



## **AFRICA/EGYPT - Christian Churches defend the Imam of Al Azhar against the attacks by Erdogan**

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - The Secretary General of the Council of Christian Churches in Egypt, Father Bishoy Helmy, has rejected and deplored, on behalf of the Egyptian Christians, the hostile statements aimed at Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan against Ahmed Al Tayyeb, great Imam of Al Azhar University. "The virtues of the Imam and his human stature", said Fr. Bishoy Helmy "are witnessed by his story". Last Sunday, during a speech at the University of Rize, the Turkish Premier had intervened with regards to the Egyptian crisis, heavily attacking Al Tayyeb. "When I saw the Sheikh of Al Azhar in the midst of the coup leaders I was disappointed", said Erdogan, adding that "history will curse men like him, as it cursed in the past in Turkey intellectuals and scholars of that kind". In the same speech, the Turkish Prime Minister also accused Israel and the French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy of having inspired the overthrow of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and of the government monopolized by Islamist Parties.

The Imam Al Tayyeb, target of Erdogan's attack, replied that offending Al Azhar means offending all Muslims and all Egyptians.

The University of Al-Azhar is the main center of religious teaching of Sunni Islam. "Before the crisis", says to Fides Agency the Bishop Adel Zaki OFM, Apostolic Vicar of Alexandria in Egypt "a strong collaborative agreement between Al Azhar and the Council of Christian Churches is being registered, the organization that aims to represent the unitary position of Christians in relation to social and political events". (GV) (Agenzia Fides 27/08/2013)