

Egyptian Academic: Is Syria heading towards majoritarian rule?

Professor warns of growing sectarian violence in Egypt and Syria at CSI supported conference

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OXFORD, England, June 11, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Mariz Tadros, an Egyptian academic based at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, spoke of worrisome processes of democratization in Syria and Egypt in a talk at Oxford University on June 8. Evidence reveals that Syria may mirror Egypt and head towards an exclusionary majoritarian rule, Dr. Tadros said.

In her talk, entitled "From Revolt to Sectarian Ruptures: The Challenges of Building an Inclusive Democracy in Egypt and Syria," Dr. Tadros voiced her concerns regarding the increase in sectarian violence in Egypt, and explored how that development relates to post-Assad Syria. Dr. Tadros spoke at a conference hosted by St. Antony's College in Oxford and supported by the human rights organization Christian Solidarity International on the Future of Religious Minorities in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Two Sudans.

Sectarian violence has been a part of the region for a long time, Dr. Tadros noted. Since the ousting of the Mubarak regime, however, Dr. Tadros has observed in her quantitative and qualitative research an increase of new and more systematic forms of sectarian violence throughout the region. "Even in parts of Egypt where there was a high degree of social harmony, this peace is now being ruptured," Dr. Tadros said, mentioning the case of governorates such as Ismailia, the New Valley and Aswan, which began to experience sectarian violence from 2011 onwards.

The fact that many Copts participated in the Egyptian revolution did not protect the community from acts of revenge after the elections, when the majority of the Copts did not vote for the Muslim Brotherhood. Dr. Tadros now fears a similar or worse situation in Syria, where there is even more diversity in terms of religious belief and ethnicity. The worry is that acts of revenge against those Syrians who may not vote for the Islamist forces in future elections could be even more drastic and systematic then they are in Egypt today. "The elections in post-war Syria may lead to an exclusive majoritarian rule," said Dr. Tadros. "The most vulnerable are always the first to be targeted in a situation where security and protection are not sustained."

Adherents of Islam who do not conform to the beliefs of the majority would also face severe restrictions. The challenge lies in establishing a system of inclusive democracy. "If we rely on Western democratic measures of promoting democracy, such as holding elections, Syria will sink into chaos even more," Dr. Tadros fears.

Furthermore, Dr. Tadros warns of an emergence of a dedicated Islamist bloc throughout the Middle East, in which powerful Jihadi/Salafi networks, which are already condoned by the Muslim Brotherhood, could possibly heavily influence future governing powers in the region.

Dr. Mariz Tadros researches participatory concepts and processes of democratization in the Middle East and North Africa. In November 2012 she held a lecture as part of a series of

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discussions organized by CSI regarding the future of religious minorities in the Middle East. That lecture, as well as this one,

Christian Solidarity International (CSI) is a Christian human rights group campaigning for religious liberty and human dignity. In response to the escalating attacks on Christians and other religious groups in the region, CSI has issued a genocide warning for religious minorities in the Islamic Middle East. To learn more, go to www.csi-usa.org.

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