

Clearwater, FL (April 12, 2012) – U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis (FL-09), is pleased to announce that he is hosting a forum to highlight the treatment of Coptic Christians in Egypt, and to promote religious freedom in the Middle East and worldwide.

The forum will be held from 4-6 p.m. on Saturday, April 21, 2012, at the St. Mary & St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church, 2930 County Road 193, in Clearwater.

"This event is a rare opportunity for Coptic Christians, and for all those in the Tampa Bay area who are interested in promoting religious freedom, to learn from national experts about the challenges religious minorities face throughout the world," said Bilirakis, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee as well as International Religious Freedom Caucus.

Featured speakers include former Congressman Fred Grandy, who now serves as Executive Vice President of the Center for Security Policy and is an expert on religious freedom and national security issues, and Cynthia Farahat, a political activist and Coptic Christian who has personally experienced the persecution of Coptics in Egypt.

"Numerous incidents in recent months have shown that the Egyptian government continues to disregard the basic principles of human rights and religious freedom, particularly for Coptics, and has failed to protect against attacks on their churches," Bilirakis said.

Late last year, Bilirakis spearheaded an effort to place conditions on annual aid to Egypt to prevent the military from using U.S. taxpayer dollars to persecute and attack thousands of religious minorities.

Related News:

[Click here to listen to an interview featuring Grandy and Bilirakis.](#)

