



Patriarch Kirill's statement on disturbances in Cairo

In his statement published below, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church expresses support for the suffering Egyptian Christians.

'The Russian Orthodox Church has followed the developments in Egypt with concern and bitterness. Blood has been spilt and Christian churches have been destroyed again. There is another manifestation of growing intolerance towards Christians and their legal and physical vulnerability in the Egyptian society.

Our Church knows from her recent history what the suffering of innocent people and destruction of churches are. We raise our voice in defence of our Egyptian brothers in faith and call upon the world community not to be indifferent to this lawlessness. The United Nations and other international organizations and leading world powers capable of influencing the policy of the new authorities in Egypt should unequivocally come out against the persecution of Christians and do everything to help establish interreligious peace and security in the region.

The tragic ordeals the Egyptian Christians are undergoing so courageously are links in the same chain which has already brought out a new and ever growing wave of emigration. Egypt is a country in which the Christian and Muslim communities have lived together for centuries. The aggression against Christians lies on the conscience of destructive radical forces whose motives are not at all religious. We appeal to the leaders of the Islamic world to express a clear condemnation of the violence against Christians, to respect their right to openly confess their faith and to preserve their religious and cultural traditions. At an hour when the very future of Christian-Muslim dialogue is threatened, religious leaders should demonstrate in deed their commitment to peace and mutual understanding.

We called upon the Egyptian authorities to put an end immediately to the violence against the ancient Coptic community, to the murders of Christians, to the defilement of churches and shrines. It is insufficient to declare commitment to the principles of justice and human rights; rather it is necessary to ensure the real observance of freedom of conscience in the country. The historical Christian community in Egypt should have the right to confess its faith freely and safely and to preserve its old churches and to build new ones.

The Russian Church once again expresses her support for the suffering Egyptian brothers in Christ,

calling them to preserve the spirit of peace, to defy provocations, to be faithful to our Saviour in their suffering.

+ Kirill

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

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