

# Egypt

<b>Response to Information Request Number:</b>	EGY990002.znk
<b>Date:</b>	8 June 1999
<b>Subject:</b>	Egypt. Information on 1) whether the traffic police is a separate force from the Central Security Forces (CSF) and State Security Investigations (SSI) in Egypt, 2) whether the traffic police have any connection with or influence over the police who investigate crimes in Egypt, 3) whether it is likely that a Roman Catholic would be hired as a traffic police officer in Egypt.
<b>From:</b>	INS Resource Information Center
<b>Keywords:</b>	Egypt / Security forces / Police investigation / Public safety / Public order / National Security / Criminal investigation

## Query:

1. Is the traffic police a separate force from the Central Security Forces (CSF) and the State Security Investigations (SSI) in Egypt?
2. Does the traffic police have any connection with or influence over the police who investigate crimes in Egypt?
3. Is it likely that a Roman Catholic would be hired as a traffic police officer in Egypt?

## Response:

Research for this query included contacts with internationally renowned human rights organizations and correspondence with the cited human rights managers and officials. In addition, hard copy library resources were researched and referenced. Freedom House has recently finalized a 127 page book entitled *Egypt's Endangered Christians* which contains information responsive to this query.

The organization of Egyptian police security among the Deputy Ministers of Interior is the same today as it was when Anwar Sadat reorganized all functions of police security among the Deputy Ministers of Interior, according to an Egyptian Embassy employee. (Phone conversation, the Embassy of Egypt, Washington, D.C., 8 June 1999). "The Minister himself retained responsibility for State Security Investigations and overall organization. The Deputy Minister for Public Security oversaw sections responsible for public safety, travel, immigration, passports, port security, and criminal investigations. Responsibilities assigned to the Deputy Minister for Special Police included prison administration, the Central Security Forces, civil defense, police transport, communications, traffic and tourism. The Deputy Minister for Personnel Affairs was responsible for police-training institutions, personnel matters for police and civilian employees, and the Policemen's Sports Association. The Deputy Minister for Administrative and Financial Affairs had charge of general administration, budgets, supplies and legal matters." (*Egypt – A Country Study* 1991, 338).

According to the book, *Egypt – A Country Study*, in 1977, the Central Security Forces were formed to prevent the need for calling armed forces to deal with domestic disturbances. At that time, the CSF was "responsible for guarding public buildings, hotels, strategic sites (such as water and power installations) and foreign embassies. They also helped direct traffic and control crowds." (*Egypt – A Country Study*, 1991, 340).

According to an official at the Embassy of Egypt, "The traffic police in Egypt are not a part of the State Security Investigations. Their responsibility is confined to traffic regulations and investigations of traffic accidents. They have no other duties. Traffic police are recruited impartially from all citizens of Egypt and religious affiliation is totally immaterial to recruitment." (Fax exchange, the Embassy of Egypt, Washington, D.C., 9 February 1999).

According to a phone conversation with an official in the International Coptic Federation, it is very likely that a Roman Catholic, if accepted in the police academy would, upon graduation, hold a position of a traffic police officer, the entry level point of the police hierarchy. This official discussed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Article of the Egyptian Constitution, which states, "Islam is the Religion of the State. Arabic is its official language, and the principle source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia)." He interpreted this as meaning that no Christian can have authority over a Muslim, adding that if "Muslim superiors decide that Christian is in a position of authority over a Muslim, the Christian's position will be changed or eliminated." He stated that this law is applicable to any Egyptian position, including police work. He also stated that traffic police do have connection with and influence over crime investigation, not only in the traffic area. In addition, he stated that Egyptian laws are published and public only to Egyptian lawyers; it is by law that if a traffic police officer, or any police officer, witnesses any crime, that police officer is forced to act or will be fired. The official concluded by stating: "All of the police uniforms look the same, and all police receive the same respect. All Egyptian policemen can take any action that they want. A traffic policeman in Egypt is still a very powerful position." (Phone conversation, International Coptic Federation, Washington, D.C., 26 March 1999).

When asked in a phone conversation about his interpretation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Article of the Egyptian Constitution, one of the Directors at Freedom House stated, "It depends on the situation and the type of job or position. There are many Christians who have Muslim subordinates. So, it is inaccurate to say that Christians cannot be bosses." However, based on the Director's two trips to Egypt last year, he stated, "we will document in a report that we are preparing that there are no Christians in high level government jobs, military jobs, heads or deans of universities, etc. It is systematic, particularly in the Army, that Christians cannot have authority over Muslims, especially concerning soldiers, promotions and police." When asked if the job of Egyptian traffic police is one where no Christians can have authority over Muslims, the Director stated, "That depends. There are two types of traffic police: the traffic soldiers and the traffic police officers. Yes, the rule does apply to both positions. There is a small number of Christian traffic police who hold high positions. We documented that 3% of police academy officers are Christians. Generally speaking, Christians get the lower level jobs (or as Egyptians say, 'unimportant positions') unless they are well connected to government." The Director stated, in closing, "the 2<sup>nd</sup> Article of the Egyptian Constitution does relegate Christians to 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens, and it is not common that Christians are in positions of authority. While there are Articles in the Constitution, like Article 41, that provide for equal opportunity, the [lack of] enforcement or practice of the Constitution systematically places Christians in low level positions." (Phone conversation, Freedom House, Washington, D.C., 20 April 1999).

#### References:

Center for Religious Freedom of Freedom House: *Egypt's Endangered Christians 1999*. 1999. Dr. Paul Marshall and Joseph Assad. Washington, D.C.: Freedom House

The Embassy of Egypt in Washington, D.C. Fax request and phone conversation with the Secretary to one of the Directors (Washington, D.C.: 8 June 1999).

The Embassy of Egypt in Washington, D.C. Fax exchange with current high level official (Washington, D.C.: 9 February 1999)

Freedom House in Washington, D.C.. Phone conversation with the Director of Middle East concerns (Washington, D.C.: 20 April 1999)

The International Coptic Federation in Annandale, Virginia. Phone conversation with a current official (Washington, D.C.: 26 March 1999)

Library of Congress, *Egypt – A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1991), pp. 338-340.

**Additional Sources Consulted:**

Egyptian Organization for Human Rights

Amnesty International

Human Rights Watch (Middle East Watch)

The Egyptian Desk at the US Department of State

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