



Dutch Coptic Foundation

The pain in Egypt...



## **Proem**

Egypt, the country with the largest (Muslim and Christian) population in the Middle East is known for keeping a reasonable degree of stability and peace. Mubarak, the president, is firmly in charge and presses any form of Islamic extremism away. The Coptic Orthodox Church, united under the Patriarch of Alexandria, is reluctant and seeks through political ways protection and its rights. The church has lost its evangelistic drive since a long time and fights only for its survival. Coptic Christians do not complain. Outsiders often accuse their passivity.

The church is a last resort, a place of safety and protection. But this is starting to change due to the growing insecurity. Especially during the current political situation in Egypt. There is a large chance that Egypt will be a more Islamic country in the near future. The Sharia will be the main law then and all Christians will lead an even worse life.

As experience has taught us, the western world has a very short memory and they are expected to easily forget what is happening in the east. Western countries have been aware of the massive persecution of Copts in the Middle East. In Egypt alone a 162 incidents have occurred since 1972 in which 4000 to 5000 Copts have been victims of violence. With that all been said, the western world has not shown any initiatives. They keep on seeing Egypt as an ally and refuse to demand explanations about the terrible happenings that occur. We hope that this will change and that the whole world will help to make Egypt a better place to live for Christians.

Right now there is an actual christo phobia in the Middle East. If the situation does not change soon, a lot of innocent people will die and churches will go out in flames. This situation can be devastating and it will eventually reach out to our own environment here in Europe.

Egypt's nickname is 'oum al-donya' which means mother of the world. But if her children are fighting each other, the effect will be felt in the whole world. Newspapers around the world report that after the latest bombing in Alexandria a sense of unity has been risen between Copts and Muslims. This is only what the Egyptian government want people to believe. But the truth is that from all the Muslims in Egypt there is only a hand full of people that actually know any copts.

And then there is the rest of the Middle East. The churches in Iraq (where they still exist) are having a hard time. The amount of Christians in the Palestenian region is dropping drastically. Christians in Lebanon are desperately searching for ways to leave and join their families in countries such as France and the United States. Most Christians from the Middle East do not see a future in this region. They fear that in a couple of years the entire Middle East will only consist of Muslims and will be even more hostile for any onther religion.

The problems are all the same in the Middle East: limited press freedom, structural inequality between men and women, huge unemployment, sexual frustrations because men are not enough equipt to get married and hyperinflation. All over the region organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood are growing at extreme speeds. It seems that Mohammed and Jesus will not be able to live together peacefully. Who knows what this will mean for churches in the Arabic world.

In this booklet you will find a chronological sample of the terrible events that have taken place against Copts in Egypt in the last decades followed by today's speech. You will also find some news articles related to each terrible event so you can understand what the effects are of the hatriate that is ruling against Copts in Egypt.

**Subject:** Massacre in village

**Place:** Al Kosheh, Sohag governorate

**Date:** December 31 1999 - January 2 2000

**Casualties:** 21 Copts killed, several injured

## Egypt victims buried

Tuesday, 4 January, 2000, 21:01 GMT | [news.bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk)



A mass funeral for 19 Christians killed on Sunday in clashes with Muslims has taken place in southern Egypt.

Local bishops went to the village of Kusheh for the service, as well as a representative of the head of Egypt's Christian Coptic Church, Pope Shenouda.

An official inquiry has now been launched into the killings, which the BBC's Cairo correspondent Caroline Hawley says represent the worst inter-communal violence in Egypt for decades.

### Torched

The Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights has also sent investigators to the area.

The interior ministry said 44 people were injured in the clashes, while more than 20 buildings and several vehicles were torched.

Investigators will try to establish how an apparently mundane financial dispute spiralled into such deadly violence.

The fighting began in the village of Kusheh, about 440km (275 miles) south of Cairo, after a financial dispute between Muslim and Coptic Christian businessmen in Kusheh on Friday.

### 'Barbaric people'

A Muslim customer had allegedly demanded an apology from a Christian shopowner, which was refused.

The customer is then reported to have opened fire, hitting and wounding three farmers passing by.

The authorities imposed a curfew to bring the initial violence under control, but fighting flared up again when the curfew was eased at the weekend.

Coptic Bishop Wissa, from the neighbouring Balyana village, has accused local security forces of standing by while Christians were attacked.

Bishop Wissa said "barbaric people carrying rifles went on a rampage and started firing at Christian shops and Christian houses" after church services on Sunday.



Pope Shenouda sent a representative to the funeral

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### **'Routine discrimination'**

Witnesses in the village said scores of Christian-owned shops and offices had been destroyed in the violence. They said security forces had opened fire in an effort to disperse the protesters, some of whom had fired back.

Bishop Wissa told the BBC the looting and burning of Christian homes and shops had spread to four other villages by Monday.

Kusheh last came to international attention in 1998, when an Egyptian human rights group accused police of arresting hundreds of Christian villagers and torturing some of them during an investigation into the murder of two Christians.

The group believes the police were trying to find a Christian, rather than Muslim, culprit to avoid inflaming tensions between the two communities.

Copts make up about 10% of the population. They complain privately of subtle but routine discrimination, including difficulty in getting permits to build churches.

Between 1991 and 1998, almost 100 Copts were killed in attacks by Islamic militants, but there is no evidence so far of militant involvement in Sunday's killings.

**Subject:** Shooting in front jewellery shop

**Place:** Cairo

**Date:** May 29 2008

**Casualties:** 4 people killed

## Copts shot dead in Cairo attack

**Four Coptic Christians have been shot dead in broad daylight at a jewellery shop in a busy district of the Egyptian capital, Cairo.**

Details remain sketchy, but witness accounts speak of two men, wearing wigs and sunglasses, entering the shop and opening fire with automatic weapons.

The motive for Wednesday's murders is still unknown because the killers did not appear to have stolen anything.

There are fears the attack may have been sectarian or even political.

The manner and the timing of the crime has shocked residents of Cairo, says the BBC's Arab Affairs Analyst, Magdi Abdelhadi.



The motive for the daylight killings remains unclear

### Motorbike escape

The shop's owner and three of his assistants were killed in the attack. All four were Christian Copts. The killers then sped away on a motorbike.

Egyptian jewellery shops owned by Christians have, in the past, been looted by Islamist militants to finance their insurgency, reports our correspondent from the Egyptian capital. But that has not happened since the government quashed militant groups during the 1990s.

**Subject:** Attack on Abu Fana Monastery

**Place:** Abu Fana Monastery, Western Sahara

**Date:** 12 attacks between 2004 and 2008

**Casualties:** Kidnapping and molesting of 3 monks and several people injured during the attack. Also serious damage to the monastery.

## As Tensions Rise for Egypt's Christians, Officials Call Clashes Secular

New York Times

A monk at the Abu Fana Monastery wore a neck brace this week after a violent clash at the monastery in May.

By MICHAEL SLACKMAN  
Published: August 2, 2008

CAIRO — A monastery was ransacked in January. In May, monks there were kidnapped, whipped and beaten and ordered to spit on the cross. Christian-owned jewelry stores were robbed over the summer. The rash of violence was so bad that one prominent Egyptian writer worried it had become “open season” on the nation’s Christians.



A monk at the Abu Fana Monastery wore a neck brace this week after a violent clash at the monastery in May.

### **Does Egypt face a sectarian problem?**

Not according to its security officials, who insist that each dispute represents a “singular incident” tied to something other than faith. In the case of the monastery and the monks, officials said the conflict was essentially a land dispute between the church and local residents.

“Every incident has to be seen within its proper framework; you study an incident as an incident,” said an Interior Ministry spokesman who grew furious at the suggestion that Egyptians were in conflict because of their differing faiths. It is customary for security officials not to have their names revealed publicly.

“An incident is an incident, and a crime is a crime,” he said. But the Egyptian security apparatus is increasingly alone in its insistence. As more and more conflicts pile up and as the tensions of daily life increase, many people in Egypt and around the region said the problem of sectarian clashes had become more urgent. They said that ordinary conflicts had become more bitterly sectarian as religious identity had become more prominent among Muslims and Christians alike.

“It is as if there is a struggle — each against the other — and it creates a sectarian atmosphere,” said Gamal Assaad, a former member of Parliament who is a Coptic intellectual and a writer. “This tense atmosphere makes people ready to explode at any point if they are subjected to any amount of instigation or incitement.” Egypt is the most populous Arab country, with about 80 million people. About 10 percent are Coptic Christian.

For most of Egypt’s Coptics, the major flare-ups — the attack on the Abu Fana Monastery or riots in 2005 in Alexandria — are faraway episodes that serve only to confirm a growing alienation from larger society. For most, the tension is more personal, a fear that a son or daughter will fall in love with a Muslim or of being derided as “coftes,” which means “fifth column.”



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“We keep to ourselves,” said Kamel Nadi, 24, a Coptic who runs a small shop in the Shubra neighborhood of Cairo. “Muslims can’t say it, but it’s clear they don’t accept us. Here no one can speak the truth on this issue, so everybody’s feelings are kept inside.”

Christian Arabs have increasingly complained of being marginalized in the Middle East, with large numbers leaving over the decades. Now it appears that pressure on these communities is spiking, whether in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan or the West Bank. In each, Christians speak of specific national behavior that has made them feel less welcome. While governments are generally regarded as more accommodating than they used to be, the overall environment is seen as less hospitable.

“Yes, we are feeling marginalized,” said Dr. Audeh Quawas, a surgeon in Amman, Jordan, who serves on the central committee of the World Council of Churches, a Geneva-based group. He rattled off a list of grievances, from the refusal of the state to acknowledge Easter as a national holiday to the insistence that Christians abide by Islamic law regarding inheritance.



For Egypt, sectarian tensions are complicated because they are connected to many other challenges burdening the nation, including crushing inflation and high unemployment among the young.

Many Egyptians around Cairo and in the south said that conflicts often arose over everyday matters — a dispute between farmers, an argument between students — but that once sparked, they deteriorated into sectarian name-calling, sometimes worse. That is partly because religious identity is paramount now, more important than a common citizenship, Mr. Assaad said.

“When something happens, it always comes back to Muslim and Christian,” said Tharwat Taki Faris, 45, a subsistence farmer in Mansafees, a village of about 33,000 people five hours south of Cairo.

The village is poor, its unpaved and uneven roads filled with barefoot children in tattered clothing. There are two churches, each guarded by men with shotguns. There are also two mosques, where security men are posted outside on Fridays, just in case the faithful become overwrought during prayer, people here said. It was midday, and villagers back from working their small plots of land began to gather to discuss relations with their Muslim neighbors. Any conflict between Muslim and Christian is a “singular incident,” they all said, using the same phrase. Villagers said that the government was adamant about keeping things “singular,” so whenever a Muslim and a Christian had a problem, they knew to go to the police before the matter escalated. “If someone can’t resolve it, they go to the police station,” said John Riyad, 23. “Trust me, the police will make him resolve it.”

The crowd quickly swelled as men and women and children joined the conversation, which almost imperceptibly began to shift toward grievances: There are no Christian officers in the police force. The villagers cannot get permission to build another church. There are no high-ranking Christian officials in their governate. And of course, if their daughters married Muslims, they would kill them.

Then, just as suddenly, the crowd thinned. The reason: state security was on the way. A village informant had already reported the conversation.

“The police know you are here now,” said Mr. Taki Faris, before he, too, made himself scarce. “They are very anxious these days.”

Egypt is an authoritarian state held in line by a vast internal security force, about twice the size of the army. Certain topics are out of bounds. People know it is taboo to say openly that a sectarian problem exists. So they are cautious.

“We feel pressure, maybe not all the time, but we do,” said Ashraf Halim, 45, a grocery store owner in the Shubra neighborhood in Cairo. “We have liberty of speech, and religion, but it’s as if somebody was telling us at the same time, ‘Don’t speak and don’t practice your religion.’”

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Mr. Halim's grocery is next to a hair salon with the word "Allah" atop the storefront in large Arabic letters. He responds in his own small way, with a picture of St. George on his dairy cooler.

"Me, I try to keep a certain distance from Muslims," said Mr. Halim. "We have simple relations: I give you this, you give me this. That's it. They don't want more than that, either."

The underlying tension in Egypt flares periodically around the country. There were riots when word spread of a Coptic play supposedly denigrating the Prophet Muhammad and again over plans to expand a church. The state treated each case as a security problem.

But the violence at the ancient Abu Fana Monastery in May elevated events to a new level. In a follow-up report issued last month, the National Council for Human Rights described the atmosphere in Egypt as an "overcharged sectarian environment" and chided the state, saying it "turns a blind eye to such incidents" and was "only content to send security forces after clashes catch fire."

Frustrated by the official posture of denial, a small group of Egyptian bloggers decided in January 2007 to try to bring Muslims and Christians together to talk. The group, which calls itself Together Before God, began with about 20 members of both faiths.

They posted an Internet survey to gauge Muslims' and Christians' ideas about each other and received about 5,000 responses. Two-thirds were from Muslims, the rest from Christians.

The survey showed profound misunderstanding on both sides, said Sherif Abdel Aziz, 36, a co-founder of the group. Some Muslims declared that Coptic priests wore black to mourn the Arab invasion of Egypt in the seventh century. Some Christians believed that the Koran ordered Muslims to kill all Christians.

Did the group discover a sectarian problem? Absolutely, and it was compounded by the lack of frank public discussion, Mr. Abdel Aziz said.

"The religious discourse has to change from both sides because it incites hatred, even if it does so indirectly, increasing fanaticism from both sides," Mr. Abdel Aziz said.





**Subject:** Shooting in front of church on Christmas Eve

**Place:** Naga Hamady, Qena governorate

**Date:** January 7 2010

**Casualties:** 6 people and 1 security official killed and 10 people injured

## Clashes in Egyptian town after Coptic killings

Clashes have broken out in the southern Egyptian town where seven people died in a drive-by shooting outside a church after a Coptic Christmas Eve Mass.



Security is tight outside the hospital in Naga Hamady

A BBC correspondent in Cairo said protesters clashed with police at the hospital in the town of Naga Hamady.

The shooting happened as churchgoers left midnight Mass to welcome in the Coptic Christmas on 7 January.

The attack is thought to be in revenge for the alleged rape of a 12-year-old Muslim girl by a Christian man.

Following the reported rape in November there were five days of riots in the town, with Christian properties set on fire and damaged.

The BBC's Yolande Knell, in Cairo, said more than 1,000 Christians had gathered at the hospital to collect the bodies of six of the victims.

Stones were thrown at security forces and ambulances were smashed as they vented their anger, she added. Three people are reported to have pulled up outside the church in Naga Hamady on Wednesday evening, killing at least six Coptic Christians and a security official and injuring 10 others, including two Muslim passers-by.

Police say the chief attacker in Wednesday's shooting has been identified but no arrests have yet been made. The church's Bishop Kirolos said there had been threats in the days leading up to the

Christmas Eve service - a reason he decided to end his Mass an hour earlier than normal.

"For days, I had expected something to happen on Christmas Eve," he told the Associated Press.

He said he left the church minutes before the attack.

"A driving car swerved near me, so I took the back door," he said. "By the time I shook hands with someone at the gate, I heard the mayhem, lots of machine-gun shots."

Witness Youssef Sidhom told the BBC that the attack shocked everyone, including police guarding the church.

### Harassment claims

Naga Hamady is 40 miles (64km) from Luxor, southern Egypt's biggest city.

Coptic Christians - who make up 10% of Egypt's 80 million population - have complained of harassment and discrimination.

Some Copts argue that previous attacks on them have gone unpunished or have resulted in light sentences.

Most Christians in Egypt are Copts - Christians descended from the ancient Egyptians.

Their church split from the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches in AD451 because of a theological dispute over the nature of Christ, but is now, on most issues, doctrinally similar to the Eastern Orthodox Church.

## Man sentenced to death for killing Christians

By the CNN Wire Staff

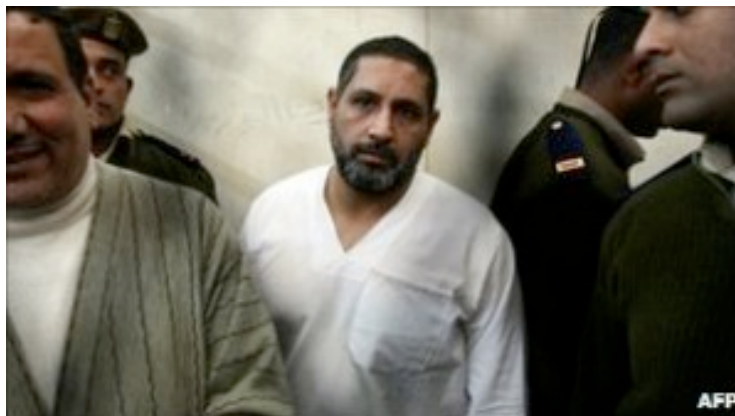
January 17, 2011 -- Updated 0950 GMT (1750 HKT)

**Cairo, Egypt (CNN)** -- A man accused of killing Christians after a Christmas mass a year ago in Egypt has been sentenced to death, Egypt's state-run Al Ahram newspaper reported Sunday.

Mohamed El-Kamouny, one of three people accused in the targeted killing of members of the Coptic Christian sect after a Christmas mass, is the first to be sentenced.

Seven people were killed -- six Copts and a Muslim guard -- in the January 2010 incident outside a church in the southern town of Naga Hammadi. Coptics observe Christmas Day on January 7.

The judge who sentenced El-Kamouny postponed the sentencing of the other two defendants until next month, Al Ahram reported.



The sentencing comes in the wake of a new round of concerns over the security of Copts in Egypt. A New Year's Day bombing killed 23 people at the Church of the Two Saints in Alexandria, Egypt, a Coptic place of worship.

Ten days later, a gunman killed a Christian man and wounded five other Christians on a train in Egypt. One of the victims said the gunman opened fire after yelling in Arabic, "There is no God but God." The suspect was later identified as a deputy policeman.

About 9% of Egypt's 80 million residents are Coptic Christians. They base their theology on the teachings of the Apostle Mark, who introduced Christianity to Egypt, according to St. Takla Church in Alexandria, the capital of Coptic Christianity.

The religion is known for its rift with other Christians in the 5th century over the definition of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

**Subject:** Church bombing on New Years Eve

**Place:** Alexandria

**Date:** January 1 2011

**Casualties:** 21 killed and nearly 100 injured

## Egypt Orders Tighter Security After Church Bombing

By LIAM STACK and DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK | The New York Times  
Published: January 2, 2011

**CAIRO** — Egyptian authorities increased security around churches on Monday as sectarian tensions mounted after a bombing in the coastal city of Alexandria that killed 21 and wounded nearly 100 leaving a New Year's Mass.



Ben Curtis/Associated Press

A woman cried out after a mass inside the Saints Church in Alexandria, Egypt, where 21 people were killed in a bomb attack on Saturday.

Egyptian news reports said the authorities want to forestall further unrest as the Coptic Christmas approaches on Friday. Police officers have been instructed to arrest people they regard as suspicious and to prevent crowds from gathering outside churches.

One newspaper, Al Masry Al Youm, reported Monday that seven people had been detained for questioning after the New Year's bombing and 10 had been questioned and released.

On Sunday, Egyptian security officers, many in riot gear, filled the streets of Cairo and Alexandria to tamp down scattered protests by Coptic Christians and others blaming government negligence for the bombing.

"If this happened in a mosque, the government would be doing something," yelled one parishioner in an angry street protest after Sunday morning Mass at Saints Church, the site of the bombing, where a crucifix wrapped in a blood-stained sheet stood sentinel. "But this happens to us every year, and every day, and they do nothing."

The bombing early on Saturday morning climaxed the bloodiest year in four decades of sectarian tensions in Egypt, beginning with a Muslim gunman's killings of nine people outside another midnight Mass, at a church in the city of Nag Hammadi on Jan. 6, the Coptic Christmas.

Analysts said the weekend bombing was in a sense the culmination of a long escalation of violence against Egypt's Coptic Christians, who make up about 10 percent of the population. But at the same time the blast's planning and scale — a suicide bomber evidently detonated a locally made explosive device packed with nails and other shrapnel, the authorities said Sunday — were a break with the smaller episodes of intra-communal violence that have marked Muslim-Christian relations for the past decade.

Instead, it was reminiscent of the 1990s attacks by Egyptian Islamist terrorists on Christians, tourists and government institutions. Analysts said the flare-up was likely to increase the domestic dissatisfaction with the 30-year-old tenure of President Hosni Mubarak, who has made preserving Egypt's stability his guiding principle.

Egyptian authorities asserted throughout the weekend that the attack seemed at least inspired by Al Qaeda or other international groups. Although no one claimed responsibility for the bombing, some analysts noted that two months ago a group calling itself Al Qaeda in Iraq threatened attacks on Egyptian churches in retaliation for what it said had been a Coptic kidnapping of two women who sought to convert from Christianity to Islam. And in a rare televised address hours after the attack, President Mubarak said it was the work of "foreign fingers."

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But on Sunday, Egyptian authorities also acknowledged that the attack appeared to have been executed by local Egyptians, and analysts noted that the government invariably sought to blame foreign conspiracies or nonsectarian local disputes for Muslim-Christian violence in an attempt to avoid inflaming sectarian tensions.

The official MENA news agency reported that the authorities were examining the remains of two heads found after the blast in the belief that one might have belonged to the bomber.



Asmaa Waguih/Reuters  
Demonstrators ran past a line of riot police officers, background, on Sunday near the Coptic church in Alexandria that was attacked early Saturday.

The Egyptian Ministry of Information issued a statement urging news organizations to “emphasize the national aspect in addressing the national unity issue” and avoid “topics” or “details” that might “deepen the wounds and add fuel to the fire in an issue related to the security of the homeland.”

Hossam Bahgat, executive director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, which tracks violence between Muslims and Copts, argued that the government’s denial of sectarian tension had exacerbated the problem.

“What we see is a heavy-handed response from the security agencies, arbitrary arrests on both sides of any conflict, and then forced reconciliations, where the victims are coerced into withdrawing their criminal complaints and accepting the arbitrary justice,” Mr. Bahgat said.

“The response is driven by security agencies whose main desire is to impose quiet after any incident and close the file,” he said, often letting off the true perpetrators.

A spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt’s largest Islamist group and the main political opposition to the Mubarak government, condemned the bombing, calling it “a threat to Egypt’s stability, which all divine religions explicitly forbid.”

Pope Shenouda III, the leader of Egypt’s Coptic Orthodox Church, called for the swift prosecution of the perpetrators and vowed that the attacks would not deter services for the Coptic Christmas this week.

In the aftermath of the New Year’s bombing, some Egyptians circulated appeals on Sunday over the Internet urging Muslims to attend Coptic Christmas services in a gesture of interfaith solidarity.

Others posted mourning messages on the Facebook page of Mariouma Fekry, a young woman killed in the bombing. Before leaving for the midnight Mass, she had written on her page, **“this year has the best memories of my life” and “I have so many wishes in 2011 ... hope they come true ... plz god stay beside me & help make it all true.”**



## European Coptic churches on alert after attack

January 04, 2011 | By the CNN Wire Staff

### European Coptic churches are on high alert following the New Year's Day bombing of a Coptic church in Alexandria, Egypt.

Coptic churches around Europe are expressing fears for their safety following a New Year's Day attack on a church in Egypt that had been listed on an Islamist website.

The same site, which is affiliated with the al Qaeda terror network, listed 16 Coptic churches in Europe, including four in France and three each in England and Germany.

Germany's Federal Office for Criminal Investigations said it has notified state authorities of a general terrorist threat against Coptic Christians living in Germany. A spokeswoman said the office issued the notification after the threats were discovered on the site.



"It's up to the state authorities to decide how they react to such a threat," said spokeswoman Barbara Huebner, without going into detail about the threat.

France has heightened security around 19 Coptic churches ahead of January 7, the date when Coptic communities celebrate Christmas, a spokesman from the French National Police said.

French anti-terror police have begun an investigation into the threats made against Coptic churches in their country after a Coptic priest near Paris made a formal complaint, a spokeswoman for the Paris police said.

The priest, Girguis Lucas, is with the Coptic Church of St. Marie and St. Marc on the capital's outskirts and confirmed he made the complaint.

Patriarch Barnaba el Soryany, the bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church for Rome, Turin, and Florence, Italy, said he asked police for protection during the church's January 6 prayer.

El Soryany said Copts also plan to urge the Egyptian government to "do more to guard us" when they take part in an interreligious demonstration January 9 in Rome against religious intolerance.

The Coptic Church in Britain is also concerned about the threat, said Father Shenouda Shenouda, a representative of the Coptic Orthodox Church Centre in England.

"The Coptic Church in the UK has been threatened together with the Coptic Churches all around Europe, America, Australia, and several Coptic churches in Egypt," he told CNN. "We haven't received a direct threat, but through a website."

Bishop Angaelos, the general bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Britain, said church officials have been in touch with London's Metropolitan Police and have made them aware of the threats on the site, though the police said they had not received reports of any threats.

A police spokesman told CNN authorities are aware of the events in Egypt "and of threatening comments against the Coptic community worldwide made on a website.



## **Speech**

**Subject:** Petition for the violence against and the disadvantaged situation of the Coptic community in Egypt.

Respected members of the European Parliament,

First and foremost, we, the representatives of the Dutch Coptic Foundation, would like to thank the European Union, the governments of the member states of the European Union and the European people for their support and sympathy during the difficult period that the Coptic community worldwide has gone through.

Special thanks to:

The members of the European Parliament for receiving us in the building of the European Parliament, the European house of democracy, and for your being willing to listen to what we got to say and to share with us the thoughts about a solution for the problems of the Copts in Egypt.

The governments of the member states and their local police departments for their fast and adequate reaction on the terror threat directed to the Coptic churches in Europe.

The European media for their attention for the violence committed against the Copts in Egypt on New Year's Eve.

This brought the oppression of the Copts in Egypt to the attention of the general public in Europe.

The European people, which we are glad to be part of, for the support and sympathy that the Coptic community in Europe has experienced during the difficult circumstances that it has gone through.

Then we would like to draw your attention to the situation of the Copts in Egypt.

Our fellow believers are systematically isolated by the Egyptian government and the vast majority of the Muslim population in Egypt.

The Copts get banned by the government from senior positions within the state apparatus and the civil service.

Rules related to the promotion of employees are not applied and selection procedures for vacancies are pushed aside, making Copts in advance disallowed (a feeling that is commonly experienced by the Copts in Egypt towards the Egyptian society whole).

In case a police report is made or legal proceedings are started by a Copt, the processing usually takes disproportionately long before justice is done.

Coptic girls are abducted in broad daylight, raped and forced into conversion to Islam and this while the government and security forces turned a blind eye to watch.

Churchgoers are both within the church and in the immediate vicinity abused, harassed and even slain, this while churches in recent years are provided of police protection, which never intervene.

Within the broad social context, the Copts are seen as heretics and infidels, and huge numbers of Muslims act according to this image.

Women and girls with a cross around their neck or with a bare head on the street are harassed, assaulted, beaten and maimed.

Men and boys are harassed and beaten, elderly nor children are spared.

Verbal abuse and incitement to violence against the Copts is heard five times a day, after every prayer from the microphones of the mosques located on every street corner.

Hurtful words, threats and incitement to hatred can still be heard in every house, here against the government refuses to occur and the Copts cannot take any action.

The textbooks are another source of hatred toward Christians and Copts in Egypt.

The textbooks give plenty of attention to the Islamic faith and allowing the treatment of other religions avoided.

This implies that children grow up with the lack of respect for the ideals of tolerance and acceptance of people with a different religion.

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The disadvantaged position of the Copts is most clearly reflected in the regulations relating to the construction of places of worship.

For a permit to build a church a presidential approval is required, while for the construction of a mosque, a normal building permit from the municipality can be requested and obtained easily.

Above we have attempted to create a brief image of the daily life of the Copts in Egypt and the oppression that they face daily and the inhuman conditions in which they live and try to build a future.

For many Copts in Egypt leaving their homeland is not an option and for us it is important to preserve the Coptic Orthodox Church, that was founded by the year 70 AD, as the foundation of our faith.

What we want to achieve is to create a decent life and a better future for the Copts in Egypt.

The Copts in Egypt are, just like any other person entitled to inalienable rights, which should not only be included in constitutions, but also practiced and protected and violation of these rights should be cracked down.

The past has shown that the authorities in Egypt are willing to do more effort for more active protection of human rights and especially the rights of the Copts, when this is followed closely by foreign powers.

It is therefore essential to keep a close watch on the situation in Egypt and to appeal to the Egyptian authorities accordingly.

To this end we ask you, the European Parliament, to assist us hereby.

The Egyptian government must realize that the outside world is aware of the conditions in which the Copts live and that this is followed with more interest.

The Egyptian ambassadors are regularly to be sought to provide an explanation and to be informed about the European position, by the member states.

Positions taken at European level are even more powerful.

Regular / periodic attention of the European Union for human rights in Egypt, will make the Egyptian government move to improve the protection of human rights in general and of the Copts in particular.

Regular visits by European officials to the Coptic Church would improve the status of the Copts.

Cooperation with Egypt on economic, social and development fields should be provided of conditions that insure equal rights for all Egyptians.

We see it as one of our priorities as a Coptic organization, to the rescue of our fellow believers who live under harsh conditions.

We are also confident that the European community always comes first when it comes to protecting human rights.

We hope to realize with our efforts and your cooperation a better future for the Copts in Egypt and to serve the most basic human rights, as this is included in several human rights treaties, disseminate and embed.

May the lord bless our and your efforts,

The Dutch Coptic Foundation