



Helsinki, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011

To His Excellency, the Grand Sheik of AlAzhar Ahmed ElTayb

Your Excellency!

The Christian Churches in Finland, through the Finnish Ecumenical Council, would like to express their condolences to Your Excellency and through You to all Egyptians because of the terrorist attack in Alexandria on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011. This attack was directed against the unity of Your nation, and alongside with the Christian victims there were several Muslim ones. We join You in condemning this atrocity and the perpetrators of such acts.

We have been impressed by the expressions of solidarity to the Christian community in Egypt by Your Excellency as well as other Muslim leaders. We hear Your message as one of true Islamic spirituality which builds peace for all children of Abraham and all people of good will.

Both Christianity and Islam belong to the land of Egypt. Both the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Islamic community of Egypt with their spiritual and theological treasures enjoy an important position for the Christians and Muslims of the World, respectively. Their 14 centuries of common history have seen (many periods and forms) of peaceful co-existence and friendship. In welcoming the growing presence of Islam in our country, we wish to draw from the good experiences of Christians and Muslims living together in Your country.

The Finnish Ecumenical Council is an organization gathering all the nation-wide 15 Christian Churches and denominations of our country, including the majority Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the Evangelical Free Churches.

On this day when the Christians of Egypt celebrate the Nativity of Jesus Christ, our prayers and blessings are with our Christian and Muslim brothers and sisters in Egypt. May the newborn Jesus, who came to bring reconciliation from God and who needed to find refuge from violent men in the land of Egypt, continue to bring God's presence and blessing to that land and teach all of us to join in the angels' praise: Glory to God in the highest, peace on Earth to all people of good will.

Teemu Sippo  
Moderator  
The Finnish Ecumenical Council  
Monsignore SCJ  
Bishop of Helsinki

Heikki Huttunen  
General Secretary  
The Finnish Ecumenical Council  
Father