

**Planting the Seed... Now**  
**Towards a Strategy For Removing Roots of Sectarian**  
**Sedation in Egypt and Planting the seeds of Citizenship**

*20 years ago was the best time for planting the seed, second best time is now*

**Introduction and Recommendations**

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**The report at hand had been reviewed and discussed during a workshop that was held in May, 7<sup>th</sup> 2013 in Kalimah Hall, Sakiet Sawy.  
Key note speakers and commentators were as follows:**

**Political thinker, Dr. Moustafa Al Feqy: Moderator and main commentator  
Political writer, Mr. Kamal Zakher: Main commentator  
Author and member of the Islamic Group, Mr. Samir Ala`rky: Main commentator  
Mr. Mahmoud Ibrahim: Main researcher of the report**

**Participants included a host of media professionals, politicians, legal professionals, right activists and representatives of student unions**

## Introduction

### **May be it is not too late.**

Indeed, Egyptians had been taken by the strong Tahrir Square scene which cameras hastened to save when the priest used to pour ablution water for the Sheikh, and Christian brothers are protecting backs of their fellow Muslims during performing *Salat* in Tahrir Square. Everyone retained in their memories the scene of a celebrant holding complete mass in Tahrir Square every Sunday; and how Egyptians were respectfully and solemnity engaged in this awesome spiritual scene.

It seems that this was a spontaneous moment in Egypt's history which we imagined that it could be repeated. However, what happened exceeded out expectations. Instead, sectarian sedition triggered in many places, attacks launched against churches, in addition to aggression against Muslims. To this effect, the situation foretold that this historical moment we experienced in Tahrir Square was an exceptional one due to exceptional circumstances and exceptional situation that Egypt underwent.

At this moment, the citizenship issue remains the most important problem for Egyptians. We have been living, since the seventies of last century, in a citizenship related problem. From time to time, clashes erupt between Egyptians based on religious reasons, whereby articles are written, committees are composed and recommendations are made for the same recommendations. Since the infamous Al O`taify's report until today, problems seem like retaining status quo, recommendations are the same, and the political will continue to be reluctant for solving the problem, which is still the case as well. The situation in Egypt is growing worrisome, coupled with an anticipation of an escalated trend of violence, and reasoning is totally absent? in 1998 when I worked with the Democracy Development Group, we held a discussion session as part of a large conference titled as "Do Christians Resort to Violence?", at that time, the question seemed shocking. The conference was held at the end of the nineties of last century when the battle between the State and fundamentalist groups was almost settled in favor of the State. In the context of this heated climate, the normal question was "is it possible for Christians to resort to violence?" Two prominent Christian thinkers: Ms. Marlene Tadros and Mr. Soliman Shafiq answered the question saying probably (no) because of either the values and traditions of Christianity or demographic balance in the country in addition to the potential serious consequences of violence that would affect Christians at that time. It might be also because Christians learnt from the mistakes of political Islam that adopted violence and realized they should not repeat it. Nevertheless, we may say that nowadays, there are nascent attempts reflecting impatience more than resorting to violence. In this regard, we may refer back to the incidents of O`mranya Church that took place slightly before January, how Christians moved and accessed into Giza Governorate...Then we could speak about incidents of Embaba Church and others. During this decisive moment of Egypt's history, it is not in anyone's interest that an Egyptian loses patience and thus resorts to violence under the impression that it is an adequate alternative to obtain all or part of his right. In this context, the United Group (UG) implemented a project on citizenship and published the report at hand on some sectarian incidents that took place in Egypt during the past months, particularly Khosous followed by clashes in the Cathedral

vicinity. Because of the aforementioned circumstances, both the project and report gain certain significance.

UG held a seminar aimed at discussing the report at hand specially that it reviews events that took place in all geographic regions nationwide covering from Qalyoubiah to Aswan without a coherent reason except misunderstanding, rushing, or false concern about belief.

The objective of the seminar was not restricted on merely discussing the incidents subject of this report or even the introduction produced by the young lawyer Mahmoud Ibrahim, but it aimed at finding out whether or not developing new approaches for resolving the sectarian crisis in Egypt is possible? In my opinion, the seminar was unsuccessful as it failed to introduce any new solutions, because all solutions had been already exhausted since the seventies of last century. Hence, the feedback of the said seminar, if it does have real feedback, is opening festered wounds. May be this is time, we will be able to first clean out the pus and then close the wound.

The rich discussion that took place in Kalimah (2) hall of Sakiet Sawy under the title (Planting the Tree Now) was chaired by the prominent thinker Dr. Moustafa Al Feqy, presenter of the key paper, young lawyer Mahmoud Ibrahim, well known secular Coptic thinker Kamal Zakher, and Islamic thinker who belongs to Construction and Development Party Mr. Samir Al e`rky. In addition, a list of other prominent figures who took part in the session and enriched the discussion is included at the end of the report<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Annex 1, names of participants in the discussion in alpha bet order.

In this regard, I have concluding remarks before leaving the reader with this report:

1<sup>st</sup>: Problems that erupted since Al O`taify report and incidents of Zawaya Hamra during the seventies of last century remain the same partially due to lack of law enforcement. For example, this is clearly manifested in Fayoum incident. In this case, the church was licensed but the neighbor does not like sounds of psalms, therefore, he punctured the separating wall between his house and the church in order to monitor the proceedings. The hole widened allowing others to join in monitoring only to end by shooting fire while the authority representative, precinct's commissioner, was present.

2<sup>nd</sup>: The Muslim majority had been taken by fear, suspicion, and insecurity, and same feelings equally dominated the Christian minority. Simply, the idea of large number generates security is untrue in this case, as the majority suffered the same fear and threat felt by the minority.

3<sup>rd</sup>: Political Islam movements always took the course towards accommodating and controlling the sedition as well as introducing solution. Simply, the rise of political Islam might serve as an opportunity for ending sectarian problems in Egypt as they are keen on retaining their gains because they are aware that violence is expensive.

This issue can no longer be delayed.. unified Egypt is endangered..I hope that this phrase is capable of reaching the ears of those who can act and not only those who are good in speaking.

And Allah has full power and control over His Affairs...And Allah Is the Most Just of the judges."

Attorney to Cassation, Negad el Bora`i

Executive Chair - United Group  
Ma`adi, May 25<sup>th</sup> 2013

## **Introduction**

Recent sectarian incidents that started in Al Khosous and ended by the unprecedented attack on the Cathedral reopened the file of sectarian crisis in Egypt indicating how well rooted it is in Egypt. No doubt that having a head of State who belongs to the political Islam trend caused an incremented concern to the Copts. The reason for this concern is fear of using this incident to restrict freedom of belief in Egypt.

The sectarian file and dealing with Copts in Egypt is a complex and overlapping one which needs a serious action that would ensure an unparallel and balanced approach to untangle the overlap. In addition, the sectarian issue in Egypt can not be separated from the general context of the Egyptian society that could be described as going through a "decline". January Revolution expressed a modernity and enlightenment ambition, the tools of which, are not yet available. Therefore, holistic and general discourse should be based on real conviction that "enlightenment" and "modernity" are incorporated as part of the Egyptian society's strive towards achieving this progress and enlightenment. It needs reproducing an Egyptian version of the famous British thinker John Luke's tolerance messages that take into consideration the political, cultural, social, economic, historical and geographic inputs.

It seems to me - and I hope I am wrong - that under the state of chaos and absence of the State of law, the sectarian situation, in the best case scenario, will probably retain status quo without any real radical solutions. Nevertheless, Egyptians and spiritual leaders are under the feeling that chaos should not extend to this file which would make everyone feels the responsibility and tries to accommodate the situation in the beginning. But as the role of political Islam is growing, the situation might explode at any moment. This is what we are seeking to absorb in this paper.

The paper at hand aims at proposing effective steps as part of the future strategy for eliminating religious discrimination in the society and minimizing sectarian violence. In addition, it aims at enabling all strata of Egyptians hold their historical responsibility for preventing the aggravation of the crisis in addition to treating root causes of the problem. However, the paper is different in terms of the traditional framework of describing the status except when this was necessary, it also avoided introducing incidents' details except for the purpose of strategic requirements. To a great extent, the paper avoided elaborating on extremist calls that emerged at any time which were actually common but it rather focused on moderation as an approach for addressing the problem.

The proposed strategy includes two connected aspects; the first is **short term** aiming to stop the blood shed, and preventing the recurrence of incidents, the second is **long term** aiming to radically eliminate the crisis. The report then reviews recent incidents of sectarian sedition based on the outcome of the fact finding team who covered Khosous, Fayoum, Beni Suef and Aswan.

## **I: Problem Dimensions and Recommendations**

### **1. Sectarianism in Egypt (roots and dimensions)**

Before Khanka incident in 1972, which is the most famous incident, sectarian sedition had not been seriously documented. After the Khanka incident, the first of its kind fact finding committee was formed, known in history and media as "Al O`taify Committee" following the endorsement of 1971 Constitution.

<b><u>Incident</u></b>	<b><u>Place and time</u></b>	<b><u>Number of victims</u></b>
Khanka - Qaliyoubia	November 6 <sup>th</sup> 1972	
alZawya alHamra - Cairo	March 1981	Burning and destroying stores and properties
Saint George Church - Minia	February 12 <sup>th</sup> 1997	Terrorist attack led to killing 10 people performing prayer
First Kush-h incident - Suhag	August 1998	
Second Kush-h incident - Suhag	December 1999	
Wafaa Qostantin crisis	2004	Crisis of Wafaa Qostantin who embraced Islam
Mohrram Bek - Alexandria	October 2005	Rumors about a church showed a play that reflected an insult to Islam, in the opinion of some people.
Al Amerya - Cairo	November 2008	A Christian young man killed his brother in law after marrying his sister who embraced Islam.
Naga`a Hammady - Qena	January 6 <sup>th</sup> 2010	7 Muslim citizens killed 7 Christian citizens who were coming out of Church after Christmas mass.
A Refya - Marsa Matrouh	March 12 <sup>th</sup> 2012	Burning and destroying stores located in the background of a service building.
alO`mranya - Giza	November 2010	A Christian young man objected violently to the head of al O`mranya district's chief who ordered an abolishment of a service building of the church.
Saints' Church - Alexandria	January 1 <sup>st</sup> 2011	The murder of 20 Christians in an explosion during the

		new year mass.
Samallout train	January 11 <sup>th</sup> 2011	A soldier shot and injured 6 Christian passengers.
Atfaeesh - Giza	March 4 <sup>th</sup> 2011	Destruction and burning Philopater & Demiana Coptic Orthodox Church.
Crisis of Minia Christian governor	April 25 <sup>th</sup> 2011	He was denied access to his work place.
Embaba - Giza	May 7 <sup>th</sup> 2011	Burning and destroying a church
alMarinab - Aswan	October 2011	Conflict about a location whether or not it is a church.
Maspeero - Cairo	October 9 <sup>th</sup> 2011	Death and injury of some Christian demonstrators.
Al Khosous	April 5 <sup>th</sup> 2013	Killing 5 citizens and injuring tens.
Attack on the Cathedral	April 7 <sup>th</sup> 2013	Launching an attack on the Cathedral during the funeral of Khosous victims.

The aforementioned table provides for classifying sectarian incidents into three main categories:

First: associated with action resulting from transforming some places into worship or prayer places.

Second: associated with marriage, divorce, change of religion and in many cases incidents proved to be rumors.

Third: associated with serious violence resulting from agitation or terrorist actions.

The Coptic issue seems very entangled and complex in Egypt, however, careful reading of such concerns enables the person to find out what we call "roots" of the issue which had been planted either intentionally or non intentionally. But now they are reflected in a form of sprout that causes problems. **Roots** reflect the relation between the State and Copts, conflicts in the Coptic national group between secularists and religious individuals, in addition to the relation between the institutions of Al Azhar and Church as a determinant. In this regard, an approach was used starting after July revolution taking in consideration the national liberation and attempt of building a modern state that should have been based on citizenship.

#### 1. The State and Copts:

After the July Revolution and during President Abdu Nasser regime, the relation between Pope Kyrillos and Nasser was based on mutual respect and appreciation whereby the Cathedral was built in its current location in Abbasia, with the support of President Nasser himself, to stand as the largest Christian center in the MENA region and papal headquarters. The whole situation seemed consistent with the Nasser revolutionary



discourse adopting the slogan of "Religion is to Allah and homeland is for all". The State contributed half a million pounds and a public sector contracting company undertook the Cathedral construction process by an order from the President who personally laid down the corner stone. This was on the political side, however, part of planting the "roots" of the problem took place during Nasser's era, for instance:

- Egyptian Christians were appointed to the People's Assembly seats instead of running for elections as before.
- Inserting religion entry in the personal identity card and other official documents.
- As of 1957 academic year, religion course in the pre university education was included in the GPA (counted into success and failure).
- Christian citizens do not assume any important ministerial portfolios contrary to the pre July Revolution situation when they assumed offices of prime minister and parliamentarians.
- 1967 Presidential decree on celebrating Christian feasts which had been restrict for Christians who may take it as holiday. It reflected stark discrimination.

**President Abdu Nasser passed away and Sadat assumed power**, 5 months later Pope Kyrillos passed away and Pope Shenouda III assumed office in November 14<sup>th</sup> 1971. In the outset, the relation was good, however, a report had been leaked that is historically attributed to the political Islam group in the end of March 1972, but the group attributed it to security bodies as an official report that speaks about Pope Shenouda encouraging Christians during a meeting for reproduction in order to strike balance with Muslims as well as causing them poverty. The report was distributed on a wide scope, therefore, Christian clergy held a meeting in Alexandria in July 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 1972 and agreed on a number of decisions. They communicated the decisions to the People's Assembly and other responsible bodies. Decisions mainly involved protecting their rights and belief, otherwise, "martyrdom" is better than humiliating life.

In July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1972, President Sadat called an exceptional session of the People's Assembly in August of the same year and Law number 34 of 1972 on Protecting National Unity had been endorsed. Although the law had been enacted, but in November 6<sup>th</sup> 1972, Khanka incident occurred when citizens transformed a hall in an NGO premise to a church where they performed prayer. Some extremist groups who had been released from prison after the Correction Revolution ignited the situation, consequently, Pope Shenouda called for a group of priests to go and pray in the burnt premise whatever the price might be. "Consequent to Khanka incidents in 1972, President Sadat requested to the People's Assembly speaker to formulate a fact finding committee, called "Al O`taify" Committee which published a report, that after 40 years, the report still provides documentation that might serve as spring board for any future action about religious freedoms in Egypt.

The committee summed up key problems causing sectarian agitation as follows:

**Licensing for church construction:** The committee observed that Humayuni Decree issued in 1856 followed by the ten conditions regulation passed in 1934 are restricting rather than regulating freedom of religious practices.

**Licenses for Daw`a (calling to Allah) and guidance:** The committee documented a number of Masjeds, NGOs, and churches that were operational. They found several hate letters disseminated through the said NGOs and committees from both sides which are not subject to any regulation or monitoring whereby diffusing fanaticism discourse.

**Spreading religious books:** The committee identified a large number of books and reports, from both sides, insulting the other religion. Such material were not subject to any control and it violates all laws on publishing and printing.

Based on the report that had been submitted to President Sadat, in one day, he visited Al Azhar and Papal headquarters carrying a message calling for holding on competing in building places of worship and instead getting into community action, and building hospitals and schools. At that time, Egypt was involved in the October war diffusing a status of focusing on Egyptian nationalism and ecstasy of victory. In 1977, Al Azhar submitted to the People's Assembly a law on applying death penalty on *Murtad* (apostate) and *Hudud* (Islamic punishments). However, the law was frozen and objected to as it steers sectarian tension. The Church reacted by holding Alexandria Conference in January 17<sup>th</sup> 1977, discussing multiple crucial issues related to the freedom of belief which concluded to a no less important document than that published by Al O`taify's report. Nevertheless, Al Azhar perceived the Conference as an unnecessary escalation of events which actually continued to escalate in 1977 and 1978. Concurrently, attacks had been launched against churches, monasteries, jewelry stores, and Christian students in universities and university dormitories specially in Upper Egypt. The violent incidents were associated with the growing power of political Islam in the Egyptian society, when Sadat gave them freedom for the Da`wa and political action aiming to strike balance with the leftist trends.

The dispute between President Sadat and Pope Shenouda III could never be separated from the increased congestion between Muslims and Christians whereby alZawya alHamra was not a cause, but rather an output according to reading the documents of such phase. A new dimension to the crisis emerged suddenly when President Sadat visited the USA in August 1981. He faced strong anger from immigrant Egyptian Copts which President Sadat interpreted as part of the political role Pope Shenouda is seeking to play. Upon his return, in September 5<sup>th</sup>, President Sadat passed a decree cancelling his previous decree of 1971 appointing Pope Shenouda as The Pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, furthermore, he put him under house arrest. The decree also provided for constituting quintet committee comprising bishops to assume papal duties. Consequently, the General Congregation Council and Holy Synod issued a statement in solidarity with Pope Shenouda III who had been seen as a hero in defending rights of Christians. As the problem escalated between President Sadat and Pope Shenouda III - I believe it turned into personal problem -, it marked the end of the honeymoon between the church and President Sadat which completely ended by President Sadat passing a decree putting Pope Shenouda III under house arrest in The Monastery of Saint Pishoy in Wadi El Natrun in 1981. Narrated stories quote President Sadat speaking about "plucking Pope Shenouda's beard in case he failed to comply", however, the statement had not been verified. President Sadat took several actions that boil down in the interest of national

unity, for example he cancelled the term "two elements of the nation and replaced it by "one element". Further, he confiscated many newspapers and magazines that incite sedition in addition to formulating a committee chaired by the Vice President, at that time, Mohammad Hosni Mubarak to "maintain national unity and fighting fanaticism and atheism". Nevertheless, political agitation coupled with the President's rushing to creating enmity with everyone, attacking and arresting his political rivals, the said decrees within the given context had been perceived as settling accounts rather than preventive actions. In this regard, I am only referring to those decrees that are directly related to the issue of national unity.

**President Mohammad Hosni Mubarak** came to office after the assassination of President Sadat by a terrorist group that penetrated the army. Although the State was under serious threat, but he released prisoners, and cancelled all September decisions made by his predecessor Sadat except that of re appointing Pope Shenouda that was only revoked in January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1985. Although Pope Shenouda made several positive initiatives when President Mubarak assumed power, however, he remained under house arrest. No doubt, throughout Mubarak's ruling that lasted for 30 years, the relation between the President, church and Pope Shenouda turned into a more institutional relation specially in its beginning. This form of relation had been developed as a result to President Mubarak who enabled the Church and Christians restore confidence in the Egyptian State, reproduced the political discourse, that might be still sustaining, reflecting the State as Christians' main protector regardless of any clouds that might overshadow the overall landscape. In this regard, President Mubarak passed a decree assigning Christmas day as public holiday for all Egyptians. Opponents manipulated the decree perceiving it as an approach to repel foreign pressure, but through careful reading, one might conclude that it was the presidential line, though slow, but inclined towards the interest of the Egyptian State.

In my opinion, it is in favor of President Mubarak, and according to the testimony of Pope Shenouda, that he never became involved or personalize any issues between him and Pope Shenouda. He further completely and confidently succeeded to serve as the resort whom Christians turn to when they sense an infringement of their rights. In this context, I am not speaking about Mubarak as a person, but as a man who realized the actual role as president of a State such as Egypt and knows how to protect his citizens. But like all other important files, the Coptic matter turned from a political issue included in the files of the Egyptian State to a completely security related matter. To this effect, a state security officer had been appointed as liaison with the church compared to the previous situation of the President depending on personal convoys who address problems, bring viewpoints closer and communicate messages. The aforementioned transformation actually was the cause for sectarian crisis to remain silent only looking for areas where it may explode. But roots of the crisis are still penetrating the regime.

Aggression against Christians and churches aggravated at the end of the former president's era, common belief of existing external and regime planned operations prevailed. This kept Christians and Muslims alike busy with such incidents whereby ruling Egypt becomes easy even with all the corruption and oppression practiced by the

regime. Both the government and security forces - specially minister of interior - were key defendants, the government was accused of conspiracy due to its policies and security was accused of bias to Muslims against Christians whereby the regime and security were both targeted by Christians. In addition, they were targeted by Muslims for similar reasons, which made the whole nation develop a sense of being victim of conspiracy from both the regime and security specially after the explosion that hit the Saints' Church in Alexandria. Everybody thought that reasons of inter conflict had ended by the collapse of the regime and its security teeth which turned people's security to brace support of an oppressive regime. In addition, security served as nails and assaultive hands, while Mubarak appeared to be the innocent, good doer, philanthropist and totally for the people except for the cruelty of his surrounding staff specially in the security area.

**Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) took over running the country,** consequently, the overall landscape in Egypt fell in chaos due to the leaders of SCAF who lacked political experience and involvement. Sectarian related incidents occurred one after the other starting from destroying and burning Saints' Church in Atfih, Giza Governorate, followed by the crisis that happened when a Copt governor assumed office in Qena Governorate. The incident involved the first of its kind action of disrupting railway in Upper Egypt, burning and destroying Saint Mina Church in Embaba by extremist Islamic groups, crisis of Marinab Church in Aswan which resulted from changing the building purpose, ending with the tragic incidents of Coptic demonstrators in front of Maspero when the Military Police had been directly involved. The said incidents result into an observation: SCAF enabled Islamic powers to take control in solving the crisis by sending official delegations headed by Islamic religious leaderships.

**President Mohammad Mursi** started his ruling by a reassuring speech to Copts. In my opinion, the speech does not reflect the President's vision or conviction but rather concern of loosing international support for himself and his group. This stems from the Coptic issue that falls in the core of Egypt-US relation and the President is exerting all possible efforts to reassure the US about Egypt's stability. During the last crisis, this conciliatory approach had been practically manifested specially the formal position had been announced in advance by assistant to the President for foreign affairs in English before he became under attack, which made him correct his course and send a delegation comprising presidential team. That was not the first time, the Arab page of Muslim Brothers published a Fatwa (legal opinion based on Islamic Sharia'a) prohibiting congratulating Copts on their feast, but the English version of the website extended congratulation. In addition, President Mohammad Mursi passed a decree inviting for elections, but voting days concurred with Christian feasts. However, he went back on his decision as result to attacks, and changed the date before the electoral process had been stopped by means of a judiciary ruling.

It is impossible to isolate the recent crisis, President Mohammad Mursi's, his group, and presidential team approach in handling it as well as handling the Coptic issue in Egypt from the overall political and cultural background. In this context, President Mohammad Mursi had never been a man of State, till now, he failed to demonstrate himself as realizing the size of the State he is leading. Indeed, there are several institutions that have

a well established role and position in the Egyptian mind, they function as pillars of the Egyptian State throughout different eras. Regardless of any reservations about their role, performance or efficiency, they shall retain the same position in the Egyptian mind. It is not unusual for President Mursi and his group to clash with the said institutions, as clashing with the army, Azhar, judiciary and church can be monitored on a daily basis reflected in statements of officials, presidential team and his group. For instance, the last statement published by Dr. Essam Alhadad on his official Facebook page accusing some persons of taking positions on the roof of the Cathedral in Abbasiya and attacking the police. In this regard, this statement does not only reflect the failure of the President and his team to realize the role, but also takes the Presidential institution and overall Egyptian State down the road to a direct confrontation with the Copts, while it is supposed to maintain same distance from everyone. In addition, the presidential institution is supposed to serve as safe haven where citizens resort to during crisis rather than being cause of crisis.

## **2. Copts and Church<sup>2</sup>**

The strong conflict between the Coptic secular powers and church as representative of the papal authority in Christianity is one of the implicit roots of the Egyptian Coptic crisis. Probably, unintentionally, the role played by the church in the social lives of Christians through several activities increased. This extended for a very long time whereby some of the secularists who aim to integrate into the society perceive it as "Ghetto" that further deepens the sectarian crisis in Egypt. In their opinion, it places the church as an alternative public work replacing the action that should be pursued within a complete national context. Services are no longer restricted on medical treatment, and education, but went into a stage of organization and complete social integration. Although the ideas of this group quite bold and modern, however, it is totally detached from the broad Christians' base. Further, the issue of personal status law forms an internal crisis reflecting on the general situation and mood due to its complexity and overlapping.

## **3. Al Azhar and church:**

The stereotype about the church and Al Azhar stems from manifestations of national unity concurrent with the 1919 Revolution when priests delivered sermons in *Masjeds* and Sheikhs did the same in churches in order to respond to the occupation. However, relations between both institutions occasionally sored which in turn created crisis. For instance, the aforementioned law on Islamic penalties which may potentially recur in case a well informed leadership like Sheikh Ahmad elTayeb is not available. Nevertheless, under the ruling of Muslim Brothers and in absence of Sheikh Tayeb, circumstances might impose an Azhari leadership that would adopt a strict approach in dealing with draft laws, specially that Azhar enjoys extensive powers according to the Constitution.

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<sup>2</sup> Main issues included in the Copts demands: political, social, cultural: larger representation in political life, unified law on places of worship, eliminating discrimination in education, teaching the Coptic history, cancelling the religion entry on personal IDs, Copts' personal status law, recovering Coptic endowments, equality in admission to institutes and faculties, larger share of leadership positions, freedom of changing religion, respecting religious rituals and Christian feasts and ending discrimination in official media.

**Family House Initiative:** In October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Dr. E`ssam Sharaf, Prime Minister then, passed a decree constituting what is called Family House "protecting social fabric of Egyptians, in coordination with all concerned agencies, and ministries in the country". The Egyptian Family House includes a number of Muslim scholars, Coptic church clergy, representatives of different Christian sects in Egypt in addition to a host of thinkers and experts. In addition, a board of trustees is set up chaired by Sheikh of Al Azhar and holy pope in rotation. The board is mandated with developing public policies and monitoring activities. Another executive council would be created to be in charge of implementing general policies of the Family House. Seems that this initiative needs to be activated turning it from merely friendly visits when love is expressed as part of social distinction to adopting serious decisions.

#### **4. Politics and Copts:**

Although the problems seem associated with the Egyptian State, but an in-depth look tells how it extends beyond the state in addition to being complex and compound just as other political issues where multiple factors interact. For instance, no one can overlook the Egyptian church's strict position towards performing pilgrimage to Jerusalem under occupation. In this context, it adopted situation exceeding that of the regime and state in favor of the Palestinians. The aforementioned position had been perceived by some groups as part of the reasons creating tension between Pope Shenouda and President Sadat as it concurred with the second Palestinian *Intifadah* when the latter called for holding a conference in the Cathedral showing solidarity with the Palestinians. This gave the Egyptian society strength in facing challenges specially this type of challenges. However, this is not an unusual position, as Pope Shenouda fought during the war of Palestine as a stand by officer.

#### **5. The census problem:**

Seems that failure of the Egyptian State to announce the real census of Christians is a multidimensional problem where national security criteria overlap with the culture of the society. In this sense, the official discourse argues that announcing the real number of Christians reflects an establishment of sectarianism and division of the society based on this approach. In addition, announcing the real number might increase calling for limiting the number of Christians appointed in public jobs relevant to their percentage from total population in addition to applying the same regarding their quota in the parliament. On the other side, identifying the real number of Copt citizens in Egypt may help in eliminating fears of misusing this number for capturing gains and would be a good opportunity for an increased integration of Christians.

#### **6. Foreign dimension:**

The sectarian crisis in Egypt, had and will continue to create an external resonance. It had been further affected by and affecting Egyptian - US - European relations. Constantly, it become key discussion point between parties or main axis of relations which is connected in the present time with aid and relations. This situation particularly emerged post September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 coupled with the freedom and religious minorities file. **Immigrant Copts**, in some cases turned into sources of tension between the State, regime, and Copts themselves. The annual report of religious freedoms published by the US Foreign

Department serves as a political card which everyone manipulates for their own interest. Nevertheless, and regardless of the said details, sectarian related incidents or problems facing Copts will have an external impact reflected in the media and political attention or foreign policies.

**We may say,** most of the incidents mostly start for ordinary conflicts between ordinary citizens (laundry - harassment of girls - dispute over the sound of microphone - girl running away with a young man .etc). However, there is a relation between population density and escalation of sectarian in addition to poverty rates such as Al Khosous area where population density is high. Certainly, ignorance and myths were common factors in all the sedition incidents which are even increasing under the overall deteriorating situation in the country.

In addition, certainly anger of youth specially Christians became a catalyst in aggravating the problem, however, this anger does not necessarily reflect an inclination for sectarian violence. But in my opinion, it is a reflection of a social reality where youth are suffering marginalization, despair, and lack of hope for the future. I believe that we are heading towards complete social disintegration and all forms of explosions including sectarian, revolutionary and others that are against the State.

In addition, lenience of security, un readiness for accelerated intervention in most cases, and failure to strictly apply the law might be another factor causing serious escalation of incidents due to delay of security forces. However, in some cases the situation might exceed the role of security specially in cases of changing religion. Further, media plays a negative role by magnifying the incidents taking it out of context to a wider sectarian scope specially that most news are based on rumors as proved in the end.

## **2. Proposed Strategy for Discussion**

Such as any other social reform process, the situation needs short, middle and long term strategies. The sectarian file in Egypt seems entangled and complex needing much parallel and cross cutting action through concerted efforts.

In my opinion, the main spring board here starts from the State, however, it does not end there though. But the State should assume a role in organization, and mobilization of efforts to confront and uproot this hateful phenomenon. Nevertheless, this does not mean that roles of the civil society, religious or political leaderships are not important. It rather needs to function within a well protected and maintained framework from the State and its institutions. In preparation to any action, we need to agree on complete frankness and disclosure of facts regardless how hard or painful they are. It is absolutely irrational to perceive solving the problem by merely enacting the law on places of worship or addressing the education system, but the matter is much more complicated.

### **1. Available opportunities:**

1.1 Post January, freedom climate - although loose - encouraged Copts for joining action and integration in political life specially as political classification is wide spread dividing between the two groups supporting civil and Islamic states. It further enables them to fill empty spaces in the civil side which is mainly based on citizenship.

2.1 Muslim Brothers (MB) who are assuming power now provides an opportunity for delving into the Coptic matter. The MB is attempting to introduce itself as the moderate alternative to political Islam compared to the extremist other groups. MB may work with the MB *Irshad* (guidance) bureau, and Shura council in order to reach harmonious formula on the different issues smoothly by setting up committees comprising Egyptian patriots in order to communicate the discourse to MB leaderships. Assuming that they own the discourse which they work on making it balanced and moderate, they need someone who assists them in translating the discourse into action using political approach. In this regard, even if a slight progress is achieved on this file, it will provide reassurance to a large sector of Egyptians whom the President needs for expanding his supporters base and improving the MB image.

3.1 Both religious institutions in Egypt are chaired by strong leaderships who are capable of making initiatives and working together, they both come from open cultural and social backgrounds.

### **1. Challenges:**

1.2. The main problem here is that mass agitations are usually triggered by a large number of actors whereby the key actor becomes difficult to identify. Therefore, incidents should be addressed from a criminal and legal perspective outside the scope of individual acts, and consider it as collective riot where all actors are original actors. In turn, this makes identifying a doer who would be introduced to justice impossible in addition to others who tap on their large number and impunity to implement evil plans.



2.2 Media, specially religious media on both sides, communicate messages that are not in direct violation to the law or media code of ethics, but implicitly diffuse strong incitement either for political gains, promotion or success. In this regard, the challenge lies in misusing decisions made for closing or holding such channels accountable, specially under this climate, by introducing the said decision as oppression to freedoms.

3.2 The official and unofficial Muslim side feels that the Coptic file is a foreign pressure card. It is anticipated that this feeling will grow under their ruling.

4.2 The Internet culture and quick and inaccurate transmission of information serving as a permanent ignition trigger.

## **2. Short term recommendations:**

1. 3 Operationalizing the **Family House** Initiative, promoting introductory sessions where Muslims and Christians sit together to learn about each other's religion. The session is better to be conducted on different contexts specially through the media, and Family House. It is further recommended to replicate the experience to other governorates, extend the activities to cover youth centers, in cooperation with NGOs turning them into practical activities more than gathering for merely kissing beards and eating food.

2.3 Intensifying the exchange of joint camps between Masjeds and churches for the purpose of changing the stereotypes in the minds of children and adolescents about myths inside churches.

3.3 Formulating a rapid intervention team comprising different groups from both sides, that would function like an emergency team. It would attend to the incidents' site immediately and before aggravation. The team is expected to mitigate the situation, and instantly transmit the real information and pictures to the world.

4.3 All parties should lobby for strict enforcement of the law, regardless of whoever is the wrong doer's religion.

5.3 The civil society, in coordination with political figures, would establish an observatory to publish daily reports about the media and sectarian oriented practices of civil servants.

6.3 Lack of "scientific researches" about the phenomenon, problems facing the State, and the society. This could be acceptable when the Coptic issues were purely security related. But now Egypt needs serious social studies addressing all phenomena related to freedom of belief, practicing religious rituals and minorities.

7.3 Enacting a law or media code of ethics addressing issues of freedom of belief.

8.3 Prepare sociological studies<sup>3</sup> on the religion as practiced by people and not as defined in monotheistic books. This would eventually help those who are involved in socio-economic and political planning deal with people's perspective of religion and not the religion as the book says.

9.3 Prosecution general should make quick decision on sectarian incidents related investigation, and bringing actors and inciters to criminal trials, based on the principle of the rule of law.

## **2. Long term recommendations:**

The following recommendations' package is aimed at uprooting this disease.

1.4 Implementing the full recommendations of Al O`taify's committee.

2.4 Criminal law should include severe punishments for inciters.

3.4 Preparing a list of draft law for minimizing sectarian related practices, propose and study all draft laws and decrees that achieve equality and prevent discrimination. For this purpose, a committee comprising legal experts, politicians and representatives of official religious institutions would assume the task.

4.4 Formulating a "technical" committee comprising education experts to revise curricula of all levels, and delete lessons that encourage sectarian related violence. The committee would also prepare training programs for teachers to learn about sound education practices aiming to minimize sectarianism.

5.4 Allowing universal access to places of worship ranging between school children to university students. It is intended to break fear and cautious about the other. The task would be mandated to the ministries of education and higher education. In addition, we encourage Egyptian - oriented museums for all religions<sup>4</sup>.

6.4 Reformulating the religious discourse from both sides (Al Azhar - church) to be more tolerant and concurrently compatible with the freedom of belief and international conventions<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> It is a science that teaches societies and laws governing its development and change, sociology dates back to ancient eras. For example, in Greece, Democritus, Aristotle, Plato and Lucretius, tried interpreting reasons of social changes, powers moving people's lives, origin of State, law and politics.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Basma Moussa introduced this recommendation during the seminar held by UG to discuss the report. She indicated that the Indian ministry of education organizes visits for children to all places of worship. In addition, airports provide universal places for prayer such as the case in England and Scotland.

<sup>5</sup> Participants in the seminar held by UG introduced this recommendation.

### **3. Recommendations of "Wameedu Nar" Flash of Fire Study Published by UG in May 2011 on Reasons Threatening the Idea of Equal Citizenship in Egypt<sup>6</sup>**

#### **Final Recommendations**

Many recommendations could be made, we perceive those recommendations as merely highlights. But we intend to postpone the final recommendations waiting for the results of the discussions that would take place in a workshop to be organized for discussing and enriching the said study.

#### **First, laws according to our observation through revising rulings of the State Council**

1. To amend first clause of the second article of the Constitution to stipulate that Islam is the majority's religion, and the State respects and protects all other beliefs and religions of those who are residing on its land<sup>7</sup>.
2. To formulate a committee comprising parliamentarians, and officials of the Civil Status Authority to review articles amending the following articles based on the Constitution's first article. It should be reviewed based on the rulings made by the Administrative Judiciary Court to facilitate seekers of exercising their constitutional right related to the freedom of belief<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> In 2011, UG published Wameedu Nar" Flash of Fire Study on reasons catalyst to threatening the citizenship idea. The study concluded to a comprehensive strategy or recommendation for addressing the phenomenon, which we thought they would be taken in consideration, however, they were not!! Therefore, we thought of re introducing the recommendations, hoping that they will attract someone's attention, or improvement so that they do not remain merely ink on paper.

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Ahmad Abdul Hafeez, lawyer to the court of cassation, who was key commentator on the legal track of the study, believes that the second article of the Constitution stipulating that Islamic Shari`a is the main source of legislation does not have any legal influence.

Baha`i activist Dr. Raouf Hendy Halim, perceives that the second article of the Constitution does not create any problem, so long as it is a State of law and institutions.

In the opinion of Dr. Yasser Al Faramawy, concern about the second article of the Constitution is due to lack of knowledge about rulings of the Islamic Shari`a which encompasses principles of tolerance and respecting other religions.

Mr. Mamdouh Ramzy, attorney to the cassation court, reiterates that no one is asking for the cancellation of article two, but rather an addition to be inserted regarding legislation. He argues that all monotheistic religions are supposed to be sources of legislation.

Dr. Ramadan Albatal, attorney indicated that if the second article of the Constitution would be introduced on a referendum, it shall be enforced because the majority of Egyptians are Muslims.

The second recommendation of the outputs of the First National Conference on Fighting Religious Discrimination calling for seeking the expertise of legal and activist experts for the amendment of second article of the Constitution by deriving the purposes of Islamic Shari`a. In addition, tapping on all humanity values incorporated in all religions, monotheistic legislation and others including values encouraged in the human rights charters, on which, the whole world is consensus and endorsed by international organization to serve as main source of legislation.

<sup>8</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> recommendation of the First National Conference on Fighting Religious Discrimination calls for formulating a national committee to review and fine tune Egyptian laws from all restrictions on the Egyptian citizen's right of freedom of belief and practicing rituals. This would include criminalizing imposing belief by force either by the State, organizations or individuals. Re demanding the cancellation of the religion entry in all official documents or at least making it optional.

1-2 Article (3) of Law number 68 of 1947 on documentation which is amended by Law number 629 of 1955 stipulating "offices are in charge of notarizing all written documents except marriage contracts, divorce, revocation and formalizing marriages (originally concluded informally) thereto of Muslim Egyptians and non Muslim Egyptians who are from the same sect and community. In this regard, certain notary officers appointed by means of a minister of justice decree are in charge of notarizing marriage and divorce contracts of non Muslim Egyptians who are from the same sect and community. The minister sets forth regulation defining prerequisites and competences of appointing the said officers in addition to all other related matters. A fee is charged on the said marriage contracts by virtue of the aforementioned Law number 91 of 1944".

2-2 Article 47 of the Civil Status Law number 143 stipulates that "it is not permissible to make any changes or corrections on the records of civil status registered about incidents of birth, death, and household except by a decision passed from the committee denied in the previous article. Changes or correction made on the nationality, religion, profession, civil status records related to marriage, annulment of marriage, formalizing marriages (originally concluded informally), divorce, another party applying divorcement, physical separation, or validation of lineage would be made based on rulings, or documents issued from the competent entity without the need for a resolution from the aforementioned committee.

2-3 Article 53 of the indicated law states "in case of any change in the information shown on the personal identity card of a given citizen or his/her civil status date, he/she should apply within three months of the date of change to the civil register section where he/she lives to update the data".

2-4 Article 33 of the executive regulation of the Civil Status Law stipulates that "the Civil Status Authority issues personal identify card for each Egyptian citizen whose age is above sixteen. Validity of the ID shall continue for a period of time as defined by the minister of interior's decree. Dimensions of the ID are defined according to the international standard specifications as follows:

Width: 85.47 to 85.72 ml.

Length: 53.92 to 54.03 ml.

Thickness: 0.68 to 0.84 ml.

The ID includes the following information about each citizen:

- Office of issuance.
- National number.
- Full name (four).
- Place of residence.
- Gender.
- Religion.
- Profession.
- Husband's name (for married women).
- Expiry date of the ID card.

(1<sup>st</sup>) The citizen:

The citizen should apply within 6 months after turning 16 to the section of civil register of the district where he/she lives for obtaining personal identity card coupled with the supporting documents proving validity of data. The old card, if any, should be submitted.

(2<sup>nd</sup>): The civil registry section:

- Receiving the application form, validating the applicant's personality and completing data.
- Taking the finger print of the applicant.
- Capturing and saving the applicant's picture to the computer.
- Recording the application in the relevant book.
- Preparing a daily list of the submitted applications for replacement or issuance of personal ID cards.
- Preparing a portfolio containing all submitted applications including names, and record number to be sent to the issuing center.
- Receiving the IDs from the issuance terminal in the information center to be delivered to applicants.

(3<sup>rd</sup>) Information center:

- Receiving the applications' portfolio from civil Registry sections.
- Revising and comparing data against computer stored data, completing other data on the application, and starting ID issuance procedures.
- Sending the issued IDs by an official portfolio to the civil Registry section for delivery to applicants.
- Preparing the mobilization datum.
- Preparing the military service datum.

3. Law on civil status should clearly identify the agency in charge of providing the specific document proving change of religion. The law may define the church to which the person in question is affiliated, in terms of Christian cases, and Al Azhar for Muslims, as the agency mandated for providing such document. Other groups may acknowledge their belief or religion before the Real Estate Registry Office and two witnesses. Such acknowledgement should serve as reliable document for change of religion.

4. Defining a competent court, we believe that the administrative judiciary court affiliated with the State Council is the competent court to determine on disputes related to defining religion or validity of the relevant document.

5. Enacting legislation criminalizing and applying legal penalty for religion, or ethnicity based discrimination. By virtue of this legislation, persons who are proved to be involved in discrimination against male or female citizens shall be held accountable. In addition, establishing a national agency in charge of monitoring citizenship rights, receive and decide on relevant complaints<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> This recommendation is added from outputs of the First National Conference on Fighting Religious Discrimination.

## **Second, media.**

1. Promoting the journalism code of ethics, raising journalists and media professionals' awareness regarding adherence to the contents of the code<sup>10</sup>.
2. The Supreme Press Council, in cooperation with the Press Syndicate, should set up a specialized committee comprising journalism and media professors to follow up and monitor media content, in general, and Egyptian press in particular that include bias, or religious discrimination. In addition, the committee should publish monthly report on the defined violations and concurrently notify and warn press institutions and journalists who are involved in such violations threatening the value of equality and non discrimination based on religion<sup>11</sup> as well as jeopardizing the unity and stability of the Egyptian society.
3. Incorporating the citizenship concept in the agenda of state owned, private, party and religious oriented newspapers in particular as they attract citizens' attention.
4. Civil society, and human rights organizations in particular should deliver specialized training courses for beginner young journalists on values and concepts of citizenship and non discrimination based on religion.
5. Religious institutions specially the church and Egyptian Dar u Ifta (body in charge of passing Islamic rulings based on Sharia`a) should set up a media spokes office, like that of Al Azhar. The office would formulate and prepare press and media releases with a view to prevent twisting and falsifying statements of religious leaders, which, due to their large number create confusion about positions of such institutions towards incidents of sectarian and religious tension in Egypt.
6. Setting up an independent national council for broadcast media that is not subordinated to any government control or intervention. It would monitor the respect expressed by the Egyptian media outlets for freedom of expression, ensure they are not involved in calling for hate or discrimination based on religion, color, ethnicity, gender or other forms, and operate according to the code of professional principles that criminalize all forms of discrimination. A board of trustees

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<sup>10</sup> This is underscored by Mr. Salah Eassa, editor in chief of Al Qahera newspaper and key commentator in the media track of the study. He underscored commitment to the code in order to reflect the responsibility of the media which should realize its role in the society, otherwise, sectarian sedition incidents would turn into means for journalists to make gains.

The said recommendation concurs with the 9<sup>th</sup> recommendation of the outputs of the Third National Conference on Fighting Religious Discrimination (Media and Citizenship) which proposed activating principles included in the Press Code of Ethics approved by the Supreme Press Council issued in March 26<sup>th</sup> 1998. It stipulates in the second article of the journalist's commitment chapter that "commitment to refrain from bias to racist, extremist calls or those that imply abuse, or hate of religions, or undermining belief of others. In addition, refrain from calls to discrimination, or despise any of the strata of the society". Further, the Supreme Press Council should ensure enforcement of article (20) of the Press Law of 1996 including the same aforementioned text.

Ms. Eman Raslan, journalist, also underscored that media platforms should present the other different viewpoint in order to function as an objective and transparent media.

<sup>11</sup> Mr. Salah Eassa rejected introducing comparison between different religions in the media, as religion is an instinct. He suggested holding such comparisons in the context of scholastic settings only.

comprising public figures who are known for their independence would run the council<sup>12</sup>.

7. Focusing on preparing and organizing educational training programs for journalists and media professionals from various institutions on "Citizenship Journalism". It is a type of journalism that addresses different themes and issues facing the society based on a perspective that strengthens and underscores citizenship, and concurrently, rejects sectarianism, disintegration and fragmentation but ensures incorporation, national integration, and joint peaceful coexistence. In addition, incorporating principles of the citizenship value in the curricula of media departments in the Egyptian universities<sup>13</sup>.

### **3<sup>rd</sup>: Education and curricula.**

1. Amending Law number 139 of 1981 on Education so as to eliminate all forms of discrimination between citizens and ensure complete equality<sup>14</sup>.
2. Examining education material - Arabic language, social studies, history and others - and remove all material contradicting citizenship<sup>15</sup>.
3. Prepare lessons encouraging citizenship as part of different education curricula, such as lessons on the joint Egyptians' struggle (Muslims and Copts) for national independence, Coptic and Muslims heroic examples during October War, pioneer Christians such as: Makram Obaid, Weesa Wasef, Roshdy Said, Louis A`wad, Madgy Ya`qoub.. and others<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> This recommendation had been taken from the outputs of the Third National Conference on Fighting Religious Discrimination (Media and Citizenship).

<sup>13</sup> This recommendation had been taken from the outputs of the Third National Conference on Fighting Religious Discrimination (Media and Citizenship).

<sup>14</sup> This had been supported by the 8<sup>th</sup> recommendation that resulted from Second National Conference on Fighting Religious Discrimination calling for amending the second clause of article six of the Law on Education number 139 of 1983 stipulating that "running study competition for memorizing Quran in all school levels, and bonuses shall be allocated from the Supreme Education Council".

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Sheble Badran, former Dean of the Faculty of Education, Alexandria University and key commentator on the education track of the study said, there are religious texts included in the Arabic language curriculum that all students are obliged to memorize by heart. This reflects ignoring individuals from other religions.

Dr. Mahmoud Al Dab`a believes that principles of respecting other religious should be implanted in education in addition to treating Islamic and Christian religion education course equally.

Dr. A`zza Fat hy underscores that developer of the Arabic language curriculum is absolutely unaware of other sects in the society.

This recommendation concurs with the forth recommendation resulting from the National Conference on Fighting Discrimination which called for revisiting all educational material to be filtered from parts that deepens division, and sectarian differentiation among Egyptian citizens. She further called for ensuring teaching religion only as part of the religious curricula that should be oriented towards a joint moral framework. In addition, teaching tolerance material, acceptance of pluralism, diversity, respecting of human rights and religious freedom.

<sup>16</sup> Dr. Nabil Badran is for identifying citizenship concepts in the education curricula, and conducting "content analysis". He further underscored the idea of "implicit curricula" which means that the citizenship problem in education does not only lie in the educational curricula but rather the teacher's performance which serves as strong factor in the problem. He also referred to other interactions, including management style, interrelation among learners, and reaching method. Therefore, curricula should be based on the citizenship idea in the sense that developers would be supporters of the idea.

4. Developing ministerial regulation defining discriminatory practices in school, such as excluding Cops or girls from certain activities, using resentful descriptions for calling certain individuals, or any other action or verbal form of discrimination and setting forth adequate punishments.
5. Developing a ministerial regulation defining the male and female teachers' clothing whereby it will completely ban *Muntaqibah* (face covered) females from teaching and for men prevent them from wearing *Jilbab* (long loose dress) or the Afghani like dress.
6. Issuing ministerial directive encouraging citizenship related activities in wall magazines or school radio and follow up on such activities.
7. Conducting competitions on the national history, battles of independence and development and national leaders. For this purpose, proper awards would be given for outstanding work. Competitions and winners should be announced and published.
8. Organizing trips and visits to local, legislative, and executive institutions as well as to courts to highlight their operation, objectives and role in the progress of society.
9. Promoting artistic activities that focus on reviving patriotic singing heritage of Umm Kolthoum, Mohammad Abdul Wahhab, Abdul Halim Hafez, Sheikh Imam and others.
10. Replacing curricula of national education with civil education for the purpose of: encouraging students for societal and political participation that does not involve ideological bias, refrain from any form of discrimination among citizens, acting under the Constitution and law, and introducing constitutional articles that encourage participation and underscore equality, justice and equal opportunities<sup>17</sup>.
11. Activating elections of students' unions, encouraging students to create advocacy and lobbying groups, and developing electoral platforms for candidates covering the nature of political and national participation.
12. Developing a hotline under the minister of education to receive discrimination related complaints, investigate them and introducing adequate solutions.
13. Setting exam dates centrally in order to avoid upsetting Copts specially during mid term exams that usually concur with Christmas celebrations.
14. Schools should implement a citizenship project involving creating a team including boys, girls, Muslims and Christians from students and teachers. The team would carry out a service oriented project covering the neighborhood or village where the school is located. For this purpose, they will contact government institutions, municipalities, executive bodies, universities, NGOs, natural leaders including parents, mayors and public figures. Certainly, project will be diverse including: planting trees, illuminating streets, filling unused ditches and stagnant lakes, building a fence around the youth center, painting houses of the poor, fund raising for medical care associations, decorating fences of the government agencies, writing poetry and proverbs about loving the homeland which is

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<sup>17</sup> Dr. Shebl Badran suggests teaching common values among different sects. The same opinion had been supported by Dr. Mahmoud Al Dab`a's research for common principles in different religions to be taught as part of the curricula.



abundantly available in our national memory. Students, while implementing the project, will be introduced to different laws, communicate with executive and local bodies, parties, and CSOs. In addition, they will hold artistic and sports competitions, arrange to gather for local type of lunch sharing the same "Tabliyah" (traditional wooden round dining table with very low legs, that one has to sit on the floor to eat). To this effect, the ministry will set forth criteria for successful projects which mobilize all types of strata of the society, in addition to providing awards and certificates of recognition that are offered in public competitions. Media will be able to pin point among our students and teachers real heroes who love their country and work hard for her sake.

15. Incorporating Azhari institutes into the civil education system under the ministry of education's supervision. Consequently, Al Azhar University will become a university offering Islamic religious studies allowing university graduates to join, if they wish to do so. In addition, religious studies should be developed in a manner that addresses contemporary and future problems and issues instead of remaining confined in the ancient past.

## **II. Reports of the Fact Finding Missions**

**First Report**  
**Incidents of Khosous and Cathedral**

Prepared by Attorney Sa`aid Abdul Maseeh

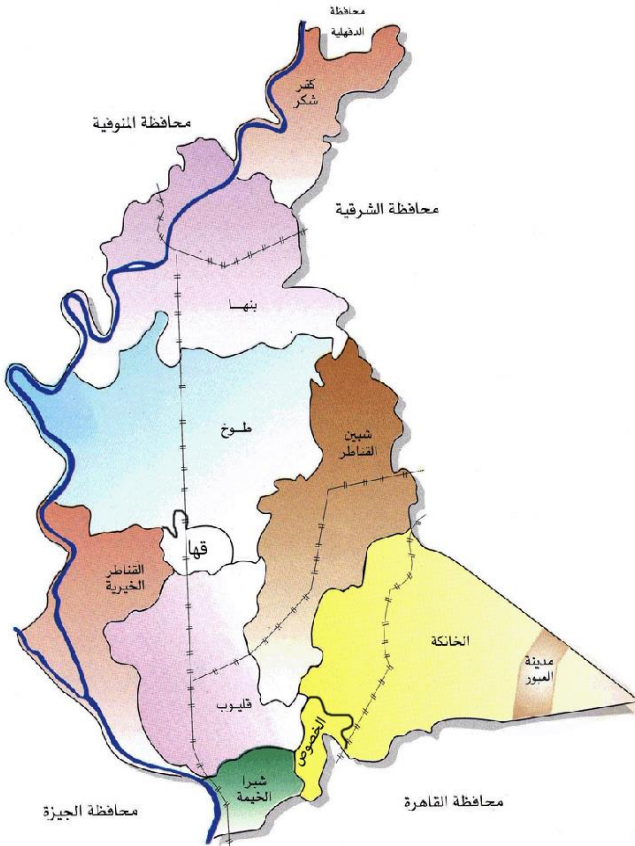
## First: Report on Khosous Incidents in Qaliyoubia

### 1. Qaliyoubia Governorate:

One of Egypt's governorate located in the east Nile region at the top of Delta and Banha is its capital. Qaliyoubia is bordered with Cairo and Giza Governorates from the south, Daqahliya and Ghariba Governorates in the north, and from east and west Sharqiya and Menoufiya Governorates, respectively.

Qaliyoubia Governorate stands as the third in "Greater Cairo" region in addition to Cairo and Giza Governorates.

Qaliyoubia comprises 9 precincts, Khosous is located in the south eastern part of Qaliyoubia Governorate. The city is bordered by Syriaqoas village in the north, and the urban block of Cairo borders with Khosous in the south and west. It is located east of the Cairo - Shebeen elQanater agriculture road, and west to the railway connecting Cairo and east Delta cities.



Khosous was an agricultural village, however, in few years, it turned to a residential city (informal), with narrow streets accommodating residential towers. According to 2008 statistics, population is 2.5 million with a Muslim majority. Christians formulate almost one third of the population. The city hosts a large number of *Masjeds* and churches in addition to major companies and factories such as "Egypt Oil - Petrogas - Cairo for Oil Refinery - Oil Cooperation - Sheni Company for Porcelain and China - Anassr Company for Glass Manufacturing (formerly known as Yasseen)

- Cairo Water Plant". Although several industries are operating in the city, however, State supervision is missing, just like other informal squatters in the sense that it lacks basic services coupled with increased rate of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment. Figure (2) shows Khosous as one of the highest cities of the governorate in terms of population density whereby it provides conducive environment for sectarian sedition. Population composition is closer to tribalism because the majority are descendants of Upper Egypt's governorates such as (Asuit - Suhag - Minia) whereby they are connected by kinship, marriage relations or come from the same village or city. This situation establishes strongly the revenge culture specially that some Christian families living in Khosous had immigrated from Upper Egypt either voluntary or by force through security authorities as an escape from past sectarian incidents that affected them in the sense of deaths and

loosing properties in their original place of living. Therefore, Khosous, before being hit by sectarian sedition, had been a safe haven for those who experience the bitter taste of sectarianism. This category of Christians use extremism in face of extremism, and respond to violence by violence. The threat of Khosous sedition and its consequences results from the type of fight which is closer to street war that might be an initiation of civil war unless wise people would intervene to stop blood shed.

### **1. Background:**

Recently in Khosous, groups of thugs and extremists started to appear in the area of "Annoura" occupying a street behind Saint George Church. They engaged in harassing women specially Christians, therefore, lawyer Eskandar Sameer (former candidate for the membership of People's Assembly in 2010) contacted Khosous Chief Investigator who promised to enforce the law and arrest the harassing thugs. Two days before the incidents and close to (Eskandar's) family house, some of the thugs were seen in company of two people; R.A and M.A and an informant from Khosous police station. They were trying to resolve the problem of Muslim young men harassment to Christian girls but discussion was heated, in response, the informant fired gun on Eskandar's family to intimidate him.

### **2. Escalation of incidents:**

On Friday April 5<sup>th</sup> 2013, a fight erupted between a Christian and a Muslim as result to a past problem (occurred since four months). In this regard, the Muslim citizen harassed two Christian women who is the sister and sister in law of "Naseem Farouq" whose house had been burnt during the incidents, while they were coming back home. This incident concurred with a group of children who drew the swastika - symbol of Nazism - on the walls of the Azhari Institute walls facing "Eskandar's" family house. Names were written in red painting around the drawing (Saleh - Ahmad - Moustafa - Battah) consequent to the fight between "Naseem Farouq" and others because of Naseem's sister. Thugs came from "Annoura" in groups carrying machine guns, pistols and cartridge weapons to assault "Nassem's" family, seized their house, and shot fire on both houses of "Naseem" and "Eskandar" families who hid inside, closed doors, and started throwing stones from the roof. A family member shot aimless fire from the balcony for intimidation, but then he aimed to the street when thugs drew close to storming into the house, during exchange of fire<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Deaths, casualties and losses:

Mohammad Mahmoud Mohammad, 18 years old - murder in error - as result to a bullet penetrating through his neck. Khosous residents are accusing either Nassem and Eskandar' families or thugs for the murder of this young man.

**Mohammad Gorysh** - injury- cut in his right thigh as result to penetration of a bullet.

**Mohammad Al Gendy** - the uncle of the aforementioned injured person who went to see him - cut in his hand.

- An unknown person had been injured by stone hit.
- Complete destruction of the house of Eskandar's family and theft of the properties.
- Destruction of Dr. "Morqos" pharmacy.

During the fight between the two families of "**Naseem and Eskandar**" from the Christian side and some extremists on the Muslim side, a Sheikh stood on the pulpit of Nour elHady ennabawy Masjed affiliated with the Shar`ia Association in Khosous City of Qaliyoubia Governorate, he used the microphone and called upon Muslims to head towards Eskandar's house to protect Muslims. In response to drawing the swastika on the institute's wall, Muslims gathered from the same and other areas, while Christians began to gather in front of the church to protect it. Complete family of Eskandar, after the call launched by a Sheikh, managed to escape leaving their house, under aimless firing, in few minutes crowds grew in front of Eskandar's family house. A number of local thugs and others from outside (groups of face covered men carrying machine guns and riding semi trucks, and motor bikes had been seen) broke into Eskandar's family house, stole properties, destroyed and set the house on fire. They also assaulted the warehouses under the house, took the plastic, set fire on two cars in the garage, two pharmacies owned to Christians and garment factory.

During the event, S.A together with a group of face covered men, taking advantage of the fury, broke the church's glass and window, attempted to set it on fire by throwing Molotov cocktail as he was troubled from the church because of the loud sound of psalms. This same person filed several police reports and complaints against this evangelical church for being harmed of the loud sound of psalms. He got the chance to get rid of the church. Concurrently, a group of local Christians head towards Saint George Church to protect it against aggression as the church is located 500 m from the events' site. Sectarian related incidents in Khosous, resulted into murder of 6 Christians who were not involved in the incidents. They are not from the families of "Eskandar / Nasseem". They were either coming back from work or going out with his fiancée.

For the second day, clashes continued in Khosous, for no obvious reason, but between security forces and Coptic youth. In this regard, extremists fired cartridge on Saint George Church, young men responded by stones and security forces threw tear gas bombs. Incidents continued for the third day, Sunday April 7<sup>th</sup>. In the evening, people marched through Khosous streets, condemning the events and chanting "Hands are together between Muslims and Christians". Simultaneously, a number of people gather in Safa street near the church carrying Molotov cocktail bottles, some people informed that they were Christians who came from A`in Shams, E`zbet eNakhl, Marg, Nourah, Zarayeb and other areas close to Khosous and set fire on a coffee shop, and roastery owned to a Muslim. A number of Muslims used the roof of the two places for shooting cartridge on Christians. However, Molotov cocktail carriers threw it on the houses of Christians facing the coffee shop. Both sides bombarded each other with benzine bottles. Security forces totally refrained from intervention but rather took the position of observer and spectator leaving the situation to aggravate. A group of Muslims gathered in Salah u Deen Masjed in Safa street carrying weapons. At 2:00 AM of the next day, security forces attacked the Masjed, and arrested the people inside who possessed fire arms and Molotov cocktail bottles. Khosous mayor, Haj Omar Hassanain reported saying "there were hunters carrying machine guns, they are not from Khosous" . Some of Khosous local residents informed that the hunters are not Egyptians.

### **3. Attacking the Papal (Cathedral) Headquarters during Khosous victims' funeral procession:**

After the autopsy of Copts dead bodies, the victims of sectarian clashes in Khosous, the victims' families decided to conduct funeral service in the Papal Headquarters, in the Coptic Cathedral in Cairo's neighborhood of Abbaseya. A huge number of Copts, including the families of victims and others coming from various places sympathizing with the victims' families, congregated at the Cathedral. Also, a significant number of moderate Muslims joined the throngs feeling for Copts in every encountered sectarian incident. Pope Tawadros II was not present in the funeral service.

Mourners escorting the deceased victims' procession yelled with cries against the ruling regime and MB. During the departure of victims' dead bodies from the Cathedral, clashes erupted between mourners and local residents. Many stories were said in this regard. **The first story** stated that mourners were unexpectedly prevented from leaving the Cathedral by thugs attacking the funeral procession, coming from the two streets facing the Cathedral main door, firing cartouche bullets and throwing Molotov canisters and rocks. Mourners, hence, escaped with the coffins and about two thousand people were besieged in the Cathedral; thugs at the main door were throwing them with Molotov canisters, firing cartouche bullets and breaking the Cathedral surveillance cameras in order not to be identified.

**Another story mentioned** that people joining the funeral procession had broken and burnt some cars, thus, local residents had to face them. Besides, outrageous young people were the ones confronting such actions and local residents arrested were trying to defend their properties. Clashes went on from 2:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m., that is to say 8 continuous hours with police attempts trying to control the clashes.<sup>19</sup>

### **4. Student and people marches:**

A group of national forces, for instance Maspero Youth Union, Egyptian Center for Development and Human Rights and others organized marches denouncing Khosous sectarian incidents and the attack on the Cathedral. Also, dozens from Ain Shams University students conducted a march heading from the University Campus to the Cathedral in Abbaseya, condemning the clashes that took place around the Cathedral leading to the death of two people and disapproving the acts of sectarian violence that occurred in Khosous and resulting in the death of six people. Students rose banners backing national unity between Muslims and Christians and opposing the ruling regime. Furthermore, the following movements participated in the former protests: 6<sup>th</sup> of April Youth Movement, Democratic Front, Socialist Revolutionaries, Union of Liberal Youth, Constitution Party Students, Ain Shams Free People Movement and Strong Egypt

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<sup>19</sup> **Such clashes taking place around the Cathedral resulted in:**

- The death of Mahrous Hanna Ibrahim, 30 years
- A dangerous criminal fell off a building. He was attacking Copts from the top of the building
- 66 injured people most of them are Copts.
- Other people suffered from minor injuries and treated in ambulance cars located around the Cathedral.

Student Movement.

### **5. Security forces role:**

Security forces did not interfere except after about 48 hours on the incidents outbreak and the increase in victims' numbers. The security forces further slackened, since the flaring up of incidents, in arresting the member of Eskandar family who fired bullets and the murderer of a Muslim. Moreover, they left the assailants who were burning the Baptist "Evangelical" Church to safely leave the incident site. In the next day, in which clashes reoccurred, a number of security leaderships from Qaliyoubia governorate were trying to dismiss the young Copts rallying in front of the church, redeploy the forces around the church and send Muslims away from the area, so as to apply the peaceful agreement concluded with the area renowned families. They also pledged that the church will be protected by the policemen, and during such attempts the investigation officials observed some people carrying pistols and found with others a bag full of Molotov canisters, thus they asked the area remarkable figures to control such people and hand them over to the police. Meanwhile, people tried to attack the security forces and fired cartouche bullets from height on them; therefore Central Security Forces were forced to use tear gases to separate the people. The area accordingly witnessed again a war-like scene between the Copts and police forces, during which a police officer was shot and sent to Khosous hospital for treatment, a soldier was injured and the security forces were still trying to control the situation.

### **6. Prosecution investigations on Khosous incidents:**

Prosecution investigations resulted in accusing 13 Muslims of violence actions, torching fires during the incidents and causing the death of 5 Christians. Investigations did not prove the incident of intentionally burning a Christian by pouring benzene on his head, yet it was perceived that he was afflicted by one of the thrown burning Molotov canister. Furthermore, it was noticed that 5 of the accused people were dangerous criminals, who were previously accused of attempted killing, drugs possession, causing impairment, weapons possession and beating. The prosecution encountered the accused people with the investigations results, recorded videos of church cameras and some of the videos recorded by people from both sides used by the police to identify the accused people. Investigations clarified that members of "Eskandar" family were the spark of the first incident when they opened fire on people standing in front of their house near to the Religious Institute fence; they were arrested after surrendering to the police forces. The judge of Al Khanka Partial Court ruled that 17 Muslims and 15 Copts remain in detention, accused of participating in strife and clashes taking place in front of Khosous Mar Girgis (St. George) Church, after being accused by prosecution of resorting to violence, possessing unlicensed weapons, disturbing public order, torching sedition fire, killing and attempted killing.

**In relation to attacking the Cathedral**, the prosecution decided to put 10 people in detention for 4 days, being accused of conducting thugs' actions, crowding, intentionally destroying public and private properties, attacking worshiping places, possessing unlicensed weapons and ammunitions and having Molotov canisters and explosives. Prosecution delayed questioning the accused people about Mahrous Hanna Ibrahim



murdering until receiving the final evidences and finishing the investigations related to the murderer. Investigations and eyewitnesses proved that the death of the second victim Ahmed Sid resulted from falling off the Church roof while trying to steal the Church camera.<sup>20</sup>

According to the defendants statements, they were present in the church to attend the service of Khosous incidents victims and to participate in the funeral procession and victims' burial, and when they knew about the clashes between some of Abbaseya local residents and a number of outrageous Christian young people, they headed to check on such clashes occurring around the Cathedral. While standing in front of the Church, they were beaten and simply injured as a result of the thrown rocks and Molotov canisters. The defendants denied participating in the incidents and emphasized on leaving the church once the police forces started using tear gas bombs to break up the clashes. Three of the Muslim defendants stated in the prosecution investigations that they were overtaken by the clashes eruption in their way back home after work, and that they stood watching the clashes surrounding the Church until the Central Security Forces used tear gas bombs, then they left to their houses in Al Waily area. Other 3 Muslim defendants said that they were not present even near to the Cathedral during the clashes and that they knew about such incidents from the television coverage and were arrested by the police forces just for being of criminal records.

#### **7. Official parties' reactions:**

- **Holy Azhar reaction:** in the crisis following day, 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2013, Al Azhar sent a delegation headed by Al Azhar Grand Imam Counselor Dr. Mahmoud Azab to Khosous incident site and met with Mar Girgis (St. George) Church Priest; both parties agreed on the importance of unifying the religious tolerance discourse delivered through different podiums and providing the required security for the Church together with "Family House" association following up of investigations held concerning the assault incidents witnessed by Khosous. Such an initiative was nothing but a meeting. The meeting was attended by a number of political parties' representatives and Khosous renowned families' members. Despite of all the people sincere feelings, clear awareness and total refusal of the culture of violence and sectarian ideas, such were mere ideas without someone to adopt. It is noteworthy that gun fires, from unknown sources, were heard around the Church after Al Azhar delegation left; hence raising the fears of both Muslims

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<sup>20</sup> The Christian indictees:

- Shady Samy Yaqoub, 29 years, unemployed
- Rimon Shehata Abdel Massih, 30 years, unemployed
- Nabil Karam, 33 years, unemployed
- Mikel Morqous Ibrahim, escaping from judicial rulings

The Muslim indictees:

- Arafa Abdel Ghany Ibrahim, 34 years, dangerous criminal in 16 cases including forced stealing
- Imad Attiah, 27 years, previously accused in 8 cases including beating, possessing drugs and robbing houses
- Hassan Morsy Sid, 32 years, previously accused of possessing drugs and weapons in unexecuted cases
- Ahmed Allaa Din Hussein, found with him cartouche bullets
- Hussein Samir Hassan Eid, 33 years, dangerous criminal, previously accused in 20 cases and was criminally arrested

and Christians residing around the Church. Such gun fires resulted not in any injuries.

- **Presidency reaction:** the Presidency condemned the incidents that took place in Khosous, Qaliyoubia governorate and emphasized stringently on confronting any attempts of fanning the flames of sectarian sedition. Presidency further expressed condolences for the victims' families and issued a statement in the evening of the incident following day<sup>21</sup> tackling the Cathedral incidents too. As mentioned in the statement issued by Dr. Issam Hadad office, Assistant to President on Foreign Relations and International Cooperation, the Cathedral incidents erupted when the people escorting the funeral procession of the Copts killed in Khosous incidents started in breaking cars located in Ramses Street surrounding the Cathedral in Abbaseya, thus the local residents replied back by throwing rocks. The statement also referred to observing people possessing live ammunition, Molotov canisters and rocks on the Cathedral roof; thus the police forces had to interfere by using tear gas to end up the clashes. It has been emphasized that investigations are underway to reveal the identity of people involved in Khosous and the Cathedral incidents and that police forces were in total self control while dealing with the situation. In addition, the statement pinpointed the Presidency ultimate refusal of different violence forms and under any pretext, highlighting that all Egyptians are citizens having equal rights before law. Presidency will not accept any attempts to divide the nation, incite sedition or cause conflict among Egyptians, consequently exerting each and every effort to achieve the rule of law and adjudicating the people involved in such incidents.

- **Shura Council reaction:** Shura Council convened a special session, to discuss Khosous and the Cathedral incidents, chaired by Dr. Ahmed Fahmy, who started by tackling the tragic incidents of Khosous and the Coptic Cathedral in Abbaseya, which resulted in a number of victims, killed and injured. The session was preceded by a meeting for the Committee of Defense and National Security, where a number of members proposed to hold an urgent session; **the appointed Coptic member Mamdouh Ramzy said** "the country is passing by a dangerous phase which should be dealt with wisely and objectively. We should also calm down as only with calmness soundness exist. Ramzy called upon the Council to rapidly form a fact-finding committee and expressed his sorrow for the repetition of sectarian incidents like that of Khosous and the repercussions of which that followed around the Cathedral. The appointed member further said that the religious belief is a relationship between the Creator and the created and that the incidents taking place in Egypt are attributed to the absence of people conscience and the non-prevalence of homeland public interest concept.

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<sup>21</sup> The statement was as follows: "Presidency followed the sorrowful incidents witnessed by "Khosous", in Qaliyoubia governorate, on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> of April, resulting in a number of victims, killed and injured. Presidency, hence, expresses condolences to the victims' families, rejects totally any acts that infringe the unity of the homeland and calls for facing up severely any attempts to foment sectarian sedition between Egypt Muslims and Christians.

The Presidency urges all citizens to respect the law, keep away from any acts violating the homeland security and stability and discard any tendentious rumors. Presidency is following up the investigations carried out by General Prosecution to identify the actual reasons behind such incidents."

**PM Issam Al Arian, Head of Parliamentary Board in Freedom and Justice Party,** expressed his condolences for all Christians and emphasized on the idea of stirring up discord as referred to by the member Mamdouh Ramzy. Al Arian added that those sowing dissension among Egyptians will fail as happened with Lord Cromer during the occupation era. He further mentioned that people involved in the incidents should be revealed and those who gathered not evidences and obliterated facts should be held accountable, in order not to end up with hired criminals, lacking full evidences and thus released similar to the famous criminals releasing campaign. Al Arian called upon the religious associations (Coptic and Islamic) to assume its roles in order to restore the homeland unity and the media means to reveal facts rather than flaming strife. The opinion of **Dr. Safwat Abdel Ghany, Deputy of Shura Council for Building and Development Party,** stated in this session on Khosous and Abbaseya incidents, resulted in a heated argument with the Coptic Council members. To elaborate, Dr. Abdel Ghany requested the church to calm Coptic young people in order to ward off extremism, which if practiced by Copts will be faced by counter extremism from the other side. Dr. Abdel Ghany further asked not to mingle policy with religion, adding that employing the incident politically is considered a mistake and even a sin and crime. These words raised the anger of Coptic Council members and thus asked for the floor to reply back. In response to receiving not the floor, a number of Coptic members left the session.

Coptic and a number of civil parties' members blamed Ministry of Interior and the government for the victims falling in the Cathedral incidents in the aftermath of the clashes occurring between Muslims and Christians. The members, hence, called for discharging Major General Mohammad Ibrahim, Minister of Interior. **The member Haile Selassie, representative of Free Egyptians Party,** was instigated and threatened to leave the session because of the non-attendance of the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior to answer the council members' questions related to the incidents. He then left the session followed by the member Fredy Al Biady who convinced him to come back and attend the session.

**The Coptic member Suzy Adly Nashed** emphasized that the reason behind the stirred up strife was the absence of security, pinpointing that such strife will be the nation destructive factor. She also hardly criticized the absence of Ministry of Interior, and questioned the reason behind not attending to clarify the measures taken by the Ministry to secure the Cathedral, being a holy place unprecedentedly attacked. **The member Mostafa Hamouda of Al Wafd Party and the Council Deputy** denounced the government loose reaction to such disaster and said: where is the Minister of Interior?! Where is the Prime Minister?! Why do we always accuse a third party ... accusing the unknown!! **The member Nilly Emmail Thabet** said for non-repetition sake I have only one question: where is the Minister of Interior?!

– **Orthodox Church reaction:** Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark, did not lead the funeral service of Khosous victims as he has been in meditative seclusion at the Saint Bishoy Monastery in Wadi Al Natrun. He was

conducting prayers during the incidents until the Sunday following the incidents. Pope Tawadros, via “Al Nahar” satellite channel, called upon all officials to take realistic and rapid actions concerning the latest Copts-related incidents and stated that security transgression is refused because it seriously affects human rights and law in Egypt. The Pope described the Egyptian law as being “dormant” and ineffective saying “we held a conciliation session between Muslims and Copts in Khosous, so as the people there can live somehow in security”. Pope Tawadros called for the necessity of taking “realistic actions” by Egyptian officials particularly because 10 days have passed after the incidents and required actions were not, the matter leading to deep frustration and sorrow among Copts. The Pope added that “Copts are suffering from various problems, for instance hindering the construction of churches, existence of loose laws which are not applied on all people equally and discrimination on the bases of religion in relation to different State positions.” In addition, he said “what really concerns me is the image of Egypt. The Khosous incidents were followed by attacking the Papal Headquarters, which is the oldest and biggest church in the Orient. Such is considered to be a matter degrading the status of Egypt before the whole world and adversely affecting Egypt economy, foreign aids, tourism and international ranking, consequently putting Egypt on equal footing with countries disrespecting laws and human rights. This is really painful for me as an Egyptian, loving Egypt and loving every Egyptian person, whether Muslim or Christian.” In relation to the conciliation session held in Khosous and arresting some Coptic young men on the Cathedral incidents by the security forces, the Pope said “I refuse security transgression and attempted balancing because such actions take us away from the framework of law; such kind of wrong treatments for crucial issues should be discarded.”

The Pope added saying that “we should know that incidents similar to Khosous are not treated except with conciliation, as long as law is dormant there is no other option, as people striving for subsistence need to live and the burden imposed on the poor citizen needs to be alleviated. Therefore, people can come out of their houses after the horror witnessed in the shed of security and law absence.” The Pope met with a group of Shura Council members, representing different parties and the civil current, who went to offer condolences for the martyrs killed in Khosous and the Cathedral incidents. The Pope said “we had an implicit compliment-free conversation, in which we brought up many related points and various escalating problems endured by the nation and society and supposedly serious endeavors are required to solve such problems.” The Pope added that “Gamal Al Etaify report on assaulting Copts in Al Khanka in 1972 was mentioned, in which a “treatment” was presented. However, 41 years have passed and such a treatment was not taken in consideration. Many incidents took place characterized by sectarian violence actions, with clear reasons and known people, but law was not applied; leading to Coptic people fury, sadness and frustration.”<sup>22</sup>

– **General Congregation Council for Coptic Orthodox Church reaction:** the General Congregation Council held a meeting on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2013, on the Papal

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<sup>22</sup> Pope statements to Middle East Christian News Agency (MCN)

Headquarters of Saint Mark Cathedral in Abbaseya. The members of the Council emphasized that they will continually convene to follow up the development of situation and investigations. They also pinpointed their full support to actions of Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark. They even issued a very strong statement.<sup>23</sup>

– **Egyptian Council of Churches reaction:** Egyptian Council of Churches expressed deep sorrow for the tragic incidents witnessed by Khosous town in Qaliyoubia, leading to a number of people injured and killed. The Council, in an issued statement, expressed heartfelt regret for the unprecedented incident of attacking Saint Mark Cathedral in Abbaseya, the symbol of Christianity in Egypt, the Middle East and the whole world and even one of the biggest Christian churches in the world. It also felt strongly sorry for the unjustified assault on groups of Christians in their way out of the Cathedral during the funeral procession of Khosous incidents victims, resulting in the death of one person and seriously injuring dozens. The Council called upon the people of Egypt to be reasonable in order to maintain the nation integrity and sincere people safety, underscoring the necessity of law application on all people equally and severely punish those manipulating with the nation unity.

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<sup>23</sup> The text of statement “General Congregation Council offers deep condolences to the families of Khosous and Cathedral incidents martyrs and to any Egyptian family that lost any of its children in the course of this week. The Council announces its serious concern about the systematic sectarian instigation against Egypt Christians, escalating during the last few months and resulting from the slackening of State institutions’ in applying law on all people equally and the political leadership failure to adjudicate known criminals in previous incidents or take decisive actions to put an end to the undeterred rising sectarian violence. Such has resulted in wasting the State dignity and disrespecting laws, citizens, freedoms and religious institutions.

In the shed of the unprecedented absence of political leadership role concerned with uniting people and diffusing sectarian crisis, the situation even reached the extent of allowing people to attack the funeral procession of the sectarian violence martyrs and assault Saint Mary Cathedral and the Papal Headquarters in front of the police forces and leaderships for long hours without serious interference.

All the mindful Egyptians witnessed the police forces shooting tear gases intensively inside the attacked Cathedral and saw people with covered faces inside the police armored-vehicles during the attack on the Cathedral. Such actions, thus, raise doubts in the reality of incidents and highlight a dangerous unprecedented shift not witnessed even during the worst eras of religious freedoms subjugation practices made by the State bodies against the Egyptian people and Egypt Christians and churches.

Therefore, the Council lays the full responsibility on the President and Prime Minister for the lack of justice, security and the suspicious involvement of some executive bodies’ officials and slackening to protect the citizens, properties and worship houses. We, hence, request an independent investigation on the incidents and holding accountable criminals and instigators together with those who slackened to deter the assailants and concealed them.”

**Second Report**  
**Al Wasta Church Incidents**  
By Journalist Mohammad Bosailah

## Second: Report on Al Wasta Incidents in Beni Suef Governorate

### 1. Beni Suef Governorate

The total governorate area is estimated by 10954 Km<sup>2</sup>. Beni Suef is located in the center of 6 governorates: Giza governorate from the Northern side (particularly Helwan), Suez governorate from Eastern Northern side, Red Sea governorate from the East, Fayoum governorate from the West and Al Menya governorate from the South. Beni Suef governorate is affiliated to North Upper Egypt region (Fayoum, Beni Suef, AlMenya). Such a region connects the Northern side of Egypt to the Southern, Eastern and Western sides.

Such pivotal affiliations formed the governorate geographic, demographic, cultural and economic characteristics. The governorate vital location formed a geographic proximity to many Egyptian governorates, thus it is considered reachable from any governorate assisted by a network of transportation means existing in the governorate, which is an important factor for the carried out economic processes. Being near to a number of essential governorates, like Cairo and Giza governorates characterized by commercial, economic and demographic significance, and Red Sea, Fayoum and Ismailia governorates known by touristic activities assisted in marketing Beni Suef industrial products.

### 2. Background:

“Al Wasta” town, in Beni Suef, witnessed sparks of sectarian strife between Muslims and Christians. Some of the political “Islamic” leaderships prevented Christians from practicing their commercial activity and forced them to close their stores until the return of Rana Hatem Al Shazly, a 20 year girl who disappeared from about a month. The girl family accused one of the “Christian” young men of kidnapping her in cooperation with “Christian” leaderships in Mar Girgis (St. George) Church, as the family found a diary of their girl including “Christian” terms and sentences and sayings explaining the history of Christianity. From her diary and papers, it was known that she was having a relationship with a Christian young man called “Abram, 23 years”. The papers also included a mobile number accompanied by the name of Priest “Fanous”, the Priest of Biad Al Arab Church.

### 3. Escalation of incidents:

A picture was taken for the young man, while withdrawing an amount of 18 thousand pounds from the girl account and an ATM machine. Therefore, the young people of Al Wasta town led by a Salafi leader and a former PM organized protests in front of the church asking for the girl return. They even forced the town Christians to close their stores and halt their commercial activity until the girl returns.



Copts closure of stores went on for a week, until some of the town wise people organized a meeting comprising representatives of the kidnapped girl family, Al Wasta people union, security officials, number of reasonable men, members of renowned families and a delegation from the church including Coptic people and men of religion in order to put an end to the dispute. The meeting resulted in “Christian” traders’ resuming commercial activity and reopening their stores. During the meeting, the people agreed upon reopening the Coptic stores against intensifying efforts for the return of the girl within one month, especially after identifying the young man who kidnapped the girl and determining the location of his family house in Beni Suef. At the same time, around one hundred young people protested in front of Mar Girgis (St. George) Church, in Al Wasta in line with the customary session held to get back the girl, in the shed of the intensive security forces guarding the Church.

Different sources stated that the young man was identified and his family house was located, his name is “Abram” and is living in Beni Suef. This information was provided by Coptic people after seeing the young man picture taken during his withdrawal of the 18 thousand pounds from the girl account and by the ATM machine camera. The Church delegation and a number of men of religion agreed upon searching for the young man and the girl. The repercussions of such a problem included Muslim traders complaining from being affected by the closure of Copts stores for having commercial dealings and transactions between Muslim and Christian parties. Thus, a recession status was witnessed and fears on commercial interests and properties prevailed among people. Also, people were scared the slipping of people during the protests.

The Salafi leader and previous PM delivered a speech, after the Friday prayer held in *Masjed Al Tahrir* adjacent to Mar Girgis (St. George) Church in Al Wasta town, in which he said that the Muslim “kidnapped” girl has travelled with a “Christian” young man to Turkey and if the security forces are incapable of getting the girl back, they should send the address to her father in order to go and get her from “Turkey”. The “Salafi leader” asked Al Wasta “Muslims” to monitor their girls during such a critical stage and revealed that 4 girls are having relationships with “Christian” young men. He further denied being responsible for closing the Coptic stores during the past days, emphasizing that it has been agreed to reopen the Coptic stores for 20 days until the girl returns. Also, he warned the people from the thugs waiting to carry out sabotage actions.

Such efforts came parallel to the request of the National Council for Human Rights, Beni Suef branch, to necessarily tackle the incidents occurring in Al Wasta, being afraid of leading to a sectarian strife. The political forces also called upon the renowned families and security leaderships to control the situation and to gather and find a quick solution for the problem.



**Third Report**  
**Fayoum Sersena Village Incidents**  
Prepared by Lawyer Ayman Tawfeek

## Third: Report on Tamiya Incidents in Fayoum Governorate

### 1. Fayoum Governorate:

Fayoum governorate is located in the Western Desert, 90 km western south side of Cairo governorate. It is one of Upper Egypt region governorates, surrounded by desert from all sides except for the eastern southern side, where it is connected to Beni Suef governorate. Its total area is estimated by 60 thousand km<sup>2</sup>, including 6 main administrative centers and around 400 thousand people.

### 2. Background:

Fayoum governorate lately witnessed, after the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution, some sectarian incidents, particularly in Tamiya town located in the governorate Northern side, which is considered the nearest to Cairo; being 25 km far from the governorate and 95 km from Cairo. Sectarian incidents took place in Fayoum governorate in the aftermath of the revolution, including for instance the incidents of Ezbet Hassan Shokry affiliated to Sersena village, Tamiya town, Fayoum, where the village Muslims assaulted a Christian man called Youssef Amin Youssef residing in Ezbet Hassan Shokry claiming that he is changing his house to a church to practice his religion rituals without acquiring a license. A minutes was filed with such an incident dated 06/01/2013, number 142 Of 2013, Tamiya. Such an incident was followed afterwards with Sersena Church incidents.

Three month prior to the main incident outbreak, a fight took place between “Hussein Kamel Saad” and his Christian neighbors, for having near to his house the Church, which is the cause of the incident. Disputes resulted from the practicing of Christians to their natural religious rituals, hence being exposed to insults and offenses by the aforementioned. Every Sunday, until the day of the incident, he repeatedly used to stand with his children to prohibit the Coptic people from entering the church.

### 3. Escalation of incidents:

In 15<sup>th</sup> February 2013, a fight took place between Priest Dumadius Habib, the Priest of Mar Girgis (St. George) Church in Sersena, Tamiya, and Muslim neighbors for embarking on setting concrete pillars on a near church-owned vacant land, which separates the Church from the land of Hussein Kamel from the Northern side. According to various gathered information, “the relationship between the Muslim neighbor and the Church priest was strained. The Muslim neighbor bored a hole in the wall between his house and the Church in order to observe what went on in the Church. Once observing the construction and concrete work, he expressed his refusal to such activities and also to the religious prayers under the pretext of being heard by his children. Dozens of village Muslims rallied and expressed refusal to the existence of the Church, which was established since 1980s and renovated in 2000 after receiving an official license number



347, in which Christian rituals are practiced and security guarding services are appointed similar to other churches. The Church area is estimated by 170 m<sup>2</sup>, made of one floor, the height of which is 2.8 m, constructed of bricks and at the top of which a wooden dome is found. Adjacent to the church a 400 meter vacant church owned land separating the Church from its neighbor.

As a result of the stated above incidents, the Church priest called security leaderships, who attended and tried to negotiate with both parties. Nevertheless, during the presence of the head of Tamiya prosecution, around 50 people roofed Hussein Kamel's house and started throwing rocks and Molotov canisters on the church; the church dome and a number of wooden chairs were burnt, glass windows were broken and assaults went on for around two hours starting at 5:00 p.m. without any interference from the present security forces, which did not arrest any of the assailants. The Muslim family of "Abdel Hamid Abdel Fattah" defended the Church Priest and escorted him to safety outside the village. Such an incident took place amidst huge throngs of the villagers. The security men banned journalists and satellite channel correspondents from accessing the Church and shooting the inflicted damages and asked them to acquire a prior permission from Fayoum archbishop or governor.

In response to the referred to incident, some of the village Christians filed a minutes with the incident in Tamiya police station, number 142 of 2013, where the Coptic people accused "Hussein Kamel Saad" and his children of attacking their church, attempting to burn and destroy the church, thus raising Muslims and Christians anger and preventing Christians from practicing their religious rituals.

When the security forces failed to find a solution, a delegation encompassing village men of reason led by "Abdel Hamid Abdel Fattah" held a conciliation session between the Muslim and the Coptic villagers, attended by the Muslim neighbors of the church, four Muslim eyewitnesses in addition to seven Coptic people. The session took place in Saturday evening, the incident day, and was under the protection of head of Tamiya prosecution in "Abdel Hamid Abdel Fattah" house. However, these attempts failed, as some Muslim villagers shouted repeating anti-Coptic cries and started throwing rocks and Molotov canisters on the church; "the church dome and a number of wooden chairs were burnt, glass windows were broken". The attacks went on for nearly two hours starting at 5:00 p.m. without any interference from the present security forces, which did not arrest any of the assailants. They further insulted the Church Priest and attempted to beat him until the family of "Abdel Hamid Abdel Fattah" interfered and defended the church priest and escorted him to safety outside the village. Such an incident took place amidst huge throngs of the villagers. The security men banned journalists and satellite channel correspondents from accessing the Church and shooting the inflicted damages and asked them to acquire a prior permission from Fayoum archbishop or governor.

#### **4. Different currents and media means reaction:**

- **Freedom and Justice Party in the village:** the party chairman "Hussein Abo Bakr" condemned the attack on the Church and the Christians, describing such actions as being unethical. He also disapproved the Christians construction of a church without a prior

permission, mentioning that the Constitution provides Coptic people with total freedom to build worshiping places in a way regulated by law. In addition, he said that people interfering for reaching conciliation between different parties are praise worthy.

- **Al Noor Salafi Party:** the party denied what has been said by media means that the party members were the villagers' instigators to attack and burn the Church. The party emphasized that the Church incidents are resulting from a personal conflict between the Church and the Muslim neighbor "Hussein Kamel" that occurred prior to the incidents outbreak and that the Party has no relation whatsoever with such incidents. At the same time, the Party denounced the inhumane assaults on the Church pinpointing that Muslims and Copts are partners in one nation.

**Fourth Report**  
**Mar Girgis (St. George) Church Incidents in Kom Ombo**  
**Aswan**  
**Prepared by Lawyer Ahmed Nady**

## Fourth: Report on Kom Ombo Incidents in Aswan Governorate

### 1. Aswan governorate:

Aswan is the southernmost governorate. It occupies an area of 63 thousands km<sup>2</sup>, comprises 4 main administrative centers, includes 10 cities and has a population of one million and a half people. The unemployment rate reaches 20% of labor force and the poverty rate accounts for 55% of population.

Kom Ombo is one of Aswan governorate cities, located 40 km North Aswan and has a population of 350 thousand people. Kom Ombo is one of the biggest commercial centers in Southern Upper Egypt. Most of the inhabitants work in agricultural, commercial and livestock and camel breeding activities.

### 2. Background:

A 35 year old woman called “Sahar Al Tony” disappeared on Monday 25/02/2011. She works as a teacher and lives with her family in an area called Al Moraba’t in Kom Ombo. She is divorced, has no children and from middle classed family. Her family started to search for her after her disappearance by asking in the school, neighbors and relatives. The first day of disappearance passed without finding her. When searching her room, they found in her wardrobe some pieces of papers including verses from the Bible and Christian prayers. Thus, they started to doubt in her school Coptic colleagues.

### 3. Escalation of incidents:

- On Thursday 28/02/2013, as a result of rumors circulated on kidnapping a girl in Mar Girgis (St. George) Church, groups of people gathered in the afternoon before the Church, cut Misr-Aswan agricultural road and the railway and threatened to attack and burn the Church if the girl was not taken out and surrendered to her family. Some reasonable people tried to break up the gathering and inform them that the girl is not in the Church, but the number of people increased and started to throw rocks and Molotov canisters on the Church. A field hospital was set up in the Church, as some of the people inside the Church were injured as a result of the thrown rocks and Molotov canisters. Security forces were deployed to protect the Church and they were preceded by *Masjed* Sheikhs and some of Kom Ombo reasonable figures who tried to refute the circulated allegations. During such incidents, many Christians abided by staying at their homes and closing their stores afraid of being attacked because of the strife hitting the city. Some of them, especially the young people, headed to protect the Church.

- On Saturday 02/03/2013, it was officially announced that the disappeared woman was found and restrained in Security Directorate of South Sinai.



- On Sunday morning 03/03/2013, the incidents calmed down and the Copts performed Sunday service in total peacefulness; surrounded with intensified presence of security forces and neighborhood watch groups. It is noteworthy that dozens of young Muslims volunteered to stand and secure the entrances and exits of the streets leading to the Church.

- Egyptian Family House Association decided to establish a branch in Aswan to carry out its entrusted role of preserving the national unity. Also, Al Azhar Grand Imam determined to send a delegation from the Egyptian Family House Association to Kom Ombo, headed by Al Azhar Grand Imam Counselor Dr. Mahmoud Azab.

- On Friday 08/03/2013, **Sheikh Ahmed Al Idreesy** held two meetings to explain the circumstances of the referred to woman disappearance and to calm down the people. The first meeting was convened in Al Idreesia Square after Friday prayer (*Salat Al Goma'*) and the other was made in the house of the disappearing women family in Al Moraba't after the evening prayer (*Salat Al E'shaa*) of the same day.

- To summarize what he said, such a woman knew a man through one of the social communication networks, from three years, who intensively talked to her about Christianity. He also phoned her directly and she actually started to take steps toward converting to Christianity, and through such a man she spoke to a priest. Then, they agreed to travel on Sunday. In effect, she travelled to Cairo and then to Sharm Sheikh until found by the security bodies.

**During such a period, since the outbreak of incidents and until holding the abovementioned meeting, the city Copts were exposed to verbal and physical attacks from some of the young Muslims and even some of the city Copts had to close their stores all along this period.**