

**From:** *(Name redacted)*  
**Sent:** 05 February 2014 13:35  
**To:** *(Name redacted)*  
**Cc:** *(Name redacted)*  
**Subject:** Request for briefing

*(Name redacted)* – [here's the brief:](#)

***(Part of title redacted): EGYPT***

**Points to make:**

- *(Bullpoint redacted)*
- Concerned at religious intolerance which is affecting Christian communities and the freedom to practice their faith. Attacks against places of worship are abhorrent and must stop. FCO Minister Hugh Robertson discussed the situation faced by Coptic Christians in his meeting with Bishop Yulios when he visited Cairo in December. UK government will continue to raise concerns with the Egyptian authorities and look at their actions to implement religious tolerance. Urge you to support us on this.
- *(Bullpoint redacted)*

**Background**

1. *(Paragraph redacted)*
2. Christians have long faced discrimination and violence in Egypt. This situation continued *(part of sentence redacted)* over the summer of 2013 with the burning of over 40 churches. Sporadic sectarian violence continues *(part of sentence redacted)* but the new constitution improves equality before the law for Coptic Christians and *(word redacted)* (however much is subject to future legislation).

*(paragraph redacted)*

**From:** Diptel CAIRO  
**Sent:** 15 December 2013 14:28  
**To:** Diptel FCO  
**Subject:** EGYPT: CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT [DIPTTEL 1311275]

## Diptel CAIRO

### Summary

**Christians have long faced discrimination and violence in Egypt. (Remainder of paragraph redacted)**

1. Egyptian Christians, amongst whom the major denomination is Coptic, have been subject to discrimination arguably since the Arab Conquest in 639-642. In recent times, violent sectarian incidents have been common. The bomb blast at an Alexandria church on New Year's Day 2011, killing 21 Christians, contributed to the bubbling over of anti-Mubarak sentiment leading to his overthrow. In March 2011, violence in Atfih, south of Cairo, that broke out on discovery of an affair between a Muslim woman and a Coptic man, left 13 dead. Subsequently in October 2011, the military killed 28 mostly Christian protesters and injured more than 321 in the 'Maspero Massacre' in central Cairo.

2. (Paragraph redacted)

3. (First 3 sentences redacted).. Sectarian practices, particularly in Upper Egypt, increased, ranging from a female teacher in Luxor who cut the hair of a 12-year-old schoolgirl for refusing to wear the Islamic head scarf, to the unprecedentedly high number of blasphemy cases raised against Copts. In April 2013 at al-Khusus in Greater Cairo, five Copts, as well as a Muslim man, were shot in sectarian rioting. Mourners were set upon by armed Islamists a few days later and besieged in Cairo's St Mark's Cathedral, while security forces fired teargas into the grounds of the Cathedral, but did not intervene as the attack continued for five hours, leaving 2 Copts dead.

4. (Paragraph redacted).

5. (First 2 sentences redacted). More than 40 churches were burnt and damaged, as well as tens of other Christian religious buildings in the governorates of Minya, Asyut, Fayoum, Giza, Suez, Sohag, Bani Suef, and North Sinai. (Last 2 sentences redacted).

### ENTER THE MILITARY

6. (Paragraph redacted).

7. (First sentence redacted). Christian organisations report that kidnappings of Christians for ransoms, a problem for some time, have surged, particularly around Minya. Violence carried on with an attack last October by alleged Islamists on a wedding party at a church on the outskirts of Cairo leaving five dead. The beginning of December saw sectarian attacks in Minya, amidst rumours that a Muslim girl had eloped with a Christian man.

### IS IT LIKELY TO GET BETTER?

8. (First 2 sentences redacted). The recently agreed draft constitution (part of sentence redacted). The anti-discrimination article which specifically precludes discrimination on the basis of religion

might contribute to a cultural shift towards better acceptance of Copts. The constitution also obliges the first parliament to legislate on the building and reconstruction of Churches (*part of sentence redacted*).

9. (*Paragraph redacted*).

10. (*Paragraph redacted*).

WATT

Authorised

James Watt | HMA (*email address and telephone number redacted*)

(*Name, email address and telephone number redacted*)

(*Name redacted*)

**From:** Nigel Baker  
**Sent:** 16 December 2013 10:41  
**To:** James Watt)  
**Cc:** (8 names redacted)  
**Subject:** EGYPT: CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT [DIPTTEL 1311275]

James,

I briefly attended a conference being held last week in Rome on “Christianity and Freedom: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives”, organised by the Religious Freedom Project of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University. *(Sentence redacted)*.

*(Part of sentence redacted)* British or UK-based experts and scholars who attended included: *(Part of sentence redacted)* of the Center for Religious Freedom at the Hudson Institute (a leading scholar on religious freedom); *(part of sentence redacted)* from Sussex University (political scientist specialising in politics and human development in the Middle East, currently working on persecution of Christians in Egypt).

*(Paragraph redacted)*.

*(Name redacted)* interestingly categorised persecution of Christians as coming from the following sources:

- *(point redacted)*
- *(point redacted)*
- *(point redacted)*
- Radical Islam, on the rise: all suffered but Christians – where it manifested itself – were particularly at risk.
- And he added, he said “for the first time” and not quite in the same category because it manifested in different ways, “Western secularism”. He detected growing trends of overt hostility towards religion from this source, including Christianity as traditionally the leading faith in countries most affected.

Your Diptel suggests Egypt crosses these categories, falling perhaps mainly in the third category, with some influence from the second and fourth.

Yours aye,

Nigel

Nigel Baker  
HM Ambassador  
British Embassy to the Holy See

*(Telephone numbers redacted)*

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EGYPT

### **Attacks on Coptic Christians and churches**

We are deeply concerned at the treatment of minority religious groups in Egypt. On 20 October four Coptic Christians were killed, and many injured at a Coptic Christian wedding in Cairo. This was the latest incident in a trend of violence against religious minorities across Egypt. On 21 October our Ambassador to Egypt wrote to the Coptic Pope to offer his condolences and a senior FCO official contacted the head of the Coptic Church in the UK to express our sympathy. The Foreign Secretary has publicly condemned all acts of violence. We recently encouraged the committee tasked with drafting Egypt's new constitution to ensure stronger protection under the rule of law for all citizens.

(Paragraph redacted)

### **What has HMG done to raise its concerns with the Egyptian government or the international community?**

When Alistair Burt, former Minister for the Middle East and North Africa visited Cairo on 24 July he raised concerns about human rights, including the persecution of minorities, with the new Minister for Transitional Justice and Reconciliation.

On 9 September the UK representative raised Egypt at the UN Human Rights Council, expressing concern at the rise in sectarian violence, lack of protection for religious minorities and attacks on places of worship.

Our concerns about religious persecution will also be raised in the next FCO Human Rights report update.

### **Do you meet the Coptic community in the UK?**

FCO Ministers and officials have met Coptic Bishop Angealos and members of the Coptic community in the UK on numerous occasions. Most recently on 10 September then Minister for North Africa and the Middle East Mr Burt spoke at the Coptic New Year Service in London where he raised his concerns about the targeting of religious communities in Egypt and across the region, and the rise of intolerance. In addition, the Director for the Middle East and North Africa has met Bishop Angealos, most recently in September.

## **State of draft constitution?**

(First Paragraph redacted)

The Egyptian Government has stated its commitment to protecting the rights of women, minorities and the need for religious tolerance. We will continue to raise our concerns with the Egyptian authorities and monitor their actions to implement this, including through the constitution. The Foreign Secretary has raised this with the Egyptian Foreign Minister, most recently on 23 September at the UN General Assembly. We are working to help ensure that the constitutional referendum will be as free and as fair as possible, including through support for a large scale EU observation mission

We are currently unaware of the wording of the draft constitution which was agreed on Sunday which should be released in the near future. The draft constitution which was under review provided protection for Muslims, Christians and Jews, but not other faiths e.g. Baha'is.

***(Remaining 4 Paragraphs redacted)***

**From:** *(Name redacted)*  
**Sent:** 24 December 2013 13:23  
**To:** *(4 names redacted)*  
**Cc:** *(2 names redacted)*  
**Subject:** FW: Egypt *(part of title redacted)*

Next week, I will be working on the Human Rights Report *(rest of paragraph redacted)*.

We need some more detail in order to expand the document. If possible, I was hoping you could supply some more information (or point me in the right direction) to the questions below..

1. *(Paragraph redacted)*.
2. *(Paragraph redacted)*.
3. Sectarian Violence
  - a. Sectarian attacks on Coptic Christians/religion minorities were not carried out by the state and many took place during MB era. *(Sentence redacted)*.
  - b. *(sub-para redacted)*
  - c. *(sub-para redacted)*
4. *(Paragraph redacted)*
5. *(Paragraph redacted)*
6. *(Paragraph redacted)*

***(Name and Job title redacted)*** North Africa Department | Foreign & Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, SW1A 2AH | UK *(telephone and email address redacted)*

**From:** *(Name redacted)*

**Sent:** 19 November 2013 12:22

**To:** *(2 Names redacted)*

**Subject:** Egypt examined by UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Dear *(Name redacted)*

Egypt was recently examined by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Below is a read-out from the examination for your information.

Best regards,

*(Name redacted)*

### **Egypt examined by UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

#### **Summary**

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights examined Egypt on 14 Nov. The Committee expressed serious concerns at the suppression of Copts' right to freedom of religion *(Remainder of paragraph redacted)*.

#### **Details**

*(Paragraphs 1-4 redacted)*.

#### **Discrimination against religious minorities**

5. The Committee was alarmed at the suppression of the Copts' right to freedom of religion. Egypt responded that the Constitution guaranteed the right to freedom of religious belief and practice, and the State rejected all discrimination and violence based on segregation between Christians and Muslims. There had been problems with religious discrimination caused by extremists and with the construction of worship places, but they hoped to resolve this by holding dialogues with religious leaders.

*(Remainder of paragraphs redacted)*.

*(Name redacted)* | UK Mission, Geneva *(telephone numbers redacted)*