

The Episcopal / Anglican Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East
The Episcopal / Anglican Diocese of Egypt
with North Africa and the Horn of Africa



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Dear friends,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Thank you very much for your messages and prayers for us as we go through this difficult time.

With great sadness, I would like to tell you about the tragic situation in Imbaba, Giza. Imbaba is a densely populated area, a few kilometres south of Cairo. Over the past two days, there have been clashes in this area between Christians and Muslims. The outcome of the clashes was the death of 12 people, and more than 232 injured. Moreover, several houses and shops were burnt, cars were destroyed, and the church of St. Mary, in the same area, was completely burnt.

The clashes started because of a rumour that a Christian woman who converted to Islam was being hidden by Mar Mina Coptic Orthodox Church. As a result of this rumour, a group of Muslim fundamentalists that belong to the Salafi sect gathered around the church, and wanted to go inside to search for this woman. Young people from the church prevented them from entering, because they were afraid that they may burn the church as it happened a few weeks ago in Sole, Giza.

As a result, more Muslim people came and after praying in the street, they started to shout "Islamic, Islamic." The Christians shouted back "with our spirit and blood, we are ready to defend the cross." There were attempts from moderate Muslims and the church priests to calm down the demonstrators on both sides, but these attempts failed.

Soon after this, some of the demonstrators started shooting and throwing Molotov cocktails. The army arrived and things became quieter. However, early the next morning, some extremist Muslims came and burned several blocks of flats and shops owned by Christians.

Yesterday, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar called for an emergency meeting of Beth El-Eila (the House of the Family), a newly formed group which includes the heads of Christian denominations and several Muslim leaders and the Grand Imam. We all agreed that this incident should be taken very seriously by the authorities, and that those who caused these destructive clashes must be brought to justice. It is worth mentioning that previous clashes between Christians and Muslims have always been solved through community reconciliation. The meeting also appointed a committee to go and visit Imbaba, and report back. I was one of this committee, and we spent eight hours today visiting and listening, and then writing a report to the wider committee.

The damage we saw was indescribable. The area looked as if it was a battlefield, because of

the many tanks and soldiers. I was moved by the story of one of the guards of St. Mary's Church, who refused to denounce Jesus Christ and as a result, his throat was slit.

This is at least the fifth tragic incident since the first day of the year, when a church was bombed in Alexandria. There is no doubt that inter-religious tension is growing in Egypt, and this needs a real strategic plan to combat it. This is what we are trying to do through Beth El-Eila.

I very much appreciate your prayers so that the Lord may transform this difficult situation. We all hope that Egypt will be a safe place for all Egyptians.

May the Lord bless you!

Yours in Christ,

+ Mouneer Egypt

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