

From VOA Learning English, this is In The News.

An Egyptian judge this week ordered the continued detention of ousted President Mohamed Morsi. The official MENA news agency says Mr. Morsi has been detained for 15 days for investigation of suspected links to the Palestinian militant group Hamas. He is accused of working with Hamas to attack police stations two years ago during the rebellion that ousted then-president Hosni Mubarak.

Mr. Morsi has been held without charge since July 3rd, when he was removed by Egypt's military. The court order came as his supporters and opponents held competing protests on Friday.

Many Egyptians have been killed in political violence in recent weeks. On Wednesday, the United States announced it was delaying a planned shipment of four F-16 fighter jets to Egypt. Defense Department spokesman George Little noted what he called the "fluid situation" in the country.

“Given the current situation in Egypt, we do not believe it is appropriate to move forward at this time with the delivery of F-16s.”

Some American lawmakers have been calling for a suspension of American aid to Egypt. The calls began after the removal of Mr. Morsi, who was the country’s first democratically elected president.

The United States provides \$1.3 billion in military aid to Egypt each year. Obama administration officials have repeatedly said it is not in America’s best interests to cut off aid to Egypt. Experts note the country has severe economic problems, including high unemployment and inflation.

Many American observers say the United States has little influence over what is happening or will happen in Egypt. Jeffrey Martini is with the RAND Corporation. He says one reason for the lack of influence is a reduction in American economic aid to Egypt over the years.

“In the mid-1980s, the total aid flow to Egypt from the United States was equivalent to about seven percent of Egypt’s economy. That would give you a lot of leverage. Today, it’s about point-seven percent. So a 10-fold drop as compared to the size of the Egyptian economy. So you don’t get much leverage when you’re looking at aid flows of point-seven percent the size of the Egyptian economy.”

Brent Scowcroft served as national security advisor to two American presidents. He says the United States must help in developing a plan to re-establish Egypt’s economic and political security.

“What’s needed now is to put together a structure which can complete the building of an Egyptian political system. That is, with a constitution, with elections, with governments that broadly reflect the interests of the electorate.”

Mr. Scowcroft says a secure Egypt is important for the Middle East. Without a successful Egypt, he says, the area has a serious problem. Other observers agree. Mirette Mabrouk is with the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East.

"A stable, prosperous, if you like, but certainly stable and healthy Egypt is absolutely vital to the Middle East. Otherwise, frankly, no one would care. If Egypt were irrelevant, then people would not be paying attention. People pay attention because Egypt is vital."

She and others say the United States and other countries should not get directly involved in Egypt and instead let the Egyptian political process take its course.

And that's In The News from VOA Learning English. I'm Steve Ember.