



## Egyptian Muslims Burn 8 Homes

The ongoing assault on the Christian churches of Egypt in the aftermath of that nation's "democratic" revolution continues to demonstrate that the rising leadership has a very different vision for a post-Mubarak nation than that which was presented to the West earlier this year.



The pattern for attacks on Egypt's Christian minority has been for the government to simply stay out of the way while Muslim mobs burn and pillage. Then, if Christians try to defend their churches or homes, they are arrested by the same police who were often noticeably absent when the real crimes were taking place.

One of the most recent occasions of anti-Christian mob violence took place in the village of Awlad Khalaf. According to the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA), a mob of nearly 200 Muslims burned eight Christian homes in that village because of a rumor that a house that was being built there might be turned into a church. [As reported on June 26 by AINA:](#)

The attack was initiated by a rumor that a house which is being built by Wahib Halim Attia will be turned into a church. Two Christians and one Muslim were injured, no fatalities were reported.

Wahib Halim Attia obtained a license to build a house in the village on a 95 square meter plot. The house grew to an area of 350 square meters but was still on agricultural land that he owns. This gave rise to the rumor that he intended to build a church instead.

Father Weesa Azmy, the priest at St. George Church in the neighboring village of Negou Madam East, said that someone went to the City Council in Dar es Salam and told them about the irregularities in the house construction, and Wahib was ordered to remove the excess by June 24. "Instead Wahib carried on with the construction, which angered the Muslims, who decided to play God and take the law into their own hands; they attacked the construction site and other Christian homes."

Westerners may be used to zoning ordinances being an occasion for interference by nosy neighbors and self-righteous bureaucrats; the idea that such a dispute could be the basis for mob violence and the burning of eight homes would almost seem unimaginable, if such events were not taking place with increasing frequency in the "new" Egypt.

While one mob was burning homes in Awlad Khalaf, several hundred miles away in Bani Ahmed, another mob besieged a church for five hours with the intention of killing the pastor. [A June 24 article for AsiaNews provides some of the details:](#)

Hundreds of Salafists yesterday attacked the Coptic Church of St. George in the village of Bani Ahmed (Minya — Upper Egypt) and attempted to kill Fr. George Thabet. The news was reported this morning. According to local sources, the extremists turned up outside the building armed



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with sticks, telling the faithful to deliver the priest who was celebrating mass. The army intervened only after [a] five-hour siege, and the priest was escorted out of the village.

This is the second assault suffered by the community of Bani Ahmed, in a few months. On 23 March, the Salafists stopped the restoration of the church and obtained the expulsion of Fr Thabet from the village.

The five-hour delay in government intervention in Bani Ahmed is what Christians have come to expect when under assault by Muslim mobs in Egypt. According to AINA, the police did not arrive in Awlad Khalaf until three hours after the attack. Time and again, individual Christians and entire congregations have found it necessary to rely on their own capacity for self-defense when suffering such attacks — such defense as may come from the police and other authorities is often far too late to do any good. In Awlad Khalaf, the efforts of Christians to defend their own homes may result in further persecution of the church; one man who allegedly shot several of the Muslims entering his home is now in hiding, according to AINA.

In the aftermath of the burning of eight homes, police are now in Awlad Khalaf to defend 30 Christian homes. Presumably the police will remain in that village until the brief attention the assault has received in the media has passed, and then they will once again leave the Christian remnant to fend for themselves.

As the emerging power of radical Islam shapes the future of a post-Mubarak Egypt, even elements of the naïve Western press may be starting to understand that they have been "played" once again. [Jeffrey Fleishman recently wrote for the \*Los Angeles Times\*](#) that "The attempt by fledgling political parties to win more time to organize coincides with a renewed push to draft a new constitution before the parliamentary elections so that no political bloc, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, will have unchecked influence to set the laws of the land." The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood ought to have been no surprise, but it appears that reality is only slowly dawning on those who will face them in any future election. In Fleishman's words:

The pressing concern among independents and secularists is that the Brotherhood, the nation's largest and best-organized party, may win about 25% of the seats in parliament and control even more through a coalition. This could give the organization the power to infuse the new constitution with conservative Islamic ideals to limit rights for women and non-Muslims.

"The Brotherhood is tyrannical in its opinions and views, and I think they will take the side of the Islamist businessmen who fund it and have strict Islamic ideologies," said Khalid Sayed, a member of the Jan. 25 Youth Coalition. "Whatever constitution they might form would not fulfill the demands of Egyptians for civil rights and democracy."

The looming fiasco in Egypt is one more example of the disastrous character of experiments in "nation building"; Libya will, no doubt, soon offer another such example. Many will say that the tragedy of such an ongoing inability to learn from one's mistakes is that over and over again others must pay the price.

*Photo: Egyptian Coptic Christians chant as they protest the recent attacks on Christians and churches, in front of the state television building in Cairo, Egypt, May 9, 2011: AP Images*



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