



Egypt's endowments minister, army leaders visit Coptic Pope Tawadros for Christmas

Egypt's endowments minister visited on Tuesday Pope Tawadros II in the Abbasiya Cathedral to extend his good wishes prior to the Eastern Coptic Christmas on 7 January, state news agency MENA reported.

During the visit, Endowments Minister Mokhtar Gomaa stressed the need to establish the principle that the sanctity of the church is the same as the sanctity of the mosque.

"I call for emphasising the common aspects between us," Gomaa was quoted as saying, "only the idiot searches just for the differences."

Gomaa added that the endowments ministry, which is responsible for administering mosques and Islamic centres, is working on shutting down sources of extremism and reinforcing cultural learning in society.

Pope Tawadros emphasised the importance of "national awareness campaigns," especially in Egyptian villages and hamlets, to protect against any religious misinterpretation.

"A good reader is a good leader," the pope stated.

While on Monday, Pope Tawadros received a number of leading army figures including Defence Minister Sedky Sobhy along with the air defense forces Commander General Ali Fahmy and naval forces commander General Ahmed Hassan to extend their good wishes for the Coptic Christmas.

Since taking office in July 2014, President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi became the first president to attend a Coptic Christmas mass in 2015. He also attended the mass for the second year running in 2016.

It is still unclear if the president will attend this year's mass on the night of 6 January.

The Coptic Church is celebrating this year's Christmas in the aftermath of a suicide bombing on 11 December in St. Peter and St. Paul's Church, which is part of Abbasiya's Coptic Orthodox cathedral complex in central Cairo.

A total of 27 people, mainly women and children, died in the attack, which was later claimed by the Islamic State militant group.