

Egypt's Christian Pope Blasts Islamist President

By **HAMZA HENDAWI**
Associated Press

CAIRO — The leader of Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church on Tuesday blasted the country's Islamist president over his handling of recent deadly sectarian violence, including an attack on the main cathedral in Cairo.

The remarks by Pope Tawadros II underscore rising Muslim-Christian tensions in Egypt. They were his first direct criticism of President Mohammed Morsi since he was enthroned in November as the spiritual leader of Egypt's Orthodox Christians. They are also likely to fuel political turmoil

that has been roiling the country since the ouster of autocrat Hosni Mubarak two years ago.

Egypt is already divided between two camps, with Morsi and Islamist allies in one and moderate Muslims, Christians and liberals in the other. The political schism is essentially over Egypt's political future after decades of dictatorship, a divide that has been compounded by a worsening economy and tenuous security.

An open conflict between Morsi's government and the church could add a new and potentially explosive layer, pushing Egypt to the brink of civil strife.

Tawadros also warned that the state

was "collapsing" and described Sunday's attack on the St. Mark Cathedral in central Cairo, which serves as the Coptic papal seat, as "breaching all the red lines."

He said Morsi had promised him in a telephone conversation to do everything to protect the cathedral, "but in reality he did not."

Asked to explain, Tawadros, who spoke in a telephone interview to a political talk show aired on the private ONTV network, said it "comes under the category of negligence and poor assessment of events." It was not clear whether he was accusing Morsi himself or whether he was addressing the president's government.

Presidential spokesman Ehab Fahmy said Morsi was in "constant contact" with the church over Sunday's violence and had dispatched three top aides to offer condolences to victims.

In the violence, an angry mob of Muslims threw firebombs and rocks at the Coptic cathedral in Cairo, leaving two people dead. One of the two was identified as a Christian.

The attack followed a funeral service for four Christians killed in sectarian clashes in a town north of Cairo early the day before. A fifth person, a Muslim, was also killed. It was the deadliest sectarian violence since

Morsi came to office nine months ago as the country's first freely elected president.

"The church has been a national symbol for 2,000 years," Tawadros said. "It has not been subjected to anything like this even during the darkest ages ... There has been no positive and clear action from the state, but there is a God. The church does not ask for anyone's protection, only from God."

Tawadros also criticized the president over his decision on Monday to revive a state body mandated to promote equality between Egyptians regardless of their religious and ethnic background. Morsi's decision was in response to the sectarian violence.

U.S. Companies Are Posting More Jobs But Filling Few

By **CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER**
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — U.S. employers have more job openings than at any other time in nearly five years. Yet they seem in no hurry to fill them.

That disparity helps explain why the job market remains tight and unemployment high. Even as openings have surged 11 percent in the past year, the number of people hired has declined.

Why so many openings yet so few hires?

Economists point to several factors: Some unemployed workers lack the skills employers want. Some companies may not be offering enough pay. And staffing firms say that in a still-fragile economy, many businesses seem hesitant to commit to new hires. They appear to be holding out for the perfect candidate.

"We're living in a fear-based environment right now," says Kim First, CEO of the Agency Worldwide, a recruiting firm for pharmaceutical and biotech companies.

Those who do have jobs these days are unlikely to lose them. Layoffs have sunk to a pre-recession level.

But First says that companies feel they can't afford to take a risk by hiring someone who doesn't appear to be an ideal fit for the job they've advertised.

"They are really reluctant to make that leap of faith," she says. Companies "need someone to come in and hit the ground running."

The Labor Department said Tuesday that the number of job openings rose 8.7 percent in February from January to a seasonally adjusted 3.93 million. That was the most since May 2008.

At the same time, companies hired a seasonally adjusted 4.4 million people, just 2.8 percent more than in January. And hiring remained lower than it was a year ago, when it reached 4.49 million.

The figures suggest that the Great Recession may have transformed the job market in ways that economists still don't fully understand. Normally, more openings lead, over time, to stronger hiring and steadily lower unemployment. Yet in May 2008, when job openings were as numerous as they are now, the unemployment rate was 5.4 percent. Now, it's 7.6 percent — far above the 5 percent to 6 percent range associated with a healthy economy.

And in 2007, before the recession began, employers were hiring an average of 5.2 million people a month — 15 percent more than in February this year.

The Labor Department's Job Openings and Labor Turnover survey, or JOLTS, reveals the total number of people hired and laid off. It differs from the department's jobs report, which provides each month's net job gain or loss. But by quantifying total hiring and layoffs, the JOLTS can paint a fuller picture of what employers are doing.

From November through February, employers added a net average of about 220,000 jobs a month. The JOLTS report shows

that the biggest factor in those gains was that layoffs fell. Companies cut 1.5 million jobs in January — the fewest since the JOLTS data was first compiled in December 2000.

Fewer people are quitting, too. Their reluctance to leave reduces the opportunities for those out of work. About 2.3 million quit in February, below the average of nearly 2.9 million that were quitting each month when the recession began in December 2007.

Jason Faberman, an economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, likens the job market to a game of musical chairs: If no one gets up, there isn't any room for anyone else to sit.

In March, U.S. employers added a net 88,000 jobs, the fewest in nine months and less than half the pace of the previous six months.

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke has said that total hiring, as gauged by the JOLTS report, is something he and other Fed officials track in assessing the job market. The Fed has said it plans to keep short-term interest rates at record lows at least until unemployment falls to 6.5 percent.

Steven Davis, an economics professor at the University of Chicago, says his research shows that companies aren't filling jobs as fast as they did during the recession. Jobs now remain unfilled for an average of 25 days. That's up from about 16 days in mid-2003, when the job market was recovering from the previous recession.

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City

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dates for getting involved."

Blaalid's first priority is in line with the other two winners.

"Water is going to be the number one issue I'm going to face," she said. "We have to figure that out."

Sustaining and growing Yankton's population, as well as expanding its economy, will also be matters Blaalid wants to address.

South Dakota Secretary of State Jason Gant was at the Yankton County Government Center Tuesday as technology previously reserved for statewide elections was used for Yankton's joint city/school election.

"This is the first time we've

used our total vote system, which encompasses all of our election programs that we use in the primary and general elections, in a city/school election," he said.

"The benefit is that the absentee voting process is much quicker, because we use labels instead of handwriting everything. There was also component for service men and women in the military. They could receive an email to access their ballot. The election night reporting was also a benefit."

Election results were updated on the Secretary of State website almost as fast as they were calculated in the government center.

Gant said the entire process went smoothly.

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at twitter.com/AnInlandVoyage

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