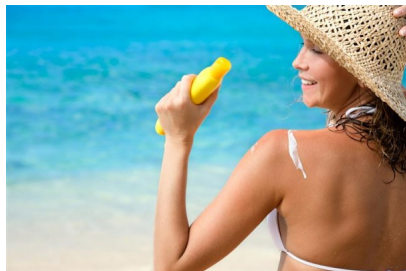


ISLAMISTS THREATEN TO RADICALIZE EGYPTIAN TOURISM



Despite the economy reeling and political turmoil very much a feature of recent Egyptian history, Islamic parties want to make tourism stricter by reducing the rights of visitors to behave as they wish.

The interim Egyptian Prime Minister Kamal el-Ganzouri has recently shed tears on national television as he was describing the state of the Egyptian economy, claiming that the situation is about to get worse. Political unrest surrounding the adventures of Mr. Mubarak has put Egypt on the front pages for all the wrong reasons.

One could easily make a case for the promotion of tourism to get the economy back on track as the industry accounts for 10% of the Egyptian GDP and employs 3 million people. Egypt boasts an array of ancient monuments, is a hub for divers and has weather on its side as well.

However, the current political climate has contributed to the rise of a number of Islamist parties, which want to revolutionize tourism as we know it in Egypt and deny tourists their usual freedom. This can only lead to a decrease in tourists from Western countries and may increase the tears of leaders. However, it may increase the respect Egypt has in the Muslim world if the country embarks on sin-free tourism.

The Muslim Brotherhood party wishes to see a ban on alcohol, claiming that tourists can drink at home and don't need to drink on Egyptian soil. The Salafis wish to outlaw men and women bathing together and introduce a ban on bikinis.

If many people have their way, then hotel managers will even be required to ask couples for marriage certificates if they wish to stay in a hotel together.

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