



## FACES OF PERSECUTION

**December 2016: In Cairo, Egypt, at least 29 people were killed and more than 50 people were injured when a suicide bomber struck during Sunday Mass.**

Following the attack at SS Peter and Paul Coptic Orthodox Church, next to the St Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral, Daesh (ISIS) claimed responsibility, stating on Facebook that similar attacks would continue "against every infidel and apostate in Egypt, and everywhere."

Egyptian Catholic bishops' spokesman Father Rafic Graiche told Aid to the Church in Need: "There is a feeling among many who attend Mass that under the seat there is a bomb."

Four months later, in April 2017 on Palm Sunday suicide bombers targeted two churches in Alexandria and Tanta, resulting in 44 dead and more than 120 injured.

The following month, at least 28 people were killed and 23 others were injured when extremists targeted a bus filled with pilgrims travelling in Minya Province, Upper Egypt. Again, Daesh claimed responsibility.



## AID TO THE CHURCH IN NEED

**APRIL 2016: When Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II visited a Syrian town just days after Daesh (ISIS) was driven out, he saw how the militants had tried to eradicate Christian symbols there.** Syrian government forces ejected Daesh from Al-Qaryatayn in April 2016, nine months after the jihadists seized the town. During his visit, Patriarch Aphrem saw evidence that the jihadists had used a bulldozer to partially destroy St Elias Monastery, which dates back more than 1,500 years.

Human bones from ancient graves could be seen within the rubble. Charred pages from ancient Christian holy books were also visible and, in the graveyard outside, gravestones had been damaged and all the crosses removed. Churches all over the area have been demolished or damaged. Patriarch Aphrem (pictured standing in Al-Qaryatayn's St Elian Syriac Orthodox Church) told Aid to the Church in Need: **"The residents wept when they saw what had become of their town. It was especially painful to see how the churches had been wilfully defiled by ISIS."**

Within 24 hours of seizing Al-Qaryatayn in August 2015, Daesh abducted 230 people – 60 of them Christians – from the town. Many were subsequently released.