

Nile Union Mission (1951–1962)

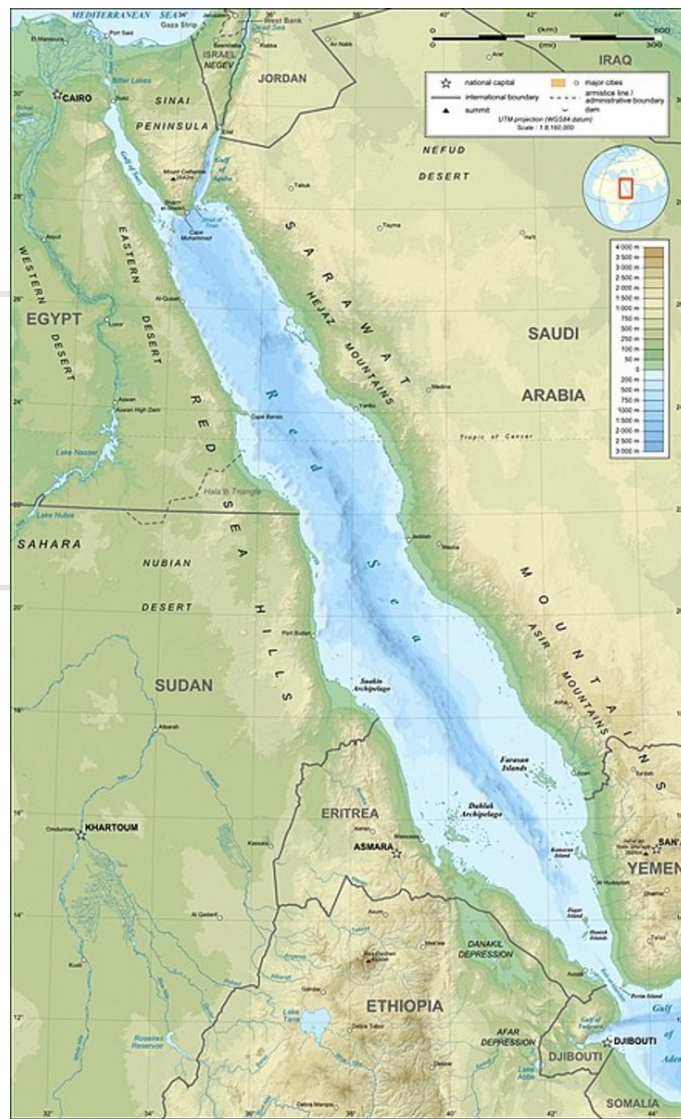
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Nile Union Mission (NUM) was organized in 1951 as part of the newly organized Middle East Division. Its territory included Egypt, Libya, northern Sudan, the portion of Arabia bordering on the Red Sea, and Aden. The population was 33,689,000, and there were 11 churches and a membership of 600. Egypt Mission was the only organized mission or church entity in the union at the time.¹ NUM had a brief history and was dissolved in 1962.²

Development

With Egypt as the primary country, the union office was established at 16 Avenue de Koubeh in Heliopolis, Egypt, where the Egypt Mission office was located.³ There were only a few members outside of Egypt. The purpose of the new union organization was to provide further attention to the unreached territories along the Nile and bordering countries. In 1953 the Sudan Mission was established at House no. 15, B-I H-W, North Khartoum, Sudan. It was later renamed Sudan Station.⁴ In 1954, upon the request of the General Conference,⁵ the Aden Station office was established at Beit El Hag El Hamzi, opposite the New Telephone Exchange (Maalla).⁶ In 1956 the work was opened in Libya with the Station address at P. O. Box 240, Benghazi, Libya.⁷ All work for the three stations was administered for a time by Nile Union Mission⁸



Territory of Nile Union Mission.

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Ormond K. Andersen and Chafic Srour were sent in April 1954 on an exploratory trip to Aden. During this time they made official contact and secured an apartment. Once they moved there with their wives, they opened an Arabic Bible correspondence school, distributed publications on ships and the shore, canvassed with the *Life and Health* magazine among those who spoke and read English, and used local radio stations for health programs. They gained one convert, a Palestinian refugee. In 1955 the work was discontinued, and later attempts to reopen it were unsuccessful, though temperance and anti-tobacco meetings were well attended. On one occasion when the union president, Neal C. Wilson, visited, the film "One in 20,000" was shown. Eventually, the territory of Aden was assigned to the Middle East Division.⁹

With the dissolution of the Egypt Mission in 1955, the organization was divided into two missions: Lower (Northern) Egypt Mission under the direction of Hilal Dose, with the mission office at the same address as before, and the Upper Egypt Mission under the leadership of C. V. Bauer, with the headquarters located in Assiut. The area was further divided in January 1957, when Hilal Dose was placed in charge of the Central Egypt Section with headquarters in Heliopolis. Hilmy Berbawy became director of the Upper Egypt Section, and W. R. Leshner was director of the Delta Section, with headquarters in Alexandria. These territorial arrangements proved unwieldy, and by December 1958, the work was reunited in the Egypt Section. The officers of the Nile Union Mission administered the work of transition. At the Nile Union biennial council of 1960, it was decided to include more nationals in church leadership. A new constitution was adopted, and Hilal Dose became the first national president of the Egypt Section.¹⁰

Achievements

One of the major achievements accomplished during the NUM period, while Neal C. Wilson and A. G. Zytoskee were presidents, was the planning and building of the Evangelistic Center at Ramses Square in Cairo.¹¹ The land was purchased under the leadership of Neal C. Wilson in 1953, and the building project with a hall seating more than 700 was officially opened in 1962.¹² The first major evangelistic series was conducted in 1963 by GC field Secretary C. E. Moseley.¹³ In July 2018, after a renovation, it was reopened by Ted N. C. Wilson as the Ramses Cultural Center with multipurpose functions.¹⁴

A significant step forward occurred when the United Arab Republic officially recognized the Seventh-day Adventist organization, calling it the Coptic Adventist Denomination. This recognition gave the church work a status equal to that of other Christian groups. "The drive to obtain recognition began in 1957. After a period of waiting for final denominational clearance, denominational recognition was obtained in April 1960. Pastor Neal C. Wilson and Brother Ramses Mina initiated the drive for recognition while Pastors A. G. Zytoskee and Hilal Dose carried it through to victory."¹⁵

Also, in 1955, work opened up in Libya, initiated by the NUM with strong support from the Division. A lease was signed for a building in Benghazi to be remodeled as a hospital. The first doctor, Roy S. Cornell, arrived in Egypt

in 1955, and the NUM requested Fakhry Naguib from Egypt to accompany him and help start the hospital. On May 21, 1956, the Benghazi Adventist Hospital was officially opened and came to play a vital role in the Adventist work in Libya.¹⁶

Nile Union Mission opened a school, Nile Union Academy (formerly Nile Union Training School), in Gabal Asfar, Cairo, in 1954. This school continues (2023) to serve students from Egypt and Sudan.¹⁷

NUM Dissolved

In 1962 the executive committee of the Middle East Division decided to dissolve the East Mediterranean and Nile Unions “in order to implement a general simplification of the organization within the Division field.” In this arrangement, the Middle East Division would deal directly with the local fields and sections.¹⁸ At this time, the population in the NUM territory had grown to 48,045,000, and there were 21 churches with a membership of 837.¹⁹

Executive officers

Presidents: Neal C. Wilson (1951-1958); A. G. Zytoskee (1959-1962)

Secretary-Treasurer: A. E. Klein (1951-54); Ramses Mina (1958); R. W. Wilmot (1959-1961)

Secretary: Ramses Mina (1954-1957), C. V. Brauer (1962)

Treasurer: Neal C. Wilson – Acting (1954-1957).²⁰

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