

PRESS RELEASE

COPTIC COMMUNITY OUTRAGED AT ATTACK OF ST. MARK'S CATHEDRAL IN CAIRO

MISSISSAUGA, Ontario – December 11, 2016 – St. Peter's Coptic Orthodox Church on the grounds of St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Cairo, Egypt, headquarters to the Coptic Orthodox Church and the official residence of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, was bombed earlier this morning during a liturgical service celebrating the fast of the Advent as all Christians prepare to celebrate Christmas. At this time, 25 parishioners, including mothers and young children, are confirmed dead and many more are injured. It is expected that more will succumb to their injuries as a result of the force and concentration of the explosion, which happened inside the sanctuary. St. Mark's Cathedral is a very significant site for Coptic Orthodox Christians akin to the Vatican for Roman Catholic Christians.

Religious places ought to be sacred and shown deference, regardless of religion. However, the brutal perpetrators chose to attack and strike fear in the Coptic Christians. We have our faith and hope in our Lord and we will not be shaken in this faith or be driven to fear.

We demand that all religious sites receive the necessary protections to allow all to safely and freely celebrate their faith. While these events aim to disrupt relations between Christians and Muslims in Egypt, we will always continue to work together as we live in accord and harmony as we have for many years and together we will denounce extremist terrorism, which is solely focused on destabilizing Egypt by grouping individuals by religion.

We call on the Government of Egypt to form a team of special prosecutors to conduct a thorough investigation and prosecute all the perpetrators of these crimes to the fullest extent of the law. Rhetoric without consequential action by the responsible officials is not sufficient for the Coptic Christians as it shows no repercussions for such heinous conduct.

We also call on the Government of Canada to recognize that extremist terrorism in Egypt is a grave concern for all Egyptians, but particularly for the Coptic Christians, and to lend its hand in friendship to the Government of Egypt and the Coptic Christian Community.

We offer our hearts up in prayer to our Lord to give comfort and patience to those suffering and to those who have lost loved ones. We extend our sincerest condolences to our father and Patriarch, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II and to the Coptic Christian community worldwide. We also express our sincerest condolences to the president of Egypt, Mr. Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and ask the Lord to guide him as he leads the Arab Republic of Egypt during these difficult times. May the good Lord have mercy on His people in Egypt and everywhere during these trying times.

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