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AFRICA/EGYPT - Bishop Hanna: these are the articles of the draft of the Constitution that endanger religious freedom

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - Even yesterday, during the demonstration organized by President Morsi's supporters, the Muslim Brotherhood leader Mahmoud Beltagui went back to inciting the crowd against Christians, claiming that 60 percent of participants in demonstrations against the government belong to the Coptic Church. An argument put forward already three days ago by Khairat al-Shater, supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood.
Asked by Fides Agency, the Auxiliary Bishop of Alexandria of the Catholic Copts, Botros Fahim Awad Hanna, denounces the attempt to slide the conflicts that shake the Country on sectarian contrast, "the strategy", says to Fides, Mgr. Hanna "is to find a scapegoat to hide the disaster of a policy that has destroyed the unity of the nation. This is extremely dangerous. But it seems to me that people have perceived that it has to do with diversive operations of propaganda."
Bishop Hanna wants to highlight that the opposition to the text of the draft constitution is not generic and indistinct, and highlighted a few items regarding religious matters: "Article 2 is not a problem. Everyone here accepts the legal criteria that recognizes the principles of the Sharia as a fundamental source of legislation. Article 3, which is new, guarantees Christians and Jews to use their canonical principles to regulate the personal and religious issues in their communities. It may appear as a guarantee of autonomy. But in fact there is no glimmer of religious freedom and the ability to freely choose their religion. Article 4 confers the power to interpret the law at the Sunni University of Al Azhar, and not the Supreme Court. Now in Al Azhar moderate positions prevail, but who can say how things will evolve in the future? Article 44 sets the constitutional basis for a possible blasphemy law, which is doing so much damage in other countries with a Muslim majority. Some articles enshrine a role of social groups in safeguarding ethics and public morals, and could be used to establish foreign police officers to pursue individual behavior inconsistent with religious precepts. Finally, Article 219 makes it clear that the interpretation of the Sharia law should be in accordance with the rules established in the early centuries of Islam. Thus one recognizes the possibility of intervention to interpretative schools in conflict with each other, with an implicit preference for those most followed by the Salafis." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 12/12/2012).

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