

Coptic-Muslim clashes erupt in Egypt



At least 16 people have been wounded after Muslims attacked a church and Christian homes in a village near the Egyptian capital, Cairo, officials say.

The unrest in Dahshur, about 40km (25 miles) south of Cairo, started after a Muslim man died of wounds sustained in an earlier clash on Friday.

Violence frequently flares between Egypt's Muslim majority and its Coptic Christian minority.

It is the first instance since Mohammed Mursi took over as president in June.

Last October, a suicide attack on a church in Alexandria killed 24 people.

Police in Dahshur early on Wednesday fired teargas to stop a Muslim mob from setting fire to a church, but the rioters instead torched several Christian properties and three police cars, officials said.

Ten policemen were among the 16 injured, according to the authorities.

Fire-bombs

The office of the local Coptic archbishop of Giza said the entire Christian population of Dahshur had now fled, according to the Associated Press.

The rioters "looted and torched shops, including a jewellery shop... and terrorised the local community, forcing them to leave their homes", the agency quoted the statement as saying.

Tension first erupted on Friday after a Christian laundry worker was accused by a Muslim client of singeing his shirt while ironing it.

Villagers from both sides threw fire-bombs at each other, fatally wounding a Muslim.

The man died of his injuries on Tuesday and was buried overnight, sparking the latest unrest.

About 10% of Egyptians are Coptic Christians.

They fear that more radical forms of Islam, resurgent since the fall of former President Hosni Mubarak, could imperil their safety in Egypt.