

The council for Human Rights.

The forum for minorities.

The fifth session.

Geneva November 27th and 28th 2012.

An intervention about the status of the Copts in Egypt.

Thank you Mr. President for giving me the word. My name is Mamdouh Nakhla, I am the chairman of the al-Kalema , "Word", Organization for human Rights, I am one of the Coptic minority.

The Coptic community is the Christians of Egypt who mainly follow the Orthodox faith; they are the descendants of the ancient Egyptians who lived in the valley of the river Nile three thousand years ago BC, they were speaking the Coptic language until the Arabs entered Egypt

They were forced to use the Arabic language but still the Coptic language is still used in their Churches and in their prayers. The population of those Copts is about 15 millions out of the total population of Egypt which is 85 millions, so they constitute a ratio of more than 17% to be considered the smallest minority in number in this region.

Those Copts suffer being marginalized, under discriminatory acts on many of their rights through many decades but it got harder after January 25th 2010, when the Islamists reached power of the state.

1- Many of the Copts are exposed to daily assaults by some fundamentalists and extremists without any legal justification.

Their churches are burnt, their prosperities are damaged, their economical activities are sabotaged, and they were forced to leave their lands and houses in addition to the forceful migration.

In many of these cases the criminals were not arrested or if arrested they were released or escaped penalty, in so many occasions the Copts were forced on reconciliation with those criminals without a fair trial.

2- Maybe one of the most important challenges to the practical execution of the special decree for the rights of people

belonging to ethnic, national, religious or lingual minorities even after 20 years of the agreement on this decree

Is that states don't confess the existence of these minorities especially the underdeveloped countries," like Egypt", that denies until now, having citizens representing those minorities, the thing that reduces the chances for a dialogue between the state of Egypt and those relevant bodies to these minorities.

3- Until now there is an absence of the awareness among the citizens of these countries of the terminology, " minorities", even among those who belong to this minority as a result of the deformation made by the state's media as directed to the terminology, "Minority", as a contradictory concept of citizenship.

So we recommend the following:-

1- Reconsidering the item of religion in all the personal identification documents specially job application to the state's posts, registration for sales and buying or legal decrees.

2- The cancelation of the Orfi sessions," Orfi session is reconciliation derived from tribal habits and away of the court as a friendly action among people', activating the positive law to guarantee that the Copts will not be forced to accept reconciliation in cases of assaults on their lives, their properties or their places of worship.

3- The," Yes", response to the continual demands for the visit of the independent expert for minority cases and the Special rapporteur on freedom of religion and faith.

4- To withdraw all the conservations on the decrees and the protocols that were signed by Egypt for the diverse it cause to the Islamic Sharri'a," Islamic laws", as long as it copes with the international peace and stability.

Finally we appreciate that state's acceptance to the recommendation concerning the mechanism to ratify personal complaints to the bodies of the U.N. decrees that were agreed upon during the full directory show in the session number 13 but we ask for more due speedy actions.

Thanks again for your attention.