

MINORITY AT RISK: COPTIC CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

JULY 22, 2011

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July 22, 2011

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
WASHINGTON, DC

The hearing was held at 9:30 a.m. in room 210, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC, Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding.

Commissioners present: Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Hon. Steve Cohen, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; and Joseph R. Pitts, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Witnesses present: Caroline Doss, Vice President, Coptic Solidarity; Michele A. Clark, Adjunct Professor, Elliott School of International Affairs, the George Washington University; Jean Maher, President, French Office, Egyptian Union for Human Rights Organization; Hon. Frank Wolf, a Member in Congress from the State of Virginia; Hon. Trent Franks, a Member in Congress from the State of Arizona; Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Member in Congress from the State of Florida; and Hon. Renee L. Ellmers, a Member in Congress from the State of North Carolina.

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Mr. SMITH. The Commission will come to order, and I want to welcome our very distinguished panel to this Commission hearing focusing on a minority at risk, Coptic Christians in Egypt. And just for the C-SPAN audience, I would just point out that the Helsinki Commission was formed immediately after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in the mid-1970s, a comprehensive human rights convention that had three major baskets: one dealing with security, another with trade and the one that we have emphasized very, very strongly over these last several decades, the human rights basket.

The Helsinki Commission is made up of nine House Members, nine Members of the U.S. Senate and three members of the executive branch, all Assistant Secretaries, very high level, including the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Labor and Human Rights. I've been on the Commission since 1982, and my—three in my second term. I've actually Chaired the Commission or Co-Chaired it from '95 to 2006, and served as Ranking Member and

now am back as Chairman, and Senator Cardin serves as Co-Chairman from the Senate side.

So again, welcome to this Commission hearing. This morning we're going to focus on the question of what is happening to the Coptic Christians in Egypt and what will happen to them in the new country that is emerging from the revolution this spring.

Early signs are discouraging. There has been an escalation in violence against Copts, which has included the killing of dozens of Coptic individuals, fire bombings of churches and the destruction of at least three churches. Of course, Coptic Christians have long been marginalized, disadvantaged and faced harsh discrimination, persecution, and even violent attacks, both by the Egyptian Government and by Muslim extremists in Egypt where they constitute roughly 8 percent of the population of about 82 million people. The plight of Copts has been well-documented, including by the State Department's International Religious Freedom reports and its Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and by the reports of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The most recent International Religious Freedom report said that the Egyptian Government's respect for this fundamental human right is quote, "poor." Given developments in Egypt, we have to be deeply concerned about what the next report will say and, more importantly, what has truly happened or is happening on the ground.

The other focus of this hearing will be the widespread and credible allegations that the Egyptian Coptic women and girls are subjected to abduction, forced conversion to Islam and forced marriage to Muslims. They appear to be targeted with deceptive and abusive practices, which often include violence and that separate them forever, against their will, from their families. We've heard very disturbing reports, and part of the reason for this hearing is to begin to open up and find out what is truly going on with regards to this terrible situation.

I would note parenthetically that I am the prime sponsor and author of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, and one of the hallmarks of that legislation is to bring light and policy, including sanctions, against countries that engage either internally or across boundaries in any kind of commodification of women, especially the selling of individuals into sexual trafficking situations, modern-day slavery as we call it. I would also point out that, over the years, many of us on the Foreign Relations Committee and those not on it who are concerned about this, routinely raised the issue of the Coptic Christians and their persecution, especially with President Mubarak, and time and again, we had lists. I would give him lists, both in Cairo and in Washington, when he would visit, and ask that individuals who have been hurt or arrested falsely or under false charges be shown relief. And while it was bad under Mubarak, the big concern now, the big open question is, is it evolving in the wrong direction and actually worsening?

I'd like to say to the Egyptian Government today, in my opinion and in the opinion of many of us who follow human rights closely, Egypt has failed to initiate credible investigations into the cases of the fire bombings and the abducted women and many of these other issues as well as killing of individuals. And that does perhaps have the intended consequence of creating a climate of impunity for

the perpetrators. If there is no penalty for this terrible abuse and violence, it only encourages more violence. I'd like to say at the outset that this is only the first hearing on the persecution of the Copts—or rather the second; there was one in January chaired by my good friend and colleague, Mr. Wolf, who did it under the auspices of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission. We will hold hearings on Copts and other minority religions in the Middle East.

But of course the revolution against Mubarak has created a new situation, which calls for a new hearing. Things have changed dramatically on the ground. And I'd like to bring a special focus to the issue of the abduction of Coptic women and girls. If we need to, we will have—and we will—have followup hearings later this year until the Egyptian Government gets the message. This is an issue that calls for action. In April 2010, I wrote to the State Department, together with 15 other Members, urging further investigation and reporting on the exploitation of Coptic women. This spring, Frank Wolf introduced legislation that would create a special envoy to promote freedom of religious minorities in the Middle East and South Central Asia. That bill is likely to be on the floor this coming Monday. Hopefully it'll pass, hopefully the Senate will take it up quickly, and get down to the president to have a point person reaching out and working—with direct access to the President, to work on the worsening plight of Christians in the Middle East.

Egypt is a major recipient, as we all know, of U.S. foreign aid, and it is a Mediterranean Partner for Co-Operation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. I do hope its government is paying close attention today and that it chooses the path of reform and religious freedom. If it doesn't, we should restructure our aid so as to promote religious freedom much more vigorously and carefully consider designating Egypt as a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

And I would note parenthetically that the U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom has already made that recommendation. So there is a—this is something that has to be taken very seriously, and it has to be done right now.

Finally, yesterday, we marked up the reauthorization of the Foreign Relations Act, which is the State Department and some foreign aid in the Foreign Affairs Committee. I offered an amendment which we will give out and make a part of the record here today—yesterday—that brings attention to all of these issues concerning Coptic Christians: from the fire bombings to the desecration of churches and, of course, the destruction of churches and to this under-focused-upon issue of young Coptic girls being abducted and forced into Islam and then given over as brides. It's a very disturbing and, I think, an outrageous situation, and we need to do more, and this hearing marks a pivotal moment at least for, I think, what the Congress will do—as did yesterday.

I would note parenthetically that the amendment passed unanimously by both Republicans and Democrats on the committee and those who spoke in favor of it, including Howard Berman, the Ranking Member, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the Chairwoman of the Committee and other members, all were on the same page—we

need to speak out robustly as does the administration on behalf of Coptic Christians.

I would like to now welcome our distinguished witnesses to this hearing today, beginning first with Caroline Doss, who's an attorney and Vice President of Coptic Solidarity, a group dedicated to upholding the human rights of Egyptian Copts, and she has spoken widely on issues affecting minorities in Egypt. Her full resume will be made a part of the record; she has many, many accomplishments, as do our other witnesses today. And then we'll hear Jean Maher, who's the President of the French office of the Egyptian Union for Human Rights Organizations and represents several Coptic organizations in France. He has been engaged in promoting Coptic rights in France and in wider Europe. And then third, we'll hear from Michele Clark, who's an adjunct professor at the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University and co-author of the 2009 report, "The Disappearance, Forced Conversions and Forced Marriages of Coptic Christian Women in Egypt." She is currently working on a new investigation into abduction, forced conversion and marriage, and is known to the Commission for her extraordinarily fine work in combating human trafficking.

I'd like to now turn to Caroline Doss, and ask all of our distinguished witnesses to come to the witness table. [Applause.]

CAROLINE DOSS, VICE PRESIDENT, COPTIC SOLIDARITY

Ms. DOSS. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of Congress and Commissioners, thank you for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify and focus on the issues related to the Christian minority in Egypt, particularly as many of these appear to be ignored in current policy considerations.

There are a number of issue—issues minorities have faced in Egypt over the years, including violent attacks, discrimination in the workplace and in society at large, inequality under the law, lack of justice against those who perpetuate attacks, hate speech in the media, and the long-term issues related to peacefully practicing one's faith and worshipping freely.

Numerous media articles and reports document the discrimination and violence against Christians and other minorities under the Mubarak regime. There was great hope among minorities, especially as the Egyptian people stood side by side in Tahrir Square, calling for Mubarak to leave, that a post-Mubarak Egypt would provide more freedom and peace for minorities. Tragically that has not occurred. Instead, there is a—there is clear evidence of an increasing pattern and practice by Commission and omission, of government-sanctioned persecution of Copts.

Sadly we have seen many violent attacks against Coptic Christians in the last few months of the post the Mubarak regime. There has been clear evidence of a pattern and practice. We can start with the military. There have been two very well-documented attacks where the military openly attacked Coptic monasteries. Those attacks can actually be viewed online. The military opened fire on unarmed monks and, if you actually go online and look at the videos, which we provided links for, you can see these monks

running for cover as the military is opening fire with heavy machinery on the monks.

Also we see persecution by government officials, specifically the Governor of el-Minya. In February, he demolished 10 Coptic homes because the owners of those homes refused to contribute $\frac{1}{5}$ of their property to build a mosque. That same Governor attempted to demolish a Coptic services home for the handicapped. Luckily, Coptic protestors were able to block him from doing so.

Very disturbing. Five churches have been attacked since Mubarak has stepped down, and what is very scary about those attacks is that they occurred out in the open while the military stood by and watched. We have also attached the YouTube links where you can actually watch these attacks go on, with the military standing in the background, and what's very disturbing—one common thing you see in all of these attacks is the crowds in unison chanting "Allah hu Akbar," God is great, as the attacks go on. Watch them for yourself, and you'll see in horror as the attacks go on, they actually chant "Allah hu Akbar," God is great.

Now what's also very scary and sad is that some of the footage of those attacks is so clear that you can actually see the people who are participating in the attacks and identify them. One of the YouTube links takes it frame by frame and puts circles around the attackers. We've printed out the name and address of one of those attackers and who he's related to in the government. Has he been arrested? No, he hasn't. We have another printout of another individual who, as the church was burning clearly said—a Salafi—we are not men if we do not burn all the churches in Imbaba, a clear, crystal clear picture of this man. Has he been arrested? No, he hasn't.

The church in Ain Shams that was most recently attacked in May, May 14th to be specific, in Cairo, I can say there were three convictions, and each of the three received 5-year prison sentence, two for possession of a pistol and one for possession of a pocket knife. Here's the disturbing thing: Those three individuals were all Christians.

Within 2 weeks, those individuals were arrested and convicted and handed very harsh sentences of 5 years because they were Christians and because they possessed weapons and defended their churches. How is that in comparison to the situation as a whole when you look at it? No Muslim perpetrators were arrested at all. Instead, the Christians, who were defending their churches, were the ones who were arrested. What does that tell us? The message is you can attack, you can threaten, you can watch the attack, you can participate in it, you can put it on YouTube, you can advertise it, but you can't defend against the attack because if you do, the government will make sure that they harshly and swiftly respond to anyone who dares defend against an attack. What does that say to this minority? Sit back and take it. And if you think you're not going to, we'll show you.

The torture and the impunity of the former state security officials—some have been sent home, and some have just been simply relocated in different parts of the government. Nobody has ever held these people accountable for what they have done to Egyptian citizens. There is a clear record, and State Department reports

spell it out: torture, rape, burnings of people who want to convert from Islam to Christianity. Have any of them been brought to justice? Absolutely not. They have not. As a person who deals with people who first immigrate to the United States, I can tell you, I have seen scars of people who were tortured in state security.

Most recently, a woman showed me her scars, her burn marks on her arms and on her inner thighs. They burned her with cigars because they wanted to know and insisted on knowing who was the priest who baptized you and what church did they baptize you in? She wouldn't give his name, so the torture went on for 3 days. She knows the name of her abuser because he made—he made sure he introduced himself before they started the torture.

Another man who described his torture in state security, a convert from Islam to Christianity—and he gave me the location of where he was tortured and again the name of the person who tortured him, because he also introduced himself. He described how they removed his clothing, tied him down and put a metal chair between his legs and tied wires around his genitals and to his toes and then turned on the electricity.

These people—we know their names. But have any of them been brought to justice? No. They've just been placed in different parts of the government. The same people will practice the same torture and the same tactics because they—no one has ever said anything to them. They haven't been held accountable. There is a clear record of a pattern and practice of abuse and a pattern and practice of impunity. Put those together and what do we get?

Another issue, which my colleagues will expand more on later is the forced conversion and the kidnapping of Coptic girls. Again, dealing with people who come to—who have been coming to the United States in the last few months, I've heard accounts of what people actually went through during the time that they were threatening—there better be no one in the street without a veil. It was actually a particular Tuesday in the month of March, where Salafis made sure that they very well advertised that if a woman went into the street without the veil, she would be punished.

As one woman and her husband went on to tell me, while their 8 year old child was in the room, her son begged and cried that day: Mom, don't leave; you might die. She wanted to go and wish her mother a happy Mother's Day. Mother's Day is in the month of March in Egypt. And her son cried and begged, don't leave; you might get killed.

Another story I heard from another client—he actually made his wife wear the veil. He was scared for her. He said, just put it on, we don't want any trouble. They put it on, but despite that, they were still actually attacked. And while the attack was going on, the wife, fearing for her life, ran, tripped and 2 days later suffered a miscarriage. She was 18 weeks pregnant at the time.

The veil is an issue that is deeply disturbing and brings to mind the actions of the Taliban in Afghanistan and their attacks against non-veiled women.

We make the following recommendations for the Egyptian Government, the U.S. Government and the international community. We support and strongly urge the passage of H.R. 440 and S. 1245, which provide for the appointment of a special envoy for minorities

in the Middle East. We also strongly urge the administration to appoint someone to that position who is highly qualified and has the stature needed to ensure that issues related to minorities are included at the highest level of the U.S. Government, particularly during this historic transition in Egypt. We also call for the prosecution of the perpetrators of these crimes. Until these people are brought to justice, Egypt will never see justice or unity. These people need to be held accountable. And the message that you can burn a church in public and have a party afterwards, chanting "Allah hu Akbar," it is not acceptable. That message needs to be sent to the people of Egypt and to the international community.

Also, we ask that the U.S. Government and the international community press the Egyptian Government to ensure that its commitments to international human rights norms are upheld in the foundational sections of the constitution and are not undermined by any subsequent articles or passages.

And last, we ask that while we welcome the efforts to help Egypt and its—in its current economic situation, we believe that unconditional financial aid would be a strategic error. Aid should be linked to Egypt's human rights record in terms of constitutional stipulations, laws and practices over the short- and medium-terms. We urge the U.S. Government, European governments and others in the international community providing financial aid to Egypt to tie that aid to Egypt's upholding and protecting fundamental human rights norms now and in any new constitution.

Mr. Chairman, I again thank you for the opportunity to raise these concerns today. The people of Egypt, particularly the minorities, long for a society in which they are free to peacefully practice their faith and to live their lives without fear. Muslims, Christians and other minorities all deserve a stable, peaceful and free society. It is at this time in Egypt's history that real change is possible, but I fear that change will not happen unless there is an exponential increase in pressure, both from inside, and outside, of Egypt.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Doss, thank you very much [applause] for your passionate and very incisive testimony. I think for many Members of Congress, this will be an eye-opening hearing. And I do believe because C-SPAN is here, for many Americans, they will be learning for the first time just how discriminatory and how violent the plight has been for Coptic Christians and especially this—the veil being lifted off the abduction of young girls and women to be sold into what is, without a doubt, modern-day slavery. They are forced into marriages, stolen from their families. And we will hear—our next two witnesses will bring, I do believe, even more light on that.

But before going to them, I'd like to yield to Commissioner Cohen for any comments he might have and then Commissioner Joe Pitts.

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

Mr. COHEN. Thank you. Just very briefly—thank you, Mr. Chairman—I just want to express my appreciation for the witnesses and for all the people here who are concerned about these issues. I'm, I think, the newest member of this Commission. Chairman Smith has a long history and is greatly appreciated for the work that he

puts into this. This isn't one of those Commissions and appointments through the Congress where you get a lot of contributions, you know, and PAC support and all those things. This is something which you do because you care about human beings. And so I appreciate the Chairman and the other members who are here and the opportunity to participate here.

You know, it's stunning, your testimony about the discrimination against Coptics. And I've read about—I was in Cairo about a month ago. And I had read about the issues that existed in Egypt. I also had read that when the—our American newscaster, the female, was raped, that the screams were not necessarily “God is great,” but suggestions that she was Israeli; and so it was truly good that she was being raped.

The situation is not good. I had an email today, and I don't know what—how valid it is. I'm sending it to the Commission for their opportunity to vet it. But it suggested there's been an increase in anti-Semitic actions in France and that there's been many actions against synagogues and Jewish places of assemblage and Jewish people in France. It's just distressing that religion is causing so much anger and separation and hate rather than the love that is supposed to encourage us all to exchange and to value.

And so, through this Commission, I hope we can do some good in shedding light on the problems and hopefully get some of the clergy people to spread a little love rather than a little hate. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Cohen, thank you so very much.
Commissioner Pitts.

**HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the opening statement?

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Mr. PITTS. The Republic of Egypt, an OSCE Mediterranean Partner for Co-operation, has undergone a dramatic revolution rooted in the inevitable need for freedom and democracy that many OSCE members faced two decades ago during the fall of the Soviet Union. As we continue to hold hearings at this Commission, we see many of those states still struggling to uphold democracy and human rights for all their people.

However, discrimination against Egypt's Coptic population long preceded the Arab Spring. Indeed, the Coptic community was instrumental in the recent democratic uprising that led to the end of Hosni Mubarak's rule. But attacks against the Copts are ongoing, and the impunity present under Mubarak has not ended with his removal, but observed with a lack of credible investigations into these attacks by the state. Many have concluded that the current Egyptian Government may offer a climate for Coptic Christians that is worse than the one facilitated by former President Mubarak.

It is my fear that we are seeing Egypt trade one form of oppression for another, trading a dictatorship for mob rule or tyranny of the majority. The government must understand that it has a vested

interest in the equal protection of Christians and Muslims, which will ensure the common good of all Egyptians.

During my tenure in Congress, I've raised numerous issues with the government of Egypt, including issues ranging from appreciation for working together on issues of importance to both of our nations such as defense and terrorism, to concerns about widespread torture in prisons and discrimination against and even outright persecution of religious minorities and the lack of freedom to hold free, fair and transparent elections.

In March of this year, I sent a letter, along with other Members of Congress, to the head of the transitional government, Field Marshal Tantawi, urging him to intervene against the attacks on the Coptic church, stressing that it only is with the strong action against those seeking to undermine the values of democracy, transparency and freedom in Egypt that the country will reach its potential and maintain its strength and stability. Although I never received a response from the government, I am hopeful that I can find answers to my questions in today's hearing with the help of our panelists, find courses of action that will lead to a truly democratic Egypt.

I'm disturbed by the ongoing reports of abuse against this ancient minority in Egypt and, in particular, reports of abuses toward women under the new regime.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing today. I look forward to finding ways the United States and the OSCE can help facilitate policies to aid Egypt during this crucial time in its history.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Commissioner Pitts. I would just note parenthetically that Congressman Joe Pitts for years has spoken out on the floor, in committee, and in Egypt about the plight of Coptic Christians and has been tenacious in promoting religious freedom in general. But for Coptic Christians, no one has done more in the U.S. House of Representatives. So I do thank him. And Commissioner Cohen, thank you for your steadfast support for human rights and for religious freedom as well.

We will now go to our next witness, Michele Clark. And I would just note that Michele Clark was the Director—and this is how we worked very closely on human trafficking—of the Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit at the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe, where she assisted all 56 countries of the OSCE—which is virtually all of Europe, the United States, and Canada—with meeting their commitments to combating this modern-day slavery. She is also the author of a comprehensive report, which without objection we'll make a part of the record, a 41-page report called "The Disappearance, Forced Conversions and Forced Marriages of Coptic Christian Women in Egypt."

So, Ms. Clark, the floor is yours.

MICHELE A. CLARK, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, ELLIOTT SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Ms. CLARK. Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission, it's an honor to testify before the Helsinki Commission today. Thank

you for your gracious invitation, and thank you for including the report in the permanent record.

Mr. Chairman, I'm here today to speak about the disappearance, forced conversions and forced marriages of Coptic women in Egypt. Thank you for calling this hearing. Your steadfast, strong voice over the past decade and then some in defense of vulnerable women and children remains an inspiration. I'd just also like to call to your attention that the weather has agreed to turn up the heat on this matter in support of your initiative. [Laughter.]

The topic is timely, as Egypt is moving into a new phase of government, where the rights of all citizens are equally valued and represented. This includes—should include the rights of religious minorities and of women. While I've provided detailed written testimony to the Commission for the record, I'd like to summarize some of the main points here in my oral presentation.

As context, in 2007, the State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practice referenced the issue that—under discussion and claimed while there were no reports of forced religious conversion carried out by the government, there continued to be unsubstantiated reports. Reports were disputed. Reports included allegations and denials. Extremely difficult to determine the accuracy—extremely difficult to determine whether compulsion was used, and cases almost never used—appeared in the local media. In 2008, the Report on International Religious Freedom, in its Egypt country report, uses almost the same language: Reports of forced conversion, reports are disputed, inflammatory allegations and categorical denials, extremely difficult to determine. And finally, in 2010, the Trafficking in Persons Report, published by the U.S. Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking indicated that an NGO released a report about alleged forced marriages of Coptic Christian women, including an allegation of forced prostitution, although the allegations have not been confirmed.

Mr. Chairman, I'm here to confirm these allegations. Mr. Chairman, I'm here to attest that these claims should not be disputed. I'm here to say that categorical denials of kidnappings, rapes, forced marriages and forced conversion are an affront to the dignity of Egyptian Coptic women. I know this. Why? Because I have spoken to women who've been traumatized after an "alleged" kidnapping; who will suffer a lifetime of infertility due to an "alleged" rape, who move from home to home in constant fear of reprisal by "alleged" perpetrators and who are denied their Christian identities because of an "alleged" conversion.

In 2009, I traveled to Egypt on behalf of Christian Solidarity International and the Coptic Foundation for Human Rights. Together with Nadia Ghaly, a spirited human rights activist, to gather evidence to vindicate the claims of these women. We spoke to over 50 women. We met their families. We sat with parish priests who regularly witness this occurrence within their congregation and who have painstakingly compiled binders five feet in height of evidence documenting each tragic story. We reviewed legal documents filed by courageous human-rights lawyers who were working to restore their original Christian identity to these women, and we drank tea in shelters where women returning from lives of "al-

leged” abuse and in some cases forced prostitution were sequestered.

Mr. Chairman, under regular human rights, in normal human-rights circumstances, such reporting eliminates the use of the word “allegation.” I’m just wondering why the word “allegation” persists now that we have been able to document such reports.

Let me summarize some of our specific findings. First, we can substantiate that Christian women are in fact lured into marriages with Muslim men and subsequently converted to Islam. These marriages often take place under duress and frequently include abductions, physical abuse, rape. Victims remain reluctant to press charges against their perpetrators for fear of reprisal. When charges have been filed, there is no evidence. We have not been able to find evidence of a single conviction against a perpetrator.

Let me give you an example. A young woman—we’ll refer to her as “H”—was befriended by a Muslim girl. She trusted her friend and spent time at her home. One day in her friend’s absence, the brother raped her. Ashamed to tell her own family, she remained with this man’s family, during which time the mother persuaded her to convert to Islam and marry the son. She was subsequently locked into her apartment every day when her husband left for work and allowed to leave only with her in-laws. She was denied access to the telephone, made to cover herself when she left the house and was frequently beaten.

Our second conclusion is that authorities do not acknowledge that criminal action has taken place. Instead, young women are presumed to be willing participants in their faith. This is not true. Mr. Smith, you’ve been in the anti-trafficking arena long enough to understand that one of the chief arguments leveled against victims of trafficking is that somehow they went along with the promises. Anti-trafficking experts frequently—or increasingly recognize two important facts. One is that the purposes of trafficking can include forced marriage. This has been documented in the U.S. Government’s TIP Report.

Furthermore, the anti-trafficking community recognizes that one form of recruitment into trafficking takes the form of seduction. In the Netherlands, they refer to it as “the loverboy phenomenon.” This facade of romance to mark a false intent is consistent with patterns documented in human-trafficking cases. Although some women do in fact—may in fact consent to romance, in no way do they consent to abuse, violence and loss of religious identity. Therefore, fraud is present in these cases. Under U.S. trafficking law, if force or fraud or coercion is present, you have a case of trafficking. Trafficking does not have to be commercial.

Third, we have identified specific patterns in these instances, Mr. Chairman, including the fact that Coptic girls are befriended—and this pattern—these patterns would indicate that there is thought and strategy and planning. These are not random occurrences or random actions. Coptic girls are befriended by Muslim girls who are classmates or neighbors, who introduce the Christian—young Christian women to their families where they meet a Muslim man. Women and girls, often finding themselves in various situations of distress are befriended by an older woman who becomes a mother figure and trusted confidant. The woman provides material and

emotional assistance during difficult times and introduces the Coptic girl to a Muslim man who can help.

Women and girls are approached by a Muslim benefactor, who offers services and assistance in the case of illness. There was one instance where a young woman was offered help in buying blood necessary for a child's transfusion.

Once trust has been established, girls can be lured to an isolated place, drugged and kidnapped. Often, they are raped. Following the rape, the Coptic women experience shame and fear of how their families will respond. They become more willing to stay with Muslim friends and marry the rapist because they feel that there is no place for them to go. These marriages are accompanied by conversion to Islam at the insistence of the man's family. And a new Muslim identity card is subsequently issued. Once married, Coptic women experience forms of psychological and physical abuse, including rape, beating, verbal abuse, confinement to their apartments, limited freedom of movement, and isolation from their families.

Furthermore, women report that once the marriage has taken place, the new couple or the in-laws receive some material benefit in the form of the new apartment, new furniture, or perhaps a job given to a derelict son or a former petty—convicted petty thief.

Escape takes the following forms. In some cases, notably where there are no children and where the women persist in wanting to get out of the situation, making lives difficult for everyone, the woman is sent home. In other cases, she is rescued by friends and relatives. However, when children have been born, women rarely leave.

Another point of interest, Mr. Chairman, is that while Islam forbids a Muslim woman from marrying a non-Muslim man, a Muslim man may marry a non-Muslim woman. In each of the cases documented for this report, conversions and marriages occurred within a few days of each other.

Now, it's necessary to inquire further why forced marriages of Coptic women to Muslim men are accompanied by a conversion when Islamic law does not require a conversion. The only purpose it seems to serve is the denial of a religious identity, is the annihilation of a religious identity.

Fourth, counseling sessions with members of their own clergy, traditionally part of the conversion process to Islam, are no longer available to potential converts. It used to be that if an individual opted to convert to Islam, meetings were convened where members of my own clergy, together with representatives of the Islamic face—faith—would be together in order so that I would understand the full implications of my choice.

Under the former government, these counseling sessions have been suspended. Attempts by various human rights lawyers on behalf of religious minorities to challenge this and to restore these sessions have not been successful to my knowledge to date.

Fifth, Coptic women experience physical and psychological abuse both before and after their conversions in marriage, including reports, documented reports of forced prostitution by their husbands.

Sixth, the Egyptian government does not require the legal Christian identity of Coptic women who have returned to their faith

communities of origin to be restored to them. We've received some reports that a few numbers of women are able to regain their Christian identity, but in fact for the most part, a woman is required to live with her Islamic identity until something is done to change the situation.

The Coptic Church has developed some safe houses for victimized women and girls. We have visited them and note that provision is—some provision is being made for their care. But on the whole, the issue is shrouded in ignorance, in fear, in shame, with a real unwillingness to bring the issue forward in the country.

Based on the preliminary findings of this report, we recommended the Helsinki Commission actively pursue the following issue—issues: the reinstatement of counseling sessions for those completing—contemplating conversions to Islam; the restoration of Christian identity cards to former converts of Islam who decide to return to their original faith; the investigation of all allegations of kidnappings, rape, and other acts of violence against women associated with forced marriages and conversions of Coptic women; and the prosecution of perpetrators.

We encourage the U.S. Government to fund out of its democracy funds programs that work toward freedom of religion and the empowerment of women in the Middle East, two essential cornerstones of any free society.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, let's get rid of the word "allegation."

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you [applause] so much for your incisive testimony as well. You know, this is an indictment of the Egyptian Government and of a practice that has gone on for far too long. As you pointed out in the report, as far back as 1976, Pope Shenouda III said—and I quote 'there is pressure being practiced to convert Coptic girls to Islam and marry them under terror to Muslim husbands.'" It would appear that the situation has dramatically worsened based on your testimony and the testimonies of our other witnesses.

And now, you know, as you know, Egypt is a Tier 2 country, frankly, and—which suggests that they're taking actions to combat human trafficking. That report just came out, and based on the evidence—and I've read the testimonies of our witnesses—I will initiate an effort to get the Ambassador-at-Large, Luis C. deBaca, to follow up at a hearing here before the Commission. He is the Ambassador-at-Large for human trafficking.

And I wrote the law that created that position, so I know the full capabilities of that office and that individual—and he is a very competent man—to re-look at Egypt because they deserve to be a Tier 3 country—an egregious violator that needs to be put on that list.

And we wrote the law that it's not just done annually—anytime information warrants it, a country can be either elevated or demoted in terms of its designation. And Tier 3—there's a Tier 1, Tier 2 watch list, and then a Tier 3. They do not deserve to be on Tier 2. And we will be admonishing, encouraging and even demanding that re-evaluation occur quickly because it's a—it's a—this situation, again, our witnesses are bringing this to light.

That's why we're having this hearing [laughter] because it is such a—an egregious human rights abuse.

Our next witness, Jean Maher, I want to thank him for traveling yesterday across the Atlantic just to be here to present testimony. Chief of Staff Mark Milosch and I met with Mr. Maher in Brussels a few weeks ago, and we're absolutely convinced of the great work that he is doing on behalf of Coptic Christians.

And he had a poster, and I wish I had blown it up for all to see, of all of these missing girls who have been abducted, that—in most cases never to be seen again, forced into a marriage and intimidated, coerced. And so I want to thank Mr. Maher for his leadership and for being here, for flying to be here. And I yield such time as he would like to consume for his testimony.

JEAN MAHER, PRESIDENT, FRENCH OFFICE, EGYPTIAN UNION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

Mr. MAHER. Mr. Chairman, and members of the Commission, I would like to thank you to give me this opportunity to talk about this tragic Coptic girls kidnapping.

And as you mentioned, Mr. President—Mr. Chairman, this is the poster [laughter] that—with the 30 girls. I don't think they are a part of the 50 that you interviewed; these are probably another 30. This is circulating in the Internet since 2008, and it was prepared by an English Coptic association. So these girls have been kidnapped, have been raped, have been forced to convert to Islam, have been forced to marry, and disappeared.

You know, the numbers of crimes are huge. Each one is just alone a huge crime.

I also have some official documents I got from the human rights association in Egypt. It's one page, one girl. And you can see, you know, a photo of a beautiful girl, and then after she had been kidnapped you see other photos with the veil. This is a certificate from Al-Azhar Mosque saying that she had been converted to Islam. And almost on the same day, or a few days later, you find a statement saying that she got married.

So I have many, many of these beautiful girls who have been veiled and disappeared. One of them here escaped. And she escaped without her hair; her hair was just taken away. And she is 19 years old, a student in university, and she said she was being raped.

So these are just samples of parents who went to the human rights organization to complain. And they know, and they told that [inaudible] the kidnapers and their accomplices are paid, probably financed by Saudis and Gulf countries' money. And they say that one Coptic girl is equivalent to \$10,000 to \$50,000. So you can see how attractive is the business.

Few girls have succeeded to escape, and they tell their horrible experience. As an example, I talked to Aji, Aji Ahd, which is circulating since about 3 weeks on the Net in an Arabic-speaking video. Aji was 12 when she was kidnapped; today, she is 16.

This is what she said: I walked out from my school and was followed by some—all young people. They pushed me in a taxi and used a vaporizer so I lost consciousness. And when I woke up, I found myself in an apartment—and Aji—with two other girls, in-

roduced me to a man named Sultan. He took me in a room, tied my arms on my back and raped me. Four other men raped me, one after one. Each one seemed to have the desire to cut my body in pieces as if I was his enemy and hates me.

You can—it's terrible when you see the girl talking. For 4 months I was beaten and had a lot of blue marks. I was unable to eat, drink, or sleep. All they want to do was to give me drugs and rape me. For 2 consecutive days, five men stayed in the room and raped me. I was awake, unable to sleep 24 hours a day.

She continued crying—more than 50 men during these months have raped me. Then my father succeeded in finding me, and I came back home. The police security asked me to come for interrogation. The officer only beat me so hard with his feet in my stomach and my back, pulled me from my hair and treated me as a street girl. They wanted to force me to say that I left my family by my own will, and none of these stories happened.

I was only 12 when this happened. Why all this? Only because I am a Christian? And then continued crying—now everybody around me thinks I am a bad girl.

The father said on the video, I succeeded to get her back alone. The police have done nothing, were of no help, and they do not have the right to beat her; she has done no fault.

This is an example of one girl. Now, there's another example in the testimony of a mother that I met her personally by chance 2 years ago in Egypt. She knew that a French couple would attend the meeting, so she came to see us and she told her story.

She gave me her daughter's photo, abducted in 2007 at the age of 19. She wrote on the back the names of her abductor and her Islamist husband. This is what happened: On the last day of the faculty exams, she went to a restaurant where her Muslim girlfriend offered her a pizza and a Coke. She felt dizzy and called her parents, telling them she's coming back home because she's sick. She never came back.

Despite the death threats of the police and the police phone tapping, this courageous mother traced and found the names of Islamist husband, her Islamist abductors; one of them was registered as a terrorist in the security files. She complained, of course, to the police, wrote to the interior minister and former president Mubarak. After the revolution, she went to the military council and the prime minister. As answer to all that, she has always received silence.

When she tried to see Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, one of the Presidential guards told her, if your daughter is in the hands of these people, forget about her.

Her daughter is now wearing the niqab, living in [inaudible]. She will continue her studies at the university. She was literally seen beaten in the street because she dared to answer her mother's phone call. She seems convinced her parents will be killed if she tries to escape.

All the names of the perpetrators, the complicit police officers, the complicit university Islamist professors are available. The parents keep hoping to see again their daughter.

Before meeting this lady 2 years ago, I was not aware of this type of struggle in Egypt. Living in France, I preferred not to be

involved in Egyptian or Coptic contacts, limiting this type of activity to conferences, radio interviews on the Coptic Pharaonic background culture. The heartbroken lady, this heartbroken lady, led me to different personal commitments.

There are methods people are using to reach their targets—as you say, a methodology. These barbaric acts are executed according to a well-elaborated methodology by people who want to give money or by people convinced to be doing good for Allah by bringing a kafir infidel woman to Islam. The number of Copts will therefore decrease, the number of Muslims will increase since by law the children will follow the religion of the father.

Since the oriental culture—in the oriental culture, taking away a girl's virginity means taking away the whole family's honor—so the plan pays by either kidnapping or sexually compromising Christian girls by defiling, humiliating them. And the psychological effect on the girl becomes a shame to her family, and conversion to Islam becomes a solution to the problem.

So besides a girl loses her will, the family is covered by shame, condemned by their—by their social environment; there's Muslims claiming the girl came by her own will; and some Christians reproaching, not having taken enough care of their daughter—a process—a process leading to humiliation of the Coptic community as a whole in front of the supremacy of Islam.

In a newspaper interview, a Muslim researcher, Mr. Ayman Abdel Rasoul (ph), asserted the complicity of the security police. He designated as a main instigator Imam Abu Islam Ahmed Abdullah, known as Abu Islam. Acting through an association called Nur al-Islam, the Light of Islam, he revealed that the girls are gathered in one building in a Cairo suburb. He also gave a list of Islamist association specialized in soliciting the Coptic girls using Internet, money, employment and other means. And he said that these associations have a—the security support and the security cover-up.

He gave the list just as a record [speaking in Arabic] Winners of Muhammad [inaudible] association; al Sharia—al Sharia, the legitimate association, a radical Salafist one; Nur al-Islam, the Light of Islam association; and many others.

Information from other sources gives the methods used in four steps: One, grouping nine minor girls between 12 and 17 years old in one apartment where they are drugged, brainwashed, and probably raped; two, keep them up to the majority age of 18 where they are brought to another mosque to convert to Islam; they immediately obtain their ID mentioning their religion as Muslim instead of Christian, and their name is changed using a Muslim name. Note that the opposite way is impossible.

Three, bring young boys or men or old men, and for them, to marry one of them; four, keep the girl away from her family; maintain the doubt on the Christian doctrine—God cannot marry and has no son. And you keep terror and fear that she's ashamed to her family who will kill her if she returns. And anyway, since she became a Muslim, she can't go back to Christianity or she'll be killed according to Sharia law. Four steps, methods, horrors.

Now what statistics? How many girls? There are hundreds. I just mentioned what has been monitored and recorded. The Egyptian Union for Human Rights Organization monitored 800 cases since

2009. Egypt for Christ monitored 45 cases, under 18 years, since January revolution. They have 275 cases known between 2005 and 2010, under 18—275 cases known under 18, and 400 cases over 18.

Now, is this just a work of some small radical people? No. This is a part of a huge plan, probably, probably, and it's not a false alarm. It's preparation for a Coptic genocide. Egypt is the only Muslim country to have an important number of Christians with at least around 12 million Copts.

We will not talk about the number of converted Muslims, they are just hidden. Some people talk about 1 to 2 millions. So these Copts still maintain some of the Pharaonic civilizations through their everyday customs, through their Coptic language, the Coptic language which is the last version of the Pharaonic hieroglyphics.

The Copts represent an obstacle to the radical Islamists, who are dreaming to establish the great worldwide Islamic caliphate nation. Strategic plans are set to get—to get rid of them slowly but firmly by different means. Disappearance of minor Coptic girls and women is just one of their horrible means. In Iraq already, out of more than 1 million Christians 4 years ago, only 300,000 to 400,000 are left. Will this happen to Egypt?

After Alexandria church bombing, at the 2011 New Year's Eve following the Baghdad church bombing, President—French President Nicolas Sarkozy gave a speech on the 7th of January. He denounced the religious—a religious extermination plan to get rid of the Middle East Christians. He mentioned that France will not tolerate such a plan.

On March 5th, after the revolution, Mr. Patrick Devedjian, Member of Parliament, former Minister, was invited to one—as a guest speaker, to one of conferences on Egypt's revolution. A son of Armenian parents who ran away from the Turkish genocide, he recalled the context of the euphoric Turkish Revolution in 1908, seeking freedom, democracy. He said—was euphoric as it is in Egypt today, there were [inaudible] our country away from the religious Ottoman power. Only 7 years later, 1915, around 1.2 millions Armenians, two-thirds of them, were exterminated, and he wished to ask the Copts that because of today's media, because of today's fast communication, this will prevent such a scenario to the Copts—to the Copts of Egypt.

What is the international community's role? A U.S. or international human rights investigation commission is absolutely necessary to examine the events freely. I know that in the European Parliament, the idea is going through and maybe if the commission here takes the same decision, maybe a coordinated work would be set with the European Parliament to pressure the military council to take actions, as was mentioned before, with a precise time plan. And you should expect the answer is thus—is just that these are only individual love stories where a Coptic girl wants to follow her Muslim lover. And then pressure Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Countries to stop financing these terrorist acts.

As a conclusion, I have a message and a request. The message: The Muslim Brotherhoods will never change or leave their objective of restoring the Islamic caliphate. Their foundation is Allah is our target, the Prophet is our model, the Koran is our law, the holy war is our way, the martyrdom is our wish. These are the fun-

damentals and the basics of the Muslim Brotherhoods. They will not change them. They will not leave their objective of restoring the Islamic caliphate. They are only changing tactics. They are adapting their language to democracy and to the Western ears.

The early parliamentary elections that were planned in September now, because of the young revolutionaries' pressure on the council—on the military council, have been reported to November. If they are held either in September or in November, they will bring the Muslim Brotherhoods to power. Why? Because for the last 30 years, Mubarak regime and his surroundings were just interested in staying in their chair, in their power, and they left the society in the hands of these people.

So the Egyptian society is invested by a culture of hate, and as an example, one child, 8 years old, said to his Christian friend, yesterday was my birthday, I invited all my friends except you because you are Christian. In my time, when I was at this age, we had no such things, and all my—all my friends are Muslims; when I go to Egypt, I don't even have Christian friends now. But my faculty of Muslim friends, and they are very good one, and they did—we didn't—never lived such a hate situation.

So an early parliamentary election will not represent the real democratic demands. I can say early election is just undemocratic, and they will be very similar to what happened in Gaza. They were 100 percent democratic, they were controlled by an international commission and they brought Hamas. So democracy brings—when the country's not ready, she brings what is left. So what is in Egypt now is the Muslim Brotherhood. What is required is a constitutional framework that must be prepared first. So we urge the commission, we urge the U.S. Congress to take that into consideration.

Now, this is a message; I have now a request, a request to President Obama: The U.S. Middle East policy should encourage the Muslim liberals. They are also Muslims; they should not favor handing over Egypt to the Muslim Brotherhoods. There is a huge difference between Muslims, Muslim Brotherhoods who are behind al-Qaida, who are behind the 9/11. No. 2 of al-Qaida, al-Zawahiri, is a medical doctor who was involved in Sadat assassination; he was the mastermind of the 9/11. Bin Laden had only the financing. The leader of the 9/11, of the 20 people, Mohammad Atta, a Ph.D. engineer from Germany, he was the leader of the 20 people in the different planes. He was Egyptian engineer. These people are coming from Muslim Brotherhoods. Consequences of getting Muslim Brotherhoods on the power of Egypt will be huge, and they are not in the interest of the American people.

The second request was also mentioned before: A U.S. financing aid to Egypt must be conditioned, must be conditioned by a real democratic process according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and not according to the Shariah Islamic law, as Muslim Brotherhoods are claiming. Actions are needed, actions are needed now before it's too late. Thank you. [Applause.]

Mr. MILOSCH. Mr. Maher, thank you very much, and thanks to Ms. Doss and Ms. Clarke as well. It's very, very moving to hear your testimony. For those of us joining us down at C-SPAN, I'll say that Chairman Smith and the other Commissioners left to vote, but

because this hearing is so important and we have C-SPAN here live, we're going to continue the proceedings.

My name is Mark Milosch. I'm the Chief of Staff of the Helsinki Commission. I'm here right now with Shelly Han, who's on Commission staff as Policy Advisor and Allison Hollabaugh who is on Mr. Smith's personal office staff and expert on trafficking issues.

So we'll proceed with some questions that the Chairman has left us. The first question I have is, have any Muslim leaders in Egypt condemned the kidnapping, forced marriage, forced conversion of Coptic Christian girls? Has anyone spoken out against this?

Mr. MAHER. I have only the one who mentioned—the name I gave—just the name I gave, who mentioned these associations and recognized that this is happened and it is a part of a plan. So I only have one courageous Muslim man who is talking about it. Most of what I have seen on the TV and what I have read in the newspapers are just trying to transform these events into a love story and that the girls just left by their own will. Even Coptics I heard, they said it's a false problem because they have been also influenced by the media and by the newspapers they read. So what is really known is limited—is limited to the Christian people.

Mr. MILOSCH. Thank you.

Ms. DOSS, Ms. Clark?

Ms. CLARK. I'm sorry; I have not been able to find any in my research.

Ms. DOSS. I agree with Ms. Clark; I haven't—I haven't heard of anyone actually condemning it and coming out and speaking out against this—these crimes.

Mr. MILOSCH. Could any of you or perhaps all of you walk me through the, say, a day in the life of a Coptic Christian in Egypt? Tell me just how it's different from what it should be—just how the persecution, the repressive atmosphere, the discrimination in the society presents itself. I mean, when you go out on the street in the morning, what is different from what it should be when you—say when you go to register for a driver's license? When you, say, go to a restaurant; could you give me a picture of how daily life and the daily things that we go through? Get granular here. What is different, and you might also address, you know, what's different since the revolution, and whether you believe it's going downhill since then?

Please, Ms. Doss.

Ms. DOSS. Sure. I've actually been speaking with a lot of people who have been fleeing Egypt. As an immigration attorney I meet a lot of people who are now interested in immigrating to the United States because they describe a situation which is completely intolerable.

A day in the life: the hate speech. Let's start with that. The microphones that are attached to the mosques, the sermons are just filled with hate, and I've heard from several different clients throughout different parts of Egypt this new common prayer: May the Lord make their wives widows and their children orphans, and on and on, diseases and destruction and all these different things. This is what people hear when they open their balcony or they open up their window from the local mosque. So you can imagine what these people are thinking when they're hitting the street,

aside from the spitting, the cursing, especially for the women because they're obviously easily identified as Christian because they're not wearing the veil.

From many women I have heard they just stopped leaving their home and that the men in the house have now become responsible for things like food shopping because they're afraid to leave their homes. So it's become much more difficult. There is definitely that overall fear for women to leave their homes and as far as men go, they're dealing with fear that they may be attacked. Obviously there's a fear of going to churches. I've actually also heard that approximately 50 churches have closed in the last few months, and Coptic Solidarity has actually visited 10 of them and confirmed that yes, they are in fact closed. So people are now afraid to go to their churches, afraid to walk out on the street if they're not veiled and if they're identifiable as a Copt. So it has definitely impacted the daily lives of Coptic Christians in Egypt.

Mr. MILOSCH. Ms. Clark?

Ms. CLARK. I would just like to share an anecdote. When I was visiting Egypt in company with Nadia Ghaly, a Coptic woman originally from Egypt, we visited the Egyptian Museum, and she pointed out to me very clearly that—

Mr. MILOSCH. You missed the button on your microphone, Ms. Clark?

Ms. CLARK. It was pressed; sorry about that. But I'll speak more—is this better?

Mr. MILOSCH. That is. Thanks.

Ms. CLARK. She pointed—so when I was in Egypt, I visited with Nadia Ghaly, my co-author and a Coptic—Egyptian Coptic woman, we visited the Egyptian Museum, and she pointed out very specifically that none of the guides, the curators and the professional staff in the museum were of Coptic origin. This was a deep—she was deeply disturbed by this because to her it indicated that the very custodians of a heritage that was in fact hers, that she could claim as a Copt—Copts trace their history back to the time—to—for thousands of years in Egypt, that they were cutoff from being the custodians of their own heritage, and therefore it was an affront to her that Copts were not allowed to represent some of the history of the country.

Mr. MILOSCH. That's very interesting, this notion of the Copts having been there for so long, it being their history. How does that play out in the relations between Egyptians and Copts—is it—between Muslim Egyptians and Copts, is there something that occurs in the rhetoric that's directed against Copts in any way? Does it—is it—does it complicate the rhetoric or the relationship?

Ms. CLARK. I would defer to perhaps Mr. Maher.

Mr. MAHER. What—I think, when I was a child at school, we never been taught about the Coptic history. I learned about my own history when I came to France because my French wife is a history teacher, and she motivated me to discover my own history. But I think there are also many people here at my age. The history of the Coptics were just out of the books. Now it starts to be discovered because of the communication, now the Muslims start to understand that we had 3,000 years of pharaonic civilization, 3,000 before Christ—3,000 to 5,000 before Christ, and then 700 years of

Egypt, Christian—by the first century was 100 percent Christians, and then when the Arabs came in the seventh century, they found only Christians and they named them “Copts.” So that’s why “Copts” are identified as inhabitants of Egypt, but a Copt is a Christian because when they came there were only Christians.

And then for 1,400 years, there was persecution, they have asked the people to either convert or to pay the taxes or to be killed. So many of them have converted to Islam, and some of them paid the taxes and we are the descendants of these people who—not necessarily noble people, but people who could pay the taxes and maintain their religion. And the Coptic language was maintained until the 19th century. It is the Pharaonic language. Now, the people are discovering this history today, a lot of Muslims, and even some of the Muslims say: I am also Coptic; I am a Coptic Muslim, because I bring back my history to the Pharaonic period. The Salafist and the Muslim Brotherhoods are against that, because since the 7th century, everything before is erased, does not exist anymore and we are going to the Arabic culture, toward the Arabian Peninsula. There were no Saudis. It was the Arabian Peninsula. So even they don’t—they call the 7th century invasion; they call it “opening” and not—it is a re-invasion, a re-conquest.

So a lot of Muslim liberals today, and one of the most active is calling the Muslims to come back—not to change their religion, but to come back and recognize their history. How many countries, he said, in the world, have pyramids and Sphinx? Only Egypt. So you Muslims, keep your religion, but go back to accept your own history; it is not the Arabic culture.

So I think it’s [inaudible] coming to the surface and more known.

Mr. MILOSCH. Thank you. So there is some struggle over the past and this notion of legitimacy.

Now, I’ll turn to Ms. Han for a question.

Ms. HAN. I’m wondering if you can describe what the reaction is within the Coptic community in terms of, are they working to perhaps change some of their own perceptions of, you know, how we can bring our daughters back into their communities, some of the long-held stigma that might be—that might be attached to that; and then also if you could talk about their—how are they going about trying to find daughters? I hear from all of your statements that there is very little cooperation with the police, but what other ways—are there other ways that they’ve sort of banded together to try to protect their community? I’d just be interested in what sort of response there’s been because of the increase in this—these incidents.

Ms. CLARK. Would you like to begin?

Mr. MAHER. Go ahead.

Ms. CLARK. The more information that gets out about the story, the stronger the families and the communities are able to be, because it dispels the myth of secrecy, it dispels the myth of shame, it dispels the myth of isolation; and therefore, there is—in hearings such as this and in other reports such as my fellow panelists, there is—there is value because it informs—it informs the Coptic community that, no, these are not isolated instances and that in fact, their daughters are caught up in a much larger phenomenon, an insid-

ious, targeted, and methodical attack against their most deeply held values.

However, because the phenomena is just beginning to gain public recognition, a lot of effort still needs to be done. There are pockets of initiatives that in fact really deserve to be strengthened. There are individual parish priests, who, as I indicated in my report and my oral testimony today, are greatly concerned about it, because they see the daughters that disappear from their own communities. There are—there are monasteries which create shelters in places they don't know, because some families still struggle with the notion of taking back their daughter—is this not our honor, but is this not—are these not our daughters? And so they're benefiting from the increased understanding and awareness that's being raised.

One action that Coptic families are taking in my research is that they're increasingly struggling to send their daughters to private schools. This is a hardship for many, because Coptic religious schools are more expensive than public schools. But hopefully in so doing, the girls are protected there—at least they are able to have peers—friends among their own peers and they're also able to recognize that it's OK to be a Copt, whereas for many of them who are in public schools, they sometimes experience—and they're friends with their classmates—just as when we're teenagers, we're all friends with everybody. Peer pressure is a great thing when you're a young adolescent and the need to belong, the not—the need not to feel that you're part of not only a minority but a despised minority is very difficult for a young person. So consequently, parents view private-school education as something that can strengthen a young person's sense of individual identity.

We're seeing efforts made certainly among Coptic communities in the diaspora to spread the news among individuals and among the communities to raise greater awareness about this. But this is something that, in my subsequent research, I look forward to working on a great deal. I teach courses on issues of women in global politics at George Washington University. I include these topics in my classes. It's one way of beginning to create a level of discourse that perhaps has not been raised.

Mr. MAHER. They can help girls who came back. They can help by putting on the Internet a lot of messages now: Take care of your girls. But what's happening is more and more now, the girls are accompanied by the brother or by the mother or by someone because they always are in fear.

I know even a cousin—she said, I don't dress in pants anymore because the pant is becoming a symbol of Christian, so—and it is a danger. But if you take the examples of almost all the parents who went to the police claiming that their girl is kidnapped, they are very badly treated by the police. They are insulted, and they—they even sometimes refuse to make the official claim, and then they tell them you come back tomorrow or after tomorrow and then if we hear something, we'll let you know. But if [inaudible] you let us know.

So I think that these determined people, these radical Islamist people who are determined—they send, you know, their—the people around schools, around universities, and the Coptic girls are

easily found because she doesn't dress in veils. So they are just all the time at risk.

Ms. DOSS. I have read about many accounts actually of family members, obviously writing first to the police to file their report and essentially given the runaround, and then after persisting, police have responded by either beating family members or placing restraining orders on them, saying, well, you're posing a threat to this girl now. Or they would say things that would—I can't even imagine how the family members would feel—don't worry; she's married now; she's taken care of. I can't even imagine what a parent of a 16-year-old or a 17-year-old is thinking or feeling when hearing a response like that. You know where she is, but you're not giving her back to me.

And in a couple of cases, actually, I heard of parents taking matters into their own hands. And there was actually a case that was in the paper, I think, a couple of years ago about how a family went into a home where they knew the girl was, took her back—the uncles and the dad—brought her back to their home, and then obviously the Muslim family came back and took her back forcibly. And police, instead of stopping them, allowed them—the girl to be taken back to the Muslim family. And I actually did speak with one individual who described to me how his daughter was kidnapped and knew that there was no hope to go to the police and actually bought her back. He exchanged a piece of property through an attorney and got his daughter back and brokered her back like a piece of property.

So sometimes on occasion people do take things into their own hands, but overall, there's no help, obviously, from the legal system.

Mr. MILOSCH. Ms. Doss, that is truly shocking what you say about the police. Do you think we're dealing here with a police that does not punish this crime because they have a policy of "we don't punish crimes committed by Muslims against Christians" or because—it's even worse than that—because "we're OK with, we're fine with, in fact, we think it's in some ways a good thing when this happens?" I mean, is this almost a kind of quasi state policy on some local and administrative levels, or is it simply a matter of, well, we don't like it, but we don't do anything about it because we don't punish Muslim crimes against Christians?

Ms. DOSS. I think it is a policy, because you see a clear pattern here. Dozens and dozens of family members going to police and reporting this and police knowing where these women are, and turning them away saying she's now—she's now married—she's now married. And what about the cases where the restraining orders get slapped on the parents? That's the court system interfering also.

So they know where these women are, and they are allowing it to continue. It is government-sanctioned. If you look at the practice, that's what it is.

Mr. MILOSCH. Ms. Clark, Mr. Maher, do you agree?

Mr. MAHER. Yes. Yes, I agree on that. It's a part of the government—of the people's government plan. We knew that the bombing of Alexandria church was planned and that the ministry of interior himself was involved, in order to show that the government is

doing what it can to stop and look and so forth on these terrorists of—you know, the government of Mubarak was always playing both sides—you know, showing externally that Mr. Mubarak, I am the protector of the Copts, and then leaving, you know, the fanatics and radicals attacking and doing nothing. And it is also true that the security forces, what they call, you know, the security police, have a file and are—in complicity with the people. They have a file of each girl, of each family. And if a commission is set, these files have been—must be found because they have all the stories. And on the first day these things happen, they [inaudible] delay in order that the other Muslim people get organized and then in 24 hours, they would come with a testament saying that she went to Alazar and is Muslim now. So the family have nothing to do with that. These are the police's work.

So they are 100 percent involved. And what is surprising—this is happening all over Egypt. You know, if we say that [inaudible] Muslims say that this is [inaudible] for the Muslim people—but this is happening in different areas, different cities, different villages, and the scenario and the behavior of the police is the same: do nothing, leave it and shoo these parents away.

Mr. MILOSCH. Ms. Clark?

Ms. CLARK. Thank you. Yes, Mr. Maher presented an impressive list of statistics, basically by my math, close to a thousand documented cases—not a single documented prosecution. So there's—we can definitely—we can definitely assume that there's not a lot of forethought or intent given to pursuing any of these allegations legally. It's a real problem in any kind of preventative measure, and we need to look at it from that perspective as well, because the—as these victims recognize that their voices are not being heard and that they have no recourse and that in fact if they try to seek recourse, they and their families will bear serious consequences, they will no longer come forward, and those who could come forward will not.

So the lack of prosecution, the lack of investigations followed by the lack of prosecutions, leads to a continued and ongoing cloak of silence, which only exacerbates the problem. We've seen this in the anti-trafficking community all too often, where the—where numbers—where instances of legitimate cases of human trafficking are minimized in the public eye and the government eye because victims don't come forward. That doesn't mean that there's not a problem. It just means—it means that there's something going on to prevent women from coming forward and seeking justice.

Mr. MILOSCH. Now, it seems we have a very grave problem at the local level, for sure. I'd like to ask you, is there any level of the government where—diplomatically—this issue can be raised and find a sympathetic ear? If local government is complicit in and at times encouraging or in league with abductors, people who are involved in forced marriages, forced conversions, is there a particular ministry in the government, aside from the police ministry, where we would get a more sympathetic ear with this problem or a different level, perhaps the highest level, does not approve of this but has a policy, rather, of—as so many countries do, of not punishing its own policemen when they do the wrong thing? I mean,

I'm looking for a glimmer of hope or a place or ministry level or angle where this issue can be most constructively raised.

Ms. CLARK. From some of the conversations that I've had, I think that—I think that you can look at what happens within the conversion process. And what was of great interest to me was the suspension of the counseling sessions. These counseling sessions were designed, in fact, to have—if a Coptic girl was in this particular situation, a mandatory counseling session with a member of her clergy as well as a member of the Muslim clergy was designed so that in fact she could hear from a member of her own clergy, if you convert to Islam, you may never again convert back to your religion; your children will be raised as Muslims; this is—this is what will happen.

Now, often—and certainly because the conversions are produced under duress, very rapidly following acts of violence, there's really little awareness or understanding of what's actually at stake when a young woman converts and goes through this particular process. So that's one very specific institutional function that can be reinstated in order to help protect young women who are being converted.

Mr. MILOSCH. Ms. Doss, Mr. Maher?

Ms. DOSS. If I can expand on something Ms. Clark had just mentioned, the counseling sessions, as far as I understood, took place in state security offices. So that's also an indication, obviously, that they were aware of what was happening. And I've spoken to people that have—also I believe she's entitled to a family member there, right? She's entitled to see a family member and her priest. And I've spoken to family members who have been to these meetings with this kidnapped girl and have described a drugged girl who couldn't even respond or think when she was sitting there in state security.

One client once mentioned to me that as his sister sat there—it was, like, maybe for 3 minutes—the one thing she said to him was, I had to do it for the children. And then they just took her away. She left behind two children, two Coptic children.

So obviously this is an indication that they're aware and that they're participating in the process.

Mr. MAHER. The context has changed before the revolution and after the revolution. Before the revolution, since the regime was playing a double game, you could always find [inaudible] in the government trying to put a little bit of pressure and so on. After the revolution, there is no more security forces, no more police for the whole country. So the problem is becoming even worse, because before it was [inaudible] starting to seduce or attract, but now they just put them in the car, in the taxi, and go away with them. And they're not only young girls, even married women. It is becoming disastrous after the revolution.

Why they destroyed the church and just talked about, it was seen on the TV. We can see the people with their axes breaking down doors of the church. We can see the attackers on the top door of the church singing and shouting and inciting the people to come and destroy the church. All of these people have been seen. So ask them, because they have wanted to solve the solution. They decided that the church would be reconstructed, but they had to get author-

ization from these people—from the Salafist Imam. They had to go to ask authorization as a fatwa to say we can start the work of reconstruction.

So I think there is—today—in the context of today, there is only one way: It is an outside pressure. The international community must have one voice. This is not acceptable. This has to reach the military council. They have the power. They have fear because they need money. So the message should be clear: We are going to help you and give you money. But things are rotten in your country. A country infested by hate is not going to be solved in 24 hours. They need at least two generations to come back to what I was living in my childhood.

So I said only international pressure, only American pressure, European pressure and international committee pressure, outside pressure; clear messages will make them move.

Mr. MILOSCH. Thank you. And it sounds like this pressure should be directed at the professional military groups, which have a somewhat different ethos of the populist one of the new government.

Mr. MAHER. Yes, probably also the Prime Minister and the government. Yes.

Mr. MILOSCH. OK. Thanks very much. The Chairman is back with us.

[Offside conversation.]

Ms. HAN. Ms. Doss, I was interested—in your practice, have you come across or have there been successful asylum cases, given the fact that the—that we don't have prosecution, there are no—there is no evidence of prosecution of any cases within Egypt—so you don't really have a documented trail of evidence about this type of persecution—and also the vague language that we've seen in the TIP Report, have you been able to make any cases, or have there been any asylum cases? Or how is the U.S. Immigration Service handling these types of requests, or are there any requests—[off mic]?

Ms. DOSS. That's a very good question. Actually, there are lots of people filing for asylum cases right now. And personally, with myself, we're at a 99 percent grant rate, which is amazing. And when I say "granted," I mean granted within 8 weeks from the date you file to the date you get granted. So they have been very supportive of Coptic Christians and their plight. And also, obviously, someone representing them would go through a great length of supplying supporting documents about what's happening in Egypt. Of course, what would be more helpful is if we had the State Department making an official determination that there's a pattern and practice of persecution against Copts, so there wouldn't be that struggle in proving that case. Proving that you're a Coptic Christian should be enough at this point, based on what it is that we're seeing out there.

So we have met, actually, with representatives from the State Department and asked, please, make a conclusion of this report; you've described pattern and practice, but you haven't spelled it out; you need to draw that conclusion. So we definitely encourage that.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much. We're joined by Congressman Frank Wolf, Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, that deals

with the Justice Department and science. We're also joined by the Chairman of the Constitution Subcommittee for the Judiciary Committee, Congressman Trent Franks of Arizona, who's also the Chairman of the Religious Freedom Caucus here in the House. And I'd like to yield, if he'd like, to Mr. Wolf, if he has any comments, having just been in Egypt.

HON. FRANK WOLF (R-10) A MEMBER IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF VIRGINIA

Mr. WOLF. Well, I really don't have any questions. I just wanted to say I appreciate Mr. Smith having this hearing. I'm anxious to read your testimony. I would just say, for a long period of time, the Coptic Christians have been treated very, very poorly there—I mean in Egypt. And I hope whatever the Congress does with regard to aid or whatever, it conditions with regard to any support that whereby the Coptic Christians can be treated like anyone else, along with the Ahmadi and the Baha'is and others. And I'm looking forward to your—reading your testimony, and I appreciate this Commission having this hearing.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Wolf, thank you very much. Chairman Franks.

HON. TRENT FRANKS (R-8) A MEMBER IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mr. FRANKS. Well, I would just echo Chairman Wolf's perspective, as well as your own. I'm always grateful to you, Chairman Smith, because of your lifelong commitment to religious freedom. So often times we are thankful in this country for our constitutional rights, and we consider protecting the lives and the constitutional rights of our citizens to be the preeminent focal point of our government. And yet we forget that the foundation of really all freedoms, the core freedom that there is, is religious freedom because without that, of course, there are no—there is no other type of freedom.

And some of us are especially concerned about the plight of Coptic Christians in Egypt and other places. The reports of children or young women being forced into marriages within—kind of forced Islamization (ph), if you might call it that, where they are forced into marrying people that—they maybe have a totally different perspective, and their freedoms being overcome in that regard—that's—those are—those are things that the media should be focused on and looking at very carefully because those reports are unsettling, to say the least, where a young woman, 16, 17 years old, is forced to marry someone outside her faith for the very purposes of trying to rob her of religious freedom, among other things.

And I just, again, am grateful to Chairman Smith. In the final analysis, you know, even in this country when we—when we have a condemned killer and they're going to be put to death for their crimes, we still recognize their religious freedoms. And it is the last bastion of freedom there is. And if we in this country—who are known for our commitment to religious freedom and freedom of individual and human dignity in general—if we don't defend and do what we can to protect our brothers and sisters across the world, then I'm afraid we've hastened the day when that door of coercion

will—that—when that hand of coercion will be knocking on our own door.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman, very, very much, and I hope you'll forgive me that I do have to go to another gathering, but I want to commend everyone that is in this battle and hope that we can be part of assisting you in the future. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Franks, thank you so very much. And I would like to just ask—perhaps Michele Clark, you might be the best to answer this. You know, the President has gone to Cairo. He gave his famous Cairo speech. Secretary of State has obviously raised issues relevant to Egypt on numerous occasions. Has the Obama administration raised the issue of kidnapping of Coptic girls and young women? Have they done it in a way that has had any kind of consequence? And we are now, the United States, a member of the U.N. Human Rights Council, which is—was supposed to be the follow-on to the egregiously flawed Human Rights Commission, which never did much of anything except berate Israel. I mean, it—even insiders at the U.N. said the Council or the Commission had to go.

Regrettable, it's almost like déjà vu over again, to quote Yogi Berra; it's like it's the same organization. But we do have a seat on the Human Rights Council. And to the best of your knowledge, has the United States raised the kidnapping and trafficking—sex trafficking of young Coptic girls and women at the Human Rights Council, any other venue at the United Nations; and has it been raised on a government-to-government level with the high officials in Egypt?

Ms. CLARK. Mr. Smith, thank you for the question. My answer is no, as to the best of my knowledge. In preparation for the testimony today, I've been actively reviewing any current news that post-dates the publication of my report and the recent research so that I would have the most current information available. And I've not been able to find anything to that effect. If it exists, I have—I have not—I have not yet seen it.

What is the—I would venture, however, that my not knowing about this means that it doesn't exist. You perhaps are familiar with the challenges that we faced in including Egypt in the 2010 TIP Report. We initially presented the findings—you know, some of our findings to the Office to Combat, Monitor Trafficking, and the initial response was these were only allegations. Thanks to you and the support of other Members of Congress in a bipartisan way, Ambassador deBaca was encouraged to revisit the issue; and in fact, Egypt was then included in the 2010 TIP Report. It was not—the issue of the Coptic Christian women was not raised this year, but further, based on the studies that I intend to continue, we hope as per your recommendation earlier in this hearing to continue to advance the issue.

Mr. SMITH. We will invite, as I indicated earlier, Ambassador Luis C. deBaca, who is the point person for the Obama administration on human trafficking, to a Commission hearing—again, he's been here before—to ask him specifically, what have they done—in chronological order; this is something that's not new—what has that office done? We'll also ask Michael Posner, who is the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Labor and Human Rights; and we'll

ask the Secretary herself—although I doubt she'll make her way up to Capitol Hill; she rarely does—to answer those questions, and what has been the response if any, because to the best of my knowledge, this has been a non-issue, and that oversight has to end, and it has to end here today.

Mr. Wolf—Chairman Wolf.

Mr. WOLF. [Off mic.]

Ms. CLARK. Mr. Wolf, thank you for that comment. As I noted earlier, in three sentences in the TIP Report, the use of the word—the word “allegation” or “alleged” was used, I believe, five times. So there's less than a committed interest.

Mr. WOLF. What number do you believe we're talking about? How many individuals would we be talking about per year or maybe over the last 10 years? If it's one, it's too many, so—but can you give me—what the number that you believe this may very well be? I'm at a—somewhat a disadvantage; I'm just reading your testimony. I didn't have it before time. I saw—where the one monastery, 45, it was said.

When I was there, some of the Coptic Christians raised this issue. That's why I think this should be one of the things when the foreign affairs bill comes up or the foreign operations bill, there ought to be a conditionality. I mean, for so many years, the Egyptian Government has rolled this Congress—both political parties, Republican and Democratic administrations. They've hired powerful people, a former Congressman and everything, to lobby for them, and these issues never, never come up. Now with the opportunity of new elections and a whole—hopefully a clean slate, if you will, there has to be some sort of conditionality. But how many do you believe we're talking about country-wide?

Ms. CLARK. Again, great, great question. And again, as in the early days of the anti-trafficking movement, we've run up against the challenge of numbers, but I'm trying to help remedy that, as is my fellow panelist here. And I'll turn the floor over to him in a minute.

In the early days of the TIP Report, 100 cases were sufficient for a country to be—to be included in the TIP report. Since then, they've done away with the number. I would just like to say that the methodology that I used in my report in Egypt was a similar methodology. I used documenting trafficking cases—the word “allegation” was never included back then. I find it odd that the same methodology warranted the use of the word “allegation” in this current TIP Report.

Mr. Maher, you had some interesting numbers. Perhaps you'd like to repeat them for Mr. Wolf's benefit. But I would—I would—I would say that you're looking at several thousand cases a year.

Mr. WOLF. Wow.

Mr. MAHER. Yes, well, I think that's [laughter] that's a summary. I showed one page, one girl—these are copies that I got from a human rights organization in Cairo.

Mr. WOLF. Has that been submitted to the Commission?

Mr. MAHER. I will make a copy. [Laughter.] No problem, yes. So this is—these are just samples. I didn't make copies of all—of everything. They—these are parents who came to claim the disappearance of their daughter. And I—we prefer to give numbers

that we are sure of. So at this human rights association, they monitored 800 cases since 2009. So they have 800 sheets of paper—one paper, one girl. Egypt for Christ monitored 45 cases under 18 since January, since March, after the revolution. And for 5 years, between 2005 and 2010, they know 275 cases under 18 and 400 cases over 18. So these are the figures we are sure of. But we are also sure that there are thousands.

Mr. WOLF. Because the families are reluctant to come forward, and the fear of the government?

Mr. MAHER. Yes, this is one of the reasons. The other is they don't—they don't have money. Most of them may be from, you know, poor—poor people, so they cannot go to hire a lawyer, and they are just powerless.

Mr. WOLF. One other question then. Has the Pope, Pope Shenouda, spoken out on this?

Mr. MAHER. Yes.

Mr. WOLF. He has? When?

Mr. MAHER. Yes—sorry, I couldn't—

Mr. WOLF. When?

Mr. MAHER. I saw him on the TV in—you know, every Wednesday, he lectures at the Cathedral of Cairo. And one time, a mother was present, and she shouted about her daughter disappearing. And of course, the patriarch reacted, you know, with a lot of sensitivity and said, please come, and we will help you. And he said we know of other cases—believe me, we do our best. That was public. We know a lot of cases and we are doing our best. But our best from, you know, the man of a church is what? Is going to the—to the government and say, please do something, and then nothing happens.

Mr. WOLF. Well, I—Mr. Chairman, I think Anne Patterson is coming by to see me, I think next week—I think. The current Ambassador has just left. The DCM is acting. He's been appointed, I think, an ambassador to another country. But I'll raise this, and I think the committee ought to raise this with the new Ambassador. She's a good person, and I think to force this issue, whereby she hits the ground running, this is one of the very first issue that she raises.

But again, I'm going to read all of the testimony, and I appreciate all of your—and Chris, thanks for having the hearing.

Mr. SMITH. Well, thank you very much. Chairman—or Commissioner Pitts—and Chairman too.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. For the record, Joe Pitts is Chairman of the Health Subcommittee, one of the most important committees in Congress, on the Energy and Commerce Committee, but he's also a Commissioner for the Helsinki Commission.

Mr. PITTS. Yes, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the testimony I was able to hear. Unfortunately, we had a series of votes. We had to run to the floor, so I missed some of it. And—but I appreciate the questions focused on the kidnapping issue.

Caroline Doss, how does this issue fit into the wider context of what is happening today regarding the new constitution and the joint cooperation of secular and religious civil society leaders?

Ms. DOSS. Unfortunately, as you all may be aware, Article II of the constitution very clearly states that Islamic law is the primary source of legislation, so that when you do have a conflict, that's actually what winds up winning out. So when you do have a situation where you have a Muslim who would like to convert to Christianity, that is the legislation that they actually refer to.

So it's having that secular constitution and removing things from the constitution such as that basically invalidates the freedom to choose and freedom of religion. That's obviously something that will help the Egyptian society move forward.

There is actually a special paper actually that was written on the basic provisions in the constitution—OK, excellent—great.

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Chairman, without objection, I would like to submit for the record this paper she's referring to. It's entitled "Freedom, Dignity, Social Justice: Basic Provisions in the Constitution," and it's signed by human rights NGOs—27 signatories. If you could enter that into the record. You may proceed. You may proceed with your—

Ms. DOSS. And that—I think obviously this would provide a much more detailed analysis of the improvements that need to be made to the constitution to make it more secular.

Mr. PITTS. What kind of activity is occurring from those who are not extremist in relation to the new constitution that will soon be written? Can you comment on that?

Ms. DOSS. I really, honestly, haven't seen any support to make this—to make it more of a secular state. I haven't—I mean, obviously, there are moderates out there, but they are not the strong voice. And the stronger voice are—is those of the extremists.

Mr. PITTS. For any of you, what do you see in terms of trends relating to minorities possibly fleeing Egypt, like what happened in Iraq? What would you recommend to the U.S. Government and other international bodies regarding that?

Mr. MAHER. If you open to the door today for immigration, you will get 12 million.

Mr. PITTS. You get what?

Mr. MAHER. Twelve million Copts who want to come.

Mr. PITTS. Twelve million.

Ms. DOSS. I agree with Mr. Maher. I've been seeing—it seems like an exodus. I don't have room in my office anymore in the file cabinets—we're actually piling up in boxes for files for people who are just dying to get out. And it isn't just the lower class or the middle class anymore. Now you're seeing the upper class wanting and needing to leave, but they're leaving on EB5s, which are investor visas because obviously they have the financial backing to do something like that.

So to the average person who would like to get out and can get out, perhaps maybe easing up on visas, visas to Christians in the U.S. Embassy—there are a lot of Christians who are horribly persecuted and need to get but can't get out and are denied visas in the U.S. Embassy.

Mr. PITTS. Now, earlier, your written testimony refers to a security threat earlier this year to the Coptic community in the United States. Would you elaborate on that?

Ms. DOSS. Yes. One of the attachments to the package that was submitted was very shockingly a terror threat that was posted on the Mujahedeen electronic network, which is a jihadi forum group also connected with al-Qaida. And on it in Arabic, and there's an attached translation, you see a list of Coptic churches throughout Egypt with their telephone numbers and a list of churches—Coptic churches—outside of Egypt, including here in the United States. And at the bottom of that list is how to make a bomb out of a Pepsi can, out of a water bottle, how to propel it, and how to successfully bomb a church.

Due to this threat, the security on the churches in the United States was heightened, and this was before Christmas, January 7, 2011. Personally, I recall attending these meetings where security officials briefed the churches in the New York and Pennsylvania and New Jersey area on how they should increase their security. The archdiocese, for example, had a helicopter flying above. Some of the churches had bomb-sniffing dogs go through them. That isn't something we should have to deal with here in the United States.

This list includes churches in the United States, which means there's a spillover from the terrorism that is happening in Egypt to here in the United States. So this is actually something that's hitting us home here that we should really be concerned about. These are, I think, what they call soft targets, things that we don't expect terrorists will target, places filled with people and inside the United States where there's normally no security. So it's—it's an issue I think that the United States needs to address because if we allow this extremism to grab hold of Egypt there's a very high likelihood it will spill over here.

Mr. MAHER. May I add something, please?

Mr. PITTS. Yes, sir.

Mr. MAHER. Because the same thing is happening in Europe and in France. I can talk about France since it's where I'm living. There was a list of all the churches in Paris, about—there are eight of them—and their addresses, and then a list of my friends in the Coptic associations which are targeted as dangerous for Islam. And this happened at the same time after the Alexandria bombing. And because of that, the minister of interior—the French minister—he insisted to come on the Christmas Eve, which is the 6th of January, to us to be present at the church as a symbol. And on the second day on Christmas all the churches had been surrounded by trucks of security. So this is also—you know, what's happening in the states is happening in France, happening in Europe.

Ms. DOSS. Mr. Maher raises a good point, if I may say. There were a list of 70 names of Coptic individuals who were deemed enemies of Islam throughout the world, actually, in the United States and in Canada. I myself happen to be on that list, and got a home visit from an FBI agent telling me I'm on this and if anything strange should happen, please feel free to give us a call. I know that Canada took the threat more serious and actually investigated and it was all over the newspaper there. But the United States is aware of that, and that's also, again, evidence that this is spilling over because they're actually threatening people that are not even from Egypt and their angry at the fact that they're speaking out on this issue.

Mr. PITTS. Finally, Mr. Chairman, I didn't hear in the testimony, if any of you could comment, is there evidence that these kidnappings or the seizing the girl for forced marriage is being used as far as extortion from some of the Christian Coptic businessmen? Are you aware of anything like that happening in Egypt? In other words, if they say give us \$30,000 and we'll give her back to you. Is that kind of thing happening?

Mr. MAHER. Not so much. These are a part of some messages. They called a father and they didn't ask him money, they told him leave the village, leave Egypt, and maybe you will get your girl back. The mother I talked to received phone calls asking for money, but not made very seriously because if it was only a question of money, she would have done everything to get her girl back. It's not a question of getting money, it is a question of Islamizing, humiliating, and part of the strategic plan to get Egypt as Muslim, Islamic country within an empire of—Caliphate empire coming back again in the world.

Ms. CLARK. I would agree, Mr. Pitts. The kidnappings, forced conversions and forced marriages do not seem to—do not appear to be, based on my evidence as well, on any commercial motive but rather an ideological motive.

Mr. PITTS. All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Very important hearing. I hope the appropriate agencies of our government are notified of the testimony we've gotten today.

Mr. SMITH. Without a doubt they will.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. And thank you, Commissioner Pitts. We are joined by the distinguished gentlelady from Florida, the Chairwoman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. And I would note, yesterday after 2 days of markup of the Foreign Relations Reauthorization Act, with her strong support, we approved a very strongly worded resolution calling for religious freedom for Coptic Christians with a particular emphasis on disappeared and abducted and kidnapped Coptic girls and young women. And Michele Clark had just said, Madam Chair, that thousands of Coptic girls go missing or are abducted every year. And that is absolutely underappreciated, if—being met with indifference by so many at the State Department that it is mind boggling. So I yield to the—

**HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN (R-27) A MEMBER IN CONGRESS
FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA**

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Well, thank you very much, Chairman Smith. And as the Chairman had pointed out, yesterday in our full Committee on Foreign Affairs we concluded last night robust days of markup, debate and adoption of many measures that deal with security for young girls around the world. No issue is more pressing than this horrific pattern of kidnapping and torture and forced marriages of Coptic Christian girls in Egypt and the fear that it will spread elsewhere.

Thanks to the leadership of Chairman Smith, who Chairs the Africa, Global Health and Human Rights Subcommittee, the Committee adopted provisions that he sponsored that seek to address this specific threat of Coptic Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities and we will continue to work with Chairman Smith

and other congressional leaders. And in that group are the two gentlemen to my right. Congressman Wolf has been fighting on this issue for so many years, as has Congressman Joe Pitts. So we will continue to work with these fearless leaders, my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, to make sure that we have leverage on U.S. assistance to Egypt to compel changes on this horrific tragedy.

And in light of the information about the linkage to activities in the United States that you have brought out about church bombings, et cetera, or nefarious acts against poor, innocent young ladies, I will work with the chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, Congressman Peter King of New York, to hold joint hearings in the Foreign Affairs Committee to investigate this—these horrific acts. And Chris Smith, Frank Wolf, and Joe Pitts have been leading the charge in Congress—as you know, that’s the reason that you’re here on this subject—for many years. And, yes, there can be random acts of violence in every country; no one is immune to that. But this is totally different—this is orchestrated, this is approved because these horrific acts cannot be—cannot take place every day in Egypt unless the Egyptian authorities look away.

And this is the difference between a random act, let’s say, here in the United States of police brutality—that does happen—and organized acts of police brutality against civilians—that does not happen and is never condoned. And what is going on in Egypt for young, Christian Coptic young ladies, 12 years old, 11 years old, raped repeatedly by men and that brings dishonor to the family so that they are shunned, and then the father who is able to wrestle the girl away from this degrading and violent and abusing relationship brings the case to the authorities, and the authorities not just look away, they are part of the beating as well to this girl to bring further dishonor to her, so that she is shunned by her family and by her community.

So it’s a—it’s a sad chain link of abuses and degradation of the integrity of a human being, and in this case innocent young girls who want to practice their faith. And their crime is that they’re Coptic Christians. They have done no wrong. And they are forced into these marriages, and they’re forced into conversions and given no respect for their human rights. It is—it is shocking, it is appalling, and what’s appalling is not just that it happens to one or two—that would be shameful enough, but that it’s a pattern and it’s a repeated pattern.

And I’m glad that we have congressional leaders, like the ones here, who are bringing focus to this issue and, as I’m sure that Congressman Smith has pointed out, through his leadership he has the reauthorization bill that’s coming up before our Committee in the fall. And so we’re dealing with the Coptic Christian girls’ issue as a trafficking issue. We’re dealing with it as an abuse of human rights issue. And we will make sure that we can continue to shine congressional light and human light on this horrific problem.

And we have a lot of funds that go to many countries, and these are tough economic times here at home. So if we are to help other countries so that they can become prosperous societies, therefore good neighbors and people who follow human rights and universally accepted human rights, then let’s be careful about the way we

allocate funds and let's look at issues of whether these countries are cooperating in terms of respecting religious minorities and respecting the rights of girls to blossom into young women freely and without this forced coercion and these forced marriages and forced conversions.

So I know that our Committee will be hard at work on this issue because we have Chris Smith in our Committee. And I thank Congressman Pitts and Congressman Wolf who have been working tirelessly on this. So your words and your testimony will be heeded by the members of our Committee. And I thank the gentleman for the opportunity to stop by. And Congresswoman—she was sneaky, I did not see you there. And one of our freshmen Members, Renee Ellmers, who was a standout member last night in our marathon markup who stood up on behalf of all of the human rights victims throughout the world. And we should not make the Christian Coptic young girls in Egypt an exception to that protection that we must give them. So thank you, Congresswoman Ellmers. I would have pointed you out; I just didn't look this way.

Thank you, Mr. Smith, for this time. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. I want to thank the distinguished Chairwoman of our full Committee. It was a marathon session. And I thank her for being here, and for so strongly backing the amendment dealing with Coptic Christians and especially Coptic women who are being coerced and put into forced marriages. Thank you so much for your leadership on that. Thank you.

I would like to now yield to Renee Ellmers from North Carolina who chairs the subcommittee—one of the subcommittees on the Small Business Committee. She's also on Foreign Affairs as the distinguished young lady from Florida just said, and on the Ag committee, and has really become a rising star overnight in the Republican Party.

**HON. RENEE L. ELLMERS (R-2) A MEMBER IN CONGRESS
FROM THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

Ms. ELLMERS. [Laughter.] I don't know about that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is an honor to be here, and I came for a few minutes just—you know, Congressman Smith is just—he is a heroic figure for us here in Congress. He has been fighting for human rights issues across the world for years. And we look up to him so much, he is such a voice for us, as is Ileana. She is wonderful. It's great to be in the presence and working with those individuals who value life at every level. And we will continue that fight as I move forward. It's an honor for me as a freshman.

I am—I am just one of many very strong pro-life fighters for freedom around the world and especially women's rights and so this is such a wonderful opportunity for me to be here and listen, at least for a few minutes, to what you have to say. Thank you so much for coming, and giving us this personal face to this issue that's happening because this is one of those areas that so many just are not aware of. And when we bring these things to light, everyone wins. And we want very much to help in this situation and to eradicate this terrible, terrible crime that continues. So thank you for being with us today.

Mr. SMITH. [Off mic] Ellmers, thank you very much. And let me just ask some final questions, then go to Mr. Wolf, if you have a—

First, if I could, any of our panelists, Egypt is a party to CEDAW, the Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It's a party to the Genocide Convention, and also, obviously, is held up for periodic review before the Human Rights Council. The United States certainly is a party to the Genocide Convention. And my question would be, have any of those treaty bodies investigated? Has there been an attempt to get a special rapporteur, for example, designated to go and look at Coptic church discrimination and especially this horrific abuse, which I am shocked that any Muslim cleric could in any way be indifferent to?

Kidnapping is an egregious crime. Human trafficking is among the worst crimes on the face of the earth. This does not put a good face on Islam to think that there's either indifference to or acquiescence and perhaps even enabling and party to these kinds of abuses. So my question would be, at the United Nations, CEDAW, Genocide Convention—has the United States done anything vis-à-vis this, or any other regional body?

And finally, do you know of any Muslim clerics, imams for example, who have spoken out against the abduction and forced Islamitization? Now, let me remind everyone that the definition of the—in part, pertinent part—of the Genocide Convention is that it is the deliberate and systematic destruction in whole or in part of an ethnic, racial, religious or national group. It seems to me forced Islamitization, and that's not just of the woman but any children that she bears, clearly would fit any definition of genocide against the Copts in Egypt.

And finally, Michele Clark, with regards—you were talking earlier in your opening comments about force, fraud, and coercion and obviously trafficking fits this—this fits the trafficking definition as to what's going on. You say, and I think with emphasis, it's no longer an allegation, it's a fact. It's now, what do we do with that fact? And I'm wondering if you could speak to what happens to underage girls, because you know the definition and you are very much a part of all of this—Palermo Protocol, our own Trafficking Victims Protection Act, any woman who has not attained the age of 18 fits the definition of trafficking. There need be no element of force, fraud or coercion, although obviously it only adds exclamation points if there is.

And also, for Dr. Clark, Egypt in 2010 moved from the watch list to Tier 2—amazingly. With all of this going on, I find that shocking. One of the recommendations for Egypt in the TIP Report is for implementation of the 2010 trafficking law, which is one of the reasons why they were moved down. It was a hope rather than based on real, tangible actions on the ground. Does this trafficking law, in Egypt, include any body or mechanism such as a commission or special office to receive reports of trafficking or child marriage or this whole forced issue of abducting young Coptic girls?

So it's a number of questions. Please, all of you take a shot.

Ms. CLARK. I'll begin because I can—I can answer—look to some of the specific ones. As Mr. Maher and I have indicated, Mr. Chairman, the issue of abductions and forced marriages occurs regard-

less of age. There's documented evidence of young girls as young as 11 and 12 or 16 and 17. Obviously childbearing age is one of the primary considerations in this situation since, as you said, the objective is part of—one of the objectives is a war of attrition. And so women who can bear Muslim children are particularly targeted.

To my knowledge, no, this is not being specifically addressed in Egypt by the various anti-trafficking bodies that exist. There is no particular focus on this in large part because the issue of this as a trafficking instance remains disputed. I've indicated that we need to remove the word "allegation." It doesn't help any of us, and evidence is now consistent with anecdotal reports that I believe we can and we should remove the word.

The challenge, as we faced throughout the history of the anti-trafficking movement, is to what—to what extent are the young women in collusion with this situation. But—and the answer is, blatantly, not at all. They do not want to go along with these—with these instances. They have no idea what they're consenting to. A commercial exchange does not have to be present to make a case of trafficking. These women are being exploited for ideological gain, but the protocol—but nowhere does the protocol of Palermo to which the U.S. is signature—signatory, for example, stipulate that it's—that nonfinancial gain is not part of trafficking. So this fits the definition. It needs to be pursued as such.

I believe that—CEDAW—I have no documentation that it's being preserved, and I will leave the genocide issue to my more capable colleagues.

Mr. MAHER. At each meeting in Geneva, on different occasions, the position of the Egyptian Government was always to say we are doing our best; the Coptic problem does not exist. The government never recognized that there is something called Copts in Egypt suffering with injustice or what they call confessional disputes. You know, when there is a church burnt, you can find the perpetrators; everyone knows who they are. But they are transformed into reconciliation sessions: People coming together, and the victim just doesn't use any lawyer, and the perpetrators just go away.

The government never put in place something to solve the problem because they never recognized that there was a problem. So if there is no problem, why the different commissions or genocide from United Nations Commissions or—and so on, would act? Now more Muslim liberals are standing up and asking the military council, the government, to recognize that there is a problem, and unless this will be solved, the country will continue to go down and down.

Ms. DOSS. I am actually not aware of any body taking any particular action. But I can say that personally, I did meet with someone in January 2010, after the Nag Hammadi attack, in the genocide department at the United Nations, and I actually did present them with a package that presented evidence of genocide, but we haven't heard anything back from them.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Wolf?

Mr. WOLF. Just one question, but before I do, I think a lot of the blame [off mic]—

Mr. SMITH. Your microphone?

Mr. Wolf. A lot of the blame though was really in this Congress, and this administration and previous administrations. Again, if you go to look at the lobbyists who worked long and hard to lobby for Egypt over the years—

Mr. MAHER. Yes.

Mr. WOLF. Those administrations have advocated for Mubarak, and there have been amendments on the floor, and Dave Obey tried to offer one, and everyone got up to say what a great friend Mubarak was or this.

We have given them over \$50 billion. There will be an amendment to strike this when it comes up. There will be an amendment with regard to the foreign operations funding. And so when you look at who are lobbying for these people, they fundamentally—it's that a lot of the blame rests right here in the U.S. Congress. Go back and look at the debates.

I can be in the Appropriations Committee where we have people come back and say they just got back from a CODEL and Mubarak was such a wonderful man, he did all these wonderful things and we ought not condition it. So really I think there ought to be some complaints and direction on both the previous administrations, Republican and Democrat.

When I was in Egypt 3 weeks ago, I couldn't help but notice—I was in the Embassy. As I walk down the hall, all the pictures of all the former Presidents with a very large, big smile with who? Mubarak. They're all in; they just put out a new book—the Embassy put out a new book. President Obama's on the cover, and it shows all of the previous people, Republican and Democrat, who have been with this administration.

So a lot of the fault lies here, and we'll see what the spine is with this Congress when these issues are offered because I think there's a lot of blame right here in River City and be—by Republicans and Democrats. The Coptic Christians—and frankly I don't want to see the Coptic Christians leave Egypt—Egypt and the Middle East without Christians it will not be the Middle East, and for too long people up here and in previous administrations have been reluctant to advocate for those who are being persecuted because they're Christians, whether it be in Afghanistan, whether it be in Pakistan, whether it be in Egypt and all over.

The two questions that I have: How many convictions have there been over the last several years? Do you have any? And how many occasions do you know where the American Embassy has advocated for these cases? Because generally when there's a problem, our members go to the Embassy, they advocate for us. So how many convictions do you know have been—cases are brought in the Egyptian courts and how many times has the American Embassy participated and been involved in any different cases?

Ms. CLARK. Thank you very much, Mr. Wolf. There's—there have been—in the 50 cases I was involved with personally, there were two investigations. Neither investigation resulted in any legal process. So, there are no convictions resulting as of—as of complaints to the effective kidnappings, forced marriages and forced conversions of Coptic Christian women. To my knowledge also and according to my research, the U.S. Embassy has not advocated on behalf of these women.

Mr. WOLF. One last thing, Mr. Chairman, as you have this record, I urge you to send it to Leon Panetta. Our military has a very good relationship—in fact, I think our military has a better relationship and more clout with the Egyptian Government and the Egyptian military than does our State Department. And I think Leon Panetta—one of the recommendations I made is that Leon Panetta send some top generals over, who have relationships with their generals, to put some of these things on the table.

Thank you for your testimony. I will read it all and, Chris, thanks for having the hearing.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Wolf, thank you very much.

Commissioner Pitts, do you have any—

Mr. PITTS. There you go. Thanks.

Just one question on the problem we've encountered in the past, raised with the former Egyptian Government and that is the problem of the government-issued ID cards, including a reference to the bearer's religious affiliation. Victims have discovered their national ID card designates them as Muslim, even though they've converted, and subsequent children that they may have, likewise automatically designated on their cards. And conversion from Islam is considered to be an act of apostasy. Can you just expound a little bit on the implication of this problem for the victims? Any of you.

Mr. MAHER. I can give you an example. Maher el-Gohary this is one; Mohammed Hegazy is another one. But these are two people that dared saying publicly that they converted from Muslim to Christianity. Mohammed Hegazy asked the court to officially change his religion from Muslim to Christian. It was ruled at different levels of courts and was refused.

Maher el-Gohary is another one—was 16 years old [inaudible] today, he also dared going to the court and asking to change his identity card and was finally refused. But, in between, there was a fatwa from the mosque publicly, on the microphones, saying wherever you find him, kill him and, you know, you don't go—in your—you go to paradise.

So, for 3 years, he had to go from one place to another. I met him; I know his testimony in detail; and he went from one place to another. His daughter is 16 years old—now, it's almost 3 years, she hasn't been to school. After the revolution, they succeeded to go out. Before, they confiscated his passport; he has been beaten; and he was not allowed to go away. And then he left to Syria because he didn't have a visa to go, came to France, and now he's in Germany. And he would like to come to the States because his wife is in the United States, and he's waiting for all the process to be done in order to, you know, to come to see her, his wife. But this—just to see, you know, what the mentality is—what's happened to the kidnapped girls is an [inaudible] of the Egyptian society as Mr. Mubarak left it, as he managed to give a false image about his country as he managed to have the United States put \$50 billion for what? The result is to bring the Muslim Brotherhood, the most—you know, the most radicals.

So our pledge as a Copt today is please do something in order to delay the elections, not that the Egyptian liberals, the Muslim liberals get—and other parties have the power to have their place and not only give the place to the Muslim Brotherhood. The early—

the early election in September or November will bring the Muslim Brotherhood and many—the Middle East doesn't need that. [Inaudible] democratic election. It's only [inaudible] not as U.S. history [inaudible] the Constitution and see what it will come.

Will it be a country where the religion is [inaudible] or will they say [inaudible] that the Shari'a law and become like Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and so on? If it is, Egypt is Egyptstan, then, you know, the financial aid should stop immediately.

If they want to go to another country, there is no place for religion in the constitution. That is—the question is not to hold a democratic election as a [inaudible] elections. Or they will just, you know, delayed it again [inaudible] to delay and again. We don't hold elections now. We want the liberals. There are a lot of good Muslim liberals. We want them to work with the Copts and other Muslims and to develop a good constitution for a better Egypt, a model Egypt for tomorrow.

Mr. PITTS. Michele.

Ms. CLARK. Thank you. Just very briefly to answer your question, Mr. Pitts, on what are the implications, if a young woman returns to her family after having been kidnapped and forcibly converted and forcibly married, the consequences in her life are as follows. She cannot marry within her own church because she's formally listed as a Muslim. So she can't resume her life. Her life is to live—to be ever lived in limbo.

Furthermore, if—and as I have talked to such women, if she does marry, her marriage is illegal because she's a Muslim woman and not allowed to marry a Christian man. Consequently, children that would be born to that couple would be illegitimate children and would not be given a national identity. And finally, as a Muslim on her identity card, she would not be given—she would not be allowed to be buried in a Christian cemetery. So in fact she is forcibly for the rest of her life denied any public relationship with the thing that is most precious to her, which is her faith.

Mr. PITTS. Now, because of the lack of religious freedom and some calling for Egypt to be designated as a country of particular concern under our International Religious Freedom Act, do you have any thoughts on that designation? What's your view of this question?

Ms. CLARK. Well, I've carved out a little bit of a niche for myself, so anything I say is based on this. But certainly if you deny the right of a woman to have a voice in the most fundamental aspects of her life—marriage, the birth of her children and a place to be buried—then I really challenge a country's position on religious freedom.

Mr. PITTS. So you would favor them being designated a country of particular concern.

Ms. CLARK. As I said, based on what I know now, it would appear I—it would appear.

Mr. PITTS. Yes, any other views or comments? Do you agree with that?

Ms. DOSS. I absolutely do agree with that. It does deserve to be labeled as a country of particular concern. I think—I think actually it's long overdue.

Mr. PITTS. Yes.

Ms. DOSS. Based on what we have seen in the trends in just our own reports here, it should have been labeled as a country of particular concern a long time ago. But for our relationship and their strong lobby, we haven't, unfortunately, seen it until recently.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you.

Mr. MAHER. Just impunity is not admissible. Impunity of the people who burn churches, who kill—who kill Christians, impunity of the rapists or all this—you know, this put Egypt just in this category.

Mr. PITTS. Yes. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this important hearing, for your leadership on the issue.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Pitts, thank you so much for your leadership because, as I said earlier, when it comes to Coptic Christians, Frank Wolf, Joe Pitts, they work it every single day. And so I want to thank—and let me just say one brief comment on what Chairman Wolf said earlier. I had met myself with Mubarak in Cairo, and every year he would come at least once a year to the United States. And whenever we—and I wasn't the only one—would raise with great documentation human rights abuses against Coptic Christians, he would lean back and say, talk to Boutros-Ghali who was, I guess, at least a nominal Coptic Christian. And I said, no, we're talking to you, Mr. President.

But we would still be diverted to Boutros-Ghali, who would then take all the information and say everything is just fine.

So we know clearly that was not true, but it seems to be getting significantly better. I have just a couple of final questions. And any final comments our distinguished witnesses would like to make, please do.

How should we be pressing Saudi Arabia or others on what you've cited in your testimony as the financial and philosophical support for this horrific and barbaric practice of kidnapping and forcing women into marriages?

Mr. MAHER. I would think it doesn't come from the Government of Saudi Arabia. The problem is it comes from individuals. And I think it's very hard to—you know, maybe the message should be to the Government of Saudi Arabia, saying they have to press their citizens in order to stop it. But it doesn't come from the Saudi Government.

Mr. PITTS. Anybody else.

Mr. SMITH. And—would you like to make any final comment before we conclude this hearing, any of our distinguished witnesses?

Ms. DOSS. If I may make just one comment—

Mr. SMITH. [Off mic.]

Ms. DOSS [continuing]. Going back to the issue of the pattern and practice and the impunity, the perpetrators of these crimes, a lot of them, we're very well aware of who they are, the perpetrators of the crimes and the attacks against the churches, the individuals that participated in the tortures in state security. What do we do when these people come and apply for visas to the United States? Is there some sort of a mechanism we could use to prevent them from entering the United States? Is there some sort of a tool? I mean, we know who they are. We have their names.

I remember back in 2007—if I may just make a comment about this. It was January 2007. The—this extremist Islamic cleric was granted a visa by the United States to enter the United States. This man openly on his web site supports jihad. And our government gave him a visa to the United States. I had done an interview on MSNBC Live and read the quotes right off of this guy's Web site. They gave him a visa to come here.

And at one point in time I heard—I don't know if it's true or not—that he was actually exiled from Egypt. So this radical person now has been given access to the United States. How do we protect ourselves from people like this? They're known torturers. They're known offenders and violators of human rights. Maybe we should have some sort of a reporting mechanism to put these people on a watch list.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Ms. CLARK. Thank you so much, Mr. Smith, again, for holding this hearing. So many of us are so grateful to you and, again, for your sustained leadership in—on behalf of women and children. I'd like to conclude by drawing a few lessons from the fight against human trafficking, where after 11 years now in the United States and around the world, we've begun to see tiny but nonetheless sustained measures.

One of the challenges that we must face—and it sounds as if you're really heading in that direction—is to name the offense. We have to say this is what's happening, this is the crime that's occurring, this is how we know it, this is what you are doing, this is who it's being done to. In the absence of naming a crime, everything else can be—just can dissolve into rhetoric and lofty statements that eventually become forgotten.

The second thing we need to do that we've learned as a result of seeing how the TIP Report has had—has taken effect is to follow through with teeth. Removing the word “allegation” is one important message. Challenging status on tier levels is another important way that the U.S. Government can go after this. We have to show that our naming of the offense also carries with it the strength and determination to follow through.

The third thing that we can do is continue, as you've begun in this hearing, to disseminate the—knowledge and information about what is taking place. The more the veil of mystery, shame and stigma of a crime is removed, the greater a potentially victimized people can feel empowered and the greater the anti-trafficking, the advocacy community can come together on behalf of prospective victims.

And then finally we can empower the Coptic community itself to take ownership, knowing that actions on their part will be protected and not subject to government reprisal. We can encourage the distribution of information. In fact, that should be perhaps an object of funding. We can encourage the protection of shelters and safe houses, and we can ensure the viability of families which seek to take back their young women and help them to establish their lives according to freedom of conscience, religion and the hopes and dreams of every other young girl.

Thank you, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Dr. Clark—Mr. Maher.

Mr. MAHER. [Inaudible] just to take the opportunity of the revolution of today and give as many messages to the military council and the government as we can. They are—they recognize they don't have political experience. They are ready, I think, to get recommendations. So the external messages of the international community must be clear. Only external, outside pressure will make things move.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much. Thank you all.

You know, Mr. Wolf, Chairman Wolf had a very good point about military-to-military, and we will follow up on that—and I know he will as well—with incoming Department of Defense Secretary Panetta.

And I would also point out that recently a group from Egypt was here in town looking for debt relief. I came to that meeting and talked about Coptic Christians and went through with documentation abuses committed against—including the horrific practice of kidnapping Coptic girls. I was met with denials, denials, and more denials.

In the room was Toby Moffett, one of the leading lobbyists—former Members of Congress. And so I would suggest that part of our outreach needs to be to the handlers of the account of Egypt here in town who carry huge amounts of influence, get paid very handsomely for that. And they should not be indifferent to or enablers of this horrific crime against women and crimes against humanity that are being perpetrated against Coptic Christians.

So I—this is a hearing in a series of hearings, and I can assure you we will have a legislative strategy and we will only—this is—your information. I remember when I took some journalism classes. The three As of journalism are accuracy, accuracy, accuracy. And I believe that deeply when it comes to human rights, and you three have been truth tellers, giving us the accurate picture of what is going on on the ground and very, very useful suggestions as to how to proceed. And the Commission cannot thank you enough for your insights, counsel and wisdom and for being here.

So thank you so much. This hearing is adjourned. [Applause.]

[Whereupon, at 12:10 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDICES

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CAROLINE DOSS, ESQ., VICE PRESIDENT, COPTIC SOLIDARITY

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members of Congress and Commissioners, thank you for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify and focus on the issues related to the Christian minority in Egypt, particularly as many of these issues appear to be ignored in current policy considerations.

There are a number of issues minorities have faced in Egypt over the years including violent attacks, lack of justice against those who perpetrate attacks, discrimination in the workplace and in society at large, inequality under the law, hate propaganda in the media, and long term issues related to peacefully practicing one's faith and worshipping freely.

Numerous media articles and reports document the discrimination and violence against Christians and other minorities under the Mubarak regime. There was great hope among minorities, especially as the Egyptian people stood side by side in Tahrir Square calling for Mubarak to leave, that a post-Mubarak Egypt would provide more freedom and peace for minorities. Tragically, that has not occurred. Instead, there is clear evidence of an increasing pattern and practice, by commission and omission, of government-sanctioned persecution of Coptic Christians.

VIOLENT ATTACKS

Under this new government, the lack of protection and security for many Egyptians, and particularly for minorities, is clear. Since the fall of Mubarak, violent physical attacks against Christians have been implemented by the military, extremists, government officials, and verbally via government-paid religious leaders.

- Military: the military has attacked monasteries and protestors and has failed to intervene to protect victims under attack

- Extremists: the extremists have attacked individuals, at least four churches, and many Christians' homes and places of business. Afterwards, the attackers frequently celebrated by chanting "Allah Akbar." (Please see links: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edVRFUOSJAw>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiol9cPm-4g>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKC9pCitXHc&feature=related>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bnmkQ67qYY>) Reports suggest that in one incident the attackers even handed out chocolates in the street to celebrate the violence.

- Government officials: The Governor of El Minya demolished 10 homes because the owners refused to donate a portion of their land to the building of a mosque. In addition, he also attempted to demolish a church building but was interrupted by Coptic protestors. Both events occurred on February 28, 2011.

- Government-sponsored mosques: In Egypt, the government is responsible for the salaries of Imams and other religious leaders in the mosques. Some of these same state employees have been openly and very publicly involved in inciting their followers to violence

against minorities, particularly Christians. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, in November of 2010 raised concerns that “incitement to violence in Egyptian media and government-funded mosques is contributing to increasing sectarian tensions.” More recent eyewitness accounts from those leaving Egypt suggest that this incitement continues to be a serious problem.

With your permission, I would like to submit for the Record a list of attacks since the uprising in February of this year. This list reflects attacks that occurred after the horrific Alexandria church bombing in January.

WOMEN AND GIRLS

In addition to the violence aimed at communities, homes and places of worship, as my colleague Michele Clark has testified, there have been a number of cases of the kidnapping, rape, forced conversion and/or forced marriage of Coptic women and girls. The victims include minor children, as well as married and single women. Further, there have been open threats to harm any women walking in public who are not veiled. This threat was disseminated by Salafis, who could be seen as the “Taliban” of Egypt (they have even received money from Saudi Arabia). Throughout the month of March, Salafis told Egyptians that on March 29, 2011, anyone not wearing a veil would be attacked. According to the Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights, for the first time in Minufiya governorate,

“350 Salafists confronted the state Jaw and surrounded a house of a woman . . . forced her out of her house, threw her house’s furniture onto the street, burned the house and threatened to kill her if she returned to her home. They did so claiming that her conduct was immoral and dishonorable . . . The Egyptian Center for Human Rights received a number of complaints from several women on receiving threats on Facebook that they will be ‘punished’ if they do not wear the legitimate clothes. The threats mentioned a time limit of Tuesday, March 29, 2011. This matter raised panic among a large number of women in Egypt. They are asking whether it will be safe to go to schools, universities and work or whether they will be attacked.” (Press release from March 28, 2011)

These threats against women were focused on both Muslims and Christians, despite the fact that Christians are not Muslims and therefore should not be subject to the enforcement of wearing a veil in public. Mr. Chairman, the veil issue is deeply disturbing as it brings to mind the actions of the Taliban in Afghanistan and their attacks against non-veiled women or against men who did not dress according to Taliban dictates. It is quite disturbing to think of Egypt being controlled by Taliban-style extremists, as the rich culture and history of Egypt would not be possible with people like that in control of Egyptian society.

INJUSTICE AND IMPUNITY

Many are concerned by the continued pattern of impunity afforded to violent extremists and attackers, as well as by those in the state security services (SSI) involved in torture. More recently, and more publicly, security officials and the military stood by watching as churches were burned and destroyed and individuals and peaceful protestors were attacked. There is no record to date of any security official, SSI, military or a member of any other security apparatus, being held responsible for standing by and watching the destruction and violence. All this, despite the fact that videos of soldiers and others standing by are on YouTube and the Government could easily find out who was involved in allowing the attacks to begin, or last for much longer than necessary. Also, it is important to note that the "Coptic" issue is handled primarily through the state security offices - it is seen as a security issue, not as a political or human rights issue.

An additional and related issue of concern is the intolerance against the Copts reflected when authorities, after a violent attack, arrest Muslims and Christians for the attacks. It has never been clear why Christians are arrested in these attacks. While there has been violence perpetrated by Christian during attacks, it has almost never been reported that the violence is anything but in self-defense. It does not take much contemplation to realize that in a country like Egypt, where minorities frequently live in fear, a minority would not instigate violence or riots or property destruction against itself, let alone against a majority where violent extremists commit crimes. It is quite absurd to think otherwise. Yet, the Egyptian Government, most recently in the May 2011 Imbaba church attacks, arrested some Muslims and a number of Christians and blamed them all equally for the attacks. In another case where a mob of thousands attacked those involved in the opening of the St. Mary and St. Abraham Church one media report from May 27 reveals that a "Military court in Egypt has sentenced three Christian Copts to 5-years imprisonment on charges of possession of firearms and pocket knives. The Court released all other Muslims and Copts arrested following clashes on May 19." (Assyrian International News Agency)

Further, as was raised by Dina Guirgis In the January 2011 hearing held by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, if on the rare occasions when there is an attempt to hold perpetrators to account, the government often forces victims into "reconciliation sessions" where justice is completely undermined and criminals are not punished. Such practices have continued since the fall of the Mubarak regime.

The Government seems to be afraid of arresting, prosecuting and punishing the actual perpetrators and criminals in these attacks. Why? It is unclear, but with the exponential increase of the activities of extremists in Egyptian society, the Government may be afraid of the extremists. If this is true, Egypt is in deep trouble. The Egyptian people deserve a government that governs fairly and transparently and brings justice where it is due.

As a side note, it is important to raise the point that when the Egyptian Government discusses, or the Western media reports on,

clashes in Egypt, they frequently use the term “sectarian clashes.” This terminology causes concern because it assumes that both sides in a clash have power. The practical reality on the ground is that even though the Copts are a large minority within Egypt, they do not instigate clashes, but some feel compelled to defend themselves when they are attacked.

TORTURE AND IMPUNITY

One concern regarding impunity is that the SSI, the infamous state security service, which was intimately involved in torture under the Mubarak regime, has allegedly been disbanded and a new government agency has been formed. While the intent may be laudable, the reality is that many of the same security officials simply moved to this new organization to continue their work. Those involved in torture have not been brought to justice. In a number of firsthand accounts I have heard, the torturers gave their full names to the victims being tortured. As a result, it is not difficult to find out who the torturers are. There are torture victims throughout Egypt, from the minority as well as Egyptian society at large who, if they felt it was safe and there would be real justice, might come forward to name these criminals.

ID CARDS

Yet another issue that has not changed since the Mubarak regime lost power is the unequal application of the law. This issue comes into play in relation to the building or repair of churches and in relation to the refusal to issue new government identity cards to those desiring to change their faith to any religion that is not Muslim. While there reportedly have been a few recent cases where a change was allowed on the ID card, changes are rare. In general, there is opposition by local police, government officials, state security officials, the courts, and by religious laws, all of which inspire people to harm and in some way retaliate against the person trying to change his or her faith identification. In one case, Maher El-Gohary and his daughter were forced into hiding and were later brutally attacked when in August 2008, he filed a lawsuit against the Egyptian Government in order to change the religion listed on his state ID card. Both he and his daughter publicly were branded apostates. The two fled the country. (Compass Direct News Service, March 21, 2011).

CONSTITUTION

Mr. Chairman, in the very near future, a group of Egyptians will be drafting a new Constitution. There are disturbing signs that the freedoms of the Egyptian people may be more restricted and Christians and other minorities will be even less safe than they are currently.

The next step in the Constitutional process is that a permanent Constitution will be written. The Muslim Brotherhood and other extremists want to wait until after the parliamentary elections so that, as they plan to control the next parliament, they can elect the constitutional committee from the newly elected parliamentarians. The secular and moderate Muslims, the Christians, and other mi-

minorities all would like to see the elite, trained professionals of the country write the Constitution prior to the elections so the process is not hijacked by extremists.

It is important that the U.S. and the international community press Egypt to live up to its human rights commitments and ensure that those commitments are enshrined in the new Constitution, not as an afterthought, but up front. It is only when there is a Constitution that protects the people and their fundamental rights and freedoms that there will be any recourse for minorities or any citizen who is discriminated against or persecuted to bring criminals to justice. I would like to draw your attention to an article by Ms. Ana Palacio, Former Foreign Affairs Minister of Spain, who refers to the Constitution and external pressure being successful,

“Senior Editor of the Cairo weekly *Watani* Adel Guindy suggested that, without interfering in the process, the EU can push for ‘an unambiguous reference to full and unconditional respect of the universal human rights values [in Egyptian constitution] as expressed in international conventions. While such a text will be no guarantee that the human rights are respected, its absence will be a guarantee (as is the case today) that human rights will NOT be respected.’” (Article cited is “Upheaval in the Arab World: a (Close) Call for the European Union,” Ana Palacio, Former Foreign Affairs Minister of Spain, World Bank Group, p. 2, Footnote 6)

FINANCIAL AID

While this hearing is primarily focused on the fundamental rights of minorities in Egypt, I would like to raise the issue of economic aid to Egypt. While it may be difficult to implement, it would be a very helpful tool to link aid to Egypt, including forgiveness of debt, to the upholding and protection of human rights norms. Some might see this recommendation as controversial because the Egyptian economy is not doing well, and as a result all of Egyptian society, especially the poor are suffering. However, simply giving debt relief or other financial aid to Egypt with no stipulations will likely not bring much benefit to the Egyptian people as a whole. The same Egyptian people who banded together in Tahrir Square to call for Mubarak to leave and to rally for a new, democratic and free Egypt deserve to benefit from any aid.

SECURITY THREATS IN THE U.S.

Some people have raised the idea that the violence in Egypt involves a security risk to the U.S. That might be puzzling, in light of the threats from Al-Qaeda and terrorists networks, but let me share how that threat has already come to the U.S. and could increase if extremists and Salafists are allowed free reign to impose their beliefs on Egyptian law and society. In the aftermath of the Alexandria church New Years bombing, a website run by a jihadi forum group issued a call to attack churches in Egypt, the Middle East AND churches in Europe, the U.S and other countries. Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit for the record the printed version

of an extremist website calling for attacks on churches in the U.S and listing the names of those churches as well as the phone numbers and other identifying information. The original is in Arabic and there is an English translation. I would draw your attention to the photos further down the page which help would-be attackers design and build bombs for these church attacks. I am from the New York/New Jersey area and prior to Orthodox Christmas, which is celebrated in January, our community had numerous meetings with regional security officials in order to ensure that our Christmas celebrations could be carried out safely. In fact, some in our community were afraid to attend those celebrations because of the threats—and these churches are not located in Egypt!

It is deeply, deeply disturbing that even before the Salafists and other extremists were released from Egyptian prisons or flooded back into Egypt from abroad, this type of direct security threat affected the U.S. If the extremists have their way, it is increase.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations for the Egyptian Government, the U.S. government, and the international community:

Special Envoy

- We support and strongly urge the passage of H.R. 440 and S. 1245 which provides for the appointment of a Special Envoy for minorities in the Middle East. We also strongly urge the Administration to appoint someone to that position who is highly qualified and has the stature needed to ensure the issues related to minorities are included in the highest level of the U.S. Government, particularly during this historic transition in Egypt, Iraq and other countries in the region.

Implementation of Justice

- We strongly urge that the Egyptian Government bring to justice those state security officials, including the SSI, military and other branches, involved in the torture of Egyptian citizens.

“Further, we urge the U.S. Government to press the Egyptian Government to prosecute perpetrators of violence before, during and after the uprisings and the historic events in Egypt this year.

- We also urge the U.S. Government to ban visas and travel to the U.S. for any government official involved in torture. While this may be difficult to implement immediately, the U.S. could assist in setting up a mechanism that would allow for torture victims to report the names of their torturers. With the proper instruments and processes in place to allow for confirmation that a government official is indeed involved in torture, the U.S. could easily implement a visa ban against these officials similar to that in the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

- We strongly urge the Egyptian Government to stop arresting both Christians and Muslims when Christians and their property are attacked and instead bring the real perpetrators to justice.

Constitution

- We urge the U.S. Government and the international community to press the Egyptian Government to ensure that its commit-

ments to international human rights norms are upheld in the foundational sections of the Constitution and are not undermined by any subsequent articles or passages.

- We also urge the Egyptian Government to allow for international monitors for the upcoming elections. If the election is to be free and fair, there is no reason not to have election observers and monitors.

Economy

- As mentioned above, while we welcome efforts to help Egypt in its current economic situation, we believe that unconditional financial aid would be a strategic error—aid should be linked to Egypt’s human rights record in terms of constitutional stipulations, laws and practices over the short and medium terms. We urge the U.S Government, European governments and others in the international community providing financial aid to Egypt to tie that aid to Egypt’s upholding and protecting fundamental human rights norms now and in any new Constitution.

Mr. Chairman, I again thank you for the opportunity to raise these concerns today. The people of Egypt, particularly the minorities, long for a society in which each is free to peacefully practice his or her faith and to live a life without fear. Muslims, Christians, and other minorities all deserve a stable, peaceful and free society. It is at this significant time in Egypt’s history that real change is possible, but I fear that change will not happen unless there is an exponential increase in pressure both from inside and outside Egypt.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have. Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHELE CLARK, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Mr. Chairman, it is an honor to be invited to testify once more on this most important issue of the disappearances, forced conversions and forced marriages of Coptic Christian women and girls. I would like to express my thanks to the Commission for holding this hearing and launching this new report. I would also like to express my thanks to Christian Solidarity International, and in particular to Dr. John Eibner, CEO, for championing this issue and sponsoring the research and writing of the report we are discussing here. I would also like to express my thanks to Nadia Ghaly, the co-author of this report, who is not able to be here today, for her invaluable collaboration in this effort.

My testimony is based directly on the report introduced today, "The Disappearance, Forced Conversions and Forced Marriages of Coptic Christian Women and Girls in Egypt II", and I would therefore like to request that the report be included along with my testimony into the record of these hearings.

Coptic women in Egypt are disappearing from their homes, their schools and their jobs. They go missing while returning from church, picking up their children from school or traveling to the sick bed of an aging parent. They are often held as captives, subjected to physical and psychological abuse in the form of rapes, beatings, domestic labor without pay, forced marriage and conversion to Islam. Their lives, and the lives of their families, are severely damaged.

The Egyptian government has distanced itself from any responsibility or culpability. Those who dispute these claims assert that the disappearances are merely willful acts of young women seeking to leave oppressive home environments and that there is no criminal activity involved.

To investigate these claims, Christian Solidarity International and the Coptic Foundation for Human Rights Commissioned a report written in November 2009 which asserted that Coptic women and underage girls are deceptively lured into forced marriages with Muslim men and conversion to Islam; that the Egyptian authorities dismiss the criminality of such events; that the young women are presumed to be complicit in their disappearances; that the disappearances follow consistent patterns; that the Egyptian government rarely restores their Christian identities to women who have been forcibly converted to Islam.

This report marked the beginning of renewed discussion on the topic, including a hearing in front of this very Commission last summer.

Other US Government agencies were more skeptical.

For example, the 2010 US Department of States Annual Trafficking in Persons Report referenced our report, and stated that "During the reporting period, an international NGO released a report about alleged forced marriages of Coptic females in Egypt, indicating an allegation of forced prostitution, though the allegations have not been confirmed."

The 2010 Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report also referred to our report, stating,

“As in previous years, there were occasional claims of Muslim men forcing Coptic women and girls to convert to Islam. Reports of such cases were disputed and often included inflammatory allegations and categorical denials of kidnapping and rape. In November 2009 an international Christian advocacy group published a report regarding alleged cases of forced conversion; however, well-respected local human rights groups were unable to verify such cases and found it extremely difficult to determine whether compulsion was used, as most cases involved a female Copt who converted to Islam when she married a male Muslim. Reports of such cases almost never appear in the local media.”

Before entering in the details of the new report, I would like to make one important point: Claims that all disappearances are the result of impulsive behaviors and not abduction reflect a misunderstanding of the force, fraud and coercion that are characteristic of the relationships between young Coptic women and girls and their captors. Both Nadia Ghaly and I recognize that not all disappearances are the result of abductions, that not all marriages are forced, and that some conversions can be consensual. We have spoken with a young woman who quite candidly left her husband because he beat her while her male Muslim neighbor was kind. She eventually returned to her family.

However, and notwithstanding the ambiguity of many situations we encountered, we claim that it is not possible to dismiss each case in the 2009 report on the grounds that the girls willingly and left their families.

And, since this first report, it is possible to say that stories of abductions and disappearances of Coptic women and girls are for the first time garnering attention in the mainstream media. On December 15, 2010, the BBC aired a documentary entitled, “Christian Minority under Pressure in Egypt.” In the opening scene, a father relates to the interviewer that there will be no Christmas in their home this year; their daughter, who loved Christmas, was abducted and has never returned.

On June 15, 2011, Yasmin el Rashdi, writing *New York Review of Books* on June 15, 2011, quotes a parish priest who raises the issue of the disappearance of young Coptic women.

“There are no sizable attacks,” he said, “but each week there are incidents of women having the cross grabbed from their necks as they walk in the streets. In this very neighborhood people are still being insulted as they leave church; and we still have young girls disappearing, kidnapped, being harassed for what they are wearing or for bearing the cross tattooed on their wrists.”

Since the publication of our first report, the political landscape has changed considerably in Egypt. The Coptic community has become more vulnerable to persecution as a result of an upsurge in militant Islam following the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak. Emigration is increasing and asylum petitions in both the United States and other countries are on the rise. Young Coptic

women are particularly vulnerable. Exploitation thrives in times of political unrest.

Among the most vulnerable members of this beleaguered community are women and young girls. Young Coptic women are applying for asylum on the basis of fear of being abducted and forced to convert and marry. In September 2011, I testified in federal court as an expert witness in one such asylum case. Asylum was granted for a young Coptic woman on the basis of fear of being abducted should she return. Other immigration lawyers attest to recent favorable asylum decisions based on threat or fear of abduction. We have here, as witnesses in this hearing, two young women who have sought and received asylum because of abduction and fear of abductions. These cases are not allegations.

A SECOND REPORT

Concerned with the escalating violence against the Copts in Egypt and dissatisfied with the lack of response from the US Government, Christian Solidarity International commissioned a second report, which we are launching here today. This new report substantiates our earlier findings. In addition, we have observed changes in trends and patterns, which reinforce the pre-meditation of the captors.

The goal of our second report is straightforward: To continue to support the claims of disappearances, abductions and forced conversions and forced marriages of Coptic women in Egypt and continue to challenge the use of the term “allegation” in US government reports.

The new findings in the report are based on:

1. Interviews with four Egyptian lawyers. These lawyers provided access to claims filed by families on behalf of Coptic women who had disappeared as well as young women who had returned from a forced marriage and conversion and were attempting to regain their Christian identities;
2. Interviews with representatives of civil society organizations;
3. Interviews with family members of young women who have disappeared. Some of these individuals are represented by attorneys;
4. A review of Internet sites reporting the disappearance of Coptic girls. The authors considered only those cases with appropriate documentation, including police reports.
5. Interviews with women who have returned from a forced marriage and conversion.

All interviews were conducted from November 16–25, 2011, in Cairo, Egypt. Only verifiable cases are included in this report. Each of these cases is verifiable through attorney files, personal interviews and police reports. The real names of young women and their family members and other identifying details are not published in this report in order to protect their identities.

KEY FINDINGS

1. THE NUMBER OF DISAPPEARANCES AND ABDUCTIONS APPEAR TO BE INCREASING.

Exact numbers of cases throughout the country are difficult to come by for reasons analyzed below. However, each of the attorneys interviewed for this report indicated an increase in his caseload since January 2011. Four attorneys collectively report a total of over 550 cases of abductions, disappearances and petitions to restore Christian identity following abductions, forced marriages and forced conversions over a five-year period. Furthermore, one attorney interviewed for this report indicates first-hand knowledge of over 1,600 cases of Christians petitioning to have their conversions to Islam overturned in recent years, with 60% of this number being women; in other words, 960 women are petitioning to have their Christian identities restored.

DATA COLLECTION CHALLENGES

There is no systematic data repository within the Coptic community documenting the disappearances of young women. Priests or bishops keep records of activities within their churches and communities. Attorneys maintain their own caseloads. Activists maintain different websites but there is no cross-referencing with other data sources.

Families of victims do not report all cases. The police do not register all complaints filed by family members. In many cases, family members of missing young women reported that the police would not file a report until a lawyer intervened. In other cases, families do not file reports because they do not believe that their claims will be taken seriously or because they fear retribution by the authorities. Not all families are financially able to secure the services of an attorney; while not a guarantee of results, the presence of an attorney would at least enable the filing of a legitimate claim.

2. FEWER GIRLS APPEAR TO BE RETURNING TO THEIR FAMILIES

Our 2009 report focused on young women who had returned from forced marriages and conversions and were struggling to regain their Christian identities. They reported instances of abuse and forced domestic servitude; one woman reported being prostituted by her captor. Since then, there has been a discernible change in the dynamics of the disappearances of young Coptic women. Attorneys handling such cases report that fewer young women are being returned to their families. There is speculation that young women might be trafficked overseas, but attorneys and activists have not yet been able to document this phenomenon.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA

Many families are learning about their daughters' conversion to Islam through new Internet sites which document the conversion to Islam of Christian girls. Increasing websites are appearing which feature fully veiled young Coptic women and girls announcing their conversion to Islam. On the other hand, Coptic families

are beginning to post announcements of disappearances also on the internet.

4. MINORS AND MOTHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN APPEAR TO BE INCREASINGLY TARGETED.

In addition to disappearances of single young women over the age of 18, lawyers report an increase in the abductions of mothers with young children. While the age of consent to convert to a different religion is eighteen in Egypt, there are increasing reports that children of mothers who are forced to convert are also registered as Muslims. Even if a mother returns to her community, the children are considered by law to be Muslim and will remain Muslim.

5. DISAPPEARANCES ARE ORGANIZED AND PLANNED.

Attorneys, social workers and members of the clergy interviewed for this and the previous report all attest to organized and systematic planning in cases of missing Coptic women. Tactics to lure young women into relationships follow similar patterns throughout the country. One lawyer interviewed for this report stated that the same man's name occurred in several police reports; he married five Christian women who subsequently converted to Islam. Family members report that their daughters or sisters were befriended by a schoolmate, a neighbor, or an older mother figure over time. Lawyers indicate that their clients report that the families of the captors benefited materially; frequently, family members were provided with new apartments or furniture, and unemployable young men were given jobs.

6. ABDUCTORS TARGET VULNERABLE WOMEN AND GIRLS, AND GIRLS IN VULNERABLE AND UNPROTECTED MOMENTS.

The concluding observations of the UN's Commission on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) express concern "at the very limited information and statistics provided about vulnerable groups of women and girls" in Egypt.

Coptic women and girls are vulnerable in the following ways:

1. They are members of a religious minority.
2. They come from closed, insular communities.
3. Their minority status is the basis for legal and social discrimination

Coptic women and girls are vulnerable because of their minority status, yet little effort is made by the Egyptian Government to document this vulnerability or its consequences.

7. CAPTORS SEVER CONTACT BETWEEN VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

The first task of the captor is to come between a young woman and members of her family. They can do this by force, taking away her phone and family connections. They lock her up, denying her any mobility. They threaten her, telling her that, even if she runs away, her family will never accept her; they will punish her and put her in a monastery. Eventually a young woman is brainwashed

and believes that she will be safe only with her Muslim captor. Ultimately, she will be truly safe only if she converts to Islam. Because there is no obligation for a Christian woman who marries a Muslim man to convert to Islam, one attorney claims that conversion is the ultimate goal of the captivity.

8. CAPTORS MAKE USE OF MEASURES INVOLVING FORCE, FRAUD AND COERCION.

A young woman consents to a glass of sugar cane juice and the attention of a man whose words promise a life of love, ease and provision. Another woman shares a with a mother who is also waiting for children after school. And a third seeks friendship and escape from a harsh and sometimes abusive home environment. Victims who have not literally been abducted nonetheless did not consent to being ripped from their family without the possibility of ever seeing them again; nor do they consent to being forcibly converted to a religion other than their own. They do not consent to a life of captivity within one small apartment, every outing supervised by a member of her new husband's family. They said yes to the things that young women say yes to: friendship, romance, hope, a future, safety and security. It is reasonable to expect that most young women would respond in precisely the same way as many young Coptic girls responded to these offers of friendship or romance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In developing recommendations for this report, the authors consulted with attorneys and civil society actors in Egypt in order to assess what government actions might support their efforts to protect Coptic women from falling into captivity and, as a result, into forced marriages and conversions. There was considerable consensus as to steps that the government might take.

EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT

1. Local police stations will take seriously and file reports on all claims of disappearance of Coptic women and girls. All claims will be investigated and family members kept apprised of the progress of each of these cases.
2. The Egyptian national government will request an annual accounting of all cases of disappearances including open and ongoing cases as well as any prosecutions that resulted from local police investigations.
3. The Egyptian government will create a registry to document the disappearance of minors.
4. Children of parents who convert will retain the religion of their birth until they are 18 years of age, the legal age of consent.
5. The legal age for conversion to Islam will be raised to 18, which is the age of legal consent in Egypt.
6. Laws which penalize discrimination based on religion in the areas of education, employment and the media will be enacted.

COPTIC CHURCH

1. The Coptic Church will maintain a central registry documenting instances of disappearances, abductions and forced marriages and conversions of Coptic women.
2. The Coptic Community will educate families and young women on the recruitment and deception patterns that lead to captivity.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

1. A legal defense fund will be created to enable Coptic families to secure the presence of an attorney.
2. International or national agencies assessing the situation of Coptic women in Egypt will recognize that coercion and fraud are represented in most cases of disappearance, forced marriages and forced conversions, all of which obviate the consent of the victim.
3. International organizations will recognize both the scope and scale of the problem and no longer refer to such offenses as mere "allegations."

Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission, I thank you for your time and interest in this very important matter. I look forward to answering your questions.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF JEAN MAHER, PRESIDENT,
FRENCH OFFICE, EGYPTIAN UNION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OR-
GANIZATION**

COPTIC GIRLS KIDNAPPING

A STRATEGIC HUMILIATION PLAN

A PREPARATION TO A COPTIC GENOCIDE

JEAN MAHER

10 MINUTES SPEECH

1. Coptic Girls and Women disappearances
2. Methodology
3. A Preparation to a Coptic genocide
4. The International Community role

I. COPTIC GIRLS AND WOMEN DISAPPEARANCES

1. Photo of 30 disappeared Coptic girls—published on the Inter-
net in 2008

2. Some samples of parents complaints to the Human Rights Or-
ganization in Cairo: one page, one girl. As a reward, Kidnappers
and their accomplices are paid by Saudis and Golf countries money.
One Coptic girl = 10 to 50 thousand dollars.

3. Few girls have succeeded to escape and they tell their horrible
experience. As an example, Engy Adel witnessing is circulating on
the net in an Arabic-speaking video [http://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=JrfnOcW1H2A&feature=youtube_gdata_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrfnOcW1H2A&feature=youtube_gdata_player) [http://
www.youtube.com/watch?v=H97sMYZ9-9M_NR=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H97sMYZ9-9M_NR=1)

Engy was 12 when she was kidnapped. Today she is 16, and
counts:

- I went out from school and was followed by some young people.
They pushed me in a taxi and used a vaporizer so I lost conscience
and woke-up to find myself in an apartment. A lady with two other
girls introduced me to a man named “Sultan”. He took me in a
room, tied my arms on my back and raped me. Four other men
raped me, one after one. Each one seemed to have the desire to cut
my body in pieces as if I was his enemy and hates me.

- For one month I was beaten and had a lot of blue marks. I was
unable to eat, drink or sleep. All they wanted was to give me drugs
and rape me.

- For two consecutive days five men stayed in the room and
raped me. I was awake unable to sleep 24 hours a day.

- Crying: more than 50 men during this month have raped me.
Then my father succeeded in finding me and I came back home.
The police security asked me to come for interrogation. The officer
only beat me so hard with his feet in my stomach and my back,
pulled me from my hair and treated me as street-girl. They wanted
to force me to say that I left my family by my own will and nothing
of these stories happened.

- I was only 12 when this happened. Why all this? Only because
I am a Christian. Crying: now everybody around me thinks I am
a bad girl.

- The father: I succeeded, alone, to bring back my daughter. The police have done nothing, was of no help and they do not have the right to beat her, she has done no fault.

4. Another example is the testimony of a mother I met personally, by chance, two years ago in Egypt. She knew that a French couple will attend a meeting, so she came to see us and to tell her story. She gave me her daughter photo abducted in 2007 at the age of 19. She wrote on the back the names of her abductor and her Islamist husband.

- On the last day of the faculty exams she went to a restaurant where her Moslem girlfriend offered her a pizza and a Coke. She felt dizzy and called her parents telling them she is coming back home because she is sick. She never came back.

- Despite the death threats and the police phone tapping, this courageous mother traced and found the names of his Islamist husband and her Islamist abductors, one of them registered as a terrorist in the Security files.

- She complained to the police, wrote to the Interior Minister and former President Mubarak. After the Revolution she went to the Military Council and the Prime Minister. As an answer she had always received "silence"

- When she tried to see Mrs. Suzan Mubarak, one of the presidential guards told her "if your daughter is in the hand of these people, forget about her".

- Her daughter is now wearing the Niqab, living in drugs, and was lately seen beaten in the street because she dared trying to answer her mother phone call.

- She seems convinced her parents will be killed if she tries to escape.

- All the names of the perpetrators, complicit police officers and complicit University Islamist professors are available. The parents keep hoping to see again their daughter.

5. Before meeting this lady I was not aware of this type of struggle in Egypt. Living in France I preferred not to be involved in Egyptian or Coptic contacts, limiting this type of activity to conferences and radio interviews on the Coptic Pharaonic-background culture. This heart-broken lady led me to personal commitments.

II. METHODOLOGY

- These barbaric acts are executed according to a well elaborated methodology by people who want to gain money, or by people convinced to be doing "Good" for Allah, by bringing a "Kafir infidel" women to Islam. The number of Copts will therefore decrease and the number of Moslems will increase since, by law, the children follow the religion of the father.

- Since in the oriental culture taking away a girl-virginity means taking away the whole family's "Honor", the plan aims at either kidnapping or sexually compromising Christian girls, by defiling and humiliating them. The psychological effect on the girl is becoming a shame to her family, and conversion to Islam becomes the solution to the problems. Besides a girl who loses her will, the family is covered by a shame, condemned by their social environment, the Moslems claiming the girl came by her own will and some Christians reproaching not having take enough care of their daughter.

A process leading to humiliation of the Coptic community as whole in front of the supremacy of Islam

- In a newspaper interview, a Moslem Researcher Mr. Ayman Abdel Rasoul, asserted of the complicity of the Security Police and designated as a main instigator Imam Abou Islam Ahmed Abdallah, known as "Abou Islam" acting through an Association called "Nour el Islam". He revealed that the girls are gathered in one building apartments in Cairo suburb. He also gave a list of Islamist associations specialized in dragging the Coptic girls, using Internet, money, employment, and other means, stressing that these associations have a the Security support and cover-up

- Ansar el Sunna el Mohamadeya (Winners of Mohamed Sunna Association)

- El Shareya (The Legitimate Association) - a Salafist

- Nour el Islam (The Light of Islam Association)

- Information from other source gives the method used in 4 steps:

1. Grouping 9 minor girls between 12-17 years' age in one apartment where they are drugged and brainwashed

2. Keep them up to the majority age of 18 where they are brought to Al Azhar Mosque to convert to Islam. They immediately obtain the ID mentioning the religion as Moslem instead of Christian and the name is islamized. Note that the opposite way is impossible.

3. Bring young boys or men and force them to marry

4. Keep the girl away from her family, maintain the doubt on the Christian doctrine (God can't marry and has no son), inculcate terror and fear that she is a shame to her family who will kill her if she returns and since she is a Moslem she can't go back to Christianity or she be killed.

- What statistics? How many girls?

- Egyptian Union for Human Rights monitored 800 cases since 2009

- Egypt4Christ monitored 45 cases under 18 years since the January Revolution. Between 2005-2010 they know 275 cases under 18 and 400 cases over 18.

III. A PREPARATION TO A COPTIC GENOCIDE?

- Within the Islamic Nation, Egypt is the only Muslim country to have an important number of Christians with around 12 millions of Copts. They still maintain some of the Pharaonic civilization through their everyday customs and their Coptic language, the last version of the Pharaonic hieroglyphics.

- The Copts represent an obstacle to the radical Islamists who are dreaming to establish the Great Worldwide Islamic Caliphate Nation. Strategic plans are set to get rid of them by different means. Disappearance of minor Coptic girls and women is just one their horrible means. In Irak, out of One million Christians few years ago, only 300 to 400 thousands are left.

- After Alexandria church bombing at the 2011 New Year's Eve, following Bagdad church bombing, French President Nicolas Sarkozy gave a speech on the 7th of January denouncing a religious extermination plan to get rid of the Middle East Christians. He mentioned that France will not tolerate such a plan.

- On March 5th, Mr. Patrick Devedjan Member of Parliament, former Minister was invited as a Guest-speaker to one of our conferences on Egypt's revolution. Son of Armenian parents who run away from the Turkish Genocide, he recalled the context of the euphoric Turkish revolution in 1908 seeking freedom and democracy and claiming a secular country away from the religious Ottoman power. Only seven years later in 1915 around 1.2 millions, the 2/3 of the Armenians were exterminated. He wished that today's media and fast communication will prevent such a scenario to the Copts of Egypt.

IV. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ROLE

1. A US or International Human Rights investigation commission to examine the events freely

2. Pressure the Military Council to take actions demanding a precise time plan (expect that the answer is that these are only individual love stories where the Coptic girl wants to follow her Moslem lover)

3. Pressure Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries to stop financing these terrorists acts

As a conclusion I have a message and a request:

- Message: the "Moslem Brotherhoods" will never change or leave their objective of restoring the Islamic Caliphate. They are only changing tactics and adapting their language. Early Parliamentary election will bring them to power and will not represent the real democratic demands. A Constitutional framework must be prepared first.

- Request to President Obama:

- The US Middle East policy should encourage the Moslem Liberals and not favour handing-over Egypt to the "Moslem Brotherhoods". Consequences will be huge and they will not be in the interest of the American people.

- US Financing aid to Egypt must be conditioned by real democratic process according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and not according to the Sharia Islamic law.

Actions are needed now, before it is too late.

**MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE EGYPTIAN
HUMAN RIGHTS NGOS PAPYRUS**

“FREEDOM, DIGNITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE”

BASIC PROVISIONS IN THE CONSTITUTION

EGYPTIAN HUMAN RIGHTS NGOS PAPYRUS

WHY THIS PAPYRUS?

The principles proposed here aim to contribute to the current social debate surrounding the constitution of the January 25 Revolution from a human rights perspective, particularly regarding guarantees for the protection of a civil state and a secular state, as inspired by the values of the January 25 Revolution.

The purpose of this document is not to reject, oppose, or disparage other initiatives that have been released or that are currently being prepared. Indeed, some of those who participated in drafting this document also contributed to discussions over the document released by Dr. Mohamed El-Baradei, a potential presidential candidate, and agree with the basic rights outlined in that document. Nevertheless, the fact that similar documents have been prepared by various political groups does not obviate the importance of issuing a document offering a human rights perspective.

This document was drafted to be brief and condensed. It is not a summary of the constitution. Thus, it does not address in detail the human rights guarantees that must be enshrined in the constitution, as the place for this is the constitution itself. The document suffices by referring to a supreme safeguard for these rights, namely, that all rights and guarantees found in international human rights conventions and international law must be incorporated as the base line for the new constitution and that these sources of law should be the prime reference used to elaborate these rights in the constitution and in legislation.

The document does not adopt a particular system of governance (parliamentary, presidential, or mixed) but leaves this issue to the constitution. It rather stipulates a set of higher constitutional values that must be respected in any democratic system, regardless of the specific mode of governance adopted by the constitution.

The document also refrains from offering any specific formulation on what is commonly known in Egypt as “Article 2” of the constitution related to the sources of legislation, as the constitution is the appropriate place to determine this issue. However, the document does affirm the need for multiple sources of legislation as a supra-constitutional principle that reflects the reality of Egyptians’ religious, sectarian, ethnic, and cultural diversity. This principle has become a point of broad social consensus, including among different camps of political Islamists, although disagreements remain about the appropriate formulation to express the diversity of legislative sources.

This document calls for the creation of a Constitutional Council whose mandate is to guard these supra-constitutional principles against infringement based on supposed “democratic” pretexts that claim majority backing. After a democratic system is firmly established in Egypt, perhaps over the next 20 years, Egypt may no

longer need such a safeguard to ensure the protection of these rights.

THE BASIC CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS PAPYRUS

ARTICLE 1

Egypt is a nation of multiple religions, sects, confessions, ethnicities, and cultures. This unique diversity, which has shaped the character and identity of Egyptians, along with the productive engagement of its constituent parts throughout history and the interplay of Pharaonic, Nubian, Coptic, Arab, and Islamic civilizations, is a source of pride and respect for all Egyptians and the backbone of their sacred national union. Egyptian identity is multi-dimensional and has roots in multiple civilizations. This diversity is the most significant source of the richness and distinction of Egyptian identity. Historically and practically it cannot be reduced to one dimension without destroying Egyptians' national unity or depriving the country of its independence.

The constitution guarantees the diversity of the sources of legislation as a reflection of the diverse currents feeding Egyptian identity and in support of national unity so that no legislation is imposed regulating the private sphere of citizens that contradicts their beliefs and so that no legislation is imposed regulating public or private spheres that conflicts with guarantees of human rights and public liberties.

The constitution guarantees every Egyptian the right to enjoy cultural rights, insofar as this is also a requirement for the preservation of the national heritage and the cultures of various ethnic, religious, and geographic groups throughout the history of Egypt.

ARTICLE 2

1. Egypt is an independent, free, and democratic state. Its political system is based on the constitution, which is founded on several fundamental principles:

- a. The sovereignty of the people as the source of all authority.
- b. Respect for civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights as established by international conventions and international law. The constitution shall elaborate these rights without infringing on them, and the legislator shall not have the right to infringe on or restrict these rights using any justification not found in international conventions. The constitution shall provide that human rights values constitute the main pillar of Egyptian foreign policy.
- c. The separation, balance, and mutual oversight of the three branches of authority, the executive, the legislative, and the judicial.
- d. The rule of law and the equality of all citizens before the law.
- e. The constitution shall provide for a system that guarantees Egyptians the right to dignity and social justice.

2. The philosophy of the democratic system in the constitution aims to:

- a. Strengthen and protect the values of pluralism as a part of human nature, a fundamental human value and the founda-

tion upon which to unleash Egyptians' energies to build their country and advance in all fields. As such, the constitution guarantees the flourishing of pluralism. No majority shall be permitted to suppress any minority by any means, whether ideological, religious, confessional, or ethnic, or any artistic, literary, or philosophical school of thought. The constitution and legislation also prohibit all forms of incitement to religious hatred and racism that lead to violence.

b. Adopt and foster all forms and methods created or developed by Egyptians that strengthen democracy based on participation and popular oversight, starting with pupils' committees in schools and leading up to a system of local governance, which constitutes an effective model of self government that helps hone Egyptians' capabilities for the sake of development and advancement. These initiatives shall be based on elections at every level. The constitution must address freedom and the instruments of democratic governance as a major pillar for the advancement of the Egyptian nation and its progress in all fields, including the eradication of poverty and illiteracy.

3. The people exercise sovereignty through their parliament based on periodic general elections; the representative elected parliament shall undertake the task of legislation and oversight of executive actions.

4. The constitution guarantees the freedom to establish and operate political parties, professional and labor unions, non-governmental organizations, and all other forms of civil society association by notice, as long as the objectives and programs of these bodies do not violate the basic rights of Egyptians elaborated in this document and as long as they pursue their activities in a peaceful manner. The constitution does not permit the establishment of political parties based on religious or ethnic exclusion. Political parties, professional and labor unions, and non-governmental organizations have the right to offer advice to the different legislative bodies in cases related to their respective fields of specializations.

5. The constitution guarantees full independence of the judiciary, including the Public Prosecutor, and limits the jurisdiction of the military judiciary solely to military crimes committed by members of the armed forces.

6. The constitution guarantees the independence of religious institutions. These institutions shall be devoted to strengthening their spiritual role in advancing the character of Egyptians and cultivating religious values. Any partisan activity is not permitted in any facilities belonging to religious institutions.

7. The democratic system of the constitution guarantees the principle of accountability for all officials who occupy executive or legislative public office before the people and before representative and judicial bodies for all their conduct while in office. They are prohibited from practicing any kind of private enterprise during their term in office.

ARTICLE 3

The police is a regular, civil, non-military, body, which oversees the protection of internal security and the public order. The Inte-

rior Ministry shall be subject to oversight by elected representative bodies and assumed by a political figure.

ARTICLE 4

The state alone has the power to establish armed forces. Under no circumstance may any other body or group establish military or paramilitary formations. The armed forces defend the country's independence and secure it against military dangers.

The President of the republic is the commander in chief of the armed forces. The Ministry of Defense shall be subject to oversight by elected representative bodies.

ARTICLE 5

All Egyptians, women and men, shall enjoy all the rights and guarantees specified in this document without discrimination; any assault on these rights shall constitute a crime.

No text in this document shall be interpreted to arrogate to any state institution, group, or individual any right to engage in any activity or deed aimed at undermining the rights, liberties, and guarantees contained in this document.

Upon approval of this document, it shall become binding on any constitutional assembly established to form the new constitution. No part of it may be amended in the twenty years following its approval, even by parliamentary majority or a new constitutional assembly. The parliament shall review current laws for their consistency with the provisions of this document and amend them or draft alternative legislation when necessary.

ARTICLE 6

A Constitutional Council shall be established to oversee the protection of the constitution and the democratic system, in particular to guarantee the application of Article 5 of this document. This council shall be comprised of the chairs of the high courts,¹ led by the president of the Supreme Judicial Council. The Constitutional Council's decisions are binding on all parties.

Members of parliament, political parties, human rights organizations, civil society groups, and national human rights institutions shall have the right to petition the constitutional council directly with a constitutional grievance or any complaint relevant to its mandate.

SIGNATORIES

1. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
2. Alternative Development Foundation
3. Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies
4. Arab Penal Reform Organization
5. Arabic Network for Human Rights Information
6. Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression
7. Cairo Center for Development
8. Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance
9. Center for Trade Union and Workers' Services

¹Including the Supreme Constitutional Court, which is to be granted complete independence based on Article 2(B) of this document.

10. Coptic Solidarity
11. Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement
12. Egyptian Center for Women's Rights,
13. Egyptian Foundation for the Advancement of Childhood Conditions
14. Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights
15. Egyptian Organization for Human Rights
16. Egyptians Against Religious Discrimination
17. Habi Center for Environmental Rights
18. Hand in Hand for Egypt
19. Helwan Foundation for Community Development-Bashayer
20. Hisham Mubarak Law Center
21. Human Rights Center for the Assistance of Prisoners
22. Human Rights Legal Aid Group
23. Ishraqa Center for Women's Rights
24. Mother Association for Rights and Development
25. Nazra for Feminist Studies
26. New Woman Research Center
27. United Group

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