

# Pius XII and Decolonization: Catholicism in North Africa and the Levant, 1939-1958



**10-11 November 2025**

**Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC)**

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**Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt**

**<https://tinyurl.com/NVICmap>**

# Pius XII and Decolonization: Catholicism in North Africa and the Levant, 1939-1958

**Monday November 10**

**08.30-9.00** Welcome tea/coffee at NVIC

**9.00- 9.15** Greetings by **Marleen De Meyer** (Director Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo)

**9.15- 9.30** Introduction of the main themes by the conference organizers

**Erica Moretti** (Fashion Institute of Technology-SUNY)

**Jacopo Pili** (University of Rome Tor Vergata)

**Simon Unger** (DHI Rom)

**09.30-10.30** *The Algerian War Through the Papers of the Paris Apostolic Nunciature*

**Gianfranco Armando** (Vatican Apostolic Archives)

**10.30** Coffee Break

**11.00-13.00** *International Agencies, Humanitarian Intervention, and the Catholic Church*

Chair: **Erica Moretti, Jacopo Pili**

*From Mission to Development: The Case of the Upper Egypt Association for Education and Development (1940-1960)*

**Annalaura Turiano** (CNRS, Iremam, amU)

*Catholic Action in the Arab World during the Pontificate of Pius XII*

**Sam Kuijken** (Kadoc-KU Leuven)

*Sacred Missions, Secular Agendas: The Catholic Church, International Agencies, and Education in Decolonizing French Africa*

**Marialuisa Lucia Sergio** (Roma Tre University)

*An In-Between Humanitarian Actor: Pius XII, the Catholic Church, and Palestinian Refugees (1948-early 1950s)*

**Marie Levant** (Ecole française de Rome, IFPO)

**13.00-14.30** Lunch at the NVIC

**14.30-16.30** *Interaction Between Periphery and the Center*

Chair: **Martin Baumeister**

*Petitioning Rome from the Margins: Refugee Letters to the Vatican and Catholic Humanitarianism across Postwar Mediterranean Borders*

**Katarzyna Nowak** (University of Vienna)

*The Pontificate of Pius XII and the Test of Decolonization: Doctrinal Orientations and Lines of Intervention*

**Lucia Ceci** (University of Rome Tor Vergata)

*When the Empire Ends: The Vatican and the Native Clergy as Agents of Decolonization at the Horn of Africa (1939-1958)*

**Maria Bonaria Urban** (Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome)

*The Catholic Church in the Evolving Middle East: A Study of Iraq and Jordan*

**Paolo Maggiolini** (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan)

**16.30-17.00** Open discussion of first day findings

**19.30** dinner at Granita restaurant (5 Michel Lutfallah Street)

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**Tuesday November 11**

**08.30-9.30** Welcome tea/coffee at NVIC

**9.30- 10.45** Keynote: *Bringing the Vatican into Global History: Decolonization and the Recentering of the Periphery*  
**Giuliana Chamedes** (University of Wisconsin, Madison)

**10.45-11.00** Tea/Coffee Break

**11.00-13.00** *Interfaith Debates on Decolonization*

Chair: **Simon Unger** (DHI Rom)

*Africanising the Priesthood, Navigating Empire: The Pope's Secretariat of State, Propaganda Fide, and the Belgian Congo*  
**Elisabeth Bruyère** (KU Leuven)

*Decolonization, Religion, and Nationhood: Pakistan's Islamic Ideological Formation and Its Parallels with North African Catholic Debates*  
**Jamil Akhtar** (University of the Punjab)

*The Church's Encounter with Islamic Reform Movements: Dialogue or Defensive Posture?*  
**Vedran Obućina** (Centre for Interreligious Dialogue Rijeka, Croatia)

*"Everything but the Communion?": Towards a (Coptic) Catholic Community Archive in Egypt*  
**Mina Ibrahim** (Marburg University, Shubra's Archive)

**13.30-14.30** Lunch at the NVIC

**14.30** Final roundtable: open discussion and concluding remarks

**19.30** dinner (optional) at Five Bells (13 Ismail Mohammed, Abu Al Feda)

**Organizers: Erica Moretti, Jacopo Pili, Simon Unger**