

Building work begins on new church as Egyptian president lives up to promises



Work began on 26 January to build a new church at New Alamein, one of 15 of Egypt's new 'fourth generation' cities, on the country's north coast.

Church leaders thanked President al-Sisi for allocating the land, which seems in line with his promise that new towns should include churches as well as mosques.

New Alamein, about 110 km west of Alexandria, is designed to accommodate three million people and be a gateway between North Africa and southern Europe.

The president attended the opening of the cathedral in Egypt's planned new administrative capital. At the Christmas service on 6 January (when Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas Eve) he expressed his support for Christians, 'You are our family, you are from us, we are one and no one will divide us.'

Al-Sisi's government has also continued the process of legalising church buildings with 508 applications approved in 2018. However, progress is slow and more than 3,000 churches that have applied for approval since 2017 are still waiting to be registered.

Although Christians have been treated more favourably under the current government, the opening of a government-recognised church has often been used as a pretext for violence against Christians in rural communities. In April 2018, a mob of about 300 Muslims attacked a church building in al-Kumeria, forcing it to close, shortly after it received official recognition from the government.

Source : Barnabas Fund