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AFRICA/EGYPT - Bishop of Luxor: “Attempts are made to force Christian girls to convert to Islam”

Luxor (Agenzia Fides) – "What occurred was an incident between two young people that was overplayed to make Christians look bad,” Fides was told by Bishop Joannes Zakaria, Bishop of the Catholic Copts of Luxor, Egypt, whose diocese includes the village of al-Nawahid in Qena (southern Egypt), where Muslim extremists burned homes and businesses of Christian Copts after rumors spread of a romance between a Christian boy and a Muslim girl. "Fortunately, in this case, the police intervened swiftly and immediately imposed a curfew, preventing incidents that would have caused more serious damage," said Bishop Zakaria.
"It was a situation between to young people that turned into a pretext to attack Christians. We have reason to believe, instead, that there is a plan to force Christians to convert, especially girls, who are the most vulnerable," continues Bishop Zakaria. "We are aware of several incidents of young Muslims who spot Christian girls and try to make them convert to Islam by force," says the Bishop of Luxor. "Similar incidents have occurred from Alexandria to Aswan."
"As Christians of Egypt, we feel very close to our brothers in faith persecuted in Iraq. Sunday, November 14, I celebrated a Mass here in Luxor for the souls of the people who died October 31 in the attack on the Syrian Catholic Church of Our Lady of Deliverance in Baghdad. The Mass was attended by many of the faithful,” said Bishop Zakaria.
"It is the cross we bear with serenity, even with pain in our heart, because it allows us to share in the sufferings of Christ the Redeemer," says the Bishop of Luxor. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 17/11/2010)

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