

Abstract 250 words: **The effect of disputed population data on discussions on Religious Freedom, Persecution and Mission.**

There is a correlation in literature between claims of high numbers of Christians in Egypt and claims of Christians being persecuted since once does not see equal proportions of Christians in various government positions. Those who claim that the number of Christians is much smaller believe that the claims of persecution are exaggerated.

The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) has carried out annual censuses including religious affiliation between 1907 and 1986 and has documented these data for even the smallest administrative units. These data, however, have never been published. The Coptic Orthodox Church claims to have its own statistics, also on the smallest administrative/local church levels but does not want to publish these. The Ministry of Interior has taken over the registration of religious affiliation after 1986 but also does not publish these. The lack of published verifiable data has resulted in claims that the Christian population in Egypt ranges between 6 and 24 percent of population. This in turn has contributed to Muslim-Christian tensions and claims of persecution in Egypt.

Tensions are expected to reduce once both Christians and Muslims have access to all population data on also the smallest administrative units since the data of the smallest units can be verified and thus if these are accurate these will create confidence in the population data provided and thus will reduce the effect of unverifiable data that create so much uncertainty.

The paper will use a descriptive methodology and qualitative framework of analysis of the discourse about Christian population statistics in relation to persecution narratives in Egypt.

Biography

Cornelis Hulsman, B. 1955. M.A. in Development Sociology Leiden State University, 1984, with specialty Islam and Middle Eastern Christianity. Correspondent with different (Christian) media in Egypt since 1994. Founder and editor-in-chief of the electronic magazine Arab-West Report since 1997. Affiliate-Assistant Professor of Mass Communication at the American University in Cairo, 2000-2001, Secretary-General of the Cairo Foreign Press Association, 2003-2009. Published several books and reports and a substantial number of articles about Christianity, Muslim-Christian relations and media in Egypt.