



## In Egypt, A Call for Tolerance and Moderation

**President Abdel Fattah El Sisi began the new year with a dramatic call for tolerance and the renewal of religious discourse in two historic speeches. Speaking at the eminent Al Azhar University on January 1, the President called for a “religious revolution” that rejects extremist misinterpretation of Islam.**

Several days later, President El Sisi attended Coptic Christmas mass at Abbasiya Cathedral, making history as the first Egyptian president to personally attend the ceremony. President El Sisi made an impromptu speech calling upon Egyptians not to view each other as Christians or Muslims, but to unite as Egyptians. These speeches expanded upon themes that President El Sisi has given voice to since his election in June 2014, as well as actions that he has taken to promote coexistence at a time of conflict, such as the November meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican that resumed religious dialogue between the Vatican and Al Azhar, and recent meetings with Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Abune Mathias I and President of the World Jewish Congress Ronald Lauder.



**“As for renewing the religious discourse...Al Azhar will maintain its role in renewing and rectifying the religious discourse and resume efforts to show the real moderate and tolerant image of Islam, which has been distorted.”**

INAUGURAL ADDRESS, JUNE 8, 2014

**“There has been a strategic shift in Egyptians’ awareness. They are very, very alert to extremist ideology that is far from the moderation and tolerance of Islam...Public opinion is ready for the sort of renewal we have in mind, rejecting terrorism and extremism and reviving the tolerance and moderation of the Muslim faith.”**

INTERVIEW WITH THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, SEPTEMBER 21, 2014

**“Egypt today is the beacon of moderate Islam...Terrorism is a plague that does not differentiate in its spread between developing and developed societies. Terrorists come from differing societies. They are not bound together by any true religious faith.”**

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADDRESS, SEPTEMBER 24, 2014

**“I simply represent moderate Islam. I’m concerned about the challenges of poverty and ignorance in the Muslim world. I can’t be against Islam — I consider myself a devout Muslim — but the reality poses a challenge.”**

INTERVIEW WITH TIME MAGAZINE, SEPTEMBER 24, 2014

**“I say and repeat, again, that we are in need of a religious revolution...the Islamic world is being torn, it is being destroyed, it is being lost. And it is being lost by our own hands.”**

SPEECH AT AL AZHAR, JANUARY 1, 2015