

Thank you, your honor. My name is Merna Nakhla. I am a researcher at Alkalema Center for Human Rights. I belong to the Coptic minority, who are the Egyptian Christians of the indigenous people in Egypt, the Pharos. And as a Coptic female, I will dedicate my words to the trafficking of Coptic women and girls in Egypt. Based on the United Nations definition, "Human Trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit" In the year 2020, a study found that more than 500 Coptic women and girls were trafficked in the last decade. Coptic women and girls are being trafficked from their homes, work, schools, and simply being a citizen on the street. This happens through the victim's friend, neighbour, colleague, or a stranger. After they kidnap the Coptic women and girls, they start pressuring them to convert to Islam or threatening their families to pay a ransom.

The police refuse to receive the reports of the sorrowed families of the trafficked Coptic women and girls. The police also refuse to track or search for the offenders of the hundreds of trafficked Coptic women and girls. The government never punished or held a trafficker accountable until this day. The government also doesn't respond to any request for help from the Coptic families. The clergy is afraid of being discriminated against because of the pressures that they face from the families and the opposition of the government.

We demand the Egyptian government to oblige to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children. We also recommend to the Forum to dispatch the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, Reem Alsalem, to visit Egypt.

No family should be concerned about their daughters being trafficked, going to college, or shopping. Coptic women and girls Matter. All Lives matter.

Thank you your honor and thanks everyone.