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## EGYPT CSW expresses concern at repressive tactics

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Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is deeply concerned by an apparent slide towards repression in Egypt, following earlier democratic gains. Of particular concern are recent repressive actions by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, and an upsurge in attacks by the Salafist movement against the country's religious minorities.

The violent government crackdown in Cairo's Tahrir Square on Saturday, April 9, during which at least one protestor died and around 70 were injured, is the latest indication of a worrying trend that local observers have termed "counter-revolutionary".

A series of repressive actions and legislation have been initiated by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, made up largely of Mubarak appointees. For example, the emergency law has not been repealed, and random arrests continue to take place. The armed forces are reported to have detained thousands of civilians since 28 January, sentencing them to jail terms following hearings in military courts.

In another worrying development, the interim regime decreed that any new political party must now have at least 5,000 members across ten governorates prior to registration. Under Presidents Sadat and Mubarak, parties only needed 1,000 members for registration.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has outlawed strikes, protests, sit-ins, public congregations and street assembly, with protestors risking large fines and a one-year prison sentence. The military has also reacted strongly to criticism. Maikel Nabil Sanad, an Egyptian blogger who questioned the lack of transparency by the military, was arrested by military police and has just received a three-year sentence for "disturbing public security", "insulting the military institution and publishing lies about it."

Increased repression by authorities has been accompanied by an upsurge in attacks on Egypt's religious minorities by the Wahabbi-influenced Salafist movement. Previously thought to be small and lacking in support, Salafists have become far more visible, launching a number of sectarian attacks.

On March 8, at least 13 people died and over 100 were injured in the Zarayeb area in Muqattam, when Salafists attacked Copts protesting against an attack on Sool village, in which a church was torn down. Coptic homes and businesses were torched, including the home of the head of Cairo's garbage village, and several Coptic victims were reported to have suffered gunshot wounds, indicating security service involvement. On March 20, Salafists in the town of Qena cut off the ears of 45 year-old Coptic Christian Ayman Anwar Mitri, after accusing him of having had an affair with a Muslim woman and running a brothel. More recently, Salafists destroyed over 16 Sufi shrines.

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "Many Egyptians of every creed maintain the vision for a nation characterized by justice, freedom and equality of citizenship and opportunity, which was the driving force for change. It is vital that the international community maintains its focus on Egypt at this critical time in the nation's history, and urges the current regime to restrict military courts to the prosecution of soldiers, and to release civilians imprisoned by these courts. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces must also be prevailed upon to discard laws that threaten freedom of association and the right to peaceful assembly, to end

unwarranted limitations on freedom of expression, and to ensure that those who commit crimes against the country's religious minorities face the full extent of the law.”