

Violence in Egypt: A Statement by the Working Group on Egypt

February 3, 2011

Yesterday, Egypt witnessed a massive escalation of violence due to government-organized thugs acting against peaceful demonstrators in Alexandria and Cairo. These attacks indicate that President Mubarak cannot be entrusted with overseeing the orderly transition to democracy that the United States has urged Egypt to undertake.

Although President Mubarak has indicated his intention of remaining in office until the presidential election in September, it is the Working Group's conclusion that the sooner Mubarak leaves office, the sooner Egypt can begin a peaceful transition to a democratic government that respects human rights. The United States government should affirm the urgency of this transition by explicitly stating that, after today's violence, it is clear that Mubarak has no place in a process leading to meaningful political change. Unless this conflict is resolved immediately and decisively, it will undermine the prospects for a peaceful transition period in Egypt. Such a transition must include a broad spectrum of opposition forces and lead to free and fair elections for the presidency and parliament and absolute respect for freedom of speech, press, and assembly.

Until unrestrained thug violence began on February 1, the Working Group was hopeful that the Egyptian military would play a positive role in safeguarding a peaceful transition. If the government continues to employ such violence, the United States should immediately freeze all military assistance to Egypt. We endorse President Obama's call for an immediate start to the process of democratic transition and hope that all forces in Egypt committed to that goal meet their responsibilities by joining in this vital effort now.

The Working Group on Egypt is a nonpartisan initiative bringing substantial expertise on Egyptian politics and political reform, and aimed at ensuring that Egypt's elections are free and fair and open to opposition candidates.