



Egyptian Christian Framed in Sexual Assault Case

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(AINA) -- As Guirgis Baroumi went out to Farshout on his tricycle selling poultry on November 18, 2009, he never imagined that he would be framed in a sexual assault crime -- which would be used twice in less than 7 weeks by Islamists as a pretext for arson, looting and slaying of his Christian Coptic brethren in Farshout and Nag Hammadi.

Pessimistic observers see that the death sentence has already been passed on Baroumi when the Egyptian authorities and State Security decided to interfere in the course of justice and use him as a scapegoat to justify the violations against the Copts in Egypt .

After the last court session on March 24, 2010, the defense team came out angry and critical of the court. "It is obvious there is lack of justice. The trial is an absolute comedy, an unjust theatrical play." said Fathi Farid, Chairman of the Egyptian Organization for Anti-Discrimination (EGHR). "The developments in the case are not reassuring at all." Their grievances against the court include changing its mind with every session, preventing them from meeting with the defendant, barring them from closed sessions, following the wrong procedures with regards to forensic evidence, and accepting new witnesses.

Claims of the alleged sexual assault of 12-year-old Muslim girl Youssra Abdelwahab by 21-year-old Copt Guirgis Baroumi, on November 18, 2009, led to several days of violence by hundreds of Muslim protesters who went to the police station to kill Baroumi, then went on a rampage of looting and torching Christian-owned property. State Security also forced the eviction of 160 Christians from Baroumi's village (AINA [11-22-2009](#), [11-23-2009](#)). Baroumi, who always denied committing the crime, was not

subjected to forensics, "which gave the impression that he was framed to be used as a pretext for assaulting Copts in Farshout and the neighboring villages and destroying them economically," said Coptic activist Wagih Yacoub.

On January 6, 2010, when Copts celebrate Christmas Eve, six Copts were gunned down in a drive-by shooting as they emerged from church in Nag Hammadi. (AINA [1-7-2010](#)). This hideous crime resulted in widespread Coptic demonstrations worldwide and international condemnation, with the USA saying that the killings of Copts showed "an atmosphere of intolerance in Egypt."

Egyptian officials, including the Interior Minister, the Prosecutor General and the Speaker of the People's Assembly, Dr. Fathi Sourour, have denied a sectarian element to the Nag Hammadi slaying, insisting it was a criminal act, in revenge for the rape of the Muslim girl by a Copt in Farshout. Although the two cases are unconnected, the government linked them together, even the timings of the court sessions run parallel in both cases. Egyptian rights groups have disputed the government theory and criticized authorities for refusing to acknowledge the sectarian aspect of the killings. "If they can prove that Guirgis is guilty then they can say that what happened on Christmas Eve is a reaction to what he did," said Fathi Farid.

In an interview with BBC Arabic on January 31, 2010, Sourour said the Nag Hammadi Christmas Eve shooting of Christians 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 (AINA [2-3-2010](#)). When he was criticized for falsifying facts as she was still alive, he altered his statement, saying the girl "died morally." Defense team member Al-Zohairy told Watani Coptic Weekly, "This statement, coming from the Parliament Speaker and professor of criminal law, is a serious matter, because this is an indictment of Baroumi before the end of the trial, and a violation of the rule which says that the accused is innocent until proven guilty."

Baroumi's defense team has expressed fear over the way the trial is being handled in an effort to bring a water-tight case against Baroumi.



"The case against him is full of holes," said Ahraf Edward, defense team member. "Surprisingly, documentation show that prosecution referred the case to court only two days after the arrest has been made and without waiting for any forensic reports to verify that Baroumi was the one who committed the alleged sexual assault," said Edward who was one of the first to take up Baroumi's defense after the Bar Association in Qena, issued a statement warning lawyers not to take up Baroumi's defense, in solidarity with the girl's family.

Many people believe the Farshout girl's story lacks credibility. "The girl changed her story nine times, as to what happened, the time and the location," said Ashraf Edward.

According to the first description of the crime as per the police report issued on 18 November 2009, (scan of police report, the father of the girl reported that his daughter Youssra Abdelwahab told him when she came home that a man on a tricycle threw her on the ground and "tried to sleep with her". The report continues that she gave her father his description who ran to Farshout and caught him at the railway crossing. The father said that he came to know that his name was Guirgis Baroumi, his daughter identified him, and they accompanied him to the police station.

"Her story changed when she was questioned by prosecution into rape on the busy main road, but that he had no time to complete the act because she called out for help" said Dr. Ihab Ramzy, "The place, the circumstances and in view of no prior relationship between them, makes the rape incident extremely illogical and full of lies."

Youssra's lawyers told ElYoum 7 newspaper that they are now calling for a change in the description of the charge against Baroumi to make it abduction and rape, which carries the death penalty. "Because he obstructed her way, made her fall off her donkey and him being so huge that he pinned her down to the ground which amount to abduction." one of the lawyers said.

The fourth trial session which was held in Qena Criminal Court on March 24, was marred by a clash between the defense team and the presiding judge, Mahmoud Abdelsalam, who barred them from attending sessions until they obtain a power of attorney from the defendant or either of his parents. "This is not legal at all. A power of attorney should not be requested at a criminal court if the defendant is present, it is only required if he is absent," Ramzy said. He pointed out that the procedures to obtain a power of attorney is complex and the judge knows that, "He just wants to limit the defense of the defendant," Dr. Ihab Ramzy said. Attorneys have been complaining that they are never allowed to meet with Baroumi in prison on State Security orders.

Defense attorney Saeed Abdelmassih said that the judge prevented the defense team from attending a closed session on February 17 when the alleged rape victim, her parents and a new witness were being questioned. "This is against all norms of justice to separate an accused person from his attorney." When they were barred, defense complained to the Justice Minister and Attorney General and it was agreed with the judge after that, that they would question the victim on March 24, however, the girl and her family did not show up at court.

Outspoken attorney Ms.Howaida Al-Omda said "the court is preventing defense from questioning the alleged rape victim because she is a liar. I do not believe that the rape incident took place at all."

The court also accepted as a witness 16-year-old student Mohamed Hussein, who claims to have seen the incident in November. The defense team objected to this, but the court overruled their objection. "Legally, the defense of the defendant has the right to bring witnesses while the victim is restricted to the list of witnesses mentioned in the case file," defense lawyer Peter Al-Naggar told Copts-United. "the victim and her father said in the police and investigations that there were no witnesses to the incident. So after all that time a witness appears and the court allows it," said Fathi Farid.

All NGOs and journalists carrying foreign press identity cards were barred from the court session.

Christian youths, who believe like many others that Giruis Baroumi is innocent and that he is bound to lose his life with powerful opponents such as the Egyptian government and the State Security authorities who insist on his guilt, have initiated a Facebook campaign called [Save Guirgis](#).

By Mary Abdelmassih