

## Keynote Address with Ambassador Gerald Feierstein

Wendy Chamberlin: Welcome back from lunch and I, uh, hope you all, or as many of you as possibly could, had an opportunity to talk with our many guests that we've, uh, hosted and brought in from Cairo because that's one of the major purposes of this conference.

Um, as we move onto the second part of our program today, which is a discussion with two keynote speakers, it's my very great pleasure to introduce Ambassador Gerry Feierstein, who's kindly agreed to step in for Anne Patterson. Anne really wanted to be with us today but Secretary Kerry asked her to accompany him out to (inaudible) and the region as they try to follow up on the new policy shift that President Obama has just announced with regards to the Islamic state, an important issue and one that of course many people in Washington and around the world and in the press are seized with, uh, this week particularly.

But Egypt still remains enormously important to the United States and it certainly is a major focus of the Middle East institute. Um, here with us today to discuss U.S.-Egyptian relations is Ambassador Gerry Feierstein. He is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Near East Bureau in the Department of State and he has a long history of deep involvement in the Middle East region. I've known him for over 40 years. He's a dear friend. He had a... one of the most successful ambassadorships in, uh, in Yemen recently. He has served in Pakistan, in Saudi Arabia, in Tunisia and in Egypt. And it is my very great pleasure and I'm very grateful that Gerry is with us this afternoon. Gerry, can you make a few remarks and then he's kindly offered to answer a couple of my questions and then we'll turn it over to you and he'll answer your questions. Thank you.

[applause]

Gerry Feierstein: Thank you, Wendy, and thank you for the, uh, kind introduction. Uh, on behalf of Ambassador Patterson, who, as Wendy said, was very much looking forward to being here with you today, but Secretary Kerry had other ideas. I'd like to, to thank, uh, the Middle East Institute for including us in this important conversation.

Much has happened in Egypt over recent months. Much will be happening in the months to come, including the Parliamentary elections. Uh, so this is an appropriate time to discuss how after three long years of political and economic upheaval, Egypt is going to begin moving forward again and more importantly of course, it's also an appropriate time to look at the state of the U.S.-Egyptian relationship and to assess where we are and where we're going.

Let me begin with a direct statement. A close productive U.S. relationship with a secure, stable Egypt that's moving in a positive direction, both economically and politically is at the heart of U.S. policies in the region. Regardless of any other factor, Egypt remains

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the anchor of the Arab world and its voice carries weight, not only in Arab and Islamic (inaudible), but in fact, globally.

If there's any doubt about the validity of my assertion, I invite you to think back to the state of our relations in the Middle East, in the period prior to 1975 when the kind of collaborative cooperation, between our two countries that we have today, didn't exist. Indeed, despite the current challenges in our relationship, the fact is that the U.S. and Egypt share common perspectives on the most urgent regional issues, and we are working closely together on strategies to address them.

Uh, we share, for example, concerns about the threat of violent extremism, uh, operating today from Libya to Iraq. Egyptian Foreign Minister Shukri participated with Secretary Kerry and counterparts from the GCC and regional partners in a meeting yesterday in (inaudible), to build a coalition to confront and ultimately to defeat ISIL. Uh, Egypt joined us in declaring in the communique issued at the conclusion of that meeting that we stand united against the threat posed by all terrorism including the so-called Islamic state in Iraq and the Levant to the region and the world.

Similarly, Egypt has joined the other neighbors of Libya in the Tunis process, uh, aimed at supporting efforts to resolve peacefully, uh, the internal conflict that has threatened to untrack Libya's political transition in recent months.

As part of that process, Egypt leads the political subcommittee of the neighbor's group and hosted a few days ago a ministerial gathering that reiterated the neighbor's support for a process of dialogue and negotiation and rejected outside interference in Libyan affairs. We appreciate Cairo's statement of support for the newly elected Libyan House of Representatives and we share the Egyptian view that political compromise is the only way forward in Libya where no one militia has enough support to dominate a complex political environment.

Significantly in recent days, the Egyptian government has resumed its traditional role in helping to promote Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, and once again, negotiating a Gaza cease fire. We hope that the plan for resuming Israeli-Palestinian negotiations will contribute to a durable peace, but we all know that this is going to be a formidable challenge.

Above all Egypt's efforts once again demonstrated the importance of the Camp David Accords in providing a solid foundation for regional peace and security. No discussion of the regional security picture would be complete without also recognizing the challenges that Egypt itself faces, with violent extremist groups operating in Sinai, as well as the recent security incidents in the western desert. We stand with the government of Egypt and the Egyptian people in their determination to eliminate the threat to their security and the stability of the country. For that reason, Secretary Kerry determined to release

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to the Egyptians, 10 Apache helicopters that will contribute significantly to the fight against terrorism and extremist violence.

We believe that Egypt wants Washington's continued support and is working with us to restore a mutually productive and beneficial relationship. However, going forward, this relationship cannot be based solely on a security partnership adopted in the wake of the Camp David Accords. The world has changed and we need to address new threats, new regional realities, and new paradigms for security and economic assistance. Egyptians understand this and it will be an important part of our dialogue going forward.

Noting then the strong commonality of views between the United States and Egypt regarding many of the most significant challenges confronting our two countries and the region today, where are we in the relationship?

It's no secret that the United States has had differences with those who have held power in Egypt in recent years. And these differences have shaken the confidence of both parties about the basic foundations of our partnership. From the time of the February 2011 revolution, the United States has been guided by a desire to support the Egyptian people as they build a new democratic government that respects universal rights and helps them address their substantial economic challenges.

We adopted this position because of the importance we attach to the relationship with Egypt and because we believe that democratic politics and open economic systems make stronger nations and better partners. Our commitment to support Egypt's democratic political process regardless of who won at the ballot box has generated accusations that the United States somehow engineered both Mohammad Morsi's election and his government's ouster.

Many in the United States have been drawn into Egypt's debates, demanding that the U.S. use all elements of our relationship with Egypt's leaders, to force political and economic reforms. As we craft a policy that keeps pace with rapid change in the region and addresses our core interest, we are asking some key questions. What is President Sisi's vision for Egypt's role in the region and for relations with the United States? How does the government envision it with, uh... will implement its obligations to permit full democratic governance and respect for universal rights under the Egyptian constitution. How does the Egyptian government intend to move forward with needed economic reforms in a way that enhances stability by improving the lives of the average Egyptian?

The Egyptian people are fully able to direct the future of their nation. They have currently prioritized security over a democratic process that created chaos but Egyptians know now how to voice their opinions and want to be involved in the political process. The challenge will be to channel that energy from street protests into building strong institutions and open consultative politics. The U.S. will continue to press for

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more inclusive governance, basic freedoms and space for civil society organizations. We see no value in jailing political activists merely for peaceful protests or for convicting journalists. We are concerned that Egypt's arrests and mass trials are only fueling continued low-level protests that keep both tourists and investors wary of returning to Egypt. But the only way to press our support for Egyptian democracy is to remain engaged with Egypt.

Egypt's economic recovery and reforms will very much affect Egypt's political stability going forward. This is a very important area where the United States can offer needed support for the Egyptian government. I would mention here that the state department's senior advisor, Ambassador David Thorne, was in Cairo over the past few days to continue his productive engagement with senior Egyptian officials on efforts to promote much needed economic reform.

The needs in Egypt are so very great that it's time for a major shift in the logic underlying economic policy. Even the generous support Egypt has received from Gulf friends is dwarfed by Egypt's growing deficit and the massive infrastructure investments needed to bring Egypt into the global economy. Egypt needs to address the systemic problems urgently, including subsidy reform, a sclerotic bureaucracy that impedes entrepreneurship, banks that are reluctant to provide small businesses capital to expand, the failure of the legal system to promote speedy dispute resolution and the challenge of rapid population growth that makes it necessary to create an astounding 700,000 new jobs every year.

President Sisi has taken welcomed steps to begin to control deficits and costly subsidies and to increase revenues. He is creating short-term jobs through mega infrastructure projects, although we hope that the effort to rebuild infrastructure will also focus more on the role that the private sector can play in promoting national economic growth.

Urgent steps are also needed to spur economic growth through investment and trade. We continue to encourage Egypt to seek an Article IV IMF program that will create the confidence required to bring investors back to Egypt and we look forward to a sizeable American business presence at the proposed investment conference currently scheduled for next February.

In that context, we would like to see an increase in bilateral trade between our two countries, including through expanded, uh, the qualified industrial zones that now support 280,000 jobs and provide the fastest access for Egyptian products into the U.S. market. We're working to expand access for both U.S. and Egyptian agricultural products into our respective markets.

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Through OPEC and XM, we're providing approximately \$500 million in support for small and medium enterprise financing and American investors and we believe there are great opportunities in the energy, IT and health sectors. Through USA ID we're supporting entrepreneurship and vocational training, especially in tourism and agro business. We look forward to a large U.S. chamber of commerce trade mission to Egypt in November.

To conclude with a self evident statement, Egypt is a long time friend and a critical partner for the United States. While we cannot ignore the very real difficulties in rebuilding a productive relationship with Egypt, we are committed to framing a partnership based on our shared common interests.

President Obama and Secretary Kerry have been very clear in their recognition of the importance of our bilateral relationship and in reinforcing our commitment to work with the Egyptian leadership to advance those interests. Thank you.

[applause]

Wendy Chamberlin: Well, thank, thank you, Gerry. Um, that was, uh, a very impressive, uh, summary of the many different elements that, uh, that make our relationship with Egypt very important to the United States. You know, the U.S.-Egyptian bilateral relationship has really been running shotgun in this wild roller coaster in the last three years. Um, and it's, uh... it's still a car that hasn't stopped yet.

Uh, we hear, although I'm very impressed with all of the different aspects of the strengthening of our relationship, you often hear from Egyptians, and even Americans, that they don't know what our policy is there. Uh, they don't know that our policy is... they think it's a bit fuzzy. Uh, it doesn't sound fuzzy in your mind but what I hear, uh, and... and what we see when we read about the U.S.-Egyptian relationship is that there is, uh, two threads that run through it. One, a relationship based on our values of democracy, of human rights, of rule of law, social justice, women's rights, et cetera, minority rights, and another thread that you mentioned, uh, equally, uh, persuasively in your few remarks and that is that we share interest in the region, interest for stability, interest in, uh, foreign... foreign policy, uh, common interest. Are these in conflict and... and how well is the U.S. government articulating what our priority objectives and interests are in our relationship?

Gerry Feierstein: What I would say Wendy, um, is that... is that it... it's certainly true that there are different facets to our relationship. Uh, but I think as, as I tried to articulate in, in my, uh, comments, uh, these are different facets with, uh, ultimately the same objective. Uh, the objective that we have I think is to, um, to, uh, advance a partnership within Egypt that's a strong and stable, uh, nation, uh, that is able to provide, uh, political and economic security for its people, uh, that it's able to address the, uh, the

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challenges that it confronts, uh, both internally, uh, as well as and what is a very complex and difficult regional environment today.

And... and so, uh, I think, uh, that as you look at the various aspects, if you keep in mind that that is the objective of what we're trying to achieve, it becomes much less fuzzy and much clearer, uh, that all of these, different elements, uh, all have a similar, uh, goal and that is, uh, an Egypt that's strong, stable, economically prosperous and politically progress.

Wendy Chamberlin: Yeah, I... I get it and I think, uh, most people in the west and certainly in the United States, and we sure heard that in the first two panels this morning, um, see stability as sustainable stability, as being based on a popular buy in, on inclusion, on, uh, citizen participation, as the... as true foundation for stability over the long run. There are many in the Middle East, including Egypt that would cease to find stability and see stability first as a strong security force, a strong police, a strong army that can, uh, deal effectively with terrorist groups, with, uh, violence in the streets. And this definition of what stability is seems to be tripping us up a bit. Uh, do you find that?

Gerry Feierstein: Well, uh, I think and... and here again, um, uh, there is a... there is a view in... in the U.S. and, and, and certainly in, in this administration, uh, that we need to stand, uh, very closely with our Egyptian friends, as they confront serious, uh, challenges to their security. Uh, there's no question that, uh, when you're looking at, uh, Sinai, uh, when you're looking at organizations like (inaudible), uh, or when you're looking at some of these incidents in the western desert, uh, there is no doubt in our mind that, uh, Egypt confronts a serious, challenge to its stability, and that challenge requires, uh, that there be a firm, uh, response on the part of, uh, security forces. And, therefore, um, we have, uh... we have supported that. Uh, we'll continue to support that.

Uh, Secretary Kerry's decision on the Apaches the other day was aimed specifically at that threat. Uh, at the same time, uh, we also believe it's important not to, uh, um, to push to the extremes, uh, people who are not, uh, uh, violently opposed to the regime, people who can be brought into a political process, people, uh, who, uh, want the right to speak freely, but who don't present a security challenge to the government.

Uh, and so we think it's important in order to build a strong society that we distinguish, uh, between those, uh, elements who present a violent challenge, uh, whose objective is... is frankly to undermine, uh, the, uh, law and order, uh, and, uh, uh, the basic framework of a civil society, uh, and, uh, not to confuse them, uh, with political opponents or, or people who have a different point of view that they want to express in a peaceful or political way.

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Wendy Chamberlin: Uh, thank you. We had a... a terrific panel right before lunch on, uh, the economy and what... what really impressed me about that panel was how much energy and dynamism and political will was coming from the Egyptian people, both from the top down, uh, where... where most panelists have agreed today, there have been some significant first steps in real reform, uh, just since President Sisi came into office. Uh, it surprised me a little bit that this... this, uh, was such a... a view held by so many of the panelists.

And then it was so encouraging to see the energy coming from the bottom up, the Egyptians themselves, uh, not just in the... in investments and SMEs and the young people with the startups but also the Egyptian people who have, uh, invested 40 billion pounds... it's a statistic that came up, uh, really impressed me, uh, in the... for the construction of the expansion of the Suez Canal. This is from Egypt. This is development that is coming from Egypt, from Egyptians. Uh, we have always thought in the foreign service and my... our talking points the last 40 years of how important, uh, our assistance programs were in Egypt and our aid programs and it was tied to Camp David. How important is our assistance program and is the United States becoming irrelevant when we look at what will really fuel Egypt's future and development?

Gerry Feierstein: Well, I don't think that, you know, I certainly would be loathe to suggest that our assistance programs are... are irrelevant.

Wendy Chamberlin: Of course.

Gerry Feierstein: And we certainly wouldn't want to tell American taxpayers that. Uh, but, uh, um, uh, uh, look. I think that we need to look at this, uh, uh, in the... in the totality of American economic engagement. Uh, and it covers a number of different areas. I mean, certainly, uh, on the economic assistance side there... there are things that we can do that contribute. We're talking about vocational training. We're talking about other kinds of assistance that will help Egypt build a strong foundation for economic growth and prosperity.

We can certainly engage on issues of economic reform and I did hear, um, a, a report about your economic panel and, like you, I was, um, encouraged, uh, by, uh, the positive assessment that several of your panelists had of the steps that are underway that are being taken. It's very good news and, uh, very welcomed news.

Um, uh, but then I think that we need to... to expand the aperture even a little bit more, uh, and talk also about the private sector. Uh, you and I spent, uh, our careers as bureaucrats and so maybe we're not, uh, the best people to talk about the importance of the private sector. But, um, it is.

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It is, uh, an essential component. And, uh... and, you know, one of the things, uh, that we I believe can bring to the table in terms of our relationship with Egypt and how we go forward is, one, the American business community, uh, American investment, uh, American markets for Egyptian goods. Uh, all of those things are very important. Uh, but also I think, you know, and to encourage, uh, um, Egyptians and the government of Egypt to look, uh, more towards the private sectors, the real engine of economic growth and prosperity.

And if you look broadly in the Middle East, uh, I... I think that one of the... the things that we've seen is that, uh, in, uh, in many of the countries of the Middle East, uh, there has been, uh, an undervaluation, frankly, in the role that private sector, private enterprise, uh, private investment play in actually generating economic growth and creating jobs and doing all of the things that really become essential, uh, for a successful economic strategy.

Uh, I think that... that the United States has a lot that we can impart, uh, and I think that, um, also we have a lot that we can do to encourage American business, uh, to really take a fresh look at Egypt, uh, and to, uh, find the opportunities, uh, to create partnerships with Egyptian, uh, counterparts, uh, and to really be a part of... of a very promising economic future.

Wendy Chamberlin: Good. You nailed that one. Uh... [laughter] Let's open it up, uh, to the audience. Is there anybody in the first row who'd like to ask the first question? If not, let's... let's start from the back. Questions?

Male: Uh, good afternoon. (inaudible), Operation and Culture Analyst, uh, I... I caught you, sir. A couple minutes ago you said Egypt is a long time friend and critical partner in the region and yet we do not have any FTA agreement with Egypt. The second question is would you propose Egypt to eventually lead the Arab nation joint military action against ISIL? Thank you.

Gerry Feierstein: Um, uh, on... on the first, uh, uh, question, um, uh, I would say that, uh, uh, the FTA aside, the... the...

Wendy Chamberlin: Foreign trade agreement.

Gerry Feierstein: Foreign trade agreement, right, uh, uh, that the... the nature of our economic interaction with, uh, with the government of Egypt, uh, is very strong. We have a number of, uh, of bonds. Uh, if there comes a time where it makes sense, uh, to pursue an FTA then I think we could do that. Uh, it's, uh... it's difficult these days negotiating new agreements but it's certainly something that we can consider.

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On the second, uh, of course, uh, as I mentioned, uh, uh, and by, uh, Foreign Minister Shukri, uh, was in, uh, (inaudible) yesterday. The purpose of the meeting there was really to help build up the participation in the coalition and to follow the, um, uh, the, uh, the... the strategy that President Obama announced in his speech on Wednesday evening.

Uh, there are many different ways, uh, that this, uh... that this coalition, this partnership of, of countries will operate. Uh, the military aspect is only one. Uh, there are a number of other elements that will go into the effort, uh, ultimately to, uh, to defeat, uh, uh, ISIL, uh, including issues like, uh, uh, stopping the flow of foreign fighters, uh, preventing, uh, ISIL from, uh, from acquiring financial support, uh, ensuring that people understand and... and, uh, I think that, uh, throughout, certainly throughout the Islamic world in religious communities around the world, it's important for there to be a strong message that people receive that what ISIL represents, uh, is not in any way, shape or form Islamic. Uh, it is not something that reflects either the history or the tradition or the future of Islam and to make sure that, uh, those people who might be tempted by the message of, uh, ISIL are given to understand that, uh, this is an aberration. Uh, it is not a faithful execution of anybody's vision of a religious society.

So... so all of those different elements, uh, uh, the government of Egypt through Foreign Minister Shukri participated in the issuance of the, uh, joint communica. At the end of the meeting, it pledged all of the participants, uh, to working together on, uh, the strategy of defeating terrorism broadly and ISIL specifically, uh, going forward and we'll look forward to working very closely with the government of Egypt on strategies to actually implement that, uh, commitment as we go forward.

Wendy Chamberlin: Oh, it's a... it's a frightening conflict that we'll be facing collectively but there's a subconflict, a subtext to all of this and that will be whether the U.S. government will win the battle of calling it ISIL or whether the media and think takes will... will... will achieve the definition as ISIS.

Gerry Feierstein: Well, of course, our friends and your counterparts and the real ISIS which is the, uh, strategic international studies, uh, I... I think, uh, they... they've already voted for ISIL.

Wendy Chamberlin: Yeah, for sure. I think there's one company that actually changed their name. Yes.

Male: It's sometimes said that super powers are like elephants. If they want to make a U-turn it takes them much longer than it takes any other smaller creature. And we've seen that very clearly with the revolution of 2011, when it... how it took the United States a long time to, uh, stand by the new movement, uh, and the changes that were happening in the country. Uh, I feel the same is happening now with this, uh, ISIL

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situation, a situation that, uh, Egypt has been facing for the past three years and which has been calling on the United States to realize that this is a common problem that we should all address. Uh, and the United States was always calling our, you know, dealing with it as an Egyptian problem saying Egypt is facing a problem of terrorism. It's not just Egypt. And it took the United States some time to realize that it is a common problem only after the unfortunate events that started with the slaying of the, uh, American, uh, newspaper man. And that made President Obama finally come out today and talk about the strategy against, uh, this terrorist, uh, movement. Uh, why do you think, uh, the United States as we feel in our part of the world, takes such a long time to react to... and is not less forthcoming as other, um, powers in Europe or elsewhere, Russia certainly, uh...?

[laughter]

Wendy Chamberlin: Yeah, why?

Male: For obvious reasons.

Wendy Chamberlin: Yeah, why?

Male: No, you needn't comment... comment about...

Gerry Feierstein: I won't. I won't.

Male: But is it... is it because you're an elephant? Is that all?

[laughter]

Gerry Feierstein: Uh, uh, look, I... I think that, um, you know, understanding the, uh... the nature of the ISIL threat, uh, has been something that, uh... that we've been, uh, addressing and coping with for, uh, quite a long time now. Uh, um, I think that, uh, you know, the president is somebody who believes that we should understand an issue, that we should, uh, think carefully about an issue before, uh, we make a decision. Uh, we have been moving, as you know, in that direction for quite a few months. Uh, but I think that, uh, the president saw quite rightly that in terms of the situation inside of Iraq, uh, uh, the threat that was posed by ISIL is only one element of a much larger picture and that is, uh, the need really for the Iraqi people, um, and the Iraqi leadership themselves, uh, to, uh... to come up with new strategies, new ideas. Uh, we had a successful election in the spring in Iraq that, uh, uh... that produced, uh, a good, uh, outcome, um, free and fair election in our view and I think that the president was, uh, very clear in saying that we wanted to see how, uh, that was going to be followed up with a formation of a new government because I think that while the United States can play an important role, will play an important role in addressing the ISIL threat, uh, uh, no... and the rest of

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the international community can also play important roles, at the end of the day in terms of Iraq, uh, uh, we won't succeed unless the Iraqi people themselves are firmly, uh, with a strategy, firmly with, uh, the result and therefore, he, uh, wanted to see that, uh, that the Iraqi people, uh, uh, were coming to that same conclusion, were making some of the decisions that would allow them to overcome some of the obstacles that helped permit. It created a permissive environment that allowed ISIL to have the success that it had.

Uh, so we've been extremely pleased, uh, over these past few weeks, uh, to see the successful, uh, uh, selection of a new speaker of the parliament, of the president, uh, and, uh, just a few days ago, a new prime minister, uh, who's, uh, put together a broad based inclusive government and has made commitments to his constituency that he will strike out in a new direction of inclusivity, bringing together the different elements of the Iraqi society.

And on that basis I think President Obama felt more confident in taking the stance that he took because he believed that now in Iraq we have a new partner who's going to work with us and who's going to help us achieve success. And that was, uh, really what drove the timing of, uh, the president's decision.

Uh, in, uh, uh, elsewhere, in... in, uh... in the region, uh, we have, uh, the same... uh, the same issues. I was in Yemen for three years, between 2010 and... and '13 and I can say that, um, in... in the Yemeni context we had a very similar experience where, you know the, the political transition that was launched in 2011 opened up new opportunities and, and provided us, uh, with a much stronger partnership in terms of the fight against Al Qaeda and the Arabian peninsula there.

And so when you have that kind of partnership, when you have that kind of engagement, with the host government and with the citizens of that country, it makes, um, uh, your effort to... to work on these, uh, uh, counter terrorism and, and counter extremism strategies much more successful.

Wendy Chamberlin: We'll try to get somebody from... who hasn't asked a question before. Let's see.

Rafael Danziger: Thank you. Are there many press...

Wendy Chamberlin: If you could, uh, identify yourself, please.

Rafael Danziger: Yeah, sure. I'm Rafael Danziger and I'm a consultant to APEC. And there have been many press reports that the United States has established some channels of communications with Iran on ISIL. At the very least, you know, to deconflict, as it's been said, or perhaps even to coordinate some kind of activities with regard to ISIL. Could you comment on that, please? Thank you.

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Gerry Feierstein: Uh, yeah, I think, uh... I think that, uh, the secretary and, uh, um, and the under secretary Sherman have spoken pretty clearly and, uh, to say that there is no coordination between the United States and Iran on these issues. Uh, obviously, uh, there are, uh, instances where, uh, you have, uh, governments that have shared, uh, or common concerns, common interests. This may be one of those cases. Uh, uh, but... but, uh, we're not coordinating and we're not consulting with the Iranians on how to go forward on this.

Wendy Chamberlin: Back there, please.

Zach Gold: Hi, Zach Gold. Mr. Ambassador, thank you for...

Wendy Chamberlin: Zach, could you identify your...

Zach Gold: Thank you for being with us today. Um, I guess you mentioned in the (inaudible) Communica that the, uh, agreements or the pledge is to fight all terrorism. You also eluded that there is a difference in view between the United States and the Egyptian government as to who is a terrorist actor. So I was wondering if you could just reconcile those. Thank you.

Gerry Feierstein: Well, I think, again, uh, um, uh, there is an interest in, in not, uh, confining, uh, our, uh... our strategies and, and our commitment to fight against violent extremism only to ISIL. It's not the only violent extremist organization that's operating in the region. Uh, uh, in the Syrian, Iraq, that context you have the (inaudible). Certainly in Egypt you have (inaudible). Uh, in Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula we've seen Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Uh, in, uh, Libya we have, um, Ansar Al Sharia. Uh, and Al Qaeda in the Islamic (inaudible). So there are a number of different organizations, uh, um, uh, that, uh, are of concern to, to all of us, uh, that pursue violence as an instrument of, uh, their own, uh, efforts to, uh, to win a territory or, or to, uh, to dominate, uh, political, uh, uh, instruments.

And so, uh, the United States has been fighting against, uh, many of these organizations for many years, and some, you know, for 14, 15, uh, years or longer. Uh, and, uh, I think it's appropriate to... to look at this broadly as a, uh, as a vite... fight against, uh, violent extremism, um, with the focus right now on, uh, ISIL because, uh, we do believe that ISIL is the most serious threat confronting the region and the world at this particular moment.

Um, uh, over, uh... nevertheless, I... I would say that, uh, that we don't necessarily see all political opposition, as extremist or as terrorist and... and, uh, we think that it's important to... to distinguish, uh, very carefully between these, between organizations that, um, may have views that we don't, uh, like, uh, or support, but nevertheless are

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committed to, uh, uh, to putting their, uh, positions on the table and participating in an open, uh, free and democratic political system, uh, and those who seek to subvert those kinds of systems and undermine them through the use of violence.

And so we believe that the success of the effort against violent extremist organizations depends heavily on being able to distinguish between those two different kinds of organizations.

Wendy Chamberlin: Okay, we're gonna have time for just, uh, one...

Gerry Feierstein: One...

Wendy Chamberlin: ... one more. This will probably be the very last one, this fellow in the middle, please. Identify yourself and your organization.

Scott Cooper: My name's Scott Cooper and I'm with Human Rights First. Um, I liked the way you put it in which you said the U.S. sees no use in the jailing of peaceful protests and journalists. I wonder what hope you can give, uh, that for instance those who are jailed who are not, um, members of the Muslim Brotherhood or the like. Um, I'll give you an example. Um, (inaudible) been in jail since the middle of June, a delightful young lady that we've worked with before. Um, what, uh, progress do you see along those lines and do you think it's possible that we can make a utilitarian argument that, in fact, it is in their interest to release such people, not extremists but rather ones that have been jailed unnecessarily?

Gerry Feierstein: Well, I... I... I... again, and I think that this is part of the conversation and Ambassador (inaudible) is here and he can, uh, speak to it. I... I mean, it is... it is something that we, uh, that we discuss and we... and we believe, uh, exactly this, that, uh, that, uh, it's in... it's in the interest, uh, of Egypt going forward and, uh, on the political side, uh, to, uh, uh, to allow people, uh, to speak out freely. It allows people, you know, if you keep things bottled up, uh, and don't, uh, allow them, uh, to... to be expressed in a... in an open way, uh, that, uh, eventually it becomes a security problem, it becomes, uh, a, uh, an issue of violence. And so it's much better in our view, uh, to allow people to speak. Uh, and this is certainly an argument and it's certainly a viewpoint that we express.

Wendy Chamberlin: Thank you very much. Please join me in thanking Ambassador Feierstein.

[applause]

**Transcript ends**