



الجمعية الإسلامية المصرية

THE ISLAMIC EGYPTIAN SOCIETY OF N.S.W. INC.

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The Honourable Ms Julia Gillard  
Prime Minister of Australia  
The Australian Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT

As Egyptian Australians we monitor the current situation in Egypt with worry and sadness and we have issued a press release in this regard not to express our feelings only, but to also present a factual insight on the situation in Egypt.

Our community cannot help but feel disappointment when we see that the Australian Parliament pass a motion to condemn what it called “persecution of Coptic Christians” in Egypt. This shows complete ignorance of the status of Christians in Egypt and displays a completely biased view. Coptic Christians have lived side by side with their Muslim brothers and sisters in harmony for hundreds of years and have prospered economically and grew in numbers. Had there been any “persecution” in Egypt, Coptic Christians would not have grown in numbers to represent up to 10 % of the Egyptian population (currently around 85 million people). Had there been any “persecution” in Egypt, Boutros Boutros-Ghali would not have been appointed as Egypt’s foreign minister then become the secretary-general of the United Nations at a later date (this is but one example of hundreds). Had there been “persecution” in Egypt, the number of churches in Egypt would not have increased to the level they are currently at: close to 3,200 churches, which is one of the highest per capita in the world. The statistics go on and on.

The Australian government should have monitored the situation in Egypt closely and got its information and the facts directly from Coptic Church leaders in Egypt, not from extremists like Bishop Surial of Melbourne.

Pope Shenuda the III himself said that the demonstrations were infiltrated by people aiming to create violence.

There is also the testimony of the Bishop of Aswan, Father Hydra, who spoke about the church which was used as a reason to start the latest demonstrations. We ask that you view in the following link. In the link Father Hydra states that the church was built outside the registered specification, however he specifically emphasises that there were no attacks on the church nor was it subjected to demolition.  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dl3hR\\_mGz8A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dl3hR_mGz8A)

It is disappointing to see the Australian government adopting a one-sided approach with regards to the current events in Egypt, especially when we witnessed how the views expressed by Bishop Surial of Melbourne have received sympathetic ears from both yourself and the opposition Leader, Mr Abbott.

Bishop Surial should not be given a platform to voice out his hateful enraging views. His statements, which can only be described as unbalanced and false, denote



nothing but statements coming out of a man driven by some hidden agenda. These inflammatory comments will only work against the harmony of all Egyptians which existed for hundreds of years, both in Egypt and abroad, and will further ignite the fragile emotions prevailing after the current events. We cannot emphasise strongly enough that views such as those of Bishop Surial's are views that will serve nothing but ignite sectarian tumult and tension between all Egyptians both in Egypt and abroad, and will destroy the harmony that existed for hundreds of years. Bishop Surial, therefore, cannot and does not represent or speak on behalf of true Egyptians, Muslims or Christians.

The Egyptian Australians from the Muslim and the Coptic Christian community have always maintained good relations and cooperated as one community working together in harmony and contributed productively for the advancement of Australia. We urge you, as the head of the Australian government, the Australian Parliament and the Australian people, to take a neutral position with regards to the current events in Egypt, and we ask you not to take into consideration any extremist and exaggerated views. In doing so, you will help maintain and enhance the harmony that exists in the Egyptian Australian community.

We realise that there are problems in Egypt. But this is only natural with any revolution at its early stages; teething problems will arise. The problems in post-revolution Egypt face all Egyptians, both Muslims and Christians. We hope that the transition period will pass sooner than later. The Australian Government should support the people of Egypt, the people of the revolution, both Muslims and Christians, to fulfil their dreams and aspirations for a brighter future. Please refer to the Australian article <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/fanning-sectarian-flames-in-egypt/story-e6frg6so-1226167062968> referring to outside elements trying very hard to ignite tensions between the two faiths.

We hope that Australia will be proactive in the process of safeguarding the peaceful coexistence and harmony that lasted (and will continue to exist) between the Muslims and Christians for centuries. It is our hope that the Australian government will encourage this harmony and will work vigorously to deter anyone who tries to sabotage it.

Yours truly

Mohammed Helal  
On behalf of the Islamic Egyptian Society of NSW, Australia  
17 October 2011