



AFRICA/EGYPT - Pope Tawadros II's secretary: five guidelines to do away with religious conflicts

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - "We are tired of palliatives. There is need for concrete measures." This is how Father Makari Habibi, personal secretary of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarch Tawadros II, ruled in favor of the provisions that the Islamist government of President Morsi is required in order to evaluate its genuine desire to stem sectarian conflicts that in recent days caused eight deaths and attack against the Coptic cathedral in Cairo. "We ask the President," said father Habibi to the Turkish state news agency Anadolu "that the law is applied to everyone, that security is guaranteed throughout the Country, and that the principle of citizenship is achieved in an integral manner, that religious speech is modified and that Coptic history is taught at schools." According to Pope Tawadros' secretary "the absence of legislation has meant that the Copts are treated as second-class citizens." Today's crisis is the culmination of religious conflicts that already marked the whole of Mubarak's regime. According to Father Habib, all those who incite sectarian hatred should be pursued. It is necessary to ensure the minority Coptic appropriate representation in civil and political institutions of the Country. "The Copts make up 20 percent of the Egyptian community. This means that we have a right to 100 of the 500 seats in Parliament and the same percentage in the ministries, among governors and members of the army and the police," explained the Coptic priest.

In Egypt rounds of the elections to renew the composition of Parliament will begin on April 22 and will end in June. In December, the Christian senators in the Shura (the upper house of Parliament) were 13 out of 270. In recent months voices were raised within the Coptic Church opposed to the idea of reserving to Christian Copts "a percentage" in the lists that will compete in the upcoming elections. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 11/04/2013).