

EGYPT: TOURISM THREATENED BY PARLIAMENTARIANS?



Egypt has been titled the fastest growing tourist destination by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in terms of increasing the percentage of visitors from one year to the next. However, Egyptian parliamentarians make comments that undermine any efforts to develop the sector.

A result that should satisfy tourism professionals in Egypt and government finances. In 2017, 8.5 million tourists arrived in 2017 and a percentage of +55 % compared to 2016.

Last August, a government official told a news agency that Egyptian tourism revenues jumped 77% in the first half of 2018 to \$4.8 billion compared to the same period last year. The number of visitors during the first half of 2018 jumped by 41% compared to 2017.

After the 2011 revolution, the economy and tourism experienced a sharp decline that affected the whole of Egypt. The government has launched a major economic reform programme, one of the measures of which has been to allow the Egyptian pound to float. The budget deficit is going in the right direction. The unemployment rate has also improved from 12.5 to 9.8 per cent and the country hopes to be below 9 per cent in 2018-2019. The IMF has just granted a new loan.

The Alexandria Military Court sentenced 17 people convicted of a series of attacks on Coptic churches to death. 19 people were sentenced to life imprisonment and ten others to 10 to 15 years' imprisonment. The suicide attacks that took place in late 2016 and early 2017 killed 84 people and injured 166 others and were reportedly sponsored by the Islamic State Group of Sinai.

Convicted persons may appeal. MP Margaret Azer, vice-president of the Human Rights Committee, refused to qualify Coptic Christians in Egypt as a minority, arguing that they were citizens with the same rights as Muslims.

Margaret Azer, the same parliamentarian who was talking about the Copts, **suggested that the country should export meat from dogs to countries like South Korea** to solve the problem of the large number of stray dogs in Egypt. Mrs. Azer spoke to the press and said that her suggestion was a more humane way to get rid of dogs.

It is to be hoped that animal advocates will react. Many Asian enthusiasts have the habit of eating dogs, but governments are beginning to take action, including in China.

However, this kind of information spread around the world can only harm the image of Egypt and thus threatens tourism.

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