

Pressereaktion aus Ägypten

1) Published in National Democratic Party website October 31, 2007

The Minister of Islamic Endowments during the Egyptian-German Dialogue:
Religions Are Not Conflicting

Dr. Mahmoud Hamdi Zaqzouq, Minister of Islamic Endowments, confirmed that religions can not grapple or be in conflict, but followers of religions may abuse and use religions for political interests and goals. He pointed to the importance of having followers of religions commit to the ideals and high values called for by religions.

During his inauguration of the procedures of the Egyptian-German dialogue attended by the elite of intellectuals and Muslim and Christian clergymen from Egypt and Germany, the Minister of Islamic Endowment said that what is required in the current international phase is to deepen the culture of tolerance, dialogue and understanding of the other, especially in light of the promotion of sectarian conflict and the clash of civilizations and cultures by some groups.

He added that the realization of intercultural understanding will bring good and peace to mankind, pointing out that dialogue is the effective way to achieve this goal and to make us understand ourselves and others in a right way.

Dr. Ali El Din Hilal, Information Secretary of the National Democratic Party, said that religious extremism or intolerance exists in all religions and cultures. In Europe there are right-wing movements emerging from Nazi philosophies that despise black people and Muslims and call for the expulsion of foreigners. There are also extremist Muslim movements in the Arab world that despise and insult other religions.

Dr. Ali El Din Hilal also said that the problem is not in the principles of the Islamic religion or the Christian religion, but the problem is in the behavior of the followers of religions who resort to trade in religions for the sake of personal objectives.

He called for respecting the international conventions that ensure respect for freedom of belief and focus on the human beings and protecting of their rights and dignity, pointing to the importance of rapprochement between cultures in light of globalization, as it is hard that people get enclosed and live in isolation from the others.

For his part, Professor Mahrenholz, Vice President of the Constitutional Court in Germany, said that until now his country does not have a good program to deal with the issue of

immigration, especially from Turkey and the Arab countries, pointing out that Germany has got now different cultures and civilizations and must be dealt with very well and be integrated into the German society and culture, calling attention that lack of foreigners integration would lead to the emergence of parallel societies.

He explained that the German Constitution recognizes in its first principle respect for human dignity, regardless of the country from which this person is coming.

On the issue of the "Hijab (veil)" which has become imposing on the Muslim communities in Europe, the German Professor said that he is personally against banning women's wear of veil in Germany, saying that we understand the relationship of the veil to the Islamic belief.

2) Published in Mashy website, 11/15/2007

The Governor of Alexandria: Sectarian Problems are solved through Dialogue

General Adel Labib, Governor of Alexandria, confirmed that the problem of religious extremism is a newly coming problem to Egypt and does not represent the majority of Egyptians who are known for their tolerance and love, pointing out that any sectarian problems can be addressed and treated through dialogue, acceptance of the other, and upholding to the values of religions that are calling for love, tolerance and peace.

This came on "Thursday" during the Governor's inauguration of the Egyptian-German dialogue conference procedures on the issue of citizenship organized by the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services in cooperation with the German Evangelical Academy, with the participation of a large number of Muslim and Christian clergymen, university professors, intellectuals and media representatives.

The Governor explained that the satellite channels and the media in general contributed to exaggerating some sectarian incidents and presenting the matter in a way that reflects the existence of conflict among followers of the two religions, though most of the incidents are normal matters that occur between relatives and children (followers) of the same religion

The governor asked the western countries affected by the negative image, which has been promoted about Muslims in the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001, to reconsider their stand and study the Islamic religion, which calls for the good and for peace, and rejects terrorism in all its forms.

General Adel Labib, the Governor of Alexandria, confirmed that the Egyptian society is strong and coherent, and cannot be broken into small pieces despite its special sensitivity towards religion. He called some Muslim and Christian satellite channels to stop raising sectarian prejudices that are trying to undermine and weaken the society.

The governor asked to quickly remedy the roots of sectarian problems through the collaboration of all people's efforts rather than just relying on the security officials alone. He

explained that he has a successful experience in the governorate of Qena, where he was gathering wise and sensible people from both sides to have the voice of reason and understanding rise over any groupings or battles.

He added that problems worsen when the language of dialogue is absent and because of some negative and distorted images that may be promoted by one party about the other, confirming that dialogue is enough to remove barriers and break misunderstandings.

He pointed out that - during his recent visit to the United States - he sensed that some of the migrant Copts have false images and information about the situation in Egypt due to the reporting of incorrect information, warning that these things threaten the citizenship and frustrate the spirit of belonging.

He said that during his experience in the governorate of Qena, he took up many of the demands of the Copts and the spread of the spirit of belonging, and that the Church's bishops were coming to him with the demands and rights of Muslims - pointing out that this is the genuine Egyptian spirit.

General Adel Labib, Governor of Alexandria, pointed out that Islam is not a religion of terrorism as promoted by some fanatics in the West, and that the extremists claimed to be Muslims commit acts against Islam and against Arab and Muslim countries. He added that extremism and intolerance is a feature that appeared in all religions and in all countries

The governor called to deepen the spirit of belonging and citizenship among juveniles, and to prevent the collapse of the values of citizenship through dissemination of proper and correct religious values and deepening of the culture of dialogue.

From his side, Dr. Nabil Abadir, Director General of CEOSS, confirmed that the Egyptian-German dialogue aims to bring together Arab and Western cultures and to freely discuss the values of citizenship and the changes experienced in recent years due to globalization and the global religious rise.

Abadir called to eliminate intercultural confusion and face the dominance of sectarianism, the separation of minorities, and other global conflicts.

It is worthy mentioning that the conference procedures continue in Alexandria over the coming three days to discuss the problems of citizenship and the dialogue between the East and the West.

3) Published at Al Masri Al youm, daily Egyptian Newspaper, Nov. 1st, 2007

During the Sixth Round (Conference) of the Dialogue on Citizenship: The Head of the German Delegation Asks about the Role of Al-Azhar in Combating Terrorism

Last Monday began the sixth conference of the Egyptian-German dialogue with the participation of a German delegation formed of 30 persons consisting of members of the German parliament, intellectuals and academics, and 40 intellectuals and clergymen.

The delegation, which has members of the German parliament, visited the People's Assembly, where they met Dr. Zeinab Radwan, Undersecretary of the Council; and visited Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies and met Dr. Abdul Moneim Al-Said and members of the Center before heading to Alexandria today to start the sixth round of dialogue with the participation of the elite of Egyptian intellectuals,

In the evening, a reception was held and attended by Dr. Mahmoud Hamdi Zaqqouq, Minister of Islamic Endowment and Dr. Ali Al Din Hilal, Information Secretary of the National Democratic Party.

Ernst Mahrenholz, Head of the German Delegation, asked a question to Al-Azhar scholars about Al-Azhar's role in facing terrorism. He said: «Why haven't Al-Azhar scholars been concerned with the issue of extremism and terrorism until now, and why haven't senior scholars addressed and talked about this important topic? Muslim scholars themselves must remove tension from the world ».

In response to the question, Dr. Salah Zeidan, Professor of Law at Al Azhar University, said: "I sense that the question about Al-Azhar's role in facing terrorism is a question in the form of an indictment".

He added: "What do Al-Azhar scholars has in their hand except to fulfill the mission of the university, which is to teach its students the forensic (lawful) sciences that represent Islam as it has descended on the Prophet. On top of what we teach to our students is the wonderful tolerance and forgiveness, which the Prophet has taught us when he allowed the Christians to pray in the mosque. We also teach that dignity and rights are inviolable and preserved to all human beings."

The head of the German delegation said that he had not meant any charge, but was just asking for knowledge. He added that unfortunately there are those who murder in the name of God and perform their terrorist operations in the name of God, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful.

Sheikh Fawzi Al Zifzaf, Former President of the Interfaith Dialogue Committee of Al-'Azhar directed his speech to the Head of the German delegation, saying: "Which terrorism do you mean: is it the terrorism of Al-Qaida, the American terrorism in Iraq, the Israeli terrorism in Palestine or the Russian terrorism in Chechnya?".

He added: "The world has not agreed on a definition of terrorism, because each country wants to define it in accordance to its interests". He stressed that Islam is explicit and clear in this and has denied the attack on the human soul, money and honor regardless of religion and race.

He emphasized that there is a wide gap between Islam as a religion and the actions of some Muslims that are not consistent with Islam, which does not know extremism. It is the religion of moderation.

Prof. Dr. Ernst Gottfried Mahrenholz clarified that he does not approve what Bush is doing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Dr. Nabil S. Abadir, Director General of CEOSS, which is organizing the dialogue in partnership with the Evangelical Academy of Loccum - Germany, said that the Egyptian-German dialogue has witnessed 5 interchangeable rounds of dialogue between Egypt and Germany, during which the parties have discussed a number of issues such as religion and democracy, cultural interaction and integration of civilization, religion and the state, and religious awakening, pointing out that the official dialogue sessions will begin today, Thursday, in Alexandria for three days to discuss citizenship in the modern state.

Dr. Ali Al Din Hilal, Information Secretary of the National Democratic Party, said that there is a problem of intolerance in European countries as in the Arab and Muslim countries; there are religious trends in the European countries that emerge from philosophies closer to the Nazi philosophies - despising blacks and Muslims and calls for the expulsion of foreigners. Some of the sentences issued by the courts of Germany prevent women from working as a teacher while wearing the hijab (veil).

He explained that some of the problems between Muslims and the West come from disagreement on the philosophical concept of freedom, as shrines and sacred stuff do not stand in the way of freedom of expression in Europe, while this is not acceptable in our culture.

He said: "We want to respect each other's, so we do not see for example anything in the German textbooks that insult Islam and we do not want to see anything in the Muslim countries that offend or insult a religion".

He added: "We want to remain Muslims and to remain Arabs, and to maintain our cultural identity. At the same time we admire and appreciate the Germans, but we do not want to become like them".

He continued: "We - Muslims and Copts - do not accept the Western concept of sexual freedom. We do not say that it is a bad thing, may be because we are falling behind we do not accept the idea of homosexuals.. God, the Almighty, may facilitate our understanding of this in the centuries to come, but not now".

Dr. Mahmoud Hamdi Zaqzouq, the Minister of Islamic Endowments (Awqaf), confirmed in his speech, which he gave in German, the importance of dialogue at the present time in light of the conflicts between ideologies, and gave an example of the good relations between Muslims and Copts in Egypt.

4) Published at Rosa Al Youssef Egyptian News paper, November 5th, 2007

A collective attack on the banned in the lobbies of the Evangelical Egyptian German dialogue due to its discrimination against Copts and women

Alexandria: Diana Aldabaa

The veil, the Holocaust, the banned, and Al-Azhar's position on terrorism were among the most prominent issues that presented themselves during the sixth Egyptian-German dialogue organized by CEOSS in partnership with the Evangelical Academy of Loccum – Germany, in which a number of clergymen, intellectuals and politicians from the two sides have participated, and which has witnessed since its inauguration serious dialogues. The two sides have exchanged their views frankly and with understanding that is usually missing in these types of dialogues. Prof. Dr. Jens Goebel, Minister of Culture of the Free State of Thuringia, said in the conference, which began the day before yesterday, Thursday, in Alexandria under the title "Citizenship in Modern State" on his country's experience with adopting secular thinking, that now the percentage of believers who go to church is no more than thirty percent maximum, and that the charity works which had begun by the church and used to be done only through church, are now being done through secular civil society organizations. However, he indicated that the new generations' abandonment of these civil activities pose a danger that may cause the extinction of these activities. Some of the Egyptian attendants objected to the German Minister's limitation of the concept of secularism to being the abstinence from religion and church, pointing out that the real dilemma of secularism in Egypt is linking it to the concepts of alienation away from religion, which led the Minister to apologize for the way he defined secularism remarking that the difference in cultures leads to an inevitable difference in defining the terms.

Adel Labib, the Governor of Alexandria, who inaugurated the dialogue has attributed the phenomenon of extremism and religious intolerance to several internal factors, on top of which comes the irresponsible exaggeration of the media to small passing events as well as external ones, pointing out that the easiest way to demolish a society is to break it into tiny pieces, as is happening in Lebanon. He added to this what is done by the immigrant Copts, who receive distorted exaggerated images through some internet sites.

Member of the Constitutional Court of Germany, Prof. Dr. Ernst Gottfried Mahrenholz, pointed to the widespread controversy raised in Germany about the veil prevention act; advocates of the law see that the teacher who wears the veil is actually preaching her religion to the children, whereas Ernest sees that wearing the veil is an integral part of the freedom of belief which is supposedly called for by the European countries. Ernst dealt in the same way with the crisis of the abusive insulting drawings, which he believes to be malicious in all forms, yet he believes – despite the fact that he is a member of the Constitutional Court - that it must not reach the courts in any way, because the court is detrimental rather than beneficial to such issue, pointing out that the European media makes fun of Jesus Christ or even God Himself almost on a daily basis. One of the German participants explained the crisis raised by the veil in the German society, which has become the focus of many symposia and political debates; some see that the veil underestimates

and belittles women because they are often forced to wear it, at the same time a writer and a director of a Turkish origin supports the Act of banning the veil in Germany.

In response to some people's likening of the acceptance of the Holocaust to the veil, Ernest said: I do not understand what the similarities are between the two, explaining that the Germans feel guilty about what they have done to the Jews and this has nothing to do with a controversial issue such as the veil. Finally, the dialogue touched on the Muslim Brotherhood and their negative impact on citizenship. Dr. Rev. Andrea Zaki, Vice President of the Protestant Church in Egypt, denounced what the Muslim Brotherhood provokes against Copts in an offensive way. In contrast, moderate bodies such as the Evangelical Church conduct symposia and issue books on how to accept the other, while the Muslim Brotherhood rejects that Copts and women take the presidency.

5) Published at AL Akhbar, Daily Egyptian Newspaper, Nov. 1st, 2007

The Minister of Islamic Endowments, at the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services: Estrangement between East and West is no longer in the interest of both parties

Olfat Alkhashab wrote:

Dr. Mahmoud Hamdi Zaqzouq, Minister of Islamic Endowments, confirmed that the estrangement between East and West is no longer in the interest of both parties. Humanity will not enjoy peace and stability except by revitalizing the efforts of dialogue, which is the best option to help humanity avoid the scourge of confrontation and conflict, explaining that dialogue leads to removal of misunderstandings and fruitful introduction of the other and the values of the other, and thus narrows the differences and helps achieve common understanding.

This came in the speech of the Minister to the intellectual forum organized by the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services and attended by a large number of Egyptian and German intellectuals and thinkers. The Minister said that all religions provide humanity with ideals and noble values that could eliminate all conflicts provided that there is a positive and constructive interaction between adherents of religions to activate these ideals and values.

On the other hand, General Adel Labib, the Governor of Alexandria, inaugurates in the afternoon the sixth round of the Egyptian German Dialogue organized by Forum for Intercultural Dialogue, CEOSS in cooperation with the Evangelical Academy of Loccum – Hanover – Germany. The dialogue continues for three days under the title "Citizenship in Modern State: Challenges and Aspiration". The German Minister of Culture, Dr. Jens Goebel, and Deputy of the German Ambassador in Cairo participate in the dialogue.

6) Published in Al Akbar Daily Egyptian Newspaper October 30, 2007

Minister of Islamic Endowments inaugurates the Intercultural Dialogue Forum

Dr. Mahmoud Hamdi Zaqzouq, Minister of Islamic Endowments, participates tonight – Tuesday – in the Forum for Intercultural Dialogue organized by CEOSS. This is in the framework of the procedures of the sixth conference of the Egyptian – German Dialogue in cooperation with the Evangelical Academy of Loccum – Germany held under the title “Exchanged Viewpoints on the Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Dimensions – Egyptian-German perspective”.

7) Published in Al Ahram Newspaper, Nov. 1st, 2007

With the Participation of Muslim and Christian Leaders
The Sixth Round of the Egyptian – German Dialogue Starts Today
Zaqzouq: Conflicts of Religions adherents leads to weakening them

By: Said Halwy

General Adel Labib, the Governor of Alexandria, inaugurates in the afternoon the sixth round of the Egyptian German Dialogue organized by the Forum for Intercultural Dialogue, CEOSS in cooperation with the Evangelical Academy- Loccum – Hanover – Germany. The dialogue continues for three days under the title “Citizenship in Modern State: Challenges and Aspiration”, and is attended by Prof. Dr. Jens Goebel, Minister of Culture of the Free State of Thuringia , Deputy of the German Ambassador in Cairo; Dr. Fritz Anhilm, Director of the Evangelical Academy of Loccum; and Dr. Nabil Abadir, Director General of CEOSS.

The dialogue participants discuss many of the issues that are of mutual interest to both parties – such as: citizenship in modern state. Prof. Dr. Jens Goebel, Minister of Culture of the Free State of Thuringia, and Dr. Nour Farahat, Professor of International Law speaks about citizenship in politics and civil society – citizenship in the economic and social domain – citizenship in religion and culture – the role of civil society in promoting the practice of citizenship – the impact of the civil global movement on citizenship.

The German delegation participating in the dialogue, which consists of about thirty members of intellectuals, parliament officials and some Muslim and Christian Religious leaders has started its visit to Cairo the day before yesterday, by visiting the People’s Assembly, where they met Dr. Zeinab Radwan, Undersecretary of the Council, who talked about the history of parliament life in Egypt. Radwan confirmed during the meeting that in the coming round of the People’s Council, starting next week, they will start studying the new election law, by virtue of which the representation of some groups – such as women and Copts – in the membership of the People and Shura Councils will increase, as they do not have adequate representation in the two Councils.

During the meeting, Prof. Rolf Wernstedt , Minister of Education and Former President of the Parliament Council in Lower Saxony State clarified that the German constitution stresses that the parliament member represents all people, regardless of his party affiliation, and thus the member is accountable to his conscience first in everything he undertakes for the benefit of the homeland and the citizen. He added that there is no authority that can force the member of the parliament to vote for the benefit of the party to which he belongs, if the decision is not in favor of the society as a whole.

On the other hand, Dr. Mahmoud Hamdi Zaqzouq, Minister of Islamic Endowments confirmed that the role of religions today has become more difficult than before. Despite the ideals offered by the heavenly religions, the conflicts emerging among some of their followers may lead to weakening them.

Therefore, we should all work to stress these ideals and show the common factors among us. Zaqzouq stressed in his speech on the importance of activating dialogue with the other, confirming that dialogue does not only introduce us to the other, but contributes to self-understanding.

On his part, Dr. Ali AL Din Hilal, Information Secretary of the National Democratic Party, clarifies that the total political and economic developments in the Arab region will lead on the medium and long run to more interest from the European Union countries, wondering whether this bias would be in favor of the Arabs or not?

This took place in the reception ceremony the day before yesterday, to which Dr. Nabil Abadir, Director General of CEOSS, has invited a group of thinkers, intellectuals, media professors, and some of the Muslim and Christian religious leaders.

Prof. Dr. Ernst Gottfried Mahrenholz, Member of the Constitutional Court in Germany mentioned that there is an increase in the number of foreign immigrants to Germany, of whom big numbers are Muslims; and that human dignity does not differentiate between majority or minority. The human is the human regardless of his religious affiliation. Mahrenholz called Al-Azhar scholars to address the phenomenon of terrorism, which some links to Muslims, stressing the importance of the role of Al-Azhar in working to remove tension from the world.

Dr. Nabil Abadir, Director General of CEOSS confirmed in his speech that citizenship in modern state faces at the present time many internal and external challenges, which may affect somehow the position of citizenship in the state.

He pointed to the importance of the pivotal role played by the civil society in activating and supporting the citizenship movement in the context of international and local variables, especially in the educational field as well as in practice and application.

8) Published in AL Ahram, daily Egyptian News paper, Nov. 7th, 2007

In the Egyptian – German Dialogue Meetings: Citizenship is an ever-developing concept and is required to cover all groups

By: Said Halwy

Participants in the Egyptian – German Dialogue, which concluded its procedures in Alexandria, confirmed that the concept of citizenship is an ever developing concept as it is linked to the social and political process in each society. That is what makes it until now a room for conflict in many societies, specially between what is religious and political; between moderates and extremists, and also between religious and fundamentalist thinkers and enlightened thinkers.

Participants also stressed the importance of extending dialogue to cover many groups of the society; have wider participation of the civil society organizations, thinkers and intellectuals who adopt intellectual and cultural issues transcending various restrictions that limit the effectiveness of dialogue and common understanding; and to increase interest in issues of women, children and human resources, specially in poor communities.

This came in the conclusion of the procedures of the sixth round of the Egyptian – German dialogue held in Alexandria and lasted for three days under the title “Citizenship in Modern State: Prospects and Challenges”. It was organized by the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services in cooperation with the German Evangelical Academy – Loccum – Hanover - Germany, with the participation of about one hundred thinkers, parliament officials, media people, and some political and religious leaders - Muslim and Christian – from the two countries.

General Adel Labib, Governor of Alexandria has confirmed, during the opening session of the dialogue that the Egyptian society will remain strong and coherent, and no one can undermine its unity despite the sensitivity that some have especially towards religious matters. He pointed to the necessity of consolidating all people’s efforts to resolve the sectarian problems floating on the surface every now and then, without relying on just the security solution only.

About the concept of dialogue, Dr. Fritz Anhilm, Director of the Evangelical Academy-Loccum commented that dialogue means understanding and all what is related to culture and religion, and this is a difficult matter. Therefore, we have to distinguish between the things and elements that lead to a just world having no discrimination; and we have to build bridges of trust among us, and to discuss the differences among us frankly.

On his part, Dr. Nabil Abadir, Director General of CEOSS, confirmed that there are various and different considerations and updates that currently push the concept of citizenship to be at the center of dialogues and discussions, due to the intellectual and political challenges facing this concept globally and locally. Abadir pointed out that the concept of citizenship faces many intellectual and political challenges. Globally, appears the phenomenon of

multiculturalism as a result to increased global immigration with the invasion of the phenomenon of globalization. Locally, the concept witnesses a rise on the intellectual, theoretical and legislative side, while it encounters a conflict on the ideological and behavioral side.

On the topic of "Citizenship in Modern State", Prof. Dr. Jens Goebel, Minister of Culture of the Free State of Thuringia, called for further rapprochement and cooperation between the countries of East and West, rejecting all forms of extremism and isolation, pointing out that it is illogical in light of globalization and modern technological revolution that a congregation gets isolated from the international society, in which we live.

About "Veil", Prof. Dr. Ernst Gottfried Mahrenholz, Member of the Constitutional Court of Germany expressed that he does not object Muslim women's wear of veil in Germany, confirming his respect to the Islamic doctrine and Muslims, and pointing out that some of the rights organizations there reject imposing a certain uniform on women by force, especially among children, and stresses on the importance of not having this uniform lead to any religious discrimination, especially in the German schools.

Dr. Mohammad Nour Farahat, Professor of International Law, Zaqaziq University, stressed the importance of engaging Egyptians in a national project that advances them, and through which tendencies of sectarian and denominational extremism hide, and come on the surface of political life values of tolerance and dialogue. He stressed that it is not enough for the enforcement of the value of citizenship to just state it in the constitution, despite its importance, but it is rather a must to spread the culture of tolerance, pluralism and freedom, so that it becomes a part of the general culture on the official and popular levels.

About "Citizenship in the Global Village", the Deputy of the German Ambassador in Cairo HE. Hans-Werner Bussmann, Minister Plenipotentiary, German Embassy, confirmed that the global citizen has to participate in the events and interactions around him; and that it is important to find appropriate solutions for the migrants' problems, and to give them full opportunity to be able to live in European societies with complete freedom. He pointed out that there are currently many European programs that work to support cultural exchange among Europeans in all fields. These programs give the opportunity to Europeans to travel outside their countries to get to know the various cultures and civilizations. New foreigners should participate seriously in these programs so that we would listen to them rather than speak on their behalf.

The researcher Samir Morcos, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Al-Masri Foundation for Citizenship and Dialogue, pointed out that citizenship cannot be understood in isolation from the social context in which people move searching for citizenship, or away from understanding the balances of the prevalent social forces, the structure of the state, and pattern of existing production, and the class structure, which distinguishes a community in a certain historic moment.