

# Many children among victims

## Cairo

Children are among at least 28 killed in the attack carried out by masked gunmen on a bus carrying Coptic Christians on a visit to a monastery south of the Egyptian capital yesterday.

State television quoted a health ministry official as saying a "large number" of the victims were children.

The interior minister said in a statement that the assailants in three pick-up trucks attacked the bus as it was heading for the Saint Samuel monastery in Minya province, more than 200 kilometres (120 miles) from Cairo, before fleeing.

"They used automatic weapons," Minya governor Essam el-Bedawi told state television of the attackers.

The latest attack came after jihadists had threatened more strikes against the Copts, who make up about 10 percent of Egypt's 90-million population.

The north Minya town of Maghagha saw scenes of anger and despair on Friday.

A group of around 50 men gathered near a church where the funeral of two victims was held, calling for the interior minister to "beat it" and for his ouster.

Nearby, a dozen women dressed in dusty black robes cried and moaned.

In a statement on its spokesman's Facebook page, the Coptic Church called for "measures to be taken to prevent the dangers of those incidents that tarnish Egypt's image".

Al-Azhar, Egypt's top religious authority,

condemned Friday's shooting on the eve of the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

"The Minya incident is unacceptable to Muslims and Christians and it targets Egypt's stability," Al-Azhar's Grand Imam Ahmed al-Tayeb said in a statement.

Condemnation also poured in from Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Russia and France, with Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo saying the Eiffel Tower's lights would be turned off on Friday.

"Israel strongly condemns the severe terrorist attack in Egypt and sends the condolences of the Israeli people to President al-Sisi and the Egyptian people," a statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin denounced the "barbarism and cruelty of terrorism", and French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian tweeted that no one "should fear for their life by practising their faith".

Hidalgo said the Eiffel Tower would go dark after midnight in solidarity with the victims, as also happened on Tuesday after the Manchester Arena attack.

Copts have suffered sectarian attacks for years.

Friday's shooting came after a historic visit to Egypt by Roman Catholic Pope Francis to show solidarity with the country's Christians.

In his late April trip, Francis visited one of the bombed Coptic churches and condemned violence carried out in the name of God.

## Trump urges end to violence

### Washington

US President Donald Trump wished Muslims "a joyful Ramadan," yesterday, urging them to use the holy month to reject violence by Islamist extremists.

"On behalf of the American people, I would like to wish all Muslims a joyful Ramadan," said Trump, who is winding up a first overseas trip as president that included a stop in Saudi Arabia.

"This year, the holiday begins as the world mourns the innocent victims of barbaric terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom and Egypt, acts of depravity that are directly contrary to the spirit of Ramadan," said the US leader.

"Such acts only steel our resolve to defeat the terrorists and their perverted ideology," he said in his message to the world's estimated 1.6 billion Muslims.

Trump said that when he met dozens of leaders of Muslim countries in the Saudi capital Riyadh, he had vowed to stand with them to counter "terrorism and the ideology that fuels it."

## The Copts

Egypt's Copts, targeted by gunmen yesterday as they travelled in a bus to a monastery south of Cairo, are the Middle East's largest Christian minority and one of the oldest.

Making up about 10 per cent of Egypt's population of 90 million, the Coptic Orthodox form the largest Christian denomination in the Muslim-majority country.

The Copts trace their history to the dawn of Christianity, when Egypt was integrated into the Roman and later the Byzantine empire.

The word "Copt" comes from the same root as the word for "Egyptian" in ancient Greek.

The community's decline started with the Arab invasions of the 7th century and the progressive Islamisation of the country, which today is largely Sunni Muslim.

Copts, represented in all social classes, are present across the whole country, with the strongest concentration in central and southern Egypt.

Poorly represented in government, Copts complain that they are sidelined from many posts in the justice system, universities and the police.

Egypt's Copts have been the target of several deadly attacks since the 2011 uprising that toppled longtime president Hosni Mubarak.

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