CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE USA
VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

12.12.16

EGYPT | Coptic Orthodox Church Attack Kills 25

The funeral service for those who died Dec. 11 in a bomb attack on a church adjoining the main Coptic Orthodox Cathedral took place at the Church of the Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius in Cairo. The service was conducted by the leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church Pope Tawadros II, who cut short a Papal visit to Greece.

Three men and a woman were reportedly arrested in connection with the explosion, which occurred at 10 a.m. local time in a section of the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul that was reserved for women and which also injured at least 41 people. Egyptian authorities are now describing it as a suicide bombing and said in a statement that the death toll is expected to rise.

Following the explosion, the Egyptian President Abdul Fattah el-Sisi declared three days of national mourning, stating, "Terrorism targets the country's Copts and Muslims... Egypt will only be made stronger and more united in such circumstances." The Egyptian Grand Mufti Sheikh Shawky Ibrahim Abdel-Karim Allam, who also called for unity, said, "Attacking churches whether by demolition, bombing, killing those inside, or terrifying people is prohibited in Islamic Sharia."

General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom His Grace Bishop Angaelos said, “As Christians, we also believe in forgiveness, but forgiveness is by no means synonymous with ignoring justice... Forgiveness is ultimately liberating and empowering, but at the same time, justice is essential; not for the purposes of punishment, but to secure and protect our societies in which people must respectfully live side by side."

Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide Mervyn Thomas said, “We are deeply saddened by this callous attack on worshippers gathering during the month of advent. Our prayers are with those who have tragically lost loved ones and friends as well as with all who were injured. This is the deadliest attack on the Christian community since the bombing of the church in Alexandria in 2011. The fact it has occurred at the seat of the Coptic Orthodox Church is particularly sensitive, and follows a series of sectarian mob attacks on Christian communities

in which perpetrators have consistently escaped punishment. Thus while the bombing underlines once again the need for added vigilance and security during festive occasions, it also highlights the urgent need to ensure accountability for all sectarian attacks, and justice for targeted communities throughout the country.”