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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure

on recent attacks on religious minorities in Egypt

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on behalf of the EFD Group

European Parliament resolution on recent attacks on religious minorities in Egypt

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Egypt,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2007 on serious events which compromise Christian communities' existence and those of other religious communities,
- having regard to the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders,
- having regard to Article 18 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as ratified by Egypt in 1982,
- having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the respect for freedom of religious belief is amongst the fundamental principles and aims of the European Union and constitute common ground for the relations between the European Union and third countries,

B. whereas Art. 46 of the Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt guarantees freedom of religious belief and the practice of religious rites, although the Government places restrictions on the practice of these rights and Islam is the official State religion,

C. whereas Coptic Christians make up to 12 percent of Egypt's population, thus representing the largest Christian community in the Middle East,

D. whereas six Coptic Christians and a security official were killed in a drive-by shooting outside a church in southern Egypt after a midnight mass on Coptic Christmas Eve,

E. whereas Coptic Christians in Egypt are often detained following sectarian attacks, sometimes without being formally charged, in order to discourage the Coptic Christians from calling for official action to prosecute perpetrators of sectarian attacks,

F. whereas, despite the fact that the "crime" of apostasy is not recognized in Egypt's civil law, Christian converts in Egypt are often subjected to death threats, because under Sharia law, apostasy is punishable by death,

G. whereas access to employment, social service and education in Egypt is limited for those who do not have a valid Identity Card stating the religion of the cardholder,

H. whereas on November 2008 "security concerns" have been cited by the Egyptian Government, which refused to grant permission for the building of a Coptic Church in the

Shubra al-Kheima area of the Qalyubiya governorate,

I. whereas in February 2009, Egyptian police arrested two citizens at the Cairo International Book Fair for distributing Bibles and on 12 October 2008, the Giza Criminal Court sentenced Coptic priest Mita'us Wahba to five years of prison and "forced labour" for officiating at a wedding between a Copt and a Muslim convert to Christianity,

J. whereas the recent Egyptian government's culling of an estimated 400,000 pigs in the country had a severe economic impact on Coptic Christian families, who rely on pigs and garbage scavenging for their primary income,

K. whereas Coptic Christians who represent between 8 and 12 percent of the population of Egypt hold fewer than 2 percent of the seats in the People's Assembly and Shura Council,

L. whereas also other minorities such as the Baha'i, the Shiites, the Koranists and members of other religious groups are still severely disadvantaged by sectarian isolation in Egypt,

1. Strongly condemns the recent attacks against Christians in Egypt and reminds Egyptian authorities that respect for human rights and democratic principles, including freedom of religious belief, constitutes an essential element of the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement,

2. Emphasize that contributing to the stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean region, by promoting understanding and tolerance, is one of the main aspects of the relations between Egypt and the European Union,

3. Calls on the Government of Egypt to prosecute all those responsible for the attacks against Christians and other religious minorities and calls for a fair treatment of all Egyptian citizens before the law, regardless of their religion; calls on the Egyptian authorities to duly investigate and prosecute those responsible for attacks and death threats against Christians accused of apostasy,

4. Re-affirming its commitment to combat every form of discrimination, calls on the Government of Egypt to remove all forms of religious identification from Government issued documents where religion is not relevant; calls for a more fair licensing procedure for church construction and equal treatment with the procedure of the construction of Mosques and other religious buildings,

5. Urges the High Representative for CFSP to put the protection of Christian communities in Egypt and their freedom of religious belief, very high on her agenda during the forthcoming meetings with Egyptian authorities;

6. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the government and parliament of Egypt, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Mediterranean third countries and to the President of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly.