



Anti-Christian Violence Continues in Egypt

In the aftermath of a Christmas season filled with anti-Christian violence in Nigeria, Iraq, and Egypt, Christian leaders around the world have called for prayers for those undergoing persecution, and have also called upon the governments that have thus far proven impotent to stop such attacks to step up to their responsibility to protect their citizens.



Though Egyptian President [Hosni Mubarak](#) tried to claim in the aftermath of the detonation of a car bomb outside a church in Alexandria that “all Egypt is the target” of such jihadist terrorism, such claims ring hollow with the Coptic Church, which has suffered widespread persecution, especially when there are [claims that Egyptian security forces](#) (which are supposed to prevent such violence) withdrew from protecting the church shortly before the bomb was detonated.

The bombing in Alexandria was not the end of jihadist terrorism; now an Egyptian police officer has gone on an anti-Christian shooting spree.

It appears that the true character of Egypt’s government is being revealed. The response of the Mubarak government to Pope Benedict’s appeal on behalf of Coptic Christians has been to call the Egyptian Ambassador to the Vatican back to Egypt for consultations. [According to an article at CatholicHerald.co.uk](#):

Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, whose formal title is Secretary for Relations with States, met the ambassador, Lamia Aly Hamada Mekhemar, just hours after she was told to return to Cairo in the wake of her government’s displeasure with Pope Benedict XVI’s appeal to the country to protect Christians.

The Vatican said in a written statement that it “fully supports the government’s concerns about ‘avoiding an escalation of clashes and tensions for religious reasons,’ and appreciates the efforts that it is taking in this direction.”

Egypt had described as “unacceptable” the Pope’s remarks about recent attacks against Christians in Egypt.

What had Benedict said which Mubarak found “unacceptable”? Again, according to the [CatholicHerald.co.uk](#) article:

In an address to diplomats Pope Benedict recalled the December 31 bomb attack on a Coptic Orthodox church in Alexandria that left 23 people dead.



Written by [James Heiser](#) on January 14, 2011

He said the Alexandria bombing and attacks on Christians in Iraq were “yet another sign of the urgent need for the governments of the region to adopt, in spite of difficulties and dangers, effective measures for the protection of religious minorities. Need we repeat it? In the Middle East, Christians are original and authentic citizens who are loyal to their fatherland and assume their duties toward their country.”

Hossam Zaki, Egypt’s foreign ministry spokesman, said the Pope’s statement represented “an unacceptable interference in its internal affairs” and announced it was recalling its ambassador to the Vatican “for consultation.”

In essence, Benedict’s words are not vastly different from some of the things that Mubarak had said; the difference may be that Benedict meant them.

The Coptic Church is not under the authority of Rome, or any of the other historic churches of the West. In fact, the Coptic Church has long been divided from the Roman Catholic Church and other historic communions of the Western Church, as well as many within the Eastern Orthodox churches, because the Coptic Church is among those that rejected the so-called “Chalcedonian Definition” decreed by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. (The current head of the Coptic Church is [Pope Shenouda III](#).) But while divided from the Copts over doctrinal differences, Christians of the East and West feel a connection to those who are suffering for the Christian faith at the hands of Jihadist butchers, and they share a measure of the frustration that Copts feel when the Egyptian government merely pays lip service to their security.

The murderous shooting spree of an off-duty policeman depicts a more honest view of life for Christians in Egypt than will be offered up by a hundred speeches by Hosni Mubarak. An article at [CatholicCulture.org](#) (“[Policeman shoots 4 Christians in Egypt](#)”), captures a sense of the fear that Copts must endure merely going out in public:

Less than two weeks after a church bombing in Alexandria left 21 Coptic Christians dead, an off-duty policeman shot four Christians on a train, killing a 71-year-old man. A fifth person was also wounded.

“This lunatic went up and down the coach looking for Christians,” said Coptic Orthodox Bishop Morcos of Shobra El-Kheima, who had spoken with witnesses to the shooting.

“Seeing a group of girls and women who were not wearing the [Islamic’ veil], he took them for Christians and fired, shouting Allahu Akbar [Allah is great].”

The new attack on Christians came just after the Egyptian government announced that it was recalling its ambassador from the Holy See, in a protest against the Pope’s statement that the country must do more to protect Christians.

The world has already seen what happened to the Punjab Governor in Pakistan, Salman Taseer, when he (as a Muslim) challenged the use of the death penalty in blasphemy cases, and sought to free a Christian woman who was falsely accused of blasphemy: He was murdered by one of his own security guards. After the assassination, Taseer’s murderer was praised by [500 “moderate” Muslim scholars and clerics](#), and [1,000 Pakistani lawyers have now signed a petition](#) in support of the assassin. When agents of the state in Pakistan and Egypt now willfully join the jihad, or (as is alleged) withdraw their protection before a bombing transpires, it becomes clear that little confidence can be placed in such governments to offer the most basic protection to their citizens.



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While the news media in the United States now revels in a seemingly endless discussion of the Tucson tragedy and the actions of one allegedly deranged killer, the systematic slaughter of Christians is barely afforded a few seconds as an anchor read.

[According to the U.S. State Department's website:](#)

The U.S. has a large assistance program in Egypt and provides funding for a variety of programs. Through its Human and Economic Sector Development cash transfer program, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is supporting benchmarks that aim to stimulate the small and microenterprise sectors, improve budget transparency to increase macroeconomic stability, and improve the trade regime and business climate. To support the Middle East peace process through regional economic integration, the United States permits products to be imported from Egypt without tariffs if they have been produced by factories registered in Qualified Industrial Zones and 10.5% of the inputs of these products originate from Israel.

Leaving aside for the moment the constitutionality of any such assistance program, many Americans may feel that it makes sense to use the suspension of this aid to send a clear signal to the Mubarak regime. The latest stunt — withdrawing the Ambassador to the Vatican — communicates quite clearly that the Egyptian government does not expect to be held to anything more substantive than words when it comes to protecting its people from jihadism. American taxpayers may wonder why such a regime should be the recipient of their tax dollars, or, for that matter, enjoy favored trade status.

As the House of Representatives looks for places to cut the budget, perhaps they will discover here one more line item begging to be snipped.

Funeral for Coptic victims of bombing: AP Images



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