

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 2, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

The upcoming COP27 Summit represents a critical next step in cementing the United States' bold new commitments on climate action made at last year's summit. Importantly, it is an opportunity to ensure that all stakeholders in the global fight against climate change are heard, including civil society. Civil society organizations play a critical role in promoting government accountability, connecting grassroots efforts across the globe, and translating climate policies to the broader population, particularly marginalized groups that bear the brunt of climate impacts. We are therefore deeply troubled by the message it sends to the world that the Egyptian government is hosting COP27 while imprisoning tens of thousands of political prisoners – including many environmental activists. With the world's attention on Sharm el-Sheikh this month, COP27 presents a unique opportunity for the United States to press the Egyptian government to release these activists and demonstrate its commitment to inclusive engagement with the full range of stakeholders on climate solutions.

Egypt's record of egregious human rights violations is inconsistent with what the United States should expect from a key international security partner. There are tens of thousands of political prisoners in Egypt, most of whom are reportedly held in brutal, inhumane conditions. Widespread arbitrary detentions, restrictions on members of the media and non-governmental organizations, and the crackdown on the government's political opponents cannot be ignored while Egypt enjoys a spotlight on the world stage. Despite taking some limited steps in response to international criticism, in recent months the Egyptian government has continued to conduct thousands of new arrests and renew pretrial detention for current detainees.

Environmental groups in Egypt are deeply concerned over the government's harassment of civil society leaders and restrictions on the rights to peacefully protest and assemble ahead of the world's premier climate summit. As the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights found in October, "arrests and detention, NGO asset freezes and dissolutions and travel restrictions against human rights defenders have created a climate of fear for Egyptian civil society organizations to engage visibly at the COP27." Members of civil society seeking to participate in the upcoming climate summit have reported intimidation from Egyptian security officials, undue visa processing delays, burdensome regulations for accreditation as an NGO in the country, and other restrictions limiting their ability to participate.

We recognize that the Global South—including the Middle East and North Africa—is disproportionately affected by climate change, particularly among its most vulnerable

populations. Egypt suffers from acute water scarcity, rising sea levels, deadly air pollution, rapid degradation of green and natural spaces, and all amid record high and increasing temperatures. We also recognize that Egypt is committed to demonstrating leadership on issues, such as loss and damage, that are of critical importance to those countries currently suffering from the adverse consequences of climate change. But Egypt's capacity to push forward these demands is undercut by its refusal to allow the meaningful participation of environmental and civil society groups, activists, and those most impacted by the climate crisis.

We urge the Administration to engage the Egyptian government to allow the full participation of civil society throughout this year's summit. This includes ensuring that both participants and observers, including groups critical of the government, have access to engage and express their positions freely at COP27. This simply cannot occur with the unprecedented detention of leading environmental activists and prominent political prisoners. Therefore, we urge the Administration to call for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained in Egypt for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, and should raise the following cases with Egyptian officials for special attention: political activists Alaa Abdel Fattah and Ahmed Douma, human rights lawyer Mohamed el Baqer, blogger Mohamed "Oxygen" Ibrahim, former presidential candidate Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, Seif and Safwan Thabet, and environmentalist Ahmed Amasha.

The COP27 conference presents not just an opportunity for the world to come together to confront climate change through collective action, but also brings a responsibility to ensure that commitments and policies are inclusive of all members of society. The United States and Egypt have a long-standing and historic bilateral relationship built on shared interests in regional security, stability, and prosperity. Given that strong partnership, the U.S. must send a clear message that respect for human rights and civil society is a core dimension of both U.S. national security interests and our collective ambitions toward climate action.

We thank you for your consideration on this important issue.

Sincerely,




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Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator

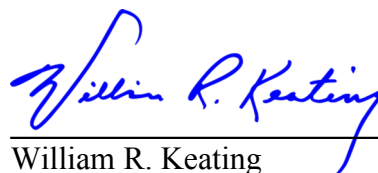


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David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress  
Chair, Subcommittee on the  
Middle East, North Africa  
and Global Counterterrorism



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



William R. Keating  
Member of Congress  
Chair, Subcommittee on  
Europe, Energy, the  
Environment, and Cyber



Karen Bass  
Member of Congress



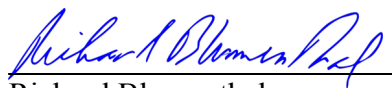
Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



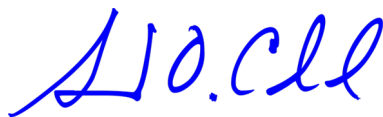
Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.  
Member of Congress



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



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Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress



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André Carson  
Member of Congress



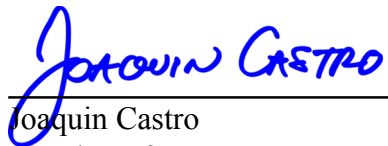
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Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



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Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



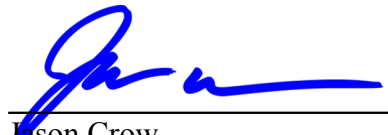
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Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



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Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



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Jason Crow  
Member of Congress



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Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



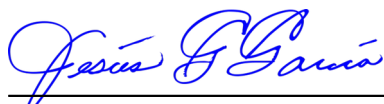
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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



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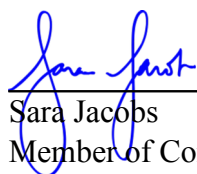
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



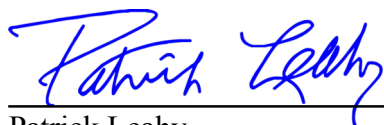
Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



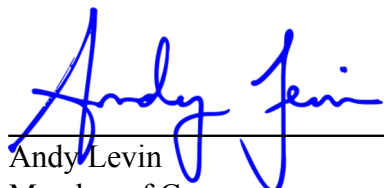
Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Andy Levin  
Member of Congress



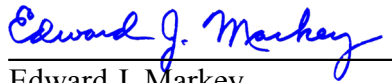
Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch  
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Tom Malinowski  
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress




Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



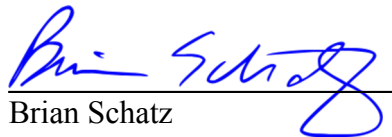
Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress



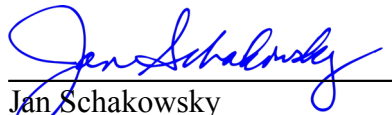
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

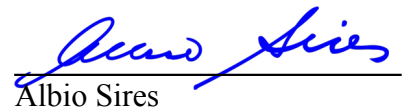


Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress




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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress




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Albio Sires  
Member of Congress




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Mark Takano  
Member of Congress



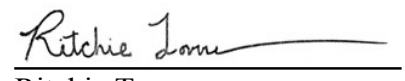
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Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



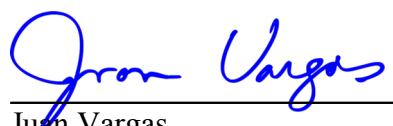
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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress




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Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress



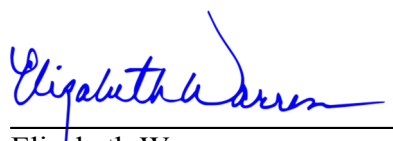
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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



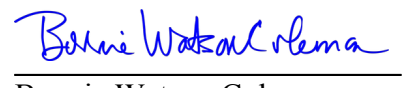
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Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



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Peter Welch  
Member of Congress



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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



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Susan Wild  
Member of Congress



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Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress