



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on January 17, 2026

Egyptian Christian Given Five Years' Hard Labor for YouTube Videos Defending Faith

In what one activist group called a “farical exercise of justice,” an Egyptian Christian has been sentenced to five years of hard labor for defending his faith online.

Augustinos Samaan, 37, is a Coptic Christian who studies comparative religion. “Through scholarly work and online educational content,” wrote nonprofit [Coptic Solidarity](#), “he peacefully discussed religious issues and responded to anti-Christian incitement”



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Detention Hell

Samaan’s YouTube channel has over 100,000 subscribers. Such popularity is undoubtedly what brought him to the attention of the Egyptian government, which charged him with “contempt of religion” and “misuse of social media.” The [Foundation for Defense of Democracies \(FDD\)](#), a Washington-based think tank, noted that such “charges are frequently triggered by online activity.”

According to Coptic Solidarity:

In the early hours of October 1, 2025, at approximately 1:30 a.m., a group of masked special-forces officers arrested [Samaan]. During the arrest, security forces confiscated his laptop, mobile phone, a large number of books, and several personal papers.

Following investigations conducted by the National Security Sector, and after an ordeal that reportedly included torture, Samaan was initially charged with “joining a terrorist organization” and “spreading false news.” These charges were later amended to “contempt of religion” under Article 98(f) of the Penal Code.

On October 11, 2025, his detention was renewed for 15 days pending investigation by the El Basatin Summary Prosecution. Since then, his detention has been renewed repeatedly in 15-day increments. He remains held in El Basatin Police Station lockup, alongside detainees accused of offenses such as drug trafficking and theft.

This is a common practice in Egypt, reported FDD. “By keeping individuals detained and isolated for extended periods, Egypt’s legal system effectively punishes detainees long before a case ever reaches trial.”



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[CBN News](#) reported on other prisoners subjected to the same treatment:

Egyptian-American Mustafa Kassem was held in pretrial detention for five years under this system before dying in custody in 2020.

Saeed Mostafa, an Egyptian Muslim who converted to Christianity, was arrested weeks before Samaan and remains in custody for charges including “joining a terrorist organization” and “contempt of Islam.”

The Law and the Prophet

Egypt’s [constitution](#) declares that “freedom of belief is absolute.” Furthermore, “All individuals have the right to express their opinion through speech, writing, imagery, or any other means of expression or publication.”

At the same time, the country has a statute prohibiting “derision of religion.” Not surprisingly, when the religion being criticized is Islam, that law takes precedence over the constitution and any other agreements to which Egypt is a party, including those governing U.S. military aid. (Egypt is the [second largest](#) recipient of such aid.)

Defenseless Defendant

On January 3, Samaan was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment with hard labor, beginning immediately.

Three days later, his family was stunned to learn this, not so much because such a sentence was unexpected but because they didn’t even know he had been tried yet. When they went to El Basatin Court, near Cairo, on January 6, they expected a routine detention-renewal hearing, the last such hearing having occurred on December 23. Indeed, so ignorant were they of Samaan’s status that they even secured the services of an additional attorney the day before going to court.

When they arrived, however, they saw that Samaan’s name was not on the docket for that day. “Upon inquiry,” wrote Coptic Solidarity, “they learned that he had already been referred to trial, without any notification to either his lawyers or his family.”

The trial took place on December 27, after which the court adjourned until January 3, at which time Samaan was found guilty and sentenced.

Coptic Solidarity reported:

To date, the defense has not been granted access to the case file, nor has it been afforded a genuine opportunity to exercise the right of defense or to represent the defendant before the court. These circumstances raise serious concerns regarding fair-trial guarantees and the fundamental right to defense as enshrined in the Egyptian Constitution and domestic law.

The group expressed

its deep concern at what appears to be a farcical exercise of justice in Egypt. Beyond the discriminatory application of Egypt’s “derision of religion” law — which in practice is used



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exclusively to protect Islam — this case exemplifies a total disregard for the most basic legal and procedural guarantees.

Prisoner With a Prayer

FDD echoed these sentiments:

The Samaan case underscores how these [blasphemy] laws function less as safeguards for religious harmony ... and more as instruments of coercion. This application reinforces the vulnerability of Christians within Egypt's legal system, signaling that minority religious expression remains conditional and punishable.

FDD called on the U.S. government to “enforce” its policy requiring recipients of military aid to protect “religious freedom” and provide “due process protections.” Better still, Uncle Sam should simply terminate such aid, which is unconstitutional and makes American taxpayers accessories to foreign governments’ depredations.

Samaan’s appeal hearing has been scheduled for January 26. His “legal team affirmed that it will continue to pursue this case within a legal and human-rights framework, in a manner that safeguards procedural integrity and the protection of fundamental rights,” penned Coptic Solidarity.

Regardless of the outcome of his appeal, Samaan, like so many other persecuted Christians, may well find his faith strengthened by his ordeal. As For the Martyrs founder Gia Chacon told CBN, “Despite the most unimaginable tragedy and horrific crimes against humanity, they still had hope, and they’ve kept their faith.”



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