

Egypt's beleaguered Christians
By Editorial Board
23 August 2013

THE ARAB revolutions have brought hardships as well as opportunities to religious and ethnic minorities across the region, and Egypt's large [Christian community has suffered](#) some of the severest blows. Following a [bloody crackdown](#) by the military-backed government [against followers of the Muslim Brotherhood last week](#), scores of Christian [churches, schools and private homes](#) were attacked across the country. Many were burned, and Christian groups reported that at least six people were killed.

The military government and some Christian leaders are blaming the assaults on the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) and saying the violence supports the new regime's claim that its crackdown against the group is a battle against "terrorism." It's not that simple.

The former Muslim Brotherhood government of [Mohamed Morsi disregarded the interests of Christians](#) and was slow to condemn sectarian attacks or take measures to protect churches. Its rhetoric sometimes appealed to religious intolerance. But, as [The Post's Abigail Hauslohner reported this week](#), there is no evidence that Muslim Brotherhood leaders, [most of whom are imprisoned](#), had any role in organizing last week's attacks. The group has condemned the violence and suggested that the new government may have encouraged the assaults to justify its repression, especially to Western audiences.

Little evidence has emerged to back that conspiracy charge. It is clear that [police and military authorities across Egypt did little](#) or nothing to stop the attacks on churches and, in most cases, made no attempt to investigate them in the days afterward — even while offering to transport journalists to see some of the torched sanctuaries. The regime has ordered police to open fire to defend their own stations, which have also come under attack, but has taken no special measures to ensure that Christian property is protected.

In fact, Egypt's Christians have been badly served by [military and Islamist rulers since the 2011 revolution](#). [Before the Muslim Brotherhood took power](#), Christians organized a march in Cairo to protest their lack of security; [troops opened fire and crushed some protesters](#) under an armored vehicle. Many families with the means to leave the country have joined a [regional exodus of Christians](#) from strife-torn Syria, Iraq and the Palestinian West Bank.

Despite their troubles with the military, many Christian religious and political leaders backed the July 3 coup, judging the Muslim Brotherhood the greater threat. The danger now is that a sectarian tinge will be added to an already bitter political struggle. For [Egypt's Christians](#), the only real protection would be the creation of a genuinely democratic regime under the rule of law. Sadly, that appears at the moment a distant prospect in Cairo.