and collapsed fully when the Muslim Brotherhood came in and swept the election, and doesn't exist today.

So my question to you, with the time that the chair might give me: If we had that opportunity in Egypt again, how would we do it differently so that those programs would yield real political organizations that had staying power to actually have an effect?

Because we had the opportunity; we had years. Hosni Mubarak gave us those years. And it did us no good when those elections occurred, in my opinion.

Mr. MASTIC. So I think some of the response on what we do differently is about implementation. Some of it, frankly, is at a higher policy level with respect to, for example, what the U.S. State Department and through our Embassies is saying to the Egyptian leadership, irrespective of who that is.

On the implementation side, I do think that a greater focus on sort of leveling the political landscape between competitors would have been helpful for the electoral competition element. I don't know that any programming would have, say, produced a different outcome in the first election because of the dynamic of the Muslim Brotherhood entering the electoral competition for the first time. I do think that there could have been much more vocal policy rhetoric with respect to a democratic backslide once the Muslim Brotherhood was elected and in the way Morsi governed and a more redoubled effort on helping new political entrants and building new parties.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman's time has expired.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Meadows, for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank all of you for your testimony.

And so let me pick up there, Mr. Mastic, with—no, actually, you are right, Madam Chair. You are right.

And so, Mr. Mastic, let me pick up there, because we keep talking about the Muslim Brotherhood, we talk about Hezbollah, we talk about Hamas and their infiltration into the election process as a legitimate party. And yet Dr. Herman was talking about it not being the rule of law but, I guess, ruling by law. And what happens is, with the State Department's inability to acknowledge, maybe, the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, it sends a conflicting message, as if it is a, what in the West we would think is just a legitimate party with a different focus.

Do you not see that we send conflicting messages as it relates to some of this? Whether it be in Egypt or whether it be in Lebanon with Hezbollah, are we sending conflicting messages?

Mr. MASTIC. I think one of the challenges about this is Islamism encompasses a huge range of actors and perspectives. And just one data point I would offer is, in Tunisia, there, the Islamist party is actually working in a coalition government with the primary secular party and has proven to be very prudent in the way that it has approached the democratic transition—

Mr. MEADOWS. So what is the difference? Because I agree. And if you look at Tunisia, you can look at, from a coalition standpoint, a very positive direction that we are seeing. So what is the difference? When does it slip from an ideological point of view to, what I would say, an activist point of view that has a very different outcome?

Mr. MASTIC. Yeah. Well, I think one of the key differences in what we saw in Egypt is that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood proved to be a highly authoritarian, illiberal actor once it was elected to power.

Mr. MEADOWS. So why didn't we condemn that more vociferously than we did?

Mr. MASTIC. Those would be questions that you would have to pose to the——

Mr. MEADOWS. Well, then why——

Mr. MASTIC [continuing]. Decision-makers at the time.

Mr. MEADOWS. Well, then my question comes to this administration, because largely we are silent on that too. This is not a Democrat or Republican—we have been silent on it. And at what point are we going to start to speak out about what is legitimate and what is not, instead of pretending that somehow we ignore the obvious?

And we are seeing it play outright now in Lebanon in a different way, but, because we have been ignoring it and it has been relatively peaceful in Lebanon, we ignore the presence of Hezbollah and their influence in the region.

Mr. MASTIC. Right. And, ironically, of course, Hezbollah is a designated foreign terrorist organization under the U.S. law.

So I think the best response I could try to give here is simply that part of it is looking at the actual ideology and behavior, actions of the group, and part of it gets into a realm that is far outside of, sort of, my knowledge, which is financing and where the support comes from. Persons over at the Department of Treasury are, sort of, best to deal with that.

Mr. MEADOWS. Listen, but this is different. And let's look at the Muslim Brotherhood specifically, because this is very different. I was an author of the Hezbollah's—you know, the sanctioning bill, so I get the financial side of it. But what you are dealing with is not finances. What you are dealing with is democracy, and it has nothing to do with the finances. And until we start to actually articulate our concerns, you are going to have these, you know, abnormal issues that we have to address.

You know, the gentleman from Virginia was talking about funding. Listen, I have been one that has advocated on funding on your behalf from a foreign policy standpoint. But if you are going to be anemic with proper assessment, you know, there is no sense to have you around.

And I am saying, coordinating that with the State Department, the message needs to be clear. It is time that we start acknowledging the obvious.

Wouldn't you agree, Mr. Campbell?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yeah, I agree in most senses. One of the things that I think we need to do is make sure that parties that have not renounced violence or that have violent wings aren't treated as just normal competitors in elections, which is——

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you. And I think that that is exactly where we need to go with this. Because here's what I have been troubled with, is that at times—listen, we are all about freedom, and we are all about free speech, and we are all about a competition of ideas.

But the minute that you start putting in the violence that is accompanied with that, you miss out.

Wouldn't you agree, Dr. Herman?

Mr. HERMAN. Yeah, I absolutely agree. I think that is the critical point, that these parties have to be committed to peaceful participation, peaceful processes.

And I would also say, though, that we should also be spending time worrying about and trying to find out why are so many people in those societies drawn to those who would not renounce violence as a way of bringing about political change? And that goes back to the idea of inclusion and giving people an ability to participate in a political system that they can change it without resorting to violence.

Mr. MEADOWS. Well, and that is, as our democracy would say, is protecting the rights of the minority. And when you do that, it has good results.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Chabot, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

Just going back to the last answer—and I want to, first of all, apologize for being here a little late. I had a Small Business hearing and a Judiciary hearing, and so I have missed much of what has happened. So if I am repeating anything that has already been said, tough luck. No, I am sorry. I apologize.

But going back to why are people drawn to, kind of, violent ideologies, Dr. Herman, if I could go to you with that, and anybody who would like to answer, for that matter—and that certainly seems to be the case in some of the recent history we have seen, particularly in the Middle East.

The previous administration pulled out of Iraq. And I had been there, you know, a number of times. And when we were talking to our military personnel there, our Iraqi counterparts, to virtually anybody, there was always this concept that a certain level of troops would be left there for a period of time, anywhere from 10,000 to 15,000 to 20,000 or so. And, ultimately, that is not what happened, and I would argue that we saw the results of that, which was the rise of ISIS. And the country, which I think—probably Baghdad would have fallen, had the administration and our allies in the region not finally stepped forward and did something—they didn't do enough, and it took far too long, but ultimately we see, you know, recently, ISIS is falling, although, you know, they are like rats. They go into other parts of the region, and they are going to have a mischievous 2 weeks where there is going to be horrific action as a result of their being all over the place. But the point is, when we pulled out, it didn't take too long for Iraq to fall.

If we pulled our troops out of Afghanistan—the administration is not considering that, I don't believe, but if we did—because a lot of Americans, I think—you know, we are tired. We have been there for a long, long time. We still are losing our men and women there. If we pulled out, how long would it take for the Taliban to take over? Anybody who would like to take that.

Mr. MASTIC. Well, regrettably, the Taliban already controls portions of the country. I don't know that they have the capability to sort of take over Kabul, in the sense of a, kind of, full takeover of the country, in part because of the efforts that have been put into sort of, like, building resiliency. But the writ of the Government of Afghanistan kind of ends at the Kabul city limits, unfortunately.

Mr. CHABOT. Right.

Mr. MASTIC. And so, how long could they kind of withstand that growing onslaught? It is hard for me to offer a timeline on that. But, certainly, if there is a minimized U.S. presence, efforts to ensure that doesn't happen are important, certainly.

Mr. CHABOT. Right. Thank you.

I think, as distasteful as it is that we have to, it seems like, leave our men and women in harm's way in that region longer than a lot of us thought we would be there or should be there, I think the adverse consequences of pulling them out would be tragic and horrific, and we can't afford to do that.

Let me shift gears completely. I don't have a whole lot of time left, and I am assuming that you all already talked about this to some degree. But who would like to comment on Prince Mohammad bin Salman's recent aggressive diplomatic tactics and what is going on there? And what should we think about that?

Mr. Campbell, I think I see you champing at the bit.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yeah. We did talk about it a little bit, but I think we all agreed that no one knows the inner workings of Saudi Arabia well enough.

But just to make a comment, Yemen is such a volatile place right now, and there is a lot of saber rattling coming out of Saudi Arabia. Prime Minister Hariri, you know, left Lebanon, went to Saudi Arabia, then resigned. And then we had the sacking of the various princes and, you know, putting them in the Ritz Carlton and so on.

I don't know the inner workings. We were saying earlier that perhaps this is an anticorruption move. But I would wonder if there is anyone in Saudi Arabia, you know, in the higher echelon of the princes that is not corrupt. So it is a little hard for me to believe that one group is not corrupt, all the other group is corrupt.

But what really worries me more than anything is that, at this moment when the region is so sensitive and at this tender moment in terms of all-out warfare even worse than what we have, Saudi Arabia appears to want to start wars. And I don't know if they are going to fight the wars, because they haven't fought it very well in Yemen. They started, and they haven't been able to finish it. They have created a crisis there.

So my only comment on that, not knowing the inner workings, is the way they are talking is not helpful.

Mr. CHABOT. I thank you.

And my time has expired, but I would just, if I could, have one final comment. I think there ought to be considerable concern when one considers the rise of Iran in the region and the negative consequences of what they have wrought thus far. And to think that the Saudis could be unstable at this critical time is of, I think, considerable concern or ought to be.

I yield back.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman yields back.

And now the Chair finally gets to recognize a gentleman with good patience, the gentleman from California, who is the chair of the Europe Subcommittee, the gentleman from California, Mr. Rohrabacher, for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much. I have enjoyed this hearing. Thank you very much for stimulating the discussion.

As I say, I went through this when our number-one enemy was the Soviet Union and communism was the great threat. And I don't know, maybe people won't agree with me now, but radical Islamic terrorists—and, as I say, when radical Islam gets in charge of a government, they become radical Islamist fascists, of a fascist system—is the number-one threat to the free people of the world.

And I would hope that, as we get into this battle, that we are not making a mistake that peaceful change is the only way that happens in the world. We understand there are people fighting one another; we are not perfect people. But good intentions and people who more reflect what we would want them to do, if they don't come to power—and, no matter what their good intentions are, if who comes to power are these radical Islamic terrorists, then we have failed. Then we are making it a worse world by trying to be perfectionists.

And all the criticism I have heard of Egypt right now, I will just have to tell you, I happen to believe that Morsi—there was an election after Morsi was removed, all right? I understand that Morsi was removed, that was a coup d'etat, and there was an election since then. However, if General Sisi and his government fall, does anyone here think that Christians will be more protected? And if Morsi would have stayed in, would Christians in Egypt be worse off? Or how about these other minorities that we are talking about? Would Egypt be a freer society now?

And I will tell you, if Egypt falls, if the el-Sisi government would fall to a radical Islamic group, the whole Middle East would go into turmoil, and chances of freedom would be less.

So, no matter how good people's intentions are, no matter how moral we can position ourselves, if the outcome is more radical Islamic governments, we have failed.

And I happen to believe, yes, we should try to steer Egypt in the right direction, but we should not be focusing on Egypt when there are so many other governments there that are worse and would murder Christians if they had a chance. And I don't believe that is true of General Sisi and his group that now are in control of Egypt.

And no matter how we can proclaim, through, you know, your whole civil society movement—we can proclaim how we want minority groups who have different sexual preferences to be protected or environmental ideas or rights of women—if we indeed insist on that in imperfect governments and we end up with radical Islamic governments, we have failed. We have taken the world in a worse direction. And I see that perfectionism leading to a world that is going to be less free, and especially in terms of the criticism I have heard today of Egypt.

Let me ask you this. Would the panel just very quickly—do you consider the Muslim Brotherhood a democratic force, a positive force in the Middle East? Yes or no?

Mr. MASTIC. In Egypt? No.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. No, no. All throughout the Middle East.

Mr. MASTIC. I am concerned about the authoritarian, illiberal nature of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. So the answer is it is not. You say no on the Muslim Brotherhood.

How about you? Muslim Brotherhood, positive force, negative force?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Positive or negative force? I think——

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Negative force? I want to make sure I get everyone's opinion.

Mr. CAMPBELL. But can I just——

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Negative or positive?

Ms. ABDELKARIM. It is a political party that must have the space to compete in elections like any other political party.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I didn't catch that. Yes or no, is it a negative or a positive force in the Middle East?

Ms. ABDELKARIM. I cannot categorize it as a——

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay, you can't do that.

Ms. ABDELKARIM [continuing]. Positive force. Yes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Yeah.

Ms. ABDELKARIM. Yeah.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. That is really too bad. It tells a lot about you. Is it a positive or a negative force?

Mr. HERMAN. To the extent that they are prepared to renounce violence as a way of gaining political support, I would say they could be a positive force. But I share very much Scott's analysis that, as we see it now, no.

And, of course, in Egypt, the best outcome would have been——

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay.

Mr. HERMAN [continuing]. For them to be just—not gone in a coup but voted out of office, and then inoculate the citizenry from thinking that that is a solution to the problems of Egypt.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. All right. Well, the Muslim Brotherhood gives excuses for people to tyrannize other human beings and exactly the thing your civil society claims to be against. And the world isn't just changed by violence; it is changed by people who propagate ideas that will lead to tyranny and to violence.

The Muslim Brotherhood is a negative force in the world and especially in the Middle East. And we better start being realistic or we are going to have a totally destabilized world, where radical Islamic terrorists have a lot more threat to everybody else in the world than they have today.

Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Mrs. WAGNER. The gentleman's time has expired.

And, without further ado, the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee hearing on democracy and governance in the Middle East and North Africa stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:40 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

**Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman**

October 31, 2017

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov>).

DATE: Tuesday, November 7, 2017

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

SUBJECT: Democracy and Governance in the Middle East and North Africa

WITNESSES: Mr. Scott Mastic
Vice President for Programs
International Republican Institute

Mr. Leslie Campbell
Senior Associate and Regional Director for Middle East and North Africa Programs
National Democratic Institute

Ms. Zeinab Abdelkarim
Regional Director
Middle East and North Africa
International Foundation for Electoral Systems

Robert Herman, Ph.D
Vice President for International Programs
Vice President for Emergency Assistance Programs and Multilateral Initiatives
Freedom House

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5921 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.



COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON Middle East and North Africa HEARINGDay Tuesday Date 11/07/17 Room 2172Starting Time 10:05 AM Ending Time 11:40 AMRecesses ☐ (to) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman Wagner

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒Executive (closed) Session ☐Stenographic Record ☒Televised ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

Democracy and Governance in the Middle East and North Africa

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*GOP- Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Reps. Chabot, Issa, Meadows, Zeldin, Wagner, Fitzpatrick**Dem- Ranking Member Connolly, Reps. Cicilline, Gabbard, Schneider, Suozzi*

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)

*GOP- Rep. Rohrabacher*HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

*Rep. Wagner's Question for the Record for Dr. Herman**Rep. Cicilline's Question for the Record*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 11:40 AM


Subcommittee Staff Associate