



## PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

### Pray for the Persecuted Christians in Egypt



Christian Population: 16,250,000 (16 %)

Total Population: 101,169,000

#### Living in a Pressure Cooker

Many Egyptian Christians encounter substantial roadblocks to living out their faith. There are violent attacks that make news headlines around the world, but there are also quieter, more subtle forms of duress that burden Egyptian believers. Particularly in rural areas in northern Egypt, Christians have been chased from villages, and subject to mob violence and intense familial and community pressure. This is even more pronounced for Christians who are converts from Islam.

In the face of huge economic, political, social and security challenges, the government of President el-Sisi seems to spare little regard for basic human rights and democratic pluralism. Thus, religious freedom for Christians is not fully guaranteed. Egyptian Christians are often victims of social exclusion, and face constant discrimination in areas such as justice, education and basic social services. In rural areas, Christian women have been targeted for abduction and forced marriage.

Thousands of churches are still awaiting official recognition, and there were dozens of attacks on churches during the 2020 World Watch List (WWL) reporting period. And yet, even in the face of terrible violence, Christians in Egypt have shown incredible grace and forgiveness—Coptic Christians were even nominated for the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize for their refusal to retaliate.

#### How Christians Are Suffering

Those with Muslim backgrounds often face enormous pressure from immediate and extended families to renounce their faith and return to Islam. Severe restrictions on building or securing places for worship often prevent Christians from congregating, in addition to hostility and violence toward believers who do gather. Christians, especially women, face discrimination in their workplaces and public spaces. And in recent years, Islamic extremist groups have targeted Christians and churches both individually and en masse in numerous violent and deadly acts of persecution. Specifically, ISIS has publicly vowed to wage war on Christians.

#### Examples

On November 2, 2018, Islamic militants opened fire on buses carrying Christian pilgrims in Minya Province, killing seven and wounding at least 19. During the WWL 2020 reporting period, at least 16 Christians were killed because of their faith or under suspicious circumstances, most of them in Upper Egypt. [...]

In June 2019, Coptic Christians were attacked by a mob after one of the Christians had written an allegedly "blasphemous" Facebook post. The police arrested some of the Coptic men and imprisoned the one responsible for the Facebook post.

Although the government continues with the legalization of churches under the Church Construction Law (2016), thousands of churches are still waiting to be formally recognized. Requests for official recognition are sometimes answered with mob violence and the closure of the church by the security services.

At least five church buildings went up in flames, with Christians wondering whether this happened by coincidence.

#### Pray for Egypt

- In a culture where the man of the house is seen as the protector and the source of dignity for the women, the absence of men makes women targets for Muslim extremists. Pray for Open Doors' partners in Egypt who provide women's ministry to these vulnerable women.

- Muslim extremists are using a new persecution tactic where they hack Christians' Facebook accounts and post blasphemous content, then rally moderate Muslims to attack their neighbors. Pray for justice and protection for believers.
- Christians of all backgrounds face difficulties in building churches or finding a place for communal worship, coming both from state restrictions, as well as from communal hostility and mob violence. Pray believers are able to find fellowship.
- Christians, especially women, face discrimination and abuse in their places of work and when they go about their daily life in public spaces. Pray for their safety and protection.