Schedule 1 – An Update to *Religious Freedom in Egypt: The Case of the Christian Minority*

Egypt after the June 2009 Report

According to the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), there have been at least 53 incidents of sectarian violence or tension between January 2008 and January 2010.[1] These include some events mentioned in the June 2009 report as well as events that have occurred after its publishing. This amounts to approximately 2 incidents each month during this period. The EIPR found that "in some governorates such as Sharqiya, only one incident has taken place, but in others, such as Minya, there have been 21 incidents".

It is noteworthy that the EIPR has analysed these incidents in terms of the type of sectarian violence. In summary, there are four types of incidents that account for the largest percentage of cases of persecution against Copts in Egypt – in the order of their frequency: acts of collective retribution; violence prompted by Christians engaging in their religious rites; targeting of churches; and, premeditated murder on the basis of religious identity.[2] These are described in more detail in the footnote.

Without attempting to describe all of the events of persecution that have occurred since the publishing of the 2009 report, some of the major events that have occurred are the following, grouped by type of incident:

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[1] "Two Years of Sectarian Violence: What happened? Where do we begin? An Analytical Study of Jan 2008 -Jan 2010", p.5, available at: http://www.eipr.org/en/report/2010/04/11/776, accessed January 29, 2011. For more information, please also see other periodic reports on this same website. The periodic reports give details on events occurring per 3 month time period.

[2] **1) Acts of collective retribution:** These acts target adherents of a particular religion in one area, the majority of which involve Muslims attacking Christians. These attacks spring from an irrational conviction that all Christians in the area are responsible for an act attributed to one or more Christians towards one or more Muslims.

2) Violence prompted by Christians engaging in their religious rites: (i.e. Christians praying, trying to hold worship services in a home or building, trying to turn a building into a church, or building a new church or expanding an existing one).

3) Targeting of churches: (i.e. planting explosives next to the churches, torching churches or breaking crosses off of churches during the night).

4) Premeditated murder on the basis of religious identity: self-explanatory.
For further details, please see pages 7-10 of the EIPR Report, *Supra,* footnote 1.

Collective Retribution:

- On April 19, 2009, in Hegaza village, a group of Muslims opened fire on Christians celebrating the Eve of Easter. Two people were killed and one other was injured.[3]
- On January 6 2010, in Nagga Hammadi, a city in Upper Egypt, six Christians and a Muslim in their company were killed and nine Christians injured by Muslims with machine guns simply because the victims belonged to the same religion as an accused rapist.[4]

Prohibited Worship:

- On July 24, 2009, in the village of al-Howaissla (in the district of Minya), some 2000 Muslims attacked and torched a building owned by the Independent Baptist Assembly. They also set fire to three Christian-owned homes and a livestock pen and chanted anti-Christian slogans. These attacks took place after it was discovered that the assembly intended to use the building as a church when it affixed two plaster crosses on the building façade.[5]
- An example of a smaller scale issue was on April 2nd, 2009, when a citizen was arrested because he had hosted a church service in his home. The Public Prosecutor's office charged him for holding a prayer group in his home "without a permit" which was found by EIPR to have no legal basis.[6]
- There were several cases in which security authorities intervened to prevent Christians from building houses or properties. For example, in the village of al-Reida, located in the Minya district, a Christian lumber merchant was prohibited from competing construction of a lumber warehouse on July 28, 2009 because State Security Investigations officers suspected that he was building a church.[7]

Houses of Worship targeted:

- On May 10, 2009, in the Zeitoun Area of Cairo, a bomb went off in front of the Zeitoun Coptic Church.[8]
- Most recently, on December 31st, 2010, during what is suspected to be a suicide attack, 23 people were killed and 70 hurt by a bomb that went off during a New Year's Eve service at the al-Qiddissin Church.[9]

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[3] "Christians killed in Egypt feud": http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8007919.stm, accessed January 29, 2011.
[4] EIPR Report, *Supra* at p. 8.
[5] *Ibid.* at p. 10.
[6] *Ibid.* at p.13.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] EIPR Report, *Supra,* at p. 15.
[9] "Alexandria Church Bom: Egyptian Copts and Police Clash" http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12106177, accessed January 28th, 2011.

Murder on the Basis of Religious Identity:

- On September 17, 2009 in the district of Bagour in the Monufiya governorate, one Christian was killed and three others gravely injured by an assailant.[10]
- On March 12, 2010, in the city of Marsa Matrouh, a mob of approximately 3000 angry Muslims went on a rampage against Christians after a gathering for Friday prayers in which the mosque's imam exhorted them to cleanse the city of its infidel Christians. 18 homes, 23 shops and 16 cars were completely destroyed, while 400 Copts barricaded themselves in their church for 10 hours until things calmed down.[11]
- On January 11, 2011, in the town of Samalout in the Minya district, a Muslim off-duty policeman boarded a train and opened fire killing a 71 year old Christian man and wounding his wife and four others.[12]

Uprising in Egypt

At the time of writing, there are ongoing clashes and mass protests against the current ruling government of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.

The Wall Street Journal has reported that most Coptic Christians, including a public comment to Egyptian state television by Pope Shenouda III, head of the Coptic Church, want President Mubarak to remain in power.[13]

Why would a persecuted religious community express such a thing?

As the Wall Street Journal notes, the Copts are "reluctant supporters" because Mr. Mubarak's government and policies have kept Islamist extremists from gaining control of government and culture in Egypt. In short, they fear greater persecution may result from the uncertainty of either chaos or a change in government occasioned by protest rather than orderly transition.

While change may be forthcoming, the above information represents the situation as up until February 4, 2011. Any change in providing greater protection to the religious freedom of Christians is likely to be slow, given that, as mentioned in the body of the

[10] EIPR Report, *Supra* at p. 15.
[11] "Egypt's Persecuted Christians: Violence against Copts is on the rise and all but ignored by the state": http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703745904575248301172607696.html, accessed January 28th, 2011.
[12] "Off-duty Egyptian policeman kills Christian man, injures five others": http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/africa-mideast/off-duty-egyptian-policeman-kills-christian-man-injures-five-others/article1866113/, accessed January 29, 2011.
[13] "Coptic Christians Worry About Future Without Mubarak"; http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703439504576116222399438428.html, accessed February 1, 2011

main report, discrimination is entrenched in the Egyptian laws and Constitution, which are not likely to be changed quickly.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This report notes the additional factor of the current political instability in Egypt with its attendant risks to religious freedom for minority religions, particularly the visible and large minority of Coptic Christians.

In addition to the recommendations contained in the June 2009 report, the Government of Canada is urged to maintain human rights, particularly religious freedom, as a high priority in its initiatives relating to the stabilization of the situation unfolding in Egypt and its ongoing dealings with the Government of Egypt.

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