



## **Egypt - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Wednesday 29 January 2014**

### **Information on Christian women including:**

**Treatment since Muslim Brotherhood took power; Treatment since banning of the Muslim Brotherhood; Information on attacks on public transport/in the streets; Attacks/rapes/kidnappings/killings in Giza; Is there a requirement to be accompanied by a male guardian in public/treatment of those unaccompanied**

In 2012 a publication by the *Social Institutions and Gender Index* points out that:

“Women’s freedom of movement in Egypt is restricted...In rural areas, women’s day-to-day freedom of movement can be restricted, and widespread sexual harassment in urban areas also inhibits freedom of movement” (Social Institutions and Gender Index (2012) *Egypt*).

A report issued in May 2013 by the *United States Department of State* notes that:

“The government failed to protect Christians and their property effectively when they were attacked in Dahshour, Alexandria, and Rafah, and often failed to investigate and prosecute crimes against Christians and other religious minorities, most notably in the cases of violence in October 2011 against Copts in Maspairo that killed 25 and the September kidnapping of a Coptic girl, Sarah Ishaq” (United States Department of State (20 May 2013) *2012 International Religious Freedom Report – Egypt*).

In April 2013 the *United States Department of State* commenting on events of the preceding year notes:

“...women faced discrimination and violence both in private and public. The security situation and widespread sexual harassment significantly inhibited women’s political participation and expression...” (United States Department of State (19 April 2013) *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2012 – Egypt*, Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons/women).

This report also points out that:

“Sexual harassment remained a serious problem. Harassment of women remained endemic, with NGOs reporting an increase during the year. There is no specific law criminalizing sexual harassment, but perpetrators can be charged with the misdemeanor “public display of affection,” which women’s rights groups contended was tantamount to holding the victims equally responsible, because the term implies mutual consent. On June 9, hundreds of men assaulted participants in a demonstration against sexual harassment staged by approximately 1,000 women in Cairo’s Tahrir Square. NGOs asserted that government and civilian actors used sexual harassment intentionally as a tool of political repression, but concrete evidence proving this motive was difficult to ascertain. Due to the criminal elements targeting them, women sometimes were unable to assemble peacefully without male protection” (ibid).

In February 2013 a report issued by *United Nations Women* states:

“Recent news reports suggest there is an increasing trend of violence against women in public spaces” (United Nations Women (25 February 2013) *From play-acting to real-life action: a journey to end harassment on public transit in Egypt*).

A report issued in January 2014 by *Freedom House* commenting on events of 2013 notes:

“Violence against women has surfaced in new ways since Mubarak’s ouster, particularly as women have participated in more demonstrations and faced increased levels of sexual violence in public” (Freedom House (23 January 2014) *Freedom in the World 2014 – Egypt*).

In April 2013 *Inter Press Service* states:

“Christian rights watchdogs say abductions and forced conversions of young Egyptian Coptic girls have been going on for decades right under the noses of local authorities. But the frequency of the kidnappings has increased alarmingly since the uprising in 2011 that toppled dictator Hosni Mubarak and brought an Islamist-led government to power” (Inter Press Service (16 April 2013) *Missing Christian Girls Leave Trail of Tears*).

In January a publication by *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* points out that:

“Members of Egypt’s Coptic community have been physically attacked or killed; their homes, businesses and church buildings have been destroyed and several young women have been abducted” (Christian Solidarity Worldwide (25 January 2013) *Egypt: Renewed calls for justice, equality and human rights on second anniversary of uprising*).

In December 2013 a report issued by *Minority Rights Group International* notes:

“Gender is a source of deeply entrenched discrimination in Egypt. The situation, though historically poor throughout the Mubarak era, may have deteriorated further since the 2011 revolution. A survey by the United Nations in April 2013 suggested that 99.3% of Egyptian women had suffered some form of sexual harassment...while a November 2013 report published by Thomson Reuters declared it “the worst country” for women’s rights out of 22 Arab states” (Minority Rights Group International (9 December 2013) *No Change in Sight: The situation of religious minorities in post-Mubarak Egypt*, p.14).

This report also notes:

“According to the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Egypt has witnessed an upsurge in sectarian violence over the transition period, and we are also aware of reports of abuse against women from religious minorities.” However, one form of gender-based violence against minorities that is particularly entrenched is the forced abduction of Coptic girls and women” (ibid).

A publication in November 2013 by *United Nations Women* states:

"In Egypt, where up to 94 per cent of women report having been sexually harassed, students across 28 universities have devised clever anti-sexual harassment campaigns. Walking down a quiet street in Cairo to enjoy the evening air, 23-year-old Heba couldn't help but wonder whether she was putting herself in harm's way. "Can I join my family for dinner after this walk," she asked herself. Heba is one of the countless women in Egypt who worry about being sexually harassed on a daily basis while using public transportation, going to school, or simply taking a walk. Such concerns are not unwarranted. A 2008 survey of 2,320 women and 2,088 men conducted by the Social Planning Analysis and Administration Consultants and the National Council for Women... in seven governorates in Egypt revealed startling data on sexual harassment in public spaces. The data showed that 72.4 per cent of married women and 94 per cent of unmarried young women had experienced verbal forms of sexual harassment, while 22.2 per cent of married women and 21.7 per cent of unmarried women reported having been physically harassed" (United Nations Women (19 November 2013) *From bike rides to pink ribbons, Egyptian anti-violence campaigns create ripples across the country*).

A report issued in January 2014 by *Amnesty International* points out that:

"During Mohamed Morsi's presidency, sectarian attacks against Coptic Christians and Shi'a Muslims, as well as convictions on blasphemy charges, increased against the backdrop of the inflammatory sectarian rhetoric espoused by some of Morsi's supporters and members of the affiliated MB movement" (Amnesty International (23 January 2014) *Egypt: Roadmap to repression: No end in sight to human rights violations*, p.6).

In a report published in 2013 by the *Middle East Research and Information Project*, it is noted the:

"...singling-out of Coptic girls and women for verbal abuse..." (Middle East Research and Information Project (2013) *Copts Under Mursi*)

In August 2013 *The Telegraph* points out that:

"Egypt's Christians had reported a rise in social discrimination and violent attacks throughout the now deposed Muslim Brotherhood president, Mohammad Morsi's time in office. Since the coup last month, Coptic leaders say the situation is worse as tensions between the president's Islamist supporters and their Christian neighbours increase" (The Telegraph (14 August 2013) *Ten-year-old Christian girl shot dead as violence returns to Egypt's streets*).

In October 2013 a report produced by *Amnesty International* notes:

"...there has been a notable increase in sectarian tension and an unprecedented level of attacks since Minister of Defence Abdel Fattah al-Sisi announced on 3 July that Mohamed Morsi was no longer President – characterized by security forces' failure to protect Coptic Christian lives, property and places of worship" (Amnesty International (9 October 2013) *How Long Are We Going to Live in this Injustice? Egypt's Christians Caught Between Sectarian Attacks and State Inaction*, p.2).

*Reuters* in November 2013 states:

"Women played a central role in the country's revolution but activists say the rising influence of Islamists, culminating in the election of Muslim Brotherhood leader

Mohamed Mursi as president, was a major setback for women's rights. Mursi was toppled in a military takeover in July after mass protests against his rule, but hopes for greater freedoms have been tempered by the daily dangers facing women on the street, experts said" (Reuters (12 November 2013) *Poll-Egypt is worst Arab state for women, Comoros best*).

No further information particular to Christian/Coptic women could be found among sources available to the RDC.

## References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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