

Human Rights Council  
Forum on Minority Issues  
Sixth Session  
Guaranteeing the Rights of Religious Minorities  
Geneva 26-27 November 2013

**Intervention - Item 3 of the Programme of Work: Protection of the existence of and prevention of violence against religious minorities**

**Intervention presented by: Margaret Adel Adib Masaad of the Arabic Republic of Egypt - Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialog - Cairo**

Thank you Madame President for giving [me] the opportunity,  
And thank you to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for giving me the opportunity to participate in the Minorities Fellowship Programme [in] 2013.

Copts suffer from the silence of the State and its disregard for sectarian incidents and violence. The State's role is limited to merely denounce and condemn these incidents without taking actual measures for [the Copts'] protection from the violence of Islamic militant groups in Upper and Lower Egypt. Further, hundreds of these incidents are neglected by the State in the prosecution of the assailants, so that [the incidents] end without punishment for the perpetrators. Rather, sometimes Copts are forced to customary reconciliation with the opposing party in what is called "Customary Reconciliation Session" and thus there is also no punishment for the perpetrators, and the events repeat themselves and continue. This is not including the cases of forced displacement after sectarian incidents under the pretext of fearing for [their safety] because of Muslim violence in the region, as has happened to a few Coptic families in Alexandria and Assyut. They were forced to leave their houses and their possessions.

On the other side the state contributes to the reinforcement of discrimination against the Copts through a few practices, like the presence of unfair conditions for the constructions of churches - and the work is still, until now, done according to the Hamayouni Decree - to the extent of that the construction of a church needs a presidential decision. Further, there is duplicity in the application of a few laws, for

example the law of contempt of religion, which tries every insult or contempt of the Islamic religion, while it releases who is in contempt of Christianity or any other religion.

Add to the above the phenomenon of forced disappearances of minors. The association of victims of disappearances recorded 500 cases of forced disappearances of underage girls since January 2011 until now, where Coptic girls were kidnapped, forced to convert to the Islamic religion and were deceived and most of those young girls had not reached the legal age...

We recommend to the Egyptian government:

1. The necessity of opening fair and expeditious investigations into the incidents which took place against Copts (Church of the Saints - El Khasos - Maspero - Al-Warraq Church - the demolition of the Church in Atfeeh - the demolition and burning of the Churches of Minya in "Delga" and Beni Suef ...and so on).
2. The necessity to punish the perpetrators, so that these incidents against Copts don't repeat themselves.
3. The reaffirmation of recommendation 50 to take measures to prevent acts of violence which target members of religious minorities and accordingly we demand from the state to urgently and immediately search for the abducted girls and apprehending the perpetrators of their kidnapping with the application of the law, which prohibits converting minors to another religion, and returning to counseling sessions, which were cancelled.
4. Supporting recommendation Nr. 19, we demand the application of special laws to prohibit the discrimination against others on the basis of religion and the application of all the laws establishing equality between citizens without discrimination.
5. Reinforcing the principle of equality for all in the new constitution.
6. Punish anyone who incites to violence against Copts; leaflets are being distributed in the villages inciting to kill Copts and looting their properties.
7. We call for the necessity of issuing a law for united places of worship for all religions and sects in Egypt.
8. Pursuant to recommendation 31 we call also for the necessity of consulting all parties, including Copts, and involve them in earnest on the core issues (especially with regards to legislation) in the transitional phase.

Thank you for your attention