

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**CONFERENCE OF MIDDLE EAST CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN AUSTRALASIA**

Following the deadly suicide bombing on 11 December 2016 at the Chapel of Sts Peter and Paul, in Cairo, a delegation of the Middle Eastern Churches in Australasia visited His Grace Bishop Daniel, Orthodox Coptic Bishop of Sydney, at St Mary & Mina's Cathedral in Bexley. They expressed their condemnation of the deadly attack which left 25 Egyptian Christians dead and 31 others injured, and offered their condolences to His Grace and to the victims' families.

The Middle Eastern Churches Council expresses its sincere condolences to, and conveys its heartfelt solidarity with His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, as well as to all Orthodox Coptic Archbishops, clergy and faithful, and particularly expresses its sympathy for the women and children who were among the victims and for their families. The Middle Eastern Churches Council in Australasia prays that such barbaric acts never occur again, and that the Egyptian people, Christian and Muslim alike, receive the blessings of peace, justice, equity and dignity.

The Middle Eastern Churches Council applauds the statement of Mr Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, President of Egypt, expressing a fraternal sympathy towards the Copts of Egypt in their tragedy. The Council strongly supports the rights of Christians in Egypt and any other countries with a Muslim majority. Their governments must provide them with effective protection against so-called Islamic extremism.

With Christmas approaching, the Middle Eastern Churches Council stresses their rejection of terrorism, and calls again for dialogue, openness and respect. May God have mercy on the souls of the victims, heal the wounded, comfort the broken-hearted families, and bring peace to the hearts of the faithful, the people of Egypt and the whole world.

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