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Joint Statement by EU High Representative Ashton and US Secretary of State Kerry on Egypt

In the spirit of supporting Egypt's democratic transition, two senior representatives of the European Union and the United States, Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean Bernardino Leon and Deputy Secretary of State Bill Burns, have been working together intensively over the past week to urge the government and opposition parties to begin a process of genuine reconciliation, and move ahead inclusively to consider amendments to the Constitution and prepare as quickly as possible for Parliamentary and Presidential elections. They have cooperated closely in this effort with visiting senior representatives from the UAE and Qatar.

Mindful of the limits of our role, but deeply concerned about Egypt's future and what is at stake at this critical time, we have suggested a number of practical ideas to calm current tensions and help Egyptians build a bridge toward a real political dialogue. These have included a series of modest confidence building measures, including public statements condemning violence and supporting peaceful resolution of political differences; a commitment to meaningful negotiations, requiring compromises and broad political participation; an end to incitement in public statements and the media; steps to scale down and ease tensions surrounding the ongoing demonstrations at Raba'a al-Adawiya and Nahda Squares; and immediately beginning the process of releasing detained political figures. These ideas remain available for the parties even now, and our engagement at all levels continues on a daily basis.

P R E S S

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While further violent confrontations have thus far been avoided, we remain concerned and troubled that government and opposition leaders have not yet found a way to break a dangerous stalemate and agree to implement tangible confidence building measures. The Egyptian government bears a special responsibility to begin this process to ensure the safety and welfare of its citizens. This remains a very fragile situation, which holds not only the risk of more bloodshed and polarization in Egypt, but also impedes the economic recovery which is so essential for Egypt's successful transition. Now is not the time to assess blame, but to take steps that can help initiate a dialogue and move the transition forward.

We remain ready to help in any way that we can. As the holy feast of Eid al-Fitr approaches, this is a moment for leadership, vision, and magnanimity – a unifying moment when Egyptians should look ahead at what is at risk and what they have to gain through genuine reconciliation. These are choices which only Egyptians can make, and there is nothing neat or easy about any of them. But if they can make those hard but positive choices, Egyptians will find determined partners in Europe and America.

We take this moment to reaffirm that the European Union and the United States remain deeply committed to a strong, democratic, inclusive and prosperous Egypt. We recognize that many challenges lie ahead, but we also believe that much is possible for Egyptians. We are convinced that a successful democratic transition can help Egypt lead the rest of the region toward a better future, as it has so often done during its rich and proud history.

We both understand fully that only Egyptians can make the choices that will shape their future at this historic moment. We support basic democratic principles, not any particular personalities or parties. We are firmly opposed to violence, support the right to non-violent protests, and realize that progress in Egypt can only come through a peaceful political process in which all parties can compete on an equal footing.
