

Cairo, police fled before the attack on the church of the Virgin Mary

For the Administrative Director of the parish, the security forces fled up a side street instead of defending the faithful . Yesterday the funeral of the four victims of the shooting.



Cairo (AsiaNews, 23 October 2013) - The security forces charged with protecting the Christians of the Church of the Virgin Mary in Warraq were not present at the time of the Islamist attack that left four dead and over 20 injured. This was revealed by the Administrative Director of the Coptic community of al- Warraq (Giza) , who stated that he saw the guards sent by the Ministry of the

Interior leave the building during the massacre .

When questioned by investigators, the man said that he was working in his office - located above the entrance of the church - when he heard the shots. He looked out the window, noting that the security personnel had fled up a side street leaving unguarded the church . This witness reopens the controversy about the responsibilities of police and members of the army, already accused by Christian leaders of doing nothing to prevent attacks by Islamists or defend buildings and places of worship. Eye-witnesses of the al- Warraq attack confirm that despite numerous distress calls , police and ambulances only arrived on the scene two hours after the shooting.

The October 20 attack, is the first deliberate attack on a church in the capital since July 3, the day of the fall of the Islamist President Mohamed Morsi. According to reports three people were involved in the shooting, which targeted the marriage of two young people. Investigators believe that in addition to the two men aboard the motorcycle, a third accomplice had infiltrated among guests.

Yesterday thousands of people attended the funeral of Miriam Nabil, a victim of only 8 years, and the other three people who died in the shooting, all from the same family. In his homily, bishop Youannas said: "The blood shed by innocents is never in vain in the eyes of God and the Church . Those responsible for this act delude themselves if they think they will stop us from attending church. After this incident our community has gained more strength, thanks to the sacrifice of our martyrs . "

The case of al- Warraq has provoked harsh criticism from Muslim authorities. Ahmed al-Tayyeb , Grand Imam of Al-Azhar (the most important university of Sunni Islam) , described the attack as an act of " crime against religion and values ." The grand mufti Shawki Allam said that "the attacks against churches are prohibited acts by Islamic Sharia". As for the political front, one of the leaders of the Freedom and Justice Party, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood , wrote on Facebook: "I condemn with the greatest firmness this attack and demand an investigation . "