

## **Egypt Legalizes Dozens of New Churches, Rules against Demolition of Orthodox Church**



Egypt's state committee mandated to license places of public worship has authorized 62 new churches, a move interpreted as a significant step forward for Christian communities in the North African country that links northeast Africa with the Middle East.

The Monday September 23 decision brought the total number of churches and service buildings legalized by the Prime Minister led committee to 1,171, various media have reported.

On August 5, the government approved 88 Churches to operate in the country. On the same day, an administrative Court in Alexandria ruled against the demolition of a Greek Orthodox church in the governorate of Beheira.

In making the verdict, the court referred to a decision rendered twelve years ago by the Supreme Court in which the court considered that mosques and churches had equal status, [Agenzia Fides reported](#).

Al Azhar, the religious authority of Sunni Muslims, also considered that Islamic law does not prohibit Christians from having churches and that these churches must be protected from possible demolition and rebuilt if necessary.

Legislation from 1934 had subjected the construction of new churches to “10 rules” that forbade building them near schools, canals, government buildings, railways, and even residential areas, [Vatican News reported](#). Under this jurisdiction, building permits for new churches could only be issued by presidential decree.

In practice, strict enforcement of the law practically prohibited new houses of worship from springing up in areas where Christians live, especially in sparsely inhabited areas of Upper Egypt.

The Christians of Egypt, the vast majority of whom are Copts, represent 6 to 10% of a population of 95 million inhabitants, according to sources.

- Source: [aciafrica.org](http://aciafrica.org)