



Egypt

6 January 2011

FIDH and its member organizations condemn the terrorist attack in Alexandria and call upon the Egyptian authorities to respect human rights in fighting against terrorism

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Following the attack, protests were held in the capital and Alexandria. According to our information, several clashes were reported between the police and the protesters mainly Copts, a religious minority in Egypt.

This attack is representative of the climate of violence which prevails against Christian communities in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly in Egypt and Iraq. 2010 was indeed witness to a series of bloody attacks perpetrated against these religious minorities. On January 7, 2010, six people were shot dead in Naga Hammadi in Upper Egypt after leaving a midnight mass. In Iraq, forty persons were taken hostage by a terrorist group close to Al-Qaeda, they were later killed inside a Syriac church in Baghdad on October 31, 2010.

This latest aggression committed against the Copts, one of the largest Christian communities in the region (the population is estimated at 8 to 10 million) is a crime of extraordinary violence and must be condemned by all religious leaders. It is the consequence of the security policies on the escalation of violence. Pointing to the incidents of religious strife during 2010, it is noteworthy that Emergency Law has not really prevented terrorism from penetrating Egypt as alleged by the government. Such acts must be severely punished by the authorities in accordance with international standards.

Even though religious freedom is granted and protected under the Egyptian constitution and under international human right conventions, religious intolerance and discrimination are embedded very deeply within the legislative and ideological framework of the Egyptian society. No solution will ever be effective without providing a social and legislative context which allows religious minorities to practice their religions freely, and which would harshly punish attempts of breaking the unity of the Egyptian people.

FIDH, EOHR, CIHRS and HRAAP thus call for a collective effort from different societal powers to address the multidimensional threat of religious strife.

FIDH, EOHR, CIHRS and HRAAP also call on the Egyptian authorities to investigate the attack and demand that they make every effort to ensure that its perpetrators be brought to justice and urge the international community to implement all means necessary in order to end the wave of violence which is plaguing the region and to come in support of the persecuted Christian communities.

<http://www.fidh.org/FIDH-and-its-member-organizations-condemn-the>