



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 28, 2014

Seven Egyptian Christians Executed in Benghazi, Libya

In the latest violence against Christians in the Middle East, the [BBC](#) reported that the bodies of seven Christians from Egypt were found on a beach near Benghazi, Libya, February 24. The individuals, all young men, appeared to have been murdered execution style, with gunshots to the head and chest.

While Libyan police said that the motive for the killings was unclear, Christians have been targeted in the region over the past few years as political unrest continues, with Muslim extremists attacking churches and individual believers for sharing their religious beliefs with others.



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The [Libya Herald](#) reported that all seven men were Coptic Christians from Egypt, and were between the ages of 17 and 25. Witnesses reported that the assailants, who appeared to be Islamists, dragged the men from their apartment, bound their hands, and shot them. Their bodies were later discovered on a local beach.

Thousands of Coptic Christians from Egypt have flooded into Libya to work as laborers in the oil fields, and have faced heavy persecution and violence from Islamic fundamentalists. The *Herald* reported that an explosion in December 2012 near a Coptic church in Misrata, Libya, killed two Christians and injured others. And Benghazi's main Coptic church is now closed following an attack last March when Islamists set fire to the building two weeks after the congregation's priest was attacked. That incident was seen as payback for an attack on Libya's embassy in Cairo, Egypt, after nearly 100 Coptic Christians were arrested in Libya on charges of proselytizing.

Last month a British man and a New Zealand woman, employees of a petroleum company, were shot execution-style on another beach 60 miles from Tripoli, Libya's capital. Friends said that the two had driven to the beach for a picnic. Unlike the execution of the Coptic Christians, Middle East experts speculated that the killing of the two foreigners were most likely "carried out by jihadists determined to prevent the revival of the oil and gas industry on which [Libya] depends for more than 90% of its income and which has been largely crippled since Gaddafi's fall," reported the U.K.'s [Guardian](#) newspaper.

Photo of Benghazi, Libya, at dusk



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