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## **Egypt almost killed me four years ago. The U.S. must hold its government accountable.**

By April Corley

Four years ago last month, the Egyptian military tried to kill me.

At the time, I was on vacation with my boyfriend, Rafael Bejarano. As we ate lunch with our tour group in Egypt's Western Desert en route to a popular tourist destination, [Egyptian security forces came out of nowhere and attacked us from above](#). Flying a U.S.-supplied Boeing Apache helicopter, they fired rockets and heavy ammunition, killing 12 people, [including Rafael](#). I survived, but just barely. The bullets and explosives pierced, lacerated and shredded my body. Even after eight surgeries so far and hundreds of medical appointments, I will never recover, let alone return to my past life as an Olympic-caliber athlete and performer.

Yet, Egypt has refused to compensate me for my injuries, despite admitting that the attack was a "mistake." It has offered only a trivial amount that wouldn't cover even the cost of my medevac flight out of Cairo, much less my mounting medical bills and a lifetime of lost wages. I have often wondered if, after the Egyptian military nearly killed me with U.S.-supplied weaponry, our government would reward Egypt with more taxpayer-funded military aid.

Tragically, the answer is yes. Of the \$1.3 billion that the United States allocated for Egypt's military in fiscal 2018, \$300 million was [conditioned](#) on Egypt making progress on specified human rights indicators, including holding its security forces accountable.

However, instead of denying these funds based on its failure to do just that, including its refusal to compensate me and address its human rights record, the Trump administration recently waived the conditions and [released](#) the aid on national security grounds. I was devastated to learn this. Does an unwarranted, nearly fatal attack on an American citizen *not* qualify as an issue of national security?

Many in the U.S. government believe it does.

Members of Congress from both parties have advocated for me, and State Department officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, have raised my case with the Egyptian government. I am exceedingly grateful for their support. However, Egypt remains unwilling to even meet with me, let alone help me. I have begged and pleaded with the Egyptian government for years, but, clearly, a stronger response is needed.

First, Congress should impose stricter conditions on Egypt's military aid. The House of Representatives has already taken a promising first step. This past June, the House passed an [appropriations bill](#) that not only makes \$260 million of Egypt's military aid contingent on human rights progress but also specifically withholds \$13 million of that amount with no waiver possible until Egypt provides me with "fair and commensurate compensation." I hope the final version of the bill contains a similar provision. Allowing attacks on American citizens using U.S.-supplied weaponry to be waived or ignored should not be an option.

Second, the Trump administration and Congress should create a retroactive exception to the [Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act](#), which currently prevents private citizens from suing Egypt or other countries in U.S. courts. The current prohibition essentially allows foreign nations to escape responsibility when they injure or kill the very U.S. taxpayers who fund their military aid. By contrast, the exception would allow U.S. victims injured in a negligent or intentional attack by the Egyptian military using U.S.-funded or U.S.-approved assistance to sue for damages in U.S. courts. Such exceptions have been enacted before, including [the law allowing 9/11 victims to sue Saudi Arabia](#). And this narrow carve-out would not risk subjecting our military to similar suits abroad.

Finally, it's clear that Egypt will not take my case seriously unless President Trump is personally involved. In his remarks at the U.N. General Assembly last week, the president restated his oft-repeated commitment to an "America First" policy. When a foreign country uses U.S. military aid to harm or murder an American citizen, I have to believe that putting America and Americans first means holding that country accountable.

Therefore, I ask President Trump to raise my case with President Abdel Fatah al-Sissi, who is a close ally, and insist that Egypt provide fair compensation for the irreversible damage they have caused me. Holding Egypt accountable would demonstrate to the world that U.S. military aid does not come with a license to maim or kill U.S. citizens with impunity.

No other American should ever have to endure the nightmare that I am living.

*April Corley was seriously wounded in an attack by the Egyptian military on Sept. 13, 2015.*