CEOSS Press Release on Violent Backlash in EGYPT

In what has become one of the deadliest days in recent Egyptian history, hundreds were killed and thousands injured in attacks nationwide. The government’s attempt to disperse two protest camps sparked and ignited attacks resulting in massive retaliation all across the country. Supporters of deposed President, Mohamed Morsy, many from the Muslim Brotherhood, took aim at Christian-owned properties, police stations, and governmental buildings. Later, Egypt’s interim president, Adly Mansour, responded with a month-long state of emergency nationwide.

The events began early morning of Wednesday, August 14, 2013, when police forces supported by the military, encouraged protestors in the two main camps in Cairo, to leave safely and return to their homes. It is worth mentioning, that these protestors have been protesting for six weeks, blocking major roadways and shutting down local businesses. Additionally, residents of both neighborhoods had been suffering greatly and unable to commute in and out of the areas. In dispersing the sit-ins, police allowed protestors a safe exit, to which many heeded and left the area. However, others resisted to leave and attacked the police forces. Police responded professionally, using tear gas only as a start which was escalated to using weapons in response to protesters aggression using live ammunition. During and after the dispersal, police forces discovered caches of weapons and ammunition at both sit-in sites.

A few hours later, violent demonstrations by Morsi supporters broke out in different cities and towns throughout Egypt. Police and military personnel attempted to maintain safety for all people and disperse protestors safely. However, Morsi supporters threatened that if they were dispersed from the current sites, they would move to other sites and continue to protest, utilizing violence. Later, Interim President Mansour declared a month-long state of emergency and the Ministerial Cabinet declared a curfew from 7pm until 6am in the 12 governorates where the majority of the violent attacks took place. However, these violent attacks continued across the country, ignoring imprisonment for violation of the curfew, per the Cabinet’s statement.

CEOSS has been a target to the attacks, the following are the current locations to date

- Historically CEOSS-owned Dahabeya Boat, charred. The Dahabeya Boat is one of CEOSS’ most important and historical assets as it was founded 60 years ago by CEOSS founder, Samuel Habib, and hosts many worldwide missionaries for the study of the Holy Bible. The Dahebeya Boat also served as a main source of financial sustainment for CEOSS developmental projects. During the violent attacks, the boat was charred to ruins.
- CEOSS Small and Micro Enterprise Office, attacked and robbed. Initially, the building in which the CEOSS office is contained was attacked and some apartments set on fire. Out of fear, CEOSS staff escaped the office onto a fire escape in which they stayed for three hours frightfully avoiding the attackers. While on the fire escape, the office was attacked and looted. Additionally, a staff member, in escaping the violent attackers, jumped off the fire escape and was injured.

There were many attacks on Police stations and Government buildings and mosques. The following are the destructive attacks beset on Christian establishments in 10 Egyptian governorates:

El MENYA:
1- In Delga village: St. Ebram Church, previously attacked on July 4th, after general Sessi’s first statement; the ancient Church and Monastery of St. Mary and St. Ebram; St. George Church, including the Bishopric resting house and a child daycare, burned and looted; 20 Christian homes, attacked and looted; Local Coptic resident, Eskandar Toss, shot dead in his home; Eslah Church, burned; Delga Dir Mawass, attacked; Residence of Father Angelous, priest of St. Mary and St. Ebram Church, attacked and burned.

2- St. Mina’s Church in Abu Hilal was attacked and the front gates and service building were burned.

3- The Evangelical Church in Gad El Sayed was burned.

4- Amir Tadros Church on Al Geish Street charred.

5- Khalas AlNefous Church, burned

6- St. Joseph Church and School, burned

7- St. Moses Church in Abu Hilal, attacked with Molotov cocktails.

8- St. John Church on Al Souq Street.

9- St. Mary Church, attacked and crosses removed from burned min the middle of the street.

10- Jesuit community building, belonging to the Catholic Church, burned.

11- Coptic High School, burned.

12- Soldiers of Christ Children Orphanages, burned and children kidnapped.

13- The Evangelical Church in Abu Hilal, burned.

14- Baptist Church in Bani Mazar, burned.

15- A number of Christian-owned shops and businesses, looted and burned.

16- Christian Youth Center (Al Wady), attacked and burned.

17- St. Marc, attacked by rocks.

18- Jesuit Church, attempted break-in,

19- St. Mary Church in the Al Jazareen area, crosses on gates removed and destroyed.

20- St. Joseph School, attempted break-in.

21- Coptic Church in Malawy, attacked by gunfire and rocks.

22- Coptic Church in Dir Mowass, attacked with Molotov cocktails, gunfire, and rocks.

23- YMCA, burned

24- Bible Society Bookstore, burned.

ASSUIT:

1- St. John the Baptist, Abnob village, burned.

2- The Adventists Church on Yosri Ragheb Street, Assyut Village, burned.

3- The Apostolic Church on Kolta Street, Assyut Village, burned.

4- St. George Church on Kolta Street, Assyut Village, burned.

5- Archangel Church on El Nemis Street, assaulted with stones.

6- Coptic Orthodox Diocese in Abu Teeg Village, sieged.

7- Christian-owned properties on Kolta and Gomhoreyya Streets, attacked and burned.

8- Altar of St. Therese Church, burned.

9- Bible Society, burned.

FAYOUM:

1- The Virgin Mary Church in Youssef El Sedik suburb, burned.


3- St. Demyana Church in El Zerbi Village, Tamia suburb, burned.

4- The Evangelical Church in El Zerbi Village, Tamia suburb, looted and burned.
5- Friends of the Holy Book Association, burned.
6- Bible Society Bookstore, burned.

GIZA:
1- Archangel Michael Church in Kerdasa, burned.
2- The Archbishopric of Atfih in Deir Karm El Rosol, stormed and looted.
3- The Two Martyrs Church in Soul Village of Atfih, sieged.
4- St. Mary the Virgin Church in Alsaf suburb, burned.
5- Coptic Church in Atfih, attempted break in.
6- St. Mary in Kafr Abdu suburb of October 6th City, attacked by rocks.
7- Al Karma Monastery in Atfih, attacked by gunfire.

SUEZ:
1- The old Catholic Greek Church on Baradees Street, burned.
2- The Good Shepherd Church and School, stormed and burned.
3- The Franciscan School, burned.

SOHAG:
1- St. George Church on 23rd of July St., burned.

LUXOR:
1- Christian owned businesses, looted and burned.

BENI SUEIF:
1- Catholic Nuns School, looted and burned.
2- St. George Church in the area of Al Wasta, attacked with rocks, Molotov cocktails, and gunfire.

QENA:
1- St. Mary Church in area of Hod 10, attempted break-in.

ALEXANDRIA:
1- St. George Church in Bakos, attempted break-in and arson.
2- St. Maximus Church on Street 45, attacked by Molotov cocktails and gunfire.

CAIRO:
1- Bible Society Bookstore, looted and attempted arson.

Additionally, due to these events and wave of violence, the first round of the research project, "Stages of Political Transformation after the Revolution", an Egyptian-German Dialogue (composed of 24 Egyptian and German intellectuals and researchers) conducted in cooperation with the Evangelical Academy of Loccum, and due to commence on August 16 in Germany, was cancelled hours before starting due to the escalation of violence in Egypt. Our German counterparts were very understanding of the crisis and a meeting with the Bishop of the EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany) was conducted. During said meeting, Dr. Andrea Zaki discussed the political situation in Egypt starting with the mass protests on June 30th and military assistance realizing the Egyptian people's will, which has been falsely portrayed in international media as a military coup. The EKD
then, in solidarity with the Egyptian people, released a statement condemning the violence and reflecting the truth of the situation to the German media and government.

**CEOSS, on August 18th,** has issued the following statement condemning the violence calling on its partners and friends to clarify the truth of events and convey the real picture to the media and governments in their countries.

With the escalation of violence and terrorism taking place in Egypt against all state facilities and houses of worship as well as private property, including important assets of CEOSS in Minia that were totally destroyed, we have immediately communicated with all our partners and friends in the various countries of the world including members of governments, international institutions and churches, those who represent important figures of the international community, to clarify the truth of events; and called on them to convey the real picture to the media and governments in their countries. CEOSS has also emphasized the need to stand by the people of Egypt in these circumstances that they face by the militias and armed extremist groups who roam the country destroying private and public with the aim of causing chaos, which is the first incident of its kind in the history of modern Egypt. It also stressed that what happened on June 30, is a correction of the path to Revolution and not a military coup as alleged by some, and the evidence is the appointment of the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court as an interim president of the country according to the constitution, the formation of a civil government as well as starting the procedures for amending the Constitution in a clearly communicated road map.

This was stated by Dr. Rev. Andrea Zaki, CEOSS General Director, who explained that CEOSS is one of Egyptian civil society organizations interested in public affairs, working in many cultural and development areas for over sixty years, providing its services to all Egyptians regardless of religion, sex or belief. Since the revolution of January 25, 2011, CEOSS had a firm and clear situation supporting the revolution, which called for livelihood, freedom and human dignity. CEOSS tried, through its Forum for Intercultural Dialogue, to involve all segments and movements of the Egyptian society in dialogue to develop a vision of a better future for the nation based on inclusion in rebuilding the state institutions. However, the course of events did not move in the desired direction of the citizens. With the continued intransigence of the ruling party at that time, millions rushed to the streets on June 30, declaring their opposition to the continuation of this policy. CEOSS has called more than once by several means to renounce violence and begin a serious dialogue aimed for the good of the people. It has also announced its support to the road map advocated by millions as a solution to many of the problems at all levels. Besides, CEOSS continued to communicate with all its friends and partners inside and outside Egypt to stand by the Egyptian people in this critical stage praying for the peace and security of our beloved homeland.

Furthermore, we are thankful for our partners who have showed solidarity during these difficult times and have released statements clarifying the misinformation transported across international media such as the Evangelical Church in Germany and World Council of Churches

**“Solidarity is essential for the victims”**

**EKD Bishop for ecumenical relations for the current development in Egypt**
EKD-Bishop Martin Schindehütte, responsible for ecumenical relations and ministries abroad, has expressed his deep concern about the current development in Cairo and Egypt after the violent destruction of the pro Mursi protest camps. At a meeting with Rev. Andrea Zaki, General Director of CEOSS (Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services), Bishop Schindehütte said in the church office of the EKD in Hannover today:

“With great consternation and sorrow we heard about the latest news from Egypt. The numerous loss of human lives leaves us with great concerns. Among the victims of violence there are also many Christians. Christian Institutions and churches were set on fire and destroyed. We stand in solidarity with those, who have lost relatives, being victims of violence and arbitrariness.

The Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) will continue its support for all actors who are working for a peaceful and democratic future of Egypt. The EKD is deeply convinced that this future will be supported by strengthening structures of civil society and an equal participation of all citizens in the political development of the country. The EKD trusts that the existing and well working cooperation between Christians and Muslims in manifold projects and initiatives in broad parts of the country has a positive effect on the well-being of the Egyptian Society and helps to avoid further polarization and escalation of the current situation.”

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STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF EGYPT

The World Council of Churches and its member churches are greatly concerned by the violent turn of events in Egypt and call for an immediate end of violence from all sides. The World Council of Churches calls for prayer for all Egyptians for healing, justice and peace. The only way forward is for mutual recognition as equal citizens within Egypt, sharing responsibilities and authority, accepting the diversity of political opinions and religious beliefs.

We deeply regret the attacks against several churches and properties of the Christian community in different areas of the country that have occurred in the last days.

Since 25 January 2011 Egypt has been experiencing a critical moment in its history. The Egyptian people showed on different occasions their belief in a multi-religious and multi-cultural society where all parties join hands in facing the current challenges and building a better future based on social justice and human dignity. We believe that the commitment of all Egyptians to justice and peace will help them to overcome all obstacles and reach common expectations.

We are thankful to see that the churches of Egypt, even in this situation, are witnesses of God’s peace on earth. Throughout history they have offered up many sacrifices and martyrs for their beloved country.

Let us pray for all the Egyptians; may God grant them comfort, heal their wounds and accompany them on their way to justice and peace.

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While we regret the violent and tragic losses nationwide, we specifically regret the tangible losses of CEOSS and injury to our Upper Egypt staff member. For the safety and security of our staff, CEOSS ordered all staff to evacuate buildings and to emergency leave while the violence continues.

We ask for prayer of peace and security of the country and its people, especially for CEOSS and its staff, in order to strongly stand against the storm and continue to deliver its services and benefit all Egyptians nationwide.