

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
H.H. Pope Tawadros II
Pope of Alexandria and
Patriarch of the See of St. Mark
The Papal Center



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22nd February 2017

Statement by His Holiness Pope Tawadros II **Pope of Alexandria & Patriarch of the See of St. Mark**

Addressed to the United States Congress

Egypt has a long history of rich civilization from the Pharaoh era, then with the entrance of Christianity to Egypt in the middle of the first century through St. Mark the Evangelist, followed by the entrance of Islam, through out the years and with today's population of over 90 million Egyptians, we have always lived peacefully and in harmony.

The Coptic Orthodox Church is the oldest and largest in the Middle East and with the largest Christian population, Coptic Christians today are around 15 million scattered inside and outside Egypt.

President Abdel Fattah El Sisi is concerned with the needs and rights of all Egyptians regardless of religion, working hard to ensure that Christians get all their rights as Egyptian citizens. Coptic Christians have always been excluded from the Egyptian equation, but President Sisi is working towards changing this. Since his election as President of the Arab Republic of Egypt in May 2014, a change towards Christians has been well noticed.

It is for the first time in the Egyptian history that a law has finally been issued by the Parliament recognizing and permitting the building of churches.

Further today there are 39 Coptic Christians in the Egyptian Parliament in comparison to only one Christian in the previous parliament.

President Abdel Fattah El Sisi is the first Egyptian president to visit the Cathedral during Coptic Christmas Eve service; he comes in person to greet Christians. This Christmas, he has announced from inside the Cathedral that the government will build a new church in the new administrative capital.

With the attack on Churches in August 2013, about 100 churches and church buildings got destroyed in the same day, with the orders of President Sisi they have all been rebuilt by the government.

Such attacks are far away from Egyptians, both Muslim and Christian Egyptians have always lived peacefully together, any terror attacks comes from outside. Therefore during this incident I said, "If they burn our churches we will pray with our Muslim neighbours in the Mosques, and if they burn the Mosques, we will all pray together in the streets".

We are building our New Egypt and we support our beloved President in fighting terrorism and extremism, we do face problems and conflicts in small villages but we always try to resolve with the spirit of one family.

Egypt today is in need for strengthening the governmental education system, through which we will manage to overcome all types of extremisms.

We pray for those with hatred hearts, may God open their eyes to recognize the devil acts they do, and we pray for our beloved leaders, president, government and parliament, may God grant them wisdom in ruling our country Egypt, and we pray for peace and prosperity for Egypt and the entire world.

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Tawadros II

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Pope Tawadros II
Pope Of Alexandria & Patriarch of the See of St. Mark
Coptic Orthodox Church, Egypt

