

Muslim-Christian cooperation in Egypt

By [Amy Frykholm](#)

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I have become a [BBC Middle East](#) addict.

I check in every few hours to see updated reports of what is happening in Egypt. I cannot get enough of the freshness of their reporting, their insightful and personal commentary and their somewhat cynical take on the world's governments.

The most fascinating story coming from Egypt is the incredible persistence of the protestors, persistence that finally led to President Hosni Mubarak's [resignation](#) earlier today. But I'm struck as well by the relationship between Egypt's Christians and Muslims. Just weeks ago, Copts celebrated Christmas under threat of violence from Islamist militants--but [with the protection](#) of their Muslim neighbors. Yesterday, Anna Alexander from the University of Cambridge had an excellent [piece](#) on Muslim-Christian cooperation during the protests.

Alexander suggests that the earlier attack against Copts may have been fueled by the Mubarak regime, in order to make the regime look like Egypt's only sane alternative. But the sight of Christians and Muslims dancing, chanting, singing and praying together in Tahrir Square makes the regime's story look pretty thin.

The Egyptian state has had a great deal of self-interest in fueling sectarian tensions, but Egyptians are reaching for a greater unity. A commenter on a [CCblogs network](#) post on the Coptic Christmas story [expressed](#) some ambivalence about unity found in nationalism. But I am not sure that nationalism, in and of itself, is serving a bad purpose here. It is raising the

question, "What kind of Egypt do we want to live in?"

That seems like a profound question to ask, and if the behavior of the protestors on the street is an indication of the answer, then I for one am inspired.