

Egypt Government Officials Resign After Christian Massacre

In the wake of the brutal quell of the Christian protest in Tahrir Square, Egypt lost her finance minister and her deputy prime minister. Both men resigned in protest over the way the government handled the uprisings that left 26 dead.

"I think it's a good sign that the seriousness of this issue is taking root in the political structures and in the emerging political reality," says Open Doors USA president Carl Moeller. "Egypt cannot have a future if it chooses to have extremists dictate the future for Egypt."

Throngs of Egyptians gathered to protest the ruling military council during the funeral procession of 17 Christian protesters who died Sunday night.

Disbelief over the heavy-handed response gave way to shock and outrage in the Christian community. Moeller says likely there's more to come: "The Christian community has felt an increasing pressure since the Arab Spring, and the reality for the Church is that this pressure is now taking more violent forms."

A believer from Cairo, who requested to stay anonymous, told Open Doors: "The Christians went out on a peaceful demonstration ... it is taped. You can see the people walking from one place in the city in the direction of the television station where several demonstrations have been held since the revolution. It was a mixed group, including men, women and also children. They were singing praise songs and encouraging each other to lift up their heads with pride."

"According to our friend there, who was actually at the morgue

and lost a loved one, three of the 24 were actually killed by bullets from the security forces,” Moeller says. “But the 21 were killed by the vehicles that [the security forces] were driving, running them over.”

Egyptian Christians called for a night of prayer on Monday for the victims of the violence and for the current situation of the church. “There was an overnight prayer from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. this morning,” Moeller says. “And a country-wide call for fasting and prayer will be held from Wednesday until Friday.”

Moeller adds that the tragedy is drawing people together in unity before Christ: “The evangelical church of Egypt is also respecting that call and asking its parishioners to also be fasting and praying for the country.”

Moeller cautions that the tensions have a low flashpoint. He asks believers to pray that the natural, normal emotions of grief don’t evolve into anger and rage to produce a cycle of violence that would further escalate this crisis. From his perspective, there is opportunity for change. “The church wants to establish a dialogue with the process of creating a new government in Egypt,” Moeller says. “The church can possibly see this as an opportunity for their legitimacy to be established.”

It’s also a strategic point for other outreach. Moeller points out that “Egypt is a thought leader, and it’s the intellectual capital of Islam. We need to remember that as Egypt goes, so goes most of the Muslim world, so this is a vital place for us to be targeting our prayers.”