

The background of the slide is a close-up, textured image of the Egyptian flag, showing its three horizontal stripes of red, white, and black. A large, faint, golden-yellow Coptic cross is visible as a watermark in the center of the white stripe. The text is overlaid on this background.

Egypt and the Coptic Christians

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Outline

- Overview: Copts in Egypt
- Contributing factors
- Trends and future risks
- Theoretical implications
- Canadian policy options



Coptic Christians in Egypt



□ Demographics

- 5-10% of Egypt's total population
- Largest Christian community in Middle East
- Ethnically/linguistically identical to other Egyptians
- Geographically dispersed, urban and rural
- Perceived as economically privileged
- Major diasporas in US, Canada, Australia, Kuwait, Libya, UK, France, South Africa



Religious Composition of the Middle East

Islam:

- Sunnism (Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki and Hanbali rites)
- Shiism (Imami, Zaidi and Isma'ili rites, as well as Alevism, Yarsanism, and Zikrism)
- Ibadism
- Wahhabism (Salafism, Muwahhidun)

Christianity (various denominations)

- Judaism
- Zoroastrianism
- Druze
- Other (Yezidism, Nusairism, Animism/Zâr-Bâd, Hinduism etc.)

	StateTotal	Sunni	
		No.	%
Egypt	77.4 mil	67.2	86.8
		Shia	
		No.	%
		2.24	2.9
		Christians	
		No.	%
		7.89	10.2
		Other*	
		No.	%
		0.07	0.1

Coptic Christians in Egypt



□ History of marginalization

▣ 19th Century until 1952

- Influx of Western influence
- Egyptian independence: 1936
- Increased violence

▣ 1952: Coup d'état

- Decreased violence
- Political/legal/bureaucratic discrimination
- Church property confiscated
- Significant Coptic emigration

Coptic Christians in Egypt



- Current conditions
 - ▣ Economic, political, social exclusion
 - ▣ Continued small-scale violence
 - ▣ Protests, Mubarak's resignation, 2011
 - ▣ Death of Pope Shenouda, March 2012
 - ▣ Elections, military coup

Recent Contributing Factors



- Domestic influences: Political
 - ▣ Political and bureaucratic instability
 - 'Failure of the centre' – no viable political vehicle
 - Coptic withdrawal from constitution talks, April 2 2012
 - De facto dissolution of elected parliament, June 14 2012
 - SCAF Constitutional decree, June 17 2012
 - ▣ State corruption
 - Egypt rated 112th in Corruption Perception Index
 - Judicial independence looking dubious in light of latest decrees

Recent Contributing Factors



- Domestic influences: Economic
 - ▣ Worsening national poverty & joblessness
 - 2012-13 budget submitted July 4 - financing gap
 - Rapid population growth; youth bulge
 - ▣ Barriers to employment/advancement
 - Institutionalized discrimination: dispersal of public funds
- Domestic influences: Social
 - ▣ 2005 media reforms
 - Rise in sensationalistic coverage of Coptic/Muslim tensions
 - Competing Coptic identities

Recent Contributing Factors



□ International influences

▣ Arab Spring

- Social media
- Schism between 'official' Church position and Coptic youth

▣ International pressure

- Canada, US, EU, UN
- Coptic diaspora lobbies: Coptic Solidarity, Coptic Assembly
- Historical sensitivity to perceived foreign interference

□ Coptic response

- ▣ Low-level demonstrations
- ▣ Lack of discernible unity

Theoretical Implications



- Low probability of conflict (Duffy Toft; Gurr & Lichbach)
 - ▣ Low probability of Coptic political mobilization
 - ▣ Low probability of change in institutional discrimination
 - ▣ High probability of continuing sporadic, localised, low-level violence
- Diasporas (Cederman et al.)
 - ▣ Low probability will influence political outcomes
- Foreign Intervention (Carment & James)

Canadian Policy Options



- Preventative, quiet diplomacy; special envoy
 - ▣ Goals: increase Coptic political representation, decrease military influence
- Publicize persecution of Coptic Christians
- Punitive measures (i.e. sanctions) if human rights violations escalate