



# Kerry: US a Partner of Egypt, Aid Cutback Not Punishment

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CAIRO — U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met with Egyptian civilian and military leaders Sunday in the highest-ranking U.S. visit to Cairo since the coup against President Mohamed Morsi. He called for transparent justice a day before the start of the trial against the former president.

Kerry says it is no secret that Egypt is going through difficult times following July's military-backed takeover, but he told officials here that President Obama is confident Egyptians will overcome those challenges.

"The United States believes that the U.S.-Egypt partnership is going to be strongest when Egypt is represented by an inclusive democratically-elected civilian government based on rule of law, fundamental freedoms, and an open and competitive economy," he said.

The visit came a day before the scheduled start of Morsi's trial. Taking questions from reporters following talks with Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy, Kerry did not mention the former president by name but said it is important that civilians face civilian justice.

"Minister Fahmy and I agreed on the need to ensure that Egyptians are afforded due process with fair and transparent trials," he said.

In response to violence that followed the coup that toppled Morsi, the United States delayed the delivery of some major weapons systems. But Washington is continuing most of its military aid, taking a middle path that American University professor Akbar Ahmed says satisfies no one.

"Both sides are going to be critical. Both sides are going to say it is not enough. You have to choose," he said.

Morsi's supporters in the Muslim Brotherhood believe the United States is choosing Egypt's military over its young democracy, says Cato Institute analyst Doug Bandow, and that could further radicalize the group.

"We risk destroying the kind of semi-moderate leadership, whatever is out there, and having a

much younger and more radical leadership rise up," he said.

How the United States manages political expectations in Egypt and across North Africa will ultimately help determine the legacy of the Arab Spring uprisings and the young people who joined them, says U.S. Institute of Peace analyst Manal Omar.

"There was the ballot box. There was a way to go through the system. And it created a huge paradigm shift in the minds of the youth. My concern with what's happening in Egypt is we are sending the message that you were actually tricked. That isn't a way to be heard. There really is only violence," said Manal Omar.

Kerry says progress toward a democratic transition is linked to Egypt's overall economic success.

"With stability comes tourism and investment. And with both come jobs for the Egyptian people," he said.

Kerry says the United States believes that the military-backed transitional government has so far shown that it is determined to return the country to civilian rule.

Kerry departed later Sunday for Saudi Arabia, whose rulers have criticized the U.S. refusal to take military action against the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, embroiled in a civil war against rebels backed by Riyadh.

Before departing Cairo, Kerry said the United States and its regional partners "share the same goal" of achieving a "transitional government" in Syria, even if they differ on "individual tactics."

Kerry's other stops include Israel and the West Bank, where he will meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. He also is due to visit Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Morocco and Poland.