



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 8, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500-0005

Dear Mr. President:

I write today ahead of your upcoming visit with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to raise concerns about the plight of Christian minorities in Egypt.

The United States and Egypt are critically important partners in the fight against terrorism in the Sinai Peninsula and throughout the region. Egypt's role at Camp David has led to some of the closest ties between the United States, Egypt, and Israel in our history. Who would think that Egypt and Israel would partner to fight terrorism in the Sinai or attempt to be arbiters together in the Gaza Strip? I acknowledge and support our partnership and friendship with Egypt, but I believe that more can always be done in the area of protecting religious freedom and human rights.

I have briefed the Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback, on my interest in Egypt, and he is supportive of my efforts. I am the author of a House Resolution (H.Res.49) related to the treatment of Coptic Christians in Egypt. There is currently a culture of impunity in Egypt's rural communities when Coptic Christians are attacked by their fellow Egyptians. The attackers face few or no legal repercussions. This Resolution has 47 bipartisan cosponsors, including ten members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

The State Department's 2018 religious freedom report on Egypt mentions Minya Province more than any other. Minya is where the most recent, and some of the deadliest, attacks on Copts have occurred. In December 2018, two Coptic construction workers were murdered by an armed police guard outside of a church in Minya, and last week the police guard was found guilty of the murder. This conviction is an important step, and justice must continue to be achieved for all crimes committed against Christians. I applaud the actions that the Egyptian government has taken against terrorist groups that have perpetrated some of these atrocities, but I continue to have concerns when radical Islamists who are common Egyptians attack Coptic Christians or destroy their property. We must continue to work with the Egyptian government to ensure that the Christian population has the same protection under the law as others.

I have great respect for Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and I applaud the changes and message that he has made in the area of religious tolerance. He continues to say and do the right things at the top level of government. This includes having a good relationship with the Coptic Pope, attending mass on multiple occasions, reconstructing churches, constructing the largest Christian Cathedral in the Middle East in the "new" administrative center, and holding terrorists accountable for their atrocities.

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However, I believe there is more to do, and as the second highest receiver of annual American military aid in the world, the United States Government must use the tools we have to hold our allies, like Egypt, to a higher standard if they are to continue to receive our aid.

Therefore, I request that you discuss the plight of Coptic Christians in Egypt when you meet with President el-Sisi tomorrow. Respect for human rights and religious freedom is a fundamental American position, and I share the view of President Ronald Reagan who said, "Respect for human rights is not social work; it is not merely an act of compassion. It is the first obligation of government and the source of its legitimacy."

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please let me know if there is anything the Congress can do to assist your efforts. I look forward to working with you to strengthen the friendship between the United States and Egypt.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "French Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "F".

French Hill
Member of Congress