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EGYPT CSW launches campaign at Egypt Day of Prayer

Christian Solidarity Worldwide launched its campaign for religious freedom for Egyptian Christians at a day of prayer held at St Mary's Church in London on January 29. The No Way Out campaign will run throughout 2011.

The Egypt Day of Prayer took place as streets of towns and cities across Egypt were rocked by protests against the government of President Hosni Mubarak, who has been in power for 29 years. In his opening remarks, Bishop Angaelos, head of the Coptic Church in the UK, reflected on the current political upheaval and urged prayer for every Egyptian citizen, including the protesters, the security forces, the army and the President.

Bishop Angaelos also spoke about the resilience of the Egyptian Church, and prayed for Egyptian Christians to be able to practise their faith without persecution or marginalisation.

Sectarian violence against Christians in Egypt has escalated in recent years, with 53 reported incidents since 2008. This year opened with the bombing of a Coptic church in Alexandria on New Year's Eve, in which 23 people were killed and 80 were injured. In addition, Egypt is one of the few countries in the world which stipulates that a person's religion must be indicated on their identity card, and no convert from Islam has ever been able to change their religious designation on their card. Christian converts face daily discrimination, including arbitrary arrest, loss of employment and marriage restrictions.

The No Way Out campaign seeks to bring about proactive measures to prevent sectarian violence against Egyptian Christians, the right for Egyptians to change their religion on official records and protection for those who pursue this right, and the upholding of article 40 of the Egyptian constitution, ensuring that Christians enjoy "...equal public rights and duties without discrimination due to race, ethnic origin, language, religion or creed."

CSW will be publishing a groundbreaking report on sectarian violence in Egypt in the second quarter of 2011, which will be launched in the UK and EU parliaments. The campaign pack can be downloaded from www.csw.org.uk/nowayout. There is also a petition seeking 50,000 signatures and calling for the Egyptian government to address the root causes of sectarian violence.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "The timing of the Egypt Day of Prayer was significant, coming at what is clearly a crucial time in the nation's history. It was indeed a privilege to be able to stand and pray in solidarity with Egyptian Christians at this time. CSW is committed to continue to offer support, prayer and solidarity until Egyptian Christians receive and enjoy their full rights as citizens, and the nation's religious minorities are able to practice their respective faiths without fear of discrimination or harassment."

Notes to Editors:

1. Photographs of the Egypt Day of Prayer are available from the CSW Press Office.
2. For more information on CSW's No Way Out campaign, visit: www.csw.org.uk/nowayout