

Pray for Egypt (5 July 2013)

The past week has been a momentous one for Egypt as mass protests on the streets of Cairo and throughout Egypt led to the intervention of the Egyptian army and the removal from office of President Morsi, who was elected president one year ago. Adly Mahmud Mansour, the head of Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court, has been appointed as interim president but the situation in Egypt is far from settled and the future seems full of uncertainty.



Many Christians joined in the protests, among them **Hebatalla Safwat Ghali**, a French professor at Cairo University, who said, "I am here at el Tahrir because first, I am Egyptian, I am a part of this people. Second, as a Copt I present my Christian love of my country. I care about my people's worries. I have compassion for all Egyptian people. I reject all kind of unfairness to all the people, not only the Christians. We will keep at our revolution until we achieve the three values of social justice, freedom and human dignity. The situation has become worse, but we will keep on until the end. The Brotherhood is trying to kidnap our country."

Also participating in the protest was **Shenoda Danil**, a Cairo taxi driver, who said, "Our situation has become worse. The Brotherhood are thinking only of themselves. They do not know and do not do anything for the people. They divided our society into Muslim and Christian. The Brotherhood stole the first revolution. That is unfair, and an injustice."



On Tuesday 2 July the Egyptian Council of Churches issued a statement in support of the army's ultimatum to President Morsi to resign. Pope Tawadros II, head of the Coptic Orthodox church, appeared on the TV broadcast announcing the president's removal from office, speaking briefly after the head of the army, General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, and Mohammed el-Baradei, a leading opposition figure and coordinator of the National Salvation Front.

Many Christians have welcomed recent developments. They note that the protests, in which an estimated 17 million people participated, were overwhelmingly peaceful and orderly, though regrettably limited violence led to some loss of life. Christians, like the majority of Egyptians, desire to live in a country where dignity and justice are upheld for all.

In recent weeks threats have been issued by extremists that they would attack church property if Christians participated in the demonstrations. On Wednesday 3 July in the Coptic Catholic parish of St. George in Delga, Minya province, the church's guesthouse and the home of the priest, Father Ayoub, were looted and set ablaze. There was a similar attack on the Church of the Holy Virgin in Marsa Matrouh. Police arrived quickly to disperse the violent mob.

Ramez Atallah, General Director of the Bible Society of Egypt, also took part in the protests and said: "We all felt very proud to be Egyptians and to be among so many wonderful compatriots from Christians to conservative, Muslim, veiled women! The fact that this is truly a movement by and for the people gives more reason for Egyptians to participate proudly in the protests.

"When the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist parties won the majority in the new parliament and had one of their own elected as President, they quickly turned it into an autocratic one-party rule and hijacked the revolution with its 'Egypt for all' emphasis.

"Pray that the unprecedented unity expressed between all Egyptians who reject the forceful imposition of political Islam will result in a new Egypt where people with different persuasions can live alongside one another in harmony. This is the Egypt I remember from my youth and the Egypt most Egyptians yearn for."

Ramez Atallah is due to visit Ireland next month to speak at the Bangor Missionary Convention and also at an iMap event in Dublin (Sunday 25 August at Grosvenor Road Baptist Church at 7pm).



Reacting to the news from Egypt, **Bishop Angaelos** of the Coptic Church in the UK said, "The scenes of rejoicing and jubilation in Egypt's squares must now be followed by an intentional and proactive programme of reconciliation among all parties.

"We feel the pain of those who may consider themselves defeated, and who now fear marginalisation and alienation; sentiments which we as Christians have experienced at times over the centuries in Egypt.

"We pray that no more blood is shed, no more families or communities grieved, no more violence spreads, and that cooperation and collaboration become principle foundations throughout this continuing formative process. The next weeks and months will be crucial, needing the support of every Egyptian and guiding him or her to no longer think in terms of tribes or separation, but rather in terms of unity and collaboration for the good of all."

(Information from Middle East Concern, World Watch Monitor)

Prayer Requests from Egyptian Christians

1. Pray that Egypt will be governed for the benefit of all citizens, with people of different persuasions able to live alongside one another peaceably.
2. Pray that Biblical principles of servant-leadership will be displayed in the new leaders.
3. Pray that there will be effective protection of church and other property against attacks by extremists, and that the rule of law and order will be established for the benefit of all citizens.
4. Pray that there will be sustainable supplies of basic necessities to all.
5. Pray that Egyptian Christians will play an increasingly prominent and effective role in addressing the needs of all Egyptians.