

Christians hopeful amid unrest in Egypt



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Christians in Egypt are suffering increased persecution in the wake of the violent protests which have followed the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi.

The former president was removed from power by the military on July 3 after months of protests against his regime. The Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters in turn began protesting his overthrow and calling for his reinstatement.

The political turmoil has reportedly spurred increased persecution of Christians and other minority groups. Some of these include the death of a Coptic Catholic priest, the burning down of homes, and a series of kidnappings. Pope Tawadros II of the Egyptian Coptic Church, for instance, cancelled public meetings due to security concerns.

Even though Morsi's overthrow has been followed by deadly protests and a rise in persecution, however, Christians say they are hopeful for the changes ahead following removal of the former president.

UK director of Aid to the Church in Need, Neville Kyrke-Smith, was in Egypt in the days leading up to and following Morsi's overthrow, and told Ann Schneible the "expectations were that really there would be a change in government, and a change, I think, in general, for the better": better for the more than 8 million Catholics in Egypt, for the poor, for society, and for the economy.

"What I found fascinating, from a Catholic perspective, was the hope of the young people," he said. After meeting with young members of the Legion of Mary in one of the parishes, for instance, he said the sentiments he received from them was: "We love Egypt. We love God. We are Christians. We are Egyptians. And we wish to remain here."

During his visit to Egypt, Kyrke-Smith said he witnessed the "extraordinary strength of the Christian community."

"That's not to take away from the fear and anxiety that's there at the moment," he said, but he noted how there is nonetheless a "sense of hope, of trust in God, which was extraordinary for me to find in the midst of political turmoil."