

Market Drayton Churches Together: IDOP - 17 November 2018

EGYPT

5th Nov: Morning Star News

Islamist Terrorists Ambush, Kill Seven Christians near Monastery in Egypt

<https://morningstarnews.org/2018/11/islamist-terrorists-ambush-kill-seven-christians-near-monastery-in-minya-egypt>

Funerals were held over the weekend in Egypt for seven Christians ambushed and killed on Friday (Nov. 2) in Islamist attacks.

Hundreds of people attended the funeral service in Minya for six Coptic Christians from the same family killed when Islamist gunmen ambushed their microbus near a desert monastery. A 15-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl were among those killed when the terrorists stopped their microbus from Minya and opened fire, rights activists said.

A seventh Christian, Asaad Farouk Labib Ghaly, was also killed. His 34-year-old wife, four children and others mourned him at a funeral on Friday (Nov. 2) at a church in Sohag, about 392 kilometers (244 miles) south of Cairo, the activists said.

The Coptic Orthodox Church reported an additional 19 Christians were wounded in the attacks, which took place near St. Samuel the Confessor monastery, just west of the town of Al-Idwa and about 90 miles (145 kilometers) south of Cairo. On one of the attacked buses, six of 28 members of a family reportedly travelling to a baptism of one of its children were injured.

An Egypt-based Islamic State (IS) affiliate claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it was in retaliation for Egypt's imprisonment of "our chaste sisters," without elaborating. The group claimed that 13 people were killed and 18 wounded.

Egypt's Interior Ministry reportedly said the attackers used dirt roads to reach the buses carrying the Christians. Only those visiting the monastery are allowed to use the main road to it since a like attack in May 2017 killed 30 people; after that assault, the government had reportedly provided armed escorts for those visiting the monastery but later dropped the security measure.

At the funeral service for the six family members at Prince Tadros church in the city of Minya, Coptic Orthodox Bishop-General of Minya Anba Makarios presided.

"There is a mix of sadness and pain; sadness as these painful events are being repeated, and pain because Copts are part of this homeland and part of its fabric," Bishop Makarios reportedly said, promising that the church would "not forget the promises of officials, including the president of the republic, that the criminals will be punished."

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi held a minute's silence for the victims, and called Coptic Pope Tawadros II to offer his condolences.

Besides Asaad Farouk Labib Ghaly, the Coptic Orthodox Church identified the six family members slain as Kamal Yousef Shehata, Reda Yousef Shehata, Nady Yousef Shehata, Bishoy Reda Yousef Shehata, Maria Kamal Yousef Shehata and Bousy Milad Yousef Shehata.

The government on Sunday (Nov. 4) claimed that security forces had killed 19 Islamist militants from a cell believed to be responsible for the attack on Christians near the monastery. The government statement said the security forces surrounded the militants after a chase in a mountainous area west of Minya governorate and engaged them in a firefight.

2nd Nov: Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Terrorist attack on Coptic Christians

<https://www.csw.org.uk/2018/11/02/press/4158/article.htm>

At least seven Coptic Christians have been killed and eleven injured in a terrorist attack today, 2 November. The attack was carried out on a bus taking Christians on their way to visit the monastery of Anba Samuel the Confessor in the governorate of Minya in Upper Egypt.

CSW sources said that the victims had travelled from the city of Suhag, approximately 300 kilometres south of Minya. It is thought that the attackers were in a four wheel drive vehicle, and that they disappeared into the desert after opening fire on the bus. Police and army have since arrived at the scene and the investigation remains ongoing.

Egyptian President Sisi issued a message of condolence on his twitter account in which he expressed his sorrow for the "loss of the martyrs," wished a swift recovery for the injured, and reaffirmed his commitment to combat terrorism and bring perpetrators to justice.

Egypt's Coptic community has been the target of numerous attacks in recent years. In May 2017, 28 Coptic Christians were killed and 23 injured in the same location when masked gunmen opened fire on the vehicles they were travelling in. Recent months have seen several instances in which mobs have stormed Coptic churches, demanding their closure and damaging property.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said: "*CSW extends its deepest condolences to all who have lost loved ones in this attack. CSW calls upon the Egyptian authorities to increase its efforts to contain and combat sectarianism, this requires upholding constitutional rights and ensuring that all citizens are treated equally. Egypt must end all forms of discrimination against Christians and other religious minorities; this includes restrictions on building places of worship for non-Muslims and state-sponsored reconciliation sessions depriving victims from their rights and emphasising the culture of impunity.*"

2nd Nov: Open Doors UK

At least seven Christians killed in bus attack in Egypt

<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/stories/egypt-181102>

At least seven Christians have been killed and nine injured in an attack on a bus convoy in Minya today. Armed terrorists opened fire on two buses as they were leaving Saint Samuel's monastery. There was a larger bus and a smaller bus in the convoy. Fr. Abanoub Shehata, a priest in Maghagha diocese, Minya, says, "The big bus belonged to a church in Sohag. The driver managed to escape the scene and no one in that bus got hurt. The second, smaller bus, came from a village in Minya and did not manage to escape. The terrorist stopped the bus and opened fire on the passengers."

This is the same place where a bus attack took place on 26 May 2017, killing 28 Christians. Local Christians are angry that an attack could take place in same place twice. "Why were they not protected?" asks Emad Nasif, a deacon in a church in Minya. "There seems to be an indifference to the safety of the Christian minority."

"Heaven received yet another group of martyrs," says Hanaa Youssef Mikhael, who lost her husband Ayad Habib Tawadros in the Minya bus attack in May 2017, and is mother of two survivors of the attack, teenagers Marco and Mina. She cries, "I am very sad about what happened. And I am startled. How is it possible that this happened again?"

8 Jun 2017: Voice of the Martyrs - Canada Egyptian Christians Killed During Ambush

<https://www.vomcanada.com/eg-2017-06-08.htm>

On May 26th, armed gunmen opened fire, killing at least 28 Christians and wounding more than 20 others. The victimized believers were travelling on two buses and an accompanying SUV to attend services at the Monastery of St. Samuel in Minya, southern Egypt.

The convoy was stopped at 9:30 a.m. on a remote desert road near El Idwa, close to the border between two provinces. According to the Egyptian health ministry, eight to ten masked attackers wearing military uniforms blocked the vehicles as they were passing through the Minya region (about 200 kilometres south of Cairo). When the militants intercepted the vehicles at gunpoint, they forced all the travellers to hand over their money, jewelry and mobile phones.

Someone at the scene testified that the militants then ordered all the Christians to convert to Islam. "Bear witness that there is no god to be worshipped but Allah, and that Mohammed is the messenger of Allah!" they demanded. When the victims refused, stating, "We are Christians," the attackers opened fire, shooting most of them in the head. A number of children were confirmed among the dead, and all eight men in the SUV were killed.

Survivors of the attack noted that the black flag representing the Islamic State (ISIS) was displayed on the attackers' vehicles. The terrorist group has since confirmed their responsibility for the Minya attack. "This is a very sad (time) for Egyptian Christians and for our nation," explains one of VOM's in-country ministry partners. "Please pray for God's comfort for the families of those who died and are injured.

13th Sept: Voice of the Martyrs - Canada Mobs Force Church Closures

<https://www.vomcanada.com/eg-2018-09-13.htm>

For the Christian minority in Egypt, regulations and bureaucracy have caused issues for years. Across Egypt, over 3,500 churches are presently in the process of being licensed; some have waited for over 20 years. In January, the government announced that Christians will be allowed to continue meeting in unlicensed churches pending the process. But in the Luxor governorate region alone, a Coptic diocese faced the forced closure of its eighth church due to pressure from mobs. All these churches were in the process of being officially approved by the government.

In the village of El-Zeniqa, a Coptic church was forced to close its doors on August 22nd, after a large group of young Muslim men gathered to shout threats against the Christians. The mob tried to break down the front door of the church but the members had locked it from the inside and called the police. The officers were able to disperse the crowd but then sealed the building, posting security forces outside. The protests began after rumours spread that the government was about to officially recognize the church.

In the Minya governorate, similar protests have been happening against churches. In the village of Ezbet Sultan Pasha, the church was first attacked on July 13th after villagers heard of its application for legalization. Crowds returned on August 24th, pelting the church building with rocks and damaging CCTV cameras. They then moved to a house where Christians had gathered to pray, before causing damage to some of the other

homes in the area. During the attack, members of the mob shouted threats against those who were gathered, proclaiming that a church would never be allowed in the village.

26th Oct: Morning Star News

Coptic Christians Deprived of Home Worship Hall in Egypt

<https://moringstarnews.org/2018/09/26/2018-09-26-coptic-christians-deprived-of-home-worship-hall-in-egypt>

Nearly a year after declaring that attacks on Christians had hit a level not seen in decades, a Coptic Orthodox bishop in Egypt continues to lament a stream of incidents of violence against churches in Upper Egypt.

Coptic Orthodox Bishop-General of Minya Anba Makarios this month confirmed that an Islamist assault on four Christians' homes after mosque prayers on Aug. 31 left two Copts with knife wounds in the head and face.

Makarios issued a statement saying the homes of Adel Saeed Rizq, Reda Abdel-Sayed Rizq, Kamel Fawzy Shahata and Fawazy Shahata Boutros in Dimshau Hashim village were damaged and plundered because the assailants objected to the Copts using a small hall in one of the homes for worship.

The village has no church facility, so after the damages to the homes, the Coptic families were forced to hold a Sept. 6 funeral in the street, according to Egyptian news outlet Watani.

At the four homes in the village in Minya Governorate, some 250 kilometers (155 miles) south of Cairo, the assailants stole gold jewelry, smashed electric equipment and set part of one property on fire. A fireman was injured attempting to douse it. The wounded Copts received treatment at Minya Public Hospital, according to Watani.

Makarios reported that Minya police arrested 38 Muslim extremists, released 19 and held another 19 for investigation on suspicion of creating unrest and assault. The bishop said the attack was motivated by the Islamists' objection to Copts allegedly building a church facility without a license.

He said he appreciated the tight security that followed, saying officials were striving to restore Copts' rights. The bishop said he was pained to listen to the Coptic families tell him how their terrorized children wailed during the assault, according to Watani.

Makarios said it was heart-aching that the children "should be subjected to such horror simply because their families exercised their constitutional right of freedom of worship," according to Watani.

While striving to console them, he encouraged them to hold to the Christian tenet of entrusting themselves to God while bearing the persecution and to practice forgiveness, tolerance and patience. At the same time, he said the government is obligated to prosecute the culprits and bring them to justice, compensate the victims and reject customary "reconciliation" meetings between victim and assailant that invariably result in Muslim attackers denying religious rights to Copts, according to Watani.

Such injustices allow assailants to escape justice and send Islamic extremists the message that they can commit crimes with impunity, he said.

Last October Makarios had said that it has been years since Egypt had suffered the flurry of church closures and assaults on Christians and their properties in one month. Four churches were closed over two weeks after Islamic extremists attacked three churches in Minya Governorate.

Links to the full reports featured on this sheet, along with information about other relevant articles are available on the Market Drayton Churches Together website, linked from the P4PC section as "Recent Reports"

churchestogether-marketdrayton.org.uk/p4pc

Next P4PC Session - Thursday 6th December at Wollerton URC