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AFRICA/EGYPT - Patriarch Tawadros II: Coptic Orthodox representatives may withdraw from the Constituent Assembly

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - The new Coptic Orthodox Pope Tawadros II hopes that the new Constitution in the process of being drafted retains without modification Article 2 of the previous text of the Constitution - which recognized the principles of the Sharia as the basis of the pre-eminent law - and ask the withdrawal of the Copts representatives from the Constituent Assembly if attempts persist to force in the Islamist sense the new Constitution of the Great North African country.
The Patriarch, who will be enthroned next Sunday, November 18, presented his thoughts on the work of the Constituent Assembly in a meeting with a delegation of journalists' trade unions and lawyers which took place on November 12 in St. Bishoy monastery (Deir Amba Bishoy). On this occasion, the head of the largest Christian community in the Middle East also confirmed that the Coptic Orthodox Church is coordinating with the representatives of the Islamic University of Al Azhar to share a common discernment on the individual articles under discussion.
Among the one hundred members of the Constituent Assembly, Christians are about fifteen. Four of them - two Coptic Orthodox, a Protestant and a Catholic Coptic Bishop Yohanna Qulta - were appointed directly by the respective Churches and ecclesial communities.
According to the Auxiliary Bishop of Alexandria of the Catholic Copts, Botros Fahim Awad Hanna, the decisive and balanced approach of Patriarch Tawadros can have a positive effect on the constitutional debate ongoing in Egypt, contrasting fighting maneuvers of Salafist groups that aim at the complete Islamization of the constitutional paper. "Even the vast majority of Muslims," explains to Fides Bishop Hanna, "do not agree with this so narrow-minded and rigid line. While we can all agree that the principles of peace and justice also fostered by Islamic jurisprudence inspire law and legislation, in conformity with the natural law." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 15/11/2012).

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