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AFRICA/EGYPT - Assault against the Coptic Cathedral of St. Mark. Patriarch Tawadros calls everyone to remain calm

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - The assault suffered in the afternoon of Sunday, April 7 against St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Abassyia in Cairo - where the funeral of four Coptic Christians killed two days before in al-Khosous was being celebrated - is a serious and unprecedented episode, before which we must "keep calm" also to preserve the Country's security and national unity. This is how Pope Tawadros II, Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox, expressed his disapproval before the fights that on Sunday afternoon involved the area surrounding the Coptic cathedral for more than four hours. Pope Tawadros, in the considerations reported in Bishop Moussa's Facebook account (in charge of the pastoral ministry) also announced to be in constant contact with government officials - in particular those of the Interior Ministry - to promote a speedy exit from the critical stage.
On Sunday afternoon, while in the cathedral the funeral of four Coptic Christians was being celebrated, killed two days before by automatic weapons in sectarian clashes that took place in the city of al-Khosus, during the funeral liturgy attended by the multitude of faithful, slogans against president Morsi and the government monopolized by the Muslim Brotherhood were launched. At the end of the mass groups of assailants - many of whom stationed on the roofs of the surrounding buildings - attacked the faithful Copts who left the church with stones and petrol bombs, causing a victim and 29 people were injured. The clashes lasted until late in the evening, in the initial inaction of the security forces.
According to Egyptian sources, on Sunday evening, president Morsi assured by phone Patriarch Tawadros his commitment to stop the escalation of inter-confessional conflicts, insisting that he considers "any attack against churches as a personal attack" against him. Today Bishop Raphael, secretary of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox, reported that Tawadros is at the headquarters in Alexandria and "his personal safety is not in danger."
The Council of Churches in Egypt strongly condemned the assault on St. Mark's Cathedral, pointing out that the attack against places of worship is a serious exceeding of an inviolable threshold, and requires "immediate action on behalf of State bodies ". (GV) (Agenzia Fides 08/04/2013).

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