



14 October 2011

His Excellency the Ambassador of Egypt
Mr. Wael Ahmed Kamal Aboul Magd
Embassy of Egypt in Canada
454 Laurier Avenue East
Ottawa, ON K1N 6R3

Your Excellency:

We wish to share with you our deep concerns following the violent confrontation by Egyptian law enforcement agents against Coptic Christians that took place in Cairo on October 9, 2011. There are accounts by witnesses, testimonies from hospitals, and video recordings of peaceful demonstrators being shot by soldiers or run over by armoured military personnel carriers driving at speed. In an interview following these attacks, Cardinal Antonios Naguib, the Catholic Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria, stated that these grave incidents are further to other acts of persecution and intolerance by extremist groups against Egyptian Christians.

We request that your government undertake all necessary measures to ensure that Christians in Egypt are able to enjoy complete freedom of religion and to live in peace, that their security be respected, and that all forms of discrimination against them be ended.

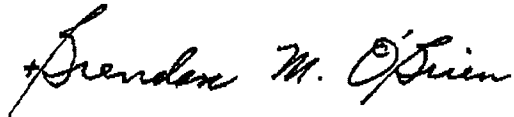
We also encourage your government to promote the calls for dialogue and mutual respect that have previously been made by Christian and Muslim leaders, in order to build a country of peace and harmony. At their annual meeting in February 2010, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Permanent Committee of Al-Azhar for Dialogue among the Monotheistic Religions, which is based in Cairo, issued the following recommendations: to “avoid discrimination because of religious identity”; to “recognize and respect the dignity and the rights of each human being without any bias related to ethnicity or religious affiliation”; and to “oppose with determination any act that tends to create tensions, divisions and conflicts in societies”.

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Mourning the recent events in Cairo, Pope Benedict XVI earlier this week encouraged prayers that Egypt "might enjoy a true peace, founded upon justice, upon respect for the freedom and the dignity of every citizen." In addition, he indicated his support for "the efforts of Egyptian authorities, civil and religious, who promote a society in which the human rights of all are respected, and in particular of minorities, to the benefit of national unity".

We thank you for the attention that will be given to our request.

Sincerely in the One God,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brendan M. O'Brien".

The Most Reverend Brendan M. O'Brien
Archbishop of Kingston
Chairman of the Human Rights Committee
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Cc: The Honourable John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs