



Report on **The Occasion of the International Day of Human Fraternity (February 4)**

For the first time, the world celebrates the International Day of Human Fraternity on February 4 of this year, after a resolution on the said question was jointly submitted by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and was adopted by consensus in December 2020.

It should be noted that February 4 was chosen for the annual celebration of this occasion, as it was the day on which Grand Imam Ahmed Al-Tayeb, sheikh of Al-Azhar, and Pope Francis of the Vatican signed the document “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” in Abu Dhabi, UAE, in 2019. This document represents a deeply meaningful humanitarian and historical event that carries a message of peace, love, and fraternity to the entire world, as it calls for undertaking serious efforts to spread the culture of tolerance and coexistence and to reject extremism, intolerance, and hate in all their forms.



On this occasion, the Technical Secretariat of the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR) issued this report, which addresses the pioneering role of Egypt within the framework of the UN in promoting peace, tolerance, and religious freedoms, and the constitutional and legal framework supporting the principles and values of human fraternity. The report also reviews the institutional structure for promoting tolerance, rejecting violence, and combating extremism in Egypt, while shedding light on the most prominent national efforts to implement the values and principles of human fraternity.

First: Egypt’s Pioneering Role within the Framework of the UN in Promoting Peace, Tolerance, and Religious Freedoms

The interest that Egypt attaches - within the framework of multilateral diplomacy at the UN - to the promotion of a “culture of peace,” tolerance, and religious freedoms reflects its belief in coexistence, and its efforts to promote constructive dialogue among religions and societies in order to address discrimination, stereotyping, and stigmatization, which people are exposed to because of their religious beliefs.

Egypt exerted active diplomatic efforts, in cooperation with the UAE, to build consensus among all member states of the UN on the draft resolution they jointly submitted, together with a number of friendly countries, to the General Assembly titled “International Day of Human Fraternity.” The

resolution, which was adopted last December, refers to the document entitled “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together,” expressing grave concern over actions that incite religious hatred and thus undermine the spirit of tolerance and respect for diversity.

The resolution also notes the valuable contribution that people of all beliefs make to humanity and the values shared by all human beings irrespective of their group identities. The resolution particularly highlights the importance of raising awareness of different cultures and beliefs in addition to the importance of education in promoting tolerance. Accordingly, the resolution calls for strengthening interfaith and intercultural dialogue among all groups in order to promote social stability, respect for and acceptance of diversity, and the creation of an environment conducive to achieving peace and mutual understanding at the global level as well as at the regional, national, and local levels.

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The adoption of the resolution was timely, especially given the unprecedented crisis resulting from the (COVID-19) pandemic which continues to require global measures based on unity, solidarity, and stronger multilateral cooperation. Its importance is also evident in the need to intensify initiatives to curb extremism in all its forms and to address hate speech and incitement by promoting a culture of peace and rejecting violence.

In addition, in January 2021, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution submitted by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco, in collaboration with a number of other countries, under the title “Promoting a Culture of Peace and Tolerance for the Protection of Religious Sites.” The resolution comes in a context of escalating religious intolerance and discrimination and an ensuing need to promote coexistence and acceptance of the other, and thus it urges all countries to take effective measures against calls for national, racial, or religious hatred that constitute incitement to discrimination or violence. The resolution also condemns all attacks on religious sites and calls on states to support the UN plan of action to protect religious sites, which was prepared by the UN Alliance of Civilizations. Additionally, it calls on the UN Secretary-General to hold a global conference aimed at taking specific measures in order to implement the aforementioned plan of action while asserting that the primary responsibility in this regard rests with the states.

Second: The Constitutional and Legal Framework Supporting the Principles and Values of Human Fraternity

The Egyptian Constitution enshrines the values and principles of equality, tolerance, citizenship, fraternity, respect, acceptance of others, and pluralism, affirming that citizenship and the rule of law are the foundations of the state (Article 1) and that the state is committed to achieving equal opportunities for all citizens without discrimination (Article 9). The Constitution affirms that all citizens are equal in rights, freedoms, and public duties and that there must not be any discrimination among them on the grounds of religion, belief, gender, origin, race, language, disability, social level, political or geographical affiliation, or any other factors. Furthermore, it stipulates that discrimination and incitement to hatred are crimes punishable by law (Article 53). In addition, the Constitution outlines the goals of education, among which

is the instilling of the concepts of citizenship, tolerance, and non-discrimination (Article 19). It also stipulates that the state is obligated to preserve the components of cultural pluralism in Egypt (Article 50). As per the Constitution, it is impermissible to introduce amendments to the provisions related to equality unless they provide more guarantees of this right (Article 226).

The Constitution also asserts that the national unity of the people is based on the principles of equality, justice, and equal opportunities for all citizens (Article 4), guaranteeing the freedom of belief as an absolute freedom and the freedom to practice religious rituals and establish places of worship for believers of the Abrahamic religions (Article 64). It also stipulates that the main sources of legislation regulating the personal status of Egyptian Christians and Jews and their religious affairs are their religious laws and principles respectively (Article 3).

In accordance therewith, the legislative structure is rich in many laws incorporating the values of tolerance, fraternity, and the promotion of religious freedoms. For example, the Law Regulating the Press, Media, and the Supreme Council for Media Regulation prohibits newspapers, media outlets, and websites from publishing or broadcasting any material that incites discrimination, violence, racism, hatred, or intolerance. Another example is the Churches Building and Restoration Law No. 80 of 2016, which included for the first time a disciplined definition of the rules and procedures for issuing construction permits for churches and which delegated to governors the authority to issue approvals for requests to issue requisite licenses. The law also provided for the regularization of facilities where Christian religious ceremonies were held and which were not licensed at the time of its promulgation. Similarly, Law No. 190 of 2020 was also issued regarding the establishment of endowments for the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Community.

Third: The Institutional Structure to Implement the Principles and Values of Human Fraternity in Egypt

Egypt's institutional structure to implement the principles and values of human fraternity has a diversity of components as follows:

1. *The National Council for Combating Terrorism and Extremism*: Chaired by the President of the Republic, this council was established in 2017 to mobilize institutional and social capacities in Egypt to address the causes and effects of terrorism by developing a national strategy to combat it internally and externally, and coordinating efforts with religious institutions to enable moderate religious discourses and raise awareness as regards the dangers of terrorism and extremism.
2. *The Supreme Committee for Confronting Sectarian Incidents*: Established according to Presidential Decree No. 602 of 2018, this committee is responsible for setting policies and implementing plans to raise awareness of the dangers of sectarian strife in addition to promoting religious tolerance and dealing with sectarian incidents.
3. *The Peace Center for Studies of Extremism and Terrorism*: It is a research and scientific center affiliated with the Egyptian Dar al-Iftaa. It was established in 2020 to prepare studies to help



72
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**"CITIZENSHIP
COMMITTEES"**
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in **44** villages

address the problems of extremism for Muslims around the world and propose action plans to confront, combat, and eliminate this increasing phenomenon.



4. *Al-Azhar Observatory for Combating Extremism*: it was established in 2015 to monitor and confront extremist ideas and ideologies adopted by terrorist groups; oversee the conditions of Muslims around the world; and spread an accurate narrative of Islam and highlight its role in supporting humanity.
5. The *Islamophobia Observatory*: affiliated with the Egyptian Dar al-Iftaa, it was established in 2015 to monitor and confront extremist ideas and ideologies adopted by terrorist groups of all kinds.
6. *The Forum for Tolerance and Moderation*: It was established under the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in February 2014 in order to spread the culture of dialogue, consolidate tolerance, and reject fanaticism and terrorism through holding conferences, seminars, and publishing books and pamphlets that support the jurisprudence of coexistence and spread the principles of moderation and tolerance of Islam while simultaneously rejecting religious hatred.
7. *The Egyptian Family House*: It was established in 2011 under the leadership of the Sheikh of Al-Azhar, the Pope of Alexandria, and the Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church. It aims to preserve the national unity and cohesion of Egyptians by emphasizing the supreme values and commonalities among religions, cultures, and human civilizations as well as affirming the values of citizenship, tolerance, dialogue, and combating the incitement to violence and discrimination. It also works towards training preachers and priests on moderate religious discourse while simultaneously monitoring and suggesting preventive means to maintain communal peace.
8. *The Observatory of Takfiri Fatwas*: It is affiliated with the Egyptian Dar al-Iftaa and monitors fatwas issued by terrorist and extremist groups in order to confront them.

Fourth: Prominent National Efforts to Implement the Principles and Values of Human Fraternity

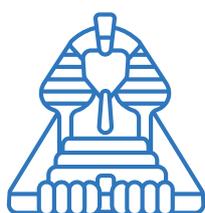
1. *The Committee for the Legalization of the Status of Churches* was established in January 2017. It is headed by the Prime Minister, and its mandate is to study the relevant requests for legalization according to a set of conditions that are stipulated in the law. By December 2020, the status of about 1,800 churches and buildings were legalized in accordance with the Churches Building and Restoration Law.
2. An initiative led by state agencies to restore churches that were damaged and vandalized after the revolution of June 30, 2013, managed to restore 72 churches.
3. The government implemented a USD 70 million worth plan to restore some Egyptian monuments, including the Jewish temples in Cairo and Alexandria as well as ancient Jewish

cemeteries. The government also restored some of the religious monuments along the route of the Holy Family's journey in Egypt.

4. *The Church of the Birth of Christ and Al-Fattah Al-Alim Mosque* were built and inaugurated in the New Administrative Capital in Cairo on the eve of Orthodox Christmas 2019 in a symbolic message of tolerance. Both the mosque and the church are the largest in the Middle East.
5. *Al-Azhar* issued several publications to introduce human rights and the principles of citizenship and peaceful coexistence and to combat extremism and fanaticism, in addition to translating these publications into different languages. It also created a curriculum in the various stages of the Azhari education to emphasize religious, doctrinal, and cultural pluralism. The initiative titled *Al-Azhar Brings Us Together* was also launched in youth centers to spread the values of tolerance and acceptance of the other.
6. *Dar al-Iftaa* launched several scientific initiatives and projects aimed at renewing the religious discourse, refuting extremist ideas, and implementing many rehabilitation and training programs for muftis and scholars around the world to enable them to understand extremist ideas and scientifically respond to them.
7. *The three Egyptian Churches* launched various initiatives and activities aimed at spreading enlightened thought and affirming common human values advocated by all religions. These initiatives also sought to consolidate respect for pluralism, and acceptance of others while rejecting intolerance and combating hate speech. This included the initiative titled "Peace Be to All People", in which the Bishopric of Public, Ecumenical, and Social Services of the Coptic Orthodox Church cooperated with the Ministry of Endowments to present a practical model for working on the ground to support and spread the culture of peace in religious, educational, media, and civil society institutions in order to increase cohesion and peaceful coexistence in the Egyptian society and strengthen the role of religious institutions in consolidating these values through a religious discourse that establishes a culture of acceptance of others.
8. *The Ministry of Higher Education* launched the strategy to confront extremism and Takfiri thought in Egyptian universities from 2019 to 2023 by setting goals, policies, and programs to monitor and combat the most significant manifestations of Takfiri thought.

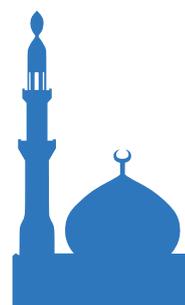


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9. *The Ministry of Education* reviewed religious curricula, and introduced a course on ethics aimed at promoting fraternity, acceptance of others, and citizenship. In addition, a book titled *Values and Respect for Others* is being taught to third-grade students during the academic year 2020-2021, and a similar curriculum is being prepared for the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades of primary school.
10. *The Ministry of Endowments* allocated a number of Friday sermons to spreading the values of tolerance and the rejection of violence and hatred. In addition, it held several seminars on the concept of citizenship in cooperation with the National Media Authority. It also launched the initiative entitled *Our Master Muhammad, Messenger of Humanity*, to publicize the prophet's message which rejects violence and incitement to hatred. Furthermore, it launched a campaign titled *Baladi Amana*, in cooperation with Egyptian churches and the National Council for Women, for female preachers working under the Ministry of Endowments as well as nuns and female church servants to spread the spirit of tolerance and consolidate the values of coexistence. Finally, the Ministry of Endowments also issued translated publications in several languages to introduce the values of tolerance and citizenship.
11. *The Ministry of Social Solidarity* organized many activities aimed at upholding the values of Egyptian citizenship. "Citizenship committees," were established in 44 villages to provide training on the concepts of citizenship and acceptance of religious and cultural diversity as well as on community engagement in developmental and cultural initiatives, in order to reduce extremism among youth and society. The ministry's social and cultural clubs also provide preventive programs for young people to confront exposure to misleading ideas by raising awareness of moderate ideas and holding programs to support spiritual values and deepen national allegiance.
12. *The Ministry of Youth and Sports* implemented the first program for preparing young volunteers under the slogan "Youth for Citizenship," which included as a first stage the preparation of 150 young men and women on how to employ volunteering skills in development programs and community service. This is in addition to holding many seminars in youth centers in cooperation with the Ministry of Endowments to confront extremist ideology and spread the values of tolerance and acceptance of the other among the youth.
13. *The Ministry of Culture* implemented a number of cultural and artistic activities through its various sectors that aimed to form and raise communal awareness, consolidate cultural identity, promote citizenship values, and reject fanaticism and extremist ideas. This included the International Sama'a Festival for Spiritual Music and Chanting for groups from all over the world, which was held last year under the theme of "A Message of Peace to the World." It combined religious chanting and Coptic hymns in one spectacle. Furthermore, the St. Catherine Forum for World Peace, with the slogan "Here We Pray Together," was also held, and a project titled *Vision Series* was launched. The latter was a collection of works that dealt with topics related to the renewal of religious discourses and the spread of religious freedoms. All of the aforementioned were undertaken in cooperation with the ministries of Endowments, Education, and Youth and Sports.

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14. Finally, *the National Council for Women* implemented many activities to promote citizenship, a culture of acceptance of others, and gender equality and to consolidate cooperation among members of society. This included the interactive program under the slogan “The Week of Love and Peace” within the framework of the campaign of “Egypt: The Land of Love and Peace.” The number of women, men, and children who benefited from this program in the governorates of Minya, Aswan, Beheira, Assiut, and the New Valley, totaled 5,300 beneficiaries.