



1. What is the population of Egyptian Coptics to Muslims in the Minia area?

Al Minya (also spelled El Menia and Minia), the capital of the Al Minya governorate, has a substantial Christian population. In 2006, the population of Al Minya was 236,043 persons, of which Coptic Christians comprised around 50 per cent.¹

Estimates vary concerning the Coptic population of the Minya Governorate as a whole. The Al Minya governorate has a population of approximately 4 million.² Although some sources state that Copts comprise around 50 per cent of the population, other sources place this number between 15-20 per cent.³ A 2005 interview with a Catholic priest based in Al Minya quoted him as saying that the proportion of Christians in Minya governorate was 15 per cent or “maybe more”, with “Orthodox Copts” making up the majority,⁴ while a 2002 article in the *Journal of Health and Behaviour* states that Coptic Christians make up about 20 per cent of the population of Al Minya Governorate.⁵

RRT Country Advice EGY37024 (2 August 2010) provides additional information on Al Minya governorate, including major cities, Christian populations and sites.⁶

1. What is the distance between Ashrouba Beni Mazar in Minya and Matai in Minya?

According to Google Maps, the town of Ashroba in Beni Mazar is approximately 9.91261 km from the town of Matai (also Matay, Matâi, Maṭāy) in Minya governorate. These locations are shown on Map 1.⁷

¹ ‘Al-Minyā’ 2011, *Encyclopædia Britannica*. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/384682/al-Minya> - Accessed 3 August 2011- Attachment 1; ‘Al Minya’ 2008, *The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition* <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-Minya-Al.html> – Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 2

² ‘El Minya’ (undated), touregypt.net website <http://www.touregypt.net/elminyatop.htm> - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 3

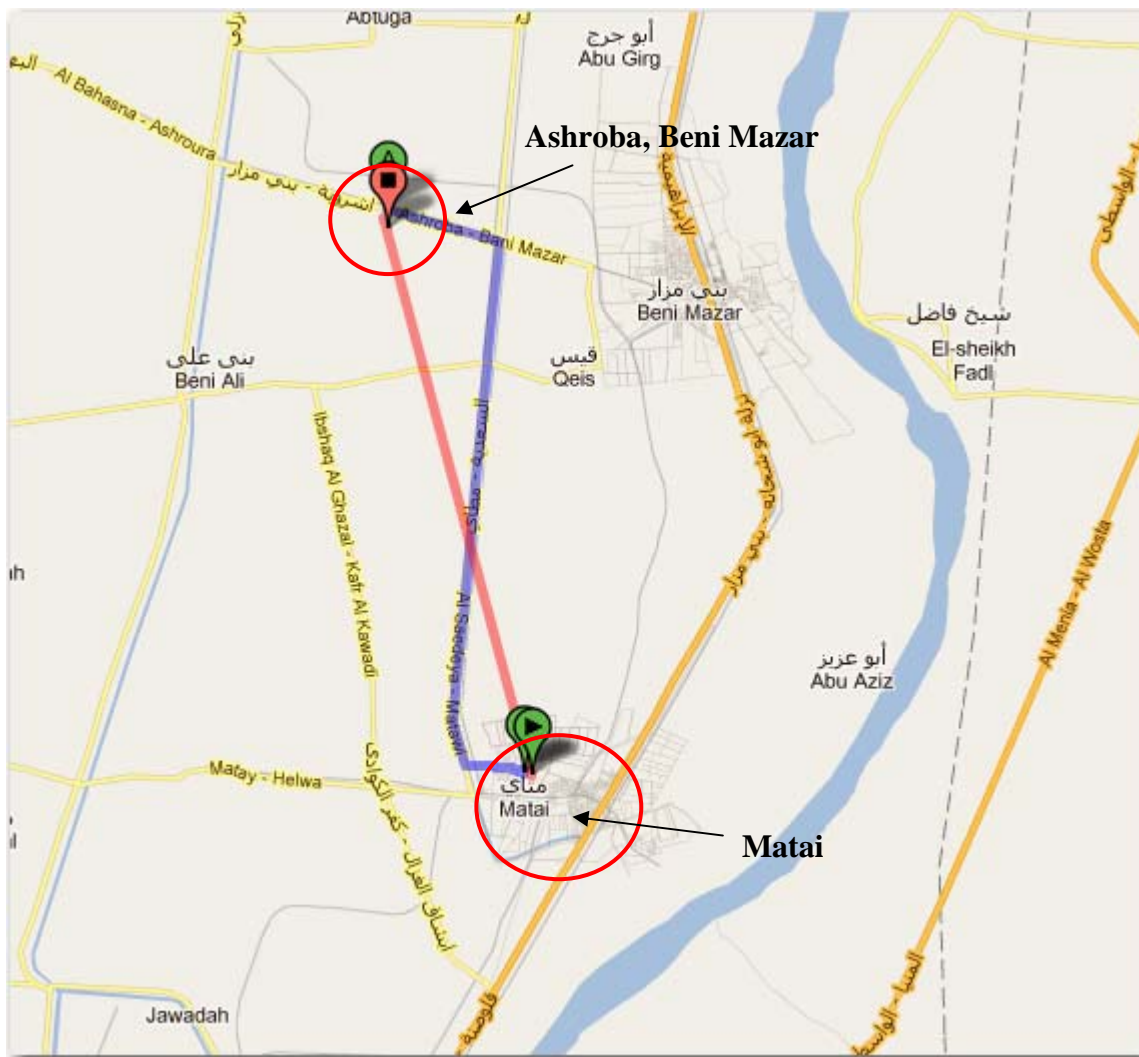
³ ‘Two dead, eight injured in sectarian clashes in central Egypt’ 2011, *Channel 6 News*, source: *BNO News*, 20 April <http://channel6news.com/2011/04/two-dead-eight-injured-in-sectarian-clashes-in-central-egypt/> - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 5; ‘An interview with Father Anthony Fenech, SJ, Minia, Egypt’ 2005, A Catholic View website, February <http://www.catholicvu.com/newpage%20124.htm> – Accessed 29 October 2010 – Attachment 6; Yount, K 2002, ‘Like Mother, like Daughter? Female Genital Cutting in Minia, Egypt’, *Journal of Health and Behaviour* 43(3), pp. 336-358 – Attachment 7, p 339.

⁴ ‘An interview with Father Anthony Fenech, SJ, Minia, Egypt’ 2005, A Catholic View website, February <http://www.catholicvu.com/newpage%20124.htm> – Accessed 29 October 2010 – Attachment 6

⁵ Yount, K 2002, ‘Like Mother, like Daughter? Female Genital Cutting in Minia, Egypt’, *Journal of Health and Behaviour* 43(3), pp. 336-358 – Attachment 7, p 339.

⁶ RRT Country Advice Service 2010, *Country Advice EGY37024*, 2 August – Attachment 32

⁷ ‘Ashroba, Beni Mazar, Egypt to Matai, Al Minya, Egypt’ 2011 *Google Maps* <http://maps.google.com.au/maps?ll=28.480461,30.779572&spn=0.22452,0.527687&z=12> - Accessed 4 August 2011- Attachment 4



Map 1. Distance between Ashroba and Matai, Al Minya.

2. Have there been any reported incidents of attacks on Coptics and Coptic places of worship in areas in and around Minia?

The 2010 US Department of State *International Religious Freedom Report* states there were 21 incidents of interreligious violence in Minya from January 2008 to January 2010, which was ‘the highest percentage of all governorates in the country’.⁸ The figures are based on a report by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), an NGO that the US Department of State cites as ‘reputable’, which analysed instances of sectarian violence in Egypt over a two year period (January 2008 – January 2010).⁹

The EIPR report found that sectarian violence in Upper Egypt was notable for the frequency with which it occurred, the variety of cases and the disparate locations. According to EIPR, in Minya

⁸ US Department of State 2010, *International Religious Freedom Report 2010*, 17 November Attachment 8

⁹ Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights 2010, *Two years of sectarian violence:*

What happened? Where do we begin? An analytical study of January 2008-January 2010, April

http://eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/Sectarian_Violence_inTwoYears_EN.pdf - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 9

there was an instance of sectarian violence every 35 days in 17 different villages located in seven of the governorate's nine districts.¹⁰

The EIPR report provides a detailed analysis of the various types of sectarian violence observed in Minya, and in Egypt in general, such as collective retribution and violence prompted by Christians engaging in religious rites. The report includes examples of attacks against Copts and Coptic places of worship between January 2008 and January 2010.¹¹

Of note, the EIPR found that, of the crimes assessed by the organisation in Minya, 'exactly zero have been referred to trial'. The report states:

In the very few cases that are brought before the courts, investigators have not done sufficient work to identify the perpetrators; in addition, proper legal procedures are not followed and insufficient evidence is presented to the court. The result is acquittal.

As noted by EIPR, Minya governorate experienced the highest percentage of sectarian violence during the period under review. Such incidences have continued in Minya governorate in 2011. Examples include:

- 6 January 2011 – A worker at the St. Antonious Church in the city of Al Minya found a small explosive device packed with nails and fireworks planted under the stairs. According to a security official, the device appeared designed to 'test security measures'.¹² This incident occurred within one week of the New Year's Day bombing of a Coptic church in Alexandria which killed 21 people.¹³
- 11 January 2011 – an off-duty police officer opened fire on an Assuit to Cairo train as it entered Minya's Samalut train station. One Christian was killed and five other Christians wounded. The shooter was charged with murder and will reportedly be tried in a state security court. Coptic activists have suggested that the attack was religiously motivated, although other groups have not been able to confirm this.¹⁴

¹⁰ Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights 2010, *Two years of sectarian violence: What happened? Where do we begin? An analytical study of January 2008-January 2010*, April http://eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/Sectarian_Violence_inTwoYears_EN.pdf - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 9

¹¹ Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights 2010, *Two years of sectarian violence: What happened? Where do we begin? An analytical study of January 2008-January 2010*, April http://eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/Sectarian_Violence_inTwoYears_EN.pdf - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 9

¹² Al-Atrush, Samer 2011, 'Egypt Copts mark Christmas under tight security' *Agence France Presse*, 6 January <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h-s5A-I3-w76xKdI5jImQ4hXnVOg?docId=CNG.5ef495a04e9f24705338c4bd6be74062.ad1> - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 10

¹³ Minority Rights Group International 2011, *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Egypt: Copts*, April – Attachment 11

¹⁴ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2011, *Annual Report 2011*, May, p.49 <http://www.uscirf.gov/images/book%20with%20cover%20for%20web.pdf> – Accessed 27 June 2011 – Attachment 12; Khalil, Emad 2011 'Egyptian police clash with Coptic protesters after Minya train shooting' *Almasry Alyoum*, 11 January <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/292962> - Accessed 2 August 2011- Attachment 13; Hendawi, Hamza 2011 'Policeman shoots Christian dead in Southern Egypt', *ABC News*, source: *Associated Press*, 11 January <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=12590774> – Accessed 3 August 2011 – Attachment 14; 'Christian shot dead on Egypt train' 2011, *Al Jazeera*, 11 January <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/01/201111118826410490.html> - Accessed 2 August 2011 - Attachment 15.

- 30 January 2011 – According to the *Christian Assyrian International News Agency (AINA)*, ‘Islamists’, aided by local Muslims, killed 11 Coptic Christians in the village of Sharona, near Maghagha. A Coptic bishop in Maghagha reportedly stated in a televised interview that the killers were their neighbours, who “seized the opportunity of the mayhem prevailing in Egypt and the absence of political protection to slaughter the Copts”. In addition, the report states that money, furniture and electrical equipment were stolen from the houses of the victims.¹⁵ The report could not be verified.
- 17 February 2011 – The *Christian Compass Direct News* reports that in the village of El-Hathatah a group of townspeople attacked the congregation of St. George’s Church with bricks and rocks. This reportedly occurred in response to construction work being undertaken by the church.¹⁶
- 5 April 2011 – According to *AINA* a crowd of Muslims occupied the entrance to St John the Beloved Church in the village of Kamadeer, in Samalut. The priest had reportedly arrived at the church to find ‘hundreds of Salafis’ who told him they were not allowed to pray at the church any longer. The problem reportedly started when Copts requested permission from the military to repair the church which had been damaged in heavy rains in January.¹⁷
- 19 April 2011 – A dispute occurred in Abu Qurqus, Minya between a Copt and a Muslim over a privately placed speed bump which then escalated into sectarian violence in which two Muslims are said to have been killed. The dispute involved the house guards of a Coptic former National Democratic Party member who reportedly opened fire, killing two bystanders and incensing the local community. It is reported that a ‘mob’ then ransacked a café and several homes of local Christians.¹⁸ According to the Egyptian news provider *Almasry Alyoum*, Christians make up an estimated 75 percent of Abu Qurqus’ population.¹⁹
- 23 June 2011 – Christian news agency *Compass Direct News* reported that a group of Salafis surrounded a church in Beni Ahmad near the town of Minya and demanded the parish priest leave the village or else be murdered. Security forces reportedly kept the mob at bay and removed the priest from the village. The article claims that the incident arose as a result of Church plans to expand a building on their property.²⁰ This is the second such incident to be reported about the church. According to *AINA*, on 23 March 2011 ‘Salafis together with a

¹⁵ Abdelmassih, Mary 2011 ‘Muslims Attack Two Christian Families in Egypt, 11 Killed’, *Assyrian International News Agency*, 2 March

<http://www.aina.org/news/20110202205758.htm> – Accessed 3 August 2011 – Attachment 16

¹⁶ ‘Church Building in Egypt Reconstructed in Time for Easter’ 2011, *Compass Direct News*, 27 April
http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/egypt/article_111608.html - Accessed 3 August 2011 – Attachment 17

¹⁷ Abdelmassih, Mary 2011, ‘Three Churches Attacked, Egyptian Military Sides With Radical Muslims’ *Assyrian International News Agency*, 9 April <http://www.aina.org/news/20110408230557.htm> - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 18

¹⁸ ‘Egypt traffic dispute turns into sectarian brawl’ 2011, *The Boston Globe*, source: *Associated Press*, 19 April
http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2011/04/19/egypt_traffic_dispute_turns_into_sectarian_brawl/?rss_id=Boston.com+%2F+Boston+Globe+--+World+News - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 19

¹⁹ Nafea, Saeed and Theresa Kamal 2011, ‘18 detained in Minya sectarian clashes’, *Almasry Alyoum*, 21 April
<http://www.almasyalyoum.com/en/node/408445> - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 20

²⁰ ‘Muslim Mobs in Egypt Attack Christian Homes, Threaten Priest’ 2011, *Compass Direct News*, 27 June
http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/egypt/article_114242.html - Accessed 8 July 2011 - Attachment 21

large crowd of village Muslims' demanded that church officials stop their construction plans and that the church priest leave the village.²¹

- 25 July 2011 – Christian news agencies *Asia News* and *AINA* report an attack against Christians in the small village of Ezbet Jacob Bebawi near Samalut which resulted in six Copts being hospitalised, including a pregnant woman. In an interview on Coptic TV, a priest from the Samalut Coptic diocese reportedly stated “The real reason behind this assault was the [recently installed] church bell, which has greatly angered the Muslims in the village”.²² The aforementioned EIPR report cites a similar incident which occurred in the Deir Mawas district of Minya on 27 October 2009. In this incident, sectarian clashes erupted following Muslim protests against the renovation of a bell tower at the local Mar Girgis church.
- 29 July 2011 – The *Associated Press* reports that ‘gunmen’ fired on a car carrying Christians, killing two and injuring two. The article states it was the second killing in two weeks in the predominantly Christian village of Roman in Minya.²³ This incident was not cited in other news sources.

3. What information is there available on conscription of Egyptians to the army?

A number of RRT Country Advice products provide information on the conscription of Egyptians to the army, including:

- EGY37584 (4 November 2010) provides advice on compulsory military service in Egypt and treatment of Coptic Christian in the Egyptian military;²⁴
- EGY36325 (12 March 2010) provides advice on military service deferral documentation;²⁵
- EGY36097 (26 February 2010) provides expert advice on the treatment of Copts in the military, and information on conscientious objectors;²⁶
- EGY36099 (18 February 2010) provides DFAT Advice on military service exemption;²⁷
- EGY35028 (18 June 2009) provides information on military service obligations in Egypt.²⁸

The Egyptian news provider *Ahram Online* published an article on 28 June 2011 stating that the Armed Forces Committee of the National Consensus Conference, which was being held in Egyptian Parliament, recommended that compulsory military service should be expanded to

²¹ Abdelmassih, Mary 2011, ‘Three Churches Attacked, Egyptian Military Sides With Radical Muslims’, *Assyrian International News Agency*, 9 April <http://www.aina.org/news/20110408230557.htm> - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 18

²² ‘Minya: young pregnant Coptic woman attacked by a Muslim man over Coptic church bell’ 2011, *Asia News*, 28 July <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Minya:-young-pregnant-Coptic-woman-attacked-by-a-Muslim-man-over-Coptic-church-bell-22227.html> - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 22; Abdelmassih, Mary 2011, ‘Muslim Attack on Christians in Egypt Provoked By Installation of Church Bell’, *AINA*, 28 July <http://www.aina.org/news/20110727201803.htm> - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 23

²³ Hubbard, Ben and Sarah El Deeb 2011, ‘Ultraconservative Muslims dominate Egypt protest’, *Associated Press*, 29 July http://hosted2.ap.org/APDEFAULT/*/Article_2011-07-29-ML-Egypt/id-75c9a8671dff4370a3ee4040a56d580f - Accessed 3 August 2011 - Attachment 24

²⁴ RRT Country Advice Service 2010, *Country Advice EGY37584*, 4 November - Attachment 31

²⁵ RRT Country Advice Service 2010, *Country Advice EGY36325*, 12 March - Attachment 30

²⁶ RRT Country Advice Service 2010, *Country Advice EGY36097*, 26 February - Attachment 28

²⁷ RRT Country Advice Service 2010, *Country Advice EGY36099*, 18 February - Attachment 29

²⁸ RRT Country Advice Service 2010, *Country Advice EGY35028*, 18 June - Attachment 27

include women.²⁹ No further information has been located to suggest the military service regulations detailed in the above Country Advice documents have changed since the resignation of President Mubarak on 11 February 2011.

²⁹ El-Din, Gamal Essam 2011, 'Young Egyptian women recommended to perform military service', *Ahram Online*, 28 June <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/15209/Egypt/Politics-/Young-Egyptian-women-recommended-to-perform-milita.aspx> - Accessed 4 August 2011 - Attachment

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<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/01/201111118826410490.html> - Accessed 2 August 2011.
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http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2011/04/19/egypt_traffic_dispute_turns_into_sectarian_brawl/?rss_id=Boston.com+%2F+Boston+Globe+--+World+News - Accessed 3 August 2011.
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