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Dear Friends,

Greetings from the Project on Middle East Democracy!

Last week, the debate on Egyptian military aid intensified, with the Egyptian government continuing the investigation into foreign NGOs despite Congressional threats to cut aid and a high-level visit by American military officials. Bahrain marked the year anniversary of their mass-uprising with widespread clashes as demonstrations were held throughout the country. As violence continues to mount in Syria, the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution seeking to end the crackdown on protestors and facilitate a transition of power. Look for next week to be dominated by presidential elections in Yemen.

For more detailed coverage of the debates surrounding U.S. foreign policy and the prospects for democracy in the Middle East, be sure to check out our blog, [POMED Wire](#).

Also, POMED's Weekly Wire is now available in Arabic - to register to receive the Arabic version by email, please [click here](#).

The Weekly Wire

February 20, 2012

Legislation

Sen. **John Kerry** (D-MA) introduced [S.Res.372](#) urging "Egypt to protect civil liberties and cease intimidation and prosecution" of NGOs. The resolution was co-sponsored by Senators **James Inhofe** (R-OK), **Barbara Boxer** (D-CA), and **Dick Durbin** (D-IL).

Senator **Rand Paul** (R-KY) [filibustered](#) business of the Senate this week in an effort to force a vote on [SA 1541](#), an amendment to [S.1813](#), to suspend all direct assistance to the Government of Egypt pending a resolution to the ongoing NGO crisis. A vote to invoke cloture on the legislation [failed](#), with a vote of 54-42, so the Senate will take up the bill again for consideration when they return from recess on February 27th.

Rep. **Keith Ellison** (D-MN) introduced [H.Res.549](#), "calling for democratic change in Syria." The bill is an identical House version of [S.Res.370](#), [introduced](#) by **Robert Casey** (D-PA) and **Marco Rubio** (R-FL).

Rep. **Aaron Schock** (R-IL) introduced [H.Res.546](#), "the Department of State should raise the travel advisory for Egypt from the current level of 'Travel Alert', in place since November 7, 2011, to 'Travel Warning', the highest level of travel security advisory, until all 43 detained nongovernmental organization workers are given the freedom to leave Egypt."

Sen. **Lindsey Graham** (R-SC) and 35 cosponsors introduced [S.Res.380](#), "to express the sense of the Senate regarding the importance of preventing the Government of Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability."

Sen. **John Kerry** (D-MA) introduced [S.Res.397](#), condemning violence against the Syrian people.

Committee Hearings

On Wednesday, the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia held a hearing entitled [Reflections on the Revolution in Egypt, Part I](#), with testimony from [Michelle Dunne](#), [Eric Trager](#), [Robert Kagan](#), and [Tamara Cofman Wittes](#). Rep. **Steve Chabot** (R-OH) chaired the hearing and was accompanied by Rep. **Gary Ackerman** (D-NY), Rep. **Robert Turner** (R-NY), and Rep. **Gerald Connolly** (D-VA).

On Thursday, The House Committee on Foreign Affairs held a hearing entitled [Egypt at the Crossroads, Part II](#), with testimony from the presidents of the four American NGOs involved in the recent government raids in Egypt: [Lorne Craner](#), [Kenneth Wollack](#), [David Kramer](#), and [Joyce Barnathan](#). Chairwoman **Ileana Ros-Lehtinen** (R-FL) presided over the hearing.

From Washington

Lawmakers Threaten Egypt's Aid: Rep. **Gary Ackerman** (D-NY) [said investigations](#) of NGOs could damage bilateral relations, but Egypt's Ambassador **Sameh Shukri** [disagreed](#). President **Barack Obama** [proposed](#) FY 2013 military aid to Egypt, but State Department Spokeswoman **Victoria Nuland** and Rep. **Steve Chabot** (R-OH) [said](#) the crisis could halt the process, as **Adel Al Adawy** [said](#) aid would continue. Sen. **Rand Paul** (R-NY) [vowed to continue delaying](#) business unless [granted](#) a vote on his amendment to [suspend](#) aid, as Rep. **Howard Berman** (D-CA) urged Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton** not to certify the aid or exercise the national security waiver. Rep. **Ileana Ros-Lehtinen** (R-FL) [said](#) no aid should go through Minister of Planning and International Cooperation **Fayza Abouel Naga**, as **Zvika Krieger** [argued](#) the U.S. is ready to "reevaluate" current ties. **Ernesto Lodoño** [wrote](#) of a "chilling effect" on civil society. **Marlene Spoerri** [argued](#) Egyptians are questioning the U.S. commitment to their democracy.

U.S. State Department Issues 2013 Budget: The U.S. State Department [released](#) the annual FY 2013 budget, including a \$770 million request for a new Middle East and North Africa Incentive Fund. The [Executive Budget Summary](#) allots \$65 million to the Middle East Partnership Initiative and \$5 million to USAID Middle East Regional (OMEF) of that \$770 million. The [Congressional Budget Justification](#) calls the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' priority promoting political reform. **John Norris** [questioned](#) if the fund added new money, and the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition [applauded](#) the request.

Bahrain Marks One Year of Protests: Rep. **James P. McGovern** (D-MA) [denounced](#) the use of force by authorities preventing free assembly, and the State Department's **Victoria Nuland** [called](#) on authorities to "operate within the rule of law." U.N. Secretary General **Ban Ki-Moon** [urged](#) "maximum restraint." French Foreign Ministry Spokesman **Bernard Valero** [supported](#) (French) peaceful demonstrations and **Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui** [condemned](#) the lack of reform after the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry report. **Brian Dooley** [criticized](#) the U.S. government for "falling short in condemning" abuses. The hacker group Anonymous [downed](#) the website of a company supplying Bahrain with tear gas. British MPs [called](#) for canceling the 'Bahrain Grand Prix' but the Bahrain International Circuit [insisted](#) the race will be held on April 22. Britain [sold](#) Bahrain \$1.6 million of military equipment, after suspending the sale following the crackdown.

World Leaders and U.N. General Assembly Condemn Syrian Crackdown: U.N. Human Rights Chief **Navi Pillay** [accused](#) President **Bashar Al-Assad** of human rights abuses and was "appalled" by the "onslaught" on Homs. **Greg Elder** of Doctors Without Borders [decried](#) the use of hospitals as tools of oppression. French Foreign Minister **Alain Juppé** [said](#) the U.N. should consider "humanitarian corridors." The U.N. General Assembly [endorsed](#) the Arab League plan to end violence. Syrian Ambassador **Bashar Al-Jafari** [said](#) the plan interfered in domestic affairs and cited Al-Qaeda Leader **Ayman Al-Zawahri's** call for Muslims to aid the opposition. Russian Foreign Minister **Sergey Lavrov** [praised](#) Assad's constitution proposal. The first [meeting](#) of the "Friends of Syria" coalition will

be February 24 in Tunis. The U.N. General Assembly [approved](#) a resolution demanding Syrian authorities end the 11-month crackdown, and endorse an Arab League plan for political transition. U.N. Secretary General **Ban Ki-moon** [accused](#) the Syrian regime of committing “almost certain” crimes against humanity. **Susan Rice**, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., [added](#) that Assad “has never been more isolated,” while U.K. Prime Minister **David Cameron** [announced](#) being “not satisfied that we are taking all the action we need” in Syria.

Lawmakers Urge Diplomacy with Iran: Rep. **Keith Ellison** (D-MN) and Rep. **Walter Jones** (R-NC) [urged](#) President **Barack Obama** to use diplomacy and sanctions to diffuse tensions with Iran in a draft [letter](#). Ellison [defended](#) voting against the *Iran Threat Reduction Act* saying it “restricts diplomacy.” **Dennis Ross** [wrote](#) that U.S. pressure is starting to affect the regime and created an opportunity for diplomacy to work.

Turkey’s Campaign Against Kurds: **Nicole Pope** [called](#) Turkey’s campaign against its Kurdish minority its “weakest link” of democratization and said it only [feeds](#) the dispute among the conservative camps.

Also Worth Reading

Amnesty International [released](#) a report, “Militias Threatens Hopes for New Libya,” stressing the human rights abuses by militias and the threat to a democratic process in Libya.

From the Middle East

Demonstrations in Bahrain on One-Year Anniversary of the Uprising: In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, King **Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa** [said](#) “there is no ‘opposition’ in Bahrain” and “there are no ‘political prisoners’ in Bahrain...we only have criminals.” 120 protesters [were injured marching](#) on the Pearl Roundabout in Manama but [clashed with police](#). Violence [increased](#) days before the anniversary. The Coalition of the Youth of the February 14th Revolution [called](#) (Arabic) for the regime to step down, and Al Wafaq [criticized](#) (Arabic) the “campaign of [arrests](#) (Arabic).” Defense Force Field Marshal Sheikh **Khalifa Bin Ahmad Al Khalifa** [blamed](#) foreigners for the unrest. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights [said](#) police “brutally” suppressed protests. Interior Minister Sheikh **Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa** [said](#) “expressing opinion must be within” the law. Shiite leaders and a senior minister [met](#) in secret to discuss resuming formal talks. Witness Bahrain [said](#) 6 U.S. citizens were arrested by the police during the march. Bahrain’s government [announced](#) it will stop [issuing](#) visas to countries who do not provide the same privileges to Bahrainis.

U.S. General Meets with Tantawi, Egypt Repeals Death Sentences: General **Martin Dempsey** [met](#) with SCAF Chief **Hussein Tantawi**. Egypt [repealed](#) death sentences of three men for their alleged roles in bombings. Muslim Brotherhood MP **Essam Al Erian** [warned](#) the peace treaty with Israel was conditioned on Egypt’s aid. International Cooperation Minister **Fayza Abouel Naga** [said](#) the U.S. [funded](#) (Arabic) NGOs to weaken Egypt. Egyptian NGOs [called](#) the probe politically motivated and **Kareem Elbayer** said the criminal case could signal a broader crackdown on civil society.

Syria’s Assad Sets Date for Constitution Referendum: President **Bashar al-Assad** [proposed](#) a new constitution allowing political parties and [establishing](#) presidential term limits. **Khalaf Dahowd**, of the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change in Syria, [said](#) they would only accept Assad’s exit. The regime continued its assault on Homs, [destroying](#) an oil pipeline. Sunnis and Alawites [clashed](#) in nearby Lebanon, killing two people. Security forces [arrested](#) 14 human rights activists. Human rights lawyer **Anwar Bunni** [called](#) “on Syrian authorities to immediately release them,” sentiments [echoed](#) by Reporters Without Borders. Syria [released](#) jihadist **Abu Musa’ab Al-Suri**.

Iran Announces Nuclear Advances: Iranian media [announced](#) a new generation of nuclear centrifuges which could cut the time needed to enriched uranium. Iran [spent](#) \$1 billion to develop a more censored internet, which Police Chief **Esmail Ahmadi Moghaddam** [said](#) must be free of “subversive” content. Blogger Maysam said certain websites were [blocked](#).

Protesters Killed in Saudi: Two protesters were killed, while police [claimed](#) they were shot at and returned fire. Blogger **Ahmed Al-Omran** [said](#) police never recognize protests. Activist **Zohair Al Saad** [asked](#) why live rounds were used. King **Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz al-Saud** [indicted](#) **Hamza Kashgari** for tweeting about the Prophet Mohammed, and Information Minister **Abdul-Aziz Khoja** [banned](#) his writings from Saudi papers. Home Minister **Hishammuddin Tun Hussein** [said](#) the charges are a matter for Saudi authorities.

Yemen Marks Uprising Anniversary: Critics [denounced](#) Yemeni Vice President **Abdurabu Mansur Hadi**, who is the only candidate for February 21 elections to replace President **Ali Abdhullah Saleh**. Soldiers in Daela [killed](#) Southern separatists, while rebels in Aden [burned](#) a camp of anti-government protestors. Tribal leader Sheikh **Sadiq Al-Ahmar** [supported](#) a civil state. An offshoot of Al-Qaeda [executed](#) three men for [giving](#) the U.S. information.

Activists Imprisoned in Morocco: A Taza court [imprisoned](#) activist **Abdessamad Hidour** for [calling](#) King **Mohamed VI** a [dictator](#). Blogger **Walid Bahomane** was [arraigned](#) for posting unflattering images of the King to Facebook. [Clashes](#) in Taza between protesters and police [wounded](#) more than 150 people, and 10 were [jailed](#) for throwing rocks. **Mustapha Khalfi** of Human Rights Watch (HRW) [criticized](#) the Communication Minister's ban on two French magazines [containing](#) images of God and the Prophet Muhammad, which **Sarah Leah Whitson** [said](#) (French) violated freedom of speech. A court [imprisoned](#) (French) a soldier for insulting his officer. The Moroccan Association for Human Rights [called](#) (Arabic) for a celebration of "the beginning of the February 20 movement." King **Mohammed VI** [pardoned](#) Salafia Jihadia militants, who [said](#) "we are free thanks to the Arab Spring." The "sacred" nature of the King was [removed](#) from the Moroccan Constitution.

Turkey Continues Crackdown: Turkish police [arrested](#) 109 people and [raided](#) 20 homes and offices investigating officials tied to the Kurdish Communities Union (KCK). Since 2009, between 700 and 3500 people with alleged ties to Kurdish rebels have [been arrested](#).

Libya Marks Uprising Anniversary: On February 14th Libyans [marked](#) the [anniversary](#) of the uprising that overthrew **Muammar Gadhafi**. The National Transitional Council (NTC) [struggled](#) to control former militants and other [issues](#).

In Case You Missed It

On Monday (2/13), the International Religious Freedom Caucus and Congressman **Dan Lungren** (R-CA) hosted a panel titled [Iran's Escalating Repression of Human Rights](#). The speakers were **Arash Alaei, Kamiar Alaei, Anthony Vance** and **Paul Marshall**.

On Tuesday (2/14), the American University International Law Review hosted a symposium discussing "The Impact of the Arab Spring throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa: Building the Rule of Law and the Role of the International Community in Domestic Conflicts." There were a series of events. [The Revolution and the Law in Libya](#) featured Libyan Ambassador **Ali Suleiman Aujali**. [The People Demand the Fall of the Regime: The Social and Legal Origins of the Arab Spring](#) featured **Jonathan Brown, Stephen Grand, Loubna Skalli-Hanna**, and **David Tafuri**. **Padideh Ala'I** moderated the event. [Protection in Practice: Intervention, Accountability, and the Role of the International Community in Domestic Conflicts](#) featured **Simon Adams, Noura Erakat, Michael Wahid Hanna**, and **Sarah Leah Whitson**. **Robert Goldman** moderated the event. [Revolt, React, Revise: Challenges, Opportunities, and Lessons Learned in Light of the Arab Spring](#) featured **Rosa Brooks, Juan Mendez, Anna Triponei**, and **Ruth Wedgwood**. **Diane Orentlicher** moderated. [Legal Reforms and Democratization in the Wake of the Arab Spring](#) featured **Yussef Auf, Nathan Brown, Hamid Khan**, and **Stephen McInerney**. **Paul Williams** moderated the event.

On Tuesday (2/14), the National Press Club hosted a panel titled [Repression of Expression in the Middle East](#). The speakers were **Courtney Radsch, Jeff Ghannam, Abderrahim Foukara, Clare Morgana Gillis**, and **Nada Alwadi**. **Frank Smyth** moderated the panel.

On Wednesday (2/15), the Woodrow Wilson Center hosted an event titled [Post-Occupation Iraq – The Brittleness of Political Institutions](#). The speaker was **Adeed Dawisha**. **Haleh Esfandiari** moderated the event.

On Wednesday (2/15), Freedom House hosted a discussion titled [Voices from Bahrain: Anniversary of the Uprising](#). The speakers were **Maryam Al-Khawaja**, **Husain Abdulla**, and **Jalil Al Radhi**. Dr. **Robert Herman** moderated the event.

On Wednesday (2/15), the Middle East Institute hosted a discussion titled [Is Reconciliation in Bahrain Possible?](#) The speakers were **Joost Hiltermann**, and **Fadel Jean-Francois Sez nec**. **Kate Seelye** moderated the event.

On Thursday (2/16), The Middle East Institute and the Stimson Center hosted a panel titled [No End in Sight: Syria After the U.N. Vote](#). The panel featured **Aram Nerguizian**, **Randa Slim**, and **Mona Yacoubian**. **Kate Seelye** moderated the event.

On Thursday (2/16), the United States Institute of Peace, in partnership with the Reserve Officers Association, hosted an event titled [A Year of Turmoil: The Arab Uprising and the Challenges of Reconstruction](#). The speakers were **William Taylor**, and **Ellen Laipson**. **Steven Heydemann** moderated the event.

On Thursday (2/17), Cloud Media Entertainment and Middle East Policy Council screened a documentary, "[Turning Point: A Month that Changed a Nation - Views into the Unrest in Bahrain](#)". Dr. **Tomas Mattair** moderated the Q&A.

The Weekly Wire is compiled by POMED Policy team members Mathieu O'Keefe, David Wille, Conner Maher, John Simon, and Su Kim.