

## **Sixth Forum on Minorities**

### **The minorities in Egypt, an incomplete citizenship and governmental inaction in intervening**

Geneva - 26 November 2013

The Egyptian society suffers from the reluctance of the government to put legislations in place which works to criminalize discrimination and in some cases the government contributes in the consecration of the culture of discrimination through compensation, which is dispensed to victims of crimes of sectarian violence, since it works to compensate the Muslim side at the expense of the Christian side, so that the society appears as if it is two-sided.

The government is trying very much to amend the situation, but daily practices reveal the deceitfulness of the government and its inaction to protect the principle of citizenship and human rights, and it contributes to the spread of the culture of hatred at the expense of pluralism and the acceptance of the other. In many situations Christian citizens are accused of charges of contempt of the Islamic religion just by exchanging pictures and comments on Facebook pages, while the prosecution of those who are openly in contempt of the Christian religion is ignored.

Christians in Egypt are a numerical minority and they suffer from the absence of justice and the failure to punish the culprits of the crimes in which churches and properties of Christians were attacked. Since the seventies of the last century, nobody has been tried for these crimes. Despite the enormity of the bombing of the Church of Saints and the martyrdom of 24 Christians in January 2011, as well as the massacre of Maspero in October 2011 and the martyrdom of 27 Christians for demonstrating peacefully, and the crime of Al-Warraq, targeting Christians while they were participating in a church wedding and the death of five, nobody has been tried.

Christians in Egypt face the inaction of the government in regards to operations of collective punishment, behind which stands a call to violence and extremism.

The Egyptian Center is collaborating with the Ministry of Education to put a curriculum on human rights in schools, and we have come a long way in this matter with the Ministry. The Egyptian Center for Human

Rights is a member of the special committee to develop curriculums to instill the culture of human rights, and the curriculum of human rights remains to be transformed into a social culture and political will of the Government to amend the current situation.

We suggest to the Egyptian government to sign off on the subject of human rights, so that it would not be only pass or fail, but rather its grades would count towards the final grade in High School, which qualifies for university education, in order to develop students from a young age to respect the rights and freedoms, and build a democratic society that believes in the ideas of human rights and works to strengthen them.

Christians in Egypt are suffering from the lack of adequate representation in elected councils. We propose the adoption of the principle of positive discrimination for a period of not more than ten years to uphold the values of pluralism and to guarantee the honorable representation of every group of society, and to end the policy of exclusion and deprivation, from which Christians have suffered over the past years.

Christians face a problem in the personal status [law], especially regarding divorce and marriage and the government is slacking in putting in place appropriate legislations to resolve this problem. The government also has failed to set up a mechanism to promote freedom of religious conversion, since it allows the conversion from Christianity to Islam while it does not accept the opposite, and it also imposes unfair conditions and whoever tries to take this step would be prosecuted, threatening his life and his personal safety.

We demand from the government to put in place a constitutional solution and laws regarding the problem of Egyptian citizenship of the Baha'is in light of them being deprived of obtaining official papers, which would make it easier for them to obtain birth certificates, the ID card, marriage, divorce and property contracts.

We demand from the government to respect the rights of Egyptian Shiites to practice their faith in light of their persecution by extremist groups amid the failure of the state to protect these rights.

We demand from the government to end the acceptance of customary reconciliatory sessions in which Christians are coerced into [accepting] the outcomes, on the account of the harm they experienced from crimes and considering the many losses. The state refrains from compensation and puts pressure on the

church to grant affected Christians appropriate compensation while leaving the real culprit at large with impunity, and this leads to repeated attacks, a result of the support of the state for extremists and the call for violence and hatred.