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## **Governance of Religious Diversity:**

### **The Copts of Egypt as Example**

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**Diversity is a main element of soft power in Egyptian society. Religious tensions have posed a threat to the country's social fabric and allowed divisive discourses and incidents of direct confrontation between Muslims and Christians to take place against a backdrop of poor governance of religious diversity.**

**This study examines the governance of religious diversity in Egypt, from public policy perspective, through revisiting different problems and the solutions adopted, and proposing programmatic solutions in light of recent developments in the religious domain, especially that Egypt is passing through a new stage of history following the January 25, 2011 Revolution.**

There are two main currents in this context:<sup>1</sup>

The first is the current of the January 25 Revolution that took shape through the participation of both Muslims and Christians in the Revolution. The "Tahrir Square" culture, which does not know or allow polarisation and is very significant as far as Muslim-Christian relations are concerned, is

still potentially capable of creating a new all-inclusive system.

Al-Azhar Document of June 19, 2011 has said as much in some of its clauses.

On the other hand, the pre-Revolution current feeds on polarisation and discrimination, and promotes public support for traditional formulas in social relations, which have been developed by this current and turned into a confrontation with the Other. This has had several negative repercussions, chief among which is polarisation between Islamists and secularists, which revived after the regime's

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<sup>1</sup> Sameh Fawzy, "The Christian Arab Presence: Depth and Issues," Al-Azhar Magazine, August 2011, Ramadan 1432 *hijri*.

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downfall and shifted from intellectual polarisation to political polarisation on the street, regarding the identity of the society. It is better that the Christians remain a diverse group whose involvement and activities in the public space emanate from their political beliefs rather than sectarian fears<sup>2</sup>. This current also allowed the return of religious tensions, to new religious visions that rob Egyptian jurisprudence of its particularity, to an angry counter-reaction, to accusations of apostasy against the other and to considering the Christians as a “religious group”. In brief, a formula that places power in the hands of a religious majority in violation of the Egyptian national contract, that behaves according to the old religious management mentality that sets the law aside, and relies on traditional remedies and a non-transparent treatment of religious tensions.

However, despite the above negative manifestations, there are a number of positive ones. Today, issues related to citizenship and Christian-Muslim relations are addressed with more openness, and have shifted to the political domain after being regarded, for long, as a matter of security. Several meetings were held and committees formed to this end, including the “Family House”, under the auspices of Al-Azhar, and the “National Justice Committee” at the Prime Ministry, coupled with an increased willingness to address various Coptic issues, in particular controversial ones like the construction and restoration of churches.

### (1)

Despite the diverse nature of the religious incidents, the last decade of Mubarak’s

presidency was a model of intellectual penury as far as managing highly sensitive religious incidents was concerned:

**A lack of any serious attempt to find radical solutions** to different issues, including the building and restoration of churches, the political representation of the Coptic community and their right to hold major state positions, and slandering of Christian religious beliefs in the media. Although these problems and others remained for years a subject of debate, there were no attempts to find radical solutions for them. In addition, despite the Government’s “relative” level of awareness, it, far from leading to more harmonious relations, has exacerbated the intra-religious tensions and both Christians and Muslims felt persecuted.

**Favouring security at the expense of the political and cultural:** the security services have taken in hand the religious file in all its dimensions, which prevented the development of a political and legal formula that promotes pluralism.

**Setting the law aside** and resorting to traditional conflict resolution formulas: during incidents of religious violence, the law is set aside in favour of traditional formulas that bring the victim and perpetrator together in an exercise in which justice plays no role. The state abandons its legal prerogatives to act intermediary, and forces the victim to accept a reconciliation effort that brings him no justice and makes him feel doubly victimised: first when he is aggressed and, second, when he is compelled to accept a pro forma reconciliation. Setting the law aside usually increases the appetite for more sectarian incidents.

**Using the media in the management of religious affairs:** When incidents of a religious nature take place, the media

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<sup>2</sup> Sameh Fawzy, “Emerging from the Tunnel of Polarisation,” Al-Shorouk newspaper, June 4, 2011; see also: Sameh Fawzy, “Waiting for a New Elite,” Al-Shorouk newspaper, November 19, 2011.

deliberately tries to escalate tensions. Some blame this phenomenon on the media's need for publicity, especially since religious issues are popular with the public, while others blame it on the need, by various parties involved, to use media outlets that are friendly to their cause, in matters relevant to the security services, the Islamist currents or the Copts. The problem is that although the Egyptian society is aware of pluralism in the media, the media itself still chooses to function in a non-diverse context. This type of media coverage is dangerous because its cumulative impact remains dormant under the surface, waiting for a catalyst to bring it out into the open in unrestrained acts that could become difficult to control.<sup>3</sup>

**Absence of a single collective reference authority:** The religious file does not rest in the hands of a single reference authority, in the strict political sense. Although there are two separate Islamic and Christian reference authorities, no specific political authority is in charge of the religious file save for the Ministry of the Interior, as mentioned above. We are not surprised, therefore, by the huge number of rumours spread by local officials, the fanatics among the public and various political forces in the country.<sup>4</sup> The fact that

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<sup>3</sup> Sameh Fawzy, "Christian Satellite Channels in the Middle East," a paper presented to the Arab Satellite Channels Conference held in at Cambridge University in January 2010. Dr. Fawzy's paper will soon appear in a book about the subject.

<sup>4</sup> Preceding the attack on the Coptic Church and its property in Kafr Damian in Sharqiah, in 1996, a rumour was circulating to the effect that "the Copts intended to build a temple inside the church." Likewise, the dramatic incidents of Kasheh in Sohaj, in 2000, which lead to the death of twenty-one Copts, were preceded by rumours saying, "The Christians had poisoned the drinking water." In 2004 what began as rumours became a warning issued from church pulpits that Muslim-owned stores were luring Christian girls, a rumour that proved false despite its astonishing wide circulation among Coptic circles. Another such

no one in Egypt has monopoly over the Muslim-Christian relations file explains why it is a natural incubator for rumours.<sup>5</sup>

**Service and culture-oriented responses:** "National unity" committees are formed as soon as sectarian incidents take place, and these meet a few times before disappearing from the scene; this means that despite the patriotic intentions behind the move, the lack of perseverance reveals an absence of vision. Such responses are no more than attempts to put out the fire, rather than serious efforts to develop a new political formula to deal with religious matters.

The outcome of this poor management style has had several negative outcomes, all of which have deepened the problems impeding religious coexistence. These include the lack of a clear strategy, the absence of a memory regarding the best means of dealing with the religious file, raising the level of "religious conservatism" to balance-out the repression against political Islam, and fostering what one could call a sectarian mentality in perceiving social change.<sup>6</sup>

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incident took place in 2004 whereby rumours had it that a certain Mrs. Wafa' Constantine, the wife of a priest, was "kidnapped by the Muslims and forced to convert to Islam," a rumour that was never confirmed. On the other hand, there were rumours among the Muslims to the effect that "Muslim girls were being kidnapped and lodged in monasteries," and that "some Coptic young men were spraying a chemical on veiled women's dresses which turned into crosses difficult to erase," which was actually wrong. In another incident in 2007, in Maha in Ayat, newspapers announced that tracts were being widely distributed encouraging Muslims to prevent the construction of a church in the village and were using terms depicting Christians as the enemy.

<sup>5</sup> Sameh Fawzy, "Since Even Women Had a "Council" to Defend Them... Who Will Defend Religious Pluralism?" Al-Shorouq newspaper, June 20, 2009

<sup>6</sup> Sameh Fawzy, "How Can We Dispel the Sectarian Mentality," Al-Shorouq newspaper, Saturday July 31, 2010; also see: Sameh Fawzy, "The Spread of

## (2)

Below are a number of problems specific to the Coptic community, and the attitude of different parties towards them:

**First: Building and restoration of churches<sup>7</sup>**

Throughout history, the governors of Egypt have been careful to regulate the construction of churches, and the Islamic state never had a predetermined position in this regard; its position fluctuated according to the prevailing social and political circumstances of the day. In 1856, Sultan Abdul-Majid I issued the so-called Hamayonic Decree as part of the reforms intended to show his flexible attitude towards non-Muslims. However, current official decisions refrained from referring to the Hamayonic Decree, but rather to Law No. 12, of 1927, that regulates the authority at the religious institutions and the appointment of religious leaders. The paradox, however, is that although this law does not address either the construction or the restoration of churches. Still, it is continuously referred to in the preambles of subsequent presidential decisions. Historically, there were no detailed laws specific to the construction of churches, except for the famous administrative measures of 1934, known as “Conditions of ‘Azbi Pasha” (Under-Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior), which do not amount to a law, issued in the period of the coup

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Sectarian Tensions... Whose Responsibility Is It?” Al-Shorouq newspaper, Saturday September 25, 2010

<sup>7</sup> For more details on the subject see: Samir Morcos, “Cultural Citizenship: Integration and Pluralism, the Construction of Churches as Example,” study presented at the first annual conference on citizenship organized by the National Council for Human Rights, 2007.

against the 1923 Constitution and its replacement by the 1930 Constitution. One could say, therefore, that no restrictions were imposed on the construction of church during the Nineteenth Century and up to the middle of the Twentieth Century, nor was the social climate of the time opposed to it.

Until a decade ago, restoration of churches required a presidential decree, which provoked several problems. On January 11, 1998, presidential Decree No. 13 was issued directly delegating the president’s prerogatives regarding licensing the restoration of churches to the governors, followed by Decrees No. 453 of 1999 and No. 291 of 2005, with the latter expanding the governors’ prerogatives in this domain. Although these decrees constituted a certain “development”, practice showed that while some have benefited from this evolution in certain cases, others encountered additional difficulties, because the issue was left entirely to the local authorities’ discretion, in particular the security services.

The National Council for Human Rights proposed a unified draft law regarding the construction of places of worship, but the draft was not submitted to the People’s Assembly until after Mubarak’s downfall from power.<sup>8</sup> One of the political currents in the country endorses the creation of a new system, regardless of its name, that would separately regulate the construction of churches, especially in light of the Prime Ministerial Decree of October 17, 2001, specifying the requirements of mosque building. There is also a call by the “*Family House*” to endorse the idea, and it seems that the government will indeed go down that road

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<sup>8</sup> Sameh Fawzy, “Unified Law Regarding the Construction of Places of Worship,” Rose al-Yusuf Magazine, July 27, 2008

particularly in light of the Islamic Research Council's decision to support the call, a development that would not be opposed by the Egyptian churches.

### **Second: The Copts' limited political representation**

One of the problems that the Copts face in Egypt is the level of their representation in different elected bodies, including the People's Assembly, Shura Council, local councils and different unions and professional associations.

In this context, Coptic representation in the People's Assembly has steadily declined, revealing a narrowing scope of social tolerance. In the 2000 parliamentary elections, only three Copts out of 444 members were elected and four appointed, making together 1.5% of the 454 total Assembly members. The same happened in the 2005 parliamentary elections in which only one Copt was elected, the Minister of Finance, out of 444 members, which together with the five appointed members brought the total up to 6, i.e. 1.4% of Assembly members, and the 2010 elections produced almost the same result. This outcome is not an exception, since that same pattern has been recurring for almost half a century.

## **Coptic Representation in Egypt's Parliaments 1924-2005**

### **1. 1924-1952**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Number of Members</b>	<b>Coptic Members</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1924	214	16	7.48%
1925	214	15	7%
1926	214	12	5.60%
1926	235	23	9.79%
1931	150	4	2.66%
1936	232	20	8.62%
1938	264	6	2.27%
1942	264	27	10.23%
1945	264	12	4.55%
1950	319	10	3.13%
<b>Average Percentage of Copts in Parliament 1924-1950</b>			<b>6.13%</b>

### **2. 1957-1969**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Number of Members</b>	<b>Number of Elected Coptic Members</b>	<b>Number of Appointed Coptic Members</b>	<b>Total Number of Coptic Members</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1957	350	1	NA	1	Less than 0.5%
1964	360	1	8	9	2.5%
1969	348	2	7	9	2.6%
<b>Average Coptic Representation</b>					<b>2.54 %</b>

### 3. 1971-1984

Year	Total Number of Members	Number of Elected Coptic Members	Number of Appointed Coptic Members	Total Number of Coptic Members	Percentage
1971	360	3	9	12	3.33%
1976	370	0	8	8	2.16%
1979	360	4	10	14	3.89%
Average Coptic Representation					1.65%

### 4. 1984-2005

Year	Total Number of Members	Number of Elected Coptic Members	Number of Appointed Coptic Members	Total Number of Coptic Members	Percentage
1984	468	4	5	9	1.92%
1987	458	6	4	10	2.18%
1990	454	1	6	7	1.54%
1995	454	0	6	6	1.32%
2000	454	3	4	7	1.5%
2005	454	1	5	6	1.32%
Average Coptic Representation					1.65%

The above statistics show that what we are witnessing is a process that continues in the past five decades. In this regards, the following tree remarks are relevant:

1) Those who examine the party candidate lists closely, since 1990, will find an almost total disinterest by different parties in embedding Coptic candidates. It seems that the machine that forms these parties' political cadres is out of order, or the Egyptian political mind is no longer interested in the Copts being present on the scene. What governs these parties' mindsets is the potential for loss or gain,

rather than giving priority to enhancing the national integration.

2) Many candidates, including not only those affiliated by religious currents but also by other parties as well, cast doubt on the Copts' right to run for or be represented in parliament, based on various *fatwas* (religious opinion) in this regard, despite the presence of other *fatwas* which decisively endorse that right. This reflects the religious domain's encroachment on the civil domain, and the triumph of the religious connotation of the majority-minority concept.

3) Since 1952, successive regimes have used appointments to compensate for the meagre Coptic presence on the political scene, which prompted some to consider implementing a "quota" system, an idea rejected by a wide swath of the Coptic community. In order to tackle this inherited problem seriously, an all-out effort is needed to involve everyone in public activism and shift the conversation from the question of the Copts' citizenship to the question of citizenship for all Egyptians, as a whole, coupled with joint efforts to move us forward from mere residents to active citizens.<sup>9</sup>

The following are a few practical suggestions to integrate the Copts in the political process:

- Prepare for a national convention that would formulate plans and issue a code of honour to which all national forces in the country would commit. It would also keep up with the periods of the national

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<sup>9</sup> Samir Morcos, "Citizenship and Change," Al-Shorouq International, 2006

movement ascent; curtail all that is harmful to national integration, such as allowing religion to encroach on the political process; guarantee the implementation of constitutional provisions that promote integration; compose a detailed map of the electoral experience; and propose candidates' to the parties. The convention should remain in session for several years until such a day when Egypt regains its spontaneous integration.

- Adopt the party-list proportional representation, which should make a qualitative shift in the Egyptian political life, whereby political trends and beliefs would become the main criteria for voting and candidacy in lieu of tribal, sectarian and family-based affiliations, i.e., primordial systems in diametric opposition to the concept of the modern civil state. Alternatively, parliamentary candidates could be divided into two equal groups, one elected according to the list system and the other to the single vote system.
- Adopt what could be called a "national list" to correct the absence of several important groups, including the small producers, employees, peasants, public sector employees, civil society activists, women and the Copts, and all those who did not have the chance to be represented in parliament.

Moreover, what happens in the political representation domain also happens in what could be called the "representative bureaucracy," i.e., the presence of the religious Other in government institutions. This presence will enhance these institutions' self-control in the direction of expanding the scope of tolerance, and will help promote the concept of cultural

pluralism in the good governance systems of state institutions, in line with UNESCO's philosophy.<sup>10</sup> All signs point to the meagre Coptic presence in the administration system, especially in leadership positions where appointees are chosen. This takes place in the shadow of a popular rejection, based seemingly on interpretations to the effect that a Copt cannot assume a position of leadership considered part of the issues related to the governance.<sup>11</sup>

### **Third: Freedom of religious belief**

Article 46 of the 1971 Constitution states: "The State shall guarantee the freedom of belief and the freedom of practice of religious rites." The said provision contains no legal restrictions, limits on religious practices or preconditions, which presupposes that the citizens are free to choose their religious beliefs. However, this is not what actually happens in practice.

Conversions from Christianity to Islam face no obstacles; in fact, there is an effort to facilitate the process involved in changing one's identity papers. Until very recently, there was a habit of arranging a meeting between the person wishing to convert to Islam and a Christian religious leader, but the

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<sup>10</sup> Sameh Fawzy, "Emerging from the Sectarian Tunnel: Coptic Issues," Cairo: Ibn Khaldoun Centre, 1998, p. 98.

<sup>11</sup> In this context, a researcher has found very few Copts in administrative decision-making circles; there is not a single Copt among the 274 university presidents, or deans of colleges or institutes. This has been the case for many years, and only a small number of Copts are found in local decision-making circles, with a very small number in major state institutions. For more details see: 'Adel Jundi, "Genuine Equality for Citizenship's Sake," paper distributed at the Citizenship Seminar organized by the National Council for Human Rights, on November 25, 2007.

practice was later discontinued. There are calls to reinstate it despite the difficulties it used to face, including the very short time allocated to the advisory meeting, and the fact that this meeting was held in a security establishment.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, a Muslim who wants to convert to another religion, like Christianity, faces a mountain of obstacles; not only is it difficult for him or her to obtain the necessary identity papers, their social relationships are negatively affected, as well. It seems that Article 2 of the 1971 Constitution, amended in 1980 and stating that Islam is the state religion and the principles of Islamic Sharia are the main source of legislation, is the legal basis that prevents a Muslim from converting to another religion. Thus, if someone willingly converts to Islam, he or she cannot go back on that decision.<sup>13</sup>

In recent years, a phenomenon known as the “Returnees to Christianity” made its appearance, in reference to Christian citizens who converted to Islam then decided to return

to Christianity. Some of these were allowed to do so legally and granted identity papers to prove that their status, although the reference to their past conversion to Islam could eventually expose them to society’s ire.<sup>14</sup> In the wake of the January 25 Revolution, the Ministry of the Interior agreed to grant the “Returnees to Christianity” identity cards with a national number stating their current religion as Christianity.

Linked to the issue of religious conversions are the religious identity of minor children who are the dependents of Christian parents who converted to Islam; these children find themselves in a situation not of their own choosing.<sup>15</sup>

There are calls to remove from national number identity cards the item that identifies the bearer’s religion. In any case, it is necessary to codify the religious conversion issue to make it more in line with a society organised along democratic lines, and safeguards the basic rights of its citizens. Hence, this issue can be regarded as a personal issue, requiring the registration of one’s conversion in a court of law; it will also be a human rights issue, an issue in which religious institutions have no role to play.

#### **Fourth: Social discrimination against the Copts**

There are cases of social discrimination against the Copts that are neither legally founded nor the result of direct government policies. They are rather the result of a climate rife with extremist discourses, which

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<sup>12</sup> See a detailed account of this issue in International Religious Freedom Report, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> This is evident from the case of Mohammad Hijazi, a young Egyptian who in the summer of 2007 announced his conversion to Christianity, and in doing so, unleashed a big scandal. The legal administrative system refused his request to change his identity papers to reflect his new religion, as is commonly done when Christians convert to Islam. In its verdict, the court stated that, “Heavenly religions have come down from God Almighty according to a given timeline. This makes the act of leaving a more recent religion in favour of an older one an unusual occurrence. Although the Koran commits the Muslim not to force non-Muslims to join Islam and that non-Muslims are free to join Islam or not, those who join Islam and believe in this faith have already practiced their freedom of belief and cannot leave their Muslim faith. If they do that, they will be considered apostates who take this worthy religion lightly, and thus distanced themselves from the true path and damned their soul.” Al-Masry al-Yaom, Wednesday, January 30, 2008

<sup>14</sup> Al-Masry al-Yaom, February 10, 2008

<sup>15</sup> See the report entitled: “Forbidden Identities,” issued by Human Rights Watch in cooperation with the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, November 2007, p. 9.



only serves to alienate the Coptic community further from public life. The Islamist movements' discourse is one of the reasons behind the narrowing scope of religious tolerance.

In this context, there are two different groups of Islamists; the first adheres to the “adjusted *thimmiya*” school, which believes that citizenship is a right for both Christians and Muslims, albeit without ignoring the Muslims' right to dominate the political scene since they constitute the numerical majority. The second group views the Copts as “*ahlul thimma*” (i.e., Jewish and Christian minorities protected under Islam), and therefore favour a return to the old *thimmiyya* system with its rules and conditions, rather than consider them full citizens.<sup>16</sup> Countering such a position requires a serious effort to generate new interpretations with a potential to re-inspire Egyptian jurisprudence that relies on a balance between respect for religion's place in the public order, and equality among all citizens.

### (3)

In order to found citizenship's principles and rules of coexistence among all Egyptians, within a state of law, on a solid basis, there is need to study the phenomenon and draw the required confrontation strategies.

#### **First: the objectives**

- 1) Studying the history of religious tensions helps achieve a number of objectives: understanding the reasons behind sectarian

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<sup>16</sup> Sameh Fawzy, “The Copts and Islamic Movements,” a paper presented at the seminar Citizenship and National Unity, organized by the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo, on January 20, 2008.

conflicts and using the documented information as a point of departure in dealing with the religious file, based on an agreed-upon methodology. This would also help researchers carry out studies to pinpoint the catalysts that ignite religious tensions, and propose the appropriate solutions for them.

- 2) Pinpointing areas of religious discrimination in the public domain, whether due to the overuse of religious symbolisms, religious statements out of context or opinions and *fatwas* that provoke religious disharmony. As the result of outward displays of religiosity, of political Islam's need, mainly the salafists, to control the public domain or of the presence of religious tensions on both sides of the equation, religious discrimination leads often to tension at the workplace, in the public transportation system and on the street.
- 3) Pinpointing incidents of discrimination in the media, in the cultural, religious and political discourses, and in the academic curricula. The lack of genuine criticism for this type of discrimination has had an impact on the public. The issue is not to simply criticise these discourses, but to find also the right mechanisms to improve the situation.
- 4) Finding practical solutions to mitigate tensions and draw a distinction between religious and social incidents. Despite the fact that there are general Coptic problems, their impact differs depending on the time, place and social class involved.
- 5) Developing both a long-term and short-term strategy: while some problems require immediate practical solutions, like

the construction and restoration of churches, others require long-term solutions, especially issues related to social discrimination, the way of perceiving the Other and involvement. Some see that solving the Copts' problems requires time to prepare the public arena for that; however, we do not see them propose any long-term political vision. In this situation, the deferral of the solution to the future is only an excuse to procrastinate, even if inadvertently.

### **Second: Allies and partners**

Allies and partners are community organisation networks, legal organisations and specialised national councils active in the field of human rights, women, and youth; political parties; recently formed cultural and social organisations; political groups formed in the wake of the January 25 Revolution, concerned ministries, civil society organisations and religious foundations (churches, Al-Azhar, the Family House).

### **Third: Operating mechanisms and interventions**

- 1) To rely on a network of community-based organisations to monitor the situation in various governorates; this will help maximise local capabilities and establish a set of conflict resolution rules, and eventually lead to a proper framework for the relationship between the two sides. It will also help foster social solidarity and underline the notion that religious affairs are neither a security matter nor are they solely the concern of religious organisations; they are first, and foremost, a social issue.
- 2) The January 25 Revolution has shed light on the role that the youth, especially those with good social communication skills, could play in this domain; they could help by sensing religious tensions before they unfold, and then intervene to diffuse them.
- 3) To train young natural leaders locally on how to help contain and mitigate conflicts using dialogue as a tool. Natural leaders play an important role in resolving conflicts and contribute usually to "value assignment". Their intervention to resolve religious conflicts will have a positive impact.
- 4) To promote avenues of joint activities to foster a wider social capital among the citizens based on mutual trust and respect. This would create among people of different religious backgrounds a network of socio-economic relations revolving around projects aimed at improving the quality of life, a development likely to dispel a big part of the country's religious tensions. Developing this kind of trust is not only civil society's responsibility, but also that of the state whose role is to find more avenues of social participation.
- 5) To establish independent fact-finding committees to accurately record events as they unfold, since the lack of documented evidence conceals the real reasons behind the problems, and limits the ability to gain the experience required to address them.
- 6) To maintain contact through the internet in order to raise the public's awareness on the importance of involvement, gain access to precise information, disprove misleading opinions, unveil rumours and give positive examples. The higher the level of alphabetical and cultural illiteracy is, the lower the impact of the internet on the people is; however, it is still important

to stay connected especially in light of this tool's repeated misuse recently unveiled by religiously motivated incidents.<sup>17</sup>

- 7) To re-examine efforts already underway to improve academic curricula, propose new laws and launch cultural projects, in order to activate them and raise public awareness about them. One of the problems is the lack of any coordination mechanism between the different institutions in charge of the media, education and culture.

- 8) To reform the media in a manner that would allow them to act as an avenue of communication rather than a forum for sectarian rivalry and conflict, and training a new generation of journalists based on the importance of dialogue and values of citizenship. This involves reforming journalists intellectually, professionally and legally.

In light of the above principles, we propose four main focal points to inspire future programmes and material for the media:

- 1.The history of Muslim-Christian relations and cultural pluralism in Egypt;
2. Promoting the value of cultural dialogue, and dialogue in daily life;
- 3.Promoting the principles of modern citizenship;
- 4.The media's treatment of religious tensions

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<sup>17</sup> Sameh Fawzy, "The Internet's Youth are Victims... Don't Turn Them into Criminals," Al-Shorouq newspaper, Saturday January 15, 2011.