

Volume (2) Issue 6 (April/ May/June 2008)



MILITANT ATTACKS ON ABU FANA MONASTERY



More than two months ago, Abu Fana Monastery located in Mallawi, Minya Province, Egypt received final permission from the official authorities to build a protective wall around the monastery grounds. The construction on this wall began a few days prior to May 31st, 2008. The construction of this wall angered some residents of the closest village, and on May 31st, 2008 these residents started an armed attack on Abu Fana Monastery. One of the Monastery's resident monks, stated that "about 60 Muslim residents of the neighboring village attacked the monastery on Saturday, May 31st, 2008. The attacks began between 2 and 5pm and continued until 9pm. The attackers were armed with automatic rifles, wood sticks, and other weapons." The local police forces were called and arrived after 3 hours despite the local police station is only 15 miles from the Monastery. The attacks continued for about an hour after the arrival of the police, but the police did not interfere to protect during this time. Father Mina one of the monks added

"We were surprised by the heavy fire. The attackers seized a bulldozer, which was rented by the monastery for the wall's construction, and then proceeded to separate into different groups. The groups used the bulldozer to destroy some of the monk's cells, burn 3 worker's rooms, destroy the 1st floor of a church building, and completely destroy another church. The groups also used the bulldozer to destroy the Monastery's mushroom farm, honey farm, and olive trees." Five monks, (Fr. Bakhoun, Fr. Saweris, Fr. Isaac, Fr. Mikhail, and Fr. Finy) were injured. some were hit with bullets and some were beaten with sticks. Four of the five injured monks were taken to the hospital were taken to the hospital, two in critical condition. Also during the attack, two monks-in-training (Mounir Labib and Refaat Zakaria) were injured and taken to the hospital. The attackers kidnapped 3 monks (Fr. Youaanis, Fr. Maximos, and Fr. Andraous; and the brother of Father Mina, Ibrahim Tiqi Riad. Father Youaanis, interviewed at the

hospital and stated that the attackers tortured the kidnapped monks by beating and whipping them. He also said that the kidnappers broke his leg and arm, and put him on a donkey, releasing him into the desert, leaving him for dead and telling him to crawl back to the monastery.

Father Maximos and Father Andraous also stated that they were tied to a palm tree, whipped with electric cables, beaten with wooden sticks, and spit on by some women. The attackers asked both of them **to spit on the cross and to give the confession of Islam**. When the monks refused, the beatings and humiliation increased. The 3 monks were released after a full night around 3am. All three are in very poor condition, and the signs of the beatings and injuries are evident on their bodies.

The monks asked the Governor of El Minya to interfere in order to ensure the safe return of all those kidnapped. The Governor asked them to pay ransom to the attackers, in exchange for the safe release of the kidnapped Christians. The Governor also threat-



The Copts of Malawi express their anger about what happened

ened the monks to keep the incident secret, saying that if the monks did not keep quiet, the matter would be out of his hands and he will not be able to help them.

Governor Ahmed Dia Eldin had said that this incident was “an ordinary quarrel over disputed land between neighbours,” and that “fire was exchanged on both sides.” Father Kirillious asserted that the monks do not keep weapons, and condemned the negligence and complicity of the security forces and the Governor.

Father Kirillious also pointed out that the security forces and the Governor’s story of accusing Refaat, the contractor hired to build the wall around the monastery, is a lie. He added that the security forces falsely charged Refaat in the murder of a Muslim man named Khalil Ibrahim . The monks of the Monastery and Ibrahim, Refaat’s brother, testified that Refaat was not present at Abu Fana Monastery on May 31st. Refaat’s brother Ibrahim told reporters that he was present at the Monastery on May 31st in order to get a deposit from the Monastery, because he and his brothers are the paid contractors to build the wall. During the attack, Ibrahim and his son hid for 3 hours until the attack ended.

Ibrahim also told reporters that a police office had asked him about his brother’s whereabouts, and he responded that his brother was in Malawi. The officer asked Ibrahim to call Refaat because he wanted to speak with him, Ibrahim did, and Refaat went to Abu Fana Monastery. From the Moanstery, Refaat was taken to the police station. As of now, Ibrahim

does not know where Refaat is.

previous attacks on abu fana monastery

In March of 2006, Abu Fana Monastery was terrorized and shot upon for over a week. It was estimated that the monastery was hit with 300 bullets. The monks found more than 50 rounds of bullet shells from automatic weapons, including cartridges from 9mm guns and rifles.

On January 8th of 2008, Abu Fana Monastery was attacked by a dozen of men armed with automatic weapons. These men burned the Monastery’s library and destroyed many of the monk’s cells, which are scattered around the Monastery grounds.



H. H. Pope Shenouda III visits the attacked Monks of Abu Fana Monastery at the Hospital



H. H. Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the sea of St. Mark, accompanied by some bishops went to the Hospital in Heliopolis to visited the seven injured monks at the recent attack by Militants on Apu Fana Monastery in Mallawi (Upper Egypt).

The joy and a vision of hope appeared on the faces of the injured monks. H.H Pope Shenouda listened to their complain about what had happened, and they asked him to do his best for a better secure for the in order not to repeat such things.

This visit had a dramatic impact in raising the morale of the monks . They will stay for some days at the hospital until they recovered.

The Statement of Coptic Organizations in Reference to the Armed Attack on Copts and Holy Places

The undersigned Coptic organizations condemn and deplore the barbarian and brutal attacks against the historical Abu Fana Monastery in Mallawi, Minya Province, Egypt. The attack began between 2pm-5pm on Saturday, May 31st, and continued through the night. It is important to note that this is not the first time the monastery has been exposed to such a brutal militant attack perpetrated by a mob. This militant attack took place in broad daylight directly under the sight and 'protection' of the security officers.

This armed attack on Abu Fana Monastery resulted in four monks injured by bullet wounds, and the kidnapping of three other monks: Maximos, Andraous, and Youanas. The three kidnapped monks were returned on Sunday, June 1st, after having been tortured and beaten. Injuries sustained by these monks include fractured and broken bones.

Roughly 60 aggressors, who carried automatic weapons, carried out the armed attack on the monastery. This attack resulted in great damage to the monastery, including the theft of equipment, burning and destruction of the monastery's farms, and the complete destruction of the monastery's farm equipment like tractors...

At the same time the 3 monks were kidnapped, a Christian man named Ibrahim Tiqi Riad, brother of Father Mina, was also kidnapped. His fate is still unknown.

Such crimes, including other armed attacks on churches and shops owned by Coptic Christians, take place in broad daylight in a planned, systematic manner that suggests that the target is genocide of the Copts in order to weaken their existence, eliminating them both morally and physically.

The undersigned Coptic organizations does not, and will not, tolerate these crimes and attacks committed against the Copts. These crimes and attacks are incompatible with all the international declarations for human rights. We will escalate our campaign to the highest international level.

Despite the seriousness of this matter, the authorities have failed to respond in a timely manner. The security service's negligence suggests their collaboration with the attackers. Because of the provocative statement made by Major General Ahmed Dia Eldin (the Governor of El Minya) that this incident is "an ordinary quarrel over disputed land between neighbors," and that "fire was exchanged on both sides;" we assert that the monks were unarmed and do not own weapons. The attackers totaled approximately 60 people who were carrying automatic weapons. The Governor also alleged that one Muslim was killed during the attacks.

Note that these statements by the government will have a negative impact on the integrity and transparency of the investigation, and gives the State Security the opportunity to change the facts.

State Security Director Major General Mohammed Nour Eldin accused some monks with charges of "inciting" the Christian citizens to clash with other residents in Mallawi. It is totally illogical to attribute such things to the monks, who have dedicated their lives to quiet prayer in the desert. We, the undersigned organizations, demand an appeal to the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council to form an international fact-finding commit-

tee to ascertain the causes of the armed attacks against the property and lives of the monks at Abu Fana Monastery. We also demand that the Egyptian government takes action immediately to protect the lives and property of the Copts.

The undersigned organizations:

1. Coptic Association for Human Rights, Switzerland
2. Coptic Canadian Association
3. **United Copts Great Britain**
4. Coptic Assembly of America
5. Coptic Association of France
6. Coptic Organization of the Netherlands
7. Middle East Christian Union in Austria
8. The Voice of the Copts, Italy
9. Middle East Christians Association
10. Christian Copts of California
11. The Cultural Organization of Coptic Intellectuals, France
12. Australian Coptic Organization
13. The International Coptic Federation
14. The Austrian Coptic Organization
15. Coptic Assembly of America, California Chapter
16. The Word Center for Human Rights in Cairo
17. Free Copts
18. International Christian Union of USA
19. American Coptic Association

Egypt at the House of Lords

Baroness Cox raises the question of Religious Freedom with Egypt at the House of Lords. Egyptian government abuses will be discussed at the June EU-Egypt political sub-committee established under the European neighbourhood policy action plan.

Baroness Cox asked Her Majesty's Government: Further to the Written Answer by Lord Malloch-Brown on 10 March (WA 199), whether their welcome of the ruling of the Egyptian Supreme Administrative Court on 10 February took account of the referral of Article 47 of the civil and personal status law to the Egyptian High Constitutional Court to determine its compatibility with Article II of the Egyptian constitution. [HL3815]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Malloch-Brown):

The Government are aware that the ruling has now been referred to the constitutional court. The Government regularly raise religious freedom issues with the Egyptian Government and will continue to do so. Most recently, our ambassador in Cairo raised human rights concerns with the Egyptian Minister of Interior on 22 April. We acknowledge the steps that the Egyptian Government have taken to engage with us on these issues and welcome their willingness to hold further human rights dialogue. We recognise the difficulties that some Egyptian citizens have faced in their attempts to have religious conversion recognised under Egyptian law and will continue to urge the Government of Egypt to implement transparent and effective procedures in this respect. We look forward to these issues being discussed at the June EU-Egypt political sub-committee established under the European neighbourhood policy action plan.

Statement of the Holy Synod Committees of the Coptic Orthodox Church on the Attack at Abu Fana Monastery in Mallawi, Minya

The Episcopal Bishops, members of the Holy Synod committees of the Coptic Orthodox Church, were shocked by the dastardly assault on the monks who reside in the monastery of Abu Fana in Mallawi, and on the monastery itself and its church, buildings and property on Saturday, May 31, 2008. This incident did not occur for many centuries in our beloved Egypt. This occurrence is contrary to what Muslims call for and what Egypt represented in President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak many efforts to preserve Egypt's security, which is unity and reputation.

The attack on monks with automatic weapons, kidnapping some of them who were then tortured by whipping and dragging on the ground, the breaking of their bones, forcing them to insult the cross and confess Islam under torture, and other brutal methods that the human conscience refuses, as well as destruction, damage, burning and obliteration of church, other buildings and the property of the monastery – points to the fact that the monastery does not have any kind of weapons except prayers and worship which is contrary to how some try to portray the abused in the monastery as if they were the aggressors. The attempted attack on the monastery workers during their return on June 4th, pushed the Holy Synod committees to call upon President Mubarak, to lead his people, along with all the state officials, to heal these wounds in the body of the nation through:

- 1 - The release of unjustly detained Copts.
 - 2 - The arrest of the reported offenders. Following, the State must take legal action against them to prevent them and others from repeating such attacks that endanger the social peace of Egypt.
 - 3 - Portray the true reality, which is the deliberate conspiracy of the offenders to commit the crime, as well as showing all the details of the repeated assault on the monks and the monastery property.
 - 4 - Build a fence around the whole monastery under the supervision of the State Patrol to prevent the recurrence of future attacks. Particularly, the fence must be around artifacts premises, the farm, the cemetery, and the monk's individual cells (rooms).
 - 5 - Compensate the monastery for damage and stolen items that damaged the monastery buildings and properties, which exceeded one million pounds.
 - 6 - Working on not repeating such attacks by examining its causes and removing them.
- Our confidence in the wisdom of President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, which endowed by God, and his love for all Egyptians, are the best guarantee for Egypt's security and unity,

Bishop Bishoy
The Holy Synod Secretary

LCHR condemns Abu Fana Monastery attack, Egyptian government's indifferent response to incident

The Leadership Council for Human Rights condemns the recent attacks on Egypt's Abu Fana Monastery and is outraged by Cairo's lack of response to this latest assault on the nation's beleaguered Coptic Christian minority.

The May 31 attacks occurred in Mallawi, in Egypt's El Minya Province. According to news reports and our colleagues at the Coptic Assembly of America (CAA), a mob of at least 60 men carrying automatic weapons stormed the monastery, destroying and burning property, including two on-site churches and crops on monastic farmland.

The incident left a total of nine monks and monastery employees wounded, one critically. Four other individuals, including three monks, were kidnapped and held overnight by the assailants, who tortured, tied

up, and beat the men, resulting in multiple broken bones and other injuries. The fourth individual held captive, a brother of one of the monks, is still missing.

According to one of the monks on the scene, the Egyptian police did not respond to the attacks until three hours after the call for help was made. This, despite the fact that the nearest police station is located just 15 miles from the monastery. Once the authorities did arrive, victims say they failed to interfere, as assailants continued to destroy property for an hour, despite their presence.

To date, none of the individuals responsible for the crime have been punished. The only arrest made in connection with the incident was of a Christian man not present during the attacks. He has been falsely accused of murder, and, after being taken in

for questioning by security officials days ago, his whereabouts are now unknown.

El Minya's governor has stated publicly that the attacks were not sectarian in an effort to downplay the incident. Some of the monastery's monks have requested that the governor visit the victims in the hospital, but he has so far declined to do so. LCHR stands with CAA and the Egyptian human rights community at large in denouncing this episode and the continued intolerance towards Christians in Egyptian society that it demonstrates.

We also call attention to the apparent negligence and complicity by security forces, as well as the government's attempts to diminish the seriousness of the incident, which are loathsome and cause for severe concern.



Throwing law and justice to the wind

By Youssef Sidhom
Watani Newspaper

The criminal assault against Abu-Fana monastery in Mal-lawi, Minya, on 31 May was only the most recent episode in a series of attacks against the monastery. Faced with pre-dominant official indifference, hostile actions against Coptic monasteries have become increasingly frequent. In this respect, official statements are pathetically contradictory. Some prefer to typically denote the events as 'sectarian incidents'. Others, taken aback by the frequency of assaults targeting Copts—one week alone witnessed the midday murder of four Copts in a jewellery shop in Zeitoun, Cairo; the looting of a jewellery shop in Alexandria; and the Abu-Fana attack—resorted to negating the sectarian character of the events altogether.

I believe both approaches warrant denouncement since they represent injurious approaches, adopting escapism to cover up the deplorable reality. By dubbing the attacks against Copts' properties, lives and monasteries 'sectarian events', the first approach promotes the false idea of two factions of fanatic Muslims and Copts fighting each other, placing thus the victim and offender on equal footing and condemning both. The authorities brandish their own style of terrorism by arresting members of the victimised party and coercing this party into a 'reconciliation' in which all their rights are renounced in return for releasing the detainees. This move naturally involves releasing any culprits detained, since the victims have renounced their rights to have the culprits prosecuted. The end result is that the victims are twice victimised, first by their assailants and then by the authorities. Law and justice are effectively thrown to the winds.

The second approach practically underestimates our intelligence by supposing that we are only concerned about the Zeitoun, Alexandria, and Abu-Fana crimes because we interpret them as a grand conspiracy against Copts. This supposition is ridiculous, since all Egyptians were shocked and horrified by the criminal acts committed against peaceful Egyptians, regardless that they are Copts.

I wish for a third approach that would perceive the crimes as blatant assaults on Egyptian people, and lawless acts that require a rush by the authorities to enforce law and execute justice. Instead of resorting to compromises, the authorities should arrest the offenders, whatever their religion, and refer them to court. In a State claiming to live by the rule of law, it is an incontestable axiom that a horrific crime like that of Zeitoun would prompt the security apparatus to chase the murderers and have them prosecuted. What actually happened was that the culprits were left to run free while the focus turned to the alleged Coptic monopoly of means of wealth such as jewellery shops. In case of the Alexandria theft the culprits, who committed their crime under cover of niqab or full face veil, were found and are being prosecuted. But the issue of niqab as a threat to society's security remained obscured, placed on hold. The attack against Abu-

Fana monastery involved, besides the usual scenario of torching and plundering Coptic property and threatening their lives, the harrowing crime of abducting three monks and torturing them all through the night before throwing them on the roadside. The truth was yet arrogantly distorted and public opinion diluted by the unjust official handling of the crime as a mere fight between the 'Arabs'—the term used to denote the tribal communities that live in the desert—and monks, instead of the premeditated horrendous crime that it was.

In this respect, a host of official actions beg explanation.

A number of the Coptic inhabitants of the nearby village of Hur, who had nothing whatsoever to do with the attack against the monastery, were detained and accused of possessing unlicensed weapons. It is quite obvious the security authority sought to use them as negotiation chips to corner the bishopric into a 'reconciliation'.

The contractor building the wall around the land owned by the monastery and his two brothers were arrested and accused of killing one of the Arabs, although none of them was there at the time of the attack.

The police did not catch the criminals who abducted the monks and tortured them, although they are known by name. Instead, the police detained a few underage Arab lads who would have to be freed once an investigation starts, since they are in fact innocent and no evidence exists to incriminate them.

The police refused to register a report on the crime or register the monks' testimonies of their abduction. The result is that a substantial portion of the public refuses to believe the abduction and torture story—even though the monks are still in hospital and their injuries are substantiated by medical reports—and consider it the brainchild of some paranoid Copt. The erection of the fencing wall around the monastery grounds has been halted although the monastery is in possession of the full ownership documents of the land, and has been regularly paying the annual land tax required. Yet the Arabs' claim they have a right to the land and have repeatedly attacked the monastery; and why should they not, since the authorities are perfectly indifferent. After the monastery got the formal approval to erect the wall and began construction works, the Arabs attacked the monastery. To stress a false impression that the monks were responsible for the criminal events, authorities halted construction works. Minya governor General Ahmed Diaa' Eddin, announced that the event was a mere squabble between two parties and decided to form a committee to settle the dispute. Such a statement is a relevant indicator on how the formal announcements falsify the truth and how the victim and criminal are made equal.

Security apparatuses should deal with the Abu Fana crime and the atrocities committed against its inmates in accordance with citizenship principles and rule of law. As for giving priority to religious balances and recasting the roles of the offender and victim in order to achieve a coerced equality between both in evil and thus force the victim to reconcile with the offender and renounce all due rights; this in no way reflects any citizenship concepts or supremacy of law. It constitutes a devil's acts for the devil's account.



Iraqi Christians are targets of cleansing

Jennifer Green, The Ottawa Citizen

Muslim militants are crucifying children to terrorize their Christian parents into fleeing Iraq, a parliamentary committee studying the persecution of religious minorities heard yesterday. Since the war began in 2003, about 12 children, many as young as 10, have been kidnapped and killed, then nailed to makeshift crosses near their homes to terrify and torment their parents. One infant was snatched, decapitated, burned and left on his mother's doorstep, the committee was told. Filham Isaac, speaking for the Nineveh Advocacy Committee, told the human rights committee that Iraqi Christian churches were bombed, clergy mur-

dered and unveiled Iraqi women raped or scarred with acid. It's part of a systemic -- and very effective -- campaign to ethnically cleanse the area of any non-Muslims.

Muslims attack Christians in Indonesia

Catholic News Agency

Muslim extremists who are members of the Islamic Defenders Front recently attacked 200 moderate Christians and Muslims who protested for religious freedom in the Indonesian capital, threatening the protestors with death and attacking them with machetes and sticks. Twelve people were left wounded as the extremists shouted, "Repent or die." The extremists also attacked children and the elderly who

were present having copies of the Bible. Between the years 2004 and 2007, Muslim extremist groups and local governments closed 110 churches in Indonesia.

A Spanish Newspaper "La Razon" pointed to the case of Habiba Kouider, a Muslim convert to Christianity in Algeria who was arrested and sentenced for hpossession. In addition to her case, seven other Christians are on trial. The Spanish daily also denounced that in Egypt, four Coptic priests were wounded by drive-by gunfire against the Monastery of Abu Fana in the southern region of the country.

Algerian Christian converts fined

BBC News – 3 June: Four Algerian Christians have been given suspended jail terms and fines for worshipping illegally.

The case has provoked accusations in the West of religious repression in the largely Muslim country of 33 million - a charge the government denies. But Christian groups point to the ordered closures of some churches. The state-appointed Higher Islamic Council said Protestant evangelicals are secretly trying to divide Algerians to colonise the country.

One man, a computer technician, received a six-month suspended jail sentence and a fine of \$3,150. Three others got lighter penalties, two-month suspended jail terms and half the fine. The four men admitted they had converted to Christianity but rejected the charge against them - that they were holding an illegal religious ceremony when they were arrested.

You can't preach the Bible here, this is a Muslim area'

ThisisLondon.co.uk

Two Christian preachers were stopped from handing out Bible extracts by police because they were in a Muslim area, it was claimed yesterday. They say they were told by a Muslim police community support officer that they could not preach there and that attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity was a hate crime. The community officer is also said to have told the two men: 'You have been warned. If you come back here and get beat up, well, you have been warned.' A police constable who was present during the incident in the Alum Rock area of Birmingham is also alleged to have told the preachers not to return to the district.

It comes amid growing concern over the development of Islamic 'no-go areas'. The preachers, Americans Arthur Cunningham and Joseph Abraham, are demanding an apology and compensation from West Midlands Police. They say their treatment breaks the Human Rights Act, which guarantees freedom of religious expression.



To Join and support UCGB

To Join the United Copts of Great Britain Write to :

E-mail: info@unitedcopts.org

Or log on <http://www.unitedcopts.org/content/view/391/118/>

And fill the form Or speak to Tel: 07976710729

To Support United Copts of Great Britain:

You can fill in the Standing Order attached or log on

<http://www.unitedcopts.org/images/stories/pdf/ucgb%20standing%20order.pdf>



Egyptian News

Four Coptic Christians jewellery killed

Two men on motorbike enter jewellery shop in Zeitoun district and shot dead the owner and 3 of the staff. The killers were in wigs and sunglasses and the four dead all are Coptic Christians.

The shooting happened at around 12:30pm local time, in the mixed Christian-Muslim district of Zeitoun in northeast Cairo, the attackers escaped without stealing anything from the shop.

Eyewitnesses said that the men arrived at the shop on a motorbike, walked in and shot dead the shop's owner and three employees before driving away, in a rare act of brazen bloodshed in the capital. Police, who swiftly cordoned off the area, found 15 revolver shell casings at the scene, the official said.

Cairo's Zeitoun district is a famed pilgrimage site where, according to witness accounts, the Virgin Mary appeared above the Church of Saint Mary over a period of several years in the late 1960s. The apparitions were seen by millions including Copts, Muslims, Jews and atheists.

A Historic Church damaged by Fire

A historic church in the Nile Delta where the Holy Family is said to have stopped during their flight to Egypt, leaving Christ's footprint, has been damaged by fire, a security official said today. The fire yesterday at the Sanctuary of the Church of the Virgin Mary in Sakha, just outside the Delta city of Kafr el-Sheikh, north of Cairo, destroyed the altar and an historic icon and caused some structural damage.

The local governor blamed the fire on an electrical fault, the official said, with a security cordon placed around the church amid Christian-Muslim tensions following recent unrest between the two communities.

A land dispute involving an historic monastery in central Egypt turned violent on May 31, leading to the death of a Muslim man and injuring four Copts, including two monks.

The Coptic name for Sakha, Pekha-Issous, means "Jesus's foot" because it is home to a rock which purportedly bears Christ's footprint, left during the Biblical flight to Egypt to escape King Herod's massacre of the innocents.

Found in 1984, the stone was put on display in the church, which was itself built on the site of a medieval monastery. The stone was reportedly not damaged in the fire

Attacks on Christian property in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) - Police have arrested 20 people after hundreds of Muslim Egyptians attacked Coptic Christian property after a woman who converted to Islam went missing, a security official said.

Five people were also slightly hurt when police used tear gas to disperse protesters in the village of Al-Nazla, in the province of Fayyum 100 kilome-



tres south of Cairo, the official said.

The woman whose reported disappearance caused the disturbances later returned home with her 10-month-old baby after a three-day visit to relatives in the capital, security officials said.

Muslim villagers went on the rampage after word that the Coptic woman recently converted to Islam had gone missing from her home, and amid rumours that she had been abducted by her Christian family.

"Al-Nazla residents threw stones at houses and shops owned by Copts... because the villagers believed that the woman had been kidnapped by Christian members of her family," the official said on condition of anonymity.

Police fired tear gas grenades to disperse the protesters and arrested 20 people in connection with damage to Christian-owned property, the official said, adding that five people were slightly hurt in the unrest.

Earlier this month the Coptic Ecclesiastical Council issued an unusually strong-worded statement urging President Hosni Mubarak to guarantee the safety of Christians in Egypt.

The statement referred to a violent attack in May on a monastery in which four Copts were injured and called on Mubarak to prevent "more armed attacks on monks" and "insults to the cross."

Last month's attack in the southern town of Mallawi sparked fears of sectarian strife in an increasingly religious, Sunni Muslim-dominated society in which tensions with Christians are already running high.

Egypt Deported more Eritreans

Egyptian police moved 350 Eritrean migrants to Cairo from detention on the Red Sea coast to fly them home. The UN refugee agency UNHCR has objected to the mass deportations, which could violate the prohibition on sending people home who have a well-grounded fear of persecution.

Activists close to the migrant community say they think the Egyptians have deported at least 810 Eritrean asylum seekers since June 11, out of about 1,600 Eritreans who were in Egyptian detention. The government has not given any figure of its own.

The deportations are the largest forced returns of asylum seekers from Egypt in decades, and could mark a shift in Egypt's policy toward tens of thousands of largely African migrants on its territory, activists say.

Amnesty International says thousands of migrants try to cross into Israel from Egypt each year, with numbers rising since 2007. But Eritreans arriving in Egypt in recent months include Pentecostal Christians fleeing religious persecution and others trying to avoid military conscription, activists say.

The Egyptian government has said it fulfils its commitments under international law on refugees but UNHCR said that the Egyptian authorities were obstructing access to the asylum seekers, who could face torture in Eritrea.



A Window on History

From The Book of Maqrizi

written by: a Muslim scholar in the thirteen century

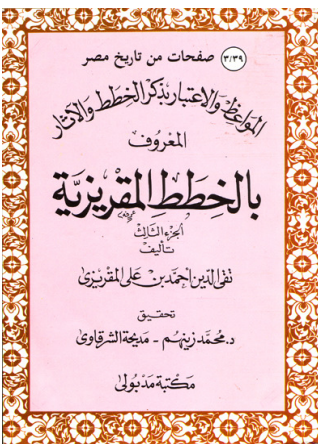
In the year 682 of Hira it was the battle of the Copts when Amir Sanger El-Shouga'e who was well respected in the times of king Mansour Inb Kalawoon. Copts were only allowed to ride donkeys with belts to mark them and would not dare to speak to a Muslim while riding and when walk only with humiliation. Copts were not allowed to wear good quality cloths. When King Mansour died and his son Alashraz Khalil was made king Copts were starting to be used by princes and felt strength. They started to wear good cloths and appeared well. There was a Coptic clerk known as

Ein Ghazal who one day met with a Muslim agent on a ware house to the Muslim Amir who Ein Ghazal work for who was late in payment to the Amir. Ein Ghazal started swearing and threatening the agent to get the delayed payment and the agent kept apologizing then Ein Ghazal ordered his attendant to tie the hands of the Muslim agent which enraged Muslim public till the crowd got quiet angry that they threw Ein Ghazal off the donkey and let the agent free then the crowd started to attack Ein Ghazal him self that he was close to be killed if not for the Amir men who then started to attack the crown.

The Muslim crowd ran to the Amir and pleaded with him that Ein Ghazal was harsh with the Muslim agent which is not allowed under Islam.

Then the Amir asked for his deputy Bidra and Amir Singer to come and he then ordered to being all Copts and Jews in Cairo to be killed he then when his anger went he decided that all Christians to be offered the conversion to Islam or to be killed and who converts to Islam to be employed by Muslims.

www.al-emam.com/Islamlib/viewchp.asp?BLD=224&CID=165



نافذة على التاريخ

مقتبسة من كتاب

"المواظظ والإعتبار بذكر الخطط والآثار" للمقريزي

واو جاقيته فخلصوه من الناس وشرعوا في القبض عليهم ليفتكوا بهم، فصاحوا عليهم ما يحل ومروا مسرعين الى ان وقفوا تحت القلعة واستغاثوا نصرالله السلطان، فارسل يكشف الخبر، فعرفوه ما كان من استطالة الكاتب النصراني على السمسار وما جرى لهم فطلب عين الغزال ورسم للعامة باحضار النصرارى اليه وطلب الامير بدر الدين بيدرا النائب والامير سنجر الشجاعى وتقدم اليهما باحضار جميع النصرارى بين يديه ليقتلهم. فما زال به حتى استقر الحال على ان

فاخذ يسبه ويهدده على مال قد تأخر عليه من ثمن غلة الأمير وهو يترفق له ويعتذر فلا يزيد ذلك عليه الا غلظة، وأمر غلامه فنزل وكنف السمسار ومضى به والناس تجتمع عليه حتى صار الى صليبية جامع احمد بن طولون ومعه عالم كبير وما منهم الا من يسأله ان يخلي عن السمسار وهو يمتنع عليهم، فتكاثروا عليه والقوه عن حماره واطلقوا السمسار.

وكان قد قرب من بيت استاذة فبعث غلامه لينجده بمن فيه، فاتاه بطائفة من غلمان الأمير

وفي سنة اثنتين وثمانين وستمئة كانت واقعة النصرارى، ومن خبرها ان الأمير سنجر الشجاعى كانت حرمة واقرة في أيام الملك المنصور قلاوون فكان النصرارى يركبون الحمير بزنانير في اوساطهم ولا يجسر نصراني يحدث مسلماً وهو راكب، واذا مشى فيذلة ولا يقدر احد منهم يلبس ثوبا مصقولاً، فلما مات الملك المنصور وتسلطن من بعده ابنه الملك الأشرد خليل، خدم الكتاب النصرارى عند الامراء الخاصكية وقووا نفوسهم على المسلمين وترفعوا في ملابسهم وحياتهم.

وكان منهم كاتب عند خاصكي يعرف بعين الغزال، فصادف يوماً في طريق مصر سمسار شونة مخدومه، فنزل السمسار عن دابته وقبل رجل الكاتب،

ينادي في القاهرة ومصر ان لا يخدم احد من النصرارى واليهود عند أمير، وأمر الامراء باجمعهم ان يعرضوا على من عندهم من الكتاب النصرارى الاسلام، فمن امتنع من الاسلام ضربت عنقه ومن اسلم استخدموه عندهم.