

**Question for written answer E-004408/2013
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**

Rule 117

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Subject: VP/HR - Sectarian violence against Copts in Egypt

In recent days renewed sectarian violence has taken place in Egypt. The situation has been tense and at times explosive in the town of Wasta, about one hundred kilometres south of Cairo. Reportedly, a young local Muslim woman recently went missing, with local Salafis blaming the Mar-Girgis Church for her disappearance, claiming that its members had forced her to convert to Christianity. In the week of 19 to 25 March 2013, Salafis and their supporters forced Christian stores and businesses to shut and ordered all Christians to leave the town.

On Friday 5 April, sectarian violence in the village of El Khusus cost the lives of four Christians and one Muslim. Following a funeral mass in Cairo's main Coptic cathedral on Sunday 7 April, street battles raged for hours on the cathedral premises and in the surrounding neighbourhood. Another Coptic life was lost and dozens of people were wounded. It appears that the police did little to subdue the crowds of angry Muslim youths outside, and they may have even fired tear gas into the church's courtyard.

1. How does the Vice-President / High Representative view the situation in Egypt? Does she believe that the Egyptian authorities are doing enough to protect one of Egypt's oldest indigenous communities, the Coptic Christians?
2. What actions have the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the EU Delegation in Cairo undertaken or proposed in order to assist the Egyptian authorities in their efforts to protect the Copts and prevent further sectarian violence?
3. Does the Vice-President / High Representative share the opinion that Article 2 of the EU-Egypt Association Agreement still bears relevance, and that the Egyptian authorities should be held accountable for any actions or lack of action that harm the basic human rights of the Copts?
4. Will the Vice-President / High Representative consider imposing sanctions, such as an aid freeze, as a means of pressuring the Egyptian regime into taking concrete action to protect the Copts?