
Muslim-Christian tensions around Deir Abu Fana

Posted by Dilan - 2008/07/17 12:49

Muslim-Christian tensions around Deir Abu Fana monastery, Egypt

The clashes that have happened on May 31 in Deir Abu Fana, have attracted much media attention in Egypt and world wide. I want to open a critical discussion on that incident and appreciate any contributions and new thoughts on that subject.

There are some questions I would like to put forward.

Further I would recommend you to read Arab -West Report, www.arabwestreport.info

In week 15, 2008, you find interviews with the Governor/ the monks/ the villagers and local Sheikhs. On the website you find a map/ video material will follow.

I.Can we trust various media reports? - does it reflect in your eyes the incident as it happened or do you think it is important to acknowledge that the conflict is twofold and is a fight on land and due to the fact that both parties involved in the fight represent different religions, it resulted in a sectarian clash?

II.Conflicts about landownership occur often in Egypt since ownership documents are often 'urfi. The Bishop says to own legal papers that proves that the monastery owns the land. However, the Governor says that "all these lands are still the state's property. The monastery seems to have some documents that include 'urfi contracts between some of the citizens who had sold some of these lands to monks . All these contracts are null and void..." (Interview with the Governor, al-Minia, July 3). Since it is known that land is often obtained by creating 'urfi contracts, why is the government then not trying to make these papers legal?

III.Writer Ahmad al-Aswani writes on al-Aafaq.org that "What is happening to our Coptic brothers.....is no longer a matter of sporadic incidents". Do you agree with his view?

IV.I would like to explore solutions for these tensions, not only about this monastery but frequent incidents and much biased reporting about Egyptian Muslim-Christian relations. It is for me obvious that efforts must be made to make Muslims and Christians live together in peace and equality what do you think are steps that are needed?

You can respond in any language you want, English and/or Arabic.

Thanks,

Dilan

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Re:Muslim-Christian tensions around Deir Abu Fana

Posted by dmueller - 2008/07/17 13:39

Hi Dilan,

thanks for starting this discussion which will hopefully bring about some deeper thinking about "hidden" reasons.

To serve the "outside reader" in this case those who are not familiar with Egyptian local customs be so kind to explain the following details:

Why is land ownership so important along the Nile ?

What is the meaning of 'urfi ?

Which roles do the monasteries play for the Coptic population ?

Thanks DieterM

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Re:Muslim-Christian tensions around Deir Abu Fana

Posted by Kees Hulsman - 2008/07/17 19:47

I would strongly recommend you reading the various texts we prepared for Arab-West Report, week 15, on Abu Fana. I have been working with a team of six people for two weeks about this and these texts provide a lot of background information (www.arabwestreport.info)

Below the interview with the governor of Minia I explained a number of terms he used. I wrote about Urfi contracts: "Often handwritten agreements between citizens, not registered with official state institutions and therefore not recognized by the state. Urfi contracts are often used to avoid long painstaking bureaucratic procedures of state institutions.

The status of the documents of Bishop Dimitrius is thus a major issue. If these are indeed urfi contracts as the governor stated then his legal papers are indeed very weak. The problem is that bishop Dimitrius and clergy all state that their papers are legally perfectly ok without providing further details and thus that is reason to question those statements.

One should of course distinguish between land that has been owned by the monastery for ages. That land is not under dispute. And newly developed desert land and here are the questions about their legal status.

Why is landownership so important: See the translation of my article for the Reformatorisch Dagblad, in AWR week 15, article number 2. What do you think of a country of 80 million inhabitants on a surface as big as the Netherlands? The remainder of Egypt is desert. The population pressure is thus tremendous and it is therefore not surprising that people who are able to afford this are looking at the desert. Not all desert areas, however, can be developed. It depends on the soil. If rocky or too mountainous or too salty efforts to develop that are hopeless. Important too is the availability of water and thus there should be either ground water or a source close by " that could be the Nile valley. It is thus not surprising that any efforts to reclaim land are on the edge of the Nile valley. The monastery is expanding in the desert. The villagers see that that reduces their ability to reclaim land from the desert. See the google map on the AWR website. We marked the monastery, its extension and linked that to photos from our visit.

Monasteries are of major importance for the Coptic Christian population. The late German researcher on Coptic history and traditions Dr. Otto Meinardus told me once that when monastic life flourished the church in Egypt flourished and when monastic life was in decline the life of the church was in decline. Bishops and the pope are elected from among the monks. The influence of the pope and bishops on the ordinary faithful is tremendous. A bishop is a man of God and thus one is not supposed to doubt his judgment and decisions. He should be obeyed. This is a practice I disagree with. For me the pope and bishops deserve respect. They are humans as we all are humans with all weaknesses we have. We should not blindly accept whatever they say but ask questions, and at times might disagree but that is unfortunately not the attitude of most Coptic faithful. This attitude of bishops does not make it easy for bishops who are in fact monks who have been placed by their faithful on a high elevated place. If they don't watch out they become isolated, surrounded by people who always agree with them but therefore are insufficiently able to have open frank discussions on issues such of Abu Fana with members of their own church.

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Re: Muslim-Christian tensions around Deir Abu Fana

Posted by khulsman - 2008/07/20 20:11

Raed al-Sharqawi posted today his latest news on Abu Fana on the website of AWR, www.arabwestreport.info

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Re: Muslim-Christian tensions around Deir Abu Fana

Posted by Kees Hulsman - 2008/07/23 21:24

A friend of mine wrote:

"We continue to be with you and this issue in our prayers.

Ultimately it is not INFORMATION that changes the hearts, but the Holy Spirit. so don't be disheartened if it all doesn't work the way it should.

We should strive and also let God do his part."

This is certainly true but good information needs to be at hand. Lack of information, lack of transparency makes it possible to manipulate. Many people are manipulated. Coptic researcher Dr. Samir Marcos told me yesterday that he was astonished to meet with many people with strong opinions but not based on any substantial information. Bishop Dimitrius, the governor and a very small group of people know what is going on but most people don't know key information, not clergy in Mallawi, not Egyptian Christians, not Coptic activists. I was told today that Coptic lawyers Naguib Gibrail and Mamdouh Nakhla have not visited the monastery after the attack on May 31. This is horrible.

Tomorrow I am going back to Minia and the monastery to ask for more information. I was supposed to go to the press

conference of the bishop. We had informed his spokesman father Bola we would come. Tonight at 10.30 pm I spoke with bishop Marcos who told me to my surprise that bishop Dimitrius is traveling to the US to meet Pope Shenouda a second time in the US within two weeks. OK, but it would have been nice if father Bola would have made the effort to inform me and others who were planning to come. I called the priest and he confirmed the press conference was postponed to August 14 now. It has the appearance that bishop Dimitrius did not want to face the press and thus decided to go to the US to avoid meeting press. The press conference was anyhow strange. Not earlier had a bishop called for a press conference following a dispute with the government over land and handling tensions following the attack on may 31. In a way I am glad bishop Dimitrius does not hold the press conference. It could have led to more tensions in an already charged atmosphere. More tensions are certainly not needed. It would, however, have been nice to have been informed earlier. I am now using the occasion to try to find more information that will be presented in AWR.

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Re: Muslim-Christian tensions around Deir Abu Fana

Posted by Kees Hulsman - 2008/08/08 20:22

I have been with a delegation of the Cairo Foreign Press Association to Minia and the monastery of Abu Fana on July 6 and 7. I tried to call Bishop Dimitrius on his mobile telephone on Tuesday evening to inform him personally about this press visit but I was told that the bishop was in his cell praying and I only got to speak to father Bola who told me at 10.00 pm that the FPA delegation was not welcome to visit the monastery. I subsequently immediately informed chairman Volkhard Windfuhr who tried numerous times to call the same mobile number but no one responded.

When we arrived at the monastery a group of six to seven monks was sitting outside the gate, welcomed us and were very willing to explain us their point of view, at times very emotional. On Wednesday we visited the monastery and neighboring village and met with MP Alaa Hassanein (Muslim) and Christian businessman Eid Labib who are trying to negotiate a settlement with monks and villagers. Following this we were invited by the governor for dinner in hotel Aton/Nefertiti. Here MP Alaa Hassanein received a telephone call from Bishop Yo'annis, personal secretary to H.H. Pope Shenouda, and gave the telephone to the governor who then emphatically told the bishop that he was not giving a press conference. The governor then gave the telephone to me and I told the bishop we had visited Abu Fana and were planning to visit the next day al-Bahnassa where I would explain the group about the Holy Family tradition. I also told the bishop that there had been no press conference, neither had the governor been willing to respond to any questions from members of the FPA delegation. I understood that if the governor would speak to the foreign press the bishop would interpret this as an attack on the church. The governor consequently did not do so because he wants a solution to the conflict and thus did not want to speak to our members but I am totally shocked by the pressure methods the church is using.

All indications are that the church is divided. It seems that church leaders did not want us to hear the story from the monks who indeed have made very crude comments that show no willingness to a compromise.

On July 3 one of the monks had claimed that miracles had happened, pictures of saints were not consumed by the fire, a sign that God is with the monastery. We have photographic evidence (see www.arabwestreport.info - visit July 24) that the claim of miracles is a lie. This has nothing to do with Christian ethics at all.

I have seen several comments on my article for Christianity Today
http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctliveblog/archives/2008/07/egyptian_villag_1.html

Medhat writes on the CT website that the governor "is not trustworthy since he belongs to the hard line of Muslim fundamentalists" and that. "There is no evidence that one Muslim was killed or injured in this incident, but police and security forces in Menya district "cooked" the reports to represent a distorted vision of what happened."

The governor does not show any sympathy for Islamists. From the statements/comments he makes and the language he is using I cannot but conclude that he is a secularist. Compare him to the secular Turkish generals. Both the church and the governor have not gone public with documents to support their stances and one can certainly blame both church and state for lack of transparency.

Denying that one Muslim was killed is ridiculous. I have met with his family and have seen his picture. The governor told me during a brief that that was not an interview that he attended the funeral and was sad to see the end of life of a young man who had a pregnant wife. The young man was very poor and it will be very hard for his widow to continue without him. These are human dimensions that should not be denied. Not only this, none of the monks denied that the young man was killed but they deny the monastery was responsible for his death.

One of the journalists commented that it seems that both monastery and villagers are benefiting from this conflict. It brings in financial support to both parties in the conflict. Sad, but in the way it is handled it will never come to an end and conflicts like these will come back over and over again. That is not because of an Islamist governor (as Coptic activists

abroad claim) but because of various interests to keep the fire burning.

Re: Muslim-Christian tensions around Deir Abu Fana

Posted by luoxiaosang - 2010/08/02 03:53

Penelope rapplez rupees, Trunk knows something about risk. A nationally syndicated columnist, Ms. Trunk shocked the business community when she revealed intimate details of her personal life on her blog. At the time, many weren't sure this was the right move, but the blog shot up in popularity and eventually garnered over 30,000 rapplez rupees subscribers.

If not for world of warcraft gold, that loyal following, Ms. Trunk might not have been able to make a case for her current venture, Brazen Careerist (BrazenCareerist.com), an online professional network for Generation Y. Launching a new company is a perilous endeavor, but Ms. Trunk thought the risk was worth it. 'This world isn't set up for writers to get anywhere,' she says. 'Although I went into massive debt and ended up sacrificing my marriage, it was essential that I take my career into world of warcraft gold my own hands.'

As a result, she maple story power leveling, is no longer dependent on publications for her livelihood and has achieved one of her lifetime goals -- to serve as a mentor to twenty-something employees. Big Risks, Big Rewards If you think about it, most accomplished people in our culture are entrepreneurs who have taken big risks to net proportionally high rewards. Tough as it is for cautious people like me to accept, if you don't occasionally take calculated gambles, you won't get ahead as quickly as those who do. You will also never get over your fear of the unknown, and life will be predictable and aple story power leveling dull.

How do you world of warcraft gold, go about deciding if a career risk is necessary and will bear fruit? First, it helps to think long term. Where do you want your career to be in five years, and what actions will you have to take to make sure you get there? Next, clearly define the challenge and the opportunity -- or the upside if the risk goes well. Then, consider the downside. Will the worst-case scenario be career-ending, or something that can be world of warcraft gold overcome?

What's Yourworld of warcraft gold, Backup Plan? Finally, what are some clues to assess if the risk is going bad, and what is your backup plan if your risk isn't successful? In thinking through these questions, you might determine, for example, that quitting your well-paying job and spending your savings to pursue an invention idea isn't a risk you find tolerable. The smartest risks have a limited downside and a huge upside. They involve research and the counsel of experienced people -- but also the willingness to step back and let the cards fall where they world of warcraft gold may.

Believe that Atlantica gold, you've made the right choice, and have faith that everything will turn out all right in the end. Insecurity and negativity won't serve you well, because you'll be constantly holding your breath, waiting for things to fall apart. Speaking of which, if a risk doesn't work out, don't let it stop you from taking similar actions in the future. It's normal to feel disappointment and even embarrassment. But it's essential that you pick yourself up and move on. Take stock of what went wrong and make a note to do it differently next time. There is no shorter path to career Atlantica gold fulfillment.

Re: Muslim-Christian tensions around Deir Abu Fana

Posted by simluo - 2010/08/17 07:19

Nearly two thousand years prom dresses, have passed since a census decreed by Caesar Augustus become part of the greatest story ever told. Many things have changed in the intervening years. The hotel industry worries more about overbuilding than overcrowding, and if they had to meet an unexpected influx, few inns would have a manager to accommodate the weary guests prom dresses.

Eve isk,

Now it is the census taker that does the traveling in the fond hope that a highly mobile population will stay long enough to get a good sampling. Methods of gathering, recording, and evaluating information have presumably been improved a great deal Eve isk.

ffxi gil,

And where then it was the modest purpose of Rome to obtain a simple head count as an adequate basis for levying taxes, now batteries of complicated statistical series furnished by governmental agencies and private organizations are eagerly scanned and interpreted by sages and seers to get a clue to future events. The Bible does not tell us how the Roman census takers made out, and as regards our more immediate concern, the reliability of present day economic forecasting, there are considerable differences of ffxi gil opinion.

wow power leveling,

They were aired at the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the American Statistical Association. There was the thought that business forecasting might well be on its way from an art to a science, and some speakers talked about newfangled computers and high-falutin mathematical system in terms of excitement and endearment which we, at least in our younger years when these things mattered, would have associated more readily with the description of a fair

maiden wow power leveling.

wedding gowns,

But others pointed to the deplorable record of highly esteemed forecasts and forecasters with a batting average below that of the Mets, and the President-elect of the Association cautioned that "high powered statistical methods are usually in order where the facts are crude and inadequate, the exact contrary of what crude and inadequate statisticians assume."

wow power leveling,

We left his birthday party somewhere between hope and despair and with the conviction, not really newly acquired, that proper statistical methods applied to ascertainable facts have their merits in economic forecasting as long as neither forecaster nor public is deluded into mistaking the delineation of probabilities and trends for a prediction of certainties of mathematical exactitude.

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