

Egypt Persecutes Christians and Americans Pay the Bill

Egypt's governing majority, the Muslim Brotherhood, is not actually crucifying the nation's Christians. But they are nonetheless actively persecuting Coptic Christians, who are said to be one-tenth of the population of the largest Arab country. A photograph of two young men set afire during recent demonstrations is pretty striking.

Typically, the Copts protest against Islamist violence directed at them and their churches. St. Mark's Cathedral, for instance, has been the target of Muslim extremists in recent weeks. When the Copts face police, they get teargassed—and then they are the ones arrested. The Muslim Brotherhood authorities pick up Coptic youth—hopefully the ones not yet set on fire—and jail them.

Then the police grab some of the Islamists perpetrators and jail them. Later, following a much-ballyhooed “reconciliation,” the authorities release all—perpetrators and victims alike. Christian Magdy Saber describes the phony process in an interview with the online *Daily News of Egypt*, an English-language source:

“‘This is a natural consequence of the reconciliation between Muslims and Christians in Al-Khasous and what some priests agreed to,’ said Magdy Saber, vice head of the union’s media committee. ‘It brings us back to the old bargaining scenario [under Mubarak] where the criminals are released.’

“Saber said that this method has long been used in any sectarian conflict. ‘Reconciliation sessions take place followed by Coptic arrests. Then both the Copts and the criminals are simultaneously released to end the conflict.’”

Police use tear gas against the Copts, and it is tear gas sold

to Egypt by American firms. In addition to foreign aid—most recently a \$250 million increase offered by Secretary of State John Kerry—our State Department has approved the sale of this “non-lethal” crowd-control agent to the Muslim Brotherhood governing party.

The Christian Copts of Egypt are divided among themselves, unfortunately. Some want the Egyptian military to exercise greater control over the actions of the Islamists aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists. But others remember what they call the Maspero Massacre of 2011, in which armored personnel carriers drove over Coptic protesters in an action reminiscent of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, which mowed down student pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

The English version of Egypt’s *Al-Ahram* online site carries these comments by Coptic activists: “‘Copts are split between those who want the military back for protection and those who still remember the military tanks that ran over Coptic bodies only last year,’ said Coptic political activist Sally Toma, referring to the ‘Maspero massacre’ in which 24 Copts were killed.”

A report in the *Los Angeles Times* shows the difficulty faced by the Copts: “‘The country’s general chaos is causing everything to escalate and allows a radical Muslim ideology to propagate violence,’ said biomedical engineer Karim Samuel, a Copt. ‘I sometimes sit on the Metro [subway] next to men reading the Koran. I wonder if they really understand what they’re reading or do they blindly follow sheiks.’

“He paused and calculated the political math against his faith and other minorities.

“‘Morsi and the Brotherhood don’t care about Copts, liberals or leftists,’ Samuel said. ‘I don’t know what we can do as a Christian community.’”

It is, to be sure, a most confused and confusing situation in Egypt. But this much should be clear: American taxpayers are underwriting a regime that has little concern for fundamental human rights. We are shoveling billions to Egypt in the naive belief that they are moving toward democracy.

Is Egypt moving toward democracy? Pew polls and other opinion surveys regularly report that as many as 84 percent of Egyptians today say anyone who leaves Islam should be killed. Believing that, how can they have a democracy?

The Obama administration has never explained how it makes sense for Americans to borrow billions from China to give to a government in Egypt that is rolling over its own citizens and turning a blind eye to those of its backers who are burning Coptic churches, shooting Copts down and setting them on fire.

We may not be able to protect the Copts of Egypt, but we surely should not be helping their persecutors. If the Morsi administration begins to crucify the Copts, will we pay for the nails?

Ken Blackwell is a senior fellow in family empowerment and **Bob Morrison** is a senior fellow in policy studies at Family Research Council. This article appeared on on April 22.