

Washington, DC (December 15, 2011) – Rep. Gus Bilirakis (FL-09) has led an effort in the U.S. House of Representatives to prevent the Egyptian military from using U.S. taxpayer dollars to persecute and attack thousands of Coptic Christians and other religious minorities.

On Thursday, the House released its Fiscal Year 2012 funding bill that places conditions on the \$1.3 billion in annual aid to Egypt. Last week, Bilirakis, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee's Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee as well as International Religious Freedom Caucus, [wrote the House Appropriations Committee](#) – which crafts the legislation – urging the committee to include the conditions.

"I am pleased that the Appropriations Committee considered my recommendations. It is unacceptable to continue providing unconditioned military aid to a country that disregards the basic principles of human rights and religious freedom," Bilirakis said. "These conditions are appropriate given recent events in Egypt and should remain in place until the government can demonstrate its respect for the human rights of minority religious communities and security for their worship. Furthermore, it is critical that Egypt honor its obligations under the 1979 Camp David Accords and keep peace with our staunch ally, Israel – also an important condition in the funding bill."

Numerous incidents in recent months have shown the need for conditions on aid to Egypt. Thousands of Coptic Christians have peacefully taken to the streets of Cairo to protest the government's failure to protect against attacks on their churches. However, the demonstrations turned violent after the military plowed through the crowds and fired on civilians killing dozens and injuring hundreds. To date, no known action has been taken against the military.