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“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” John 17:15

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My dear Friends,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

The situation in Cairo is very sad for us as a Christian community. On Friday 6 April 2013, sectarian clashes erupted once again, this time in El Khosus, in the outskirts of Cairo. The story, according to the director of the police, started by a 12-year old Muslim boy drawing graffiti on the wall of an Islamic school. Two Muslim men rebuked him for doing so, and a Christian man also came and rebuked him. This developed into a big argument and fighting between Christians and Muslims in the area. After the Friday prayers in the mosque, a group of Muslims came out and attacked the Coptic Orthodox church in the area. The result of this was the killing of four Christians and one Muslim, and many injured. Many stores were also vandalized and looted. The Grand Imam sent his assistant, together with a Coptic Orthodox bishop, in order to do a reconciliation. However, one hour after things calmed down, the fighting erupted again.

The next day there was a funeral at the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Abassayia the center of Cairo for the Christians who died. Thousands of Christians attended the funeral. Amidst their mourning and grief they were shouting words against the government and against the Muslim Brotherhood. Because of this, as they exited the Cathedral and the church grounds, they were attacked by other Muslims. The police then interfered throwing teargas. At least one person was killed with over 80 injured. This was the first time in history that the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral was attacked, especially during a time of mourning.

It is worth mentioning that in the last two years, since the beginning of the Revolution of 2011, the number of incidents of sectarian clashes has increased. No one who committed violence or killing has been brought to justice because the government is content to solve the sectarian clashes by reconciliatory meetings. In a statement I made, I urged the government to apply the rule of law as the only way to stop these sectarian clashes. I emphasized the importance of the reconciliatory meetings which we as an Anglican Church are facilitating at several levels. I also emphasized that they are not a substitute to the application of the law. Unfortunately the current government is inexperienced and is not doing enough to include the different political parties in building up Egypt after the Revolution. This contributed to the instability of the Egyptian society, the decrease of tourism, and the bad economic situation.

The Christian community in Egypt right now is mourning and feels challenged in their own country, as some of them have said, “*we have been here since the time of the Pharaohs, this is our country! We will not leave whatever happens.*” On the other hand, there are many educated young people who are immigrating out of the country and this is the saddest thing for me as one of the leaders of the church in Egypt, because I believe that the Christian presences is very much liked with the Christian witness.

May the Lord bless you!

+ Mouneer Egypt

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