

ADDITIONAL VIEWS OF REPRESENTATIVE DAVID OBEY

I am deeply disappointed that the Committee did not accept my amendment to condition \$200 million of the funds for Egypt under Foreign Military Financing on the enactment of future legislation. My amendment would ultimately not have reduced overall assistance to Egypt but rather delayed a portion of it, thereby providing Congress with an opportunity to assess any efforts by Egypt to improve its record on human rights. My amendment was not offered out of anger at Egypt, it was offered out of concern. For over three decades, I have been a strong supporter of Egypt and have backed the over \$60 billion in economic and military aid that the United States has provided to Egypt during my tenure in Congress. I continue to believe that Egypt plays an important and stabilizing role in the Middle East and is a strong ally of the United States.

However, I am increasingly concerned that Egypt is headed in a direction domestically that puts at risk not only U.S. interests in the region but the very stability of Egypt. I am deeply troubled by the reversal in political freedoms and human rights over the past year. The continued imprisonment of Ayman Nour, a leading opposition candidate in the presidential elections, the crackdown on pro democracy protestors, the narrowing of judicial independence, extension of the emergency laws for an additional two years and the harassment of political parties and moderate opposition leaders have sent a chilling message throughout Egypt. Yet, as political choice and free speech through legitimate means are denied to the Egyptian people, the effect has been to strengthen the appeal of more extremist ideologies. If the United States and other allies in the region are not able to influence the current government in Egypt to open up the political system and allow greater participation now, any future transition from the current regime is more likely to result in chaos, violence and the growing power of more extremist political parties.

By rejecting the amendment, I fear that the Committee sent a message to the government of Egypt that as long as Egypt continues to be of strategic importance to the United States, the issues of human rights and democracy will take a back seat; that short-term geopolitical considerations will continue to take precedence over long-term stability and security interests. That message may suit the short-term interests of the United States, but it will prove disastrous in the long run to both our national interest and the values of political and civil decency for which we are supposed to stand.

DAVID OBEY.

