

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 13, 2016

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to express our deep concern about ongoing attacks against Coptic Christians in Egypt. We urge the Administration to strongly condemn the continued persecution of Coptic Christians and work with the Egyptian government to ensure the protection of religious minorities in Egypt.

An estimated ten percent of Egypt's Christian community can trace its roots back to Egypt for over two thousand years. In some Egyptian communities, Christians still make up at least forty percent of the population. However, many Coptic Christians are under constant threat and live in fear of being attacked. Just this past weekend a bomb ripped through St. Peter's Church, adjacent to the Coptic Cathedral in Cairo during Sunday services, murdering dozens and leaving scores more injured. In 2013 alone, at least 76 churches were burned to the ground and more than 1,000 homes and businesses were torched, which is intolerable. To make matters worse, Coptic Christians are also facing persecution from extremists such as ISIL that are targeting Coptic Christians, as witnessed in the brutal beheading of 21 Copts in February 2015.

We appreciate the commitment from President el-Sisi to begin rebuilding churches in Egypt but we believe that more can be done to protect the livelihoods of this targeted group. We are troubled that we continue to see regular instances of violence against Coptic homes, businesses, and places of worship. Vigilante violence has taken the lives and livelihoods of innocent men, women, and children throughout Egypt, and far too often, with impunity.

We firmly believe in democratic values to ensure individuals have the right to freedom of speech, worship, and assembly must be upheld globally. We look forward to hearing from you on what steps the Administration is taking to urge the Egyptian government to protect the human rights of all Egyptian citizens and promote enforcement of the basic freedoms already enshrined in Egypt's constitution.

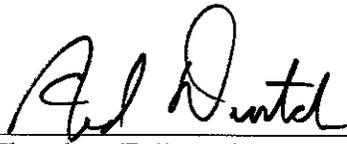
Sincerely,



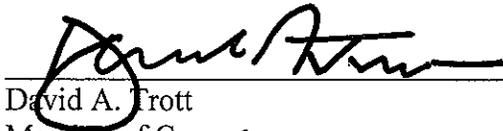
Albio Sires
Member of Congress



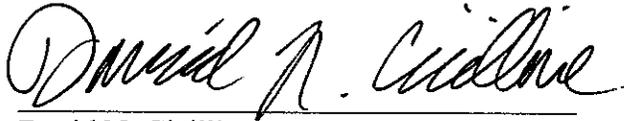
Heana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



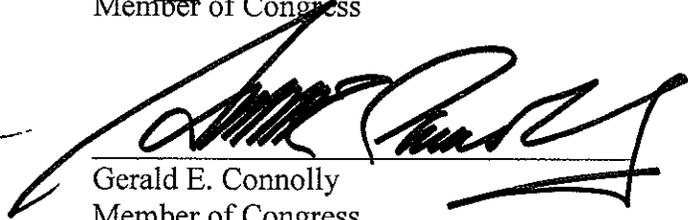
Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress



David A. Frott
Member of Congress



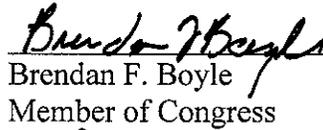
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



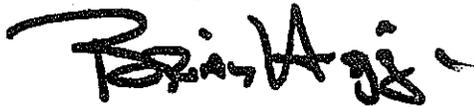
Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



Ted Poe
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Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Steve Chabot
Member of Congress