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EGYPT | Copts Arrested Following Attack on Cathedral

Egyptian authorities have arrested four Coptic men who were present in St. Mark's Cathedral when it was attacked last weekend.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) was informed Shadi Sami and Michael Morcos were arrested today by Special Forces who stormed the back entrance of his apartment. It appears the men were detained for being in the grounds of St. Mark's Cathedral when it was attacked last Sunday. Two other Coptic men were also arrested today, according to the Coptic Maspero Youth Union.

The men were among hundreds of people who attended Sunday's funeral at St. Mark's Cathedral for four Coptic men who were killed in sectarian violence last Friday in Khosous, a town 10 miles from Cairo.

As mourners left the funeral, they were pelted with stones, petrol bombs, and Molotov cocktails, forcing them to seek shelter in the grounds of the Cathedral. As stones and other missiles continued to be hurled from the roofs of surrounding buildings and by people who had climbed the walls of the Cathedral, young Coptic men took up sticks and rocks to retaliate. Two Coptic men were killed during the violence, and 84 were injured, including Michael Morcos, who required 16 stitches to the head after being hit by a glass bottle. When police eventually arrived at the scene, they fired teargas into the grounds of the cathedral and did nothing to end the attack, which continued for at least five hours.

Andrew Johnston, Advocacy Director at CSW, said, "These arrests come at a time when the Coptic community in Egypt is still coming to terms with an unprecedented attack on the headquarters of the Coptic Orthodox Church and the violence in Khosous. Two Copts were killed during the attack on the cathedral; four more died in Khosous, yet not one of their attackers has been arrested. Such discrepancies in the discharge of justice contribute to impunity, and can only foster more sectarianism. They also send a clear message that Christians are not viewed as equal citizens, despite the government's verbal protestations to the

contrary, and the fact that Egypt is party to international covenants that prohibit discrimination. Being in the cathedral identifies these men as victims, not perpetrators. CSW therefore urges their immediate release, and calls on the Egyptian authorities to focus instead on apprehending assailants caught on camera as they attacked the cathedral with stones and guns.”