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AFRICA/EGYPT - "The murderer of the Coptic Orthodox priest is perhaps linked to the tensions two years ago," Bishop of Assiut tells Fides

Assiut (Agenzia Fides) - "It seems that the issue goes back to two years ago, when a Coptic Orthodox faithful committed an act of sacrilege against Islam, provoking the anger of Muslims. This person then said that it was his parish priest, Fr Daoud Boutros, who incited him to commit the act. Since then there has always been tension between the Coptic and Muslim communities." This was reported to Fides by Bishop Kyrillos William, Coptic Catholic Bishop of Assiut, Lycopolis, Upper Egypt, where in the village of Shotb, Coptic Orthodox Priest Fr Daoud Boutros was killed.
"The pastor was killed with 22 stab wounds and was beheaded. The body was discovered three days after the murder, because his daughter, who lives in Hourgarda, was unable to make contact with her father and had asked a relative to visit his apartment. The neighbours also reported hearing the voices of four people uttering Islamic slogans," said Bishop William. "Newspapers have reconstructed the episode linking the murder to the episode from two years ago. The killers also emptied the safe. The pastor had suffered threats from an Islamic website that accused him of proselytizing to Muslims."
"I sent nine priests and religious to bring my condolences to the family and the community of the parish priest killed," continued the Catholic Bishop of Assiut. "I was told that during the funeral of the pastor, there were tense moments. Some young people attacked the Governor, who had come to offer his condolences. The Governor is a good person who has always tried to have good relations with Christians. Even a Muslim would have been beaten. I heard that among the Christians there are people who want to hold protests for this and the abolition of Article 2 of the Constitution. The situation is threatening to heat up. We hope that there are some wise people in all communities who work for peace," said Bishop William.
"Article 2 states that the Sharia (Islamic law) is the main source of legislation. In Egypt, after the youth revolt and the resignation of Mubarak, debate rages on institutional and constitutional reform (see Fides 19/2/2011).... It was held last week at a Cairo meeting of the Catholic hierarchy in which, as Bishops, we said we will never ask for its abolition because it would would would the feelings of Muslims. In the future we will ask to add some assurances for the non-Muslim communities," concluded the Bishop. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 24/2/2011)

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