

RELEASE IN FULL

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To: H
Subject: Egypt readout

I had 3 days of extensive mtgs with a broad section of egyptian officials, NGOs, and business leaders. Here's brief assessment -- will expand when I return.

STOP LOSS OF FORWARD MOVEMENT FOR WOMEN in Egypt

Women's NGOs need funding and technical assistance to form broad-based coalitions to organize a COORDINATED campaign around priorities, such as getting key issues raised during campaign, candidates training, election ed and rights awareness with poor women in villages, advocacy with decisionmakers on upcoming elections (eg, proportional representation with women on lists, women's participation in drafting constitution, restoring women's machinery in government etc).

There is little time, and women need support now. Amb Scobey went w me to most of the mtgs I had and fully understands the need to get resources to effective and locally credible entities like UN Women's Egypt office or to the larger women's NGOs who have a good plan which they can immediately begin to implement. USAID is planning on making grants in area of 900k. This amount can't be absorbed by small NGOs and it won't be utilized properly. If a basket fund were created with UNWomen or others, it could be used to hire technical staff and make grants to smaller NGOs,

Women have been marginalized by the military. There is no resolution on retention of quotas for women for Parliament, no involvement in drafting election rules, no guarantee they will be significantly represented in drafting of constitution after Parliamentary election. The Ministry for women was dismantled (with no notice) and Council of women (once a powerhouse office) has been marginalized. The PM called in 6 women for a meeting on women's issues, incl 2 young bloggers. Only 1 of the 6 had any background on the issues, however.

The youth groups are disorganized and still dealing with their celebrity. They don't have a clue about the importance of the laws on child marriage, trafficking, nationality, family law, etc. Although many worked over many years for the laws, Mrs. Mubarek was instrumental in their adoption. As a result, they are being viewed by some, including some of the youth leaders, as illegitimate. The Muslim Brotherhood has picked up on this --having originally opposed all of these measures --and are using this association to justify need to repeal laws. The MB is far better organized and seem determined to push back.

I met with some of the poor women who have benefited from these laws as well as the NGOs who work with them and they told me they feared losing the laws that helped them.

The women leaders also urged that our govt raise women's participation in any meetings with the military.

The women leaders made 2 additional requests; that our govt raise women's issues and participation in official mtgs we have with the military leaders and that we organize a letter to the military on behalf of Egyptian women and have it signed by influential leaders from around the world.

WOMEN NEED TO BE INCLUDED IN POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

As you know, the economy is in a downward spiral-- from tourism to production, strikes, exports, etc Moreover, there doesn't seem to be any wise group or anyone with expertise in govt making thoughtful economic decisions. They clearly

need a forward-looking plan for economic growth. A complicating factor is that "business" has become a dirty word since so many businessmen are in prison, under suspicion, overseas or being interrogated.

Many things need to happen but one thing that's very important is to stimulate SME's, especially those run by women. One component of the protest on Tahrir was about jobs. SME's have high elasticity and are growth accelerators. They create jobs. The major barrier is access to finance. There need to be loan guarantees and other innovative ways to make access to capital possible. Women-run businesses need to be part of any economic strategy. As one economist said, "If this is gender neutral, there will be discrimination against women."

There's a lot at stake for women and for Egypt's future.

I have a head of experiences to unpack from the West Bank and Israel. Will provide later. Hani's center in Nablus is doing incredible work.