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AFRICA/EGYPT - " Violence that recalls the initial suppression of the Egyptian revolution", says the National Director of the Egyptian PMS

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - "A peaceful protest was violently suppressed by the military. They are scenes reminiscent of the Egyptian revolution which took place early in January", says don Nabil Fayez Antoun, National Director of Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) of Egypt to Fides. Yesterday evening, Sunday, October 9, at least 24 people were killed and 200 wounded in clashes which broke out when a group of Coptic demonstrators was heading toward the television headquarters to protest against the demolition, at the end of September, of a church in the province of Aswan in southern Egypt.
"Even the media spread the news that described Christians as those who attacked the military. For this reason, groups of Muslims took to the streets and attacked the Christians, who had gathered in front of the hospital where the wounded were hospitalized and where the bodies lay of people killed during the clashes", said the National Director of the PMS.
Don Nabil, however, does not despair that interreligious dialogue can continue and can help calm people. "This evening I will attend a meeting sponsored by an organization for women's rights. Next to me there will be a Muslim representative. We will try to strike up a dialogue in such a difficult moment of our national life".
"The tension also arises from delays in addressing problems and initiating trials on crimes committed by the former regime. The approach of the elections on November 28 also contributes to excite the minds", concludes the National Director of the PMS.
The great Imam Ahmed al-Tayyeb, Rector of the Islamic University of al-Azhar and the highest authority of the Muslim majority in Egypt, called for urgent talks with and among members of the so-called "Egyptian Family", an organization that includes religious leaders from both confessions, "with the aim to contain the crisis". The Imam has also contacted Pope Shenouda III, the highest authority of the Coptic Orthodox Church and Patriarch of Alexandria. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 10/10/2011)

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