



**Australian Government**  

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**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

3 May 2011

Mr Peter Tadros  
aucopticmovement@gmail.com

Dear Mr Tadros

I refer to your letter dated 11 April 2011 regarding the welfare of Coptic Egyptian woman Ms Heba Adel. I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Kevin Rudd MP.

The Australian Embassy in Cairo is aware of the incident you refer to in your letter and has raised this issue with contacts in Cairo. We are concerned by a general increase in violence in Egypt since the unrest in January and February 2011.

Through the Embassy in Cairo the Australian Government regularly monitors the situation in Egypt and the treatment of minorities, including its Christian population. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade also liaises closely with the Coptic community in Australia. Mr Rudd met with Bishop Suriel of the Coptic Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated regions on 15 February 2011. Mr Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, met with Bishop Suriel on 4 February 2011.

During his visits to Egypt in March and February 2011 and December 2010, Mr Rudd discussed the situation of Coptic Christians with members of the Egyptian Government. During Mr Rudd's February visit, he met with Copts who were engaged in the protests which led to the resignation of President Mubarak, and discussed their commitment to the political reform process.

Australia has sought to engage the Egyptian Government in practical areas to address key concerns of the Coptic community in Egypt. In February 2010, the Australian Government submitted a written intervention in Egypt's Universal Periodic Review at the United Nations Human Rights Council, seeking advice on the status of the Egyptian National Council for Human Rights' proposal for a 'unified law' on the construction and renovation of houses of worship. A 'unified law' would significantly simplify regulations governing the construction and renovation of churches.

In statements to the Australian Parliament following the recent political unrest in Egypt, Mr Rudd noted that transition to civilian rule would pose significant challenges for Egypt. The Government will continue to closely monitor the political situation in Egypt, including issues relating to the Coptic community and other minorities. The Government will be watching to see how political forces are articulated and minorities represented. Mr Rudd is

aware of the statement issued by the Coptic Church in Egypt on 15 February 2011 hailing the revolution and praising the military's role in protecting Egypt.

The Government will continue to follow these issues closely and convey the Australian Coptic community's concerns about violence targeting Christians in Egypt in an appropriate and constructive manner.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marnie Wright', written in a cursive style.

Marnie Wright  
Director  
Middle East and Northern Africa Section