

Copts Demand Equality

Copts (Christians of Egypt) are not asking for special treatment to compensate for centuries of discrimination and persecution. They are only asking for equality. They don't want anything more, and they will not settle for anything less. It is hard to believe that, at the turn of the 21st century, equality to Copts remains a luxury they still dream of. This at a time when the rest of the civilized world considers equality a birthright to be taken for granted.

This is why the Copts are asking for:

Copts want the antiquated 19th Century Hamayouni decree be abolished. It is inconceivable to request that the president of Egypt must approve permits to build a church or even to repair a toilet in a church. Mosques in Egypt are being built with no restrictions.

Copts want equal air time on the government controlled TV and Radio stations to broadcast their belief to their people. The 15 million Copts living in Egypt pay for the TV and Radio from their money and they should have time allocated for broadcasting.

Copts want to have the church's trust lands returned. The income generated by these lands was used to provide for needy Copts. The lands were seized by the Ministry of Islamic affairs, even though courts had ordered that the lands must be returned to their legitimate owners; the Copts.

Copts want an end to forced conversion of Christian girls, who are kidnapped and raped by Muslim extremists. There are reports of police protection given to the abductors.

Copts want all Egyptian citizens to have the freedom of belief, including the freedom to change own religion. Christians are welcomed to convert to Islam, so Muslims should be free to convert to Christianity, if they so chose. Those converts are usually subjected to imprisonment and torture.

Copts want religious affiliation be removed from national ID cards, job applications etc... so Christian could not be identified and discriminated against.

Copts want educational curriculums to be revised to guarantee that they do not contain denigrating references to Christians and Christianity, but to encourage students to accept and respect each other. Mandatory courses in human rights in all public schools are strongly recommended.

Copts want the Government controlled media to refrain from conducting a campaign of hate against Christians, labelling them as infidels, thus creating a climate of intolerance, in which attacks against Copts can be easily propagated. The media should also allow Coptic programs to be aired.

Copts want an end to discrimination in job appointments and promotions. Very few Christians appointed to key jobs such as ministers, or other government officials. At

the present time there are Christian governors, mayors, chief of police, president of City council or college deans in Egypt.

Copts want an end to discrimination in government controlled school admission against Christian students. Very few Christians are admitted to the police academy, military schools. Very few Christian are appointed to teaching assistance positions in all medical collages, pharmaceutical collage engineering collages and all top education collages.

Copts want the Egyptian government to be serious about apprehending those who murder Copts, and punish them to the fullest extent of the law, and to adequately compensate the victims of these crimes. No killers of Copts have been sentenced to the same punishment as that of a killer of Muslims. Even terrorist Haridi, who murdered thirteen Christians including small children, in Sanabu in 1992, did get the usual punishment for murder for his horrigying crimes.

Copts want immediate orders be issued to rebuild Kafr Demian village, which was burned down by Muslim extremists in 1996, this must be done at the expense of the State.

Copts want certain mechanism to be established to create an adequate representation for them in the Egyptian parliament. One suggestion is to have certain areas be closed to Coptic candidates on Political exclusion of Copts must stop. The governing national party failed to include any Copts in their list of candidates to the parliament.

Copts want center for handicapped children, which was destroyed by the army in December 1996 be rebuilt at the expense of the government, and as soon as possible.

Copts want to be treated with honor and dignity inside Police Departments and in the Sermons of Muslim Sheiks in Mosques etc..... There is no justification for humiliating somebody just because he is different in religion.

Copts want to see an end to the religious discrimination that prevails at all levels of the Egyptian educational system, especially in hiring of teachers and professors, and unfair grading practices aimed at Christian students.

Copts want their history, language, and culture be taught in schools and colleges in Egypt where their sons and daughters attend.

Copts want to feel that Mr. Mubarak is a president for both Muslims and Copts. They want him to care for them and address their concerns. They want him to meet with their religious leadership, and perhaps pay visits to their churches, something other presidents used to do, but he has never done. This, no doubt, will break down walls of mistrust, and build bridges of tolerance and harmony between Muslims and Christians.

Copts want to be allowed to enroll in all schools, which are publicly funded, such as Al-Azhar University, police and military academies, without any restrictions. At present time there is a 5% maximum place on Coptic enrollment to police and military academies, and this percentage is not even met by actual enreollment.

These are just a few examples of the discriminatory practices imposed on Copts. They represent a starting point, and taking care of them will show good faith. The most important thing is that there must be a will to correct the wrongs being done to the Copts. When the will is there, everything else will fall in place. Then, Muslims and Christians will live together, in harmony, as brothers and sisters on the land of our beloved Egypt.

This is our hope, and this is our prayer.