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EGYPT CSW expresses concern at violence toward Coptic protesters in Egypt

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has received updated information that hundreds of Copts were involved in Wednesday's protest in Cairo's Giza governorate, in which one man was killed and at least 60 were injured during clashes with an estimated 5,000 riot police. CSW initially reported that 150 Copts were involved.

In a comment to CSW, His Grace Bishop Angaelos of the Coptic Orthodox Church UK said, "We completely reject the use of violence. This is not in the nature of Coptic Christians. However, we believe the demonstration could have been policed in a much better manner and that the mishandling of the demonstration by the police force caused it to spiral out of control".

Reuters News Agency reports that the Egyptian Attorney General ordered the detention of 156 protesters, some of whom were refused access to legal assistance. When 30 lawyers tried to attend police questioning of 120 people in Giza on Wednesday evening, they were prevented from entering the public prosecutor's office. Five lawyers later managed to attend, but were not allowed to speak to the protestors in private. The Associated Press reports that the prosecutor general has ordered a renewable 15-day-detention for those arrested, on charges that include sabotage, assault, possession of explosives and attempted murder of police.

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "It is unacceptable that the protesters were not given full access to legal assistance, especially given the severity of the charges that are being brought against them. CSW calls on the Egyptian government to ensure unhindered access to legal representation and a fair judicial process for these detainees, and to address the underlying issue of restrictive church building regulations that sparked this spontaneous protest, by finalizing a unified law for the construction of places of worship."