

Situation in Egypt

European Parliament, Strasbourg - 13 March 2013

Geoffrey Van Orden, on behalf of the ECR Group – Mr President, the sad reflection is that by no account do matters seem to have improved in Egypt at all in the two years since the fall of Mubarak. Any hope of progress in the Middle East Peace Process depends very much on the security and stability of a country like Egypt – Egypt which of course signed the peace treaty with Israel in 1979, the guardian of the empty spaces of Sinai and with the ability to influence what happens in Gaza and indeed more widely in the Palestine Authority areas.

Baroness Ashton, you mention a further tranche of funding going to Egypt. We have been very generous in aid to Egypt in recent years. In fact, if we look back over the last six years, some EUR 9 billion of funding has gone in that direction, both pre-Mubarak and since Mubarak. I wonder if you can reassure us that this money is well targeted and being well controlled.

I also have another concern at the moment, which is the growth of unofficial policing groups – what you might call Islamist vigilantes – sponsored by Jama'a al-Islamiyya and the Muslim Brotherhood imposing their own form of harsh and arbitrary discipline on helpless people. I would be most grateful for your comments on this and on how it is going to impact on the rule of law and freedom.

Could I ask your indulgence, Mr President, because I wrote to Baroness Ashton a month ago about listing Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation, but have not yet had her reply on this. We heard Shimon Peres speaking here, also making a plea for the listing of Hezbollah, and I would very much appreciate her comments.

[Video of the speech can be found here:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getVod.do?mode=chapter&language=EN&vodDateId=20130313-16:11:55-196>]

[Full minutes of the debate can be found here:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20130313+ITEM-012+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>]