

Dutch Coptic Association on Item II
9th Session of the Forum on Minority Issues

Thank you Chairman. I represent the Dutch Coptic Association. I would like to address the undermining religious belief in certain countries including Egypt. This is unacceptable, [...] of this type cannot be accepted since it is an attack on the various faith in Egypt. Christians and Muslims co-exist in Egypt and consequently it would appear that certain persons take it upon themselves to denigrate Christianity with impunity. The reverse is not true, it is not possible to criticise Islam. Since that carries penalties regardless of the age or the status of the person involved. This was seen in Southern Egypt where certain persons have been convicted with prison up to 20 years. Others had to flee Egypt and head for Europe. Some of them were age of only 15. All of those who encountered to the [...] from Christians to Muslims are persecuted. There have been attempts to modernise Islam, but extremists radicals have countered it to propagate or rather justify the arrests of individuals arrested. [...] were arrested also simply because of their desire to express their opinion. With regards to this, which carries a prison sentence this runs counter to all religious teaching. [interrupted by Chair]

Chair: 'A point of order from Egypt.'

Egypt: 'Once again I thank you Chairman. Once again there is a need for speakers to respect the institution of [Al-Azari]. Thank you.'

Chair: 'I thank the representative of Egypt. Could I ask the distinguished representative of the Dutch Coptic Association to conclude within 30 seconds and to observe the rules of the procedure of the Forum. 30 second please.'

We respect all Egyptian institutions but we cannot deny the [harmfulness] of [Al-Ahzar] as is much it has contributed to the arrests of intellectuals and activists in Egypt. Nobody can deny this reality, which is well documented. The most recent attack last week to repeal this law was not achieved, the majority of the parliamentarian voted in favour of maintaining provisions in place and this [promulgates] to extremist views in Egypt. I thank you.