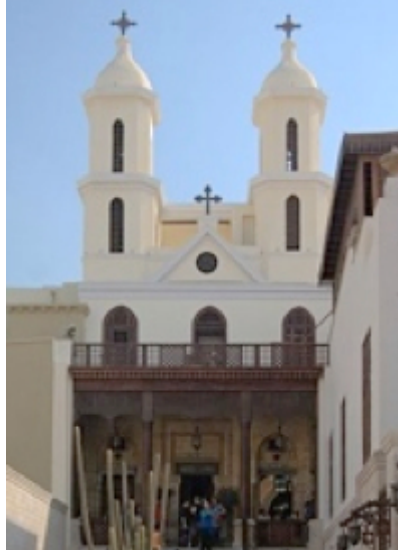




Written by [James Heiser](#) on December 8, 2011

Egypt's Coptic Christians Brace for Life Under the Muslim Brotherhood

As militant Islamists celebrate their decisive victory in the recent Egyptian election, Coptic Christians are bracing themselves for the next round of violence directed against them. A year which began with Muslim terrorists bombing a church in Alexandria, Egypt, during the Coptic Church's celebration of Christmas on January 7 has now witnessed the rise of militant Islam to the point of having utter control of the government of that nation.



As Alex Newman [wrote](#) recently for *The New American*, the vote was decisively in support of parties favoring an expanded role for sharia law in post-Mubarak Egypt:

Egyptian voters delivered a powerful victory to Islamists and the long-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood in the first round of parliamentary elections, with hard-line Islamic parties winning around 65 percent of the vote. The news sparked widespread fears among Christians and others that Egypt could be plunged into tyranny once again while jeopardizing the security of neighboring Israel.

Official election results released on Sunday showed the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) garnering a sizeable lead with almost 37 percent of the vote. The more radical Salafi Muslim party Al Nour did far better than expected with close to 25 percent of the 10 million votes cast in the first of three rounds of elections.

An article by Yasimine Fathi ("[Egypt Copts react to Islamist electoral win](#)") captures the context of the significant victories for radical Islam in forming the new Egyptian parliament:

It has been a year where Coptic churches were burned by Salafist groups, where residents of the southern city of Qena demonstrated and blocked the city's highways to protest the appointed of a Coptic governor, where Copts repeatedly took to the street to protest increasing discrimination and where deadly clashes between Coptic protesters and the army left at least 28 dead in what became known as the "Maspero massacre," taking place in front of the State TV building in Maspero.

It's also been a year where various Islamists speaking on TV shows called Christians *kafirs* (heretics) and insisted that they should pay the *jizya* (Islamic fine for non-Muslims), pushing Egypt's Christians to spiral into an even more intense wave of panic.

And Fathi quotes the words of a witness to the Maspero massacre — Fr. Filopater Gameel — regarding voter intimidation and fraud which has allegedly transpired during this first round of parliamentary elections:



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“The elections were filled with rigging and violations. The Supreme Electoral Committee (SEC) has already announced that many ballot boxes will be disregarded because [of] concerns that they were rigged. We also saw violations in terms of *niqabis* [fully veiled women] entering the polling stations and refusing to identify themselves so that they can keep entering the station and vote more than once. We’ve also heard of cases where the Salafist El-Nour Party blocked the door to the polling stations, so that any voter going in would have to pass by them first, which is actually against the law that bans campaigning in front of polling stations.

Also, during the electoral process there was heavy usage of religious slogans and mosques were used for campaigns and to promote the Islamists.

In the months since the beginning of the “Arab Spring” in Egypt, that nation’s future readily appeared to be decisively in the direction of a more militant expression of Islam moving to the fore. As [reported for *The New American*](#) in late November, the Obama administration has clearly been preparing for Egypt — and other Arab Spring nations — to move in a more Islamist direction. The shibboleth of the inherent virtue of democracy — long a defining characteristic of State Department rhetoric — often has been invoked with a marked disinterest in whether what the fifty-one percent of a given population desires is actually desirable. If the ostensible role of the State Department is to defend the interests of these United States, such a role would not involve an ideological commitment inculcating “democracy,” regardless of the implications for the best interests of our nation. Now, the nation will reap what it has sown, as the very forces which were encouraged by the Obama administration to assume power in Egypt seem likely to move that nation in a direction which is inimical to the interests of the United States.

Having long pursued a self-destructive pattern of “regime change” which rarely serves the interests of the United States and which has made American foreign policy the servant of ideological agendas which ill-serve the interests of the nation, U.S. policy toward Egypt has now led to a situation similar to the debacle in Iraq, where a U.S. invasion led to the systematic persecution of a Christian minority which had survived in that nation for centuries. Now, it remains to be seen whether Coptic Christians will begin fleeing a country reshaped by the Muslim Brotherhood. According to Fr. Filopater Gameel, the Copts will not easily be driven from their homeland:

The Copts will be the voice in Egypt that will continue to call for freedom, equality and a civil state. We will remain here and continue the fight for the beautiful and ancient Egyptian civilisation.

I do not agree with the decision of many Copts to emigrate or flee the country because the Islamists won. This is passive. I think those who leave will be very few. Mass emigration, I believe, will not take place and Egypt will always have its Christians.

The biggest problem I have with the Islamists is that they are unclear and have many faces. They say one thing and then later deny it, and when people lie you cannot trust them. I think it also shows that we replaced the Mubarak dictatorship with a new dictatorship, but this time it is religious. ...

However, we Copts will not give up. We will continue in the struggle for our freedom in Tahrir Square and all other squares in the country.

Adventurism in pursuit of democracy may have an ideological appeal to those politicians ruling in Washington, D.C. Those who have to live with the results of such ideological commitments are less



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sanguine. For Copts who have endured generations of persecution, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood is simply the latest indication that the West has once again aided the rise to power of an ideology which will bring suffering to those who must live with the implications of our foreign policy.

Photo: A Coptic Christian church in Cairo



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