

11 September 2015

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Our reference: MIN/87001/2015

Caroline Lucas MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your letter of 19 August about Early Day Motion 279 regarding the invitation of President Sisi to visit the UK.

The Prime Minister's National Security Adviser, Sir Kim Darroch, invited President Sisi to visit the UK during his visit to Egypt in June. The President accepted this invitation and the visit is scheduled to occur before the end of this year. The UK and Egypt cooperate on a wide range of issues of mutual interest from education to tourism. This visit is an opportunity for discussions to take place at the highest level on key areas of interest.

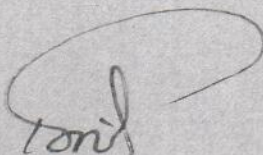
I understand your concerns about the human rights situation in Egypt. We firmly believe that for Egypt to enjoy security and prosperity in the long-term, it needs an inclusive political system, an open civil society, and a commitment to uphold Egyptians' constitutional human rights.

The EDM also raises the issue of arms exports. We operate one of the most robust and transparent arms export control systems in the world. All export licences are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (known as the Consolidated Criteria: <https://www.gov.uk/assessment-of-export-licence-applications-criteria-and-policy>) and only granted when there is no threat that they breach those criteria. Risks around human rights abuses are a key part of our assessment. We do not export equipment where we assess there is a clear risk that it might be used for internal repression, or would provoke or prolong conflict within a country, or would be used aggressively against another country. Licences are also suspended or revoked where they are assessed to be no longer compatible with the Consolidated Criteria.

All export licence applications for Egypt are assessed against restrictions introduced by the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 21 August 2013 and the Consolidated Criteria. A licence will not be granted if an application fails to meet the tests set by these restrictions and the Consolidated Criteria. The security situation remains very difficult due to the ongoing terrorist threat. We want to support the legitimate security needs of the Government of Egypt. We also want to prevent UK exports being used for internal repression.

We want Egypt to succeed, and we do not under-estimate the challenges facing the country. Our belief and experience is that political freedom and the rule of law are vital underpinnings for prosperous democracy. The UK and Egypt have strong ties, supported by a frank and honest relationship, allowing us to raise any concerns with our Egyptian partners on a consistent basis – that is what our policy of engagement is all about.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Toni', enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval.

TOBIAS ELLWOOD MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State