



8.15.13

## EGYPT | Hundreds Dead, Churches Attacked in Violence

The Egyptian government has confirmed that 525 people were killed and thousands more injured in violence that ensued after security services dispersed a sit-in by supporters of former President Morsi. Coptic Church media sources report that at least 52 churches were attacked across the country after the protesters were dispersed.

The crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood protesters was immediately followed by a spate of attacks on the Coptic community by Islamists, with many churches and Christian-owned businesses burnt or completely destroyed. According to news reports, the Egyptian Bible Society building in Assuit has been razed to the ground.

The Egyptian Interior Ministry has confirmed that 43 policemen were also killed in the violence, which started after security forces attempted to remove Muslim Brotherhood supporters who had been staging sit-in protests at various locations in Cairo. Many Muslim Brotherhood supporters had refused to move from the makeshift camps until the former president was reinstated. Following the violence, a month-long emergency rule was implemented, with a curfew from 7p.m. to 6a.m.

The Coptic newspaper Al Watani reported damage to a church in Sohag, south of Cairo, while in the village of Dalga, three churches and six buildings within the grounds of the 5th-century Monastery of the Holy Virgin and Anba Abra'am, housing a clinic, a retreat center, a preschool nursery, and the bishop's residence, were set on fire. In the Minya region, south of Cairo, police stations in Matai and Beni-Mazar were targeted. The church of Mar-Mina in the Abu-Hilal district and a clinic operated by the church were set alight, as were two churches in the Fayoum villages of Nazla and Youssef al-Seddiq and the Society of the Holy Bible in the town of Fayoum, approximately 60 miles southwest of Cairo.

In the town of Suez, 60 miles east of Cairo, the church and the school of the Good Shepherd were set on fire by the Islamists, who also blocked the road to prevent fire trucks from reaching the area. The Anglican News Service also confirmed that St. Saviour's Anglican Church in Suez was attacked

by supporters of former president Morsi, who threw Molotov cocktails and stones at the church while also destroying the car of the priest in charge of St Saviour's, Ehab Ayoub.

Political polarization has increased since the removal of former President Morsi in what was described as a "people's coup" facilitated by the army. His ousting followed protests which saw 17 million take to the streets and a further 22 million sign a petition demanding his resignation. There has been a steady increase in attacks on the Christian community following accusations by several Islamist sources, including the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood and the leader of al Qaeda, that Christians were part of a "conspiracy" to remove the Morsi regime.

Daniel Sinclair, Director of Communications at Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said, "We express our heartfelt condolences to the families of those killed in yesterday's violence. The removals may have been necessary; however, the manner in which they were executed and the excessive loss of lives will only serve to polarize Egyptian society even further. CSW is also deeply concerned at the unwarranted and continuing targeting of the Coptic community. We urge the government to ensure comprehensive security to all Egyptians, regardless of their religion."