



Egyptian Parliament Speaker Falsifies Facts About Christmas Eve Shootings

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Cairo (AINA) -- In an interview with BBC Arabic on January 31, 2010, Dr. Fathi Sourour, speaker of the People's Assembly (parliament) said that the Nag Hammadi shooting of Christians on Christmas Eve was a single criminal act, with no sectarian dimensions, prompted by the "death" of a Muslim girl as a result of being raped by a Copt ([video](#)).

12-year-old Yusra Abdelwahab, who was allegedly raped on November 18, 2009 in Farshout, is alive and due to appear in court in Qena on February 17, as requested by her own lawyer on January 19, 2010. This fact was confirmed today by Ashraf Edward, defense attorney of Girgis Baroumi, the Christian Copt who allegedly raped Yusra (AINA [1-28-2010](#)).



Fathi Sourour

Copts were shocked and angered by this statement which they consider to be another lie propagated by the government to trigger another wave of Muslim attacks against them. Some have called on Mr. Sourour to resign, as a "lying head of parliament is a blow to Egypt's image," while others have called for bringing Fathi Sourour to justice for inciting to sedition.

Egyptian officials have denied from the beginning a sectarian element in the Christmas Eve attack, insisting it was purely a criminal act and have linked it to the alleged rape incident.

Mufid Shehab, minister of legal affairs and parliamentary council said, "No religious dimension should be attached to this incident, only a criminal one," reported Almasry Alyom Newspaper, which covered the parliamentary session after the shoot-out.

Egyptian rights groups have disputed the government theory and criticized authorities for refusing to acknowledge the sectarian aspect of the killings. "What happened in Nag Hammadi was sectarian killing," Hafez Abou Seada, Secretary General of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR).

The State-affiliated National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) has sent a fact-finding mission to Nag Hammadi. The mission included Coptic MP Georgette Kellini, who is also a member of NCHR, together with two other NCHR members.

There was a heated dispute over the use of the word "sectarian" in parliament, and when Kellini confirmed that the incident was "sectarian" she was attacked in Parliament by Fathi Sorour who accused her of wanting to be a "hero" and by AbdelRahim El Ghouli, the governing party representative of Nag Hammadi, who called her a "criminal."

Two days after the Christmas Eve killings three Muslims, Mohamed El-Kamony, Korshy Aly and Hendawy Hassan were arrested. The police found the gun which was used; ballistics tests confirmed it was the same gun used to kill the victims.

The three arrested are registered criminals and were charged with premeditated murder, terrorism, possession of unlicensed firearms, disturbing public security, intentional destruction of property, and the intent of killing the wounded. The first charge alone warrants the death penalty. The main suspect El-Kamony had been convicted in 12 crimes in the past and had spent time in prison from 2002 till 2004. Two of his convictions were for rape. El-Kamony is known to be a hired killer and a thug used by election candidates to intimidate voters in the Nag Hammadi region.

After confessing to the killing, which he said was prompted by his anger to the rape of the Muslim girl by a Copt in Farshout, El-Kamony recanted his confession in front of prosecution, saying that his previous confessions were made under security services' pressure by arresting their women.

Coptic international lawyer Mr. Hanna Hanna suspects a conspiracy on the part of the government and expects the criminals to get away scot-free. "El-Kamony denies the shootings, which will be supported by witnesses prepared by the security authorities. The case will end up in the judges not finding a fixed charge, so El-Kamony and his accomplices would be set free."

Explaining why the authorities insist on the scenario of an individual criminal offense rather than a sectarian one, Hanna Hanna says that

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El-Kamony is a registered criminal and does not care about religion or honor. Also the theory of revenge does not hold as in Upper Egypt he had to kill family of the offender, i.e. Girgis Baroumi, but none of the Copts killed on Christmas Eve were his kinsmen. "Giving as an excuse for the shooting the alleged rape of the Muslim girl, he is only repeating the words of Fathi Sourour, and this would make the court consider the shooting a "criminal" rather than a "sectarian" offense. Since the motive was 'Honor' he would get a lighter sentence, and soon afterwards would be released."

Eighty young Christian from Nag Hammadi are presently detained without charges in what is known as the security services' "balancing act" in order to put pressure on the church to relinquish criminal charges in exchange of setting them free.

Many observers were disappointed that the prosecutor general hastily concluded that no one could be found to have incited the three accused Muslims to commit the shootings. They will be tried before the Emergency Supreme State Security Court in Qena on February 13. A team of 25 Islamist lawyers have volunteered to defend them.

By Mary Abdelmassih

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