



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 21, 2013

Egyptian, Korean Christians Imprisoned, Killed for their Faith

Christianity is under intense attack in Egypt, where more than 15 percent of the population embrace the faith. Most recently, a court in Egypt sentenced a mother and her seven children to up to 15 years in prison for the crime of converting from Islam to Christianity.



Nadia Mohamed Ali converted to Islam from Christianity 23 years ago after marrying a Muslim, and when her husband died, she and her children went through the process of converting back to Christianity so that she could receive an inheritance from her family. Between 2004 and 2006, the widow sought help in one of the country's registration offices to obtain new identity cards that reflected Christian names and showed new residences.

"When the conversion came to light under the new regime," reported [Fox News](#), the woman, her children, "and even the clerks who processed the identity cards were all sentenced to prison."

Samuel Tadros of the Hudson Institute's [Center for Religious Freedom](#) said that while such conversions were commonplace in the past in Egypt, under the now intensely sharia-influenced government, arrests and jail terms may be the trend. He called the new Islam-heavy constitution "a real disaster in terms of religious freedom," and speculated that persecution will become more prevalent. "It will be much harder for people to return to Christianity," he said.

Jordan Sekulow of the [American Center for Law and Justice](#) (ACLJ), which has represented several Christians imprisoned in Islamic countries over their faith in God, agreed. "Now that Sharia law has become an integral part of Egypt's new constitution, Christians in that country are at greater risk than ever," Sekulow told Fox. He said that the case of the imprisoned mother and her family "underscores the growing problem of religious intolerance in the Muslim world. To impose a prison sentence for a family because of their Christian faith sadly reveals the true agenda of this new government: Egypt has no respect for international law or religious liberty."

Egypt's new president, Mohamed Morsi, who has the backing of the country's radical Islamic faction, has been roundly criticized both in Egypt and internationally for failing to provide ample protection for the country's millions of Christians. "In August, the roughly 100-family Christian community in Dahshour was forced to flee after Muslim neighbors launched attacks against the Christians' homes and property," reported Fox. But "Morsi said the expulsion and violence were 'blown out of proportion.'"

The Egyptian president is scheduled to meet with President Obama in the spring, and the ACLJ is among those pressuring the U.S. government to take a firm stand for Egypt's Christians. "The U.S.



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State Department must play more of a role in discouraging this kind of persecution,” said Sekulow. “The U.S. should not be an idle bystander. The U.S. provides more than \$1 billion to Egypt each year. The State Department should speak out forcefully against this kind of religious persecution in Egypt.”

In mid-January, hundreds of Muslims attacked and destroyed a building owned by the Coptic church in the village of Fanous, 100 miles southwest of Cairo. According to witnesses, the Muslims came out of local mosques, armed with hammers and chanting Islamic slogans. They destroyed the building, identified as a social services center. Local police arrived only after the building had been completely demolished.

According to the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA), the two-story building, which was in the construction process, had all the local permits and was to have served as a reception hall and a kindergarten for Coptic Christian families in the area. After a meeting with local Muslims and the mayor, the Christian group had agreed to disassemble the second floor, but when mosques in surrounding villages warned that the Christians in Fanous were “building a church,” the Muslim mob descended on the site, insulting the Christians and demolishing the entire building to shouts of “Allahu Akbar.”

Witnesses said that no one from the group or even the imams who incited the violence were arrested or held responsible for their actions. “This incident will end like all other similar incidents,” speculated a spokesman for an Egyptian Coptic organization. “No one will be arrested and the building will never be rebuilt.”

Meanwhile, in North Korea persecution of Christians continues under the auspices of the communist government. [Open Doors USA](#), an organization that monitors the persecuted church, reported January 18 that two North Korean Christians who had traveled to China for Bible training had been killed. One of the men was shot on his way back into China for more training, while the other died in one of the country’s prison camps, where he had been sent after government officials learned of his conversion to Christianity.

The first Christian had traveled to China several times in search of employment, and while there met a Christian who eventually led the Korean to faith in Christ. The man had returned to North Korea, but was on his way back into China when he was killed. “He was very excited about his new faith and wanted to share the gospel with his family,” said an Open Doors spokesperson. “He wanted to go back to China to study the Bible more so he could explain the Christian faith better to his family. It is heartbreaking that he was killed.”

The second man had spent eight months in China, where he also had become a devoted follower of Christ. But when he returned to his native country, North Korean officials quickly learned about his faith, which is forbidden under the oppressive communist regime, and he was imprisoned.

“He was terribly tortured because of his faith,” said the Open Doors spokesperson. “He was also forced to do heavy labor while hardly receiving any food. Before his return to North Korea, he was baptized and willing to deal with all the hardships he had to face. We never tell people to go back to North Korea, but he was happy to.”

Over the past decade Open Doors has listed North Korea as the top country it monitors for religious persecution. “Nowhere else in the world is the persecution of Christians so intense,” the group pointed out. “Even the possession of the Bible is enough to be killed or sent to a labor camp for life with your family.... Approximately 50,000 to 70,000 Christians live, work, and ultimately die in one of the horrible



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concentration camps.”

A North Korean refugee summed up the situation: “There is no religious freedom whatsoever in North Korea. People are simply killed if they believe in Jesus. Kim Jong-Un is a god and there cannot be any god besides him.”



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