



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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August 23, 2013

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. State Department
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

In the words of Pope Francis, what Egypt needs is “peace, dialogue and reconciliation.” To that end, we urge the United States to work with the international community to support efforts by Egyptians to strengthen public order and the rule of law and to build an inclusive democracy respectful of human rights and religious freedom.

Pope Francis has lamented the “painful news” coming from Egypt. He prayed for “all the victims and their families, the injured and all those who are suffering.” We do the same.

Amidst the tragedy of violence and bloodshed in Egypt, our Conference has a special concern for the Christian community. Extremists have scapegoated Christians, blaming them for the current state of affairs, and viciously attacked Christian churches, institutions and communities, destroying property and terrorizing people. The destruction of Christian churches and the targeting of Christians are unacceptable.

The Church in Egypt reports that the attacks are the work of extremists and that many of their Muslim neighbors have come to their defense. Patriarch Ibrahim Isaac Sidrak, Coptic Catholic Patriarch of Alexandria, commended “our honorable Muslim compatriots who have stood by our side, as far as they could, in defending our churches and our institutions.”

We agree with the Administration’s call for “a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Egypt.” The responsibility for building such a future rests primarily with Egyptians, but the actions of the United States and the international community can help or hinder this task.

We urge the United States to preserve, and even increase, humanitarian and economic assistance. Poor and vulnerable Egyptians should not pay the price of the political turmoil and violence gripping their nation. The international community should provide resources and hope to the bulk of the Egyptian people who live in poverty. Increasing desperation and misery will exacerbate Egypt’s challenges and fuel more frustration and violence.

We must also remember the various refugee populations in Egypt from the Horn of Africa, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. Refugees are particularly vulnerable, especially in the current insecure environment. They need continued assistance and protection.

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Our nation should find ways to support and encourage respect for human rights, religious freedom, and the building of an inclusive democracy in which all Egyptians have a stake and a voice. Towards these ends, we urge you to press for an end to the violence, a return to the rule of law, the protection of the Christian community, and the initiation of “dialogue and reconciliation” that leads to an inclusive future for all Egyptians.

Sincerely yours,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Chair Committee on International Justice and Peace